

Events indeed had followed in such rapid succession, that the Convention having been regarded only as to immediate interests, not with reference to principles which are of eternal application, seemed like a subject obsolete and out of date. Ministers derived another advantage from the manner in which they were attacked. No man could blame them, except in the mere spirit of opposition, for having sent an expedition to Portugal; the public sense of what had been lost by the armistice sufficiently proved the wisdom of its destination; and that the force had been sufficient for its object we had the decisive authority of Sir Arthur Wellesley, and the complete evidence of the victory which he had gained. The discussions upon the expedition to Spain were more frequent and more angry. Both parties, however, as soon as the subject was brought forward, agreed in voting the thanks of Parliament to the army for their services, and a monument to the General. It had been the intention of Government to make a provision for the female part of Sir John Moore's family; but upon an intimation of their wish that it might be transferred to a male branch, a pension of a thousand pounds was granted to his elder brother. This was a becoming act of national generosity; but the opposition eagerly consecrated, and as it were canonized, the memory of Sir John Moore, that they might impute the whole misconduct of the campaign, with all its loss and its disgrace, to Government; and the ministers, always willing to avert a harassing investigation, were well pleased that their opponents should thus preclude themselves from pressing it upon military grounds.

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Both parties agree in extolling Sir J. Moore.

Inquiry, however, was called for, not upon that reasonable ground, but in the avowed hope that it would prove the ministry guilty of that utter misconduct for which their enemies so loudly and exultingly arraigned them. Lord Grenville said it was indeed a sinking country if such mismanagement were suffered to continue in the midst of our unexampled perils and dif-

Inquiry into the campaign in Spain called for.

Lord Grenville.

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Lord Erskine.

faculties. The hand of Providence appeared to be on us. Within three years we had lost the two great statesmen in whom the nation reposed its confidence, an admiral who had carried our navy to a pre-eminence which it never before enjoyed, and now a great military chieftain, whose talents were of the first order. "Was it possible," Lord Erskine asked, "to deplore the loss of friends whom we loved, and of men whose lives were precious to their country, without lamenting in bitterness that they were literally immolated by the ignorance and folly of those who now wished to cover their own disgrace by the just and natural feelings of the public towards men who had died for their native land? But for their immortal renown, it would have been better for them, certainly much better for their country, to have shot them upon the parade of St. James's Park, than to have sent them, not to suffer the noble risk of soldiers, in a practicable cause, but to endure insufferable, ignoble, and useless misery, in a march to the very centre of Spain, where for them to attack was impracticable, and to retreat only possible, by unparalleled exertions: and what sort of retreat? . . . a retreat leaving upon the roads and in the mountains of Spain from 8000 to 9000 of our brave men, dying of fatigue, without one act of courage to sweeten the death of a soldier. What could, then, be a more disgusting and humiliating spectacle, than to see the government of this great empire, in such a fearful season, in the hands of men who seemed not fit to be a vestry in the smallest parish?"

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Mr. Ponsonby.

Mr. Ponsonby insisted that it was the duty of ministers, before they engaged in such a contest, to have ascertained the real state of Spain. It was not sufficient to know that monks could excite some of the poorer and more ignorant people to insurrection. The disposition and views of the upper classes, who from their rank and property possess a natural influence,

ought to have been ascertained ; and, above all, the inclination of that middle class which is every where the great bond and cement of connexion between the higher and lower orders. Some information too they might have collected from history before they ventured upon sending an army into Spain : for, as far as history went, they would not find much to encourage them in relying upon the character of the Spaniards for cordial or active co-operation in such a contest. “ I am not disposed,” said he, “ to speak disrespectfully of the Spaniards ; but history does not represent them as remarkable for that daring, enthusiastic, high-spirited disposition which prompts and qualifies men to make a great struggle for freedom and independence. The most powerful principles to excite mankind have uniformly been religion and liberty : have either been found materially to operate upon the recent movements of the Spanish people ? These are the only principles which have ever served to excite the noble daring, the heroic resolution to conquer or die ; and it was necessary therefore to inquire whether they were actuated by both, or by either, to calculate upon the probability of their success in the war. If they were influenced by neither of these motives, how could any reflecting man look for energy, zeal, or perseverance among them ? Let me not be misinterpreted. I do not desire that they, or any people, should become wild or mad, and destroy society itself in order to improve its condition ; that in order to remove abuses they should tear away all their ancient institutions ; that in order to reform religion they should destroy Christianity itself ; but I do say, while the Inquisition existed, that if the Spaniards were not sensible of the multitude of abuses which pressed upon them, if they felt not a wish to reform abuses and to restore their rights, and were not willing, for that reformation and restriction, to encounter all the dangers and endure all the difficulties inseparable from the species of

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warfare in which they were engaged ; I say, that if this people were not actuated by the wish for, and encouraged by the hope of an improved condition, it was impossible for any statesman, for any man of common sense, to suppose that they would fight with success. If they were insensible of the cause of their degradation, and indifferent as to its removal, it was in vain for England to calculate upon materially exciting the spirit, or effectually aiding the exertions of such a people."

Then, after intimating a belief that Sir John Moore had acted against his own judgement, and in consequence only of Mr. Frere's repeatedly urging him to advance, he asked whether the Spaniards had been found willing and cordial in their assistance to the British army ? whether they had received them as deliverers and guests, or with jealousy and fear ? " Perhaps," he continued, " ministers may say that the Spaniards did not discover all that cordiality which was expected. But can it be permitted that they shall say this after they have involved the country in such a ruinous, unproductive, and inglorious struggle ? For let us not forget this, that, although we have obtained renown for our military bravery, England has for ever lost its character as a military nation. Were you to propose to send your soldiers again, as an encouragement and aid to other foreign powers, what would be the answer ? It would be, ' No ! Your troops are good ; your officers are skilful and courageous ; but there is something in the councils of England, or in the nature and manner of the application of her force, that renders it impossible ever to place any reliance upon her military assistance.' When you appeared in Holland and Germany as auxiliaries, you failed ; true it is, your force in these cases was comparatively small, and the question remained undecided. The problem is solved, however, by what has passed in Spain. You professed to send forth the largest army that ever went from England, for the purpose of

meeting the force of France; and what has been the result? A shameful retreat before the armies of France, and a disgraceful desertion of the power you wished to assist. This campaign, I say, will have an influence upon the character of England long after all of us shall cease to live. I ask the House, then, to institute an inquiry. I call upon the country to seek for one, in order to show how much distress, difficulties, dangers, and perils unexampled, our soldiers have endured in this fruitless and inglorious struggle. I call upon you, by the gratitude you owe to those who were thus shamefully sacrificed at Coruña, . . . by that which you owe to their companions in arms, who are still in existence, and able and willing to defend their country; I call upon you, by the interest you take in those who yet remain, to institute this inquiry, in order that they may not be sacrificed by similar misconduct upon a future occasion. I call upon you, as you value the glory of our country, the preservation of our future power and reputation, as well as our interest, by every thing that can excite the exertions of brave men, to institute this investigation."

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Lord Castlereagh, in his reply to this speech, observed with sarcastic truth, there could not be a greater mistake than to suppose they who called for inquiry meant that they wanted information. It happened, however, that by pronouncing upon facts of which he was imperfectly informed, Mr. Tierney was led into a course of argument most unfavourable to the intentions of himself and those who acted with him. Why, he demanded, had not the 10,000 men who were embarked been sent forward with all speed to Sir John Moore's assistance? On board the transports they were, and Lord Castlereagh took them out. Had they been sent, Sir John might have been still alive, and a real diversion then have been effected; for our army might for some time have maintained itself in Coruña, and have obliged the enemy

*Lord Castle-
reagh.*

*Mr. Tier-
ney.*

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 XXI. had sustained in our retreat, he said, was carefully glossed over,
 1809. but he understood that it was at least from 8,000 to 10,000 men.
 February. Such a scene of woe, indeed, had scarcely ever been heard of.
 Think of blowing up the ammunition, destroying three or four
 hundred waggons, staving the dollar casks, leaving the artillery
 to be cast away, and the Shrapnell shells to the French, who would
 thus discover their composition! He meant not to ascribe these
 disasters in the smallest degree to the General: all might have
 been avoided, if only 10,000 men had been sent to his support.
 Inquiry, therefore, was more than ever necessary; and by the
 result of that night's debate Great Britain would judge of the
 character of the House of Commons. That House ought to con-
 vince the army that, though they might be exposed to unavailing
 exertions, and useless hardships, by the mismanagement of ig-
 norant councils, they had protection in Parliament, who would
 never be slow in attending to their interest and their comforts.
 Unless the officers of the army had this support to look to, all
 would with them be absolute despair; for, with the exception of
 some of the connexions of ministers, there was not an officer who
 came home from the expedition who did not vent execrations
 against the authors of it. . there was not a man engaged in that
 retreat of unparalleled hardship who did not curse those who
 placed them in such a situation.

The fact was as Mr. Tierney stated it; . . he was only mis-
 taken in imputing it to the government. Four regiments and
 two troops of horse artillery were actually on board, and had
 been disembarked. Five more regiments of cavalry were under
 orders for Spain, and would have been dispatched as soon as
 the transports could return for them. Nor had Mr. Tierney
 overstated the advantages which might have been expected had
 they arrived at the scene of action. On the contrary, far more

important results than that of maintaining Coruña for a time must have ensued, if the British army had found these reinforcements there, even if it could be supposed that the retreat would have been made with such desperate precipitance, the General knowing he had such support at hand. He would then have retreated like one who was falling back upon his reinforcements, not flying to his ships. Broken in strength as the army was by severe exertion and excessive sufferings, broken in spirit too and almost in heart by the manner of its retreat, it had beaten the pursuers in fair battle, and 10,000 fresh troops would have turned the tide. Galicia would have been delivered from the enemy, Portugal saved from invasion, and Soult's army have been cut off, unless they could have crossed the mountains faster in flight than they had done in pursuit. Ministers would indeed have deserved the imputation so confidently cast on them by their opponents, if these advantages had been lost by their misconduct. Mr. Canning stated in their defence, that the reinforcements had been countermanded by the Generals, and empty transports sent out in conformity to their distinct requisition. "It was an afflicting circumstance," said he, "to send out empty, for the purpose of bringing off the army, those ships which had been filled for the purpose of reinforcing it. Among all the decisions to which I have been a party, no one has ever in the course of my life occurred which gave me more pain than this; . . . every dictate of the understanding was tortured, every feeling was wrung by it. But his Majesty's ministers had no choice. They felt that it would excite dissatisfaction in England and dismay in Spain; and yet they had no alternative."

Mr. Canning then proceeded to examine the more general arguments of Mr. Ponsonby. "It had been argued," he said, "that before the assistance of this country had been given to Spain, we ought to have ascertained whether or not the Spaniards

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*Mr. Can-
ning.*

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XXI. by the higher ranks ; whether they were wedded to their ancient
1809. institutions, or disposed to shake off the oppression of their former
February. government ; to abjure the errors of a delusive religion ; and to
forswear the Pope and the Grand Inquisitor. The policy of his
Majesty's government was different. They felt that the Spanish
nation wanted other and more aids than lectures on municipal
institutions ; they were content that a British army should act
in Spain, though the Grand Inquisitor might have been at the
head of the Spanish armies ; though the people might have been
attached to their ancient monarchy, and with one hand upheld
Ferdinand VII., whilst with the other they worshipped the Lady
of the Pillar. God forbid we should be so intolerant as to make
a conformity to our own opinions the price of our assistance to
others, in their efforts for national independence ; to carry the
sword in one hand, and what we might choose to call the Rights
of Man in the other ! But the enthusiasm of the Spaniards was
not pretended ; what they had in their mouths, they felt in their
hearts : they were enthusiastically determined to defend their
country to the last extremity, or to perish under its ruins. The
cause was not desperate ; the spirit of the people was unsubdued ;
the boundaries of French power were confined within the limits
of their military posts ; the throne of Joseph was erected on sand,
and would totter with the first blast ; and Buonaparte, even
should he succeed, instead of a yielding and unrepublishing ally,
would have an impatient, revolting, and turbulent nation to keep
down. The cause was not therefore desperate, because our army
of 30,000 or 40,000 men had been obliged to withdraw ; and it
was not just to the country, or to the army, which he hoped
would again prove the stay and bulwark of Europe, to assert
that its honour was in consequence gone for ever. All the
energy of liberty, and all the sacredness of loyalty, still sur-

vived ; and the Spanish revolution was, he trusted, destined by Providence to stand between posterity and French despotism, and to show to the world, that, amidst the paroxysms of freedom, a monarch might still be loved. If, therefore, ministers could show that these were the feelings by which they were influenced, and that they had acted up to these feelings, their justification would be complete ; and he was convinced that the liberal and disinterested measures of his Majesty's government towards Spain were more congenial to British feeling, and more honourable to the national character, than if they had set out in their career of assistance by picking up golden apples for ourselves. For himself, as an humble individual of the government, and having a share in these transactions, the recollection would be a source of gratification which he should carry with him to the grave. If we had been obliged to quit Spain, we had left that country with fresh laurels blooming upon our brows ; and whatever failure there had been upon the whole might still be repaired. If that was to be brought forward as the ground for accusation, he stood there for judgement. The object of the motion was to take the reins of government out of the hands of those who held them ; and upon that ground he desired that the present ministers might be judged by comparison. Was it the pleasure of the House that Spain should be abandoned ? Was it a principle agreed upon, that the direction of government should be committed to other hands ? Was it then a settled opinion, that there was something fatal in the will, and irresistible in the power of Buonaparte ? and was the world to submit to his tyrannous resolves, as to a divine infliction ? Whatever might be the fruits of Buonaparte's victories in other respects, the spirit of the Spanish nation was yet unsubdued. His fortune, no doubt, had been augmented ; but still it was fortune, not fate ; and therefore not to be considered unchangeable and fixed. There

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