

announced that an address would be moved for his immediate recall. That intention was not pursued when it was understood that Marquis Wellesley would be appointed to succeed him in the embassy; and upon every point except that of having desired that Colonel Charmilly might be examined before a council of war, his conduct was fully vindicated and approved by the ministers. In so doing they thought he had adopted an improper course; but they proved from the documents which had supplied the grounds of the accusation, that Sir John Moore had not been guilty of the gross fault which his admirers, in their desire of criminating another, imputed to him: he had not made a forward movement which endangered the army contrary to his own judgement, and in deference to an opinion which he disapproved; but upon his own plans, and in consequence of the information which he obtained from an intercepted dispatch.

In the course of these debates Earl Grey complained that only 2000 cavalry had been sent to Spain, though we had 27,000, and though that description of force was peculiarly necessary in that country; and he contrasted the conduct of the British government with that of Buonaparte, "the consummate general whose plans they had to oppose. In rapidity of execution," said his lordship, "he is only equalled by his patience in preparing the means. He has all the opposite qualities of Fabius and Marcellus, whether you consider the country in which he acts, the people with whom he has to contend, or the means by which he is to subdue them. He rivals Hannibal in the application of the means, and is exempt from his only fault, that of not improving by past experience. The means provided by Buonaparte for the accomplishment of his purposes are so well combined, and his objects so ably prosecuted, as generally to give him a moral certainty of success; and whatever may be thought of his total disregard of the justice of those objects, it is im-

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*Earl Grey.*

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CHAP. possible not to admire the ability and wisdom with which he  
 XXI. combines the means of accomplishing them. In order to main-  
 1809. tain against such an antagonist the ultimate contest which is to  
 April. decide for ever the power and independence of this country, the  
 true policy of those who govern it must be, to pay a strict at-  
 tention to economy, to be actuated by a determination to con-  
 centrate our means, not to endanger them in any enterprise or  
 speculation in which the event is doubtful; but pursuing the  
 economical system of husbanding our resources, by which alone  
 we could enable ourselves to continue a contest, the cessation of  
 which does not depend upon us, but upon the injustice of our  
 enemy."

*Earl of Li-  
 verpool.*

The Earl of Liverpool remarked, in reply, how singular it was that every one who censured the plan which ministers had followed with regard to Spain had a plan of his own, and that none of those plans should have a single principle of agreement with each other. This at least, he said, showed the difficulty which government must have felt in forming its measures, though it afforded a facility in defending them. As to the accusation of not sending a sufficient force of cavalry, he stated that as much tonnage was required for 5000 horse as for 40,000 foot; and moreover that vessels of a different description were necessary, of which a very limited number could at any time be procured. Yet from 8000 to 9000 horse had been sent, and there would have been not less than 12,000, had not the General countermanded the reinforcements which were ready. Weak as Earl Grey might be pleased to deem the ministers, they had not been so foolish as to expect that the first efforts of the Spaniards would meet with uninterrupted success; they were not yet guilty of calculating upon impossibilities; they had not supposed that such a cause as the cause of Spain, to be fought for with such an enemy as the ruler of France, could be determined in one cam-

paign. Reverses they had met; but those reverses were not owing to the indifference or apathy of the Spaniards; they were imputable to their want of discipline, and to an ill-judged contempt for the French, a proof in itself of their zeal and ardour. And what would have been the general sentiment in that country and in this if our army had retired without attempting any thing? If, when after all her repeated disasters, the spirit of Spain was unsubdued, and her capital bidding defiance to an immense army at the very gates; if a British army, so marshalled and equipped, and after a long march to the aid of their ally, had in that hour of trial turned their backs upon her danger, what would have been thought of the sincerity of our co-operation? "I believe in my conscience," he continued, "that that movement of Sir John Moore saved Spain. There are some, perhaps, who may be startled at the assertion: it is my fixed and decided opinion, and as such I will avow it. After the destruction of Blake's army, the defeat of Castaños, and the dispersion of the army of Extremadura, . . . after the capitulation of Madrid, which promised to emulate the glory of Zaragoza, and would have done so, had not treachery interposed; if at that crisis Buonaparte had pursued his conquests, by pushing to the southern provinces, the Spanish troops would never have had time to rally there. But that time was given by Sir John Moore's advance in their favour. Never was there a more effectual diversion. Sir John Moore himself said, that as a diversion it had completely and effectually succeeded. Nor was the moral effect of thus re-animating the spirit of the nation to be overlooked. Let the final issue of the contest be what it may, France has not yet succeeded in subduing Spain. I admit that Buonaparte has 200,000 men in that country; that his troops are of the bravest, and his generals among the most skilful in the world; and, above all, that he has been himself at their head: and yet, with all this, he has not got possession of more

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CHAP. territory than he had last year: he only holds such parts as in  
 XXI. every war fell to the lot of whichever brought the largest army  
 1809. into the field. I am far from saying, regard being had to the  
 April. man and the circumstances of the case, that the Spaniards must  
 ultimately succeed; but, at the same time, looking at the spirit  
 they have evinced, and the actions that have happened, parti-  
 cularly the defence of Zaragoza, I cannot feel lukewarm in my  
 hope that their efforts will be crowned with ultimate success.  
 In that fatal contest with America we gained every battle; we took  
 every town we besieged, until the capture of General Burgoyne;  
 and yet the Americans ultimately succeeded, by perseverance,  
 in the contest. In the present struggle, do not the extent and  
 nature of the country afford a hope of success? does not its  
 population forbid despair? We have not lost the confidence of  
 the Spanish people; we know that every true Spanish heart  
 beats high for this country; we know that whatever may happen,  
 they do not accuse us. Submission may be the lot they are fated  
 to endure in the end; but they do not impute to us the cause of  
 their misfortunes: they are sensible that neither the thirst after  
 commerce, nor territory, nor security, is to be imputed to us, in  
 the assistance we have afforded to them upon this important  
 occasion. Whatever may be the result, we have done our duty;  
 we have not despaired; we have persevered, and will do so to the  
 last, while there is any thing left to contend for with a prospect  
 of success."

*Mr. Can-  
ning.*

*May 9.*

Mr. Canning also declared, that considering Sir John Moore's  
 advance in a military point, in his poor judgement he could not  
 but think it a wise measure; but in every view which ennobles  
 military objects by exalting military character, he was sure it  
 was so. With all its consequences and disasters, he preferred it  
 to a retreat at that time. Of those disasters he would not say a  
 word: the battle of Coruña covered every thing; but the retreat

itself, and the precipitancy of it, he could never cease to regret. This single expression was the only hint even of censure as to the conduct of the retreat which was heard in Parliament. In the course of the debate an extraordinary confession was made by Mr. Canning. "During the whole time," he said, "that these events were passing, government had no means of arguing from the past: the occasion was without precedent, and such as it was impossible to lay their hand on any period of history to parallel, either from its importance with regard to individuals, to this happy country and to Europe, or the difficulty that arose from there being so little knowledge to guide their steps in the actual scene of their operations. Why should government be ashamed to say they wanted that knowledge of the interior of Spain, which they found no one possessed? With every other part of the continent we had had more intercourse: of the situation of Spain we had every thing to learn." With what contemptuous satisfaction must Buonaparte and the French politicians have heard such a confession from the British secretary of state for foreign affairs! With whatever feelings the government might make this avowal, it was heard with astonishment by the thoughtful part of the people, and not without indignation. To them it was a mournful thing thus to be told that their rulers laid in no stock of knowledge, but lived, as it were, from hand to mouth, upon what they happened to meet with! Is there a country or a province in Europe, it was asked; is there a European possession in any part of the world, of which the French government does not possess maps, plans, and the most ample accounts of whatever may guide its politics, and facilitate its invasion? Even respecting Spanish America, such a confession would have been disgraceful, because it would have betrayed an inexcusable negligence in seeking for information; but as regarding Spain itself, it became almost incredible. Did there not exist faithful

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and copious accounts of that kingdom, both by foreign and native writers? Had we not still living, diplomatists who had resided for years at the Spanish court; consuls and merchants who had been domesticated, and almost naturalized in Spain; and travellers who, either for their pleasure, or on their commercial pursuits, had traversed every province and every part of the Peninsula? Was not information always to be found, if it were wisely and \*perseveringly sought?

The truth was, that though we had means adequate to any emergency, troops equal to any service, and generals worthy to command them, Government had the art of war to learn: it had been forgotten in the cabinet since the days of Marlborough and Godolphin. The minds of men expand with the sphere in which they act, and that of our statesmen had long been deplorably contracted. The nation, contented with its maritime supremacy, hardly considered itself as a military power; and had well nigh acquiesced in what the French insultingly proclaimed, and the enemies of the Government sedulously repeated, that we had ceased to be so. We had been sinking into a feeble, selfish policy, which would have withered the root of our strength; its avowed principle being to fix our attention exclusively upon

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\* When Clarkson wanted evidence respecting the manner in which slaves were obtained up the rivers Calabar and Bonny, he heard, by accident, that there was one person who could give it, but he neither could obtain his name, nor learn the place of his abode: . . . all that was known was, that he belonged to some ship of war in ordinary. That indefatigable and admirable man immediately set out in search of him: he went on board every ship in ordinary at Deptford, Woolwich, Chatham, and Sheerness, . . . above an hundred and sixty vessels, . . . but in vain. He boarded above an hundred more at Portsmouth, equally in vain, and fifty-six at Plymouth, with as little success. In the fifty-seventh he found his man, after a labour of three weeks; obtained the knowledge which he wanted; and established by that evidence a point of main importance to the abolition of the slave trade.

what were called British objects ; in other words, to pursue what was gainful, and be satisfied with present safety, regardless of honour, and of the certain ruin which that regardlessness must bring on. The events in Spain had roused the country from a lethargy which otherwise might have proved fatal ; and ministers, as undoubtedly the better part of their opponents would have done had they been then in office, heartily participated the national feeling : but when vigorous measures were required, they found themselves without precedent and without system. They had entered, however, into the contest generously and magnanimously, with a spirit which, if it were sustained, would rectify the errors of inexperience, and work its way through all difficulties.

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Earl Grey took occasion in one of his speeches to notice an opinion, that it was of no consequence by which party the administration of affairs was directed. “ How can it,” he asked, “ be seriously urged, that it is the same thing whether the government be entrusted to incapable persons, or able statesmen ? I am really astonished at the absurd extravagance of the doctrine into which men of general good sense and good intentions have been recently betrayed upon this subject.” But no person had ever pretended that it was the same thing whether the government were administered by weak heads or by wise ones. What had been maintained was, that the party out of place was in no respect better than the party in, and in many respects worse : that they did not possess the slightest superiority in talents ; that a comparison of principles was wholly to their disadvantage ; and that the language respecting the present contest held, even by those among them whose attachment to the institutions of their country could not be doubted, was such as left no hope for the honour of England if it were committed to their hands. The existing ministry acted upon braver and wiser principles,

*Earl Grey.*  
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and, whatever errors they committed in the management of the war, to the latest ages it will be remembered for their praise, that in the worst times they never despaired of a good cause, nor shrunk from any responsibility that the emergency required.

*Expedition  
to the  
Scheldt.*

An error, and one most grievous in its consequences, they committed at this time, by dividing their force, and sending a great expedition against the Isle of Walcheren, as a diversion in aid of Austria, instead of bringing all their strength to bear upon the Peninsula. It was a wise saying of Charles V. that counsels are to be approved or condemned for their causes, not for their consequences. When the causes which led to this unhappy resolution are considered, it will appear imputable in part to the conduct of the Spanish government, still more to that of the opposition in England. By refusing to put us in possession of Cadiz as a point of retreat and safe depôt, the Spaniards afforded their enemies in England an argument in support of their favourite position, that these allies had no confidence in us. The opposition writers did not fail to urge this as an additional proof that they were unworthy of our assistance; and the impression which they laboured to produce was strengthened by persons whose hearts were with their country, but who thought by heaping obloquy upon the Spaniards, and making their very misfortunes matter of accusation against them, to excuse the manner of Sir John Moore's retreat. To the effect which had been thus produced on public opinion ministers in some degree deferred. They deferred still more to the pitiful maxim that the British government ought to direct its efforts towards the attainment of what were called purely British objects: now there were ships at Antwerp and at Flushing, and it was deemed a British object to destroy the naval resources of the enemy.

Men in England regarded the commencement of the Austrian war with widely different feelings, each party expecting a result



in conformity to its own system of opinions. Those journalists who taught as the first political commandment that Buonaparte was Almighty, and that Europe should have none other Lord but him, as from the commencement of the troubles in Spain they had represented the cause of the Spaniards to be hopeless, so they predicted now that that resistless conqueror was only called a while from his career of conquest in the Peninsula to win new victories upon the Danube, after which he would return to the Guadalquivir and the Tagus, and bear down every thing before him there. Others, who had too sanguinely expected immediate success from the Spaniards, with equal but less excusable credulity rested their hopes now upon Austria, . . there, they said, the battle was to be fought, and the fate of Spain as well as of Germany depended upon the issue. The wiser few looked for little from the continental governments, though they knew that much was possible from the people; but from the beginning of this new contest, it appeared to them important chiefly because it effected a diversion in favour of the Spaniards; especially they hoped that England would seize the opportunity, and by meeting the enemy upon that ground with equal numbers, secure a certain and decisive victory.

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Great and unfortunate as the error was of dividing their efforts, the Government acted with a spirit and vigour which have seldom been seen in the counsels of a British cabinet. At a time when they expected that not Spain alone, but Portugal also, would be abandoned by our troops, they made preparations for sending thither another army with all speed, under Sir Arthur Wellesley, who consequently resigned his seat in Parliament, and his office as Chief Secretary in Ireland. Sir John Craddock, who had then the command in Portugal, being a much older officer, was appointed Governor of Gibraltar. The Earl of Buckinghamshire complained of this, as being an ill reward for

*Troops sent  
to Portugal.*

*Earl of  
Bucking-  
hamshire.  
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 XXI. paring it for resistance, to which it was owing that the deter-  
 1809. mination of embarking from Lisbon was abandoned. This com-  
 plaint drew from the Earl of Liverpool a just tribute to Sir John  
 Craddock's merits, and some remarks not less just upon the im-  
 propriety of bringing such a subject before Parliament, as at  
 once trenching upon the prerogative, and virtually destroying  
 that responsibility which ministers possessed.

Lord Buckinghamshire was of opinion that we had acted  
 unwisely in reinstating the Portuguese Regency; that it became  
 the duty of ministers to form a provisional government in that  
 country till the subject could be submitted to the Prince of Bra-  
 zil's decision; and that when Marquis Wellesley went out as  
 ambassador to Seville, he should take with him powers for making  
 those changes in Portugal which could not be delayed without  
 most serious injury to the common cause of that kingdom and  
 of Spain, and to the security of Great Britain and Ireland. To  
 this it was replied, that what had been done was done because  
 it was presumed to be most in accord with the sentiments of the  
 government in Brazil, at the same time that due regard was paid  
 to the feelings and even the prejudices of the people. Lord  
 Buckinghamshire strongly recommended that we should avail  
 ourselves of the strength of Portugal as a military position, and  
 of the excellent qualities of the Portuguese, which, under good  
 discipline, whenever they had had it, made them among the best  
 soldiers in the world. Such measures for that great purpose had  
 at that time been taken as the Earl of Buckinghamshire wished.  
 That nobleman spoke more wisely upon the affairs of the Pen-  
 insula than any other member of the opposition, and without  
 the slightest taint of party spirit. There were some, of whom it  
 would be difficult to say whether their speeches displayed less  
 knowledge of facts, or less regard of them,