

solemnly bound itself to restore them. The time was now arrived for this great work. Desirous, therefore, that the nation should appear with the dignity due to its heroic efforts; that the rights of the people should be placed beyond the reach of encroachments; and that the sources of public felicity should run freely as soon as the war ceased, and repair whatever inveterate arbitrary power had scorched, or the present devastation had destroyed, the Junta decreed, that the Cortes should be re-established, and would immediately proceed to consider the method of convening it; for which end it would nominate a committee of five of its members. It would also investigate, in order to propose them to the nation assembled in Cortes, the means of supporting the holy war in which they were engaged; of insuring the observance of their fundamental laws; of meliorating the legislation and abolishing the abuses which had crept into it; of collecting and administering the revenue, and of reforming the system of public education. And to combine the information necessary for such discussions, it would consult the councils, provincial Juntas, tribunals, magistracies, corporations, bishops, and universities, and the opinion of intelligent and enlightened persons."

CHAP.
XXV.
1809.

A declaration in stronger terms had been submitted to the Junta, and rejected by them at the instigation of Mr. Frere. "Spaniards," it was there said, "it is three ages since the laws on which the nation founded its defence against tyranny have been destroyed. Our fathers did not know how to preserve the liberty which had been bequeathed to them; and although all the provinces of Spain successively struggled to defend it, evil stars rendered their efforts useless. The laws, from that time forward, have been only an expression more or less tyrannical, or beneficent, of a particular will. Providence, as if to punish the loss of that prerogative of free men, has paralyzed our valour,

*Declaration
which was
first pro-
posed.*

CHAP. arrested the progress of our intellect, and impeded our civiliza-
XXV. tion, till we have come to that condition, that an insolent tyrant
1809. formed the project of subduing the greatest nation of the globe,
without reckoning upon its will, and even despising its existence.
In vain has the prince sometimes attempted to remedy some of
the evils of the state : buildings cannot be erected on sand, and
without fundamental and constituted laws, it is useless for the
philosopher in his study, or the statesman in the theatre of busi-
ness, to exert himself for the good of the people. The best pro-
jects are not put in execution, or not carried through. Good
suggestions are followed by evil ones ; economy and order, by
prodigality and rapine ; a prudent and mild minister, by an
avaricious and foolish favourite ; and thus the ship of the state
floats without sails and helm, till, as has happened to the Spanish
monarchy, it is dashed to pieces on a rock. How, but by the
re-establishment of freedom, could that blood be recompensed
which flows in every part of the Peninsula ; those sacrifices
which Spanish loyalty is offering every instant ; that moral re-
sistance, as universal as it is sublime, which disconcerts our
enemies, and renders them hopeless even in the midst of their
victories ? When this dreadful contest is concluded, the Spaniard
shall say proudly to himself, ‘ My fathers left me slavery and
wretchedness for my inheritance ; I leave to my descendants
liberty and glory.’ Spaniards, this is the feeling which, by re-
flection in some, and by instinct in all, animates you now ; and
it shall not be defrauded of its expectations. Our detractors
say that we are fighting to defend old abuses, and the inveterate
vices of our corrupted government ; let them know that your
struggle is for the happiness, as well as the independence of your
country ; that you will not depend henceforward on the uncer-
tain will or the variable temper of a single man ; nor continue
to be the plaything of a court without justice, under the control

of an insolent favourite, or a capricious woman; but that on the edifice of your ancient laws you will rear a barrier between despotism and your sacred rights. This barrier consists in a constitution to aid and support the monarch when he is just, and to restrain him when he follows evil councils. Without a constitution all reform is precarious, all prosperity uncertain; without it the people are no more than flocks of slaves, put in motion at the order of a will, frequently unjust, and always unrestrained; without it the forces of the whole society, which should procure the greatest advantages for all its members, are employed exclusively to satisfy the ambition, or satiate the frenzy of a few, or perhaps of one."

CHAP.
XXV.
1809.

When this paper was communicated to Mr. Frere, he saw serious objections, which he stated to Garay, and which the Junta, though they would otherwise have published the proclamation, readily admitted. That ambassador perceived, more clearly perhaps than any other person at that time, the danger to be apprehended from convoking a legislative assembly in a nation altogether unprepared for it by habits, feelings, education, or general knowledge. He considered it a delicate and dangerous point in every respect, and said, "that if the decision of the question were left in his hand, notwithstanding the necessity for widening the basis of the government, the failure of all the political experiments which had been made in these latter times, and the impossibility which had been found (by a fatality peculiar to the present age) of forming a permanent establishment, even in affairs less essential than the formation of a free constitution for a great nation, would make him waver. But taking the decision for granted, he thought the manner in which it was proposed to announce it likely to produce bad effects in Spain; and he could venture," he said, "to assure D. Martin de Garay, that it would undoubtedly create them in England. If

*Objections
by Mr.
Frere.*

CHAP. the Spaniards had indeed passed three centuries under arbitrary
XXV. government, they ought not to forget that it was the price which
1809. they paid for having conquered and peopled the fairest portion
of the world, and that the integrity of that immense power rested
solely upon these two words, Religion and the King. If the
old constitution had been lost by the conquest of America, the
first object should be to recover it; but in such a manner as not
to lose what had cost so much in the acquisition: and for this
reason, they ought to avoid, as a political poison, every enuncia-
tion of general principles, the application of which it would be
impossible to limit or qualify, even when the Negroes and In-
dians should quote it in favour of themselves. And allowing
that a bad exchange had been made in bartering the ancient
national liberty for the glory and extension of the Spanish name;
allowing that the error should at all hazards be done away; even
though it were so," Mr. Frere said, "it did not appear becoming
the character of a well-educated person to pass censures upon
the conduct of his forefathers, or to complain of what he may
have lost by their negligence or prodigality, still less so if it were
done in the face of the world; and what should be said of a nation
who should do this publicly, and after mature deliberation?"

This was true foresight, . . . and yet the English ambassador
approached Charybdis in his fear of Scylla. He spoke to the
Spaniards of Religion and the King; in England the truest and
most enlightened lovers of liberty can have no better rallying
words; in Spain those words had for three hundred years meant
the inquisition and an absolute monarch, whose ministers, so
long as they could retain his favour, governed according to their
own will and pleasure, unchecked by any constitutional control.
The government did not obtain by their decree for convoking
the Cortes the popularity which they had perhaps expected.
The measure had been long delayed, and therefore was sup-

posed to have been unwillingly resolved on. So much, indeed, had been expected from the Central Junta, that no possible wisdom on their part, no possible success, could have answered the unreasonable demand. The disappointment of the nation was in proportion to its hopes, and the government became equally the object of suspicion and contempt. Some of the members had large estates in those provinces which were occupied by the French, and it was suspected that where their property was, there their hearts were also. Their subsequent conduct proved how greatly they were injured by this distrust. They were not censured for their first disasters, which the ablest men under like circumstances could not have averted. Had they obtained accurate intelligence of the strength and movements of the enemy when Buonaparte entered Spain; had they exerted themselves as much in disciplining troops as in raising and embodying them, and had they supplied them with regularity and promptitude; it would not have been possible to have stopped the progress of such a force. Something was allowed for the confidence which the battle of Baylen had inspired, and for the enthusiasm of the people, which the government had partaken. Neither would the nation have been disposed to condemn, even if it had perceived, errors which arose from the national character. But when, after the bitter experience of twelve whole months, no measures had been adopted for improving the discipline of the armies, or supplying them in the field, the incapacity of the Junta became glaring, and outcries against them were heard on all sides.

CHAP.
XXV.

1809.

Unpopularity of the Junta.

One of the weightiest errors for which they were censured was for not exerting themselves more effectually to bring the whole strength of the country against the invaders. They had promised to raise 500,000 men and 50,000 cavalry. Granada was the only province which supplied its full proportion, and

Their difficulties and errors.

CHAP. Granada even exceeded it; its contingent was about 28,000,
XXV. whereas it furnished nearly forty. But this depended more upon
1809. the provincial Juntas than upon the central government, whose
decrees were of no avail in those parts which the enemy possessed, and were ill observed in others, where the local administrations, from disgust, or jealousy, or indolence, or incapacity, seemed to look on as spectators of the dreadful drama, rather than to perform their parts in it, as men and as Spaniards. Neither is it to the want of numbers that their defeats were to be attributed; there were at all times men enough in the field; arms, equipments, and discipline were wanting. It is unjust to judge of the exertions of the Spanish Junta by those of the National Convention in France, who had the whole wealth and strength of a populous and rich country at their absolute disposal, and who began the revolutionary war with officers, and tacticians, and statesmen capable of wielding the mighty means which were put into their hands. The fault of the Junta was in relying too much upon numbers and bravery, and too little upon their fortresses. The general under whom the great captain Gonzalo de Cordova learnt the art of war had left them a lesson which they might profitably have remembered. He used to say, that fortresses ought to be opposed to the impatience and fury of the French, and that the place for stationing raw troops was behind walls and ramparts.

The most important errors which the Junta had hitherto committed were, the delay in convoking the Cortes, and their conduct towards Sir Arthur Wellesley's army; but the national character contributed in no slight degree to both. For it was not the known aversion of Florida Blanca to the name of a representative assembly, nor the fears of some of the Junta, nor the love of power in others, which protracted the convocation of the Cortes, so much as their reverential adherence to established

forms. This was evident in Jovellanos himself, who regarded it as equally profane and dangerous to approach this political ark of the covenant, without scrupulously observing all the ceremonies and solemnities which the law prescribed. Precedents on points of this kind are not to be found in Spain as they are in England. Antiquaries were to be consulted, archives examined, old regulations adapted to new circumstances, . . . and this when the enemy was at the gates. The defect may well be pardoned, because of the virtues with which it was connected. Had the Spaniards regarded with less veneration the deeds and the institutions of their ancestors, they would never have supported that struggle which will be the wonder of succeeding ages. Their conduct toward the English army sprang from a worse fault ; from that pride which made them prone to impose upon others and upon themselves a false opinion of their strength. It is the national failing, for which they have ever been satirized, by their own writers as well as by other nations. They will rather promise and disappoint, than acknowledge their inability ; of this, their history for the last two centuries affords abundant examples ; they had yet to learn, that perfect sincerity is as much due to an ally as to a confessor. In many cases the government was itself deceived ; the same false point of honour prevailing in every department, from the lowest to the highest, it received and acted upon exaggerated statements and calculations ; but in others, it cannot be denied, that pride led to the last degree of meanness, and that promises were held out to the English general, which those who made them must have known it was impossible to perform.

Yet it must be admitted that the errors of the Junta were more attributable to the character of the nation than of the individuals ; and those individuals were placed in circumstances of unexampled difficulty. Four-and-thirty men, most of them

CHAP.
XXV.
1809.

CHAP. XXV.
1809. strangers to each other, and unaccustomed to public business, were brought together to govern a nation in the most perilous crisis of its history, without any thing to direct them except their own judgement, and almost without any other means than what the patriotism of the people could supply. They had troops indeed, but undisciplined, unofficered, unprovided, half armed, and half clothed. The old system of government was broken up, the new one was yet to be formed. They had neither commissariat nor treasury; the first donations and imposts were exhausted; so also were the supplies which England had liberally given, and those from America had not yet arrived. Added to these difficulties, and worse than all, was that dreadful state of moral and social anarchy, into which the nation had been thrown, and which was such that no man knew in whom he could confide. To poison food or water in time of war is a practice which all people, who are not absolute savages, have pronounced infamous by common consent; but it is a light crime compared to the means which Buonaparte employed for the subjugation of Spain, . . . means which poisoned the well-springs of social order, and loosened the very joints and fibres of society. Morla, when he betrayed his country, committed an act of treason against human nature. The evil had been great before, but when a Judas Iscariot had been found in Morla during the agony of Spain, in whom could the people confide? "Suspicion," says Jovéllanos, "and hatred were conceived and spread with frightful facility. How many generals, nobles, prelates, magistrates, and lawyers, were regarded with distrust, either because of their old relations with Godoy, or because they were connected with some of the new partizans of the tyranny; or for the weakness, or indecision, or ambiguity of their conduct; or for the calumnies and insinuations which rivalry and envy excited against them! It was considered as a crime to have gone to Bayonne, to have

remained at Madrid, or resided in other places which were occupied by the intrusive government; to have submitted to swear allegiance to it, to have obeyed its orders, or to have suffered even compulsively its yoke and its contempt. What reputation was secure? who was not exposed to the attacks of envy, to the imputations of calumny, and to the violence of an agitated populace?"

CHAP.
XXV.
1809.

From this state of things it necessarily arose, that the Junta acted in constant fear and suspicion of those whom they employed. Their sense of weakness and their love of power increased the evil. Fearing the high spirit of Alburquerque, and the influence which rank and talents conjoined would give to his deserved popularity among the soldiers, they cramped him in a subordinate command, while they trusted those armies which were the hope of Spain to Cuesta, because they were afraid of offending him, and to Venegas, for the opposite reason, that they were sure of his obsequious submission. Some odium they incurred by permitting a trade with towns which the enemy occupied. For the sake, as was alleged, of those Spaniards who were compelled to live under the yoke, and also for the advantage of the colonies, they had granted licences for conveying sugar, cacao, and bark to those parts of the kingdom. These licences were only to be trusted to persons of known and approved patriotism, who were likewise to be strictly watched, and liable to be searched upon any suspicion. The weakness of such a concession in such a war, as well as the obvious facility which it afforded to the French and their traitorous partizans, excited just reprehension; and at the close of the year the Junta found it necessary to revoke their edict, acknowledging that, in spite of all precautions, it was found prejudicial to the public safety. Some of the members were suspected of enhancing the price of necessaries for the army, by their own secret mono-

July 14.

Dec. 22.

CHAP. polies; others were said to be surrounded by venal instruments,
 XXV. through whom alone they were accessible. These imputations
 1809. were probably ill-founded or exaggerated; certain, however, it
 is, that never had any government fewer friends. Men of the
 most opposite principles were equally disaffected toward it. Its
 very defenders had no confidence in its stability, and were
 ready to forsake it. They who dreaded any diminution of the
 regal authority, could not forgive its popular origin; they who
 aspired to lay the foundation of a new and happier order of
 things, were discontented, because the measures which were
 taken towards the reformation of the state were slowly, and, as
 they deemed, reluctantly adopted. Those wretches who were
 sold to France were the enemies of any government which re-
 sisted the usurpation; and those whose timid natures, or short-
 sighted selfishness, disposed them to submission, naturally re-
 garded it with dislike, because it delayed the subjection of the
 country. Among the people, who were actuated by none of
 these feelings, it was sufficient to render the Junta unpopular,
 that it was unfortunate. The times rendered them suspicious;
 their own conduct and their power made them obnoxious to
 many; and their ill-fortune, more than their errors, made them
 disliked by all.

*Scheme for
 overthrow-
 ing them.*

Influenced by some of these motives, and perhaps in no little
 degree by jealousy, the Junta of Seville were particularly hostile
 to the government, and a plan was formed in that city for over-
 throwing it: the members were to be seized, and some of the
 most obnoxious transported to Manilla in a ship which was pre-
 pared for the purpose. Some regiments had been gained over,
 and it is said even the guards of the Junta; but as the persons
 who designed this revolution had for their direct object the good
 of Spain, they considered it a mark of confidence due to Great
 Britain to make the English ambassador acquainted with their