

## CHAPTER VI.

GENERAL INSURRECTION. PROCEEDINGS IN ASTURIAS AND GALLICIA. JUNTAS FORMED IN THE PROVINCES. JUNTA OF SEVILLE. MURDER OF SOLANO AT CADIZ; CAPTURE OF THE FRENCH SQUADRON IN THAT HARBOUR. MASSACRE OF THE FRENCH AT VALENCIA. PROCLAMATIONS OF THE PATRIOTS. MOVEMENTS OF THE FRENCH AGAINST THEM.

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*May.*  
*General in-*  
*urrection.*

THE seizure of the fortresses, and the advance of the French troops, had roused the spirit of the Spaniards; their hopes had been excited to the highest pitch by the downfall of Godoy and the elevation of Ferdinand; and in that state of public feeling, the slaughter at Madrid, and the transactions at Bayonne, were no sooner known, than the people, as if by an instantaneous impulse over the whole kingdom, manifested a determination to resist the insolent usurpation. Abandoned as they were by one part of the Royal Family, deprived of the rest; forsaken too by those nobles and statesmen, whose names carried authority, and on whose talents and patriotism they had hitherto relied; . . . betrayed by their government, and now exhorted to submission by all the constituted authorities civil and religious which they had been accustomed to revere and to obey; . . . their strong places and frontier passes in possession of the enemy; the flower of their own troops some in Italy, others in the north of Europe; and a numerous army of the French, accustomed to victory, and now flushed with Spanish slaughter, in their capital and in the heart of the country; under these complicated disadvantages and

dangers, they rose in general and simultaneous insurrection against the mightiest military power which had ever till that time existed ; a force not more tremendous for its magnitude than for its perfect organization, wielded always with consummate skill, and directed with consummate wickedness. A spirit of patriotism burst forth which astonished Europe, and equalled the warmest hopes of those who were best acquainted with the Spanish nation : for those persons who knew the character of that noble people, . . who were familiar with their past history, and their present state ; who had heard the peasantry talk of their old heroes, of Hernan Cortes and of the Cid ; . . who had witnessed the passionate transfiguration which a Spaniard underwent when recurring from the remembrance of those times to his own ; . . his brave impatience, his generous sense of humiliation, and the feeling with which his soul seemed to shake off the yoke of these inglorious days, and take sanctuary among the tombs of his ancestors, . . they knew that the spirit of Spain was still alive, and had looked on to this resurrection of the dry bones. As no foresight could have apprehended the kind of injury with which the nation had been outraged, nor have provided against the magnitude of the danger, so by no possible concert could so wide and unanimous a movement have been effected. The holiest and deepest feelings of the Spanish heart were roused, and the impulse was felt throughout the Peninsula like some convulsion of the earth or elements.

The firing on the 2d of May was heard at Mostoles, a little town about ten miles south of Madrid, and the Alcalde, who knew the situation of the capital, dispatched a bulletin to the south, in these words : “ The country is in danger ; Madrid is perishing through the perfidy of the French. All Spaniards, come to deliver it ! ” No other summons was sent abroad than this, which came from an obscure and unauthorized individual,

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rez Estrada, p. 126.*

in a state of mind that would have made him rush upon the French bayonets ; but this stirred up the people in the southern provinces ; and in truth no summons was needed, for the same feeling manifested itself every where as soon as the details of the massacre were known, and the whole extent of the outrage which had been offered to the nation. Buonaparte was totally ignorant of the Spanish character, and in that ignorance had pursued the only course which could have provoked a national resistance. If he had declared war against Spain, at the beginning, no enthusiasm could have been raised in favour of the government, and he might have dictated the terms of submission as a conqueror. The opinion of his magnanimity and greatness would have gone before him ; the Spaniards, prone to admire what is romantic and miraculous, and taught by their own history to disregard the injustice and the inhumanity of wars which are waged for conquest, had been dazzled by the splendour of his portentous career ; and had he appeared to them as an open, honourable foe, the pretension that he was appointed to fulfil the ways of Providence, might have found among them a submissive, and perhaps a willing belief.

*Deputies  
from Astu-  
rias sent to  
England.**May 25.*

Asturias was the first province in which the insurrection assumed a regular form. A Junta of representatives was elected, who assembled at Oviedo, and declared that the entire sovereignty had devolved into their hands. The commander in chief in that principality, who attempted to suppress these movements, was in danger of losing his life ; and the Conde del Pinar, and the poet, D. Juan Melendez Valdes, who were sent by Murat from Madrid to appease the people, were glad to escape from the indignation which their mission provoked. The first act of the Junta was to dispatch two noblemen to solicit aid from England : they put off from Gijon in an open boat, and got on board an English privateer which happened to be cruising off

that port. Agents also were sent to Leon and to Coruña, inviting the Leonese and the Gallicians to unite with them against the common enemy.

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*Insurrec-  
tion at Co-  
ruña.*

The Asturian who came to Coruña upon this mission was ordered by one of the magistrates to leave the town immediately, and not to make his errand known to any person, on pain of being arrested and treated as a criminal. On the way back he stopped at Mondoñedo, where he learnt that the Leonese were in insurrection, and met as emissary from that kingdom one of those generous spirits who were then every where employed in rousing the nation, and preparing it for the struggle which must ensue. The people of Mondoñedo entered with ardour into the common cause; and a student from the seminary there accepted the office of deputy from that city to Coruña, notwithstanding the risk which the Asturian had run. He went with the fair pretext of asking from the provincial government what course ought to be taken by the authorities at Mondoñedo, in consequence of the events in Asturias and Leon. Coruña was in a state of great ferment when he arrived; true and false reports were received with equal belief by the populace; it was affirmed that the sale of church property which Ferdinand had suspended was to be resumed; that Buonaparte would order off all the Spanish troops to the north of Europe, and that cart-loads of chains were on the way to manacle those soldiers who should refuse to march willingly. The captain-general of Galicia and governor of Coruña, D. Antonio Filangieri, believed that the only course which it behoved him to pursue in the strange and perilous state of Spain, was to preserve order as far as possible; but the very precaution which he took to prevent an insurrection became the signal for it. The festival of St. Ferdinand, King of Spain, which is commemorated on the 30th of May, had always been celebrated as the saint's-day of Ferdinand since he

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was acknowledged as Prince of Asturias; and in all fortified towns the flag should have been displayed and a salute fired. Filangieri forbade this to be done, lest it should occasion a dangerous movement among the people. The omission excited them more forcibly than the ceremony would have done: it was a silent but unequivocal act of assent to the iniquitous proceedings at Bayonne; and the people understanding it as such, collected in great numbers about the governor's house, and insisted that the flag should be hoisted. Filangieri was a Neapolitan, who might have transferred his allegiance from a Bourbon King of Spain to a Buonaparte without any sacrifice of feeling, or violation of duty. His inclinations, however, were in favour of the country which had adopted him, and he obeyed the popular voice. They then required that a regiment which he had removed to Ferrol should be recalled, that the arms in the arsenal should be distributed among the inhabitants, that Ferdinand should be proclaimed King, and that war should be immediately declared against France. The governor demurred at this last demand; . . . they broke into his house and seized his papers, and his life would probably have been sacrificed if he had not escaped at a garden door, and found shelter in a convent.

The multitude then hastened to the arsenal, and took possession of the arms; the soldiers offered no resistance, and soon openly declared for the cause of their country. Some officers who attempted to restrain the people were hurt; some houses were attacked; a warehouse was broke open because it was said the fetters in which refractory conscripts were to be conveyed to France were deposited there, and the French Consul would have been murdered, if some humaner persons had not conveyed him in time to Fort St. Antonio, upon an island in the sea. A portrait of Ferdinand was carried in procession through the streets; and the *Vivas* which accompanied that popular name were fol-

lowed by a fearful cry of "Down with the French and the traitors!" But order was soon restored, and in great measure by the exertions of the clergy, who possessed at this time a double influence over the people, because no class of men displayed more fervour of patriotic loyalty. The heads of the monasteries and the parochial priests assembled with the constituted authorities of the town, the Regent of the Royal Audience, and the Governor, to whom obedience was now restored; they formed a permanent Junta of government, they sent officers to treat with the English squadron which was then blockading Ferrol, and they dispatched advices to Santiago, Tuy, Orense, Lugo, Mondoñedo, and Betanzos, requiring each of those cities to send a deputy to the Junta, and make the news known throughout their respective jurisdictions. In the course of three days the whole of Galicia was in a state of insurrection, and a communication was immediately opened with England.

At Badajoz and at Seville the first popular movements were repressed by the local authorities; but they soon broke out again with renewed violence. The Count de la Torre del Fresno was governor at Badajoz; the people collected before his palace, calling upon him to enrol them, and give them arms for the defence of the country. A second time he endeavoured to control a spirit which was no longer to be restrained; and the furious multitude, who perceived that to remain quiet was in fact to acknowledge the foreign King who was to be forced upon them, considered all attempts to abate their ardour as proceeding from a traitorous intention, forced their way into the house, dragged him forth, and murdered him. For in the sudden dissolution of government, by which free scope was for the first time given to the hopes and expectations of enthusiastic patriotism, the evil passions also were let loose, and the unreasonable people were sometimes hurried into excesses by their

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*Excesses of  
the popu-  
lace.*

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own blind zeal, sometimes seduced into them by wretches who were actuated by the desire of plunder, or of private revenge. Men were sacrificed to the suspicions and fury of the multitude, as accomplices and agents of the French, whose innocence in many cases was established when too late. Such crimes were committed at Valladolid, Cartagena, Granada, Jaen, San Lucar, Carolina, Ciudad Rodrigo, and many other places. But this dreadful anarchy was of short duration. The people had no desire to break loose from the laws and the habits of subordination; the only desire which possessed them was to take vengeance for their murdered countrymen, and to deliver their country from the insolent usurpation which was attempted. If any obstruction was offered to this generous feeling, they became impatient and ungovernable: otherwise, having always been wont to look to their rulers, never to act for themselves, their very zeal displayed itself in the form of obedience; they were eager to obey any who would undertake to guide them, and no person thought of stepping beyond his rank to assume the direction. Because Ferdinand, when he set out upon his journey to Bayonne, had left a Junta of government at Madrid, the people were familiar with that name, and Juntas, in consequence, were formed every where; those persons being every where appointed whom the inhabitants were accustomed to respect.

*Juntas established every where.*

*Formation of the Junta of Seville.*

Though the provisional governments thus suddenly formed were altogether independent of each other, a certain degree of ascendancy was conceded by general consent to the Junta of Seville; that city, for its size and importance, being regarded by the Spaniards as their capital, while Madrid was in the enemy's possession. After the magistracy had repressed the first tumultuous indications of patriotism in the Sevillians, a movement too general for them to withstand was excited by a

man of low rank by name Nicolas Tap y Nuñez. He came there as a missionary to preach the duty of insurrection against the French; and at a time when every hour brought fresh excitement to the hopes and the indignation of the people, this man by his ardour and intrepidity obtained a great ascendancy, which he did not in the slightest instance abuse. When the persons in authority found it impossible to withstand the tide of popular feeling, the formation of a Junta was proposed, and the first thought of the people was, that the parochial clergy and the heads of the convents should assemble to choose the members, so little did they think of exercising any right of election themselves, and so naturally did they look up to those by whom they were wont to be directed. Some of these persons assembled, accepting unwillingly the power with which they were by acclamation invested, and confounded, if not intimidated, by their apprehensions of the French, the injunctions of the constituted authorities at Madrid, and the presence of a multitude who had given murderous proofs that their pleasure was not to be resisted with impunity: in this state of mind many withdrew from the meeting, and they who remained were glad to rid themselves of immediate responsibility by assenting to any nominations which were proposed. Such a choice was made as might be expected under such circumstances; some who thrust themselves forward with the qualifications of wealth and effrontery were chosen, and they to accredit their own election added others who held the highest place in public opinion for rank or talents. Among them were D. Francisco Saavedra, who had formerly been minister of finance, and P. Gil de Sevilla; both had been sufferers under Godoy's administration, and they who were persecuted by him were for the most part entitled to respect as well as commiseration. Though the populace had thus obtained their immediate object, they still remained in a state of ferocious excite-

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Tap y Nuñez, who was for that day the Lord of Seville, assisted at the election of the Junta, and being a stranger, and ignorant of the good or ill deserts of those who were proposed, assented to all the nominations. Learning however that two members, more likely to discredit the cause of the country than to serve it, had been chosen, he went the next day to their sitting, and required that these individuals should be expelled. All hope of establishing subordination would have been lost, if a demagogue like this, however meritorious his intentions, were allowed to make and unmake the members of the government at his pleasure. The Junta therefore immediately arrested him, and sent him prisoner to Cadiz. This was a necessary act of vigour, without which no authority could have been maintained. But some merciful consideration was due to this man, because he had shown no disposition to abuse his dangerous influence, nor to aggrandize himself, when it was in his power: he was, however, made to feel, that the forms and realities of justice were as little to be looked for under the provisional government, as under the old despotism; and having been thrown into prison, there he was left to linger, hopeless of a trial, and having nothing to trust to for his deliverance but the chance that they might be weary of supporting him there, or that his place might be wanted for another.