

the English troops, who unite their arms with the daggers of the banditti; to avenge the French blood, so basely shed; to put out of all doubt the security of France, and the peace of our posterity; to restore and complete the work of Louis XIV.; to accomplish the wish of the most illustrious of your predecessors, and particularly of him who was by France most beloved; to extend your great power, in order to diminish the miseries of war, and to compel the enemy of the continent to a general peace, which is the sole object of all your measures, and the only means for the repose and prosperity of our country. The will of the French people is, therefore, Sire, the same as that of your Majesty. The war with Spain is politic, just, and necessary.".. If the transactions which are the subject of this history had passed in remote ages, and such a narrative as is here presented had been preserved to us, it would scarcely be possible, when we found the Senate of a great nation, like France, thus solemnly approving and ratifying the conduct of its Emperor, not to suspect that the history had been handed down in an imperfect state; that some facts had been suppressed, and others distorted; for, however credible the usurpation itself might appear, as the act of an individual tyrant, that it should, with its attendant circumstances of perfidy and cruelty, be thus represented as a just and necessary act, by a legislative assembly, and made the ground of a national war, is something so monstrous, that it would startle our belief; and, for the honour of human nature, we should hesitate before we trusted human testimony.

The conscription for which the tyrant called was decreed without one dissentient voice, by an assembly constituted for no other purpose than that of executing his will and pleasure. His other measures had already been taken. About the middle of August he had ordered General Gouvion Saint Cyr from Boulogne, to repair to Perpignan, and there collect an army,

CHAP.  
XIII.

1808.

*September.*

*March of  
the troops  
toward  
Spain.*

CHAP.

XIII.

1808.

September.

with which to enter Catalonia, as soon as Buonaparte himself should enter Spain on the other side. He gave him no other instructions than that he should use all efforts to preserve Barcelona: "if that place be lost," said he, "to recover it will cost me eighty thousand men." The troops from Prussia and Poland were recalled; they consisted not of Frenchmen alone, but of Germans and Italians, Poles, Swiss, and Dutch, Irish and Mamalukes, men of all countries and languages, of all religions and of none, united into one efficient body by the bond of discipline. They cared not whither they were ordered, so it were only to a land which produced the grape, . . . upon what service, or in what cause, was to them a matter of indifference; war was their element, and wherever they went they expected to find free quarters, and no enemy who could resist them. Not a few of them when they heard, as they had so often heard before, that they were now to give the last blow to the tottering power of England, believed they were about to march to England by land through Spain; the desert, they said, had separated them from that country when they were in Egypt, and when they were at Boulogne there was the sea; but they should get there now. As soon as these troops had crossed the Rhine, they were received with public honours in every town along the line of their march. Deputations came out to welcome them, they were feasted at the expense of the municipality, and thanked at their departure for the honour they had conferred upon the place. This was Buonaparte's policy. But the conduct of the soldiers showed what an enemy might expect from them, when their own countrymen, upon whom they were quartered, did not escape ill usage. They treated them as they had done the Germans; and the allied troops took the same licence which they had seen the French exercise among an allied and friendly people. Under the imperial government every thing was subject to the sword.

Buonaparte reviewed them at Paris. "Soldiers," said he, "after having triumphed on the banks of the Danube and the Vistula, you have passed through Germany by forced marches. I shall now order you to march through France, without allowing you a moment's rest. Soldiers, I have occasion for you! The hideous presence of the leopard contaminates the continent of Spain and Portugal. Let your aspect terrify and drive him from thence! Let us carry our conquering eagles even to the pillars of Hercules: there also we have an injury to avenge!" The capture of the French squadron at Cadiz had never been published in France, and this hint is the only notice that ever was publicly taken of it. "Soldiers," he pursued, "you have exceeded the fame of all modern warriors. You have placed yourselves upon a level with the Roman legions, who, in one campaign, were conquerors on the Rhine, on the Euphrates, in Illyria, and on the Tagus. A durable peace and permanent prosperity shall be the fruits of your exertions. A true Frenchman can never enjoy any rest till the sea is open and free. Soldiers, all that you have already achieved, and that which remains to be done, will be for the happiness of the French people, and for my glory, and shall be for ever imprinted on my heart."

The preparations for war were answerable to the arrogance of this harangue. All the roads to Spain were thronged with troops, marching from all parts of France and its dependencies toward the Pyrenees. While they were on their march, Buonaparte set out for Germany, to meet his dependent German princes, and the Emperor Alexander, at Erfurth. Some of the performers of the *Theatre Française* had orders to precede him, that these potentates might be provided with amusement. An opportunity was taken of giving Alexander a momentous hint of the superiority of his new friend: . . . Buonaparte took him to

CHAP.  
XIII.

1808.

September.

Speech of  
Buonaparte  
to the troops.

Conferences  
at Erfurth.

CHAP.

XIII.

1808.

October.

the field of Jena ; a temple, dedicated to Victory, was erected on the spot where the French Emperor had past the night previous to the battle ; tents were pitched round it ; and, after a sumptuous breakfast, he was led over every part of the ground which the two armies had occupied, and left to make his own reflections upon the spot where Prussia received the reward of its long subserviency to France, and of its neutrality when the fate of the continent was upon the hazard. The immediate consequence of the meeting was a proposal for peace to Great Britain.

*Overtures of  
peace from  
Erfurth.*

These overtures were made in the customary diplomatic forms ; but they were accompanied by a joint letter from the Emperors of France and Russia to the King of England. Having been brought together at Erfurth by the circumstances of the continent, their first thought, they said, had been to yield to the wishes and wants of every people, and to seek, in a speedy pacification, the remedy for the common miseries of Europe. The long and bloody continental war was at an end, and could not possibly be renewed. Many changes had taken place, many states had been overthrown. The cause was to be found in the evils arising from the stagnation of maritime commerce. Still greater changes might yet occur, and all of them contrary to the policy of the English nation. Peace was their interest, as well as the interest of the continent. We unite, therefore, said they, in intreating your Majesty to listen to the voice of humanity, silencing that of the passions ; to seek, with the intention of arriving at that object, how to conciliate all interests, and by that means to preserve the powers which still exist ; and to insure the happiness of Europe, and of this generation, at the head of which Providence has placed us. The official notes stated, that Russian plenipotentiaries would be sent to Paris, there to receive the answer of England ; and that French plenipotentiaries would repair to any city on the continent, to which

Oct. 12.

the King of Great Britain and his allies should send theirs. It was added, that the King of England must, without doubt, feel the grandeur and sincerity of this conduct on the part of the two emperors; that their union was beyond the reach of change; and that it was formed for peace as well as for war.

CHAP.  
XIII.  
1808.  
*October.*

In answer to the Russian minister, it was stated, that however desirous his Majesty might be to reply directly to the Emperor Alexander, the unusual manner in which his letter was drawn up, deprived it entirely of the character of a private and personal communication, and it was impossible to adopt that mark of respect towards him, without, at the same time, recognizing titles which the King of England never had acknowledged. This was a needless demurral. We had sent ministers to treat with Buonaparte since he had been Emperor of France, . . . surely this was, to all intents, an effectual recognition of his title. It was weakening the moral strength of our cause, to rest, even for a moment, upon a point of punctilio. In every other respect, the correspondence on the part of England was worthy of the cause. An immediate assurance that France acknowledged the government of Spain as party to any negotiation, was declared to be absolutely necessary: that such was the intention of the Emperor of Russia, it was added, his Majesty could not doubt. He recollected the lively interest which that Emperor had always manifested for the dignity and welfare of the Spanish monarchy, and wanted no other assurance that he could not have been induced to sanction, by his concurrence, or by his approbation, usurpations, the principles of which were not less unjust than their example was dangerous to all lawful sovereigns.

*Reply to the  
Russian  
minister.  
Oct. 28.*

The letter of the two Emperors was fully and most ably answered in an official note. The King's readiness and desire to negotiate a peace on terms consistent with his own honour, and with the permanent security of Europe, were again declared.

*Reply to the  
overtures.*

CHAP.

XIII.

1808.

October.

If the condition of the continent were one of agitation and of wretchedness, if many states had been overthrown, and many more were still menaced with subversion, it was a consolation to the King to reflect, that no part of those convulsions could be in any degree imputable to him. Most willing was he to acknowledge that all such dreadful changes were indeed contrary to the policy of Great Britain. And if the cause of so much misery was to be found in the stagnation of commercial intercourse, although he could not be expected to hear with unqualified regret that the system devised for the destruction of the commerce of his subjects had recoiled upon its authors or its instruments, yet it was neither in his disposition, nor in the character of the people over whom he reigned, to rejoice in the privations and unhappiness even of the nations which were combined against him. He anxiously desired the termination of the sufferings of the continent. The war in which he was engaged was entered into for the immediate object of national safety; but, in its progress, new obligations had been imposed upon him, in behalf of powers whom the aggressions of a common enemy had compelled to make common cause with him, or who had solicited his assistance and support in the vindication of their national independence. The interests of Portugal and of Sicily were confided to his friendship and protection; and he was connected for peace, as well as for war, with the King of Sweden. To Spain he was not yet bound by any formal instrument, but he had, in the face of the world, contracted with that nation engagements not less sacred, and not less binding upon his mind than the most solemn treaties. He therefore assumed, that, in an overture made to him for entering into negotiations for a general peace, his relations subsisting with the Spanish monarchy had been distinctly taken into consideration, and that the government acting in the name of his Catholic Majesty, Ferdinand VII.,

was understood to be a party to any negotiation in which he was invited to engage.

The answer of the Russian minister was, that the admission of the sovereigns in alliance with England could not be a point of any difficulty; but this principle by no means extended to the necessity of admitting the plenipotentiaries of the Spanish insurgents, and the Emperor Alexander could not admit them. He had already acknowledged King Joseph Napoleon; he was united with the Emperor of the French; and he was resolved not to separate his interests from those of that monarch. But Count Romanzoff added, he saw, with pleasure, that, in this difference of opinion respecting the Spaniards, there was nothing which could either prevent or delay the opening of a congress; because his Britannic Majesty had himself admitted, that he was bound to no positive engagement with those who had taken up arms in Spain. Count Romanzoff did not intend to insult a British King, by telling him he might violate his word and honour, because he was not bound to keep them by any formal instrument;.. but M. Champagny's reply was intentionally insulting. "How," said he, "is it possible for the French government to entertain the proposal which has been made to it, of admitting the Spanish insurgents to the negotiation? What would the English government have said, had it been proposed to them to admit the Catholic insurgents of Ireland? France, without having any treaties with them, has been in communication with them, has made them promises, and has frequently sent them succours." The writer did not perceive what warning this utterly irrelevant argument held out to the disaffected in Ireland, by thus plainly informing them, that however Buona-parté might promise them support, he was at all times ready to abandon them, whenever it might suit his views. Menacing language was then introduced. England, we were told, would

CHAP.  
XIII.

1808.

*Reply of  
the Russian  
and French  
ministers.  
Nov. 8.*

CHAP.  
XIII.  
1808.

find herself under a strange mistake, if, contrary to the experience of the past, she still entertained the idea of contending successfully, upon the continent, against the armies of France.

What hope could she have, especially when France was irrevocably united with Russia? France and Russia could carry on the war till the court of London recurred to just and equitable dispositions; they were resolved to do so; and the English were admonished not to lose sight of the inevitable results of the force of states.

Dec. 9.  
*Final answer of the British government.*

Mr. Canning's replies were equally decided and dignified. To Count Romanzoff he expressed the King's astonishment and regret, that it should be supposed he would consent to commence a negotiation by the previous abandonment of the cause of the Spanish nation, and of the legitimate monarchy of Spain, in deference to an usurpation which had no parallel in the history of the world. He had hoped that the participation of the Emperor Alexander in these overtures would have afforded a security to him against the proposal of a condition so unjust in its effect, and so fatal in its example. Nor could he conceive by what obligation of duty or of interest, or by what principle of Russian policy, his Imperial Majesty could have found himself compelled to acknowledge the right assumed by France, of deposing and imprisoning friendly Sovereigns, and forcibly transferring to herself the allegiance of loyal and independent nations. If these were indeed the principles to which the Emperor had inviolably attached himself, to which he had pledged the character and resources of his empire, and which he had united himself with France to establish by war, and to maintain in peace... deeply did the King of England lament a determination by which the sufferings of Europe must be aggravated and prolonged: but not to him was to be attributed the continuance of the calamities of war, by the disappointment of all hope of such



a peace as would be compatible with justice and with honour. To the French minister Mr. Canning said, he was especially commanded to abstain from noticing any of those topics and expressions insulting to his Majesty, to his allies, and to the Spanish nation, with which the official note of M. Champagny abounded. The King of England was desirous to have treated for a peace which might have arranged the respective interests of all the belligerent powers on principles of equal justice, but he was determined not to abandon the cause of the Spanish nation, and of the legitimate monarchy of Spain; and the pretension of France, to exclude from the negotiation the central and supreme government, acting in the name of his Catholic Majesty, Ferdinand VII., was one which he could not admit, without acquiescing in an usurpation unparalleled in the history of the world.

CHAP.  
XIII.

1808.

As soon as this correspondence was concluded, the rupture of the negotiation was made known in England, by a declaration which, while any sense of honour remains in the English nation, may always be recollected with pride and satisfaction. The continued appearance of a negotiation, it said, when peace was found to be utterly unattainable, could be advantageous only to the enemy. It might enable France to sow distrust and jealousy in the councils of those who were combined to resist her oppression: and if, among the nations which were groaning under the tyranny of French alliance, or among those which maintained against France a doubtful and precarious independence, there should be any who were balancing between the certain ruin of a prolonged inactivity and the contingent dangers of an effort to save themselves from that ruin.. to nations so situated, the delusive prospect of a peace between Great Britain and France could not fail to be peculiarly injurious. Their preparations might be relaxed, by the vain hope of return-

*British de-  
claration.  
Dec. 15.*