

pidly. The whole attention of Spain was therefore directed to this point. For a long time, she claimed a right to an exclusive dominion over the vast oceans, which surrounded her American possessions; and this right she asserted, to the utmost extent, wherever she was enabled to do so by a superiority of maritime force.

Few are, I believe, aware of the length, to which these pretensions were carried. I shall therefore subjoin, in order to illustrate them, some extracts from a correspondence which took place, as late as 1790, between Don Teodoro de Croix, then Viceroy of Peru, and the Governor of the Island of Juan Fernandez, who was disgraced, and narrowly escaped a severer punishment, for having, in that year, allowed a vessel from the United States, which had lost her rudder, and been otherwise damaged by a storm, to put into the harbour for a few days to refit.

The Viceroy expresses, in very strong terms, his displeasure at the negligence of the Governor, in allowing the vessel to leave the Island, "without having even attempted to seize her; and his surprise at the Governor of any of the King's Islands being so ignorant, as not to know, that any foreign vessel sailing in the South Sea, without a Spanish license, was to be treated as an *enemy's* vessel, although the country, to which she belonged, might be at peace and amity with Spain."

This doctrine met with the entire approbation of

the Audiencia of Peru; and a circular was immediately addressed to all governors of islands, and commandants of forts, or towns, situated upon the coast of the Pacific, instructing them, "in the event of any foreign vessel entering their harbours, to endeavour, to the best of their abilities,\* to detain her, until a favourable opportunity should present itself for seizing her, with her crew, and to transmit to the capital the earliest possible intelligence of the result."

This correspondence was found in the archives of the Viceroyalty at Lima, and published by the Independent party, when it obtained possession of the capital, together with the decree respecting the college for noble Indians, which I have already quoted.

Like the letter of the Viceroy Calleja, and the representation of the Mexican Audiencia to the Cortes, to which I shall have occasion to allude in the next book, I see no reason to question their authenticity; and, where this is the case, nothing tends to throw so strong a light upon the causes of a revolution, as such documents. They are better than a thousand theories, the result merely of private opinions, more or less warmly expressed; for, without pretending to establish any system, they enable every one to form his own upon a basis, the stability of which there is no reason to doubt.

\* Literally, "with suitable discrimination, art, and prudence—con la sagacidad arte, y prudencia, convenientes."

It is with this view, and not with any wish to place the conduct of the Spanish government in an unfavourable light, that I have introduced them into this sketch. The errors of Spain have brought with them their own punishment. Even during the days of her power, they were chiefly detrimental to her own interests; for, in attempting to exclude foreign trade entirely, she only reduced smuggling to a system, by which the revenue was defrauded, without the interest of the Creoles being materially advanced; since produce could not be exported, where no legal communication could be held.

With regard to the other parts of her Colonial Policy, it must always be recollected, that its spirit was originally mild; the evils which grew out of it, were, perhaps, the inevitable consequence of despotic institutions, transplanted to regions so distant, that there could be no check to the abuse of delegated power. There was no want of excellent laws in the folios in which the code of the Indies was contained; but the facility with which they were evaded, and the constant impunity of those by whom they were infringed, rendered them unavailing. What wonder then, that under such circumstances, a remedy should have been sought in a total change of institutions, or that a system should have been adopted the very opposite to that which had before prevailed?

## BOOK II.

It is with this view, and with you for his view, that I have endeavoured to give a fair and dispassionate view of the system by which the possessions of Spain in the New World were governed, during a period of three centuries. It was not in the nature of things that such a system should be endured any longer than the power to enforce it was retained. There was little mutual affection, and no reciprocity of advantages; so that the question of right, between the Mother country and the Colonies, became, in fact, a question of might; and resistance, on the part of the Creoles, the almost inevitable consequence of a consciousness of strength. It is uncertain, however, how long a disposition to assert their rights might have been

cherished by the more enlightened, without being sufficiently generalised to admit of its being declared, had not the events of the year 1808 favoured its development. The history of Europe, and more particularly of the Peninsula, during this period, is so intimately connected with that of American Independence, that it is impossible to understand the one without a previous acquaintance with the other. I shall, therefore, not apologise for reminding each of my readers, as they have forgotten the other, of the events which have since occurred, that the endless changes, which have since occurred, in the throne of Spain, were carried into effect.

## B O O K II.

### SECTION I.

#### EFFECTS PRODUCED BY THE EVENTS OF THE YEAR 1808 IN THE PENINSULA.

I HAVE endeavoured to give, in the preceding section, a fair and dispassionate view of the system by which the possessions of Spain in the New World were governed, during a period of three centuries. It was not in the nature of things that such a system should be endured any longer than the power to enforce it was retained. There was little mutual affection, and no reciprocity of advantages; so that the question of right, between the Mother country and the Colonies, became, in fact, a question of might; and resistance, on the part of the Creoles, the almost inevitable consequence of a consciousness of strength. It is uncertain, however, how long a disposition to assert their rights might have been

cherished by the more enlightened, without being sufficiently generalized to admit of its being declared, had not the events of the year 1808 favoured its development.

The history of Europe, (and more particularly of the Peninsula,) during this period, is so intimately connected with that of American Independence, that it is impossible to consider them apart, or even to understand the one, without a previous acquaintance with the other. I shall, therefore, not apologize for reminding such of my readers, as may have forgotten the course of Spanish affairs, amidst the endless changes which have since occurred, that, in 1808, the schemes which Napoleon had long cherished for the establishment of his brother on the throne of Spain, were carried into effect. Advantage was taken of the burst of national indignation, by which the ministry of the Prince of Peace was terminated, and of the abdication of Charles IV., which followed the dismissal of his favourite, to entice the whole Royal Family to Bayonne, under pretence of deciding an appeal, preferred by the Ex-king against his son, (the actual monarch,) where, by an act unparalleled in the history of the world, they both renounced the throne, in favour of the family of the Umpire, and consented to live in retirement, upon a stipend assigned to them by his munificence. This act, although supported by a party amongst the Spaniards themselves, (los Afrancesados,) and by the

armies of Napoleon, only served to rouse the spirit of the nation, which substituted, in every province, a popular government for that, by which it thought that its youthful monarch had been betrayed. A Central Junta\* was entrusted with the management of affairs, which was followed by a Regency†, and this, again, by a Second,‡ created by the Cortes, which were assembled in the Isla de Leon, in September 1810, *as the only legitimate source of power during the captivity of the sovereign.* By these unexpected events, the form and spirit of the Spanish government were entirely changed: principles, which had been inculcated for ages, were at once exploded; a Constitution, democratic in the extreme, in its theory, was substituted for the Royal Prerogative; the sovereignty of the people was set against the divine rights of Kings; and even religion was deprived of its influence, as a political engine, by the abolition of the Holy Tribunal. That such things could take place in the Peninsula, without producing corresponding effects in its dependencies, was not to be expected; and these effects it is my present object to trace.

It is generally admitted, that the insurrection of Aranjuez, (1808,) which led to the dismissal of the

\* Installed 25th September, 1808.

† First Regency, 29th January, 1810. *Vide* Decree of Central Junta of that date. Isla de Leon.

‡ Second Regency 18—29th October, 1810. *Vide* Decree of Cortes of that date.

Prince of Peace, (Godoy,) and to the abdication of Charles IV., gave the first shock to the Royal authority in America. An absolute monarch, compelled to bow before the will of a tumultuous populace, insulted by his subjects, and deserted by his guards, in the very heart of his kingdom, was a sight that could not but tend to diminish those feelings of almost religious awe, with which any thing like opposition to the will of the Sovereign had been previously contemplated.

The subsequent invasion of the Peninsula by Napoleon, the captivity of the Monarch, and the abdication of the Old Dynasty at Bayonne, contributed to destroy whatever remained of the *prestige*, which had before attached to the name of Spain, and created an impression, only the more strong, because, to the mass of the people in America, she was still the Spain of the sixteenth century, in whose dominions the sun never set, and whose arms were the terror of the world.

This belief had long been the tutelary angel of the Mother country: with it, she lost her moral force, (the only force capable of compelling the obedience of seventeen million of Transatlantic subjects,) and, from that moment, the loss of the Colonies themselves became inevitable.

It was in vain to struggle against nature, or to attempt to subdue that new spirit, which, within two years after the invasion of the Peninsula, began to appear amongst all classes of the Creoles. Its pro-

gress was both rapid, and irresistible; and, without any previous concert amongst the parties themselves, without even the possibility of foreign interference, a mighty revolution broke out at once, in almost every part of the New World.

A momentary enthusiasm in favour of the Mother country, was, indeed, excited (in 1808) by the resolution of the Spanish people to vindicate their rights, and not tamely to submit to a yoke, which, force and fraud combined, seemed, at first, to render inevitable; but the rapid progress of the French arms, during the year 1809, the weakness and reverses of the Central Junta, its retreat into Andalusia, and the gradual occupation of the whole of that province by the invading army, with the exception of Cadiz, not only checked this favourable disposition, but completed that change in the feelings and opinions of the Creoles, for which the occurrences of the preceding year had prepared the way. They regarded Spain as lost, and degraded almost to the rank of a province of France; and they saw no plea of right, or justice, by which obedience could be exacted from them to the agents of a government, which was itself decried, and disobeyed with impunity at home. The King was the only tie that connected them with Spain; for it was the fundamental principle of Spanish Jurisprudence, with regard to America, to consider what had been acquired there, as rested in the *Crown*, and not in the *State*. In the absence of the Monarch, therefore, the Creoles might, with jus-

tice, assert their right to determine what should be considered as a fit substitute for his authority, (as the Spanish people had done in their own case,) instead of admitting the claims of Provincial Delegates, (representing at best but a fraction of the Royal power, and that in virtue of a most irregular popular election,) to exercise the King's Prerogative, in its fullest extent, in the vast possession of Ultramar.\*

Yet such were the pretensions of each, and all of the ephemeral *Juntas*, that started up in the Peninsula. Commissioners from Asturias, and Seville,\* (the two first *Juntas* established in the Mother country,) arrived, almost at the same moment, in the Colonies, equally exclusive in their pretensions, and authoritative in their demands. In the impossibility of reconciling their rival claims, the attention of the Creoles was naturally turned to the source from which they emanated, and to the means by which the vacuum in the frame of the government, occasioned by the captivity of the Sovereign, had been filled up in the Peninsula. They saw every where delegates chosen by the people exercising authority under the denomination of *Juntas*; and

\* A reference to the history of the year 1808, will show, that the only title by which the first Spanish *Juntas* held their authority, was the nomination of a mob, which, in each of the great cities, called, by acclamation, those persons, in whom it placed confidence, to assume the management of its affairs.

† Each assumed the title of "Junta Soberana de España y de las Indias."

these again, deputing members of their own body to form a Central Junta, which was entrusted with the supreme command. They heard this course not only justified by the sages of the nation, but admired by the world, and pronounced by one whose name they had been taught to respect, (Don Gaspar Jövellänös,) "to be the undeniable and strictly natural right of any nation, placed in circumstances similar to those of Spain."\* They applied this doctrine to themselves, and either could not, or would not, understand the soundness of the reasoning, by which a measure, that was allowed to have been productive of the most beneficial results in the Peninsula, could be constructed into absolute treason on the opposite side of the Atlantic.†

Their perception of their own rights was quickened by a deep sense of the grievances under which

\* *Vide* "Defence of Central Junta, by Jovellanos," in which he assumes, as his second undeniable axiom, "That a people, seeing its existence threatened, and knowing that the ministers of that authority, which ought to direct and defend it, are either intimidated or suborned, is necessarily driven to self-defence, and acquires an extraordinary and legitimate right of insurrection."—7th October, 1808.

† It is impossible too strongly to insist upon the fact, that all the proceedings of the American Independents were but a transcript of those which had taken place in the Mother country. They applied to the Cortes, at a later period, the very principles which the Cortes applied to Ferdinand VII.; and refused to submit to that despotism, in the hands of a popular assembly, which was admitted by that assembly to be intolerable, while in the hands of a monarch.

they laboured, as well as by the injudicious manner in which the justice of their complaints was admitted by the new governments of the Mother country, although not one of those measures was taken, by which the causes of them might have been removed. The State papers of the day furnish abundant proofs of the vacillating policy which prevailed, with regard to American affairs; and, as they have long become the property of the historian, I shall avail myself of them, without scruple, in order to illustrate it.

After proclaiming "a perfect equality of rights, between the American and Spanish subjects of the crown," and declaring the provinces of Ultramar "to be component parts of the Monarchy, and not Colonies or Factories, like those of other nations,"\* the Central Junta gave place to the Regency, which, desirous still farther to conciliate the Creoles, by a decree, dated the 17th May, 1810, conceded to them, under certain limitations, a *free trade*, during the suspension of the usual intercourse with the Mother country. This wise decree, the best possible antidote, (as the author of the "Español" very justly terms it,) against a revolutionary spirit in

\* *Vide* Proclamation, dated Seville, 5th June, 1809; and "Aviso" of 10th January, 1810.

"Considerando que los vastos y preciosos dominios que la España posee en las Indias, no son, propiamente, Colonias, o' Factorías, como los de otras naciones, sino una parte esencial, e integrante, de la Monarquía Española."

the Colonies, was protested against by the merchants of Cadiz, who found means to induce the Regency, very soon after its publication, to repeal it; and the measure was carried into execution, with a violence as impolitic, as the resolution itself was imprudent. On the 27th of June, a second decree appeared, stating, that "Notwithstanding the lively wish of the Regency to conciliate the welfare of the Americas with that of the Mother country, it had abstained from touching upon a point of such delicacy and importance, that the least innovation with regard to it must be preceded by the repeal of the prohibitory laws of the Indies, which could not but be attended with the most serious consequences to the State:" It therefore declared the decree of the 17th of May\* to be spurious, and of no value or effect," and directed "all existing copies of it to be burnt, and its authors to be proceeded against;" but assured the Colonists, at the same time, "that the Regency had not ceased to meditate, and was still meditating upon some mode of relieving the Americas, by other means, from the evils and privations under which they were suffering."†

\* "Apocrifa y de ningun valor ni efecto."

† "Sin que por esto haya dexado de pensar, y piense, el Consejo, en aliviar, por otros medios, a' las Americas, de los males, y privaciones que sufren.

(Signed)

"Castaños,

"Cadiz, 27th June, 1810." "Pedro Bishop of Oreuse," &c.

This imprudent disavowal of a measure, by which one great cause of the dissatisfaction of the Creoles would have been removed—known, as it was, to have been forced upon the Government by the very men, whose interests it alone consulted—(the merchants of Cadiz,) naturally tended to convince the Colonies that they had but little practical relief to expect from Spain; and that political freedom alone could emancipate them from those commercial restrictions, by which their natural resources had been so long paralyzed.\* It led them to doubt the sincerity (or the value, at least,) of every other concession; to insist upon perfect equality of representation in the Cortes, by which they hoped to acquire, (and would, undoubtedly, have acquired, ultimately,) an equality upon all other points; and, when this was denied them, to seek, by the direct road of independence, those rights which it was almost impossible to withhold, from the moment that they became sensible of their importance.

Vain were the endeavours of the Regency to soothe or cajole them; vain the admission of errors, and the promises of amendment; although the first were carried so far as to allow, "that, for upwards of twenty years, the door to preferment,

\* Things were carried so far, with respect to the Decree of the 17th of May, that the Minister and several clerks of the Colonial department were put under arrest, when it was repealed, in order to induce the public to believe that it had not, in fact, received the sanction of the Regency.

in every class of public employment, had been shut against all persons of information, patriotism, and real merit,\* while it had been opened, by intrigue and court favour, to persons depraved, vicious, or, at best, totally unfit to command." The Colonists were not to be satisfied with words; they thought, and said, that any thing short of specific reforms would be unavailing; and that "the best laws were useless, as long as a Captain-general could affirm, with impunity, that in his government he recognized no authority superior to his own:† they, therefore, regarded the abolition of offices, inseparably connected, in their minds, with the abuses, the existence of which was admitted, as a first step towards improvement, and this step they determined to take themselves, when they found the Mother country resolved to retain to the last every attribute of her former power.

Such was the state of affairs at the commencement of 1810: I have quoted documents of a later date, in order the better to illustrate it; and they

\* Lest these terms be thought too strong, I subjoin the passage in the original, as contained in a Circular of the Regency, dated, Isla de Leon, 15th February, 1810. "Convencido el Cousejo," &c. "de que el favor, la intriga, y la inmoralidad, al mismo tiempo que han tenido cerrada la puerta, de veinte anos a' esta parte, para toda clase de empleos, a' los sugetos *de luces, patriotismo, y verdadero merito*, la han franqueado a' una porcion de personas, *depravadas, inmorales, o' ineptas* quando menos."

† Vide Observations of Junta of Caracas, on the above Circular, dated 20th May, 1810.

render sufficiently intelligible the unanimity which characterized the first proceedings of the Creole Insurgents. Throughout the whole Continent of America, the same causes were everywhere in operation; and, with little or no difference in point of time, they every where produced the same effects: in Cărăcăs, Būenos Ayres, Bögötă, Cărthăgēnă, Chîlê, Upper Peru, and Mexico, by one simultaneous movement, the people deposed the European Authorities, and transferred the reins of Government to Juntas, composed almost exclusively of Native Americans.\*

These Juntas assumed the title of "Guardians and Preservers of the Rights of Ferdinand VII."† In some, Europeans were at first admitted: in others, the Viceroy himself, (where not personally obnoxious,) was invited to preside.‡ In all, the most amicable sentiments towards Spain were expressed,

\* The revolution of Cărăcăs took place on the 19th of April, 1810; that of Būenos Ayres, 25th May; of New Grenada, 3d July; of Bögötă, 20th July; of Cărthăgēnă, 18th August; of Chîlê, 18th September; of Mexico, 16th September.—*Vide* "Representation of American Deputies to the Cortes," dated 1st August, 1811. Appendix. *B. Page 403.*

† Junta Conservadora, or Cuerpo Conservador, de los Derechos del Señor Don Fernando 7<sup>mo</sup>.

‡ As at Buenos Ayres, where the Congress was convoked, and a Provisional Government formed, at the suggestion of the Viceroy, Don Baltasar Hidalgo de Cisneros.—*Vide* his Proclamation of 18th May, 1810.

and assurances given of a readiness to assist her in her struggle against the forces of her invader.

It is difficult now to ascertain how far these professions of attachment to the Mother country, on the part of the new Governments, were sincere. Many of their members, undoubtedly, aspired to independence from the first; but the majority would have been satisfied with moderate reforms; and it was, perhaps, the necessity of conciliating these, as well as the great mass of the people, (who certainly were not prepared to throw off their allegiance at once,) that forced the bolder spirits to temporize, and to disguise their real designs, under the mask of devoted loyalty. Be this as it may, the good understanding which the Creoles seemed to court, was but of short duration. The jealousy excited amongst the Europeans, by the loss of an authority which they regarded as their patrimony, their irritating language, and the violence of their conduct wherever the presence of European troops gave them even a momentary ascendancy, soon showed the real nature of the conquest. Contempt, and domineering habits, on the one side, begot hatred, and obstinate resistance on the other: rigour led to reprisals, reprisals to habitual cruelty; and thus the war acquired, very soon after its commencement, that sanguinary character, which nothing but private animosity, engrafted on a public quarrel, can explain, and which not even that can excuse.

It is a curious fact, that the importance of these great events was not, at first, felt in the Peninsula; or if felt, was, at least, greatly underrated. So little was the character of the Creoles known, and so high the opinion entertained of the superior resources of Spain, that neither the Regency, nor the Cortes, which met, (as I have already stated,) in September, 1810, would ever take the subject into serious consideration.

The First thought to quell the spirit of insurrection in Vēněžüělă, (where the flame first broke out,) by sending there a Royal Commissary, (Don Antonio Ignacio Cörtävărriă,) armed with extravagant powers, \* whom the Junta of Caracas, of course, refused to receive: and the Second† passed days and weeks in discussing the mode in which the Americans were to be represented in the National assembly, and fixed it, at last, upon a basis to which the Colonists refused their assent. The whole coast of Vēněžüělă was subsequently declared to be in a state of blockade, ‡ without a single ship of war

\* His commission empowered him "to assume the Regal power in its fullest extent:—to remove, suspend, or dismiss the Authorities of every rank and class; to pardon or punish the guilty, at pleasure; to make use of the monies belonging to the Royal Treasury; and to give orders, which were to be obeyed as emanating directly from the King's own person.—*Vide* Commission, dated 1st August, 1810

† *Vide* Sessions of Cortes, of 9th, 10th, 11th, 14th, and 16th January, 1811.

‡ Decrees of Regency, of 21st August, 1810.

being upon the spot to enforce the decree; and by this impolitic mixture of arrogance and weakness, the Colonies were irritated, not intimidated, and the hope of a reconciliation rendered every day more distant.

Of the possibility of such a reconciliation, in the first stages of the Revolution, no reasonable doubt can be entertained; although nothing less than a recognition of the legitimacy of the American Juntas, and the admission of their deputies to the Cortes, on the same terms, and in the same ratio, as the deputies of the Peninsula, \* could have effected it. But these were conditions that suited not the temporizing policy of Spain. The equality, which she proffered to her American subjects, was an equality merely of words;—an equality, which was, somehow or another, to subsist in concert with all those abuses, of which the Creoles most complained: the prohibitory system was to be maintained in all its purity; Viceroy, Audiencias, and all the paraphernalia of the Royal Government were to be kept up, †

\* The Castes, or mixed breeds, and more especially those in any way contaminated by a mixture of African blood, were not allowed to vote in the elections; and consequently, the number of deputies to be returned by each Colony, depended upon its *White* population alone. This regulation ensured to the European deputies a permanent majority in the Cortes.

† *Vide* Terms proposed in a Proclamation of Cortavarria's, dated Puerto Rico, 7th Dec. 1810, which may be taken as a criterion for the rest, and which amount to the re-establishment of things in *statu quô*, and nothing more.