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MONTHLY RETROSPECT OF POLITICS.

THE view of political affairs is at this moment of extraordinary interest. The close of the year promises what was little expected at its commencement, and the contending parties in Europe seem to apply to the contest for power, with renovated vigour. The coming crisis will be awful to a great degree; some persons sanguinely anticipate the overthrow of the Bonaparte dynasty: others conceive that the resources, the resources, the military skill of the French Emperor, will extricate, and render him triumphant; many are confounded by the conflict of new and surprising circumstances: various parties, as usual, are influenced in their opinions, by merely interested motives: but on the whole, Europe is agitated more profoundly, than since the beginning of the French Revolution. A concise retrospect will lead us to a more minute, and detailed examination of her situation. The peace of Tilsit, and the seizure of the Danish fleet had placed the European nations in a novel position. The Continent, wearied with vain struggles against France, acquiesced apparently under her influence and domi-

nion. The great remaining land power in forming an alliance with her, turned her views to Turkey, and the East, and entirely estranged herself from England. That once most respectable maritime power, Denmark, was deprived of her naval force, on a plea, which never will be wanting, where temptation is strong; and was thus cast into the arms of France. Prussia was annihilated. The north of Germany depressed, as much as the South had been.

A war of duties and confiscations, vexatious to the commercial world at large, and unavailing as to the grand object, arose between Great Britain and France. The ports of Portugal were shut against her ancient ally; the House of Braganza shortly after emigrated to South America, leaving the whole peninsula at the discretion of Bonaparte. It was in this spot a new and interesting scene was about to present itself. The French government had indicated by its movements, that something mysterious was in agitation respecting Spain. It is probable that Bonaparte had discovered some proceedings in the Spanish court which roused his suspicions, and

conformably to modern doctrine, determined to anticipate the danger which threatened him from that quarter. He stationed himself at Bayonne; placed Murat at Madrid. He prevailed on the Royal family, by means certainly not persuasive, but yet very efficacious, to join him at Bayonne. They proceeded to France. A Junta was summoned; a new constitution submitted to them, and (Ferdinand having resigned his crown to Napoleon) Joseph Bonaparte was proposed and received as king. The warrior and statesman who had courted fortune with blood and steel, and had scarcely ever courted her in vain, seemed to have given Spain to one of his house, with much more ease than Louis XIV. had done a century before. But a spark of that sacred flame, which never is wholly extinguished in a nation, peeped forth in Spain, and the conqueror of nations and armies was forced to pause at the unwelcome phenomenon.

No generous mind can avoid admiring the high resolve of the Spaniards at this juncture.

- “ Why should we gifts to a proud tyrant send,
 “ Or strive with prayers his haughty soul to bend;
 “ This country’s woes he glories to deride
 “ And prayers will burst that swelling heart with pride.
 “ Then let him arm, when Jove and he think fit,
 “ That, to his madness, or to heaven commit;
 “ What for ourselves we can, is always ours.”

ILIAD, B. IX.

Yet in giving our admiration to the truly heroic conduct of a great part of the Spanish nation, it is impossible to suppress something of the anguish of unavailing regret, at the idea that this generous effort may be too late, and that if wise councils had directed England at the commencement of the coalition wars against France, she might, in the fulness of time, have intervened with majesty and effect. The original error was in imagining that the old governments not possessing, and not deserving the love, and consequently the energies of their subjects, could extinguish or reduce France. But had France proceeded with intemperate ambition, until the *people* of different states had felt indignant; and had England remained the sagacious observer of coming events, without instigating and subsidizing every hesitating or

needy continental power, without attempting to impose the vexatious chains of maritime despotism, then would nations have had a legitimate object for contest; England would have been a mediator, or powerful ally, and France, in yielding to just demands, would have maintained her dignity and independence. Leaving those preliminary and retrospective remarks, which the introduction of the branch relating to public affairs appeared to demand, the actual state of Europe recalls us to present scenes, and to contemplation of the future.

Continental Europe, roused by a new internal war, sees the two great rival powers prepare to combat on Spanish ground: a short time ago, there seemed to be no point of contact for them in our division of the globe; and eternal war was threatened from the apparent impracticability of the two leading nations deciding the fate of things by arms.

ENGLAND.

England, by a peculiar fatality, at present finds herself supporting those principles, which, in the early French war, she endeavoured to extinguish. The French and the Spanish revolutions (if the latter may be yet called one), are intrinsically of the same nature. To resist foreign aggression, and interference with internal government; to reform abuses; to marshal the people in defence of the country; to give them due share in the government; to maintain independent rank among other nations; are features common to both. The English ministry see with extorted admiration, the efforts of a people struggling for liberty; and are compelled to aid what the chief part of their great leader’s career had been employed in endeavouring to destroy. In their home politics, however, their course is not so liberal; and the generosity of their conduct to Spain, is strongly contrasted by their penury of concession to Ireland. Preparations have been made, and expeditions fitted out with laudable promptitude, to succour the new ally of England; but it is obvious, that the Spaniards must look to preserving their character as a naval power, and that in future arrangements, the maritime pretensions of the former must be softened, or the ally be disgusted. How constantly does the deviation from justice bring its own inconvenience!

The debates of the last session of parliament have left no very favourable impression of parties, and incline impartial men to think that the more of fixed laws that can be established for a community, as fun-

damental regulations, the greater will be its prosperity. Party too often legislates hastily, and public good is postponed to indulging triumph over a political antagonist. England, by the accidental effervescence of Spanish ardour, is brought forward in a most flattering point of view to the world: it is for her to profit by this good fortune, and retracing years of error, to vindicate the principles of freedom and justice.

FRANCE.

At this conjuncture, the overgrown power of France is, for the first time, seriously threatened. A renovated nation, as France was, with such a leader as Bonaparte, found no great difficulty in overthrowing the Continental nations of Europe; but popular energy, so destructive and so infectious, is more formidable to her, if ably directed; because it possesses a stimulus which she has lost, and can neither be corrupted nor cajoled. But, though threatened, the empire of France is too widely and too firmly settled to afford rational ground for expectation of its overthrow. In alliance with Russia; Austria feeble; Germany organized; Italy long in her hands; able to menace, in an alarming manner, the East; and maturely preparing her plans for Turkey. France may be baffled in Spain and yet make the world tremble. Her navy is silently increasing, and her public debt very trifling.* Her armies are numerous, well disciplined, and well commanded; nor is her governor likely to relax in any of the points for which he has been celebrated. It is also to be remarked, that France has not yet made any grand attempt against Spain.

TURKEY.

Turkey, having sent a minister to England will presently find her peril increase. That ill-governed and bigotted people, taking the event of the day as the omen of fate, have now, perhaps, cast the die of their own. Russia, their hated neighbour, preserves the line of policy adopted since her peace with France, and having proclaimed restitution to Denmark, and adjustment of the maritime code, as bases for future pacification with England, she cannot with decency recede.

SPAIN.

The intelligence which daily arrives from Spain, encourages the hope of Spanish emancipation from a foreign yoke—The victory of General Castanos, the ina-

bility of the French to resist hitherto with any effect, the statement that the Juntas have agreed upon assembling the Cortes, are subjects highly gratifying. The extinction of that assembly had caused much of the degradation and weakness of Spain. A Representative Assembly is the true theatre for public spirit to exhibit in. The annihilation of the former, damps the latter; and apathy succeeding, public virtue decays, and the nation grows feeble.—The escape also of the Spanish troops in the north of Germany, by the aid of Admiral Keats, is a very striking proof of the extent and fervour of Spanish feeling; while, on the other hand, the activity and immense preparations of the French, portend no common struggle. The elevation of Murat to the throne of Naples; the uncertainty as to the situation of King Joseph, who does not appear to be leaving Spain, though he may have left Madrid; and the circumstance of Bonaparte making a circuitous tour to Paris, favour the supposition, that Spanish affairs are not, by any means, considered desperate at St. Cloud. The situation of Portugal is very interesting; and the approaching conflict between Sir Arthur Wellesley's and General Junot's armies, is of high importance to Spain. The fate of the Russian fleet, and of Spain itself, may be decided by its result.

Sweden seems in one of those incomprehensible situations which the petulant politics and character of her king would be likely to involve her in. The British army withdrawn; the King of Sweden displeased with the English Commander; the alliance continuing; the Baltic war going on without any late decisive turn; and Russia, apparently either unable, or unwilling to overwhelm Sweden. Such is the picture, which has ceased to interest from its obscurity, and also from the splendor of Spanish movements towards revolution.

The East presents no striking event, at present; but a new scene is opening. The alliance of Persia with France, and the reported arrival of French troops in that country, give cause for apprehension and reflection. The attempts at innovation, and proselytising in religious matters, are now as actively, as they are injudiciously carrying on, in Hindostan. Men, under the mask of spreading a pure religion, but secretly grasping at the exercise of influence and power, do not scruple to disturb the prejudices and peace of a prostrate people but the experiment is dangerous; and the Indian devotee may speedily be-

* About sixty millions sterling.

come an alienated subject.

North America holds the same tenour of conduct. The Embargo continues; and if she long pursues her present course, she will become more agricultural, and perhaps more improved in character, which her commercial avidity had rather contributed to tarnish.

In our future labours, more of narrative and less of remark will take place, in treating of public affairs.

The present sketch contains outline chiefly, and little of detail. The introductory ceremony being over, it will be our future desire to investigate facts along with our Readers; to narrate impartially; and yet, at all times, to speak with the boldness of truth, and consciousness of integrity.

IRELAND.

This country deserves the attention of the intelligent at large, affording matter of great interest for political investigation: but to its inhabitants, it is of the utmost consequence also, to weigh and consider its complicated situation; for their happiness, and that of their posterity, is at stake. Religious discord must give way, or Ireland must remain uncivilized. Disorders in the south have been reprobated and punished. Agriculture is gaining ground. Statutes for anticipating crimes have been passed. General education however, goes on languidly, or not at all; and

the vestige of public spirit would be lost, if in urging their just and sacred claims, the Roman Catholics did not preserve a vital spark, which may yet illumine bigotry itself. It is in vain to exclaim against the dangers of the Irish nation, participating mutually in the privileges of British subjects. It is not preventative codes, or unwise religious restriction, can make Ireland a source of strength. If her manacles are taken off, and she feels that the British constitution maketh its sun to act upon all with equal light and heat, she will become an ally of immense importance; if she is depressed, and experiences exclusion and coldness, no statesman can calculate upon future times, and the neglect of home concerns may eventually turn the scale of things in the world.

This subject in future numbers will occupy more space, and receive the examination it merits, without courting any party, or aiming at anything but the greatest and nearest attainable good for this country... Its situation is delicate, but truth is wholesome; without its expression, the mind languishes, and debility and degradation ensue. It will be the honest pride of our work, to encourage the feeling of patriotism, and to assert its character. The pen, however, will drop from our hand, rather than be used to gratify faction, to irritate society, or to disturb the order of morality, and wise legislation.

PROVINCIAL OCCURRENCES.

ARMAGH.

On the 24th of August, Major Campbell, of the 21st regiment, was executed at Armagh, for the murder of Captain Boyd, of the same regiment. This unfortunate catastrophe resulted from a dispute between these two officers relative to the mode of giving a word of command. A challenge ensued, that kind of appeal, so common in the court of honour; but so contrary to a sense of justice and humanity. Major Campbell, who had been heated by something of irritation in Captain Boyd's manner, but which, according to the evidence on the trial, might have been done away by candid explanation, appears to have hurried Captain Boyd to the fatal meeting, in a small apartment, and without seconds. Captain Boyd was mortally wounded with the first shot, and expired in great torture, in about eighteen hours,

leaving a disconsolate widow, and a large infant family. He did not acknowledge that the duel was a fair one. Upon being asked by Major Campbell, if every thing was fair, he answered, "*Campbell you have hurried me...you are a bad man... you know I wanted to wait for friends.*" When his forgiveness was afterwards intreated, he stretched out his hand and said, "*I forgive you...I feel for you.... and I am sure you do for me.*" The defence of Major Campbell went only to Character, for humanity and proper behaviour; on these points he had most respectable testimony. The fatal verdict was pronounced, but the jury that condemned him, recommended him to mercy, His Majesty could not extend forgiveness, where the example was so pernicious to society, and so productive of evil in that service, where false