

shadow of a legal trial, had taught me a bitter and serious lesson, and authorized me to suppose that the dungeons of Ceuta might close my mortal career.

"We know that the sultans of the Ottoman empire, in the plenitude of their sublime functions, occasionally decapitate their vassals, and afterwards order the divan of Constantinople to examine and decide on the guilt or innocence of the victim. God forbid, that Turkish usages should become the *order of the day* in any part of the Christian world! but I presume your excellency will coincide with me in opinion, that there is no essential difference between imprisoning an individual for an indefinite period, without a hearing or trial, and taking off his head according to the usages of the Turks.

"I trust your excellency will find in the preceding reflections an ample apology, if not a justification, of the step which I have taken. I shall always bear a grateful recollection of your excellency's very liberal conduct towards me at Cadiz; and I flatter myself, that neither your conscience nor reputation will ever suffer, from your having manifested a repugnance to be the subordinate instrument of executing decrees, unjust and barbarous, and marked by a spirit of anti-civilization in all their features.

"I beg leave to enclose a copy of my letter of this date to the Marquis Casa Yrujo, for your information, and have the honour to be, with great respect,

"Your excellency's obedient servant,

"WILLIAM D. ROBINSON.

"To his Excellency the Condé de Abisbal,
Captain-general of Andalusia, Governor of Cadiz, &c. &c.

Gibraltar, March 25, 1820.

"SIR,

"It has been represented to me, that your excellency, in your public and private character, has developed a strong antipathy towards the government and citizens of the United States; but when I reflect on your excellency's distinguished talents and acquirements, on the long course of your diplomatic career, and on your having mixed so much in the civilized world, I can scarcely think it possible, that the imputation before suggested is correct. It will afford me much pleasure to find it unjust.

"I have now the honour to enclose, for your excellency's information, a copy of my letter to the governor of Cadiz, in justification of my having departed from that city without his consent. I have sent a copy of the same to the American minister, and shall send another to the government of the United States.

"I feel most particularly anxious, sir, to be allowed a public opportunity to vindicate my conduct and character against any charges which the viceroy of New Spain may have unjustly and illiberally adduced against me; and I wish to have an opportunity of proving how very often the viceroys, captain-generals, and other authorities in Spanish America, make Olympian mountains out of mole-hills.

"I am desirous, sir, of convincing the Spanish government, as well as my own, that I have been most unjustly persecuted and cruelly treated; and I likewise desire to prove, that I have rendered most important services to your government, which terminated in my ruin, in the years 1804 and 1805, and that I have now

the most indisputable claims on your government for more than half a million of dollars. To attain those objects, it is only necessary for me to have a liberal and impartial hearing.

" If I have committed any errors, I will submit to make a corresponding atonement. I do not supplicate favours or indulgences. I demand a rigid scrutiny into my conduct; but I must require such scrutiny to be made with a due regard to my person and rights, as a citizen of the United States.

" Under these circumstances, sir, I solicit his Catholic Majesty to grant me a fair and liberal hearing; and that he will condescend to give a solemn assurance to the minister of the United States at Madrid, that I shall not suffer any further acts of personal violence or outrage on the part of the Spanish government.

" If such assurance is given, with the solemnity suggested, I will not hesitate a moment in returning to Spain; but if, from any motives whatsoever, such assurance is withheld, I will in such case enter my solemn protest against all whom it may concern, and indulge hopes of obtaining eventual redress through the intervention of my own government.

" I have the honour to be, with due respect,

" Your excellency's obedient humble servant,

" WILLIAM D. ROBINSON.

" To his Excellency the Marquis Casa Yrujo,
First Minister of State, &c. &c."

The Spanish minister, immediately on the receipt of the preceding communications, addressed the following note to the American minister:—

(TRANSLATION.)

" SIR,

" I have the honour to send you herewith copies of a letter to me, and of one to the captain-general of Andalusia, written from Gibraltar, by William Davis Robinson, a citizen of the United States. By them your excellency will perceive, that, violating his parole of honour, he has fled from Cadiz, in which place he had been permitted to reside under arrest. Your excellency will likewise perceive the motives which he alleges, for having taken this determination, which he pretends to justify; and that he asks permission to come to this court, to defend himself against the charges which the viceroy of New Spain may have adduced against him; but, for the security of his person, solicits that there shall be given to your excellency the most complete assurances, that he shall not suffer any oppression or violence whatsoever. His Majesty, whom I have acquainted with these circumstances, and who desires to administer strict and impartial justice in his dominions, has been pleased to decide on granting a safe-conduct (*salvo conducto*) to the said citizen, to enable him, as he offers, to come to this capital, to justify himself before a competent tribunal, who will investigate and judge his conduct conformably to our laws, administered with all justice and impartiality,—but on the indispensable condition, that the said Mr. Robinson is to remain subject to the effects of the sentence. His Majesty hopes, that in this step will be immediately recognized the rectitude which characterizes his government, and that the president of the United States, as well as your excellency, will see in this measure a new proof of the

consideration with which the citizens of the United States are treated in Spain.

" I renew to your excellency my respects, and pray God to preserve your life many years.

" At the Palace, 2d of April, 1819.

(Signed) " MARQUIS DE CASA YRUJO.

" To the Minister Plenipotentiary
of the United States of America."

The preceding document, although couched in very polite diplomatic language, was by no means satisfactory to the American minister. He naturally felt some degree of mortification at the inattention which had so recently been manifested by the Spanish government to the formal application he had made for the writer's release; and when he reflected, that, at the very moment the Marquis Casa Yrujo had been amusing him with a promise that the writer's case should be investigated, the said marquis had sent a secret order to the governor of Cadiz, to arrest and send him to Ceuta, it was impossible for the American minister to place any confidence in a government that acted with so much bad faith: he therefore declined accepting the guarantee for the writer's personal safety, offered in the marquis's note, and replied accordingly.

From the tenor of Mr. Erving's communications to the writer on this subject, he was perfectly satisfied of the correctness of the course Mr. Erving had adopted, and indeed he feels great pleasure in acknowledging his obligations to that gentleman, for his official and friendly conduct towards him. His last letter on the subject is as follows:—

" Madrid, April 19, 1819.

" SIR,

" Your letter of April 12th is just received. I am glad to learn that the explanation contained in my last letter was satisfactory to you; as in no view of the case could I find a motive for encouraging your coming to Spain, neither could I make myself the medium of offering you the encouragement proposed by this government. As you desire to have a copy of Mr. Yrujo's note, referred to in my last, it is herewith enclosed. I must, however, observe, that if I could think it proper to intervene in the proposed arrangement, I should require stipulations rather more precise than what are contained in Mr. Yrujo's note.

" With much esteem, I am, sir,

" Your obedient servant,

(Signed) " GEORGE W. ERVING.

" P. S. I must further inform you, that Mr. Yrujo, in his second note on your case, after mentioning *the importance of the charges against you*, says, that his Majesty would order his minister at Washington to lay before the president *his reasons for not acquiescing in the president's demand*. This, you will conclude, *was intended to preclude all further remonstrance on my part, whilst you were in prison under trial, or after sentence had been passed on you.* G. W. E.

" To Mr. William Davis Robinson."

The writer has been more prolix in this detail than he otherwise would have been, because the Spanish government has complained to the government of the United States on the point of his having broken his

parole at Cadiz, and because he feels desirous of convincing his fellow-citizens, as well as every impartial reader; that such a step was perfectly justifiable; and, as regards his refusal to return to Spain, he would fain believe that his correspondence with the minister of the United States completely elucidates that point, and shews that it would have been an act of more than common folly, to have visited Madrid under the guarantee and on the conditions expressed in the Marquis Casa Yrujo's note to Mr. Erving. But, exclusive of the official communications with which he was honoured in this matter, he has other documents in his possession, which prove, that, in case of his return to Spain, it was the marquis's intention, as well as that of his government, to have spared no means to effect his destruction. The writer forbears to publish the documents alluded to, at this time, as they would swell the present work too much, and perhaps trespass on the patience of the reader. Enough has already been said to shew, that if any of his opinions, expressed in the following pages, be tinged with enmity towards the late government of Spain, he has had sufficient cause to excite his animosity and disgust. He does not hesitate to declare, that while he respects the individual character of the Spaniard in Europe, yet he views with abhorrence his conduct towards the American Creole and Indian, and feels not the least commiseration for his loss of power and influence in the New World; and, if he mistake not, the facts developed in the course of this work will demonstrate, that the sun of Spanish power in the west is about to descend for ever below the horizon.

The writer is aware, that he who records events of

such deep importance to the civilized world, ought to be gifted with talents, and possess acquirements, infinitely beyond those which have fallen to his lot, and that consequently he may be accused of presumption in touching on subjects which even sages and scholars would find it difficult properly to illustrate: but, in extenuation of all his literary faults, he begs the reader to bear in mind, that an individual, compelled by misfortune and Spanish treachery to seek a subsistence for the last fourteen years by his own enterprise, cannot have enjoyed much time for the cultivation of letters. Making, therefore, no pretensions to the honours of an *author*, he submits his work to the candid criticism of his fellow-citizens. He can regard with frigid indifference the harshest judgments of European censors; but, tremblingly alive to the favourable opinion of his own countrymen, he requests them to look upon the work as the production of one who, never possessing learned leisure, was engaged in the honourable occupation of an American merchant.

PHILADELPHIA,

October 20, 1820.