

Catholic majesty did not think himself necessarily bound, by the mere fact of a war between England and France, to fulfil the stipulations of the treaty of Ildefonso. In the month of October following, a convention was signed, by which Spain agreed to pay to France a certain sum monthly, in lieu of naval and military succours, but of the amount of that sum no official information was given.

The British ambassador made known to the Spanish government, that a subsidy amounting to the sum which they were supposed to pay to France far exceeded the bounds of forbearance, and could only be connived at by England as a temporary expedient. He was afterward instructed to protest against the convention itself as a violation of neutrality, and a justifiable cause of war; and farther to declare, that, if persevered in, it would be considered in that light; that the entrance of any French troops into Spain must be refused; that any naval preparations would be regarded as a just cause of jealousy, and any attempts to give naval assistance to France would be an immediate cause of war: that the Spanish ports must remain open to British commerce; and that British ships must have equal treatment with those of France. Mr. Frere was farther instructed by his government, that if any French troops entered Spain, or should he receive authentic information of any naval armaments preparing for the assistance of France, he was instantly to quit Madrid, and give immediate notice to the British naval commanders, that they might proceed to hostilities without the delay that would be occasioned by a reference to the British government at home.

In the month of July, the Spanish government gave assurances of faithful and settled neutrality, and disavowed any orders to arm in their ports; but in the month following, it was ascertained by the British admiral commanding the squadron off Ferrol, that reinforcements of soldiers and sailors had arrived through Spain for the French fleets at that port and Toulon. On receiving this intelligence, Mr. Frere presented two notes to the Spanish minister, remonstrating on this procedure; but no answer was returned to either of them. Towards the end of September, it was discovered that very considerable armaments were preparing in the principal ports of Spain; that three first-rate ships of the line had received orders to sail from Cadiz; and that instructions had been issued to arm the packets as in time of war.

To the inquiries and representations grounded on this intelligence no satisfactory explanations were given, and strong measures of precaution were consequently adopted. In particular, the British admiral off Ferrol was instructed to prevent any ships of war from quitting that port, or any additional ships of war from entering it. Orders were at the same time issued to all the British admirals and commanders to exercise a scrupulous indulgence and forbearance towards the Spaniards, and to avoid, by every means consistent with the attainment of their object, any act of violence or hostility. Official notice was given to the court of Madrid of these precautions, with an assurance that England still felt an earnest desire to maintain a good understanding with Spain; but that this could only be on the condition that she abstained from all hostile preparations, and that she made a full and explicit disclosure of the nature and extent of her engagements with France, which had hitherto been so frequently and so fruitlessly demanded.

These remonstrances, however, failed in rousing the court of Madrid from the abject state of vassalage to which that power had been reduced by an imbecile and corrupt administration, and the British government issued orders for the detention of such Spanish ships of war homeward bound as contained bullion or treasure. Pursuant to these orders, captain Graham Moore was detached from the channel fleet to cruise off Cadiz, with the *Indefatigable* and three other frigates. On the 5th of October, he fell in with four large Spanish frigates steering for that port. At his approach they formed the line of battle ahead, and held on their course without regarding his summons to shorten sail, which he gave on placing each of his ships alongside of theirs. Captain Moore then fired a shot across the fore-poop of the second of the Spanish ships, which bore a rear-admiral's flag, and this had the

desired effect of bringing them to parley. He then sent an officer to inform the admiral that his orders were to detain the squadron, and that it was his earnest wish to execute those orders without bloodshed; but that the determination on the part of the Spaniards must be instantly made. An unsatisfactory answer having been returned, a close fight ensued, and in less than ten minutes the admiral's second astern, the *Las Mercedes*, blew up with a tremendous explosion. The remaining three frigates struck in succession after a considerable loss in killed and wounded.

A truly affecting incident attended the loss of the *Mercedes*. A gentleman of rank, who was returning to Spain in that ship with his whole family, which consisted of his lady, four daughters, and five sons, had passed with one of the latter on board another frigate before the action commenced, and they had there the horror of witnessing the dreadful catastrophe which in an instant severed them from their dearest relatives, and deprived them of a fortune which had been saved during five-and-twenty years of foreign service! Captain Moore, on their passage to England, did all in his power to mitigate the anguish of the surviving father and son, and their strong claims on the humanity of the British government were not disregarded. The cargoes of the captured ships were of immense value, consisting of gold and silver bullion and rich merchandise; but Mr. Pitt, and his associates in the ministry, were severely censured for not having preceded this terrible blow by a declaration of war, and also for not sending such a superior force as would have precluded all hope of successful resistance.

It is remarkable that this event did not occasion any interruption of the pending negotiations at Madrid. On the 26th of October, the British minister presented to that of Spain a note, in which three points were insisted on as preliminary to the settlement of other matters then under discussion. He demanded that the orders given at Ferrol, Cadiz, and Carthagena should be countermanded, as well for the equipment of ships of war in those ports as for their removal from one port to the other; that the armament should be discontinued, and the establishment of ships of war placed on its former footing when hostilities commenced between England and France; and lastly, that a full disclosure should be made of the existing engagements, and future intentions of Spain with respect to France. From this time till the 2d of November, the discussions continued with little variation in their tenor—of urgent demand of satisfaction on one side, and of evasive replies on the other. On the 14th of December, however, the British *chargé-d'affaires* quitted Madrid, his Catholic majesty having declared war against England two days before. During the whole negotiation no mention whatever had been made of the captured treasure-ships, and the rupture ultimately took place on grounds distinct from and totally unconnected with that measure. It was a necessary consequence of the arbitrary conduct of France, in compelling Spain to violate conditions on which, according to distinct and repeated notices from England, the continuance of peace depended.

France had now at her disposal the fleets of her tributary ally, and was thus enabled to cope, on less unequal terms than formerly, with the navy of Great Britain. In the interim she had neglected no means of improving and augmenting her own marine. By a convention concluded on the 20th of October, she obtained from the Ligurian republic, in exchange for some commercial advantages of a very equivocal nature, the services of six thousand men during the war, and the use of their harbours, arsenals, and dock-yards. Thus the port of Genoa was virtually ceded to her, under an engagement that the Ligurian republic should, at its own expense, enlarge the basin for the reception of ten sail of the line, which were to be immediately constructed.

The rising hostility of Russia and Sweden at this moment increased the jealousy of the French government against the influence of England on the continent; and under the pretext of frustrating a conspiracy, another insult was committed on the rights of neutral states. On the 25th of October, 1804, sir George Rumbold the British *chargé-d'affaires* in the circle of Lower Saxony, was seized at his country house near Hamburgh, by a party of French

troops who had crossed the Elbe for that purpose. He was conveyed to Paris, imprisoned in the temple, and released only on signing a parole not to return to Hamburgh, or reside within a certain distance of the French territories. On the subject of this outrage, an application was made by the British minister for foreign affairs to the cabinet of Berlin; but a remonstrance from his Prussian majesty had already been made with success for the liberation of the envoy. After in vain applying for the restitution of his papers, he was conveyed to Cherbourg, and sent by a flag of truce on board the Niobe frigate, which conveyed him to Portsmouth.

The threat of invasion was kept up against England during the whole of the year 1804, and to counteract it, several operations were at different times undertaken against the enemy's armaments on the coasts of France and Holland, but they were seldom crowned with success. On the 16th of May, an attempt was made by the gallant sir Sidney Smith, in the Antelope frigate, with some sloops of war, to prevent the junction of the flotilla which lay in the harbour of Flushing from joining that of Ostend. The failure of success was attributed to the want of gun-boats. Fifty-nine sail of the Flushing division reached their destination in safety; and the English force, after the ebbing of the tide, were obliged to haul off into deep water, with the loss of about fifty men killed and wounded. In August an attack was made by captain Owen on the flotilla anchored in the road of Boulogne, but with little success; and those of captain Oliver, made about the same period at Havre, failed of their object, and produced no other result than some damage occasioned by the explosion of shells in the town. In the beginning of October, so great a proportion of the enemy's flotilla had collected at Boulogne, that the alarm of invasion became universal throughout England; and ministers were induced to sanction a project, which had been submitted to them, for destroying the whole armament by means of copper vessels of an oblong form filled with combustibles, and so constructed as to explode by clock-work in a given time. These vessels which obtained the name of *catamarans*, were to be towed and fastened under the bottoms of the enemy's gun-boats by a man in a small raft, who, being seated up to the chin in water, might possibly elude detection in a dark night. Fireships of various constructions were also to co-operate in the attack. The experiment was to be made under the direction of lord Keith, who was to cover the smaller force with his powerful squadron; and the appearance of a hundred and fifty sail of the enemy's flotilla, in the outer road to Boulogne, presented a favourable opportunity for executing an enterprise respecting which the public curiosity had been strongly excited.

On the 2d of October, lord Keith anchored at about a league and a half from the north to the west of the harbour, and the requisite preparations were made for commencing the attack at night. So strongly were the English ministers interested in its success, that Mr. Pitt and several other members of the cabinet were induced to witness the scene from Walmer castle. At a quarter past nine the first detachment of the fireships was launched under a heavy fire from the advanced force, which was answered by a tremendous one from the hostile batteries. The vessels of the flotilla opened a passage for them as they approached, and so completely avoided them that they passed into the rear of the line without doing any damage. At half past ten the first explosion ship blew up, producing an immense column of fire, but no mischief either to the ships or the batteries. A second, and a third, and a fourth succeeded no better; and at length, when twelve had been exploded, the engagement ceased about four in the morning, and the English smaller vessels drew off without the loss of a man. No perceptible destruction had been effected except of two brigs and some small craft which seemed to be missing in the morning. Thus terminated to the confusion of the projectors, and the disappointment of the public, an expedition prepared at a greater expense than the merits of the plan, on mature examination, might have warranted.

## LETTER III.

*Continuation of the History of Europe, from the Commencement of the War with Spain to the Battle of Trafalgar, 1805—Liberal Supplies granted to Mr. Pitt—Impeachment of Lord Melville—Change of the continental Republics into Kingdoms—Napoleon made King of Italy—Third Coalition formed against France—Battle of Austerlitz, and Capture of Vienna—Peace of Presburg—Naval Victory of Trafalgar—Death of Lord Nelson; and Honours paid to his Memory—Death and Character of Mr. Pitt.*

THE commencement of the year 1805 was distinguished by an overture for peace, comprised in a letter from the newly-appointed emperor of France, dated January 2d, to his majesty George III. Some little elation of mind arising from his recent exaltation was obvious in his present, as it had also been in his former epistle, which announced his advancement to the consular dignity; it nevertheless contained sentiments of which the greatest monarch could have no reason to be ashamed. "My first wish," said he "is for PEACE. I consider it as no disgrace to make the first advance; and certainly there never was a moment more favourable to silence all the passions, and listen only to the sentiments of reason and humanity. The world is large enough for our two nations to live in it; and reason is sufficiently powerful to discover means of reconciling, when the wish for reconciliation exists on both sides. I have fulfilled a sacred duty in making this overture, and trust your majesty will believe in the sincerity of my sentiments, and my wish to give you every proof of it." The reply of the English government, dated on the 14th of January, was decorous in its language, but wholly evasive; and not the slightest wish was expressed for farther explanation. After acknowledging the receipt of Napoleon's letter, and professing an ardent desire for peace, the answer concluded with coldly declaring, that "his majesty feels it impossible for him to reply more particularly to the overture that has been made him, till he has had time to communicate with the powers on the continent with whom he is engaged in confidential connexions and relations, and particularly the emperor of Russia."

Mr. Pitt, who was now reinstated in office, began to exert himself, by all possible means, to strengthen his administration, which he was in some measure enabled to effect by means of a reconciliation with the minister whom he had so lately supplanted. On the 12th of January, Mr. Addington was created viscount Sidmouth, and appointed president of the council, on the resignation of the duke of Portland; lord Mulgrave was made foreign secretary; and Mr. Vansittart, with other friends of lord Sidmouth, were sworn of the privy council. When the subject of the war with Spain came under parliamentary investigation, the attack on the Spanish frigates was severely censured by several speakers, and by none more pointedly than by lord Grenville, who reprobated the proceeding as at once barbarous and unjust. "The laws of civilized war," said his lordship, "allow no such act of violence as that which has been committed in assaulting the Spanish ships on the high seas. It has been assimilated to an embargo: but was there no difference between delaying merchant vessels, which might be delivered back, and destroying ships navigating the ocean in supposed security? Who can restore the innocent blood that has been spilled? No capture of treasure could wash away the stain thus brought upon our arms."

The supplies for the year amounted to about four-and-forty millions, of which sum twenty millions were raised by a loan. A considerable addition was made to the war taxes, and the property tax was raised to six and a quarter per cent. The new taxes imposed in perpetuity were estimated at one million six hundred thousand pounds; and the minister, while in the act of thus heavily adding to the weight of the public burdens, concluded an eloquent speech by congratulating the house on the increasing prosperity of the country!

At this time proceedings were instituted against a member of the adminis-