

What might not the nation fear from this foreign Prelate, who, forgetting his dignity and the character of his mission, transforms the Representative of the head of the Church into an agent of petty interests, very different from those of the primacy of order and jurisdiction which belongs to his Holiness, into a kindler of feuds, which could end in nothing but a civil war. The imagination can hardly encompass the mass of evils to which he has exposed our afflicted nation, by such an unheard-of step. The letters imply that he had previous notice of the resistance which the Chapter and Vicars of Cadiz were to make. Of the object of those dilatory measures which the Bishops, now resident in this town had agreed to adopt, as well as of other steps which were in contemplation, tending to confirm that resistance, and to spread it over the kingdom. The plan being one, the interest the same, the measures every where analogous, it evidently appears that the effects of the cooperation and support of the Reverend Nuncio, must have been fatal to the representative body, and to the government on which the nation reposes its hopes of independence.

The Spanish people are fully aware, that the Decrees of the Cortes have no other scope but the combined support of the Catholic Faith, and the temporal prosperity of the kingdom. To shake this just conviction, and blast all the hopes which are grafted on it, was the object of those letters, and those injunctions of secrecy with which the Most Reverend Nuncio supported the schemes of the Chapter of Cadiz. This illustrious personage has, therefore, been wanting to the rules of his office, to the consideration due to the National Congress, and to the confidence with which a Catholic nation has sheltered him in its bosom,—a nation which now, more than ever, requires the most perfect internal union, if she is to hope for success in her struggle with tyranny. He has besides done a great injury to the Christian Religion, whose interests he pretends to promote, by inducing the loyal and peaceful Spaniards to disaffection and resistance. Neither is the offence slight with regard to the Holy Father, whose disapprobation of a conduct so openly at variance with the Gospel, is ensured by his heroic virtues. That man insults the religious principles of the Pope,—who can suppose him capable of asserting in a foreign kingdom, the pretensions of his Court,—nay, even his undoubted rights, by encouraging rebellion amongst the people. The false step of the Most Reverend Nuncio is one of the greatest evils which the captivity of the Holy Father has produced to our pious nation: and nothing but the special care of Providence could prevent its fatal consequences. But such has been the loyalty and obedience of the Bishops and the Chapters of Spain, that they have adopted the apparently uncivil course, of not even answering the Nuncio's letters.

However, this is not enough to appease my mind. The flame which has been quenched so luckily might be raised at another time, and they might grasp at some opportunity of imposing upon the loyalty and exalted piety of our nation: and I should not be worthy of the trust which the nation has reposed upon me, if I did not provide against such danger. What I could not wink at in a Spanish Bishop, I will not suffer in a foreign Prelate, who so ill requites the hospitality and generosity of the Spaniards. I am ready to excuse the errors of what some people are willing to call Policy; but I cannot dissemble to myself, that any degree of connivance in this particular instance, would be highly criminal; both from the injustice of the act, and the ruinous consequences which it might bring upon the country.

I bear in mind the unwearied zeal with which our monarchs have defended their own authority against the pretensions of the Court of Rome. The mere suspicion that Briefs might contain some doctrines or decrees contrary to the privileges of the Crown, has been deemed sufficient reason to stop their circulation, until they are examined and approved by Government. Whenever any relaxation appeared to glide in on this point, Government has instantly applied a steady hand to stop its progress. Our history presents very awful examples of this kind, which might have been a warning to the most Reverend Nuncio. A Government which has been so jealous of its unalienable rights, is now doubly bound to take the most effectual measures against an agent of that same Court, who by means of intrigue and underhand practices, endeavours to promote and organize a religious and political schism, which might endanger the security of the State. These reasons have roused my justice: but, although I conceive myself fully authorized to exercise it on the Most Reverend Peter Gravina, by ordering him out of Spain, and seizing his temporalities, I have limited myself to command that, the following Royal Decree be transmitted to him; and this for the reasons expressed therein:—

DECREE.

“THE REGENCY of the Kingdom expected that your Excellency having regard to the public character of a Legate of his Holiness, with which you are accredited, to a Nation equally heroic and religious, would have kept within the limits of that character, forbearing to abuse the consideration with which the Spanish government has continued to acknowledge you in an Embassy, the legitimacy of which was rendered very doubtful by the captivity of the Holy Father and of our King Ferdinand VII. as well as from other circumstances. His Highness relied on the strong motives which might and should have regulated your private conduct. But he has now beheld with surprise the steps which your Excellency has taken on the affair of the Inquisition. When on the 5th of March, you presented a Note to the President and Supreme Council of Regency, that very day