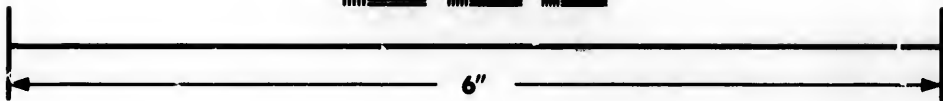
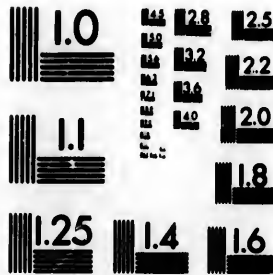


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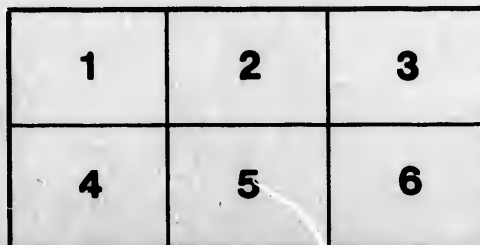
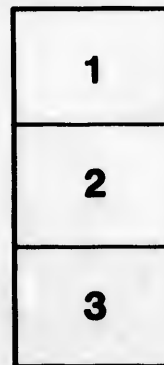
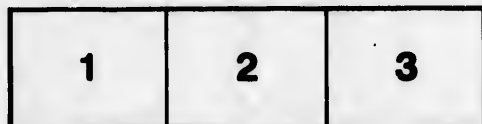
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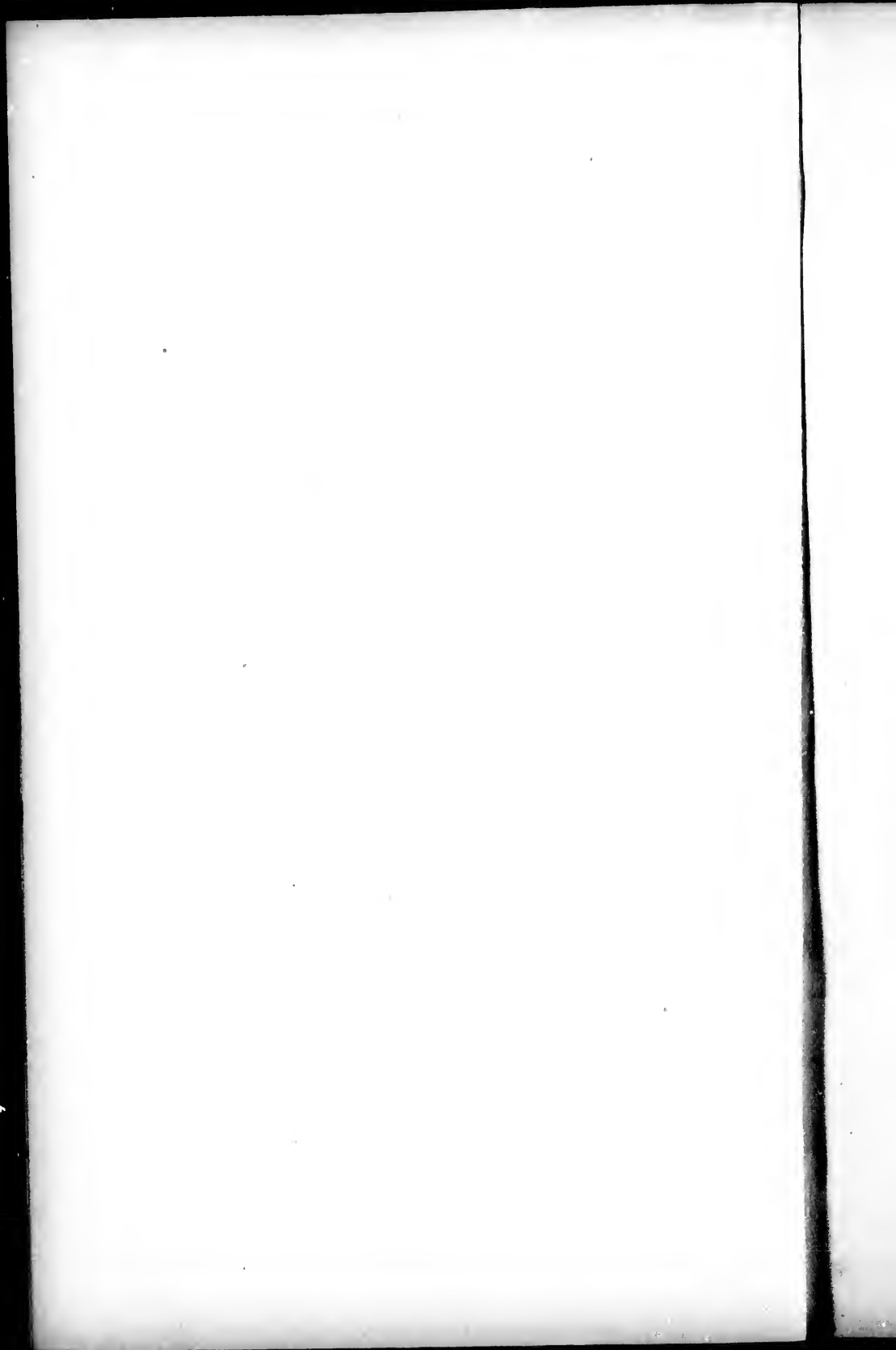
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LETTERS

FROM A

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT,

TO HIS

FRIEND IN THE COUNTRY.

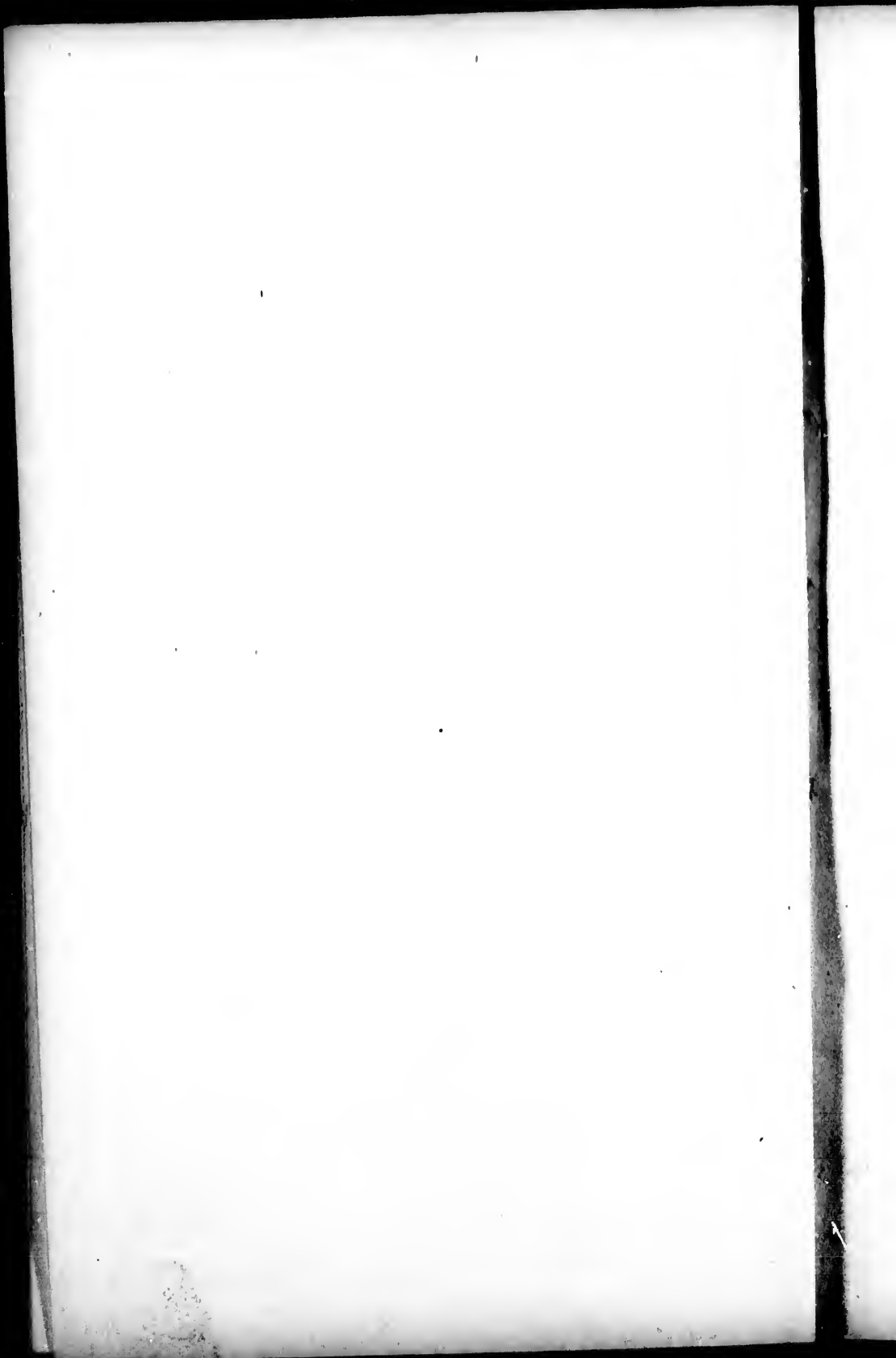
LETTER I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. RIDGWAY, NO. 170, PICCADILLY.

1809.

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LETTERS,

&c.

LETTER I.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I LOSE no time in complying with your request to explain to you more particularly the grounds of the opinion which I have formed on the late events in Spain and Portugal, and by which my conduct in the ensuing session will be regulated.

“ I have already expressed to you in conversation the unfavourable impressions which I have received from those transactions. Our whole system of policy, all the plans for giving effect to that system, and all the measures for the execution of those plans, appear to me to have been utterly destitute of that prudent forethought, which

is the first requisite for success in the conduct of great and arduous affairs.

“ The importance of the crisis, in which we have been placed, no man can contest. Nor will there be any difference of opinion as to that result, which was most to be desired by this country. When Bonaparte, circumventing by the grossest treachery the feeble princes of Spain, and drawing into his own net the chief of her nobility, suddenly assumed the right to dispose of the monarchy of a faithful and obsequious ally, our disgust at the baseness of the transaction, was equalled only by our indignation at its enormity. The resistance of the Spanish Patriots was well calculated to excite the warmest interest in every heart in which the principles of justice have any sway. Had we heard of such an event in some remote territory, known only to us by report, and separated by the intervention of half the globe, yet the best wishes of every

virtuous mind would have attended the gallant bands of Patriots, armed against such oppression. The case of Spain touched us much more nearly.

“ The success of our enemy in that quarter, has augmented beyond calculation all our former difficulties and dangers: His failure, could such an event have happened, would have opened to us the most flattering and brilliant prospects. The interdiction against our commerce, would, by opening the Spanish ports, have been rendered of no effect. Those points of our empire where we are most vulnerable, would have been as much protected, by the independence of Spain, as they are now endangered by her subjection. And the solidity of that stupendous mass of power, united against us on the continent of Europe, would have been more weakened by the consequences, and the example of a successful resistance in Spain, than by almost any other event,

that our imaginations could suggest. If wishes therefore could prevail, the independance of Spain was an object most devoutly to be wished. For such an object, all men will readily agree, that we were bound both in wisdom and in honour, to make all such efforts and sacrifices as were really likely in any sober judgment to contribute to its success. By this test alone of the reasonableness of their plan, and the practicability of their execution, our exertions should be tried. To this standard our system of policy must ultimately be referred. If our treasure has been expended, our armies risked, our domestic safety exposed to the utmost hazard, in attempts wisely planned and consistently executed, where success was probable, and failure of no dangerous importance, we may lament the result, but we cannot condemn the councils which have produced it. My own persuasion is, on the contrary, that the resources

of a burthened though not exhausted country have been profusely lavished, in the prosecution of a policy from which we could anticipate nothing but disaster : that both the existence of our armies, and the reputation of our military character, have been wantonly committed, to a contest in which it was evident that not even all the valour of our troops afforded any prospect of success : and that, as well by the rashness of our original determinations, as by the want of all plan, concert, and preconsidered system, and the deficiency of the means which such enterprises most required, we have ultimately exposed our own domestic safety to the same dangers which we have in vain endeavoured to avert from others.

These sentiments rest indeed on such knowledge only of those transactions as the public has been hitherto permitted to obtain, and I fully agree with you, that in order to arrive at a correct judgment of the measures

of government on this subject, there are difficulties which parliament alone can remove.

“ The first endeavours therefore of all those members of either house, who consider the privilege of partaking in the deliberations of the great council of the nation, as a trust for the upright exercise of which they are responsible, must be to obtain such information on these points, as may be sufficient for their own guidance and satisfactory to the country.

“ Ministers acting on a policy adverse to the constitution, and injurious to the feelings of the country, have withheld from us almost all communication from the moment that success appeared to abandon the cause of Spain. No dispatch from their numerous accredited ministers and agents in that country, has been given to the public on any one of the many interesting events which have occurred since that period.

They have not even deigned to satisfy the extreme anxiety of the public, by any of those short statements of facts, by which it has been the established practice to give, in the Gazette, the substance of important intelligence, whenever it has not been thought safe to publish the dispatches.

“ The form and nature of the court appointed to inquire into the convention of Cintra, and the manner in which the case was there brought forward, have also abundantly proved, that it was the intention of ministers to keep back every information that might connect their own conduct with the proceedings of the generals, or in any way implicate the king's government, in the transactions carried on under their instructions.

“ Had their object really been, according to the gracious intentions expressed in his Majesty's royal warrant, to have instituted earnestly, and with good faith, a fair and full

inquiry into "ALL THE CAUSES AND
"CIRCUMSTANCES that led to the con-
"vention, whether arising from the pre-
"vious operations of the British army, or
"otherwise," how different would have been
their conduct. They would have asked his
Majesty's permission, to have laid before the
COURT IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, many
important documents affecting their own
character. They would have produced
every paper in their possession that might
in any way shew on what grounds the desti-
nation of that force was originally fixed.
They would have explained, whether when
Sir Arthur Wellesley or Sir Harry Burrard
failed from this kingdom, or when the last
instructions were sent out to Sir Hew Dal-
rymple, there did or did not exist any real
danger to the cause of the Spaniards, from
the continuance of the enemy in Portugal.
They would have shewn what circumstances
connected with the affairs of Spain, rendered

the early evacuation of Lisbon, by the enemy, a matter either of absolute necessity, or of real and urgent expediency. They would have told the court on what information it was believed that the march of our troops into Castile, by the way of Portugal, was not only safe and practicable, but also the most expeditious mode of accomplishing those objects which were deemed of immediate and paramount importance. They would not have left it doubtful whether all these facts and opinions were duly communicated to our generals, to those especially to whom any discretion was entrusted, in fixing the direction of our immediate or future operations.

“When in the year 1757, a court of inquiry was holden upon Sir John Mordaunt, to consider the cause of the failure of the expedition against Rochefort, Mr. Pitt and his colleagues thought it their duty to provide that the inquiry might be really complete, IN ALL

ITS PARTS. They laid therefore before that court every public and private document that could bear upon the case; even the secret intelligence was produced, which they obtained respecting the real strength and means of defence of the enemy, in and about the place itself; and, what was of no less importance, the secret reports of the actual amount and distribution of the whole force of France. It was thus seen at once what troops the enemy was able in any given time to bring to bear upon the British operations, from parts more or less remote from the scene of action; the government on that occasion wisely considered that unless the case before the court were complete in all its parts, no just opinion could be formed of its real merits, and no judgment given that must not be in its nature illusory; and in its impression wholly unsatisfactory.

“ The whole merits of the expedition to

Portugal, its original destination, its intermediate operations, and its ultimate conclusion, rest on its connection with the affairs of Spain. Was the original destination of that army right? It can be so only because this was the best mode of assisting the Spanish Patriots. Were the bold and adventurous enterprizes of its first general, preferable to surer but more tardy measures? They were so only because they held out more rapid aid to the cause of Spain. Can the convention itself be defended on any other ground, than that it sooner set free an army to march to that scene of action in which centered all our hopes and all our dangers? For those, therefore, who were to judge of any part of these proceedings, full information was indispensably necessary, not only of the state of Portugal, but also of that of Spain.

“Had ministers on this occasion been governed by the same principles as Lord Chat-

ham, they would have laid before the court the substance at least of all they knew of the public mind in both those countries; and of the means and resources of their several provinces. They would have pointed out the plans that had been suggested to them for transporting a British army by land from Lisbon into Spain, the difficulties that attended such a march, and the measures that had been provided, adopted or prepared, for enabling the army to move forward with rapidity, from the instant that Lisbon had capitulated. But above all, for upon this point every military calculation must evidently be grounded, they would have shewn what, according to the information to which they must have given credit, was the real amount and disposition of the military force of France, not only in Spain and Portugal, but in all other parts from whence it was possible before the campaign were over, that reinforcements could be sent into

those countries. And they would have explained at what period, and to what amount at each respective period, any such reinforcements might be brought to bear upon the operations of the British army, in different quarters of the peninsula.

“ That some such information was in the possession of government is scarcely to be doubted, nor will it lightly be believed that without it a British army has been committed to its fate, in the face of the whole military resources of France, and its dependant governments.

“ Such information doubtless had not only been obtained, but had been made the subject of frequent consultations among the ministers, and the ground-work also of state-papers, in which its bearings upon the general question of the affairs of Spain, and upon the military operations of this country, were carefully examined and digested by the proper departments for the

deliberate consideration of the King and of the Cabinet. To suppose otherwise would be to attribute to government, negligence and rashness so extraordinary as ought not certainly to be imputed without proof to any men charged with the public interests. Without some such information, the Cabinet could not have adopted their measures : without the same information the Court of Inquiry could neither examine, nor decide upon them ; and if any doubts should arise in your mind as to the competency of such a court, for so extensive an inquiry, that doubt will only affect the propriety of bringing the matter at all to issue before an inadequate tribunal : and the conclusion can only be that the question remains entire for the consideration of Parliament ; since there at least no defect can be alledged of competency or of power.

“ It must be remembered, however, amidst all the artificial difficulties with which the

question has been designedly obscured, that great light has nevertheless been already thrown upon it.

“ The official papers of the enemy, however coloured and exaggerated in other respects, have communicated to us many important facts, respecting the amount and disposition of their own force : the very nature and constitution of the provincial juntas have also required from them very full and frequent publications of various kinds, and have given to their whole proceedings, a publicity that could never have been expected from a more formed and regular government.

“ All this information is not only within our reach, but it is familiar to the public mind. The affairs of Spain have, from their extraordinary importance, so entirely interested all the affections, hopes, fears, and desires of the people of England, as to have absorbed almost exclusively their whole at-

tion. There is therefore no fact that has yet transpired respecting them, that has not been made throughout the whole country, and almost equally so in every class of life, a subject of public curiosity and of public discussion.

“ With these helps I proceed to state the various points that in my judgment most require the attention of parliament, and of the country. In doing this, it will be unnecessary for me to speak of the events that have happened, otherwise than as they shall appear to be the necessary consequences of the plans and measures by which they were preceded. It is to those plans and measures, that I wish solely to advert, without reference to the conduct or abilities of the persons appointed to carry them into execution. I propose to argue, and I fear I cannot well fail to prove, even from our present information, that upon such a system and with such plans it was not pos-

fible that Spain could have derived any benefit from the exertions of Great Britain, and that all our losses and disgrace have arisen entirely from our having taken false views of the whole subject, and departed from the only principles by which under the same circumstances the conduct of a wise and considerate government would necessarily have been directed.

“ The subject naturally divides itself in point of time into three distinct periods, each marked by circumstances and events peculiarly its own, and each admitting of distinct and separate examination without prejudice to a full and connected view of the whole. The FIRST of these periods, that which preceded our actual operations, terminates with the prorogation of Parliament on the 4th of July, on which day the King's intentions with respect to Spain were made known by his Majesty's speech, and nearly about which time Sir Arthur Wel-

lesley sailed from Cork. The SECOND period, that which includes the expedition to Portugal, ends on the 31st of August, the day on which the convention of Cintra was ratified, from which time the forces of Great Britain were directed to new objects. The THIRD period which still continues and comprehends our operations in Spain, is unfortunately distinguished by the successes and triumphs of the French, the subjugation of the capital and many of the finest provinces of Spain, and the beginning of our own national disgraces and disasters.

“To any just view that can be taken of the two last of these periods the consideration of the first, which will be the principal subject of this Letter, is absolutely necessary, and it includes those primary and most important resolutions of our own government, which had unavoidably a decisive influence on all that was to follow.

“When the King's speech was delivered,

ministers plainly thought that they had sufficient information for forming new plans adapted to the new and extraordinary circumstances which had arisen. Two leading principles upon which we were to act had at that time been finally settled and adopted by them. First, the instructions of Sir Arthur Wellesley of the 12th and 30th of June, shew that it had then already been determined to employ British armies on the Continent in the cause of Spain, instead of confining our assistance to supplies of money, arms and stores, or to such diversions as a maritime armament might create. And secondly, it was distinctly announced from the Throne on the 4th of July, that in the support the King was prepared to give to the Spanish cause, (in which support the employment of his armies was then necessarily included,) his Majesty would be "guided in the choice and in the direction of his exertions by the wishes of those

“ in whose behalf they were to be employed.”

“ To judge rightly of the wisdom of these determinations either as separate or as combined together, we must consider what was necessary to be known before such decisions, the last so novel in its nature, and both of them so important in their consequences, could ever have been taken. They were such as all men must necessarily have pronounced hazardous in their execution, and, in the possible event of their failure, full of danger to the state; all those I mean who know any thing of the extent of the various demands for our army, of the real numbers of which it is composed, and of the difficulty of merely keeping it up to its establishment, without reference to the urgent and imperious calls which we might, and still may have, (I fear too soon) for its further augmentation. **FIRST**, with respect to Spain itself, it was not enough to have learnt that the people of Spain

had manifested a disposition to shake off the yoke of France in all the provinces not immediately occupied by the enemy; nor that they should in more than one instance have manifested that disposition by acts of extraordinary valour against considerable detachments of the French armies, acts of which no one speaks or thinks without heartfelt admiration and applause; it was further necessary to ascertain what were their real means of executing this honourable purpose. If we were to be committed to the contest we should at least have known what were the supplies in men, in arms, in provisions and in stores, upon the liberal use and proper application of which this country might safely rely. But there were also other matters of still more grave and weighty consideration. If the success of our arms, if the very existence of our troops was to be made dependent on the co-operation of a new government and power to be formed in Spain, could we forbear

to inquire into the nature and stability of such institutions ? upon what principles and with what views the rising had taken place ? whether it had the same object and direction, in each different province ? or whether religious bigotry, unfavourable in its very nature to co-operation with British troops, might not have occasioned in one province what had been effected in another by the purer spirit of patriotism, or by a strong attachment to a legitimate sovereign ? whether there were any jarring interests separating the respective provinces, creating distrust among the grandees, and jealousies between the military commanders, and obstructing all hope of union among the different orders of the state, BEFORE AN OVERWHELMING HOSTILE FORCE WOULD BE INTRODUCED AGAIN WITH POWER TO CRUSH THEM ALL UNDER ONE COMMON DESPOTISM ? Should it not have been asked where was the power, the talents, and the energy to enforce the many

extensive measures, both civil and military, that such a project would indispensably require? Nor was it indifferent to us whether the rising of a people so long degraded was likely to follow the impulse of its best leaders, the persons of weight and consideration in the country, or to take a democratic form and to rest on revolutionary principles?

“ In the latter case was it prudent to commit our armies to a co-operation with untried characters and to a support of measures the most adverse to the feelings and interests of Englishmen. If, on the contrary, full confidence appeared to be placed by that people on those who from their rank and influence would naturally become the leading members of any central government adapted to the antient mixed and free constitution of the Spanish monarchy, the conduct, the talents, the character and the principles of these persons could not well be unknown to our government. From such considerations just conclusions might have

been drawn how far there was a possibility of regenerating within the space of two or three months a country which had so much and so long declined, and of calling forth from amongst a people bowed down by civil and religious tyranny, a spirit, mind, and power, capable of defending itself against a French army commanding most of the military resources in Europe.

“ Nor was such inquiry necessary only as with respect to any future general government which might have been formed in Spain. At the time of which I am speaking none such existed, the efforts of the patriots were directed solely by the provincial juntas, and with the members of these self-constituted councils alone our government communicated. Their characters, views, and interests were therefore points of the utmost possible importance. They were the persons by whose wishes the King was to be guided in the employment of British troops, and in the prosecution of British

operations. Nor has this extravagant principle only been announced. It has been acted upon ; for it now appears that when our troops actually failed, their first operations were left to the discretion of a general officer, whom, whatever be his talents and merited reputation, the ministers considered worthy only of the fourth or fifth place in the command. To him was entrusted the power by his determination to bind his superior officers to a particular plan of operations ; to commit those officers, together with the whole army, to the defence and protection of any particular province ; and to embark the country in whatever course, or scene of action, his own zeal and judgment might suggest. For his guidance no other information was supplied, no other council provided by the ministers, but that only of a reference to the "wishes" of the men, whoever they might be, by whom the affairs of that particular province might hap-

pen at that particular moment to be administered. No one can indeed have failed to remark how much stress has in the late inquiries been laid on the fact, that the suggestions on which one of our best officers acted in the disposal of his force, were received by him from some provincial junta of the district where he chanced to land. But of whom that junta was composed, and how competent it was to determine such a question for the British Empire, we have not, as far as I know, ever yet been informed. The plans of operations to be undertaken by our armies, the quarters to which their efforts are to be directed, the means of ascertaining and counteracting the difficulties to which they are to be exposed, and of apportioning their numbers and resources to the probable exigencies of the service they undertake, have hitherto been considered as among the most difficult and important questions which can occupy the deliberations of any

statesmen. The decision involves the lives of thousands of our brave troops ; the reputation of our military character ; and eventually the safety of all that is dearest to us. Can it be said that these are points to be shifted by a British Cabinet from their own responsibility, and committed to the direction of some local or municipal assembly, some bench perhaps of provincial lawyers, of whose characters and names we were ignorant, and who may have been raised by the hazards of a revolution, then first to deliberate on subjects on which they had never bestowed a thought till called upon to decide them in behalf of the British Cabinet ?

“ Again, it was not sufficient that ministers should have known that what remained of the regular army in Spain had joined the standard of the patriots, it was their duty further to have inquired not merely into their numbers but into their formation, discipline, and military character ; of what

troops composed, and in what material points deficient, for active operations in the field; what was the reputation of their generals; and above all, whether there was any one among them to whom the chief command would readily be ceded, and by whom it might advantageously be exercised; what personal objections might exist to such an appointment, however obviously indispensable to the final success and triumph of the cause of Spain?

“It cannot be doubted that all these points should, as far as was practicable, have been investigated by any prudent government, even in the case of a common military alliance: but in those instances much is supplied when we act with ancient and regular governments, by previous knowledge of their nature, disposition, and resources. Here the whole field of inquiry was new. The investigation might appear extensive, the judgment to be exercised might be difficult;

but on its issue was to depend nothing less than the safety and character of our own army, about to be committed in a foreign country, remote from all British support, and with no other protection against an almost infinite superiority in number than that which might be found in the energy of the Spanish patriots, in the wisdom of their government, and the fitness of their armies for extensive operations in the field. With respect to another great head of this consideration, that which relates to our own troops, whatever might be the opinion entertained, and no one can entertain a higher than myself of their spirit and discipline, their ardent and brilliant courage, their intrepidity in attack, and above all their unshaken steadiness whether under fire, or when engaged hand to hand with an enemy, it was still to be remembered, that these qualities alone, though they make excellent soldiers, do not constitute AN ARMY. Before that name can

properly be given to any number of troops acting together they must be furnished with all the requisites for performing with certainty, with safety, and above all with expedition, whatever is expected of AN ARMY IN THE FIELD. To commit them without these requisites at a distance from their resources, and beyond the protection of fleets and fortresses, in the face of an active, enterprising and experienced enemy, amply provided with every thing necessary for carrying on the war on the largest scale, and possessing an almost unlimited command of numbers, was to expose them, notwithstanding the most brilliant exertions of skill or valour, to ultimate and inevitable failure.

How far they have been so supplied we may collect from a comparison of the times respectively employed in the marches and movements of such comparatively small bodies of our own troops on the one hand, and of the mighty force of the enemy on the other.

To examine the particulars of the deficiency, and to consider the manifest neglects on the part of our government, to which it is in great measure to be ascribed, is a part of my subject falling naturally under a subsequent head of inquiry. All that I mean now to advance is this obvious truth, that before the resolution had been finally taken to send troops in aid of the cause of Spain, it was incumbent on ministers to have correctly ascertained, and fully supplied, all that would be necessary for so new and arduous a service.

It was indeed no light or trifling decision they were about to take. They were to resolve on sending to the Continent forty thousand men, the flower of the British army, not as in former periods to limit their operations to the coast, not to co-operate with some great military power, assisting our efforts and supplying our deficiencies; but to act alone, to penetrate into the

heart of a great kingdom, and to be itself the foundation on which, and on the fragments of a regular army long disused to service, an undisciplined population was to build up its military system.

The combinations necessary for the movements and supply of so numerous a force are extremely complicated and difficult. They are the result of profound science, multiplied research, and long experience.

To this study the greatest attention is given in all the European armies, and in none more than that of our enemy, nor has any other circumstance more contributed to the ascendancy which he has acquired over the other military powers of the continent. The nature of our force scattered over so many distant possessions, the comparative smallness of our armies, and the maritime operations in which they are principally employed, render these subjects far less familiar than in

any other service in Europe, both to our officers and to those who more immediately serve in such departments.

“By study alone this knowledge never can be gained. It is essentially practical, it mocks all theory, and exclusively depends on observation and experience. Those only can acquire it, who with an attention fixed on these objects, have carefully observed such armies as in the present state of continental warfare, are drawn together, exercised, manœuvred, and subsisted: nor is it perhaps sufficient to have seen, without being also actively engaged in the execution of such arrangements, both in their purely military branches, and in those which partake also of civil employment.

“Far from wishing to deny, I have a pleasure in boasting of the true military spirit and talent which now pervades our army, and of its great and acknowledged progress in military science. That progress is ho-

nourable both to the commander in chief, and to the individuals who in despite of so many disadvantages have so far succeeded in acquiring the means of distinction to themselves and of security to the dearest interests of their country.

“Whether our armies ever can be fitted for acting on the continent alone or supported only by an irregular and newly levied force, is a question on which it might appear presumptuous to pronounce with a confidence, that so novel an experiment untried for centuries, was not in the present state of Europe lightly to be hazarded; must be obvious to the most superficial observer. Nor is it less notorious to those acquainted with our military system, that if it ever should be really necessary for us to embrace this dangerous policy, much still remains to be previously supplied, and many resources to be created of which a thought has hardly yet been entertained. Even for

that domestic service on which the safety of all may now too probably depend, a more habitual and more general familiarity with the collection and exercise of numerous bodies, will probably be thought indispensable, by all who can reason on such subjects. Nor will it be less necessary, even with that view, that we should apply ourselves to the formation of some, and to the improvement of other subordinate departments of an army, in one sense only subordinate, since, without them, no great military movements can be made with rapidity or precision. But to have attained these objects even for service at home, and much more to have qualified our army, if such was the dreadful necessity of the case, for the unheard-of difficulties to which it was to be exposed in Spain, ministers should have done the reverse of all that they have been most desirous to effect. Instead of concealing, they must have fairly and candidly exposed the

wants and defects of our establishment: instead of encouraging and exciting the delusive hopes and inflamed imaginations of the people; instead of underrating the formidable and daily increasing power of the enemy, they should have truly stated all the hazards we were about to encounter, and urged from thence the necessity of leaving nothing undone, which so perilous an enterprize might require. Such was the course they should have followed even for the purpose of fitting our army to embark in this unprofitable and hopeless expedition. How much better would it have been if from these considerations, they had drawn the true conclusion? What decisive arguments, would not the circumstances of France and Europe have afforded against our vain desire of military conquest, and our rage for continental expeditions? What gratitude, what praises would not our ministers have deserved, if instead of goading

us on to impracticable enterprizes with visionary hopes daily renewed in their predictions, but in our own experience daily contradicted, they had urged us to consider rather what might one day be our wants at home? " If instead of announcing to us the certain defeat of the French armies, and the already accomplished overthrow of their chief, they had themselves reflected what might be the fate of our own troops rashly committed under every disadvantage on the continent of Europe, and opposed to a vigilant and skilful enemy possessing there, in addition to all his other means, an irresistible superiority of numbers?

" LASTLY, in what respects the force of the enemy. I can in truth add little to what I have already said. The amount, composition and distribution of the whole disposable army of France, and particularly the number of troops that (under the different cir-

cumstances in which Europe might be placed,) it would be in her power at any period to bring to bear upon the proposed operations of the British army, are points on which no one can deny that the fullest information should have been obtained ; as little will it be questioned that to have committed that' army to its fate on the continent without such information would in any case have been an act of the most extraordinary negligence and rashness. What knowledge the cabinet had on these subjects we cannot yet have learnt. We all know the confidence with which it was asserted throughout the public (but not I trust at the suggestion of ministers) that 100,000 men was the utmost force which Buona- parte could apply to this service. Such was the expectation and belief of the British public ; how raised and how maintained I will not now inquire : we all have seen how grievously it has been disappointed. Did

ministers partake of this delusion? How else can we account for the destination of 40,000 British troops to this service? A force which, although it was too large to be rapidly manœuvred and plentifully subsisted without much more ample means than were supplied for both those purposes, was yet too small to offer the remotest hope of effectual resistance against the overwhelming armies of Buonaparte.

“That this force has been committed to its fate in the presence of a superior enemy is now but too notorious. It seems, therefore, to follow as a necessary consequence, that when ministers determined to send it to Spain, they must either have taken their resolution **MOST NEGLIGENTLY** without sufficiently ascertaining the disposable force of the enemy, or **MOST RASHLY** have consigned our troops to inevitable disaster, in open defiance of the most obvious rules of human policy and wisdom.

“That Buonaparte has at his absolute disposal at the least 500,000 European troops, is a fact of which no well informed man entertains a doubt; that a system has been successfully adopted in his armies by which large bodies of these troops can be removed from place to place with a rapidity unknown to former times, has been made but too manifest in the melancholy history of the other states of the continent as well as in that of Spain. It will I think be as readily acknowledged that 250,000 men, commanded as his armies now are, with numerous fortresses and military depôts and magazines in their rear, are abundantly sufficient, not perhaps to make further conquests, but certainly to secure all their present acquisitions in Germany and in Italy, and to make head by defensive operations against all that remains of continental Europe, had any prospect of such warfare really existed.

“How then could it ever have entered into

the mind of any man, that with such an object in view, and having the means entirely in his power, he would not transport at the least 150,000 men into Spain, in addition to the forces already there, or that if these were not sufficient, he would not carry there almost any given number necessary for the accomplishment of his revenge, and the gratification of his ambition? As well might it have been doubted that he would take the command of this mighty force himself, assisted by his ablest generals, or that he would furnish it in abundance with every object necessary for the most powerful and extensive military operations, that consummate skill and deliberate forethought could possibly devise.

To a force like this what but a presumption quite unexampled in the history of mankind could induce the British government to expose the flower of its army, the last hope and stay of the country, without

the remotest chance of its serving any other purpose than to swell the triumphs of the enemy ?

Nor in this state of things should it ever have been forgotten, that together with our troops were necessarily committed the honour and good faith of the nation ; and that there could be thenceforth no retreat whilst any considerable part of Spain remained in arms, without our being liable to the imputation, however unmerited, of abandoning to the mercy of a conqueror those whom we had animated to resistance. It was also to be remembered that by sending our troops to Spain and Portugal, we involved those countries in difficulties from which they could not easily be extricated.

If for the purpose of supporting the operations of our army in the field, their raw levies were also to engage in the enterprizes of regular war, the consequences must be, what from the beginning the Spaniards at

least foresaw, inevitable disaster when contending with such superiority of military skill. If, on the contrary, they pursued that system of desultory warfare so wisely recommended in their first instructions, and at that time so generally applauded in this country, the British force, to which such a system was quite inapplicable, must stand alone, deserted by the allies whom it came to support, and singly exposed to the whole accumulated force of the French armies. Nor even in the case of the most extreme necessity could these invaded countries enter without disgrace into negotiation with the conqueror, unless they stipulated from him not only amnesty for his newly acquired subjects, but safe and honourable retreat for his most hated enemies.

They would be placed therefore in the cruel necessity of either sacrificing their allies, or for our sake exposing their country to the rage of a merciless invader.

It has indeed been said, that ministers in the principles upon which they have acted, and in the leading measures they have adopted with respect to Spain, have followed not led the wishes of the nation ; a dangerous argument which shifts upon the multitude that responsibility which our constitution attaches to the few, and which entrusts the direction of our military enterprizes not to the provident forecast of our government, but to the uninformed, the honourable enthusiasm of the people. It may be right, however, to consider what it is to which the nation has in fact committed itself upon the Spanish question.

It may, I think, be correctly stated that the opinions of all were from the beginning unanimous in favour of granting every prudent and practicable aid to the Spanish patriots, and that there existed throughout the country much enthusiasm for the cause, and an undefined, but eager desire of making all

useful sacrifices in its favour. There was at the same time in most men a strong disposition (though not without great shades of difference) to believe almost implicitly the statements circulated by ministers of the increasing numbers and means of the patriots. Thus the hopes of the country keeping pace with its wishes, they were led to give a more than ordinary confidence to the king's government as to the propriety of acting with a British force in Spain, as to the amount and nature of that force, and as to the manner in which it might be most advantageously employed. But it would be going far indeed to conclude, that because the people of England wished success to the cause of Spain, they were therefore indifferent as to the manner in which that cause should be supported; or that they had in blind ignorance previously recognized the wisdom of any possible measures which government might adopt, much less can it be argued, that men

ready on such a subject to give a confidence perhaps too large to the councils of their own sovereign, had therefore consented, without any knowledge of the individuals, or the principles directing the Spanish juntas, that this country should be **GUIDED BY THEM IN THE CHOICE, AND IN THE DIRECTION OF ITS EXERTIONS.**

If such was indeed the case, we are undoubtedly precluded now from any inquiry into the manner in which our efforts have been applied and directed. The functions of parliament are superseded, and the discussions of the British public on these interesting questions are worse than superfluous. The constituents of the Spanish juntas can alone examine how they have exercised a power exclusively confided to their discretion.

In this country a disposition to place unusual confidence in the king's government, must in every case imply the necessa-

ry condition of subsequent responsibility. Such confidence is granted only in the just expectation, that before any important measures are carried into execution, ministers shall have done all that human prudence can require to ensure success to their undertakings; and if they shall have failed in this essential duty, shall they be allowed to plead in their defence the liberal disposition of their country? Far from it, their guilt will be aggravated by the extent of the means which were confided to them. They will be answerable not only for the failure of their own efforts, but also for the disappointment of that enthusiasm and zeal with which British bosoms beat high at the sight of an injured nation; struggling for its independence.

It would therefore be a gross calumny on an enlightened nation to suppose that they had approved of sending troops to Spain on any other supposition than that government had satisfied itself UPON THE

FULLEST CONSIDERATION AND INQUIRY, that the measure would be both practicable and advantageous. Until that conviction should be obtained, the country had doubtless a right to expect that ministers would have firmly resisted all ignorant and unfounded clamour, well knowing that on this as on every other occasion, though the result of all human actions is beyond our reach, wisdom is the best ground of hope, and prudent counsels the surest foundation of successful measures.

Enthusiasm is indeed a quality much better fitted for a people than for its government: generous and even romantic feelings adorn a brave and free nation; but zeal without knowledge is the disgrace of legislators and statesmen.

These are the reflections which naturally arise from the result of our late enterprise, compared with the knowledge we have successively acquired of the circum-

stances under which they were undertaken, circumstances studiously concealed at the time, and even up to this hour imperfectly disclosed.

A complete view of the whole case can be obtained and given to the publick by parliament alone, and surely no subject ever did more urgently call for the attention of an assembly entrusted with the dearest interests of a great and powerful empire. It is indeed scarcely possible for the boldest or most insensible among us, to contemplate IN SUCCESSION the events that have happened in Spain since parliament was last prorogued without mingled sensations of amazement, and alarm, of the most deep and poignant grief for what is past, and the most awful apprehension for what is still to come.

All men eagerly inquire to what these things are to be ascribed, and how it is that the rising in arms of a people whom they

believed to have been united, and were taught to call the UNIVERSAL SPANISH NATION, has served only to rivet the fetters of that unhappy people, and to expose their councils to the derision, and their Leaders to the persecution, of their insulting and merciless Oppressor? Nor is less astonishment expressed that all the fleets and armies, all the treasures and resources of a mighty kingdom prodigal in its offers, and enthusiastic in its zeal for the cause of Spain, should have been shewn only in preparation and expence, and should never once have been brought into the scene of action until the tragedy was already closed. A result, says the enemy, in one of his insulting bulletins, a result perfectly astonishing! "An armament of such mighty promise, productive of effects so very inconsiderable!"

We all feel the taunt, and grieve to acknowledge, that such is the judgment of our conduct which must be formed by the pre-

sent age and by posterity. But if we mean to know the causes of these things, we must endeavour for a time to stifle these sensations. We must, however painful the task, trace down the whole melancholy history from its beginning, pass in review each leading event as it arose, connect it with its origin and consequences, and by this detailed examination of the whole subject, defeat every attempt to involve it in obscurity.

This most important work, Parliament alone can effectually perform. It is only Parliament that can call for and command the many documents necessary for such an investigation.

From such documents the country and posterity will learn what previous deliberation and inquiry preceded the adoption of the most important and decisive resolutions. From these they will judge whether rashness

and negligence, producing their invariable consequences, have brought upon us these calamities, or whether this awful dispensation with which we are visited, was beyond the reach of all human foresight and prudence.

All that can now be done is to reason upon the facts already known: to point the attention of those who are to judge on this occasion in behalf of their country to those heads of information which can alone enable them to form with justice that opinion which they are authoritatively to pronounce: and to indicate to those who are called upon for their defence, those circumstances of strong and hitherto unremoved impression which appear to justify us in attributing to their temerity and their negligence, all the past evils and all the future consequences resulting from their fatal policy.

These observations have, however, relat-

ed only to the general determinations of acting by a British army in Spain, and of rendering the operations of that army subservient, not to the plans of their own government, but to the wishes of the Spanish Juntas. Much more still remains to be said of the manner in which those two determinations have been acted upon by the government; what Forces have in fact been sent, to what Quarters and at what Periods, how provided and how commanded, and particularly how combined and adapted in their composition to the peculiar services expected from them.

The particulars of these proofs of mismanagement I will detail to you in a succeeding letter, following as much as possible the order of time, and adhering wherever I can to the very words of the official documents. Anxious only for truth, and above all things solicitous to warn my country by the awful

example of calamities already incurred
against a perseverance in those paths which
can lead only to a repetition of the same
misfortunes.

FINIS.

W. Flint, Printer, Old Bailey.

