

THE LATE CONVENTION.

GUILDHALL, LONDON, OCTOBER 4.

Some ordinary business being transacted, the order of the day was read, for taking into consideration the propriety of a Petition and Address to his Majesty on the late disgraceful convention in Portugal.

Mr. WAITMAN said, that never in his life had he risen to bring forward any motion in that assembly, the propriety and necessity of which required less proof or less argument. The address to which he meant to request the concurrence of the assembly, was not only one of propriety, but imperious necessity. It was unnecessary for him to go over the field of argument, which had already gone forth upon the subject of this most disgraceful Convention; he should barely read one or two of those articles which had obtained the concurrence of a British Commander in Chief at the head of a conquering army, and whose only justification of himself, for an act so disgraceful to his country, and so vexatious to her allies, was his total ignorance of the situation of the French armies, with whom he concluded these articles and of the state of the country where he was sent to command. After all the discussion had taken place about appointing Commanders in Chief, it was astonishing to every one, who heard of the appointment of Sir Hew Dalrymple, that such a man should have been selected for such a command.—Mr. Waitman then referred to several of the Articles of the Convention particularly the 5th, 7th, and 8th, on which he commented at some length, as well with respect to the terms granted to the French troops, of suffering them not only to march out with the honors of war, ammunition and baggage, but with the whole fruits of their plunder without any stipulations whatever, for a cessation of their insults, oppression and plunder towards the Portuguese during their stay, but also of surrendering the Russian force on board their fleet, in the Tagus, although blockaded up by a British Squadron for ten months, then at the mouth of the River, and more than competent to meet the enemy at sea, while no article whatever was stipulated to the liberation of the 5000 Spanish soldiers then imprisoned on board the Russian ships. What could have induced to the conclusion of such a treaty, under all its circumstances, it was impossible for any man to conceive, without some explanation of causes, which no man attempted hitherto to elucidate. Either the victory of the 21st was signal and glorious to the British or the London Gazette must be a lie, and the dispatches of the British General a forgery. But what must be the grief and astonishment of every Englishman, alive to the honour of his country and the glory of her arms, to hear that in seven days after this victory achieved by one half the British force at that time in the field, after considerable reinforcements of British troops had arrived, and much more considerable aid in Spanish and Portuguese were hourly expected, that such a convention should have been formed with the vanquished army of the French, surrounded as they were by a hostile country, and in the presence of victorious troops nearly double their number. He was aware of the opposition of some individuals to any inquiry, and that he might be told, that it was discreet to wait and see whether Ministers would inquire of their own accords, or that there was no precedent for inquiries of this sort; but he thought the feeling of the country on this important occasion owed no deference to the discretion of Ministers. If there was no precedent, this was the time and occasion to make one. There were, however, striking precedents in better times of the country, and particularly in 1756, after the failure of the unfortunate expedition to Minorca, and this under the administration of the great Lord Chatham; the corporation of London did address the King for an inquiry, and it was unfortunately true that a brave Officer was sacrificed to the machinations of a party, who contrived to shift upon his shoulders the cause of that failure. Another Address was moved by the Corporation of London for an inquiry into the failure of the Rochfort expedition, and a message came from the Government to the Lord Mayor, stating that such inquiry was to take place. And if the Corporation of London did not think fit to withhold their sentiments in the administration of the great Chatham, surely they owed no such deference to our present Rulers. In that day Ministers sought not to screen themselves from responsibility. A Committee of Military Officers was appointed, to whom all the documents and dispatches were submitted and the result was, an Inquiry by Court Martial. And although it was ever so notorious to that Assembly, that an inquiry was intended on the present occasion, he still thought they should go up with this Address. Had inquiry taken place, as it ought, upon our disgraceful failure at Dunkirk, and subsequent evacuation of Holland, and upon the disgrace which afterwards fell upon our arms at the Helder, and the authors of those misfortunes, been brought to punishment, we should not at this day lament the present calamity. But what could be expected from the vigilance of the present Government, when we were told, that the author of our disgrace in the expedition to Ferrol, was nominated second in command to our troops now going on foreign service? Was it to be supposed that such men could intend any inquiry even in our disgraces in Portugal? Where were such men as Dalrymple and Burrard found? or who ever heard of their public services any where? He feared the causes for appointing such men arose from too much subserviency in the Country to the disposition of Ministers; and it was no wonder that such men obtained appointments, when the ruinous conduct of their predecessors was suffered to pass with impunity. For his own part, he at present sought to throw no particular blame on any particular individual—Minister or General. Inquiry was his object; and his wish was, that where the valor of our troops was successful, their country might have the benefits of their bravery, instead of having them thus basely surrendered by their Commanders, to the discouragement and disgust of those brave Officers and soldiers by whom such triumphs were achieved; and thus the money of the country expended, and its blood lavished in vain. If such things passed unpunished, soldiers could no longer be induced to enter with ardour the field of battle, for the useless effusion of their blood, and the achievement of nugatory

victories, the fruits of which they were to lose almost as soon as they acquired. If Ministers appointed such Commanders, they must stand in some responsibility to their country; and if they passed by men of known valor and talents, to choose men not known to possess either, they should answer to their country for the consequence. He concluded by moving—

That an Humble and Dutiful Address and Petition be presented to his Majesty, expressing our grief and astonishment at the extraordinary and disgraceful Convention lately entered into by the Commanders of his Majesty's Forces in Portugal and the Commander of the French army in Lisbon, praying his Majesty to institute such an Inquiry into this dishonorable and unprecedented transaction, as will lead to the discovery and punishment of those by whose misconduct and incapacity the cause of the country and its Allies have been so shamefully sacrificed.

Mr. QUIN rose to second the motion. He called upon the Court to take the question on those general grounds, upon which all men were united, and which embraced his Majesty himself as well as the meanest of his subjects. He was convinced that there were grounds for an Inquiry upon the present occasion, to which no man could disagree; and that his Majesty's Ministers must be themselves as anxious for an Inquiry as any other class of the community. The country was now placed in a crisis in which much more important considerations present themselves than the accusation or support of any particular set of men. It was called upon to express the sorrow and resentment it must feel at hearing that the honour of the British name had been tarnished and degraded. He, for his part, could not avoid, deprecating the selection that was said to be made of a Commander for our Army in Spain, and declaring that among the many brave and experienced officers which were in our army, he would much rather that the choice should fall upon one who had been hitherto untried in commanding an army, than that so important an army should be given to the immediate command of the illustrious person who is Commander in Chief of the British forces. He believed that the public feeling through the country at large was depressed by sorrow, or roused by indignation at this odious Convention. It could never have been supposed possible that British heads could have conceived, British hearts could have approved of, or that British hands could have executed such an act of high treason to their country, and of perfidy to its allies. It had been disputed which of the Commanders was most to blame. It appeared to him that the Commander in Chief who concluded and ratified the Treaty, was more to blame than the subordinate Officer who signed it, and he was more inclined to arraign the matter than the servant. The object of the Expedition was doubtless not only to rescue Portugal from the banditti which was ravaging and destroying it, but also to punish them for their misdeeds. How completely then had the expedition failed in its objects? After the French robbers had plundered and harassed our allies in every possible way, the Convention was that they should be sent home to their own country at our expence, and in British ships. Never was the British oak polluted by such a precious cargo. If we were to look a little farther into this Convention, we would find that the place where these troops were to be landed was so near Spain, that within fifteen days of their landing they might be in the heart of Spain, or at least in the heart of Navarre. There was another most infamous Article in the Convention. The Spanish troops who had been disarmed by the French on account of their attachment to their King and their native country, and shut up in prison-ships, were only to be restored to their country on the terms of their being exchanged against a legion of French spies—a horde of malefactors which had been dispersed over Spain for the purpose of fomenting treason and assisting traitors. He trusted the Spanish troops would never submit to such indignity, and that they would prefer going to the bottom of the sea to being exchanged for these infamous wretches.—The Government of Portugal, and the interests of the country, had been treated with the most shameful inattention and neglect. The Russian fleet was to be given back for the purpose of being employed against us in a future war; and that which was the vital principle of a fleet, the seamen, were now to be surrendered for the purpose of fighting against us and our Ally the King of Sweden. When our negotiators permitted the return of the French army, it never had entered into their sapient heads to consider that there were nearly 10,000 of our countrymen famishing in the dungeons of France, most of whom were arrested in notorious violation of the laws of nations and hospitality. There were but a few hundreds of this mass who possessed the means of supporting themselves in prison, and the rest were suffering the greatest distress, and yet by this Convention not only the Portuguese soldiers which France had seized, but our own prisoners, were entirely overlooked at a time when a great French army was in our power. In addition to the precedents which had been mentioned by his friend (Mr. Waitman), he should mention that of Sir Robert Calder, who was tried and severely reprimanded when he had actually won a victory. Now if one rule was to be adopted for the administration of the naval force, and another rule entirely different for that of the army, he could not see how the military honour of the country could be any longer sustained. He should forbear to go into a length of criticism on the Articles of Convention, as he was convinced that there was but one feeling in the country upon it. He did not think any man would dare to oppose an inquiry, and he was convinced that Ministers themselves must be anxious for it.

Mr. Alderman Smith, (the late Sheriff) said a few words in support of the motion.

Mr. S. Dixon asked, if British ships were not to take home the French, what other ships could be found to do it? It appeared to him a strong proof of a submitting army to consent to be carried home in the ships of their conquerors. He would not oppose the motion for an inquiry, as he was convinced that every man in the country was desirous of an inquiry; but he would suggest to the Mover, whether it would not be the best way, in order to procure a perfect unanimity, to soften the expressions in the motion, which

appeared to prejudice the result of an inquiry.

Mr. Alderman Birch cordially supported the motion, and did not see that there were any expressions which required alteration. He saw no objection to an expression of sorrow and disappointment at a time when the country was overwhelmed with sorrow and disappointment. He saw no impropriety in calling the Convention dishonorable and disgraceful, when nobody entertained any other opinion of it. As for his part holding a commission under his Majesty as a Volunteer Officer, he could not avoid feeling strongly for the military character and honour of the country, which he thought had been deeply injured by that most horrible transaction. Neither did he see why they should not talk of punishment, when every body was agreed that some where or other there was great guilt. He wished that where the fault appeared, there "the great axe might fall."

The question was then pretty loudly called for. Sir Charles Price supported the motion, as did also Mr. Alderman Coombe.

Sir William Curtis said he was afraid he should stand alone, but he thought it his duty to declare what was his opinion, although he was not vain enough to suppose that his opinion ought to prevail over that of the whole Court. He did not approve of the motion, as he thought it would be an improper interference with the intentions of his Majesty, and he had no doubt but that Ministers if left to themselves, would institute the necessary inquiry.

Upon the decision, there was a loud expression of applause from the strangers below the bar; but order was soon restored in the hall.

And a committee being appointed, withdrew to prepare the said Address, and being returned, the same was read and agreed to, and the Sheriffs, attended by the Remembrancer, were requested to wait upon the King, to know his royal pleasure when the Court may attend and present the same.

DISTURBANCES AT OPORTO.  
PRIVATE LETTER.

OPORTO, OCTOBER 13, at night.

"We have had, since Monday last, a kind of second revolution, which was occasioned by the arrival of the French troops from Almeida, under an escort of 240 men of the 6th British regiment. They arrived at Cales Novo, below Massarallos on Sunday morning; but the sick (about 250) came down from Pezo da Regoa, in four boats, under a guard of British soldiers, and arrived on Saturday morning. This, as you may suppose, attracted a great crowd on the bridge, and that day the people began to be dissatisfied. These were carried down to the castle at St. John's, and things remained pretty quiet until the Monday morning, although all Sunday the people went to see those that were at Cales Novo, and continued so all night long; which they employed in buying all kinds of things from the French, who sold many fine horses, and very cheap. On the Monday morning early, they were all embarked on board four transports, that had arrived the day before from Lisbon, and were laying at Massarallos with their arms, baggage and ammunition. This only tended to inflame the minds of the Portuguese mob, and they kept murmuring all day long. It was not until the evening, about 7 o'clock, when the bells in the city, and round it, gave the alarm, that people of every description, and from all parts, came down to Massarallos, lined the shore on both sides the river, some armed with guns, some with swords, and others with sticks, &c. I should tell you before I proceed any further, that during the Monday Sir Robert Wilson, with the Quarter-Master-General, who came down with the French from Almeida, and several other officers, went down to the Castle to have the baggage that was there examined by them and the Governor Barmido. Accordingly, every thing was going on well, when they opened a box which they found contained several rich vestments of the Portuguese Priests. This was enough to increase the dissatisfaction of the Governor, and he instantly gave orders that no vessel should be allowed to pass the Castle, or if they attempted to get out to sink them. Every gun in the Castle was loaded with shot, and remains so to this moment. The people of St. John's soon heightened the story, and said that diamonds, sacriental vessels, and church plate, had been found, with many other things. This soon reached Oporto and the mob without listening to any thing that could be said to them, went down, and insisted upon killing the French in the Castle. Some of the English soldiers who were on guard at St. John's, were attacked by the mob, but nothing of consequence happened. The Portuguese troops were all out, and the Bishop was obliged to go down to St. John's, where he succeeded in quieting the Povo, and about 8 o'clock in the evening, he returned to Oporto, accompanied by Sir Robert, and several other officers, English and Portuguese, amidst the cries of "Viva o Bispo, destruction to the regency of Lisbon—the Bishop must be Viceroy." They however, continued all night on both sides of the river, and waited with patience until yesterday morning, when, by 7 o'clock, there were more than four thousand persons of all descriptions assembled, who appeared determined to attack the French that were on board the transports. Every preparation was made; several pieces of artillery were drawn up on both sides, and they had mounted twenty guns on board of each of the three Brazil ships that were lying opposite the transports. Every moment increased the storm, and the French, who were preparing to meet the attack, were all provided with sixty rounds each man and determined to defend themselves. The wish of the Povo it was impossible to know, but it generally appeared that they wanted to destroy them all. About nine o'clock, the Bishop came down in a barge with Sir Robert Wilson, who was indefatigable on the occasion.—Much praise is due to him for his exertions, to which we are indebted for things not having taken a more serious turn. The mob would not hear any thing. They wanted the Frenchmen's arms and baggage, and reproached the English with not assisting them.

A negotiation was established on the part of the people, by the Bishop and Sir Robert Wilson, and propositions were made to the French General who was on board. This