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# LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

VISCOUNT PALMERSTON, M. P.

ON

HIS SPEECH AND MOTION

ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 1830,

RESPECTING

THE RELATIONS OF ENGLAND

WITH

PORTUGAL.

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BY WILLIAM WALTON.

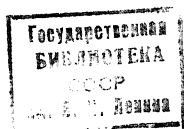
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# A LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

VISCOUNT PALMERSTON, M. P.



MY LORD,

You have distinguished yourself, in the character of a Member of the British Parliament, by two great and successive efforts in the Affairs of Portugal, acting, as in candour it must be presumed you did, with the very best intentions ; but, evidently, without that knowledge and discretion which the importance of the subject and the dignity of the House required. Soon after Your Lordship's speeches were pronounced, they appeared in print, under a corrected form, and the respectability of the publisher of the last, at least, and his known connections warrant the conclusion that this was done *by authority*. The inference is indeed natural—their contents therefore became fair topics of discussion, and, if found erroneous, may obviously be taken as just and reasonable subjects of animadversion. This, I think,

Your Lordship will be disposed to allow ; and although I may, in the eyes of some people, render myself liable to the double charge of being an end-  
less, if not an intrusive, writer on the Portuguese question, I frankly confess that I cannot resist the inclination I feel to point out to Your Lordship some of your most material errors, particularly of your last speech, and I hope that this will be deemed an ample apology for my now addressing to Your Lordship the subjoined considerations.

In noticing the discussions in both Houses of Parliament on the Affairs of Portugal, one is astonished at the extraordinary doctrines therein promulgated by men, deeply versed in the Constitutional History of their own country and professing to respect the national institutions of others, according to which they would gladly inculcate that it is England who is called upon to fix the destinies of Portugal ; that she alone has a right to sit in judgment on the settlement of the Crown, and to dictate what are the duties of the Portuguese sovereign, as well as to establish the attributes of his people. On no single occasion, has the late Award of the Lisbon Cortes been alluded to, in either House ; not once has the Legislation of Portugal, applicable to the case in question, been submitted to even a partial inquiry. The favourite charge, for I cannot call it argument, throughout, and more particularly with Your Lordship, has been—" D. Miguel has violated his engagements with us ; he has usurped his niece's throne ; he has broken his faith with England and personally insulted our sovereign ; and that, as re-

gards Portugal, he has been treacherous, perjured, tyrannical, cowardly and cruel." These are in fact, My Lord, your own words, and, a little further on, you very gravely and emphatically tell us that "you maintain that the solemn engagements, taken by Dom Miguel, and to which he chose to make the King of England a party, gave us rights of interference with respect to him, which we should not otherwise have had, and that a due regard to the dignity and good faith of the nation (meaning England) and to the personal honour of its sovereign, required us to enforce those rights," &c.

Thus England was to be the only dictator and sole umpire in the Affairs of Portugal ! The Portuguese were not to be allowed a voice in their own concerns ! They were bound to abide by the *solemn engagements* made with the King of England in London, by a Prince who had been estranged to his own country for more than four years, and, during the whole of that period, kept under restraint ; one, in short, who did not at the time know the extent of his own rights, and even if he had, was debarred from the possibility of exercising them !

Great God ! and is it thus that an English Nobleman and a Member of the British House of Commons expresses himself ; is it thus that he argues ? Is England, in this manner, to interfere in the concerns of other independent nations ? Is it thus that the destinies of a foreign kingdom are to be wielded and fixed—is it thus that the settlement of another's crown is to be made ? In a word, are the laws and

institutions of Portugal to be set aside by conditions, entered into with us in London (even supposing that any such existed) by a deluded youth, brought hither against his will? Is this the magnanimity that has usually been our boast? Was England ever known to extort conditions from the weak and powerless, and then insist on their compliance, because she had the means of enforcing her demands? Is such the language used in a free community like ours?

This expeditious and compendious mode of forming an opinion on the Affairs of an independent nation and then ushering it to the public, as a guidance, will not do, My Lord. Your theories must be examined, and it will be found no Herculean task to detect the fallacies into which you and your ready coadjutors have rushed. Watch them closely, and they will hardly be found to wear the garb of ingenious sophistries. Your Lordship speaks with the most dignified disdain of that which is dear to others, at the same time that you indulge in sallies of sarcasm and bursts of eloquence, at the expence of truth and reason. You feel proud of your own Constitution, and yet do not pay the slightest regard to the institutions, usages, or prejudices of others. Your mode of reasoning is peculiarly your own, and you infer, much to your own satisfaction, that, because D. Miguel, or, I should rather say, the Portuguese people, for they were in reality the authors of all the changes of which Your Lordship complains, have not thought proper to receive laws from others, they are to be worried by British bull-dogs, for I can see no other sense to which the term *enforce*

can be made applicable, notwithstanding Your Lordship's subsequent professions on the score of peace. Pythagoras could not have exulted half so much at his leading discovery, as you seemingly do, My Lord, on finding out the means by which the Portuguese question can at once be brought to a final issue. According to Your Lordship, we are the only injured and interested party. It is our province to judge and next our duty to punish ; nay, Your Lordship besides held out a kind of an ambiguous intimation that, even if the present Sovereign of Portugal should be able to clear up his rights to the throne, he shall not ascend it, until he has passed the test of morality, prepared for him by Your Lordship !

But, My Lord, do you forget that the Portuguese have laws, framed with as provident a circumspection and as eager a jealousy to protect and perpetuate their rights and institutions, as any of those to be found in the Statute Book of England ? They have also a Constitution, fenced round by rules, as well as ourselves. In them are vested inherent and indefeasible rights, of which neither the exactions of power, nor foreign interference, had been able to strip them. The Portuguese are besides gifted with a due sense of their national rights, and actuated by a firm determination not to forgo them, either through dread, or condescension to any foreign power, or powers. They are contending for a principle—for the preservation of a birth-right, whilst we are amusing ourselves in pursuit of speculative theories, divested of all tendency and result, for if only properly examined, it will be found that most

of the late discussions on this subject, as well as the two last pamphlets of English origin, written upon it,\* may be considered more as an inquiry into the late Mr. Canning's policy with regard to Portugal, than an investigation from which practical advantages to the nation might be obtained.

Never was a subject more fruitful of controversy ; yet, the nearer we approach the real question, the more plain and simple it appears. On your side of the House, My Lord, as well as with a large portion of the public, lectured and roused by the constant lucubrations of the press and the efforts of Parliamentary orators, it has become a perfect mania—an inquiry that will admit of neither investigation, nor proof. The several debates amount to nothing else than a successive series of sweeping accusations and charges, unsupported by a single fact. The charge of usurpation, for example, has been asserted at random, over and over again, till, at last, it wears the semblance of truth, because, whenever reiterated, no proof was demanded—no one endeavoured to refute it. It was first put forth as a contrivance for a political purpose, and, having answered its object, it has been continued, because no one stopped to scrutinize the grounds on which it originally rested. The Sovereign of Portugal is called an *ingrate*, because he refused to wear the trammels which it was wished to impose upon him from Rio de Janeiro ;

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\* “ Observations on the Papers respecting the Affairs of Portugal,” and “ An authentic Account of Mr. Canning’s Policy with respect to Portugal.”



an *oath-breaker*, because he did not keep the engagements required of him by persons who had no right to control his acts, or those of his people; and he is denounced as an *usurper*, because he has ascended the throne, prepared for him by the laws and the special and general consent of the nation over which he presides. After this, the Portuguese are upbraided for not coinciding in the same opinions and reposing on our conclusions, with that tenderness of acquiescence, so distinguishable in both of Your Lordship's speeches on the Affairs of Portugal.

But why, may I ask, My Lord, are we to wield the destinies of Portugal from the precincts of Saint Stephen's Chapel? How is it that this *usurpation*, of which Noble Lords and Honourable Gentlemen have told us so much, has not been discovered and denounced in Portugal, where the public records have been ransacked and the leading talents set to work, in order to ascertain the constitutional history of the realm, and to bring forward the venerable precedents on which it is founded? How is that the charge of *usurpation* is known only to a handful of Portuguese refugees and their immediate friends and coadjutors, in England and France?

This, My Lord, is the effect of public clamour, at all times an unsafe and erroneous guide. Whilst deliberating on the settlement of the throne of Portugal, according to the principles established in the great European Commonwealth; whilst discussing the means of promoting the welfare and prosperity of a people, to whom we still address the strongest

professions of interest and regard, ought not such charges, as those which Your Lordship and other speakers in both Houses have so eagerly levelled against the Sovereign of an allied nation, to have been omitted? Would it not have been more decorous and consistent in you yourself, My Lord, to have fixed, with something like tolerable certainty, what the rule of Succession is in Portugal; or, at least, to have exhibited that view of it which had led you to form such extraordinary conclusions? Before you attempt to call a man an *usurper*, ought you not to have pointed out the law which he had transgressed? Was not this due to your hearers, as well as to the public of this country, who were intended to read the copy of your corrected speech, and to the Portuguese, for whose benefit it was most likely about to be translated.

Scrutiny—inquiry—investigation, however, were not wanted on the occasions alluded to, by those who wished to introduce Portuguese Affairs to the notice of Parliament and the Public. All in fact that has been said and done upon the subject, particularly in the House of Commons, can be viewed in no other light than as an additional proof of that aptness to delusion which has occasionally marked its debates. There is scarcely a doctrine, however extravagant and even preposterous it may be, that will not for awhile serve as a decoy, when its theories accord with the imagined interests, or chime in with the biassed feelings of those who wish to have it adopted, as a rule of action. This has been precisely the case in the Portuguese question. Our sympathies

were excited in favour of exiles whom we considered as unjustly driven from their country, and these sympathies were roused, when we beheld among us an interesting young Princess, brought over from a distant quarter of the globe, whom these exiles assured us was their lawful Sovereign, in whose cause they were suffering. We did not stop to inquire whether all this was right, or wrong. We believed it—we took it as the evidence of our own eyes, and, as it were, shrunk from the appearance of every thing that could undeceive us. The prospect has, however, by this time, materially changed, and only few Englishmen can now be found, still labouring under the fiction; but, at the head of that few you seem, My Lord, to have voluntarily ranged yourself. Your last effort, however, bespeaks weakness, confusion and despondency; nay, if I mistake not, the day is not far distant, when it will be matter of astonishment that men of rank and talent should thus have enlisted themselves, in so wild a crusade. As soon as the excited passions are a little more allayed, the British public will feel ashamed of having so long been the dupe of the many and varied impostures, practised in reference to Portugal. The author of the “Deserted Village” facetiously attributed to the British nation the weakness of always being the victim of some prevailing apprehension, or other. At one time, it was a French invasion; at another, mad dogs, ghosts, comets, or some other grievous calamity, and, within the last two years, very grave personages have conjured up the novel bugbear of D. Miguel ascending the throne of his ancestors, a subject that, seemingly, bids fair to be introduced

into the next edition of the "Nursery Rhymes." This, by the aid of quackery and all kinds of other expedients, had become the grand and fashionable delirium of the day, and, through the patronage of the powerful, was prolonged far beyond the time usually allotted to those popular and ephemeral delusions, which have so often served as a kind of artificial existence to a large portion of our thoughtless countrymen. The Portuguese rage succeeded to the South American mania; but, as the apparent preponderance which popular feeling seemed to have acquired on the Affairs of Portugal, is evidently on the decline, it is presumable that some new object of terror is preparing to annoy and agitate the nerves of His Majesty's good and liege subjects., to which the late one will give place.

Speaking more seriously, did it never occur to you, My Lord, that Lisbon, and not London, Vienna, or Rio de Janeiro, was the proper place to treat the question of Portuguese Succession in, as well as the others connected with the settlement of the crown? A remarkable and important crisis ensued through the death of King John VI., which occurred on the 10th of March, 1826; one that required an immediate and efficacious remedy. Now, My Lord, let me in candour ask you, were the Portuguese to come over to London, or go to Vienna, or even to Rio de Janeiro, in search of this remedy? With us, My Lord, every interruption in the exercise of the royal authority, has been invariably provided for by Parliament, and the principle on which the practice is founded, is alike obvious and unquestionable.

The order of Succession to the throne of these realms, has been established, not for the benefit of any individual Family, however entitled to our gratitude and veneration ; but for the advantage of the nation and for the peace, security and happiness of millions ; and I think, My Lord, reversing your own position, that if a Prince of the Blood Royal of England were to find himself enveigled into a snare, or detained a prisoner in either London, or Vienna, and there induced to sign a paper whereby he surrendered up his rights to the throne, to which he was constitutionally called, you would scarcely be bold enough to contend that the people of this kingdom ought to confirm his act. I cannot, for a moment, imagine that Your Lordship would venture to rise up in your place and offer such advice. You would not dare to insult your countrymen by such a proposal. And why are not the Portuguese to be allowed the same rights and the same feelings as ourselves, in matters which exclusively concern them ? You tell us “ that D. Miguel bound himself to Austria and England, to maintain the Constitution and give up his Regency to Donna Maria ;” but, when he arrives in Lisbon and the Portuguese tell him that he had no power to contract such an engagement ; nor the Sovereigns of those States any right to demand it, what is he to do ? You very gravely admonish us of “ the existence of a formal compact between D. Miguel and the King of England, every tittle of which compact,” you add, “ D. Miguel has contemptuously violated ;” and yet, My Lord, how could such a compact be made binding on the Portuguese people ? You wish him “ to ad-

minister Portugal according to the Constitution," and when he arrives there, he learns that no such code will be tolerated. You are pleased to argue "that a gross indignity has been offered to the King of England, and that it is right that Parliament should know the nature and extent of that indignity, and the steps which have been taken by the King's advisers to assert the honour of the Crown;" but, My Lord, by whom has this indignity been offered, by the King, or People, of Portugal? The opposition to the Constitution did not originate with D. Miguel, since he was absent for nearly two years whilst it was displayed in the most vigorous manner. It was not he who sounded the tocsin of alarm; he did not raise up armies against it; nor was it he who pronounced the Award of the Three Estates. How then does Your Lordship come to the conclusion "that, as England, however unintentionally, had given to D. Miguel the powerful aid of her military protection, in the early execution of his revolutionary plans, we were, on that account, the more bound to have interposed in the after stages, to *compel him to adhere to his engagements?*"

Such an assertion, My Lord, denotes a total ignorance of the recent occurrences in Portugal. There, as well as in England, in those extraordinary and unforeseen emergencies, and when an interruption arises in the administration of the sovereign trust, it remains with the people, legally represented, to provide a remedy, adapted to the occasion. The history of Portugal shews that this rule was constantly adhered to, and the principle from which it is derived,

was there always held as sacred, as ever it was in England. It was even adopted in all cases of monarchs who had forfeited their claim to the allegiance of their subjects, and consequently could not be restored to their authority. Whether we examine the case alluded to as a point of history, or as a question of abstract reasoning, the position I seek to establish will be found precisely the same. For the express purpose of seeking a remedy, in the emergency in which the kingdom was placed, through the demise of King John VI. and the desertion of the Heir Apparent, the Three Estates of the Realm, or National Parliament, were summoned according to all the legal forms, and met, in the Portuguese capital, on the 23rd of June, 1828, when they unanimously resolved and declared “that, as the two Princes (meaning D. Pedro and D. Miguel) were called to the throne, one after the other, on the first born being legally excluded, the Crown, by that legal exclusion, necessarily devolved to the second brother.”

Thus it was, My Lord, that the settlement of the Crown was effected; but I do not see in all this any thing that savours of the *revolutionary plans* of D. Miguel, or that could be in the least offensive to the King of England. It would in fact be a paradox in reasoning and a solecism in language to ascribe to the deliberate award of a National Congress, any such character. It would be an anomaly in the affairs of nations, as well as in the transactions of men, if matters of such high moment were otherwise settled; but, to blame D. Miguel, individually, for