

A NARRATIVE
OF
The Political and Military
EVENTS AT NAPLES,
In 1820 and 1821.





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A NARRATIVE

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THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY

EVENTS,

WHICH TOOK PLACE

AT NAPLES, IN 1820 AND 1821;

WITH

Observations,

EXPLANATORY OF THE NATIONAL CONDUCT IN GENERAL,
AND OF HIS OWN IN PARTICULAR,
DURING THAT PERIOD.

—
ADDRESSED

TO HIS MAJESTY,

THE KING OF THE TWO SICILIES,

BY GENERAL WILLIAM PEPE.

—
WITH

AN APPENDIX OF OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS,

The greater Part hitherto unpublished.

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P R E F A C E.



I ADDRESS this Narrative, in the first place, to my own Sovereign ; and not less to men of all parties in the different Nations of Europe, who from a wayward disposition of the human heart, from unacquaintance with human nature, or ignorance of the most recent historical events, are disposed, and perhaps pleased, to load the unhappy Neapolitans with contempt. Deprived of all assistance, menaced on every side, and opposed in a thousand ways by a powerful enemy, who was seconded by their own king, they became the victims of an unseasonable confidence, and fell, from the want of discretion and

harmony, into the same cruel vicissitudes which at different epochs have befallen all the other nations of Europe, whose situation perhaps did not present so many difficulties to overcome, as those into which the Neapolitans saw themselves plunged. In fact, setting aside a variety of other instances, did not the French, that characteristically war-like people, who subsequently triumphed over all the armies of Europe, fly at the first cannon shot, in their first campaign in May 1792? Subsequently, as an apology for this disaster, did they not accuse of treason and put to death General Dillon? And yet what a difference in the position of the French in Flanders, and that of the Neapolitans in the Abruzzi! The French, disciplined by their civil dissensions, secure in their immense population and national strength, had to fight with an enemy who had for many years been unaccustomed to war; the Neapolitans on the contrary, in the Abruzzi, in want of everything, with a badly armed militia, assembled for the first time, had to contend with an army of at least four times their number,

disciplined by twenty-five years of obstinate warfare, and availing themselves, as of a shield, of the presence of the King of the Two Sicilies. Notwithstanding all this, the dispersion of the Neapolitans near Rieti did not take place until after they had resisted the Austrians for a whole day, and severely handled his numerous cavalry, which piqued itself on being invincible. But it will be said, that the reverses of the French in 1792 were very soon followed by the retreat of the Duke of Brunswick, and the victory of Gemappe. To this I reply—If, twelve days after their first check, the French government had ~~thrown~~ itself into the arms of the enemy, if they had ~~delivered~~ up to him their strong places, their fleet, and their whole means of defence, would the French in the sequel have filled the universe with their military glory? Who is there who doubts that if the Royal Family, and the Parliament of Naples, had retired into Calabria, and not abandoned Sicily, the strong places, the fleet, and in short everything, twelve days after the affair of Rieti, who is there who doubts

that the Neapolitans would now be in the possession of immortal glory, and the enjoyment of permanent liberty?

I put this question to such of the French officers as were employed in the war of Naples, in 1799 and 1806, who had only to fight with the lowest classes of the people, acting without direction, and were moreover assisted by the numerous national guards composed of the choicest of the inhabitants. In 1806 the French troops returning from Vienna and Austerlitz, and commanded by Marshal Massena, did not succeed during two years in occupying the extreme part of Calabria, where they suffered considerable losses. I appeal also to the French with whom the Neapolitans fought in Spain, as well as in the North, and particularly at Dantzic; finally, I appeal to the testimony of the Austrians themselves, who combated as allies with the Neapolitans in 1814.

It will perhaps be said that in 1799 and 1815, the troops disbanded themselves instead of defending the kingdom. In 1799 two-thirds of

the army were mere recruits, who had quitted their homes at the end of September 1798, and entered upon active service in November of the same year. The other third, composed of old troops, had never faced an enemy.

Were the Prussians then more fortunate at Jena?

In 1815, Joachim began the campaign with 24,000 infantry, and 3,400 cavalry, viz.—

Three divisions of Infantry -	21,000
Foot Guards - - -	3,000
Horse Lancers - - -	3,000
Hussars of the Guard -	400
Total	<u>27,400</u>

With this army he had to make war with the Holy Alliance, or at least with the Austrians, who passed the Po with 60 or 70,000 men, without taking into account that king Ferdinand was disembarking from Sicily with the promise of a Constitution, and that the English squad-

ron intercepted the communication by sea, and thereby prevented his receiving the succours, which would have been so advantageous to the Neapolitan cause.

All the nations of Europe have had in our own times alternate periods of humiliation and glory, while the unfortunate Italians, particularly the Neapolitans, although they have shed much of their blood in late wars, have experienced, and still experience, nothing but humiliation. It is impossible, however, to deprive the latter of the merit of being the first to rise against the victorious French army, and also the first Italians to seek and obtain a constitutional government. But if they have not maintained either their glory or their liberty, the whole of the Neapolitans ought not to be blamed for it, as I will prove in this Narrative, which I have addressed to his Majesty the King of Naples, and which at least will have the merit of speaking the truth. Lest it should be said that the conspicuous part which I acted in these events has led me to take a mistaken view of

them, the reader will find at the end of this Narrative the necessary documents to satisfy him of the accuracy of my details.

I have farther to request, that he will direct his attention to the *facts* which it contains, and overlook the imperfections of the style, for which I am sensible I have occasion for all his indulgence.

To His Majesty,

THE KING OF THE TWO SICILIES.

London, 30th September, 1821.

SIRE,

TO-MORROW will dawn the first of October and is there a single Neapolitan who can contemplate it with indifference? It was on the 1st of October last year, that your Majesty, surrounded by the Representatives of the Nation, the Royal Family, and an immense concourse of your people, swore to maintain the Constitution of Spain, subject to the modifications which should be proposed by the Parliament, and sanctioned by your Majesty. You were saluted by the spectators, with the name of Regenerator of your Country; and the hearts of all were strongly moved at the sight of the tears of tenderness, which were seen flowing from your eyes. After this solemn act I resigned to your Majesty the chief command of the army; I assured you that you would

always find me ready to shed my blood for the constitutional throne, and that I would prefer burying myself under its ruins to surviving its fall ; but the catastrophe of our country came so rapidly that I found no opportunity of making the sacrifice of my life useful to my fellow citizens. I still retain the desire of exhibiting to your Majesty, to Europe, and to posterity, within the bounds of a succinct Narrative: 1st. The conduct of the nation, and my own, before and after the political change. 2nd. What were the real causes of our country being so easily subjugated, notwithstanding the firm determination of the citizens, and the energy which all of them displayed in maintaining the national independence. Finally, I will prove to your Majesty, that if you do not restore the constitution you then swore to, you will neither consult the prosperity of the people, nor the security of the throne.

Sire, Flores Estrada, the present deputy of the Cortes of Spain, wrote from London in 1818, to his king, Ferdinand VII; what misfortunes would not that monarch have spared to Spain, what humiliation and dangers would he not have saved himself, if he had then listened to the language at once respectful and free of that celebrated Remonstrance !

In 1813 the sect of the *Carbonari* was protected and encouraged in the kingdom of Naples either by your Majesty, or by your Ministers in your name, under the promise that on the recovery of your crown, you would give a liberal Constitution to your people. This is an indisputable fact, as the *Carbonari*, declaring themselves the enemies of Joachim, and persecuted by his government, found an asylum and employments in Sicily. And this sect, (or to speak more properly, the nation united in secret societies) declared itself so strongly in 1814, in the Calabrias and the Abruzzi, in favor of a constitutional government, that fifteen Neapolitan generals, with a view to avoid greater misfortunes to the nation, and to Joachim himself, formed the design of obliging him to give a liberal Constitution, by marching upon Naples with twelve thousand men, cantoned in the Marshes. These generals made their intentions known to the English general, Lord William Bentinck, at Genoa; but although they had bound themselves reciprocally to each other, by a double instrument bearing their signatures, they became divided in opinion and never executed their plan. In 1815, your Majesty, on the point of leaving Sicily, and setting sail for