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Charles Napier

Excerpt

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WAR OF SUCCESSION

IN

PORTUGAL,

ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN Dom John of Portugal died, Dom Pedro, the Emperor of the Brazils, abdicated the crown of Portugal, and presented to that kingdom his daughter Donna Maria de Gloria, a minor, and a constitutional charter, which was brought to Lisbon by Lord Stuart de Rothesay. The princess Isabel Maria was appointed Regent. Dom Miguel had been banished from Portugal for having conspired against his father, and had resided

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for some time at the court of Vienna. During Isabel Maria's regency, a rebellion broke out against the government, at the head of which was the Marquis de Chaves, supported by the court of Spain.

Mr. Canning, then minister, at the request of the Regent sent a small army to Portugal to defend that kingdom from foreign aggression. This demonstration checked the rebellion, and put an end to Spanish interference. Shortly after this Donna Maria was affianced to Don Miguel, who was created Lieut.-General of the kingdom, and proceeded to Lisbon from this country, having pledged himself to the Emperor of Austria and the King of England to preserve the charter, and marry the young queen, as had been settled by his brother Dom Pedro.

This faithless prince had hardly set his foot on Portuguese ground ere he began to pave the way for usurpation, by displacing all the constitutional officers, and appointing creatures of his own in their places. This was followed by dissolving the constitutional Cortes, and assembling the old Cortes of the kingdom, who proclaimed him absolute king. Mr. Canning in the meantime died; the Duke of Wellington came to the head of the administration;

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and the British army remained tame spectators of the treachery of Miguel, with orders even to protect his person, and finally embarked for England, leaving suffering Portugal to be ruled by the iron hand of despotism.

The troops at Oporto declared against the usurper, and the chiefs of the constitutional party, who had withdrawn from Portugal, now returned, and put themselves at the head of the army, who were near Coimbra; they were defeated, and retired to Oporto, from whence many embarked; others retreated on the Minho, crossed over to Spain, and laid down their arms. Neither talent nor energy was displayed by the constitutional party, and they became an easy prey to the absolutists. The regiments stationed in the island of Terceira remained faithful to the Queen, and to that bulwark of Portuguese liberty many of the Constitutionals repaired.

Saldanha, and a part of the refugees who had taken shelter at Plymouth, in endeavouring to get to Terceira, were driven back by two frigates sent by the existing government, who fired into one of his transports, killing one or two men,

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and obliged them to proceed to Brest. Terceira, nevertheless, remained faithful. The Count Villa Flor proceeded to that island, and arrived in time to defeat a formidable force sent by Don Miguel to reduce it to obedience; he was followed by the Marquis Palmella and many respectable officers; and a regency was formed, consisting of Palmella, Villa Flor, and Guerreiro. The island was fortified, and by great exertions, and with the assistance of their friends in France, England, and the Brazils, they managed to keep up a respectable force, always looking forward to some happy occurrence in their favour. The French Revolution in July, 1830, was the first light that dawned upon them: this was followed by a change of ministry in England.

The obstinacy of Don Miguel, in refusing an amnesty, had prevented his being recognized by the Duke of Wellington's administration: in a despatch from Zea Bermudez to Count Montalegre, found in the Foreign Office at Lisbon, he relates a conversation with his grace, in which the latter distinctly stated that it was quite impossible for the powers of Europe who had already acknowledged Donna

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Maria as the rightful Queen of Portugal, to recognize Don Miguel, unless he granted an amnesty without any exception, as the adherents of the Queen had relied on the justness of her cause in consequence of her being acknowledged, and to abandon them to the mercy of Don Miguel was quite impossible; but that, in the event of a full amnesty being granted, a minister would be shortly sent to Lisbon in a ship of the line, accompanied, if necessary, by two frigates,³ and a corvette to Oporto. His grace further warned them of the danger of delay, and pointed out the regency of Terceira as the quarter from whence a blow would be struck, which might throw the whole peninsula into a state of anarchy and confusion. The sequel has proved what a true prophet the duke was.

Previously to the change of ministry in England, several British vessels had been most unjustifiably captured off the Western Islands, and I was sent to Lisbon in the *Galatea*, with orders to the consul-general to insist on restitution, and two frigates proceeded to the Western Islands to restrain such lawless proceedings. In 1831 fresh insults were offered to England and France: the

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former sent a force to the Tagus, and obtained redress, but it was refused to the French, till a squadron forced the river, dictated terms to the usurper, and deprived him of the ships that were at that time considered serviceable. A frigate was also sent to the Western Islands, and one of the two Portuguese corvettes on that station was captured. These events were not looked upon with indifference at Terceira: great exertions were made to equip an expedition, two small schooners were armed, forced loans had recourse to, the bells were melted down and converted into money, and every means that a government reduced to despair could think of, were employed to profit by the present circumstances and extend the Queen's authority over the Azorean Archipelago.

Representations were made by the British inhabitants that their lives and properties would be endangered in the event of an attack, as they were, generally speaking, disliked by the Miguelite party, who would profit by the confusion and make them suffer for their favourable feelings towards the Constitutionals. The English in all foreign settlements are extremely sensitive of

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danger, and generally cry out before they are hurt. Nevertheless the government determined on affording them protection. I still commanded the *Galatea*, had just returned from the West Indies, and was sent upon this service. On my arrival at St. Michael's, early in June, I found the *Druid* lying there; she had been ordered to touch at that island on her way to the Brazils, and to await my arrival. The expedition from Terceira had already sailed and taken possession of the islands of St. George and Pico, and were making preparations to attack Fayal.

After consulting with the consul-general, Mr. Reid, and paying my respects to Vice-Admiral Prega, the captain-general, (who, though a Miguelite, was a worthy man, and had refrained from all unnecessary cruelties to those who differed with him in politics, though fully authorized by Miguel's government to be summary in his proceedings with his enemies,) I proceeded to Terceira, and was received with great kindness by the Marquis Palmella and Mr. Guerreiro, two of the regency: the Count Villa Flor, the other member, was absent with the expedition. I at once explained to the

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duke the purport of my visit, that my orders were to be perfectly neutral, and that I trusted he would take care not to oblige me to interfere with English vessels employed in his service, as complaints had already been made by the owners of one that had been impressed by the regency and lost. I gave him to understand that I should not prevent either party from hiring English vessels, but that no warlike operation could be carried on with them under the sanction of the British flag.

After this interview I proceeded to Fayal. The governor and garrison were in great alarm, as an attack was hourly expected, and the corvette had been driven from her anchorage by bad weather. I also learned that Don Pedro had touched at Fayal in the *Volage*, on his way to England, having abdicated the imperial crown of the Brazils. This intelligence gave fresh vigour to the hopes of the Constitutionalists, but still they hesitated long and were extremely dilatory. In the meantime the governor became more alarmed, and on the arrival of the corvette abandoned the island, leaving more than half the garrison behind him, becalmed in an American brig, which was captured by the

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Count Villa Flor in his passage across. After arranging the government of Fayal, the Count returned to Terceira, organized another expedition, and took St. Michaels on the 2nd of July, and subsequently the whole of the islands. The cause of the Queen now began to brighten, and the regency already talked of fitting out an expedition to attack the usurper in Portugal. My opinion of how that attack ought to have been made is to be found in the United Service Journal of 1832, and was as follows:—

“ The only sure manner of settling the Portuguese question, is by dashing right up the Tagus, and carrying the capital by storm. The defences of the river are no doubt strong, but with a fair wind and strong current, they would be soon passed. The Portuguese artillery, though of high reputation in the Peninsular war, have not had much practice lately; every shot does not hit, and every shot that hits is not between wind and water; and if the guns on shore were divided between all the ships that form the expedition, there will not be more than half a dozen for each. It must also be remembered, that, in the event of a check, any

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number of ships may anchor in the Tagus out of shot from all sides ; and with a squadron before the town having 8000 troops on board, the inhabitants of Lisbon do not rise *en masse*, they cannot be favourable to Donna Maria ; if unfavourable, that force on shore in any part of Portugal could never dethrone Don Miguel. With a larger force they could not carry on a defensive war in the provinces of Minho and Douro in the first instance, it is not likely they can carry on an offensive war with a smaller one now."

Shortly after the capture of the islands the marquis Palmella came to England, and concerted measures with the Emperor for attacking the Usurper. Captain Sartorius volunteered to command the naval expedition, and two indifferent frigates were purchased and fitted out in the Thames as far as the Foreign Enlistment Bill would permit ; but notwithstanding all their precautions, they met with many difficulties, and one was seized in the Downs and detained for some time, but on reference to the proper authorities she was given up. Several naval officers accompanied Captain Sartorius for a summer cruize, as