

The Spaniards suspected no harm till Napoleon showed his hand by a disgraceful piece of kidnapping. King Charles IV. and his son, Prince Ferdinand, a worthless and useless pair, had been engaged in a bitter quarrel with each other. Bonaparte summoned them both to visit him at Bayonne, just across the French frontier, in order that he might arbitrate between them and heal their quarrel. They were foolish enough to obey this insolent mandate: when they arrived, however, he put them both in confinement, bullied them into signing an abdication, and sent them prisoners into France. He then took the astounding step of appointing his own brother Joseph Bonaparte as the successor of Charles IV., and the numerous French troops scattered through Spain everywhere proclaimed the usurper. The populace of Madrid rose, but was put down with ruthless severity, and Joseph made his appearance in the capital at the head of a strong guard.

Joseph  
Bonaparte  
proclaimed  
King of  
Spain.

Bonaparte had believed that centuries of misgovernment and disorganization had so broken the spirit of the Spanish nation that his impudent and treacherous scheme could be carried to a successful end. He was soon undeceived: the Spaniards, in spite of the decay of their ancient power and wealth, and the incompetence of their rulers, still possessed a healthy sense of national pride: they were, moreover, the most obstinate, fanatical, and revengeful race in Europe. Though deprived of their princes, and confronted with French garrisons treacherously installed in their fortresses, they sprang to arms in every province. In most quarters their raw levies were easily beaten by the French veterans, but a series of fortunate chances enabled the insurgents of the South to surround and capture at Baylen an army under General Dupont, which had forced its way into Andalusia (July 20, 1808). This was the first serious check which the French arms had sustained since Napoleon had been proclaimed emperor, and it had important results. Joseph

Resistance  
of the  
Spaniards—  
Capitulation  
of Baylen.