

the campaign
against Russia,
1807.

All central Europe now lay in Napoleon's hand. Another man would have preferred to rest before continuing his march of triumph, but Napoleon felt unsatisfied as long as there was any one who dared brave his legions. In order to overthrow the presumptuous ally of Prussia, the Czar Alexander, Napoleon now set out from Berlin, and in June, 1807, won a great victory over the Russians at Friedland. Then he magnanimously offered peace to Alexander, and to the surprise of the world the enemy of yesterday became the bosom friend of to-day.

The Treaty
of Tilsit.

The humilia-
tion of Prussia.

The Czar Alexander was a young man with a vivid imagination, and when he now met the great Corsican, under romantic circumstances, on a raft moored in the river Niemen, he fell completely under the spell of his personality. The consequence of the repeated deliberations of the two emperors, of which the disgraced king of Prussia was for the most part a silent witness, was the Peace of Tilsit (July, 1807). By this peace Russia was treated with kindness, but Prussia was thoroughly humiliated, and condemned to the sacrifice of half her territory. The Prussian provinces between the Elbe and Rhine were made the nucleus of a new kingdom of Westphalia for Napoleon's youngest brother Jerome, and the Prussian spoils of the later Polish Partitions were constituted as the grand-duchy of Warsaw, and given to the elector of Saxony. Prussia became a secondary state, with nothing more to boast of than that she still lived.

Alliance of
Napoleon and
Alexander

The treaty of peace was accompanied by an arrangement between Napoleon and Alexander by the terms of which they became close allies. This dramatic turn was the result of the fascination which the western conqueror exercised upon the pliable and romantic Czar, who now formally promised to join Napoleon in his war against England, in case that power would not straightway make peace. In return the French sovereign held out the prospect of aiding Russia in

her projects upon Turkey, and diverted his new friend with an imaginative picture of a Europe divided, as in Roman times, between an emperor of the west and another of the east.

The Peace of Tilsit carried Napoleon to the zenith of his career, for with Russia as his ally, the rest of the Continent was subject to his will and obliged to wear his yoke. Let us for a moment with the map in hand review his position. He held France and the kingdom of Italy, ruling them directly and absolutely, and this firm nucleus he had surrounded with a host of dependencies, where subject-sovereigns enjoyed vacant and nominal honors. In Germany he had created the Confederation of the Rhine; he controlled the Swiss Republic under the title of Mediator; and he had put his brothers and relatives as instruments of his will in various territories, Louis becoming king of Holland, Joseph king of Naples, his favorite, Jerome, king of Westphalia, and his brother-in-law, the brilliant cavalry leader Murat, grand-duke of Berg. These last two states, Westphalia and Berg, were artificial creations out of the German spoils, and were incorporated with the Confederation of the Rhine. By a succession of unparalleled strokes, delivered between 1805 and 1807, he had humbled Austria, Prussia, and Russia, had silenced all opposition on the Continent, and could now return to the starting-point of his imperial wars, the struggle with England.

Napoleon at
the height of
his power.

This struggle is one of the most fascinating and momentous chapters in Napoleon's career. Adjourned at the Peace of Amiens (1802), it had broken out again the next year, and led to the armament of Boulogne and the plan to invade the island. The project was hair-brained while England with a superior fleet controlled the Channel, and its chances were entirely blasted when in October, 1805, Nelson, the British naval hero, destroyed the allied French and Spanish fleets

The war with
England.

The Continental System.

off Trafalgar. Since then fighting on the seas had practically ceased; Napoleon might march with his invincible hosts from capital to capital, but his control stopped with the shore. Undismayed, he resolved now to strike at England indirectly by ruining her commerce and sapping her wealth. This commercial war has received the name of the Continental System, and the opening gun was fired in the Decrees issued from Berlin in November, 1806, by which Napoleon ordered the seizure of all British goods in his own or allied territory, and excluded from the ports of France and her allies all ships hailing from Great Britain. The necessary supplies of colonial produce, such as sugar and coffee, Napoleon hoped to have furnished by neutral vessels; but the British Government shattered this illusion by answering his challenge with the so-called Orders in Council, forbidding neutral ships, under penalty of seizure, to trade between ports from which Britain was excluded. This blow called for another. Napoleon now determined on nothing less than to seal the Continent hermetically to English trade by obliging every state, great and small, to accept the Continental System. Prussia and Austria had already yielded, and one of the articles of the alliance of Tilsit provided not only that Russia should follow in their footsteps, but also that Alexander should join Napoleon in forcing the exclusion of British goods upon the few small states which had thus far resisted, namely, Denmark, Sweden, and Portugal.

The Continental System prepares Napoleon's overthrow.

The adoption of the Continental System became the turning-point of Napoleon's career and the beginning of his downfall, for not only did it involve him in new conquests, but by spreading misery far and wide, through the ruin of commerce and industry, created a discontent which lost him his popularity, and finally rose in ever-renewed waves of hatred to a sea of universal revolt. It is well to remember in this connection that Napoleon's astonishing successes

were won over old-fashioned, absolute monarchies, only remotely in touch with their own peoples. In Italy and Germany the masses to a considerable extent sympathized with Napoleon, for he represented the doctrines of the French Revolution, and his armies brought in their train the overthrow of such feudal iniquities as serfdom and the reign of privilege. But this precious support the emperor sacrificed when he paralyzed the economic life of Europe and carried exasperation into every city and village. Greeted at first as a liberator, he was gradually cursed as a scourge, and reaped the harvest of his policy in a series of national revolts which swept himself, his throne, and his family off the face of Europe. It is of course questionable whether Napoleon's cosmopolitan empire, composed of many proud and spirited nationalities, could have been fashioned even by his genius into a durable form; in any case it is certain that by the Continental System he took measures to secure his own failure.

Acting upon the arrangements of Tilsit, Napoleon first turned upon little Portugal with the command that she seize all British goods and close her ports to British commerce. On her refusal he occupied her territory with an army, and drove her royal family across the seas to Brazil.

Invasion of Portugal, 1807.

Here was brutality and violence, but it dwindled to innocence compared with what happened immediately after in Spain, for there the emperor struck a friend and ally. The history of Spain during the French Revolution is a miserable tale, largely because of the despicable character of the king, Charles IV., and the corruption of the court. Having made war upon the Revolution in its first stage, the king had as early as 1795 signed a peace, which had shortly after ripened into an alliance. For the sake of his good friend Napoleon, Charles IV. had joined his fleet to that of France, and also for the sake of that friend he had sacri-

The weak policy of Spain during the Revolution.