Before we proceed to relate the events of this campaign, we must very briefly notice the territorial divisions of Italy at the period when the French Republic was established in 1792, and its political condition at the beginning of 1796. The kingdom of Sardinia—consisting of Savoy, Nice, Piedmont, and the island of Sardinia—was under Victor Amadeus III. This prince had joined the Coalition against France, and Savoy and Nice, lying convenient to the revolutionists, were very soon seized. But he continued to resist, although little able to struggle against his dangerous neighbour. The republic of Genoa was neutral; but an Anti-Gallican party had given offence to the Directory, and the Genoese oligarchy were not likely to be treated with kindness. The Grand Duchy of Tuscany, under Ferdinand III., had recognized the French Republic at an early period. The small republic of Lucca was independent of Tuscany. The States of the Church, under Pope Pius VI., were so wretchedly administered—the people were so servile and degraded—that the anathemas of the sovereign pontiff against the Revolution were not likely to divert the French armies from plundering Rome, and devastating the provinces. The Kingdom of Naples, including Sicily, was under Ferdinand IV., a weak Bourbon prince, married to the sister of Marie Antoinette. The Duchy of Modena was governed by Ercole Renaldo, a descendant of the house of Este. The Duchy of Parma was ruled by a Spanish prince, Don Ferdinand. The two Duchies of Milan and Mantua, forming Lombardy, were under the emperor of Germany, Francis II. The Republic of Venice had declared against France in 1793; but had subsequently adopted a neutral policy, and had compelled the head of the French Bourbon family to quit Verona. Such were the various Italian States to which the French armies carried their promises and their threats—whose people they harassed with confiscations, and deluded with the prospect of Italian unity and freedom.

The French army was posted on the Riviera, west of Genoa. It numbered about 40.000 men, who were in a very wretched condition, badly clothed, without pay. Bonaparte brought them a little money; but he also brought something more efficient even than money—the principle that war should support war, and that whatever was wanting should be supplied by the people with whom they came to fraternize. He had able generals and an active staff—Massena, Augereau, Serurier, Berthier. Opposed to the French were the Austrian general Beaulieu, with 30,000 men, and the Austro-Sardinian force of 22,000 men, under Colli. Bonaparte was received by the army with little enthusiasm, but the

French troops soon recognized a general to their mind—"You are ill-fed and almost naked; the government owes you much, but can do nothing for you. I will lead you into the most fertile plains of the world—to grand towns and wealthy provinces, where you will find glory and riches."* On the 12th of April, Bonaparte attacked the Austrian centre, consisting of 10,000 men under D'Argenteau, and routing them at Montenotte, cut off the communication between Beaulieu and Colli. He defeated in succession these two generals. The king of Sardinia was terrified, and demanded an armistice; which the French general agreed to conclude upon being put in possession of the fortresses of Coni, Ceva, and Tortona, the keys of Piedmont. The court of Turin also sent ambassadors to Paris to negociate a peace, which was signed on the 15th of May upon the humiliating conditions of resigning to France eight frontier fortresses till a general peace, and confirming to France the possession of Savoy and Nice in perpetuity. General Beaulieu now gave up Piedmont as lost; crossed the Po; and applied himself to the defence of the Austrian possessions in Lombardy. The French followed him; and compelled his army to retire to the Adda. On the 9th of May, the French were before Lodi. The famous passage of the bridge was accomplished by a rapid and daring movement, which sat at nought the twenty pieces of cannon by which it was defended. Beaulieu retreated beyond the Mincio; and the French entered Milan on the 15th of May. There was now a little spare time to gather some of the spoils of five weeks' fighting. The eulogistic historian, Thiers, tells us that the exactions of Bonaparte were indispensable. He levied a contribution of twenty million francs on the Milanese. He granted an armistice to the duke of Modena upon the payment of ten millions. Salicette, the commissioner of the Directory, and their politic general, robbed the Monte di Pietà of Milan of the valuables deposited there as pledges for money lent. These measures were very grievous to the tender heart of Bonaparte, "for they retarded the march of public spirit," says M. Thiers. He sent millions to the Directory, much of which was intercepted in its way into the public coffers. He had always ample means for corrupting those in the employ of the Italian governments. It is only justice to say that a very small share of the Italian spoils went into Bonaparte's own pocket. The exactions of the French led to resistance amongst the oppressed people of Milan and of Pavia. In Pavia there was a serious revolt, and some of the French were killed. Bonaparte hurried there with a sufficient force; broke down the

* Thiers, "Revolution," livre xxxiii.

gates with cannon; and gave the city up to pillage—"for three hours," says M. Thiers; for twenty-four hours, say more reliable authorities. "There was only a thousand men," writes the candid historian, "and this small number could cause no serious disasters in a town so considerable as Pavia." No doubt these thousand brigands did their spiriting gently—the very Claude Duvals of robbers. Ladies would gladly yield their jewels to the polite strangers; and would accept their caresses as a signal honour. Bonaparte, after the sack of Pavia, sent his cavalry into the neighbouring country, who sabred a large number of the revolted peasantry. A novel species of contribution was now insisted upon, as the French armies marched from city to city, and dictated the terms upon which their forbearance might be purchased. It was not sufficient that the duke of Parma should obtain an armistice by large money payments and supplies of horses and stores, but he must give twenty of his choicest paintings to be sent to Paris. The duke of Modena had to purchase a temporary respite of the seizure of his dominions, by contributing not only millions of livres, but treasures of art which no money could buy. Bonaparte thus early saw his way to flatter the national vanity of the French, by gathering for the Parisians those works of genius which lost half their interest when taken away from the lands which had produced them, and from the people who inherited them. Send me artists and scholars, wrote Bonaparte to the Directory, to assist me in choosing from the galleries, museums, libraries, and churches of Italy, the best paintings, sculptures, and manuscripts for our *Musée* of the Louvre.

The Austrian general, Beaulieu, having arranged for the defence of Mantua, retreated into the mountains of the Tyrol. His army had temporarily occupied the Venetian town of Peschiera; which occupation was an excuse for Bonaparte seizing the place upon its being abandoned by Beaulieu; and subsequently for demanding admittance to the Venetian city of Verona, thus treating Venice as a hostile power. He then turned his arms against the Pope, who was terrified into an armistice, which was bought by money contributions, and by precious works of art and rare manuscripts. Tuscany was at peace with the French. But the warehouses of Leghorn were full of English merchandize, and thither Bonaparte rapidly marched, seized all the goods belonging to "the enemies of the republic" who had fled to their ships; and levied a contribution of five millions of francs upon the native merchants as the permission for them to keep the other property which had been entrusted to them by English and Portuguese houses. In these odious

transactions Bonaparte was the instrument of the Directory; and he sometimes remonstrated against the impolicy of their violence and rapacity, but never against the iniquity. The Austrian Government superseded general Beaulieu, and sent a gallant veteran, general Wurmser, to take the chief command of a new army in Italy. With the old traditional strategical mistake of dividing their forces, whilst the young French general invariably concentrated all his power for attack or defence, the Austrians moved towards Mantua in two separate divisions. Bonaparte attacked and routed the army under general Quosdanowich, and the army under general Wurmser.

But the Austrians were not yet disposed to give up the great struggle. The French main army under Bonaparte was weakened by the necessity of maintaining divisions to blockade Mantua, to occupy Verona and Legnano, and to guard some of the passes of the Tyrol. Another Austrian army of sixty thousand men advanced in two divisions, one under general Alvinzy, the other under general Davidowich. On the 12th of November Bonaparte attacked Alvinzy at Caldiero; but he sustained very heavy loss, and was compelled to retire into Verona. He wrote a desponding letter to the Directory; but that mood was not of long duration. He was one of that order of minds who "out of the nettle, danger, can pluck the flower, safety." On the night of the 14th he marched in silence out of Verona, as if retreating. He moved rapidly by the right bank of the Adige, which he crossed at Ronco, where he had made a temporary bridge. He was now in a marshy tract, between the Adige and the Alpone; which river it was necessary to cross before he could reach Villanova, where the Austrian baggage and stores were stationed, in the rear of Alvinzy's army. One of the causeways of the morass led to the bridge of Arcole. Three times the passage of this bridge was obstinately contested on the 15th of November, Bonaparte himself leading his grenadiers in one of the desperate attempts to contend against the Austrian batteries. For three days this battle of Arcole, the most severe of the Italian war, went on. The third day concluded the terrible conflict, when Alvinzy retreated towards Vicenza. Bonaparte had prevented the junction of the two Austrian armies. The battle of Arcole made a profound impression upon Europe. It ought to have shown the continental powers where their safety lay. It should have taught them a lesson which they too often forgot in a long series of fruitless endeavours: "Matched against a competitor of such extraordinary activity, it was incumbent on them to lay aside the embarrassments of ancient forms and ancient prejudices; and

to gird up the skirts of their luxurious and effeminate magnificence." *

The combined operations upon the Rhine of the French generals, Jourdan and Moreau, were not favourable to the Republic. The archduke Charles encountered Jourdan when he had crossed the Rhine in June, and had advanced to Lahn. The French army was driven back, and recrossed the Rhine. Moreau carried his army over the Rhine at Strasbourg, and defeated the Austrian general Latour. The archduke fell back to the Danube. Jourdan, reassured by the operations of Moreau, again advanced towards Bohemia. The archduke fought a battle with Moreau; crossed the Danube; and drove back Jourdan in a series of well-concerted attacks. Moreau, separated by a long interval from Jourdan, and exposed to the assaults of the archduke on his front, and to those of Latour on his rear, ascended the Danube, and accomplished his retreat through the Black Forest. This celebrated movement saved his army from an imminent danger. After fighting several battles, Moreau finally reached Strasbourg. The wonderful success of Bonaparte in Italy is partly to be attributed to the contempt in which he held the orders of the Directory. The plan of the German campaign was laid down in Paris, and hence its failure.

The successes of the Austrians in Germany, appeared to the English government more important than the career of Bonaparte in Italy. Lord Grenville thought in September, that if Moreau were "dispatched, and that quickly, there will be time and means to make Bonaparte suffer severely for his late advanced move." Our situation, he considered, was very much improved.† The moment was deemed favourable to open negotiations with the French Directory for peace; although some previous overtures had been contemptuously received. Lord Malmesbury was appointed as plenipotentiary on the part of his Britannic majesty, and he arrived in Paris on the 22nd of October. Burke held that any attempt to negotiate for "a Regicide Peace" was a disgrace and a humiliation for England. He wrote under the full influence of his own enthusiasm, and of the passions of the emigrants by whom he was surrounded. M. Thiers, half a century after 1796, when national prejudices ought to have been softened down by historical truth, adopts as insolent a tone in relating the progress of this negotiation as if the mantle of Barras had descended upon his shoulders. Pitt, he says, demanded passports for an envoy to be sent on the part of Great Britain. Pitt had no real wish for peace;

* Canning, in "Quarterly Review," vol. iv. p. 253.
† "Court and Cabinets of George III.," vol. iii. p. 351.

he only wanted to satisfy public opinion; he knew that his terms would not be accepted; but to obtain sixty thousand militia, and fifteen thousand sailors, he would pretend that he had done all he could for peace—"*son possible pour traiter.*" Without the hope of obtaining peace, he made an advance towards the Directory. Thus M. Thiers repeats, in almost the same words, the mean insinuations with which the Directory announced to the Council of Five Hundred the proposal of Great Britain to negotiate. He adds, "this surprising step of the most implacable enemy of our republic was a glory for her. The English aristocracy was thus *reduced* to demand peace from the regicide republic." * The historian of "the Revolution" has taken as little pains to look at the authentic relations of this episode of diplomacy, as he has taken to understand the family name of the negotiator chosen by Pitt, when he calls him "*lord Malmesbury, autrefois sir Harry.*" †

For nearly four years the condition of France, as exhibited in the appearance of the country, had been as little known to the English as Japan. Lord Malmesbury had his eyes open, and Mr. Talbot, a gentleman connected with the embassy, has left a very interesting account of what he observed. Many of the houses on the road from Calais to Paris were shut up; very few of the churches appeared to be open; but the land throughout was in a state of high cultivation, though there were comparatively few men at work. The farmers had become wealthy proprietors, by receiving depreciated assignats for their produce, and buying estates—national domains—with that paper money, at the sum which it represented. In Paris the streets were crowded, the shops tolerably well supplied, the theatres well attended, some private carriages, and a great number of public vehicles: "All this," says the sensible attaché, "brought to my reflection how very difficult a matter it must be to destroy a great country." ‡

It would be tedious to follow the course of this negotiation. Lord Malmesbury arrived at Paris on the 22nd of October; he left Paris on the 21st of December. The points of difference between the two governments were too serious to be overcome by any anxiety of the prime minister of Great Britain for peace, even if the French Directory, rendered more warlike than ever by the successes of Bonaparte, could have regarded the real welfare of France more than its false glories. Lord Malmesbury required as a *sine quâ non*, that the Netherlands should not be annexed to France.

* Thiers, livre xxxiv.
† Sir James *Harris* was raised to the peerage as Earl of Malmesbury.
‡ "Court, &c., of George III.," vol. iii. p. 355.

M. Delacroix, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, held that the banks of the Rhine were the natural limits of France. It was in vain to diplomatize. Mr. Pitt had to call upon his country for new sacrifices, and the French Directory had to send new armies to seize the means of subsistence in the lands which Bonaparte was revolutionizing.

At a period of less public excitement than was occasioned by other events which marked the close of the year 1796, the death of Catharine II., Empress of Russia, on the 10th of November, and the retirement of Washington from the Presidency of the United States, in December, would have been fruitful sources of political speculation. The sudden decease of Catharine, who for thirty-six years had been the autocrat of all the Russias, was in some degree a triumph for the French republic; and that event probably decided the Directory in suddenly breaking off the negotiation for peace with England. She was preparing to take part in the coalition against France. Her successor, Paul, was inclining to the French interests. The retirement of Washington interrupted the continuance of that system of neutrality by which he had preserved the American republic from the dangers attendant upon the extreme opinions of the federalist and the democratic parties—the one disposed, however timidly, to take part with England in the great European crisis; the other, of which Jefferson was the head, manifesting hostility to the mother-country and favour to France, in a manner that savoured more of evil passions than of wise statesmanship. Washington regarded with alarm the Societies, modelled upon the Jacobin clubs, which had sprung up in the United States; and his expression of this feeling produced in the democratic party a violent hostility to the treaty which had been concluded under his auspices with Great Britain in 1795. Washington's retirement was preceded by manifestations of party spirit against the policy of the great founder and preserver of the republic. Had his nature been different—had his ambition been less under the control of his virtue,—he might have taken up the sword, and, sweeping away his enemies, have raised himself to supreme power upon the ruins of his country's liberty. He retired to his estate of Mount Vernon, to pass the rest of his days as a private citizen. At this period, the young conqueror of Italy was meditating upon plans of rising to what some would deem the pinnacle of human greatness. His scheme of glory was accomplished. He founded a military despotism. Washington's scheme of glory was also realized. He had been a ruler of free men—ruling by the power of law. He laid down his authority when he had done the work to which he was called, most

happy in this, that ambition of a selfish order could never be justified by his example.

On the 17th December, two days before lord Malmesbury left Paris, an expedition went out from Brest, consisting of seventeen sail of the line and thirteen frigates. Its destination was Ireland, with an army of twenty thousand men, under the command of Hoche, who had succeeded in the pacification of La Vendée. A great storm dispersed this formidable fleet. A portion of the squadron entered Bantry Bay on the 24th of December. It consisted of seven sail of the line and ten smaller vessels. The general who was to advance with the troops into the interior—who was to support the disaffected, and revolutionize the government—had been separated from the rest of the armament. The officers who were with the troops in Bantry Bay were desirous to effect a landing. The admiral refused to comply with their requisition, and sailed back to Brest. The other divisions of the French fleet also sought to return. Several ships were captured, and others reached the French ports in a shattered condition. Some amongst our statesmen knew the danger, if such a landing as that contemplated by the Directory had been effected. Lord Mornington wrote, in September, "My great fear is a blow in Ireland, before sufficient preparation has been made for our defence in that most vulnerable, and at the same time mortal part." * Lord Malmesbury, in the middle of November, gave an intimation to Lord Grenville that an expedition was meditated against Ireland; that the troops were encouraged to embark by the most exaggerated reports of the temper of the country. Loyal Irishmen were grateful that "the goodness of Providence to us has exhibited a second armada." But even loyal men inquired why the coast had been left wholly unprotected by our fleet for seventeen days; why admiral Colpoys could not follow the French fleet for want of water and provisions; why lord Bridport was lying at Spithead, not even ready for sea, instead of being off Ushant." †

* "Life of Sidmouth," vol. ii. p. 474.

† *Ibid.*, p. 181.