

## CHAPTER V.

Preliminaries of Leoben.—Transfer of Venice to Austria.—Peace of Campo Formio.—Victory of Admiral Duncan off Camperdown.—Bonaparte arrives in Paris.—Is appointed to the command of the Army of England.—Preparations for invasion.—The scheme postponed.—An expedition to Egypt prepared at Toulon.—Nelson appointed to command a squadron in the Mediterranean.—The expedition sails.—Malta seized.—Bonaparte lands at Alexandria.—Nelson has returned to Naples.—Alexandria taken by assault.—Battle of the Pyramids.—The French at Cairo.—Nelson returns to Alexandria.—The Battle of the Nile.—Rejoicings in England, and new hopes.—An income tax first imposed.—Volunteers.—Ireland.

ENGLAND has to bear many unjust reproaches when her children are not "kind and natural." Byron reproaches his country with the humiliation of Venice:

"Thy lot  
Is shameful to the nations,—most of a  
Albion, to thee."

Albion in 1814 left Venice to the tender mercies of Austria; but it was the French Republic that in 1794 betrayed the sister Republic into the hands of the Emperor, as the bribe to the preliminaries of Leoben and the peace of Campo Formio. The history of nations exhibits no example of greater baseness than this act of Bonaparte—for it was his sole act, contrary to the instructions of the Directory. By a treaty with the Democratic party in Venice made on the 16th of May, the French had abolished the ancient oligarchical government; had filled the city with troops; had exacted contributions in money, in ships, and in works of art. They carried off the famous horses of St. Mark, to be placed on the triumphal arch of the Tuileries. These were common proceedings. Bonaparte during the summer was negotiating with the cabinet of Vienna for exchanges of territories and for transfers of populations, in a spirit quite as despotic as that of the absolute governments which had partitioned Poland. He had stirred up the revolutionary party in the Venetian States to insurrection, on the assurance that he would establish a democratic Republic. The Doge, and the Council of Ten, and the Senate had fallen, to give place to an executive body chosen by the suffrages of the people. Venice, after these changes, believed that the Republic, as newly modelled, was under the protection of France, whose mission was

to bestow liberty upon the nations. On the 26th of May, Bonaparte wrote to the municipality of the city, "In every circumstance I shall do what lies in my power to give you proof of my desire to consolidate your liberties, and to see unhappy Italy at length assume the place to which it is entitled in the theatre of the world, free and independent of all strangers." Six weeks before this declaration he had agreed in the secret preliminaries of Leoben to cede Venice to the Emperor. After the Eighteenth Fructidor, Bonaparte was instructed by the Directory not to cede Venice to the Emperor; and Bonaparte returned for answer that if that was their resolve, peace was impracticable. He was determined that a peace should be made; and he gave very sufficient reasons for making it at any sacrifice of principle. The reasons were such as he repeated to the secretary of the French legation at Venice, after the peace had been concluded. "Never has France adopted the maximum of making war for the sake of other nations: I should like to see the principle of philosophy or morality which should command us to sacrifice forty thousand Frenchmen." He wished that the declaimers who raved about the establishment of republics everywhere, "would make a winter campaign." The Austrian Plenipotentiary, Cobentzel, with three assistant negotiators,—according to a story which is in agreement with Bonaparte's melodramatic propensities,—were terrified by a display of well-timed passion, into the terms proposed by the French. On the 16th of October a final conference took place at Udine. The four Austrian negotiators sat on one side of a long table; Bonaparte sat alone on the other side. They had agreed that France should have Flanders and the line of the Rhine; the islands of Corfu, Zante and Cephalonia, and the Venetian districts of Albania: that the Emperor should have Dalmatia, Istria, and the other Venetian territory as far as the Adige and the Po, with the city of Venice. Lombardy was to form part of the Cisalpine Republic, which Bonaparte had organized: and which was also to include the duchy of Reggio and other small Italian States. The great point in dispute was whether Mantua should belong to this Republic or to the Emperor. Cobentzel maintained, that as the Emperor had consented to give up Mayence, he ought to retain Mantua; and in a lengthened arguement he hinted that a negotiator was forgetful of his duty when he sought to sacrifice the repose of his country to his military ambition. A costly tea service, presented to Cobentzel by the Empress Catharine, was upon a stand near Bonaparte. He took the tray in his hands, saying, "If to keep Mantua is your ultimatum, war is declared; but mind you, in three months I will

break your monarchy in pieces, as I now break this porcelain," dashing the service upon the floor. He was a great actor, and needed not the future lessons of Talma.\* The peace of Campo Formio was concluded the next day. Amongst the reasons for peace with Austria which the conqueror of Italy assigned to the Directory was this,—“The war with England will open to us a new field for active operations more vast and splendid.” On the day when the signature of the treaty of Campo Formio was known at Paris, the Directory created an army to be called “The army of England,” and appointed Bonaparte to its command. In a Proclamation signed by Lépaux it was announced that “the army of England is about to dictate peace in London, and there, republicans, you shall find your auxiliaries. . . . Conducted by the hero who has so long led you in the path of victory, you will be followed by the applause of every just and virtuous mind.” Parliamentary reformers; artisans reduced to wretchedness by the war; Irish bearing the chain of a court fed by their blood—these, according to the Directory, were to fraternize with the hero of Italy. He had given the world a noble evidence of his aspirations for the liberty and happiness of revolutionized States, when he delivered Venice, bound hand and foot, to be trodden upon by Austria.

There was something of bravado in the threat of the Directory to make an immediate descent upon England or upon Ireland; for their means of invasion had been signally crippled by the great victory over the Dutch fleet, on the 11th of October, off Camperdown. Admiral Duncan had been half a century in the navy when he fought this battle. He had sustained the deep mortification of having been deserted by the greater portion of his fleet, and left in his own ship, the *Venerable*, in company only with the *Adamant*, to keep up the blockade of the Texel. By making repeated signals, as if to a fleet in the offing, he deceived the Dutch as to the real amount of his force. When the mutiny was suppressed, ships gradually joined him. But at the beginning of October, the *Venerable*, and other vessels which had suffered from heavy gales, and were in want of stores, put into Yarmouth Roads, leaving the Dutch to be watched by a small squadron of observation. The fleet had been busied for several days in victualling and refitting, when early in the morning of the 9th a lugger appeared at the back of Yarmouth sands and gave the signal for an enemy. Before noon Duncan was at sea with eleven sail of the line. He directed his

\* Bourienne, the secretary of Bonaparte, denies the truth of this story. Thiers gives it without any qualification.

course straight across to his old station. He was joined by three ships; and on the 11th he got sight of the squadron of observation, with signals flying for an enemy to leeward. In less than an hour he came up with the enemy. The land between Egmont and Camperdown was about nine miles to leeward. Duncan took the bold resolve to pass through the Dutch line, and thus to place himself between the enemy and their own shores, to which they were fast approaching. Soon after noon every ship of the British fleet had broken the enemy's line and was hotly engaged. The coast was covered for miles with thousands of spectators. Duncan's ship, the *Venerable*, was engaged for three hours with the *Vryheid*, the flag-ship of admiral De Winter. The brave Dutchman did not strike till all his masts had gone overboard and half his crew were killed or wounded. Admiral Onslow was engaged in a similar close fight with the Dutch vice-admiral, who did not yield till he was equally crippled. By four in the afternoon the victory was clearly decided. But during the fight the British squadron had drifted so near the land as to be only in five fathoms water. It required the greatest exertion to prevent the ships from getting into the shallows; and this necessity favoured the escape of some of the Dutchmen. Eight ships of the line, two of fifty-six guns, and two frigates, were captured. The carnage on both sides was very great. The Dutch fired at the hulls of our ships, instead of at the masts and rigging, which was the practice of the French and Spaniards; and this mode of assault involved a severe loss of our men. The prizes with difficulty reached the English shores, with tottering masts and hulls full of shot-holes. Duncan made sail to the Nore; where the presence of a triumphant fleet excited feelings in many official visitors very different from those with which the mutinous fleet of the previous June had been regarded. Mr. Addington, the Speaker, went on board the *Venerable*; conversed with De Winter and the other Dutch admiral who were prisoners; admired the noble stature and manly bearing of Duncan; and visited the wounded in their hammocks. “We hope, sir,” said some of the brave fellows to the Speaker, “we have now made atonement for our late offence.” \*

The conqueror of Italy arrived in Paris on the 5th of December. He had a difficult part to play. He despised the Directory, who were jealous and afraid of him. His policy was to be quiet. To make a dash at supreme power was as yet too hazardous. He was received with all the magnificence of those theatrical displays which had been so attractive during the horrors of the Revolution,

\* “Life of Sidmouth,” vol. i. p. 194.

when on the 10th of December he presented the treaty of Campo Formio to the Directors at their palace of the Luxembourg. His demeanour was modest and unassuming. Barras extolled him beyond all the heroes of the antique world; and invited him to proceed upon a new career of glory—to hoist the tri-coloured flag on the Tower of London. Bonaparte accepted the command of the army of England. The Directory were in earnest in their hostility to the persevering enemy whose desire for peace they had rudely repelled. To an absolute government, as that of the French Republic then was in reality, no measure, however injurious to its own subjects, stands in the way of its political calculations. English merchandize could not be kept out of France, however severe were the penalties against its introduction. On the 4th of January, throughout the whole French territory, domiciliary visits were made for the purpose of seizing the woven fabrics and the hardware that English industry could produce cheaply, and which no custom-house vigilance could keep out. Bonaparte made a few rapid visits to the ports bordering the British channel; saw their arsenals and their gun-boats; and appeared to take a great interest in the mighty preparations which the Directory believed would place England at their feet. Bonaparte took a more sober view of the difficulties of the enterprize. On his return from his journey to the coast, he said to Bourienne—"It would be too great a risk: I will not run it. I will not sport thus with the fate of France."

The winter passed away, the spring came on, and still the cry of invasion was echoed in every port from Antwerp to Toulon; and Frenchmen asked impatiently when the great attempt would be made. On the 20th of April a royal message was delivered to Parliament, that "from various advices received by his majesty it appears that the preparations for the embarkation of troops and warlike stores are carried on with considerable and increasing activity in the ports of France, Flanders, and Holland, with the avowed design of attempting the invasion of his majesty's dominions." On this occasion Sheridan expressed his own feelings, and the feelings of the country, in a burst of patriotism which soared far above party objects: "It is not glory the French seek for; they are already gorged with it: it is not territory they grasp at; they are already encumbered with the extent they have acquired. What, then, is their object? They come for what they really want: they come for ships, for commerce, for credit, and for capital. They come for the sinews, the bones, the marrow, the very heart's blood of Britain." Sheridan at the same time declared that his political enmity to his majesty's present ministers was irreconcilable; that

his attachment to his right honourable friend (Fox), and to his political principles, was unaltered and unalterable. Fox, some months previous, had seceded from Parliament. There was no general secession of the Whig party; but in a letter to lord Holland, Fox expressed his strong dislike to attend again himself.\* In a subsequent letter he says, "A seceder I will be, till I see a very different state of things from the present; and indeed if they were to alter more materially than can be expected, it would be with more reluctance than I can describe, or than is perhaps reasonable, that I should return to politics."† As the head of a great party he had lost his power. Whether he was wise, or true to his duty as a patriot, to retire at a season of such danger to his pleasant studies at St. Anne's Hill, may be doubtful. It is delightful, however, to contemplate a great orator and a man of the world so easily surrendering the excitements of his former life; reading the Iliad; writing of Prior, and Ariosto, and Dryden, and La Fontaine; going through Lucretius regularly; and taking up Chaucer upon his nephew's suggestion. It is pleasant to see how literature can fill up an aching void, however created.

The "avowed design" of the invasion of our country was a feint. Bonaparte had persuaded the Directory to agree to an enterprize which, if successful, would be more permanently injurious to England than a landing in Kent and a march upon London, with the certainty that the country could not be held, and that not an invader would return to exhibit his booty. The vast preparations in the ports of the Mediterranean for a great enterprize were given out by the French government to be in connection with the armaments in the ports of the Channel. Large bodies of troops were collected at Toulon, at Genoa, at Ajaccio, at Civita Vecchia; and this army was called the left wing of the army of England. Bonaparte had with great difficulty persuaded the Directory to postpone their scheme for the invasion of the British islands, and to permit him to embark an army for Egypt, the possession of which country, he maintained, would open to France the commerce of the East, and prepare the way for the conquest of India. Having subdued Egypt, he would return before another winter to plant the tricolour on the Tower of London. In April, Bonaparte was appointed general-in-chief of the Army of the East. The secret had been well kept. The means of furnishing this armament had been supplied by the appropriation of three millions of treasure which had been seized at Berne, and by forced contributions levied at Genoa and at Rome. The French government, at the beginning of Janu-

\* "Correspondence," vol. iii. p. 144.

† *Ibid.*, p. 246.

ary, had stirred up the democratic party in some of the Swiss Cantons, and had sent their troops to attack those Cantons which resisted the demand of the fraternizing French republicans that the ancient constitution of the republic of Switzerland should be abolished, and a republic created after the new model. The internal dissensions in some of the Cantons favoured this attempt to introduce the theories of liberty and equality in this ancient stronghold of freedom. The principal object of the French commander was plunder. After a brave resistance on the part of the Bernese, Berne was entered by the French on the 5th of March. Bonaparte was very quickly in communication with the French commissioners, directing them how to forward the spoil of the Bernese treasury to Toulon. At Rome, which the French army had entered at the end of January, with a pre-concerted determination to overturn the papal government, the pillage, conducted under the orders of the superior officers, was more unsparing than that which followed the entrance of Alaric, when at the hour of midnight "the inhabitants were awakened by the tremendous sound of the Gothic trumpet." Unlike the king of the Goths, Massena, who commanded the French, did not massacre the people; unlike Alaric also in this, that whilst the barbarian exhorted his troops "to respect the churches of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul as holy and inviolable sanctuaries,"\* the French carried off the priestly vestments, the sacred vessels, and the famous altar-pieces of modern Rome, little of such spoils being reserved for public uses, but sold to the Jews who followed the camp. Some of the francs and piastres that the Jews paid for the supply of their melting-pots found their way to Napoleon at Toulon. A larger portion went into the bags of Massena and his rapacious staff.

The French fleet under admiral Brueys was in the harbour of Toulon, ready to sail upon its secret destination. Something different from the invasion of England was in contemplation; for on board the admiral's ship, *l'Orient*, were a hundred literary men and artists, mathematicians and naturalists, who were certainly not required to enlighten the French upon the native productions or the antiquities of the British isles. Bonaparte arrived at Toulon on the 9th of May, and issued one of his grandiloquent proclamations to his troops. The armament consisted of thirteen ships of the line, many frigates and corvettes, and four hundred transports. The army which it was to carry to some unknown shore consisted of forty thousand men. On the 19th of May this formidable expedition left the great French harbour of the Mediterranean. On

\* See Gibbon, A. D. 410, chap. xxxi.

the day when Bonaparte arrived at Toulon, Nelson had sailed from Gibraltar, with three seventy-fours, four frigates, and a sloop, to watch the movements of the enemy. Since the most daring of British naval commanders had fought in the battle of St. Vincent, he had lost an arm in an unsuccessful attack upon the island of Teneriffe. For some time his spirit was depressed, and he thought that a left-handed admiral could never again be useful. He had lost also his right eye, and was severely wounded in his body. But he had not lost that indomitable spirit which rose superior to wounds and weakness of constitution. He rested some time at home; and then, early in 1798, sailed in the *Vanguard* to join the fleet under lord St. Vincent. The Admiralty had suggested, and lord St. Vincent had previously determined, that a detachment of the squadron blockading the Spanish fleet should sail to the Mediterranean, under the command of Nelson. The seniors of the fleet were offended at this preference of a junior officer; and men of routine at home shrugged their shoulders, and feared, with the cold lord Grenville, that Nelson "will do something too desperate."\* He was not stinted in his means, being finally reinforced with ten of the best ships of St. Vincent's fleet.

The first operation of Bonaparte was the seizure of Malta. His fleet was in sight of the island on the 9th of June. He had other weapons than his cannon for the reduction of a place deemed impregnable. The Order of St. John of Jerusalem had held the real sovereignty of the island since 1530. These Knights of Malta, powerful at sea, had formed one of the bulwarks of Christendom against the Ottomans. They had gradually lost their warlike prowess, as well as their religious austerity; and Malta, protected by its fortifications, became the seat of luxury for this last of the monastic military orders, whose occupation was gone. Bonaparte had confiscated their property in Italy; and he had sent a skilful agent to the island to sow dissensions amongst the Knights, and thus to prepare the way for the fall of the community. There were many French Knights among them, to whom the principal military commands had been entrusted by the Grand Master, a weak German. Bonaparte, on the 9th of June, sent a demand to the Grand Master, that his whole fleet should be permitted to enter the great harbour for the purpose of taking in water. The reply was that, according to the rules of the Order, only two ships, or at most four, could be allowed to enter the port at one time. The answer was interpreted as equivalent to a declaration of hostility; and Bonaparte issued orders that the army should disembark the next morn-

\* "Court, &c., of George III.," vol. ii. p. 406.

ing on the coasts of the island wherever a landing could be effected. The island was taken almost without opposition; the French Knights declaring that they would not fight against their countrymen. On the 13th of June, the French were put in possession of La Valletta and the surrounding forts. Bonaparte made all sorts of promises of compensation to the recreant Knights, which the Directory were not very careful to keep. He landed to examine his prize; when general Caffarelli, who accompanied him, said, "We are very lucky that there was somebody in the place to open the doors for us." Leaving a garrison to occupy the new possession, the French sailed away on the 20th, with all the gold and silver of the treasury, and all the plate of the churches and religious houses. "The essential point now," says Thiers, "was not to encounter the English fleet;" nevertheless, he adds, "nobody was afraid of the encounter." Nelson was at Naples on the day when Bonaparte quitted Malta. He immediately sailed. On the 22nd, at night, the two fleets crossed each other's track unperceived, between Cape Mesurata and the mouth of the Adriatic. The frigates of the British fleet had been separated from the main body, and thus Nelson had no certain intelligence. His sagacity made him conjecture that the destination of the armament was Egypt. He made the most direct course to Alexandria, which he reached on the 28th. No enemy was there, and no tidings could be obtained of them. On the morning of the 1st of July, admiral Brueys was off the same port, and learnt that Nelson had sailed away in search of him. Bonaparte demanded that he should be landed at some distance from Alexandria, for preparations appeared for the defence of the ancient city. As he and several thousand troops who followed him reached the shore in boats, a vessel appeared in sight, and the cry went forth that it was an English sail. "Fortune," he exclaimed, "dost thou abandon me? Give me only five days!" A French frigate was the cause of the momentary alarm. Nelson had returned to Sicily.

The Sultan was at peace with France; a French minister was at Constantinople. Such trifling formalities in the laws of nations were little respected by the man who told his soldiers that "the genius of Liberty having rendered the Republic the arbiter of Europe, had assigned to her the same power over the seas and over the most distant nations."\* Four thousand of the French army were landed, and marched in three columns to the attack of Alexandria. It was quickly taken by assault. Bonaparte announced that he came neither to ravage the country, nor to ques-

\* Proclamation at Toulon.

tion the authority of the Grand Seigneur, but to put down the domination of the Mamlooks, who tyrannized over the people by the authority of the Beys. He proclaimed to the population of Egypt, in magnificent language that he caused to be translated into Arabic, that he came not to destroy their religion. We Frenchmen are true Mussulmans. Have not we destroyed the Pope, who called upon Europe to make war upon Mussulmans? Have not we destroyed the Knights of Malta, because these madmen believed that God had called them to make war upon Mussulmans? \* Leaving a garrison of three thousand men in Alexandria, the main army commenced its march to Cairo. Bonaparte was anxious to arrive there before the periodical inundation of the Nile. The fleet of Brueys remained at anchor in the road of Aboukir. Bonaparte chose the shorter route to Cairo through the desert of Damanhour, leading thirty thousand men,—to each of whom he had promised to grant seven acres of fertile land in the conquered territories,—through plains of sand without a drop of water. They murmured, and almost mutinied, but they endured, and at length reached the banks of the Nile, at Rahmameh, where a flotilla, laden with provisions, baggage, and artillery, awaited them. The Mamlooks, with Mourad Bey at their head, were around the French. The invaders had to fight with enemies who came upon them in detachments; gave a fierce assault; and then fled. As they approached the great Pyramids of Jizeh, they found an enemy more formidable than these scattered bands. Mourad Bey was encamped with twelve thousand Mamlooks and eight thousand mounted Bedouins, on the west bank of the Nile, and opposite Cairo. The French looked upon the great entrepôt, where the soldiers expected to find the gorgeous palaces and the rich bazaars of which some had read in Galland's "Arabian Nights," whose tales they had recounted to their comrades on their dreary march under a burning sun. They had to sustain the attack of Mourad Bey and his Mamlooks, who came upon them with the fury of a tempest. In the East, Bonaparte was ever in his altitudes; and he now pointed to the Pyramids, and exclaimed to his soldiers, "Forty centuries look down upon you." The chief attack of the Mamlooks was upon a square which Desaix commanded. In spite of the desperate courage of this formidable cavalry, the steadiness of the disciplined soldiery of the army of Italy repelled every assault; and after a tremendous loss Mourad Bey retreated towards Upper Egypt. His intrenched camp was forced, amidst a fearful carnage. The conquerors had no difficulty in obtaining

\* Thiers, livre xxxix.

possession of Cairo. Ibrahim Bey evacuated the city, which on the 25th of July Bonaparte entered. His policy now was to conciliate the people instead of oppressing them. He addressed himself to the principal scheiks, and obtained from them a declaration in favour of the French. It went forth with the same authority amongst the Mussulmans as a brief of the Pope addressed to Roman Catholics. In the grand mosque a litany was sung to the glory of "the Favourite of Victory, who at the head of the valiant of the West has destroyed the infantry and the horse of the Mamlooks." A few weeks later "the Favourite of Victory" was seated in the grand mosque at the Feast of the Prophets, sitting cross-legged as he repeated the words of the Koran, and edifying the sacred college by his piety.\*

From the beginning to the end of July, Mr. Pitt was waiting with anxious expectation for news from the Mediterranean. During this suspense he wrote to the Speaker that he "could not be quite sure of keeping any engagement he might make." It was not till the 26th of September that the English government knew the actual result of the toils and disappointments to which Nelson had been subjected. When it was known in England that he had been to Egypt and had returned to Sicily, the journalists talked of naval mismanagement; and worn-out captains who were hanging about the Admiralty asking for employ marvelled at the rashness of lord St. Vincent in sending so young a commander upon so great an enterprize. The Neapolitan ministry, dreading to offend the French Directory, refused Nelson the supplies of provision and water which he required before he again started in pursuit of the fleet which "Cæsar and his fortune bare at once." Sir William Hamilton was our minister at Naples; his wife was the favourite of the queen of Naples, and one of the most attractive of the ladies of that luxurious court. Nelson had a slight acquaintance with lady Hamilton; and upon his representations of the urgent necessity for victualling his fleet, secret instructions were given that he should be supplied with all he required. In 1805, Nelson requested Mr. Rose to urge upon Mr. Pitt the claims of lady Hamilton upon the national gratitude, because "it was through her interposition exclusively he obtained provisions and water for the English ships at Syracuse, in the summer of 1798; by which he was enabled to return to Egypt in quest of the enemy's fleet;—to which, therefore, the success of his brilliant action of the Nile was owing, as he must otherwise have gone down to Gibraltar to refit, and the enemy would have escaped." †

\* Thiers, livre xxxix. (August, 1798.) † Rose—"Diaries," &c., vol. i. p. 254.

On the 25th of July Nelson sailed from Syracuse. It was three days before he gained any intelligence of the French fleet, and he then learned that they had been seen about four weeks before, steering to the S.E. from Candia. He was again convinced that their destination was Egypt; and he made all sail for Alexandria. On the 1st of August he beheld the tri-coloured flag flying upon its walls. His anxiety was at an end. For a week he had scarcely taken food or slept. The signal was made for the enemy's fleet; and he now ordered dinner to be served, and when his officers rose to prepare for battle, he exclaimed that before the morrow his fate would be a peerage or Westminster Abbey.

The fleet of admiral Brueys was at anchor in the bay Aboukir. The transports and other small vessels were within the harbour. Bonaparte told O'Meara that he had sent an officer from Cairo with peremptory orders that Brueys should enter the harbour, but that the officer was killed by the Arabs on the way.\* Brueys had taken measures to ascertain the practicability of entering the harbour with his larger ships, and had found that the depth of water was insufficient. He was unwilling to sail away to Corfu—as Bonaparte affirmed that he had ordered him to do, if to enter the harbour were impracticable—until he knew that the army was securely established at Cairo. The French admiral moored his fleet in what he judged the best position; a position described by Nelson himself as "a strong line of battle for defending the entrance of the bay (of shoals), flanked by numerous gun-boats, four frigates, and a battery of guns and mortars." † The French ships were placed "at a distance from each other of about a hundred and sixty yards, with the van-ship close to a shoal in the north-west, and the whole of the line just outside a four-fathom sand-bank; so that an enemy, it was considered, could not turn either flank." ‡ Nelson, with the rapidity of genius, at once grasped his plan of attack. Where there was room for a French ship to swing, there was room for an English ship to anchor. He would place half his ships on the inner side of the French line, and half on the outer side. The number of ships in the two fleets was nearly equal, but four of the French were of larger size. At three o'clock in the afternoon the British squadron was approaching the bay, with a manifest intention of giving battle. Admiral Brueys had thought that the attack would be deferred to the next morning. Nelson had no intention of permitting the enemy to weigh anchor, and get to sea in the darkness. By six o'clock Nelson's

\* "Voice from St. Helena," vol. ii.; Diary, May 16. † "Gazette," October 2.  
‡ James—"Naval History," vol. ii. p. 142.

line was formed, without any precise regard to the succession of the vessels according to established forms. The shoal at the western extremity of the bay was rounded by eleven of the British squadron. The Goliath led the way, and when her commander, Foley, reached the enemy's van, he steered between the outermost ship and the shoal. The Zealous (captain Hood) instantly followed. At twenty minutes past six the two van-ships of the French opened their fire upon these vessels, but they were soon disabled. Four other British ships also took their stations inside the French line. Nelson, in the Vanguard, followed by five of his seventy-fours, anchored on the outer side of the enemy. Nine of the French fleet were thus placed between the two fires of eleven of the British ships. The Leander had not been engaged, having been occupied in the endeavour to assist the Culloden, which, coming up after dark, ran aground.

Before the sun went down the shore was crowded with the people of the country gazing upon this terrible conflict. When darkness fell, the flashes of the guns faintly indicated the positions of the contending fleets. Each British ship was ordered to carry four lanterns at her mizzen-peak, and these were lighted at seven o'clock. Each ship also went into action with the white ensign of St. George, of which the red cross in the centre rendered it easily distinguishable in the darkest night at sea. But there was another illumination, more awful than the flashes of two thousand cannon, which was that night to strike unwonted dismay into the bravest of the combatants of either nation. Five of the French ships had surrendered. The Vanguard had been engaged with the Spartiate and the Aquilon. Her loss was severe. A splinter had struck Nelson on the head, cutting a large piece of the flesh and skin from the forehead, which fell over his remaining eye. He was carried down to the cockpit, and the effusion of blood being very great, his wound was held to be dangerous, if not mortal, by the anxious shipmates around him. He was carried where his men were also carried, without regard to rank, to be tended by the busy surgeons. These left their wounded to bestow their care on the first man of the fleet. "No," said Nelson, "I will take my turn with my brave fellows." Sidney, in the field of Zutphen, taking the cup of water from his lips to give to the dying soldier, with the memorable words, "This man's necessity is more than mine," was a parallel example of heroism. The admiral did wait his turn; and meanwhile, in the belief that his career was ended, called to his chaplain to deliver a last token of affection to his wife. The wound was found to be superficial. He was carried to his cabin, and left alone,

amidst the din of the battle. Suddenly the cry was heard that l'Orient, the French flag-ship of 120 guns, was on fire. Nelson groped his way to the deck, to the astonishment of the crew, who heard their beloved commander giving his orders that the boats should be lowered to proceed to the help of the burning vessel. The Bellerophon had been overpowered by the weight of metal of l'Orient, and had lost her masts. The Swiftsure had also been engaged with this formidable vessel. Both had maintained an unremitting fire upon the French flag-ship. Admiral Brueys had fallen, and had died the death of a brave man on his deck. The ship was in flames; at ten o'clock she blew up, the conflagration having lasted for nearly an hour. When the explosion came, there was an awful silence. For ten minutes not a gun was fired on either side. The instinct of self-preservation, as well as the sudden awe on this sublime event, produced this pause in the battle. Some of the French, endeavouring to get out of the vicinity of the burning wreck, had slipped their cables. The nearest of the English took every precaution to prevent the combustible materials doing them injury. The shock of the explosion shook the Alexander, Swiftsure, and Orion to their kelsons, and materially injured them. None of our ships, however, took fire. About seventy only of the crew of l'Orient were saved by the English boats. The battle was resumed by the French ship, the Franklin; and it went on, at intervals, till daybreak. The contest was sustained by four French line-of-battle ships, and four of the English. Finally, two of the French line-of-battle ships and two frigates escaped. Of thirteen sail of the line, nine were taken, two were burned. Of the British about nine hundred men were killed and wounded. No accurate account was obtained of the French loss. The estimate which represented that loss at five thousand was evidently exaggerated. About three thousand French prisoners were sent on shore. Kleber, the French general, wrote to Napoleon, "The English have had the disinterestedness to restore everything to their prisoners." After the victory of the Nile, Nelson returned to Naples. He required rest; and in the ease and luxury, the flattery and the honours, which there awaited him, he forgot his quiet home, and after a time was involved in public acts which reflect discredit upon his previous spotless name. At Palermo, lord Cochrane had opportunities of conversation with him. He says, "To one of his frequent injunctions, 'Never mind manœuvres, always go at them,' I subsequently had reason to consider myself indebted for successful attacks under apparently difficult circumstances." Cochrane considered Nelson "an embodiment of dashing courage, which

would not take much trouble to circumvent an enemy, but being confronted with one would regard victory so much a matter of course as hardly to deem the chance of defeat worth consideration.\* This opinion is borne out by a letter which Nelson wrote to his old friend, admiral Locker, from Palermo:—"It is you who always said, 'Lay a Frenchman close and you will beat him;' and my only merit in my profession is being a good scholar."† Nelson was himself a master who made many good scholars.

M. Thiers, having described the great naval battle of Aboukir with tolerable fairness, admits that it was the most disastrous that the French navy had yet experienced—one from which the most fatal military consequences might be apprehended. The news of the disaster caused a momentary despair in the French army. Bonaparte received the intelligence with calmness. "Well," he exclaimed, "we must die here; or go forth, great, as were the ancients." He wrote to Kleber, "We must do great things;" and Kleber replied, "Yes, we must do great things: I prepare my faculties." It would have been fortunate for the fame of Bonaparte, if he had abstained from doing some of "the great things" which he accomplished whilst he remained in the East.

The victory of Nelson formed the great subject of congratulation in the royal speech, when the Session was opened on the 20th of November. "By this great and brilliant victory, an enterprize of which the injustice, perfidy, and extravagance had fixed the attention of the world, and was peculiarly directed against some of the most valuable interests of the British empire, has, in the first instance, been turned to the confusion of its authors." Out of this victory new hopes were to arise—vain hopes which statesmen formed in the enthusiasm of success: "The blow thus given to the power and influence of France has afforded an opening, which, if improved by suitable exertions on the part of other powers, may lead to the general deliverance of Europe." What the king said from his throne, men "in the secret" had previously whispered in confidence to their friends: "It seems quite certain," writes Mr. Addington, "that the war on the continent will be renewed; and I have no doubt that Prussia will concur in the prosecution of it. Lord Nelson has electrified Europe." Magnificent were the anticipations of the sanguine Speaker. The Swiss were to throw off their yoke; Prussia would keep France at bay on the Rhine. The emperor Paul would recover Mentz and Manheim. The Aus-

\* Lord Dundonald—"Autobiography," vol. i. p. 88.

† "Plain Englishman," vol. iv. p. 563; a periodical work for popular instruction, conducted, in 1821, by the son of admiral Locker and by the author of this History.

trians, in conjunction with the king of Naples, would be sufficient for the deliverance of Italy. Holland, the Netherlands, Brabant, even France herself, would surely not remain inactive.\* These prodigious anticipations lead one to remember a certain Arabian story of a man who, calculating in his day-dream the vast profits he was to acquire by turning again and again the capital he had expended upon articles of glass, kicked over the tray upon which his store was placed. The waking Alnaschar cried out and said, "All this is the result of my pride;" and he slapped his face and tore his clothes. A bitter reproach against England—in many respects an unjust reproach—had been embodied in the exaggerations of one who justified the extravagances of poetical imagery, as "the product of his own seething imagination, and therefore impregnated with that pleasurable exaltation which is experienced in all energetic exertion of intellectual power."† England at the end of 1796 was thus painted:—

"Abandoned of Heaven! mad avarice they guide,

At cowardly distance, yet kindling with pride,

Mid thy herds and thy corn-fields secure thou hast stood,

And joined the wild yelling of famine and blood."

The reproach was more pithily expressed by the French in ascribing every hostile movement of Europe to "the gold of Pitt." Five years of fatal experience had, in 1798, shown how hollow were the alliances that were bought. The system was to be renewed again. On the 29th of December, 1798, a treaty of alliance was concluded between Great Britain and Russia. Russia, of course, to be subsidized. The vein of gold was far from being exhausted, however vigorously it had been worked. A new vein was now to be opened. On the 3rd of December Mr. Pitt gave an estimate of the amount of Supply required. The total was upwards of twenty-nine millions. The estimate for 1793 was sixteen millions. To meet this ever-increasing expenditure all sorts of devices of direct taxation had been resorted to—devices described by the marquis of Lansdowne as "irksome, petty, and unproductive exactions which fret and disturb men's minds."‡ Mr. Pitt now proposed, for the first time in the history of British finance, an Income-Tax. He estimated the total income of Great Britain at 102,000,000*l.*, which he proposed to tax, upon a graduated scale, at 10 per cent.; to commence with incomes above 60*l.* a-year, but in a reduced ratio from 60*l.* to 200*l.* He assumed that this tax would produce an

\* "Life of Lord Sidmouth," vol. i. p. 215.

† Coleridge—Apologetic Preface to "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter."

‡ "Parliamentary History," vol. xxxiii. col. 1538.



annual revenue of ten millions. In 1859-60, the Income-Tax was 9*l*. in the pound, which also produced very nearly ten millions. The great financial measure of the minister of 1798 was called by Mr. Tierney "indiscriminate rapine;" and he and others urged the objections which have been so often ineffectually urged, how ever impossible to be refuted. Mr. Tierney asked, "Does the minister mean to say, that a person possessing an income for life of a certain sum, and another person of the same income which he derives from the interest of his own capital, can equally bear the same taxes?" A more obvious objection was put by Mr. Hobhouse: "The man who had an income of 1000*l*. per annum arising from capital, and the man who gained the same annual sum by a profession or business, surely ought not to be assessed in the same degree."\* In the House of Lords, the argument, which left out of view the pressure upon industry, was used by lord Holland,—that a direct tax of this nature would be oppressive to the landed interest. "Could their lordships look forward to the prospect of their posterity becoming titled beggars? Their property was easily known, and they could not, if they were inclined, evade the tax. The whole weight of the tax must fall on those who should not be able to escape—in fact, on land-owners—on those who had ostensible possessions."† The measure of an Income-Tax was passed without any division in either House.

In the royal speech of the 20th of November, there were two references to the internal condition of Great Britain and Ireland which are of more than temporary importance: "The extent of our preparations at home, and the demonstrations of zeal and spirit among all ranks of my subjects, have deterred the enemy from attempting to execute their vain threat of invading the coasts of this kingdom." The "demonstrations of zeal and spirit" had chiefly reference to the formation of Volunteer corps throughout the country. How imperfectly the zeal of the people was then seconded by the aid of the government may be collected from a letter of lord Cornwallis, in May, 1798. He was then Master-General of the Ordnance: "The only means by which the innumerable local corps in all parts of the country can be armed, is by providing balls for fowling-pieces."‡

The other noticeable passage in the royal speech is this: "In Ireland the rebellion which they [the enemy] had instigated has been curbed and repressed; the troops which they landed for its support have been compelled to surrender; and the armaments

\* "Parliamentary History," vol. xxxiv. cols. 23 and 25.—† *Ibid.*, col. 185.

‡ Cornwallis—"Correspondence," vol. ii. p. 337.

since destined for the same purpose have, by the vigilance and activity of my squadrons, been captured or dispersed." The policy of curbing and repressing rebellion was now to be associated with a higher ambition in the British government. The first proposal to the British Parliament of a legislative union with Ireland, was conveyed in a passage of the King's message on the 22nd of January, recommending to the "Parliaments of both kingdoms to provide, in the manner which they shall judge most expedient, for settling such a complete and final adjustment as may best tend to improve and perpetuate a connection, essential for their common security, and to augment and consolidate the strength, power, and resources of the British empire."

During the progress of our narrative, from the year 1795, we have deferred any detailed notice of the condition of Ireland. In the next Chapter we shall endeavour to present a connected view of the circumstances which preceded the Rebellion; of the progress of that calamitous struggle; and of its final issue in the measure which has been a never-ceasing source of bitterness to Irish factions, but of the benefits of which to both countries no wise or honest politician can now doubt.