

Sièyes had his plan ready. The details were to be debated between the Consuls and the commissioners. The aptitude of Bonaparte for power; his sagacity; his quickness of observation,—turned every discussion to his own prospective advantage. By the 24th of December, the Constitution was completed and published. The Executive authority was to consist of three Consuls, Bonaparte being First Consul for ten years. This executive was to propose the laws. The Legislative authority was a Tribunate, to discuss the projects of laws, and approve or reject them; a Legislative body of three hundred members, to vote upon the laws proposed by the Tribunate, without the right of discussion; and a Senate of eighty members, who were to sit in secret. It was a mock Legislature, to strengthen the Executive. All these classes of legislators were to be paid. The three Consuls were to have an allowance, the first Consul receiving 500,000 francs a-year; each of the others three-tenths of that sum. Cambacérès and Lebrun were associated with Bonaparte in the consular office; but the real power was in his hands alone. The Constitution was accepted by the votes of the people, three millions having registered their approval. Their votes were doubtless influenced by the agents of the government. But it is clear that the people were tired of anarchy; had no confidence in a Directory and Councils of Ancients and Five Hundred; cared little about Liberty; and had a profound admiration for military glory.

When the British Parliament met on the 22nd of January, 1800, after an adjournment in October, a royal message was presented, the chief purport of which was to lay before the two Houses "copies of communications recently received from the enemy, and of the answers which have been returned thereto by his majesty's command." The communications "received from the enemy" were a brief note from Talleyrand, Minister of Foreign Affairs in France, to lord Grenville, enclosing a letter from the First Consul to the King of Great Britain and Ireland. This letter, dated 5th Nivose,* is too interesting, as well as too laconic, to be abridged:

"Called by the wishes of the French nation to occupy the first magistracy of the republic, I think it proper, on entering into office, to make a direct communication of it to your majesty.

"The war, which for eight years has ravaged the four quarters of the world, must it be eternal? Are there no means of coming to an understanding?"

* December 25th, according to the translation laid before Parliament; the 26th according to Thiers.

"How can the most enlightened nations of Europe, powerful and strong beyond what their safety and independence require, sacrifice to ideas of vain greatness the benefits of commerce, internal prosperity, and the happiness of families? How is it that they do not feel that peace is of the first necessity, as well as of the first glory?"

"These sentiments cannot be foreign to the heart of your majesty, who reigns over a free nation, and with the sole view of rendering it happy.

"Your majesty will only see in this overture my sincere desire to contribute efficaciously, for the second time, to a general pacification, by a step speedy, entirely of confidence, and disengaged from those forms which, necessary perhaps to disguise the dependence of weak states, prove only in those which are strong, the mutual desire of deceiving each other.

"France and England, by the abuse of their strength, may still for a long time, for the misfortune of all nations, retard the period of their being exhausted. But I will venture to say it, the fate of all civilized nations is attached to the termination of a war which involves the whole world."

Lord Grenville wrote on the 4th of January to Talleyrand, saying that his majesty, "seeing no reason to depart from those forms which have long been established in Europe for transacting business with foreign states," had directed him to return an official answer, which he enclosed. This answer breathed no spirit but that of determined hostility. Recapitulating the charges so often made against France, that she desired "the extermination of all established governments"—that "the most solemn treaties have only prepared the way for fresh aggression"—his majesty could not "place his reliance on the mere renewal of general professions of pacific dispositions." He required to be convinced "that, after the experience of so many years of crimes and miseries, better principles have ultimately prevailed in France." The conviction of such a change could only result from experience. "The best and most natural pledge of its reality and permanence would be the restoration of that line of princes which, for so many centuries, maintained the French nation in prosperity at home, and in consideration and respect abroad." Nevertheless, his "majesty makes no claim to prescribe to France what shall be the form of her government." As there existed "no sufficient evidence of the principles by which the new government will be directed,—no reasonable ground to judge of its stability," to persevere in "a just and defensive war" was the only course which his majesty could at present pursue.

It was eighteen days after this answer was written that the correspondence was laid before Parliament. The letter of Bonaparte, and the answer, were, however, no secret. On the 1st of January, Grenville sent a copy of the letter to his brother, as "a curiosity"—"I need not tell you that we shall say, no." On the 3rd, he describes his answer, of which, he says, we have not hands enough to make sufficient copies. On the 16th he writes, "His Corsican Majesty's letters will be out on Monday."* It is not difficult to see that a haughty contempt for the attainment of almost regal power by a plebeian, was at the root of that fierce indignation which the British government had never evinced when they twice negotiated for peace with the Directory. It is difficult to understand how Pitt could have sanctioned such a letter as Grenville's. Yet on the 4th he wrote to Addington, "We have felt no difficulty in declining all negotiation under the present circumstances; and have drawn our answer as a sort of manifesto both for France and England, bringing forward the topics which seem most likely to promote the cause of royalty, in preference to this new, and certainly not less absolute government."† Lord Grenville found in Talleyrand one who saw the weak points of the "manifesto" at a glance, and exposed them with an irresistible logic. In his rejoinder of the 14th of January there is this passage: "The First Consul of the French Republic would not doubt that his Britannic Majesty recognized the right of nations to choose the form of their government, since it is from the exercise of this right that he holds his crown. But he has been unable to comprehend how to this fundamental principle, upon which rests the existence of political societies, the minister of his Britannic Majesty could annex insinuations which tend to an interference in the internal affairs of the Republic, and which are not less injurious to the French nation, and to its government, than it would be to England and to his Majesty, if a sort of invitation were held out in favour of that republican government of which England adopted the forms in the middle of the last century, or an exhortation to recall to the throne that family whom their birth had placed there, and whom a revolution compelled to descend from it." Statesmen thinking and acting with Mr. Pitt could not approve of lord Grenville's letter. It is "too caustic and opprobrious," said Addington—"it has not quite enough of the character of moderation," ‡ Wilberforce writes, "I must say I was shocked at lord Grenville's letter; for though our

* "Court and Cabinets, &c." vol. iii. pp. 4, 5, 6.

† "Life of Sidmouth," vol. i. p. 249.

‡ "Life," vol. i. p. 248—Letter of January 9.

government might feel adverse to any measure which might appear to give the stamp of our authority to Bonaparte's new dignity; yet I must say that, unless they have some better reason than I fear they possess for believing that he is likely to be hurled from his throne, it seems a desperate game to play—to offend, and insult, and thereby irritate, this vain man beyond the hope of forgiveness."* Cornwallis, six months after, designated Grenville's letter as "haughty and most unwise."—"The unprovoked insolence of lord Grenville's letter has placed us in a state of such embarrassment, that I must confess I have hardly a hope that we can extricate ourselves." † Bonaparte had written a conciliatory letter to the emperor of Austria, which also had been treated with contempt. The consequence was, Marengo. The correspondence with France again roused Fox into political activity. He wrote in January, "My letters tell me what I can scarce credit, that the ministers have given a flat refusal to the great Consul's proposition to treat. Surely they must be quite mad." ‡ Fox again appeared in his place in Parliament; made one of his greatest speeches, which was a reply to an equally grand oratorical display by Pitt; and was in a minority of 64 to 265. In the House of Lords, Grenville delivered a speech of remarkable ability, but tending, even more than his letter, to make the quarrel with France a personal quarrel with Bonaparte. In the third year of the Republic, said the noble Secretary for Foreign Affairs, he imposed upon the French people, by the mouth of the cannon, that very constitution which he has now destroyed by the point of the bayonet. Treaties made and broken, with Sardinia, with Tuscany, with the petty States of Italy, were ratified and annulled by Bonaparte. Venice, Rome, Genoa, Switzerland, were examples of his perfidy. He pointed to Egypt to exhibit his falsehoods, his blasphemies, his hypocrisies, his multiplied violations of all religious and moral ties. "Having, therefore, such bases for us to form a correct opinion of his policy, can it be thought inconsistent to believe that he has no intention of fulfilling his engagements." § We can scarcely object to Thiers, when he says, "the English ministers, especially lord Grenville, employed, with regard to the First Consul, language the most offensive. They had not otherwise treated Robespierre." || We look back upon the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century, and

* "Life of Wilberforce," vol. ii. p. 354—Letter of January 7.

† Cornwallis—"Correspondence," vol. iii. p. 270—277.

‡ "Correspondence of Fox," vol. iii. p. 174.

§ See "Parliamentary History," vol. xxxiv.

|| "Le Consulat et l'Empire," tom. i. livre ii.

see much to prove the ambition, the bad faith, and the insolence of Bonaparte. But we cannot deny that the affronts of the ministry of Pitt and Grenville were sufficient to stir within him an unextinguishable hatred of England.

The time was not opportune for rejecting overtures of peace. In the minds of the people "peace" was always associated with "plenty." Scarcity and even famine were regarded, and not unjustly so, as consequences of war. The people of these islands were, throughout the year 1800, and partly in 1801, on the brink of famine. There had been a bad harvest in 1795, when Burke published his "Thoughts and Details on Scarcity." In a few pointed sentences he expressed the great economic truth which agitators conceal and pseudo-philanthropists despise: "Labour is a commodity like every other, and rises or falls according to the demand. . . . Wages have been twice raised in my time, and they bear a full proportion, or even a greater than formerly, to the medium of provision during the last bad cycle of twenty years. If we were wildly to attempt to force them beyond it, the stone which we had forced up the hill would only fall back upon them in a diminished demand; or, what indeed is the far lesser evil, an aggravated price of all the provisions which are the result of their manual toil." In saying that the squires of Norfolk had dined when they gave it as their opinion that the rate of wages ought to rise and fall with the market of provisions, he laughed at a theory which the squires of many a county would soon reduce to very efficient practice. The Berkshire justices and "other discreet persons," decided, in 1795, that when the gallon loaf of 8lbs. 11ozs. should cost 1s., then every man should receive in wages, or in allowance from the poor-rates, 3s. weekly, and 1s. 6d. for the support of every other of his family; and in proportion as the price of bread rises and falls, 3d. to the man, and 1d. to every other of the family, on every penny which the loaf rises above a shilling. This Berkshire bread-scale was almost universally adopted in the agricultural counties; and thus, as the price of the loaf of bread continued to rise almost invariably from 1795 to 1800, the allowances from the rates were an encouragement to consume as much in a season of scarcity as in a season of abundance. Deficient harvests raised the price of wheat to 134s. a quarter in 1800, and to 156s. a quarter in the spring of 1801. The danger had become imminent, at the time when the conclusion of a peace offered by France might have opened our ports to importations which would have fed that large body of the artisan class that were not fed, without stint, by the operation of a bread-scale. In February, 1800, palliatives were resorted to. The

sale of bread which had not been baked twenty-four hours was prohibited. The people were exhorted to economy by proclamation. Brown bread was to be eaten instead of white. Noble lords resolved to discourage the use of pastry in their families. At the end of November, the prospect became more alarming. Importation was encouraged by excessive bounties. Great Britain did not grow enough corn, even in average years, for the subsistence of the people. The price of corn was always subject to extreme fluctuations. The whole tendency of the financial operations of the government was to raise prices to an unnatural height. The government, when the evil reached its culminating point at the end of 1800 and the beginning of 1801, was powerless, except to bring in a Brown Bread Bill. They did something more. They again suspended the Habeas Corpus Act, for the people were rioting. Pitt clearly saw the social danger to which these riots would lead: "Unless the magistrates and gentlemen are firm in discountenancing and resisting all arbitrary reductions of price, and regulations of the mode of dealing, great mischief must follow."* Romilly saw the same mischief as the consequence of the economic ignorance: "Never, to be sure, were there such temptations held out to riot and insurrection as the resolutions which, in consequence of the late riots, have been entered into in different parts of the country respecting the price of provisions. . . . I cannot find that the least attempt has been anywhere made to undeceive the people; but, on the contrary, an opinion the most repugnant to common sense;—that is, that provisions of all kinds bear a higher price than the persons who deal in them can well afford to sell them at,—is, without the least inquiry upon the subject, everywhere acted upon as an established truth."† The author of this History has a distinct recollection of his alarm, when, a child of nine years old, he saw a mob parading the streets of Windsor; breaking the windows of the bakers; and going forth in a body with the intention of burning a neighbouring mill. The military were called out. The mayor and aldermen sat on a Friday night in solemn deliberation on the imperative necessity of quieting the people by making provisions cheaper. There were difficulties in the way of this unanimous resolve as regarded bread and meat. The worshipful body compromised the matter by solemnly proclaiming that when the butter-women brought their butter to market on the Saturday morning, they should not presume to ask more than a shilling a pound, under penalty of confiscation. In the spring of 1801 the

* "Life of Lord Sidmouth," vol. i. p. 262. † Romilly—"Memoirs," letter cxviii.

high prices reached their maximum. On the 5th of March, the price of the quartern loaf was 1s. 10½*d.* A good harvest came to ease the sufferings of the people; and in the middle of October the price of the quartern loaf had fallen to 11¼*d.* In 1801 the Poor Rates had risen to a sum exceeding four millions sterling, with a population of nine millions. The provision for the poor had doubled since 1783. How much temporary mischief was averted, and how much permanent evil was created, by the system of multiplying paupers by paying wages out of rates, is not necessary here to consider.

Montholon, in his history of Napoleon at St. Helena, represents him as saying that when he made overtures of peace to England he "had need of war;" that Mr. Pitt's answer was impatiently expected. "When it arrived it filled me with a secret satisfaction; his answer could not have been more favourable." Bonaparte had, nevertheless, victories of peace to achieve as well as victories of war. He probably only wanted a breathing-time when he proposed to negotiate,—a truce rather than a lasting pacification. Nevertheless, the satisfaction which he derived from the rejection of his proposals is not a tribute to the soundness of the policy of the British cabinet. Bonaparte was thus enabled to persuade the French that his personal ambition was not the motive for a continuance of a war which brought so many sufferings to the great body of the people. Their desire for glory was at that time greatly diminished by their greater desire for rest under a settled government. By the vigour of his administrative genius he soon brought the civil institutions of France into working order. The Treasury of the Directory had depended upon forced loans, confiscations, and plunder of foreign countries. Bonaparte enforced a regular system of direct taxation, and compelled the functionaries to keep correct accounts. He established the system of prefectures—that system of departmental administration which, with little variation during sixty years, has always been an efficient support of every government, whether its objects were beneficent or despotic. He re-modelled the judicial system. He did many wise and good things which France would probably not so readily have received from any other authority than that of an incipient despotism. He did not hesitate to show the direction which his government was prepared to take for its conservation. He propitiated the Clergy; he organized a Police as one of the chief instruments of repressing new tendencies to Revolution; he destroyed that liberty of the Press which had kept the people in a ferment since 1789. "Every journal," said a decree of the Consul, "shall be immediately sup-

pressed which shall insert any articles contrary to the respect due to the social pact, to the sovereignty of the people, and to the glory of the armies; or which shall publish invectives against the government and the nations which are friends or allies of the Republic, even if those articles should be taken from foreign journals." He had given to the Consul Cambacérès the control over the judicial system; and to the Consul Lebrun the administration of the finances. He retained, as his own especial charge, the departments of War, Marine, Interior, Foreign Affairs and Police. Never was there a more efficient machinery, not only for extinguishing Jacobinism, but for taking away even the semblance of liberty from a nation that did not understand it—a nation "indocile by temperament, yet accepting the arbitrary and even the violent rule of a sovereign more readily than the free and regular government of the chief citizen."*

The pacification of La Vendée was completed by the end of January, without any sanguinary struggle. The insurgents were won to submission by moderation, instead of being trodden into despair as they had been by the severities of the old republican authorities. Suwaroff had gone home after having been kept at bay in Switzerland; and the mad emperor Paul was won over by the courteous policy of the First Consul. Bonaparte had now only two enemies to contend with,—Great Britain and Austria. But these were by far his most powerful enemies. He must break up their alliance by some signal triumphs in Italy and Germany before he could be safe in his sovereign rule. To contend with Great Britain at sea would have been a vain ambition. He was now established in regal state at the Tuileries. He was surrounded by a Court, as glittering in dress, and almost as rigid in ceremonial as that of the dukes and marquises at Versailles. He would have his own dukes and princes in good time. Meanwhile his fascinating wife would gather around her the fashion of Paris, as fashion then existed there. There were beautiful women, victorious generals, and submissive ambassadors, in those saloons; and there was no limit to the cost of the most luxurious display. Madame de Staël has described these first days of the Consulate: "I saw the First Consul enter the palace built by kings; and although Bonaparte was yet far from the magnificence he has since developed, one beheld already in all who surrounded him an anxiety to do him homage after an oriental fashion, which would persuade him that to govern the world was a very easy thing." In ascending the staircase in the midst of the crowd who pressed around

* De Tocqueville—"France before the Revolution," book ii. chap. xx.

him, his eyes would rest neither upon one object nor upon any person in particular. There was always something of the vague and careless in his physiognomy, and his looks only expressed what was always suitable to his character to show,—indifference to fortune and contempt for men.* Madame de Staël had a hatred of Bonaparte; but she is perhaps not wholly unjust, when she says, “He has in his whole nature a foundation of vulgarity that even the gigantic reach of his ambition cannot always hide.” From the luxurious grandeur of the Tuileries, from the flatteries of his sycophants, from his earnest work as chief magistrate, he resolved to depart for a season—to make an effort in his own person to recover the ground which had been lost in Italy. It was an infraction of the Constitution that the First Consul should command an army on a foreign soil. He did not stand upon such nice points of observance. But he would conceal his plans; and find safety in a new career of irresponsible glory.

There was an army of reserve formed at Dijon, to review which army Bonaparte ostensibly left Paris on the 6th of May. He inspected the troops, and quitted Dijon on the 7th. On the 8th he was at Geneva. He had deputed one of his generals to inspect the pass of the Great St. Bernard: “Can we pass?” said Bonaparte. “With great difficulty,” replied the general. “Then let us set out,” said the man who would have banished the word ‘impossible’ from his vocabulary. The Austrian general, Melas, with the main body of the army, was in the territory of Genoa. The object of Bonaparte was to seize Milan, and place himself between the Austrian army and the emperor’s dominions. Thirty-five thousand men, under general Lannes, went forward to cross the Great St. Bernard. The cannon were dismounted at the foot of the mountain, and dragged over on sledges and hollow trunks of trees. Lannes, and Berthier with another division, had crossed the mountain on the 16th. Bonaparte followed them from Lausanne on the 17th, with a young Swiss for his guide. The famous picture by David represents the hero of a melo-drama in the grandest of “poses.” Bonaparte went over the Alps like a very ordinary traveller, without danger, and suffering no privation. His army had difficulty enough with their munitions of war. He had not, like Cæsar, to fight many battles in these mountain passes. He only met with a slight resistance at Bard,—a fort which commanded the narrow pass in the valley below Aosta. Other divisions of the French army had crossed by the St. Gothard, the Simplon, Mont Genève, Mont Cenis, and the Little St. Bernard. Sixty or

* “Sur la Révolution Française,” tom. ii.

seventy thousand enemies were on the Italian side of the Alps without the knowledge of the Austrians. On the 30th of May Bonaparte was in Milan, having entered the city without opposition. The Austrian commander-in-chief, Melas, an aged man of large experiences and of well-tryed bravery, was at Nice, from which he had driven the French under Suchet. He rapidly marched to encounter Bonaparte, whose advanced guard was on the Po. He was between Melas and another Austrian army at Mantua, on the Adda, and in the Tyrol. His situation was hazardous. If he lost a battle he could only retreat over the Alps by the passes he had crossed. Melas concentrated his forces at Alessandria. Bonaparte marched to meet him; crossed the Po at Piacenza; and took up his position in the plain of Marengo. On the 14th of June, Melas came out of Alessandria, and attacked the French. For some time he appeared to be winning a great victory. He had beaten the division of Victor, had driven Lannes back, and worn out with fatigue had gone back to Alessandria, leaving the triumph to be completed by general Zach. Desaix, who had very recently returned from Egypt, was ordered by Bonaparte to lead up a division to engage the advancing Austrians. Desaix turned the tide of battle, and was himself killed. The whole Austrian army now gave way: Marengo was won. The next day Melas asked for an armistice. By the convention of Alessandria, the Austrians lost all that they had gained in 1798 and 1799. They evacuated Italy as far as the Mincio, and gave up Genoa, and all the strong places in Piedmont and the Milanais. On the 2nd of July, Bonaparte was again in Paris. During his absence, various parties of republicans and royalists were formed against him, who might have shaken his power had his bold plan of a campaign been a failure. Marengo seated him firmly in the curule chair, which was to be exchanged for a throne.

The campaign of Moreau, who entered Germany at the head of a hundred thousand men, was a series of victories, until an armistice was concluded on the 15th of July. Hostilities were suspended whilst negotiations for peace were proceeding at Luneville. The preliminaries were signed on the 28th of July. But the emperor had entered into an engagement with Great Britain, that no peace should be concluded by either power which did not comprehend the two Allies. His resolution was fortified by a new loan. The emperor refused to ratify the preliminaries which had been agreed to at Luneville. Meanwhile, Malta, which had been blockaded for two years by the English fleet, surrendered to the British troops in September. Hostilities were revived in

Germany on the 29th of November. The archduke John, who had taken the command of the Austrian army, crossed the Inn with a hundred thousand men, to attack Moreau, whose troops were concentrated near the village of Hohenlinden, about twenty miles from Munich. The forest of Hohenlinden lay between the imperial army and the position which Moreau had taken up. It could only be reached by two great roads through the forest of thick pine trees, and by cross roads rendered almost impassable by the snows and storms of a winter that had now set in. To describe this great battle on the difficult ground between the Iser and the Inn is a task for voluminous historians. The general reader will derive more vivid impressions from the spirited poem of Campbell than from all the exactness of strategic details. He will call to mind the picture of the evening, when "all bloodless lay th' untrodden snow,"—of the beat of drum "at dead of night,"—of the morning when the level sun scarce "can pierce the war-clouds rolling dun,"—of the deepening contest between "furious Frank and fiery Hun;"—

"Few, few shall part where many meet:
The snow shall be their winding sheet."

On that 3rd of December, the victory of Moreau was decisive. The French lost four thousand men; the Imperialists lost a far greater number, besides fifteen thousand prisoners and all their artillery. Moreau pursued the archduke John, and was on the road to Vienna. The archduke proposed an armistice, which was concluded on the 26th of December, the emperor engaging to negotiate separately for peace. Great Britain had released him from his pledge. The peace of Luneville was completed on the 9th of February, 1801.*

* See the Chronological Table of Treaties at the end of the next Chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

Commencement of the nineteenth century.—Parliament opened.—The king's opposition to concessions to the Catholics of Ireland.—Mr. Pitt resigns in consequence.—Mr. Addington prime minister.—The king again becomes insane.—The northern powers form a treaty of Armed Neutrality.—Expedition against Denmark.—The naval battle of Copenhagen.—Nelson's victory.—An armistice concluded.—Assassination of the emperor Paul.—Expedition to Egypt.—Battle of Alexandria and death of Abercromby.—The French evacuate Egypt.—Preliminaries of peace with France.—Negotiations of lord Cornwallis at Amiens.—Diplomatic disputes and difficulties.—The peace of Amiens concluded.

Chronological Table of Treaties.

Population of Great Britain, 1801.

A NEW CENTURY! The commencements of another Year, of another Decade, of another Century, are rarely marked by any corresponding changes in the affairs of nations; but they are suggestive of comparisons with other similar eras. At the commencement of the eighteenth century it has been estimated, upon the imperfect data of the Registers of Births and Burials, that England and Wales contained a Population of about five million and a half. At the commencement of the nineteenth century a Census of the people had been taken, and it was found that England and Wales contained about nine millions. At the commencement of the eighteenth century, William III., from his death-bed, recommended the completion of a firm and entire Union between England and Scotland; and within seven years the Act of Union was passed. At the commencement of the nineteenth century, the Union between Great Britain and Ireland was perfected; and on the 22nd of January, 1801, the first Session of the first Parliament of the United Kingdom commenced by the election of the Speaker. At the commencement of the eighteenth century William III. accomplished the Grand Alliance of the powers of Europe against the ambitious designs of the despotic head of the French Monarchy. At the commencement of the nineteenth century George III. was the sole sovereign of Europe who had not succumbed to the military despotism of the French Republic. The two centuries seem separated by a vast chasm. History bridges over the gulf; and, rightly considered, shows how one series of events is essentially connected with a preceding series—how great moral