

POPULATION OF GREAT BRITAIN

CHAPTER IX.

The Peace a precarious armistice.—Demands of Bonaparte.—English in France.—French encroachments.—The king's allusion to them in his Speech.—French expedition to St. Domingo.—Toussaint L'Ouverture.—Mr. Addington's policy.—Bonaparte and lord Whitworth.—Trial of Peltier.—Speech of Mackintosh.—Despard's conspiracy.—Militia called out.—Violence of Bonaparte towards the British ambassador.—Malta.—War declared.—Negotiations for Mr. Pitt's return to power.—Detention in France of English travellers.—Great Britain roused.—Preparations for invasion.—Emmett's insurrection.—Rapid enrolment of Volunteers.—Bonaparte at Boulogne.—Pitt at Walmer.—The Volunteers reviewed.—Weakness of the Addington ministry.—The king's illness.—Negotiations for a change of ministry.—Pitt presses for an administration on a broad basis.—His failure.—Pitt prime minister.—Conspiracy against the First Consul.—Murder of the Duc d'Enghien.

LET us compare the opinions of two historians on the likelihood of the duration of peace. "The treaty of Amiens had scarcely been signed, when the restless ambition and the insupportable insolence of the First Consul convinced the great body of the English people that the peace, so eagerly welcomed, was only a precarious armistice."* We turn from the view of Macaulay to that of Thiers: "The treaty of Amiens had been signed only a few months, and their joy at the peace had a little cooled amongst the English, when there remained before their eyes, as if it were a bright and troublesome light, the grandeur of France, unhappily too little disguised in the person of the First Consul. Some civilities to Mr. Fox, on his visit to Paris, did not prevent their seeing that the First Consul had the attitude of master, not only in the affairs of France, but in the affairs of Europe. His language, full of genius and ambition, offended the pride of the English; his devouring activity disturbed their repose."† What the English historian calls "insupportable insolence," the French historian describes as "language full of genius and ambition."—Two months only had passed since the conclusion of peace, when M. Otto said that if paragraphs against Bonaparte continued to appear in the English papers, there would be "war to the death."‡ The casual conversations of M. Otto soon took the form of positive demands on the part of the First Consul. They were these: To put a stop to offensive publi-

* Macaulay—"Biographies," Pitt, p. 217.

† Thiers—"Le Consulat et l'Empire," tom. xvii. p. 845. 1860.

‡ "Life of Sidmouth," vol. ii. p. 153.

cations; to send away certain disaffected persons and transport others; to require the princes of the house of Bourbon, resident in England, to repair to Warsaw; to expel all French emigrants, who may wear decorations belonging to the ancient government of France. M. Otto was told by lord Hawkesbury that "no representation of a foreign power would ever induce government to violate those rights on which the liberties of the people of this country are founded: "that if emigrants did not break the laws they could not be molested; that the law admitted no previous restraints upon publications; and that the law alone was the only protection which the government itself possessed or required against libels. Words incomprehensible to despotism! "Alas," says M. Thiers, "the First Consul descended from his glorious height to listen to pamphleteers, and to deliver himself to transports as violent as they were unworthy of him. To outrage him, the wise, the victorious, what an unpardonable crime! Torrents of blood must flow, because pamphleteers, always assailing their own government, had insulted a stranger—a great man, without doubt, but a man, after all, and the chief of a rival nation."*

The Session of Parliament was closed on the 28th of June, and the Parliament was dissolved on the following day. Mr. Speaker Abbot, in addressing the king, said, "We now indulge the flattering hope that we may cultivate the arts of peace." The country generally did not indulge that hope. The people began "at last to apprehend that neither credit, satisfaction, nor even security, had been attained by the treaty of Amiens."† Yet there was a feeling amongst the higher and richer classes more intense than dread of the ambition, or indignation at the arrogance, of Bonaparte:

"Is it a reed that's shaken by the wind,
Or what is it that ye go forth to see?
Lords, lawyers, statesmen, squires of low degree,
Men known, and men unknown; sick, lame, and blind,
Post forward all, like creatures of one kind,
With first-fruit offerings crowd to bend the knee
In France, before the new-born majesty."‡

Much of the rush to France was a natural curiosity. Certainly amongst many there were higher motives in the desire to look upon a country in which ten years had produced such marvellous changes, than a slavish admiration of irresponsible power. And yet Romilly, who was in Paris in September, had a kindred feeling with the poet who had seen France,

"When faith was pledged to new-born Liberty."

* "Le Consulat et l'Empire," tom. xvii. p. 846.

† Malmesbury—"Diary," May to October, 1802.

‡ Wordsworth—Sonnet, 1802.

"Talleyrand sent me word, by Charles Fox, that I might be presented to-day (Anniversary of the Republic) to the First Consul, together with Erskine, at his levee at the Tuileries. I had been disgusted at the eagerness with which the English crowded to do homage at the new court of a usurper and a tyrant, and I made an excuse." Bonaparte had then become Consul for life, with power to choose his successor. "A more absolute despotism," says Romilly, "than that which now exists here, France never experienced." The police was never so vigilant; there was no freedom of discussion; the press was never so restrained; all English newspapers were prohibited; spies were in every society; all this machinery of despotism was carried on in the name of liberty and equality. The despotism was endured and even coveted, for it "is a sort of paradise, compared with the agitation, the perpetual alarm, the scenes of infamy and bloodshed which accompanied the pretended liberties of France."*

When the Session of the new Parliament was opened on the 23rd of November, there was something ominous in the King's Speech. In his intercourse with foreign powers he had been actuated by a sincere disposition for the maintenance of peace; but it was nevertheless impossible to lose sight of that established and wise system of policy, by which the interests of other states are connected with our own. "I cannot, therefore," continued the king, "be indifferent to any material change in their relative condition and strength." During the progress of the negotiations at Amiens, Bonaparte had become the Dictator of the Cisalpine Republic. After the conclusion of the peace, the First Consul, to use the sugared words of M. Thiers, "exercising in Switzerland his beneficent dictation, sent an army to Berne." The government of Mr. Addington made a mild remonstrance, which was answered by Bonaparte asserting that the king of England "had no right to complain of the conduct, or to interfere with the proceedings, of France, on any point which did not form a part of the stipulations of the treaty of Amiens."† In September, Piedmont was formally annexed to the French territory. The First Consul had stipulated with the Batavian Republic, that he would withdraw the French auxiliary troops on the conclusion of the Definitive Treaty. At the end of October the British minister at the Hague reported that 11,000 French soldiers were halted on the Dutch frontiers, and that their pay and maintenance was demanded from the Batavian

* Romilly—"Diary," October, 1802.

† Declaration of the British Government, 18th May, 1803.

government. It was time that the recommendation in the king's speech should be attended to—that the means of security for preserving peace should be adopted. These means were represented by a vote for 129,000 land forces, and 50,000 seamen and marines. The necessity for an additional military establishment was supported by the statement that France had a total regular force of 427,000 men, and altogether had at command 929,000 men.* The vote for additional seamen was urged as an imperious necessity, required on account of "a large armament being fitted out in the ports of a rival nation." Mr. Windham said of the French, "their temple of liberty is transformed into the temple of Mars."† In the debates on these estimates Mr. Fox held that, "with regard to the views of Bonaparte, he saw no reason why, having gained great military glory, his ambition might not now induce him to turn his attention to the improvement of the commerce of his country." Previous to the debate on the Army Estimates, Fox wrote to Sheridan, "I am very much against your abusing Bonaparte, because I am sure it is impolitic both for the country and ourselves. But,—as you please; only, for God's sake, Peace."‡

There is an entry in Mr. Wilberforce's Diary of the 3rd of February, 1803, which has reference to an unreported debate of that day, when Parliament re-assembled after the recess: "House of Commons. Busy about our helping Bonaparte with ships for St. Domingo." The help was given by British merchants, who had agreed to let out their ships to the French to carry over troops and stores to that island, which was struggling for the freedom of the blacks. Addington was cool about this transaction, and half defended it. Pitt reprobated what Wilberforce describes as a monstrous crime. Whilst the negotiations at Amiens were proceeding, the French government was preparing an expedition upon the largest scale for the destruction of the government in St. Domingo, where, after a long struggle, the military genius and the political sagacity of Toussaint L'Ouverture had succeeded in establishing the civil and military dominion of free negroes, of which government he was the undisputed head.§ The English ministry made some remonstrance against the formidable outfit of the French expedition; but the First Consul said that "we were materially interested in the reduction of Toussaint's power, who would otherwise establish in the West Indies a piratical state."||

* Debate on the Army Estimates, December 8th.

† "Parliamentary History," vol. xxxvi, col. 1096.

‡ Moore—"Life of Sheridan," p. 599—quarto ed.

§ See ante, vol. vi. p. 577.

|| "Cornwallis Correspondence," vol. iii. p. 400.

The French republican government had in 1794 issued a proclamation emancipating the slaves. Toussaint became from that time a supporter of France, and in 1796 was appointed commander-in-chief of the armies of St. Domingo. He manifested his confidence in the French by sending his children to be educated in Paris. By the time Bonaparte had assumed the reins of power, Toussaint had reduced St. Domingo to a condition of tranquillity; and had exercised a strict but just sway, which allowed the agriculture and commerce of the great island to attain some degree of their ancient prosperity. In 1801, the leading chiefs, in a Constitution which they formed, appointed Toussaint President and Governor for life. He apprised Bonaparte of his new dignity in a letter beginning, "The first of Blacks to the first of Whites." This was probably held an assumption not to be endured. The expedition was instantly prepared; and a fleet of nearly a hundred and forty vessels, with twenty-one thousand troops, sailed on the 14th of December, 1801. When this great force appeared off the island, Toussaint was disheartened. He nevertheless resisted for some time, until some of his generals were won over by the generals of Bonaparte, on receiving promises of honours and rewards. Toussaint resisted; because he knew that the object of the French was to re-establish slavery, as they had done in Guadalupe. He was finally compelled to submit; but he refused to accept any authority at the hands of those who brought fetters for his African brethren. He retired to his farm in the mountains, where he remained for two months. But, being invited to a conference with the French generals, he left his retreat, was arrested, and with his wife and children was taken on board a vessel of war and carried to Brest. He was finally immured in the castle of Joux, near Besançon; was subjected to the most frightful severities; and died there on the 27th of April, 1803.* The death of Toussaint produced a deep impression in England. The abolition of the Slave Trade had been agitated in every recent session of Parliament, and the fate of the heroic negro was ever in men's minds when they thought of the wrongs of his race. In his treatment, in the name of Liberty and Equality, they saw that magnanimity formed no portion of the nature of the First Consul.

Since the conclusion of the peace, Mr. Addington had endured a good deal of reproach as a man incompetent to direct the affairs of the country at a crisis of great difficulty and danger. He was held to be too timid in his dealings with France. On the 19th of

* For an interesting description of this prison, see Miss Martineau's "The Hour and the Man," vol. iii. p. 258.

February, he told lord Malmesbury that his maxim was "to resist or bear all clamour and invective at home till such time as France (and he ever foresaw it must happen) had filled the measure of her folly, and had put herself completely in the wrong."* That time the minister thought had arrived. Bonaparte had published in the "Moniteur" of the 30th of January, a Report of Colonel Sebastiani, who had been sent by him to explore Egypt and Syria. This Report stated that with a few thousand men France might easily reconquer Egypt; that the people were in love with the French and hated the English; and that the inhabitants of the Ionian Islands were ready to declare for the French. Adding on told Malmesbury that the Cabinet, in consequence of this Report, had directed lord Whitworth, our ambassador, to declare that the First Consul's views on Egypt were now made manifest; that his intention of annulling the Republic of the Seven Islands was also demonstrated; that every part of the Report betrayed views of hostile aggrandizement, as regarded Great Britain; and that until a full and unequivocal explanation was given, the fulfilment of the article of the treaty of Amiens respecting Malta could not be expected. This dispatch to lord Whitworth went on the 7th. On the 24th the ambassador sent an account of what had taken place at the Tuileries on the morning of the 18th. Bonaparte harangued him for two hours, lord Whitworth in vain trying to put in a word:—Every wind that blew from Dover brought additional instances of our personal dislike to him; there were two French newspapers paid by us to abuse him; had we treated him with confidence and attention he was ready to have joined with us in governing the world, which, with his army and our fleet, might certainly be done; that he now saw plainly that the two countries must ever be at enmity, if not at war; that the mode in which we had taken up the affair of his officer in Egypt was injurious and unwarrantable; that he had rather see us in possession of the Faubourg St. Antoine than in possession of Malta; that he would not provoke war, but that he had an army of 400,000 men, with which he would attack us at home, command the expedition himself, run all risks, and sacrifice army after army till he succeeded. Lord Whitworth replied with calmness; noticing that the acquisitions which France had made since the peace, and those she evidently had in contemplation to make, rendered it impossible for England to remain quiet. "What," said Bonaparte, "you mean France has got Piedmont, and part of Switzerland—*deux miserables bagatelles*." Within a day or two of this memorable interview, another

* Malmesbury—"Diaries," &c., vol. iv. p. 243.

cause of offence was blown by the winds over the Straits of Dover. One of the French papers published in London, *L'Ambigu*, conducted by M. Peltier, a royalist emigrant, contained many bitter reproaches and insinuations against Bonaparte. The First Consul had demanded, as we have seen, that a vigour beyond the law should be exercised with regard to journals; he required that Peltier should be banished, but he was told that the law alone could give him redress. He then demanded the prosecution of Peltier by the attorney-general for "a libel on a friendly government." This was putting his complaint upon a right issue. Mr. Perceval opened the case for the crown; Mr. Mackintosh defended Peltier. The jury returned a verdict for the crown, and so far Bonaparte had every reason to be satisfied with the impartiality of the English laws. But Peltier published a report of the trial, with a full translation of the speech of Mackintosh, which, re-translated into other languages—and amongst the translators was Madame de Stael—was circulated throughout Europe, with the exception, no doubt, of France. The triumph of the First Consul in the verdict of an English jury must have been a small compensation for the surpassing eloquence of an English advocate. The triumph of Bonaparte was nothing to the triumph of dispassionate Englishmen in the assertion of the majesty of the law under which they lived. Their feelings would go with the great advocate. Their judgments would go with the verdict against an unscrupulous writer, who had hinted at assassination as a remedy for the evils of tyranny. It was difficult to come to a sound conclusion, under the power of such eloquence. "Gentlemen," said Mackintosh to the jury, "the real prosecutor in this case is the master of the greatest empire the civilized world ever saw. The defendant is a defenceless, proscribed exile. . . . I am to consider this as the first of a long series of conflicts between the greatest power in the world, and the only free press remaining in Europe." It is impossible to give a notion of the grandeur of the speech of Mackintosh. On the Stock Exchange of London, it was thought that the acquittal of Peltier would be considered in France as tantamount to a declaration of war. The eloquence poured forth in his defence was in reality the manifesto of a nation, and not the formal declaration of war by a government. When all freedom of opinion had been trampled down in France, let us consider what must have been the effect in England of such words as these: "One asylum of free discussion is still inviolate. There is still one spot in Europe where man can freely exercise his reason on the most important concerns of society; where he can boldly pub-

lish his judgment on the acts of the proudest and most powerful tyrants. The press of England is still free. It is guarded by the free constitution of our forefathers. It is guarded by the hearts and arms of Englishmen, and I trust I may venture to say, that if it be to fall, it will fall only under the ruins of the British Empire." Having proceeded to describe "circumstances in the history of this country which have induced our ancestors at all times to handle, with more than ordinary tenderness, that branch of the liberty of discussion which is applied to the conduct of foreign states," the orator indirectly, but not the less distinctly, pointed to the attitude of France at the moment in which he was speaking: "When vast projects of aggrandizement are manifested, when schemes of criminal ambition are carried into effect, the day of battle is fast approaching for England. Her free government cannot engage in dangerous wars, without the hearty and affectionate support of her people. A state thus situated cannot, without the utmost peril, silence those public discussions which are to point the popular indignation against those who must soon be enemies. In domestic dissensions, it may sometimes be the supposed interest of government to overawe the press. But it never can be even their apparent interest when the danger is purely foreign. A king of England who, in such circumstances, should conspire against the free press of this country, would undermine the foundations of his own throne; he would silence the trumpet which is to call his people round his standard."

Whilst the trial of Peltier was proceeding in the Court of King's Bench on the 21st of February, a fearful tragedy was enacted at the new gaol in the Borough. Colonel Despard and six accomplices were executed for high treason. This was no case of constructive treason. Edward Marcus Despard, a native of Ireland, had served in our army with a bravery and good conduct to which Lord Nelson bore testimony on his trial. Towards the close of the war he had preferred some claim against government which was not attended to; had become irritated; and had so conducted himself as to be arrested, and confined in Coldbath Fields prison, until he was released by the expiration of the Act for the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus. Maddened into wild prospects of revenge, this fierce enthusiast engaged privates of the Guards, and some of the humblest workmen, in a conspiracy which he said was to have the most extensive ramifications, for killing the king; for attacking the Tower; for taking possession of the Bank, the public offices, and the Houses of Parliament. During the trial it was distinctly ascertained that there was no foreign instigation to

this wild plot; and that the obscure actors, who met in low public houses, had no correspondence in any other part of the United Kingdom. The madman had seduced ignorant men to believe in him; and he and they suffered the penalty of the highest crime known to the law.

On the 8th of March, a Royal Message was delivered to Parliament, for calling out the Militia, "in consequence of the preparations carrying on in the ports of France and Holland, whilst important discussions are subsisting between his Majesty and the French government." On the 14th lord Whitworth sent a remarkable dispatch to lord Hawkesbury, the official publication of which in May had been anticipated by the details of all the journals of Europe, except those of France. At the Court of the Tuileries on Sunday, the 13th of March, an extraordinary scene between Bonaparte and the British ambassador took place, in the presence of two hundred persons, including the foreign ministers. Whilst the ambassadors were waiting for their audience, we are informed by M. Thiers, "the First Consul was with Madame Bonaparte in her apartment, playing with the infant who was then intended to be his heir, the newly-born son of Louis Bonaparte and Hortense de Beauharnais."* The name of lord Whitworth was announced, continues Thiers. "It produced upon the First Consul a visible impression. He left the child; took abruptly the hand of Madame Bonaparte; rushed through the door which opened in the saloon of reception; passed before the foreign ministers who pressed around him, and went straight to lord Whitworth." Then came a series of rapid interrogations and reproaches: Have you any news from England?—So you are determined to go to war!—No; said the ambassador, we are too sensible of the advantages of peace.—You wish then for war? Lord Whitworth goes on to relate that Bonaparte, "then proceeded to count Marcow and the chevalier Azara, who were standing together at a little distance from me and said to them—The English wish for war, but if they are the first to draw the sword I shall be the last to sheathe it. They respect not treaties; henceforth we must cover them with black crape. He then went his round. In a few minutes he came back to me. He began again:—Why armaments? Against whom are these measures of precaution? I have not a ship of the line in the ports of France. But if you desire to arm, I also will arm; if you will fight, I will fight. You

* Louis and Hortense (the daughter of Josephine by her first husband) were married in 1802. The infant was their first son. Louis Napoleon, emperor of the French, was the third son.

may destroy France, but you cannot intimidate her." We wish neither the one nor the other, said the calm ambassador. We wish to live in a good understanding with France. "Respect treaties, then," said Bonaparte. "Woe to those who respect not treaties. There were two months more of diplomacy, but this scene at the Tuileries was the beginning of the end. "The first Consul from that day swore to perish or to punish England. Fatal oath!"* The first orders that bore upon his design to cross the strait between Dover and Calais, and to carry into England one of the armies that had conquered Europe, date from the day when he first heard of the Message to Parliament of the king of England.† If the First Consul had been patient, if he had insisted with firmness, but with gentleness, upon the evacuation of Malta, the excuses for the non-performance of the conditions of the treaty of Amiens would have been soon given up by the feeble minister of Great Britain. So thinks M. Thiers.‡ This result is not very probable. The French historian holds that the English were altogether wrong, for their ambition with regard to Malta, so slightly covered by dissimulation, had become a real scandal. The First Consul, he says, ought to have wholly left them in the wrong, instead of making his bursts of anger resound from one end of the world to the other.§ France demanded a literal fulfilment of the treaty; that the island should be surrendered to the Knights of Malta. France and Spain had sequestered the possessions of the Knights. "We bound ourselves to surrender it to a known Order, clothed with certain powers, and capable of exerting themselves in consequence of certain revenues. We found no such Order. The men indeed and the name we found."|| This is the ostensible defence of the conduct of England as regards its morality. The truth is, we had possession of Malta, and we had learnt its value, through its sagacious governor, sir Alexander Ball. The First Consul had pursued a system of aggression after we had signed away this key of the Mediterranean, which France desired to be in the hands of those who could not keep it. Malta, in itself, was not worth a war; but on the eve of a war which most men saw would be inevitable, it would have been very chivalrous to have evacuated Malta, but it may be questioned whether in that case the ministry of Mr. Adington would not have been laughed at by Bonaparte and Talleyrand for their weakness. The impolicy of the evacuation of Malta is the real defence for its retention. And thus we went to war, after a

* Thiers—"Le Consulat et l'Empire," tome xvii. p. 817 (Paris, 1860).

† *Ibid.*, tome iv. p. 315 (Paris, 1845).

‡ *Ibid.*, tome xvii. p. 847.

§ *Ibid.*, tome iv. p. 314.

|| Coleridge—"Friend," Essay iv.

peace which had lasted one year and six weeks. On the 18th May, the Declaration of War, and the various documents by which the final measure was to be supported, were laid upon the tables of the two Houses of Parliament.

It is scarcely necessary that we should enter into any minute details of the negotiations for the return of Mr. Pitt to power, in conjunction with Mr. Addington—a negotiation which had been going on during the months of March and April. There are various accounts of these negotiations, but it appears clearly that an overture to Pitt was made to him from Addington, through Lord Melville; and that it was proposed to Pitt that he should name some one to be First Lord of the Treasury, not receiving that situation himself, but taking the office of Secretary of State, Addington being the other Secretary.* Wilberforce tells the story of the mission of Dundas with a variation: "After dinner and port wine, he began cautiously to open his proposals. But he saw it would not do, and stopped abruptly. 'Really,' said Pitt, with a sly severity, and it was almost the only sharp thing I ever heard him say of any friend, 'I had not the curiosity to ask what I was to be.'"† Pitt was then offered the Treasury, on condition that there should be no extensive changes in other offices. Pitt stipulated that Melville, Spencer, Grenville, and Windham should be of the Cabinet; that there must be a general sweep; and that the change must be made with the king's desire. Addington demurred.‡ The king's "own Chancellor" saw his majesty, on the 20th of April, and "told the story in his own way, as the king expressed resentment against Pitt, talked of his putting the Crown in commission, and that he carried his plan of removal so extremely far and so high, that it might reach *him*."§ Pitt would not come into office upon Addington's propositions. But he was tired, and so were his friends, of bolstering up a feeble government. The admirers of Pitt felt that a great crisis was at hand; and Canning, on a subsequent occasion, expressed what he and others had long suppressed or conveyed only in sarcastic allusions: "Away with the cant of 'Measures, not men;' the idle supposition that it is the harness and not the horses that draw the chariot along. . . . What is the nature of the times in which we live? Look at France, and see what we have to cope with, and consider what has made her what she is—a Man." Addington remained in power during another year.

* Rose—"Diaries and Correspondence," vol. ii. p. 31.

† Wilberforce—"Life," vol. iii. p. 219.

‡ See Lord Colchester's "Diary," p. 414 to 417. § Malmesbury, vol. iv. p. 190.

On the 23rd of May there was unusual excitement with reference to the proceedings of the House of Commons. The king's Message was to be taken into consideration. The Strangers' Gallery was filled at an early hour; and the Reporters for the Journals, then, and long afterwards, obliged to struggle for their places, were shut out. We have thus lost irrecoverably the oration of Pitt, who had been for some time absent from parliament. It is universally represented to have been one of his greatest efforts. The finest speech, says Malmesbury, he ever made—strong in support of war, but silent as to ministers. His very finest, according to Romilly: "His influence and authority in the House of Commons, shown upon the debate I have just-mentioned, and still more on the day when Fox moved that the House should recommend the Crown to accept the mediation of Russia, exceed all belief."* Fox said of Pitt's speech "that if Demosthenes had been present, he must have admired and might have envied."† But neither Pitt nor Fox pressed for the retirement of ministers. They did not vote for the condemnatory resolutions that were proposed, and Addington had therefore a large majority. Whoever was minister at that crisis, and would carry on the war vigorously, would have the support of the country. Bonaparte, in addition to his manifestations of bitter hostility against the British government, had committed an outrage upon British subjects which roused the national feeling. Two French vessels had been captured under English letters of marque. The First Consul, under the pretence that it was contrary to the law of nations to make captures at sea before a general declaration of war, arrested ten thousand English travellers in France. The plea was a false one. The vessels were taken on the 20th of May, at which time war had been openly announced by the departure of the ambassadors of either country. He detained the English visitors in captivity till his abdication in 1814 restored most of them to their homes. "If," writes Romilly, "it had been Bonaparte's object to give strength to the British ministry, and to make the war universally popular in England, he could not have devised a better expedient." In a frenzy of passion he sent for Junot, the governor of Paris, and ordered him to take measures that all the English should be seized—the Temple, the Force, the Abbaye, (prisons) would hold them. Junot remonstrated; but he told him, with an oath, that he would show him and his other generals that he would make himself obeyed.‡

And now there was only one mind in Great Britain. "The

* Letter cxx.

† Horner—"Memoirs," vol. i. p. 221.

‡ "Memoirs of the Duchesse d'Abrantes."

land bristled." The spirit that was raised in France by the duke of Brunswick was raised in England by Bonaparte. The pressure of taxation, the desire for a reformed House of Commons, the remembrances of despotic acts of the government, the sympathy with republican France—all was forgotten, in the one absorbing impulse for the defence of the soil. Throughout the land went the eloquent Declaration of "the merchants, bankers, traders, and other inhabitants of London," agreed to at the Royal Exchange amidst the cheers of five thousand of the most eminent citizens of the greatest commercial community of the world. The Declaration was written by Macintosh. The pledge of London became the common pledge of every town and city of the provinces. "We deem it our duty solemnly to bind ourselves to each other, and to our countrymen, in the most sacred manner, that we will employ all our exertions to rouse the spirit and to assist the resources of the kingdom; that we will be ready with our services of every sort, and on every occasion, in its defence; and that we will rather perish together, than live to see the honour of the British name tarnished, or that noble inheritance of greatness, glory, and liberty destroyed, which has descended to us from our forefathers, and which we are determined to transmit to our posterity."* To the "English commercial aristocracy, more active than the old aristocracy of the nobility." M. Thiers attributes the war. They were afraid, he says, of the competition with which they were menaced by the French, Spanish, Dutch, and Genoese flags; "the mercantile interest (*haut commerce*) of London became hostile." † The merchants must have kept very bad accounts, and have made very unsound calculations, to have feared the competition of France and her dependencies, when their flags could traverse the seas uninterrupted by war. In 1801, before the peace of Amiens, the official value of our Exports was thirty-seven millions; in 1802, a year of uninterrupted peace, they had risen to forty-one millions; in 1803, when the peace was broken, they fell to thirty-one millions.

It had become a sort of popular tradition in France that an army might be transported from Calais to Dover in flat-bottomed boats. France, by a common movement of its departments and its towns, offered flat-bottomed boats to the government. These boats were, when unladen, to draw only three or four feet of water. Built in the interior, on the banks of the Gironde, the Loire, the Seine, the Somme, the Oise, the Scheldt, the Meuse, the Rhine, they were to descend these rivers to their mouths, and, creeping along the

* "Annual Register," 1803, p. 412.

† "Le Consulat et l'Empire," tome iv. p. 311.

shores, to be united in the ports of La Manche. There they were to take on board a hundred and fifty thousand men, ten thousand horses, and four hundred pieces of ordnance.* Lord Dundonald says that Bonaparte had become aware that any number of French gun-boats could sail along their own coasts, under the protection of the numerous batteries; and although it has been the custom to deride this armament, he sees no cause to doubt that it might have been successful, sooner or later. † To cross the Channel with an army, to terminate in London the rivalry of two nations, was the prodigious enterprise to which Bonaparte applied his faculties during three successive years. "So filled was he with hope that he rested, calm, confident, happy even, in preparation for an attempt which would conduct him either to be the master of the world, or to be engulfed, himself, his army, his glory, at the bottom of the ocean." ‡

On the 23rd of June, the First Consul, accompanied by Madame Bonaparte, set out to visit the coasts of the Channel from the Seine to the Scheldt. He demanded from the minister of the public treasure the diamonds of the crown, to form ornaments for his wife. He would show himself in the splendour of regality, "in all but name a king." In the autumn of 1803 his plans of invasion were becoming mature. He would attack the United Kingdom on several points at once. A portion of his army should invade Ireland from Brest. There were Irish fugitives in France with whom the First Consul negotiated. He would send an expedition of eighteen thousand men with an ample supply of arms, if they would furnish twenty thousand insurgents. Of course the fugitives were ready to promise, and to stipulate that France should not make peace with England without the independence of Ireland being a condition. The issue of the Irish insurrection of the 23rd of July abated nothing of these sanguine hopes. Robert Emmett, who with his elder brother had been implicated in the Rebellion, had returned to Ireland in 1802. By the death of his father he had obtained 3000*l.*, a sum which he employed in organizing a new rebellion. The peace was not at end when young Emmett began to swear in conspirators. On the 23rd of July—the government being aware that mischief was brooding—the insurrection broke out in Dublin. It was marked by an act of peculiar atrocity—the murder of the venerable lord Kilwarden, the Lord Chief Justice, a man of the most upright and amiable character, who came amongst an armed mob, in his carriage, accompanied by his daughter. The

* See Thiers, tome iv. pp. 352-376.

† "Autobiography of a Seaman," vol. i. p. 167. ‡ Thiers, tome iv. p. 368.