

considered to be ill-defended; and sir Home Popham determined to make a dash at a region reported to be so rich in treasure and merchandise, and so capable of affording a great opening to British commercial enterprise, that he would be justified in acting upon his own impulse. Having obtained from the general at the Cape the assistance of some troops, he arrived in June at the mouth of La Plata. Buenos Ayres was taken without opposition, with a great booty in the Treasury, and vast stores in the shipping on the river. The triumphant man sent home a circular addressed to the mercantile and manufacturing towns in Great Britain, which drove the speculators wild. Not the Scotch when they colonized Darien sent out such wonderful cargoes of goods as were sent in 1806. When the cargoes arrived Buenos Ayres had again changed masters. Under the command of a French colonel in the Spanish service, an attack was made on the British troops in the city; and after a sanguinary conflict they surrendered as prisoners of war. There was a more fatal termination of the South American enterprises in the following year. Thus it was, and thus it had been, from the commencement of the war in 1793. Year after year the armies of England were engaged in what the greatest of her commanders described as the most ruinous of systems—the carrying on “a little war.” Expeditions were again and again organized, to operate rather as distractions of the enemy than to produce any permanent impression upon the issue of the contest. Whilst Napoleon rapidly directed a great and overwhelming force upon one point, England was attempting enterprises in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in America, some of which had a temporary success, others a lamentable failure; but in all of which the bravery of her troops amply proved what a large army of such men could do, if fairly brought to grapple even with the veterans of Marengo or Austerlitz. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, and for seven years before, vast as were the sums expended upon small achievements, the government of George III. could never “screw its courage to the sticking-place,” to conduct a war against the aggressions of the Republic and the ambition of Napoleon, upon a scale that might emulate the vigour with which the government of Anne conducted the war against the ambition of Louis the Fourteenth.

CHAPTER XII.

Napoleon takes the field against Prussia.—Positions of the Prussian and French armies.—Battle of Jena.—The French enter Berlin.—The new Parliament meets.—Bill passed for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.—Proceedings which resulted in a change of Ministry.—A great Constitutional Question.—The new Administration.—Parliament dissolved.—Battle of Eylau.—Cold encouragement of England to the Allies.—Expeditions to various points.—Expedition to the Dardanelles.—Its failure, and that of other Turkish expeditions.—Expedition against Buenos Ayres.—Its lamentable results.—General Whitelock.—Meeting of the new Parliament.—Battle of Friedland.—Peace between Russia and France.—Treaty of Tilsit.—Secret articles of the Treaty become known to the British government.—The Danish fleet.—Expedition to Copenhagen.—Bombardment.—Surrender of the Fleet.

On the night of the 25th of September, Napoleon, accompanied by the empress, and by Talleyrand, left Paris. There was something more important to accomplish than remaining at the Tuileries for the mystification of lord Lauderdale. The French emperor proceeded with his usual rapidity to Mayence; and from Mayence to Wurtzbourg, where German potentates and German generals came to bow before his greatness. Around him was his army of a hundred and fifty thousand men, divided into nine corps. There were three Prussian armies, of which the principal army of fifty-five thousand men was commanded by the king in person, with his nephew, the duke of Brunswick, as his lieutenant-general. This was the famous general who advanced into France at the beginning of the Revolution, and raised a spirit in the people, that, begun in patriotism and a passion for liberty, degenerated into a passion for conquest. The duke was now seventy-one years of age. He had resigned the command of the Prussian and Austrian forces in 1793, and for thirteen years had been looking upon the great contests of Europe without taking any part in the struggle. The issue of one of the most tremendous conflicts of a time when the whole system of military tactics was changed, was now confided to a pupil of Frederick the Great. He was confronted with Napoleon, with Bernadotte, Davoust, Soult, Lannes, Ney, Augereau, Murat, Bessières, Lefebvre,—commanders who were formed in a school of warfare which, utterly disregarding the routine of the parade ground, and the systematic and slow manœuvres of a past time, rapidly concentrated large masses for the attack of an enemy, indifferent to the amount of carnage in their own ranks so that the

opposing force was annihilated. The ancient duke had some notions that he had discovered the secret of French success. He was for advancing against Napoleon's legions, and boldly attacking them. But time was an important element in these calculations. The Prussians, before they moved to attack, were holding councils of war; discussing plans; attempting to negotiate; and, as a preliminary to pacific overtures, desiring the haughty emperor immediately to withdraw his troops beyond the Rhine, and to commence his retreat on the 8th of October. Napoleon replied by an instant march into Saxony, after issuing a proclamation to his soldiers which concluded by saying that the Prussians would find that the hostility of "the great people" was more terrible than the tempests of the ocean.

The Prussian armies were posted on the Saale, in the vicinity of Erfurt, Gotha, and Eisenach. The outposts of the Prussians and French were close to each other on the 8th of October. Battles of separate divisions had been fought, as the Prussians advanced to meet their antagonists. They were compelled to relinquish the offensive system, which was incompatible with the tardiness and irresolution of their commanders. All that bravery could do would be done. All that patriotism could do would be stimulated into chivalrous enthusiasm, when the beautiful queen of Prussia rode from rank to rank of the soldiery, and exhorted them to fight for their country. Bonaparte sneered at the queen in one of his bulletins. "We seem to behold Armida in her madness setting fire to her own palace." But something, without which patriotism and bravery are of little avail, was wanting to Prussia. On the night of the 13th of October the Prussian watch-fires extended for six leagues. The fires of the French under Napoleon spread over a small space, of which the central fires lighted up the summit of the Landgrafenberg on which Napoleon bivouacked. On the morning of the 14th of October he attacked that portion of the Prussian army which, under the command of the prince of Hohenlohe at Jena was unprepared for an immediate assault. The main body was at Auerstadt; and was attacked by Davoust. Thus, this great battle, which decided the fate of the Prussian monarchy, is sometimes called the battle of Jena and sometimes the battle of Auerstadt. By whatever name this fatal day of the 14th of October is known, in that double battle, in which two hundred and fifty thousand men were engaged, with seven hundred pieces of cannon, twenty thousand Prussians were killed or wounded, and above thirty thousand were taken prisoners. The king fled from the field; the duke of Brunswick received a shot in his eye, of

which wound he died on the 10th of November. All the principal fortified towns surrendered to the French, without resistance. In the northern provinces the Prussian generals, Blücher and Lestocq kept some regiments together. All the rest of the great force that was on the banks of the Saale in October was broken. On the 25th the French, under the command of Davoust, entered Berlin. Napoleon made his triumphal entry on the following day. On the 15th of November, he wrote to his brother Joseph, "the Prussian army and monarchy have ceased to exist."* On the 20th of November he issued from the palace of the House of Brandenburg the celebrated decree against the commerce of England, known as the Berlin Decree. The ambition of Napoleon could scarcely be satiated by the destruction of the monarchy that Frederick the Great had built up; for Russia was still in arms; England was still unscathed. His project of invasion was laid aside, to give place to a project quite as impracticable—that of putting England into a condition of isolation with the rest of Europe. He now writes to Joseph, "the news of what has just happened has thrown London into consternation. The occupation of Hamburg, which I have just effected, and the declaration of the blockade of the British islands, will increase this uneasiness."

At this moment marshal Lannes wrote to the conqueror at Berlin, that the soldiers of his corps, having heard a proclamation addressed to the great army, had cried out "Live, the Emperor of the West!" In the name of his corps, the politic Lannes desired to know whether in future he might address his despatches to the Emperor of the West? No answer was given; but the idea took possession of the soul of Napoleon. The enthusiasm of the soldiers, says Thiers, divined his ambition. It inspired him with a profound joy. He kept his own counsel, whilst he cherished in secret his passion for this title.† Emperor of the West! But how so, whilst England was in arms? Perish then her commerce! The Berlin Decree went forth, followed by that of Milan; and upon the raft of Tilsit the emperor of the French, and the emperor of all the Russias, agree to divide the world, the one as Emperor of the West, the other as Emperor of the East.

From battle fields and triumphs we turn to a warfare that looks less magnificent, but which is nevertheless not without its influence in the affairs of nations—the party conflicts of the British Parliament; the ministerial changes of the British Monarchy.

After the death of Mr. Fox, the ministry of Lord Grenville felt

* "Correspondence with King Joseph," vol. i. p. 222.

† *Histoire du Consulat et l'Empire*, tome vii. and tome xvii.

itself weak in parliament. No statesman of commanding ability had joined the government. Lord Holland was the only new member of the administration. Mr. Canning resisted an overture to take office. A dissolution was resolved upon. The result was favourable to the administration; and they had a considerable majority when the new parliament met on the 15th of December. The great subject of debate was on the papers which related to the negotiation for peace with France. The able and spirited speech of lord Howick, in which he advocated an amount of resistance to Napoleon which even the keenest war partisan could not disapprove, gave the ministers a triumph without a division. The financial propositions of lord Henry Petty contemplated an annual system of loans, to make provision for a permanent state of warfare, setting a portion of these loans aside at accumulating interest, to constitute a sinking fund for their redemption. These schemes have passed "into a limbo large and broad," which statesmen have long since deserted. The great work of this session was the Abolition of the Slave-Trade. On the 23rd of February, 1807, the House of Commons decided by the vast majority of 283 to 16, that the House should go into Committee on the Slave-Trade bill, the second reading having been previously carried, as it had been carried in the Lords. When sir Samuel Romilly burst into unusual eloquence, in describing the feelings with which Mr. Wilberforce would that night lay his head on his pillow, as the preserver of millions of his fellow-creatures, as contrasted with that man who had waded to a throne through slaughter and oppression, the House shouted again and again, even as uneducated multitudes shout when their feelings are deeply stirred by impassioned oratory. The bill was read a third time on the 18th of March; was passed, with some trifling amendments in the Lords; and received the royal assent on the 25th of March. On that day the Grenville ministry delivered up the seals of office. They had not been ejected from the counsels of the sovereign by a parliamentary majority. They had been required by the king to give a pledge which no constitutional minister could give. They had, somewhat indiscreetly, it is held, but as many will think most conscientiously, brought forward the question, though in a very limited shape, which drove Mr. Pitt from office in 1801. There were too many "friends of the king" ready to take advantage of their indiscretion. They were excluded from power; and for nearly a quarter of a century the party of the Whigs was the party of Opposition.

On the 5th of March, 1807, lord Howick moved for leave to bring in a bill for securing to all his Majesty's subjects the privi-

lege of serving in the army or navy, upon their taking an oath prescribed by act of Parliament. He asked, was it politic when we were contending with such a powerful enemy, to prevent a large portion of the population of the country from contributing to the common defence? Mr. Perceval denounced the proposed bill as one of the most dangerous measures that had ever been submitted to the judgment of the legislature. On the 18th of March lord Howick postponed the second reading of the bill. He was not authorized, he said, nor would it accord with his duty, to enter into any explanation on the subject. The king had then declared against the bill. Lord Sidmouth had sent in his resignation. The king's mind was diligently made known. The expectants of office, even those who advocated the measure of Catholic relief, would sacrifice every consideration to the comfort of the king. The ministers saw their danger, and in deference to the earnestly expressed wishes of his majesty, consented to withdraw the measure on Roman Catholic enlistment. Mr. Abbot enters in his Diary of the 18th of March, "The duke of York, duke of Portland, and lord Eldon have been very busy for the last ten days; and the tone at Windsor very triumphant over the yielding ministers." * The ministers did not yield an unqualified abandonment of their desire to avert the dangers of Ireland by concession. They sent a cabinet minute to the king on the 15th of March, stating that those of his confidential servants who had promoted the bill in parliament now abandoned the whole measure; that it was intended as a first step towards a system of policy which they thought essential to the interests of the empire; that although they had endeavoured to prevent the Catholic petition from being brought forward, they must necessarily declare their own individual opinions in its favor whenever agitated in parliament; and, that their sense of duty required them to propose at any time, from time to time, such measures towards the Catholics as should in their judgments most contribute to the security and tranquillity of Ireland. † This abstract of the cabinet minute, by the Speaker, from a copy shown to him, is more circumstantial than any account we have seen of the ministerial proceeding. The immediate cause of the termination of the ministry is stated in a letter of lord Grenville to the Speaker: "On the merits of the measure which has led to this consequence, I fear we are not wholly agreed in opinion. But that measure is not the point on which the government is now at issue. We had decided to let it drop; but there has been since required of us a written and positive engagement never, under any circumstances, to

* Lord Colchester's Diary, vol. ii. p. 102.

† *Ibid.*, p. 103.

propose in the Closet *any* measure of concession to the Catholics, or *even connected with the question.*" * If the ministers had given such a pledge they would have been fitter ministers of the Sublime Porte than of the court of St. James's. They might have said to their sovereign,

"This is the English, not the Turkish Court."

They refused to give the pledge required; and the king very quickly formed a new administration. The constitutional question of the danger to which the country would be exposed, if ministers should bind themselves by pledges to their sovereign not to give advice that might be disagreeable to him, was ably maintained in a spirited debate of the 9th of April, when Mr. Brand moved a Resolution, "that it is contrary to the first duties of the confidential Servants of the Crown to restrain themselves by any pledge, expressed or implied, from offering to the king any advice which the course of circumstances may render necessary for the welfare and security of the Empire." The resolution was met by a motion for reading the other orders of the day. The Opposition sustained a most unexpected defeat, having a majority against them of thirty-two in an extraordinarily full house. On that occasion sir Samuel Romilly declared that the true question before the House was, whether it was not a high crime and misdemeanor in any minister in the confidence of the king to subscribe to a pledge that he would not offer any advice to his majesty which might appear to him to be essential to the interests of the empire. There was another constitutional question mooted in this debate—that there could be no exercise of the prerogative in which the king could be without some adviser. The new ministers had avowed that the king had acted without advice. They disowned the responsibility, but they could not escape from the constitutional inference—that by accepting office they had assumed the responsibility. † Mr. May, in his recent excellent work, says, "no constitutional writer would now be found to defend the pledge itself, or to maintain that the ministers who accepted office in consequence of the refusal of that pledge, had not taken upon themselves the same responsibility as if they had advised it." ‡ The holders of office had now a majority over those whom the king had turned out. The alarmists of the Church took part with the king, and the ministers, knowing the value of the old popular cry of "No Popery," dissolved the parliament at the end of its first session.

The new ministry, of which the Duke of Portland was the nom-

* Lord Colchester's Diary, vol. ii. p. 102.

† Hansard—vol. ix.

‡ May—"Constitutional History," vol. i. p. 27.

inal head, but of which Mr. Perceval, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, was the real leader, enrolled lord Eldon as Chancellor, Mr. Canning as Foreign Secretary, lord Hawkesbury as Home Secretary, and lord Castlereagh as War and Colonial Secretary. The Duke of Richmond was lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and sir Arthur Wellesley, Chief Secretary. There were other holders of high office, who were long associated with the fortunes of the great party upon whom the conduct of affairs now devolved—lords Bathurst, Camden, and Westmorland. The deliberations of Parliament were soon terminated. It was prorogued by commission, and a dissolution announced on the 27th of April. His majesty was "anxious to recur to the sense of his people, while the events which have recently taken place are yet fresh in their recollection." The people, thus addressed, understood little of constitutional questions. They had a horror of any approach to conciliation of the Catholics of Ireland, whatever the most enlightened statesmen of either party might think was just. They had a natural sympathy with the personal feelings of their king, now advanced in years, with the infirmities of age coming fast upon him, for he was nearly blind. The Corporation of London addressed the king as the preserver of our religion, laws, and liberties, and the protector of the religious interests of his people. * The party cry was "King and Constitution," at a time when the successful attempt to merge the responsibility of the king's ministers in the irresponsible power of the king, had given the constitution as rude a shock as any encroachment of the old days of "the right divine of kings to govern wrong."

On the point of leaving Downing-street, lord Grenville wrote to his brother, "The deed is done, and I am again a free man, and to you I may express, what it would seem like affectation to say to others, the infinite pleasure I derive from my emancipation." To continue actively to participate in the conduct of the war on the continent would have appeared a hopeless task, even to the sanguine mind of Mr. Pitt. After Austerlitz, the great minister was reported to have said, "Tear up the map of Europe." It was frightfully torn after the Prussian humiliation at Jena. That it would ever be joined again now appeared very improbable, although the Prussian and Russian forces had, in February, made a determined stand at Eylau. At this place in Eastern Prussia, was fought, on the 9th of February, one of the most terrible battles of the great war. The remnant of the Prussian army had been enabled to form a junction with the main Russian army under general Benningsen. The French, at the end of November, had

* "Annual Register," 1807—April 22.

entered Warsaw; where the prospect of national independence, to which Napoleon had given an equivocal encouragement, ensured the French a welcome reception. Napoleon himself entered Warsaw on the 19th of December. The French armies had crossed the Vistula, and had taken up their winter quarters from Elbing to Warsaw. They wanted rest; but the active Russian general allowed them no rest. He attacked Bernadotte on the 26th of December; and in the battle of Pultusk the French found that their emperor had undervalued the enemy with whom he had to deal. He had written to Cambacères, before crossing the Vistula, "All this is child's-play, to which I must put an end."* He could not "finish with all his enemies as quickly as he expected. Bernadotte, under the orders of the emperor, moved to Thorn, on the Vistula, in the expectation that Benningsen would follow, and that Napoleon would go forth and fall upon the too eager Russian. But Benningsen was not so easily entrapped. He retired to Preussisch Eylau, a small town in the circle of Königsberg. Here he was followed by Napoleon, with eighty thousand men, according to the Russian accounts. Some French historians admit sixty-eight thousand. Thiers maintains that only fifty-four thousand were in the field. He estimates the Russians at seventy-two thousand, with eight thousand Prussians. There was probably no great disproportion of numbers on either side. The French, says Thiers, had the confidence of success, and the love of glory; the Russians had a certain fanaticism of obedience, which led them blindly to defy death. Some may think—which the historian evidently does not think—that the fanaticism of duty is more to be admired than the presumption of vanity. Napoleon had passed the night of the 7th of February at the house of the postmaster, in the little town of Eylau, situate on a small eminence. As the winter morning broke, the emperor stood in the churchyard, straining his eyes to watch the movements of masses of Russians in the plain below. A keen east wind was blowing; the snow was falling thick and fast; he was scarcely aware that a detachment of Russians was upon him, from whose hands he was only rescued by the devotion of his guard. The battle soon became general; and the dreadful struggle went on till ten o'clock at night. For hours the advantage on either side was very doubtful. When darkness fell upon the combatants there was still no victory. The next morning Napoleon looked upon the field of battle, and there beheld thousands of dead and dying; horses struck down; cannon dismantled;—all lying amidst frozen ponds and drifts of snow, whilst burning hamlets

* Thiers, tome vii. p. 216.

and farms added to the horror of the scene. Napoleon, for once, seemed to feel the "one touch of nature" which "makes the whole world kin." This spectacle, he cried, should inspire princes with the love of peace and the horror of war.* His heart was scarcely affected by what was not agreeable to his taste to look upon. He had made an experiment of dressing some regiments in the white uniform of the old days of the Lilies. He turned shuddering from the patches of blood which the white cloth made too conspicuous. He would, in future, have nothing but blue for his soldiery. The butcher's blue frock hides the blood; but nevertheless there is the same blood on the floor of the slaughter-house.

For more than four months it was expected that important results would have ensued from the vigorous resistance which Napoleon had encountered at Eylau. The king of Prussia had rejected his propositions for peace; the Russians had been reinforced; the emperor of the French had ordered a new conscription, the third within seven months, and France was losing heart. Had there been a vigorous war ministry in England when the Allies applied for assistance, some great result might have been obtained. Lord Howick answered their application by stating that, "the Allies must not look for any considerable land force from Great Britain." A subsidy of 500,000*l.* was granted—a very petty and therefore very useless aid. The emperor of Russia had asked for a loan of six millions from the government. The government proposed to sanction a private loan, upon a complicated security for interest—that the Russian duties upon British merchandise should be levied in British ports. Great Britain had other modes of employing her money and her arms than in carrying on war upon a great scale. Whether her government were Whig or Tory, there was the same passion for little expeditions. A writer of remarkable powers of sarcasm has described what Bonaparte would do, if his counsellors "were taken from the English political caste." He would "delay doing anything until the season for operations was nearly gone by; he would then probably treat a little, and be duped by his allies, and cavil and wrangle a good deal, and quarrel with some of them, and excite a hatred of all of them and of myself, and a contempt of his plans among his own subjects. But, all these preliminaries of failure being settled, he would at last come to his operations; and his policy would be to get up a number of neat little expeditions, equal in number to the things he wants to take—just one for each thing." † This is a masterly description of the

* Thiers, tome vii. p. 395.

† The article appeared in the "Edinburgh Review," October, 1808 and was attributed to Mr. Brougham. See, Horner's Memors," vol. ii. p. 437.