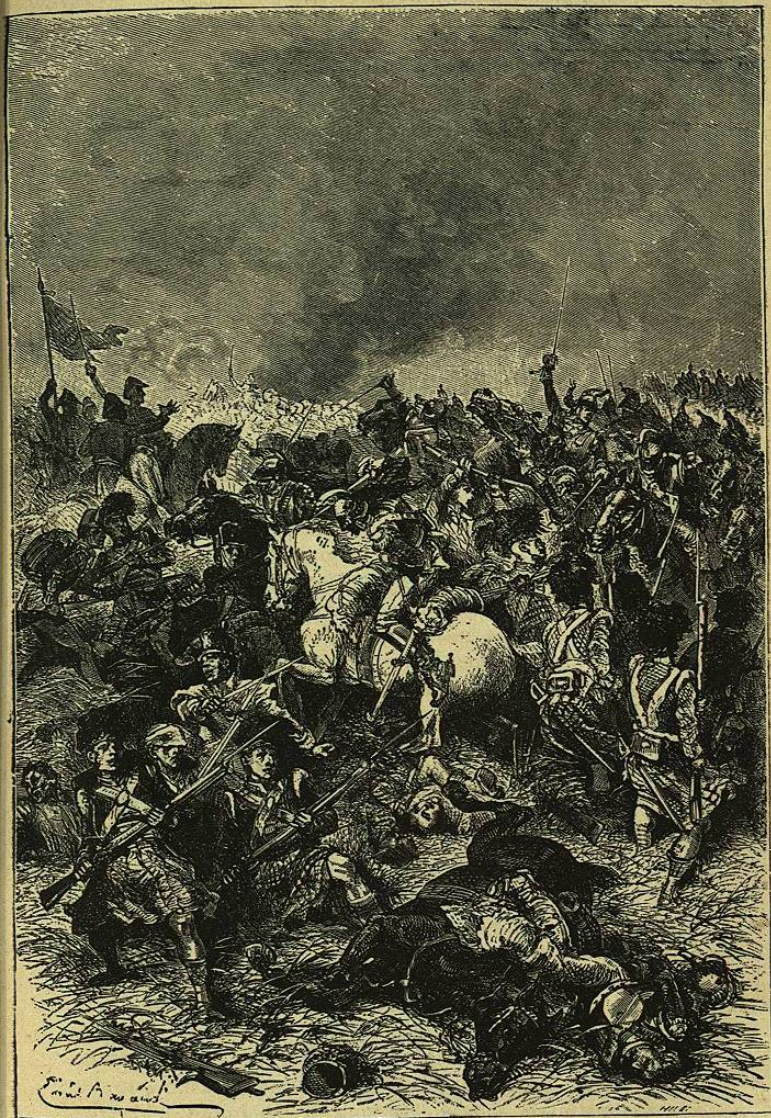


CHAPTER XIX.

The Hundred Days.—Landing of Napoleon near Cannes.—Retrospect of the Restoration of the Bourbons.—The Charter.—The French army.—The treaty of Paris published.—The escape of Napoleon from Elba.—Declaration of the Powers assembled in Congress.—Advance of Napoleon.—He is joined by Labédoyère and Ney.—Flight of Louis XVIII.—Napoleon at the Tuileries.—British Parliament declares for war.—Napoleon organizes his army.—Crosses the frontier.—Joins his army at Charleroi.—Wellington's position.—He marches from Brussels.—Battle of Ligny.—Battle of Quatre Bras.—The field of Waterloo.—Positions of the two armies on the night of the 17th and morning of 18th of June.—The Battle of Waterloo.

ON the high road, midway between Cannes and Antibes, and close to a lane leading to a landing-place in the Gulf of St. Jean, are two cabarets, one on the left side of the road, the other on the right, which have set up rival claims to immortality. The Cabaret on the left bears this inscription, "Napoléon I., au Golfe de Jouan—débarqua à Mars, reposa dans cette même propriété." The cabaret on the right thus asserts its pretensions:—"Chez moi se reposa Napoléon I. Venez boire passants, célébrez son nom." In the year whose great event these signs pretend to record neither of the wayside public houses had been built. A miserable column, erected a few years since, repeats the one inscription which is the nearest approach to truth—that Napoleon rested "in this property." He had sat down under an olive-tree of this estate. He had successfully achieved his perilous voyage from Elba, from which he had embarked on the morning of the 26th of February, with his Guards, in seven small vessels. He once more stood on the soil of France, at three o'clock in the afternoon of that memorable 1st of March. The little army bivouacked that evening on some land that was then outside the town of Cannes on the east. An attempt was made to seduce the garrison at Antibes, but the commander of the fortress arrested the soldiers who had been employed on this mission, and threatened to fire upon any others who should approach. Cambronne, one of the generals who accompanied Napoleon, went into the town of Cannes to demand of the maire six thousand rations for the troops. The demand was very unwillingly complied with, for the presence of the ex-emperor excited the hatred of the people, who were tired of wars



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and revolutions. Some said, if he came into the town they would shoot him. At four o'clock on the morning of the 2nd of March, the troops, in number about eight hundred, with Napoleon at their head, attended by his old companions in arms, Bertrand, Drouet, and Cambronne, commenced their march north on the road to Grasse; and possibly skirted Cannes on the east side, which quarter has been almost entirely built since 1815.*

This landing in the Gulf of St Juan on the 1st of March was the introductory scene to the great drama called "The Hundred Days." These count from the 13th of March, when Napoleon assumed the government, to the 22nd of June, when he abdicated.

The secret departure from Elba was not known to the sovereigns of Austria, Prussia, and Russia, and to the representatives of the other European powers assembled in congress at Vienna, till the 7th of March, when the duke of Wellington received a despatch from lord Burghersh, the British minister at Florence, announcing the astounding fact. It was some days afterwards before the landing near Cannes and the march towards Grasse were known at Vienna. † Such was the slowness of communication, that on the 5th of March it was not known in Paris that the emperor had quitted the territory all too narrow for his ambition. Let us, before proceeding to relate the progress and issue of this great adventure, take a retrospect of the events that had followed Napoleon's abdication of the 4th of April, 1814,—eleven months of false confidence and hollow peace.

The 4th of June, 1814, was an exciting day for Paris; an important day for the future tranquillity of France and of Europe. A Constitutional Charter was that day to be promulgated by the restored king; and, on the same day, the last of the allied troops were to quit the capital. Louis XVIII. was to be left in the midst of his subjects, without the guarantee for his safety which some associated with the continued presence of the armed foreigners. The Charter created a Chamber of Peers, of about one hundred and forty members, named for life by the king. These took the place of the servile flatterers of Napoleon, called the Senate. The composition of this new body was an approach to impartiality in the union of Members of the old noblesse with a remnant of the Senate, and of Generals of the army before the revolution, with Marshals of the Empire. By the Charter, a Representative body

* We are indebted for these particulars to a friend resident in Cannes; and we give them to clear up the obscurity which prevails in some accounts as to the localities of that eventful debarkation.

† "Wellington's Despatches," vol. xii. p. 266. Despatch to Castlereagh, 12th of March.

was also created, with very sufficient authority, and especially with the power of determining the taxes to be levied on the people. But if the value of a representative system was held to be in some degree proportionate to the amount of population by which it is elected, some might have doubted if the limitation of electors to those who paid 300 francs direct taxes yearly, thus restricting the nomination wholly to the more opulent class, guarantee for the impartial working of the Constitution. The Charter also provided for civil and religious freedom, for trial by jury, for the liberty of the press. The exclusive privileges of the old monarchy,—the inequalities before the law,—which produced the revolution of 1789, were no more. The letter of the ancient feudalism had perished. But its spirit lingered in the very date of this Charter. It was held that Louis XVIII. began to reign when Louis XVII., the unhappy son of Louis XVI. was released by death from his miseries. The Charter, "given at Paris in the year of grace 1814, in the nineteenth year of our reign," was an emanation of the royal bounty. The king was declared by the chancellor, in his speech of the 4th of June, to be "in full possession of his hereditary rights," but that he had himself placed limits to the power which he had received from God and his fathers. The compromise was as distasteful to the Republicans as the real advantages of the Charter to the people were hateful to the Royalists. An acute observer, who was present at the ceremony of the promulgation of the Charter, writes,—“In England such a government would be held to be an execrable despotism, impudently mocking the forms of freedom. I am inclined to believe, however, that it contains nearly as much liberty as the French can bear.”* The dissatisfaction which very soon followed the government of Louis "the desired," did not arise out of the greater or lesser amount of liberty bestowed by the Charter; but out of the manifold contradictions between the acts of the government and the character and habits of the French people. All had been changed since 1792, but the notions of the restored Royalists had undergone no change.

The Constitutional Charter was in some degree the work of the king himself, inasmuch as he had greatly modified a Charter presented to him by the Senate, which he found busy upon a constitution after Napoleon's abdication. The substance, and even the forms, of liberty, having perished during the Consulate and the Empire, the change was great when freedom of speech and of writing were possible; when a Senate and a Representative body

* "Lord Dudley's Letters," p. 42.

could debate without reserve and vote without compulsion. But a quarter of a century of revolution and military despotism had really unfitted the French to comprehend the value of the partial liberty which they had regained. The desire for liberty had almost wholly disappeared in the passion for equality which the revolution had generated. A Constitutional Monarchy, represented by a gouty old man who could not mount his horse—who had been brought back by foreign armies—was a poor compensation to the national vanity for the glory of living under a ruler who, for the greater period of his power, had only gone forth to new conquests,—who led kings captive, and who filled France with spoils of subject cities. The one surpassing folly of the restored government was the belief that France, and especially Paris, could forget Napoleon. When our Charles II. returned to St. James's under the protection of the army of Monk, it was held that his reign commenced on the terrible 30th of January, on which his father had perished before the Banqueting House at Whitehall. It was in England determined to ignore the twelve years of the Commonwealth. But it was easier for the Stuarts to take their place as a matter of absolute right and necessity—for the loyalists had always been an enduring power even during the supremacy of Cromwell—than for the Bourbons to re-enter the Tuileries as if they had been excluded for twenty years by a mere dominant usurpation which had died out. The very existence of Monsieur, and of the Comte D'Artois, had been as completely forgotten by the people, as they had become alienated from the emigrant nobility, who had fled from their ancient chateaux, and whose lands had passed into the hands of small proprietors who hated the name of Seigneurs in the dread that the quiet possession of what they had bought as national domain might be disturbed. The egregious folly which believed that a nation could altogether forget, was exhibited in the attempt to destroy every symbol of the rule of Bonaparte. The Parisians laughed at the littleness which set the upholsterers to work in defacing the N., which was multiplied on the carpets and hangings of the Tuileries; but they were angry when the white flag took the place of the tricolor. The anger of the bourgeoisie was perhaps of little consequence. They grumbled and sneered at the ordinances of the police, which forbade shops to be opened on Sundays and fête days. Wine sellers, restaurateurs, and billiard-table keepers, thought that no tyranny could be equal to that of closing their establishments during the hours of divine service. The government was right in its desire that a decent show of respect for religion should take the place of

the old license; yet it was not so easy to change the habits of a generation. The discontent of the idle pleasure-seeking Parisians would not have brought back Napoleon, had not offence been given to a much more powerful and united body. The army felt more acutely than the people the suppression of the tricolor. The men hid their old cockades in their knapsacks; the officers, when the cockades and the standards were required to be given up, concealed the eagles, or burnt the standards, which they had followed to victory. Thousands of old soldiers were pouring into France, released as prisoners of war, or turned out from the fortresses of provinces once annexed to the empire. The distinctive numbers of the regiments were entirely changed, so that the peculiar glory and heroism of each regiment were lost in the renown of the general mass. The army was reduced with imprudent haste; officers of the regiments retained by the restored government were put upon half pay, and their places were supplied by young men who had seen no service, or by ancient gentlemen whose only merit was to have emigrated. Numerous Invalides were turned out from their refuge in Paris to exhibit their wounds and proclaim their wrongs in the provinces. The power which had so long dominated over France was not judiciously reduced; its vanity was outraged by unnecessary affronts. The head of that wondrous military organization which had so long kept Europe in terror was his own master, in an island within two days' sail of the shores of France, unwatched and uncared for, as if he had utterly gone out of the minds of his idolators. The symbols of his authority had disappeared from the palaces and public buildings of France; but a symbol was invented to indicate that with the return of spring the hero would come back to chase the Bourbons from their throne, and to repair the disasters of the last year of the empire. Little prints of groups of violets were handed from hand to hand, in which the outline of a well-known face might be traced in the arrangement of the flowers. *Père la Violette* was the name by which the expected one was now recognized; and before the violets were come, this sign had passed from soldier to soldier. As they looked proudly and significantly around them, and talked, mysteriously in spite of the police, men fancied that a crisis was approaching, and that the Bee might once more replace the Lily on robes of state and on chairs of sovereignty. The army might gain in a renewed power to dominate at home and to plunder abroad. But what would the people gain who, in less than a year after they had rejected Napoleon, had begun to sympathize with the desire of the army for his return? Some of the more sober amongst French-

men saw, in spite of the ultra-monarchical tendencies of such as the Comte D'Artois and his faction, an almost certainty that genuine liberty and real prosperity would be established when false glory had lost its charm; that a spirit of Christian tolerance would take the place of the irreligion which the restored priestcraft had thought to supplant by a bigoted formality. These reasoners did not understand the nation whose restless propensities had been confirmed by fifteen years of aggressive despotism, succeeding ten years of sensitive democracy—a nation most difficult to govern, because “always deceiving its masters, who fear it either too little or too much.”*

The Treaty of Paris, ratified between France and the Allied Powers on the 30th of May, was published at the same time that the Charter was promulgated. Thiers describes with a touching sensibility the pain produced amongst all classes by a knowledge of the terms of this treaty: “They recognized the cruel hand of the stranger, above all, in the limitation of our frontiers.” The maledictions of the nation, he says, “fell chiefly upon England and upon Austria.”† It could have been no matter of surprise to any Frenchman of ordinary intelligence that the prolonged resistance of Napoleon to the moderate demands of the Allied Powers, in 1813 and 1814, had ended in the limitation of France to her ancient frontiers. Whilst Bonaparte was at the head of a powerful army, and the event of a conflict on the soil of France was full of uncertainty, the Allied Powers published their celebrated Declaration of Frankfort of the 1st of December, 1813, in which they said, “The Allied Sovereigns desire that France may be great, powerful, and happy. . . . The Powers confirm to the French empire an extent of territory which France under her kings never knew.” Lord Aberdeen had concurred with Metternich in approving this declaration. Lord Castlereagh, on the contrary, thought this gratuitous engagement previous to the opening of a negotiation was most inconvenient and blameable.‡ In the conferences of Chaillon of March 1814, the final terms proposed to Napoleon as the conditions on which he should be recognized as Emperor, were the cession of the whole of the conquests made by France since 1792. Napoleon rejected these terms, and was compelled to abdicate. While these negotiations were pending, Great Britain, Austria, Russia, and Prussia concluded the “Treaty of Union, Concert, and Subsidy,” known as the Treaty of Chaumont, which de-

* De Tocqueville—“Society before the Revolution.”

† “Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire,” tome xviii. p. 192.

‡ Letter from the Hague, Dec. 14.

clared, that if the French Government should refuse the conditions contained in proposals for a general peace, the solemn engagement thus entered into was intended "to draw closer the ties which unite them, for the vigorous prosecution of a war undertaken for the salutary purpose of putting an end to the miseries of Europe, by re-establishing a just balance of power." The restoration of the ancient dynasty was naturally associated with a return to the ancient territorial limits of France. It was this association that, in addition to other grievances, real or imaginary, made the Bourbons obnoxious to a generation incessantly familiar with conquest, and proportionately stimulated into a belief that France was the inevitable arbitress of the destinies of the world.

The duke of Wellington succeeded lord Castlereagh as the British Minister at Vienna, when the labours of the Congress were approaching their termination. The main points were concluded.* There were only some formal acts to be done. The sovereigns and the ministers of the larger states were about to separate, when their departure for their several countries was arrested by the news of the great event of the return of the ex-emperor to France.

The position of Napoleon at Elba was that of an independent sovereign. He had many soldiers around him devoted to his interests. He had cruisers by which he could keep up a correspondence with Italy and with France. During the sitting of the Congress, the evident danger arising out of his vicinity to the Continent, the eminent danger arising out of his vicinity to the Continent, was constantly present to the minds of some of the diplomatists; although they heard that the monarch of the little island appeared not only resigned to his fate, but interested in the improvement of his dominions and the prosperity of his people. His occupations of directing new buildings and of planning new roads did not deceive every one; and there was serious talk of conveying him to some more secure place—some inaccessible island of the Atlantic—where the shadow of the eagle's wing would cease to frighten the timorous birds. The emperor of Russia, however, insisted upon the literal fulfilment of the Treaty of Fontainebleau. It was with him a point of honour to leave Napoleon undisturbed; to surround him with no spies; to let him feel that he was in no sense of the word a prisoner. Sir Neil Campbell was sent in April, 1814, by the British government to Elba, with instructions to "pay every proper respect and attention to Napoleon, to whose secure asylum in Elba it is the wish of his Royal Highness the Prince Regent to afford every facility and protection." He was to remain there as long as Napoleon might desire his presence. Sir Neil

* See Chapter XX.

Campbell lived on the most friendly and familiar terms with the ex-emperor; occasionally went away to Florence or to Leghorn; and having no apprehensions of danger, did not consider that he was called upon to exercise any peculiar watchfulness. But in the middle of February his suspicions were excited, and he went to Florence to consult with the British ambassador there as to the necessity of having some adequate naval force about the island. French historians have generally some recondite theory at hand to account for very natural occurrences. M. Capefigue thinks that there was a complicity on the part of England in the return of Napoleon. He believes that England, which had been an absorbing power in Europe during the imperial epoch, now seeing that Russia was too paramount, conceived that she might recover the first rank in a new struggle with Napoleon. The English cruisers therefore shut their eyes during the passage of Bonaparte to the Gulf of St. Juan.* Always, *perfidè Albion*.

Upon the 13th of March, "the Powers who signed the Treaty of Paris assembled in Congress at Vienna, being informed of the escape of Napoleon Bonaparte, and of his entrance into France with an armed force," published a declaration which at once put an end to all possibility of terminating this issue without a trial of strength more or less severe. The declaration contained these emphatic words:—"By thus violating the convention which had established him in the Island of Elba, Bonaparte destroys the only legal title on which his existence depended; by appearing again in France with projects of confusion and disorder, he has deprived himself of the protection of the law, and has manifested to the universe that there can be neither truce nor peace with him. The Powers consequently declare, that Napoleon Bonaparte has placed himself without the pale of civil and social relations, and that, as an enemy and a disturber of the tranquillity of the world, he has rendered himself liable to public vengeance."

In a despatch of the duke of Wellington of the 12th of March, he writes: "It is my opinion that Bonaparte has acted upon false or no information, and that the king will destroy him without difficulty, and in a short time. If he does not, the affair will be a serious one, and great and immediate effort must be made." † On the 4th of April, Wellington had arrived in Brussels to devise measures for the defence of the Netherlands. The "affair" had become "a serious one." Napoleon had marched from Cannes to Grenoble without encountering any opposition in the thinly-populated mountainous regions of Dauphiny. He had been in com-

* "Les Cent Jours," tome i. p. 128.

† "Despatches," vol. xii. p. 268.

munication with Labeledoyère, who was an officer of the garrison at Grenoble, and this young colonel was ready with the men he commanded to hoist the tricolor. General Marchand, the governor of Grenoble, who was firm in his allegiance to the sovereign of the Restoration, sent out a detachment to observe the force that was approaching. Napoleon alone advanced to meet them, exclaiming, "I am your Emperor; fire on me if you wish." The soldiers threw themselves on their knees, and amidst shouts of "*Vive l'Empereur*," joined his ranks. Labeledoyère and his men swelled the number, and Napoleon entered Grenoble amidst the cheers of the soldiery and the citizens. On the 12th of March he was at Lyon. From this city he issued decrees which assumed that he was already in possession of the supreme authority. By these the Chambers of Peers and Deputies were dissolved; the returned emigrants were banished; titles of honour, except for national services, were abolished; and emigrant officers who had received commissions from the restored government were struck off the list of the army. On the 14th of March, Marshal Ney, who on the 7th had taken leave of the king with the assurance that he would bring back Bonaparte in an iron cage, published a proclamation to the army at Auxerre, which thus begins:—"Officers and Soldiers, the cause of the Bourbons is irrevocably lost: the legitimate dynasty which the French nation has adopted is about again to mount the throne." It was in vain that in the two Chambers at Paris Napoleon was denounced as a public enemy, and that the benefits of a charter under a constitutional monarch were set forth in contrast with the principles of a military despot. The troops could no longer be relied upon. On the 19th of March the king, by proclamation, dissolved the Chambers. On the 20th, after midnight, Louis and the royal family left the Tuileries. On the 25th, his Court was established at Ghent. Napoleon was at Fontainebleau on the 19th. On the 21st he slept in the palace of the Tuileries, having been borne up the grand staircase by an enthusiastic crowd, and welcomed in the familiar saloon by ladies of his old court, who showered upon him bouquets of violets. The wives and daughters of his marshals and generals had been neglected or openly affronted by those who had come to the levées of the restored monarch with an imprudent contempt of a revolutionary aristocracy; the ladies of the imperial court had now their revenge.

On the 6th of April the Prince Regent sent a message to the two houses of Parliament, that the events that had recently occurred in France had induced his royal highness to give directions for the augmentation of the land and sea forces. It was also an-

nounced that the Prince Regent had lost no time in "entering into communication with the Allied Powers for the purpose of forming such a concert as might most effectually provide for the general and permanent security of Europe." The Treaty of Vienna of the 23rd of March had bound the Allied Powers to make war together upon Napoleon, and to conclude no separate peace with him. The resistance in the British Parliament to the determination to engage in this war was very feeble. In the debate on the Address for arming and acting in concert with our Allies, Mr. Whitbread moved an amendment, to implore the Regent to use his utmost endeavours to preserve peace. It was rejected by a majority of 220 against 37. A second motion for an Address, praying the Crown not to involve the country in a war upon the ground of excluding a particular person from the government of France, was rejected by a majority of 273 against 72. The enormous sums demanded by the government were voted almost without inquiry. When a budget was brought forward on the 14th of June, which included a total charge of eighty-one millions, of which thirty-six millions were a loan, there were "not more than seventy persons present in the house, though late in the evening."*

Napoleon, on the 30th of April, had issued a decree convoking the Electoral Colleges for the nomination of Deputies to the Chamber of Representatives. The greater number of the people abstained from voting. It was necessary to do something striking, and Napoleon determined to revive the old revolutionary fête of the Champ de Mai. It was in this assembly of two hundred thousand of both sexes that he announced that the wishes of the nation having brought him back to the throne, his whole thoughts were turned to the "founding our liberty on a Constitution resting on the wishes and interests of the people." This Constitution was called "*Acte additionel aux Constitutions de l'Empire*." It was a very literal copy of the Charter of Louis XVIII., and had been forced upon the emperor by a party who believed that a limited monarchy, with representative institutions, might be a successful experiment whether under a Bourbon or a Bonaparte. Napoleon had addressed letters to the European potentates, professing his moderate and peaceful intentions. No faith could be placed in his professions, and his letters were unanswered. There could only be one solution of the question between Napoleon and the Allied Powers. In the Champ de Mai he exclaimed, "The princes who resist all popular rights are determined on war. For war we must prepare." The Chambers commenced their functions, not in the

* Lord Colchester's "Diary," vol. ii. p. 546.