

CHAPTER VI.

The position of the hostile parties.—The Berlin decrees.—The war goes on.—Battle of Eylau.—Letter to Josephine.—Offers of peace rejected.—Preparations for another campaign.—Battle of Friedland.—The peace of Tilsit.—Friendship of Napoleon and Alexander.—Correspondence.—Napoleon's magnificent plans.—Code Napoleon.—Designs upon Spain and Portugal.—Letters.—Tour to Italy.—Disagreement with Lucien.—Portugal taken.—Invasion of Spain.—Letters.—The abdication.—Joseph designated for the vacant throne.—His reluctant and unquiet reign.—The meeting of the emperors at Erfurth.—Josephine's divorce suggested.—Revolution in Spain.—Victories.—Letters.—Joseph again enthroned.—His complaint of Napoleon.—Intelligence of an Austrian campaign.—Battles of Eckmühl and Wagram.—Quarrel with the Pope.—Peace.—Divorce of Josephine.

A WEEK'S campaign had changed the fortunes of Prussia. With a remnant of his almost annihilated army the king had fled to the frontier of Poland, and was welcomed with sad surprise by the advancing Alexander of Russia. He refused renewed propositions of peace, and prepared with his powerful ally again to meet France on the battle-plain.

England, thoroughly aroused, violated the law of nations in her proclamation that France was in a state of blockade in regard to all nations, whether hostile or neutral. Private property of the enemy on the sea, was seized, and passengers there, made prisoners.

Napoleon retaliated by issuing a manifesto, and eleven edicts, called the *Berlin Decrees*—a measure famous among the boldest acts of their author. The British islands were declared to be blockaded, and English property on the continent confiscated; Englishmen wherever found were taken prisoners, and all intercourse, commercial or civil, forbidden as

treason against the government. The difficulties in the way of a practical working of the decrees were very great. The fabrics of England, and the necessaries of life which she furnished, had become indispensable to domestic comfort. Evasions were sought, and dissatisfaction was general. But the question of right in a national view, hinges on the disputed fact of *retaliation*. And odious as the Berlin decrees were to the people of Europe, no careful reader of the conflicting testimony, can doubt the provocation given, "by issuing in May, 1806, the blockade of the French coasts of the English channel." It was now the autumn of the same year, and Napoleon was master of Northern Germany, bringing almost the entire coast of Europe under his sway; affording the opportunity he was prompt to improve, of embarrassing and crippling his formidable foe. Another act in the tragedy of widespread war was immediately opened.

The emperor "prepared, without further delay, to extinguish the feeble spark of resistance which still lingered in a few garrisons of the Prussian monarchy beyond the Oder; and to meet, ere they could reach the soil of Germany, those Russian legions which were now advancing, too late, to the assistance of Frederic William. That unfortunate prince sent Lucchesini to Berlin, to open, if possible, a negotiation with the victorious occupant of his capital and palace; but Bonaparte demanded Dantzic, and two other fortified towns, as the price of even the briefest armistice; and the Italian envoy returned, to inform the king that no hope remained for him except in the arrival of the Russians.

"Napoleon held in his hands the means of opening his campaign with those allies of Prussia, under circumstances involving his enemy in a new and prob-

ably endless train of difficulties. The partition of Poland—that great political crime, for which every power that had part in it has since been severely, though none of them adequately, punished—had left the population of what had once been a great and powerful kingdom, in a state of discontent and irritation, of which, had Napoleon been willing to make full use of it, the fruits might have been more dangerous for the czar than any campaign against any foreign enemy. The French emperor had but to announce distinctly that his purpose was the restoration of Poland as an independent state, and the whole mass of an eminently gallant and warlike population would have risen instantly at his call. But Bonaparte was withheld from resorting to this effectual means of annoyance by various considerations, of which the chief were these: first, he could not emancipate Poland without depriving Austria of a rich and important province, and consequently provoking her once more into the field; and secondly, he foresaw that the Russian emperor, if threatened with the destruction of his Polish territory and authority, would urge the war in a very different manner from that which he was likely to adopt while acting only as the ally of Prussia. In a word, Napoleon was well aware of the extent of the czar's resources, and had no wish at this time to give a character of irremediable bitterness to their quarrel; but though he for these reasons refrained from openly appealing in his own person to the Poles as a nation, yet he had no scruple about permitting others to tamper, in his behalf, with the justly indignant feelings of the people. Some Polish officers were already enlisted in his army, and through these and others, he contrived to awaken the outraged passions of their countrymen, many of whom flocked to his

standard, in the fond belief that he was to be the liberator of their nation."

He issued another address to the army, many of whose troops were reluctant to leave comfortable quarters for the snow-plains of Russian war, which like a trumpet-call awakened the enthusiasm Napoleon only could inspire—a source of power greater than all others wielded by his genius.

The Russians and Prussians lay, a hundred and twenty thousand strong, on the banks of the Vistula. It was four hundred miles from Berlin to Warsaw, toward which the French battalions marched amid the bitter cold and driving storms of winter. The horrors of this campaign were scarcely less terrific than those of the Egyptian marches upon burning sands—between whose extremes, were gathered all the forms of human suffering and degradation.

After a few skirmishes with the Russians, Murat occupied Warsaw, the 28th of November; and Napoleon at Posen, meanwhile, was surrounded by the excited, hopeful Poles. Said the palatine of Gnesna: "We adore you, and with confidence repose, as upon Him who raises empires and destroys them, and humbles the proud—the regenerator of our country, the legislator of the universe!" Similar extravagant expressions of admiration and joyful anticipation repeatedly greeted his ear. He assured the deputations that waited upon him, of his sympathy, and recruiting his forces from the ranks of the noble patriots, gave no further thought to the difficult enterprise of their liberation from galling oppression.

Then followed severe encounters, which stained for many a league, the snow with crimson, and scattered the frozen, ghastly bodies of men along the path of those magnificent armies. The opposing columns soon

met on the field of Eylau. Here the whole Russian force, driven more than two hundred miles from the Vistula by the French, made a final, desperate stand. This was on February 7th, 1807; and as the night came down, Napoleon saw in the calm, cold moonlight, and waving lights of the watchfires, the enemy's line, extending two miles along a gentle swell of glittering ice and drifted snow; while over all, the howling winds wailed, in anticipation of the morrow, a funeral dirge. Two hundred cannon were placed with silent threatening, at that midnight hour, to sweep the ranks of the foe. While the next dawn was kindling upon the storm-clouds, the roar of the artillery announced the opening strife.

"The French charged at two different points in strong columns, and were unable to shake the iron steadiness of the infantry, while the Russian horse, and especially the Cossacks, under their gallant Hetman Platoff, made fearful execution on each division, as successively they drew back from their vain attempt. A fierce storm arose at midday; the snow drifted right in the eyes of the Russians; the village of Serpallen, on their left, caught fire, and the smoke also rolled dense upon them. Davoust skilfully availed himself of the opportunity, and turned their flank so rapidly that Serpallen was lost, and the left wing compelled to wheel backward, so as to form almost at right angles with the rest of the line. The Prussian corps of L'Estocq, a small but determined fragment of the campaign of Jena, appeared at this critical moment in the rear of the Russian left; and, charging with such gallantry as had in former times been expected from the soldiery of the great Frederic, drove back Davoust, and restored the Russian line. The action continued for many hours along the whole line—the French

attacking boldly, the Russians driving them back with unflinching resolution. Ney, with a French division, at length came up and succeeded in occupying the village of Schloditten, on the road to Königsberg. To regain this, and thereby recover the means of communicating with the King of Prussia, was deemed necessary; and it was carried accordingly at the point of the bayonet. This was at ten o'clock at night. So ended the longest and by far the severest battle in which Bonaparte had as yet been engaged. After fourteen hours' fighting either army occupied the same position as in the morning.

"Either leader claimed the victory."

Deeds of unequalled valor were done, and fifty thousand victims left on the frozen earth. Of the slain, more than ten thousand were Frenchmen. In one onset, a grenadier, whose arm had been torn away by a shell, rushed into the assaulting ranks, refusing to have his wound dressed, till the position was taken. The sight greatly moved Napoleon. It was devotion too deep for so dark a shrine beneath the glory of conquest.

It was the first great battle in the career of Napoleon, which did not result in decided victory. The Russians had twelve of the eagles of France, taken by Bensingen, while the emperor had possession of the field at a sacrifice which could not well bear repetition. We need not pause to dwell on the scenes of blood displayed on the plain of Eylau, when the battle was over—the piteous appeals to Napoleon in behalf of wife, mother, and children—the pools of the red life-current—the heaps of mangled bodies of men and horses—beneath which lay the dying. Nor can fancy catch the sobs of grief and the low moans of unrecorded heart-breaking, in the hamlets and among the mountain homes of a continent. The Russians retired to Königsberg; and

on February 19th, Napoleon retreated to the Vistula.

Before his departure, he wrote to Josephine, and used the following kind and descriptive words :

“ My love ! I am still at Eylau. The country is covered with the dead and the wounded. This is not agreeable. One suffers, and the soul is oppressed to see so many victims. I am well. I have done what I wished. I have repulsed the enemy, compelling him to abandon his projects. You must be very anxious, and that thought afflicts me. Nevertheless, tranquilize yourself, my love, and be cheerful. Wholly thine.

“ NAPOLEON.”

Offers of peace were again made by the emperor and rejected. And with an eloquent address to the decimated army, he entered his winter quarters to prepare for the renewed meeting with his unyielding, and now equal enemy. The spring came, and with it supplies from France and Switzerland, furnishing and recruiting his army, till he was ready with nearly three hundred thousand men to enter the contest afresh. He was at Osterode, in Poland, where he divided his time between his military plans and the immense burdens of state—the educational, civil, and financial interests of his empire. He projected the grand and beautiful Madeleine—a temple of literature, and a monument of fame to the bravery of the grand army.

During this vernal season of preparation for war, the young prince, and intended heir to the throne of France, the son of Hortense and Louis, then five years of age, died of the croup. The sad tidings reached Napoleon, and bowed his head in sorrow. But Josephine felt the blow with unutterable anguish. She knew that beyond the loss of a lovely and promising boy, was the

necessity of a successor to the crown of France, and her marriage tie would not thwart the ambitious desire of him in whom was enshrined her earthly bliss—her very life. He wrote letters of condolence and affection to Josephine and Hortense, but these did not change the fact, which threw a dismal shadow over the desolate home.

Dantzic, a strongly fortified town, surrendered to Napoleon, May 26th, after a terrific siege of fifty-one days, furnishing a rich supply of stores for his troops. The Russians struck the first blow of general conflict early in June, by an assault on Ney's division, which was at Gustadt. It fell back to Deppen, where the emperor joined the division, and compelled the pursuers to retreat. They were followed, and bloody battles were fought.

Bensingen finally took his position on the west bank of the river Aller, bringing that stream between him and the French forces. The town of Friedland, from which a narrow bridge crossed the river, was opposite. On the morning of June 14th, the Russians commenced the attack on the enemy, hoping to secure defeat before Napoleon with the other divisions of the grand army could arrive. Crossing the Aller incautiously, he was inclosed in a deep bend of the river, fighting furiously, when, guided by the thunder of the cannonade, the emperor came ; he saw the situation of the Russians, and ordered a general assault, exclaiming, “ This is the 14th of June. It is the anniversary of Marengo. It is a lucky day for us.”

Ney rushed upon the dense mass of Russians in and before the town, and the fearful struggle became one wild commotion of desperate men, plunging steeds, tossing plumes, and waving banners. Friedland was in flames, and lit up the scene, as darkness shrouded the

ensanguined plain. The allies were conquered; and retreating, dashed into the waters which swept them down, beneath a shower of bullets from the columns of the victors.

Bensingen retreated toward the Niemen.

“The Emperor Alexander, overawed by the genius of Napoleon, which had triumphed over troops more resolute than had ever before opposed him, and alarmed for the consequences of some decisive measure toward the reorganization of the Poles as a nation, began to think seriously of peace. Bensingen sent, on the 21st of June, to demand an armistice; and to this proposal the victor of Friedland yielded immediate assent.

“The armistice was ratified on the 23d of June, and on the 25th the emperors of France and Russia met personally, each accompanied by a few attendants, on a raft moored on the river Niemen, near the town of Tilsit. The sovereigns embraced each other, and retiring under a canopy had a long conversation, to which no one was a witness. At its termination the appearances of mutual good-will and confidence were marked: immediately afterward the town of Tilsit was neutralized, and the two emperors established their courts there, and lived together in the midst of the lately hostile armies, more like old friends who had met on a party of pleasure, than enemies and rivals attempting by diplomatic means the arrangement of difficulties which had for years been deluging Europe with blood.”

Napoleon wrote to the King of Naples upon the close of the fêtes, rides, and royal display on the banks of the Niemen:

NAPOLEON TO JOSEPH.

TILSIT, July 9, 1807.

“MY BROTHER—Peace was signed yesterday and

ratified to-day. The Emperor Alexander and I parted to-day at twelve o'clock, after having passed three weeks together. We lived as intimate friends. At our last interview he appeared in the order of the Legion of Honor, and I in that of St. Andrew. I have given the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor to the Grand Duke Constantine, to the Princes Kourakin and Labanoff, and to Count Budberg. The Emperor of Russia has conferred his order upon the King of Westphalia, the Grand Duke of Berg, and on the Princes Neufchatel and Benevento. Corfu is to be given up to me. The order of the chief of the staff to have Corfu occupied by the troops whom I mentioned to you has been given to an officer who is on his way to you. Do not lose time in victualing that island, and sending thither all that is necessary.”

The King of Prussia, who had been invited by Alexander to join him in the negotiations at Tilsit, was treated like a subdued and unregarded foe. He was an ordinary man, and had been the immediate cause of the late hostilities. Napoleon, therefore, despised him; and assured the Emperor of Russia, that on *his* account only did he consent to admit Frederic into the royal fraternity. The beautiful queen was no more honored, with all her arts of fascination; she went to her palace broken-hearted, and soon after died. The Prussian king had by the treaty half of his kingdom restored.

The Polish provinces of Prussia were erected into a separate principality, styled “the Grand Duchy of Warsaw,” and bestowed on the elector of Saxony, with the exception, however, of some territories assigned to Russia, and of Dantzic, which was declared a free city, to be garrisoned by French troops until the ratification

of a maritime peace. The Prussian dominions in Lower Saxony and on the Rhine, with Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, and various other small states, formed a new kingdom of Westphalia, of which Jerome Bonaparte, Napoleon's youngest brother, was recognized as king. Finally, Russia accepted the mediation of France for a peace with Turkey, and France that of Russia for a peace with England.

Russia thus became the ally of France, even beyond the letter of the treaty of Tilsit, and was willing to turn her strength against England, unmoved in a formidable and sublimely resolute, although often unjust, preeminence and hate.

Napoleon and Alexander were united in extending their scepters over coveted territories, and opposition to British aggressions. Into this coalition, soon after, Austria, Prussia, and Denmark entered—reversing the order of conflict, and changing the position of the French emperor, from solitary resistance to the rest of Europe, to that of a sovereign of monarchs, in the struggle with a foe, secure and defiant in his sea-girdled lair.

The reliable pen of Napier has recorded the subjoined verdict upon the desolating campaigns of the embattled nations: "Up to the peace of Tilsit, the wars of France were essentially *defensive*; for the bloody contest that wasted the continent so many years, was not a struggle for preeminence between ambitious powers—not a dispute for some acquisition of territory—not for the political ascendancy of one or another nation—but a deadly conflict to determine whether aristocracy or democracy should predominate—whether aristocracy or *privilege* should henceforth be the principle of European governments."

Leaving his strong garrisons in Poland and North-

ern Germany, Napoleon returned to Paris, July 27th, and was received with boundless adulation. He again grasped with his versatile and rapid thought, the affairs of his vast empire, and projected with the precision and scientific skill of a royal engineer, canals, aqueducts, and bridges. The officers of state, from the prince to the policeman, felt the ubiquitous power of the emperor—"the greatest writer of his time, while he was its greatest captain, its greatest legislator, its greatest administrator."

Never before, did a ruler so impress himself upon every part of public progress, and associate his name so justly with all the history of a realm, whether in acts of benign supremacy, or in the exercise of despotic authority.

"The *Code Napoleon*, that elaborate system of jurisprudence, in the formation of which the emperor labored personally along with the most eminent lawyers and enlightened men of the time, was a boon of inestimable value to France. 'I shall go down to posterity,' said he, with just pride, 'with the code in my hand.' It was the first uniform system of laws which the French monarchy had ever possessed; and being drawn up with consummate skill and wisdom, it at this day forms the code not only of France, but of a great portion of Europe besides. Justice, as between man and man, was administered on sound and fixed principles, and by unimpeached tribunals.

"He gratified the French nation by adorning the capital, and by displaying in the Tuilleries a court as elaborately magnificent as that of Louis XIV. himself. The old nobility, returning from their exile, mingled in those proud halls with the heroes of the revolutionary campaigns; and over all the ceremonials of these stately festivities, Josephine presided with the grace

and elegance of one born to be a queen. In the midst of the pomp and splendor of a court, in whose ante-chambers kings jostled each other, Napoleon himself preserved the plain and unadorned simplicity of his original dress and manners. The great emperor continued throughout to labor more diligently than any subaltern in office. His days were given to labor and his nights to study. If he was not with his army in the field, he traversed the provinces, examining with his own eyes into the minutest details of local arrangement; and even from the center of his camp he was continually issuing edicts which showed the accuracy of his observation during these journeys, and his anxiety to promote by any means, consistent with his great purpose, the welfare of some French district, town, or even village."

August 15th, 1807, the birthday of Napoleon, was a holiday of enthusiastic joy in the capital, and a scene of festivity in the palace of the Tuilleries. But already tokens of warfare nearer the throne than English anger, were apparent. Portugal and Spain were unquiet. The former opened its harbors to English vessels, while the government of a degraded people was vacillating between alliance with France, and open sympathy with Britain.

Spain was ruled by the voluptuous Charles IV., a prince of the Bourbon blood; and was also secretly leaning to the cause of England.

The private yet royal messages to Joseph at this crisis, contain interesting allusions to the Mediterranean islands which Alexander gave the emperor, and intimate distinctly his designs upon Spain.

NAPOLEON TO JOSEPH.

"ST. CLOUD, September 6, 1807.

"MY BROTHER—I have received your letter of the 28th of August, in which you tell me that General C. Berthier has started, but you do not acquaint me with his arrival. If the Russians land on your coast treat them well, and send them to Bologna, where the Viceroy will give them a further destination. I approve highly of Salicetti's proposal that you should send five thousand quintals of wheat to Corfu.

"I have already informed you that, although the isles of Corfu do not form part of your kingdom, they are nevertheless under your civil and military government as commander-in-chief of my army of Naples. In general, I wish you to interfere as little as possible with the constitution of the country, and to treat the inhabitants well. The Emperor Alexander, who gave them their constitution, thinks it very good. Make General Cæsar Berthier aware that I wish the inhabitants of these islands to have cause only to rejoice at having passed under my dominion; that when I selected him I relied on his honesty and on his endeavors to make his government popular. The idea of establishing packets is very sensible. My troops have taken possession of Cattaro; the English are besieging Copenhagen, which still holds out."*

NAPOLEON TO JOSEPH.

"FOUNTAINBLEAU, October 31, 1807.

"MY BROTHER—I do not know whether you have established the *Code Napoleon* in your kingdom. I

* England had most unjustly sent an expedition against Denmark, a neutral power, in anticipation of affinities with France, and soon made the capital a scene of horrible slaughter and of ruin.