

exposure of his person was never surpassed by the commonest soldier. The next day was spent in erecting bridges, and crossing an almost impassable defile ; in the midst of which he wrote : " The emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia were at Bray. As soon as they heard that I had forced the bridge of Montereau, they ran away as fast as they could. Their whole army is terrified. The three sovereigns spent a few days at Pont, with Madame. They intend to reach Fontainebleau to-morrow, and in a very few days, Paris : they cannot understand what is taking place. To-day we have snow, and the weather is rather severe. I am sending an article for the *Moniteur* to the empress, but you may put into the *Moniteur*, as well as into the other newspapers, under the head of Provins, a notice of the precipitation with which the sovereigns quitted Bray. The Austrians protected my palace at Fontainebleau from the Cossacks. We have taken several convoys of baggage and some carriages going toward Bray. Several hundred Cossacks have been taken in the forest of Fontainebleau. My advanced guard will reach Bray to-morrow."

As indicated in this language, Napoleon resorted now to the system of terror. Oudinot and Macdonald were ordered to march against Schwartzberg, and the troops were to shout " Vive l'Empereur ! " when in the hearing of the hostile forces, to convey the impression that the mighty commander was himself advancing. From Montereau Napoleon marched to Nogent, thence by way of Chartres to Troyes, with no battles excepting a hot and profitless skirmish with Blucher at Mery, the result of unforeseen proximity. There was during the close of February a pause in the emperor's movements, for the twofold reason that peace was possible, and the preceding campaign, distinguished for inten-

sity of action, made repose desirable. Orleans became terrified at the approach of a small force, and he dictated a thrilling appeal to arm and meet the assault, which was to be read in the name of the empress. He directed placards of the enemy's atrocities to be scattered through Paris ; and nothing overlooked which might arouse the people to the final struggle. Joseph meanwhile was writing sad news of the popular unrest, the rise of Bourbon sympathy at Amiens, the crumbling administration ; and urging peace. In dwelling on these alarming facts, he adds, with subdued expressions of encouragement : " The people of Paris, hostile to the government a month ago, touched by your majesty's confidence in trusting your wife and your son to them, encouraged and astonished by your majesty's successes, are yet not in a state in which more than mere fidelity and obedience can be expected. They admire your genius, but they can be excited only by the hope of a speedy peace, and they are by no means inclined to oppose any effective resistance to a hostile army, or to send detachments of the national guard beyond the walls. This, sire, is the exact truth. Your majesty must not rely on an exertion greater than can fairly be expected from a population so disposed.

Augereau failed, at this crisis, with a strange and unaccountable disregard of orders, to attack the allies in flank, and march on to Geneva to cut off their communications ; which contributed largely to the ultimate disaster. At the moment Napoleon was expecting the marshal to meet Borghese at Chambry, he was exulting in the success of stratagem, which he thus announced in the despatch : " Terror reigns in the ranks of the enemy. A few days ago they thought that I had no army ; now their imagination sticks at nothing ; three hundred thousand or four hundred thousand men

are not enough for them. They fancied that I had none but recruits; they now say that I have collected all my veterans, and that my armies consist of picked men; that the French army is better than ever, etc. See what is the effect of terror. The Parisian newspapers must confirm their fears. Newspapers are not history, any more than bulletins are history: one should always persuade the enemy that one's forces are immense."

He also took advantage of the neglect of the allies to confirm the treaty with Murat of security to his throne, and through Joseph made a last effort to regain the loyalty and cooperation of the King of Naples.

From Troyes he advanced northward to fall upon Blucher, leaving Oudinot and Gerard to hold Schwartzberg in check.

Those generals were defeated soon after. The emperor, who expected to find the enemy before Soissons, learned on the 4th of March that the town had surrendered. An attack on the position failed, and on the 7th he gave Blucher battle at Craonne. With victory for the moment, he pursued the Prussian commander to the stronghold of Laon. Upon these heights, protected by terrace-walls, between which lay the fruitful vineyards, the foe were intrenched, and through the mist which covered the advancing columns of the French till midway on the slope, poured their terrible fire into the ranks of Napoleon. The storm of balls was irresistible, and retiring, the next day, March 11th, they retreated to Chavignon, leaving thirty cannon and ten thousand men. At Soissons he commenced strengthening his position to meet Blucher, when tidings that Rheims was taken by St. Priest, a French emigrant, with a Russian corps, reached his ear.

He immediately and rapidly marched thither, and took the town by assault at midnight. St. Priest was

killed by the same artilleryman that directed the gun which cut Moreau in pieces; and drew from Napoleon the remark, "It really seems like a stroke of Providence." While these things were transpiring on the field of conflict, Joseph was tortured with anxiety among the restless masses at home. He wrote in the following pleading tone to Napoleon:

"As for you, sire, who have been so repeatedly victorious, I am convinced that you possess all the qualities which might make the French forget, or rather might recall to them, the best features of the reigns of Louis XII., Henri IV., and Louis XIV., if you will make a lasting peace with Europe, and if, returning to your natural kindness, and renouncing your assumed character and your perpetual efforts, you will at last consent to relinquish the part of the wonderful man for that of the great sovereign.

"After having saved France from anarchy within, and from all Europe without, you will become the father of your people, and you will be adored as much as Louis XII., after having been admired more than Henri IV. and Louis XIV.; and in order thus to accumulate every species of glory, you have only to will your own happiness, as well as that of France.

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"The result of all that I hear from the ministers, from the chief officers of the national guards, from all the persons whom I know to be attached to the present order of government, is, that circumstances render peace imperative. There is not one individual in Paris who would not loudly ask for it if it were not for the fear of offending you; and, in truth, none but your enemies can endeavor to persuade you to refuse a peace with the ancient limits. The month of March is slip-

ping away, yet the fields are not sown. It is however superfluous to enter into further details. Your majesty must feel that there is no longer any remedy but peace, and an immediate peace. Every day that is lost is mischievous to our personal popularity. Individual distress is extreme; and on the day when it is believed that your majesty has preferred prolonging the war to making even a disadvantageous peace, there is no doubt that disgust will incline the public mind in another direction. If Toulouse or Bordeaux should set up a Bourbon, you will have civil war, and the immense population of Paris will support the side which promises to give them peace soonest.

“Such is the state of opinion; no one can change it. This being the case, the only way is to submit. If the peace be unfavorable, it will be no fault of yours, as all classes here insist upon it. I cannot be mistaken, as my view is that of all the world. We are on the eve of total destruction; our only hope is in peace.”

Napoleon was four days at Rheims, from which he replied to the complaints of his brother in a manner wholly characteristic, and which needs no comment to prove the essential selfishness of his nature beneath all the grander displays of transcendent abilities.

NAPOLEON TO JOSEPH.

“RHEIMS, March 14, 1814.

“MY BROTHER—I have received your letter of the 12th of March. I am sorry that you repeated to the Duke of Conegliano what I had written to you. I do not like all this gossip. If it suited me to remove the Duke of Conegliano, all the idle talk of Paris would have no effect. The national guard of Paris is a part of the people of France, and, as long as I live, I will

be master everywhere in France. Your character is opposed to mine; you like to flatter people, and to yield to *their* wishes; I like them to try to please me, and to obey *my* wishes. I am as much a sovereign now as I was at Austerlitz. Do not permit any person to flatter the national guard, nor Regnaud, nor any one else, to set himself up as their tribune. I suppose, however, that they see that there is some difference between the time of La Fayette, when the people ruled, and the present time, when I rule.

“I have issued a decree for raising twelve battalions in Paris out of the *levée en masse*. On no pretext must the execution of this measure be delayed. I have written my wishes on this subject to the ministers of the Interior and of the Police. If the people find that, instead of doing what is for their good, one is trying to please them, it is quite natural that they should think that they have the upper hand, and that they should entertain but a mean opinion of those in authority over them.”

NAPOLEON TO JOSEPH.

“RHEIMS, March 16, 1814.

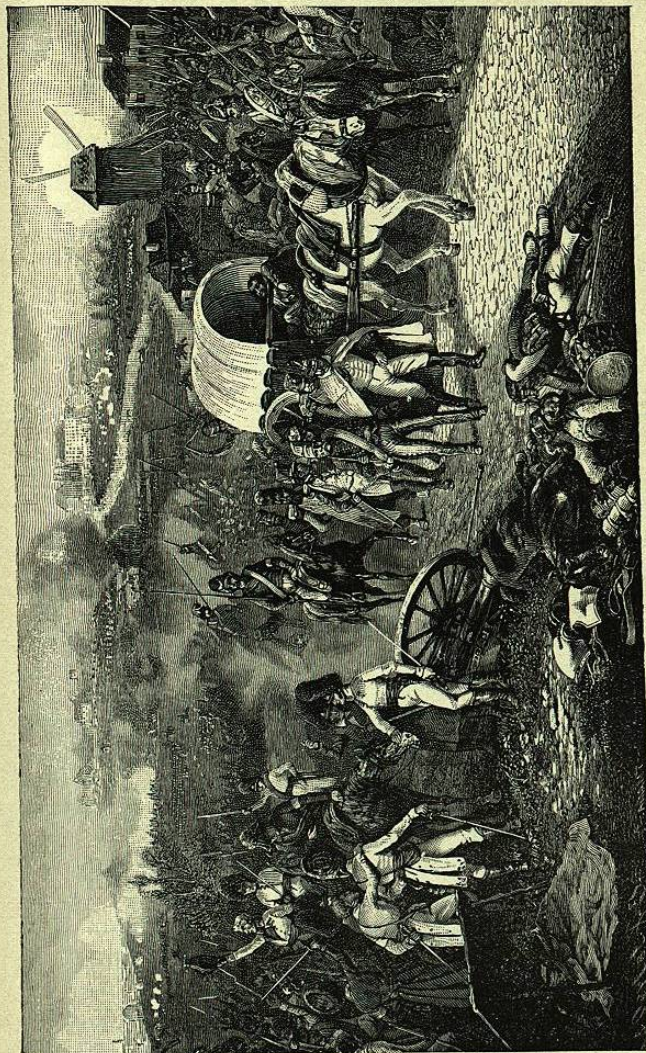
“In accordance with the verbal instructions which I gave to you, and with the spirit of all my letters, you must not allow, happen what may, the empress and the King of Rome to fall into the hands of the enemy. The maneuvers which I am about to make may possibly prevent your hearing from me for several days. If the enemy should march on Paris with so strong a force as to render resistance impossible, send off towards the Loire the regent, my son, the great dignitaries, the ministers, the senators, the president of the Conseil d'Etat, the chief officers of the crown, and Baron de la Bouillerie, with the money which is in my

treasury. Never lose sight of my son, and remember, that I would rather know that he was in the Seine, than that he was in the hands of the enemies of France : the fate of Astyanax, prisoner to the Greeks, has always seemed to me to be the most lamentable in history."

Wellington, with the Spanish hero, Mina, had taken Bordeaux, invested Bayonne, and was sweeping victoriously onward to the interior of France. "And such a flood of soldiers as had not been seen since the Crusades, poured over France, and against one formidable man."

The once sublime solitary monarch in self-reliance and magical supremacy, was now like the surrounded and yet defiant lion, chafing against restraint, and doubtful in what direction to make the desperate attempt at escape. Should he press on after Blucher, Schwartzberg would hasten to Paris before he could return, if victorious. If he encountered the latter, Blucher would dash onward to the Tuilleries. He decided to do neither, but march into the rear of the grand army, and, by the terror of his name and skilful maneuvering, direct and paralyze their movements toward Paris. On the 20th he was at Arcis-sur-Aube, where Schwartzberg gave him battle, and was beaten back with desperate valor. He was two hundred miles from the capital, with both the generals of the allied forces between him and that city.

The 22d he reached Vitry, in the path of the enemy, and summoned the commandant to surrender in vain. The next day he was at St. Dizier, and subsequently had sharp skirmishes with the divisions left to watch his progress. Tidings reached him that the main columns of the allies were rapidly approaching Paris. He then pushed forward with a superhuman energy, and



The Allies on the Road to Paris.

reached Troyes on the 29th, having marched fifty miles in a single day. Early in the morning with the remnant of his guard he advanced a short distance, and then leaving them, he took a light carriage, and, accompanied by Caulaincourt and Berthier, passed through Sens at dead of night, ordering rations for one hundred and fifty thousand troops, who he affirmed were advancing, and arrived at La Cour de France, ten miles from Paris, March 31st.

“Now, if one of the marshals had been in command—if he had had to report that such had been the employment of the last army, and the last month, of the empire—what would have been the storm of reproach and invective with which he would have been assailed by Napoleon!

The ill-success of the first fortnight may be excused. In his desperate state Napoleon was forced to run great risks, and the defeat of Blucher would have been a glorious prize. But from the time that he marched eastward, to the rear of Schwartzberg, he seems to have wandered without any definite plan, at least without any definite military plan. He relied on the terror of his name. He had so often repeated that “in war moral force is everything,” that he seems to have believed it to be literally true. He believed that all the armies that were advancing on Paris would turn back as soon as they found that he was in their rear, and would follow him till he could be succored by his garrisons on the Rhine. In this expectation he marched and countermarched, approached Vitry on the 22d, was in St. Dizier on the 23d, left it on the 24th, returned to it on the 26th, tried Vitry again on the 27th, and awoke from his dream on the 28th to find that, while he was in Lorraine, the allies were within a march of Paris.”

In Paris terror and confusion reigned. "The terrified population of the country between Meaux and Paris came pouring into the capital," says an eye-witness, "with their aged, infirm, children, cats, dogs, live-stock, corn, hay, and household goods of every description. The boulevards were crowded with wagons, carts, and carriages thus laden, to which cattle were tied, and the whole surrounded with women."

The empress had fled, attended with seven hundred soldiers, leaving only the national guard in the city; and with a train of wagons laden with plate and money, reached Rambouillet. She there addressed a note to Joseph:

MARIA LOUISE TO JOSEPH.

"RAMBOUILLET, March 29; 5¼ P.M.

"MY DEAR BROTHER—I have this instant reached Rambouillet, very sad and very harassed. It would be very kind if you would let me know what is going on, and whether the enemy has advanced. I wait for your answer before I decide whether I ought to go farther or to remain here. If I ought to move I beg you to tell me what place you think would be best and safest for me. I earnestly wish that you could write to me to return to Paris; it is the thing of all others which would give me most pleasure. A thousand remembrances to the queen. Pray believe in the sincere friendship with which I am your most affectionate sister."

Marmont and Mortier made a fruitless, though brave resistance, up to the very walls of the capital. The 30th was a fearful day. From Montmartre, and other heights, the allies poured the cannonade into the streets. Officers were despatched with flags of truce to beg for a suspension of hostilities, but in the terrific

siege, they were shot down upon the intervening plain. At 5 o'clock P. M., the capitulation was signed. At La Cour de France, General Belliard came up with his exhausted, despairing cavalry. On the way to Fontainebleau, Napoleon learned that he was too late, and springing from his carriage inquired with agitation,

"What means this? Why here with your cavalry, Belliard? And where are the enemy? Where are my wife and my boy? Where Marmont? Where Mortier?" Belliard, walking by his side, told him the events of the day. He called out for his carriage—and insisted on continuing his journey. The general in vain informed him that there was no longer an army in Paris; that the regulars were all coming behind, and that neither they nor he himself, having left the city in consequence of a convention, could possibly return to it. The emperor still demanded his carriage, and bade Belliard turn with the cavalry and follow him. "Come," said he, "we must to Paris—nothing goes aright when I am away—they do nothing but blunder." With such exclamations Bonaparte hurried onward, dragging Belliard with him until they were met, a mile from La Cour de France, by the first of the retreating infantry. Their commander, General Curial, gave the same answers as Belliard. "In proceeding to Paris," said he, "you rush on death or captivity."

But soon, seeing the dreaded reality of overthrow, he resumed his calmness, sent Caulaincourt to Paris, to accept whatever terms might be offered, and hastened to the old castle of Fontainebleau. In the stillness of a secluded apartment, he laid down to repose; exchanging the dreams of greatness for the feverish thoughts of a fallen monarch, who had given away thrones and kingdoms, but was now an exile from his own palace.