

WALTER SCOTT

LIFE OF NAPOLEON
BONAPARTE. VOLUME II

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Walter Scott

Life of Napoleon Bonaparte, Volume II

CHAPTER I

Corsica – Family of Buonaparte – Napoleon born 15th August, 1769 – His early habits – Sent to the Royal Military School at Brienne – His great Progress in Mathematical Science – Deficiency in Classical Literature – Anecdotes – Removed to the General School of Paris – When in his Seventeenth Year, appointed Second Lieutenant of Artillery – His early Politics – Promoted to a Captaincy – Pascal Paoli – Napoleon sides with the French Government against Paoli – And is banished from Corsica – Visits Marseilles, and publishes the Souper de Beaucaire.

The island of Corsica was, in ancient times, remarkable as the scene of Seneca's exile, and in the last century was distinguished by the memorable stand which the natives made in defence of their liberties against the Genoese and French, during a war which tended to show the high and indomitable spirit of the islanders, united as it is with the fiery and vindictive feelings proper to their country and climate.

In this island, which was destined to derive its future importance chiefly from the circumstance, Napoleon Buonaparte, or Bonaparte,¹ had his origin. His family was noble, though not of much distinction, and rather reduced in fortune. Flattery afterwards endeavoured to trace the name which he had made famous, into remote ages, and researches were made through ancient records, to discover that there was one Buonaparte who had written a book,² another who had signed a treaty – a female of the name who had given birth to a pope,³ with other minute claims of distinction, which Napoleon justly considered as trivial, and unworthy of notice. He answered the Emperor of Austria, who had a fancy of tracing his son-in-law's

¹ There was an absurd debate about the spelling of the name, which became, as trifles often do, a sort of party question. Buonaparte had disused the superfluous *u*, which his father retained in the name, and adopted a more modern spelling. This was represented on one side as an attempt to bring his name more nearly to the French idiom; and, as if it had been a matter of the last moment, the vowel was obstinately replaced in the name, by a class of writers who deemed it politic not to permit the successful general to relinquish the slightest mark of his Italian extraction, which was in every respect impossible for him either to conceal or to deny, even if he had nourished such an idea. In his baptismal register, his name is spelled Napoleone Bonaparte, though the father subscribes, Carlo Buonaparte. The spelling seems to have been quite indifferent. – S. – "During Napoleon's first campaign in Italy, he dropped the *u*. In this change he had no other motive than to assimilate the orthography to the pronunciation, and to abbreviate his signature." – Bourrienne, tom. i., p. 3.

² The book alluded to is entitled "Ragguaglio Storico di tutto l'occorso, giorno per giorno, nel Sacco de Roma dell'anno 1527, scritto da Jacopo Buonaparte, gentiluomo Samminiatese, chi vi si trovò presente." In 1568, a Giuseppe Buonaparte published a comedy, entitled "La Vedova." Copies of both these works are in the British Museum.

³ Paul the Fifth.

descent from one of the petty sovereigns of Treviso, that he was the Rodolph of Hapsbourg of his family; and to a genealogist, who made a merit of deducing his descent from some ancient line of Gothic princes, he caused reply to be made, that he dated his patent of nobility from the battle of Montenotte, that is, from his first victory.⁴

CORSICA

All that is known with certainty of Napoleon's family may be told in few words. The Buonapartes were a family of some distinction in the middle ages;⁵ their names are inscribed in the Golden Book at Treviso, and their armorial bearings are to be seen on several houses in Florence. But attached, during the civil war, to the party of the Ghibellines, they of course were persecuted by the Guelphs; and being exiled from Tuscany, one of the family took refuge in Corsica, and there established himself and his successors, who were regularly enrolled among the noble natives of the island, and enjoyed all the privileges of

⁴ "I sent Clarke to Florence as ambassador, where he employed himself in nothing but turning over the old musty records of the place, in search of proofs of the nobility of my family. He so plagued me with letters upon the subject, that I was forced to bid him cease from troubling either his head or mine with this nonsense about nobility, – that I was the *first* of my family." – Napoleon, *Voice*, &c., vol. i., p. 401.

⁵ "They were of Tuscan origin. In the middle ages they figured as senators of the republics of Florence, San Miniato, Bologna, Sarzana, and Treviso, and as prelates attached to the Court of Rome." – Napoleon, *Memoirs*, vol. iii., y. 7.

gentle blood.

The father of Napoleon, Charles Buonaparte, was the principal descendant of this exiled family. He was regularly educated at Pisa, to the study of the law, and is stated to have possessed a very handsome person, a talent for eloquence, and a vivacity of intellect, which he transmitted to his son. He was a patriot also and a soldier, and assisted at the gallant stand made by Paoli against the French. It is said he would have emigrated along with Paoli, who was his friend, but was withheld by the influence of his father's brother, Lucien Buonaparte, who was Archdeacon of the Cathedral of Ajaccio, and the wealthiest person of the family.

It was in the middle of civil discord, fights, and skirmishes, that Charles Buonaparte married Lætitia Ramolini, one of the most beautiful young women of the island, and possessed of a great deal of firmness of character. She partook the dangers of her husband during the years of civil war, and is said to have accompanied him on horseback in some military expeditions, or perhaps hasty flights, shortly before her being delivered of the future emperor.⁶ Though left a widow in the prime of life, she had already born her husband thirteen children, of whom five sons and three daughters survived him. I. Joseph, the eldest, who, though placed by his brother in an obnoxious situation, as intrusive King of Spain, held the reputation of a good and moderate man. II. Napoleon himself. III. Lucien, scarce inferior

⁶ Las Cases, vol. i., p. 108.

to his brother in ambition and talent. IV. Louis, the merit of whose character consists in its unpretending worth, and who renounced a crown rather than consent to the oppression of his subjects. V. Jerome, whose disposition is said to have been chiefly marked by a tendency to dissipation. The females were, I. Maria Anne, afterwards Grand Duchess of Tuscany, by the name of Eliza.⁷ II. Maria Annonciada, who became Maria Pauline, Princess of Borghese.⁸ III. Carlotta, or Caroline, wife of Murat, and Queen of Naples.

The family of Buonaparte being reconciled to the French government after the emigration of Paoli, enjoyed the protection of the Count de Marbœuf, the French Governor of Corsica, by whose interest Charles was included in a deputation of the nobles of the island, sent to Louis XVI. in 1779. As a consequence of this mission, he was appointed to a judicial situation – that of assessor of the Tribunal of Ajaccio – the income of which aided him to maintain his increasing family, which the smallness of his patrimony, and some habits of expense, would otherwise have rendered difficult. Charles Buonaparte, the father of Napoleon, died at the age of about forty years, of an ulcer in the stomach, on the 24th February 1785.⁹ His celebrated son fell a victim to

⁷ Died at Trieste, 9th August, 1820. "On accidentally reading, at St. Helena, the account of her death, Napoleon exclaimed, 'Eliza has just shown us the way; death, which seemed to have overlooked our family, now begins to strike it. I shall be the next to follow her to the grave.'" – Antommarchi, vol. i., p. 384.

⁸ She died at the Borghese Palace, near Florence, 9th June, 1825.

⁹ "I was quietly pursuing my studies whilst my father was struggling against the

the same disease. During Napoleon's grandeur, the community of Montpellier expressed a desire to erect a monument to the memory of Charles Buonaparte. His answer was both sensible and in good taste. "Had I lost my father yesterday," he said, "it would be natural to pay his memory some mark of respect consistent with my present situation. But it is twenty years since the event, and it is one in which the public can take no concern. Let us leave the dead in peace."

The subject of our narrative was born upon the 15th day of August 1769, at his father's house in Ajaccio, forming one side of a court which leads out of the Rue Charles.¹⁰ We read with interest, that his mother's good constitution, and bold character of mind, having induced her to attend mass upon the day of his birth, (being the Festival of the Assumption,) she was obliged to return home immediately, and as there was no time to prepare a bed or bedroom, she was delivered of the future victor upon a temporary couch prepared for her accommodation, and covered with an ancient piece of tapestry, representing the heroes of the Iliad. The infant was christened by the name of Napoleon, an obscure saint, who had dropped to leeward, and fallen altogether out of the calendar, so that his namesake never knew which

violence of a painful agony. He died, and I had not the consolation to close his eyes: that sad duty was reserved for Joseph, who acquitted himself of it with all the zeal of an affectionate son." – Napoleon, *Antommarchi*, vol. i., p. 240.

¹⁰ "The patrimonial house of Napoleon, at present in the possession of M. Ramolini, member of the Chamber of Deputies for the department of Corsica, continues an object of great veneration with travellers and military men." – Benson's *Corsica*, p. 4.

day he was to celebrate as the festival of his patron. When questioned on this subject by the bishop who confirmed him, he answered smartly, that there were a great many saints, and only three hundred and sixty-five days to divide amongst them. The politeness of the Pope promoted the patron in order to compliment the god-child, and Saint Napoleon des Ursins was accommodated with a festival. To render this compliment, which no one but a Pope could have paid, still more flattering, the feast of Saint Napoleon was fixed for the 15th August, the birthday of the Emperor, and the day on which he signed the Concordat.¹¹ So that Napoleon had the rare honour of promoting his patron saint.

The young Napoleon had, of course, the simple and hardy education proper to the natives of the mountainous island of his birth, and in his infancy was not remarkable for more than that animation of temper, and wilfulness and impatience of inactivity, by which children of quick parts and lively sensibility are usually distinguished.¹² The winter of the year was generally passed by the family of his father at Ajaccio, where they still preserve and exhibit, as the ominous plaything of Napoleon's boyhood, the model of a brass cannon, weighing about thirty pounds.¹³ We leave it to philosophers to inquire, whether the future love of

¹¹ Las Cases, vol. i., p. 120.

¹² "In my infancy I was noisy and quarrelsome, and feared nobody. I beat one, scratched another, and made myself formidable to all." – Napoleon, *Antommarchi*, vol. i., p. 327.

¹³ Benson's *Sketches of Corsica*, p. 4. – S.

war was suggested by the accidental possession of such a toy; or whether the tendency of the mind dictated the selection of it; or, lastly, whether the nature of the pastime, corresponding with the taste which chose it, may not have had each their action and reaction, and contributed between them to the formation of a character so warlike.

The same traveller who furnishes the above anecdote, gives an interesting account of the country retreat of the family of Buonaparte, during the summer.

Going along the sea-shore from Ajaccio towards the Isle Sanguinière, about a mile from the town, occur two stone pillars, the remains of a door-way, leading up to a dilapidated villa, once the residence of Madame Buonaparte's half-brother on the mother's side, whom Napoleon created Cardinal Fesch.¹⁴ The house is approached by an avenue, surrounded and overhung by the cactus and other shrubs, which luxuriate in a warm climate. It has a garden and a lawn, showing amidst neglect, vestiges of their former beauty, and the house is surrounded by shrubberies, permitted to run to wilderness. This was the summer residence of Madame Buonaparte and her family. Almost enclosed by the wild olive, the cactus, the clematis, and the almond-tree, is a very singular and isolated granite rock, called Napoleon's grotto, which seems to have resisted the decomposition which has taken place around. The remains of a small summer-house are visible

¹⁴ The mother of Letitia Ramolini, wife of Carlo Buonaparte, married a Swiss officer in the French service, named Fesch, after the death of Letitia's father. – S.

beneath the rock, the entrance to which is nearly closed by a luxuriant fig-tree. This was Buonaparte's frequent retreat, when the vacations of the school at which he studied permitted him to visit home. – How the imagination labours to form an idea of the visions, which, in this sequestered and romantic spot, must have arisen before the eyes of the future hero of a hundred battles!

BRIENNE

The Count de Marbœuf, already mentioned as Governor of Corsica, interested himself in the young Napoleon, so much as to obtain him an appointment [April, 1779] to the Royal Military School at Brienne, which was maintained at the royal expense, in order to bring up youths for the engineer and artillery service. The malignity of contemporary historians has ascribed a motive of gallantry towards Madame Buonaparte as the foundation of this kindness; but Count Marbœuf had arrived at a period of life when such connexions are not to be presumed, nor did the scandal receive any currency from the natives of Ajaccio.

Nothing could be more suitable to the nature of young Buonaparte's genius, than the line of study which thus fortunately was opened before him. His ardour for the abstract sciences amounted to a passion, and was combined with a singular aptitude for applying them to the purposes of war, while his attention to pursuits so interesting and exhaustless in themselves, was stimulated by his natural ambition and desire of distinction.

Almost all the scientific teachers at Brienne, being accustomed to study the character of their pupils, and obliged by their duty to make memoranda and occasional reports on the subject, spoke of the talents of Buonaparte, and the progress of his studies, with admiration. Circumstances of various kinds, exaggerated or invented, have been circulated concerning the youth of a person so remarkable. The following are given upon good authority.¹⁵

The conduct of Napoleon among his companions, was that of a studious and reserved youth, addicting himself deeply to the means of improvement, and rather avoiding than seeking the usual temptations to dissipation of time. He had few friends, and no intimates; yet at different times when he chose to exert it, he exhibited considerable influence over his fellow-students, and when there was any joint plan to be carried into effect, he was frequently chosen dictator of the little republic.

In the time of winter, Buonaparte upon one occasion engaged his companions in constructing a fortress out of the snow, regularly defended by ditches and bastions, according to the rules of fortification. It was considered as displaying the great powers of the juvenile engineer in the way of his profession, and was attacked and defended by the students, who divided into parties for the purpose, until the battle became so keen that their superiors thought it proper to proclaim a truce.

¹⁵ They were, many years since, communicated to the author by Messrs. Joseph and Louis Law, brothers of General Lauriston, Buonaparte's favourite aide-de-camp. These gentlemen, or at least Joseph, were educated at Brienne, but at a later period than Napoleon. Their distinguished brother was his contemporary. – S.

The young Buonaparte gave another instance of address and enterprise upon the following occasion. There was a fair held annually in the neighbourhood of Brienne, where the pupils of the Military School used to find a day's amusement; but on account of a quarrel betwixt them and the country people upon a former occasion, or for some such cause, the masters of the institution had directed that the students should not, on the fair day, be permitted to go beyond their own precincts, which were surrounded with a wall. Under the direction of the young Corsican, however, the scholars had already laid a plot for securing their usual day's diversion. They had undermined the wall which encompassed their exercising ground, with so much skill and secrecy, that their operations remained entirely unknown till the morning of the fair, when a part of the boundary unexpectedly fell, and gave a free passage to the imprisoned students, of which they immediately took the advantage, by hurrying to the prohibited scene of amusement.

But although on these, and perhaps other occasions, Buonaparte displayed some of the frolic temper of youth, mixed with the inventive genius and the talent for commanding others by which he was distinguished in after time, his life at school was in general that of a recluse and severe student, acquiring by his judgment, and treasuring in his memory, that wonderful process of almost unlimited combination, by means of which he was afterwards able to simplify the most difficult and complicated undertakings. His mathematical teacher was proud of the young

islander, as the boast of his school, and his other scientific instructors had the same reason to be satisfied.

In languages Buonaparte was less a proficient, and never acquired the art of writing or spelling French, far less foreign languages, with accuracy or correctness; nor had the monks of Brienne any reason to pride themselves on the classical proficiency of their scholar. The full energies of his mind being devoted to the scientific pursuits of his profession, left little time or inclination for other studies.

Though of Italian origin, Buonaparte had not a decided taste for the fine arts, and his taste in composition seems to have leaned towards the grotesque and the bombastic. He used always the most exaggerated phrases; and it is seldom, if ever, that his bulletins present those touches of sublimity which are founded on dignity and simplicity of expression.

Notwithstanding the external calmness and reserve of his deportment, he who was destined for such great things, had, while yet a student at Brienne, a full share of that ambition for distinction and dread of disgrace, that restless and irritating love of fame, which is the spur to extraordinary attempts. Sparkles of this keen temper sometimes showed themselves. On one occasion, a harsh superintendent imposed on the future Emperor, for some trifling fault, the disgrace of wearing a penitential dress, and being excluded from the table of the students, and obliged to eat his meal apart. His pride felt the indignity so severely, that it brought on a severe nervous attack; to which, though

otherwise of good constitution, he was subject upon occasions of extraordinary irritation. Father Petrault,¹⁶ the professor of mathematics, hastened to deliver his favourite pupil from the punishment by which he was so much affected.

It is also said that an early disposition to the popular side distinguished Buonaparte even when at Brienne. Pichegru, afterwards so celebrated, who acted as his monitor in the military school, (a singular circumstance,) bore witness to his early principles, and to the peculiar energy and tenacity of his temper. He was long afterwards consulted whether means might not be found to engage the commander of the Italian armies in the royal interest. "It will be but lost time to attempt it," said Pichegru. "I knew him in his youth – his character is inflexible – he has taken his side, and he will not change it."¹⁷

In October, 1784, Napoleon Buonaparte, then only fifteen years old, was, though under the usual age, selected by M. de Keralio,¹⁸ the inspector of the twelve military schools, to be sent

¹⁶ Father Petrault was subsequently secularized, and joined the army of Italy, where he served his pupil in the capacity of secretary. On Buonaparte's return from Egypt, he found him a corpulent financier; but commencing usurer, he was soon reduced to beggary. Napoleon granted him a pension sufficient for his subsistence. – Las Cases, vol. i., p. 119.

¹⁷ Las Cases, vol. i., p. 120.

¹⁸ The following is a copy of Keralio's report: – "M. de Buonaparte, (Napoleon,) born 15th August, 1769, height four feet, ten inches, ten lines, has finished his fourth course; of good constitution, excellent health, of submissive character, upright, grateful, and regular in conduct; has always been distinguished for application to the mathematics. He is tolerably well acquainted with history and geography; he is deficient in the

to have his education completed in the general school of Paris. It was a compliment paid to the precocity of his extraordinary mathematical talent, and the steadiness of his application. While at Paris he attracted the same notice as at Brienne; and among other society, frequented that of the celebrated Abbé Raynal, and was admitted to his literary parties. His taste did not become correct, but his appetite for study in all departments was greatly enlarged; and notwithstanding the quantity which he daily read, his memory was strong enough to retain, and his judgment sufficiently ripe to arrange and digest, the knowledge which he then acquired; so that he had it at his command during all the rest of his busy life. Plutarch was his favourite author; upon the study of whom he had so modelled his opinions and habits of thought, that Paoli afterwards pronounced him a young man of an antique caste, and resembling one of the classical heroes.¹⁹

Some of his biographers have, about this time, ascribed to him the anecdote of a certain youthful pupil of the military school, who desired to ascend in the car of a balloon with the æronaut Blanchard, and was so mortified at being refused, that he made

ornamental branches, and in Latin, in which he has only completed his fourth course. He will make an excellent sailor: he deserves to pass to the military school at Paris." – M. de Keralio, a highly accomplished man, who had been tutor in the royal family of Bavaria, died in 1793.

¹⁹ "Paoli often patted me on the head, saying, 'You are one of Plutarch's men.' He divined that I should be something extraordinary." – Napoleon, *Voice, &c.*, vol. i., p. 251.

an attempt to cut the balloon with his sword.²⁰ The story has but a flimsy support, and indeed does not accord well with the character of the hero, which was deep and reflective, as well as bold and determined, and not likely to suffer its energies to escape in idle and useless adventure.

A better authenticated anecdote states, that at this time he expressed himself disrespectfully towards the king in one of his letters to his family. According to the practice of the school, he was obliged to submit the letter to the censorship of M. Domairon, the professor of belles lettres, who, taking notice of the offensive passage, insisted upon the letter being burnt, and added a severe rebuke. Long afterwards, in 1802, M. Domairon appeared at Napoleon's levee; when the first consul reminded his old tutor good-humouredly, that times had changed considerably since the burning of the letter.

VALENCE – AUXONNE

Napoleon Buonaparte, in his seventeenth year, [September, 1785,] received his first commission as second lieutenant in the regiment of La Fère, or first artillery, then quartered at Valence. He mingled with society when he joined his regiment, more than he had hitherto been accustomed to do; mixed in public amusements, and exhibited the powers of pleasing which

²⁰ "This story, though incorrect as to Napoleon, was true as to one of his comrades, Dupont de Chambon." – Arnoult, *Vie de Napoleon*, p. 3.

he possessed in an uncommon degree, when he chose to exert them. His handsome and intelligent features, with his active and neat, though slight figure, gave him additional advantages. His manners could scarcely be called elegant, but made up in vivacity and variety of expression, and often in great spirit and energy, for what they wanted in grace and polish.

In 1786, he became an adventurer for the honours of literature also, and was anonymously a competitor for the prize offered by the Academy of Lyons on Raynal's question, "What are the principles and institutions, by application of which mankind can be raised to the highest pitch of happiness?" The prize was adjudged to the young soldier. It is impossible to avoid feeling curiosity to know the character of the juvenile theories respecting government, advocated by one who at length attained the power of practically making what experiments he pleased. Probably his early ideas did not exactly coincide with his more mature practice; for when Talleyrand, many years afterwards, got the Essay out of the records of the Academy, and returned it to the author, Buonaparte destroyed it, after he had read a few pages.²¹ He also laboured under the temptation of writing a journey from Valence to Mount Cenis, after the manner of Sterne, which he was fortunate enough finally to resist.²² The affectation which pervades Sterne's peculiar style of composition, was not likely to

²¹ Las Cases, vol. i., p. 129. A copy of the Essay had, however, been taken by his brother Louis. It was published in 1826 by Gourgaud.

²² Las Cases, vol. i., p. 135.

be simplified under the pen of Buonaparte.

In 1789, Buonaparte, then quartered at Auxonne, had composed a work, which might form two volumes, on the political, civil, and military history of Corsica. He addressed a letter to General Paoli, then residing in London, on the subject of the proposed work, and the actual condition of his countrymen.²³ He also submitted it to the Abbé Raynal, who recommended the publication of it.²⁴ With this view, Buonaparte invited M. Joly, a bookseller of Dole, to visit him at Auxonne. He came, he says, and found the future Emperor in a naked barrack room, the sole furniture of which consisted of a wretched bed without curtains, a table placed in the embrasure of a window, loaded with books and papers, and two chairs. His brother Louis, whom he was teaching mathematics, lay on a wretched mattress, in an adjoining closet. M. Joly and the author agreed on the price of the impression of the book, but Napoleon was at the time in uncertainty whether he was to remain at Auxonne or not. The work was never printed, nor has a trace of it been discovered.²⁵

In 1790, Buonaparte, still at Auxonne, composed a political

²³ A copy of this letter is given in the Appendix, [No. I](#). A few months after it was written, Paoli, in consequence of Mirabeau's motion for the recall of the Corsican exiles, left England for Corsica.

²⁴ Las Cases, vol. ii., p. 345.

²⁵ "This passage is not correct. I recollect very well, that, on my account, a larger and more commodious apartment was assigned to my brother than to the other officers of the same rank. I had a good chamber and an excellent bed. My brother directed my studies, but I had proper masters, even in literature." – Louis Buonaparte, p. 26.

tract in the form of a letter to M. de Buttafuoco, major-general, and deputy of the Corsican noblesse in the National Assembly. A hundred copies were printed and sent to Corsica; where it was adopted and republished by the patriotic society of Ajaccio,²⁶ who passed a resolution, attaching the epithet *infamous*, to the name of their noble deputy.²⁷

Sternier times were fast approaching, and the nation was now fully divided by those factions which produced the Revolution. The officers of Buonaparte's regiment were also divided into Royalists and Patriots; and it is easily to be imagined, that the young and the friendless stranger and adventurer should adopt that side to which he had already shown some inclination, and which promised to open the most free career to those who had only their merit to rely upon. "Were I a general officer," he is alleged to have said, "I would have adhered to the King; being a subaltern, I join the Patriots."

There was a story current, that in a debate with some brother officers on the politics of the time, Buonaparte expressed himself so outrageously, that they were provoked to throw him into the

²⁶ Norvins, tom. i., p. 19.

²⁷ The letter to Buttafuoco is a diatribe against that Corsican nobleman, who had been, during the wars with France, a strong opponent of the liberties of his country. He had been, of course, the enemy of the family of Paoli, to which Napoleon at this time was warmly attached. We have preserved the composition entire, because, though the matter be uninteresting, the rough and vivid style of invective is singularly characteristic of the fiery youth, whose bosom one of his teachers compared to a volcano surcharged with molten granite, which it poured forth in torrents, whenever his passions were excited. — See Appendix, [No. II.](#)

Saone, where he had nearly perished. But this is an inaccurate account of the accident which actually befell him. He was seized with the cramp when bathing in the river. His comrades saved him with difficulty; but his danger was matter of pure chance.

Napoleon has himself recorded that he was a warm patriot during the whole sitting of the National Assembly; but that, on the appointment of the Legislative Assembly, he became shaken in his opinions. If so, his original sentiments regained force; for we shortly afterwards find him entertaining such as went to the extreme heights of the Revolution.

Early in the year 1792, Buonaparte became a captain in the artillery by seniority; and in the same year, being at Paris, he witnessed the two insurrections of the 20th June and 10th August. He was accustomed to speak of the insurgents as the most despicable banditti, and to express with what ease a determined officer could have checked these apparently formidable, but dastardly and unwieldy masses.²⁸ But, with what a different feeling of interest would Napoleon have looked on that infuriated populace, those still resisting though overpowered Swiss, and that burning palace, had any seer whispered to him, "Emperor that shall be, all this blood and massacre is but to secure your future empire!" Little anticipating the potent effect which the passing events were to bear on his own fortune, Buonaparte, anxious for the safety of his mother and family, was now desirous to exchange France for Corsica, where the same

²⁸ See *ante*, vol. i., p. 163; Las Cases, vol. iii., p. 143; and Bourrienne, tom. i., p. 48.

things were acting on a less distinguished stage.

PAOLI – CORSICA

It was a singular feature in the French Revolution, that it brought out from his retirement the celebrated Pascal Paoli, who, long banished from Corsica, the freedom and independence of which he had so valiantly defended, returned from exile with the flattering hope of still witnessing the progress of liberty in his native land. On visiting Paris, he was received there with enthusiastic veneration, and the National Assembly and Royal Family contended which should show him most distinction. He was created president of the department, and commander of the national guard of his native island, and used the powers intrusted to him with great wisdom and patriotism.

But Paoli's views of liberty were different from those which unhappily began to be popular in France. He was desirous of establishing that freedom, which is the protector, not the destroyer of property, and which confers practical happiness, instead of aiming at theoretical perfection. In a word, he endeavoured to keep Corsica free from the prevailing infection of Jacobinism; and in reward, he was denounced in the Assembly. Paoli, summoned to attend for the purpose of standing on his defence, declined the journey on account of his age, but offered to withdraw from the island.

A large proportion of the inhabitants took part with the

aged champion of their freedom, while the Convention sent an expedition, at the head of which were La Combe Saint Michel,²⁹ and Salicetti,³⁰ one of the Corsican deputies to the Convention, with the usual instructions for bloodshed and pillage issued to their commissaries.³¹

Buonaparte was in Corsica, upon leave of absence from his regiment, when these events were taking place; and although he himself, and Paoli, had hitherto been on friendly terms, the young artillery officer did not hesitate which side to choose. He embraced that of the Convention with heart and hand; and his first military exploit was in the civil war of his native island. In the year 1793, he was despatched from Bastia, in possession of the French party, to surprise his native town Ajaccio, then occupied by Paoli or his adherents. Buonaparte was acting provisionally, as commanding a battalion of national guards. He landed in the gulf of Ajaccio with about fifty men, to take possession of a tower called the Torre di Capitello, on the opposite side of the gulf, and almost facing the city. He succeeded in taking the place; but as there arose a gale of wind which prevented his communicating with the frigate which had put him ashore, he was besieged in his new conquest by the

²⁹ La Combe Saint Michel was afterwards employed by Napoleon in Italy, Spain, and Germany. He died in 1812.

³⁰ During the reign of Joseph, he was appointed minister of police at Naples, where he died in 1809.

³¹ Napoleon, *Memoirs*, vol. iv., p. 51.

opposite faction, and reduced to such distress, that he and his little garrison were obliged to feed on horse-flesh. After five days he was relieved by the frigate, and evacuated the tower, having first in vain attempted to blow it up. The Torre di Capitello still shows marks of the damage it then sustained, and its remains may be looked on as a curiosity, as the first scene of *his* combats, before whom

"Temple and tower
Went to the ground."³²

The strength of Paoli increasing, and the English preparing to assist him, Corsica became no longer a safe or convenient residence for the Buonaparte family. Indeed, both Napoleon and his brother Joseph, who had distinguished themselves as partisans of the French, were subjected to a decree of banishment from their native island; and Madame Buonaparte, with two of her daughters, set sail under their protection, and settled for a

³² Such is the report of the Corsicans concerning the alleged first exploit of their celebrated countryman. See Benson's *Sketches*, p. 4. But there is room to believe that Buonaparte had been in action so early as February, 1793. Admiral Truguet, with a strong fleet, and having on board a large body of troops, had been at anchor for several weeks in the Corsican harbours, announcing a descent upon Sardinia. At length, having received on board an additional number of forces, he set sail on his expedition. Buonaparte is supposed to have accompanied the admiral, of whose talent and judgment he is made in the Saint Helena MSS., to speak with great contempt. Buonaparte succeeded in taking some batteries in the straits of Saint Bonifacio; but the expedition proving unsuccessful, they were speedily abandoned. — S. — For an account of the expedition to Sardinia, see *Napoleon's Memoirs*, vol. i., p. 5.

time, first at Nice, and afterwards at Marseilles, where the family remained in obscurity, until the dawning prospects of Napoleon afforded him the means of assisting them.

One small fountain at Ajaccio is pointed out as the only ornament which, in after days, his bounty bestowed on his birth-place.³³ He might perhaps think it impolitic to do any thing which might remind the country he ruled that he was not a child of her soil, nay, was in fact very near having been born an alien, for Corsica was not united to, or made an integral part of France, until June 1769, a few weeks only before Napoleon's birth. This stigma was repeatedly cast upon him by his opponents, some of whom reproached the French with having adopted a master, from a country from which the ancient Romans were unwilling even to choose a slave; and Napoleon may have been so far sensible to it, as to avoid showing any predilection to the place of his birth, which might bring the circumstance strongly under observation of the great nation, with which he and his family seemed to be indissolubly united. But as a traveller already quoted, and who had the best opportunities to become acquainted with the feelings of the proud islanders, has expressed it, – "The Corsicans are still highly patriotic, and possess strong local attachment – in their opinion, contempt for the country of one's birth is never to be redeemed by any other qualities. Napoleon, therefore, certainly

³³ "As you quit the town, the first object that presents itself is a little fountain on the left, which, except the pavement of the quay, is the only public work of Buonaparte, for the place of his birth." – Benson.

was not popular in Corsica, nor is his memory cherished there."³⁴

The feelings of the parties were not unnatural on either side. Napoleon, little interested in the land of his birth, and having such an immense stake in that of his adoption, in which he had every thing to keep and lose,³⁵ observed a policy towards Corsica which his position rendered advisable; and who can blame the high-spirited islanders, who, seeing one of their countrymen raised to such exalted eminence, and disposed to forget his connexion with them, returned with slight and indifference the disregard with which he treated them?

On his return from Corsica, Buonaparte had arrived at Nice, and was preparing to join his regiment, when General Degear, who commanded the artillery of "the army of Italy," then encamped round the city, required his services, and employed him in several delicate operations. Shortly after, the insurrection of Marseilles broke out – a movement consequent upon the arrest of the leaders of the Girondist party in the Convention, on the first Prairial (31st May;) and which extended with violence into the departments. The insurgents of Marseilles organized a force of six thousand men, with which they took possession of Avignon, and thereby intercepted the communications of the army of Italy. The general-in-chief being much embarrassed by

³⁴ Benson's Sketches of Corsica, p. 121. – S.

³⁵ Not literally, however; for it is worth mentioning, that when he was in full-blown possession of his power, an inheritance fell to the family, situated near Ajaccio, and was divided amongst them. The First Consul, or Emperor, received an olive garden as his share. —*Sketches of Corsica.*— S.

this circumstance, sent Buonaparte to the insurgents, to try to induce them to let the convoys pass. In July he went to Marseilles and Avignon, had interviews with the leaders, convinced them that it was their own interest not to excite the resentment of the army of Italy, and in fine secured the transit of the convoys.

During his residence at Marseilles, when sent to the insurgents, having, he says, an opportunity of observing all the weakness and incoherence of their means of resistance, he drew up a little pamphlet, which he called "*Le Souper de Beaucaire*," and which he published in that city. "He endeavoured," he says, "to open the eyes of these frantic people, and predicted that the only result of their revolt would be to furnish a pretext to the men of blood of the day, for sending the principal persons amongst them to the scaffold." "It produced," he adds, "a very powerful effect, and contributed to calm the agitation which prevailed."³⁶

³⁶ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 14. – Nothing can be more inaccurate than to term the *Souper de Beaucaire* a Jacobin pamphlet, although it is unquestionably written to urge the Federalists to submit to their inevitable fate, and avert extremity by doing so in time. The work is nearly free from the cant language of the day. There is no mention of liberty, equality, fraternity, or the rights of man, &c. – no abstract discussion of political principles. The whole merits of the dispute betwixt Paris and the departments are hurried over with little or no argument. Buonaparte urges the Marseillois to submission, not because the principles which dictated their insurrection were erroneous, but because they had not means to maintain successful resistance; not because they had been confuted by the Jacobins in argument, but because they were unequal to the task of contending with them by force. In after time, however, he called in and destroyed every copy of the *Souper de Beaucaire* which could be found, so that only one remained, from which the recent reprint of Monsieur Pancoucke has been executed. – S. – As remarkable specimens of Napoleon's easy style and habits

During these proceedings Toulon had surrendered to the English. Buonaparte was ordered on service to the siege of that town, and joined the army on the 12th of September.

of thinking, the opening and closing parts of this pamphlet are given, translated into English, in [No. III.](#) of the Appendix to this volume.

CHAPTER II

Siege of Toulon – Recapitulation – Buonaparte appointed to the Command of the Artillery at Toulon – Finds every thing in disorder – His plan for obtaining the Surrender of the Place – Adopted – Anecdotes during the Siege – Allied troops resolve to evacuate Toulon – Dreadful Particulars of the Evacuation – England censured on this occasion – Lord Lynedoch – Fame of Buonaparte increases, and he is appointed Chief of Battalion in the Army of Italy – Joins Headquarters at Nice – On the Fall of Robespierre, Buonaparte superseded in command – Arrives in Paris in May, 1795, to solicit employment – He is unsuccessful – Retrospect of the Proceedings of the National Assembly – Difficulties in forming a new Constitution – Appointment of the Directory – of the Two Councils of Elders and of Five Hundred – Nation at large, and Paris in particular, disgusted with their pretensions – Paris assembles in Sections – General Danican appointed their Commander-in-Chief – Menou appointed by the Directory to disarm the National Guards – but suspended for incapacity – Buonaparte appointed in his room – The Day of the Sections – Conflict betwixt the Troops of the Convention under Buonaparte, and those of the Sections of Paris under Danican – The latter defeated with much slaughter – Buonaparte appointed Second in Command of the Army of the Interior – then General-in-Chief – Marries Madame Beauharnais – Her

Character – Buonaparte immediately afterwards joins the Army of Italy.

SIEGE OF TOULON

The siege of Toulon was the first incident of importance, which enabled Buonaparte to distinguish himself in the eyes of the French Government, and of the world at large.

Buonaparte's professional qualifications were still better vouched than the soundness of his political principles, though these were sufficiently decided. The notes which the inspectors of the Military School always preserve concerning their scholars, described his genius as being of the first order; and to these he owed his promotion to the rank of a lieutenant-colonel of artillery, with the command of the artillery during this siege.

We have already mentioned that a general diffidence, and dread of the proceedings of the Jacobins, joined to the intrigues of the Girondists, had, after the fall of the latter party, induced several of the principal towns in France to take arms against the Convention, or rather against the Jacobin party, who had attained the complete mastery in that body. We have also said that Toulon, taking a more decided step than either Marseilles or Lyons, had declared for the King and the Constitution of 1791, and invited the support of the English and Spanish squadrons, who were cruising upon the coast. A disembarkation was made, and a miscellaneous force, hastily collected, of Spaniards, Sardinians,

Neapolitans, and English, was thrown into the place.

This was one of the critical periods when vigorous measures, on the part of the allies, might have produced marked effects on the result of the war. Toulon is the arsenal of France, and contained at that time immense naval stores, besides a fleet of seventeen sail of the line ready for sea, and thirteen or fourteen more, which stood in need of refitting. The possession of it was of the last importance, and with a sufficiently large garrison, or rather an army strong enough to cover the more exposed points without the town, the English might have maintained their footing at Toulon, as they did at a later period both at Lisbon and Cadiz. The sea would, by maintaining the defensive lines necessary to protect the roadstead, have been entirely at the command of the besieged; and they could have been supplied with provisions in any quantity from Sicily, or the Barbary States, while the besiegers would have experienced great difficulty, such was the dearth in Provence at the time, in supporting their own army. But to have played this bold game, the presence of an army, instead of a few battalions, would have been requisite; and a general of consummate ability must have held the chief command. This was the more especially necessary, as Toulon, from the nature of the place, must have been defended by a war of posts, requiring peculiar alertness, sagacity, and vigilance. On the other hand, there were circumstances very favourable for the defence, had it been conducted with talent and vigour. In order to invest Toulon on the right and left side at once, it

was necessary there should be two distinct blockading armies; and these could scarce communicate with each other, as a steep ridge of mountains, called Pharon, must interpose betwixt them. This gave opportunity to the besieged to combine their force, and choose the object of attack when they sallied; while, on the other hand, the two bodies of besiegers could not easily connect their operations, either for attack or defence.

Lord Mulgrave,³⁷ who commanded personally in the place, notwithstanding the motley character of the garrison, and other discouraging circumstances, began the defence with spirit. Sir George Keith Elphinstone³⁸ also defeated the Republicans at the mountain pass, called Ollioules. The English for some time retained possession of this important gorge, but were finally driven out from it. Cartaux, a republican general whom we have already mentioned,³⁹ now advanced on the west of Toulon, at the head of a very considerable army, while General Lapoype blockaded the city on the east, with a part of the army of Italy. It was the object of the French to approach Toulon on both sides of the mountainous ridge, called Pharon. But on the east the town was covered by the strong and regular fort of La Malue, and on the west side of the road by a less formidable work, called Malbosquet. To support Malbosquet, and to protect the entrance to the roadstead and harbour, the English engineers fortified with

³⁷ His lordship died the 7th of April, 1831.

³⁸ In 1797 created Baron Keith. He died in 1823.

³⁹ See *ante*, vol. i., p. 300.

great skill an eminence, called Hauteur de Grasse. The height bent into a sort of bay, the two promontories of which were secured by redoubts, named L'Eguillette and Balagnier, which communicated with and supported the new fortification, which the English had termed Fort Mulgrave.

Several sallies and skirmishes took place, in most of which the Republicans were worsted. Lieutenant-General O'Hara arrived from Gibraltar with reinforcements, and assumed the chief command.

Little could be said for the union of the commanders within Toulon; yet their enterprises were so far successful, that the French began to be alarmed at the slow progress of the siege. The dearth of provisions was daily increasing, the discontent of the people of Provence was augmented; the Catholics were numerous in the neighbouring districts of Vivarais and Lower Languedoc; and Barras and Fréron wrote from Marseilles [Dec. 1] to the Convention, suggesting that the siege of Toulon should be raised, and the besieging army withdrawn beyond the Durance.⁴⁰ But while weaker minds were despairing, talents of the first order were preparing to achieve the conquest of Toulon.

When Napoleon arrived at the scene of action, and had visited the posts of the besieging army, he found so many

⁴⁰ This letter appeared in the *Moniteur*, 10th December, 1793. But as the town of Toulon was taken a few days afterwards, the Convention voted the letter a fabrication. – S. – "This was unfair; for it was genuine, and gave a just idea of the opinion that prevailed when it was written, respecting the issue of the siege, and of the difficulties that prevailed in Provence." – Napoleon, *Memoirs*, vol. i., p. 22.

marks of incapacity, that he could not conceal his astonishment. Batteries had been erected for destroying the English shipping, but they were three gun-shots' distance from the point which they were designed to command; red-hot balls were preparing, but they were not heated in furnaces beside the guns, but in the country-houses in the neighbourhood at the most ridiculous distance, as if they had been articles of easy and ordinary transportation. Buonaparte with difficulty obtained General Cartaux's permission to make a shot or two by way of experiment; and when they fell more than half-way short of the mark, the general had no excuse but to rail against the aristocrats, who had, he said, spoiled the quality of the powder with which he was supplied.⁴¹

The young officer of artillery, with prudence, and at the same time with spirit, made his remonstrances to the member of Convention, Gasparin,⁴² who witnessed the experiment, and explained the necessity of proceeding more systematically, if any successful result was expected.

At a council of war, where Gasparin presided, the instructions of the Committee of Public Safety were read, directing that the siege of Toulon should be commenced according to the usual forms, by investing the body of the place, in other words, the

⁴¹ Las Cases, vol. i., p. 140.

⁴² It was to Gasparin that Napoleon was indebted for the triumph of his plan over the objections of the committees of the Convention. He preserved a grateful recollection of this circumstance, as appears by his will. It was Gasparin, he used to say, who had first opened his career. – Las Cases, vol. i., p. 144.

city itself. The orders of the Committee of Public Safety were no safe subject of discussion or criticism for those who were to act under them; yet Buonaparte ventured to recommend their being departed from on this important occasion. His comprehensive genius had at once discovered a less direct, yet more certain manner, of obtaining the surrender of the place. He advised, that, neglecting the body of the town, the attention of the besiegers should be turned to attain possession of the promontory called Hauteur de Grasse, by driving the besiegers from the strong work of fort Mulgrave, and the two redoubts of L'Eguillette and Balagnier, by means of which the English had established the line of defence necessary to protect the fleet and harbour. The fortress of Malbosquet, on the same point, he also recommended as a principal object of attack. He argued, that if the besiegers succeeded in possessing themselves of these fortifications, they must obtain a complete command of the roads where the English fleet lay, and oblige them to put to sea. They would, in the same manner, effectually command the entrance of the bay, and prevent supplies or provisions from being thrown into the city. If the garrison were thus in danger of being totally cut off from supplies by their vessels being driven from their anchorage, it was natural to suppose that the English troops would rather evacuate Toulon, than remain within the place, blockaded on all sides, until they might be compelled to surrender by famine.

The plan was adopted by the council of war after much hesitation, and the young officer by whom it was projected

received full powers to carry it on. He rallied round him a number of excellent artillery officers and soldiers; assembled against Toulon more than two hundred pieces of cannon, well served; and stationed them so advantageously, that he annoyed considerably the English vessels in the roads, even before he had constructed those batteries on which he depended for reducing forts Mulgrave and Malbosquet, by which they were in a great measure protected.

In the meanwhile, General Doppet, formerly a physician, had superseded Cartaux, whose incapacity could no longer be concealed by his rhodomontading language; and, wonderful to tell, it had nearly been the fate of the ex-doctor to take Toulon, at a time when such an event seemed least within his calculation. A tumultuary attack of some of the young French Carmagnoles on a body of Spanish troops which garrisoned fort Mulgrave, had very nearly been successful. Buonaparte galloped to the spot, hurrying his reluctant commander along with him, and succours were ordered to advance to support the attack, when an aide-de-camp was shot by Doppet's side; on which the medical general, considering this as a bad symptom, pronounced the case desperate, and, to Buonaparte's great indignation, ordered a retreat to be commenced. Doppet being found as incapable as Cartaux, was in his turn superseded by Dugommier, a veteran who had served for fifty years, was covered with scars, and as fearless as the weapon he wore.

From this time the commandant of artillery, having the

complete concurrence of his general, had no doubt of success. To ensure it, however, he used the utmost vigilance and exertion, and exposed his person to every risk.

One of the dangers which he incurred was of a singular character. An artilleryman being shot at the gun which he was serving, while Napoleon was visiting a battery, he took up the dead man's rammer, and, to give encouragement to the soldiers, charged the gun repeatedly with his own hands. In consequence of using this implement he caught an infectious cutaneous complaint, which, being injudiciously treated and thrown inward, was of great prejudice to his health until after his Italian campaigns, when he was completely cured by Dr. Corvissart; after which, for the first time, he showed that tendency to *embonpoint* which marked the latter part of his life.⁴³

Upon another occasion, while Napoleon was overlooking the construction of a battery, which the enemy endeavoured to interrupt by their fire, he called for some person who could write, that he might dictate an order. A young soldier stepped out of the ranks, and resting the paper on the breast-work, began to write accordingly. A shot from the enemy's battery covered the letter with earth the instant it was finished. "Thank you – we shall have no occasion for sand this bout," said the military secretary. The gaiety and courage of the remark drew Buonaparte's attention on the young man, who was the

⁴³ Las Cases, vol. i., p. 147.

celebrated General Junot, afterwards created Duke D'Abrantes.⁴⁴ During this siege, also, he discovered the talents of Duroc, afterwards one of his most faithful adherents. In these and many other instances, Buonaparte showed his extensive knowledge of mankind, by the deep sagacity which enabled him to discover and attach to him those whose talents were most capable of rendering him service.

Notwithstanding the influence which the commandant of artillery had acquired, he found himself occasionally thwarted by the members of the Convention upon mission to the siege of Toulon, who latterly were Fréron, Ricord, Salicetti, and the younger Robespierre. These representatives of the people, knowing that their commission gave them supreme power over generals and armies, never seem to have paused to consider whether nature or education had qualified them to exercise it, with advantage to the public and credit to themselves. They criticized Buonaparte's plan of attack, finding it impossible to conceive how his operations, being directed against detached fortifications at a distance from Toulon, could be eventually the means of placing the town itself with facility in their hands. But Napoleon was patient and temporizing; and having the good opinion of Salicetti, and some intimacy with young Robespierre, he contrived to have the works conducted according to his own plan.

The presumption of these dignitaries became the means of

⁴⁴ Las Cases, vol. i., p. 154.

precipitating his operations. It was his intention to complete his proposed works against fort Mulgrave before opening a large and powerful battery, which he had constructed with great silence and secrecy against Malbosquet, so that the whole of his meditated assault might confound the enemy by commencing at the same time. The operations being shrouded by an olive plantation, had been completed without being observed by the English, whom Buonaparte proposed to attack on the whole line of defence simultaneously. Messrs. Fréron and Robespierre, however, in visiting the military posts, stumbled upon this masked battery; and having no notion why four mortars and eight twenty-four pounders should remain inactive, they commanded the fire to be opened on Malbosquet without any farther delay.

General O'Hara, confounded at finding this important post exposed to a fire so formidable and unexpected, determined by a strong effort to carry the French battery at once. Three thousand men⁴⁵ were employed in this sally; and the general himself, rather contrary to what is considered the duty of the governor of a place of importance, resolved to put himself at their head. The sally was at first completely successful; but while the English pursued the enemy too far, in all the confidence of what they considered as assured victory, Buonaparte availed himself of some broken ground and a covered way, to rally a strong body of troops, bring up reserves, and attack the scattered English both in flank and rear. There was a warm skirmish, in which Napoleon himself

⁴⁵ Napoleon says six thousand. – Gourgaud, tom. i., p. 17.

received a bayonet wound in the thigh, by which, though a serious injury, he was not, however, disabled. The English were thrown into irretrievable confusion, and retreated, leaving their general wounded, and a prisoner in the hands of the enemy. It is singular, that during his long warfare, Buonaparte was never personally engaged with the British, except in his first, and at Waterloo, his last and fatal battle. The attack upon Acre can scarce be termed an exception, as far as his own person was concerned.

The loss of their commandant, added to the discouragement which began to prevail among the defenders of Toulon, together with the vivacity of the attack which ensued, seem finally to have disheartened the garrison. Five batteries were opened on fort Mulgrave, the possession of which Buonaparte considered as ensuring success. After a fire of twenty-four hours, Dugommier and Napoleon resolved to try the fate of a general attack, for which the representatives of the people showed no particular zeal. The attacking columns advanced before day, during a heavy shower of rain. They were at first driven back on every point by the most determined opposition; and Dugommier, as he saw the troops fly in confusion, exclaimed, well knowing the consequences of bad success to a general of the Republic, "I am a lost man!"⁴⁶ Renewed efforts, however, at last prevailed; the Spanish artillerymen giving way on one point, the fort fell [Dec. 18] into the possession of the French, who showed no mercy to

⁴⁶ Gourgaud, tom. i., p. 24.

its defenders.⁴⁷

Three hours, according to Buonaparte, after the fort was taken, the representatives of the people appeared in the trenches, with drawn swords, to congratulate the soldiers on their successful valour, and hear from their commandant of artillery, the reiterated assurance, that, this distant fort being gained, Toulon was now their own. In their letter to the Convention, the deputies gave a more favourable account of their own exploits, and failed not to represent Ducos, Salicetti, and young Robespierre, as leading the attack with sabre in hand, and, to use their own phrase, showing the troops the road to victory.⁴⁸ On the other hand, they ungraciously forgot, in their despatches, to mention so much as the name of Buonaparte, to whom the victory was entirely to be ascribed.⁴⁹

EVACUATION OF TOULON

In the meantime, Napoleon's sagacity was not deceived in the event. The officers of the allied troops, after a hurried council of war, resolved to evacuate Toulon, since the posts gained by

⁴⁷ Jomini, tom. iv., p. 223; Toulangeon, tom. iv., p. 88; Napoleon's Memoirs, vol. i., p. 25; Rivington's Annual Register, 1793, p. 415.

⁴⁸ Moniteur, 28th December.

⁴⁹ "Amongst those who chiefly distinguished themselves are the citizens Buonaparte, commandant of the artillery, Arena, and Gervoni." – Dugommier *to the Minister of War*.

the French must drive the English ships from their anchorage, and deprive them of a future opportunity of retreating, if they neglected the passing moment. Lord Hood alone urged a bolder resolution, and recommended the making a desperate effort to regain fort Mulgrave, and the heights which it commanded. But his spirited counsel was rejected, and the evacuation resolved on;⁵⁰ which the panic of the foreign troops, especially the Neapolitans, would have rendered still more horrible than it proved, but for the steadiness of the British seamen.

The safety of the unfortunate citizens, who had invoked their protection, was not neglected even amid the confusion of the retreat. The numerous merchant vessels and other craft, offered means of transportation to all, who, having to fear the resentment of the Republicans, might be desirous of quitting Toulon. Such was the dread of the victors' cruelty, that upwards of fourteen thousand persons accepted this melancholy refuge.⁵¹ Meantime there was other work to do.

It had been resolved, that the arsenal and naval stores, with such of the French ships as were not ready for sea, should be destroyed; and they were set on fire accordingly. This task was in a great measure intrusted to the dauntless intrepidity of Sir Sydney Smith, who carried it through with a degree of order, which, everything considered, was almost marvellous. The

⁵⁰ Rivington's Annual Register, 1793, p. 415.

⁵¹ James's Naval History, vol. i., p. 115; Thiers, tom. vi., p. 59. — "The total number borne away amounted to 14,877." — *Mémoires de Joubert*, p. 75.

assistance of the Spaniards was offered and accepted; and they undertook the duty of scuttling and sinking two vessels used as powder magazines, and destroying some part of the disabled shipping. The rising conflagration growing redder and redder, seemed at length a great volcano, amid which were long distinctly seen the masts and yards of the burning vessels, and which rendered obscurely visible the advancing bodies of Republican troops, who attempted on different points to push their way into the place. The Jacobins began to rise in the town upon the flying Royalists; – horrid screams and yells of vengeance, and revolutionary chorusses, were heard to mingle with the cries and plaintive entreaties of the remaining fugitives, who had not yet found means of embarkation. The guns from Malbosquet, now possessed by the French, and turned on the bulwarks of the town, increased the uproar. At once a shock, like that of an earthquake, occasioned by the explosion of many hundred barrels of gunpowder, silenced all noise save its own, and threw high into the midnight heaven a thousand blazing fragments, which descended, threatening ruin wherever they fell. A second explosion took place, as the other magazine blew up, with the same dreadful effects.

This tremendous addition to the terrors of the scene, so dreadful in itself, was owing to the Spaniards setting fire to those vessels used as magazines, instead of sinking them, according to the plan which had been agreed upon. Either from ill-will, carelessness, or timidity, they were equally awkward in their

attempts to destroy the dismantled ships intrusted to their charge, which fell into the hands of the French but little damaged. The British fleet, with the flotilla crowded with fugitives which it escorted, left Toulon without loss, notwithstanding an ill-directed fire maintained on them from the batteries which the French had taken.

It was upon this night of terror, conflagration, tears, and blood, that the star of Napoleon first ascended the horizon; and though it gleamed over many a scene of horror ere it set, it may be doubtful whether its light was ever blended with those of one more dreadful.

The capture of Toulon crushed all the hopes of resistance to the Jacobins, which had been cherished in the south of France. There was a strong distrust excited against England, who was judged only desirous to avail herself of the insurrection of these unhappy citizens to cripple and destroy the naval power of France, without the wish of effectually assisting the Royalists. This was an unjust belief, but it cannot be denied that there were specious grounds for the accusation. The undertaking the protection of a city in such a situation as that of Toulon, if the measure was embraced at all, should have been supported by efforts worthy of the country whose assistance was implored and granted. Such efforts were not made, and the assistance actually afforded was not directed by talent, and was squandered by disunion. The troops showed gallantry; but the leaders, excepting the naval officers, evinced little military skill, or united purpose

of defence. One gentleman, then in private life, chancing to be in Toulon at the time, distinguished himself as a volunteer,⁵² and has since achieved a proud career in the British army. Had he, or such as he, been at the head of the garrison, the walls of Toulon might have seen a battle like that of Barossa, and a very different result of the siege might probably have ensued.

So many of the citizens of Toulon concerned in the late resistance had escaped, by the means provided by the English, that Republican vengeance could not collect its victims in the usual numbers.⁵³ Many were shot, however, and it has been said that Buonaparte commanded the artillery, by which, as at Lyons, they were exterminated; and also that he wrote a letter to Fréron and the younger Robespierre, congratulating them and himself on the execution of these aristocrats, and signed Brutus Buonaparte, Sans-Culotte. If he actually commanded at this execution, he had the poor apology, that he must do so or himself perish; but, had the fact and the letter been genuine, there has been enough of time since his downfall to prove the truth of the accusation, and certainly enough of writers disposed to give these proofs publicity. He himself positively denied the charge; and alleged that the victims were shot by a detachment of what was called the Revolutionary Army, and not by troops of

⁵² Mr. Graham of Balgowan, now Lord Lynedoch. He marched out on one of the sorties, and when the affair became hot, seized the musket and cartouch-box of a fallen soldier, and afforded such an example to the troops, as contributed greatly to their gaining the object desired. – S.

⁵³ Jomini, tom. iv., p. 226; Lacretelle, tom. xi., p. 189.

the line.⁵⁴ This we think highly probable. Buonaparte has besides affirmed, that far from desiring to sharpen the vengeance of the Jacobins, or act as their agent, he hazarded the displeasure of those whose frown was death, by interposing his protection to save the unfortunate family of Chabrilla, emigrants and aristocrats, who, being thrown by a storm on the coast of France, shortly after the siege of Toulon, became liable to punishment by the guillotine, but whom he saved by procuring them the means of escape by sea.⁵⁵

In the meanwhile, the young general of artillery was rapidly rising in reputation. The praises which were suppressed by the representatives of the people, were willingly conferred and promulgated by the frank old veteran, Dugommier. Buonaparte's name was placed on the list of those whom he recommended for promotion, with the pointed addition, that if neglected, he would be sure to force his own way.⁵⁶ He was accordingly confirmed in his provisional situation of chief of battalion, and appointed [March] to hold that rank in the army of Italy. Before joining that

⁵⁴ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 13; Jomini, tom. iv., p. 226; Las Cases, vol. i., p. 153.

⁵⁵ Las Cases, vol. i., p. 152.

⁵⁶ "Dugommier wrote to the Committee of Public Safety, soliciting the rank of brigadier-general for him, and concluded with these words, 'Reward this young man, and promote him, for should he be ungratefully treated, he will promote himself.'" – Napoleon, *Montholon*, tom. iii., p. 15. Dugommier was killed on the following November, by the bursting of a field-piece. Napoleon bequeathed to his descendant 100,000 francs, "as a testimonial of gratitude for the esteem, affection, and friendship of that brave and intrepid general."

army, the genius of Napoleon was employed by the Convention in surveying and fortifying the sea-coast of the Mediterranean; a very troublesome task, as it involved many disputes with the local authorities of small towns and villages, and even hamlets, all of whom wished to have batteries erected for their own special protection, without regard to the general safety. It involved him, moreover, as we shall presently see, in some risk with the Convention at home.

The chief of battalion discharged his task scientifically. He divided the necessary fortifications into three classes, distinguishing those designed to protect harbours and roadsteads, from such as were intended to defend anchorages of less consequence, and both from the third class, which were to be placed on proper situations, to prevent insults and partial descents on the coast by an enemy superior at sea. Napoleon dictated to General Gourgaud⁵⁷ hints on this subject, which must be of consequence to the sea-coasts which need such military defences.⁵⁸

Having made his report to the Convention, Buonaparte proceeded to join the headquarters of the French army, then lying at Nice, straitened considerably and hemmed in by the Sardinians and Austrians, who, after some vain attempts of

⁵⁷ Gourgaud, tom. i., p. 30.

⁵⁸ An Englishman will probably remember the sublime passage in "The Mariners of England: " — "Britannia needs no bulwark, No towers along the steep; Her march is on the mountain-wave, Her home is on the deep."

General Brunet⁵⁹ to dislodge them, had remained masters of the Col de Tende, and lower passes of the Alps, together with the road leading from Turin to Nice by Saorgio.

SAORGIO

Buonaparte had influence enough to recommend with success to the general, Dumerbion,⁶⁰ and the representatives of the people, Ricord and Robespierre, a plan for driving the enemy out of this position, forcing them to retreat beyond the higher Alps, and taking Saorgio; all which measures succeeded as he had predicted.⁶¹ Saorgio surrendered, [April 29,] with much stores and baggage, and the French army obtained possession of the chain of the higher Alps, which, being tenable by defending few and difficult passes, placed a great part of the army of Italy, (as it was already termed, though only upon the frontier,) at disposal for actual service.⁶²

⁵⁹ "Brunet being unjustly accused of favouring the insurrection at Marseilles, was delivered up to the Revolutionary Tribunal at Paris, and perished on the scaffold." – Napoleon, *Montholon*, tom. iii., p. 21.

⁶⁰ "An old and brave officer. His military knowledge was considerable, but he was confined to his bed by the gout half his time." – Napoleon, *Gourgaud*, tom. i., p. 42. "Happily, he allowed himself to be directed entirely by the young Buonaparte." – Thiers, tom. vi., p. 288.

⁶¹ *Gourgaud*, tom. i., p. 42.

⁶² Jomini, tom. v., p. 204; Thiers, tom. vi., p. 283; Montholon, tom. iii., p. 30; Botta, tom. i., p. 190. General Dumerbion, in his despatch to the government, describing his successes, says, "It is to the talent of General Buonaparte that I am indebted for the

While directing the means of attaining these successes, Buonaparte, at the same time, acquired a complete acquaintance with that Alpine country, in which he was shortly to obtain victories in his own name, not in that of others, who obtained reputation by acting on his suggestions. But, while he was thus employed, he was involved in an accusation before the Convention, which, had his reputation been less for approved patriotism, might have cost him dear.

In his plans for the defence of the Mediterranean, Napoleon had proposed repairing an old state prison at Marseilles, called fort Saint Nicholas, that it might serve as a powder Magazine. This plan his successor on the station proceeded to execute, and by doing so, gave umbrage to the patriots, who charged the commandant of artillery then at Marseilles, and superintending the work, with an intention to rebuild this fort, to serve as a Bastille for controlling the good citizens. The officer being summoned to the bar of the Convention, proved that the plan was not his own, but drawn out by Buonaparte. The representatives of the army in Italy, however, not being able to dispense with his services, wrote to the Convention in his behalf, and gave such an account of the origin and purpose of the undertaking, as divested it of all shade of suspicion even in the suspicious eye of the Committee of Public Safety.⁶³

In the remainder of the year 1794, there was little

skilful plans which have assured our victory."

⁶³ Gourgaud, tom. i., p. 48.

service of consequence in the army of Italy, and the 9th and 10th Thermidor (27th and 28th July) of that year, brought the downfall of Robespierre, and threatened unfavourable consequences to Buonaparte, who had been in close communication with the tyrant's brother, and was understood to have participated in the tone of exaggerated patriotism affected by his party. He endeavoured to shelter himself under his ignorance of the real tendency of the proceedings of those who had fallen, – an apology which resolves itself into the ordinary excuse, that he found his late friends had not been the persons he took them for. According to this line of defence, he made all haste to disclaim accession to the political schemes of which they were accused. "I am somewhat affected," he wrote to a correspondent,⁶⁴ "at the fate of the younger Robespierre; but, had he been my brother, I would have poniarded him with my own hand, had I been aware that he was forming schemes of tyranny."

Buonaparte's disclamations do not seem at first to have been favourably received. His situation was now precarious; and when those members were restored to the Convention, who had been expelled and proscribed by the Jacobins, it became still more so. The reaction of the moderate party, accompanied by horrible recollections of the past, and fears for the future, began now to be more strongly felt, as their numbers in the Convention acquired strength. Those officers who had attached themselves to the

⁶⁴ General Tilly. See *Nouvelle Biog. de Bruxelles*, 1822.

Jacobin party, were the objects of their animosity; and, besides, they were desirous to purify the armies, as far as possible, of those whom they considered as their own enemies, and those of good order; the rather, that the Jacobinical principles still continued to be more favoured in the armies than in the interior. To the causes of this we have before alluded; but it may not be unnecessary to repeat, that the soldiers had experienced all the advantages of the fierce energies of a government which sent them out to conquest, and offered them the means of achieving it; and they had not been witnesses to the atrocities of their tyranny in the interior.

Before the downfall of Robespierre took place, Buonaparte had received regular but secret instructions to examine the fortifications of Genoa. M. Ricord, by whom these instructions had been signed, having now been superseded, and the younger Robespierre guillotined, Albitte, Salicetti, and Laporte, the new superintendents of the army of Italy, were pleased to suspect that Buonaparte had engaged in some plot of betraying Genoa to the enemy: he was arrested accordingly early in August; but his papers effectually established his innocence, and after the lapse of a fortnight he was released.⁶⁵

In March 1795, he was sent to Toulon to take the command of the artillery in an expedition destined against Rome; but

⁶⁵ "In the despatch of Salicetti and Albitte to the Government, dated 24th August, they declare, that there existed no foundation for the charges made against him." — Jomini, tom. vi., p. 114; *Bourrienne et ses Erreurs*, tom. i., p. 27.

this scheme was not persevered in. During his visit to Toulon, however, he had the opportunity of saving from the violence of the populace, a party of unfortunate emigrants, including the noble family of Chabillant, who had been landed from a Spanish prize. His influence with some cannoneers who had served under him during the siege, enabled him to rescue these individuals; and he unhesitatingly did so, though at considerable risk to himself. On his rejoining the troops in the Maritime Alps, near the end of March, he found the army about to be altered in some parts of its organization, and placed under the command of General Kellermann. A recent arrangement had recalled to the service many officers of high rank who had of late been unemployed; and he, as the youngest on the list of generals, could not only not be allowed to retain his command of the artillery in the army of Kellermann, but was removed to the infantry. He repaired therefore to Paris, with the view of soliciting professional employment elsewhere, and especially of remonstrating against his permanent removal from the branch of the service in which he had spent so many years. On his way to the capital he visited his mother at Marseilles, and found his brother Joseph respectably married in that city.

On reaching Paris in May, he found his pretensions thwarted by Aubry, the President of the Military Committee, who was disposed to treat with little attention his statement respecting the siege of Toulon, and his two years of successful service in the army of Italy. When, in the heat of discussion, Aubry objected

his youth, Buonaparte replied, that presence in the field of battle ought to anticipate the claim of years. The president, who had not been much in action, considered his reply as a personal insult; and Napoleon, disdainng farther answer, tendered his resignation.⁶⁶ It was not, however, accepted; and he still remained in the rank of expectants, but among those whose hopes were entirely dependent upon their merits.⁶⁷

It may be observed that, at a subsequent period, Aubry, being among those belonging to Pichegru's party who were banished to Cayenne, was excepted from the decree which permitted the return of those unfortunate exiles, and died at Demerara.

Meantime, his situation becoming daily more unpleasant, Buonaparte solicited Barras and Fréron, who, as Thermidoriens, had preserved their credit, for occupation in almost any line of his profession, and even negotiated for permission to go into the Turkish service, to train the Mussulmans to the use of artillery. A fanciful imagination may pursue him to the rank of pacha, or higher; for, go where he would, he could not have remained in mediocrity. His own ideas had a similar tendency. "How

⁶⁶ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 50; Las Cases, vol. i., p. 155; Louis Buonaparte, p. 14.

⁶⁷ Buonaparte is represented by some writers as having at this period found his situation extremely embarrassing, even as regarded pecuniary means, in the capital of which he was at no distant period to be the ruler. Among others who are said to have assisted him was the celebrated actor Talma; and such may have been the case; but the story of Talma's having been acquainted with Napoleon at the Academy of Brienne, and at that early period predicting the greatness of "*le petit Buonaparte*," has been expressly contradicted by Louis, the ex-King of Holland, who was at this epoch in Paris along with his brother.

strange," he said, "it would be, if a little Corsican officer of artillery were to become King of Jerusalem!" He was offered a command in La Vendée, which he declined to accept, and was finally named to command a brigade of artillery in Holland. But it was in a land where there still existed so many separate and conflicting factions, as in France, that he was doomed to be raised, amid the struggles of his contending countrymen, and upon their shoulders and over their heads, to the very highest eminence to which fortune can exalt an individual. The times required such talents as his, and the opportunity for exercising them soon arose.

RETROSPECT

The French nation were in general tired of the National Convention, which successive proscriptions had drained of all the talent, eloquence, and energy it had once possessed; and that Assembly had become hateful and contemptible to all men, by suffering itself to be the passive tool of the Terrorists for two years, when, if they had shown proper firmness, the revolution of the 9th Thermidor might as well have been achieved at the beginning of that frightful anarchy, as after that long period of unheard-of suffering. The Convention was not greatly improved in point of talent, even by the return of their banished brethren; and, in a word, they had lost the confidence of the public entirely. They therefore prepared to gratify the general wish by dissolving

themselves.

But before they resigned their ostensible authority, it was necessary to prepare some mode of carrying on the government in future.

The Jacobin constitution of 1793 still existed on paper; but although there was an unrepealed law, menacing with death any one who should propose to alter that form of government, no one appeared disposed to consider it as actually in exercise; and, notwithstanding the solemnity with which it had been received and ratified by the sanction of the national voice, it was actually passed over and abrogated as a matter of course, by a tacit but unanimous consent. Neither was there any disposition to adopt the Girondist constitution of 1791, or to revert to the democratic monarchy of 1792, the only one of these models which could be said to have had even the dubious endurance of a few months. As at the general change of the world, all former things were to be done away – all was to be made anew.

Each of these forms of government had been solemnized by the national oaths and processions customary on such occasions; but the opinion was now universally entertained, that not one of them was founded on just principles, or contained the power of defending itself against aggression, and protecting the lives and rights of the subject. On the other hand, every one not deeply interested in the late anarchy, and implicated in the horrid course of bloodshed and tyranny which was its very essence, was frightened at the idea of reviving a government which

was a professed continuation of the despotism ever attendant upon a revolution, and which, in all civilized countries, ought to terminate with the extraordinary circumstances by which revolution has been rendered necessary. To have continued the revolutionary government, indeed, longer than this, would have been to have imitated the conduct of an ignorant empiric, who should persist in subjecting a convalescent patient to the same course of exhausting and dangerous medicines, which a regular physician would discontinue as soon as the disease had been brought to a favourable crisis.

It seems to have been in general felt and admitted, that the blending of the executive and legislative power together, as both had been exercised by the existing Convention, opened the road to the most afflicting tyranny; and that to constitute a stable government, the power of executing the laws, and administering the ministerial functions, must be vested in some separate individuals, or number of individuals, who should, indeed, be responsible to the national legislature for the exercise of this power, but neither subject to their direct control, nor enjoying it as emanating immediately from their body. With these reflections arose others, on the utility of dividing the legislative body itself into two assemblies, one of which might form a check on the other, tending, by some exercise of an intermediate authority, to qualify the rash rapidity of a single chamber, and obstruct the progress of any individual, who might, like Robespierre, obtain a dictatorship in such a body,

and become, in doing so, an arbitrary tyrant over the whole authorities of the state. Thus, loth and late, the French began to cast an eye on the British constitution, and the system of checks and balances upon which it is founded, as the best means of uniting the protection of liberty with the preservation of order. Thinking men had come gradually to be aware, that in hopes of getting something better than a system which had been sanctioned by the experience of ages, they had only produced a set of models, which were successively wondered at, applauded, neglected, and broken to pieces, instead of a simple machine, capable, in mechanical phrase, of working well.

Had such a feeling prevailed during the commencement of the Revolution, as was advocated by Mounier and others,⁶⁸ France and Europe might have been spared the bloodshed and distress which afflicted them during a period of more than twenty years of war, with all the various evils which accompanied that great convulsion. France had then a king; nobles, out of whom a senate might have been selected; and abundance of able men to have formed a lower house, or house of commons. But the golden opportunity was passed over; and when the architects might, perhaps, have been disposed to execute the new fabric which they meditated, on the plan of a limited monarchy, the materials for the structure were no longer to be found.

The legitimate King of France no doubt existed, but he was an exile in a foreign country; and the race of gentry, from whom

⁶⁸ See *ante*, vol. i., p. 164.

a house of peers, or hereditary senate, might have been chiefly selected, were to be found only in foreign service, too much exasperated by their sufferings to admit a rational hope that they would ever make any compromise with those who had forced them from their native land, and confiscated their family property. Saving for these circumstances, and the combinations which arose out of them, it seems very likely, that at the period at which we have now arrived, the tide, which began to set strongly against the Jacobins, might have been adroitly turned in favour of the Bourbons. But, though there was a general feeling of melancholy regret, which naturally arose from comparing the peaceful days of the monarchy with those of the Reign of Terror, – the rule of Louis the XVI. with that of Robespierre, – the memory of former quiet and security with the more recent recollections of blood and plunder, – still it seems to have existed rather in the state of a predisposition to form a royal party, than as the principle of one already existing. Fuel was lying ready to catch the flame of loyalty, but the match had not yet been applied; and to counteract this general tendency, there existed the most formidable obstacles.

In the first place, we have shown already the circumstances by which the French armies were strongly attached to the name of the Republic, in whose cause all their wars had been waged, and all their glory won; by whose expeditious and energetic administration the military profession was benefited, while they neither saw nor felt the misery entailed on the nation at large. But

the French soldier had not only fought in favour of democracy, but actively and directly against royalty. As *Vive la République* was his war-cry, he was in La Vendée, on the Rhine, and elsewhere, met, encountered, and sometimes defeated and driven back, by those who used the opposite signal-word, *Vive le Roi*. The Royalists were, indeed, the most formidable opponents of the military part of the French nation; and such was the animosity of the latter at this period to the idea of returning to the ancient system, that if a general could have been found capable of playing the part of Monk, he would probably have experienced the fate of La Fayette and Dumouriez.

A second and almost insuperable objection to the restoration of the Bourbons, occurred in the extensive change of property that had taken place. If the exiled family had been recalled, they could not, at this very recent period, but have made stipulations for their devoted followers, and insisted that the estates forfeited in their cause, should have been compensated or restored; and such a resumption would have inferred ruin to all the purchasers of national demesnes, and, in consequence, a general shock to the security of property through the kingdom.

The same argument applied to the Church lands. The Most Christian King could not resume his throne, without restoring the ecclesiastical establishment in part, if not in whole. It was impossible to calculate the mass of persons of property and wealth, with their various connexions, who, as possessors of national demesnes, that is, of the property of the Church,

or of the emigrants, were bound by their own interest to oppose the restoration of the Bourbon family. The revolutionary government had followed the coarse, but striking and deeply politic, admonition of the Scottish Reformer – "Pull down the nests," said Knox, when he urged the multitude to destroy churches and abbeys, "and the rooks will fly off." The French government, by dilapidating and disposing of the property of the emigrants and clergy, had established an almost insurmountable barrier against the return of the original owners. The cavaliers in the great Civil War of England had been indeed fined, sequestrated, impoverished; but their estates were still, generally speaking, in their possession; and they retained, though under oppression and poverty, the influence of a national aristocracy, diminished, but not annihilated. In France, that influence of resident proprietors had all been transferred to other hands, tenacious in holding what property they had acquired, and determined to make good the defence of it against those who claimed a prior right.

Lastly, the fears and conscious recollections of those who held the chief power in France for the time, induced them to view their own safety as deeply compromised by any proposition of restoring the exiled royal family. This present sitting and ruling Convention had put to death Louis XVI., – with what hope of safety could they install his brother on the throne? They had formally, and in full conclave, renounced belief in the existence of a Deity – with what consistence could they be accessory to

restore a national church? Some remained Republicans from their heart and upon conviction; and a great many more of the deputies could not abjure democracy, without confessing at the same time, that all the violent measures which they had carried through for the support of that system, were so many great and treasonable crimes.

These fears of a retributive reaction were very generally felt in the Convention. The Thermidoriens, in particular, who had killed Robespierre, and now reigned in his stead, had more substantial grounds of apprehension from any counter-revolutionary movement, than even the body of the representatives at large, many of whom had been merely passive in scenes where Barras and Tallien had been active agents. The timid party of The Plain might be overawed by the returning prince; and the members of the Girondists, who could indeed scarce be said to exist as a party, might be safely despised. But the Thermidoriens themselves stood in a different predicament. They were of importance enough to attract both detestation and jealousy; they held power, which must be an object of distrust to the restored monarch; and they stood on precarious ground, betwixt the hatred of the moderate party, who remembered them as colleagues of Robespierre and Danton, and that of the Jacobins, who saw in Tallien and Barras deserters of that party, and the destroyers of the power of the Sans-Culottes. They had, therefore, just reason to fear, that, stripped of the power which they at present possessed, they might become the unpitied and

unaided scapegoats, to expiate all the offences of the Revolution.

Thus each favourable sentiment towards the cause of the Bourbons was opposed; I. By their unpopularity with the armies; II. By the apprehensions of the confusion and distress which must arise from a general change of property; and III. By the conscious fears of those influential persons, who conceived their own safety concerned in sustaining the republican model.

Still, the idea of monarchy was so generally received as the simplest and best mode of once more re-establishing good order and a fixed government, that some statesmen proposed to resume the form, but change the dynasty. With this view, divers persons were suggested by those, who supposed that by passing over the legitimate heir to the crown, the dangers annexed to his rights and claims might be avoided, and the apprehended measures of resumption and reaction might be guarded against. The son of the Duke of Orleans was named, but the infamy of his father clung to him. In another wild hypothesis the Duke of York, or the Duke of Brunswick, were suggested as fit to be named constitutional Kings of France. The Abbé Siêyes is said to have expressed himself in favour of the prince last named.⁶⁹

But without regarding the wishes or opinions of the people without doors, the Convention resolved to establish such a model of government as should be most likely to infuse into a republic

⁶⁹ The Memoirs published under the name of Fouché make this assertion. But although that work shows great intimacy with the secret history of the times, it is not to be implicitly relied upon. – S.

something of the stability of a monarchical establishment; and thus repair at once former errors, and preserve an appearance of consistency in the eyes of Europe.

NEW CONSTITUTION

For this purpose eleven commissioners, chiefly selected amongst the former Girondists, were appointed [April] to draw up a new Constitution upon a new principle, which was again to receive the universal adhesion of the French by acclamation and oath, and to fall, in a short time, under the same neglect which had attended every preceding model. This, it was understood, was to be so constructed, as to unite the consistency of a monarchical government with the name and forms of a democracy.

That the system now adopted by the French commissioners might bear a form corresponding to the destinies of the nation, and flattering to its vanity, it was borrowed from that of the Roman republic, an attempt to imitate which had already introduced many of the blunders and many of the crimes of the Revolution. The executive power was lodged in a council of five persons, termed Directors, to whom were to be consigned the conduct of peace and war, the execution of the laws, and the general administration of the government. They were permitted no share of the legislative authority.

This arrangement was adopted to comply with the jealousy

of those, who, in the individual person of a single Director, holding a situation similar to that of the Stadtholder in Holland, or the President of the United States, saw something too closely approaching to a monarchical government. Indeed, it is said, Louvet warned them against establishing such an office, by assuring them, that when they referred the choice of the individual who was to hold it, to the nation at large, they would see the Bourbon heir elected.⁷⁰ But the inconvenience of this pentarchy could not be disguised; and it seemed to follow as a necessary consequence of such a numerous executive council, either that there would be a schism, and a minority and majority established in that pre-eminent body of the state, where unity and vigour were chiefly requisite, or else that some one or two of the ablest and most crafty among the Directors would establish a supremacy over the others, and use them less as their colleagues than their dependents. The legislators, however, though they knew that the whole Roman empire was found insufficient to satiate the ambition of three men, yet appeared to hope that the concord and unanimity of their five directors might continue unbroken, though they had but one nation to govern; and they decided accordingly.

The executive power being thus provided for, the legislative body was to consist of two councils; one of Elders, as it was called, serving as a House of Lords; another of Youngers, which they termed, from its number, the Council of Five Hundred.

⁷⁰ "Peut-être un jour, on vous nommerait un Bourbon." – Thiers, tom. viii., p. 10.

Both were elective, and the difference of age was the only circumstance which placed a distinction betwixt the two bodies. The members of the Council of Five Hundred were to be at least twenty-five years old, a qualification which, after the seventh year of the Republic, was to rise to thirty years complete. In this assembly laws were to be first proposed; and, having received its approbation, they were to be referred to the Council of Ancients. The requisites to sit in the latter senate, were the age of forty years complete, and the being a married man or a widower. Bachelors, though above that age, were deemed unfit for legislation, perhaps from want of domestic experience.

The Council of Ancients had the power of rejecting the propositions laid before them by the Council of Five Hundred, or, by adopting and approving them, that of passing them into laws. These regulations certainly gained one great point, in submitting each proposed legislative enactment to two separate bodies, and of course, to mature and deliberate consideration. It is true, that neither of the councils had any especial character, or separate interest which could enable or induce the Ancients, as a body, to suggest to the Five Hundred a different principle of considering any proposed measure, from that which was likely to occur to them in their own previous deliberation. No such varied views, therefore, were to be expected, as must arise between assemblies composed of persons who differ in rank or fortune, and consequently view the same question in various and opposite lights. Still, delay and reconsideration were attained, before the

irrevocable fiat was imposed upon any measure of consequence; and so far much was gained. An orator was supposed to answer all objections to the system of the two councils thus constituted, when he described that of the Juniors as being the imagination, that of the Ancients as being the judgment of the nation; the one designed to invent and suggest national measures, the other to deliberate and decide upon them. This was, though liable to many objections, an ingenious illustration indeed; but an illustration is not an argument, though often passing current as such.

On the whole, the form of the Constitution⁷¹ of the year Three, *i. e.* 1795, showed a greater degree of practical efficacy, sense, and consistency, than any of those previously suggested; and in the introduction, though there was the usual proclamation of the rights of man, his duties to the laws and to the social system were for the first time enumerated in manly and forcible language, intimating the desire of the framers of these institutions to put a stop to the continuation of revolutionary violence in future.

But the constitution, now promulgated, had a blemish common to all its predecessors; it was totally new, and unsanctioned by the experience either of France or any other country; a mere experiment in politics, the result of which could not be known until it had been put in exercise, and which, for many years at least, must be necessarily less the

⁷¹ "Its authors were Lesage, Daunou, Boissy d'Anglas, Creuzée-Latouche, Berlier, Louvet, Lareveillère-Lepaux, Languinai, Durand-Maillanne, Baudin des Ardennes, and Thibaudeau." – Thiers, tom. viii., p. 9.

object of respect than of criticism. Wise legislators, even when lapse of time, alteration of manners, or increased liberality of sentiment, require corresponding alterations in the institutions of their fathers, are careful, as far as possible, to preserve the ancient form and character of those laws, into which they are endeavouring to infuse principles and a spirit accommodated to the altered exigencies and temper of the age. There is an enthusiasm in patriotism as well as in religion. We value institutions, not only because they are ours, but because they have been those of our fathers; and if a new constitution were to be presented to us, although perhaps theoretically showing more symmetry than that by which the nation had been long governed, it would be as difficult to transfer to it the allegiance of the people, as it would be to substitute the worship of a Madonna, the work of modern art, for the devotion paid by the natives of Saragossa to their ancient Palladium, Our Lady of the Pillar.

But the constitution of the year Three, with all its defects, would have been willingly received by the nation in general, as affording some security from the revolutionary storm, had it not been for a selfish and usurping device of the Thermidoriens to mutilate and render it nugatory at the very outset, by engrafting upon it the means of continuing the exercise of their own arbitrary authority. It must never be forgotten, that these conquerors of Robespierre had shared all the excesses of his party before they became his personal enemies; and that when deprived of their official situations and influence, which they

were likely to be by a representative body freely and fairly elected, they were certain to be exposed to great individual danger.

Determined, therefore, to retain the power in their own hands, the Thermidoriens suffered, with an indifference amounting almost to contempt, the constitution to pass through, and be approved of by, the Convention. But, under pretence that it would be highly impolitic to deprive the nation of the services of men accustomed to public business, they procured [Aug. 22] two decrees to be passed; the first ordaining the electoral bodies of France to choose, as representatives to the two councils under the new constitution, at least two-thirds of the members presently sitting in Convention; and the second declaring, that in default of a return of two-thirds of the present deputies, as prescribed, the Convention themselves should fill up the vacancies out of their own body; in other words, should name a large proportion of themselves their own successors in legislative power.⁷²

These decrees were sent down to the Primary Assemblies of the people, and every art was used to render them acceptable.

But the nation, and particularly the city of Paris, generally revolted at this stretch of arbitrary authority. They recollected, that all the members who had sat in the first National Assembly, so remarkable for talent, had been declared ineligible, on that single account, for the second legislative body; and now, men so infinitely the inferiors of those who were the colleagues of

⁷² Thiers, tom. viii., p. 13.

Mirabeau, Mounier, and other great names, presumed not only to declare themselves eligible by re-election, but dared to establish two-thirds of their number as indispensable ingredients of the legislative assemblies, which, according to the words alike and spirit of the constitution, ought to be chosen by the free voice of the people. The electors, and particularly those of the sections of Paris, angrily demanded to know, upon what public services the deputies of the Convention founded their title to a privilege so unjust and anomalous. Among the more active part of them, to whom the measure was chiefly to be ascribed, they saw but a few reformed Terrorists, who wished to retain the power of tyranny, though disposed to exercise it with some degree of moderation, and the loss of whose places might be possibly followed by that of their heads; in the others, they only beheld a flock of timid and discountenanced Helots, willing to purchase personal security at the sacrifice of personal honour and duty to the public; while in the Convention as a body, who pronounced so large a proportion of their number as indispensable to the service of the state, judging from their conduct hitherto, they could but discover an image composed partly of iron, partly of clay, deluged with the blood of many thousand victims – a pageant without a will of its own, and which had been capable of giving its countenance to the worst of actions, at the instigation of the worst of men – a sort of Moloch, whose name had been used by its priests to compel the most barbarous sacrifices. To sum up the whole, these experienced men of public business, without whose

intermediation it was pretended the national affairs could not be carried on, could only shelter themselves from the charge of unbounded wickedness, by pleading their unlimited cowardice, and by poorly alleging that for two years they had sat, voted, and deliberated under a system of compulsion and terror. So much meanness rendered those who were degraded by it unfit, not merely to rule, but to live; and yet two-thirds of their number were, according to their own decrees, to be intruded on the nation as an indispensable portion of its representatives.

THE SECTIONS

Such was the language held in the assemblies of the sections of Paris, who were the more irritated against the domineering and engrossing spirit exhibited in these usurping enactments, because it was impossible to forget that it was their interference, and the protection afforded by their national guard, which had saved the Convention from massacre on more occasions than one.

In the meanwhile, reports continued to be made from the Primary Assemblies, of their adhesion to the constitution, in which they were almost unanimous, and of their sentiments concerning the two decrees, authorizing and commanding the re-election of two-thirds of the Convention, on which there existed a strong difference of opinion. The Convention, determined, at all rates, to carry through with a high hand the iniquitous and arbitrary measure which they proposed, failed not to make these

reports such as they desired them to be, and announced that the two decrees had been accepted by a majority of the Primary Assemblies. The citizens of Paris challenged the accuracy of the returns – alleged that the reports were falsified – demanded a scrutiny, and openly bid defiance to the Convention. Their power of meeting together in their sections, on account of the appeal to the people, gave them an opportunity of feeling their own strength, and encouraging each other by speeches and applauses. They were further emboldened and animated by men of literary talent, whose power was restored with the liberty of the press.⁷³ Finally, they declared their sittings permanent, and that they had the right to protect the liberties of France. The greater part of the national guards were united on this occasion against the existing government; and nothing less was talked of, than that they should avail themselves of their arms and numbers, march down to the Tuileries, and dictate law to the Convention with their muskets, as the revolutionary mob of the suburbs used to do with their pikes.

The Convention, unpopular themselves, and embarked in an unpopular cause, began to look anxiously around for assistance. They chiefly relied on the aid of about five thousand regular troops, who were assembled in and around Paris. These declared for government with the greater readiness, that the insurrection

⁷³ "La Harpe, Lacroix, jun., Suard, Morellet, Vaublanc, Pastoret, Dupont de Nemours, Quatremère de Quincy, Delalot, Marchenna, and General Miranda, all either published pamphlets or made speeches in the sections." – Thiers, tom. viii., p. 15.

was of a character decidedly aristocratical, and that the French armies, as already repeatedly noticed, were attached to the Republic. But besides, these professional troops entertained the usual degree of contempt for the national guards, and on this account alone were quite ready to correct the insolence of the *pekings*,⁷⁴ or *muscadins*,⁷⁵ who usurped the dress and character of soldiers. The Convention had also the assistance of several hundred artillerymen, who, since the taking of the Bastille, had been always zealous democrats. Still apprehensive of the result, they added to this force another of a more ominous description. It was a body of volunteers, consisting of about fifteen hundred men, whom they chose to denominate the Sacred Band, or the Patriots of 1789. They were gleaned out of the suburbs, and from the jails, the remnants of the insurrectional battalions which had formed the body-guard of Hébert and Robespierre, and had been the instruments by which they executed their atrocities. The Convention proclaimed them men of the 10th of August – undoubtedly, they were also men of the massacres of September. It was conceived that the beholding such a pack of blood-hounds, ready to be let loose, might inspire horror into the citizens of Paris, to whom their very aspect brought so many fearful recollections. It did so, but it also inspired hatred; and the number and zeal of the citizens, compensating for the fury of the

⁷⁴ *Pekings*, a word of contempt, by which the soldiers distinguished those who did not belong to their profession. – S.

⁷⁵ *Muscadins*, fops – a phrase applied to the better class of *Sans-Culottes*. – S.

Terrorists, and for the superior discipline of the regular troops to be employed against them, promised an arduous and doubtful conflict.

Much, it was obvious, must depend on the courage and conduct of the leaders.

The sections employed, as their commander-in-chief, General Danican, an old officer of no high reputation for military skill, but otherwise a worthy and sincere man. The Convention at first made choice of Menou, and directed him, supported by a strong military force, to march into the section Le Pelletier, and disarm the national guards of that district. This section is one of the most wealthy, and of course most aristocratic, in Paris, being inhabited by bankers, merchants, the wealthiest class of tradesmen, and the better orders in general. Its inhabitants had formerly composed the battalion of national guards des Filles Saint Thomas, the only one which, taking part in the defence of the Tuileries, shared the fate of the Swiss Guards upon the memorable 10th of August. The section continued to entertain sentiments of the same character, and when Menou appeared at the head of his forces, accompanied by La Porte, a member of the Convention, he found the citizens under arms, and exhibiting such a show of resistance, as induced him, after a parley, to retreat without venturing an attack upon them.

Menou's indecision showed that he was not a man suited to the times, and he was suspended from his command by the Convention, and placed under arrest. The general management

of affairs and the direction of the Conventional forces, was then committed to Barras; but the utmost anxiety prevailed among the members of the committees by whom government was administered, to find a general of nerve and decision enough to act under Barras, in the actual command of the military force, in a service so delicate, and times so menacing. It was then that a few words from Barras, addressed to his colleagues, Carnot and Tallien, decided the fate of Europe for wellnigh twenty years, "I have the man," he said, "whom you want, a little Corsican officer, who will not stand upon ceremony."⁷⁶

The acquaintance of Barras and Buonaparte had been, as we have already said, formed at the siege of Toulon, and the former had not forgotten the inventive and decisive genius of the young officer to whom the conquest of that city was to be ascribed. On the recommendation of Barras, Buonaparte was sent for. He had witnessed the retreat of Menou, and explained with much simplicity the causes of that check, and the modes of resistance which ought to be adopted in case of the apprehended attack. His explanations gave satisfaction. Buonaparte was placed at the head of the Conventional forces, and took all the necessary precautions to defend the same palace which he had seen attacked and carried by a body of insurgents on the 10th of August. But he possessed far more formidable

⁷⁶ "For several months, Napoleon, not being actively employed, laboured in the military committee, and was well acquainted with Carnot and Tallien, whom he saw daily. How, then, could Barras make them the proposal attributed to him?" – Louis Buonaparte, p. 17.

means of defence than were in the power of the unfortunate Louis. He had two hundred pieces of cannon, which his high military skill enabled him to distribute to the utmost advantage. He had more than five thousand regular forces, and about fifteen hundred volunteers. He was thus enabled to defend the whole circuit of the Tuileries; to establish posts in all the avenues by which it could be approached; to possess himself of the bridges, so as to prevent co-operation between the sections which lay on the opposite banks of the river; and finally, to establish a strong reserve in the Place Louis Quinze, or, as it was then called, Place de la Révolution. Buonaparte had only a few hours to make all these arrangements, for he was named in place of Menou late on the night before the conflict.

A merely civic army, having no cannon, (for the field-pieces, of which each section possessed two, had been almost all given up to the Convention after the disarming the suburb of Saint Antoine,) ought to have respected so strong a position as the Tuileries, when so formidably defended. Their policy should have been, as in the days of Henry II., to have barricaded the streets at every point, and cooped up the Conventional troops within the defensive position they had assumed, till want of provisions obliged them to sally at disadvantage, or to surrender. But a popular force is generally impatient of delay. The retreat of Menou had given them spirit, and they apprehended, with some show of reason, that the sections, if they did not unite their forces, might be attacked and disarmed separately. They

therefore resolved to invest the Convention in a hostile manner, require of the members to recall the obnoxious decrees, and allow the nation to make a free and undictated election of its representatives.

On the thirteenth Vendemaire, corresponding to the 4th October, the civil affray, commonly called the Day of the Sections, took place. The national guards assembled, to the number of thirty thousand men and upwards, but having no artillery. They advanced by different avenues, in close columns, but everywhere found the most formidable resistance. One large force occupied the quays on the left bank of the Seine, threatening the palace from that side of the river. Another strong division advanced on the Tuileries, through the Rue St. Honoré, designing to debouche on the palace, where the Convention was sitting, by the Rue de Echelle. They did so, without duly reflecting that they were flanked on most points by strong posts in the lanes and crossings, defended by artillery.

The contest began in the Rue St. Honoré. Buonaparte had established a strong post with two guns at the cul-de-sac Dauphine, opposite to the church of St. Roche. He permitted the imprudent Parisians to involve their long and dense columns in the narrow street without interruption, until they established a body of grenadiers in the front of the church, and opposite to the position at the cul-de-sac. Each party, as usual, throws on the other the blame of commencing the civil contest for which both were prepared. But all agree the firing commenced

with musketry. It was instantly followed by discharges of grape-shot and cannister, which, pointed as the guns were, upon thick columns of the national guards, arranged on the quays and in the narrow streets, made an astounding carnage. The national guards offered a brave resistance, and even attempted to rush on the artillery, and carry the guns by main force. But a measure which is desperate enough in the open field, becomes impossible when the road to assault lies through narrow streets, which are swept by the cannon at every discharge. The citizens were compelled to give way. By a more judicious arrangement of their respective forces, different results might have been hoped; but how could Danican, in any circumstances have competed with Buonaparte? The affair, in which several hundred men were killed and wounded, was terminated as a general action in about an hour; and the victorious troops of the Convention, marching into the different sections, completed the dispersion and disarming of their opponents, an operation which lasted till late at night.

The Convention used this victory with the moderation which recollection of the Reign of Terror had inspired. Only two persons suffered death for the Day of the Sections. One of them, La Fond, had been a garde de corps, was distinguished for his intrepidity, and repeatedly rallied the national guard under the storm of grape shot. Several other persons having fled, were in their absence capitally condemned, but were not strictly looked after; and deportation was the punishment inflicted upon

others. The accused were indebted for this clemency chiefly to the interference of those members of the Convention, who, themselves exiled on the 31st of May, had suffered persecution and learned mercy.

The Convention showed themselves at the same time liberal to their protectors. General Berruyer,⁷⁷ who commanded the volunteers of 1789, and other general officers employed on the Day of the Sections, were loaded with praises and preferment. But a separate triumph was destined to Buonaparte, as the hero of the day. Five days after the battle, Barras solicited the attention of the Convention to the young officer, by whose prompt and skilful dispositions the Tuileries had been protected on the 13th Vendemaire, and proposed that they should approve of General Buonaparte's appointment as second in command of the army of the interior, Barras himself still remaining commander-in-chief. The proposal was adopted by acclamation. The Convention retained their resentment against Menou, whom they suspected of treachery; but Buonaparte interfering as a mediator, they were content to look over his offence.

After this decided triumph over their opponents, the Convention ostensibly laid down their authority, and retiring from the scene in their present character, appeared upon it anew in that of a Primary Assembly, in order to make choice of such of their members as, by virtue of the decrees of two-thirds, as

⁷⁷ In 1796, the Directory appointed Berruyer commander of the Hôpital des Invalides, which situation he held till his death, in 1804.

they were called, were to remain on the stage, as members of the Legislative Councils of Elders and Five Hundred.

After this change of names and dresses, resembling the shifts of a strolling company of players, the two-thirds of the old Convention, with one-third of members newly elected, took upon them the administration of the new constitution. The two re-elected thirds formed a large proportion of the councils, and were, in some respects, much like those unfortunate women, who, gathered from jails and from the streets of the metropolis, have been sometimes sent out to foreign settlements; and, however profligate their former lives may have been, often regain character, and become tolerable members of society, in a change of scene and situation.

THE DIRECTORY

The Directory consisted of Barras, Siêyes, Reubel, Latourneur de la Manche, and Reveillière-Lepaux, to the exclusion of Tallien, who was deeply offended. Four of these directors were reformed Jacobins, or Thermidoriens; the fifth, Reveillière-Lepaux, was esteemed a Girondist. Siêyes, whose taste was rather for speculating in politics than acting in them, declined what he considered a hazardous office, and was replaced by Carnot.

The nature of the insurrection of the Sections was not ostensibly royalist, but several of its leaders were of that party

in secret, and, if successful, it would most certainly have assumed that complexion. Thus, the first step of Napoleon's rise commenced by the destruction of the hopes of the House of Bourbon, under the reviving influence of which, twenty years afterwards, he himself was obliged to succumb. But the long path which closed so darkly, was now opening upon him in light and joy. Buonaparte's high services, and the rank which he had obtained, rendered him now a young man of the first hope and expectation, mingling on terms of consideration among the rulers of the state, instead of being regarded as a neglected stranger, supporting himself with difficulty, and haunting public offices and bureaux in vain, to obtain some chance of preferment, or even employment.

From second in command, the new general soon became general-in-chief of the army of the interior, Barras having found his duties as a director incompatible with those of military command. He employed his genius, equally prompt and profound, in improving the state of the military forces; and, in order to prevent the recurrence of such insurrections as that of the 13th Vendemaire, or Day of the Sections, and as the many others by which it was preceded, he appointed and organized a guard for the protection of the representative body.

As the dearth of bread, and other causes of disaffection, continued to produce commotions in Paris, the general of the interior was sometimes obliged to oppose them with a military force. On one occasion, it is said, that when Buonaparte was

anxiously admonishing the multitude to disperse, a very bulky woman exhorted them to keep their ground. "Never mind these coxcombs with the epaulets," she said; "they do not care if we are all starved, so they themselves feed and get fat." – "Look at me, good woman," said Buonaparte, who was then as thin as a shadow, "and tell me which is the fatter of us two." This turned the laugh against the Amazon, and the rabble dispersed in good-humour.⁷⁸ If not among the most distinguished of Napoleon's victories, this is certainly worthy of record, as achieved at the least cost.

Meantime, circumstances, which we will relate, according to his own statement, introduced Buonaparte to an acquaintance, which was destined to have much influence on his future fate. A fine boy of ten or twelve years old, presented himself at the levee of the general of the interior, with a request of a nature unusually interesting. He stated his name to be Eugene Beauharnais, son of the *ci-devant* Vicomte de Beauharnais, who, adhering to the revolutionary party, had been a general in the Republican service upon the Rhine, and falling under the causeless suspicion of the Committee of Public Safety, was delivered to the Revolutionary Tribunal, and fell by its sentence just four days before the overthrow of Robespierre. Eugene was come to request of Buonaparte, as general of the interior, that his father's sword might be restored to him. The prayer of the young supplicant was as interesting as his manners were engaging, and

⁷⁸ Las Cases, tom. i., p. 161.

Napoleon felt so much interest in him, that he was induced to cultivate the acquaintance of Eugene's mother, afterwards the Empress Josephine.⁷⁹

JOSEPHINE BEAUHARNAIS

This lady was a Creolian, the daughter of a planter in St. Domingo. Her name at full length was Marie-Joseph Rose Detacher de la Pag erie. She had suffered her share of revolutionary miseries. After her husband, General Beauharnais, had been deprived of his command, she was arrested as a suspected person, and detained in prison till the general liberation, which succeeded the revolution of 9th Thermidor. While in confinement, Madame Beauharnais had formed an intimacy with a companion in distress, Madame Fontenai, now Madame Tallien,⁸⁰ from which she derived great advantages after her friend's marriage. With a remarkably graceful person, amiable manners, and an inexhaustible fund of good humour, Madame Beauharnais was formed to be an ornament to society. Barras, the Thermidorien hero, himself an ex-noble, was fond of society, desirous of enjoying it on an agreeable scale, and of washing away the dregs which Jacobinism had mingled with all the dearest interests of life. He loved show, too, and pleasure, and might now indulge both without the risk of falling under

⁷⁹ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 82.

⁸⁰ See vol. i., p. 355.

the suspicion of incivism, which, in the Reign of Terror, would have been incurred by any attempt to intermingle elegance with the enjoyments of social intercourse. At the apartments which he occupied as one of the directory, in the Luxemburg palace, he gave its free course to his natural taste, and assembled an agreeable society of both sexes. Madame Tallien and her friend formed the soul of these assemblies, and it was supposed that Barras was not insensible to the charms of Madame Beauharnais, – a rumour which was likely to arise, whether with or without foundation.

When Madame Beauharnais and General Buonaparte became intimate, the latter assures us, and we see no reason to doubt him, that although the lady was two or three years older than himself,⁸¹ yet being still in the full bloom of beauty, and extremely agreeable in her manners, he was induced, solely by her personal charms, to make her an offer of his hand, heart, and fortunes, – little supposing, of course, to what a pitch the latter were to arise.

Although he himself is said to have been a fatalist, believing in destiny and in the influence of his star, he knew nothing, probably, of the prediction of a negro sorceress, who, while Marie-Joseph was but a child, prophesied she should rise to a dignity greater than that of a queen, yet fall from it before her death.⁸² This was one of those vague auguries, delivered

⁸¹ Buonaparte was then in his twenty-sixth year. Josephine gave herself in the marriage contract for twenty-eight. – S.

⁸² A lady of high rank, who happened to live for some time in the same convent

at random by fools or imposters, which the caprice of Fortune sometimes matches with a corresponding and conforming event. But without trusting to the African sibyl's prediction, Buonaparte may have formed his match under the auspices of ambition as well as love. The marrying Madame Beauharnais was a mean of uniting his fortune with those of Barras and Tallien, the first of whom governed France as one of the directors; and the last, from talents and political connexions, had scarcely inferior influence. He had already deserved well of them for his conduct on the Day of the Sections, but he required their countenance to rise still higher; and without derogating from the bride's merits, we may suppose her influence in their society corresponded with the views of her lover. It is, however, certain, that he always regarded her with peculiar affection; that he relied on her fate, which he considered as linked with and strengthening his own; and reposed, besides, considerable confidence in Josephine's tact and address in political business. She had at all times the art of mitigating his temper, and turning aside the hasty determinations of his angry moments, not by directly opposing, but by gradually parrying and disarming them. It must be added, to her great

at Paris, where Josephine was also a pensioner or boarder, heard her mention the prophecy, and told it herself to the author, just about the time of the Italian expedition, when Buonaparte was beginning to attract notice. Another clause is usually added to the prediction – that the party whom it concerned should die in an hospital, which was afterwards explained as referring to Malmaison. This the author did not hear from the same authority. The lady mentioned used to speak in the highest terms of the simple manners and great kindness of Madame Beauharnais. – S.

praise, that she was always a willing, and often a successful advocate, in the cause of humanity.

They were married 9th March 1796; and the dowery of the bride was the chief command of the Italian armies, a scene which opened a full career to the ambition of the youthful general. Buonaparte remained with his wife only three days after his marriage, hastened to see his family, who were still at Marseilles, and having enjoyed the pleasure of exhibiting himself as a favourite of Fortune in the city which he had lately left in a very subordinate capacity, proceeded rapidly to commence the career to which Fate called him, by placing himself at the head of the Italian army.⁸³

⁸³ "It was I who proposed Buonaparte for the command of the army of Italy, not Barras." – Carnot, *Réponse à Bailleul*. "Napoleon owed the appointment to the command of the army of Italy to his signal services under Dumerbion." – Jomini, tom. viii., p. 49.

CHAPTER III

The Alps – Feelings and Views of Buonaparte on being appointed to the Command of the Army of Italy – General Account of his new Principles of Warfare – Mountainous Countries peculiarly favourable to them – Retrospect of Military Proceedings since October 1795 – Hostility of the French Government to the Pope – Massacre of the French Envoy Basseville, at Rome – Austrian Army under Beaulieu – Napoleon's Plan for entering Italy – Battle of Montenotte, and Buonaparte's first Victory – Again defeats the Austrians at Millesimo – and again under Colli – Takes possession of Cherasco – King of Sardinia requests an Armistice, which leads to a Peace, concluded on very severe Terms – Close of the Piedmontese Campaign – Napoleon's Character at this period.

Napoleon has himself observed, that no country in the world is more distinctly marked out by its natural boundaries than Italy.⁸⁴ The Alps seem a barrier erected by Nature herself, on which she has inscribed in gigantic characters, "Here let ambition be staid." Yet this tremendous circumvallation of mountains, as it could not prevent the ancient Romans from breaking out to desolate the world, so it has been in like manner found, ever since the days of Hannibal, unequal to protect Italy herself from invasion. The

⁸⁴ Napoleon, Memoirs, tom. iii., p. 91.

French nation, in the times of which we treat, spoke indeed of the Alps as a natural boundary, so far as to authorise them to claim all which lay on the western side of these mountains, as naturally pertaining to their dominions; but they never deigned to respect them as such, when the question respected their invading, on their own part, the territories of other states, which lay on or beyond the formidable frontier. They assumed the law of natural limits as an unchallengeable rule when it made in favour of France, but never allowed it to be quoted against her interest.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

During the Revolutionary War, the general fortune of battle had varied from time to time in the neighbourhood of these mighty boundaries. The King of Sardinia⁸⁵ possessed almost all the fortresses which command the passes on these mountains, and had therefore been said to wear the keys of the Alps at his girdle. He had indeed lost his Dukedom of Savoy, and the County of Nice, in the late campaigns; but he still maintained a very considerable army, and was supported by his powerful ally the Emperor of Austria, always vigilant regarding that rich and beautiful portion of his dominions which lies in the north of Italy. The frontiers of Piedmont were therefore covered by a strong Austro-Sardinian army, opposed to the French, of which

⁸⁵ Victor Amadeus III. He was born in 1726, and died in 1796.

Napoleon had been just named commander-in-chief. A strong Neapolitan force⁸⁶ was also to be added, so that in general numbers their opponents were much superior to the French; but a great part of this force was cooped up in garrisons which could not be abandoned.

It may be imagined with what delight the general, scarce aged twenty-six, advanced to an independent field of glory and conquest, confident in his own powers, and in the perfect knowledge of the country, which he had acquired when by his scientific plans of the campaign, he had enabled General Dumerbion to drive the Austrians back, and obtain possession of the Col di Tende, Saorgio, and the gorges of the higher Alps.⁸⁷ Buonaparte's achievements had hitherto been under the auspices of others. He made the dispositions before Toulon, but it was Dugommier who had the credit of taking the place. Dumerbion, as we have just said, obtained the merit of the advantages in Piedmont. Even in the civil turmoil of the 13th Vendemaire, his actual services had been overshadowed by the official dignity of Barras as commander-in-chief. But if he reaped honour in Italy, the success would be exclusively his own; and that proud heart must have throbbed to meet danger upon such terms; that keen spirit have toiled to discover the means of success.

For victory he relied chiefly upon a system of tactics hitherto

⁸⁶ "The Neapolitan army was 60,000 strong; the cavalry was excellent." – Napoleon, *Memoirs*, tom. iii., p. 134.

⁸⁷ Viz. in April, 1794. – See Napoleon, *Memoirs*, tom. iii., p. 28.

unpractised in war, or at least upon any considerable or uniform scale. It may not be unnecessary to pause, to take a general view of the principles which he now called into action.

Nations in the savage state, being constantly engaged in war, always form for themselves some peculiar mode of fighting, suited to the country they inhabit, and to the mode in which they are armed. The North-American Indian becomes formidable as a rifleman or sharpshooter, lays ambuscades in his pathless forests, and practises all the arts of irregular war. The Arab, or Scythian, manœuvres his clouds of cavalry, so as to envelope and destroy his enemy in his deserts by sudden onsets, rapid retreats, and unexpected rallies; desolating the country around, cutting off his antagonist's supplies, and practising, in short, the species of war proper to a people superior in light cavalry.

The first stage of civilisation is less favourable to success in war. As a nation advances in the peaceful arts, and the character of the soldier begins to be less familiarly united with that of the citizen, this system of natural tactics falls out of practice; and when foreign invasion, or civil broils, call the inhabitants to arms, they have no idea save that of finding out the enemy, rushing upon him, and committing the event to superior strength, bravery, or numbers. An example may be seen in the great Civil War of England, where men fought on both sides, in almost every county of the kingdom, without any combination, or exact idea of uniting in mutual support, or manœuvring so as to form their insulated bands into an army of preponderating force. At

least, what was attempted for that purpose must have been on the rudest plan possible, where, even in actual fight, that part of an army which obtained any advantage, pursued it as far as they could, instead of using their success for the support of their companions; so that the main body was often defeated when a victorious wing was in pursuit of those whom their first onset had broken.

But – as war becomes a profession, and a subject of deep study – it is gradually discovered, that the principles of tactics depend upon mathematical and arithmetical science; and that the commander will be victorious who can assemble the greatest number of forces upon the same point at the same moment, notwithstanding an inferiority of numbers to the enemy when the general force is computed on both sides. No man ever possessed in a greater degree than Buonaparte, the power of calculation and combination necessary for directing such decisive manœuvres. It constituted, indeed, his *secret*– as it was for some time called – and that secret consisted in an imagination fertile in expedients which would never have occurred to others; clearness and precision in forming his plans; a mode of directing with certainty the separate moving columns which were to execute them, by arranging so, that each division should arrive on the destined position at the exact time when their service was necessary; and above all, in the knowledge which enabled such a master-spirit to choose the most fitting subordinate implements, to attach them to his person, and, by explaining to them so much

of his plan as it was necessary each should execute, to secure the exertion of their utmost ability in carrying it into effect.

Thus, not only were his manœuvres, however daring, executed with a precision which warlike operations had not attained before his time; but they were also performed with a celerity which gave them almost always the effect of surprise. Napoleon was like lightning in the eyes of his enemies; and when repeated experience had taught them to expect this portentous rapidity of movement, it sometimes induced his opponents to wait, in a dubious and hesitating posture, for attacks, which, with less apprehension of their antagonist, they would have thought it more prudent to frustrate and to anticipate.

Great sacrifices were necessary to enable the French troops to move with that degree of celerity which Buonaparte's combinations required. He made no allowance for impediments or unexpected obstacles; the time which he had calculated for execution of manœuvres prescribed, was on no account to be exceeded – every sacrifice was to be made of baggage, stragglers, even artillery, rather than the column should arrive too late at the point of its destination. Hence, all that had hitherto been considered as essential not only to the health, but to the very existence of an army, was in a great measure dispensed with in the French service; and, for the first time, troops were seen to take the field without tents, without camp-equipage, without magazines of provisions, without military hospitals; – the soldiers eating as they could, sleeping where they could, dying where they

could; but still advancing, still combating, and still victorious.

It is true that the abandonment of every object, save success in the field, augmented frightfully all the usual horrors of war. The soldier, with arms in his hands, and wanting bread, became a marauder in self-defence; and, in supplying his wants by rapine, did mischief to the inhabitants, in a degree infinitely beyond the benefit he himself received; for it may be said of military requisition, as truly as of despotism, that it resembles the proceedings of a savage, who cuts down a tree to come at the fruit. Still, though purchased at a high rate, that advantage was gained by this rapid system of tactics, which in a slower progress, during which the soldier was regularly maintained, and kept under the restraint of discipline, might have been rendered doubtful. It wasted the army through disease, fatigue, and all the consequences of want and toil; but still the victory was attained, and that was enough to make the survivors forget their hardships, and to draw forth new recruits to replace the fallen. Patient of labours, light of heart and temper, and elated by success beyond all painful recollections, the French soldiers were the very men calculated to execute this desperate species of service under a chief, who, their sagacity soon discovered, was sure to lead to victory all those who could sustain the hardships by which it was to be won.

SYSTEM OF TACTICS

The character of the mountainous countries, among which he was, for the first time, to exercise his system, was highly favourable to Buonaparte's views. Presenting many lines and defensible positions, it induced the Austrian generals to become stationary, and occupy a considerable extent of ground, according to their old system of tactics. But though abounding in such positions as might at first sight seem absolutely impregnable, and were too often trusted to as such, the mountains also exhibited to the sagacious eye of a great captain, gorges, defiles, and difficult and unsuspected points of access, by which he could turn the positions that appeared in front so formidable; and, by threatening them on the flank and on the rear, compel the enemy to a battle at disadvantage, or to a retreat with loss.

The forces which Buonaparte had under his command were between fifty and sixty thousand good troops, having, many of them, been brought from the Spanish campaign, in consequence of the peace with that country; but very indifferently provided with clothing, and suffering from the hardships they had endured in those mountainous, barren, and cold regions.⁸⁸ The cavalry, in particular, were in very poor order; but the nature of their new field of action not admitting of their being much employed,

⁸⁸ Napoleon states his fighting force, fit for duty, at about 30,000 men. – Montholon, tom. iii., p. 140; Jomini, tom. viii., p. 59, at 42,400.

rendered this of less consequence. The misery of the French army, until these Alpine campaigns were victoriously closed by the armistice of Cherasco, could, according to Buonaparte's authority,⁸⁹ scarce bear description. The officers for several years had received no more than eight livres a-month (twenty pence sterling a-week) in name of pay, and staff-officers had not amongst them a single horse. Berthier preserved, as a curiosity, an order of the day, dated Albenga, directing an advance of four Louis d'or to every general of division, to enable them to enter on the campaign.⁹⁰ Among the generals to whom this paltry supply was rendered acceptable by their wants, were, or might have been, many whose names became afterwards the praise and dread of war.⁹¹ Augereau, Massena,⁹² Serrurier, Joubert, Lasnes, and Murat, all generals of the first consideration, served under Buonaparte in his first Italian campaign.

The position of the French army had repeatedly varied since

⁸⁹ Las Cases, tom. i., p. 162.

⁹⁰ This reminds us of the liberality of the Kings of Brentford to their Knightsbridge forces — *First King*. Here, take five guineas to these warlike men. *Second King*. And here, five more, which makes the sum just ten. *Herald*. We have not seen so much the Lord knows when! – S.

⁹¹ "The state of the finances was such, that the government, with all its efforts, could only furnish the chest of the army, at the opening of the campaign, with 2000 louis in specie, and a million in drafts, part of which were protested." – Napoleon, *Montholon*, tom. iii., p. 140; Thiers, tom. viii., p. 174.

⁹² "An idea of the penury of the army may be collected from the correspondence of the commander-in-chief, who appears to have once sent Massena a supply of twenty-four francs to provide for his official expenses." – Jomini, tom. viii., p. 96.

October 1795, after the skirmish at Cairo. At that time the extreme left of the line, which extended from south to north, rested upon the Col d'Argentine, and communicated with the higher Alps – the centre was on the Col di Tende and Mount Bertrand – the left occupied the heights of Saint Bertrand, Saint Jacques, and other ridges running in the same direction, which terminated on the Mediterranean shore, near Finale.

The Austrians, strongly reinforced, attacked this line, and carried the heights of Mont Saint Jacques; and Kellermann, after a vain attempt to regain that point of his position, retreated to the line of defence more westward, which rests on Borghetto. Kellermann, an active and good brigade officer, but without sufficient talent to act as commander-in-chief, was superseded, and Scherer was placed in command of the army of Italy. He risked a battle with the Austrians near Loana, in which the talents of Massena and Augereau were conspicuous; and by the victory which ensued, the French regained the line of Saint Jacques and Finale, which Kellermann had been forced to abandon; so that in a general point of view, the relative position of the two opposed armies was not very different from that in which they had been left by Buonaparte.⁹³

⁹³ Napoleon, Memoirs, tom. iii., p. 54.

THE POPE

But though Scherer had been thus far victorious, he was not the person to whom the Directory desired to intrust the daring plan of assuming the offensive on a grand scale upon the Alpine frontier, and, by carrying their arms into Italy, compelling the Austrians to defend themselves in that quarter, and to diminish the gigantic efforts which that power had hitherto continued with varied success, but unabated vigour, upon the Rhine. The rulers of France had a farther object in this bold scheme. They desired to intimidate, or annihilate and dethrone the Pope. He was odious to them as head of the Church, because the attachment of the French clergy to the Roman See, and the points of conscience which rested upon that dependence, had occasioned the recusancy of the priests, especially of those who were most esteemed by the people, to take the constitutional oath. To the Pope, and his claims of supremacy, were therefore laid the charge of the great civil war in La Vendée, and the general disaffection of the Catholics in the south of France.

But this was not the only cause of the animosity entertained by the Directory against the head of the Catholic Church. They had, three years before, sustained an actual injury from the See of Rome, which was yet unavenged. The people of Rome were extremely provoked that the French residing there, and particularly the young artists, had displayed the three-coloured

cockade, and were proposing to exhibit the scutcheon containing the emblems of the Republic, over the door of the French consul. The Pope, through his minister, had intimated his desire that this should not be attempted, as he had not acknowledged the Republic as a legitimate government. The French, however, pursued their purpose; and the consequence was, that a popular commotion arose, which the papal troops did not greatly exert themselves to suppress. The carriage of the French envoy, or chargé des affaires, named Basseville, was attacked in the streets, and chased home; his house was broken into by the mob, and he himself, unarmed and unresisting, was cruelly assassinated. The French Government considered this very naturally as a gross insult, and were the more desirous of avenging it, that by doing so they would approach nearer to the dignified conduct of the Roman Republic, which, in good or evil, seems always to have been their model. The affair happened in 1793, but was not forgotten in 1796.⁹⁴

The original idea entertained by the French Government for prosecuting their resentment, had been by a proposed landing at Civita Vecchia with an army of ten thousand men, marching to Rome, and exacting from the pontiff complete atonement for the murder of Basseville. But as the English fleet rode unopposed in

⁹⁴ "He received a thrust of a bayonet in the abdomen: he was dragged into the streets, holding his bowels in his hands, and at length left on a field-bed in a guard-house, where he expired." — Montholon, tom. iii., p. 41; Botta, Storia d'Italia, tom. i., p. 271. Basseville, in 1789, was editor of the *Mercur National*. He published *Elémens de Mythologie, &c.*

the Mediterranean, it became a matter of very doubtful success to transport such a body of troops to Civita Vecchia by sea, not to mention the chance that, even if safely landed, they would have found themselves in the centre of Italy, cut off from supplies and succours, assaulted on all hands, and most probably blockaded by the British fleet. Buonaparte, who was consulted, recommended that the north of Italy should be first conquered, in order that Rome might be with safety approached and chastised; and this scheme, though in appearance scarce a less bold measure, was a much safer one than the Directory had at first inclined to, since Buonaparte would only approach Rome in the event of his being able to preserve his communications with Lombardy and Tuscany, which he must conquer in the first place.⁹⁵

The plan of crossing the Alps and marching into Italy, suited in every respect the ambitious and self-confident character of the general to whom it was now intrusted. It gave him a separate and independent authority, and the power of acting on his own judgment and responsibility; for his countryman Salicetti, the deputy who accompanied him as a commissioner of the Government, was not probably much disposed to intrude his opinions. He had been Buonaparte's patron, and was still his friend.⁹⁶ The young general's mind was made up to the alternative

⁹⁵ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 43; Thibaudeau, Hist. Gen. de Napoleon, tom. i., p. 139; Jomini, tom. viii., p. 49.

⁹⁶ "Salicetti was never the personal friend of Napoleon, but of his brother Joseph; with whom, in 1792 and 1793, he had been member for the department of Corsica." – Joseph Buonaparte, *Notes sur les Mémoires de Bourrienne*, tom. i., p. 238.

of conquest or ruin, as may be judged from his words to a friend at taking leave of him. "In three months," he said, "I will be either at Milan or at Paris;" intimating at once his desperate resolution to succeed, and his sense that the disappointment of all his prospects must be the consequence of a failure.

On the 27th of March Buonaparte reached Nice. The picture of the army which General Scherer⁹⁷ laid before him, was even worse than he had formed any idea of. The supply of bread was very uncertain; distributions of meat had long ceased; and for means of conveyance there were only mules, and not above five hundred of these could be reckoned upon.

The headquarters had never been removed from Nice, since the commencement of the war: they were instantly ordered to be transferred to Albenga. On the march thither, along the rugged and precipitous shore of the Mediterranean, the staff, broken with the rear and baggage of the army, were exposed to the cannonade of Nelson's squadron; but the young commander-in-chief would not allow the columns to halt, for the purpose either of avoiding or of returning it.⁹⁸ On the 3d of April, the army reached port Maunie, near Oneglia, and on the 4th arrived at Albenga; where, with the view of animating his followers to

⁹⁷ "I am particularly gratified with my reception by General Scherer; who, by his honourable deportment and readiness to supply me with all useful information, has acquired a right to my gratitude. To great facility in expressing himself, he unites an extent of general and military knowledge, which may probably induce you to deem his services useful in some important station." – *Napoleon to the Directory, March 30.*

⁹⁸ Jomini, tom. viii., p. 62; Thiers, tom. viii., p. 329.

ambitious hopes, he addressed the army of Italy to the following purpose: – "Soldiers, you are hungry and naked. – The Republic owes you much, but she has not the means to acquit herself of her debts. The patience with which you support your hardships among these barren rocks is admirable, but it cannot procure you glory. I am come to lead you into the most fertile plains that the sun beholds – Rich provinces, opulent towns, all shall be at your disposal – Soldiers, with such a prospect before you, can you fail in courage and constancy?" This was showing the deer to the hound when the leash is about to be slipped.

The Austro-Sardinian army, to which Buonaparte was opposed, was commanded by Beaulieu, an Austrian general of great experience and some talent, but no less than seventy-five years old; accustomed all his life to the ancient rules of tactics, and unlikely to suspect, anticipate, or frustrate, those plans, formed by a genius so fertile as that of Napoleon.

Buonaparte's plan for entering Italy differed from that of former conquerors and invaders, who had approached that fine country by penetrating or surmounting at some point or other her Alpine barriers. This inventive warrior resolved to attain the same object, by turning round the southern extremity of the Alpine range, keeping as close as possible to the shores of the Mediterranean, and passing through the Genoese territory by the narrow pass called the Bocchetta leading around the extremity of the mountains, and betwixt these and the sea. Thus he proposed to penetrate into Italy, by the lowest level which the surface of the

country presented, which must be of course where the range of the Alps unites with that of the Apennines. The point of junction where these two immense ranges of mountains touch upon each other, is at the heights of Mount Saint Jacques, above Genoa, where the Alps, running north-westward, ascend to Mont Blanc, their highest peak, and the Apennines, running to the south-east, gradually elevate themselves to Monte Velino, the tallest mountain of the range.

To attain his object of turning the Alps in the manner proposed, it was necessary that Buonaparte should totally change the situation of his army; those occupying a defensive line, running north and south, being to assume an offensive position, extending east and west. Speaking of an army as of a battalion, he was to form into column upon the right of the line which he had hitherto occupied. This was an extremely delicate operation, to be undertaken in presence of an active enemy, his superior in numbers; nor was he permitted to execute it uninterrupted.

No sooner did Beaulieu learn that the French general was concentrating his forces, and about to change his position, than he hastened to preserve Genoa, without possession of which, or at least of the adjacent territory, Buonaparte's scheme of advance could scarce have been accomplished. The Austrian divided his army into three bodies. Colli, at the head of a Sardinian division, he stationed on the extreme right at Ceva; his centre division, under D'Argenteau, having its head at Sasiello, had directions to march on a mountain called Montenotte, with two villages of the

same name, near to which was a strong position at a place called Montelegino, which the French had occupied in order to cover their flank during their march towards the east. At the head of his left wing, Beaulieu himself moved from Novi upon Voltri, a small town within ten miles of Genoa, for the protection of that ancient city, whose independence and neutrality were like to be held in little reverence. Thus it appears, that while the French were endeavouring to penetrate into Italy by an advance from Sardinia by the way of Genoa, their line of march was threatened by three armies of Austro-Sardinians, descending from the skirts of the Alps, and menacing to attack their flank. But though a skilful disposition, Beaulieu's had, from the very mountainous character of the country, the great disadvantage of wanting connexion between the three separate divisions; neither, if needful, could they be easily united on any point desired, while the lower line, on which the French moved, permitted constant communication and co-operation.

BATTLE OF MONTENOTTE

On the 10th of April, D'Argenteau, with the central division of the Austro-Sardinian army, marched on Montenotte, while Beaulieu on the left attacked the van of the French army, which had come as far as Voltri. General Cervoni, commanding the French division which sustained the attack of Beaulieu, was compelled to fall back on the main body of his countrymen;

and had the assault of D'Argenteau been equally animated, or equally successful, the fame of Buonaparte might have been stifled in the birth. But Colonel Rampon, a French officer, who commanded the redoubts near Montelegino, stopped the progress of D'Argenteau by the most determined resistance. At the head of not more than fifteen hundred men, whom he inspired with his own courage, and caused to swear either to maintain their post or die there,⁹⁹ he continued to defend the redoubts, during the whole of the 11th, until D'Argenteau, whose conduct was afterwards greatly blamed for not making more determined efforts to carry them, drew off his forces for the evening, intending to renew the attack next morning.

But, on the morning of the 12th, the Austrian general found himself surrounded with enemies. Cervoni, who retreated before Beaulieu, had united himself with La Harpe, and both advancing northward during the night of the 11th, established themselves in the rear of the redoubts of Montelegino, which Rampon had so gallantly defended. This was not all. The divisions of Augereau and Massena had marched, by different routes, on the flank and on the rear of D'Argenteau's column; so that next morning, instead of renewing his attack on the redoubts, the Austrian general was obliged to extricate himself by a disastrous retreat, leaving behind him colours and cannon, a thousand slain, and two thousand prisoners.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Thiers, tom. viii., p. 178; Lacretelle, tom. xiii., p. 153.

¹⁰⁰ Napoleon, Memoirs, tom. iii., p. 145; Jomini, tom. viii., p. 70; Las Cases, tom.

Such was the battle of Montenotte, the first of Buonaparte's victories; eminently displaying that truth and mathematical certainty of combination,¹⁰¹ which enabled him on many more memorable occasions, even when his forces were inferior in numbers, and apparently disunited in position, suddenly to concentrate them and defeat his enemy, by overpowering him on the very point where he thought himself strongest. He had accumulated a superior force on the Austrian centre, and destroyed it, while Colli, on the right, and Beaulieu himself, on the left, each at the head of numerous forces, did not even hear of the action till it was fought and won.¹⁰²

In consequence of the success at Montenotte, and the close pursuit of the defeated Austrians, the French obtained possession of Cairo, which placed them on that side of the Alps which slopes towards Lombardy, and where the streams from these mountains run to join the Po.

Beaulieu had advanced to Voltri, while the French withdrew to unite themselves in the attack upon D'Argenteau. He had now to retreat northward with all haste to Dego, in the valley of the river Bormida, in order to resume communication with the right wing of his army, consisting chiefly of Sardinians, from which he was now nearly separated by the defeat of the centre. General

ii., p. 187.

¹⁰¹ "Napoleon placed himself on a ridge in the centre of his divisions, the better to judge of the turn of affairs, and to prescribe the manœuvres which might become necessary." – Jomini, tom. viii., p. 72.

¹⁰² Montholon, tom. iii., p. 145; Las Cases, tom. ii., p. 190; Thiers, tom. viii., p. 178.

Colli, by a corresponding movement on the right, occupied Millesimo, a small town about nine miles from Deigo, with which he resumed and maintained communication by a brigade stationed on the heights of Biastro. From the strength of this position, though his forces were scarce sufficiently concentrated, Beaulieu hoped to maintain his ground till he should receive supplies from Lombardy, and recover the consequences of the defeat at Montenotte. But the antagonist whom he had in front had no purpose of permitting him such respite.

BATTLE OF MILLESIMO

Determined upon a general attack on all points of the Austrian position, the French army advanced in three bodies upon a space of four leagues in extent. Augereau, at the head of the division which had not fought at Montenotte, advanced on the left against Millesimo; the centre, under Massena, directed themselves upon Deigo, by the vale of the Bormida; the right wing, commanded by La Harpe, proceeded by the heights of Cairo, for the purpose of turning Beaulieu's left flank. Augereau, whose division had not engaged at the battle of Montenotte, was the first who came in contact with the enemy. He attacked General Colli on the 13th April. His troops, emulous of the honour acquired by their companions, behaved with great bravery, rushed upon the outposts of the Sardinian army at Millesimo, forced, and retained possession of the gorge by which it was defended, and thus

separated from the Sardinian army a body of about two thousand men, under the Austrian General Provera, who occupied a detached eminence called Cossaria, which covered the extreme left of General Colli's position. But the Austrian showed the most obstinate courage. Although surrounded by the enemy, he threw himself into the ruinous castle of Cossaria, which crowned the eminence, and showed a disposition to maintain the place to the last; the rather that, as he could see from the turrets of his stronghold the Sardinian troops, from whom he had been separated, preparing to fight on the ensuing day, he might reasonably hope to be disengaged.¹⁰³

Buonaparte in person came up; and seeing the necessity of dislodging the enemy from this strong post, ordered three successive attacks to be made on the castle. Joubert, at the head of one of the attacking columns, had actually, with six or seven others, made his way into the outworks, when he was struck down by a wound in the head. General Banel, and Adjutant-general Quénin fell, each at the head of the column which he commanded; and Buonaparte was compelled to leave the obstinate Provera in possession of the castle for the night. The morning of the 14th brought a different scene. Contenting himself with blockading the castle of Cossaria, Buonaparte now gave battle to General Colli, who made every effort to relieve it. These attempts were all in vain. He was defeated and cut off from Beaulieu; he retired as well as he could upon Ceva, leaving to his

¹⁰³ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 146; Las Cases, tom. ii., p. 192; Jomini, tom. viii., p. 76.

fate the brave General Provera, who was compelled to surrender at discretion.

ACTION OF DEGO

On the same day, Massena, with the centre, attacked the heights of Biastro, being the point of communication betwixt Beaulieu and Colli, while La Harpe, having crossed the Bormida, where the stream came up to the soldiers' middle, attacked in front and in flank the village of Dego, where the Austrian commander-in-chief was stationed. The first attack was completely successful, – the heights of Biastro were carried, and the Piedmontese routed. The assault of Dego was not less so, although after a harder struggle. Beaulieu was compelled to retreat, and was entirely separated from the Sardinians, who had hitherto acted in combination with him. The defenders of Italy now retreated in different directions, Colli moving westward towards Ceva, while Beaulieu, closely pursued through a difficult country, retired upon D'Aqui.¹⁰⁴

Even the morning after the victory, it was nearly wrested out of the hands of the conquerors. A fresh division of Austrians, who had evacuated Voltri later than the others, and were approaching to form a junction with their general, found the enemy in possession of Beaulieu's position. They arrived at Dego

¹⁰⁴ Las Cases, tom. ii., p. 193; Montholon, tom. iii., p. 148; Thiers, tom. viii., p. 181.

like men who had been led astray, and were no doubt surprised at finding it in the hands of the French. Yet they did not hesitate to assume the offensive, and by a brisk attack drove out the enemy, and replaced the Austrian eagles in the village. Great alarm was occasioned by this sudden apparition; for no one among the French could conceive the meaning of an alarm beginning on the opposite quarter to that on which the enemy had retreated, and without its being announced from the outposts towards D'Aqui.

Buonaparte hastily marched on the village. The Austrians repelled two attacks; at the third, General Lanusse, afterwards killed in Egypt, put his hat upon the point of his sword, and advancing to the charge, penetrated into the place. Lannes also, afterwards Duke of Montebello, distinguished himself on the same occasion by courage and military skill, and was recommended by Buonaparte to the Directory for promotion. In this battle of Dego, more commonly called of Millesimo, the Austro-Sardinian army lost five or six thousand men, thirty pieces of cannon, with a great quantity of baggage. Besides, the Austrians were divided from the Sardinians; and the two generals began to show, not only that their forces were disunited, but that they themselves were acting upon separate motives; the Sardinians desiring to protect Turin, whereas the movements of Beaulieu seemed still directed to prevent the French from entering the Milanese territory.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 148; Las Cases, tom. ii., p. 193; Lacretelle, tom. xiii., p. 59.

Leaving a sufficient force on the Bormida to keep in check Beaulieu, Buonaparte now turned his strength against Colli, who, overpowered, and without hopes of succour, abandoned his line of defence near Ceva, and retreated to the line of the Tanaro.

Napoleon, in the meantime, fixed his head-quarters at Ceva, and enjoyed from the heights of Montezemoto, the splendid view of the fertile fields of Piedmont stretching in boundless perspective beneath his feet, watered by the Po, the Tanaro, and a thousand other streams which descend from the Alps. Before the eyes of the delighted army of victors lay this rich expanse like a promised land; behind them was the wilderness they had passed; – not indeed, a desert of barren sand, similar to that in which the Israelites wandered, but a huge tract of rocks and inaccessible mountains, crested with ice and snow, seeming by nature designed as the barrier and rampart of the blessed regions which stretched eastward beneath them. We can sympathize with the self-congratulation of the general who had surmounted such tremendous obstacles in a way so unusual. He said to the officers around him, as they gazed upon this magnificent scene, "Hannibal took the Alps by storm. We have succeeded as well by taming their flank."¹⁰⁶

The dispirited army of Colli was attacked at Mondovi during his retreat, by two corps of Buonaparte's army, from two different points, commanded by Massena and Serrurier. The last

¹⁰⁶ "Annabal a forcé les Alpes; nous nous les avons tournées!" – Napoleon, *Montholon*, tom. iii., p. 151.

general, the Sardinian repulsed with loss; but when he found Massena, in the meantime, was turning the left of his line, and that he was thus pressed on both flanks, his situation became almost desperate.¹⁰⁷ The cavalry of the Piedmontese made an effort to renew the combat. For a time they overpowered and drove back those of the French; and General Stengel, who commanded the latter, was slain in attempting to get them into order.¹⁰⁸ But the desperate valour of Murat, unrivalled perhaps in the heady charge of cavalry combat, renewed the fortune of the field; and the horse, as well as the infantry of Colli's army, were compelled to a disastrous retreat. The defeat was decisive; and the Sardinians, after the loss of the best of their troops, their cannon, baggage, and appointments, and being now totally divided from their Austrian allies, and liable to be overpowered by the united forces of the French army, had no longer hopes of effectually covering Turin. Buonaparte, pursuing his victory, took possession of Cherasco, within ten leagues of the Piedmontese capital.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ "The rapidity of Massena's movements was a subject of astonishment and terror with the Piedmontese, who regarded him as a rebel. He was born at Nice, but attached himself early in his youth to the French service. The Revolution found him a sergeant in the Royal Italian regiment." – Lacretelle, tom. xiii., p. 161.

¹⁰⁸ "General Stengel, a native of Alsace, was an excellent hussar officer; he had served under Dumouriez, and in the other campaigns of the North; he was adroit, intelligent, and active, combining the qualities of youth with those of maturity, he was the true general for advanced posts." – Napoleon, *Montholon*, tom. iii., p. 152.

¹⁰⁹ *Montholon*, tom. iii., p. 151; Jomini, tom. viii., p. 93.

Thus Fortune, in the course of a campaign of scarce a month, placed her favourite in full possession of the desired road to Italy by command of the mountain-passes, which had been invaded and conquered with so much military skill. He had gained three battles over forces far superior to his own; inflicted on the enemy a loss of twenty-five thousand men in killed, wounded, and prisoners; taken eighty pieces of cannon, and twenty-one stand of colours;¹¹⁰ reduced to inaction the Austrian army; almost annihilated that of Sardinia; and stood in full communication with France upon the eastern side of the Alps, with Italy lying open before him, as if to invite his invasion. But it was not even with such laurels, and with facilities which now presented themselves for the accomplishment of new and more important victories upon a larger scale, and with more magnificent results, that the career of Buonaparte's earliest campaign was to be closed. The head of the royal house of Savoy, if not one of the most powerful, still one of the most distinguished in Europe, was to have the melancholy experience, that he had encountered with the Man of Destiny, as he was afterwards proudly called, who, for a time, had power, in the emphatic phrase of Scripture, "to bind kings with chains, and nobles with fetters of iron."

The shattered relics of the Sardinian army had fallen back, or rather fled, to within two leagues of Turin, without hope

¹¹⁰ Murat was despatched to Paris with them, and the treaty for the armistice of Cherasco. His arrival, by way of Mount Cenis, with so many trophies, and the King of Sardinia's submission, caused great joy in the capital. Junot, who had been despatched after the battle of Millesimo by the Nice road, arrived later than Murat.

of being again able to make an effectual stand. The Sovereign of Sardinia, Savoy, and Piedmont, had no means of preserving his capital, nay, his existence on the continent, excepting by an almost total submission to the will of the victor. Let it be remembered, that Victor Amadeus the Third was the descendant of a race of heroes, who, from the peculiar situation of their territories, as constituting a neutral ground of great strength betwixt France and the Italian possessions of Austria, had often been called on to play a part in the general affairs of Europe, of importance far superior to that which their condition as a second-rate power could otherwise have demanded. In general, they had compensated their inferiority of force by an ability and gallantry which did them the highest credit, both as generals and as politicians; and now Piedmont was at the feet, in her turn, of an enemy weaker in numbers than her own. Besides the reflections on the past fame of his country, the present humiliating situation of the King was rendered more mortifying by the state of his family connexions. Victor Amadeus was the father-in-law of Monsieur (Louis XVIII.) and of the Comte d'Artois, (afterwards Charles X.) He had received his sons-in-law at his court at Turin, had afforded them an opportunity of assembling around them their forces, consisting of the emigrant noblesse, and had strained all the power he possessed, and in many instances successfully, to withstand both the artifices and the arms of the French Republicans. And now, so born, so connected, and with such principles, he was condemned to sue

for peace, on any terms which might be dictated, from a General of France, aged twenty-six years, who, a few months before, was desirous of an appointment in the artillery service of the Grand Signior.

ARMISTICE OF CHERASCO

Under these afflicting circumstances, a suspension of hostilities was requested by the King of Sardinia; and, on the 24th April, conferences were held at Carru, the headquarters of the French, but an armistice could only be purchased by placing two of the King's strongest fortresses – Coni and Tortona, in the hands of the French, and thus acknowledging that he surrendered at discretion. The armistice was agreed on [April 28] at Cherasco, but commissioners were sent by the King to Paris, to arrange with the Directory the final terms of peace. These were such as victors give to the vanquished.

Besides the fortresses already surrendered, the King of Sardinia was to place in the hands of the French five others of the first importance. The road from France to Italy was to be at all times open to the French armies; and indeed the King, by surrender of the places mentioned, had lost the power of interrupting their progress. He was to break off every species of alliance and connexion with the combined powers at war with France, and become bound not to entertain at his court, or in his service, any French emigrants whatever, or any of their

connexions; nor was an exception even made in favour of his own two daughters. In short, the surrender was absolute.¹¹¹ Victor Amadeus exhibited the utmost reluctance to subscribe this treaty, and did not long survive it.¹¹² His son succeeded in name to the kingdom of Piedmont; but the fortresses and passes, which had rendered him a prince of some importance, were, excepting Turin, and one or two of minor consequence, all surrendered into the hands of the French.

Viewing this treaty with Sardinia as the close of the Piedmontese campaign, we pause to consider the character which Buonaparte displayed at that period. The talents as a general which he had exhibited were of the very first order. There was no disconnexion in his objects; they were all attained by the very means he proposed, and the success was improved to the utmost. A different conduct usually characterises those who stumble unexpectedly on victory, either by good fortune or by the valour of their troops. When the favourable opportunity occurs to such leaders, they are nearly as much embarrassed by it as by a defeat. But Buonaparte, who had foreseen the result of each operation by his sagacity, stood also prepared to make the most of the advantages which might be derived from it.

His style in addressing the Convention was, at this period,

¹¹¹ The treaty was concluded at Paris, on the 15th May. For a copy of it, see *Annual Register*, vol. xxxviii., p. 262.

¹¹² Victor Amadeus died of apoplexy, in the following October, and was succeeded by his son, Charles Emanuel.

more modest and simple, and therefore more impressive, than the figurative and bombastic style which he afterwards used in his bulletins. His self-opinion, perhaps, was not risen so high as to permit him to use the sesquipedalian words and violent metaphors, to which he afterwards seems to have given a preference. We may remark also, that the young victor was honourably anxious to secure for such officers as distinguished themselves, the preferment which their services entitled them to.¹¹³ He urges the promotion of his brethren in arms in almost every one of his despatches, – a conduct not only just and generous, but also highly politic. Were his recommendations successful, their general had the gratitude due for the benefit; were they overlooked, thanks equally belonged to him for his good wishes, and the resentment for the slight attached itself to the government, who did not give effect to them.

If Buonaparte spoke simply and modestly on his own achievements, the bombast which he spared was liberally dealt out to the Convention by an orator named Daubermesnil, who invokes all bards, from Tyrtæus and Ossian down to the author of the Marseillois Hymn – all painters, from Apelles to David – all musicians, from Orpheus to the author of the *Chant du départ*, to sing, paint, and compose music, upon the achievements of the General and Army of Italy.¹¹⁴

With better taste, a medal of Buonaparte was struck in the

¹¹³ See Correspondence Inédite, tom. i., p. 85.

¹¹⁴ See the speech in the *Moniteur*, No. 233, 12th May.

character of the Conqueror of the battle of Montenotte. The face is extremely thin, with lank hair, a striking contrast to the fleshy square countenance exhibited on his later coins. On the reverse, Victory, bearing a palm branch, a wreath of laurel, and a naked sword, is seen flying over the Alps. This medal we notice as the first of the splendid series which records the victories and honours of Napoleon, and which was designed by Denon as a tribute to the genius of his patron.

CHAPTER IV

Farther progress of the French Army under Buonaparte – He crosses the Po, at Placenza, on 7th May – Battle of Lodi takes place on the 10th, in which the French are victorious – Remarks on Napoleon's Tactics in this celebrated Action – French take possession of Cremona and Pizzighitone – Milan deserted by the Archduke Ferdinand and his Duchess – Buonaparte enters Milan on the 15th May – General situation of the Italian States at this period – Napoleon inflicts Fines upon the neutral and unoffending States of Parma and Modena, and extorts the surrender of some of their finest Pictures – Remarks upon this novel procedure.

PROGRESS OF THE FRENCH ARMY

The ardent disposition of Buonaparte did not long permit him to rest after the advantages which he had secured. He had gazed on Italy with an eagle's eye; but it was only for a moment, ere stooping on her with the wing, and pouncing on her with the talons, of the king of birds.

A general with less extraordinary talent would perhaps have thought it sufficient to have obtained possession of Piedmont, revolutionizing its government as the French had

done that of Holland, and would have awaited fresh supplies and reinforcements from France before advancing to farther and more distant conquests, and leaving the Alps under the dominion of a hostile, though for the present a subdued and disarmed monarchy. But Buonaparte had studied the campaign of Villars in these regions, and was of opinion that it was by that general's hesitation to advance boldly into Italy, after the victories which the Marshal de Coigni had obtained at Parma and Guastalla, that the enemy had been enabled to assemble an accumulating force, before which the French were compelled to retreat.¹¹⁵ He determined, therefore, to give the Republic of Venice, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and other states in Italy, no time to muster forces, and take a decided part, as they were likely to do, to oppose a French invasion. Their terror and surprise could not fail to be increased by a sudden irruption; while months, weeks, even days of consideration, might afford those states, attached as the rulers must be to their ancient oligarchical forms of government, time and composure to assume arms to maintain them. A speedy resolution was the more necessary, as Austria, alarmed for her Italian possessions, was about to make every effort for their defence. Orders had already been sent by the Aulic Council of War to detach an army of thirty thousand men, under Wurmser, from the Army of the Rhine to the frontiers of Italy. These were to be strengthened by other reinforcements from the interior, and by such forces as could be raised in the mountainous district

¹¹⁵ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 162.

of the Tyrol, which furnishes perhaps the most experienced and most formidable sharpshooters in the world. The whole was to be united to the fragments of Beaulieu's defeated troops. If suffered to form a junction, and arrange their plans for attack or defence, an army, of force so superior to the French in numbers, veterans in discipline, and commanded by a general like Wurmser, was likely to prevent all the advantages which the French might gain by a sudden irruption, ere an opposition so formidable was collected and organized. But the daring scheme which Napoleon contemplated, corresponding to the genius of him who had formed it, required to be executed with caution, united with secrecy and celerity. These were the more necessary, as, although the thanks of the French Government had been voted to the army of Italy five times in the course of a month, yet the Directory, alarmed at the more doubtful state of hostilities upon the Rhine, had turned their exertions chiefly in that direction; and, trusting to the skill of their general, and the courage of his troops, had not transmitted recruits and supplies upon the scale necessary for the great undertakings which he meditated. But *Italiam – Italiam!*¹¹⁶ – the idea of penetrating into a country so guarded and defended by nature, as well as by military skill, the consciousness

¹¹⁶ " – procul obscuros colles humilemque videmus Italiam. Italiam! primus conclamat Achates; Italiam! læto socii clamore salutant."Virg. *Æneid*, Book III. – S."Now every star before Aurora flies, Whose glowing blushes streak the purple skies; When the dim hills of Italy we view'd, That peep'd by turns, and dived beneath the flood, Lo! Italy appears, Achates cries, And, Italy! with shouts the crowd replies."Dryden.

of having surmounted obstacles of a nature so extraordinary, and the hope that they were approaching the reward of so many labours – above all, their full confidence in a leader, who seemed to have bound Victory to his standard – made the soldiers follow their general, without counting their own deficiencies, or the enemy's numbers.¹¹⁷

To encourage this ardour, Buonaparte circulated an address,¹¹⁸ in which, complimenting the army on the victories they had gained, he desired them at the same time "to consider nothing as won so long as the Austrians held Milan, and while the ashes of those who had conquered the Tarquins were soiled by the presence of the assassins of Basseville." It would appear that classical allusions are either familiar to the French soldiers, or that, without being more learned than others of their rank, they are pleased with being supposed to understand them. They probably considered the oratory of their great leader as soldier-like words, and words of exceeding good command. The English soldier, addressed in such flights of eloquence, would either have laughed at them, or supposed that he had got a crazed play-actor

¹¹⁷ "The army, on reaching the Adige, will command all the states of the House of Austria in Italy, and all those of the Pope on this side of the Apennines; it will be in a situation to proclaim the principles of liberty, and to excite Italian patriotism against the sway of foreigners. The word *Italiam. Italiam!* proclaimed at Milan, Bologna, and Verona, will produce a magical effect." – Napoleon, *Montholon*, tom. iii., p. 165.

¹¹⁸ It was dated Cherasco, April the 26th, and sufficiently proves, that notwithstanding all their victories, many of the soldiery, nay, even of the superior officers, were still alarmed at the magnitude of the enterprise on which Napoleon was entering with apparently very inadequate resources.

put over him, instead of a general. But there is this peculiar trait in the French character, that they are willing to take every thing of a complimentary kind in the manner in which it seems to be meant. They appear to have made that bargain with themselves on many points, which the audience usually do in a theatre, – to accept of the appearance of things for the reality. They never inquire whether a triumphal arch is of stone or of wood; whether a scutcheon is of solid metal, or only gilt; or whether a speech, of which the tendency is flattering to their national vanity, contains genuine eloquence, or only tumid extravagance.

TORTONA

All thoughts were therefore turned to Italy. The fortress of Tortona was surrendered to the French by the King of Sardinia; Buonaparte's headquarters were fixed there, [May 4.] Massena concentrated another part of the army at Alexandria, menacing Milan, and threatening, by the passage of the Po, to invade the territories belonging to Austria on the northern bank of that stream. As Buonaparte himself observed, the passage of a great river is one of the most critical operations in modern war; and Beaulieu had collected his forces to cover Milan, and prevent the French, if possible, from crossing the Po. But, in order to avert the dangerous consequences of attempting to force his passage on the river, defended by a formidable enemy in front, Buonaparte's subtle genius had already prepared the means for

deceiving the old Austrian respecting his intended operations.

PASSAGE OF THE PO

Valenza appeared to be the point of passage proposed by the French; it is one of those fortresses which cover the eastern frontier of Piedmont, and is situated upon the Po. During the conferences previous to the armistice of Cherasco, Buonaparte had thrown out hints as if he were particularly desirous to be possessed of this place, and it was actually stipulated in the terms of the treaty, that the French should occupy it for the purpose of effecting their passage over the river. Beaulieu did not fail to learn what had passed, which coinciding with his own ideas of the route by which Buonaparte meant to advance upon Milan, he hastened to concentrate his army on the opposite bank, at a place called Valeggio, about eighteen miles from Valenza, the point near which he expected the attempt to be made, and from which he could move easily in any direction towards the river, before the French could send over any considerable force. Massena also countenanced this report, and riveted the attention of the Austrians on Valenza, by pushing strong reconnoitring parties from Alexandria in the direction of that fortress. Besides, Beaulieu had himself crossed the Po at this place, and, like all men of routine – (for such he was though a brave and approved soldier) – he was always apt to suppose that the same reasons which directed himself, must needs seem equally convincing

to others. In almost all delicate affairs, persons of ordinary talents are misled by their incapacity to comprehend, that men of another disposition will be likely to view circumstances, and act upon principles, with an eye and opinion very different from their own.

But the reports which induced the Austrian general to take the position at Valeggio, arose out of a stratagem of war. It was never Buonaparte's intention to cross the Po at Valenza. The proposal was a feint to draw Beaulieu's attention to that point, while the French accomplished the desired passage at Placenza, nearly fifty miles lower down the river than Valeggio, where their subtle general had induced the Austrians to take up their line of defence. Marching for this purpose with incredible celerity, Buonaparte, on the 7th of May, assembled his forces at Placenza, when their presence was least expected, and where there were none to defend the opposite bank, except two or three squadrons of Austrians, stationed there merely for the purpose of reconnoitring. General Andréossi (for names distinguished during those dreadful wars begin to rise on the narrative, as the stars glimmer out on the horizon) commanded an advanced guard of five hundred men. They had to pass in the common ferry-boats, and the crossing required nearly half an hour; so that the difficulty, or rather impossibility, of achieving the operation, had they been seriously opposed, appears to demonstration. Colonel Lannes threw himself ashore first with a body of grenadiers, and speedily dispersed the Austrian hussars, who

attempted to resist their landing. The vanguard having thus opened the passage, the other divisions of the army were enabled to cross in succession, and in the course of two days the whole were in the Milanese territory, and on the left bank of the Po. The military manœuvres, by means of which Buonaparte achieved, without the loss of a man, an operation of so much consequence, and which, without such address as he displayed, must have been attended with great loss, and risk of failure, have often been considered as among his most masterly movements.

Beaulieu, informed too late of the real plans of the French general, moved his advanced guard, composed of the division of General Liptay, from Valeggio towards the Po, in the direction of Placenza. But here also the alert general of the French had been too rapid in his movements for the aged German. Buonaparte had no intention to wait an attack from the enemy with such a river as the Po in his rear, which he had no means of recrossing if the day should go against him; so that a defeat, or even a material check, would have endangered the total loss of his army. He was, therefore, pushing forward in order to gain ground on which to manœuvre, and the advanced divisions of the two armies met at a village called Fombio, not far from Casal, on the 8th of May. The Austrians threw themselves into the place, fortified and manned the steeples, and whatever posts else could be made effectual for defence, and reckoned upon defending themselves there until the main body of Beaulieu's army should come up to support them. But they were unable to sustain the vivacity of the French

onset, to which so many successive victories had now given a double impulse. The village was carried at the bayonet's point; the Austrians lost their cannon, and left behind one-third of their men, in slain, wounded, and prisoners. The wreck of Liptay's division saved themselves by crossing the Adda at Pizzighitone, while they protected their retreat by a hasty defence of that fortress.¹¹⁹

Another body of Austrians having advanced from Casal, to support, it may be supposed, the division of Liptay, occasioned a great loss to the French army in the person of a very promising officer. This was General La Harpe, highly respected and trusted by Buonaparte, and repeatedly mentioned in the campaigns of Piedmont. Hearing the alarm given by the out-posts, when the Austrian patrols came in contact with them, La Harpe rode out to satisfy himself concerning the nature and strength of the attacking party. On his return to his own troops, they mistook him and his attendants for the enemy, fired upon, and killed him. He was a Swiss by birth, and had been compelled to leave his country on account of his democratical opinions; a grenadier, says Buonaparte, in stature and in courage, but of a restless disposition. The soldiers with the superstition belonging to their profession, remarked, that during the battle of Fombio, on the day before, he was less animated than usual, as if an obscure sense of his approaching fate already overwhelmed him.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 169; Thibaudeau, tom. i., p. 206; Jomini, tom. viii., p. 117.

¹²⁰ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 172.

The Austrian regiment of cavalry which occasioned this loss, after some skirmishing, was content to escape to Lodi, a point upon which Beaulieu was again collecting his scattered forces, for the purpose of covering Milan, by protecting the line of the Adda.

BATTLE OF LODI

"The passage of the Po," said Buonaparte, in his report to the Directory, "had been expected to prove the boldest and most difficult manœuvre of the campaign, nor did we expect to have an action of more vivacity than that of Dego. But we have now to recount the battle of Lodi."¹²¹ As the conqueror deservedly congratulated himself on this hard-won victory, and as it has become in a manner especially connected with his name and military character, we must, according to our plan, be somewhat minute in our details respecting it.

The Adda, a large and deep river, though fordable at some places and in some seasons, crosses the valley of the Milanese, rising in the Tyrolese Alps, and joining the Po at Pizzighitone; so that, if the few points at which it can be crossed are fortified or defended, it forms a line covering all the Milanese territory to the eastward, from any force approaching from the direction of Piedmont. This line Beaulieu proposed to make good against the

¹²¹ Moniteur, No. 241, May 20.

victor before whom he had so often retreated, and he conjectured (on this occasion rightly) that, to prosecute his victory by marching upon Milan, Buonaparte would first desire to dislodge the covering army from the line of the Adda, as he could not safely advance to the capital of Lombardy, leaving the enemy in possession of such a defensive line upon their flank. He also conjectured that this attempt would be made at Lodi.

This is a large town, containing twelve thousand inhabitants. It has old Gothic walls, but its chief defence consists in the river Adda, which flows through it, and is crossed by a wooden bridge about five hundred feet in length. When Beaulieu, after the affair of Fombio, evacuated Casal, he retreated to this place with about ten thousand men. The rest of his army was directed upon Milan and Cassano, a town situated, like Lodi, upon the Adda.

Buonaparte calculated that, if he could accomplish the passage of the Adda at Lodi, he might overtake and disperse the remainder of Beaulieu's army, without allowing the veteran time to concentrate them for farther resistance in Milan, or even for rallying under the walls of the strong fortress of Mantua. The judgment of the French general was in war not more remarkable for seizing the most advantageous moment of attack, than for availing himself to the very uttermost of success when obtained. The quick-sighted faculty and power of instant decision with which nature had endowed him, had, it may be supposed, provided beforehand for the consequences of the victory ere it was yet won, and left no room for doubt or hesitation when his

hopes had become certainties. We have already remarked, that there have been many commanders, who, after an accidental victory, are so much at a loss what is next to be done, that while they are hesitating, the golden moments pass away unimproved; but Buonaparte knew as well how to use advantages, as to obtain them.

Upon the 10th day of May, attended by his best generals, and heading the choicest of his troops, Napoleon pressed forward towards Lodi. About a league from Casal, he encountered the Austrian rear-guard, who had been left, it would appear, at too great a distance from the main body. The French had no difficulty in driving these troops before them into the town of Lodi, which was but slightly defended by the few soldiers whom Beaulieu had left on the western or right side of the Adda. He had also neglected to destroy the bridge, although he ought rather to have supported a defence on the right bank of the river, (for which the town afforded many facilities,) till the purpose of destruction was completed, than have allowed it to exist. If his rear-guard had been actually stationed in Lodi, instead of being so far in the rear of the main body, they might, by a protracted resistance from the old walls and houses, have given time for this necessary act of demolition.

But though the bridge was left standing, it was swept by twenty or thirty Austrian pieces of artillery, whose thunders menaced death to any who should attempt that pass of peril. The French, with great alertness, got as many guns in position on the left bank,

and answered this tremendous fire with equal spirit. During this cannonade, Buonaparte threw himself personally amongst the fire, in order to station two guns loaded with grape-shot in such a position, as rendered it impossible for any one to approach for the purpose of undermining or destroying the bridge; and then calmly proceeded to make arrangements for a desperate attempt.

His cavalry was directed to cross, if possible, at a place where the Adda was said to be fordable, – a task which they accomplished with difficulty. Meantime, Napoleon observed that the Austrian line of infantry was thrown considerably behind the batteries of artillery which they supported, in order that they might have the advantage of a bending slope of ground, which afforded them shelter from the French fire. He therefore drew up a close column of three thousand grenadiers, protected from the artillery of the Austrians by the walls and houses of the town, and yet considerably nearer to the enemy's line of guns on the opposite side of the Adda than were their own infantry, which ought to have protected them. The column of grenadiers, thus secured, waited in comparative safety, until the appearance of the French cavalry, who had crossed the ford, began to disquiet the flank of the Austrians. This was the critical moment which Buonaparte expected. A single word of command wheeled the head of the column of grenadiers to the left, and placed it on the perilous bridge. The word was given to advance, and they rushed on with loud shouts of *Vive la République!* But their appearance upon the bridge was the signal for a redoubled

shower of grape-shot, while from the windows of the houses on the left side of the river, the soldiers who occupied them poured volley after volley of musketry on the thick column as it endeavoured to force its way over the long bridge. At one time the French grenadiers, unable to sustain this dreadful storm, appeared for an instant to hesitate. But Berthier, the chief of Buonaparte's staff, with Massena, L'Allemagne, and Corvini, hurried to the head of the column, and by their presence and gallantry renewed the resolution of the soldiers, who now poured across the bridge. The Austrians had but one resource left; to rush on the French with the bayonet, and kill, or drive back into the Adda, those who had forced their passage, before they could deploy into line, or receive support from their comrades, who were still filing along the bridge. But the opportunity was neglected, either because the troops, who should have executed the manœuvre, had been, as we have already noticed, withdrawn too far from the river; or because the soldiery, as happens when they repose too much confidence in a strong position, became panic-struck when they saw it unexpectedly carried. Or it may be, that General Beaulieu, so old and so unfortunate, had somewhat lost that energy and presence of mind which the critical moment demanded. Whatever was the cause, the French rushed on the artillerymen, from whose fire they had lately suffered so tremendously, and, unsupported as they were, had little difficulty in bayoneting them.

The Austrian army now completely gave way, and lost in their

retreat, annoyed as it was by the French cavalry, upwards of twenty guns, a thousand prisoners, and perhaps two thousand more wounded and slain.¹²²

Such was the famous passage of the Bridge of Lodi; achieved with such skill and gallantry, as gave the victor the same character for fearless intrepidity, and practical talent in actual battle, which the former part of the campaign had gained him as a most able tactician.

Yet this action, though successful, has been severely criticized by those who desire to derogate from Buonaparte's military talents. It has been said, that he might have passed over a body of infantry at the same ford where the cavalry had crossed; and that thus, by manœuvring on both sides of the river, he might have compelled the Austrians to evacuate their position on the left bank of the Adda, without hazarding an attack upon their front, which could not but cost the assailants very dearly.

Buonaparte had perhaps this objection in his recollection when he states, that the column of grenadiers was so judiciously sheltered from the fire until the moment when their wheel to the left brought them on the bridge, that they only lost two hundred men¹²³ during the storm of the passage. We cannot but suppose, that this is a very mitigated account of the actual loss of the

¹²² Montholon, tom. iii., p. 173; Jomini, tom. viii., p. 126; Thibaudeau, tom. i., p. 218.

¹²³ "The loss of the French was only four hundred men." – Thibaudeau, tom. i., p. 218.

French army. So slight a loss is not to be easily reconciled with the horrors of the battle, as he himself detailed them in his despatches; nor with the conclusion, in which he mentions, that of the sharp contests which the army of Italy had to sustain during the campaign, none was to be compared with that "terrible passage of the bridge of Lodi."¹²⁴

In fact, as we may take occasion to prove hereafter, the Memoranda of the great general, dictated to his officers at Saint Helena, have a little too much the character of his original bulletins; and, while they show a considerable disposition to exaggerate the difficulties to be overcome, the fury of the conflict, and the exertions of courage by which the victory was attained, show a natural inconsistency, from the obvious wish to diminish the loss which was its unavoidable price.

But, admitting that the loss of the French had been greater on this occasion than their general cared to recollect or acknowledge, his military conduct seems not the less justifiable.

Buonaparte appears to have had two objects in view in this daring exploit. The first was, to improve and increase the terror into which his previous successes had thrown the Austrians, and to impress on them the conviction, that no position, however strong, was able to protect them against the audacity and talent of the French. This discouraging feeling, exemplified by so many defeats, and now by one in circumstances where the Austrians appeared to have every advantage, it was natural to

¹²⁴ Moniteur, No. 241, May 20.

suppose, would hurry Beaulieu's retreat, induce him to renounce all subsequent attempts to cover Milan, and rather to reunite the fragments of his army, particularly that part of Liptay's division, which, after being defeated at Fombio, had thrown themselves into Pizzighitone. To have manœuvred slowly and cautiously, would not have struck that terror and confusion which was inspired by the desperate attack on the position at Lodi. Supposing these to have been his views, the victor perfectly succeeded; for Beaulieu, after his misadventure, drew off without any farther attempt to protect the ancient capital of Lombardy, and threw himself upon Mantua, with the intention of covering that strong fortress, and at the same time of sheltering under it the remains of his army, until he could form a junction with the forces which Wurmser was bringing to his assistance from the Rhine.

Buonaparte himself has pointed out a second object, in which he was less successful. He had hoped the rapid surprise of the bridge of Lodi might enable him to overtake or intercept the rest of Beaulieu's army, which, as we have said, had retreated by Cassano. He failed, indeed, in this object; for these forces also made their way into the Mantuan territory, and joined Beaulieu, who, by crossing the classical Mincio, placed another strong line of military defence betwixt him and his victor. But the prospect of intercepting and destroying so large a force, was worth the risk he encountered at Lodi,¹²⁵ especially taking into

¹²⁵ "Vandémiaire and Montenotte," said the Emperor, "never induced me to look

view the spirit which his army had acquired from a long train of victory, together with the discouragement which had crept into the Austrian ranks from a uniform series of defeats.

It should also be remembered, in considering the necessity of forcing the bridge of Lodi, that the ford over the Adda was crossed with difficulty even by the cavalry, and that when once separated by the river, the communication between the main army and the detachment of infantry, (which his censors say Napoleon should have sent across in the same manner,) being in a great degree interrupted, the latter might have been exposed to losses, from which Buonaparte, situated as he was on the right bank, could have had no means of protecting them.

PIZZIGHITONE

Leaving the discussion of what might have been, to trace that which actually took place, the French cavalry pursued the retreating Austrians as far as Cremona, of which they took possession. Pizzighitone was obliged to capitulate, the garrison being cut off from all possibility of succour. About five hundred prisoners surrendered in that fortress; the rest of Liptay's division, and other Austrian corps, could no otherwise escape, than by throwing themselves into the Venetian territory.

upon myself as a man of a superior class: it was not till after Lodi that I was struck with the possibility of my becoming a decisive actor on the scene of political events. It was then that the first spark of my ambition was kindled." – Las Cases, tom. i., p. 150.

It was at this time that Buonaparte had some conversation with an old Hungarian officer made prisoner in one of the actions, whom he met with at a bivouac by chance, and who did not know him. The veteran's language was a curious commentary on the whole campaign; nay, upon Buonaparte's general system of warfare, which appeared so extraordinary to those who had long practised the art on more formal principles. "Things are going on as ill and as irregularly as possible," said the old martinet. "The French have got a young general, who knows nothing of the regular rules of war; he is sometimes on our front, sometimes on the flank, sometimes on the rear. There is no supporting such a gross violation of rules."¹²⁶ This somewhat resembles the charge which foreign tacticians have brought against the English, that they gained victories by continuing, with their insular ignorance and obstinacy, to fight on, long after the period when, if they had known the rules of war, they ought to have considered themselves as completely defeated.

A peculiar circumstance is worth mentioning. The French soldiers had a mode at that time of amusing themselves, by conferring an imaginary rank upon their generals, when they had done some remarkable exploit. They showed their sense of the bravery displayed by Buonaparte at the Battle of Lodi, by creating him a Corporal; and by this phrase, of the *Little Corporal*, he was distinguished in the intrigues formed against him, as well as those which were carried on in his favour;

¹²⁶ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 178.

in the language of Georges Cadoudal, who laid a scheme for assassinating him, and in the secret consultation of the old soldiers and others, who arranged his return from Elba.¹²⁷

We are now to turn for a time from war to its consequences, which possess an interest of a nature different from the military events we have been detailing.

The movements which had taken place since the King of Sardinia's defeat, had struck terror into the Government of Milan, and the Archduke Ferdinand, by whom Austrian Lombardy was governed. But while Beaulieu did his best to cover the capital by force of arms, the measures resorted to by the Government were rather of a devotional than warlike character. Processions were made, relics exposed, and rites resorted to, which the Catholic religion prescribes as an appeal to Heaven in great national calamities. But the saints they invoked were deaf or impotent; for the passage of the bridge of Lodi, and Beaulieu's subsequent retreat to Mantua, left no possibility of defending Milan. The archduke and his duchess immediately left Milan, followed by a small retinue, and leaving only a moderate force in the citadel, which was not in a very defensible condition. Their carriages passed through a large crowd which filled the streets.

¹²⁷ "How subtle is the chain which unites the most trivial circumstances to the most important events! Perhaps this very nickname contributed to the Emperor's miraculous success on his return from Elba in 1815. While he was haranguing the first battalion he met, which he found it necessary to parley with, a voice from the ranks exclaimed, 'Vive notre petit Caporal! – We will never fight against him.'" – Las Cases, tom. i., p. 170.

As they moved slowly along, the royal pair were observed to shed natural tears, at leaving the capital of these princely possessions of their house. The people observed a profound silence, only broken by low whispers. They showed neither joy nor sorrow at the event which was passing – all thoughts were bent in anxious anticipation upon what was to happen next.¹²⁸

When the archduke had departed, the restraint which his presence had imposed from habit and sentiment, as much as from fear of his authority, was of course removed, and many of the Milanese citizens began, with real or affected zeal for republicanism, to prepare themselves for the reception of the French. The three-coloured cockade was at first timidly assumed; but the example being shown, it seemed as if these emblems had fallen like snow into the caps and hats of the multitude. The imperial arms were removed from the public buildings, and a placard was put on the palace of the government with an inscription – "This house is to be let – apply for the keys to the French Commissioner Salicetti." The nobles hastened to lay aside their armorial bearings, their servants' liveries, and other badges of aristocracy. Meantime the magistrates caused order to be maintained in the town, by regular patrols of the burgher guard. A deputation of the principal inhabitants of Milan, with Melzi¹²⁹ at its head, was sent to the victorious general

¹²⁸ Thiers, tom. viii., p. 207.

¹²⁹ "It was in memory of this mission, that Napoleon, when King of Italy, created the duchy of Lodi, in favour of Melzi." – Montholon, tom. iii., p. 179.

with offers of full submission, since there was no longer room for resistance, or for standing upon terms.

On the 15th of May, Buonaparte made his public entry into Milan, under a triumphal arch prepared for the occasion, which he traversed, surrounded by his guards, and took up his residence in the archiepiscopal palace. The same evening a splendid entertainment was given, and the Tree of Liberty, (of which the aristocrats observed, that it was a bare pole without either leaves or fruit, roots or branches,) was erected with great form in the principal square. All this affectation of popular joy did not disarm the purpose of the French general, to make Milan contribute to the relief of his army. He imposed upon the place a requisition of twenty millions of livres, but offered to accept of goods of any sort in kind, and at a rateable valuation; for it may be easily supposed that specie, the representative of value, must be scarce in a city circumstanced as Milan was.¹³⁰ The public funds of every description, even those dedicated to the support of hospitals, went into the French military chest; the church-plate was seized as a part of the requisition; and, when all this was done, the citizens were burdened with the charge of finding rations for fifteen thousand men daily, by which force the citadel, with its Austrian garrison, was instantly to be blockaded.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Botta, tom. i., p. 431; Jomini, tom. viii., p. 179; Thibaudeau, tom. i., p. 234; Thiers, tom. viii., p. 208.

¹³¹ On the 20th, Buonaparte addressed the following remarkable order of the day to the army: —"Soldiers! you have rushed like a torrent from the top of the Apennines: you have overthrown, dispersed, all that opposed your march. Piedmont, delivered

SITUATION OF THE ITALIAN STATES

While Lombardy suffered much, the neighbouring countries

from Austrian tyranny, indulges her natural sentiments of peace and friendship towards France. Milan is yours; and the republican flag waves throughout Lombardy. The Dukes of Parma and Modena are indebted for their political existence only to your generosity. The army which so proudly threatened you, can now find no barrier to protect it against your courage: neither the Po, the Ticino, nor the Adda, could stop you a single day: those vaunted bulwarks of Italy opposed you in vain; you passed them as rapidly as the Apennines. These great successes have filled the heart of your country with joy; your representatives have ordered a festival to commemorate your victories, which has been held in every commune of the republic. There your fathers, your mothers, your wives, sisters, and mistresses, rejoiced in your victories, and proudly boasted of belonging to you. Yes, soldiers! you have done much. – But remains there nothing more to perform? Shall it be said of us, that we know how to conquer, but not how to make use of victory? Shall posterity reproach us with having found our Capua in Lombardy? – But I see you already hasten to arms; an effeminate repose is tedious to you; the days which are lost to glory, are lost to your happiness. Well, then! let us set forth; we have still forced marches to make, enemies to subdue, laurels to gather, injuries to avenge! Let those who have sharpened the daggers of civil war in France, who have basely murdered our ministers, and burnt our ships at Toulon, tremble! The hour of vengeance has struck. But let the people of all countries be free from apprehension; we are the friends of the people everywhere, and more particularly of the descendants of Brutus and Scipio, and the great men whom we have taken for our models. To restore the capitol, to replace there the statues of the heroes who rendered it illustrious, with suitable honours, to awaken the Roman people, stupified by several ages of slavery – such is the fruit of our victories. They will form an historical era for posterity: yours will be the immortal glory of having changed the face of the finest part of Europe. The French people, free, respected by the whole world, will give to Europe a glorious peace, which will indemnify her for the sacrifices of every kind, which, for the last six years, she has been making. You will then return to your homes; and your countrymen will say, as they point you out – *'He belonged to the army of Italy.'*"

were not spared. The reader must be aware, that for more than a century Italy had been silently declining into that state of inactivity which succeeds great exertion, as a rapid and furious blaze sinks down into exhaustion and ashes. The keen judgment of Napoleon had seen, that the geographical shape of Italy, though presenting in many respects advantages for a great and commercial nation, offered this main impediment to its separate existence as one independent state, that its length being too great in proportion to its breadth, there was no point sufficiently central to preserve the due influence of a metropolis in relation to its extreme northern and southern provinces; and that the inhabitants of Naples and Lombardy being locally so far divided, and differing in climate, habits, and the variety of temper which climate and habits produce, could hardly be united under the same government. From these causes Italy was, after the demolition of the great Roman Empire, early broken up into different subdivisions, which, more civilized than the rest of Europe at the time, attracted in various degrees the attention of mankind; and at length, from the sacerdotal power of Rome, the wealth and extensive commerce of Venice and Genoa, the taste and splendour of Florence, and the ancient fame of the metropolis of the world, became of importance much over-proportioned to their actual extent of territory. But this time

—*Moniteur*, No. 254, June 2. On reading over this proclamation one day at St. Helena, the Emperor exclaimed – "And yet they have the folly to say I could not write!" – Las Cases, tom. iii., p. 86

had passed away, and the Italian states, rich in remembrances, were now comparatively poor in point of immediate consequence in the scale of nations. They retained their oligarchical or monarchical forms and constitutions, as in the more vigorous state of their existence, but appeared to have lost their energies both for good and evil. The proud and jealous love which each Italian used to bear towards his own province was much abated; the hostility of the factions which divided most of their states, and induced the citizens to hazard their own death or exile in the most trifling party quarrel, had subsided into that calm, selfish indifference, which disregards public interests of all kinds. They were ill governed, in so far as their rulers neglected all means of benefiting the subjects or improving the country; and they were thus far well-governed, that, softened by the civilisation of the times, and perhaps by a tacit sense of their own weakness, their rulers had ceased, in a great measure, to exercise with severity the despotic powers with which they were in many cases invested, though they continued to be the cause of petty vexations, to which the natives had become callous. The Vatican slept like a volcano, which had exhausted its thunders; and Venice, the most jealous and cruel of oligarchies, was now shutting her wearied eyes, and closing her ears, against informers and spies of state. The Italian states stood, therefore, like a brotherhood of old trees, decayed at heart and root, but still making some show of branches and leaves; until the French invasion rushed down, like the whirlwind which lays them prostrate.

In the relations between France and Italy, it must be observed, that two of the most considerable of these states, Tuscany and Venice, were actually in league with the former country, having acknowledged the republic, and done nothing to deserve the chastisement of her armies. Others might be termed neutral, not having perhaps deemed themselves of consequence sufficient to take part in the quarrel of the coalesced powers against France. The Pope had given offence by the affair of Basseville, and the encouragement which his countenance afforded to the non-conforming clergy of France. But, excepting Naples and Austrian Lombardy, no state in Italy could be exactly said to be at open war with the new republic. Buonaparte was determined, however, that this should make no difference in his mode of treating them.

SEIZURE OF WORKS OF ART

The first of these slumbering potentates with whom he came in contact, was the Duke of Parma.¹³² This petty sovereign, even before Buonaparte entered Milan, had deprecated the victor's wrath; and although neither an adherent of the coalition, nor at war with France, he found himself obliged to purchase an armistice by heavy sacrifices. He paid a tribute of two millions of livres, besides furnishing horses and provisions to a large amount, and agreeing to deliver up twenty of the finest paintings in his

¹³² Frederic, Duke of Parma, grandson of Philip V. of Spain, was born in 1751. On his death, in 1802, the duchy was united to France, in virtue of the convention of 1801.

cabinet, to be chosen by the French general.¹³³

The next of these sufferers was the Duke of Modena.¹³⁴ This prince was a man of moderate abilities; his business was hoarding money, and his pleasure consisted in nailing up, with his own princely hands, the tapestry which ornamented churches on days of high holiday; from which he acquired the nickname of "the royal upholsterer." But his birth was illustrious as the descendant of that celebrated hero of Este, the patron of Tasso and of Ariosto; and his alliance was no less splendid, having married the sister of the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, and of Joseph the Second: then his daughter was married to the Archduke Ferdinand, the Governor of Milan. Notwithstanding his double connexion with the Imperial family, the principality of Modena was so small that he might have been passed over as scarce worthy of notice, but for the temptation of his treasures, in the works of art, as well as in specie. On the approach of a column of the French army to Modena, the duke fled from his capital, but sent his brother, the Chevalier d'Este, to capitulate with Napoleon, [May 20.]¹³⁵

It might have been urged in his favour, that he was no avowed partner in the coalition; but Buonaparte took for granted his

¹³³ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 173; Lacretelle, tom. xiii., p. 172; Thibaudeau, tom. i., p. 211. See the Treaty, Annual Register, vol. xxxviii., p. 233.

¹³⁴ Hercules III., Renaud d'Este, last Duke of Modena, was born in 1727 and died in 1797.

¹³⁵ Lacretelle, tom. xiii., p. 187; Montholon, tom. iii., p. 187.

good-will towards his brother-in-law the Emperor of Austria, and esteemed it a crime deserving atonement.¹³⁶ Indeed it was one which had not been proved by any open action, but neither could it admit of being disproved. The duke was therefore obliged to purchase the privilege of neutrality, and to expiate his supposed good inclination for the house of Austria. Five millions and a half of French livres, with large contributions in provisions and accoutrements, perhaps cost the Duke of Modena more anxious thoughts than he had bestowed on the misfortunes of his imperial relatives.

To levy on obnoxious states or princes the means of paying or accommodating troops, would have been only what has been practised by victors in all ages. But an exaction of a new kind was now for the first time imposed on these Italian Princes. The Duke of Modena, like the Duke of Parma, was compelled to surrender twenty of his choicest pictures, to be selected at the choice of the French general, and the persons of taste with whom he might advise. This was the first time that a demand of this nature had been made in modern times in a public and avowed manner,¹³⁷ and we must pause to consider the motives and justice of such a requisition.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ "The duke is avaricious. His only daughter and heiress is married to the Archduke of Milan. The more you squeeze from him, the more you take from the House of Austria." – Lallemand to Buonaparte, 14th May; *Correspondence Inédite*, tom. i., p. 169.

¹³⁷ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 174.

¹³⁸ "The republic had already received, by the same title, and placed in its Museum,

WORKS OF ART

Hitherto, works of art had been considered as sacred, even during the utmost extremities of war. They were judged to be the property, not so much of the nation or individuals who happened to possess them, as of the world in general, who were supposed to have a common interest in these productions, which, if exposed to become the ordinary spoils of war, could hardly escape damage or destruction. To take a strong example of forbearance, Frederick of Prussia was a passionate admirer of the fine arts, and no scrupulous investigator of the rights conferred by conquest, but rather disposed to stretch them to the uttermost. Yet, when he obtained possession of Dresden under circumstances of high irritation, Frederick respected the valuable gallery, cabinets, and museums of the capital of Saxony, and preserved their contents inviolate, as a species of property which could not, and ought not, to fall within the rights of a conqueror. He considered the elector as only the keeper of the gallery; and regarded the articles which it contained as belonging to the civilized world at large.

There are persons who demand the cause of this distinction,

the *chefs-d'œuvre* of the Dutch and Flemish schools. The Romans carried away from conquered Greece the statues which adorn the capitol. Every capital of Europe contained the spoils of antiquity, and no one had ever thought of imputing it to them as a crime." – Thibaudeau, tom. i., p. 214.

and require to know why works of art, the value of which is created solely by the opinion of those who pretend to understand them, and is therefore to be regarded as merely imaginary, or, as it is called by lawyers, a mere *pretium affectionis*, should be exempted from that martial law which disposes at pleasure of the real property of the vanquished.

It might easily be shown in reply, that the respect due to genius of the highest order, attaches with a sort of religious zeal to the objects of our admiration in the fine arts, and renders it a species of sacrilege to subject them to the chances of war. It has besides already been hinted, that these chefs-d'œuvre being readily liable to damage, scarcely admitting of being repaired, and absolutely incapable of being replaced, their existence is hazarded by rendering them the objects of removal, according to the fluctuation of victory.

But it is surely sufficient to say, that wherever the progress of civilisation has introduced rules to qualify and soften the extremities of war, these should be strictly adhered to. In the rudest ages of society, man avails himself of the right of the strongest in the fullest extent. The victor of the Sandwich islands devours his enemy – the North American Indian tortures him to death – almost all savage tribes render their prisoners slaves, and sell them as such. As society advances, these inhumanities fall out of practice; and it is unnecessary to add, that, as the victorious general deserves honourable mention in history, who, by his clemency, relaxes in any respect the rigorous laws of conquest,

so he must be censured in proportion whose conduct tends to retrograde towards the brutal violence of primitive hostility.

Buonaparte cannot be exempted from this censure. He, as the willing agent of the Directory under whose commands he acted, had resolved to disregard the neutrality which had hitherto been considered as attaching to the productions of the fine arts, and, for the first time, had determined to view them as the spoils of conquest. The motive is more easily discovered than justified.

In the Reign of Terror and Equality, the fine arts, with every thing connected with cultivated feelings, had been regarded as inconsistent with the simplicity of the Republican character; and, like the successful fanatics of England, and the first enthusiastic votaries of the Koran, the true Sans-Culottes were disposed to esteem a taste which could not generally exist without a previous superior education, as something aristocratic, and alien from the imaginary standard of equality, to which it was their purpose to lower all the exertions of intellect, as well as the possession of property. Palaces were therefore destroyed, and monuments broken to pieces.

But this brutal prejudice, with the other attempts of these frantic democrats to bring back the world to a state of barbarism, equally in moral and in general feeling, was discarded at the fall of the Jacobin authority. Those who succeeded to the government, exerted themselves laudably in endeavouring rather to excite men's minds to a love of those studies and tastes, which are ever found to humanize and soften the general tone

of society, and which teach hostile nations that they have points of friendly union, even because they unite in admiring the same masterpieces of art. A museum was formed at Paris, for the purpose of collecting and exhibiting to public admiration paintings and statues, and whatever was excellent in art, for the amusement of the citizens, whose chief scene of pleasure hitherto had been a wild and ill-regulated civic festival, to vary the usual exhibition of the procession of a train of victims moving towards the guillotine. The substitution of such a better object of popular attention was honourable, virtuous, and politic in itself, and speedily led the French people, partly from taste, partly from national vanity, to attach consequence to the fine arts and their productions.

Unfortunately there were no ordinary measures by which the French, as purchasers, could greatly augment the contents of their Museum; and more unfortunately for other nations, and ultimately for themselves, they had the power and the will to increase their possessions of this kind, without research or expense, by means of the irresistible progress of their arms. We have no right to say that this peculiar species of spoliation originated with Buonaparte personally. He probably obeyed the orders of the Directory; and, besides, instances might no doubt be found in the history of all nations, of interesting articles of this nature having been transferred by the chance of war from one country to another, as in cases of plunder of an ordinary description, which, though seldom avowed or defended, are not

the less occasionally practised. But Napoleon was unquestionably the first and most active agent, who made such exactions a matter of course, and enforced them upon principle; and that he was heartily engaged in this scheme of general plunder, is sufficiently proved from his expressions to the Directory, upon transmitting those paintings which the Duke of Modena, the first sufferer on this system, was compelled to surrender, and which were transferred to Paris as the legitimate spoils of war.

But before copying the terms in which Napoleon announces the transmission of masterpieces of art to the National Museum, it ought to be remarked, that the celebrated Saint Jerome, by Correggio, which he mentions with a sort of insulting triumph, was accounted so valuable, that the Duke of Modena offered two millions of livres as the ransom of that picture alone. This large sum the French general, acting on the principle which many in his situation were tempted to recognise, might have safely converted to his own use, under the certainty that the appropriation, indispensable as his services were to the government, would neither have been inquired into nor censured. But avarice cannot be the companion, far less the controller, of ambition. The feelings of the young victor were of a character too elevated to stoop to the acquisition of wealth; nor was his career, at that or any other period, sullied by this particular and most degrading species of selfishness. When his officers would have persuaded him to accept the money, as more useful for the army, he replied, that the two millions of livres would soon be spent, but the

Correggio¹³⁹ would remain an ornament of the city of Paris for ages, and inspire the production of future masterpieces.¹⁴⁰

In his despatch to the Directory, of 17th Floreal (8th of May,) Napoleon desires to have some artists sent to him, who might collect the monuments of art; which shows that the purpose of seizing upon them had been already formed.¹⁴¹ In the letter which accompanied the transmission of the pictures, he has these remarkable expressions: – "You will receive the articles of the suspension of arms which I have granted to the Duke of Parma. I will send you as soon as possible the finest pictures of Correggio, amongst others a Saint Jerome, which is said to be his masterpiece. I must own that the saint takes an unlucky time to visit Paris, but I hope you will grant him the honours of the Museum."¹⁴²

The same system was followed at Milan, where several of the

¹³⁹ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 174.

¹⁴⁰ "Is it, then, so difficult for Sir Walter to justify the motive which induced Napoleon to prefer works of art? It was a motive too great and too praiseworthy to need justification." – Louis Buonaparte, p. 21.

¹⁴¹ On the 7th of May, Carnot had written to Buonaparte – "The executive Directory is convinced, citizen-general, that you consider the glory of the fine arts connected with that of the army under your command. Italy is, in great part, indebted to them for her riches and renown; but the time is arrived when their reign must pass into France to strengthen and embellish that of liberty. The National Museum must contain the most distinguished monuments of all the arts, and you will neglect no opportunity of enriching it with such as it expects from the present conquests of the army of Italy, and those which may follow," &c. —*Correspondence Inédite*, tom. i., p. 155.

¹⁴² *Moniteur*, 25th Floreal, 16th May.

most valuable articles were taken from the Ambrosian collection. The articles were received in the spirit with which they were transmitted. The most able critics were despatched to assist the general in the selection of the monuments of the fine arts to be transferred to Paris, and the Secretary-general of the Lyceum, confounding the possession of the production of genius with the genius itself which created them, congratulated his countrymen on the noble dispositions which the victors had evinced. "It is no longer blood," said the orator, "which the French soldier thirsts for. He desires to lead no slaves in triumph behind his chariot – it is the glorious spoils of the arts and of industry with which he longs to decorate his victories – he cherishes that devouring passion of great souls, the love of glory, and the enthusiasm for high talents, to which the Greeks owed their astonishing successes. It was the defence of their temples, their monuments, their statues, their great artists, that stimulated their valour. It was from such motives they conquered at Salamis and at Marathon. It is thus that our armies advance, escorted by the love of arts, and followed by sweet peace, from Coni to Milan, and soon to proceed from thence to the proud basilic of St. Peter's." The reasoning of the Secretary of the Lyceum is lost amidst his eloquence; but the speech, if it means any thing, signifies, that the seizing on those admired productions placed the nation which acquired the forcible possession of them, in the same condition as if she had produced the great men by whom they were achieved; – just as the ancient Scythians believed they became inspired

with the talents and virtues of those whom they murdered. Or, according to another interpretation, it may mean that the French, who fought to deprive other nations of their property, had as praiseworthy motives of action as the Greeks, who made war in defence of that which was their own. But however their conduct might be regarded by themselves, it is very certain that they did by no means resemble those whose genius set the example of such splendid success in the fine arts. On the contrary, the classical prototype of Buonaparte in this transaction, was the Roman Consul Mummius, who violently plundered Greece of those treasures of art, of which he himself and his countrymen were insensible to the real and proper value.

It is indeed little to the purpose, in a moral point of view, whether the motive for this species of rapine were or were not genuine love of the art. The fingering connoisseur who secretes a gem, cannot plead in mitigation, that he stole it, not on account of the value of the stone, but for the excellence of the engraving; any more than the devotee who stole a Bible could shelter herself under a religious motive. But, in truth, we do not believe that the French or their general were actuated on this occasion by the genuine love of art. This taste leads men to entertain respect for the objects which it admires; and feeling its genuine influence, a conqueror would decline to give an example of a species of rapine, which, depriving those objects of admiration of the protection with which the general sentiment of civilized nations had hitherto invested them, must hold them up, like

other ordinary property, as a prey to the strongest soldier. Again, we cannot but be of opinion, that a genuine lover of the arts would have hesitated to tear those paintings from the churches or palaces, for the decoration of which they had been expressly painted, and where they must always have been seen to the best effect, whether from the physical advantages of the light, size of apartment, and other suitable localities connected with their original situation, or from the moral feelings which connect the works themselves with the place for which they were primarily designed, and which they had occupied for ages. The destruction of these mental connexions, which give so much additional effect to painting and statuary, merely to gratify the selfish love of appropriation, is like taking a gem out of the setting, which in many cases may considerably diminish its value.

We cannot, therefore, believe, that this system of spoliation was dictated by any sincere and manly love of the arts, though this was so much talked of in France at the time. It must, on the contrary, be ascribed to the art and ambition of the Directory who ordered, and the general who obeyed; both of whom, being sensible that the national vanity would be flattered by this species of tribute, hastened to secure it an ample gratification. Buonaparte, in particular, was at least sufficiently aware, that, with however little purity of taste the Parisians might look upon these exquisite productions, they would be sufficiently alive to the recollection, that, being deemed by all civilized people the most admirable specimens in the world, the valour of the French

armies, and the skill of their unrivalled general, had sent them to adorn the metropolis of France; and might hope, that once brought to the prime city of the Great Nation, such chefs-d'œuvre could not again be subject to danger by transportation, but must remain there, fixed as household gods, for the admiration of posterity. So hoped, as we have seen, the victor himself; and doubtless with the proud anticipation, that in future ages the recollection of himself, and of his deeds, must be inseparably connected with the admiration which the Museum, ordained and enriched by him, was calculated to produce.

But art and ambition are apt to estimate the advantages of a favourite measure somewhat too hastily. By this breach of the law of nations, as hitherto acknowledged and acted upon, the French degraded their own character, and excited the strongest prejudice against their rapacity among the Italians, whose sense of injury was in proportion to the value which they set upon those splendid works, and to the dishonour which they felt at being forcibly deprived of them. Their lamentations were almost like those of Micah the Ephraimite, when robbed of "the graven image, and the Teraphim, and the Ephod, and the molten image," by the armed and overbearing Danites – "Ye have taken away my gods that I have made, and what have I more?"

Again, by this unjust proceeding, Buonaparte prepared for France and her capital the severe moral lesson inflicted upon her by the allies in 1815. Victory has wings as well as Riches; and the abuse of conquest, as of wealth, becomes frequently the source

of bitter retribution. Had the paintings of Correggio, and other great masters, been left undisturbed in the custody of their true owners, there could not have been room, at an after period, when looking around the Louvre, for the reflection, "Here once were disposed the treasures of art, which, won by violence, were lost by defeat."¹⁴³

¹⁴³ See also Lacretelle's "Digression sur l'enlèvement de statues, tableaux, &c." —*Hist.*, tom. xiii., p. 172.

CHAPTER V

Directory proposes to divide the Army of Italy betwixt Buonaparte and Kellermann – Buonaparte resigns, and the Directory give up the point – Insurrection against the French at Pavia – crushed – and the Leaders shot – Also at the Imperial Fiefs, and Lugo, quelled and punished in the same way – Reflections – Austrians defeated at Borghetto, and retreat behind the Adige – Buonaparte narrowly escapes being made Prisoner at Valeggio – Mantua blockaded – Verona occupied by the French – King of Naples secedes from Austria – Armistice purchased by the Pope – The Neutrality of Tuscany violated, and Leghorn occupied by the French Troops – Views of Buonaparte respecting the Revolutionizing of Italy – He temporizes – Conduct of the Austrian Government at this Crisis – Beaulieu displaced, and succeeded by Wurmser – Buonaparte sits down before Mantua.

Occupying Milan, and conqueror in so many battles, Buonaparte might be justly considered as in absolute possession of Lombardy, while the broken forces of Beaulieu had been compelled to retreat under that sole remaining bulwark of the Austrian power, the strong fortress of Mantua, where they might await such support as should be detached to them through the Tyrol, but could undertake no offensive operations. To secure his position, the Austrian general had occupied the line formed by

the Mincio, his left flank resting upon Mantua, his right upon Peschiera, a Venetian city and fortress, but of which he had taken possession, against the reclamation of the Venetian government, who were desirous of observing a neutrality between such powerful belligerents, not perhaps altogether aware how far the victor, in so dreadful a strife, might be disposed to neglect the general law of nations. The Austrian defence on the right was prolonged by the lago di Guarda, a large lake out of which the Mincio flows, and which, running thirty-five miles northward into the mountains of the Tyrol, maintained uninterrupted Beaulieu's communication with Germany.

Buonaparte, in the meantime, permitted his forces only the repose of four or five days, ere he again summoned them to active exertion. He called on them to visit the Capitol, there to re-establish (he ought to have said to *carry away*) the statues of the great men of antiquity, and to change, or rather renovate, the destinies of the finest district of Europe. But while thus engaged, he received orders from Paris respecting his farther proceedings, which must have served to convince him that *all* his personal enemies, all who doubted and feared him, were not to be found in the Austrian ranks.

The Directory themselves had begun to suspect the prudence of suffering the whole harvest of success which Italy afforded, to be reaped by the adventurous and haughty character who had first thrust in the sickle. They perhaps felt already an instinctive distrust of the waxing influence, which was destined one day to

overpower their own. Under some such impression, they resolved [May 7] to divide the army of Italy betwixt Buonaparte and Kellermann, directing the former general to pass the Po, and advance southward on Rome and Naples, with twenty thousand men, while Kellermann, with the other moiety of the Italian army, should press the siege of Mantua, and make head against the Austrians.¹⁴⁴

This was taking Buonaparte's victory out of his grasp; and he resented the proposal accordingly, by transmitting his resignation [May 14,] and declining to have any concern in the loss of his army, and the fruits of his conquests. He affirmed, that Kellermann, with an army reduced to twenty thousand men, could not face Beaulieu, but would be speedily driven out of Lombardy; and that, in consequence, the army which advanced southward would be overwhelmed and destroyed. One bad general, he said, was better than two good ones.¹⁴⁵ The Directory must have perceived from such a reply, the firm and inflexible nature of the man they had made the leader of their armies, but they dared not, such was his reputation, proceed in the plan they had formed for the diminution of his power; and, perhaps for the first time since the Revolution, the executive government of France was compelled to give way to a successful general, and

¹⁴⁴ See Letter of the Directory to Buonaparte, May 7; Correspondence Inédite, tom. i., p. 145; and Montholon, tom. iv., p. 447.

¹⁴⁵ "Je crois qu'il faut plutôt un mauvais général que deux bons. La guerre est comme le gouvernement — *c'est une affaire de tact.*" — *Correspondence Inédite*, tom. i., p. 160.

adopt his views instead of their own. The campaign was left to his sole management;¹⁴⁶ he obtained an ascendancy which he took admirable care not to relinquish, and it became the only task of the Directory, so far as Italy was concerned, to study phrases for intimating their approbation of the young general's measures.

Whatever were the ultimate designs of Buonaparte against Rome, he thought it prudent to suspend them until he should be free from all danger of the Austrians, by the final defeat of Beaulieu. For this object, he directed the divisions of his army towards the right bank of the Mincio, with a view of once more forcing Beaulieu's position, after having taken precautions for blockading the citadel of Milan, where the Austrians still held out, and for guarding Pavia and other points, which appeared necessary to secure his conquests.

REVOLT OF PAVIA

Napoleon himself fixed his headquarters at Lodi, upon the 24th of May. But he was scarcely arrived there, when he received the alarming intelligence, that the city of Pavia, with all the surrounding districts, were in arms in his rear; that the tocsin

¹⁴⁶ "You appear desirous, citizen-general, to continue to conduct the whole series of the military operations of the present campaign in Italy. The Directory have maturely reflected on this proposition, and the confidence they have in your talents and Republican zeal, has decided this question in the affirmative." – Carnot to Buonaparte, 21st May; *Correspondence Inédite*, tom. i., p. 202.

was ringing in every village, and that news were circulated, that the Prince of Condé's army, united with a strong Austrian force, had descended from the Tyrol into Italy. Some commotions had shown themselves in Milan, and the Austrian garrison there made demonstrations towards favouring the insurrection in Pavia, where the insurgents were completely successful, and had made prisoners a French corps of three hundred men.

Buonaparte represents these disturbances as effected by Austrian agents;¹⁴⁷ but he had formerly assured us, that the Italians took little interest in the fate of their German masters. The truth is, that, having entered Italy with the most flattering assurances of observing respect for public and private property, the French had alienated the inhabitants, by exacting the contributions which they had imposed on the country with great severity. As Catholics, the Italians were also disgusted with the open indignities thrown on the places and objects of public worship, as well as on the persons and character of their priests.¹⁴⁸

The nobles and the clergy naturally saw their ruin in the success of the French; and the lower classes joined them for the time, from dislike to foreigners, love of national independence, resentment of the exactions made, and the acts of sacrilege

¹⁴⁷ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 196.

¹⁴⁸ It has been alleged, that in a farce exhibited on the public stage by authority of Buonaparte, the Pope was introduced in his pontifical dress. This, which could not be looked on as less than sacrilege by a Catholic population, does not accord with the general conduct of Buonaparte. See, however, "*Tableau des Premières Guerres de Buonaparte*," Paris, 1815, par Le Chevalier Mechaud de Villelle, p. 41. – S.

committed by the ultramontane invaders. About thirty thousand insurgents were in arms; but having no regular forces on which to rest as a rallying point, they were ill calculated to endure the rapid assault of the disciplined French.

Buonaparte, anxious to extinguish a flame so formidable, instantly returned from Lodi to Milan, at the head of a strong division, took order for the safety of the capital of Lombardy, and moved next morning towards Pavia, the centre of the insurrection. The village of Benasco, which was defended against Lannes, was taken by storm, the inhabitants put to the sword, and the place plundered and burnt. Napoleon himself arrived before Pavia, blew the gates open with his cannon, dispersed with ease the half-armed insurgents, and caused the leaders of the insurrection to be put to death, for having attempted to defend the independence of their country. He then seized on the persons of many inhabitants, and sent them to Paris as hostages for the subjection of their fellow-citizens.¹⁴⁹

The French general published a proclamation in the Republican style, in which he reproaches the insurgents for presuming to use arms in defence of their country, and menaces with fire and sword whatever individuals should in future

¹⁴⁹ "The pillage lasted several hours; but occasioned more fear than damage; it was confined to some goldsmiths' shops. The selection of the hostages fell on the principal families. It was conceived to be advantageous that some of the persons of most influence should visit France. In fact, they returned a few months after, several of them having travelled in all our provinces, where they had adopted French manners." – Napoleon, *Montholon*, tom. iii., p. 200.

prosecute the same daring course. He made his threat good some weeks afterwards, when a similar insurrection took place in those districts called the Imperial Fiefs,¹⁵⁰ and still later, when an effort at resistance was attempted in the town of Lugo. On both occasions, the leaders of the armed inhabitants were tried by a military commission, condemned, and shot. On the last, indeed, to revenge the defeat sustained by a squadron of French dragoons, Lugo was taken by storm, pillaged, burnt, and the men put to the sword; while some credit seems to be taken by Buonaparte in his despatches, for the clemency of the French, which spared the women and children.¹⁵¹

It is impossible to read the account of these barbarities, without contrasting them with the opinions professed on other occasions, both by the republican and imperial governments of France. The first of these exclaimed as at an unheard of cruelty, when the Duke of Brunswick, in his celebrated proclamation, threatened to treat as a brigand every Frenchman, not being a soldier, whom he should find under arms, and to destroy such villages as should offer resistance to the invading army. The French at that time considered with justice, that, if there is one duty more holy than another, it is that which calls on men to defend their native country against invasion. Napoleon, being emperor, was of the same opinion in the years 1813 and 1814, when the allies entered the French territories, and when, in

¹⁵⁰ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 227.

¹⁵¹ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 227.

various proclamations, he called on the inhabitants to rise against the invaders with the implements of their ordinary labour when they had no better arms, and "to shoot a foreigner as they would a wolf." It would be difficult to reconcile these invitations with the cruel vengeance taken on the town of Lugo,¹⁵² for observing a line of conduct which, in similar circumstances, Buonaparte so keenly and earnestly recommended to those whom fortune had made his own subjects.

The brief insurrection of Pavia suppressed by these severities, Buonaparte once more turned his thoughts to the strong position of the Austrians, with the purpose of reducing Beaulieu to a more decided state of disability, before he executed the threatened vengeance of the Republic on the Sovereign Pontiff. For this purpose he advanced to Brescia, and manœuvred in such a manner as induced Beaulieu, whom repeated surprises of the same kind had not put upon his guard, to believe, that either the French general intended to attempt the passage of the Mincio at the small but strong town of Peschiera, where that river issues from the lago di Guarda, or else that, marching northward along the eastern bank, he designed to come round the head of the lake, and thus turn the right of the Austrian position. While Beaulieu disposed his forces as expecting an attack on the right of his line, Buonaparte, with his usual celerity, proposed to attack him on the centre, at Borghetto, a town situated on the Mincio,

¹⁵² "The examples of the Imperial Fiefs and Lugo, though extremely severe, were indispensable, and authorised by the usage of war." – Jomini, tom. viii., p. 156.

and commanding a bridge over it, above ten miles lower than Peschiera.

BATTLE OF BORGHETTO

On the 30th May, the French general attacked with superior force, and repulsed across the Mincio, an Austrian corps who endeavoured to cover the town. The fugitives attempted to demolish the bridge, and did break down one of its arches. But the French, rushing forward with impetuosity, under cover of a heavy fire, upon the retreating Austrians, repaired the broken arch so as to effect a passage, and the Mincio, passed as the Po and the Adda had been before, ceased in its turn to be a protection to the army drawn up behind it.

Beaulieu, who had his headquarters at Valeggio, a village nearly opposite to Borghetto, hastened to retreat, and evacuating Peschiera, marched his dismayed forces behind the Adige, leaving five hundred prisoners, with other trophies of victory, in the hands of the French. Buonaparte had designed that this day of success should have been still more decisive; for he meditated an attack upon Peschiera at the moment when the passage at Borghetto was accomplished; but ere Augereau, to whom this manœuvre was committed, had time to approach Peschiera, it was evacuated by the Austrians, who were in full retreat by Castel

Nuovo, protected by their cavalry.¹⁵³

The left of the Austrian line, cut off from the centre by the passage of the French, had been stationed at Puzzuolo, lower on the Mincio. When Sebottendorf, who commanded the Imperial troops stationed on the left bank, heard the cannonade, he immediately ascended the river, to assist his commander-in-chief to repel the French, or to take them in flank if it was already crossed. The retreat of Beaulieu made both purposes impossible; and yet this march of Sebottendorf had almost produced a result of greater consequence than would have been the most complete victory.

The French division which first crossed the Mincio, had passed through Valeggio without halting, in pursuit of Beaulieu, by whom the village had been just before abandoned. Buonaparte with a small retinue remained in the place, and Massena's division were still on the right bank of the Mincio, preparing their dinner. At this moment the advanced guard of Sebottendorf, consisting of hulans and hussars, pushed into the village of Valeggio. There was but barely time to cry to arms, and, shutting the gates of the inn, to employ the general's small escort in its defence, while Buonaparte, escaping by the garden, mounted his horse and galloped towards Massena's division. The soldiers threw aside their cookery, and marched instantly against Sebottendorf, who, with much difficulty, and not without loss, effected a retreat in the same direction as his commander-

¹⁵³ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 204; Jomini, tom. viii., p. 140.

in-chief Beaulieu. This personal risk induced Buonaparte to form what he called the corps of guides, veterans of ten years' service at least, who were perpetually near his person, and, like the *Triarii* of the Romans, were employed only when the most desperate efforts of courage were necessary. Bessières, afterwards Duke of Istria, and Marshal of France, was placed at the head of this chosen body, which gave rise to the formation of the celebrated Imperial Guards of Napoleon.¹⁵⁴

FORTRESS OF MANTUA

The passage of the Mincio obliged the Austrians to retire within the frontier of the Tyrol; and they might have been considered as completely expelled from Italy, had not Mantua and the citadel of Milan still continued to display the Imperial banners. The castle of Milan was a place of no extraordinary strength, the surrender of which might be calculated on so soon as the general fate of war had declared itself against the present possessors. But Mantua was by nature one of those almost impregnable fortresses, which may long, relying on its own resources, defy any compulsion but that of famine.

The town and fortress of Mantua are situated on a species of island, five or six leagues square, called the seraglio, formed by three lakes, which communicate with, or rather are formed

¹⁵⁴ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 206.

by, the Mincio. This island has access to the land by five causeways, the most important of which was in 1796 defended by a regular citadel, called, from the vicinity of a ducal palace, La Favorità. Another was defended by an intrenched camp, extending between the fortress and the lake. The third was protected by a horn-work. The remaining two causeways were only defended by gates and draw-bridges. Mantua, low in situation, and surrounded by water, in a warm climate, is naturally unhealthy; but the air was likely to be still more destructive to a besieging army, (which necessarily lay in many respects more exposed to the elements, and were besides in greater numbers, and less habituated to the air of the place,) than to a garrison who had been seasoned to it, and were well accommodated within the fortress.

To surprise a place so strong by a coup-de-main was impossible, though Buonaparte represents his soldiers as murmuring that such a desperate feat was not attempted. But he blockaded Mantua [June 4] with a large force, and proceeded to take such other measures to improve his success, as might pave the way to future victories. The garrison was numerous, amounting to from twelve to fourteen thousand men; and the deficiencies of the fortifications, which the Austrians had neglected in over security, were made up for by the natural strength of the place. Yet of the five causeways, Buonaparte made himself master of four; and thus the enemy lost possession of all beyond the walls of the town and citadel, and had only

the means of attaining the mainland through the citadel of La Favorit . Lines of circumvallation were formed, and Serrurier was left in blockade of the fortress, which the possession of four of the accesses enabled him to accomplish with a body of men inferior to the garrison.¹⁵⁵

To complete the blockade, it was necessary to come to some arrangement with the ancient republic of Venice. With this venerable government Napoleon had the power of working his own pleasure; for although the state might have raised a considerable army to assist the Austrians, to whom its senate, or aristocratic government, certainly bore good will, yet, having been in amity with the French Republic, they deemed the step too hazardous, and vainly trusting that their neutrality would be respected, they saw the Austrian power completely broken for the time, before they took any active measures either to stand in their defence, or to deprecate the wrath of the victor. But when the line of the Mincio was forced, and Buonaparte occupied the Venetian territory on the left bank, it was time to seek by concessions that deference to the rights of an independent country which the once haughty aristocracy of Venice had lost a favourable opportunity of supporting by force.

¹⁵⁵ Napoleon, *Memoirs*, tom. iii., p. 209.

VERONA – LOUIS XVIII

There was one circumstance which rendered their cause unfavourable. Louis XVIII., under the title of a private person, the Comte de Lille, had received the hospitality of the republic, and was permitted to remain at Verona, living in strict seclusion. The permission to entertain this distinguished exile, the Venetian government had almost mendicated from the French revolutionary rulers, in a manner which we would term mean, were it not for the goodness of the intention, which leads us to regard the conduct of the ancient mistress of the Adriatic with pity rather than contempt. But when the screen of the Austrian force no longer existed between the invading armies of France and the Venetian territories – when the final subjugation of the north of Italy was resolved on – the Directory peremptorily demanded, and the senate of Venice were obliged to grant, an order, removing the Comte de Lille from the boundaries of the republic.

The illustrious exile protested against this breach of hospitality, and demanded, before parting, that his name, which had been placed on the golden book of the republic, should be erased, and that the armour presented by Henry IV. to Venice, should be restored to his descendant.¹⁵⁶ Both demands

¹⁵⁶ Daru, Hist. de Venise; tom. v., p. 436; Thibaudeau, tom. i., p. 257.

were evaded, as might have been expected in the circumstances, and the future monarch of France left Verona on the 21st of April, 1796, for the army of the Prince of Condé, in whose ranks he proposed to place himself, without the purpose of assuming any command, but only that of fighting as a volunteer in the character of the first gentleman in France. Other less distinguished emigrants, to the number of several hundreds, who had found an asylum in Italy, were, by the successes at Lodi and Borghetto, compelled to fly to other countries.

Buonaparte, immediately after the battle of Borghetto, and the passage of the Mincio, occupied the town of Verona [June 3,] and did not fail to intimate to its magistrates, that if the *Pretender*, as he termed him, to the throne of France, had not left Verona before his arrival, he would have burnt to the ground a town which, acknowledging him as King of France, assumed, in doing so, the air of being itself the capital of that republic.¹⁵⁷ This might, no doubt, sound gallant in Paris; but Buonaparte knew well that Louis of France was not received in the Venetian territory as the successor to his brother's throne, but only with the hospitality due to an unfortunate prince, who, suiting his claim and title to his situation, was content to shelter his head, as a private man might have done, from the evils which seemed to pursue him.

The neutrality of Venice was, however, for the time admitted, though not entirely from respect for the law of nations; for

¹⁵⁷ Moniteur, No. 267, June 17; Montholon, tom. iv., p. 121.

Buonaparte is at some pains to justify himself for not having seized without ceremony on the territories and resources of that republic, although a neutral power as far as her utmost exertions could preserve neutrality. He contented himself for the time with occupying Verona, and other dependencies of Venice upon the line of the Adige. "You are too weak," he said to the Proveditore Foscarelli, "to pretend to enforce neutrality, with a few hundred Sclavonians, on two such nations as France and Austria. The Austrians have not respected your territory where it suited their purpose, and I must, in requital, occupy such part as falls within the line of the Adige."¹⁵⁸

But he considered that the Venetian territories to the westward should in policy be allowed to retain the character of neutral ground, which The Government, as that of Venice was emphatically called, would not, for their own sakes, permit them to lose; while otherwise, if occupied by the French as conquerors, these timid neutrals might, upon any reverse, have resumed the character of fierce opponents. And, at all events, in order to secure a territory as a conquest, which, if respected as neutral, would secure itself, there would have been a necessity for dividing the French forces, which it was Buonaparte's wish to concentrate. From interested motives, therefore, if not from respect to justice, Buonaparte deferred seizing the territory of Venice when within his grasp, conscious that the total defeat of the Austrians in Italy would, when accomplished, leave the prey

¹⁵⁸ Thiers, tom. viii., p. 225.

as attainable, and more defenceless than ever. Having disposed his army in its position, and prepared some of its divisions for the service which they were to perform as moveable columns, he returned to Milan to reap the harvest of his successes.

The first of these consisted in the defection of the King of Naples from the cause of Austria, to which, from family connexion, he had yet remained attached, though of late with less deep devotion. His cavalry had behaved better during the engagements on the Mincio, than has been of late the custom with Neapolitan troops, and had suffered accordingly. The King, discouraged with the loss, solicited an armistice, which he easily obtained [June 5]; for his dominions being situated at the lower extremity of Italy, and his force extending to sixty thousand men at least, it was of importance to secure the neutrality of a power who might be dangerous, and who was not, as matters stood, under the immediate control of the French. A Neapolitan ambassador was sent to Paris to conclude a final peace; in the meanwhile, the soldiers of the King of the Two Sicilies were withdrawn from the army of Beaulieu, and returned to their own country. The dispositions of the Court of Naples continued, nevertheless, to vacillate, as opportunity of advantage, joined with the hatred of the Queen, (sister of Marie Antoinette,) or the fear of the French military superiority, seemed to predominate.¹⁵⁹

The storm now thickened round the devoted head of the Pope.

¹⁵⁹ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 213; Thibaudeau, tom. i., p. 275.

Ferrara and Bologna, the territories of which belonged to the Holy See, were occupied by the French troops. In the latter place, four hundred of the Papal troops were made prisoners, with a cardinal who acted as their officer. The latter was dismissed on his parole. But when summoned to return to the French headquarters, his eminence declined to obey, and amused the republican officers a good deal, by alleging, that the Pope had dispensed with his engagement. Afterwards, however, there were officers of no mean rank in the French service, who could contrive to extricate themselves from the engagement of a parole, without troubling the Pope for his interference on the occasion. Influenced by the approaching danger, the Court of Rome sent Azara, the Spanish minister, with full powers to treat for an armistice. It was a remarkable part of Buonaparte's character, that he knew as well when to forbear as when to strike. Rome, it was true, was an enemy whom France, or at least its present rulers, both hated and despised; but the moment was then inopportune for the prosecution of their resentment. To have detached a sufficient force in that direction, would have weakened the French army in the north of Italy, where fresh bodies of German troops were already arriving, and might have been attended with great ultimate risk, since there was a possibility that the English might have transported to Italy the forces which they were about to withdraw from Corsica, amounting to six thousand men. But, though these considerations recommended to Napoleon a negotiation with the Pope, his

holiness was compelled to purchase the armistice [June 23] at a severe rate. Twenty-one millions of francs, in actual specie, with large contributions in forage and military stores, the cession of Ancona, Bologna, and Ferrara, not forgetting one hundred of the finest pictures, statues, and similar objects of art, to be selected according to the choice of the committee of artists who attended the French army, were the price of a respite which was not of long duration. It was particularly stipulated, with republican ostentation, that the busts of the elder and younger Brutus were to be among the number of ceded articles, and it was in this manner that Buonaparte made good his vaunt, of establishing in the Roman capitol the statues of the illustrious and classical dead.¹⁶⁰

LEGHORN VIOLATED

The Archduke of Tuscany was next to undergo the republican discipline. It is true, that prince had given no offence to the French Republic; on the contrary, he had claims of merit with them, from having been the very first power in Europe who acknowledged them as a legal government, and having ever since been in strict amity with them. It seemed also, that while justice required he should be spared, the interest of the French themselves did not oppose the conclusion. His country

¹⁶⁰ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 221; Thiers, tom. viii., p. 236.

could have no influence on the fate of the impending war, being situated on the western side of the Apennines. In these circumstances, to have seized on his museum, however tempting, or made requisitions on his territories, would have appeared unjust towards the earliest ally of the French Republic; so Buonaparte contented himself with seizing on the grand duke's seaport of Leghorn [June 27,] confiscating the English goods which his subjects had imported, and entirely ruining the once flourishing commerce of the dukedom. It was a principal object with the French to seize the British merchant vessels, who, confiding in the respect due to a neutral power, were lying in great numbers in the harbour; but the English merchantmen had such early intelligence as enabled them to set sail for Corsica, although a very great quantity of valuable goods fell into the possession of the French.

While the French general was thus violating the neutrality of the grand duke, occupying by surprise his valuable seaport, and destroying the commerce of his state, the unhappy prince was compelled to receive him at Florence,¹⁶¹ with all the respect due to a valued friend, and profess the utmost obligation to him for his lenity, while Manfredini, the Tuscan minister, endeavoured to throw a veil of decency over the transactions at Leghorn, by allowing that the English were more masters in that port than was the grand duke himself. Buonaparte disdained to have recourse

¹⁶¹ "Il parcourut avec le grand-duc la célèbre galerie et n'y remarqua que trop la Vénus de Medicis." – Lacretelle, tom. xiii., p. 190.

to any paltry apologies. "The French flag," he said, "has been insulted in Leghorn – You are not strong enough to cause it to be respected. The Directory has commanded me to occupy the place."¹⁶² Shortly after, Buonaparte, during an entertainment given to him by the grand duke at Florence, received intelligence that the citadel of Milan had at length surrendered. He rubbed his hands with self-congratulation, and turning to the grand duke, observed, "that the Emperor, his brother, had now lost his last possession in Lombardy."

When we read of the exactions and indignities to which the strong reduce the weak, it is impossible not to remember the simile of Napoleon himself, who compared the alliance of France and an inferior state, to a giant embracing a dwarf. "The poor dwarf," he added, "may probably be suffocated in the arms of his friend; but the giant does not mean it, and cannot help it."

While Buonaparte made truce with several of the old states in Italy, or rather adjourned their destruction in consideration of large contributions, he was far from losing sight of the main object of the French Directory, which was to cause the adjacent governments to be revolutionized and new-modelled on a republican form, corresponding to that of the Great Nation herself.

This scheme was, in every respect, an exceedingly artful one. In every state which the French might overrun or conquer, there must occur, as we have already repeatedly noticed, men fitted to

¹⁶² Montholon, tom. iii., p. 226; Pommereuil, Campagnes de Buonaparte, p. 78.

form the members of revolutionary government, and who, from their previous situation and habits, must necessarily be found eager to do so. Such men are sure to be supported by the rabble of large towns, who are attracted by the prospect of plunder, and by the splendid promises of liberty, which they always understand as promising the equalization of property. Thus provided with materials for their edifice, the bayonets of the French army were of strength sufficient to prevent the task from being interrupted, and the French Republic had soon to greet sister states, under the government of men who held their offices by the pleasure of France, and who were obliged, therefore, to comply with all her requisitions, however unreasonable.

This arrangement afforded the French government an opportunity of deriving every advantage from the subordinate republics, which could possibly be drained out of them, without at the same time incurring the odium of making the exactions in their own name. It is a custom in some countries, when a cow who has lost her calf will not yield her milk freely, to place before the refractory animal the skin of her young one stuffed, so as to have some resemblance to life. The cow is deceived by this imposture, and yields to be milked upon seeing this representative of her offspring. In like manner, the show of independence assigned to the Batavian, and other associated republics, enabled France to drain these countries of supplies, which, while they had the appearance of being given to the governments of those who granted the supplies, passed, in fact, into the hands of their

engrossing ally. Buonaparte was sufficiently aware that it was expected from him to extend the same system to Italy, and to accelerate, in the conquered countries of that fertile land, this species of political regeneration; but it would appear that, upon the whole, he thought the soil scarcely prepared for a republican harvest. He mentions, no doubt, that the natives of Bologna and Reggio, and other districts, were impatient to unite with the French as allies, and intimate friends; but even these expressions are so limited as to make it plain that the feelings of the Italians in general were not as yet favourable to that revolution which the Directory desired, and which he endeavoured to forward.

He had, indeed, in all his proclamations, declared to the inhabitants of the invaded countries, that his war was not waged with them but with their governments, and had published the strictest orders for the discipline to be observed by his followers. But though this saved the inhabitants from immediate violence at the hand of the French soldiery, it did not diminish the weight of the requisitions with which the country at large was burdened, and to which poor and rich had to contribute their share. They were pillaged with regularity, and by order, but they were not the less pillaged; and Buonaparte himself has informed us, that the necessity of maintaining the French army at their expense very much retarded the march of French principles in Italy. "You cannot," he says, with much truth, "at the same moment strip a people of their substance, and persuade them, while doing so, that you are their friend and benefactor."

He mentions also in the St. Helena manuscripts,¹⁶³ the regret expressed by the wise and philosophical part of the community, that the revolution of Rome, the source and director of superstitious opinions, had not been commenced; but frankly admits that the time was not come for going to such extremities, and that he was contented with plundering the Roman See of its money and valuables, waiting until the fit moment should arrive of totally destroying that ancient hierarchy.

VIEWES AGAINST ITALY

It was not without difficulty that Buonaparte could bring the Directory to understand and relish these temporizing measures. They had formed a false idea of the country, and of the state and temper of the people, and were desirous at once to revolutionize Rome, Naples, and Tuscany.

Napoleon, more prudently, left these extensive regions under the direction of their old and feeble governments, whom he compelled, in the interim, to supply him with money and contributions, in exchange for a protracted existence, which he intended to destroy so soon as the fit opportunity should offer itself. What may be thought of this policy in diplomacy, we pretend not to say; but in private life it would be justly branded as altogether infamous. In point of morality, it resembles

¹⁶³ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 222.

the conduct of a robber, who, having exacted the surrender of the traveller's property, as a ransom for his life, concludes his violence by murder. It is alleged, and we have little doubt with truth, that the Pope was equally insincere, and struggled only, by immediate submission, to prepare for the hour when the Austrians should strengthen their power in Italy. But it is the duty of the historian loudly to proclaim, that the bad faith of one party in a treaty forms no excuse for that of the other; and that national contracts ought to be, especially on the stronger side, as pure in their intent, and executed as rigidly, as if those with whom they were contracted were held to be equally sincere in their propositions. If the more powerful party judge otherwise, the means are in their hand to continue the war; and they ought to encounter their more feeble enemy by detection, and punishment of his fraud, not by anticipating the same deceitful course which their opponent has resorted to in the consciousness of his weakness, – like a hare which doubles before the hounds when she has no other hope of escape. It will be well with the world, when falsehood and finesse are as thoroughly exploded in international communication, as they are among individuals in all civilized countries.

But though those states, whose sovereigns could afford to pay for forbearance, were suffered for a time to remain under their ancient governments, it might have been thought that Lombardy, from which the Austrians had been almost totally driven, and where, of course, there was no one to compound

with on the part of the old government, would have been made an exception. Accordingly, the French faction in these districts, with all the numerous class who were awakened by the hope of national independence, expected impatiently the declaration of their freedom from the Austrian yoke, and their erection, under the protection of France, into a republic on the same model with that of the Great Nation. But although Buonaparte encouraged men who held these opinions, and writers who supported them, he had two weighty reasons for procrastinating on this point. First, if France manumitted Lombardy, and converted her from a conquered province into an ally, she must in consistency have abstained from demanding of the liberated country those supplies, by which Buonaparte's army was entirely paid and supported. Again, if this difficulty could be got over, there remained the secret purpose of the Directory to be considered. They had determined, when they should make peace with the Emperor of Austria, to exact the cession of Belgium and the territory of Luxembourg, as provinces lying convenient to France, and had resolved, that under certain circumstances, they would even give up Lombardy again to his dominion, rather than not obtain these more desirable objects. To erect a new republic in the country which they were prepared to restore to its former sovereign, would have been to throw a bar in the way of their own negotiation. Buonaparte had therefore the difficult task of at once encouraging, on the part of the republicans of Lombardy, the principles which induced them

to demand a separate government, and of soothing them to expect with patience events, which he was secretly conscious might possibly never come to pass. The final issue shall be told elsewhere. It may be just necessary to observe, that the conduct of the French towards the republicans whom they had formed no predetermination to support, was as uncandid as towards the ancient governments whom they treated with. They sold to the latter false hopes of security, and encouraged the former to express sentiments and opinions, which must have exposed them to ruin, in case of the restoration of Lombardy to its old rulers, an event which the Directory all along contemplated in secret. Such is, in almost all cases, the risk incurred by a domestic faction, who trust to carry their peculiar objects in the bosom of their own country by means of a foreign nation. Their too powerful auxiliaries are ever ready to sacrifice them to their own views of emolument.

Having noticed the effect of Buonaparte's short but brilliant campaign on other states, we must observe the effects which his victories produced on Austria herself. These were entirely consistent with her national character. The same tardiness which has long made the government of Austria slow in availing themselves of advantageous circumstances, cautious in their plans, and unwilling to adopt, or indeed to study to comprehend, a new system of tactics, even after having repeatedly experienced its terrible efficacies, is combined with the better qualities of firm determination, resolute endurance, and unquenchable spirit.

The Austrian slowness and obstinacy, which have sometimes threatened them with ruin, have, on the other hand, often been compensated by their firm perseverance and courage in adversity.

Upon the present occasion, Austria showed ample demonstration of the various qualities we have ascribed to her. The rapid and successive victories of Buonaparte, appeared to her only the rash flight of an eaglet, whose juvenile audacity had over-estimated the strength of his pinion. The Imperial Council resolved to sustain their diminished force in Italy, with such reinforcements as might enable them to reassume the complete superiority over the French, though at the risk of weakening their armies on the Rhine. Fortune in that quarter, though of a various complexion, had been, on the whole, more advantageous to the Austrians than elsewhere, and seemed to authorise the detaching considerable reinforcements from the eastern frontier, on which they had been partially victorious, to Italy, where, since Buonaparte had descended from the Alps, they had been uniformly unfortunate.

BEAULIEU DISPLACED

Beaulieu, aged and unlucky, was no longer considered as a fit opponent to his inventive, young, and active adversary. He was as full of displeasure, it is said, against the Aulic Council, for the associates whom they had assigned him, as they could be with

him for his bad success.¹⁶⁴ He was recalled, therefore, in that species of disgrace which misfortune never fails to infer, and the command of his remaining forces, now drawn back and secured within the passes of the Tyrol, was provisionally assigned to the veteran Melas.

Meanwhile Wurmser, accounted one of the best of the Austrian generals, was ordered to place himself at the head of thirty thousand men from the Imperial forces on the Rhine, and, traversing the Tyrol, and collecting what recruits he could in that warlike district, to assume the command of the Austrian army, which, expelled from Italy, now lay upon its frontiers, and might be supposed eager to resume their national supremacy in the fertile climate out of which they had been so lately driven.

Aware of the storm which was gathering, Buonaparte made every possible effort to carry Mantua before arrival of the formidable Austrian army, whose first operation would doubtless

¹⁶⁴ The following letter appears in the journals as an intercepted despatch from Beaulieu to the Aulic Council of War. It seems worthy of preservation, as expressing the irritated feelings with which the veteran general was certainly affected, whether he wrote the letter in question or not. It will be recollected, that D'Argenteau, of whom he complains, was the cause of his original misfortunes at Montenotte. See *ante*, p. 52. "I asked you for a *general*, and you have sent me Argenteau – I am quite aware that he is a great lord, and that he is to be created Field-marshal of the Empire, to atone for my having placed him under arrest – I apprise you that I have no more than twenty thousand men remaining, and that the French are sixty thousand strong. I apprise you farther, that I will retreat to-morrow – next day – the day after that – and every day – even to Siberia itself, if they pursue me so far. My age gives me a right to speak out the truth. Hasten to make peace on any condition whatever." —*Moniteur*, 1796, No. 269. – S.

be to raise the siege of that important place. A scheme to take the city and castle by surprise, by a detachment which should pass to the Seraglio, or islet on which Mantua is situated, by night and in boats, having totally failed, Buonaparte was compelled to open trenches, and proceed as by regular siege. The Austrian general, Canto D'Irles, when summoned to surrender it, replied that his orders were to defend the place to extremity. Napoleon, on his side, assembled all the battering ordnance which could be collected from the walls of the neighbouring cities and fortresses, and the attack and defence commenced in the most vigorous manner on both sides; the French making every effort to reduce the city before Wurmser should open his campaign, the governor determined to protract his resistance, if possible, until he was relieved by the advance of that general. But although red-hot balls were expended in profusion, and several desperate and bloody assaults and sallies took place, many more battles were to be fought, and much more blood expended, before Buonaparte was fated to succeed in this important object.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 229; Jomini, tom. viii., p. 163.

CHAPTER VI

Campaign on the Rhine – General Plan – Wartensleben and the Archduke Charles retire before Jourdan and Moreau – The Archduke forms a junction with Wartensleben, and defeats Jourdan, who retires – Moreau, also, makes his celebrated Retreat through the Black Forest – Buonaparte raises the Siege of Mantua, and defeats the Austrians at Salo and Lonato – Misbehaviour of the French General Valette, at Castiglione – Lonato taken, with the French Artillery, on 3d August – Retaken by Massena and Augereau – Singular escape of Buonaparte from being captured at Lonato – Wurmser defeated between Lonato and Castiglione, and retreats on Trent and Roveredo – Buonaparte resumes his position before Mantua – Effects of the French Victories on the different Italian States – Inflexibility of Austria – Wurmser recruited – Battle of Roveredo – French victorious, and Massena occupies Trent – Buonaparte defeats Wurmser at Primolano – and at Bassano, 8th September – Wurmser flies to Vicenza – Battle of Saint-George – Wurmser finally shut up within the walls of Mantua.

CAMPAIGN ON THE RHINE

The reader must, of course, be aware, that Italy, through which

we are following the victorious career of Napoleon, was not the only scene of war betwixt France and Austria, but that a field of equally strenuous and much more doubtful contest was opened upon the Rhine, where the high military talents of the Archduke Charles were opposed to those of Moreau and Jourdan.

The plan which the Directory had adopted for the campaign of 1796 was of a gigantic character, and menaced Austria, their most powerful enemy upon the continent, with nothing short of total destruction. It was worthy of the genius of Carnot, by whom it was formed, and of Napoleon and Moreau, by whom it had been revised and approved. Under sanction of this general plan, Buonaparte regulated the Italian campaign in which he had proved so successful; and it had been schemed, that to allow Austria no breathing space, Moreau, with the army of the Sambre and Meuse, should press forward on the eastern frontier of Germany, supported on the left by Jourdan, at the head of the army of the Rhine, and that both generals should continue to advance, until Moreau should be in a position to communicate with Buonaparte through the Tyrol. When this junction of the whole forces of France, in the centre of the Austrian dominions, was accomplished, it was Carnot's ultimate plan that they should advance upon Vienna, and dictate peace to the Emperor under the walls of his capital.¹⁶⁶

Of this great project, the part intrusted to Buonaparte was

¹⁶⁶ See Correspondence Inédite, tom. i., p. 12; Montholon, tom. iv., p. 372; Jomini, tom. viii., p. 388.

completely executed, and for some time the fortune of war seemed equally auspicious to France upon the Rhine as in Italy. Moreau and Jourdan crossed that great national boundary at Neuwied and Kehl, and moved eastward through Germany, forming a connected front of more than sixty leagues in breadth, until Moreau had actually crossed the river Lech, and was almost touching with his right flank the passes of the Tyrol, through which he was, according to the plan of the campaign, to have communicated with Buonaparte.

During this advance of two hostile armies, amounting each to seventy-five thousand men, which filled all Germany with consternation, the Austrian leader Wartensleben was driven from position to position by Jourdan, while the Archduke Charles was equally unable to maintain his ground before Moreau. The imperial generals were reduced to this extremity by the loss of the army, consisting of from thirty to thirty-five thousand men, who had been detached under Wurmser to support the remains of Beaulieu's forces, and reinstate the Austrian affairs in Italy, and who were now on their march through the Tyrol for that purpose. But the archduke was an excellent and enterprising officer, and at this important period he saved the empire of Austria by a bold and decided manœuvre. Leaving a large part of his army to make head against Moreau, or at least to keep him in check, the archduke moved to the right with the rest, so as to form a junction with Wartensleben, and overwhelm Jourdan with a local superiority of numbers, being the very principle on which

the French themselves achieved so many victories. Jourdan was totally defeated, and compelled to make a hasty and disorderly retreat, which was rendered disastrous by the insurrection of the German peasantry around his fugitive army. Moreau, also unable to maintain himself in the heart of Germany, when Jourdan, with the army which covered his left flank, was defeated, was likewise under the necessity of retiring, but conducted his retrograde movement with such dexterity, that his retreat through the Black Forest, where the Austrians hoped to cut him off, has been always judged worthy to be compared to a great victory.¹⁶⁷ Such were the proceedings on the Rhine, and in the interior of Germany, which must be kept in view as influencing at first by the expected success of Moreau and Jourdan, and afterwards by their actual failure, the movements of the Italian army.¹⁶⁸

ADVANCE OF WURMSER

As the divisions of Wurmser's army began to arrive on the Tyrolese district of Trent, where the Austrian general had

¹⁶⁷ "That retreat was the greatest blunder that ever Moreau committed. If he had, instead of retreating, made a détour, and marched in the rear of Prince Charles, he would have destroyed or taken the Austrian army. The Directory, jealous of me, wanted to divide, if possible, the stock of military reputation; and as they could not give Moreau credit for a victory, they caused his retreat to be extolled in the highest terms: although even the Austrian generals condemned him for it." – Napoleon, *Voices*, &c., vol. ii., p. 40. See also Gourgaud, tom. i., p. 157.

¹⁶⁸ Montholon, tom. iii., pp. 292-307; Jomini, tom. viii., pp. 178-194.

fixed his head-quarters, Buonaparte became urgent, either that reinforcements should be despatched to him from France, or that the armies of the Rhine should make such a movement in advance towards the point where they might co-operate with him, as had been agreed upon at arranging the original plan of the campaign. But he obtained no succours; and though the campaign on the Rhine commenced, as we have seen, in the month of June, yet that period was too late to afford any diversion in favour of Napoleon, Wurmser and his whole reinforcements being already either by that time arrived, or on the point of arriving, at the place where they were to commence operations against the French army of Italy.¹⁶⁹

The thunder-cloud which had been so long blackening on the mountains of the Tyrol, seemed now about to discharge its fury. Wurmser, having under his command perhaps eighty thousand men, was about to march from Trent against the French, whose forces, amounting to scarce half so many, were partly engaged in the siege of Mantua, and partly dispersed in the towns and villages on the Adige and Chiese, for covering the division of Serrurier, which carried on the siege. The Austrian veteran, confident in his numbers, was only anxious so to regulate his advance, as to derive the most conclusive consequences from the victory which he doubted not to obtain. With an imprudence which the misfortunes of Beaulieu ought to have warned him against, he endeavoured to occupy with the divisions of his army

¹⁶⁹ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 234.

so large an extent of country, as rendered it very difficult for them to maintain their communications with each other. This was particularly the case with his right wing under Quasdonowich, the Prince of Reuss, and General Ocskay, who were detached down the valley of the river Chiese, with orders to direct their march on Brescia. This division was destined to occupy Brescia, and cut off the retreat of the French in the direction of Milan. The left wing of Wurmser's army, under Melas, was to descend the Adige by both banks at once, and manœuvre on Verona, while the centre, commanded by the Austrian field-marshal in person, was to march southward by the left bank of the lago di Guarda, take possession of Peschiera, which the French occupied, and, descending the Mincio, relieve the siege of Mantua. There was this radical error in the Austrian plan, that, by sending the right wing by the valley of Chiese, Wurmser placed the broad lake of Guarda, occupied by a French flotilla, between that division and the rest of his army, and of course made it impossible for the centre and left to support Quasdonowich, or even to have intelligence of his motions or his fate.¹⁷⁰

The active invention of Buonaparte, sure as he was to be seconded by the zeal and rapidity of the French army, speedily devised the means to draw advantage from this dislocation of the Austrian forces. He resolved not to await the arrival of Wurmser and Melas, but, concentrating his whole strength, to march into the valley of Chiese, and avail himself of the local superiority

¹⁷⁰ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 235; Jomini, tom. viii., p. 302.

thus obtained, to attack and overpower the Austrian division left under Quasdonowich, who was advancing on Brescia, down the eastern side of the lake. For this purpose one great sacrifice was necessary. The plan inevitably involved the raising of the siege of Mantua. Napoleon did not hesitate to relinquish this great object, at whatever loss, as it was his uniform system to sacrifice all secondary views, and to incur all lesser hazards, to secure what he considered as the main object of the campaign. Serrurier, who commanded the blockading army, was hastily ordered to destroy as much as possible of the cannon and stores which had been collected with so much pains for the prosecution of the siege.¹⁷¹ A hundred guns were abandoned in the trenches, and Wurmser, on arriving at Mantua, found that Buonaparte had retired with a precipitation resembling that of fear.¹⁷²

On the night of the 31st July this operation took place, and, leaving the division of Augereau at Borghetto, and that of Massena at Peschiera, to protect, while it was possible, the line of the Mincio, Buonaparte rushed, at the head of an army which his combinations had rendered superior, upon the right wing of the Austrians, which had already directed its march to Lonato, near the bottom of the lago di Guarda, in order to approach

¹⁷¹ Jomini, tom. viii., p. 314; Montholon, tom. iii., p. 239.

¹⁷² "Napoleon despatched Louis in the greatest haste to Paris, with an account of what had taken place. Louis left his brother with regret on the eve of the battle, to become the bearer of bad news. 'It must be so,' said Napoleon, 'but before you return you will have to present to the Directory the colours which we shall take to-morrow.'" – Louis Buonaparte, tom. i., p 63.

the Mincio, and resume its communication with Wurmser. But Buonaparte, placed by the celerity of his movements between the two hostile armies, defeated one division of the Austrian right at Salo, upon the lake, and another at Lonato. At the same time, Augereau and Massena, leaving just enough of men at their posts of Borghetto and Peschiera to maintain a respectable defence against Wurmser, made a forced march to Brescia, which they supposed to be still occupied by a third division of the Austrian right wing. But that body, finding itself insulated, and conceiving that the whole French army was debouching on them from different points, was already in full retreat towards the Tyrol, from which it had advanced with the expectation of turning Buonaparte's flank, and destroying his retreat upon Milan. Some French troops were left to accelerate their flight, and prevent their again making head, while Massena and Augereau, rapidly countermarching, returned to the banks of the Mincio to support their respective rear-guards, which they had left at Borghetto and Peschiera, on the line of that river.

BATTLE OF LONATO

They received intelligence, however, which induced them to halt upon this counter-march. Both rear-guards had been compelled to retire from the line of the Mincio, of which river the Austrians had forced the passage. The rear-guard of Massena, under General Pigeon, had fallen back in good order, so as to

occupy Lonato; that of Augereau fled with precipitation and confusion, and failed to make a stand at Castiglione, which was occupied by Austrians, who intrenched themselves there. Valette, the officer who commanded this body, was deprived of his commission in presence of his troops for misbehaviour,¹⁷³ an example which the gallantry of the French generals rendered extremely infrequent in their service.

Wurmser became now seriously anxious about the fate of his right wing, and determined to force a communication with Quasdonowich at all risks. But he could only attain the valley of the Chiese, and the right bank of the lago di Guarda, by breaking a passage through the divisions of Massena and Augereau. On the 3d of August, at break of day, two divisions of Austrians, who had crossed the Mincio in pursuit of Pigeon and Valette, now directed themselves, with the most determined resolution, on the French troops, in order to clear the way between the commander-in-chief and his right wing.

The late rear-guard of Massena, which, by his counter-march, had now become his advanced-guard, was defeated, and Lonato, the place which they occupied, was taken by the Austrians, with the French artillery, and the general officer who commanded them. But the Austrian general, thus far successful, fell into the great error of extending his line too much towards the right, in order, doubtless, if possible, to turn the French position on

¹⁷³ Buonaparte to the Directory; *Moniteur*, No. 328; Jomini, tom. viii., p. 318; Botta, tom. ii., p. 64.

their left flank, thereby the sooner to open a communication with his own troops on the right bank of the lago di Guarda, to force which had been his principal object in the attack. But, in thus manœuvring,¹⁷⁴ he weakened his centre, an error of which Massena instantly availed himself. He formed two strong columns under Augereau, with which he redeemed the victory, by breaking through and dividing the Austrian line, and retaking Lonato at the point of the bayonet. The manœuvre is indeed a simple one, and the same by which, ten years afterwards, Buonaparte gained the battle of Austerlitz; but it requires the utmost promptitude and presence of mind to seize the exact moment for executing such a daring measure to advantage. If it is but partially successful, and the enemy retains steadiness, it is very perilous; since the attacking column, instead of flanking the broken divisions of the opposite line, may be itself flanked by decided officers and determined troops, and thus experience the disaster which it was their object to occasion to the enemy. On the present occasion, the attack on the centre completely succeeded. The Austrians, finding their line cut asunder, and their flanks pressed by the victorious columns of the French, fell into total disorder. Some, who were farthest to the right, pushed forward, in hopes to unite themselves to Quasdonowich, and what they might find remaining of the original right wing; but these were attacked in front by General Soret, who had been

¹⁷⁴ "Sa manœuvre me parut un sûr garant de la victoire." – Buonaparte to the Directory, 6th August.

active in defeating Quasdonowich upon the 30th July, and were at the same time pursued by another detachment of the French, which had broken through their centre.

Such was the fate of the Austrian right at the battle of Lonato, while that of the left was no less unfavourable. They were attacked by Augereau with the utmost bravery, and driven from Castiglione, of which they had become masters by the bad conduct of Valette. Augereau achieved this important result at the price of many brave men's lives;¹⁷⁵ but it was always remembered as an essential service by Buonaparte, who afterwards, when such dignities came in use, bestowed on Augereau the title of Duke of Castiglione.¹⁷⁶ After their defeat, there can be nothing imagined more confused or calamitous than the condition of the Austrian divisions, who, having attacked, without resting on each other, found themselves opposed and finally overwhelmed by an enemy who appeared to possess ubiquity, simply from his activity and power of combining his forces.

A remarkable instance of their lamentable state of disorder and confusion, resembling in its consequences more than one example of the same sort, occurred at Lonato. It might, with any briskness of intelligence, or firmness of resolution, have

¹⁷⁵ Buonaparte, in his despatch to the Directory, states the loss of the Austrians at from two to three thousand killed, and four thousand prisoners; Jomini, tom. viii., p. 325, says, "three thousand killed, wounded, or prisoners."

¹⁷⁶ "That day was the most brilliant of Augereau's life, nor did Napoleon ever forget it." – Montholon, tom. iii., p. 255.

proved a decisive advantage to their arms; it was, in its result, a humiliating illustration, how completely the succession of bad fortune had broken the spirit of the Austrian soldiers. The reader can hardly have forgotten the incident at the battle of Millesimo, when an Austrian column which had been led astray, retook, as if it were by chance, the important village of Deago;¹⁷⁷ or the more recent instance, when a body of Beaulieu's advanced guard, alike unwittingly, had nearly made Buonaparte prisoner in his quarters.¹⁷⁸ The present danger arose from the same cause, the confusion and want of combination of the enemy; and now, as in the former perilous occurrences, the very same circumstances which brought on the danger, served to ward it off.

ESCAPE AT LONATO

A body of four or five thousand Austrians, partly composed of those who had been cut off at the battle of Lonato, partly of stragglers from Quasdonowich, received information from the peasantry, the French troops, having departed in every direction to improve their success, had only left a garrison of twelve hundred men in the town of Lonato. The commander of the division resolved instantly to take possession of the town, and thus to open his march to the Mincio, to join Wurmser. Now, it happened that Buonaparte himself, coming from Castiglione

¹⁷⁷ See *ante*, p. [55](#).

¹⁷⁸ See *ante*, p. [84](#).

with only his staff for protection, had just entered Lonato. He was surprised when an Austrian officer was brought before him blindfolded, as is the custom on such occasions, who summoned the French commandant of Lonato to surrender to a superior force of Austrians, who, he stated, were already forming columns of attack to carry the place by irresistible force of numbers. Buonaparte, with admirable presence of mind, collected his numerous staff around him, caused the officer's eyes to be unbandaged, that he might see in whose presence he stood, and upbraided him with the insolence of which he had been guilty, in bringing a summons of surrender to the French commander-in-chief in the middle of his army.¹⁷⁹ The credulous officer, recognising the presence of Buonaparte, and believing it impossible that he could be there without at least a strong division of his army, stammered out an apology, and returned to persuade his dispirited commander to surrender himself, and the four thousand men and upwards whom he commanded, to the comparatively small force which occupied Lonato. They grounded their arms accordingly, to one-fourth of their number, and missed an inviting and easy opportunity of carrying Buonaparte prisoner to Wurmser's headquarters.

The Austrian general himself, whose splendid army was thus destroyed in detail, had been hitherto employed in revictualling

¹⁷⁹ "Go and tell your general," said Napoleon, "that I give him eight minutes to lay down his arms; he is in the midst of the French army; after that time there are no hopes for him." – Montholon, tom. iii., p. 246; Jomini, tom. viii., p. 326. But see Botta, tom. i., p. 546.

Mantua, and throwing in supplies of every kind; besides which, a large portion of his army had been detached in the vain pursuit of Serrurier, and the troops lately engaged in the siege, who had retreated towards Marcaria. When Wurmser learned the disasters of his right wing, and the destruction of the troops despatched to form a communication with it, he sent to recall the division which we have mentioned, and advanced against the French position between Lonato and Castiglione, with an army still numerous, notwithstanding the reverses which it had sustained. But Buonaparte had not left the interval unimproved. He had recalled Serrurier from Marcaria, to assail the left wing and the flank of the Austrian field-marshal. The opening of Serrurier's fire was a signal for a general attack on all points of Wurmser's line. He was defeated, and nearly made prisoner; and it was not till after suffering great losses in the retreat and pursuit, that he gained with difficulty Trent and Roveredo, the positions adjacent to the Tyrol, from which he had so lately sallied with such confidence of victory. He had lost perhaps one half of his fine army, and the only consolation which remained was, that he had thrown supplies into the fortress of Mantua. His troops also no longer had the masculine confidence which is necessary to success in war. They were no longer proud of themselves and of their commanders; and those, especially, who had sustained so many losses under Beaulieu, could hardly be brought to do their duty, in circumstances where it seemed that Destiny itself was fighting against them.

The Austrians are supposed to have lost nearly forty thousand men in these disastrous battles. The French must have at least suffered the loss of one-fourth of the number, though Buonaparte confesses only to seven thousand men;¹⁸⁰ and their army, desperately fatigued by so many marches, such constant fighting, and the hardships of a campaign, where even the general for seven days never laid aside his clothes, or took any regular repose, required some time to recover their physical strength.

Meantime, Napoleon resumed his position before Mantua; but the want of battering cannon, and the commencement of the unhealthy heats of autumn, amid lakes and inundations, besides the great chance of a second attack on the part of Wurmser, induced him to limit his measures to a simple blockade, which, however, was so strict as to retain the garrison within the walls of the place, and cut them off even from the islet called the Seraglio.

The events of this hurried campaign threw light on the feelings of the different states of Italy. Lombardy in general remained quiet, and the citizens of Milan seemed so well affected to the French, that Buonaparte, after the victory of Castiglione, returned them his thanks in name of the Republic.¹⁸¹ But at

¹⁸⁰ "In the different engagements between the 29th July and the 12th August, the French army took 15,000 prisoners, 70 pieces of cannon, and nine stand of colours, and killed or wounded 25,000 men; the loss of the French army was 7000 men." — Montholon, tom. iii., p. 251.

¹⁸¹ "Your people render themselves daily more worthy of liberty, and they will, no doubt, one day appear with glory on the stage of the world." — *Moniteur*, No. 331, Aug. 9.

Pavia, and elsewhere, a very opposite disposition was evinced; and at Ferrara, the Cardinal Mattei, archbishop of that town, made some progress in exciting an insurrection. His apology, when introduced to Buonaparte's presence to answer for his conduct, consisted in uttering the single word *Peccavi!* and Napoleon, soothed by his submission, imposed no punishment on him for his offence,¹⁸² but, on the contrary, used his mediation in some negotiations with the court of Rome. Yet though the Bishop of Ferrara, overawed and despised, was permitted to escape, the conduct of his superior, the Pope, who had shown vacillation in his purposes of submission, when he heard of the temporary raising of Mantua, was carefully noted and remembered for animadversion, when a suitable moment should occur.

INFLEXIBILITY OF AUSTRIA

Nothing is more remarkable, during these campaigns, than the inflexibility of Austria, which, reduced to the extremity of distress by the advance of Moreau and Jourdan into her territories, stood nevertheless on the defensive at every point, and by extraordinary exertions again recruited Wurmser with fresh troops, to the amount of twenty thousand men; which reinforcement enabled that general, though under no more

¹⁸² "When brought before the Commander-in-chief, he answered only by the word *peccavi*, which disarmed the victor, who merely confined him three months in a religious house." – Montholon, tom. iii., p. 254.

propitious star, again to resume the offensive, by advancing from the Tyrol. Wurmser, with less confidence than before, hoped now to relieve the siege of Mantua a second time, and at a less desperate cost, by moving from Trent towards Mantua, through the defiles formed by the river Brenta. This manœuvre he proposed to execute with thirty thousand men, while he left twenty thousand, under General Davidowich, in a strong position at or near Roveredo, for the purpose of covering the Tyrol; an invasion of which district, on the part of the French, must have added much to the general panic which already astounded Germany, from the apprehended advance of Moreau and Jourdan from the banks of the Rhine.

Buonaparte penetrated the design of the veteran general, and suffered him without disturbance to march towards Bassano upon the Brenta, in order to occupy the line of operations on which he intended to manœuvre, with the secret intention that he would himself assume the offensive, and overwhelm Davidowich as soon as the distance betwixt them precluded a communication betwixt that general and Wurmser. He left General Kilmaine, an officer of Irish extraction¹⁸³ in whom he reposed confidence, with about three thousand men, to cover the siege of Mantua, by posting himself under the walls of Verona, while, concentrating a strong body of forces, Napoleon marched

¹⁸³ Kilmaine was born at Dublin in 1754. He distinguished himself at Jemappes and in La Vendée, and was selected to command the "*Army of England*," but died at Paris in 1799.

upon the town of Roveredo, situated in the valley of the Adige, and having in its rear the strong position of Calliano. The town is situated on the high road to Trent, and Davidowich lay there with twenty-five thousand Austrians, intended to protect the Tyrol, while Wurmser moved down the Brenta, which runs in the same direction with the Adige, but at about thirty miles' distance, so that no communication for mutual support could take place betwixt Wurmser and his lieutenant-general. It was upon Davidowich that Buonaparte first meant to pour his thunder.

Sept. 4

The battle of Roveredo, fought upon the 4th of September, was one of that great general's splendid days. Before he could approach the town, one of his divisions had to force the strongly intrenched camp of Mori, where the enemy made a desperate defence. Another attacked the Austrians on the opposite bank of the Adige, (for the action took place on both sides of the river,) until the enemy at length retreated, still fighting desperately. Napoleon sent his orders to General Dubois, to charge with the first regiment of hussars: – he did so, and broke the enemy, but fell mortally wounded with three balls. "I die," he said, "for the Republic – bring me but tidings that the victory is certain."¹⁸⁴

The retreating enemy were driven through the town of

¹⁸⁴ Buonaparte to the Directory, 6th September.

Roveredo, without having it in their power to make a stand. The extreme strength of the position of Calliano seemed to afford them rallying ground. The Adige is there bordered by precipitous mountains, approaching so near its course, as only to leave a pass of forty toises' breadth between the river and the precipice, which opening was defended by a village, a castle, and a strong defensive wall resting upon the rock, all well garnished with artillery. The French, in their enthusiasm of victory, could not be stopped even by these obstacles. Eight pieces of light artillery were brought forward, under cover of which the infantry charged and carried this strong position; so little do natural advantages avail when the minds of the assailants are influenced with an opinion that they are irresistible, and those of the defenders are depressed by a uniform and uninterrupted course of defeat. Six or seven thousand prisoners, and fifteen pieces of cannon captured, were the fruits of this splendid victory; and Massena the next morning took possession of Trent in the Tyrol, so long the stronghold where Wurmser had maintained his headquarters.¹⁸⁵

The wrecks of Davidowich's army fled deeper into the Tyrol, and took up their position at Lavis, a small village on a river of a similar name, about three leagues to the northward of Trent, and situated in the principal road which communicates with Brixen and Inspruck. Buonaparte instantly pursued them with a division of his army, commanded by Vaubois, and passed the Lavis

¹⁸⁵ Jomini, tom. ix., p. 107; Thibaudeau, tom. ii., p. 5; Montholon, tom. iii., p. 259.

with his cavalry, while the enemy were amused with an assault upon the bridge. Thus he drove them from their position, which, being the entrance of one of the chief defiles of the Tyrol, it was of importance to secure, and it was occupied accordingly by Vaubois with his victorious division.

THE TYROL

Buonaparte, in consequence of his present condition, became desirous to conciliate the martial inhabitants of the Tyrol, and published a proclamation, in which he exhorted them to lay down their arms, and return to their homes; assuring them of protection against military violence, and labouring to convince them, that they had themselves no interest in the war which he waged against the Emperor and his government, but not against his subjects.¹⁸⁶ That his conduct might appear to be of a piece with his reasoning, Napoleon issued an edict, disuniting the principality of Trent from the German empire, and annexing it in point of sovereignty to the French Republic, while he intrusted, or seemed to intrust, the inhabitants themselves with the power of administering their own laws and government.

Bounties which depended on the gift of an armed enemy, appeared very suspicious to the Tyrolese, who were aware that, in fact, the order of a French officer would be more

¹⁸⁶ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 263.

effectual law, whenever that nation had the power, than that of any administrator of civil affairs whom they might themselves be permitted to choose. As for the proclamation, the French general might as well have wasted his eloquence on the rocks of the country. The Tyrol, one of the earliest possessions of the House of Austria, had been uniformly governed by those princes with strict respect to the privileges of the inhabitants, who were possessed already of complete personal freedom. Secured in all the immunities which were necessary for their comfort, these sagacious peasants saw nothing to expect from the hand of a stranger general, excepting what Buonaparte himself has termed, those vexations necessarily annexed to a country which becomes the seat of war, and which, in more full detail, include whatever the avarice of the general, the necessities of the soldiers, not to mention the more violent outrage of marauders and plunderers, may choose to exact from the inhabitants. But, besides this prudent calculation of consequences, the Tyrolese felt the generous spirit of national independence, and resolved that their mountains should not be dishonoured by the march of an armed enemy, if the unerring rifle-guns of their children were able to protect their native soil from such indignity. Every mode of resistance was prepared; and it was then that those piles of rocks, stones, and trunks of trees, were collected on the verge of the precipices which line the valley of the Inn, and other passes of the Tyrol, but which remained in grim repose till rolled down, to the utter annihilation of the French and Bavarian

invaders in 1809, under the direction of the valiant Hofer and his companions in arms.

More successful with the sword than the pen, Buonaparte had no sooner disposed of Davidowich and his army, than he began his operations against Wurmser himself, who had by this time learned the total defeat of his subordinate division, and that the French were possessed of Trent. The Austrian field-marshal immediately conceived that the French general, in consequence of his successes, would be disposed to leave Italy behind, and advance to Inspruck, in order to communicate with the armies of Moreau and Jourdan, which were now on the full advance into Germany. Instead, therefore, of renouncing his own scheme of relieving Mantua, Wurmser thought the time favourable for carrying it into execution; and in place of falling back with his army on Friuli, and thus keeping open his communication with Vienna, he committed the great error of involving himself still deeper in the Italian passes to the southward, by an attempt, with a diminished force, to execute a purpose, which he had been unable to accomplish when his army was double the strength of the French. With this ill-chosen plan, he detached Mezaros with a division of his forces, to manœuvre on Verona, where, as we have seen, Buonaparte had stationed Kilmaine to cover the siege, or rather the blockade, of Mantua. Mezaros departed accordingly, and leaving Wurmser at Bassano on the Brenta, marched south-westward towards the collateral valley of the Adige, and attacked Kilmaine, who, by drawing his men under

cover of the fortifications of Verona, made a resolute defence. The Austrian general, finding it impossible to carry the place by a coup-de-main, was meditating to cross the Adige, when he was recalled by the most urgent commands to rejoin Wurmser with all possible despatch.

As soon as Buonaparte learned this new separation of Wurmser from a large division of his army, he anticipated the possibility of defeating the field-marshal himself, driving him from his position at Bassano, and of consequence, cutting off at his leisure the division of Mezaros, which had advanced so far to the southward as effectually to compromise its safety.

To execute this plan required the utmost rapidity of movement; for, should Wurmser learn that Buonaparte was advancing towards Bassano, in time to recall Mezaros, he might present a front too numerous to be attacked with hope of success. There are twenty leagues' distance betwixt Trent and Bassano, and that ground was to be traversed by means of very difficult roads, in the space of two days at farthest. But it was in such circumstances that the genius of Napoleon triumphed, through the enthusiastic power which he possessed over the soldiery, and by which he could urge them to the most incredible exertions. He left Trent on the 6th September, at break of day, and reached, in the course of the evening, Borgo di Val Lugano, a march of ten French leagues. A similar forced march of five leagues and upwards, brought him up with Wurmser's advanced-guard, which was strongly posted at Primolano.

The effect of the surprise, and the impetuosity of the French attack surmounted all the advantages of position. The Austrian double-lines were penetrated by a charge of three French columns – the cavalry occupied the high-road, and cut off the enemy's retreat on Bassano – in a word, Wurmser's vanguard was totally destroyed, and more than four thousand men laid down their arms.¹⁸⁷ From Primolano the French, dislodging whatever enemies they encountered, advanced to Cismone, a village, where a river of the same name unites with the Brenta. There they halted exhausted with fatigue; and on that evening no sentinel in the army endured more privations than Napoleon himself, who took up his quarters for the night without either staff-officers or baggage, and was glad to accept a share of a private soldier's ration of bread, of which the poor fellow lived to remind his general when he was become Emperor.¹⁸⁸

BATTLE OF BASSANO

Cismone is only about four leagues from Bassano, and Wurmser heard with alarm, that the French leader, whom he conceived to be already deeply engaged in the Tyrolese passes, had destroyed his vanguard, and was menacing his own position. It was under this alarm that he despatched expresses, as already

¹⁸⁷ Buonaparte to the Directory, 8th September; Montholon, tom. iii., p. 265. Jomini, tom. ix., p. 114, estimates the prisoners at fully from twelve to fifteen hundred.

¹⁸⁸ At the camp of Boulogne, in 1805.

mentioned, to recall Mezaros and his division. But it was too late; for that general was under the walls of Verona, nigh fifteen leagues from Wurmser's position, on the night of the 7th September, when the French army was at Cismone, within a third part of that distance. The utmost exertions of Mezaros could only bring his division as far as Montebello, upon the 8th September, when the battle of Bassano seemed to decide the fate of his unfortunate commander-in-chief.

Sept. 8

This victory was as decisive as any which Buonaparte had hitherto obtained. The village of Salagna was first carried by main force, and then the French army, continuing to descend the defiles of the Brenta, attacked Wurmser's main body, which still lay under his own command in the town of Bassano. Augereau penetrated into the town upon the right, Massena upon the left. They bore down all opposition, and seized the cannon by which the bridge was defended, in spite of the efforts of the Austrian grenadiers, charged with the duty of protecting Wurmser and his staff, who were now in absolute flight.

The field-marshal himself, with the military chest of his army, nearly fell into the hands of the French; and though he escaped for the time, it was after an almost general dispersion of his

troops.¹⁸⁹ Six thousand Austrians surrendered to Buonaparte;¹⁹⁰ Quasdonowich, with three or four thousand men, effected a retreat to the north-east, and gained Friuli; while Wurmser himself, finding it impossible to escape otherwise, fled to Vicenza in the opposite direction, and there united the scattered forces which still followed him, with the division of Mezaros. When this junction was accomplished, the aged marshal had still the command of about sixteen thousand men, out of sixty thousand, with whom he had, scarce a week before, commenced the campaign. The material part of his army, guns, waggons,

¹⁸⁹ Napoleon the same night visited the field of battle, and he told this anecdote of it at St. Helena – "In the deep silence of a beautiful moonlight night," said the Emperor, "a dog leaping suddenly from beneath the clothes of his dead master, rushed upon us, and then immediately returned to his hiding-place, howling piteously. He alternately licked his master's face, and again flew at us; thus at once soliciting aid and threatening revenge. Whether owing to my own particular mood of mind at the moment, the time, the place, or the action itself, I know not, but certainly no incident on any field of battle ever produced so deep an impression on me. I involuntarily stopped to contemplate the scene. This man, thought I, must have had among his comrades friends; and here he lies forsaken by all except his dog! What a strange being is man! and how mysterious are his impressions! I had, without emotion, ordered battles which were to decide the fate of the army; I had beheld with tearless eyes, the execution of those operations, in the course of which numbers of my countrymen were sacrificed; and here my feelings were roused by the mournful howling of a dog. Certainly at that moment I should have been easily moved by a suppliant enemy; I could very well imagine Achilles surrendering up the body of Hector at the sight of Priam's tears." – Las Cases, tom. ii., p. 403. See also Arnault, Hist. de Napoleon; and Thibaudeau, tom. ii., p. 11.

¹⁹⁰ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 266; Buonaparte, in his letter to the Directory, says 5000; Jomini, tom. ix., p. 116, reduces them to 2000.

and baggage, was all lost – his retreat upon the hereditary states of Austria was entirely cut off – the flower of his army was destroyed – courage and confidence were gone – there seemed no remedy but that he should lay down his arms to the youthful conqueror by whose forces he was now surrounded on all sides, without, as it appeared, any possibility of extricating himself. But Fate itself seemed to take some tardy compassion on this venerable and gallant veteran, and not only adjourned his final fall, but even granted him leave to gather some brief-dated laurels, as the priests of old were wont to garland their victims before the final sacrifice.

Surrounded by dangers, and cut off from any other retreat, Wurmser formed the gallant determination to throw himself and his remaining forces into Mantua, and share the fate of the beleaguered fortress which he had vainly striven to relieve. But to execute this purpose it was necessary to cross the Adige, nor was it easy to say how this was to be accomplished. Verona, one point of passage, was defended by Kilmaine, who had already repulsed Mezaros. Legnago, where there was a bridge, was also garrisoned by the French; and Wurmser had lost his bridge of pontoons at the battle of Bassano. At the village of Albarado, however, there was an established ferry, totally insufficient for passing over so considerable a force with the necessary despatch, but which Wurmser used for the purpose of sending across two squadrons of cavalry, in order to reconnoitre the blockade of Mantua, and the facilities which might present themselves for

accomplishing a retreat on that fortress. This precaution proved for the time the salvation of Wurmser, and what remained of his army.

Fortune, which has such influence in warlike affairs, had so ordered it, that Kilmaine, apprehending that Wurmser would attempt to force a passage at Verona, and desirous to improve his means of resistance against so great a force, had sent orders that the garrison of four hundred men who guarded the bridge at Legnago should join him at Verona, and that an equal number should be detached from the blockade of Mantua, to supply their place on the Lower Adige. The former part of his command had been obeyed, and the garrison of Legnago were on their march for Verona. But the relief which was designed to occupy their post, though on their way to Legnago, had not yet arrived. The Austrian cavalry, who had passed over at Albarado, encountering this body on its march from the vicinity of Mantua, attacked them with spirit, and sabred a good many. The commander of the French battalion, confounded at this appearance, concluded that the whole Austrian army had gained the right bank of the Adige, and that he should necessarily be cut off if he prosecuted his march to Legnago. Thus the passage at that place was left altogether undefended; and Wurmser, apprised of this unhopedor chance of escape, occupied the village, and took possession of the bridge.¹⁹¹

Buonaparte, in the meantime, having moved from Bassano to

¹⁹¹ Jomini, tom. ix., p. 116; Thibaudeau, tom. ii., p. 54; Montholon, tom. iii., p. 267.

Arcola in pursuit of the defeated enemy, learned, at the latter place, that Wurmser still lingered at Legnago, perhaps to grant his troops some indispensable repose, perhaps to watch whether it might be even yet possible to give the slip to the French divisions by which he was surrounded, and, by a rapid march back upon Padua, to regain his communication with the Austrian territories, instead of enclosing himself in Mantua. Buonaparte hastened to avail himself of these moments of indecision. Augereau was ordered to march upon Legnago by the road from Padua, so as to cut off any possibility of Wurmser's retreat in that direction; while Massena's division was thrown across the Adige by a ferry at Ronco, to strengthen General Kilmaine, who had already occupied the line of a small river called the Molinella, which intersects the country between Legnago and Mantua. If this position could be made good, it was concluded that the Austrian general, unable to reach Mantua, or to maintain himself at Legnago, must even yet surrender himself and his army.

ACTION OF CEREIA

On the 12th September, Wurmser began his march. He was first opposed at Cerea, where Murat and Pigeon had united their forces. But Wurmser made his dispositions, and attacked with a fury which swept out of the way both the cavalry and infantry of the enemy, and obtained possession of the village. In the heat of the skirmish, and just when the French were giving

way, Buonaparte himself entered Cerea, with the purpose of personally superintending the dispositions made for intercepting the retreat of Wurmser, when, but for the speed of his horse, he had nearly fallen as a prisoner into the hands of the general whose destruction he was labouring to ensure. Wurmser arrived on the spot a few minutes afterwards, and gave orders for a pursuit in every direction; commanding, however, that the French general should, if possible, be taken alive – a conjunction of circumstances worthy of remark, since it authorised the Austrian general for the moment to pronounce on the fate of him, who, before and after was the master of his destiny.

Having again missed this great prize, Wurmser continued his march all night, and turning aside from the great road, where the blockading army had taken measures to intercept him, he surprised a small bridge over the Molinella, at a village called Villa Impenta, by which he eluded encountering the forces of Kilmaine. A body of French horse, sent to impede his progress, was cut to pieces by the Austrian cavalry. On the 14th, Wurmser obtained a similar success at Duc Castelli, where his cuirassiers destroyed a body of French infantry; and having now forced himself into a communication with Mantua, he encamped between the suburb of Saint George and the citadel, and endeavoured to keep open the communication with the country, for the purpose of obtaining a supply of forage and provisions.

Sept. 19

But it was not Buonaparte's intention to leave him undisturbed in so commodious a position. Having received the surrender of an Austrian corps which was left in Porto Legnago, and gleaned up such other remnants of Wurmser's army as could not accompany their general in his rapid march to Mantua, he resolved once more to force his way into the islet of the Seraglio, upon which Mantua is built, and confine the besieged within the walls of their garrison. On the 19th, after a very severe and bloody action, the French obtained possession of the suburb of Saint George, and the citadel termed La Favorita, and a long series of severe sallies and attacks took place, which, although gallantly fought by the Austrians, generally tended to their disadvantage, so that they were finally again blockaded within the walls of the city and castle.¹⁹²

The woes of war now appeared among them in a different and even more hideous form than when inflicted with the sword alone. When Wurmser threw himself into Mantua, the garrison might amount to twenty-six thousand men; yet, ere October was far advanced, there were little above the half of the number fit for service. There were nearly nine thousand sick in the hospitals, – infectious diseases, privations of every kind, and the

¹⁹² Montholon, tom. iii., p. 271; Jomini, tom. ix., p. 126.

unhealthy air of the lakes and marshes with which they were surrounded, had cut off the remainder. The French also had lost great numbers; but the conquerors could reckon up their victories, and forget the price at which they had been purchased.

It was a proud vaunt, and a cure in itself for many losses, that the minister of war had a right to make the following speech to the Directory, at the formal introduction of Marmont, then aide-de-camp of Buonaparte, and commissioned to present on his part the colours and standards taken from the enemy: – "In the course of a single campaign," he truly said, "Italy had been entirely conquered – three large armies had been entirely destroyed – more than fifty stand of colours had been taken by the victors – forty thousand Austrians had laid down their arms – and, what was not the least surprising part of the whole, these deeds had been accomplished by an army of only thirty thousand Frenchmen, commanded by a general scarce twenty-six years old."¹⁹³

¹⁹³ Moniteur, No. 13, October 4.

CHAPTER VII

Corsica reunited with France – Critical situation of Buonaparte in Italy at this period – The Austrian General Alvinzi placed at the head of a new Army – Various Contests, attended with no decisive result – Want of Concert among the Austrian Generals – French Army begin to murmur – First Battle of Arcola – Napoleon in personal danger – No decisive result – Second Battle of Arcola – The French victorious – Fresh want of concert among the Austrian Generals – General Views of Military and Political Affairs, after the conclusion of the fourth Italian Campaign – Austria commences a fifth Campaign – but has not profited by experience – Battle of Rivoli, and Victory of the French – Further successful at La Favorita – French regain their lost ground in Italy – Surrender of Mantua – Instances of Napoleon's Generosity.

CORSICA REUNITED WITH FRANCE

About this period the reunion of Corsica with France took place. Buonaparte contributed to this change in the political relations of his native country indirectly, in part by the high pride which his countrymen must have originally taken in his splendid career; and he did so more immediately, by seizing the

town and port of Leghorn, and assisting those Corsicans, who had been exiled by the English party, to return to their native island.¹⁹⁴ He intimated the event to the Directory, and stated that he had appointed Gentili, the principal partisan of the French, to govern the island provisionally; and that the Commissioner Salicetti was to set sail for the purpose of making other necessary arrangements.¹⁹⁵ The communication is coldly made, nor does Buonaparte's love of his birth-place induce him to expatiate upon its importance, although the Directory afterwards made the acquisition of that island a great theme of exultation. But his destinies had called him to too high an elevation to permit his distinguishing the obscure islet which he had arisen from originally. He was like the young lion, who, while he is scattering the herds and destroying the hunters, thinks little of the forest-cave in which he first saw the light.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Jomini, tom. ix., p. 153; Thibaudeau, tom. ii., p. 32; Montgaillard, tom. iv., p. 468.

¹⁹⁵ "Gentili and all the refugees landed in October, 1796, in spite of the English cruisers. The republicans took possession of Bastia and of all the fortresses. The English hastily embarked. The King of England wore the Corsican crown only two years. This whim cost the British treasury five millions sterling. John Bull's riches could not have been worse employed." – Napoleon, *Montholon*, tom. iii., p. 58.

¹⁹⁶ It is fair to add, however, that Buonaparte in his Memoirs, while at St. Helena, gives a sketch of the geographical description and history of Corsica, and suggests several plans for the civilisation of his countrymen, – one of which, the depriving them of the arms which they constantly wear, might be prudent were it practicable, but certainly would be highly unpalatable. There occurs an odd observation, "that the Crown of Corsica must, on the temporary annexation of the island to Great Britain, have been surprised at finding itself appertaining to the successor of Fingal." Not

Indeed, Buonaparte's situation, however brilliant, was at the same time critical, and required his undivided thoughts. Mantua still held out, and was likely to do so. Wurmser had caused about three-fourths of the horses belonging to his cavalry to be killed and salted for the use of the garrison, and thus made a large addition, such as it was, to the provisions of the place. His character for courage and determination was completely established; and being now engaged in defending a fortress by ordinary rules of art, which he perfectly understood, he was in no danger of being over-reached and out-manœuvred by the new system of tactics, which occasioned his misfortunes in the open field.

ALVINZI

While, therefore, the last pledge of Austria's dominions in Italy was confided to such safe custody, the Emperor and his ministers were eagerly engaged in making a new effort to recover their Italian territories. The defeat of Jourdan, and the retreat of Moreau before the Archduke Charles, had given the Imperialists some breathing time, and enabled them, by extensive levies in the warlike province of Illyria, as well as draughts from the army of the Rhine, to take the field with a new army, for the recovery of the Italian provinces, and the relief of Mantua. By orders of the

more, we should think, than the diadem of France, and the iron crown of Italy, may have marvelled at meeting on the brow of a Corsican soldier of fortune. – S.

Aulic Council, two armies were assembled on the Italian frontier; one at Friuli, which was partly composed of that portion of the army of Wurmser, which, cut off from their main body at the battle of Bassano, had effected, under Quasdonowich, a retreat in that direction; the other was to be formed on the Tyrol. They were to operate in conjunction, and both were placed under the command of Marshal Alvinzi,¹⁹⁷ an officer of high reputation, which was then thought merited.

Thus, for the fourth time, Buonaparte was to contest the same objects on the same ground, with new forces belonging to the same enemy. He had, indeed, himself, received from France, reinforcements to the number of twelve battalions, from those troops which had been formerly employed in La Vendée. The army, in general, since victory had placed the resources of the rich country which they occupied at the command of their leader, had been well supplied with clothes, food, and provisions, and were devotedly attached to the chief who had conducted them from starving on the barren Alps into this land of plenty, and had directed their military efforts with such skill, that they could scarce ever be said to have failed of success in whatever they undertook under his direction.

Napoleon had also on his side the good wishes, if not of the Italians in general, of a considerable party, especially in Lombardy, and friends and enemies were alike impressed with belief in his predestined success. During the former attempts of

¹⁹⁷ Alvinzi was, at this time, seventy years of age. He died in 1810.

Wurmser, a contrary opinion had prevailed, and the news that the Austrians were in motion, had given birth to insurrections against the French in many places, and to the publication of sentiments unfavourable to them almost every where. But now, when all predicted the certain success of Napoleon, the friends of Austria remained quiet, and the numerous party who desire in such cases to keep on the winning side, added weight to the actual friends of France, by expressing their opinions in her favour. It seems, however, that Victory, as if displeased that mortals should presume to calculate the motives of so fickle a deity, was, on this occasion, disposed to be more coy than formerly even to her greatest favourite, and to oblige him to toil harder than he had done even when the odds were more against him.¹⁹⁸

Davidowich commanded the body of the Austrians which was in the Tyrol, and which included the fine militia of that martial province. There was little difficulty in prevailing on them to advance into Italy, convinced as they were that there was small security for their national independence while the French remained in possession of Lombardy. Buonaparte, on the other hand, had placed Vaubois in the passes upon the river Lavis, above Trent, to cover that new possession of the French Republic, and check the advance of Davidowich. It was the plan of Alvinzi to descend from Friuli, and approach Vicenza, to which place he expected Davidowich might penetrate by a corresponding movement down the Adige. Having thus

¹⁹⁸ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 345; Thibaudeau, tom. ii., p. 82.

brought his united army into activity, his design was to advance on Mantua, the constant object of bloody contention. He commenced his march in the beginning of October, 1796.

As soon as Buonaparte heard that Alvinzi was in motion, he sent orders to Vaubois to attack Davidowich, and to Massena to advance to Bassano upon the Brenta, and make head against the Austrian commander-in-chief. Both measures failed in effect.

Nov. 5

Vaubois indeed made his attack, but so unsuccessfully, that after two days' fighting he was compelled to retreat before the Austrians, to evacuate the city of Trent, and to retreat upon Calliano, already mentioned as a very strong position, in the previous account of the battle of Roveredo. A great part of his opponents being Tyrolese, and admirably calculated for mountain warfare, they forced Vaubois from a situation which was almost impregnable; and their army, descending the Adige upon the right bank, appeared to manœuvre with the purpose of marching on Montebaldo and Rivoli, and thus opening the communication with Alvinzi.

On the other hand, though Massena had sustained no loss, for he avoided an engagement, the approach of Alvinzi, with a superior army, compelled him to evacuate Bassano, and to leave the enemy in undisputed possession of the valley of the Brenta. Buonaparte, therefore, himself saw the necessity of

advancing with Augereau's division, determined to give battle to Alvinzi, and force him back on the Piave before the arrival of Davidowich. But he experienced unusual resistance; and it is amid complaints of the weather, of misadventures and miscarriages of different sorts, that he faintly claims the name of a victory for his first encounter with Alvinzi. It is clear that he had made a desperate attempt to drive the Austrian general from Bassano – that he had not succeeded; but, on the contrary, was under the necessity of retreating to Vicenza. It is further manifest, that Buonaparte was sensible this retreat did not accord well with his claim of victory; and he says, with a consciousness which is amusing, that the inhabitants of Vicenza were surprised to see the French army retire through their town, as they had been witnesses of their victory on the preceding day.¹⁹⁹ No doubt there was room for astonishment if the Vicenzans had been as completely convinced of the fact as Buonaparte represents them. The truth was, Buonaparte was sensible that Vaubois, being in complete retreat, was exposed to be cut off unless he was supported, and he hastened to prevent so great a loss, by meeting and reinforcing him. His own retrograde movement, however, which extended as far as Verona, left the whole country betwixt the Brenta and Adige open to the Austrians; nor does there occur to those who read the account of the campaign, any good reason why Davidowich and Alvinzi, having no body of French to interrupt their communication, should not instantly

¹⁹⁹ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 345; Thibaudeau, tom. ii., p. 109.

have adjusted their operations on a common basis.²⁰⁰ But it was the bane of the Austrian tactics, through the whole war, to neglect that connexion and co-operation betwixt their separate divisions, which is essential to secure the general result of a campaign. Above all, as Buonaparte himself remarked of them, their leaders were not sufficiently acquainted with the value of time in military movements.

Napoleon having retreated to Verona, where he could at pleasure assume the offensive by means of the bridge, or place the Adige between himself and the enemy, visited, in the first place, the positions of Rivoli and Corona, where were stationed the troops which had been defeated by Davidowich.

MURMURS OF THE TROOPS

They appeared before him with dejected countenances, and Napoleon upbraided them with their indifferent behaviour. "You have displeased me," he said; – "You have shown neither discipline, nor constancy, nor bravery. You have suffered yourselves to be driven from positions where a handful of brave men might have arrested the progress of a large army. You are no longer French soldiers. – Let it be written on their colours – "They are not of the Army of Italy." Tears, and groans of sorrow and shame, answered this harangue – the rules of discipline could not

²⁰⁰ Jomini, tom. ix., p. 165.

stifle their sense of mortification, and several of the grenadiers, who had deserved and wore marks of distinction, called out from the ranks – "General, we have been misrepresented – Place us in the advance, and you may then judge whether we do not belong to the army of Italy." Buonaparte having produced the necessary effect, spoke to them in a more conciliatory tone; and the regiments who had undergone so severe a rebuke, redeemed their character in the subsequent part of the campaign.²⁰¹

While Napoleon was indefatigable in concentrating his troops on the right bank of the Adige, and inspiring them with his own spirit of enterprise, Alvinzi had taken his position on the left bank, nearly opposite to Verona. His army occupied a range of heights called Caldiero, on the left of which, and somewhat in the rear, is the little village of Arcola, situated among marshes, which extend around the foot of that eminence. Here the Austrian general had stationed himself, with a view, it may be supposed, to wait until Davidowich and his division should descend the right bank of the Adige, disquiet the French leader's position on that river, and give Alvinzi himself the opportunity of forcing a passage.

Buonaparte, with his usual rapidity of resolution, resolved to drive the Austrian from his position on Caldiero, before the arrival of Davidowich. But neither on this occasion was fortune propitious to him.²⁰² A strong French division, under

²⁰¹ Montholon, tom. iii., p. 349.

²⁰² Jomini, tom. ix., p. 170; Thibaudeau, tom. ii., p. 112.

Massena, attacked the heights amid a storm of rain; but their most strenuous exertions proved completely unsuccessful, and left to the general only his usual mode of concealing a check, by railing at the elements.²⁰³

The situation of the French became critical, and, what was worse, the soldiers perceived it; and complained that they had to sustain the whole burden of the war, had to encounter army after army, and must succumb at last under the renewed and unwearied efforts of Austria. Buonaparte parried these natural feelings as well as he could,²⁰⁴ promising that their conquest of Italy should be speedily sealed by the defeat of this Alvinzi; and he applied his whole genius to discover the means of bringing the war to an effective struggle, in which he confided that, in spite of numbers, his own talents, and the enterprising character of an army so often victorious, might assure him a favourable result. But it was no easy way to discover a mode of attacking, with even plausible hopes of success. If he advanced northward on the right bank to seek out and destroy Davidowich, he must weaken his line on the Adige, by the troops withdrawn to effect that purpose; and

²⁰³ "The rain fell in torrents; the ground was so completely soaked, that the French artillery could make no movement, whilst that of the Austrians, being in position, and advantageously placed, produced its full effect." – Montholon, tom. iii., p. 352.

²⁰⁴ "We have but one more effort to make, and Italy is our own. The enemy is, no doubt, more numerous than we are, but half his troops are recruits; when he is beaten, Mantua must fall, and we shall remain masters of all. From the smiling flowery bivouacs of Italy, you cannot return to the Alpine snows. Succours are on the road; only beat Alvinzi, and I will answer for your future welfare." – Montholon, tom. iii., p. 355.

during his absence, Alvinzi would probably force the passage of the river at some point, and thus have it in his power to relieve Mantua. The heights of Caldiero, occupied by the Austrian main body, and lying in his front, had, by dire experiment, been proved impregnable.

In these doubtful circumstances the bold scheme occurred to the French general, that the position of Caldiero, though it could not be stormed, might be turned, and that by possessing himself of the village of Arcola, which lies to the left, and in the rear of Caldiero, the Austrians might be compelled to fight to disadvantage. But the idea of attacking Arcola was one which would scarce have occurred to any general save Buonaparte.

Arcola is situated upon a small stream called the Alpon, which, as already hinted, finds its way into the Adige, through a wilderness of marshes, intersected with ditches, and traversed by dikes in various directions. In case of an unsuccessful attack, the assailants were like to be totally cut off in the swamps. Then to debouche from Verona, and move in the direction of Arcola, would have put Alvinzi and his whole army on their guard. Secrecy and celerity are the soul of enterprise. All these difficulties gave way before Napoleon's genius.

Verona, it must be remembered, is on the left bank of the Adige – on the same with the point which was the object of Buonaparte's attack. At nightfall, the whole forces at Verona were under arms; and leaving fifteen hundred men under Kilmaine to defend the place from any assault, with strict

orders to secure the gates, and prevent all communication of his nocturnal expedition to the enemy, Buonaparte commenced his march at first to the rear, in the direction of Peschiera; which seemed to imply that his resolution was at length taken to resign the hopes of gaining Mantua, and perhaps to abandon Italy. The silence with which the march was conducted, the absence of all the usual rumours which used in the French army to precede a battle, and the discouraging situation of affairs, appeared to presage the same issue. But after the troops had marched a little way in this direction, the heads of columns were wheeled to the left, out of the line of retreat, and descended the Adige as far as Ronco, which they reached before day. Here a bridge had been prepared, by which they passed over the river, and were placed on the same bank with Arcola, the object of their attack, and lower than the heights of Caldiero.

FIRST BATTLE OF ARCOLA

Nov. 15

There were three causeways by which the marsh of Arcola is traversed – each was occupied by a French column. The central column moved on the causeway which led to the village so named. The dikes and causeways were not defended, but

Arcola and its bridge were protected by two battalions of Croats with two pieces of cannon, which were placed in a position to enfilade the causeway. These received the French column with so heavy a fire on its flank, that it fell back in disorder. Augereau rushed forward upon the bridge with his chosen grenadiers; but enveloped as they were in a destructive fire, they were driven back on the main body.

Alvinzi, who conceived it only an affair of light troops, sent, however, forces into the marsh by means of the dikes which traversed them, to drive out the French. These were checked by finding that they were to oppose strong columns of infantry, yet the battle continued with unabated vigour. It was essential to Buonaparte's plan that Arcola should be carried; but the fire continued tremendous. At length, to animate his soldiers to a final exertion, he caught a stand of colours, rushed on the bridge, and planted them there with his own hand. A fresh body of Austrians arrived at that moment, and the fire on flank blazed more destructively than ever. The rear of the French column fell back; the leading files, finding themselves unsupported, gave way; but, still careful of their general, bore him back in their arms through the dead and dying, the fire and the smoke. In the confusion he was at length pushed into the marsh. The Austrians were already betwixt him and his own troops, and he must have perished or been taken, had not the grenadiers perceived his danger. The cry instantly arose, "Forward – forward – save the general!" Their love to Buonaparte's person did more than even

his commands and example had been able to accomplish.²⁰⁵ They returned to the charge, and at length pushed the Austrians out of the village; but not till the appearance of a French corps under General Guieux had turned the position, and he had thrown himself in the rear of it. These succours had passed at the ferry of Alborado, and the French remained in possession of the long-contested village. It was at the moment a place of the greatest importance; for the possession of it would have enabled Buonaparte, had the Austrians remained in their position, to operate on their communications with the Brenta, interpose between Alvinzi and his reserves, and destroy his park of artillery. But the risk was avoided by the timely caution of the Austrian field-marshal.²⁰⁶

Alvinzi was no sooner aware that a great division of the French army was in his rear than, without allowing them time for farther operations, he instantly broke up his position on Caldiero, and evacuated these heights by a steady and orderly retreat. Buonaparte had the mortification to see the Austrians effect this manœuvre by crossing a bridge in their rear over the Alpon, and which could he have occupied, as was his purpose, he might have rendered their retreat impossible, or at least disastrous. As

²⁰⁵ "This was the day of military devotedness. Lannes, who had been wounded at Governolo, had hastened from Milan; he was still suffering; he threw himself between the enemy and Napoleon, and received three wounds. Muiron, Napoleon's aide-de-camp, was killed in covering his general with his own body. Heroic and affecting death!" – Napoleon, *Memoirs*, tom. iii., p. 362.

²⁰⁶ Jomini, tom. ix., p. 180; Thibaudeau, tom. ii., p. 117.

matters stood, however, the village of Arcola came to lose its consequence as a position, since, after Alvinzi's retreat, it was no longer in the rear, but in the front of the enemy.

Buonaparte remembered he had enemies on the right as well as the left of the Adige; and that Davidowich might be once more routing Vaubois, while he was too far advanced to afford him assistance. He therefore evacuated Arcola, and the village of Porcil, situated near it, and retreating to Ronco, recrossed the river, leaving only two demi-brigades in advance upon the left bank.

The first battle of Arcola, famous for the obstinacy with which it was disputed, and the number of brave officers and men who fell, was thus attended with no decisive result. But it had checked the inclination of Alvinzi to advance on Verona – it had delayed all communication betwixt his army and that of the Tyrol – above all, it had renewed the Austrians' apprehensions of the skill of Buonaparte and the bravery of his troops, and restored to the French soldiery the usual confidence of their national character.

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