LEVER CHARLES JAMES

TOM BURKE OF "OURS", VOLUME II

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I. THE SICK LEAVE

"What is it, Minette?" said I, for the third time, as I saw her lean her head from out the narrow casement, and look down into the valley beside the river; "what do you see there?"

"I see a regiment of infantry coming along the road from Ulm," said she, after a pause; "and now I perceive the lancers are following them, and the artillery too. Ah! and farther again, I see a great cloud of dust. *Mère de Ciél!* how tired and weary they all look! It surely cannot be a march in retreat; and, now that I think of it, they have no baggage, nor any wagons with them."

"That was a bugle call, Minette! Did you not hear it?"

"Yes, it's a halt for a few minutes. Poor fellows! they are sadly exhausted; they cannot even reach the side of the way, but are lying down on the very road. I can bear it no longer. I must find out what it all means." So saying, she threw round her a mantle which, Spanish fashion, she wore over her head, and hurried from the room.

For some time I waited patiently for her return; but when half

an hour elapsed, I arose and crept to the window. A succession of rocky precipices descended from the terrace on which the house stood, down to the very edge of the Danube, and from the point where I sat the view extended for miles in every direction. What, then, was my astonishment to see the wide plain, not marked by regular columns in marching array, but covered with straggling detachments, hurrying onward as if without order or discipline. Here was an infantry battalion mixed up with a cavalry corps, the foot-soldiers endeavoring to keep up with the ambling trot of the dragoons; there, the ammunition wagons were covered with weary soldiers, too tired to march. Most of the men were without their firelocks, which were piled in a confused heap on the limbers of the guns. No merry chant, no burst of warlike music, cheered them on. They seemed like the scattered fragments of a routed army hurrying onward in search of some place of refuge, – sad and spiritless.

"Can he have been beaten?" was the fearful thought that flashed across me as I gazed. "Have the bold legions that were never vanquished succumbed at last? Oh, no, no! I'll not believe it." And while a glow of fever warmed my whole blood, I buckled on my sabre, and taking my shako, prepared to issue forth. Scarcely had I reached the door, with tottering limbs, when I saw Minette dashing up the steep street at the top speed of her pony, while she flourished above her head a great placard, and waved it to and fro.

"The news! the news!" cried I, bursting with anxiety. "Are

they advancing; or is it a retreat?"

"Read that!" said she, throwing me a large sheet of paper, headed with the words, "Proclamation! la Grande Armée!" in huge letters, – "read that! for I've no breath left to tell you."

Soldiers! – The campaign so gloriously begun will soon be completed.

One victory, and the Austrian empire, so great but a week since, will be humbled in the dust. Hasten on, then! Forced marches, by day and night, will attest your eagerness to meet the enemy; and let the endeavor of each regiment be to arrive soonest on the field of battle.

"Minette! dearest Minette!" said I, as I threw my arms around her neck, "this is indeed good news." "Gently, gently, Monsieur!" said she, smiling, while she disengaged herself from my sudden embrace. "Very good news, without doubt; but I don't think that there is any mention in the bulletin about embracing the vivandières of the army."

"At a moment like this, Minette – "

"The best thing to do is, to make up one's baggage and join the march," said she, very steadily, proceeding at the same time to put her plan into execution.

While I gave her all assistance in my power, the doctor entered to inform us that all the wounded who were then not sufficiently restored to return to duty were to be conveyed to Munich, where general military hospitals had been established; and that he himself had received orders to repair thither with his sick

detachment, in which my name was enrolled.

"You'll keep your old friend, François, company, Lieutenant Burke; he is able to move at last."

"François!" said I, in ecstasy; "and will he indeed recover?"

"I have little doubt of it; though certainly he's not likely to practise as maître d'armes again. You 've spoiled his tierce, though not before it cost the army some of the prettiest fellows I ever saw. But as to yourself – "

"As for me, I 'll march with the army. I feel perfectly recovered; my arm – "

"Oh! as for monsieur's arms," said mademoiselle, "I'll answer for it, they are quite at his Majesty's service."

"Indeed!" said the doctor, knowingly; "I thought it would come to that. Well, well, Mademoiselle, don't look saucy; let us part good friends for once in our lives."

"I hate being reconciled to a surgeon," said she, pettishly.

"Why so, I pray?"

"Oh, you know, when one quarrels with an officer, the poor fellow may be killed before one sees him again; and it's always a sad thought, that. But your doctor, nothing ever happens to him; you're sure to see him, with his white apron and his horrid weapons, a hundred times after, and one is always sorry for having forgiven such a cruel wretch."

"Come, come, Mademoiselle, you bear us all an ill-will for the fault of one, and that's not fair. It was the hospital aide of the Sixth, Monsieur, (a handsome fellow, too), who did not fall in

love with her after her wound, – a slight scratch."

"A slight scratch, do you call it?" said I, indignantly, as I perceived the poor girl's eyes fill at the raillery of her tormentor.

"Ah! monsieur has seen it, then?" said he, maliciously. "A thousand pardons. I have the honor to wish you both adieu." And with that, and a smile of the most impertinent meaning, he took his leave.

"How silly to be vexed for so little, Minette!" said I, approaching and endeavoring to console her.

"Well, but to call my wound a scratch!" said she. "Was it not too bad? and I the only vivandière of the army that ever felt a bullet."

And with that she turned away her head; but I could see, as she wiped her eyes, that she cared less for the sarcasm on her wounded shoulder than the insult to her wounded heart. Poor girl! she looked sick and pale the whole day after.

We learned in the course of the day that some cavalry detachments would pass early on the morrow, thus allowing us sufficient time to provide ourselves with horses, and make our other arrangements for the march. These we succeeded in doing to our satisfaction; I being fortunate enough to secure the charger of an Austrian prisoner, mademoiselle being already admirably mounted with her palfrey. Occupied with these details, the day passed rapidly over, and the hour for supper drew near without my feeling how the time slipped past.

At last the welcome meal made its appearance, and with it

mademoiselle herself. I could not help remarking that her toilette displayed a more than common attention: her neat Parisian cap; her collar, with its deep Valenciennes lace; and her *tablier*, so coquettishly embroidered, – were all signs of an unusual degree of care; and though she was pale and in low spirits, I never saw her look so pretty. All my efforts to make her converse were, however, in vain. Some secret weight lay heavily on her spirits, and not even the stirring topics of the coming campaign could awaken one spark of her enthusiasm. She evaded, too, every allusion to the following day's march, or answered my questions about it with evident constraint. Tired at last with endeavoring to overcome her silent mood, I affected an air of chagrin, thinking to pique her by it; but she merely remarked that I appeared weary, and that, as I had a long journey before me, it were as well I should retire early.

The marked coolness of her manner at this moment struck me so forcibly that I began really to feel some portion of the ill-temper I affected, and with the crossness of an over-petted child, I arose to withdraw at once.

"Good-by, Monsieur; good-night, I mean," said she, blushing slightly.

"Good-night, Mademoiselle," said I, taking her hand coldly as I spoke. "I trust I may find you in better spirits to-morrow."

"Good-night, – adieu!" said she, hastily; and before I could add a word she was gone.

"She is a strange girl," thought I, as I found myself alone,

and tortured my mind to think whether anything I could have dropped had offended her. But no: we had parted a few hours before the best friends in the world; nothing had then occurred to which I could attribute this sudden change. I had often remarked the variable character of her disposition, – the flashes of gayety mingled with outbursts of sorrow; the playful moods of fancy alternating with moments of deep melancholy; and, after all, this might be one of them.

With these thoughts I threw myself on my bed, but could not sleep. At one minute my brain went on puzzling about Minette and her sorrow; at the next I reproached myself for my own harsh, unfeeling manner to the poor girl, and was actually on the eve of arising to seek her and ask her pardon. At last sleep came, and dreams too; but, strange enough, they were of the distant land of my boyhood and the hours of my youth; of the old house in which I was born, and its well-remembered rooms. I thought I was standing before my father, while he scolded me for some youthful transgression; I heard his words as though they were really spoken, as he told me that I should be an outcast and a wanderer, without a friend, a house, or home; that while others reaped wealth and honors, I was destined to be a castaway: and in the torrent of my grief I awoke.

It was night, – dark, silent night. A few stars were shining in the sky, but the earth was wrapped in shadow; and as I opened my window to let the fresh breeze calm my fevered forehead, the deep precipice beneath me seemed a vast gulf of yawning

blackness. At a great distance off I could see the watchfires of some soldiers bivouacking in the plain; and even that much comforted my saddened heart, as it aroused me to the thoughts of the campaign before me. But again my thoughts recurred to my dream, which I could not help feeling as a sort of prediction.

When our sleep leaves its strong track in our waking moments, we dread to sleep again for fear the whole vision should come back; and thus I sat down beside the window, and fell into a long train of thought. The images of my dream were uppermost in my mind; and every little incident of childhood, long lost to memory, came now fresh before me, – the sorrows of my schoolboy years, unrelieved by the sense of love awaiting me at home; the clinging to all who seemed to feel or care for me; and the heart-sickening sorrow when I found that what I mistook for affection was merely pity: all save one, – my mother! Her mild, sad looks, so seldom cheered by a ray of pleasure, – I remember well how they fell on me! with such a thrilling sensation at my heart, and such a gush of thankfulness, as I felt then! Oh! if they who live with children knew how needful it is to open their hearts to all the little sorrows and woes of infant life; to teach confidence and to feed hope; to train up the creeping tendrils of young desire, and not to suffer them to lie straggling and tangled on the earth, – what a happier destiny would fall to the lot of many whose misfortunes in late life date from the crushed spirit of childhood!

My mother I – I thought of her as she would bend oyer me at night, her last kiss pressed on my brow, – the healing balm

of some sorrow for which my sobs were still breaking, – her pale, worn cheek, her white dress, her hand so bloodless and transparent, the very emblem of her malady. The tears started to my eyes and rolled heavily along my cheek, my chest heaved, and my heart beat till I could hear it. At this moment a slight rustle stirred the leaves: I listened, for the night was calm and still; not a breeze moved. Again I heard it close beside the window, on the little terrace which ran along the building, and occupied the narrow space beside the edge of the rock. Before I could imagine what it meant, a figure in white glided from the shade of the trees and approached the window. So excited was my mind, so wrought up my imagination by the circumstances of my dream and the thoughts that followed, that I cried out, in a voice of ecstasy, "My mother!" Suddenly the apparition stood still, and then as rapidly retreated, and was lost to view in the dark foliage. Maddened with intense excitement, I sprang from the window, and leaped out on the terrace. I called aloud; I ran about wildly, unmindful of the fearful precipice that yawned beside me. I searched every bush, I crept beneath each tree, but nothing could I detect. The cold perspiration poured down my face; my limbs trembled with a strange dread of I knew not what. I felt as if madness was creeping over me, and I struggled with the thought and tried to calm my troubled brain. Wearied and faint, I gave up the pursuit at last, and, throwing myself on my bed, I sank exhausted into the heavy slumber which only tired nature knows.

"The Sous-Lieutenant Burke," said a gruff voice, awakening

me suddenly from my sleep, while by the light of a lantern he held in his hand I recognized the figure of an orderly sergeant in full equipment.

"Yes. What then?" said I, in some amazement at the summons.

"This is the order of march, sir, for the invalid detachment under your command."

"How so? I have no orders."

"They are here, sir."

So saying, he presented me with a letter from the assistant-adjutant of the corps, with instructions for the conduct of forty men, invalided from different regiments, and now on their way to Lintz. The paper was perfectly regular, setting forth the names of the soldiers and their several corps, together with the daily marches, the halts, and distances. My only surprise was how this service so suddenly devolved on me, whose recovery could only have been reported a few hours before.

"When shall I muster the detachment, sir?" said the sergeant, interrupting me in the midst of my speculations.

"Now, – at once. It is past five o'clock. I see Langenau is mentioned as the first halting-place; we can reach it by eight."

The moment the sergeant withdrew, I arose and dressed for the road, anxious to inform mademoiselle as early as possible of this sudden order of march. When I entered the *salon*, I found to my surprise that the breakfast table was all laid and everything ready. "What can this mean?" said I; "has she heard it already?" At the same instant I caught sight of the door of her chamber

lying wide open. I approached, and looked in. The room was empty; the various trunks and boxes, the little relics of military glory I remembered to have seen with her, were all gone. Minette had departed; when or whither, I knew not. I hurried through the building, from room to room, without meeting any one. The door was open, and I passed out into the dark street, where all was still and silent as the grave. I hastened to the stable: my horse, ready equipped and saddled, was feeding; but the stall beside him was empty, – the pony of the vivandière was gone. While many a thought flashed on my brain as to her fate, I tortured my mind to remember each circumstance of our last meeting, – every word and every look; and as I called to my memory the pettish anger of my manner towards her, I grew sick at heart, and hated myself for my own cold ingratitude. All her little acts of kindness, her tender care, her unwearying good-nature, were before me. I thought of her as I had seen her often in the silence of the night, when, waking from some sleep of pain, she sat beside my bed, her hand pressed on my heated forehead; her low, clear voice was in my ear; her soft, mild look, beaming with hope and tender pity. Poor Minette! had I then offended you? was such the return I made for all your kindness?

"The men are ready, sir," said the sergeant, entering at the moment.

"She is gone," said I, following out my own sad train of thought, and pointing to the vacant stall where her pony used to stand.

“Mademoiselle Minette – ”

“Yes, what of her – where is she?”

“Marched with the cuirassier brigade that passed here last night at twelve o’clock. She seemed very ill, sir, and the officer made her sit on one of the wagons.”

“Which road did they take? »

“They crossed the river, and moved away towards the forest. I think I heard the troop-sergeant say something about Salzburg and the Tyrol.”

I made no answer, but stood mute and stupefied; when I was again recalled to thought by his asking if my baggage was ready for the wagons.

With a sullen apathy I pointed out my trunks in silence, and throwing one last look on the room, the scene of my former suffering, and of much pleasure too, I mounted my horse, and gave the word to move forward.

As we passed from the gate, I stopped to question the sous-officier as to the route of the cuirassier division. But he could only repeat what the sergeant had already told me; adding, there were several men slightly wounded in the squadrons, for they had been engaged twice within the week. The gates closed! and we were on the highroad.

CHAPTER II. LINTZ

As day was breaking, we came up with a strong detachment of the cavalry of the Guard proceeding to join Bessiere's division at Lintz. From them we learned that the main body of the army was already far in advance, several entire corps having marched from Lintz with the supposed intention of occupying Vienna. Ney's division, it was said, was also bearing down from the Tyrol; Davoust and Mortier were advancing by the left bank of the Danube; whilst Lannes and Murat, with an overwhelming force of light troops, had pushed forward two days' march in advance on their way to the capital. The fate of Ulm was already predicted for the Austrian city, and each day's intelligence seemed to make it only the more inevitable. Meanwhile the Emperor Francis had abandoned the capital, and retreated on Brunn, a fortified town in Moravia, there to await the arrival of his ally, Alexander, hourly expected from Berlin.

As day after day we pressed forward, our numbers continued to increase. A motley force, indeed, did we present: cavalry of every sort, from the steel-clad cuirassier to the gay hussar, dragoons, chasseurs, guides, and light cavalry, all mixed up together, and all eagerly recounting the several experiences of the campaign as it fell under their eyes in different quarters. From none, however, could I learn any tidings of Minette; for though known to many there, the detachment she had joined had taken

a southerly direction, and was not crossed by any of the others on their march. The General d'Auvergne, I heard, was with the headquarters of the Emperor, then established at the monastery of Molk, on the Danube.

On the evening of the 13th of November we arrived at Lintz, the capital of Upper Austria, but at the time I speak of one vast barrack. Thirty-eight thousand troops of all arms were within its walls; not subject to the rigid discipline and regular command of a garrison town, but bivouacking in the open streets and squares. Tables were spread in the thoroughfares, at which the divisions as they arrived took their places, and after refreshing themselves, moved on to make way for others. The great churches were strewn with forage, and filled with the horses of the cavalry; there might be seen the lumbering steeds of the cuirassier, eating their corn from the richly-carved box of a confessional; here lay the travel-stained figure of a dragoon, stretched asleep across the steps of the altar. The little chapelries, where the foot of the penitent awoke no echo as it passed, now rung with the coarse jest and reckless ribaldry of the soldiers; parties caroused in the little sacristies; and the rude chorus of a drinking song now vibrated through the groined roof where only the sacred notes of the organ had been heard to peal. The Hôtel de Ville was the quartier-général, where the generals of divisions were assembled, and from which the orderlies rode forth at every moment with despatches. The one cry, "Forward!" was heard everywhere. They who before had claimed leave for slight wounds or illness,

were now seen among their comrades with bandaged arms and patched faces, eager to press on. Many whose regiments were in advance became incorporated for the time with other corps; and dismounted dragoons were often to be met with, marching with the infantry and mounting guard in turn. Everything bespoke haste. The regiments which arrived at night frequently moved off before day broke. The cavalry often were provided with fresh horses to press forward, leaving their own for the corps that were to follow. A great flotilla, provided with all the necessaries for an army on the march, moved along the Danube, and accompanied the troops each day. In a word, every expedient was practised which could hasten the movement of the army; justifying the remark so often repeated among the soldiers at the time, "Le Petit Caporal makes more use of our legs than our bayonets in this campaign."

On the same evening we arrived came the news of the surprise of Vienna by Murat. Never was there such joy as this announcement spread through the army. The act itself was one of those daring feats which only such as he could venture on, and indeed at first seemed so miraculous that many refused to credit it. Prince Auersberg, to whom the great bridge of the Danube was intrusted, had prepared everything for its destruction in the event of attack. The whole line of woodwork was laid with combustibles; trains were set, the matches burning; a strong battery of twelve guns, posted to command the bridge, occupied the height on the right bank, and the Austrian gunners lay, match

in hand, beside their pieces: but a word was needed, and the whole work was in a blaze.

Such was the state of matters when Sebastiani pushed through the faubourg of the Leopoldstadt at the head of a strong cavalry detachment, supported by some grenadiers of the Guard, and by Murat's orders, concealed his force among the narrow streets which lead to the bridge from the left bank of the Danube. This done, Lannes and Murat advanced carelessly along the bridge, which, from the frequent passage of couriers between the two headquarters, had become a species of promenade, where the officers of either side met to converse on the fortunes of the campaign. Dressed simply as officers of the staff, they strolled along till they came actually beneath the Austrian battery; and then entered into conversation with the Austrian officers, assuring them that the armistice was signed, and peace already proclaimed between the two countries.

The Austrians, trusting to their story, and much interested by what they heard, descended from the mound, and joining them, proceeded to walk backwards and forwards along the bridge, conversing on the probable consequences of the treaty; when suddenly turning round by chance, as they walked towards the right bank, they saw the head of a grenadier column approaching at the quick step. The thought of treachery crossed their minds; and one of them, rushing to the side of the bridge, called out to the artillerymen to fire. A movement was seen in the battery, the matches were uplifted, when Murat, dashing forward, cried

aloud, “Reserve your fire; there is nothing to fear!”

The same instant the Austrian officers were surrounded; the sappers rushing on the bridge cleared away the combustibles, and cut off the trains; and the cavalry, till now in concealment, pushing forward at a gallop, crossed the bridge, followed by the grenadiers in a run, – before the Austrians, who saw their own officers mingled with the French, could decide on what was to be done, – while Murat, springing on his horse, dashed forward at the head of the dragoons; and before five minutes elapsed the battery was stormed, the gunners captured, and Vienna won.

Never was there a *coup de main* more hardy than this, whether we look to the danger of the deed itself, or the insignificant force by which it was accomplished. A few horsemen and some companies of foot, led on by an heroic chief, thus turned the whole fortune of Europe; for, by securing this bridge, Napoleon enabled himself, as circumstances might warrant, to unite the different corps of his army on the right or left banks of the Danube, and either direct his operations against the Russians, or the Austrians under the Archduke Charles, as he pleased.

The treachery by which the bold deed was made successful, was, alas! deemed no stain on the achievement. But one rule of judgment existed in the Imperial army: Was the advantage on the side of France, and to the honor of her arms? That covered every flaw, no matter whether inflicted by duplicity or breach of faith. The habit of healing all wounds of conscience by a bulletin had become so general, that men would not trust

to the guidance of their own reason till confirmed by some Imperial proclamation; and when the Emperor declared a battle gained and glory achieved, who would gainsay him? If this blind, headlong confidence tended to lower the *morale* of the nation, in an equal degree did it make them conquerors in the field; and thus – by a strange decree of Providence, would it seem – were they preparing for themselves the terrible reverse of fortune which, when the destinies of their leader became clouded and their confidence in him shaken, was to fall on a people who lived only in the mad intoxication of victory, and knew not the sterner virtues that can combat with defeat.

But so was it. Napoleon commanded the legions and described their achievements; he led them to the charge and he apportioned their glory; the heroism of the soldier had no existence until acknowledged by the proclamation after the battle; the valor of the general wanted confirmation till sealed by his approval. To fight beneath his eyes was the greatest glory a regiment could wish for; to win one word from him was fame itself forever.

If I dwell on these thoughts here, it is because I now felt for the first time the sad deception I had practised on myself; and how little could I hope to realize in my soldier's life the treasured aspirations of my boyhood Î Was this, then, indeed the career I had pictured to my mind, – the chivalrous path of honor? Was this the bold assertion of freedom I so often dreamed of? How few of that armed host knew anything of the causes of the war, – how much fewer still cared for them! No sentiment of patriotism,

no devotion to the interests of liberty or humanity, prompted us on. Yet these were the thoughts first led me to the career of arms; such ambitious promptings first made my heart glow with the enthusiasm of a soldier.

This gloomy disappointment made me low-spirited and sad. Nor can I say where such reflections might not have led me, when suddenly a change came over my thoughts by seeing a wounded soldier, who had just arrived from Mortier's division, with news of a fierce encounter they had sustained against Kutusof's Russians. The poor fellow was carried past in a litter, – his arm had been amputated that same morning, and a frightful shot-wound had carried away part of his cheek; still, amid all his suffering, his eye was brilliant, and a smile of proud meaning was on his lips.

"Lift it up, Guillaume; let me see it again," said he, as they bore him along the crowded street.

"What is it he wishes?" said I. "The poor fellow is asking for something."

"Yes, mon lieutenant. It is the *sabre d'honneur* the Emperor gave him this morning. He likes to look at it every now and then; he says he doesn't mind the pain when he sees that before him. *And it is natural, too.*"

"Such is glory!" said I to myself; "and he who feels this in his heart has no room for other thoughts."

"Oh, give to me the trumpet's blast, And the champ of the charger prancing; Or the whiz of the grape-shot flying past, That

‘a music meet for dancing.

“Tralararalal” sang a wild-looking voltigeur, as he capered along the street, keeping time to his rude song with the tramp of his feet.

“Ha! there goes a fellow from the Faubourg!” said an officer near me.

“The Faubourg?” repeated I, asking for explanation.

“Yes, to be sure. The Faubourg St. Antoine supplies all the reckless devils of the army; one of them would corrupt a regiment, and so, the best thing to do is to keep them as much together as possible. The voltigeurs have little else; and proof is, they are the cleverest corps in the service, and if they could be kept from picking and stealing, lying, drinking, and gambling, there’s not a man might not be a general of division in time. There goes another!”

As he spoke, a fellow passed by with a goose under his arm, followed by a woman most vociferously demanding restitution; while he only amused himself by replying with a mock courtesy, deploring in sad terms the unhappy necessities of war and the cruel hardships of a campaign.

“It’s no use punishing those fellows,” said the officer. “They desert in whole companies if you send one to the *salle de police*; and so we have only one resource, which is, to throw them pretty much in advance, and leave their chastisement to the enemy. And, sooth to say, they ask for nothing better themselves.”

Thus, even these fellows seemed to have their own sentiment

of glory, – a problem which the more I reasoned over the more puzzled did I become.

While a hundred conjectures were hourly in circulation, none save those immediately about the person of Napoleon could possibly divine the quarter where the great blow was to be struck, although all were in expectation of the orders to prepare for battle. News would reach us of marchings and counter-marchings; of smart skirmishes here, and prisoners taken there; yet could we not form the slightest conception of where the chief force of the enemy lay, nor what the direction to which our own army was pointed. Indeed, our troops seemed to scatter on every side. Marmont, with a strong force, was despatched towards Gratz, where it was said the Archduke Charles was at the head of a considerable army; Davoust moved on Hungary, and occupied Presburg; Bernadotte retraced his steps towards the Upper Danube, to hold the Archduke Frederick in check, who had escaped from Ulm with ten thousand men; Mortiers corps, harassed and broken by the engagement with Kutusof, were barely sufficient to garrison Vienna; while Soult, Lannes, and Murat pushed forward towards Moravia, with a strong cavalry force and some battalions of the Guard. In fact, the whole army was scattered like an exploded shell; nor could we see the means by which its wide extended fragments were to be united at a moment, much less divine the spot to which their combined force was to be directed.

Had these Russians been fabulous creatures of a legend,

instead of men of mortal mould, they could scarcely have been endowed with more attributes of ubiquity than we conferred on them. Sometimes we believed them at one side of the Danube, sometimes at the other; now we heard of them as retreating by forced marches into their native fastnesses, now as encamped in the mountain regions of Moravia. Yesterday came the news that they laid down their arms and surrendered as prisoners of war; to-day we heard of them as having forced back our advanced posts and carried off several squadrons as prisoners.

At length came the positive information that the allied armies were in cantonments around Olmutz; while Napoleon had pushed forward to Brunn, a place of considerable strength, communicating by the highroad with the Russian headquarters. It was no longer doubtful, then, where the great game was to be decided, and thither the various battalions were now directed by marches day and night.

On the 29th of November our united detachments, now numbering several hundred men, arrived at Brunn. I lost no time in repairing to headquarters, where I found General d'Auvergne deeply engaged with the details of the force under his command: his brigade had been placed under the orders of Murat; and it was well known the prince gave little rest or respite to those under his command. From him I learned that three days of unsuccessful negotiation had just passed over, and that the Emperor had now resolved on a great battle. Indeed, every moment was critical. Russia had assumed a decidedly hostile aspect; the Swedes were

moving to the south; the Archduke Charles, by a circuitous route, was on the march to join the Russian army, to whose aid fresh reinforcements were daily arriving, and Benningsen was hourly expected with more. Under these circumstances a battle was inevitable; and such a one, as, by its result, must conclude the war.

This much did I learn from the old general as we rode over the field together; examining with caution the nature of the ground, and where it offered facilities, and where it presented obstacles, to the movement of cavalry. Such were the orders issued that morning by Napoleon to the generals of brigade, who might now be seen with their staffs traversing the plain in every direction. As we moved along we could discover in the distance the dark columns of the enemy marching, not towards us, but in a southerly direction towards our extreme right. This movement attracted the attention of several others, and more than one aide-de-camp was despatched to Brunn to carry the intelligence to the Emperor.

The same evening couriers departed in every direction to Bernadotte and Davoust to hasten forward at once; even Mortier, with his mangled division, was ordered to abandon Vienna to a division of Marmont's army, and move on to Brunn. And now the great work of concentration began.

Meanwhile the Russians advanced, and on the 30th drove in an advanced post, and compelled our cavalry to fall back behind our position. The following morning the allies resumed their flank movement. And now no doubt could be entertained of

their plan; which was, by turning our right, to cut us off from our supporting columns resting at Vienna, and throw our retreat back upon the mountainous districts of Bohemia. In this way five massive columns moved past us scarce half a league distant from our advanced posts, numbering eighty thousand men, of which fifteen were cavalry in the most perfect condition.

Our position was in advance of the fortress of Brunn; the headquarters of the Emperor occupied a rising piece of ground, at the base of which flowed a small stream, a tributary to some of the numerous ponds by which the field was intersected. The entire ground in our front was indeed a succession of these small lakes, with villages interspersed, and occasionally some stunted woods; great morasses extended around these ponds, through which led the highroads or such bypaths as conducted from one village to another. Here and there were plains where cavalry might act with safety, but rarely in large bodies.

Our right rested on the lake of Moeritz, where Soult's division was stationed; behind which, thrown back in such a manner as to escape the observation of the enemy, was Davoust's corps, the reserve occupying a cliff of ground beside the convent of Eeygern. Our left, under Lannes, occupied the hill of Santon, – a wooded eminence, the last of a long chain of mountains running east and west. Above, and on the crest of the height, a powerful park of artillery was posted, and defended by strong intrenchments. A powerful cavalry corps was placed at the bottom of the mountain. Next came Bernadotte's division,

separated by the highroad from Brunn to Olmutz from the division under Murat, which, besides his own cavalry, contained Oudinot's grenadiers and Bessière's battalions of the Imperial Guard; the centre and right being formed of Soult's division, the strongest of all; the reserve, consisting of several battalions of the Guard and a strong force of artillery, being under the immediate orders of Napoleon, to be employed wherever circumstances demanded.

These were the dispositions for the coming battle, made with all the precision of troops moving on parade; and such was the discipline of the army at Boulogne, and so perfectly arranged the plans of the Emperor, that the ground of every regiment was marked out, and each corps moved into its allotted space with the regularity of some piece of mechanism.

CHAPTER III. AUSTERLITZ

The dispositions for the battle of Austerlitz occupied the entire day. From sunrise Napoleon was on horse-back, visiting every position; he examined each battery with the skill of an old officer of artillery; and frequently dismounting from his horse, carefully noted the slightest peculiarities of the ground, – remarking to his staff, with an accuracy which the event showed to be prophetic, the nature of the struggle, as the various circumstances of the field indicated them to his practised mind.

It was already late when he turned his horse's head towards the bivouac hut, – a rude shelter of straw, – and rode slowly through the midst of that great army. The *ordre du jour*, written at his own dictation, had just been distributed among the soldiers; and now around every watchfire the groups were kneeling to read the spirit-stirring lines by which he so well knew how to excite the enthusiasm of his followers. They were told that "the enemy were the same Russian battalions they had already beaten at Hollabrunn, and on whose flying traces they had been marching ever since." "They will endeavor," said the proclamation, "to turn our right, but in doing so they must open their flank to us: need I say what will be the result? Soldiers, so long as with your accustomed valor you deal death and destruction in their ranks, so long shall I remain beyond the reach of fire; but let the victory prove, even for a moment, doubtful, your Emperor shall be in

the midst of you. This day must decide forever the honor of the infantry of France. Let no man leave his ranks to succor the wounded, – they shall be cared for by one who never forgets his soldiers, – and with this victory the campaign is ended!"

Never were lines better calculated to stimulate the energy and flatter the pride of those to whom they were addressed. It was a novel thing in a general to communicate to his army the plan of his intended battle, and perhaps to any other than a French army the disclosure would not have been rated as such a favor; but their warlike spirit and military intelligence have ever been most remarkably united, and the men were delighted with such a proof of confidence and esteem.

A dull roar, like the sound of the distant sea, swelled along the lines from the far right, where the Convent of Reygern stood, and growing louder by degrees, proclaimed that the Emperor was coming. It was already dark, but he was quickly recognized by the troops, and with one burst of enthusiasm they seized upon the straw of their bivouacs, and setting fire to it, held the blazing masses above their heads, waving them wildly to and fro, amid the cries of "Vive l'Empereur!" For above a league along the plain the red light flashed and glowed, marking out beneath it the dense squares and squadrons of armed warriors. It was the anniversary of Napoleon's coronation; and such was the fête by which they celebrated the day.

The Emperor rode through the ranks uncovered. Never did a prouder smile light up his features, while thronging around him

the veterans of the Guard struggled to catch even a passing glance at him. “Do but look at us tomorrow, and keep beyond the reach of shot,” said a *grognard*, stepping forward; “we’ll bring their cannon and their colors, and lay them at thy feet.” The marshals themselves, the hardened veterans of so many fights, could not restrain their enthusiasm; and proffers of devotion unto death accompanied him as he went.

At last all was silent in the encampment; the soldiers slept beside their watchfires, and save the tramp of a patrol or the *qui vive*? of the sentinels, all was still. The night was cold and sharp; a cutting wind blew across the plain, which gave way to a thick mist, – so thick, the sentries could scarcely see a dozen paces off.

I sat in my little hovel of straw, – my mind far too much excited for sleep, – watching the stars as they peeped out one by one, piercing the gray mist, until at last the air became thin and clear, and a frosty atmosphere succeeded to the weighty fog; and now I could trace out the vast columns, as they lay thickly strewn along the plain. The old general, wrapped in his cloak, slept soundly on his straw couch; his deep-drawn breathing showed that his rest was unbroken. How slowly did the time seem to creep along! I thought it must be nigh morning, and it was only a little more than midnight.

Our position was a small rising ground about a mile in front of the left centre, and communicating with the enemy’s line by a narrow road between the marshes. This had been defended by a battery of four guns, with a stockade in front; and along it

now, for a considerable distance, a chain of sentinels were placed, who should communicate any movement that they observed in the Russian lines, of which I was charged to convey the earliest intelligence to the quartier-général. This duty alone would have kept me in a state of anxiety, had not the frame of my mind already so disposed me; and I could not avoid creeping out from time to time, to peer through the gloom in the direction of the enemy's camp, and listen with an eager ear for any sounds from that quarter. At last I heard the sound of a voice at some distance off; then, a few minutes after, the hurried step of feet, and a voltigeur came up, breathless with haste: "The Russians were in motion towards the right. Our advanced posts could hear the roll of guns and tumbrels moving along the plain, and it was evident their columns were in march." I knelt down and placed my ear to the ground, and almost started at the distinctness with which I could hear the dull sound of the large guns as they were dragged along; the earth seemed to tremble beneath them.

I awoke the general at once, who, resting on his arm, coolly heard my report; and having directed me to hasten to headquarters with the news, lay back again, and was asleep before I was in my saddle. At the top speed of my horse I galloped to the rear, winding my way between the battalions, till I came to a gentle rising ground, where, by the light of several large fires that blazed in a circle I could see the dismounted troopers of the *chasseurs à cheval*, who always formed the Imperial Bodyguard. Having given the word, I was desired by the officer of the watch

to dismount, and following him, I passed forward to a space in the middle of the circle, where, under shelter of some sheaves of straw piled over each other, sat three officers, smoking beside a fire.

"Ha! here comes news of some sort," said a voice I knew at once to be Murat's. "Well, sir, what is't?"

"The Russian columns are in motion, Monsieur le Maréchal; the artillery moving rapidly towards our right."

"*Diantre!* it's not much more than midnight! Davoust, shall we awake the Emperor?"

"No, no," said a harsh voice, as a shrivelled, hard-featured man turned round from the blaze, and showing a head covered by a coarse woollen cap, looked far more like a pirate than a marshal of France; "they 'll not attack before day breaks. Go back," said he, addressing me; "observe the position well, and if there be any general movement towards the southward, you may report it."

By the time I regained my post, all was in silence once more; either the Russians had arrested their march, or already their columns were out of hearing, – not a gleam of light could I perceive along their entire position. And now, worn out with watching, I threw myself down among the straw, and slept soundly.

"There! there! that's the third!" said General d'Auvergne, shaking me by the shoulder; "there again! Don't you hear the guns?"

I listened, and could just distinguish the faint booming sound

of far-off artillery coming up from the extreme right of our position. It was still but three o'clock, and although the sky was thick with stars, perfectly dark in the valley. Meanwhile we could bear the galloping of cavalry quite distinctly in the same direction.

"Mount, Burke, and back to the quartier-général! But you need not; here comes some of the staff."

"So, D'Auvergne," cried a voice whose tones were strange to me, "they meditate a night attack, it would seem; or is it only trying the range of their guns?"

"I think the latter, Monsieur le Maréchal, for I heard no small arms; and, even now, all is quiet again."

"I believe you are right," said he, moving slowly forward, while a number of officers followed at a little distance. "You see, D'Auvergne, how correctly the Emperor judged their intentions. The brunt of the battle will be about Reygern. But there! don't you hear bugles in the valley?"

As he spoke, the music of our tirailleurs' bugles arose from the glen in front of our centre, where, in a thick beech-wood, the light infantry regiments were posted.

"What is it, D'Esterre?" said he to an officer who galloped up at the moment.

"They say the Russian Guard, sir, is moving to the front; our skirmishers have orders to fall back without firing."

As he heard this, the Marshal Bernadotte – for it was he – turned his horse suddenly round, and rode back, followed by his

staff. And now the drums beat to quarters along the line, and the hoarse trumpets of the cavalry might be heard summoning the squadrons throughout the field; while between the squares, and in the intervals of the battalions, single horsemen galloped past with orders. Soult's division, which extended for nearly a league to our right, was the first to move, and it seemed like one vast shadow creeping along the earth, as column beside column marched steadily onward. Our brigade had not as yet received orders, but the men were in readiness beside the horses, and only waiting for the word to mount.

The suspense of the moment was fearful. All that I had ever dreamed or pictured to myself of a soldier's enthusiasm was faint and weak, compared to the rush of sensations I now experienced. There must be a magic power of ecstasy in the approach of danger, – some secret sense of bounding delight, mingled with the chances of a battle, – that renders one intoxicated with excitement. Each booming gun I heard sent a wild throb through me, and I panted for the word "Forward!"

Column after column moved past us, and disappeared in the dip of ground beneath; and as we saw the close battalions filling the wide plain in front, we sighed to think that it was destined to be the day of glory peculiarly to the infantry. Wherever the nature of the field permitted shelter or the woods afforded cover, our troops were sent immediately to occupy. The great manoeuvre of the day was to be the piercing of the enemy's centre whenever he should weaken that point by the endeavor to turn our right flank.

A faint streak of gray light was marking the horizon when the single guns which we had heard at intervals ceased; and then, after a short pause, a long, loud roll of artillery issued from the distant right, followed by the crackling din of small-arms, which increased at every moment, and now swelled into an uninterrupted noise, through which the large guns pealed from time to time. A red glare, obscured now and then by means of black smoke, lit up the sky in that quarter, where already the battle was raging fiercely.

The narrow causeway between the two small lakes in our front conducted to an open space of ground, about a cannon-shot from the Russian line; and this we were now ordered to occupy, to be prepared to act as support to the infantry of Soult's left, whenever the attack began. As we debouched into the plain, I beheld a group of horsemen, who, wrapped up in their cloaks, sat motionless in their saddles, calmly regarding the squadrons as they issued from the wood: these were Murat and his staff, to whom was committed the attack on the Russian Guard. His division consisted of the hussars and chasseurs under Kellermann, the cuirassiers of D'Auvergne, and the heavy dragoons of Nansouty, – making a force of eight thousand sabres, supported by twenty pieces of field artillery. Again were we ordered to dismount, for although the battle continued to rage on the right, the whole of the centre and left were unengaged.

Thus stood we as the sun arose, – that "Sun of Austerlitz!" so often appealed to and apostrophized by Napoleon as gilding

the greatest of his glories. The mist from the lakes shut out the prospect of the enemy's lines at first; but gradually this moved away, and we could perceive the dark columns of the Russians, as they moved rapidly along the side of the Pratzen, and continued to pour their thousands towards Reygern.

At last the roar of musketry swelled louder and nearer, and an officer galloping past told us that Soult's right had been called up to support Davoust's division. This did not look well; it proved the Russians had pressed our lines closely, and we waited impatiently to hear further intelligence. It was evident, too, that our right was suffering severely, otherwise the attack on the centre would not have been delayed. Just then a wild cheer to the front drew our attention thither, and we saw the heads of three immense columns – Soult's division – advancing at a run towards the enemy.

"*Par Saint Louis*," cried General d'Auvergne, as he directed his telescope on the Russian line, "those fellows have lost their senses! See if they have not moved their artillery away from the Pratzen, and weakened their centre more and more! Soult sees it: mark how he presses his columns on! There they go, faster and faster! But look! there's a movement yonder, – the Russians perceive their mistake."

"Mount!" was now heard from squadron to squadron; while dashing along the line like a thunderbolt, Murat rode far in advance of his staff, the men cheering him as he went.

"There!" cried D'Auvergne, as he pointed with his

finger, "that column with the yellow shoulder-knots, – that's Vandamme's brigade of light infantry; see how they rush on, eager to be first up with the enemy. But St. Hilaire's grenadiers have got the start of them, and are already at the foot of the hill. It is a race between them!"

And so had it become. The two columns advanced, cheering wildly; while the officers, waving their caps, led them on, and others rode along the flanks urging the men forward.

The order now came for our squadrons to form in charging sections, leaving spaces for the light artillery between. This done, we moved slowly forward at a walk, the guns keeping step by step beside us. A few minutes after, we lost sight of the attacking columns; but the crashing fire told us they were engaged, and that already the great struggle had begun.

For above an hour we remained thus; every stir, every word loud spoken, seeming to our impatience like the order to move. At last, the squadrons to our right were seen to advance; and then a tremulous motion of the whole line showed that the horses themselves participated in the eagerness of the moment; and, at last, the word came for the cuirassiers to move up. In less than a hundred yards we were halted again; and I heard an aide-de-camp telling General d'Auvergne that Davoust had suffered immensely on the right; that his division, although reinforced, had fallen back behind Reygern, and all now depended on the attack of Soult's columns.

I heard no more, for now the whole line advanced in trot, and

as our formation showed an unbroken front, the word came, – "Faster!" and "Faster!" As we emerged from the low ground we saw Soult's column already half way up the ascent; they seemed like a great wedge driven into the enemy's centre, which, opening as they advanced, presented two surfaces of fire to their attack.

"The battery yonder has opened its fire on our line," said D'Auvergne; "we cannot remain where we are."

"Forward! – charge!" came the word from front to rear, and squadron after squadron dashed madly up the ascent. The one word only, "Charge!" kept ringing through my head; all else was drowned in the terrible din of the advance. An Austrian brigade of light cavalry issued forth as we came up, but soon fell back under the overwhelming pressure of our force. And now we came down upon the squares of the red-brown Russian infantry. Volley after volley sent back our leading squadrons, wounded and repulsed, when, unlimbering with the speed of lightning, the horse artillery poured in a discharge of grapeshot. The ranks wavered, and through their cleft spaces of dead and dying our cuirassiers dashed in, sabring all before them. In vain the infantry tried to form again: successive discharges of grape, followed by cavalry attacks, broke through their firmest ranks; and at last retreating, they fell back under cover of a tremendous battery of field-guns, which, opening their fire, compelled us to retire into the wood.

Nor were we long inactive. Bernadotte's division was now engaged on our left, and a pressing demand came for cavalry

to support them. Again we mounted the hill, and came in sight of the Russian Guard, led on by the Grand-Duke Constantino himself, – a splendid body of men, conspicuous for their size and the splendor of their equipment. Such, however, was the impetuous torrent of our attack that they were broken in an instant; and notwithstanding their courage and devotion, fresh masses of our dragoons kept pouring down upon them, and they were sabred, almost to a man.

While we were thus engaged, the battle became general from left to right, and the earth shook beneath the thundering sounds of two hundred great guns. Our position, for a moment victorious, soon changed; for having followed the retreating squadrons too far, the waves closed behind us, and we now saw that a dense cloud of Austrian and Russian cavalry were forming in our rear. An instant of hesitation would have been fatal. It was then that a tall and splendidly-dressed horseman broke from the line, and with a cry to "Follow!" rode straight at the enemy. It was Murat himself, sabre in hand, who, clearing his way through the Russians, opened a path for us. A few minutes after we had gained the wood; but one third of our force had fallen.

"Cavalry! cavalry!" cried a field-officer, riding down at headlong speed, his face covered with blood from a sabre-cut, "to the front!"

The order was given to advance at a gallop; and we found ourselves next instant hand to hand with the Russian dragoons, who having swept along the flank of Bernadotte's division, were

sabring them on all sides. On we went, reinforced by Nansouty and his carabineers, a body of nigh seven thousand men. It was a torrent no force could stem. The tide of victory was with us; and we swept along, wave after wave, the infantry advancing in line for miles at either side, while whole brigades of artillery kept up a murderous fire without ceasing. Entire columns of the enemy surrendered as prisoners; guns were captured at each instant; and only by a miracle did the Grand-Duke escape our hussars, who followed him till he was lost to view in the flying ranks of the allies.

As we gained the crest of the hill, we were in time to see Soult's victorious columns driving the enemy before them; while the Imperial Guard, up to that moment unengaged, reinforced the grenadiers on the right, and broke through the Russians on every side.

The attempt to outflank us on the right we had perfectly retorted on the left; where Lannes's division, overlapping the line, pressed them on two sides, and drove them back, still fighting, into the plain, which, with a lake, separated the allied armies from the village of Austerlitz. And here took place the most dreadful occurrence of the day.

The two roads which led through the lake were soon so encumbered and blocked up by ammunition wagons and carts that they became impassable; and as the masses of the fugitives thickened, they spread over the lake, which happened to be frozen. It was at this time that the Emperor came up, and seeing

the cavalry halted, and no longer in pursuit of the flying columns, ordered up twelve pieces of the artillery of the Imperial Guard, which, from the crest of the hill, opened a murderous fire on them. The slaughter was fearful as the discharges of grape and round shot cut channels through the jammed-up mass, and tore the dense columns, as it were, into fragments.

Dreadful as the scene was, what followed far exceeded it in horror; for soon the shells began to explode beneath the ice, which now, with a succession of reports louder than thunder, gave way. In an instant whole regiments were ingulfed, and amid the wildest cries of despair, thousands sank never to appear again, while the deafening artillery mercilessly played upon them, till over that broad surface no living thing was seen to move, while beneath was the sepulchre of five thousand men. About seven thousand reached Austerlitz by another road to the northward; but even these had not escaped, save for a mistake of Bernadotte, who most unaccountably, as it was said, halted his division on the heights. Had it not been for this, not a soldier of the Russian right wing had been saved.

The reserve cavalry and the dragoons of the Guard were now called up from the pursuit, and I saw my own regiment pass close by me, as I stood amid the staff round Murat. The men were fresh and eager for the fray; yet how many fell in that pursuit, even after the victory! The Russian batteries continued their fire to the last. The cannoneers were cut down beside their guns, and the cavalry made repeated charges on our advancing squadrons;

nor was it till late in the day they fell back, leaving two thirds of their force dead or wounded on the field of battle.

On every side now were to be seen the flying columns of the allies, hotly followed by the victorious French. The guns still thundered at intervals; but the loud roar of battle was subdued to the crashing din of charging squadrons, and the distant cries of the vanquishers and the vanquished. Around and about lay the wounded in all the fearful attitudes of suffering; and as we were fully a league in advance of our original position, no succor had yet arrived for the poor fellows whose courage had carried them into the very squares of the enemy.

Most of the staff – myself among the number – were despatched to the rear for assistance. I remember, as I rode along at my fastest speed, between the columns of infantry and the fragments of artillery which covered the grounds, that a *peloton* of dragoons came thundering past, while a voice shouted out "Place! place!" Supposing it was the Emperor himself, I drew up to one side, and uncovering my head, sat in patience till he had passed, when, with the speed of four horses urged to their utmost, a calèche flew by, two men dressed like couriers seated on the box. They made for the highroad towards Vienna, and soon disappeared in the distance.

"What can it mean?" said I, to an officer beside me; "not his Majesty, surely?"

"No, no," replied he, smiling: "it is General Lebrun on his way to Paris with the news of the victory. The Emperor is down at

Reygern yonder, where he has just written the bulletin. I warrant you he follows that calèche with his eye; he'd rather see a battery of guns carried off by the enemy than an axle break there this moment."

Thus closed the great day of Austerlitz – a hundred cannons, forty-three thousand prisoners, and thirty-two colors being the spoils of this the greatest of even Napoleon's victories.

CHAPTER IV. THE FIELD AT MIDNIGHT

We passed the night on the field of battle, – a night dark and starless. The heavens were, indeed, clothed with black, and a heavy atmosphere, lowering and gloomy, spread like a pall over the dead and the dying. Not a breath of air moved; and the groans of the wounded sighed through the stillness with a melancholy cadence no words can convey. Far away in the distance the moving lights marked where fatigue parties went in search of their comrades. The Emperor himself did not leave the saddle till nigh morning; he went, followed by an ambulance, hither and thither over the plain, recalling the names of the several regiments, enumerating their deeds of prowess, and even asking for many of the soldiers by name. He ordered large fires to be lighted throughout the field, and where medical assistance could not be procured, the officers of the staff might be seen covering the wounded with greatcoats and cloaks, and rendering them such aid as lay in their power.

Dreadful as the picture was, – fearful reverse to the gorgeous splendor of the vast army the morning sun had shone upon, and in the pride of strength and spirit, – yet even here was there much to make one feel that war is not bereft of its humanizing influences. How many a soldier did I see that night, blackened with powder,

his clothes torn and ragged with shot, sitting beside a wounded comrade – now wetting his lips with a cool draught, now cheering his heart with words of comfort! Many, though wounded, were tending others less able to assist themselves. Acts of kindness and self-devotion – not less in number than those of heroism and courage – were met with at every step; while among the sufferers there lived a spirit of enthusiasm that seemed to lighten the worst pang of their agony. Many would cry out, as I passed, to know the fate of the day, and what became of this regiment or of that battalion. Others could but articulate a faint "Vive l'Empereur!" which in the intervals of pain they kept repeating, as though it were a charm against suffering; while one question met me every instant, – "What says the Petit Caporal? Is he content with us?" None were insensible to the glorious issue of that day; nor amid all the agony of death, dealt out in every shape of horror and misery, did I hear one word of anger or rebuke to him for whose ambition they had shed their heart's blood.

Having secured a fresh horse, I rode forward in the direction of Austerlitz, where our cavalry, met by the chevaliers of the Russian Imperial Guard, sustained the greatest check and the most considerable loss of the day. The old dragoon who accompanied me warned me I should find few, if any, of our comrades living there.

"*Ventrebleu!* lieutenant, you can't expect it. The first four squadrons went down like one man; for when our fellows fell wounded from their horses, they always sabred or shot them as

they lay."

I found this information but too correct. Lines of dead men lay beside their horses, ranged as they stood in battle, while before them lay the bodies of the Russian Guard, their gorgeous uniform all slashed with gold, marking them out amid the dull russet costumes of their comrades. In many places were they intermingled, and showed where a hand-to-hand combat had been fought; and I saw two clasped rigidly in each other's grasp, who had evidently been shot by others while struggling for the mastery.

"I told you, mon lieutenant, it was useless to come here; this was *à la mort* while it lasted; and if it had continued much longer in the same fashion, it's hard to say which of us had been going over the field now with lanterns."

Too true, indeed! Not one wounded man did we meet with, nor did one human voice break the silence around us. "Perhaps," said I, "they may have already carried up the wounded to the village yonder; I see a great blaze of light there. Bide forward, and learn if it be so."

When I had dismissed the orderly, I dismounted from my horse, and walked carefully along the ridge of ground, anxious to ascertain if any poor fellow still remained alive amid that dreadful heap of dead. A low brushwood covered the ground in certain places; and here I perceived but few of the cavalry had penetrated, while the infantry were all tirailleurs of the Russian Guard, bayoneted by our advancing columns. As I approached

the lake the ground became more rugged and uneven; and I was about to turn back, when my eye caught the faint glimmering of a light reflected in the water. Picketing my horse where he stood, I advanced alone towards the light, which I saw now was at the foot of a little rocky crag beside the lake. As I drew near, I stopped to listen, and could distinctly hear the deep tones of a man's voice, as if broken at intervals by pain, while in his accents I thought I could trace a tone of indignant passion rather than of bodily suffering.

"Leave me, leave me where I am," cried he, peevishly. "I thought I might have had my last few moments tranquil, when I staggered thus far."

"Come, come, Comrade!" said another, in a voice of comforting; "come, thou wert never faint-hearted before. Thou hast had thy share of bruises, and cared little about them too. Art dry?"

"Yes; give me another drink. Ah!" cried he, in an excited tone, "they can't stand before the cuirassiers of the Guard. *Sacrebleu!* how proud the Petit Caporal will be of this day!" Then, dropping his voice, he muttered, "What care I who's proud? I have my billet, and must be going."

"Not so, *mon enfant*; thou'lt have the cross for thy day's work. He knows thee well; I saw him smile to-day when thou madest the salute in passing."

"Didst thou that?" said the wounded man, with eagerness; "did he smile? Ah, villain! how you can allure men to shed their heart's

blood by a smile! He knows me! That he ought, and, if he but knew how I lay here now, he 'd send the best surgeon of his staff to look after me."

"That he would, and that he will; courage, and cheer up."

"No, no; I don't care for it now. I'll never go back to the regiment again; I could n't do it!"

As he spoke the last words his voice became fainter and fainter, and at last was lost in a hiccup; partly, as it seemed, from emotion, and partly from bodily suffering.

"*Qui vive?*" cried his companion, as the clash of my sabre announced my approach.

"An officer of the Eighth Hussars," said I, in a low voice, fearing to disturb the wounded man, as he lay with his head sunk on his knees.

"Too late, Comrade! too late," said he, in a stifled tone; "the order of route has come. I must away."

"A brave cuirassier of the Guard should never say so while he has a chance left to serve his Emperor in another field of battle."

"Vive l'Empereur! vive l'Empereur!" shouted he, madly, as he lifted his helmet and tried to wave it above his head. But the exertion brought on a violent fit of coughing, which choked his utterance, while a torrent of red blood gushed from his mouth, and deluged his neck and chest.

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* that cry has been his death," said the other, wringing his hands in utter misery.

"Where is he wounded?" said I, kneeling down beside the sick

man, who now lay, half on his face, upon the grass.

"In the chest, through the lung," whispered the other. "He doesn't know the doctor saw him; it was he told me there was no hope. 'You may leave him,' said he; 'an hour or two more are all that 's left him;' as if I could leave a comrade we all loved. My poor fellow, it is a sad day for the old Fourth when thou art taken from them!"

"Ha! was he of the Fourth, then?" said I, remembering the regiment.

"Yes, *parbleu!* and though but a corporal, he was well known throughout the army. Pioche – "

"Pioche!" cried I, in agony; "is this Pioche?"

"Here," said the wounded man, hearing the name, and answering as if on parade, – "here, mon commandant! but too faint, I 'm afraid, for duty. I feel weak to-day," said he, as he pressed his hand upon his side, and then slowly sank back against the rock, and dropped his arms at either side.

"Come," said I, "we must lose no time. Let us carry him to the rear. If nothing else can be done, he 'll meet with care – "

"Hush! mon lieutenant! don't let him hear you speak of that. He stormed and swore so much when the ambulance passed, and they wanted to bring him along, that it brought on a coughing fit, just like what you saw, and he lay in a faint for half an hour after. He vows he 'll never stir from where he is. Truth is, Commandant," said he, in the lowest whisper, "he is determined to die. When his squadron fell back from the Russian square, he

rode on their bayonets, and cut at the men while the artillery was playing all about him. He told me this morning he 'd never leave the field."

"Poor fellow! what was the meaning of this sad resolution?"

"*Ma foi!* a mere trifle, after all," said the other, shrugging his shoulders, and making a true French grimace of contempt. "You 'll smile when I tell you; but he takes it to heart, poor fellow. His mistress has been false to him, – no great matter that, you 'd say, – but so it is, and nothing more. See how still he lies now! is he sleeping?"

"I fear not; he looks exhausted from loss of blood. Come, we must have him out of this; here comes my orderly to assist us. If we carry him to the road I 'll find a carriage of some sort."

I said this in a tone of command, to silence any scruples he might still have about obeying his comrade in preference to the orders of an officer. He obeyed with the instinct of discipline, and proceeded to fold his cloak in such a manner that we could carry the wounded man between us.

The poor corporal, too weak to resist us, faint from bleeding and semi-stupid, suffered himself to be lifted upon the cloak, and never uttered a word or a cry as we bore him along between us.

We had not proceeded far when we came up with a convoy, conducting several carts with the wounded to the convent of Reygern, which had now been fitted up as an hospital. On one of these we secured a place for our poor friend, and walked along beside him towards the convent. As we went along I questioned

his comrade closely on the point; and he told me that Pioche had resolved never to survive the battle, and had taken leave of his friends the evening before.

"Ah, *parbleu!*" added he, with energy, "mademoiselle is pretty enough, – there 's no denying that; but her head is turned by flattery and soft speeches. All the gay young fellows of the hussar regiment, the aides-de-camp, – ay, and some of the generals, too, – have paid her so much attention that it could not be expected she'd care for a poor corporal. Not but that Pioche is a brave fellow and a fine soldier. *Sapristi!* he 'd be no discredit to any girl's choice. But Minette – "

"Minette, the vivandière?"

"Ay, to be sure, mon lieutenant; I'd warrant you must have known her."

"What of her? where is she?" said I, burning with impatience.

"She's with the wounded, up at Reygern yonder. They sent for her to Heilbrunn yesterday, where she was with the reserve battalions. *Ma foi!* you don't think our fellows would do without Minette at the ambulance, where there was a battle to be fought. They say they'd hard work enough to make her come up. After all, she's a strange girl; that she is."

"How was that? Has she taken offence with the Fourth?"

"No, that is not it; she likes the old regiment in her heart. I'd never believe she didn't; but" (here he dropped his voice to a low whisper, as if dreading to be overheard by the wounded man), "but they say – who knows if it's true? – that when she

was left behind at Ulm or Elchingen, or somewhere up there on the Danube, that there was a young fellow – I heard his name, too, but I forget it – who was brought in badly wounded, and that mademoiselle was left to watch and nurse him. He got well in time, for the thing was not so serious as they thought. And what do you think was the return he made the poor girl? He seduced her!"

"It's false! false as hell!" cried I, bursting with passion. "Who has dared to spread such a calumny?"

"Don't be angry, mon lieutenant; there are plenty to answer for the report. And if it was yourself – "

"Yes; it was by *my* bedside she watched; it was to *me* she gave that care and kindness by which I recovered from a dangerous wound. But so far from this base requital – "

"Why did she leave you, then, and march night and day with the chasseur brigade into the Tyrol? Why did she tell her friends that she'd never see the old Fourth again? Why did she fret herself into an illness – "

"Did she do this, poor girl?"

"Ay, that she did. But, mayhap, you never heard of all this. I can only say, mon lieutenant, that you'd be safer in a broken square, charged by a heavy squadron, than among the Fourth, after what you 've done."

I turned indignantly from him without a reply; for while my pride revolted at answering an accusation from such a quarter, my mind was harassed by the sad fate of poor Minette, and

perplexed how to account for her sudden departure. My silence at once arrested my companion's speech, and we walked along the remainder of the way without a word on either side.

The day was just breaking when the first wagon of the convoy entered the gates of the convent. It was an enormous mass of building, originally destined for the reception of about three thousand persons; for, in addition to the priestly inhabitants, there were two great hospitals and several schools included within the walls. This, before the battle, had been tenanted by the staffs of many general officers and the corps of engineers and sappers, but now was entirely devoted to the wounded of either army; for Austrians and Russians were everywhere to be met with, receiving equal care and attention with our own troops.

It was the first time I had witnessed a military hospital after a battle, and the impression was too fearful to be ever forgotten by me.

The great chambers and spacious rooms of the convent were soon found inadequate for the numbers who arrived; and already the long corridors and passages of the building were crowded with beds, between which a narrow path scarcely permitted one person to pass. Here, promiscuously, without regard to rank, officers in command lay side by side with the meanest privates, awaiting the turn of medical aid, as no other order was observed than the necessities of each case demanded. A black mark above the bed, indicating that the patient's state was hopeless, proclaimed that no further attention need be bestowed; while

the same mark, with a white bar across it, implied that it was a case for operation. In this way the surgeons who arrived at each moment from different corps of the army discovered, at a glance, where their services were required, and not a minute's time was lost.

The dreadful operations of surgery – for which, in the events of every-day life, every provision of delicate secrecy, and every minute detail which can alleviate dread, are so rigidly studied, – were here going forward on every side; the horrible preparations moved from bed to bed with a rapidity which showed that where suffering so abounded there was no time for sympathy; and the surgeons, with arms bare to the shoulder and bedaubed with blood, toiled away as though life no longer moved in the creeping flesh beneath the knife, and human agony spoke not aloud with every motion of their hand.

"Place there! move forward!" said an hospital surgeon, as they carried up the litter on which Pioche lay stretched and senseless.

"What's this?" cried a surgeon, leaning forward, and placing his hand on the sick man's pulse. "Ah! take him back again; it 's all over there!"

"Oh, no!" cried I, in agony, "it can scarcely be; they lifted him alive from the wagon."

"He's not dead, sir," replied the surgeon, in a whisper, "but he will soon be; there's internal bleeding going on from that wound, and a few hours, or less perhaps must close the scene."

"Can nothing be done? nothing?"

"I fear not." He opened the jacket of the wounded man as he spoke, and slitting the inner clothes asunder with a quick stroke of his scissors, disclosed a tremendous sabre-wound in the side. "That is not the worst," said he. "Look here," pointing to a small bluish mark of a bullet hole above it; "here lies the mischief."

An hospital aid whispered something at the instant in the surgeon's ear, to which he quickly replied, "When?"

"This instant, sir; the ligature slipped, and – "

"Remove him," was the reply. "Now, sir, I have a bed for your poor fellow here; but I have little hope to give you. His pulse is stronger, otherwise the endeavor would be lost time."

While they carried the litter forward, I perceived that another party were lifting from a bed near a figure, over whose face the sheet was carelessly thrown. I guessed from the gestures that the form they lifted was lifeless; the heavy sumph of the body upon the ground showed it beyond a doubt. The bearers replaced the dead man by the dying body of poor Pioche; and from a vague feeling of curiosity, I stooped down and drew back the sheet from the face of the corpse. As I did so, my limbs trembled, and I leaned back almost fainting against the wall. Pale with the pallor of death, but scarcely altered from life, I beheld the dead features of Amédée Pichot, the captain whose insolence had left an unsettled quarrel between us. The man for whose coming I waited to expiate an open insult, now lay cold and lifeless at my feet. What a rush of sensations passed through my mind as I gazed on that motionless mass! and oh, what gratitude my heart

gushed to think that he did not fall by *my* hand!

"A brave soldier, but a quarrelsome friend," said the surgeon, stooping down to examine the wound, with all the indifference of a man who regarded life as a mere problem. "It was a cannon-shot carried it off." As he said this, he disclosed the mangled remains of a limb, torn from the trunk too high to permit of amputation. "Poor Amédée! it was the death he always wished for. It was a strange horror he had of falling by the hand of an adversary, rather than being carried off thus. And now for the cuirassier."

So saying, he turned towards the bed on which Pioche lav, still as death itself. A few minutes' careful investigation of the case enabled him to pronounce that although the chances were many against recovery, yet it was not altogether hopeless.

"All will depend on the care of whoever watches him," said the surgeon. "Symptoms will arise, requiring prompt attention and a change in treatment; and this is one of those cases where a nurse is worth a hundred doctors. Who takes charge of this bed?" he called aloud.

"Minette, Monsieur," said a sergeant. "She has lain down to take a little rest, for she was quite worn out with fatigue."

"Me voici!" said a silvery voice I knew at once to be hers. And the same instant she pierced the crowd around the bed, and approached the patient. No sooner had she beheld the features of the sick man than she reeled back, and grasped the arms of the persons on either side. For a few seconds she stood, with her hands pressed upon her face, and when she withdrew

them, her features were almost ghastly in their hue, while, with a great effort over her emotion, she said, in a low voice, “Can he recover?”

“Yes, Minette!” replied the surgeon, “and will, if care avail anything. Just hear me for a moment.”

With that he drew her to one side, and commenced to explain the treatment he proposed to adopt. As he spoke, her cloak, which up to this instant she wore, dropped from her shoulders, and she stood there in the dress of the vivandière: a short frock coat, of light blue, with a thin gold braid upon the collar and the sleeve; loose trousers of white jean, strapped beneath her boots; a silk sash of scarlet and gold entwined was fastened round her waist, and fell in a long fringe at her side; while a cap of blue cloth, with a gold band and tassel, hung by a hook at her girdle. Simple as was the dress, it displayed to perfection the symmetry of her figure and her carriage, and suited the character of her air and gesture, which, abrupt and impatient at times, was almost boyish in the wayward freedom of her action.

The surgeon soon finished his directions, the crowd separated, and Minette alone remained by the sick man’s bed. For some minutes her cares did not permit her to look up; but when she did, a slight cry broke from her, and she sank down upon the seat at the bedside.

“Minette, dear Minette, you are not angry with me?” said I, in a low and trembling tone. “I have not done aught to displease you, – have I so?”

She answered not a word, but a blush of the deepest scarlet suffused her face and temples, and her bosom heaved almost convulsively.

"To you I owe my life," continued I, with earnestness; "nay more, I owe the kindness which made of a sick-bed a place of pleasant thoughts and happy memories. Can I, then, have offended you, while my whole heart was bursting with gratitude?"

A paleness, more striking than the blush that preceded it, now stole over her features, but she uttered not a word. Her eyes turned from me and fell upon her own figure, and I saw the tears till up and roll slowly along her cheeks.

"Why did you leave me, Minette?" said I, wound up by her obstinate silence beyond further endurance. "Did the few words of impatience – "

"No, no, no!" broke she in, "not that! not that!"

"What then? Tell me, for Heaven's sake, how have I earned your displeasure? Believe me, I have met with too little kindness in my way through life, not to feel poignantly the loss of a friend. What was it, I beseech you?"

"Oh, do not ask me!" cried she, with streaming eyes; "do not, I beg of you. Enough that you know – and this I swear to you, – that no fault of yours was in question. You were always good and always kind to me, – too kind, too good, – but not even your teaching could alter the waywardness of my nature. Speak of this no more, I ask you, as the greatest favor you can bestow on me.

See here," cried she, while her lips trembled with emotion; "I have need of all my courage to be of use to him; and you will not, I am sure, render me unequal to my task."

"But we are friends, Minette; friends as before," said I, taking her hand, and pressing it within mine.

"Yes, friends!" muttered she, in a broken voice, while she turned her head from me. "Adieu! Monsieur, adieu!"

"Adieu, then, since you wish it so, Minette! But whatever your secret reason for this change towards me, you never can alter the deep-rooted feeling of my heart, which makes me know myself your friend forever."

The more I thought of Minette's conduct, the more puzzled I was. No jealousy on the part of Pioche could explain her abrupt departure from Elchingen, and her resolve never to rejoin the Fourth. She was, indeed, a strange girl, wayward and self-willed; but her impulses all had their source in high feelings of honor and exalted pride. It might have been that some chance expression had given her offence; yet she denied this. But still, her former frankness was gone, and a sense of coldness, if not distrust, had usurped its place. I could make nothing of it. One thing alone did I feel convinced of, – she did not love Pioche. Poor fellow! with all the fine traits of his honest nature, the manly simplicity and openness of his character, he had not those arts of pleasing which win their way with a woman's mind. Besides that, Minette, from habit and tone of voice, had imbibed feelings and ideas of a very different class in society, and with a feminine tact, had

contrived to form acquaintance with, and a relish for, the tastes and pleasures of the cultivated World. The total subversion of all social order effected by the Revolution had opened the path of ambition in life equally to women as to men; and all the endeavors of the Consulate and the Empire had not sobered down the minds of France to their former condition. The sergeant to-day saw no reason why he might not wear his epaulettes to-morrow, and in time exchange his shako even for a crown; and so the vivandière, whose life was passed in the intoxicating atmosphere of glory, might well dream of greatness which should be hers hereafter, and of the time when, as the wife of a marshal or a peer of France, she would walk the *salons* of the Tuileries as proudly as the daughter of a Rohan or a Tavanne.

There was, then, nothing vain or presumptuous in the boldest flight of ambition. However glittering the goal, it was beyond the reach of none; and the hopes which, in better-ordered communities, had been deemed absurd, seemed here but fair and reasonable. And from this element alone proceeded some of the greatest actions, and by far the greatest portion of the unhappiness, of the period. The mind of the nation was unfixed; men had not as yet resolved themselves into those grades and classes, by the means of which public opinion is brought to bear upon individuals from those of his own condition. Each was a law unto himself, suggesting his own means of advancement and estimating his own powers of success; and the result was, a general scramble for rank, dignity, and honors, the unfitness of

the possessor for which, when attained, brought neither contempt nor derision. The epaulette was noblesse; the shako, a coronet. What wonder, then, if she, whose personal attractions were so great, and whose manners and tone of thought were so much above her condition, had felt the stirrings of that ambition within her heart which now appeared to be the moving spirit of the nation!

Lost in such thoughts, I turned homewards towards my quarters, and was already some distance from the convent when a dragoon galloped up to my side, and asked eagerly if I were the surgeon of the Sixth Grenadiers. As I replied in the negative, he muttered something between his teeth, and added louder, "The poor general; it will be too late after all."

So saying, and before I could question him further, he set spurs to his horse, and dashing onwards, soon disappeared in the darkness of the night. A few minutes afterwards I beheld a number of lanterns straight before me on the narrow road, and as I came nearer, a sentinel called out, —

"Halt there! stand!"

I gave my name and rank, when the man, advancing towards me, said in a half whisper, —

"It is our general, sir; they say he cannot be brought any farther, and they must perform the operation here."

The soldier's voice trembled at every word, and he could scarcely falter out, in reply to my question, the name of the wounded officer.

"General St. Hilaire, sir, who led the grenadiers on the Pratzen," said the poor fellow, his sorrow struggling with his pride.

I pressed forward; and there on a litter lay the figure of a large and singularly fine-looking man. His coat, which was covered with orders, lay open, and discovered a shirt stained and clotted with blood; but his most dangerous wound was from a grapeshot in the thigh, which shattered the bone, and necessitated amputation. A young staff surgeon, the only medical man present, was kneeling at his side, and occupied in compressing some wounded vessels to arrest the bleeding, which, at the slightest stir of the patient, broke out anew. The remainder of the group were grenadiers of his own regiment, in whose sad and sorrow-struck faces one might read the affection his men invariably bore him.

"Is he coming? can you hear any one coming?" said the young surgeon, in an anxious whisper to the soldier beside him.

"No, sir; but he cannot be far off now," replied the man.

"Shall I ride back to Reygern for assistance?" said I, in a low voice, to the surgeon.

"I thank you, sir," said the wounded man, in a low, calm tone, – for with the quick ear of suffering he had overheard my question, – "I thank you, but my orderly has already been sent thither. If you could relieve my young friend here from his fatiguing duty for a little, you would render us both a service. I am truly grieved to see him so much exhausted."

"No, no, sir!" stammered the youth, as the tears ran fast down his cheeks; "this is my place. I will not leave it."

"Kind fellow!" muttered the general, as he pressed his hand gently on the young man's arm; "I can bear this better than you can."

"Ah, here he comes now," said the sentinel; and the same moment a man dismounted from his horse, and came forward towards us.

It was Louis, the surgeon of the Emperor himself, despatched by Napoleon the moment he heard of the event. At any other moment, perhaps, the abrupt demeanor of this celebrated surgeon would have savored little of delicacy or feeling; nor even then could I forgive the sudden announcement in which he conveyed to the sufferer that immediate amputation must be performed.

"No chance left but this, Louis?" said the general.

"None, sir," replied the doctor, while he unlocked an instrument case, and busied himself in preparation for the operation.

"Can you defer it a little; an hour or two, I mean?"

"An hour, perhaps; not more, certainly."

"But am I certain of your services then, Louis?" said the general, trying to smile. "You know I always promised myself your aid when this hour came."

"I shall return in an hour," replied the doctor, pulling out his watch; "I am going to Rapp's quarters."

"Poor Rapp! is he wounded?"

"A mere sabre-cut; but Sebastiani has suffered more severely. Now then, Lanusse," said he, addressing the young surgeon, "you remain here. Continue as you are doing, and in an hour – "

"In an hour," echoed the wounded man, with a shudder, as though the anticipation of the dreadful event had thrilled through his very heart. Nor was it till the retiring sounds of the surgeon's horse had died away in the distance that his features recovered their former calm and tranquil expression.

"A prompt fellow is Louis," said he, after a pause; "and though one might like somewhat more courtesy in the Faubourg, yet on the field of battle it is all for the best; this is no place nor time for compliments."

The young man answered not a word, either not daring to criticise too harshly his superior, or perhaps his emotion at the moment was too strong for utterance. In reply to my offer to remain with him, however, he thanked me heartily, and seemed gratified that he was not to be left alone in such a trying emergency.

"Come," said St. Hilaire, after a pause, "I have asked for time, and am already forgetting how to employ it. Who can write here? Can you, Guilbert?"

"Alas, no, sir!" said a dark grenadier, blushing to the very eyes.

"If you will permit a stranger, sir," said I, "I will be but too proud and too happy to render you any assistance in my power. I am on the staff of General d'Auvergne, and – "

"A French officer, sir," interrupted he; "quite enough. I ask for no other guerdon of your honor. Sit down here, then, and – But first try if you can discover a pocket-book in my sabretache; I hope it has not been lost."

"Here it is, General," said a soldier, coming forward with it; "I found it on the ground beside you."

"Well, then, I will ask you to write down from my dictation a few lines, which, should this affair," – he faltered slightly here, – "this affair prove unfortunate, you will undertake to convey, by some means or other, to the address I shall give you in Paris. It is not a will, I assure you," continued he with a faint smile. "I have no wealth to leave; but I know his Majesty too well to fear anything on that score. But my children, I wish to give some few directions – " Here he stopped for several minutes, and then, in a calm voice, added, "Whenever you are ready."

It was with a suffering spirit and a faltering hand I wrote down, from his dictation, some short sentences addressed to each member of his family. Of these it is not my intention to speak, save in one instance, where St. Hilaire himself evinced a wish that his sentiments should not be a matter of secrecy.

"I desire," said he, in a firm tone of voice, as he turned round and addressed the soldiers on either side of him, – "I desire that my son, now at the Polytechnique, should serve the Emperor better than, and as faithfully as, his father has done, if his Majesty will graciously permit him to do so, in the grenadier battalion, which I have long commanded; it will be the greatest favor I

can ask of him." A low murmur of grief, no longer repressible, ran through the little group around the litter. "The grenadiers of the Sixth," continued he, proudly, while for an instant his pale features flushed up, "will not love him the less for the name he bears. Come, come, men! do not give way thus; what will my kind young friend here say of us, when he joins the hussar brigade? This is not their ordinary mood, believe me," said he, addressing me. "The Russian Guard would give a very different account of them; they are stouter fellows at the *pas dé charge* than around the litter of a wounded comrade."

While he was yet speaking, Louis returned, followed by two officers, one of whom, notwithstanding his efforts at concealment, I recognized to be Marshal Murat.

"We must remove him, if it be possible," said the surgeon, in a whisper. "And yet the slightest motion is to be dreaded."

"May I speak to him?" said Murat, in a low voice.

"Yes, that you may," replied Louis, who now pushed his way forward and approached the litter.

"Ah, so soon!" said the wounded man, looking up; "a man of your word, Louis. And how is Rapp? Nothing in this fashion, I hope," added he, pointing to his fractured limb with a sickly smile.

"No, no," replied the surgeon. "But here is Marshal Murat come to inquire after you, from the Emperor."

A flush of pride lit up St. Hilaire's features as he heard this, and he asked eagerly, "Where, where?"

"We must remove you, St. Hilaire," said Murat, endeavoring to speak calmly, when it was evident his feelings were highly excited; "Louis says you must not remain here."

"As you like, Marshal. What says his Majesty? Is the affair as decisive as he looked for?"

"Far more so. The allied army is destroyed; the campaign is ended."

"Come, then, this is not so bad as I deemed it," rejoined St. Hilaire, with a tone of almost gayety; "I can afford to be invalided if the Emperor has no further occasion for me."

While these few words were interchanging, Louis had applied a tourniquet around the wounded limb, and having given the soldiers directions how they were to step, so as not to disturb or displace the shattered bones, he took his place beside the litter, and said, —

"We are ready now, General."

They lifted the litter as he spoke, and moved slowly forward. Murat pressed the hand St. Hilaire extended to him without a word; and then, turning his head away, suffered the party to pass on.

Before we reached Beygern, the wounded general had fallen into a heavy sleep, from which he did not awake as they laid him on the bed in the hospital.

"Good-night, sir, – or rather, good-morning," said Louis to me, as I turned to leave the spot. "We may chance to have better news for you than we anticipated, when you visit us here again."

And so we parted.

CHAPTER V. A MAÎTRE D'ARMES

The day after the battle of Austerlitz the Prince of Lichtenstein arrived in our camp, with, as it was rumored, proposals for a peace. The negotiations, whatever they were, were strictly secret, not even the marshals themselves being admitted to Napoleon's confidence on this occasion. Soon after mid-day, a great body of the Guard who had been in reserve the previous day were drawn up in order of battle, presenting an array of several thousand men, whose dress, look, and equipment, fresh as if on parade before the Tuileries, could not fail to strike the Austrian envoy with amazement. Everything that could indicate the appearance of suffering, or even fatigue, among the troops, was sedulously kept out of view. Such of the cavalry regiments as suffered least in the battle were under arms; while the generals of division received orders to have their respective staffs fully equipped and mounted, as if on a day of review.

It was late in the afternoon when the word was passed along the lines to stand to arms; and the moment after a *calèche*, drawn by six horses, passed in full gallop, and took the road towards Austerlitz. The return of the Austrian envoy set a thousand conjectures in motion, and all were eager to find out what had been the result of his mission.

"We must soon learn it all," said an old colonel of artillery near me. "If the game be war, we shall be called up to assist Davoust's

movement on Göding. The Russians have but one line of retreat, and that is already in our possession."

"I cannot for the life of me understand the Emperor's inaction," said a younger officer; "here we remain just as if nothing had been done. One would suppose that a Russian army stood in full force before us, and that we had not gained a tremendous battle."

"Depend on it, Auguste," said the old officer, smiling, "his Majesty is not the man to let slip his golden opportunities. If we don't advance, it is because it is safer to remain where we are."

"Safer than pursue a flying enemy?"

"Even so. It is not Russia, nor Austria, we have in the field against us; but Europe, – the world."

"With all my heart," retorted the other, boldly; "nor do I think the odds unfair. All I would ask is, the General Bonaparte of Cairo or Marengo, and not the purple-clad Emperor of the Tuileries."

"It is not while the plain is yet reeking with the blood of Austerlitz that such a reproach should be spoken," said I, indignantly. "Never was Bonaparte greater than Napoleon."

"Monsieur has served in Egypt?" said the young man, contemptuously, while he measured me from head to foot.

"Would that I had! Would that I could give whatever years I may have before me, for those whose every day shall live in history!"

"You are right, young man," said the old colonel; "they

were glorious times, and a worthy prelude to the greatness that followed them."

"A bright promise of the future, – never to come," rejoined the younger, with a flash of anger on his cheek.

"*Parbleu*, sir, you speak boldly!" said a harsh, low voice from behind. We turned: it was Napoleon, dressed in a gray coat, all covered with fur, and looking like one of the couriers of the army. "I did not know my measures were so freely canvassed as I find them. Who are you, sir?"

"Legrange, Sire, chef d'escadron of the Second Voltigeurs," said the young man, trembling from head to foot while he uncovered his head, and stood, cap in hand, before him.

"Since when, sir, have I called you into my counsels and asked your advice? or what is it in your position which entitles you to question one in mine? Duroc, come here. Your sword, sir!"

The young man let fall his shako from his hand, and laid it on his sword-hilt.

"Ah!" cried the Emperor, suddenly; "what became of your right arm?"

"I left it at Aboukir, Sire."

Napoleon muttered something between his teeth; then added, aloud, —

"Come, sir, you are not the first whose hand has saved his head. Return to your duty, and, mark me! be satisfied with doing yours, and leave me to mine. And you, sir," said he, turning towards me, and using the same harsh tone of voice, "I should

know your face."

"Lieutenant Burke, of the Eighth Hussars."

"Ah! I remember, – the Chouanist. So, sir, it seems that I stand somewhat higher in your esteem than when you kept company with Messieurs Georges and Pichegru, eh?"

"No, Sire; your Majesty ever occupied the first place in my admiration and devotion."

"*Sacristi!* then you took a strange way to show it when first I had the pleasure of your acquaintance. You are on General St. Hilaire's staff?"

"General d'Auvergne's, Sire."

"True. D'Auvergne, a word with you."

He turned and whispered something to the old general, who during the whole colloquy stood at his back, anxious but not daring to interpose a word.

"Well, well," said Napoleon, in a voice of much kinder accent, "I am satisfied. Your general, sir, reports favorably of your zeal and capacity. I do not desire to let your former conduct prove any bar to your advancement; and on his recommendation, of which I trust you may prove yourself worthy, I name you to a troop in your own regiment."

"And still to serve on my staff?" said the general, half questioning the Emperor.

"As you wish it, D'Auvergne."

With that he moved forward ere I could do more than express my gratitude by a respectful bow.

"I told you, Burke, the time would come for this," said D'Auvergne, as he pressed my hand warmly, and followed the cortege of the Emperor.

Hitherto I had lived an almost isolated life. My staff duties had so separated me from my brother officers that I only knew them by name; while the other aides-de-camp of the general were men much older than myself, and with none of them had I formed any intimacy whatever. It was not without a sense of this loneliness that I now thought over my promotion. The absence of those who sympathize with our moments of joy and sorrow reduces our enjoyment to a narrow limit indeed. The only one of all I knew who would really have felt happy in my advancement was poor Pioche. He was beyond every thought of pleasure or grief.

Thus reflecting, I turned towards my quarters at Brunn. It was evening: the watchfires were lighted, and round them sat groups of soldiers at their supper, chatting away pleasantly, and recounting the events of the battle. Many had been slightly wounded, and by their bandaged foreheads and disabled arms claimed a marked pre-eminence above the rest. A straw bivouac, with its great blazing fire in front, would denote some officer's quarters; and here were generally some eight or ten assembled, while the savory odor of some smoking dish, and the merry laughter, proclaimed that feasting was not excluded from the life of a campaign.

As I passed one of these I heard the tones of a voice which, well known, had somehow not been heard by me for many a

day before. Who could it be? I listened, but in vain. I asked myself whose was it. I dismounted, and leading my horse by the bridle, passed before the hut. The strong light of the blazing wood lit up the interior, and showed me a party of about a dozen officers, seated and lying on a heap of straw, occupied in discussing a supper, which, however wanting in all the elegancies of table equipment, even where I stood had a most appetizing odor. Various drinking vessels, some of them silver, passed from hand to hand rapidly; and the clinking of cups proclaimed that, although of different regiments, – as I saw they were, – a kindly feeling united them.

"Well, François," said the same voice, whose accents were so familiar to me without my being able to say why, – "well, Francois, you have not told us how it happened."

"Easily enough," said another; "he broke my blade in his back, and gave point afterwards and ran me through the chest." It was the maître d'armes of the Fourth, my old antagonist, who said this, and I drew near to hear the remainder. "You could not call the thing unfair," continued he; "but, after all, no one ever heard of such a *passe*."

"I could have told you of it, though," rejoined the other; "for I remember once, in the fencing school at the Polytechnique, I saw him catch his antagonist's blade in his sleeve, and when he had it secure, snap it across, and then thrust home with his own. *Parbleu!* he lost a coat by it; and I believe, at the time, poor fellow, he could ill spare it."

This story, which was told of myself, was an incident which occurred in a school duel, and was only known to two or three others; and again was I puzzled to think which of my former companions the speaker could be. My curiosity was now stronger than aught else; and so, affecting to seek a light for my cigar, I approached the blaze.

"Halloo, Comrade! a cup of wine with you," cried out a voice from within; "Melniker is no bad drinking – "

"When Chambertin can't be had," said another, handing me a goblet of red wine.

"*Par Saint Denis!* it's the very man himself," shouted a third. "Why, Burke, my old comrade, do you forget Tascher?"

"What!" said I, in amazement, turning from one to the other of the mustached faces, and unable to discover my former friend, while they laughed loud and long at my embarrassment.

"Make way for him there; make way, lads! Come, Burke, here's your place," said he, stretching out his hand and pressing me down beside him on the straw. "So you did not remember me?"

In truth, there was enough of change in his appearance since last I saw him to warrant my forgetfulness. A dark, bushy beard, worn cuirassier fashion, around the mouth and high on the cheeks, almost concealed his face, while in figure he had grown both taller and stouter.

"Art colonel of the Eighth Regiment?" said he, laughing; "you know I promised you were to be, when we were to meet again."

"No; but, if I mistake not," said a hussar officer opposite, "monsieur is in the way to become so. Were you not named to a troop, about half an hour ago, by the Emperor himself?"

"Yes!" said I, with an effort to suppress my pride.

"*Diantre bleu!*" exclaimed Tascher, "what good fortune you always have I I wish you joy of it, with all my heart. I say, Comrades, let us drown his commission for him."

"Agreed! agreed!" cried they all in a breath. "Francois will make us a bowl of punch for the occasion."

"Most willingly," said the little maître d'armes. "Monsieur le Capitaine, I am sure, bears me no ill-will for our little affair. I thought not," added he, seizing my hand in both his. "*Ma foi!* you spoiled my tierce for me; I shall never be the same man again. Now, gentlemen, pass down the brandy, and let the man with most credit go seek for sugar at the canteen."

While François commenced his operations, Tascher proceeded to recount to me the miserable life he had spent in garrison towns, till the outbreak of the campaign had called him on active service.

"It was no use that I asked the Empress to intercede for me, and get me appointed to another regiment; being the nephew of Napoleon seemed to set a complete bar to my advancement. Even now," said he, "my name has been sent forward by my colonel for promotion, and I wager you fifty Naps I shall be passed over."

"And what if you be?" said a huge, heavy-browed major beside him; "what great hardship is it to be a lieutenant in the

cuirassiers at two and twenty? I was a sergeant ten years later."

"Ay, *parbleu!*" cried another, "I won my epaulettes at Cairo, when three officers were reported living, in a whole regiment."

"To be sure," said François, looking up from his operation of lemon-squeezing; "here am I, a maître d'armes, after twenty-six years' service; and there's Davoust, who never could stand before me, he's a general of brigade."

The whole party laughed aloud at the grievances of Maître Francois, whose seriousness on the subject was perfectly real.

"Ah; you may laugh," said he, half in pique; "but what a mere accident can determine a man's fortune in life! Would Junot there be a major-general to-day if he did not measure six feet without his boots? We were at school together, and, *ma foi!* he was always at the bottom of the class."

"And so, Francois, it was your size, then, that stopped your promotion?"

"Of course it was. When a man is but five feet – with high heels, too – he can only be advanced as a maître d'armes. *Parbleu!* what should I be now if I had only grown a little taller?"

"It is all better as it is," growled out an old captain, between the puffs of his meerschaum. "If thou wert an inch bigger, there would be' no living in the same brigade with thee."

"For all that," rejoined Maître François, "I have put many a pretty fellow his full length on the grass."

"How many duels, François, did you tell us, the other evening, that you fought in the Twenty-second?"

"Seventy-eight!" said the little man; "not to speak of two affairs which, I am ashamed to confess, were with the broadsword; but they were fellows from Alsace, and they knew no better."

"*Tonnerre de ciel!*" cried the major, "a little devil like that is a perfect plague in a regiment. I remember we had a fellow called Piccotin – "

"Ah! Piccotin; poor Piccotin! We were foster-brothers," interrupted Francois; "we were both from Châlons-sur-Marne."

"Egad! I 'd have sworn you were," rejoined the major. "One might have thought ye were twins."

"People often said so," responded François, with as much composure as though a compliment had been intended. "We both had the same colored hair and eyes, the same military air, and gave the *passe en tierce* always outside the guard exactly in the same way."

"What became of Piccotin?" asked the major. "He left us at Lyons." "You never heard, then, what became of him?" "No. We knew he joined the *chasseurs à pied*." "I can tell you, then," said Francois; "no one knows better. I parted from Piccotin when we were ordered to Egypt. We did our best to obtain service in the same brigade, for we were like brothers, but we could not manage it; and so, with sad hearts, we separated, – he to return to France, I to sail for Alexandria. This was in the spring of 1798, or, as we called it, the year Six of the Republic. For three years we never met; but when the eighth demi-brigade returned from

Egypt, we went into garrison at Bayonne, and the first man I saw on the ramparts was Piccotin himself. There was no mistaking him; you know the way he had of walking with a long stride, rising on his instep at every step, squaring his elbows, and turning his head from side to side, just to see if any one was pleased to smile, or even so much as to look closely at him. Ah, *ma foi!* little Piccotin knew how to treat such as well as any one. Methinks I see him approaching his man with a slide and a bow, and then, taking off his cap, I hear him say, in his mildest tone, 'Monsieur assuredly did not intend that stare and that grimace for me. I know I must have deceived myself. Monsieur is only a fool; he never meant to be impertinent.' Then, *parbleu!* what a storm would come on, and how cool was Piccotin the whole time! How scrupulously timid he would be of misspelling the gentleman's name, or misplacing an accent over it! How delicately he would inquire his address, as if the curiosity was only pardonable I And then with what courtesy he would take his leave, retiring half a dozen paces before he ventured to turn his back on the man he was determined to kill next morning!"

"Quite true; perfectly true, Francois," said the major; "Piccotin did the thing with the most admirable temper and good-breeding."

"That was the tone of Chalons when we were both boys," said François, proudly; "he and I were reared together."

He finished a bumper of wine as he made this satisfactory explanation, and looked round at the company with the air of a

conqueror.

"Piccotin saw me as quickly as I perceived him, and the minute after we were in each other's arms. 'Ah! *mon cher!* how many?' said he to me, as soon as the first burst of enthusiasm had subsided.

"'Only eighteen,' said I, sadly; 'but two were Mamelukes of the Guard.'

"'Thou wert ever fortunate, François,' he replied, wiping his eyes with emotion; 'I have never pinked any but Christians.'

"'Come, come,' said I, 'don't be down-hearted; good times are coming. They say Le Petit Caporal will have us in England soon.'

"'Mayhap,' said he, sorrowfully, for he could not get over my Turks. Well, in order to cheer him up a little, I proposed that we should go and sup together at the 'Grenadier Rouge;' and away we went accordingly.

"It would amuse you, perhaps," said Maître François, "were I to tell some of the stories we related to each other at night. We both had had our share of adventure since we met, and some droll ones among the number. However, that is not the question at present. We sat late; so late that they came to close the café at last, and we were obliged to depart. You know the 'Grenadier Rouge,' don't you?"

"Yes, I know it well," replied the major; "it's over the glacis, about a mile outside the barrier."

"Just so; and there's a pleasant walk across the glacis to the gate. As Piccotin and I set out together on our way to the town,

the night was calm and mild; a soft moonlight shed a silvery tint over every object, and left the stately poplars to throw a still longer shadow on the smooth grass. For some time we walked along without speaking; the silence of the night, the fragrant air, the mellow light, were all soft and tranquillizing influences, and we sank each into his own reflections.

"When we reached the middle of the plain, – you know the spot, I'm sure; there's a little bronze fountain, with four cedars round it," (the major nodded, and he resumed), – "Piccotin came to a sudden halt, and seizing my hand in both of his, said, 'François, canst thou guess what I 'm thinking of?'

"I looked at him, and I looked around me, and after a few seconds' pause I answered, 'Yes, Piccotin, I know it; it is a lovely spot.'

"'Never was anything like it!' cried he, in a rapture; 'look at the turf, smooth as velvet, and yet soft to the foot; see the trees, how they fall back to give the light admittance; and there, that little fountain, if one felt thirsty, eh! What say you?'

"'Agreed,' said I, grasping him by both hands; 'for this once; once only, Piccotin.'

"'Only once, François; a few passes, and no more.'

"'Just so; the first touch.'

"'Exactly; the first touch,' said he, as, taking off his cloak, and folding it neatly, he laid it on the grass.

"It was a strange thing, but in all our lives, from earliest boyhood up, we never had measured swords together; and though

we were both maîtres d'armes, we never crossed blades, even in jest. Often and often had our comrades pitted us against each other, and laid wagers on the result, but we never would consent to meet; I cannot say why. It was not fear; I know not how to account for it, but such was the fact.

"'What blade do you wear, François?' said he, approaching me, as I arranged my jacket and vest, with my cap, on the ground.

"'A Rouen steel,' said I; 'too limber for most men, but I am so accustomed to it, I prefer it.'

"'Ah! a pretty weapon indeed,' said he, drawing it from the scabbard, and making one or two passes with it against an elder trunk. 'Was this the blade you had with you in Egypt?'

"'Yes; I have worn none other for eight years.'

"'Ah, *ma foi!* those Mamelukes. How I envy you those Mamelukes!' he muttered to himself, as he walked back to his place.

"'Move a little, a very little, to the left; there's a shadow from that tree. Can you see me well?' said I.

"'Perfectly; are you ready? Well; *en garde!*'

"Piccotin's forte, I soon saw, lay in the long meditated attack, where each movement was part of an artfully devised series; and I perceived that he suffered his adversary to gain several trifling advantages, by way of giving him a false confidence, biding his own time to play off the scores. In this description of fence he was more than my equal. *My* strength was in the skirmishing passages, where most men lunge at random; then, no matter how

confused the rally, I was as cool as in the salute.

"For some time I permitted him to play his game out; and certainly nothing could be more beautiful than his passes over the hilt. Twice he planted his point within an inch of my bosom; and nothing but a spring backwards would have saved me.

"At length, after a long-contested struggle, he made a feint within, and then without, the guard, and succeeded in touching my sword-arm, above the wrist.

"'A touch, I believe,' said he.

"'A mere nothing,' said I; for although I felt the blood running down my sleeve, and oozing between my fingers, I was annoyed to think he had made the first hit.

"'Ah, François, these Mamelukes were not of the première force, after all. I have only been jesting all this time; see here.' With that he closed on me, in a very different style from his former attack. Pushing and parrying with the rapidity of lightning, he evinced a skill in 'skirmish' I did not believe him possessed of. In this, however, I was his master; and in a few seconds gave him my point sharply, but not deeply, in the shoulder. Instead of dropping his weapon when he received mine, he returned the thrust. I parried it, and touched him again, a little lower down. He winced this time, and muttered something I could not catch. 'You shall have it now,' said he, aloud; 'I owe you this, – and this.' True to his word, he twice pierced me in the back, outside the guard. Encouraged by success, he again closed on me; while I, piqued by his last assault, advanced to meet him.

"Our tempers were both excited; but his far more than mine. The struggle was a severe one. Three several times his blade passed between my arm and my body; and at last after a desperate rally, he dropped on one knee, and gave me the point here, beneath the chest. Before he could extricate his blade, I plunged mine into his chest, and pushed till I heard the hilt come clink against his ribs. The blood spurted upwards, over my face and breast, as he fell backwards. I wiped it hurriedly from my eyes, and bent over him. He gave a shudder and a little faint moan, and all was still."

"You killed him?" cried out three or four of us together.

"*Ma foi!* yes. The 'coup' was mortal; he never stirred after. As for me," continued Francois, "I surrendered myself a prisoner to the officer on guard at the gate. I was tried ten days after by a military commission, and acquitted. My own evidence was my accusation and my defence."

"*Ventrebleu!* had I been on the court-martial, you had not been here to tell the story," said the old major, as his face became almost purple with passion.

"Nonsense!" said Tascher, jeeringly. "What signifies a maître d'armes the more or the less?"

"Monsieur will probably explain himself," said François, with one of his cold smiles of excessive deference.

"It is exactly what I mean to do, François."

"Come, sirs, none of this," broke in the major. "Lieutenant Tascher, you may not fancy being placed under an arrest when

the enemy is in the field. Master Francois, do you forget the sentence of a court-martial is hanging over your head for an affair at Elchingen, where you insulted a young officer of the hussars?"

"In that case I must be permitted to say that Maître François conducted himself like a man of honor," said I.

"*Parbleu!* and got the worst of it besides," cried he, placing his hand on his hip. The tone of his voice as he said this, and the grimace he made, restored the party once more to good-humor, and we chatted away pleasantly till day was breaking.

As Tascher strolled along with me towards my quarters, I was rejoiced to discover that he had never heard of my name as being mixed up in the Chouan conspiracy; nor was he aware with how little reason he believed me to be favored by fortune.

I received, however, all his congratulations without any desire to undeceive him. Already had I learned the worldly lesson, that while friends cling closer in adversity, your mere acquaintance deems your popularity your greatest merit; and I at length perceived that, however ungenial in many respects the companionship, the life of isolation I led had rendered me suspected by others, and in a career, too, where frankness was considered the first of virtues.

I assented at once with pleasure to the prospect of our meeting frequently while in camp. My own regiment had joined Davoust's corps, and I was glad to have the society of some others of my own age, if only to wean myself from my habits of solitude. While I formed these plans for the future, I little anticipated what

events were in store for me, nor how soon I should be thrown among scenes and people totally different from those with which I had ever mixed before.

"You mess with us, then, Burke, – that's agreed," said Tascher. "They 're excellent fellows, these cuirassiers of ours, and I know you 'll like them."

With this promise we parted, hoping to meet on the morrow.

CHAPTER VI. THE MILL ON THE HOLITSCH ROAD

At an early hour on the morning of the 4th came orders for the "Garde à Cheval" to hold themselves in readiness, with two squadrons of the carabineers, on the road to Holitsch; part of this force being under the command of General d'Auvergne. We found ourselves fully equipped and in waiting soon after eight o'clock. From the "tenue" and appearance of the troops, it was evident that no measure of active service was contemplated; yet, if a review were intended, we could not guess why so small a force had been selected. As usual on such occasions, many conjectures were hazarded, and a hundred explanations passed current, – one scarcely a whit better than the other, when at last we perceived a peloton of dragoons advancing towards us at a brisk trot.

The word was passed to close up and draw swords; and scarcely was it obeyed when the staff of the Emperor came up. They were all in the full blaze of their gala uniforms, brilliant with crosses and decorations. Napoleon alone wore the simple costume of the "Chasseurs of the Garde," with the decoration of the Legion; but his proud look and his flashing eye made him conspicuous above them all. He was mounted on his favorite charger "Marengo," and seemed to enjoy the high spirit of the

mettled animal, as he tossed his long mane about, and lashed his sides with his great silken tail.

As the cortége passed we closed up the rear, and followed at a sharp pace, more than ever puzzled to divine what was going forward. After about two hours' riding, during which we never drew bridle, we saw a party of staff-officers in front, who, saluting the Emperor, joined the cortége. At the same instant General d'Auvergne passed close beside me, and whispered in my ear. "Bernadotte has just come up, and been most coldly received." I wished to ask him what was the object of the whole movement, but he was gone before I could do so. In less than a quarter of an hour afterwards we left the highroad, and entered upon a large plain, where the only object I could perceive was an old mill, ruined and dilapidated. Towards this the imperial staff rode forward, while the peloton in front wheeled about, and rode to the rear of our squadrons. The next moment we were halted, and drawn up in order of battle.

While these movements were going forward, I remarked that the Emperor had dismounted from his horse and dismissed his staff, all save Marshal Berthier, who stood at a little distance from him. Several dismounted dragoons were employed in lighting two immense fires, – a process which Napoleon appeared to watch with great interest for a second or two; and then, taking out his glass, he remained for several minutes intently surveying the great road to Holitsch.

In this direction at once every eye was turned; but nothing

could we see. The road led through a wide open country for some miles, and at last disappeared in the recesses of a dark pine wood, that covered the horizon for miles on either side. Meanwhile Napoleon, with his hands clasped behind his back, walked hurriedly backwards and forwards beside the blazing fires, stopping at intervals to look along the road, and then resuming his walk as before. He was not more than two hundred paces from where we stood, and I could mark well his gesture of impatience, as he closed his glass each time, after looking in vain towards Holitsch.

"I say, Burke," whispered one of my brother officers beside me, "I should not fancy being the man who keeps him waiting in that fashion. Look at Berthier, how he keeps aloof; he knows that something is brewing."

"What can it all mean?" said I. "Who can he be expecting here?"

"They say now," whispered my companion, "that Davoust cannot hold the bridge of Goding, and must fall back before the Russian column; and that Napoleon has invited Alexander to a conference here to gain time to reinforce Davoust."

"Exactly; but the Czar is too wily an enemy for that to succeed; and probably hence the delay, which appears to irritate him now."

The supposition, more plausible than most of those I heard before, was still contradicted by the account of the Emperor Alexander's retreat; and again was I at a loss to reconcile these discrepancies, when I beheld Napoleon, with his glass to his eye,

motion with his hand for Berthier to come forward. I turned towards the road, and now could distinguish in the distance a dark object moving towards us. A few minutes after the sun shone out, and I remarked the glitter of arms, stretching in a long line; while my companion, with the aid of a glass, called out, —

"I see them plainly; they are lancers. The escort are Hungarians, and there's a *calèche*, with four horses in front."

The Emperor stood motionless, his arms folded on his breast, and his head a little leaned forward, exactly as I have seen him represented in so many pictures and statues. His eyes were thrown downwards; and as he stirred the blazing wood with his foot, one could easily perceive how intensely his mind was occupied with deep thought.

The clattering sound of cavalry now turned my attention to another quarter; and I saw, exactly in front of us, and about five hundred paces off, a regiment of Hungarian Hussars, and some squadrons of Hulans drawn up. I had little time to mark their gorgeous equipment and splendid uniform, for already the *calèche* had drawn up at the roadside, and Prince John of Lichtenstein, descending, took off his chapeau, and offered his arm to assist another to alight. Slowly, and, as it seemed, with effort, a tall thin figure, in the white uniform of the Austrian Guard, stepped from the carriage to the ground. The same instant the officers of the staff fell back, and I saw Napoleon advance with open arms to embrace him. The Austrian emperor – for it was Francis himself – seemed scarcely able to control the

emotion he felt at this moment; and we could see that his head rested for several seconds on Napoleon's shoulder. And what a moment must that have been! How deeply must the pride of the descendant of the Cæsars have felt the humiliation which made him thus a suppliant before one he deemed a mere Corsican adventurer! What a pang it must have cost his haughty spirit as he uttered the words, *Mon frère!*

As they walked side by side towards the plateau, where the fires were lighted, it was easy to mark that Napoleon was the speaker, while Francis merely bowed from time to time, or made a gesture of seeming assent.

As the Emperor arrived at the place of conference, we fell back some fifty yards; and although the air was still and frosty, and the silence was perfect around, we could not catch a word on either side. After about an hour the conversation appeared to assume a tone of gayety and good-humor, and we could hear the sovereigns laughing repeatedly.

The conference lasted for above two hours, when once more the emperors embraced, and, as we thought, with more cordiality, and separated; the Emperor of Austria returning, accompanied by Prince Lichtenstein; while Napoleon stood for some minutes beside the fire as if musing, and then, beckoning his staff to follow, he walked towards the highroad.

Scarcely had the Austrian emperor reached his carriage, when Savary, bareheaded and breathless, stood beside the door of it. He was the bearer of a message from Napoleon. The

next moment the *calèche* started, accompanied by Savary, who, with a single aide-de-camp, took the road towards the Austrian headquarters.

As Napoleon was about to mount his horse, I saw General d'Auvergne move forward towards him. A few words passed between them; and then the general, riding up to where I stood, said, —

"Burke, you are to remain here, and if any orders arrive from General Savary, hasten with them to the headquarters of his Majesty. In twelve hours you will be relieved."

So saying, he galloped back to the imperial staff; and soon after the squadrons defiled into the road, the cortége dashed forward, and all that remained of that memorable scene was the dying embers of the fires beside which the fate of Europe was decided.

The old mill of Holitsch had been deserted when the Austrian and Russian columns took up their position before Austerlitz. The miller and his household fled at the first news of the advance, and had not dared to return. It was a solitary spot at best: a wild heath, without shelter of any kind, stretched away for miles on all sides; but now, in its utter loneliness, it was the most miserable-looking place that can be conceived. While, therefore, I contented myself with the hope that my stay there might not be long, I resolved to do what I could to render my quarters more comfortable.

My first care was my horse, which I picketed in the kitchen,

where I was happy to find an abundant supply of firewood; my next, was to explore the remainder of the concern, in which I discovered traces of its having been already occupied by the allied troops, – rude caricatures of the French army in full *déroute*, before terrible-looking dragoons in Austrian and Russian uniforms, ornamented the walls in many parts; whole columns of French prisoners were depicted begging their lives from a single Austrian grenadier; and one figure, which it could be easily discovered was intended for Napoleon himself, was about to be hanged upon a tree, to the very marked satisfaction, as it would seem, of a group of Russian officers, who stood by, laughing. It is easy to smile at the ridicule of which fortune has thwarted the application and so I amused myself a good while by contemplating these grotesque frescos.

But a more welcome sight still awaited me, in a small chamber at the top of the building, where, in large letters, written with chalk on the door, I read, "Rittmeister von Oxenhausen's quarters." Here, to my exceeding delight, I discovered a neatly-furnished chamber, with a bed, sofa, and, better still, a table, on which the remains of the Rittmeister's sapper yet stood, – a goodly ham, the greater part of a capon, a loaf of wheaten bread, and an earthenware crock, with a lid of brass, containing about two bottles of Austrian red wine. This was a most agreeable surprise to me, – a pleasant exchange from the meagre meal of bread and cheese I had but time to procure from a sergeant of my troop at parting. It need not be supposed that I hesitated long

about becoming the Rittmeister's successor; and so I drew the chair to the table, and the table nearer to the fire, – for, singularly enough, the embers of a wood fire still slumbered on the hearth. Having taken the keen edge off an appetite the cold air had whetted to the sharpest, I began an inspection of my quarters, first having replenished the fire with some logs of wood.

The chamber was an octagon, with five windows in as many of the faces, a fireplace and two doors occupying the other three. One of the doors – that by which I entered, – opened from the stairs; the other led into a granary, or something of that nature, – at least, so I conjectured, from a heap of sacks which littered the floor, and filled one corner completely. As I could not discover any corn, I resolved on sharing my loaf with my horse, – a meal every campaigning steed is well accustomed to make. And now, returning to my little chamber, I resumed my supper with all the satisfaction of one who felt he had made his rounds of duty, and might enjoy repose.

As I knew the Château de Holitsch, where the Emperor Francis held his quarters, was some six leagues distant, I guessed that General Savary was not likely to return from his mission before morning at very soonest; and so it behooved me to make my arrangements for passing the night where I was. Having, then, looked to my horse, for whose bedding I made free with some dozen of the corn-sacks in the granary, I brought up to my own quarters a supply of wood; and having fastened the door, and secured the windows as well as I was able, I lit my meerschaum,

and lay down before the fire in as happy a frame of mind as need be.

Indeed, I began to fancy that fortune had done tormenting, and was now about to treat me more kindly. The notice of the Emperor had relieved my heart of a load which never ceased to press on it, and I could not help feeling that a fairer prospect was opening before me. It is true, time and misfortune had both blunted the ardor of enthusiasm with which I started in life; the daring aspirations after liberty, the high-souled desire for personal distinction, had subsided into calmer hopes and less ambitious yearnings. Young as I yet was, I experienced in myself that change of sentiment and feeling which comes upon other men later on in life; and I was gradually reconciling myself to that sense of duty which teaches a man well to play his part, in whatever station he may be called to act, rather than indulge in those overweening wishes for pre-eminence, which in their accomplishment are so often disappointing, and in their failure a source of regret and unhappiness. These feelings were impressed on me more by the force of events than by any process of my own reasoning. The career in which I first started as a boy had led to nothing but misfortune. The affection I conceived for one, – the only one I ever loved, – was destined equally to end unhappily. The passion for liberty, in which all my first aspirations were centred, had met the rude shocks which my own convictions suggested; and now I perceived that I must begin life anew, endeavoring to forget the influences whose shadows darkened

my early days, and carve out my destiny in a very different path from what I once intended.

These were my last waking thoughts, as my head sank on my arm, and I fell into a deep sleep. The falling of a log from the fire awoke me suddenly. I rubbed my eyes, and for a second or two could not remember where I was. At length I became clearer in mind, and looking at my watch, perceived it was but two o'clock. As the flame of the replenished fire threw its light through the room, I remarked that the door into the granary stood ajar. This struck me as strange. I thought I could remember shutting it before I went to sleep. Yes, – I recollected perfectly placing a chair against it, as the latch was bad, and a draught of cold air came in that way; and now the chair was pushed back into the room, and the door lay open. A vague feeling, half suspicion, half curiosity, kept me thinking of the circumstance, when by chance – the merest chance – my eyes fell upon the table where I had left my sabre and my pistols. What was my amazement to find that one of the latter – that which lay nearest the door – was missing!

In an instant I was on my feet. Nothing can combat drowsiness like the sense of fear; and I became perfectly awake in a moment. Examining the room with caution, I found everything in the same state as I had left it, save the door and the missing pistol. The granary alone, then, could be the shelter of the invader, whoever he might be. What was to be done? I was totally unprovided with light, save what the fire afforded; and even were it otherwise, I should expose myself by carrying one, long before I could hope

to detect a concealed enemy. The best plan I could hit upon seemed to secure the door once more; and then, placing myself in such a position as not to be commanded by it again, to wait for morning patiently. This then, I did at once; and having examined my remaining pistol, and found the charge and priming all safe, I drew my sabre, and sat down between the door and the window, but so that it should open against me.

Few sensations are more acutely painful than the exercise of the hearing when pushed to intensity. The unceasing effort to catch the slightest sound soon becomes fatigue, and as the organ grows weary, the mental anxiety grows more acute; and then begins a struggle between the failing sense and the excited brain. The spectral images of the eye in fever are not one half so terrible as the strange discordant tones that jar upon the tympanum in such a state as this. Each inanimate object seems endowed with its own power of voice, and whispering noises come stealing through the dead silence of midnight.

In this state of almost frenzied anxiety I sat long, – my eyes turned towards the door, which oftentimes I fancied I could perceive to move. At length the thought occurred to me, that by affecting sleep, if any one lay concealed within whose object was to enter the room, this would probably induce him.

I had not long to wait for the success of my scheme. The long-drawn breathing of my seeming slumber was not continued for more than a few minutes, when I saw the door slowly, almost imperceptibly, move. At first it stirred inch by inch; then

gradually it opened wider and wider till it met the obstacle of the chair. There now came a pause of several seconds, during which it demanded all my efforts to sustain my part, – the throbbing at my throat and temples increasing almost beyond endurance, and the impulse to dash forward, and flinging wide the door, confront my enemy, being nearly too much for my resistance. Again it moved noiselessly as before; and then a hand stole out, and, laying hold of the chair, pushed it slowly backwards. The gray light of the breaking day fell upon the spot, and I could see that the cuff of the coat was laced with gold.

This time my anxiety became intense. Another second or two and I should be engaged in the conflict, – I knew not against how many. I clutched my sabre more fairly in my grasp, as my breathing grew thicker and shorter. The chair still continued to slide silently into the room, and already the arm of the man within protruded. Now was the moment, or never; and with a spring, I threw myself on it, and, pinioning the wrist in my hands, held it down upon the floor while I opposed my weight against the door.

Quick as lightning the other hand appeared, armed with a pistol; and I had but a moment to crouch my head nearly to the ground when a bullet whizzed past and smashed through the window behind me, while with a crash the frail door gave way to a strong push, and a man sprang fiercely forward to seize me by the throat. Jumping backward, I recovered my feet; but before I could raise my pistol he made a spring at me, and we both rolled together on the floor. On the pistol both our hands met, and the

struggle was for the weapon.

Twice was it pointed at my heart; but my hand held the lock, and not all his efforts could unclasp it. At last I freed my right hand from the sword-knot of my sabre, and striking him with my clenched knuckles on the forehead, threw him back. His grasp relaxed at the instant, and I wrenched the pistol from his fingers, and placed the muzzle against his chest.

Another second and he would have rolled a corpse before me, when, to my horror and amazement, I saw in my antagonist my once friend, *Henri de Beauvais*. I flung the weapon from me, as I cried out, "De Beauvais, forgive me! forgive me!"

A deathly paleness came over his features; his eyes grew glazed and filmy, and with a low groan he fell fainting on the floor. I bathed his temples with water; I moistened his pale lips; I rubbed his clammy fingers. But it was long before he rallied; and when he did come to himself and looked up, he closed his eyes again, as though the sight of me was worse than death itself.

"Come, Henri!" said I, "a cup of wine, my friend, and you will be better presently. Thank God, this has not ended as it might."

He raised his eyes towards me, but with a look of proud and unforgiving sternness, while he uttered not a word.

"It is unfair to blame me, De Beauvais, for this," said I. "Once more I say, forgive me!"

His lips moved, and some sounds came forth, but I could not hear the words.

"There, there," cried I; "it's past and over now. Here is my

hand."

"You struck me with that hand," said he, in a deep, distinct voice, as though every word came from the very bottom of his chest.

"And if I did, Henri, my own life was on the blow."

"Oh that you had taken mine with it!" said he, with a bitterness I can never forget. "I am the first of my name that ever received a blow; would I were to be the last!"

"You forget, De Beauvais – "

"No, sir; I forget nothing. Be assured, too, I never shall forget this night. With any other than yourself I should not despair of that atonement for an injury which alone can wash out such a stain; but *you*, – I know you well, —*you* will not give me this."

"You are right, De Beauvais; I will not," said I, calmly. "Sorry am I that even an accident should have brought us into collision. It is a mischance I feel deeply, and shall for many a day."

"And I, sir," cried he, as, starting up, his eyes flashed with passion and his cheek grew scarlet, – "and I, sir! – what are to be my feelings? Think you, that because I am an exile and an outcast, – forced by misfortune to wear the livery of one who is not my rightful sovereign, – that my sense of personal honor is the less, and that the mark of an insult is not as blood-stained on my conscience as ever it was?"

"Nothing but passion could blind you to the fact that there can be no insult where no intention could exist."

"Spare me your casuistry, sir," replied he, with an insolent

wave of his hand, while he sank into a chair, and laid his head upon the table.

For an instant my temper, provoked beyond endurance, was about to give way, when I perceived that a handkerchief was bound tightly around his leg above the knee, where a great stain of blood marked his trouser. The thought of his being wounded banished every particle of resentment, and laying my hand on his shoulder, I said, —

"De Beauvais, I know not one but yourself to whom I would three times say, forgive me. But we were friends once, when we were both happier. For the sake of him who is no more, – poor Charles de Meudon – "

"A traitor, sir, – a base traitor to the king of his fathers!"

"This I will not endure!" said I, passionately. "No one shall dare – "

"Dare!"

"Ay, dare, sir! – such was the word. To asperse the memory of one like him is to dare that which no man can, with truth and honor."

"Come, sir, I'm ready," said Be Beauvais, rising, and pointing to the door, "Sortons!"

No one who has not heard that one word pronounced by the lips of a Frenchman can conceive how much of savage enmity and deadly purpose it implies. It is the challenge which, if unaccepted, stamps cowardice forever on the man who declines it: from that hour all equality ceases between those whom a

combat had placed on the same footing.

"Sortons!" The word rang in my ears, and tingled through my very heart, while a host of different impulses swayed me, – shame, sorrow, wounded pride, all struggling for the mastery: but above them all, a better and a higher spirit, – the firm resolve, come what would, to suffer no provocation De Beauvais could offer, to make me stand opposite to him as an enemy.

"What am I to think, sir?" said he, with a voice scarcely articulate from passion, – "what am I to think of your hesitation? or why do you stand inactive here? Is it that you are meditating what new insult can be added to those you have heaped on me?"

"No, sir," I replied, firmly; "so far from thinking of offence, I am but too sorry for the words I have already spoken. I should have remembered, and remembering, should have made allowance for, the strength of partisan feelings, which have their origin in a noble, but, as I believe, a mistaken source."

"Indeed!" interrupted he, in mockery. "Is it, then, come to this? Am I, a Frenchman born, to be lectured on my loyalty and allegiance by a foreign mercenary?"

"Not even that taunt, De Beauvais, shall avail you anything. I am firm in my resolve."

"*Pardieu!* then," cried he, with savage energy, "there remains but this!"

As he spoke, he leaped from his chair, and sprang towards me. In so doing, however, his knee struck the table, and with a groan of agony, he reeled back and fell on the floor, while from

his reopened wound a torrent of blood gushed out and deluged the room.

For a second or two he motioned me away with his hand; but as his weakness increased, he lay passive and unresisting, and suffered me to arrest the bleeding by such means as I was able to practise.

It was a long time ere I could stanch the gaping orifice, which had been inflicted by a sabre, and cut clean through the high boot and deep into the thigh. Fortunately for his recovery, he had himself succeeded in getting off the boot before, and the wound lay open to my surgical skill. Lifting him cautiously in my arms, I laid him on the bed, and moistened his lips with a little wine. Still the debility continued, – no signs of returning strength were there; but his features, pale and fallen, were glazed with a cold sweat that hung in heavy drops upon his brow and forehead.

Never was agony like mine. I saw his life was ebbing fast; the respiration was growing fainter and more irregular; his pulse could scarce be felt; yet dare I not leave my post to seek for assistance. A hundred thoughts whirled through my puzzled brain, and among the rest, the self-accusing one that I was the cause of his death. “Yes,” thought I, “better far to have stood before his pistol, at all the hazard of my life, than see him thus.”

In an instant all his angry speeches and his insulting gestures were forgotten. He looked so like what I once knew him, that my mind was wandering back again to former scenes and times, and all resentment was lost in the flood of memory. Poor fellow! what

a sad destiny was his! fighting against the arms of his country, – a mourner over the triumphs of his native land! Alien that I was, this pang at least was spared me.

As these thoughts crossed my mind, I felt him press my hand. Overjoyed, I knelt down and whispered some words in his ear.

"No, no," muttered he, in a low, plaintive tone; "not all lost, – not all! La Vendee yet remains!" He was dreaming.

CHAPTER VII. THE ARMISTICE

As I sat thus watching with steadfast gaze the features of the sleeping man, I heard the clattering of a horse's hoofs on the pavement beneath, and the next moment the heavy step of some one ascending the stairs. Suddenly the door was flung wide open, and an officer in the handsome uniform of the Austrian Imperial Guard entered.

"Excuse this scant ceremony, Monsieur," said he, bowing with much courtesy, "but I almost despaired of finding you out. I come from Holitsch with despatches for your Emperor; they are most pressing, as I believe this note will inform you."

While I threw my eye over the few lines addressed by General Savary to the officer in waiting at Holitsch, and commanding the utmost speed in forwarding the despatch that accompanied them, the officer drew near the bed where De Beauvais was lying.

"*Mère de ciel*, it is the count!" cried he, starting back with astonishment.

"Yes," said I, interrupting him; "I found him here on my arrival. He is badly wounded, and should be removed at once. How can this be done?"

"Easily. I 'll despatch my orderly at once to Holitsch, and remain here till he return."

"But if our troops advance?"

"No, no! we're all safe on that score; the armistice is signed.

The very despatch in your hands, I believe, concludes the treaty."

This warned me that I was delaying too long the important duty intrusted to me, and with a hurried entreaty to the Austrian not to leave De Beauvais, I hastened down the stairs, and proceeded to saddle for the road.

"One word, Monsieur," said the officer, as I was in the act of mounting. "May I ask the name of him to whom my brother officers owe the life of a comrade much beloved?"

"My name is Burke; and yours, Monsieur?"

"Berghausen, *chef d'escadron* of the Imperial Guard. If ever you should come to Vienna – " But I lost the words that followed, as, spurring my horse to a gallop, I set out towards the headquarters of the Emperor.

As I rode forward, my eyes were ever anxiously bent in the direction of our camp, not knowing at what moment I might see the advance of a column along the road, and dreading lest, before the despatches should reach the Emperor's house, the advanced vedettes should capture the little party at Holitsch. At no period of his career was Napoleon more incensed against the adherents of the Bourbons; and if De Beauvais should fall into his hands, I was well aware that nothing could save him. The Emperor always connected in his mind – and with good reason, too – the machinations of the Royalists with the plans of the English Government. He knew that the land which afforded the asylum to their king was the refuge of the others also; and many of the heaviest denunciations against the "perfide Albion" had no other

source than the dread, of which he could never divest himself, that the legitimate monarch would one day be restored to France.

While such were Napoleon's feelings, the death of the Duc d'Enghien had heightened the hatred of the Bourbonists to a pitch little short of madness. My own unhappy experience made me more than ever fearful of being in any way implicated with the members of this party, and I rode on as though life itself depended on my reaching the imperial headquarters some few minutes earlier.

As I approached the camp, I was overjoyed to find that no movement was in contemplation. The men were engaged in cleaning their arms and accoutrements, restoring the broken wagons and gun-carriages, and repairing, as far as might be, the disorders of the day of battle. The officers stood in groups here and there, chatting at their ease; while the only men under arms were the new conscript? just arrived from France, – a force of some thousands, – brought by forced marches from the banks of the Rhine.

The crowd of officers near the headquarters of the Emperor pressed closely about me as I descended from my horse, eager to learn what information I brought from Holitsch; for they were not aware that I had been stationed nearly half-way on the road.

"Well, Burke," said General d'Auvergne, as he drew his arm within mine, "your coming has been anxiously looked for this morning. I trust the despatches you carry may, if not Contradict, at least explain what has occurred."

"Is this the officer from Holitsch?" said the aide-decamp of the Emperor, coming hurriedly forward. "The despatch, sir!" cried he; and the next moment hastened to the little hut which Napoleon occupied as his bivouac.

The only other person in the open space where I stood was an officer of the lancers, whose splashed and travel-stained dress seemed to say he had been employed like myself.

"I fancy, Monsieur," said he, bowing, "that you have had a sharp ride also this morning. I have just arrived from Göding – four leagues – in less than an hour; and with all that, too late, I believe, to remedy what has occurred."

"What, then, has happened?"

"Davoust has been tricked into an armistice, and suffered the Russians to pass the bridge. The Emperor Alexander has taken advantage of the negotiations with Austria, and got his army clear through; so, at least, it would seem. I saw Napoleon tear the despatch into fragments, and stamp his foot upon them. But here he comes."

The words were scarcely spoken when the Emperor came rapidly up, followed by his staff. He wore a gray surtout, trimmed with dark fur, and had his hands clasped within the cuffs of the coat. His face was pale as death, and save a slight contraction of his brows, there was nothing to show any appearance of displeasure.

"Who brought the despatch from Göding?"

"I did, Sire," said the officer.

"How are the roads, sir?"

"Much cut up, and in one place a torrent has carried away part of a bridge."

"I knew it, – I knew it," said he, bitterly; "it is too late. Duroc," cried he, while the words seemed to come forth with a hissing sound, "did I not tell you, 'Grattez le Russe, et vous trouverez le Tartare!'"

The words were graven in my memory from that hour; even yet, I can recall the very accents as when I heard them.

"And you, sir," said he, turning suddenly towards me, "you came from General Savary. Return to him with this letter. Have you written, Duroc? Well, you'll deliver this to General Savary at Holitsch. He may require you to proceed to Göding. Are you well mounted?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Come, then, sir. I made you a captain yesterday; let us see if you can win your spurs to-day."

From the time I received the despatch to that in which I was in the saddle not more than five minutes elapsed. The idea of being chosen by the Emperor himself for a service was a proud one, and I resolved to acquit myself with credit. With what concert does one's heart beat to the free stride of a mettled charger! how does each bold plunge warm the blood and stir up the spirits! and as, careering free over hill and valley, we pass in our flight the clouds that drift above, how does the sense of freedom, realized as it is, impart a feeling of ecstasy to our minds! Our thoughts,

revelling on the wayward liberty our course suggests, rise free and untrammelled from the doubts and cares of every-day life.

Onward I went, and soon the old mill came in sight, rearing its ruined head amid the black desolation of the plain. I could not resist the impulse to see what had become of De Beauvais; and leading my horse into the kitchen, I hastened up the stairs and through the rooms. But all were deserted; the little chamber lay open, the granary too; but no one was there.

With a mind relieved, in a great measure, from anxiety, I remounted and continued my way; and soon entered the dark woods of Holitsch. The château and demesne were a private estate of the Emperor Francis, and once formed a favorite resort of Joseph the Second in his hunting excursions. The château itself was a large, irregular mass of building, but still, with all its incongruity of architecture, not devoid of picturesque effect, – and the older portion of it was even handsome. While I stood in front of a long terrace, on which several windows opened from a gallery that ran along one side of the château, I was somewhat surprised that no guard was to be seen, nor even a single sentinel on duty. I dismounted, and leading my horse, approached the avenue that led up between a double range of statues to the door. An old man, dressed in the slouched hat and light blue jacket of a Bohemian peasant, was busily engaged in wrapping matting around some shrubs, to protect them from the frost. A little boy – his second self in costume – stood beside him with his pruning-knife, and stared at me with a kind of stupid

wonder as I approached. With some difficulty I made out from the old man that the Emperor occupied a smaller building called the Kaiser-Lust, about half a league distant in the forest, having given strict orders that no one was to approach the château nor its immediate grounds. It was his favorite retreat, and perhaps he did not wish it should be associated in his mind with a period of such misfortune. The old peasant continued his occupation while he spoke, never lifting his head from his work, and seeming all absorbed in the necessity of what he was engaged in. As I inquired the nearest road to the imperial quarters, he employed me to assist him for a moment in his task by holding one end of the matting, with which he was now about to envelop a marble statue of Maria Theresa.

I could not refuse a request so naturally proffered; and while I did so, a little wicket opened at a short distance off, and a tall man, in a gray surtout and a plain cocked hat without a feather, came forward. He held a riding-whip in his hand, and seemed, from his splashed equipment, to have just descended from the saddle.

"Well, Fritz," said he, "I hope the frost has done us no mischief?"

The old gardener turned round at the words, and, touching his hat respectfully, continued his work, while he replied, —

"No, Mein Herr; it was but a white hoar, and everything has escaped well."

"And whom have you got here for an assistant, may I ask?"

said he, pointing to me, whom he now saw for the first time.

As the question was asked in German, although I understood it I left the reply to the gardener.

"God knows!" said the old fellow, in a tone of easy indifference; "I think he must be a soldier of some sort."

The other smiled at the remark, and, turning towards me, said, in French, —

"You are, perhaps, unaware, sir, being a stranger, that it is the Emperor of Austria's desire this château should not be intruded on."

"My offending, sir," interrupted I, "was purely accidental. I am the bearer of despatches for General Savary; and having stopped to inquire from this honest man – "

"The general has taken his departure for Göding," he broke in, without paying further attention to my explanation.

"For Goding! and may I ask what distance that may be?"

"Scarcely a league, if you can hit upon the right path; the road lies yonder, where you see that dead fir-tree."

"I thank you, sir," said I, touching my hat; "and must now ask my friend here to release me, – my orders are of moment."

"You may find some difficulty in the wood, after all," said he; "I 'll send my groom part of the way with you."

Before I could proffer my thanks suitably for such an unexpected politeness, he had disappeared in the garden through which he entered a few minutes before.

"I say, my worthy friend, tell me the name of that gentleman;

he's one of the Emperor's staff, if I mistake not. I 'm certain I 've seen the face before."

"If you had," said the old fellow, laughing, "you could scarcely forget him; old Frantzerl is just the same these twenty years."

"Whom did you say?"

Before he could reply, the other was at my side.

"Now, sir," said he, "he will conduct you to the highroad. I wish you a good journey."

These words were uttered in a tone somewhat more haughty than his previous ones; and contenting myself with a civil acknowledgment of his attention, I bowed and returned to my horse, which the little peasant child had been holding.

"This way, Monsieur," said the groom, who, dressed in a plain dark brown livery, was mounted on a horse of great size and symmetry.

As he spoke, he dashed forward at a gallop which all my efforts could not succeed in overtaking. In less than ten minutes the man halted, and, waiting till I came up, he pointed to a gentle acclivity before me, across which the highroad led.

"There lies the road, sir; continue your speed, and in twenty minutes you reach Göding."

"One word," said I, drawing forth my purse as I spoke, – "one word. Tell me, who is your master?"

The groom smiled, slightly touched his hat, and without uttering a word, wheeled round his horse, and before I could repeat my question, was far on his road back to the château.

Before me lay the river, and the little bridge of Göding, across which now the Russian columns were marching in rapid but compact order. Their cavalry had nearly all passed, and was drawn with some field-guns along the bank; while at half-cannon-shot distance, the corps of Davoust were drawn up in order of battle, and standing spectators of the scene. On an eminence of the field a splendid staff were assembled, accompanied by a troop of Tartar horsemen, whose gay colors and strange equipment were a remarkable feature of the picture; and here, I learned, the Emperor Alexander then was, accompanied by General Savary.

As I drew near, my French uniform caught the eye of the latter, and he cantered forward to meet me. Tearing open the despatch with eagerness, he rapidly perused the few lines it contained; then, seizing me by the arm in his-strong grasp, he exclaimed, —

"Look yonder, sir! You see their columns extending to Serritz. Go back and tell his Majesty. But no; my own mission here is ended. You may return to Austerlitz."

So saying, he rode back to the group around the Emperor, where I saw him a few minutes after addressing his Majesty; and then, after a formal leave-taking, turn his horse's head and set out towards Brunn.

As I retraced my steps towards the camp, I began to muse over the events which had just occurred; and even by the imperfect glimpses I could catch of the negotiations, could perceive that the

Czar had out-manoeuvred Napoleon. It is true, I was not aware by what means the success had been obtained; nor was it for many a year after that I became cognizant of the few autograph lines by which Alexander induced Davoust to suspend his operations, under the pretence that the Austrian armistice included the Russian army. It was an unworthy act and ill befitting one whose high personal courage and chivalrous bearing gave promise of better things.

CHAPTER VIII. THE COMPAGNIE D'ELITE

With whatever triumphant feelings the Emperor Napoleon may have witnessed the glorious termination of this brief campaign, to the young officers of the army it brought anything rather than satisfaction, and the news of the armistice was received in the camp with gloom and discontent. The brilliant action at Elchingen, and the great victory at Austerlitz, were hailed as a glorious presage of future successes, for which the high-sounding phrases of a bulletin were deemed but a poor requital. A great proportion of the army were new levies, who had not seen service, and felt proportionably desirous for opportunities of distinction; and to them the promise of a triumphant return to France was a miserable exchange for those battlefields on which they dreamed they should win honor and fame, and from whence they hoped to date their rise of fortune. Little did we guess, that while words of peace and avowals of moderation were on his lips, Napoleon was at that very moment meditating on the opening of that great campaign, which, beginning at Jena, was to end in the most bloody and long sustained of all his wars.

Nothing, however, was now talked of but the fêtes which awaited us on our return to Paris, – while liberal grants of

money were made to all the wounded, and no effort was spared which should mark that feeling of the Emperor's, which so conspicuously opened his bulletin, in the emphatic words, "Soldiers, I am content with you!"

Napoleon well understood, and indeed appeared to have anticipated, the disappointment the army would experience at this sudden cessation of hostilities; and endeavored now to divert the torrent of their enthusiasm into another and a safer channel. The bulk of the army were cantoned around Brunn and Olmutz; some picked regiments were recalled to Vienna, where the Emperor was soon expected to establish his headquarters; while many of those who had suffered most severely from forced marches and fatigues were formed into corps of escort to accompany the Russian prisoners – sixteen thousand in number – on their way to France; and lastly, a *compagnie d'élite*, as it was called, was selected to carry to the Senate the glorious spoils of victory, – forty-five standards taken on the field of Austerlitz, and now destined to grace the Palace of the Luxembourg.

I had scarcely seated myself to the humble supper of my bivouac, when an orderly came to command me to General d'Auvergne's quarters. The little sitting-room he occupied, in a peasant hut, was so filled with officers that it was some time before I could approach him; and my impatience was not lessened by more than once hearing my name mentioned aloud, – a circumstance not a little trying to a young man in the presence of his superiors in station.

"But here he is," said the general, beckoning to me to come forward. "Burke, his Majesty has most graciously permitted me to include your name in the *compagnie d'élite*, – a testimony of his satisfaction you've every reason to be proud of. And just at the moment I was about to communicate the fact to you, I have received a message from Marshal Murat, requesting that I may permit you to serve on his own staff."

"Yes, Captain," said an officer in the uniform of a colonel, – it was the first time I had been addressed by my new title, and I cannot express what a thrill of pleasure the word gave me, – "Marshal Murat witnessed with pleasure the alacrity and steadiness of your conduct on the 2d, and has sent me with an offer which I fancy few officers would not deem a flattering one."

"Unquestionably it is, Colonel," said General d'Auvergne; "nay, more, I will say I regard it as the making of a young man's fortune, thus early in his career to have attracted such high notice. But I must be passive here; Captain Burke shall decide for himself."

"In that case, sir, I shall cause you but little delay, if you will still permit me to serve on your own staff."

"But stay, my boy, do not be rash in this affair. I will not insult your better feeling by dwelling on the little power I possess, and the very great enjoyed by Marshal Murat, of serving your interests; but I must say, that with him, and on his personal staff, opportunities of distinction – "

"And here I must interpose," said the colonel, smiling

courteously: “with no officer in this army can a man expect to see service, in its boldest and most heroic colors, rather than with General d’Auvergne.”

“I know it, – I feel it, too; and with him, if he will allow me – ”

“Enough, my dear boy,” said the old man, grasping my hand in his. “Colonel, you must explain to the marshal how stands this matter; and he is too kind of heart and too noble of soul to think the worse of any of us for our obstinacy. And now, my young friend, make your arrangements to join the *compagnie d’élite*; they march to-morrow afternoon, – and this is a service you cannot decline. Leave me to make your acknowledgments to the marshal, and lose no more time here.”

Short as had been my absence from my quarters, when I re-entered, I descried Tascher seated at the table, and busily employed in discussing the last fragments of my supper.

“You see, my dear friend,” said he, speaking with his mouth full, – “you see what it is to have a *salmi* for supper. I sat eating a confounded mess of black bread, and blacker veal, for fifteen minutes, when the breeze brought me the odor of your delicious *plat*. It was in vain I summoned all my virtue to resist it; if there ever was a dish made to seduce a subaltern on service, it is this. But, I say, won’t you eat something?”

“I fear not,” said I, half angrily.

“And why?” replied he. “See what a capital wing that is, – a little bare, to be sure; and there’s the back of a pigeon. *Ma foi!* you have no reason to complain. I say, is it true you are named

among the *compagnie d'élite*?"

I nodded, and ate on.

"*Diable!* there never was such fortune. What a glorious exchange for this confounded swamp, with its everlasting drill from morning to night, – shivering under arms for four hours, and shaking with the ague the rest of the day after, – marching, mid-leg in water, half frozen, and trying quick movements, when the very blood is in icicles! And then you 'll be enjoying Paris, – delightful Paris! – dining at the 'Rocher,' supping at the 'Cadran,' lounging into the *salons*, at the very time we shall be hiding ourselves amidst the straw of our bivouacs. I go mad to think of it. And, what's worse than all, there you sit, as little elated as if the whole thing were only the most natural in the world. I believe, on my word, you 'd not condescend to be surprised if you were gazetted Maréchal de France in to-morrow's gazette."

"When I can bear, without testifying too much astonishment, to see my supper eaten by the man who does nothing but rate me into the bargain, perhaps I may plume myself on some equanimity of temper."

"Confound your equanimity! It's very easy to be satisfied when one has everything his own way."

"And so, Tascher, you deem me such a fortunate fellow?"

"That I do," replied he, quickly. "You have had more good luck, and made less of it, than any one I ever knew. What a career you had before you when we met first! There was that pretty girl at the Tuileries quite ready to fall in love with you; I

know it, because she rather took an air of coldness with me. Well, you let her be carried off by an old general, with a white head and a queue, – unquestionably a bit of pique on her part. Then, somehow or other, you contrived to pink the best swordsman of the army, little François there; and I never heard that the circumstance gained you a single conquest."

"Quite true, my friend," said I, laughing; "I confess it all. And, what is far worse, I acknowledge that until this moment I did not even know the advantages I was wilfully wasting."

"And even now," continued he, not minding my interruption, – "even now, you are about to return to Paris as one of the *élite*. Well, I 'll wager twenty Naps that the only civil speeches you 'll hear will be from some musty old senators at the Luxembourg. Oh dear! if my amiable aunt, the Empress, would only induce my most benevolent uncle, the Emperor, to put me on that same list, depend upon it you 'd hear of Lieutenant Tascher in the 'Faubourg St. Honoré.'"

"But you seem to forget," said I, half piqued at last by the impertinence of his tone, "that I have neither friends nor acquaintances; that, although a Frenchman by service, I am not so by birth."

"And I, – what am I?" interrupted he. "A Creole, come from Heaven knows what far-away place beyond seas; that there never was a man with more expensive tastes, and smaller means to supply them, – with worse prospects, and better connections; in short, a kind of live antithesis. And yet, with all that, exchange

places with me now, and see if, before a fortnight elapse, I have not more dinner invitations than any officer of the same grade within the Boulevards; watch if the prettiest girl at Paris is not at my side in the Opera. But here comes your official appointment, I take it."

As he said this, an orderly of the "Garde" delivered a sealed packet into my hands, which, on opening, I discovered was a letter from General Duroc, wherein I read, that "it was the wish of his Majesty, Emperor and King, that I, his well-beloved Thomas Burke, in conformity with certain instructions to be afterwards made known to me, should proceed with the *compagnie d'élite* to Paris, then and there – "

As I read thus far aloud, Tascher interrupted me, snatching the paper from my hands, and continued thus: —

"Then and there to mope, muse, and be *ennuyé* until such time as active service may again recall him to the army. My dear Burke, I am really sorry for you. Wars and campaigning may be – indeed they are – very fine things; but as the means, not the end. His Majesty, my uncle, – whom may Heaven preserve and soften his heart to his relations! – loves them for their own sake; but we, – you and I, for instance, – what possible reason can we have for risking our bones, and getting our flesh mangled, save the hope of promotion? And to what end that same promotion, if not for a wider sphere of pleasure and enjoyment? Think what a career a colonel, at our age, would have in Paris!"

"Come, Tascher, I will not believe you in all this. If there were

not something higher to reward one for the fatigues and dangers of a campaign than the mere sensual delights you allude to, I, for one, would soon doff the epaulettes."

"You are impracticable," said he, half angrily; "but it is as much from the isolation in which you have lived as any conviction on the subject. You must let me introduce you to some relatives of mine in Paris. They will be delighted to know you; for, as one of the *compagnie d'élite*, you might figure as a very respectable 'lion' for two, nay, three entire evenings. And you will have the *entrée* to the pleasantest house in Paris; they receive every evening, and all the best people resort there. I only exact one condition."

"And that is – "

"You must not make love to Pauline. That you will fall in love with her yourself is a fact I can't help, – nor you either. But no advance on your part; promise me that."

"In such case, Tascher, it were best for all parties I should not know the lady. I have no fancy, believe me, for being smitten whether I will or no."

"I see, Master Burke, there is a bit of impertinence in all this. You sneer at my warnings about *la belle cousine*; now, I am determined you shall see her at least. Besides, you must do me a service with the countess I have had the bad luck to be for some time out of favor with my aunt Josephine, – some trumpery debts of mine they make a work about at the Tuileries. Well, perhaps you could persuade Madame de Lacostellerie to take up my cause; she has great influence with the Empress, and can

make her do what she pleases. And, if I must confess it, it was this brought me over to your quarters tonight; and I ate your supper just to pass away time till you came back again. You 'll not refuse me?"

"Certainly not. But reflect for a moment, Tascher, and you will see that no man was ever less intended for a diplomate. It is only a few minutes since you laughed at my solitary habits and hermit propensities."

"I've thought of all that, Burke, and am not a whit discouraged. On the contrary, you are the more likely to think of my affairs because you have none of your own; and I don't know any one but yourself I should fancy to meet Pauline frequently and on terms of intimacy."

"This, at least, is not a compliment," said I, laughing.

He shrugged his shoulders, and threw up his eyebrows with a French expression, as though to say, it can't be helped; and then continued: —

"And now remember, Burke, I count on you. Get me out of this confounded place; I 'd rather be back at Toulon again, if need be. And as I shall not see you again before you leave, farewell. I 'll send the letter for the countess early to-morrow."

We shook hands warmly and parted: he to return to his quarters; and I to sit down beside my fire, and muse over the events that had just occurred, and think of Tascher himself, whose character had never been so plainly exposed to me before.

If De Beauvais, with his hot-headed impetuosity, his mad

devotion to the cause of the Legitimists, was a type of the followers of the Bourbons; so, in all the easy indifference and quiet selfishness of his nature, was Tascher a specimen of another class of his countrymen, – a class which, wrapped up in its own circle of egotistical enjoyments, believed Paris the only habitable spot of the whole globe. Without any striking traits of character, or any very decided vices, they led a life of pleasure and amusement, rendering every one and everything around them, so far as they were able, subservient to their own plane and wishes; and perfectly unconscious the while how glaring their selfishness had become, and how palpable, even to the least observant, was the self-indulgence they practised on every occasion. Without cleverness or tact enough to conceal their failings, they believed they imposed on others because they imposed on themselves, – just as the child deems himself unseen when he closes his eyes.

Josephine's followers were, many of them, like this, and formed a striking contrast to the young men of the Napoleonite party, who, infatuated by the glorious successes of their chief, deemed the career of arms alone honorable. St. Cyr and the Polytechnique were the nurseries of these, – the principles instilled there were perpetuated in after life; and however exaggerated their ideas of France and her destiny, their undoubted heroism and devotion might well have palliated even heavier errors.

It was in ruminating thus over the different characters of the

few I had ever known intimately, that I came to think seriously on my own condition, which, for many a day before, I had rather avoided than sought to reflect on. I felt, – as how many must have done! – that the bond of a common country, the inborn patriotism of the native of the soil, is the great resource on which men fall back when they devote themselves to the career of arms; that the alien's position, disguise it how he will, is that of the mere mercenary. How can he identify himself with interests on which he is but half-informed, or feel attachment to a land wherein he has neither hearth nor home? In the very glory he wins he can scarce participate. In a word, his is a false position, which no events nor accidents of fortune can turn to good account, and he must rest satisfied with a life of isolation and estrangement.

I felt how readily, if I had been a Frenchman born, I could have excused and palliated to my conscience many things which now were matters of reproach. Aggressive war had lost its horrors in the glory of enlarged dominions; the greatness of France and the honor of her arms had made me readily forget the miseries entailed on other nations by her lust of conquest. But I – the stranger, the alien – had no part in the inheritance of glory; and personal ambition, – what means it, save to stand high amongst those we once looked up to as superiors? For me there were no traditions of a childhood passed amid great names, revered and worshipped; no early teachings of illustrious examples beside the paternal hearth. And yet there was one, although lost to me forever, before whose eyes I would gladly seem to hold a high

place. Yes! could I but think that she had not forgotten me, – would hear my name with interest, or feel one throb of pleasure if I were spoken of with honor, – I asked no more!

"A letter, Monsieur le Capitaine," said my servant, as he deposited a package on my table. Supposing it was the epistle of which Tascher spoke, I paid but slight attention to it, when by chance I remarked it was in General d'Auvergne's handwriting. I opened it at once, and read as follows: —

> Bivouac, 11 o'clock.
>
> My dear Burke, – No one ever set off for Paris without being troubled with commissions for his country friends, and you must not escape the ills of common humanity. Happily for you, however, the debt is easily acquitted; I have neither undiscovered shades of silk to be matched, nor impossible bargains to be effected. I shall simply beg of you to deliver with your own hand the enclosed letter to its address at the Tuileries; adding, if you think fit, the civil attentions of a visit.
>
> We shall both, in all likelihood, be much hurried when we meet to-morrow, – for I also have received orders to march, – so that I take the present opportunity to enclose you a check on Paris for a trifle in advance of your pay; remembering too well, in my own aide-de-camp days, the dilatory habits of the War Office with new captains.
>
> Yours ever, dear Burke,
>
> D'Auvergne, Lieut-General.

The letter of which he spoke had fallen on the table,

where I now read the address, – "À Madame la Comtesse d'Auvergne, née Comtesse de Meudon, dame d'honneur de S. M. l'Impératrice." As I read these lines, I felt my face grow burning hot, my cheeks flushed up, and I could scarcely have been more excited were I actually in her presence to whom the letter was destined. The poor general's kind note, his check for eight thousand francs, lay there: I forgot them both, and sat still, spelling over the letters of that name so woven in my destiny. I thought of the first night I had ever heard it, when, a mere boy, I wept over her sorrows, and grieved for her whose fate was so soon to throw its shadow over my own. But in a moment all gave way before the one thought, – I should see her again, speak to her and hear her voice. It is true, she was the wife of another: but as Marie de Meudon, our destinies were as wide apart; under no circumstances could she have been mine, nor did I ever dare to hope it. My love to her – for it was such, ardent and passionate – was more the devotion of some worshipper at a shrine than an affection that sought return. The friendless soldier of fortune, poor, unknown, uncared for, – how could he raise his thoughts to one for whose hand the noblest and the bravest were suitors in vain? Yet, with all this, how my heart throbbed to think that we should meet again! Nor was the thought less stirring that I felt, that even in the short interval of absence I had won praise from him for whom her admiration was equal to my own. With all the turmoil of my hopes and fears I felt a rush of pleasure at my heart; and when I slept, it was to dream of happy days to

come, and a future far brighter than the past.

My first thought when morning broke was to ride over to Beygern, to learn the fate of my wounded friends. On my way thither I fell in with several officers bound on a similar errand, for already the convent had become the great hospital to which the sufferers were brought from every part of the camp. As we went along, I was much struck by the depression of spirit so remarkable everywhere. The battle over, all the martial enthusiasm seemed to have evaporated: many grumbled at the tiresome prospect of a winter in country quarters, or cantoned in the field; some regretted the briefness of the campaign; while others again complained that to return to France after so little of active service would only expose them to ridicule from their companions who had seen Italy and Egypt.

"Spare your sorrows on that score, my young friends," said a colonel, who listened patiently to the complaints around him; "we shall not see the dome of the Invalides for some time yet. Except the *compagnie d'élite*, I fancy few of us will figure on the Boulevards."

"There, again," cried another: "I never heard anything so unfair as that *compagnie d'élite*; they have been, with two solitary exceptions, taken from the cavalry. Austerlitz was to be the day of honor for the infantry of France, said the bulletin."

"And so it was," interrupted a little dark-eyed major; "and I suppose his Majesty thought we had enough of it on the field, and did not wish to surfeit us with glory. But I ask pardon," said

he, turning towards me; "monsieur is, if I mistake not, named one of the *élite*?"

As I replied in the affirmative, I observed all eyes turned towards me; but not with any kindly expression, – far from it. I saw that there was a deliberate canvass of me, as though to see by my outward man how I could possibly deserve such a favor.

"Can you explain to us, Monsieur," said the little major to me, "on what principle the *élite* were chosen? For we have a thousand contradictory reports in the camp: some say by ballot; some, that it was only those who never soiled their jackets in the affair of the other day, and looked fresh and smart."

A burst of laughter from the rest interrupted the major's speech, for its impertinence was quite sufficient to secure it many admirers.

"I believe, sir," said I, angrily, "I can show you some reasons against the selection of certain persons."

As I got thus far, an officer whispered something into the major's ear, who, with a roar of laughing, exclaimed, —

"A thousand pardons! ten thousand, *parbleu!* I did n't know you. It was monsieur pinked François, the maître d'armes? Yes, yes; don't deny it," said he, as I made no reply whatever to a question I believed quite irrelevant to the occasion, – "don't deny it. That lunge over the guard was a thing to be proud of; and, by Jove! you shall not practise it at my expense."

This speech excited great amusement among the party, who seemed to coincide perfectly with the reasoning of the speaker;

while I myself remained silent, unable to decide whether I ought to be annoyed or the reverse.

"Come, Monsieur," resumed the major, addressing me with courtesy, "I ask-pardon for the liberty of my speech. By Saint Denis! if all the *compagnie d'élite* have the same skill of fence, I 'll not question their appointment."

The candor of the avowal was too much for my gravity, and I now joined in the mirth of his companions.

If I have mentioned so trivial an incident as this here, it is because I wish to mark, even thus passingly, a trait of French military life. The singular confession of a man who regretted his impertinence because he discovered his adversary was a better swordsman, would, under any other code or in any other country, have argued poltroonery. Not so here; no one for a moment suspected his comrade's courage, nor could any circumstance arise to make it doubtful save an actual instance of cowardice. The inequality of the combat was reason enough for not engaging in it: the odds were unfair, because duelling was like a game where each party was to have an equal chance; and hence no shame was felt at declining a contest where this inequality existed.

Such a system, it is obvious, could not have prevailed in communities where duelling was only resorted to in extreme cases; but here it was an every-day occurrence, and often formed but a brief interval, scarce interrupting the current of an old friendship. Any resentful spirit, any long-continued dislike to the

party with whom you once fought, would have been denounced as unofficer-like and ungenerous; and every day saw men walking arm-inarm in closest intimacy, who but the morning before stood opposed to each other's weapons. I now perceived the truth of what Minette had once said, and which at the time I but imperfectly comprehended. "Maître François will be less troublesome in future; and you, Lieutenant, will have an easier life also."

"Halt there!" shouted a sentry, as we approached the narrow causeway that led up to the convent. We now discovered, that by a general order no one was permitted to approach the hospital save such as were provided with a leave from the medical staff. A bulletin of the deaths was daily published on the guard-house, except which no other information was afforded of the condition of the wounded; and to this we turned eagerly, and with anxious hearts, lest we might read the name of some friend lost forever. I ran over with a rapid glance the list, where neither St. Hilaire nor poor Pioche occurred; and then, setting spurs to my horse, hurried back to my quarters at the top of my speed. When I arrived, the preparations for the departure of the *élite* were already in progress, and I had but time to make my few arrangements for the road when the order came to join my comrades.

CHAPTER IX. PARIS IN 1800

A portion of the Luxembourg was devoted to the reception of the *compagnie d'élite* for whom a household on the most liberal scale was provided, a splendid table maintained, and all that wealth and the taste of a voluptuous age could suggest, procured, to make their life one of daily magnificence and pleasure. Daru himself, the especial favorite of the Emperor, took the head of the table each day, to which generally some of the ministers were invited; while the "Moniteur" of every morning chronicled the festivities, giving *éclat* to the most minute circumstance, and making Paris re-echo to the glories of him of whose fame they were but the messengers. The most costly equipages, saddle-horses of great price, grooms in gorgeous liveries, all that could attract notice and admiration, were put in requisition; while ceremonies of pomp went forward day by day, and the deputation received in state the congratulatory visits of different departments of the Government.

While thus this homage was paid to the semblance of Napoleon's glory, his progress through Germany was one grand triumphal procession. One day we read of his arrival at Munich, whither the Empress had gone to meet him. There he was welcomed with the most frantic enthusiasm: he had restored to them their army almost without loss, and covered with laurels; he had elevated their elector to a throne; while he cemented the

friendship between the two nations by the marriage of Eugène Beauharnais with the Princess of Bavaria. Another account would tell us of sixteen thousand Russian prisoners on their way to France, accompanied by two thousand cannon taken from the Austrians. All that could excite national enthusiasm and gratify national vanity was detailed by the Government press, and popular excitement raised to a higher pitch than in the wildest periods of the Revolution.

Hourly was his arrival looked forward to with anxiety and impatience. Fêtes on the most splendid scale of magnificence were in preparation, and the public bodies of Paris held meetings to concert measures for his triumphal reception. At last a telegraphic despatch announced his arrival at Strasburg. He crossed the Rhine at the very place where, exactly one hundred days before, he passed over on his march against the Austrians; one hundred days of such glory as not even his career had equalled, – Ulm and Austerlitz, vanquished Russia, and ruined Austria the trophies of this brief space! Never had his genius shone with greater splendor; never had Fortune shown herself ‘more the companion of his destiny.

Each hour was now counted, and every thought turned to the day when he might be expected to arrive; and on the 24th came the intelligence that the Emperor was approaching Paris. He had halted part of a day at Nancy to review some regiments of cavalry, and now might be expected in less than twenty-four hours. The next morning all Paris awoke at an early hour; when

what was the surprise and disappointment to see the great flag floating from the pavilion of the Tuileries! His Majesty had arrived during the night, when, at once sending for the Minister of Finance, he proceeded, without taking a moment's repose, to examine into the dreadful crisis which threatened the Bank of France and the very existence of the Government.

At eleven, the Council of State were assembled at the Tuileries; and at twelve, a proclamation, dispersed through Paris, announced that M. Molien was appointed minister, and M. Marbois was dismissed from his office. The rapidity of these changes, and the avoidance of all public homage by the Emperor, threw for several days a cast of gloom over the whole city; which was soon dissipated by the reappearance of Napoleon, and the publication of that celebrated report by M. Champagny in which the glories of France – her victories, her acquisitions in wealth, territory, and influence – were recited in terms whose adulation it would be now difficult to digest.

From that moment the festivities of Paris commenced, and with a splendor unsurpassed by any period of the Empire. It was the Augustan era of Napoleon's life in all that concerned the fine arts; for literature, unhappily, did not flourish at any time beneath his reign. Gérard and Gros, David, Ingres, and Isabey committed to canvas the glories of the German campaigns; and the capitulation of Ulm, the taking of Vienna, the passage of the Danube, and the field of Austerlitz still live in the genius of these great painters.

The Opera, too, under the direction of Gimerosa, had attained to an unwonted excellence; while Spontini and Boieldieu, in their separate walks, gave origin to the school so distinctly that of the Comic Opera. Still, the voluptuous tastes of the day prevailed above all; and the ballet, and the strange conceptions of Nicolo, a Maltese composer, – in which music, dancing, romance, and scenery all figured, – were the passion of the time.

Dancing was, indeed, the great art of the era. Vestris and Trénis were the great names in every *salon*; and all the extravagant graces and voluptuous groupings of the ballet were introduced into the amusements of society: even the taste in dress was made subordinate to this passion, – the light and floating materials, which mark the figure and display symmetry, replacing the heavier and more costly robes of former times. The reaction to the stern puritanism of the Republican age had set in, and secretly was favored by Napoleon himself; who saw in all this extravagance and abandonment to pleasure the basis of that new social state on which he purposed to found his dynasty.

Never were the entertainments at the Tuileries more costly; never was a greater magnificence displayed in all the ceremonial of state. The marshals of the Empire were enjoined to maintain a style corresponding to their exalted position; and the reports of the police were actually studied respecting such persons as lived in what was deemed a manner unbefitting their means of expense. Cambacérès and Fouché, Talleyrand and Murat, all maintained splendid establishments. Their dinners were given

twice each week, and their receptions were almost every evening. If the Emperor conferred wealth with a liberal hand, so did he expect to see it freely expended. He knew well the importance of conciliating the affections of the *bourgeoisie* of Paris; and that by no other means could such an end be accomplished more readily than by a lavish expenditure of money throughout all classes of society. This was alone wanting to efface every trace of the old Republican spirit. The simple habits and uncostly tastes of the Jacobins were at once regarded as meannesses; their frugal and unpretending modes of life pronounced low and vulgar; and many, who could have opposed a stout heart against the current of popular feeling on stronger grounds, yielded to the insinuations and mockeries of their own class, and conformed to tastes which eventually engendered opinions and even principles.

I ask pardon of my reader for digressing from the immediate subject of my own career, to speak of topics which are rather the province of the historian than a mere story-teller like myself; still, I should not be able to present to his view the picture of manners I desired, without thus recalling some features of that time, so pregnant with the fate of Europe and the future destiny of France. And now to return.

Immediately on the Emperor's arrival, the Empress and her suite took their departure for Versailles; from whence it was understood they were not to return before the end of the month, for which time a splendid ball was announced at the Tuileries. Unwilling to detain General d'Auvergne's letter so long, and

unable from the position I occupied to obtain leave of absence from Paris, I forwarded the letter to the comtesse, and abandoned the only hope of meeting her once more. The disappointment from this source; the novelty of the circumstances in which I found myself; the fascinations of a world altogether strange to me, – all conspired to confuse and excite me, and I entered into the dissipation of those around me, if not with all their zest, at least with as headlong a resolution to drown all reflection in a life of voluptuous enjoyment.

The only person of my own standing among the *compagnie d'élite* was a captain of the Chasseurs of the Guard, who, although but a few years my senior, had seen service in the Italian campaign. By family a Bour-bonist, he joined the revolutionary armies when his relatives fled from France, and slowly won his steps to his present rank. A certain *hauteur* in his manner with men – an air of distance he always wore – had made him as little liked by them as it usually succeeds in making a man popular with women, to whom the opposite seems at once a compliment. He was a man who had seen much of the world, and in the best society; gifted with the most fascinating address, whenever he pleased to exert it, and singularly good-looking, he was the *beau idéal* of the French officer of the highest class.

The Chevalier Duchesne and myself had travelled together for some days without exchanging more than the ordinary civilities of distant acquaintance, when some accident of the road threw us more closely together, and ended by forming an intimacy which,

in our Paris life, brought us every hour into each other's society.

Stranger as I was in the capital, to me the acquaintance was a boon of great price. He knew it thoroughly: in the gorgeous and stately *salons* of the Faubourg; in the *guingettes* of the Rue St. Denis; in the costly mansion of the modern banker (the new aristocracy of the land); or in the homely *ménage* of the shopkeeper of the Rue St. Honoré, – he was equally at home, and by some strange charm had the *entrée* too.

The same "sesame" opened to him the *coulisse* of the Opera and the penetralia of the Français. In fact, he seemed one of those privileged people who are met with occasionally in life in places the most incongruous and with acquaintances the most opposite, yet never carrying the prestige of the one or the other an inch beyond the precincts it belongs to. Had he been wealthy I could have accounted for much of this, for never was there a period when riches more abounded nor when their power was more absolute: but he did not seem so; although in no want of money, his retinue and simple style of living betrayed nothing beyond fair competence. Neither, as far as I could perceive, did he incline to habits of extravagance; on the contrary, he was too apt to connect every display with vulgarity, and condemn in his fastidiousness the gorgeous splendor that characterized the period.

Such, without going further, did Duchesne appear to be, as we took up our quarters at the Luxembourg, and commenced an intimacy which each day served to increase.

"Well, thank Heaven, this vaudeville is over at last!" said he,

as he threw himself into a large chair at my fire, and pitched his chapeau, all covered with gold and embroidery, into a far corner of the room.

We had just returned from Notre Dame, where the grand ceremonial of receiving the standards was held by the Senate with all the solemnity of a high mass and the most imposing observances.

"Vaudeville?" said I, turning round rapidly.

"Yes; what else can you call it? What, I ask you, had those poor decrepit senators, those effeminate priests in the costumes of *béguines*, to do with the eagles of a brave but unfortunate army? In what way can you connect that incense and that organ with the smoke of artillery and the crash of mitraille? And, lastly, was it like old Daru himself to stand there, half crouching, beside some wretched half-palsied priest? But I feel heartily ashamed of myself, though I played but the smallest part in the whole drama."

"Is it thus you can speak of the triumph of our army? the glories – "

"You mistake me much. I only speak of that miserable mockery which converts our hard-won laurels into chap-lets of artificial flowers. These displays are far beneath us, and would only become the victories of some national guard."

"So, then," said I, half laughingly, "it is your Republican gorge that rises against all this useless ceremonial?"

"You are the very first ever detected me in that guise," said he, bursting into a hearty laugh. "But come, I'd wager you agree

with me all this while. This was a very contemptible exhibition; and, for my own part, I 'd rather see the colors back again with those poor fellows we chased at Austerlitz, than fluttering in the imbecile hands of dotage and bigotry."

"Then I must say we differ totally. I like to think of the warlike spirit nourished in a nation by the contemplation of such glorious spoils. I am young enough to remember how the Invalides affected me – "

"When you took your Sunday walk there from the Polytechnique, two and two, with a blue ribbon round your neck for being a good boy during the week. Oh, I know it all; delicious times they were, with their souvenirs of wooden legs and plum-pudding. Happy fellow you must be, if the delusion can last this while!"

"You are determined it shall not continue much longer," said I, laughing; "that is quite evident."

"No; on the contrary, I shall be but too happy to be your convert, instead of making you mine. But unfortunately, Sa Majesté, Empereur et Roi, has taught me some smart lessons since I gave up mathematics; and I have acquired a smattering of his own policy, which is to look after the substance, and leave the shadow – or the *drapeau*, if you like it better – to whoever pleases."

"I confess, however," said I, "I don't well understand your enthusiasm about war and your indifference about its trophies. To me the associations they suggest are pleasurable beyond

anything."

"I think I remember something of that kind in myself formerly," said he, musing. "There was a time when the blast of a trumpet, or even the clank of a sabre, used to set my heart thumping. Happily, however, the organ has grown steeled against even more stirring sounds; and I listened to the salute to-day, fired as it was by that imposing body, the artillery of the 'Garde Nationale,' with an equanimity truly wonderful. Apropos, my dear Burke; talk of heroism and self-devotion as you will, but show me anything to compare with the gallantry of those fellows we saw to-day on the Quai Voltaire, – a set of grocers, periwig-makers, umbrella and sausage men, with portly paunches and spectacles, – ramming down charges, sponging, loading, and firing real cannon. On my word of honor, it was fearful."

"They say his Majesty is very proud indeed of the National Guard of Paris."

"Of course he is. Look at them, and just think what must be the enthusiasm of men who will adopt a career so repugnant, not only to their fancy, but their very formation. Remember that he who runs yonder with a twenty-four pounder never handled anything heavier than a wig-block, and that the only charges of the little man beside him have been made in his day-book. By Saint Denis! the dromedary guard we had in Egypt were more at home in their saddles than the squadron who rode beside the archbishop's carriage."

"It is scarcely fair, after all," said I, half laughing, "to criticise

them so severely; and the more, as I think you had some old acquaintances among them."

"Ha! you saw that, did you?" said he, smiling. "No, by Jove! I never met them before. But that *confrèrie* of soldiers – you understand – soon made us acquainted; and I saw one old fellow speaking to a very pretty girl I guessed to be his daughter, and soon cemented a small friendship with him: here's his card."

"His card! Why, are you to visit him?"

"Better again; I shall dine there on Monday next. Let us see how he calls himself: 'Hippolyte Pierrot, stay and corset-maker to her Majesty the Empress, No. 22 Rue du Bac, – third floor above the *entresol.*' *Diable!* we 're high up. Unfortunately, I am scarcely intimate enough to bring a friend."

"Oh, make no excuses on that head," said I, laughing; "I really have no desire to see Monsieur Hippolyte Pierrot's *menage*. And now, what are your engagements for this evening? Are you for the Opera?"

"I don't well know," said he, pausing. "Madame Caulaincourt receives, and of course expects to see our gay jackets in her *salon* any time before or after supper. Then there's the Comtesse de Nevers: I never go there without meeting my tailor; the fellow's a spy of the police, and a confectioner to boot, and he serves the ices, and reports the conversations in the Place Vendôme and that side of the Rue St. Honoré, – I couldn't take a glass of lemonade without being dunned. Then, in the Faubourg I must go in plain clothes, – they would not let the 'livery of the Usurper' pass the

porter's lodge; besides, they worry one with their enthusiastic joy or grief, – as the last letter from England mentions whether the Comte d'Artois has eaten too many oysters, or found London beer too strong for him."

"From all which I guess that you are indisposed to stir."

"I believe that is about the fact. Truth is, Burke, there is only one soirée in all Paris I 'd take the trouble to dress for this evening; and, strange enough, it's the only house where I don't know the people. He is a commissary-general, or a 'fournisseur' of some kind or other of the army; always from home, they say; with a wife who was once, and a daughter who is now, exceeding pretty; keeps a splendid house; and, like an honest man, makes restitution of all he can cheat in the campaign by giving good dinners in the capital. His Majesty, at the solicitation of the Empress, I believe, made him a count, – God's mercy it was not a king! – and as they come from Guadaloupe, or Otaheite, no one disputes their right. Besides, this is not a time for such punctilio. This is all I know of them, for unfortunately they settled here since I joined the army."

"And the name?"

"Oh, a very plausible name, I assure you. Lacostellerie, – Madame la Comtesse de Lacostellerie."

"By Jove! you remind me I have letters for her, – a circumstance I had totally forgotten, though it was coupled with a commission."

"A letter! Why, nothing was ever so fortunate. Don't lose a

moment; you have just time to leave it, with your card, before dinner. You'll have an invitation for this evening at once."

"But I have not the slightest wish."

"No matter, *I* have; and you shall bring me."

"You forget," said I, mimicking his own words, "I am unfortunately not intimate enough."

"As to that," replied he, "there is a vast difference between the etiquette Rue du Bac, No. 22, three floors above the *entresol*, and the gorgeous *salons* of the Hôtel Clichy, Rue Faubourg St. Honoré; ceremony has the advantage in the former by a height of three pair of stairs, not to speak of the *entresol*."

"But I don't know the people."

"Nor I."

"But how am I to present you?"

"Easily enough, – 'Captain Duchesne, Imperial Guard;' or, if you prefer it, I 'll do the honors for *you*."

"With all my heart, then," said I, laughing; and pre-pared to pay the visit in question.

CHAPTER X. THE HÔTEL DE CLICHY

Duchesne was correct in all his calculations. I had scarcely reached the Luxembourg when a valet brought me a card for the comtesse's soirée for that evening. It was accordingly agreed upon that we were to go together; I as the invited, he as my friend.

"All your finery, Burke, remember that," said he, as we separated to dress. "The uniform of the *compagnie d'élite* is as much a decoration in a *salon* as a camellia or a geranium."

When he re-entered my room half an hour later, I was struck by the blaze of orders and decorations with which his jacket was covered; while at his side there hung a magnificent *sabre d'honneur*, such as the Emperor was accustomed to confer on his most distinguished officers.

"You smile at all this bravery," said he, wilfully misinterpreting my look of admiration; "but remember where we are going."

"On the contrary," interrupted I; "but it is the first time I knew you had the cross of the Legion."

"*Parbleu!*" said he, with an insolent shrug of his shoulders, "I had lent it to my hairdresser for a ball at the 'Cirque.' But here comes the carriage."

While we drove along towards the Faubourg I had time to

learn some further particulars of the people to whose house we were proceeding; and for my reader's information may as well impart them here, with such other facts as I subsequently collected myself.

Like most of the *salons* of the new aristocracy, Madame Lacostellerie received people of every section of party and every class of political opinion. Standing equally aloof from the old régime and the members of the Jacobin party, her receptions were a kind of neutral territory, where each could come without compromise of dignity: for already, except among the most starched adherents of the Bourbons, few of whom remained in France, there was a growing spirit to side with the Napoleonists in preference to the revolutionary section; while the latter, with all their pretensions to simplicity and primitive tastes, felt no little pride in mixing with the very aristocracy they so loudly inveighed against. Besides all this, wealth had its prestige. Never, in the palmiest days of the royalty, were entertainments of greater splendor; and the Legitimists, however disposed to be critical on the company, could afford to be just regarding the cuisine, – the luxury of these modern dinners eclipsing the most costly displays of former times, where hereditary rank and ancient nobility contributed to adorn the scene. And, lastly, the admixture of every grade and class extended the field of conversational agreeability, throwing in new elements and eliciting new features in a society where peers, actors, poets, bankers, painters, soldiers, speculators, journalists, and

adventurers were confusedly mixed together; making, as it were, a common fund of their principles and their prejudices, and starting anew in life with what they could seize in the scramble.

After following the long line of carriages for above an hour, we at last turned into a large courtyard, lit up almost to the brightness of day. Here the equipages of many of the ministers were standing, – a privilege accorded to them above the other guests. I recognized among the number the splendid liveries of Decrès; and the stately carriage of Talleyrand, whose household always proclaimed itself as belonging to a "seigneur" of the oldest blood of France, – the most perfect type of a highbred gentleman. Our progress from the vestibule to the stairs was a slow one. The double current of those pressing upwards and downwards delayed us long; and at last we reached a spacious antechamber, where even greater numbers stood awaiting their turn, if happily it should come, to move forward.

While here, the names of those announced conveyed tous a fair impression of the whole company. Among the first was Le General Junot, Berthollet (the celebrated chemist), Lafayette, Monges, Daru, Comte de Mailles (a Legitimist noble), David (the regicide), the Ambassador of Prussia, M. Pasquier, Talma. Such were the names we heard following in quick succession; when suddenly an avenue was opened by a master of the ceremonies before me, who read from my card the words, "Le Capitaine Burke, officier d'élite; le Chevalier Duchesne, présenté par lui." And advancing within the doorway, I found myself

opposite a very handsome woman, whose brilliant dress and blaze of diamonds concealed any ravages time might have made upon her beauty.

She was conversing with the Arch-Chancellor, Cambacérès, when my name was announced; and turning rapidly round, touched my arm with her bouquet, as she said, with a most gracious smile, —

"I am but too much flattered to see you on so short an invitation; but M. de Tascher's note led me to hope I might presume so far. Your friend, I believe?"

"I have taken the great liberty – "

"Indeed, Madame la Comtesse," said Duchesne, interrupting, "I must exculpate my friend here. This intrusion rests on my own head, and has no other apology than my long cherished wish to pay my homage to the most distinguished ornament of the Parisian world."

As he spoke, the quiet flow of his words, and the low deferential bow with which he accompanied them, completely divested his speech of its tone of gross flattery, and merely made it seem a very fitting and appropriate expression.

"This would be a very high compliment, indeed," replied Madame de Lacostellerie, with a flush of evident pleasure on her cheek, "had it even come from one less known than the Chevalier Duchesne. I hope the Duchesse de Montserrat is well, – your aunt, if I mistake not?" "Yes, Madame," said he, "in excellent health; it will afford her great pleasure when I inform her of your

polite inquiry."

Another announcement now compelled us to follow the current in front, which I was well content to do, and escape from an interchange of fine speeches, of whose sincerity, on one side at least, I had very strong misgivings.

"So, then, the comtesse is acquainted with your family?" said I, in a whisper.

"Who said so?" replied he, laughing.

"Did she not ask after the Duchesse de Montserrat?"

"And then?"

"And didn't you promise to convey her very kind message?"

"To be sure I did. But are you simple enough to think that either of us were serious in what we said? Why, my dear friend, she never saw my aunt in her life; nor, if I were to hint at her inquiry for her to the duchesse, am I certain it would not cost me something like a half million of francs the old lady has left me in her will, – on my word, I firmly believe she'd never forgive it. You know little what these people of the *vieille roche*, as they call themselves, are like. Do you see that handsome fellow yonder, with a star on a blue cordon?"

"I don't know him; but I see he's a Marshal of France."

"Well, I saw that same aunt of mine rise up and leave the room because *he* sat down in her presence!"

"Oh! that was intolerable."

"So she deemed his insolence. Come, move on; they 're dancing in the next *salon*." And without saying more, we pushed

through the crowd in the direction of the music.

It is only by referring to the sensations experienced by those who see a ballet at the Opera for the first time that I can at all convey my own on entering the *salle de danse*. My first feeling was that of absolute shame. Never before had I seen that affectation of stage costume which then was the rage in society. The short and floating jupe – formed of some light and gauzy texture, which, even where it covered the figure, betrayed the form and proportions of the wearer – was worn low on the bosom and shoulders, and attached at the waist by a ribbon, whose knot hung negligently down in seeming disorder. The hair fell in long and floating masses loose upon the neck, waving in free tresses with every motion of the figure, and adding to that air of abandon which seemed so studiously aimed at. But more than anything in mere costume was the look and expression, in which a character of languid voluptuousness was written, and made to harmonize with the easy grace of floating movements, and sympathize with gestures full of passionate fascination.

"Now, Burke," said Duchesne, as he threw his eyes over the room, "shall I find a partner for you? for I believe I know most of the people here. That pretty blonde yonder, with the diamond buckles in her shoes, is Mademoiselle de Rancy, with a dowry of some millions of francs; what say you to pushing your fortune there? Don't forget the *officier d'élite* is a trump card just now; and there's no time to lose, for there will soon be a new deal."

"Not if she had the throne of France in reversion," said I;

turning away in disgust from a figure which, though perfectly beautiful, outraged at every movement that greatest charm of womanhood, – her inborn modesty.

"Ah, then, you don't fancy a blonde!" said he, carelessly, whether wilfully misunderstanding me or not I could not say. "Nor I either," added he. "There, now, is something far more to my taste; is she not a lovely girl?"

She to whom he now directed my attention was standing at the side of the room, and leaning on her partner's arm; her head slightly turned, so that we could not see her features, but her figure was actually faultless. Hers was not one of those gossamer shapes which flitted around and about us, balancing on tiptoe, or gracefully floating with extending arms. Rather strongly built than otherwise, she stood with the firm foot and the straight ankle of a marble statue; her arms, well rounded, hung easily from her full, wide shoulders; while her head, slightly thrown back, was balanced on her neck with an air at once dignified and easy. Her dress well suited the character of her figure: it was entirely of black, covered with a profusion of deep lace, – the jupe looped up in Andalusian fashion to display the leg, whose symmetry was perfect. Even her costume, however, had something about it too theatrical for my taste; but there was a stamp of firmness, *fierté* even, in her carriage and her attitude, that at once showed hers was no vulgar desire of being remarkable, but the womanly consciousness of being dressed as became her. She suddenly turned her head around, and we both

exclaimed in the same breath, "How lovely!" Her features were of that brilliant character only seen in Southern blood: eyes large, black, and lustrous, fringed with lashes that threw their shadow on the very cheek; full lips, curled with an air of almost saucy expression; while the rich olive tint of her transparent skin was scarce colored with the pink flush of exercise, and harmonized perfectly with the proud repose of her countenance.

"She must be Spanish, – that's certain," said Duchesne. "No one ever saw such an instep come from this side the Pyrenees; and those eyes have got their look of sleepy wickedness from Moorish blood. But here comes one will tell us all about her."

This was the Baron de Trève, – a withered-looking, dried-up old man, rouged to the eyes, and dressed in the extravagance of the last fashion; the high collar of his coat rising nearly to the back of his head, as his deep cravat in front entirely concealed his mouth, and formed a kind of barrier around his features.

As Duchesne addressed him, he stopped short, and assuming an attitude of great intended grace, raised his glass slowly to his eye, and looked towards the lady.

"Ah! the señorina. Don't you know *her?* Why, where have you been, my dear chevalier? Oh! I forgot. You've been in Austria, or Russia, or some barbarous place or other. She is the belle, *par excellence*; nothing else is talked of in Paris."

"But her name? Who is she?" said Duchesne, impatiently.

"Mademoiselle de Lacostellerie, the daughter of the house," said the baron, completely overcome with astonishment at our

ignorance. “And you not to know this! – you, of all men living! Why,” he continued, dropping his voice to a lower key, “there never was such a fortune. Mines of rubies and emeralds; continents of coffee, rice, and sandal-wood; spice islands and sugar plantations, to make one’s mouth water.”

“By Jove, Baron! you seem somewhat susceptible yourself.”

“I had my thoughts on the subject,” said he, with a half sigh. “But, *hélas!* there are so many ties to be broken! so many tender chains one must snap asunder!”

“I understand,” said Duchesne, with an air of well-assumed seriousness; “the thing was impossible. Now, then, what say you to assist a friend?”

“You, – yourself, do you mean?”

“Of course, Baron; no other.”

“Come this way,” said the old man, taking him by the arm, and leading him along to another part of the room, while Duchesne, with a sly look at me, followed.

While I stood awaiting his return, my thoughts became fixed on Duchesne himself, of whose character I never felt free from my misgivings. The cold indifference he manifested on ordinary occasions to everything and everybody, I now saw could give way to strong impetuosity; but even this might be assumed also. As I pondered thus, I had not remarked that the dance was concluded; and already the dancers were proceeding towards their seats, when I heard my name uttered beside me, – “Capitaine Burke.” I turned; it was the countess herself, leaning on the arm of her

daughter.

"I wish to present you to my daughter," said she, with a courteous smile. "The college friend and brother officer of your cousin Tascher, Pauline."

The young lady courtesied with an air of cold reserve; I bowed deeply before her; while the countess continued, —

"We hope to have the pleasure of seeing you frequently during your stay in Paris, when we shall have a better opportunity of making your acquaintance."

As I expressed my sense of this politeness, I turned to address a few words to mademoiselle; and requesting to have the honor of dancing with her, she looked at me with an air of surprise, as though not understanding my words, when suddenly the countess interposed, —

"I fear that my daughter's engagements have been made long since; but another night – "

"I will hope – "

But before I could say more, the countess addressed another person near her, and mademoiselle, turning her head superciliously away, did not deign me any further attention; so that, abashed and awkward at so unfavorable a *début* in the gay world, I fell back, and mixed with the crowd.

As I did so, I found myself among a group of officers, one of whom was relating an anecdote just then current in Paris, and which I mention merely as illustrating in some measure the habits of the period.

At the levée of the Emperor on the morning before, an old general of brigade advanced to pay his respects, when Napoleon observed some drops of rain glistening on the embroidery of his uniform. He immediately turned towards one of his suite, and gave orders to ascertain by what carriage the general had arrived. The answer was, that he had come in a *fiacre*, – a hired vehicle, which by the rules of the Court was not admitted within the court of the Tuileries, and thus he was obliged to walk above one hundred yards before he could obtain shelter. The old officer, who knew nothing of the tender solicitude of the Emperor, was confounded with astonishment to observe at his departure a handsome *calèche* and two splendid horses at his service.

"Whose carriage is this?" said he.

"Yours, Monsieur le Général."

"And the servant, and the horses?"

"Yours, also. His Majesty has graciously been pleased to order them for you; and desires you will remember that the sum of six thousand francs will be deducted from your pay to meet the cost of the equipage which the Emperor deems befitting your rank in the service."

"It is thus," said the narrator, "the Emperor would enforce that liberality on others he so eminently displays himself. The spoils of Italy and Austria are destined, not to found a new *noblesse*, but to enrich the *bourgeoisie* of this good city of Paris. I say, Edward, is not that Duchesne yonder? I thought he was above patronizing

the *salons* of a mere commissary-general."

"You don't know the chevalier," replied the other; "no game flies too high or too low for his mark. Depend upon it, he's not here for nothing."

"If mademoiselle be the object," said a third, "I'll swear he shall have no rivalry on my side. By Jove I I 'd rather face a charge of Hulans than speak to her."

"If thou wert a Marshal of France, Claude, thou wouldst think differently."

"If I were a Marshal of France," repeated he, with energy, "I'd rather marry Minette, the vivandière of ours."

"And no bad choice either," broke in a large! heavy-looking officer. "There is but one objection to such an arrangement."

"And that, if I might ask – "

"Simple enough. She would n't have you."

The young man endeavored to join in the laugh this speech excited among the rest, though it was evident he felt ill at ease from the ridicule.

"A thousand pardons, my dear Burke," said Duchesne, at this moment, as he slipped his arm through mine; "but I thought I should have been in need of your services a few minutes ago."

"Ah! how?"

"Move a little aside, and I 'll tell you. I wished to ask mademoiselle to dance, and approached her for the purpose. She was standing with a number of people, all strangers to me, at the doorway yonder, – Dobretski, that Russian prince, the only

man I knew amongst them. A very chilling 'Engaged, sir,' was the answer of the lady to my first request. The same reply met my second and third; when the Russian, as if desirous to increase the awkwardness of my position, interposed with, 'And the fourth set mademoiselle dances with me.'

"'In that case,' said I, 'I may fairly claim the fifth.'

"'On what grounds, sir?' said she, with a look of easy impertinence.

"'The Emperor's orders, Mademoiselle,' said I, proudly.

"'Indeed, sir! May I ask how and when?'

"'Austerlitz, December 2. The order of four o'clock, dated from Reygern, says, "The Imperial Guard will follow closely on the track of the Russians." (Signed) "Napoleon."'

"'In that case, sir,' said she, 'I cannot dispute his Majesty's orders. I shall dance the fifth with you.'"

"And the Russian, – what said he?"

"*Ma foi!* I paid no attention to him; for as mademoiselle moved off with her partner, I strolled away in search of you."

If I was amused at this recital of the chevalier, I could not avoid feeling piqued at the greater success he had than myself; for still the chilling reception I had met with was rankling in my mind.

"Let us move away from this quarter," said Duchesne. "Here we have got ourselves among a knot of old campaigners, with their stupid stories of Cairo and Acre, Alexandria and the Adige. By Jove! if anything would make me a Legitimist, it is my disgust

at those confounded narratives about Kleber and Desaix; the Emperor himself does not despise the time of the Revolution more heartily than I do. Come, there's *bouillotte* yonder; let us go and win some pieces. I feel I'm in vein; and even to lose would be better than listen to these people. It was only a few minutes ago I was hunted, away from Madame de Muraire by old Berthollet, who is persuading her that her diamonds are but charcoal, and that a necklace is only fit to roast an ortolan. This comes of letting savants into society; decidedly, they had much better taste in the time of the Monarchy."

It was with some difficulty we succeeded in approaching the *bouillotte* table, where, to judge from the stakes, very high play was going forward. Duchesne was quickly recognized among the players, who made place for him among them. I soon saw that he was not mistaken in supposing he was in luck; every *coup* was successful, and, while he continued to win time after time, the heap of gold grew greater, till it covered the part of the table before him.

"Most certainly, Burke," said he, in a whisper, "this is a strong turn of Fortune, who, being a woman, won't long be of the same mind. Five thousand francs," cried he, throwing the *billet de banque* carelessly before him, while he turned to resume what he was saying to me. "Were I in action now, I 'd win the *bâton de maréchal*. I feel it; there's an innate sense of luck when it means to be steady."

"The Chevalier Duchesne! the Chevalier Duchesne!" was

repeated from voice to voice, outside the circle; “Mademoiselle de Lacostellerie is waiting to waltz with you.”

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