

LOUIS DE BOURRIENNE

MEMOIRS OF NAPOLEON
BONAPARTE — VOLUME
11

Louis Bourrienne

**Memoirs of Napoleon
Bonaparte — Volume 11**

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Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne

Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte — Volume 11

CHAPTER XIX

1809.

The castle of Diernstein—Richard Coeur de Lion and Marshal Lannes, — The Emperor at the gates of Vienna—The Archduchess Maria Louisa— Facility of correspondence with England—Smuggling in Hamburg—Brown sugar and sand —Hearses filled with sugar and coffee—Embargo on the publication of news —Supervision of the 'Hamburg Correspondant'— Festival of Saint Napoleon— Ecclesiastical adulation—The King of Westphalia's journey through his States —Attempt to raise a loan— Jerome's present to me—The present returned— Bonaparte's unfounded suspicions.

Rapp, who during the campaign of Vienna had resumed his duties as aide de camp, related to me one of those observations of Napoleon which, when his words are compared with the events that followed them, seem to indicate a foresight into his future destiny. When within some days' march of Vienna the Emperor procured a guide to explain to him every village and ruin which he observed on the road. The guide pointed to an eminence on which were a few decayed vestiges of an old fortified castle. "Those," said the guide, "are the ruins of the castle of Diernstein." Napoleon suddenly stopped, and stood for some time silently contemplating the ruins, then turning to Lannes, who was with him, he said, "See! yonder is the prison of Richard Coeur de Lion. He, like us, went to Syria and Palestine. But, my brave Lannes, the Coeur de Lion was not braver than you. He was more fortunate than I at St. Jean d'Acre. A Duke of Austria sold him to an Emperor of Germany, who imprisoned him in that castle. Those were the days of barbarism. How different from the civilisation of modern times! Europe has seen how I treated the Emperor of Austria, whom I might have made prisoner—and I would treat him so again. I claim no credit for this. In the present age crowned heads must be respected. A conqueror imprisoned!"

A few days after the Emperor was at the gates of Vienna, but on this occasion his access to the Austrian capital was not so easy as it had been rendered in 1805 by the ingenuity and courage of Lannes and Murat. The Archduke Maximilian, who was shut up in the capital, wished to defend it, although the French army already occupied the principal suburbs. In vain were flags of truce sent one after the other to the Archduke. They were not only dismissed unheard, but were even ill-treated, and one of them was almost killed by the populace. The city was then bombarded, and would speedily have been destroyed but that the Emperor, being informed that one of the Archduchesses remained in Vienna on account of ill- health, ordered the firing to cease. By a singular caprice of Napoleon's destiny this Archduchess was no other than Maria Louisa. Vienna at length opened her gates to Napoleon, who for some days took up his residence at Schoenbrunn.

The Emperor was engaged in so many projects at once that they could not all succeed. Thus, while he was triumphant in the Hereditary States his Continental system was experiencing severe checks. The trade with England on the coast of Oldenburg was carped on as uninterruptedly as if in time of peace. English letters and newspapers arrived on the Continent, and those of the Continent found their way into Great Britain, as if France and England had been united by ties of the firmest friendship. In short, things were just in the same state as if the decree for the blockade of the British Isles had not existed. When the custom-house officers succeeded in seizing contraband goods they were again taken from them by main force. On the 2d of July a serious contest took place at Brinskham

between the custom-house officers and a party of peasantry, in which the latter remained masters of eighteen wagons laden with English goods: many were wounded on both sides.

If, however, trade with England was carried on freely along a vast extent of coast, it was different in the city of Hamburg, where English goods were introduced only by fraud; and I verily believe that the art of smuggling and the schemes of smugglers were never before carried to such perfection. Above 6000 persons of the lower orders went backwards and forwards, about twenty times a day, from Altona to Hamburg, and they carried on their contraband, trade by many ingenious stratagems, two of which were so curious that they are worth mentioning here.

On the left of the road leading from Hamburg to Altona there was a piece of ground where pits were dug for the purpose of procuring sand used for building and for laying down in the streets. At this time it was proposed to repair the great street of Hamburg leading to the gate of Altona. The smugglers overnight filled the sandpit with brown sugar, and the little carts which usually conveyed the sand into Hamburg were filled with the sugar, care being taken to cover it with a layer of sand about an inch thick. This trick was carried on for a length of time, but no progress was made in repairing the street. I complained greatly of the delay, even before I was aware of its cause, for the street led to a country-house I had near Altona, whither I went daily. The officers of the customs at length perceived that the work did not proceed, and one fine morning the sugar-carts were stopped and seized. Another expedient was then to be devised.

Between Hamburg and Altona there was a little suburb situated on the right bank of the Elbe. This suburb was inhabited, by sailors, labourers of the port, and landowners. The inhabitants were interred in the cemetery of Hamburg. It was observed that funeral processions passed this way more frequently than usual. The customhouse officers, amazed at the sudden mortality of the worthy inhabitants of the little suburb, insisted on searching one of the vehicles, and on opening the hearse it was found to be filled with sugar, coffee, vanilla, indigo, etc. It was necessary to abandon this expedient, but others were soon discovered.

Bonaparte was sensitive, in an extraordinary degree, to all that was said and thought of him, and Heaven knows how many despatches I received from headquarters during the campaign of Vienna directing me not only to watch the vigilant execution of the custom-house laws, but to lay an embargo on a thing which alarmed him more than the introduction of British merchandise, viz. the publication of news. In conformity with these reiterated instructions I directed especial attention to the management of the 'Correspondant'. The importance of this journal, with its 60,000 readers, may easily be perceived. I procured the insertion of everything I thought desirable: all the bulletins, proclamations, acts of the French Government, notes of the 'Moniteur', and the semi-official articles of the French journals: these were all given 'in extenso'. On the other hand, I often suppressed adverse news, which, though well known, would have received additional weight from its insertion in so widely circulated a paper. If by chance there crept in some Austrian bulletin, extracted from the other German papers published in the States of the Confederation of the Rhine, there was always given with it a suitable antidote to destroy, or at least to mitigate, its ill effect. But this was not all. The King of Wurtemberg having reproached the 'Correspondant', in a letter to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, with publishing whatever Austria wished should be made known, and being conducted in a spirit hostile to the good cause, I answered these unjust reproaches by making the Syndic censor prohibit the Hamburg papers from inserting any Austrian order of the day, any Archduke's bulletins, any letter from Prague; in short, anything which should be copied from the other German journals unless those articles had been inserted in the French journals.

My recollections of the year 1809 at Hamburg carry me back to the celebration of Napoleon's fete, which was on the 15th of August, for he had interpolated his patron saint in the Imperial calendar at the date of his birth. The coincidence of this festival with the Assumption gave rise to adulatory rodomontades of the most absurd description. Certainly the Episcopal circulars under the Empire would form a curious collection.

—[It will perhaps scarcely be believed that the following words were actually delivered from the pulpit: "God in his mercy has chosen Napoleon to be his representative on earth. The Queen of Heaven has marked, by the most magnificent of presents, the anniversary of the day which witnessed his glorious entrance into her domains. Heavenly Virgin! as a special testimony of your love for the French, and your all-powerful influence with your son, you have connected the first of your solemnities with the birth of the great Napoleon. Heaven ordained that the hero should spring from your sepulchre."—Bourrienne.]—

Could anything be more revolting than the sycophancy of those Churchmen who declared that "God chose Napoleon for his representative upon earth, and that God created Bonaparte, and then rested; that he was more fortunate than Augustus, more virtuous than Trajan; that he deserved altars and temples to be raised to him!" etc.

Some time after the Festival of St. Napoleon the King of Westphalia made a journey through his States. Of all Napoleon's brothers the King of Westphalia was the one with whom I was least acquainted, and he, it is pretty well known, was the most worthless of the family. His correspondence with me is limited to two letters, one of which he wrote while he commanded the 'Epervier', and another seven years after, dated 6th September 1809. In this latter he said:

"I shall be in Hannover on the 10th. If you can make it convenient to come there and spend a day with me it will give me great pleasure. I shall then be able to smooth all obstacles to the loan I wish to contract in the Hanse Town. I flatter myself you will do all in your power to forward that object, which at the present crisis is very important to my States. More than ample security is offered, but the money will be of no use to me if I cannot have it at least for two years."

Jerome wanted to contract at Hamburg a loan of 3,000,000 francs. However, the people did not seem to think like his Westphalian Majesty, that the contract presented more than ample security. No one was found willing to draw his purse-strings, and the loan was never raised.

Though I would not, without the Emperor's authority, exert the influence of my situation to further the success of Jerome's negotiation, yet I did my best to assist him. I succeeded in prevailing on the Senate to advance one loan of 100,000 francs to pay a portion of the arrears due to his troops, and a second of 200,000 francs to provide clothing for his army, etc. This scanty supply will cease to be wondered at when it is considered to what a state of desolation the whole of Germany was reduced at the time, as much in the allied States as in those of the enemies of France. I learnt at the time that the King of Bavaria said to an officer of the Emperor's household in whom he had great confidence, "If this continues we shall have to give up, and put the key under the door." These were his very words.

As for Jerome, he returned to Cassel quite disheartened at the unsuccessful issue of his loan. Some days after his return to his capital I received from him a snuffbox with his portrait set in diamonds, accompanied by a letter of thanks for the service I had rendered him. I never imagined that a token of remembrance from a crowned head could possibly be declined. Napoleon, however, thought otherwise. I had not, it is true, written to acquaint our Government with the King of Westphalia's loan, but in a letter, which I addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs on the 22d of September, I mentioned the present Jerome had sent me. Why Napoleon should have been offended at this I know not, but I received orders to return Jerome's present immediately, and these orders were accompanied with bitter reproaches for my having accepted it without the Emperor's authority. I sent back the diamonds, but kept the portrait. Knowing Bonaparte's distrustful disposition, I thought he must have suspected that Jerome had employed threats, or at any rate, that he had used some illegal influence to facilitate the success of his loan. At last, after much correspondence, Napoleon saw clearly that everything was perfectly regular; in a word, that the business had been transacted as between two private persons. As to the 300,000 francs which the Senate had lent to Jerome, the fact

is, that but little scruple was made about it, for this simple reason, that it was the means of removing from Hamburg the Westphalian division, whose presence occasioned a much greater expense than the loan.

CHAPTER XX

1809.

Visit to the field of Wagram.—Marshal Macdonald—Union of the Papal States with the Empire—The battle of Talavera—Sir Arthur Wellesley—English expedition to Holland—Attempt to assassinate the Emperor at Schoenbrunn—Staps Interrogated by Napoleon—Pardon offered and rejected—Fanaticism and patriotism—Corvisart's examination of Staps—Second interrogatory—Tirade against the illuminati—Accusation of the Courts of Berlin and Weimar—Firmness and resignation of Staps—Particulars respecting his death— Influence of the attempt of Staps on the conclusion of peace— M. de Champagny.

Napoleon went to inspect all the corps of his army and the field of Wagram, which a short time before had been the scene of one of those great battles in which victory was the more glorious in proportion as it had been valiantly contested.

—[The great battle of Wagram was fought on the 6th of July 1809. The Austrians, who committed a mistake in over-extending their line, lost 20,000 men as prisoners, besides a large number in killed and wounded. There was no day, perhaps, on which Napoleon showed more military genius or more personal courage. He was in the hottest of the fight, and for a long time exposed to showers of grapeshot.- Editor of 1836 edition.]—

On that day [the type] of French honour, Macdonald, who, after achieving a succession of prodigies, led the army of Italy into the heart of the Austrian States, was made a marshal on the field of battle. Napoleon said to him, "With us it is for life and for death." The general opinion was that the elevation of Macdonald added less to the marshal's military reputation than it redounded to the honour of the Emperor. Five days after the bombardment of Vienna, namely, on the 17th of May, the Emperor had published a decree, by virtue of which the Papal States were united to the French Empire, and Rome was declared an Imperial City. I will not stop to inquire whether this was good or bad in point of policy, but it was a mean usurpation on the part of Napoleon, for the time was passed when a Julius II. laid down the keys of St. Peter and took up the sword of St. Paul. It was, besides, an injustice, and, considering the Pope's condescension to Napoleon, an act of ingratitude. The decree of union did not deprive the Pope of his residence, but he was only the First Bishop of Christendom, with a revenue of 2,000,000.

Napoleon while at Vienna heard of the affair of Talavera de la Reyna. I was informed, by a letter from headquarters, that he was much affected at the news, and did not conceal his vexation. I verily believe that he was bent on the conquest of Spain, precisely on account of the difficulties he had to surmount. At Talavera commenced the celebrity of a man who, perhaps, would not have been without some glory even if pains had not been taken to build him up a great reputation. That battle commenced the career of Sir Arthur Wellesley, whose after-success, however, has been attended by such important consequences.

—[The battle of Talavera took place on the 28th of July, twenty-two days after the fatal defeat of the Austrians at Wagram.]—

Whilst we experienced this check in Spain the English were attempting an expedition to Holland, where they had already made themselves masters of Walcheren. It is true they were obliged to evacuate it shortly after; but as at that time the French and Austrian armies were in a state of inaction, in consequence of the armistice concluded at Znaim, in Moravia, the news unfavourable

to Napoleon had the effect of raising the hopes of the Austrian negotiators, who paused in the expectation that fresh defeats would afford them better chances.

It was during these negotiations, the termination of which seemed every day to be farther distant, that Napoleon was exposed to a more real danger than the wound he had received at Ratisbon. Germany was suffering under a degree of distress difficult to be described. Illuminism was making great progress, and had filled some youthful minds with an enthusiasm not less violent than the religious fanaticism to which Henry IV. fell a victim. A young man formed the design of assassinating Napoleon in order to rid Germany of one whom he considered her scourge. Rapp and Berthier were with the Emperor when the assassin was arrested, and in relating what I heard from them I feel assured that I am giving the most faithful account of all the circumstances connected with the event.

"We were at Schoenbrunn," said Rapp, "when the Emperor had just reviewed the troops. I observed a young man at the extremity of one of the columns just as the troops were about to defile. He advanced towards the Emperor, who was then between Berthier and me. The Prince de Neufchatel, thinking he wanted to present a petition, went forward to tell him that I was the person to receive it as I was the aide de camp for the day. The young man replied that he wished to speak with Napoleon himself, and Berthier again told him that he must apply to me. He withdrew a little, still repeating that he wanted to speak with Napoleon. He again advanced and came very near the Emperor; I desired him to fall back, telling him in German to wait till after the parade, when, if he had anything to say, it would be attended to. I surveyed him attentively, for I began to think his conduct suspicious. I observed that he kept his right hand in the breast pocket of his coat; out of which a piece of paper appeared. I know not how it was, but at that moment my eyes met his, and I was struck with his peculiar look and air of fixed determination. Seeing an officer of gendarmerie on the spot, I desired him to seize the young man, but without treating him with any severity, and to convey him to the castle until the parade was ended.

"All this passed in less time than I have taken to tell it, and as every one's attention was fixed on the parade the scene passed unnoticed. I was shortly afterwards told that a large carving-knife had been found on the young man, whose name was Staps. I immediately went to find Duroc, and we proceeded together to the apartment to which Staps had been taken. We found him sitting on a bed, apparently in deep thought, but betraying no symptoms of fear. He had beside him the portrait of a young female, his pocket-book, and purse containing only two pieces of gold. I asked him his name, but he replied that he would tell it to no one but Napoleon. I then asked him what he intended to do with the knife which had been found upon him? But he answered again, 'I shall tell only Napoleon.'—'Did you mean to attempt his life?'—'Yes.'—'Why?'—'I can tell no one but Napoleon.'

"This appeared to me so strange that I thought right to inform the Emperor of it. When I told him what had passed he appeared a little agitated, for you know how he was haunted with the idea of assassination. He desired that the young man should be taken into his cabinet; whither he was accordingly conducted by two gens d'armes. Notwithstanding his criminal intention there was something exceedingly prepossessing in his countenance. I wished that he would deny the attempt; but how was it possible to save a man who was determined to sacrifice himself? The Emperor asked Staps whether he could speak French, and he answered that he could speak it very imperfectly, and as you know (continued Rapp) that next to you I am the best German scholar in Napoleon's Court, I was appointed interpreter on this occasion. The Emperor put the following questions to Staps, which I translated, together with the answers:

"'Where do you come from?'—'From Narremburgh.'—'What is your father?'—'A Protestant minister.'—'How old are you?'—'Eighteen.'—'What did you intend to do with your knife?'—'To kill you.'—'You are mad, young man; you are one of the illuminati?'—'I am not mad; I know not what is meant by the illuminati!'—'You are ill, then?'—'I am not; I am very well.'—'Why did you wish to kill me?'—'Because you have ruined my country.'—'Have I done you any harm?'—'Yes, you have harmed me as well as all Germans.'—'By whom were you sent? Who urged you to this crime?'—'No

one; I was urged to it by the sincere conviction that by killing you I should render the greatest service to my country.'—'Is this the first time you have seen me?'—'I saw you at Erfurt, at the time of your interview with the Emperor of Russia.'—'Did you intend to kill me then?'—'No; I thought you would not again wage war against Germany. I was one of your greatest admirers.'—'How long have you been in Vienna?'—'Ten days.'—'Why did you wait so long before you attempted the execution of your project?'—'I came to Schoenbrunn a week ago with the intention of killing you, but when I arrived the parade was just over; I therefore deferred the execution of my design till today.'—'I tell you, young man, you are either mad or in bad health.'

"The Emperor here ordered Corvisart to be sent for. Staps asked who Corvisart was? I told him that he was a physician. He then said, 'I have no need of him.' Nothing further was said until the arrival of the doctor, and during this interval Steps evinced the utmost indifference. When Corvisart arrived Napoleon directed him to feel the young man's pulse, which he immediately did; and Staps then very coolly said, 'Am I not well, sir?' Corvisart told the Emperor that nothing ailed him. 'I told you so,' said Steps, pronouncing the words with an air of triumph.

"I was really astonished at the coolness and apathy of Staps, and the Emperor seemed for a moment confounded by the young man's behaviour.— After a few moments' pause the Emperor resumed the interrogatory as follows:

"'Your brain is disordered. You will be the ruin of your family. I will grant you your life if you ask pardon for the crime you meditated, and for which you ought to be sorry.'—'I want no pardon. I only regret having failed in my attempt.'—'Indeed! then a crime is nothing to you?'—'To kill you is no crime: it is a duty.'—'Whose portrait is that which was found on you?'—'It is the portrait of a young lady to whom I am attached.'—'She will doubtless be much distressed at your adventure?'—'She will only be sorry that I have not succeeded. She abhors you as much as I do.'—'But if I were to pardon you would you be grateful for my mercy?'—'I would nevertheless kill you if I could.'

"I never," continued Rapp, "saw Napoleon look so confounded. The replies of Staps and his immovable resolution perfectly astonished him. He ordered the prisoner to be removed; and when he was gone Napoleon said, 'This is the result of the secret societies which infest Germany. This is the effect of fine principles and the light of reason. They make young men assassins. But what can be done against illuminism? A sect cannot be destroyed by cannon-balls.'

"This event, though pains were taken to keep it secret, became the subject of conversation in the castle of Schoenbrunn. In the evening the Emperor sent for me and said, 'Rapp, the affair of this morning is very extraordinary. I cannot believe that this young man of himself conceived the design of assassinating me. There is something under it. I shall never be persuaded that the intriguers of Berlin and Weimar are strangers to the affair.'—'Sire, allow me to say that your suspicions appear unfounded. Staps has had no accomplice; his placid countenance, and even his fanaticism, are easiest proofs of that.'—'I tell you that he has been instigated by women: furies thirsting for revenge. If I could only obtain proof of it I would have them seized in the midst of their Court.'—'Ah, Sire, it is impossible that either man or woman in the Courts of Berlin or Weimar could have conceived so atrocious a design.'—'I am not sure of that. Did not those women excite Schill against us while we were at peace with Prussia; but stay a little; we shall see.'—'Schill's enterprise; Sire, bears no resemblance to this attempt.' You know how the Emperor likes every one to yield to his opinion when he has adopted one which he does not choose to give up; so he said, rather changing his tone of good-humoured familiarity, 'All you say is in vain, Monsieur le General: I am not liked either at Berlin or Weimar.' There is no doubt of that, Sire; but because you are not liked in these two Courts, is it to be inferred that they would assassinate you?'—'I know the fury of those women; but patience. Write to General Lauer: direct him to interrogate Staps. Tell him to bring him to a confession.'

"I wrote conformably with the Emperor's orders, but no confession was obtained from Staps. In his examination by General Lauer he repeated nearly what he had said in the presence of Napoleon. His resignation and firmness never forsook him for a moment; and he persisted in saying that he was

the sole author of the attempt, and that no one else was aware of it. Staps' enterprise made a deep impression on the Emperor. On the day when we left Schoenbrunn we happened to be alone, and he said to me, 'I cannot get this unfortunate Staps out of my mind. The more I think on the subject the more I am perplexed. I never can believe that a young man of his age, a German, one who has received a good education, a Protestant too, could have conceived and attempted such a crime. The Italians are said to be a nation of assassins, but no Italian ever attempted my life. This affair is beyond my comprehension. Inquire how Staps died, and let me know.'

"I obtained from General Lauer the information which the Emperor desired. I learned that Staps, whose attempt on the Emperor's life was made on the 23d of October; was executed at seven o'clock in the morning of the 27th, having refused to take any sustenance since the 24th. When any food was brought to him he rejected it, saying, 'I shall be strong enough to walk to the scaffold.' When he was told that peace was concluded he evinced extreme sorrow, and was seized with trembling. On reaching the place of execution he exclaimed loudly, 'Liberty for ever! Germany for ever! Death to the tyrant!'"

Such are the notes which I committed to paper after conversing with Rapp, as we were walking together in the garden of the former hotel of Montmorin, in which Rapp resided. I recollect his showing me the knife taken from Staps, which the Emperor had given him; it was merely a common carving-knife, such as is used in kitchens. To these details may be added a very remarkable circumstance, which I received from another but not less authentic source. I have been assured that the attempt of the German Mutius Scaevola had a marked influence on the concessions which the Emperor made, because he feared that Staps, like him who attempted the life of Porsenna, might have imitators among the illuminati of Germany.

It is well known that after the battle of Wagram conferences were open at Raab. Although peace was almost absolutely necessary for both powers, and the two Emperors appeared to desire it equally, it was not, however, concluded. It is worthy of remark that the delay was occasioned by Bonaparte. Negotiations were therefore suspended, and M. de Champagny had ceased for several days to see the Prince of Lichtenstein when the affair of Staps took place. Immediately after Napoleon's examination of the young fanatic he sent for M. de Champagny: "How are the negotiations going on?" he inquired. The Minister having informed him, the Emperor added, "I wish them to be resumed immediately: I wish for peace; do not hesitate about a few millions more or less in the indemnity demanded from Austria. Yield on that point. I wish to come to a conclusion: I refer it all to you." The Minister lost no time in writing to the Prince of Lichtenstein: on the same night the two negotiators met at Raab, and the clauses of the treaty which had been suspended were discussed, agreed upon, and signed that very night. Next morning M. de Champagny attended the Emperor's levee with the treaty of peace as it had been agreed on. Napoleon, after hastily examining it, expressed his approbation of every particular, and highly complimented his Minister on the speed with which the treaty had been brought to a conclusion.

—[This definitive treaty of peace, which is sometimes called the Treaty of Vienna, Raab, or Schoenbrunn, contained the following articles:

1. Austria ceded in favour of the Confederation of the Rhine (these fell to Bavaria), Salzburg, Berchtolsgaden, and a part of Upper Austria.

2. To France directly Austria ceded her only seaport, Trieste, and all the countries of Carniola, Friuli, the circle of Vilach, with parts of Croatia and Dalmatia. (By these cessions Austria was excluded from the Adriatic Sea, and cut off from all communication with the navy of Great Britain.) A small lordship, an enclave in the territories of the Grieve League, was also given up.

3. To the constant ally of Napoleon, to the King of Saxony, in that character Austria ceded some Bohemian enclaves in Saxony and, in his capacity of Grand

Duke of Warsaw, she added to his Polish dominions the ancient city of Cracow, and all Western Galicia.

4. Russia, who had entered with but a lukewarm zeal into the war as an ally of France, had a very moderate share of the spoils of Austria. A portion of Eastern Galicia, with a population of 400,000 souls, was allotted to her, but in this allotment the trading town of Brody (almost the only thing worth having) was specially excepted. This last circumstance gave no small degree of disgust to the Emperor Alexander, whose admiration of Napoleon was not destined to have a long duration.—Editor of 1836 edition.]—

CHAPTER XXI

1809.

The Princess Royal of Denmark—Destruction of the German Empire—Napoleons visit to the Courts of Bavaria and Wurtemberg—His return to France—First mention of the divorce—Intelligence of Napoleon's marriage with Maria Louisa—Napoleon's quarrel with Louis—Journey of the Emperor and Empress into Holland—Refusal of the Hanse Towns to pay the French troops—Decree for burning English merchandise— M. de Vergennes—Plan for turning an inevitable evil to the best account—Fall on the exchange of St Petersburg

About this time I had the pleasure of again seeing the son of the reigning Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, whose arrival in the Hanse Towns was speedily followed by that of his sister, Princess Frederica Charlotte of Mecklenburg, married to the Prince Royal of Denmark, Christian Frederick. In November the Princess arrived at Altona from Copenhagen, the reports circulated respecting her having compelled her husband to separate from her. The history of this Princess, who, though perhaps blamable, was nevertheless much pitied, was the general subject of conversation in the north of Germany at the time I was at Hamburg. The King of Denmark, grieved at the publicity of the separation, wrote a letter on the subject to the Duke of Mecklenburg. In this letter, which I had an opportunity of seeing, the King expressed his regret at not having been able to prevent the scandal; for, on his return from a journey to Kiel, the affair had become so notorious that all attempts at reconciliation were vain. In the meantime it was settled that the Princess was to remain at Altona until something should be decided respecting her future condition.

It was Baron Plessen, the Duke of Mecklenburg's Minister of State, who favoured me with a sight of the King of Denmark's letters. M. Plessen told me, likewise, at the time that the Duke had formed the irrevocable determination of not receiving his daughter. A few days after her arrival the Princess visited Madame de Bourrienne. She invited us to her parties, which were very brilliant, and several times did us the honour of being present at ours. But; unfortunately, the extravagance of her conduct, which was very unsuitable to her situation, soon became the subject of general animadversion.

I mentioned at the close of the last chapter how the promptitude of M. de Champagny brought about the conclusion of the treaty known by the name of the Treaty of Schoenbrunn. Under this the ancient edifice of the German Empire was overthrown, and Francis II. of Germany became Francis I., Emperor of Austria. He, however, could not say, like his namesake of France, 'Tout est perdu fors l'honneur'; for honour was somewhat committed, even had nothing else been lost. But the sacrifices Austria was compelled, to make were great. The territories ceded to France were immediately united into a new general government, under the collective denomination of the Illyrian Provinces. Napoleon thus became master of both sides of the Adriatic, by virtue of his twofold title of Emperor of France and King of Italy. Austria, whose external commerce thus received a check, had no longer any direct communication with the sea. The loss of Fiume, Trieste, and the sea-coast appeared so vast a sacrifice that it was impossible to look forward to the duration of a peace so dearly purchased.

The affair of Staps, perhaps, made Napoleon anxious to hurry away from Schoenbrunn, for he set off before he had ratified the preliminaries of the peace, announcing that he would ratify them at Munich. He proceeded in great haste to Nymphenburg, where he was expected on a visit to the Court of Bavaria. He next visited the King of Wurtemberg, whom he pronounced to be the cleverest sovereign in Europe, and at the end of October he arrived at Fontainebleau. From thence he proceeded on horseback to Paris, and he rode so rapidly that only a single chasseur of his escort could keep up with him, and, attended by this one guard, he entered the court of the Tuileries. While

Napoleon was at Fontainebleau, before his return to Paris, Josephine for the first time heard the divorce mentioned; the idea had occurred to the Emperor's mind while he was at Schoenbrunn. It was also while at Fontainebleau that Napoleon appointed M. de Montalivet to be Minister of the Interior. The letters which we received from Paris at this period brought intelligence of the brilliant state of the capital during the winter of 1809, and especially of the splendour of the Imperial Court, where the Emperor's levees were attended by the Kings of Saxony, Bavaria, and Wurtemberg, all eager to evince their gratitude to the hero who had raised them to the sovereign rank.

I was the first person in Hamburg who received intelligence of Napoleon's projected marriage with the Archduchess Maria Louisa. The news was brought to me from Vienna by two estafettes. It is impossible to describe the effect produced by the anticipation of this event throughout the north of Germany.

—["Napoleon often reflected on the best mode of making this communication to the Empress; still he was reluctant to speak to her. He was apprehensive of the consequences of her susceptibility of feeling; his heart was never proof against the shedding of tears. He thought, however, that a favourable opportunity offered for breaking the subject previously to his quitting Fontainebleau. He hinted at it in a few words which he had addressed to the Empress, but he did not explain himself until the arrival of the viceroy, whom he had ordered to join him. He was the first person who spoke openly to his mother and obtained her consent for that bitter sacrifice. He acted on the occasion like a kind son and a man grateful to his benefactor and devoted to his service, by sparing him the necessity of unpleasant explanations towards a partner whose removal was a sacrifice as painful to him as it was affecting: The Emperor, having arranged whatever related to the future condition of the Empress, upon whom he made a liberal settlement, urged the moment of the dissolution of the marriage, no doubt because he felt grieved at the condition of the Empress herself, who dined every day and passed her evenings in the presence of persons who were witnessing her descent from the throne. There existed between him and the Empress Josephine no other bond than a civil act, according to the custom which prevailed at the time of this marriage. Now the law had foreseen the dissolution of such marriage contracts. A particular day having therefore been fixed upon, the Emperor brought together into his apartments those persons whose ministry was required in this case; amongst others, the Arch-Chancellor and M. Regnault de St. Jean d'Angely. The Emperor then declared in a loud voice his intention of annulling the marriage he had contracted with Josephine, who was present; the Empress also made the same declaration, which was interrupted by her repeated sobs. The Prince Arch-Chancellor having caused the article of the law to be read, he applied it to the case before him, and declared the marriage to be dissolved." (Memoirs of ad Due de Rovigo).]—

From all parts the merchants received orders to buy Austrian stock, in which an extraordinary rise immediately took place. Napoleon's marriage with Maria Louisa was hailed with enthusiastic and general joy. The event was regarded as the guarantee of a long peace, and it was hoped there would be a lasting cessation of the disasters created by the rivalry of France and Austria. The correspondence I received showed that these sentiments were general in the interior of France, and in different countries of Europe; and, in spite of the presentiments I had always had of the return of the Bourbons to France, I now began to think that event problematic, or at least very remote.

About the beginning of the year 1810 commenced the differences between Napoleon and his brother Louis, which, as I have already stated, ended in a complete rupture. Napoleon's object was to make himself master of the navigation of the Scheldt which Louis wished should remain free,

and hence ensued the union of Holland with the French Empire. Holland was the first province of the Grand Empire which Napoleon took the new Empress to visit. This visit took place almost immediately after the marriage. Napoleon first proceeded to Compiègne, where he remained a week. He next set out for St. Quentin, and inspected the canal. The Empress Maria Louisa then joined him, and they both proceeded to Belgium. At Antwerp the Emperor inspected all the works which he had ordered, and to the execution of which he attached great importance. He returned by way of Ostend, Lille, and Normandy to St. Cloud, where he arrived on the 1st of June 1810. He there learned from my correspondence that the Hanse Towns-refused to advance money for the pay of the French troops. The men were absolutely destitute. I declared that it was urgent to put an end to this state of things. The Hanse towns had been reduced from opulence to misery by taxation and exactions, and were no longer able to provide the funds.

During this year Napoleon, in a fit of madness, issued a decree which I cannot characterise by any other epithet than infernal. I allude to the decree for burning all the English merchandise in France, Holland, the Grand Duchy of Berg, the Hanse Towns; in short, in all places subject to the disastrous dominion of Napoleon. In the interior of France no idea could possibly be formed of the desolation caused by this measure in countries which existed by commerce; and what a spectacle was it to, the, destitute inhabitants of those countries to witness the destruction of property which, had it been distributed, would have assuaged their misery!

Among the emigrants whom I was ordered to watch was M. de Vergennes, who had always remained at or near Hamburg Since April 1808. I informed the Minister that M. de Vergennes had presented himself to me at this time. I even remember that M. de Vergennes gave me a letter from M. de Remusat, the First Chamberlain of the Emperor. M. de Remusat strongly recommended to me his connection, who was called by matters of importance to Hamburg. Residence in this town was, however, too expensive, and he decided to live at Neumuhl, a little village on the Elbe, rather to the west of Altona. There he lived quietly in retirement with an opera dancer named Mademoiselle Ledoux, with whom he had become acquainted in Paris, and whom he had brought with him. He seemed much taken with her. His manner of living did not denote large means.

One duty with which I was entrusted, and to which great importance was attached, was the application and execution of the disastrous Continental system in the north. In my correspondence I did not conceal the dissatisfaction which this ruinous measure excited, and the Emperor's eyes were at length opened on the subject by the following circumstance. In spite of the sincerity with which the Danish Government professed to enforce the Continental system, Holstein contained a great quantity of colonial produce; and, notwithstanding the measures of severity, it was necessary that that merchandise should find a market somewhere. The smugglers often succeeded in introducing it into Germany, and the whole would probably soon have passed the custom-house limits. All things considered, I thought it advisable to make the best of an evil that could not be avoided. I therefore proposed that the colonial produce then in Holstein, and which had been imported before the date of the King's edict for its prohibition, should be allowed to enter Hamburg on the payment of 30, and on some articles 40, per cent. This duty was to be collected at the custom-house, and was to be confined entirely to articles consumed in Germany. The colonial produce in Altona, Glückstadt, Husum, and other towns of Holstein, had been estimated, at about 30,000,000 francs, and the duty would amount to 10,000,000 or 12,000,000. The adoption of the plan I proposed would naturally put a stop to smuggling; for it could not be doubted that the merchants would give 30 or 33 per cent for the right of carrying on a lawful trade rather than give 40 per cent. to the smugglers, with the chance of seizure.

The Emperor immediately adopted my idea, for I transmitted my suggestions to the Minister for Foreign Affairs on the 18th of September, and on the 4th of October a decree was issued conformable to the plan I proposed. Within six weeks after the decree came into operation the custom-house Director received 1300 declarations from persons holding colonial produce in Holstein.

It now appeared that the duties would amount to 40,000,000 francs, that is to say, 28,000,000 or 30,000,000 more than my estimate.

Bernadotte had just been nominated Prince Royal of Sweden. This nomination, with all the circumstances connected with it, as well as Bernadotte's residence in Hamburg, before he proceeded to Stockholm, will be particularly noticed in the next chapter. I merely mention the circumstance here to explain some events which took place in the north, and which were, more or less, directly connected with it. For example, in the month of September the course of exchange on St. Petersburg suddenly fell. All the letters which arrived in Hamburg from the capital of Russia and from Riga, attributed the fall to the election of the Prince of Ponte-Corvo as Prince Royal of Sweden. Of thirty letters which I received there was not one but described the consternation which the event had created in St. Petersburg. This consternation, however, might have been excited less by the choice of Sweden than by the fear that that choice was influenced by the French Government.

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