The Private Life of Napoleon, V9

Constant

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RECOLLECTIONS OF THE PRIVATE LIFE OF NAPOLEON, V9
BY CONSTANT
PREMIER VALET DE CHAMBRE

TRANSLATED BY WALTER CLARK

CHAPTER I.

In September, 1811, the Emperor decided to make a journey into Flanders in company with the , Empress, that he might personally ascertain if his orders had been carried out in all matters concerning both the civil and religious administration. Their Majesties left Compiegne on the 19th, and arrived at Montreuil−sur−Mer at nine o'clock in the evening. I accompanied the Emperor on this journey. I have read in O'Meara's Memorial that M. Marchand was at that time in the service of Napoleon. This is incorrect; for M. Marchand did not enter the Emperor's private service until 1814, at Fontainebleau. His Majesty at that time ordered me to select from the domestics of the service an intelligent young man to assist me in my duties near his person, since none of the ordinary 'valets de chambre' were to remain on the island of Elba. I mentioned the name of M. Marchand, son of a nurse of the King of Rome, as a suitable person for the place. He was accepted by his Majesty, and from that time M. Marchand formed a part of the private service of the Emperor. He may have been on this journey to Holland; but Napoleon was not aware of it, as his duties did not bring him near his Majesty's person.

I will now relate some of the circumstances which occurred on this journey, and are not generally known to the public, and at the same time take advantage of the opportunity to refute other assertions similar to those I have just mentioned, and which I have read with surprise, sometimes mixed with indignation, in the Contemporary Memoirs. I deem it important that the public should have correct information as to everything pertaining to this journey, in order that light may thus be thrown on certain incidents, by means of which calumny has attacked the honor of Napoleon, and even my own. A devoted though humble servant of the Emperor, it is natural that I should be deeply interested in explaining all that seems doubtful, in refuting all falsehoods, and in giving minute corrections of many incorrect statements which might influence the judgment of the public concerning my master and myself. I shall fulfil this duty with perfect frankness, as I have sufficiently proved in the foregoing volumes of these Memoirs.

A little incident occurred at Montreuil, which I take pleasure in narrating, since it proves how carefully Napoleon examined both the fortifications and improvements being made in the towns, either by his personal orders, or from the impulse given by him to these important departments of public service. After investigating the work done in the past year on the fortifications of Montreuil, and having made a tour of all the ramparts, the Emperor returned to the citadel, whence he again emerged to visit the exterior works. An arm of the river Canche, which lies at the foot of the wall on one side of the city, intercepted his route. The whole suite set to work to construct a temporary bridge of planks and logs; but the Emperor, impatient at the delay, walked through the stream in water up to his knees. The owner of a mill on the opposite shore took his Majesty by the arm to assist him in mounting the bank, and profited by this opportunity to explain to the Emperor that his mill, being in the line of the projected fortifications, would necessarily be torn down; whereupon the Emperor turned to the engineers and said, "This brave man must be indemnified for any loss he may sustain." He then continued his rounds, and did not re−enter his carriage until he had examined everything at leisure, and held a long interview with the civil and military authorities of Montreuil. On the route a soldier who had been wounded at Ratisbon was presented to him; and his Majesty ordered that a present should be made him on the spot, and that his petition should be presented to him on his arrival at Boulogne on the 20th.

This was the second time Boulogne had received the Emperor within its walls. Immediately on his arrival he went on board the flotilla and held a review. As an English frigate was evidently preparing to approach in order to observe more closely what was taking place in the roadstead, his Majesty immediately sent out a French frigate under full sail against the hostile ship, whereupon the latter, taking the alarm, at once disappeared. On the 29th of September his Majesty reached Flushing, and from Flushing went to visit the fortifications at Tervueren. As he was overlooking the various works at that place, a young woman threw herself at his feet, her cheeks wet with tears, .and extended a petition to the Emperor with a trembling hand. Napoleon most graciously assisted her to rise, and inquired the object of her petition. "Sire," said the poor woman between her sobs, « I am the mother of three children, whose father is conscripted by your Majesty; the children and the mother are in the deepest distress."−−"Monsieur," said his Majesty to some one of his suite, "make a note of this man's name; I will make him an officer." The young woman tried to express her gratitude, but her emotion and tears prevented the

utterance of a word, and the Emperor went on his way.

Another kind act marked his departure from Ostend. On leaving that town he followed the course of the Estrau, and as he did not care to pass through the locks, in order to cross the Swine, entered a fishing−boat in company with the Duke of Vicenza, his grand equerry, Count Lobau, one of his aides−de−camp, and two chasseurs of the guard. This boat, which was owned by two poor fishermen, was worth only about one hundred and fifty florins, including its equipment, and was their only source of wealth. The crossing required about half an hour, and his Majesty alighted at Fort Orange, on the island of Cadsand, where the prefect with his suite awaited him; and as he was wet and suffering with the cold, a large fire was kindled, by which he warmed himself with evident enjoyment. The fishermen were then asked how much they charged for the passage, and upon their replying a florin for each passenger, Napoleon ordered that a hundred napoleons should be counted out to them, and they should be granted a pension of three hundred francs for life. It is impossible to give an idea of the joyful surprise of these poor men, who had not in the least suspected the exalted rank of their passenger; but no sooner were they informed than the whole country was told, and thus many hearts were won for Napoleon; while at the same time the Empress Marie Louise was being welcomed on his account at the theater, and whenever she appeared on the streets, with sincere and vociferous applause.

Preparations had been made everywhere in Holland two months before the arrival of their Majesties, in order that they might be suitably received; and there was no village on the Emperor's route so small that it was not eager to earn his approbation by the proportional magnificence of the welcome accorded his Majesty. Almost the whole court of France accompanied him on this journey, and grand dignitaries, ladies of honor, superior officers, aides−de−camp, chamberlains, equerries, ladies of attire, quartermasters, valets de chambre, regulators of soldiers' quarters, the kitchen service−−nothing was wanting. Napoleon intended to dazzle the eyes of the good Dutchmen by the magnificence of his court; and, in truth, his gracious manner, his affability, and the recital of the numerous benefits he scattered around his path, had already had their effect in conquering this population, in spite of the frowning brows of a few, who, as they smoked their pipes, murmured against the impediments to commerce caused by the Continental system.

The city of Amsterdam, where the Emperor had decided to remain some time, found itself suddenly in a condition of peculiar embarrassment, owing to the following circumstance: This town had a very extensive palace, but no coaches nor stables attached to them, which for the suite of Napoleon was a prime necessity; and the stables of King Louis, besides their insufficiency, were placed too far from the palace to be occupied by even a portion of the Emperor's service. Consequently there was great embarrassment in the city, and much difficulty was experienced in quartering the Emperor's horses; since to improvise stables in a few days, almost in a moment, was impossible, and to build carriage−houses in the midst of courts would have had a ludicrous effect. But fortunately this difficult situation was ended by one of the quartermasters of the palace named M. Emery, a man of great intelligence, and an old soldier, who, having learned from Napoleon and the force of circumstances never to be overcome by difficulties, conceived the happy thought of converting the flower−market into stables and coach−houses, and placing the equipages of the Emperor there under immense tents.

The Emperor at last rejoined his august spouse at Brussels, where the enthusiasm excited by his presence was unanimous. On a suggestion from him, which was as delicate as politic, Marie Louise during her stay bought laces to the value of one hundred and fifty thousand francs, in order to encourage the manufacturers. The introduction into France of English merchandise was at that time severely prohibited, and all that was found was indiscriminately burned.

Of the whole system of offensive policy maintained by Napoleon against the maritime tyranny of England, nothing more nearly aroused open opposition than the vigorous observance of prohibitory decrees. Belgium then contained a quantity of English merchandise, which was most carefully concealed, and which every one was anxious to obtain, as is ever the case with forbidden fruit. All the ladies in the suite of the Empress made large purchases of these articles; and one even filled several carriages with them, not without fear, however, that Napoleon might be informed of this, and might seize everything on its arrival in France. These carriages, bearing the arms of the Emperor, passed the Rhine filled with this precious luggage, and arrived at the gates of Coblentz, which furnished an occasion of painful uncertainty to the officers of the custom−house, while they deliberated whether they should arrest and examine the carriages, or should permit a convoy to pass unmolested because it professed to belong to the Emperor. After mature deliberation, the majority adopted this alternative; and the

carriages successfully passed the first line of French custom−houses, and reached port in safety,−−that is to say, Paris,−−with its cargo of prohibited merchandise. If the carriages had been stopped, it is probable that Napoleon would have highly applauded the courage of the inspectors of customs, and would have pitilessly burned the confiscated articles.

Their Majesties arrived at Utrecht the 6th of October, and found every house on the quays as well as the streets decorated with ribbons and garlands. The rain was falling in torrents; but this did not prevent the authorities being on foot from early in the morning, and the population filling the streets. As soon as he alighted from his carriage, Napoleon, in spite of the weather, mounted his horse, and went to hold a review of several regiments stationed at the gates of Utrecht, accompanied by a numerous staff, and a large number of curious persons, most of them wet to the skin. After the review Napoleon entered the palace, where the entire deputation awaited him in an immense hall, still unfurnished, though it had been built by King Louis, and without changing his clothing gave audience to all who were eager to congratulate him, and listened with most exemplary patience to the harangues addressed to him.

The entrance of their Majesties into Amsterdam was most brilliant. The Empress, in a chariot drawn by splendid horses, was a few hours in advance of the Emperor, who made his entry on horseback, surrounded by a brilliant staff, glittering with gold and embroideries, who advanced at a slow pace amid shouts of admiration and astonishment from the good Hollanders. Through his simple and unaffected bearing there shone a profound satisfaction, and perhaps even a natural sentiment of pride, in seeing the welcome accorded to his glory here as elsewhere, and the universal sympathy aroused in the masses by his presence alone. Drapery in three colors, which produced a very fine effect, hung from posts erected at regular intervals and formed the decoration of the streets through which his Majesty was to pass; and he who three years later was to enter the palace of the Tuileries by night, and as a fugitive, after having with much difficulty gained admission through the gates of the chateau, passed then under arches of triumph, with a glory yet unsullied by defeat, and a fortune still faithful. These reminiscences are painful to me, but they recur to my mind even against my will; for no year of the Empire was marked by more fetes, more triumphant entries, or more popular rejoicings, than that which preceded the disastrous year of 1812.

Some of the actors of the French Theater at Paris had accompanied the court to Holland, and Talma there played the roles of Bayard and d'Orosmane; and M. Alissan de Chazet directed at Amsterdam the performance by French comedians of a vaudeville in honor of their Majesties, the title of which I have forgotten. Here, again, I wish to refute another assertion no less false made by the author of these 'Contemporary Memoirs', concerning a fictitious liaison between the Emperor and Mademoiselle Bourgoin. I cite the passage in question: "Mademoiselle Bourgoin, one of the delegates from the court of Thalia, in order to be permitted to accompany the party on this journey, had thoughtlessly succumbed to the temptation of making indiscreet revelations; even boasting aloud that she attracted the Emperor to the theater in which she played; and these boasts, which were by no means virtuous, having reached the Emperor's ears, he would no longer attend the theater. He charged Talma, for whom he had much consideration, to urge the pretty actress to be silent; and to inform her that on the slightest indiscretion she would be reconducted to France under good escort."

This by no means agrees with what his Majesty said one day in regard to this actress while at Erfurt. These words, which the author of the Memoirs would do well to recall, prove that the Emperor had no views in regard to her; and the most important proof of all, is the great discretion which the Emperor always exercised in regard to his amours.

During the entire passage through Holland, the Emperor showed himself cordial and affable, welcoming every one most kindly, and accosting each in a suitable manner, and at no time was he ever more amiable or anxious to please. He visited the manufactures, inspected dock−yards, reviewed troops, addressed the sailors, and attended the ball's given in his honor in all the towns through which he passed; and amid this life of seeming pleasure and distraction, he exerted himself almost more than in the quiet, monotonous life of the camp, and was affable, gracious, and accessible to all his subjects. But in these processions, in the very midst of these fetes, amid all this acclamation of whole cities rushing out to meet him, eager to serve as his escort, under these arches of triumph which were erected to him sometimes even at the entrance of an obscure village, his abstraction was deeper than ever, and his heart more oppressed with care; for his thoughts were from this time filled with the expedition to Russia. And perhaps into this amenity of manner, this friendliness, and these acts of benevolence, most of which

were foreign to his character, there entered the design of lessening in advance the discontent which this expedition would produce; and perhaps in attaching all hearts to himself, in exhausting every means of pleasing, he imagined he was obtaining pardon in advance, by means of the enthusiasm of his subjects, for a war which, whatever might be the result, was to cost the Empire so much blood and so many tears.

During their Majesties' stay at Amsterdam, there was placed in the apartments of the Empress a piano so constructed as to appear like a desk with a division in the middle, and in this space was placed a small bust of the Emperor of Russia. Soon after, the Emperor wished to see if the apartments of the Empress were suitable, and while visiting them perceived this bust, which he placed under his arm without a word. He afterwards said to one of the ladies of the Empress, that he wished this bust removed; and he was obeyed, though this caused considerable astonishment, as it was not then known that any coolness had arisen between the two Emperors.

A few days after his arrival at Amsterdam, the Emperor made several excursions into the country, accompanied by a somewhat numerous suite. He visited at Saardam the thatched cottage which sheltered Peter the Great when he came to Holland under the name of Pierre Michaeloff to study ship−building; and after remaining there half an hour, the Emperor, as he left, remarked to the grand marshal of the palace. "That is the finest monument in Holland." The evening before, her Majesty the Empress had visited the village of Broek, which is the pride of the whole north of Holland. Almost all the houses of the village are built of wood, and are of one story, the fronts ornamented with numerous paintings in accordance with the caprice of the owners. These paintings are cared for most zealously, and preserved in a state of perfect freshness. Through the windows of clearest glass are seen curtains of embroidered China silk, and of painted muslin and beautiful India stuffs. The streets are paved with brick and very clean, and are washed and rubbed daily, and covered with fine white sand, in which various figures are imitated, especially flowers. Placards at the end of each street forbid the entrance of carriages into the village, the houses of which resemble children's toys. The cattle are cared for by hirelings at some distance from the town; and there is, outside the village, an inn for strangers, for they are not permitted to lodge inside. In front of some houses I remarked either a grass plot or an arrangement of colored sand and shells, sometimes little painted wooden statues, sometimes hedges oddly cut. Even the vessels and broom−handles were painted various colors, and cared for like the remainder of the establishment; the inhabitants carrying their love of cleanliness so far as to compel those who entered to take off their shoes, and replace them with slippers, which stood at the door for this singular purpose. I am reminded on this subject of an anecdote relating to the Emperor Joseph the Second. That prince, having presented himself in boots at the door of a house in Broek, and being requested to remove them before entering, exclaimed, "I am the Emperor!" −−"Even if you were the burgomaster of Amsterdam, you should not enter in boots," replied the master of the dwelling. The good Emperor thereupon put on the slippers.

During the journey to Holland their Majesties were informed that the first tooth of the King of Rome had just made its appearance, and that the health of this august child was not impaired thereby.

In one of the little towns in the north of Holland, the authorities requested the Emperor's permission to present to him an old man aged one hundred and one years, and he ordered him brought before him. This more than centenarian was still vigorous, and had served formerly in the guards of the Stadtholder; he presented a petition entreating the Emperor to exempt from conscription one of his grandsons, the support of his old age. His Majesty assured him, through an interpreter, that he would not deprive him of his grandson, and Marshal Duroc was ordered to leave with the old man a testimonial of Imperial liberality. In another little town in Friesland, the authorities made the Emperor this singular address: "Sire, we were afraid you would come with the whole court; you are almost alone, and thereby we see you the better, and the more at our ease." The Emperor applauded this loyal compliment, and honored the orator by most touching thanks. After this long journey, passed in fetes, reviews, and displays of all kinds, where the Emperor, under the guise of being entertained, had made profound observations on the moral, commercial, and military situation of Holland, observations which bore fruit after his return to Paris, and even while in the country, in wise and useful decrees, their Majesties left Holland, passing through Haarlem, The Hague, and Rotterdam, where they were welcomed, as they had been in the whole of Holland, by fetes. They crossed the Rhine, visited Cologne and Aix−la−Chapelle, and arrived at Saint−Cloud early in November, 1811.

CHAPTER II.

Marie Louis was a very handsome woman. She had a majestic figure and noble bearing, fresh complexion, blond hair, and blue eyes full of expression; her hands and feet were the admiration of the court. Her figure was, perhaps, a trifle too stout; but she lost some of this superfluous flesh during her stay in France, though thereby she gained as much in grace and beauty. Such was her appearance. In her intercourse with those immediately around her she was affable and cordial; and the enjoyment she felt in the freedom of these conversations was depicted on her countenance, which grew animated, and took on an infinite grace. But when she was obliged to appear in public she became extremely timid; formal society served of itself to isolate her; and as persons who are not naturally haughty always appear so with a poor grace, Marie Louise, being always much embarrassed on reception days, was often the subject of unjust criticism; for, as I have said, her coldness in reality arose from an excessive timidity.

Immediately after her arrival in France, Marie Louise suffered from this embarrassment to a very great degree, which can be easily understood in a young princess who found herself so suddenly transported into an entirely new society, to whose habits and tastes she felt obliged to conform, and in which, although her high position must naturally attract the world to her, the circumstances of this position rendered it necessary that she should take the initiative in any advances made, a fact which explains the awkwardness of her early relations with the ladies of her court. After intimacies had been formed, and the young Empress had chosen her friends with all the abandon of her young heart, then haughtiness and constraint vanished, or reappeared only on occasions of ceremony. Marie Louise was of a calm, thoughtful character; it took little to arouse her sensitive spirit; and yet, although easily moved, she was by no means demonstrative. The Empress had received a very careful education, her mind was cultivated and her tastes very simple, and she possessed every accomplishment.

She detested the insipid hours passed in idleness, and liked occupation because it suited her tastes, and also because in a proper employment of her time she found the only means of driving away ennui. I think she was, in fact, a most congenial wife for the Emperor. She was too much interested in the concerns of her own private life to ever mingle in political intrigues, and, although she was both Empress and Queen, very often was in entire ignorance of public affairs, except what knowledge she obtained from the journals. The Emperor at the end of days filled with agitation could find a little relaxation only in a quiet domestic hearth, which restored to him the happiness of family life; and, consequently, an intriguing woman or a talkative politician would have annoyed him exceedingly.

Nevertheless, the Emperor sometimes complained of the want of affability the Empress showed to the ladies of her court, and said that this excessive reserve was injurious to him in a country where the opposite extreme is most common.

This was because he was recalling the past somewhat, and thinking of the Empress Josephine, whose constant gayety was the chief charm of the court. He was necessarily struck by the contrast; but was there not some injustice at the foundation of this? The Empress Marie Louise was the daughter of an Emperor, and had seen and known only courtiers, and, having no acquaintance with any other class, knew nothing of any world outside the walls of the palace of Vienna. She arrived one fine day at the Tuileries, in the midst of a people whom she had never seen except as soldiers; and on this account the constraint of her manner towards the persons composing the brilliant society of Paris seems to me to a certain point excusable. It seems to me, besides, that the Empress was expected to show a frankness and simplicity which were entirely misplaced; and, by being cautioned over and over again to be natural, she was prevented from the observance of that formality also suitable on the part of the great, who should be approached only when they themselves give the signal. The Empress Josephine loved the people because she had been one of them; and in mounting a throne her expansive nature had everything to gain, for she found it was only extending her friendship among a larger circle. Inspired by her own kind heart, the Empress Marie Louise sought to make those around her happy; and her benevolent deeds were long the subject of conversation, and, above all, the delicate manner in which they were performed. Each month she took from the sum allotted for her toilet ten thousand francs for the poor, which was not the limit of her charities; for she always welcomed with the greatest interest those who came to tell her of distresses to be alleviated. From the eagerness

with which she listened to those soliciting aid, it would seem that she had been recalled suddenly to a duty; and yet it was simply an evidence that the chords of her sensitive heart had been touched. I do not know if any one ever received from her a refusal of a demand of this sort. The Emperor was deeply touched each time that he was informed of a benevolent act of the Empress. At eight o'clock in the morning the curtains and blinds were half opened in the apartments of the Empress Marie Louise, and the papers were handed her; after reading which, chocolate or coffee was served, with a kind of pastry called tongue. This first breakfast she took in bed. At nine o'clock Marie Louise arose, made her morning toilet, and received those persons privileged to attend at this hour. Every day in the Emperor's absence, the Empress ascended to the apartment of Madame de Montebello, her lady of honor, followed by her service, composed of the chevalier of honor, and some of the ladies of the palace; and on her return to her apartments, a light breakfast was served, consisting of pastry and fruits. After her lessons in drawing, painting, and music, she commenced her grand toilet. Between six and seven o'clock she dined with the Emperor, or in his absence with Madame de Montebello, the dinner comprising only one course. The evening was spent in receptions, or at concerts, plays, etc.; and the Empress retired at eleven o'clock. One of her women always slept in the room in front of her bedroom, and it was through this the Emperor was obliged to pass when he spent the night in his wife's room.

This customary routine of the Empress was changed, however, when the Emperor was at the chateau; but when alone she was punctual in all her employments, and did exactly the same things at the same hours. Her personal domestics seemed much attached to her; for though cool and distant in her manner, they always found her good and just.

In the Emperor's absence the portrait of the Duchess of Montebello ornamented the Empress's room with those of the entire Imperial family of Austria; but when the Emperor returned, the portrait of the duchess was removed; and during the war between Napoleon and the Emperors of Austria and Russia, the portrait of Francis II. was removed from his daughter's room, by order of his Majesty, and was, I think, consigned to some secret spot.

The King of Rome was a very fine child; and though he resembled the Emperor less than the son of Hortense had done, his features were an agreeable union of those of his father and mother. I never knew him except in his infancy, and what was most remarkable in him at that age was the great kindness and affection he showed to those around him. He was much devoted to a young and pretty person named Fanny Soufflot, daughter of the first lady of the bedchamber, who was his constant companion; and, as he liked to see her always well dressed, he begged of Marie Louise, or his governess, Madame the Countess of Montesquiou, any finery that struck his fancy, which he wished to give to his young friend. He made her promise to follow him to the war when he was grown, and said many charming things which showed his affectionate disposition.

There was chosen as companion for the little king (as he styled himself) a young child named Albert Froment, I think, the son of one of the ladies of honor. One morning as they were playing together in the garden on which the apartments of the king opened at Saint−Cloud, Mademoiselle Fanny was watching them without interfering with their games, Albert tried to take the king's wheelbarrow; and, when the latter resisted, Albert struck him, whereupon the king exclaimed, "Oh, suppose some one had seen you! But I will not tell!" I consider this a fine evidence of character.

One day he was at the windows of the chateau with his governess, amusing himself by looking at the passers−by, and pointing out with his finger those who attracted his attention. While standing there he saw below a woman in deep mourning, holding by the hand a little boy also dressed in mourning. The little child carried a petition, which he waved from a distance to the prince, and seemed to be entreating him to receive. Their black clothing made a deep impression on the prince, and he asked why the poor child was dressed all in black. " Doubtless because his papa is dead," replied the governess, whereupon the child expressed an earnest desire to speak to the little petitioner. Madame de Montesquiou, who especially desired to cultivate in her young pupil this disposition to mercy, gave orders that the mother and child should be brought up. She proved to be the widow of a brave man who had lost his life in the last campaign; and by his death she had been reduced to poverty, and compelled to solicit a pension from the Emperor. The young prince took the petition, and promised to present it to his papa. And next day when he went as usual to pay his respects to his father, and handed him all the petitions presented to him the evening before, one alone was kept apart; it was that of his little protege. "Papa," said he, "here is a petition from a little boy whose father was killed on your account; give him a pension." Napoleon was deeply moved, and embraced his son, and orders for the pension were given that day. This conduct in so young a

child gives undeniable evidence of an excellent heart.

His early training was excellent; as Madame de Montesquiou had an unbounded influence over him, owing to the manner at once gentle and grave in which she corrected his faults. The child was generally docile, but, nevertheless, sometimes had violent fits of anger, which his governess had adopted an excellent means of correcting, which was to remain perfectly unmoved until he himself controlled his fury. When the child returned to himself, a few severe and pertinent remarks transformed him into a little Cato for the remainder of the day. One day as he was rolling on the floor refusing to listen to the remonstrances of his governess, she closed tie windows and shutters; and the child, astonished by this performance, forgot what had enraged him, and asked her why she did this. "I did it because I was afraid you would be heard; do you suppose the French people would want you as their prince, if they knew that you gave way to such fits of anger?"−−"Do you think they heard me?" he inquired; "I would be very sorry if they had. Pardon, Mamma Quiou [this was his name for her], I will not do it again."

The Emperor was passionately devoted to his son; took him in his arms every time he saw him, and jumped him up and down most merrily, and was delighted with the joy he manifested. He teased him by carrying him in front of the glass and making grimaces, at which the child laughed till he cried. While at breakfast he took him on his knee, dipped his finger in the sauce and made him suck it, and smeared his face with it; and when the governess scolded, the Emperor laughed still more heartily, and the child, who enjoyed the sport, begged his father to repeat it. This was an opportune moment for the arrival of petitions at the chateau; for they were always well received at such times, thanks to the all−powerful credit of the little mediator.

The Emperor in his tender moods was sometimes even more childish than his son. The young prince was only four months old when his father put his three−cornered hat on the pretty infant.

The child usually cried a good deal, and at these times the Emperor embraced him with an ardor and delight which none but a tender father could feel, saying to him,

"What, Sire, you crying! A king weeping; fie, then, how ugly that is!" He was just a year old when I saw the Emperor, on the lawn in front of the chateau, place his sword−belt over the shoulders of the king, and his hat on his head, and holding out his arms to the child, who tottered to him, his little feet now and then entangled in his father's sword; and it was beautiful to see the eagerness with which the Emperor extended his arms to keep him from falling.

One day in his cabinet the Emperor was lying on the floor, the king riding horseback on his knee, mounting by jumps up to his father's face, and kissing him. On another occasion the child entered the council chamber after the meeting had ended, and ran into his father's arms without paying attention to any one else, upon which the Emperor said to him, "Sire, you have not saluted these gentlemen." The child turned, bowed most gracefully, and his father then took him in his arms. Sometimes when going to visit the Emperor, he ran so fast that he left Madame de Montesquiou far behind, and said to the usher, "Open the door for me, I want to see papa." The usher replied, "Sire, I cannot do it." −−"But I am the little king."−−"No, Sire, I cannot open it." At this moment his governess appeared; and strong in her protection he proudly repeated, "Open the door, the king desires it."

Madame de Montesquiou had added to the prayers which the child repeated morning and evening, these words: "My God, inspire papa to make peace for the happiness of France." One evening the Emperor was present when his son was retiring, and he made the same prayer, whereupon the Emperor embraced him in silence, smiling most kindly on Madame de Montesquiou.

The Emperor was accustomed to say to the King of Rome when he was frightened at any noise or at his grimaces, "Come, come! a king should have no fear."

I recall another anecdote concerning the young son of the Emperor, which was related to me by his Majesty himself one evening when I was undressing him as usual, and at which the Emperor laughed most heartily. "You would not believe," said he, "the singular reward my son desired of his governess for being good. Would she not allow him to go and wade in the mud?" This was, true, and proves, it seems to me, that the greatness which surrounds the cradle of princes cannot eradicate from their minds the singular caprices of childhood.

CHAPTER III.

All the world is familiar with the name of the Abbe Geoffroy of satirical memory, who drove the most popular actors and authors of the time to desperation. This pitiless Aristarchus must have been most ardently enamored of this disagreeable profession; for he sometimes endangered thereby, not his life, which many persons would have desired earnestly perhaps, but at any rate his health and his repose. It is well, doubtless, to attack those who can reply with the pen, as then the consequences of the encounter do not reach beyond the ridicule which is often the portion of both adversaries. But Abbe Geoffroy fulfilled only one of the two conditions by virtue of which one can criticise,−−he had much bitterness in his pen, but he was not a man of the sword; and every one knows that there are persons whom it is necessary to attack with both these weapons.

An actor whom Geoffroy had not exactly flattered in his criticisms decided to avenge himself in a piquant style, and one at which he could laugh long and loud. One evening, foreseeing what would appear in the journal of the next day, he could think of nothing better than to carry off Geoffroy as he was returning from the theater, and conduct him with bandaged eyes to a house where a schoolboy's punishment would be inflicted on this man who considered himself a master in the art of writing.

This plan was carried out. Just as the abbe regained his lodging, rubbing his hands perhaps as he thought of some fine point for tomorrow's paper, three or four vigorous fellows seized him, and conveyed him without a word to the place of punishment; and some time later that evening, the abbe, well flogged, opened his eyes in the middle of the street, to find himself alone far from his dwelling. The Emperor, when told of this ludicrous affair, was not at all amused, but, on the contrary, became very angry, and said that if he knew the authors of this outrage, he would have them punished. "When a man attacks with the pen," he added, he should be answered with the same weapon." The truth is also that the Emperor was much attached to M. Geoffroy, whose writings he did not wish submitted to censure like those of other journalist. It was said in Paris that this predilection of a great man for a caustic critic came from the fact that these contributions to the Journal of the Empire, which attracted much attention at this period, were a useful diversion to the minds of the capital. I know nothing positively in regard to this; but when I reflect on the character of the Emperor, who wished no one to occupy themselves with his political affairs, these opinions seem to me not devoid of foundation.

Doctor Corvisart was not a courtier, and came rarely to the Emperor, except on his regular visit each Wednesday and Saturday. He was very candid with the Emperor, insisted positively that his directions should be obeyed to the letter, and made full use of the right accorded to physicians to scold their negligent patient. The Emperor was especially fond of him, and always detained him, seeming to find much pleasure in his conversation.

After the journey to Holland in 1811, M. Corvisart came to see the Emperor one Saturday, and found him in good health. He left him after the toilet, and immediately went to enjoy the pleasures of the chase, of which he was exceedingly fond. He was in the habit of not announcing where he was going, solely in order that he might not be interrupted for some slight cause, as had happened to him sometimes, for the doctor was most obliging and considerate. That day after his breakfast, which, according to custom, he had devoured rapidly, the Emperor was taken suddenly with a violent colic, and was quite ill. He asked for M. Corvisart, and a courier was dispatched for him, who, not finding him in Paris, hastened to his country house; but the doctor was at the chase, no one knew where, so the courier was obliged to return without him. The Emperor was deeply vexed, and as he continued to suffer extremely, at last went to bed, and Marie Louise came and spent a few moments with him; at last M. Yvan was summoned, and administered remedies which soon relieved the Emperor.

M. Corvisart, somewhat anxious perhaps, came on Monday instead of Wednesday; and when he entered Napoleon's room, the latter, who was in his dressing−gown, ran to him, and taking him by both ears, said, "Well, Monsieur, it seems that if I were seriously ill, I should have to dispense with your services." M. Corvisart excused himself, asked the Emperor how he had been affected, what remedies he had used, and promised always to leave word where he could be found, in order that he might be summoned immediately on his Majesty's orders, and the Emperor was soon appeased. This event was really of advantage to the doctor; for he thus abandoned a bad habit, at which it is probable his patients rejoiced.

M. Corvisart had a very great influence with the Emperor, so much so that many persons who knew him gave

him the soubriquet of doctor of petitions; and it was very rarely he failed to obtain a favorable answer to his requests. Nevertheless, I often heard him speak warmly in favor of M. de Bourrienne, in order to impress upon the Emperor's mind that he was much attached to his Majesty; but the latter always replied, "No, Bourrienne is too much of an Englishman; and besides, he is doing very well; I have located him at Hamburg. He loves money, and he can make it there."

It was during the year 1811 that Cardinal Fesch came most frequently to the Emperor's apartments, and their discussions seemed to me very animated. The cardinal maintained his opinions most vehemently, speaking in a very loud tone and with great volubility. These conversations did not last more than five moments before they became very bitter, and I heard the Emperor raise his voice to the same pitch; then followed an exchange of harsh terms, and each time the cardinal arrived I felt distressed for the Emperor, who was always much agitated at the close of these interviews. One day as the cardinal was taking leave of the Emperor, I heard the latter say to him sharply, "Cardinal, you take advantage of your position."

A few days before our departure for Russia the Emperor had me summoned during the day, and ordered me to bring from the treasury the box of diamonds, and place it in his room, and not to go far away, as he had some important business for me. About nine o'clock in the evening I was again summoned, and found M. de Lavalette, director−general of the post, in the Emperor's room. His Majesty opened the box in my presence, and examined the contents, saying to me, "Constant, carry this box yourself to the count's carriage, and remain there till he arrives." The carriage was standing at the foot of the grand staircase in the court of the Tuileries; and I opened it, took my seat, and waited until half−past eleven, when M. de Lavalette arrived, having spent all this time in conversation with the Emperor. I could not understand these precautions in delivering the diamonds to M. de Lavalette, but they were certainly not without a motive.

The box contained the sword, on the pommel of which was mounted the regent diamond, the handle also set with diamonds of great value; the grand collar of the Legion of Honor; the ornaments, hatcord, shoulder− piece, and buttons of the coronation robes, with the shoe−buckles and garters, all of which were of immense value.

A short time before we set out for the Russian campaign, Josephine sent for me, and I went at once to Malmaison, where this excellent woman renewed her earnest recommendations to watch most carefully over the Emperor's health and safety; and made me promise that if any accident, however slight, happened to him, I would write to her, as she was exceedingly anxious to know the real truth concerning him. She wept much; talked to me constantly about the Emperor, and after a conversation of more than an hour, in which she gave full vent to her emotions, presented me with her portrait painted by Saint on a gold snuff−box. I felt much depressed by this interview; for nothing could be more touching than to see this woman disgraced, but still loving, entreating my care over the man who had abandoned her, and manifesting the same affectionate interest in him which the most beloved wife would have done.

On entering Russia, a thing of which I speak here more according to the order of my reminiscences than in the order of time, the Emperor sent out, on three different roads, details of select police to prepare in advance lodgings, beds, supplies, etc. These officers were Messieurs Sarrazin, adjutant−lieutenant, Verges, Molene, and Lieutenant Pachot. I will devote farther on an entire chapter to our itinerary from Paris to Moscow.

A short time before the battle of La Moskwa, a man was brought to the camp dressed in the Russian uniform, but speaking French; at least his language was a singular mixture of French and Russian. This man had escaped secretly from the enemy's lines; and when he perceived that our soldiers were only a short distance from him, had thrown his gun on the ground, crying in a very strong Russian accent, "I am French," and our soldiers had at once taken him prisoner.

Never was prisoner more charmed with his change of abode. This poor fellow, who seemed to have been forced to take arms against his will in the service of the enemies of his country, arrived at the French camp, called himself the happiest of men in finding again his fellow− countrymen, and pressed the hand of all the soldiers with an ardor which delighted them. He was brought to the Emperor, and appeared much over− awed at finding himself in the presence of the King of the French, as he called his Majesty. The Emperor questioned him closely, and in his reply he declared that the noise of the French cannon had always made his heart beat; and that he had feared only one thing, which was that he might be killed by his compatriots. From what he told the Emperor it appeared that he belonged to that numerous class of men who find themselves transplanted by their family to a foreign land, without really knowing the cause of their emigration. His father had pursued at Moscow an

unremunerative industrial profession, and had died leaving him without resources for the future, and, in order to earn his bread, he had become a soldier. He said that the Russian military discipline was one of his strongest incentives to desert, adding that he had strong arms and a brave heart, and would serve in the French army if the general permitted. His frankness pleased the Emperor, and he endeavored to obtain from him some positive information on the state of the public mind at Moscow; and ascertained from his revelations, more or less intelligent, that there was much disturbance in that ancient capital.

He said that in the street could be heard cries of, "No more of Barclay!

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--[Prince Michael Barclay de Tolly, born in Livonia, 1755, of
Scottish extraction; distinguished himself in wars against Sweden,
Turkey, and Poland, 1788 and 1794, and against the French, 1806;
commanded Russian army against Napoleon in 1812, until superseded,
after battle of Smolensk, by Kutusoff, and commanded the right wing
at Borodino; afterwards commanded at Bautzen and Leipsic; died
1818]--
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Down with the traitor! dismiss him! Long live Kutusoff!" The merchant class, which possessed great influence on account of its wealth, complained of a system of temporizing which left men in uncertainty, and compromised the honor of the Russian arms; and it was thought unpardonable in the Emperor that he had bestowed his confidence on a foreigner when old Kutusoff, with the blood and the heart of a Russian, was given a secondary position. The Emperor Alexander had paid little attention to these energetic complaints, until at last, frightened by the symptoms of insurrection which began to be manifest in the army, he had yielded, and Kutusoff had been named generalissimo, over which important event there had been rejoicings and illuminations at Moscow. A great battle with the French was talked of; enthusiasm was at its height in the Russian army, and every soldier had fastened to his cap a green branch. The prisoner spoke with awe of Kutusoff, and said that he was an old man, with white hair and great mustaches, and eyes that struck him with terror; that he lacked much of dressing like the French generals; that he wore very ordinary clothes--he who could have such fine ones; that he roared like a lion when he was angry; that he never started on a march without saying his prayers; and that he crossed himself frequently at different hours of the day. "The soldiers love him because they say he so much resembles Suwarrow. I am afraid he will do the French much harm," said he. The Emperor, satisfied with this information, dismissed the prisoner, and gave orders that he should be allowed the freedom of the camp; and afterwards he fought bravely beside our soldiers. The Emperor made his entrance into Gjatsk with a most singular escort.

Some Cossacks had been taken in a skirmish; and his Majesty, who was at this time very eager for information from every quarter, desired to question these savages, and for this purpose had two or three brought to his headquarters. These men seemed formed to be always on horseback, and their appearance when they alighted on the ground was most amusing. Their legs, which the habit of pressing their horses' sides had driven far apart, resembled a pair of pincers, and they had a general air of being out of their element. The Emperor entered Gjatsk, escorted by two of these barbarians on horseback, who appeared much flattered by this honor. I remarked that sometimes the Emperor could with difficulty repress a smile as he witnessed the awkward appearance made by these cavaliers from the Ukraine, above all when they attempted to put on airs. Their reports, which the interpreter of the Emperor had some difficulty in comprehending, seemed a confirmation of all his Majesty had heard concerning Moscow. These barbarians made the Emperor understand by their animated gestures, convulsive movements, and warlike postures, that there would soon be a great battle between the French and the Russians. The Emperor had brandy given them, which they drank like water, and presented their glasses anew with a coolness which was very amusing. Their horses were small, with cropped manes and long tails, such as unfortunately can be seen without leaving Paris.

It is a matter of history that the King of Naples made a most favorable impression on these barbarians. When it was announced to the Emperor one day that they desired to appoint him their hetman, the Emperor was much amused by this offer, and said jestingly that he was ready to indorse this choice of a free people. The King of Naples had something theatrical in his appearance which fascinated these barbarians, for he always dressed

magnificently. When his steed bore him in front of his column, his beautiful hair disordered by the wind, as he gave those grand saber strokes which mowed down men like stubble, I can well comprehend the deep impression he made on the fancy of these warlike people, among whom exterior qualities alone can be appreciated. It is said that the King of Naples by simply raising this powerful sword had put to flight a horde of these barbarians. I do not know how much truth there is in this statement, but it is at least possible.

The Cossacks, in common with all races still in their infancy, believe in magicians. A very amusing anecdote was told of the great chief of the Cossacks, the celebrated Platoff. Pursued by the King of Naples, he was beating a retreat, when a ball reached one of the officers beside him, on which event the hetman was so much irritated against his magician that he had him flogged in presence of all his hordes, reproaching him most bitterly because he had not turned away the balls by his witchcraft. This was plain evidence of the fact that he had more faith in his art than the sorcerer himself possessed.

On the 3d of September, from his headquarters at Gjatsk, the Emperor ordered his army to prepare for a general engagement. There had been for some days much laxity in the police of the bivouacs, and he now redoubled the severity of the regulations in regard to the countersigns. Some detachments which had been sent for provisions having too greatly prolonged their expedition, the Emperor charged the colonels to express to them his dissatisfaction, adding that those who had not returned by the next day could not take part in the battle. These words needed no commentary.

The country surrounding Gjatsk was very fertile, and the fields were now covered with rye ready for the sickle, through which we saw here and there broad gaps made by the Cossacks in their, flight. I have often since compared the aspect of these fields in November and September. What a horrible thing is war! A few days before the battle, Napoleon, accompanied by two of his marshals, made a visit of inspection on foot in the outskirts of the city.

On the eve of this great event he discussed everything in the calmest manner, speaking of this country as he would have done of a beautiful, fertile province of France. In hearing him one might think that the granary of the army had here been found, that it would consequently furnish excellent winter quarters, and the first care of the government he was about to establish at Gjatsk would be the encouragement of agriculture. He then pointed out to his marshals the beautiful windings of the river which gives its name to the village, and appeared delighted with the landscape spread before his eyes. I have never seen the Emperor abandon himself to such gentle emotions, nor seen such serenity manifested both in his countenance and conversation; and at the same time I was never more deeply impressed with the greatness of his soul.

On the 5th of September the Emperor mounted the heights of Borodino, hoping to take in at a glance the respective positions of the two armies; but the sky was overcast. One of those fine, cold rains soon began to fall, which so often come in the early autumn, and resemble from a distance a tolerably thick fog. The Emperor tried to use his glasses; but the kind of veil which covered the whole country prevented his seeing any distance, by which he was much vexed. The rain, driven by the wind, fell slanting against his field−glasses, and he had to dry them over and over again, to his very great annoyance. The atmosphere was so cold and damp that he ordered his cloak, and wrapped himself in it, saying that as it was impossible to remain there, he must return to headquarters, which he did, and throwing himself on the bed slept a short while. On awaking he said, "Constant, I hear a noise outside; go see what it is." I went out, and returned to inform him that General Caulaincourt had arrived; at which news the Emperor rose hastily, and ran to meet the general, asking him anxiously, "Do you bring any prisoners? " The general replied that he had not been able to take prisoners, since the Russian soldiers , preferred death to surrender. The Emperor immediately cried, "Let all the artillery be brought forward." He had decided that in his preparations to make this war one of extermination, the cannon would spare his troops the fatigue of discharging their muskets.

On the 6th, at midnight, it was announced to the Emperor that the fires of the Russians seemed less numerous, and the flames were extinguished at several points; and some few said they had heard the muffled sound of drums. The army was in a state of great anxiety. The Emperor sprang wildly from his bed, repeatedly exclaiming, "It is impossible!"

I tried to hand him his garments, that he might clothe himself warmly, as the night was so cold; but he was so eager to assure himself personally of the truth of these statements, that he rushed out of the tent with only his cloak wrapped around him. It was a fact that the fires of the bivouac had grown paler, and the Emperor had reason

for the gravest suspicions. Where would the war end if the Russians fell back now? He re−entered his tent much agitated, and retired to bed again, repeating many times, "We will know the truth to−morrow morning."

On the 7th of September, the sun rose in a cloudless sky, and the Emperor exclaimed, "It is the sun of Austerlitz!" These words of the Emperor were reported to the army, and repeated by them amid great enthusiasm. The drums were beaten, and the order of the day was read as follows:

> SOLDIERS,−−Behold the battle you have so long desired! Henceforth that victory depends on you which is so necessary to us, since it will furnish us abundant provisions, good winter quarters, and a prompt return to our native land. Conduct yourselves as at Austerlitz, at Friedland, at Witepsk, at Smolensk, and let the most remote posterity refer with pride to your conduct on this day; let it be said of you, "He took part in the great battle under the walls of Moscow."

The army replied by reiterated acclamations. The Emperor, a few hours before the battle, had dictated this proclamation, and it was read in the morning to the soldiers. Napoleon was then on the heights of Borodino; and when the enthusiastic cries of the army struck his ear, he was standing with folded arms, the sun shining full in his eyes, reflected from the French and Russian bayonets. He smiled, then became more serious until the affair was terminated.

On that day the portrait of the King of Rome was brought to Napoleon. He needed some gentle emotion to divert his mind from this state of anxious suspense. He held this portrait long on his knees, contemplating it with delight, and said that it was the most agreeable surprise he had ever received, and repeated several times in a low tone, "My good Louise! This is a charming attention!" On the Emperor's countenance there rested an expression of happiness difficult to describe, though the first emotions excited were calm and even melancholy. "The dear child," was all that he said. But he experienced all the pride of a father and an Emperor when by his orders officers, and even soldiers, of the old guard came to see the King of Rome. The portrait was placed on exhibition in front of the tent; and it was inexpressibly touching to see these old soldiers uncover themselves with respect before this image, in which they sought to find some of the features of Napoleon. The Emperor had at this moment the expansive joy of a father who knows well that next to him his son has no better friends than his old companions in endurance and glory.

At four o'clock in the morning, that is to say one hour before the battle opened, Napoleon felt a great exhaustion in his whole person, and had a slight chill, without fever, however, and threw himself on his bed. Nevertheless, he was not as ill as M. de Segur states. He had had for some time a severe cold that he had somewhat neglected, and which was so much increased by the fatigue of this memorable day that he lost his voice almost entirely. He treated this with the soldier's prescription, and drank light punch during the whole night, which he spent working in his cabinet without being able to speak. This inconvenience lasted two days; but on the 9th he was well, and his hoarseness almost gone.

After the battle, of every six corpses found, one would be French and five Russian. At noon an aide−de−camp came to inform the Emperor that Count Auguste de Caulaincourt, brother of the Duke of Vicenza, had been struck by a ball. The Emperor drew a deep sigh, but said not a word; for he well knew that his heart would most likely be saddened more, than once that day. After the battle, he expressed his condolences to the Duke of Vicenza in the most touching manner.

Count Auguste de Caulaincourt was a young man full of courage, who had left his young wife a few hours after his marriage to follow the French army, and to find a glorious death at the battle of La Moskwa. He was governor of the pages of the Emperor, and had married the sister of one of his charges. This charming person was so young that her parents preferred that the marriage should not take place until he returned from the campaign, being influenced in this decision by the fate of Prince Aldobrandini after his marriage with Mademoiselle de la Rochefoucault before the campaign of Wagram. General Auguste de Caulaincourt was killed in a redoubt to which he had led the cuirassiers of General Montbrun, who had just been fatally wounded by a cannon−ball in the attack on this same redoubt.

The Emperor often said, in speaking of generals killed in the army, "Such an one is happy in having died on the field of honor, while I shall perhaps be so unfortunate as to die in my bed." He was less philosophical on the occasion of Marshal Lannes's death, when I saw him, while at breakfast, weeping such large tears that they rolled over his cheeks, and fell into his plate. He mourned deeply for Desaix, Poniatowski, and Bessieres, but most of all for Lannes, and next to him Duroc.

During the whole of the battle of the Moskwa the Emperor had attacks resembling stone in the bladder. He had been often threatened with this disease unless he was more prudent in his diet, and suffered much, although he complained little, and only when attacked by violent pain uttered stifled groans. Now, nothing causes more anxiety than to hear those complain who are unaccustomed to do so; for then one imagines the suffering most intense, since it is stronger than a strong man. At Austerlitz the Emperor said, "Ordener is worn out. There is only one time for military achievement in a man's life. I shall be good for six years longer, and after that I shall retire."

The Emperor rode over the field of battle, which presented a horrible spectacle, nearly all the dead being covered with wounds; which proved with what bitterness the battle had been waged. The weather was very inclement, and rain was falling, accompanied by a very high wind. Poor wounded creatures, who had not yet been removed to the ambulances, half rose from the ground in their desire not to be overlooked and to receive aid; while some among them still cried, Vive l'Empereur!" in spite of their suffering and exhaustion. Those of our soldiers who had been killed by Russian balls showed on their corpses deep and broad wounds, for the Russian balls were much larger than ours. We saw a color−bearer, wrapped in his banner as a winding−sheet, who seemed to give signs of life, but he expired in the shock of being raised. The Emperor walked on and said nothing, though many times when he passed by the most mutilated, he put his hand over his eyes to avoid the sight. This calm lasted only a short while; for there was a place on the battlefield where French and Russians had fallen pell−mell, almost all of whom were wounded more or less grievously. And when the Emperor heard their cries, he became enraged, and shouted at those who had charge of removing the wounded, much irritated by the slowness with which this was done. It was difficult to prevent the horses from trampling on the corpses, so thickly did they lie. A wounded soldier was struck by the shoe of a horse in the Emperor's suite, and uttered a heartrending cry, upon which the Emperor quickly turned, and inquired in a most vehement manner who was the awkward person by whom the man was hurt. He was told, thinking that it would calm his anger, that the man was nothing but a Russian. "Russian or French," he exclaimed, "I wish every one removed!"

Poor young fellows who were making their first campaign, being wounded to the death, lost courage, and wept like children crying for their mothers. The terrible picture will be forever engraven on my memory.

The Emperor urgently repeated his orders for removing the wounded quickly, then turned his horse in silence, and returned to his headquarters, the evening being now far advanced. I passed the night near him, and his sleep was much disturbed; or, rather, he did not sleep at all, and repeated over and over, restlessly turning on his pillow, "Poor Caulaincourt! What a day! What a day!"

CHAPTER IV.

As I have announced previously, I shall endeavor to record in this chapter some recollections of events personal to the Emperor which occurred during the journey between the frontiers of France and Prussia. How sad a contrast results, alas! as we attempt to compare our journey to Moscow with that of our return. One must have seen Napoleon at Dresden, surrounded by a court of princes and of kings, to form an idea of the highest point which human greatness can reach. There more than ever elsewhere the Emperor was affable to all; fortune smiled upon him, and none of those who enjoyed with us the spectacle of his glory could even conceive the thought that fortune could soon prove unfaithful to him and in so striking a manner. I remember, among other particulars of our stay at Dresden, a speech I heard the Emperor make to Marshal Berthier, whom he had summoned at a very early hour. When the marshal arrived, Napoleon had not yet risen, but I received orders to bring him in at once; so that while dressing the Emperor, I heard between him and his major−general a conversation of which I wish I could remember the whole, but at least I am sure of repeating correctly one thought which struck me. The Emperor said in nearly these words:−−

"I wish no harm to Alexander; it is not on Russia that I am making war, no more than on Spain; I have only one enemy,−−England, and it is her I am striving to reach in Russia; I will pursue her everywhere." During this speech the marshal bit his nails, as was his constant habit. On that day a magnificent review was held, at which all the princes of the Confederation were present, surrounding their chief as great vassals of his crown.

When the various army−corps marshaled from the other side of the Elbe had advanced to the confines of Poland, we left Dresden, meeting everywhere the same enthusiasm on the advent of the Emperor. We were as a result sumptuously entertained in every place at which we halted, so anxious were the inhabitants to testify their regard for his Majesty, even in the person of those who had the honor of serving him.

At this time there was a general rumor in the army, and among the persons of the Emperor's household, that his intention was to re−establish the kingdom of Poland. Ignorant as I was, and from my position should naturally be, of all political matters, I heard no less than others the expression of an opinion which was universal, and which was discussed openly by all. Sometimes the Emperor condescended to ask me what I heard, and always smiled at my report, since I could not tell the truth and say anything that would have been disagreeable to him; for he was then, and I do not speak too strongly, universally adored by the Polish population.

On the 23d of June we were on the banks of the Niemen, that river already become so famous by the interview between the two Emperors, under circumstances very different from those in which they now found themselves.

The passage of the army began in the evening, and lasted for forty−eight hours, during which time the Emperor was almost constantly on horseback, so well he knew that his presence expedited matters. Then we continued our journey to Wilna, the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and on the 27th arrived in front of this town, occupied by the Russians; and it may truly be said that there, and there alone, military operations began, for up to this time the Emperor had traveled as he would have done in the departments of the interior of France. The Russians, being attacked, were beaten and fell back, so that two days after we entered Wilna, a town of considerable size, which seemed to me to contain about thirty thousand inhabitants. I was struck with the incredible number of convents and churches which are there. At Wilna the Emperor was much gratified by the demand of five or six hundred students that they should be formed into a regiment. It is needless to say that such solicitations were always eagerly granted by his Majesty.

We rested for some time at Wilna; the Emperor thence followed the movement of his armies, and occupied himself also with organizing the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, of which this town, as is well known, is the capital. As the Emperor was often on horseback, I had sufficient leisure to acquaint myself thoroughly with the town and its environs. The Lithuanians were in a state of enthusiasm impossible to describe; and although I have seen during my life many fetes, I shall never forget the joyous excitement of the whole population when the grand national fete of the regeneration of Poland was celebrated, which owing either to a singular coincidence, or the calculation of the Emperor, was appointed for the 14th of July. The Poles were still uncertain as to the ultimate fate which the Emperor reserved for their country; but a future bright with hope shone before their eyes, until these visions were rudely dispelled by the Emperor's reply to the deputation from the Polish confederation

established at Warsaw. This numerous deputation, with a count palatine at its head, demanded the integral re−establishment of the ancient kingdom of Poland. This was the Emperor's reply:−−

"Messieurs, deputies of the Confederation of Poland, I have heard with interest what you have just said. Were I a Pole, I should think and act as you have done, and I should have voted like you in the assembly at Warsaw; for love of country is the first virtue of civilized man.

In my position I have many opposing interests to reconcile, and many duties to fulfill. If I had reigned at the time of the first, second, or third division of Poland, I would have armed all my people to sustain you. As soon as victory permitted me to restore your ancient laws to your capital and to a part of your provinces, I have done so readily, without, however, prolonging a war which would have shed the blood of my subjects.

I love your nation. For sixteen years I have seen your soldiers by my side on the fields of Italy as on those of Spain.

I applaud all that you have done; I authorize the efforts you wish to make; and all that depends on me to carry out your resolutions shall be done.

If your efforts are unanimous, you may indulge the hope of forcing your enemies to recognize your rights. But in these countries, so distant and so extensive, any hope of success can be founded only on the unanimous efforts of the population which occupies them.

I have maintained the same position since my first appearance in Poland. I should add here that I have guaranteed to the Emperor of Austria the integrity of his States, and I could authorize no movement tending to disturb him in the peaceful possession of what remains to him of the Polish provinces. Let Lithuania, Samogitia, Witepsk, Polotsk, Mohilow, Wolhynia, Ukraine, and Podolia be animated by the same spirit I have seen in great Poland, and Providence will crown with success the holiness of your cause; it will recompense this devotion to your native country which has made you such an object of interest, and has obtained for you the right to my esteem and protection, on which you may rely under all circumstances."

I have thought it best to give here the entire reply of the Emperor to the deputies of the Polish confederation, as I was a witness of the effect it produced at Wilna. A few Poles with whom I was associated spoke to me of it with sorrow; but their consternation was not loudly expressed, and the air did not the less resound with cries of "Vive l'Empereur!" each time the Emperor showed himself in public, which is to say almost every day.

During our stay at Wilna some hopes were entertained that a new peace was about to be concluded, as an envoy had arrived from the Emperor Alexander. But these hopes were of short duration; and I have since ascertained that the Russian officer, M. Balochoff, fearing, like almost all of his nation, a reconciliation between the two emperors, delivered his message in such a manner as to rouse the pride of his Majesty, who sent him back after a cool reception. Everything smiled on the Emperor. He was then at the head of the most numerous as well as most formidable army he had ever commanded. On M. Balachoff's departure everything was set in order for the execution of his Majesty's plans.

When on the point of penetrating into the Russian territory, his Majesty no longer maintained his customary serenity; at least, I had occasion to remark that he was unusually silent at the hours I had the honor to approach him; and, nevertheless, as soon as his plans were made, and he had brought his troops from the other side of the Vilia, the river on which Wilna is situated, the Emperor took possession of the Russian territory with the enthusiastic ardor one would expect in a young man. One of the escort which accompanied him related to me that the Emperor spurred his horse to the front, and made him run at his utmost speed nearly a league through the woods alone, and notwithstanding the numerous Cossacks scattered through these woods which lie along the right bank of the Vilia.

I have more than once seen the Emperor much annoyed because there was no enemy to fight. For instance, the Russians had abandoned Wilna, which we had entered without resistance; and again, on leaving this town scouts announced the absence of hostile troops, with the exception of those Cossacks of whom I have spoken. I remember one day we thought we heard the distant noise of cannon, and the Emperor almost shuddered with joy; but we were soon undeceived, the noise was the sound of thunder, and suddenly the most frightful storm I have ever seen burst over the army. The land for a space of more than four leagues was so covered with water that the road could not be seen; and this storm, as fatal as a battle could have been, cost us a large number of men, several thousand horses, and a part of the immense equipments of the expedition.

It was known in the army that the Russians had done an immense amount of work at Drissa, where they had

constructed an enormous intrenched camp; and the number of troops collected there, the considerable sums expended in the works, all gave reason to believe that the Russian army would await the French at this point; and this belief was all the more reasonable since the Emperor Alexander, in his numerous proclamations disseminated through the army, and several of which fell into our hands, boasted of conquering the French at Drissa, where (said these proclamations) we should find our grave. It was otherwise ordained by destiny; for the Russians, constantly falling back towards the heart of Russia, abandoned this famous camp of Drissa on the approach of the Emperor: I heard it said by many general officers that a great battle would have been at that time a salutary event for the French army, in which discontent was beginning to increase, first, for want of enemies to fight, and second; because privations of every kind became each day more unendurable. Whole divisions lived, so to speak, by pillage. The soldiers devastated the dwellings and cottages found at rare intervals in the country; and, in spite of the severe orders of the Emperor against marauding and pillaging, these orders could not be executed, for the officers themselves lived for the most part on the booty which the soldiers obtained and shared with them.

The Emperor affected before his soldiers a serenity which he was far from feeling; and from a few detached words which I heard him pronounce in this grave situation, I am authorized to believe that the Emperor desired a battle so ardently, only in the hope that the Emperor Alexander would make him new overtures leading to peace. I think that he would then have accepted it after the first victory; but he would never have consented to retrace his steps after such immense preparations without having waged one of those great battles which furnish sufficient glory for a campaign; at least, that is what I heard him say repeatedly. The Emperor also often spoke of the enemies he had to combat with an affected disdain which he did not really feel; his object being to cheer the officers and soldiers, many of whom made no concealment of their discouragement.

Before leaving Wilna, the Emperor established there a kind of central government, at the head of which he had placed the Duke of Bassano, with the object of having an intermediate point between France and the line of operations he intended to carry on in the interior of Russia. Disappointed, as I have said, by the abandonment of the camp of Drissa by the Russian army, he marched rapidly towards Witepsk, where the greater part of the French forces were then collected: but here the ire of the Emperor was again aroused by a new retreat of the Russians; for the encounters of Ostrovno and Mohilev, although important, could not be considered as the kind of battle the Emperor so ardently desired. On entering Witepsk, the Emperor learned that the Emperor Alexander, who a few days before had his headquarters there, and also the Grand Duke Constantine, had quitted the army, and returned to St. Petersburg.

At this period, that is to say, on our arrival at Witepsk, the report was spread abroad that the Emperor would content himself with taking position there, and organizing means of subsistence for his army, and that he would postpone till the next year the execution of his vast designs on Russia. I could not undertake to say what his inmost thoughts were on this subject; but what I can certify is that, being in a room adjoining his, I one day heard him say to the King of Naples, that the first campaign of Russia was ended, and that he would be the following year at Moscow, the next at St. Petersburg, and that the Russian war was a three years' campaign. Had it pleased Providence that his Majesty had executed this plan, which he outlined to the King of Naples so earnestly, so many of the brave would not have laid down their lives a few months after in the frightful retreat, the horrors of which I shall hereafter describe.

During our stay at Witepsk, the heat was so excessive that the Emperor was much exhausted, and complained of it incessantly; and I have never seen him under any circumstances so oppressed by the weight of his clothing. In his room he rarely wore his coat, and frequently threw himself on his bed to rest. This is a fact which many persons can attest as well as I; for he often received his general officers thus, though it had been his custom never to appear before them without the uniform which he habitually wore. Nevertheless, the influence which the heat had on his physical condition had not affected his great soul; and his genius ever on the alert embraced every branch of the administration. But it was easily seen by those whose positions enabled them best to know his character that the source of his greatest suffering at Witepsk was the uncertainty whether he should remain in Poland, or should advance without delay into the heart of Russia. While he was hesitating between these two decisions he was nearly always sad and taciturn.

In this state of vacillation between repose and motion, the Emperor's preference was not doubtful; and at the end of a council where I heard it said that his Majesty met with much opposition, I learned that we were to move forward and advance on Moscow, from which it was said that we were only twenty days' march distant. Among

those who opposed most vehemently this immediate march on Moscow, I heard the names cited of the Duke of Vicenza and the Count of Lobau; but what I can assert of my own knowledge, and which I learned in a manner to leave no room for doubt, is that the grand marshal of the palace tried on numerous occasions to dissuade the Emperor from this project. But all these endeavors were of no avail against his will.

We then directed our course towards the second capital of Russia, and arrived after a few days march at Smolensk, a large and beautiful city. The Russians, whom he thought he had caught at last, had just evacuated it, after destroying much booty, and burning the greater part of the stores.

We entered by the light of the flames, but it was nothing in comparison to what awaited us at Moscow. I remarked at Smolensk two buildings which seemed to me of the greatest beauty,−−the cathedral and the episcopal palace, which last seemed to form a village in itself, so extensive are the buildings, and being also separated from the city.

I will not make a list of the places with barbarous names through which we passed after leaving Smolensk. All that I shall add as to our itinerary during the first half of this gigantic campaign is that on the 5th of September we arrived on the banks of the Moskwa, where the Emperor saw with intense satisfaction that at last the Russians were determined to grant him the great battle which he so ardently desired, and which he had pursued for more than two hundred leagues as prey that he would not allow to escape him.

CHAPTER V.

THE day after the battle of the Moskwa, I was with the Emperor in his tent which was on the field of battle, and the most perfect calm reigned around us. It was a fine spectacle which this army presented, calmly re−forming its columns in which the Russian cannon had made such wide gaps, and proceeding to the repose of the bivouac with the security which conquerors ever feel. The Emperor seemed overcome with fatigue. From time to time he clasped his hands over his crossed knees, and I heard him each time repeat, with a kind of convulsive movement, "Moscow! Moscow!" He sent me several times to see what was going on outside, then rose himself, and coming up behind me looked out over my shoulder. The noise made by the sentinel in presenting arms each time warned me of his approach. After about a quarter of an hour of these silent marches to and fro, the sentinel advanced and cried, "To arms!" and like a lightning flash the battalion square was formed around the Emperor's tent. He rushed out, and then re−entered to take his hat and sword. It proved to be a false alarm, as a regiment of Saxons returning from a raid had been mistaken for the enemy.

There was much laughter over this mistake, especially when the raiders came in sight, some bearing quarters of meat spitted on the ends of their bayonets, others with half−picked fowls or hams which made the mouth water. I was standing outside the tent, and shall never forget the first movement of the sentinel as he gave the cry of alarm. He lowered the stock of his gun to see if the priming was in place, shook the barrel by striking it with his fist, then replaced the gun on his arm, saying, "Well, let them come; we are ready for them." I told the occurrence to the Emperor, who in his turn related it to Prince Berthier; and in consequence the Emperor made this brave soldier drink a glass of his best Chambertin wine.

It was the Duke of Dantzic who first entered Moscow, and the Emperor came only after him. This entry was made in the night, and never was there a more depressing scene. There was something truly frightful in this silent march of an army halted at intervals by messages from inside the city, which seemed to be of a most ominous character. No Muscovite figures could be distinguished except those of a few beggars covered with rags, who watched with stupid astonishment the army file past; and as some few of these appeared to be begging alms, our soldiers threw them bread and a few pieces of money. I cannot prevent a sad reflection on these unfortunate creatures, whose condition alone remains unchanged through great political upheavals, and who are totally without affection and without national sympathies.

As we advanced on the streets of the faubourgs, we looked through the windows on each side, and were astonished to perceive no human being; and if a solitary light appeared in the windows of a few houses, it was soon extinguished, and these signs of life so suddenly effaced made a terrible impression. The Emperor halted at the faubourg of Dorogomilow, and spent the night there, not in an inn, as has been stated, but in a house so filthy and wretched that next morning we found in the Emperor's bed, and on his clothes, vermin which are by no means uncommon in Russia. We were tormented by them also to our great disgust, and the Emperor did not sleep during the whole night he passed there. According to custom, I slept in his chamber; and notwithstanding the precaution I had taken to burn vinegar and aloes wood, the odor was so disagreeable that every moment the Emperor called me.

"Are you asleep, Constant?"−−"No, Sire."−−"My son, burn more vinegar, I cannot endure this frightful odor; it is a torment; I cannot sleep." I did my best; but a moment after, when the fumes of the vinegar were evaporated, he again recommended me to burn sugar or aloes wood.

It was two o'clock in the morning when he was informed that a fire had broken out in the city. The news was received through Frenchmen residing in this country, and an officer of the Russian police confirmed the report, and entered into details too precise for the Emperor to doubt the fact. Nevertheless, he still persisted in not believing it. "That is not possible. Do you believe that, Constant? Go, and find out if it is true." And thereupon he threw himself again on his bed, trying to rest a little; then he recalled me to make the same inquiries.

The Emperor passed the night in extreme agitation, and when daylight came he knew all. He had Marshal Mortier called, and reprimanded both him and the young guard. Mortier in reply showed him, houses covered with iron the roofs of which were uninjured, but the Emperor pointed out to him the black smoke which was issuing from them, pressed his hands together, and stamped his heels on the rough planks of his sleeping−room.

At six o'clock in the morning we were at the palace of the Kremlin, where Napoleon occupied the apartment of the Czars, which opened on a vast esplanade reached by a broad stone staircase. On this same esplanade could be seen the church in which were the tombs of the ancient sovereigns, also the senatorial palace, the barracks, the arsenal, and a splendid clock tower, the cross on which towers above the whole city. This is the gilded cross of Ivan. The Emperor threw a satisfied glance over the beautiful scene spread out before him; for no sign of fire was yet seen in all the buildings which surrounded the Kremlin. This palace is a mixture of Gothic and modern architecture, and this mingling of the two styles gives it a most singular appearance.

Within these walls lived and died the old dynasties of the Romanoff and Ruric; and this is the same palace which has been so often stained with blood by the intrigues of a ferocious court, at a period when all quarrels were settled with the poniard. His Majesty could not obtain there even a few hours of quiet sleep.

In fact, the Emperor, somewhat reassured by the reports of Marshal Mortier, was dictating to the Emperor Alexander words of peace, and a Russian flag of truce was about to bear this letter, when the Emperor, who was promenading the length and breadth of his apartment, perceived from his windows a brilliant light some distance from the palace. It was the fire, which had burst out again fiercer than ever; and as the wind from the north was now driving the flames in the direction of the Kremlin, the alarm was given by two officers who occupied the wing of the building nearest the fire. Wooden houses of many various colors were devoured in a few moments, and had already fallen in; magazines of oil, brandy, and other combustible materials, threw out flames of a lurid hue, which were communicated with the rapidity of lightning to other adjoining buildings. A shower of sparks and coals fell on the roofs of the Kremlin; and one shudders to think that one of these sparks alone falling on a caisson might have produced a general explosion, and blown up the Kremlin; for by an inconceivable negligence a whole park of artillery had been placed under the Emperor's windows.

Soon most incredible reports reached the Emperor; some said that Russians had been seen stirring the fire themselves, and throwing inflammable material into the parts of houses still unburned, while those of the Russians who did not mingle with the incendiaries, stood with folded arms, contemplating the disaster with an imperturbability which cannot be described. Except for the absence of cries of joy and clapping of hands they might have been taken for men who witness a brilliant display of fireworks. It was soon very evident to the Emperor that it was a concerted plot laid by the enemy.

He descended from his apartment by the great northern staircase made famous by the massacre of the Strelitz. The fire had already made such enormous progress that on this side the outside doors were half burned through, and the horses refused to pass, reared, and it was with much difficulty they could be made to clear the gates. The Emperor had his gray overcoat burned in several places, and even his hair; and a moment later we were walking over burning firebrands.

We were not yet out of danger, and were obliged to steer clear of the burning rubbish which encumbered our path. Several outlets were tried, but unsuccessfully, as the hot breezes from the fire struck against our faces, and drove us back in terrible confusion. At last a postern opening on the Moskwa was discovered, and it was through this the Emperor with his officers and guard succeeded in escaping from the Kremlin, but only to re−enter narrow streets, where the fire, inclosed as in a furnace, was increased in intensity, and uniting above our heads the flames thus formed a burning dome, which overshadowed us, and hid from us the heavens. It was time to leave this dangerous place from which one means of egress alone was open to us,−−a narrow, winding street encumbered with debris of every kind, composed of flaming beams fallen from the roofs, and burning posts. There was a moment of hesitation among us, in which some proposed to the Emperor to cover him from head to foot with their cloaks, and transport him thus in their arms through this dangerous passage. This proposition the Emperor rejected, and settled the question by throwing himself on foot into the midst of the blazing debris, where two or three vigorous jumps put him in a place of safety.

Then ensued a touching scene between the Emperor and the Prince of Eckmuhl, who, wounded at the Moskwa, had himself borne back in order to attempt to save the Emperor, or to die with him. From a distance the marshal perceived him calmly emerging from so great a peril; and this good and tender friend by an immense effort hastened to throw himself into the Emperor's arms, and his Majesty pressed him to his heart as if to thank him for rousing such gentle emotions at a moment when danger usually renders men selfish and egotistical.

At length the air itself, filled with all these flaming masses, became so heated that it could no longer be breathed. The atmosphere itself was burning, the glass of the windows cracked,' and apartments became

untenable. The Emperor stood for a moment immovable, his face crimson, and great drops of perspiration rolling from his brow, while the King of Naples, Prince Eugene, and the Prince de Neuchatel begged him to quit the palace, whose entreaties he answered only by impatient gestures. At this instant cries came from the wing of the palace situated farthest to the north, announcing that the walls had fallen, and that the fire was spreading with frightful rapidity; and seeing at last that his position was no longer tenable, the Emperor admitted that it was time to leave, and repaired to the imperial chateau of Petrovskoi.

On his arrival at Petrovskoi the Emperor ordered M. de Narbonne to inspect a palace which I think had belonged to Catherine. This was a beautiful building, and the apartments handsomely furnished. M. de Narbonne returned with this information; but almost immediately flames burst from every side, and it was soon consumed.

Such was the fury of these wretches who were hired to burn everything, that the boats which covered the Moskwa laden with grain; oats, and other provisions, were burned, and sunk beneath the waves with a horrible crackling sound. Soldiers of the Russian police had been seen stirring up the fire with tarred lances, and in the ovens of some houses shells had been placed which wounded many of our soldiers in exploding.

In the streets filthy women and hideous, drunken men ran to the burning houses and seized flaming brands, which they carried in every direction, and which our soldiers were obliged repeatedly to knock out of their hands with the hilts of their swords before they would relinquish them. The Emperor ordered that these incendiaries when taken in the act should be hung to posts in the public squares; and the populace prostrated themselves around these gallows, kissing the feet of those executed, praying, and signing themselves with the sign of the cross. Such fanaticism is almost unparalleled.

One incident of which I was a witness proves that those hired to carry out this vast plot acted, evidently, according to instructions given by higher authorities. A man covered with a sheepskin, old and tattered, with a miserable capon his head, boldly mounted the steps of the Kremlin. Under this filthy disguise an elegant costume was concealed; and when a stricter surveillance was instituted, this bold beggar himself was suspected, arrested, and carried before the police, where he was questioned by the officer of the post. As he made some resistance, thinking this proceeding somewhat arbitrary, the sentinel put his hand on his breast to force him to enter; and this somewhat abrupt movement pushing aside the sheepskin which covered him, decorations were seen, and when his disguise was removed he was recognized as a Russian officer. He had on his person matches which he had been distributing to the men of the people, and when questioned admitted that he was specially charged to keep alive the fire of the Kremlin. Many questions were asked, each eliciting new confessions, all of which were made in the most indifferent manner, and he was put in prison, and was, I think, punished as an incendiary; but of this I am not certain. When any of these wretches were brought before the Emperor, he shrugged his shoulders, and with gestures of scorn and anger ordered that they should be removed from his sight, and the grenadiers sometimes executed justice on them with their bayonets; but such exasperation can be well understood in soldiers thus driven by these base and odious measures from a resting−place earned by the sword.

In Petrovskoi, a pretty residence belonging to one of Alexander's chamberlains, a man was found concealed in one of the apartments his Majesty was to occupy; but not being armed he was released, as it was concluded that fright alone had driven him into this dwelling. The Emperor arrived during the night at his new residence, and waited there in intense anxiety till the fire should be extinguished at the Kremlin, intending to return thither, for the pleasure house of a chamberlain was no suitable place for his Majesty. Thanks to the active and courageous actions of a battalion of the guard, the Kremlin was preserved from the flames, and the Emperor thereupon gave the signal for departure.

In order to re−enter Moscow it was necessary to cross the camp, or rather the several camps, of the army; and we wended our way over cold and miry ground, through fields where all was devastation and ruin. This camp presented a most singular aspect; and I experienced feelings of bitter melancholy as I saw our soldiers compelled to bivouac at the gates of a large and beautiful city of which they were the conquerors, but the fire still more than they. The Emperor, on appointing Marshal Mortier governor of Moscow, had said to him, "Above all, no pillage; you will answer for it with your head." The order was strictly enforced up to the moment the fire began; but when it was evident that the fire would devour everything, and that it was useless to abandon to the flames what would be of much value to the soldiers, liberty was given them to draw largely from this great storehouse of the north.

It was at once sad and amusing to see around poor plank sheds, the only tents our soldiers had, the most magnificent furniture, silk canopies, priceless Siberian furs, and cashmere shawls thrown pell−mell with silver

dishes; and then to see the food served on these princely dishes,−− miserable black gruel, and pieces of horseflesh still bleeding. Good ammunition−bread was worth at this time treble all these riches, and there came a time when they had not even horseflesh.

On re−entering Moscow the wind bore to us the insufferable odor of burning houses, warm ashes filled our mouths and eyes, and frequently we drew back just in time before great pillars which had been burned in two by the fire, and fell noiselessly on this calcined soil. Moscow was not so deserted as we had thought. As the first impression conquest produces is one of fright, all the inhabitants who remained had concealed themselves in cellars, or in the immense vaults which extend under the Kremlin; and driven out by the fire like wolves from their lairs, when we re−entered the city nearly twenty thousand inhabitants were wandering through the midst of the debris, a dull stupor depicted on faces blackened with smoke, and pale with hunger; for they could not comprehend how having gone to sleep under human roofs, they had risen next morning on a plain. They were in the last extremity of want; a few vegetables only remained in the gardens, and these were devoured raw, while many of these unfortunate creatures threw themselves at different times into the Moskwa, endeavoring to recover some of the grain cast therein by Rostopchin's orders;

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--[Count Feodor Rostopchin, born 1765; died 1826.  He denied that
Moscow was burnt by his authority.  He claimed that it was burnt
partly by the French, and partly by Russians without orders.]--
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and a large number perished in the water in these fruitless efforts. Such was the scene of distress through which the Emperor was obliged to pass in order to reach the Kremlin.

The apartments which he occupied were spacious and well lighted, but almost devoid of furniture; but his iron bedstead was set up there, as in all the chateaux he occupied in his campaigns. His windows opened on the Moskwa, and from there the fire could still be plainly seen in various quarters of the city, reappearing on one side as soon as extinguished on the other. His Majesty said to me one evening with deep feeling, "These wretches will not leave one stone upon another." I do not believe there was ever in any country as many buzzards as at Moscow. The Emperor was annoyed by their presence, and exclaimed, Mon −Dieu! will they follow us everywhere?"

There were a few concerts during our stay at the Emperor's residence in Moscow; but Napoleon seemed much dejected when he appeared at them, for the music of the saloons made no impression on his harassed mind, and the only kind that ever seemed to stir his soul was that of the camp before and after a battle.

The day after the Emperor's arrival, Messieurs Ed−−−− and V−−−− repaired to the Kremlin in order to interview his Majesty, and after waiting some time without seeing him, were expressing their mutual regret at having failed in this expectation, when they suddenly heard a shutter open above their heads, and, raising their eyes, recognized the Emperor, who said, "Messieurs, who are you?"−−"Sire, we are Frenchmen!" He requested them to mount the stairs to the room he occupied, and there continued his questions. "What is the nature of the occupation which has detained you in Moscow?"−−"We are tutors in the families of two Russian noblemen, whom the arrival of the French troops have driven from their homes. We have submitted to the entreaties made by them not to abandon their property, and we are at present alone in their palaces." The Emperor inquired of them if there were still other Frenchmen at Moscow, and asked that they should be brought to him; and then proposed that they should charge themselves with maintaining order, appointing as chief, M. M−−−−, whom he decorated with a tri−colored scarf. He recommended them to prevent the pillage of the French soldiers in the churches, and to have the malefactors shot, and enjoined them to use great rigor towards the galley−slaves, whom Rostopchin had pardoned on condition that they would set fire to the city.

A part of these Frenchmen followed our army in its retreat, seeing that a longer stay at Moscow would be most disagreeable to them; and those who did not follow their example were condemned to work on the streets.

The Emperor Alexander, when informed of the measures of Rostopchin, harshly rebuked the governor, and ordered him at once to restore to liberty these unfortunate Frenchmen.

CHAPTER VI.

We re−entered the Kremlin the morning of the 18th of September. The palace and the hospital for foundlings were almost the only buildings remaining uninjured. On the route our carriages were surrounded by a crowd of miserable Muscovites begging alms. They followed us as far as the palace, walking through hot ashes, or over the heated stones, which crumbled beneath their feet. The poorest were barefoot; and it was a heart−rending sight to see these creatures, as their feet touched the burning debris, give vent to their sufferings by screams and gestures of despair. As the only unencumbered part of the street was occupied by our carriages, this swarm threw themselves pell−mell against the wheels or under the feet of our horses. Our progress was consequently very slow, and we had so much the longer under our eyes this picture of the greatest of all miseries, that of a people burned out of their homes, and without food or the means to procure it. The Emperor had food and money given them.

When we were again established at the Kremlin, and had resumed our regular routine of living, a few days passed in perfect tranquillity. The Emperor appeared less sad, and in consequence those surrounding him became somewhat more cheerful. It seemed as if we had returned from the campaign, and taken up again the customary occupations of city life; but if the Emperor sometimes indulged in this illusion, it was soon dispelled by the sight Moscow presented as seen from the windows of his apartments, and each time Napoleon's eyes turned in that direction it was evident that he was oppressed by the saddest presentiments, although he no longer manifested the same vehement impatience as on his first stay at the palace, when he saw the flames surrounding him and driving him from his apartments. But he exhibited the depressing calm of a careworn man who cannot foresee how things will result. The days were long at the Kremlin while the Emperor awaited Alexander's reply, which never came. At this time I noticed that the Emperor kept constantly on his table Voltaire's history of Charles XII.

The Emperor was a prey to his genius for administration, even in the midst of the ruins of this great city; and in order to divert his mind from the anxiety caused by outside affairs, occupied himself with municipal organization, and had already arranged that Moscow should be stocked with provisions for the winter.

A theater was erected near the Kremlin, but the Emperor never attended. The troupe was composed of a few unfortunate French actors, who had remained in Moscow in a state of utter destitution; but his Majesty encouraged this enterprise in the hope that theatrical representations would offer some diversion to both officers and soldiers. It was said that the first actors of Paris had been ordered to Moscow, but of that I know nothing positively. There was at Moscow a celebrated Italian singer whom the Emperor heard several times, but only in his apartments, and he did not form part of the regular troupe.

Until the 18th of October the time was spent in discussions, more or less heated, between the Emperor and his generals, as to the best course to be pursued. Every one well knew that retreat had now become inevitable, and the Emperor was well aware of this fact himself; but it was plainly evident that it cost his pride a terrible struggle to speak the decisive word. The last days preceding the 18th were the saddest I have ever known. In his ordinary intercourse with his friends and counselors his Majesty manifested much coldness of manner; he became taciturn, and entire hours passed without any one present having the courage to begin a conversation. The Emperor, who was generally so hurried at his meals, prolonged them most surprisingly. Sometimes during the day he threw himself on a sofa, a romance in his hand which he simply pretended to read, and seemed absorbed in deep reverie. Verses were sent to him from Paris which he read aloud, expressing his opinion in a brief and trenchant style; he spent three days writing regulations for the French comedy at Paris. It is difficult to understand this attention to such frivolous details when the future was so ominous. It was generally believed, and probably not without reason, that the Emperor acted thus from motives of deep policy, and that these regulations for the French comedy at this time, when no bulletin had yet arrived to give information of the disastrous position of the French army, were written with the object of making an impression on the inhabitants of Paris, who would not fail to say, "All cannot be going so badly, since the Emperor has time to occupy himself with the theater."

The news received on the 18th put an end to all uncertainty. The Emperor was reviewing, in the first court of the Kremlin palace, the divisions of Ney, distributing the cross to the bravest among them, and addressing encouraging words to all, when an aide−de−camp, young Beranger, brought the news that a sharp engagement

had taken place at Winkowo between Murat and Kutusoff, and that the vanguard of Murat had been overwhelmed and our position taken. Russia's intention to resume hostilities was now plainly evident, and in the first excitement of the news the Emperor's astonishment was at its height. There was, on the contrary, among the soldiers of Marshal Ney an electric movement of enthusiasm and anger which was very gratifying to his Majesty. Charmed to see how the shame of a defeat, even when sustained without dishonor, excited the pride and aroused a desire to retrieve it in these impassioned souls, the Emperor pressed the hand of the colonel nearest to him, continued the review, and ordered that evening a concentration of all the corps; and before night the whole army was in motion towards Woronowo.

A few days before quitting Moscow, the Emperor had the churches of the Kremlin stripped of their finest ornaments. The ravages of the fire had relaxed the protection that the Emperor had extended to the property of the Russians.

The most magnificent trophy in this collection was the immense cross of the great Ivan. It was necessary to demolish a part of the tower on which it stood in order to take it down, and it required stupendous efforts to break this vast mass of iron. It was the Emperor's intention to place it upon the dome of the Invalides, but it was sunk in the waters of Lake Semlewo.

The evening before the Emperor was to hold a review, the soldiers were busily employed polishing their arms and putting everything in order, to conceal as far as possible the destitute condition to which they were reduced. The most imprudent had exchanged their winter clothing for provisions, many had worn out their shoes on the march, and yet each one made it a point of honor to make a good appearance on review; and when the glancing rays of the sun shone on the barrels of the well−polished guns, the Emperor felt again in witnessing this scene some slight return of the emotions with which his soul was filled on the glorious day of his departure for the campaign.

The Emperor left twelve hundred wounded at Moscow, four hundred of whom were removed by the last corps which quitted the city. Marshal Mortier was the last to go. At Feminskoe, ten leagues from Moscow, we heard the noise of a frightful explosion; it was the Kremlin which had been blown up by the Emperor's orders. A fuse was placed in the vaults of the palace, and everything arranged so that the explosion should not take place within a certain time. Some Cossacks came to pillage the abandoned apartments, in ignorance that a fire was smoldering under their feet, and were thrown to a prodigious height in the air. Thirty thousand guns were abandoned in the fortress. In an instant part of the Kremlin was a mass of ruins. A part was preserved, and a circumstance which contributed no little to enhance the credit of their great St. Nicholas with the Russians was that an image in stone of this saint remained uninjured by the explosion, in a spot where almost everything else was destroyed. This fact was stated to me by a reliable person, who heard Count Rostopchin himself relate it during his stay in Paris.

On the 28th of October the Emperor retraced his way to Smolensk, and passed near the battle−field of Borodino. About thirty thousand corpses had been left on this vast plain; and on our approach flocks of buzzards, whom an abundant harvest had attracted, flew away with horrible croakings. These corpses of so many brave men presented a sickening spectacle, half consumed, and exhaling an odor which even the excessive cold could not neutralize. The Emperor hastened past, and slept in the chateau of Oupinskoe which was almost in ruins; and the next day he visited a few wounded who had been left in an abbey. These poor fellows seemed to recover their strength at the sight of the Emperor, and forgot their sufferings, which must have been very severe, as wounds are always much more painful when cold weather first begins. All these pale countenances drawn with suffering became more serene. These poor soldiers also rejoiced to see their comrades, and questioned them with anxious curiosity concerning the events which had followed the battle of Borodino. When they learned that we had bivouacked at Moscow, they were filled with joy; and it was very evident that their greatest regret was that they could not have been with the others to see the fine furniture of the rich Muscovites used as fuel at the bivouac fires. Napoleon directed that each carriage of the suite should convey one of these unfortunates; and this was done, everybody complying with the order with a readiness which gratified the Emperor exceedingly; and the poor wounded fellows said in accents of most ardent gratitude, that they were much more comfortable on these soft cushions than in the ambulances, which we could well believe. A lieutenant of the cuirassiers who had just undergone an amputation was placed in the landau of the Emperor, while he traveled on horseback.

This answers every accusation of cruelty so gratuitously made against the memory of a great man who has passed away. I have read somewhere with intense disgust that the Emperor sometimes ordered his carriage to pass

over the wounded, whose cries of agony made not the slightest impression on him; all of which is false and very revolting. None of those who served the Emperor could have been ignorant of his solicitude for the unfortunate victims of war, and the care he had taken of them. Foreigners, enemies, or Frenchmen,−−all were recommended to the surgeon's care with equal strictness.

From time to time frightful explosions made us turn our heads, and glance behind us. They were caissons which were being exploded that we might no longer be encumbered with them, as the march became each day more painful. It produced a sad impression to see that we were reduced to such a point of distress as to be compelled to throw our powder to the winds to keep from leaving it to the enemy. But a still sadder reflection came into our minds at each detonation,−−the grand army must be rapidly hastening to dissolution when the material remaining exceeded our needs, and the number of men still left was so much short of that required to use it. On the 30th, the Emperor's headquarters were in a poor hovel which had neither doors nor windows. We had much difficulty in enclosing even a corner sufficient for him to sleep. The cold was increasing, and the nights were icy; the small fortified palisades of which a species of post relays had been made, placed from point to point, marked the divisions of the route, and served also each evening as Imperial headquarters. The Emperor's bed was hastily set up there, and a cabinet arranged as well as possible where he could work with his secretaries, or write his orders to the different chiefs whom he had left on the road and in the towns.

Our retreat was often annoyed by parties of Cossacks. These barbarians rushed upon us, lance in hand, and uttering rather howls of ferocious beasts than human cries, their little, long−tailed horses dashing against the flanks of the different divisions. But these attacks, though often repeated, had not, at least at the beginning of the retreat, serious consequences for the army. When they heard this horrible cry the infantry was not intimidated, but closed ranks and presented bayonets, and the cavalry made it their duty to pursue these barbarians, who fled more quickly than they came.

On the 6th of November, before leaving the army, the Emperor received news of the conspiracy of Malet and everything connected with it. He was at first astonished, then much dissatisfied, and ended by making himself very merry over the discomfiture of the chief of police, General Savary; and said many times that had he been at Paris no one would have budged, and that he could never leave at all without every one losing their heads at the least disturbance; and from this time he often spoke of how much he was needed in Paris.

Speaking of General Savary recalls to my memory an affair in which he was somewhat nonplussed. After quitting the command of the gendarmerie, to succeed Fouche in the office of minister of police, he had a little discussion with one of the Emperor's aides−de−camp. As he went so far as to threaten, the latter replied, "You seem to think you have handcuffs always in your pockets."

On the 8th of November the snow was falling, the sky covered with clouds, the cold intense, while a violent wind prevailed, and the roads were covered with sleet. The horses could make no progress, for their shoes were so badly worn that they could not prevent slipping on the frozen ground.

The poor animals were emaciated, and it was necessary that the soldiers should put their shoulders to the wheels in order to lighten their burdens.

There is something in the panting breath which issues from the nostrils of a tired horse, in the tension of their muscles, and the prodigious efforts of their loins, which gives us, in a high degree, the idea of strength; but the mute resignation of these animals, when we know them to be overladen, inspires us with pity, and makes us regret the abuse of so much endurance.

The Emperor on foot in the midst of his household, and staff in hand, walked with difficulty over these slippery roads, meanwhile encouraging the others with kind words, each of whom felt himself full of good−will; and had any one then uttered a complaint he would have been badly esteemed by his comrades. We arrived in sight of Smolensk. The Emperor was the least fatigued of all; and though he was pale, his countenance was calm, and nothing in his appearance indicated his mental sufferings; and indeed they must needs have been intense to be evident to the public. The roads were strewn with men and horses slain by fatigue or famine; and men as they passed turned their eyes aside. As for the horses they were a prize for our famished soldiers.

We at last reached Smolensk on the 9th, and the Emperor lodged in a beautiful house on the Place Neuve. Although this important city had suffered since we had passed through before, it still had some resources, and we found there provisions of all kinds for the Emperor's household and the officers; but the Emperor valued but little this privileged abundance, so to speak, when he learned that the army needed food for man and beast. When he

learned of this his rage amounted to frenzy, and I have never seen him so completely beside himself. He had the commissary in charge of the provisions summoned, and reproached him in such unmeasured terms that the latter turned pale, and could find no words to justify himself, whereupon the Emperor became still more violent, and uttered terrible threats. I heard cries from the next room; and I have been told since that the quartermaster threw himself at the feet of his Majesty, beseeching pardon, and the Emperor, when his rage had spent itself, pardoned him. Never did he sympathize more truly with the sufferings of his army; never did he suffer more bitterly from his powerlessness to struggle against such overwhelming misfortunes.

On the 14th we resumed the route which we had traversed a few months before under far different auspices. The thermometer registered twenty degrees, and we were still very far from France. After a slow and painful march we arrived at Krasnoi. The Emperor was obliged to go in person, with his guard, to meet the enemy, and release the Prince of Eckmuhl. He passed through the fire of the enemy, surrounded by his old guard, who pressed around their chief in platoons in which the shell made large gaps, furnishing one of the grandest examples in all history of the devotion and love of thousands of men to one. When the fire was hottest, the band played the air, 'Where can one be better than in the bosom of his family?' Napoleon interrupted them, exclaiming, "Play rather, 'Let us watch over the safety of the Empire.'" It is difficult to imagine anything grander.

The Emperor returned from this combat much fatigued. He had passed several nights without sleeping, listening to the reports made to him on the condition of the army, expediting orders necessary to procure food for the soldiers, and putting in motion the different corps which were to sustain the retreat. Never did his stupendous activity find more constant employment; never did he show a higher courage than in the midst of all these calamities of which he seemed to feel the weighty responsibility.

Between Orcha and the Borysthenes those conveyances for which there were no longer horses were burned, and the confusion and discouragement became so great that in the rear of the army most of the stragglers threw down their arms as a heavy and useless burden. The officers of the armed police had orders to return by force those who abandoned their corps, and often they were obliged to prick them with their swords to make them advance. The intensity of their sufferings had hardened the heart of the soldier, which is naturally kind and sympathizing, to such an extent that the most unfortunate intentionally caused commotions in order that they might seize from some better equipped companion sometimes a cloak, sometimes food. "There are the Cossacks!" was their usual cry of alarm; and when these guilty tricks became known, and our soldiers recovered from their surprise, there were reprisals, and the confusion reached its height.

The corps of Marshal Davoust was one of those which suffered most in the whole army. Of the seventy thousand men with which it left France, there only remained four or five thousand, and they were dying of famine. The marshal himself was terribly emaciated. He had neither clothing nor food. Hunger and fatigue had hollowed his cheeks, and his whole appearance inspired pity. This brave marshal, who had twenty times escaped Russian bullets, now saw himself dying of hunger; and when one of his soldiers gave him a loaf, he seized it and devoured it. He was also the one who was least silent; and while thawing his mustache, on which the rain had frozen, he railed indignantly against the evil destiny which had thrown them into thirty degrees of cold. Moderation in words was difficult while enduring such sufferings.

For some time the Emperor had been in a state of great anxiety as to the fate of Marshal Ney, who had been cut off, and obliged to clear for himself a passage through the midst of the Russians, who followed us on every side.

As time passed the alarm increased. The Emperor demanded incessantly if Ney had yet been seen, accusing himself of having exposed this brave general too much, asking for him as for a good friend whom one has lost. The whole army shared and manifested the same anxiety, as if this brave soldier were the only one in danger. A few regarding him as certainly lost, and seeing the enemy threaten the bridges of the Borysthenes, proposed to cut them; but the army was unanimous in their opposition to this measure.

On the 20th, the Emperor, whom this idea filled with the deepest dejection, arrived at Basanoni, and was dining in company with the Prince of Neuchatel and the Duke of Dantzic, when General Gourgaud rushed in with the announcement that Marshal Ney and his troops were only a few leagues distant. The Emperor exclaimed with inconceivable joy, "Can it be true?" M. Gourgaud gave him particulars, which were soon known throughout the camp. This news brought joy to the hearts of all, each of whom accosted the other eagerly, as if each had found a long−lost brother; they spoke of the heroic courage which had been displayed; the talent shown in saving his

corps in spite of snows, floods, and the attacks of the enemy. It is due Marshal Ney, to state here, that according to the opinion I have heard expressed by our most illustrious warriors, his safe retreat is a feat of arms to which history furnishes no parallel. The heart of our soldiers palpitated. with enthusiasm, and on that day they felt the emotions of the day of victory! Ney and his division gained immortality by this marvelous display of valor and energy. So much the better for the few survivors of this handful of braves, who can read of the great deeds they have done, in these annals inspired by them. His Majesty said several times, "I would give all the silver in the vaults of the Tuileries to have my brave Ney at my side."

To Prince Eugene was given the honor of going to meet Marshal Ney, with a corps of four thousand soldiers. Marshal Mortier had disputed this honor with him, but among these illustrious men there were never any but noble rivalries. The danger was immense; the cannon of Prince Eugene was used as a signal, understood by the marshal, to which he replied by platoon fires. The two corps met, and even before they were united, Marshal Ney and Prince Eugene were in each other's arms; and it is said that the latter wept for joy. Such scenes make this horrible picture seem somewhat less gloomy. As far as the Beresina, our march was only a succession of small skirmishes and terrible sufferings.

The Emperor passed one night at Caniwki, in a wooden cabin containing only two rooms. The one at the back was selected by him, and in the other the whole service slept pell−mell. I was more comfortable, as I slept in his Majesty's room; but several times during the night I was obliged to pass into this room, and was then compelled to step over the sleepers worn out by fatigue. Although I took care not to hurt them, they were so close together that it was impossible not to place my feet on their legs or arms.

In the retreat from Moscow, the Emperor walked on foot, wrapped in his pelisse, his head covered with a Russian cap tied under the chin. I marched often near the brave Marshal Lefebvre, who seemed very fond of me, and said to me in his German−French, in speaking of the Emperor, "He is surrounded by a set of who do not tell the truth; he does not distinguish sufficiently his good from his bad servants. How will he get out of this, the poor Emperor, whom I love so devotedly? I am always in fear of his life; if there were needed to save him only my blood, I would shed it drop by drop; but that would change nothing, and perhaps he may have need of me."

CHAPTER VII.

The day preceding the passage of the Beresina was one of terrible solemnity. The Emperor appeared to have made his decision with the cool resolution of a man who commits an act of desperation; nevertheless, councils were held, and it was resolved that the army should strip itself of all useless burdens which might harass its march. Never was there more unanimity of opinion, never were deliberations more calm or grave. It was the calm of men who decide to make one last effort, trusting in the will of God and their own courage. The Emperor had the eagles brought from each corps and burned, since he thought that fugitives had no need of them. It was a sad sight to see these men advancing from the ranks one by one, and casting in the flames what they valued more than their lives, and I have never seen dejection more profound, or shame more keenly felt; for this seemed much like a general degradation to the brave soldiers of the battle of La Moskwa. The Emperor had made these eagles talismans, and this showed only too plainly he had lost faith in them. And although the soldiers realized that the situation of affairs must be desperate to have come to this, it was at least some consolation to think that the Russians would have only the ashes. What a scene was presented by the burning of these eagles, above all to those who like myself had been present at the magnificent ceremonies attending their distribution to the army in the camp of Boulogne before the campaign of Austerlitz!

Horses were needed for the artillery, and at this critical moment the artillery was the safeguard of the army. The Emperor consequently gave orders that the horses should be impressed, for he estimated the loss of a single cannon or caisson as irreparable. The artillery was confided to the care of a corps composed entirely of officers, and numbering about five hundred men. His Majesty was so much touched at seeing these brave officers become soldiers again, put their hand to the cannon like simple cannoneers, and resume their practice of the manual of arms in their devotion to duty, that he called this corps his sacred squadron. With the same spirit which made these officers become soldiers again, the other superior officers descended to a lower rank, with no concern as to the designation of their grade. Generals of division Grouchy and Sebastiani took again the rank of simple captain.

When near Borizow we halted at the sound of loud shouts, thinking ourselves cut off by the Russian army. I saw the Emperor grow pale; it was like a thunderbolt. A few lancers were hastily dispatched, and we saw them soon returning waving their banners in the air. His Majesty understood the signal, and even before the cuirassiers had reassured us, so clearly did he keep in mind even the possible position of each corps of his army, he exclaimed, "I bet it is Victor." And in fact it was Marshal Victor, who awaited us with lively impatience. It seemed that the marshal's army had received very vague information of our disasters, and was prepared to receive the Emperor with joy and enthusiasm. His soldiers still fresh and vigorous, at least compared with the rest of the army, could hardly believe the evidence of their own eyes when they saw our wretched condition; but the cries of "Vive l'Empereur" were none the less enthusiastic.

But a different impression was made when the rear guard of the army filed before them; and great confusion ensued, as each one of the marshal's army who recognized a friend rushed out of the ranks and hastened to him, offering food and clothing, and were almost frightened by the voracity with which they ate, while many embraced each other silently in tears. One of the marshal's best and bravest officers stripped off his uniform to give it to a poor soldier whose tattered clothing exposed him almost naked to the cold, donning himself an old cloak full of holes, saying that he had more strength to resist the freezing temperature. If an excess of misery sometimes dries up the fountains of the heart, sometimes also it elevates men to a great height, as we see in this instance. Many of the most wretched blew out their brains in despair; and there was in this act, the last which nature suggests as an end to misery, a resignation and coolness which makes one shudder to contemplate. Those who thus put an end to their lives cared less for death than they did to put an end to their insupportable sufferings, and I witnessed during the whole of this disastrous campaign what vain things are physical strength and human courage when the moral strength springing from a determined will is lacking. The Emperor marched between the armies of Marshal Victor and Marshal Oudinot; and it was a depressing sight to see these movable masses halt sometimes in succession,−−first those in front, then those who came next, then the last. And when Marshal Oudinot who was in the lead suspended his march from any unknown cause, there was a general movement of alarm, and ominous rumors were circulated; and since men who have seen much are disposed to believe anything, false rumors were

as readily credited as true, and the alarm lasted until the front of the army again moved forward, and their confidence was somewhat restored.

On the 25th, at five o'clock in the evening, there had been thrown across the river temporary bridges made of beams taken from the cabins of the Poles. It had been reported in the army that the bridges would be finished during the night. The Emperor was much disturbed when informed that the army had been thus deceived; for he knew how much more quickly discouragement ensues when hope has been frustrated, and consequently took great pains to keep the rear of the army informed as to every incident, so that the soldiers should never be left under cruel delusions. At a little after five the beams gave way, not being sufficiently strong; and as it was necessary to wait until the next day, the army again abandoned itself to gloomy forebodings. It was evident that they must endure the fire of the enemy all the next day. But there was no longer any choice; for it was only at the end of this night of agony and suffering of every description that the first beams were secured in the river. It is hard to comprehend how men could submit to stand up to their mouths in water filled with ice, and rallying all the strength which nature had given them, with all that the energy of devotion furnished, and drive piles several feet deep into a miry bed, struggling against the most horrible fatigue, pushing back with their hands enormous blocks of ice, which would have submerged and sunk them with their weight; in a word, warring even to the death with cold, the greatest enemy of life. This marvelous feat was accomplished by our French pontoon corps. Many perished, borne away by the current or benumbed by the cold. The glory of this achievement, in my opinion, exceeds in value many others.

The Emperor awaited daylight in a poor hut, and in the morning said to Prince Berthier, "Well, Berthier, how can we get out of this? "He was seated in his room, great tears flowing down his cheeks, which were paler than usual; and the prince was seated near him.

They exchanged few words, and the Emperor appeared overcome by his grief. I leave to the imagination what was passing in his soul. At last the King of Naples opened his heart to his brother−in−law, and entreated him, in the name of the army, to think of his own safety, so imminent had the peril become. Some brave Poles had offered themselves as escort for the Emperor; he could cross the Beresina higher up, and reach Wilna in five days. The Emperor silently shook his head in token of refusal, which the king understood, and the matter was no longer considered.

Amid overwhelming disasters, the few blessings which reach us are doubly felt. I observed this many times in the case of his Majesty and his unfortunate army. On the banks of the Beresina, just as the first supports of the bridge had been thrown across, Marshal Ney and the King of Naples rushed at a gallop to the Emperor, calling to him that the enemy had abandoned his threatening position; and I saw the Emperor, beside himself with joy, not being able to believe his ears, go himself at a run to throw a searching glance in the direction they said Admiral Tschitzakoff had taken. This news was indeed true; and the Emperor, overjoyed and out of breath from his race, exclaimed, "I have deceived the admiral." This retrograde movement of the enemy was hard to understand, when the opportunity to overwhelm us was within his reach; and I doubt whether the Emperor, in spite of his apparent satisfaction, was very sure of the happy consequences which this retreat of the enemy might bring to us.

Before the bridge was finished, about four hundred men were carried part of the way across the river on two miserable rafts, which could hardly sustain themselves against the current; and we saw them from the bank rudely shaken by the great blocks of ice which encumbered the river. These blocks came to the very edge of the raft, where, finding an obstacle, they remained stationary for some time, then were suddenly ingulfed under these frail planks with a terrible shock, though the soldiers stopped the largest with their bayonets, and turned their course aside from the rafts.

The impatience of the army was at its height. The first who reached the opposite bank were the brave Jacqueminot, aide−de−camp of Marshal Oudinot, and Count Predzieczki, a brave Lithuanian, of whom the Emperor was very fond, especially since he had shared our sufferings with such fidelity and devotion. Both crossed the river on horseback, and the army uttered shouts of admiration as they saw that the chiefs were the first to set the example of intrepidity. They braved enough dangers to make the strongest brain reel. The current forced their horses to swim diagonally across, which doubled the length of the passage; and as they swam, blocks of ice struck against their flanks and sides, making terrible gashes.

At one o'clock General Legrand and his division were crossing the bridge constructed for the infantry, while the Emperor sat on the opposite bank, and some of the cannon becoming entangled had for an instant delayed the

march. The Emperor rushed on the bridge, put his hand to the work, and assisted in separating the pieces. The enthusiasm of the soldiers was at its height; and it was amid cries of "Vive l'Empereur" that the infantry set foot on the opposite bank.

A short time after, the Emperor, learning that General Partonneaux had laid down his arms, was deeply affected by this news, and gave vent to reproaches which were somewhat unjust to the general. Later, when he had received more correct information, he understood perfectly the part which necessity and despair had played in this surrender.

It is a fact that the brave general did not come to this decision till he had done all that a brave man could under the circumstances; for it is permitted a man to recoil when there is nothing left but to let himself be killed to no purpose.

When the artillery and baggage−wagons passed, the bridge was so overloaded that it fell in; and instantly a retrograde movement took place, which crowded together all the multitude of stragglers who were advancing, like a flock being herded, in the rear of the artillery. Another bridge had been constructed, as if the sad thought had occurred that the first might give way. But the second was narrow and without a railing; nevertheless, it at first seemed a very valuable makeshift in such a calamity. But how disasters follow each other! The stragglers rushed there in crowds. The artillery, the baggage−wagons, in a word, all the army material, had been in the front on the first bridge when, it was broken; and when, from the sudden panic which seized on those in the rear of this multitude, the dreadful catastrophe was learned, the last there found themselves first in gaining the other bridge. It was urgent the artillery should pass first, consequently it rushed impetuously towards the only road to safety which remained. No pen can describe the scene of horror which now ensued; for it was literally over a road of trampled human bodies that conveyances of all sorts reached the bridge. On this occasion could be seen how much brutality, and even cold−blooded ferocity, can be produced in the human mind by the instinct of self−preservation. There were some stragglers most frantic of all, who wounded, and even killed, with their bayonets, the unfortunate horses which obeyed the lash of their guides; and several caissons were left on the road in consequence of this slaughter.

As I have said, the bridge had no railing; and crowds of those who forced their way across fell into the river and were ingulfed beneath the ice. Others in their fall tried to stop themselves by grasping the planks of the bridge, and remained suspended over the abyss until their hands, crushed by the wheels of the vehicles, lost their grasp, and they went to join their comrades as the' waves closed over them. Entire caissons, with drivers and horse were precipitated into the water.

Poor women were seen holding their children out of the water in the effort to delay for a few instants their death, and death in such a frightful form, a truly admirable maternal incident, which the genius of the painter has divined in painting scenes from the Deluge, and which we saw in all its heartrending and frightful reality! The Emperor wished to retrace his steps, believing that his presence might restore order; but he was dissuaded from this project so earnestly, that he withstood the promptings of his heart and remained, though certainly it was not his elevated rank which kept him on the bank. All the suffering he endured could be seen when he inquired every instant where the crossing was, if they could still hear cannon rolling over the bridge, if the cries had not ceased somewhat in that direction. "The reckless creatures! Why could they not wait a little?" said he.

There were fine examples of devotion under these distressing circumstances. A young artilleryman threw himself into the water to save a poor mother with two children, who was attempting to gain the other shore in a little canoe. The load was too heavy; an enormous block of ice floated against and sunk the little boat. The cannoneer seized one of the children, and, swimming vigorously, bore it to the bank; but the mother and the other child perished. This kind young man adopted the orphan as his son. I do not know if he had the happiness of regaining France.

Officers harnessed themselves to sleds to carry some of their companions who were rendered helpless by their wounds. They wrapped these unfortunates as warmly as possible, cheered them from time to time with a glass of brandy when they could procure it, and lavished on them most touching attentions.

There were many who behaved in this manner, many of whose names we are ignorant; and how few returned to enjoy in their own country the remembrance of the most admirable deeds of their lives.

The bridge was burned at eight o'clock in the morning.

On the 29th the. Emperor quitted the banks of the Beresina, and we slept at Kamen, where his Majesty

occupied a poor wooden building which the icy air penetrated from all sides through the windows; nearly all the glass of which being broken, we closed the openings as well as we could with bundles of hay. A short distance from us, in a large lot, were penned up the wretched Russian prisoners whom the army drove before it. I had much difficulty in comprehending this delusion of victory which our poor soldiers still kept up by dragging after them this wretched luxury of prisoners, who could only be an added burden, as they required their constant surveillance.

When the conquerors are dying of famine, what becomes of the conquered? These poor Russians, exhausted by marches and famine, nearly all perished this night. In the morning they were found huddled pell−mell against each other, striving thus to obtain a little warmth. The weakest had succumbed; and their stiffened bodies were propped the whole night against the living without their even being aware of it. Some in their hunger ate their dead companions. The hardihood with which the Russians endure pain has often been remarked. I can cite one instance which surpasses belief. One of these fellows, after being separated from his corps, had been struck by a cannonball which had cut off both his legs and killed his horse. A French officer on a reconnoitering tour on the bank of the river where this Russian had fallen, perceived at some distance an object which appeared to be a dead horse, and yet he could see that it moved.

He approached, and saw the bust of a man whose extremities were concealed in the stomach of the horse.

This poor creature had been there four days, inclosing himself in his horse as a shelter against the cold, and feeding upon infected morsels torn from this horrible retreat.

On the 3d of December we arrived at Malodeczno. During the whole day the Emperor appeared thoughtful. and anxious. He had frequent confidential conversations with the grand equerry, M. de Caulaincourt, and I suspected some extraordinary measure. I was not deceived in my conjectures. At two leagues from Smorghoni, the Duke of Vicenza summoned me, and told me to go on in front and give orders to have the six best horses harnessed to my carriage, which was the lightest of all, and keep them in constant readiness. I reached Smorghoni before the Emperor, who did not arrive till the following night. The cold was excessive; and the Emperor alighted in a poor house on a square, where he established his headquarters. He took a light repast, wrote with his own hand the twenty−ninth bulletin of the army, and ordered all the marshals to be summoned.

Nothing had yet transpired as to the Emperor's plans, but in great and desperate measures there is always something unusual which does not escape the most clear−sighted. The Emperor was never so amiable nor so communicative, and one felt that he was endeavoring to prepare his most devoted friends for some overwhelming news. He talked for some time on indifferent subjects, then spoke of the great deeds performed during the campaign, referring with pleasure to the retreat of General Ney whom they had at last found.

Marshal Davoust appeared abstracted; and the Emperor said to him, "At least say something, Marshal." There had been for some time a little coolness between him and the Emperor, and his Majesty reproached him with the rarity of his visits, but he could not dissipate the cloud which darkened every brow; for the Emperor's secret had not been as well kept as he had hoped. After supper the Emperor ordered Prince Eugene to read the twenty−ninth bulletin, and spoke freely of his plan, saying that his departure was essential in order to send help to the army. He gave his orders to the marshals, all of whom appeared sad and discouraged. It was ten o'clock when the Emperor, saying it was time to take some repose, embraced all the marshals and retired. He felt the need of withdrawing; for he had been oppressed by the constraint of this interview, as could easily be seen by the extreme agitation his countenance manifested at its close. About half an hour after, the Emperor called me into his room and said, "Constant, I am about to leave; I thought I should be able to take you with me, but I have taken into consideration the fact that several carriages would attract attention; it is essential that I experience no delay, and I have given orders that you are to set out immediately upon the return of my horses, and you will consequently follow me at a short distance." I was suffering greatly from my old malady; hence the Emperor would not allow me to go with him on the boot as I requested, in order that he should receive his customary attentions from me. He said, "No, Constant, you will follow me in a carriage, and I hope that you will be able to arrive not more than a day behind me." He departed with the Duke of Vicenza, and Roustan on the box; my carriage was unharnessed, and I remained to my great regret. The Emperor left in the night.

By daybreak the army had learned the news, and the impression it made cannot be depicted. Discouragement was at its height; and many soldiers cursed the Emperor, and reproached him for abandoning them. There was universal indignation. The Prince of Neuchatel was very uneasy, and asked news of every one, though he would

naturally have been the first to receive any information. He feared lest Napoleon, who had a feeble escort, should be made prisoner by the Cossacks, who, if they had learned his departure, would make the greatest efforts to carry him off.

This night, the 6th, the cold increased greatly; and its severity may be imagined, as birds were found on the ground frozen stiff with the cold. Soldiers who had seated themselves with their head in their hands, and bodies bent forward in order to thus feel less the emptiness of their stomachs, were found dead in this position. As we breathed, the vapor from our lips froze on our eyebrows, little white icicles formed on the mustaches and beards of the soldiers; and in order to melt them they warmed their chins by the bivouac fire, and as may be imagined a large number did not do this with impunity. Artillerymen held their hands to the horses' nostrils to get a little warmth from the strong breathing of these animals. Their flesh was the usual food of the soldiers. Large slices of this meat were thrown on the coals; and when frozen by the cold, it was carried without spoiling, like salted bacon, the powder from the cartridge−boxes taking the place of salt.

This same night we had with us a young Parisian belonging to a very wealthy family, who had endeavored to obtain employment in the Emperor's household. He was very young, and had been received among the boys of the apartments, and the poor child was taking his first journey. He was seized with the fever as we left Moscow, and was so ill this evening that we could not remove him from the wagon belonging to the wardrobe service in which he had been made as comfortable as possible. He died there in the night, much to be regretted by all who knew him. Poor Lapouriel was a youth of charming character, fine education, the hope of his family,, and an only son. The ground was so hard that we could not dig a grave, and experienced the chagrin of leaving his remains unburied.

I set out next day armed with an order from the Prince de Neuchatel that all on the road should furnish me horses in preference to all others. At the first post after leaving Smorghoni, whence the Emperor had set out with the Duke of Vicenza, this order was of invaluable aid to me, for there were horses for only one carriage. I found myself a rival to M. the Count Daru, who arrived at the same time. It is useless to say that without the Emperor's orders to rejoin him as quickly as possible I would not have exercised my right to take precedence over the intendant general of the army; but impelled by my duty I showed the order of the Prince de Neuchatel to M. the Count Daru, and the latter, after examining it, said to me, "You are right, M. Constant; take the horses, but I beg you send them back as quickly as possible." How crowded with disasters was this retreat.

After much suffering and privation we arrived at Wilna, where it was necessary to pass a long, narrow bridge before entering the town. The artillery and wagons occupied the whole bridge so entirely that no other carriage could pass; and it was useless to say "His Majesty's service," as we received only maledictions. Seeing the impossibility of advancing, I alighted from my carriage, and found there the Prince of Aremberg, ordnance officer of the Emperor, in a pitiable condition, his face, nose, ears, and feet having been frozen. He was seated behind my carriage. I was cut to the heart, and said to the prince that if he had informed me of his condition I would have given him my place. He could hardly answer me. I helped him for some time; but seeing how necessary it was that we should both advance, I undertook to carry him. He was delicate, slender, and about medium height. I took him in my arms; and with this burden, elbowing, pushing, hurting some, being hurt by others, I at last reached the headquarters of the King of Naples, and deposited the prince there, recommending that he should receive every attention which his condition required. After this I resumed my carriage.

Everything had failed us. Long before reaching Wilna, the horses being dead, we had received orders to burn our carriages with all the contents. I lost heavily in this journey, as I had purchased several valuable articles which were burned with my baggage of which I always had a large quantity on our journeys. A large part of the Emperor's baggage was lost in the same manner.

A very handsome carriage of Prince Berthier, which had just arrived and had not been used, was also burned. At these fires, four grenadiers were stationed, who with fixed bayonet prevented any one from taking from the fire what had been ordered to be sacrificed.

The next day the carriages which had been spared were visited in order to be assured that nothing had been kept back. I was allowed to keep only two shirts. We slept at Wilna; but the next day very early the alarm was given that the Russians were at the gates of the town. Men rushed in, beside themselves with terror, crying, "We are lost!" The King of Naples was quickly aroused; sprang from his bed; and the order was instantly given that the Emperor's service should leave at once. The confusion made by all this can be imagined. There was no time for

any arrangements; we were obliged to start without delay. The Prince of Aremberg was put into one of the king's carriages with what could be secured for the most pressing needs; and we had hardly left the town before we heard shouts behind us, and the thunder of cannon accompanied by rapid firing. We had to climb a mountain of ice. The horses were fatigued, and we made no progress. The wagon with the treasure−chest of the army was abandoned; and a part of the money was pillaged by men who had not gone a hundred steps before they were obliged to throw it away in order to save their lives.