HUMAN VOICES FROM THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

ARTHUR CHUQUET

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HUMAN VOICES

FROM THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN OF 1812

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By

ARTHUR CHUQUET

(Member de l'Institut)

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF "ETUDES D'HISTOIRE," CINQUIEME SÉRIE.

This volume is the fifth in the series "Etudes d'Histoire" which the author has published. It was felt that in selecting the book for publication in England, it would be well to give it a distinctive name, as the English Publishers have not the intention of issuing the entire series. It is believed that the title "Human Voices from the Russian Campaign" will be found apt enough for the documents which Monsieur Chuquet has presented so brilliantly.

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NARBONNE AT VILNA

I

MINISTER of War under Louis XVI during the height of the Revolution, and lover of Mme de Staël; these two titles are enough to prevent Louis de Narbonne from being forgotten.

As Minister of War he earned the description sent to the King by some anonymous writer: "Much wit, affability and resource; speaks with facility; of frank and honourable behaviour."

He was sincerely constitutional. When Colonel of an Infantry Regiment in Piedmont, had he not said he would hand in his resignation if the King refused to accept the Constitution of 1791?

He gave proofs of zeal and ardour; he endeavoured to re-inforce discipline; he showed, as his friend, Lauzon-Biron declared[1]—that the possessor of activity, intelligence, and charm, makes a very good minister.

[1] There exists other unpublished testimony. Some one, whose name is unknown to us, wrote on the 31st of December, 1791: "Narbonne goes on well; he is showing zeal and a strong

But the Royalists turned against him; they blamed him for the looseness of his morals. *Quis interit Gracchos?* "Is it enough," wrote Bernis, "is it really enough for taking the place of Louvois that a man should drink champagne, ruin women, and run into debt?"

Mme de Staël was passionately in love with Narbonne and did her very utmost to get him into the Ministry. In the August of 1792 she managed to get him away and saved him from proscription. The lovers met again in England and Switzerland.

Then came a rupture; but in a letter to the First Consul Narbonne affirmed and proclaimed his feelings of friendship and gratitude towards her who had snatched him from the jaws of death.

Struck out of the list of *émigrés* in 1800, he solicited Bonaparte for a post, and, according to Pasquier, despite his frivolous appearance, his rare perspicacity and steadfastness befitted him for high office.

In 1791 he had desired the post of Minister of Finance, instead of that of Minister of War. But Talleyrand, as might have been expected, prevented Narbonne, his former friend and confidant, from approaching Napoleon; and when Napoleon wished to employ Narbonne, Talleyrand insinuated that his intimate

will, and justifies the account his friends gave of him. His frontier expedition is a good performance. The Assembly, which at first thought his ways much too free and easy, are now much pleased with him."

friend possessed no more than a sparkling wit used only for effect and exhausted in a note or witticism.

Poor Narbonne was under the impression that Talleyrand, whom he had known for thirty years; was urgently recommending him to Napoleon's good graces; while, on the contrary, Talleyrand was doing him an ill turn and even trying to damage him by accusing him of communicating with Lord Lauderdale in January, 1806.

The negotiation fell through, and Napoleon, in anger, exiled Narbonne for some time to a distance of forty leagues from Paris.

Then Talleyrand fell into disgrace, and suddenly, in 1809, no doubt at the request of Fezensac, his cousin, who had just married Clarke's daughter, Narbonne was summoned to the Grand Army. On June 29 the Emperor bestowed on him the governorship of the town of Raab with the rank of General of Division, that rank the chivalrous Narbonne had refused from the Legislative Assembly when he left the Administration.

Later he sent him to Trieste under Marmont. Then he appointed him French Minister in Bavaria at the request of King Maximilian, who, before the Revolution, when he was Colonel of the *Royal Deux-Ponts*, had been in garrison with Narbonne at Strasbourg. The Emperor wished even to give Narbonne Coulaincourt's post as Ambassador to Russia; but the Tsar Alexander preferred Lauriston.

He even wanted to make him Grand Master of the

Household of Marie-Louise; and who knows what influence this *sage tuteur* might have had on the Empress's mind?

But the opposition of those around Marie-Louise was so strong that Napoleon dared not appoint him. Anyhow, he granted him a sum of 200,000 francs to pay his debts, and made him his aide-de-camp.

It was a little late to recognize Narbonne's worth, since his service with the Emperor did not begin till the 21st of December, 1811; but Napoleon soon grew to appreciate his knowledge, his sagacity, and his great intelligence and tact.

Narbonne had been equerry to Mme Adélaïde, and thus constantly to and fro between Paris and Versailles in the performance of his duties and for his own amusement. On the road, sitting in his carriage, he read incessantly, so getting through numberless volumes; and he was very well informed. But in addition to his learning he had the fine manners and the traditions of the *ancien Régime.*

He once presented a letter to the Emperor on the back of his three-cornered hat, and the Emperor was flattered by a mark of respect shown him for the first time.

During the war with Russia, Narbonne, in his capacity as aide-de-camp, accompanied Napoleon, and they were mutually enchanted.

Narbonne said the Emperor was devilish witty,

and the Emperor, delighted with Narbonne's conversation, his humour, his gaiety and his funny stories, often asked him to dine with him.

During the Retreat, although he was fifty-six years old, and accustomed to enjoy all the comforts of life, Narbonne distinguished himself by his courage and good temper. Every morning when on bivouac, however bad was the weather, he had his hair powdered and dressed *à l'oiseau royal*, just as if for the most elegant salon; and whether on foot or in a sledge he never lost his ease of mind.

In 1813 Napoleon thus complained of him: "Narbonne," he said, "went through the Russian Campaign with me, and I learnt to see his good qualities. I have a great respect for him, he is a man of honour; but he relies too much on his wit and his talent for seduction; he has a mania for succeeding with women, and I advised him not to make himself ridiculous."

Nevertheless, at St. Helena, the Emperor regretted that he had not made him Minister for Foreign Affairs.

"Narbonne," he declared, "knew what he was about, and at Smolensk in the month of August, he said, as I have heard since, 'I see the Empire falling!'"

II

However this may be, in 1811, Narbonne was entrusted with two diplomatic missions.

In April, when Napoleon wanted to make sure of the Fortress of Spandau, which he looked upon as the citadel of Berlin, he sent Narbonne—as M. de Pradt phrased it—to carry narcotics to the King of Prussia and to mitigate the somewhat harsh and uncivil nature of such a measure the day after an alliance.

"Did not Narbonne," remarked one of the Emperor's secretaries, àpropos of this, "unite in himself the soldier's honesty with the graciousness and amiability of the courtier?"

Then, in May, Narbonne, who was still in Berlin, had orders to meet the Tsar Alexander.

On April 24, Prince Kourakine, Russian Ambassador in Paris, had informed Maret, Duc de Bassano, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, of the demands made by Russia before entering into negotiations: the French Army must evacuate Prussia and retire behind the Rhine!

Napoleon was indignant, and did not spare Prince Kourakine in the audience he gave him of April 27.

Such a proposal was an outrage; Alexander wanted to humiliate him, to wound him in his honour; Alexander was drawing a knife across his throat!

It is well known that Napoleon prided himself on his nobility, and loved to be surrounded by aristocrats.

Had he not said to the old Royalist Chatillon, "On the honour of a gentleman"? Now in the same way he said to Kourakine: "You are a gentleman; how can you make such a proposal?"

Anxiety was added to his anger, for he feared that Alexander might intend to cross the Niemen and come to meet the French.

This was to upset his own plan of attacking first. In order to stop the Russians and prevent their attack, to deceive and keep them quiet, he decided to send Narbonne to negotiate with them.

He believed Alexander must have left Petersburg with the Chancellor Roumiantsow for the provinces, probably for the Army at Vilna.

Therefore Narbonne must leave Berlin in twenty-four hours and go, not to Petersburg, but to Vilna, where the Emperor would be found.

He was not to mention Kourakine's declaration, of which he must be supposed ignorant; he was to talk of nothing but agreement and peace—wordily and vaguely, nothing exact; he was to tell the Emperor Alexander that the Emperor Napoleon was always hoping for an amicable settlement.

But, in accordance with Maret's instructions, he was to remain at Vilna as long as possible, so as to observe

the movements of the Russian troops and to pick up military information.

"His Majesty," adds the Duc de Bassano in his letter to Narbonne, "advises much reserve, moderation, and prudence; you will have to do with shrewd and suspicious men[1]; he relies on your most absolute discretion."

To give more plausibility to Narbonne's mission, Maret sent him an official memorandum intended for the Chancellor Roumiantsow.

On the 17th of April, the Duc de Bassano had proposed peace to Lord Castlereagh on the following conditions: to keep what the enemy could not take away by war; to recognize the independence of Portugal; to leave Joseph at Madrid and Murat at Naples; and on the 23rd Lord Castlereagh had answered that the only peace England would accept was one which would stipulate the re-establishment of Ferdinand VII in Spain.

Well, Narbonne must communicate to the Russian Cabinet the terms of the Anglo-French negotiation, a negotiation in which Alexander must take part either as the friend of France or the ally of England, and in this way we should find out if he were decidedly for us or against us.

"Whatever were the situation, peace depended on the decision of Russia."

[1] "Roumiantsow," said Napoleon to Roederer, "is a very able man."

Besides this, Narbonne received from Napoleon a letter to the Tsar couched in the most affectionate terms.

The Emperor desired to avert war; his feelings were the same as at Tilsit and Erfurt; and if war was inevitable, it would in no wise alter his sentiments for Alexander, which no vicissitudes could change.

This letter and Maret's memorandum had been written on the 5th of May; they were ante-dated the 25th of April. Alexander would suppose that Napoleon and his Minister had despatched them before knowing of Kourakine's declaration, and thus Napoleon, by not parrying the Russian demands with others, was able still to assume a pacific tone.

III

Since the 28th of April, Alexander had been at Vilna; on the 18th of May, at 9 o'clock in the morning, Narbonne, with his two aides-de-camp, Tiburca Sebastiani and Fernand de Rohan-Chabot, arrived in the town, and, an hour later, he delivered Napoleon's letter to the Tsar.

Having read it, Alexander said that he would not be the first to draw the sword, and that he did not wish to be responsible for the war in the eyes of Europe. But he would not re-open the negotiations; he had spoken; Europe was not ignorant of his grievances.

He swore—though a month earlier he had formally offered his alliance to the English Cabinet—he swore that hitherto he had not lent an ear to the agents of England, and that he would make no alteration in his policy unless it were done openly.

In any case, if he were still the ally of France, he would do nothing dishonourable, and would keep the interests of his people constantly in sight.

With a finger he pointed out to Narbonne on a map of Russia the furthest limits of the Empire at the extreme end of Kamtschatka :

"If Napoleon goes to war with me and fortune favours him, *that* is where he will have to get to ask for peace."

What answer could Narbonne give to such words but banalities and courtly speeches, as he owned later ? Still he made one witty reply that did him credit.

"Even if you were masters of Moscow," said Alexander, "I should not think my cause lost."

"Truly, sire," said Narbonne, "even in such a case you would be none the less the most powerful monarch in Asia."

The diplomatic General on his way to deliver Maret's memorandum into Roumiantsow's hands, called on the Vice-Chancellor, Kotchoubey and spent the rest of the day partly with him, partly in the streets of the town.

The next day, the 19th of May, at half-past two o'clock, he dined with the Tsar, and in the evening, at 7, he again

saw Alexander, and had a short conversation with him. But the Tsar presented him with his portrait, thus dismissing him, and courteously ordering him to depart.

On the morning of the 20th, Narbonne, with his two aides-de-camp, was present at the march past of the Grenadier regiments at Sniepichki, treating him, as Nesselrode [1] says, to a fine spectacle and showing him magnificent soldiers ; but, he goes on to say, the Frenchman was clever at pretty speeches, and said to the Tsar : " If I had left yesterday, I should have taken with me better hopes of peace ; after seeing such troops, I own it must be very difficult to be pacific."

That evening, at a quarter-past six, after receiving while he was at dinner a farewell visit from Nesselrode, who had already called on him two days earlier, the post-horses made their appearance, and at half-past six he left Vilna, accompanied by a *feldjäger*, or official courier.

He had spent but three days at Vilna ; he had been listened to patiently and received with great courtesy ; but he had been politely dismissed without having shown any desire on his own part to leave.

[1] Nesselrode, says Lauriston to Maret in a letter of the 1st of May, during the Tsar's journey had to do all the work that ought to have been Sporanski's.

IV

Nowadays we know why he was so promptly dismissed.

The Russian police, under the orders of Jacques de Sanglen, had kept constant watch on Narbonne; they had sent him a detective, named Savan, who professed to impart to the Frenchman valuable intelligence; and twice, during lengthy interviews, Savan had informed Narbonne—more or less exactly—of the strength and the positions of the Russian Army, the enlistments and the temper of the Polish population.

Savan went further. In Narbonne's absence, he bribed his servants or made them drunk, opened the casket which contained his papers and made a copy of Maret's instructions. Now, the Duc de Bassano had charged Narbonne not to carry his instructions about with him.

"You must be most careful," he had written, "not to keep them with you, but to leave them at the Headquarters of the Prince d'Eckmühl." The Emperor's envoy ought not to have with him papers the Russians might get hold of to print and "take advantage" of.

Narbonne, always somewhat careless and flighty, had taken no heed of the Minister's advice.

So Alexander, Roumiantsow and Nesselrode read Maret's instructions, and we may imagine their vexation and anger when the following lines met their eyes;

"Your mission has a political as well as a military aim. To attain both, you must keep with the Emperor as long as possible. To gain the political end of your mission, your language must be extremely peaceable; you must speak much, but in general terms, of his Majesty's desire to avert war; and, without bloodshed, to come to terms that would re-establish between the two powers the friendly relations existing between them up to recent days. The aim of your military mission is to gain information about everything concerning the Russian army—its organization, its strength, its sentiments; about those of its most influential men, and especially as to the feelings of the Poles. Take as careful note as is possible of the towns, the rivers, the country and its resources, and of the state of mind of the people. If you go to Vilna, try to stay there some time, so that you may gain a distinct impression of that town, which is a centre of public opinion."

To give no time for Narbonne to gain a "distinct impression" about Vilna, the country and the army, the Tsar made haste to dismiss him.

"In view of the promptness displayed in getting M. de Narbonne to leave Vilna," wrote Lauriston to Maret, "Your Excellency will gather that he was very much in the way, and that they were unwilling to keep him longer than necessary."

Indeed, even if Narbonne had not been in the way of the Russians, he could not have prolonged his stay at

Vilna. Alexander's mind was made up, and he was determined to put an end to it all. Convinced that he was defending his rights, he resolutely awaited Napoleon's attack.

The Chancellor Roumiantsow had assured Lauriston that the Tsar had gone to Vilna solely to avert war and to prevent his generals taking any action against the French, who were approaching Königsberg, which might provoke a rupture. But Alexander, too, like his adversary, told himself that the rupture must come, that war—a war fought on his own ground and within the limits of his Empire—was necessary, would be successful, and would put an end to the crisis and relieve the immense, unbearable tension of matters which had lasted for two years.

Had not Kourakine's declaration been an ultimatum, and the going to Vilna to assume command of the troops a challenge?

V

On May 28 a post-chaise, powdered with dust, drove into the courtyard of the Palace at Dresden, where the Emperor had been for the last ten days.

It was Narbonne coming back from Vilna—after having seen Prince Joseph Poniatovski at Warsaw—and that evening, the centre of a circle of officers and officials, he gave a lively account of his journey.

The Emperor Alexander, writes Castellane after a conversation with Narbonne, refuses to submit, and he adds that the Tsar had pointed out on the map the immense size of his Empire, showing at the same time how small would be the portion of territory Napoleon might possibly succeed in holding, and had declared that he would know how to defend himself—that he would not make peace until the French had left Russian soil, that he would wear them out, would allow them to advance and destroy themselves by keeping on the march and by an occupation of country impossible to keep up for long at so great a distance from their supplies.

M. de Pradt saw Narbonne the same evening at the house of the Comte de Senfft-Pilsach, and Narbonne confided to him that he had found the attitude of the Russians and the Emperor Alexander of the best kind, neither dejected nor boastful ("*sans abattement et sans jactance*"); Alexander had deplored the breaking-off of the alliance, and assured him that *he* was not the aggressor. "I know," he had said in conclusion, "Napoleon's talents and power; but you need only look at the map of Russia to recognize its vastness; not until I reached the utmost limits of Siberia would I sign a peace that would be ignominious for my country."

But what had Narbonne told Napoleon?

First of all he had handed him Roumiantsow's answer to the Duc de Bassano.

The Tsar, wrote the Chancellor, was grateful for the kindness of the Emperor Napoleon in informing him of his proposals to the British government; and he must always approve of the sacrifices that monarch would make to obtain a general peace. As for himself, he had invaded neither Prussia nor the Duchy of Warsaw, and he had sent to Prince Kourakine instructions which would furnish the means for settling the differences between France and Russia. He remained true to the line of conduct he had traced out for himself; he had at heart the avoidance of anything that might give his relations with Napoleon a character of bitterness and animosity; he should persevere in his defensive attitude; he was even all the more temperate in proportion as the growth of his forces enabled him the better to repel claims "which might be made against the interests of his people and the dignity of his crown."

Subsequently Narbonne told Napoleon that the Russians were making preparations for resistance, that they had large store-houses behind the frontier lines; that in case of a retreat they would fall back upon the Dwina, which would form a second line; that an entrenched camp at Drissa covered the road to Petersburg; that the head of a bridge protected the road to Moscow, and that a third army, the army of the West, had just been formed under the orders of Tormassov.

He did not fail to repeat what he had heard from the spy Savan. France, according to this Savan, must not

count on the Poles—of unstable mind; as for the Russians, they wished for war and would do anything in the world to regain freedom for their trade; for this freedom was absolutely necessary to them, as without her commerce Russia could not exist.

The Emperor strode about as he listened to Narbonne. When the General had done: "So the Russian Cabinet wants war!" exclaimed Napoleon. "It owns to and confirms Kourakine's proposals. It is its *sine quâ non*. It's what the German Princes here told me; they all knew that Russia demanded my return towards the Rhine. There's no more time to lose!"

The next day he left Dresden to join the army.

VI

Such was Narbonne's mission to Vilna in 1812.

Nesselrode wrote to his wife that he did not feel sure of the effect it would produce, and that he did not know whether peace would be broken or not.

"I expect nothing from the results of Narbonne's journey," his wife wrote to him in answer. "In the letter he wrote to the Princess Dolgorouki, he makes set speeches and talks about peace, but we are not taken in by it. It is a manœuvre the Great Man always tries on before the beginning of each war. All these sendings

of envoys serve no good purpose and only retard hostilities."

But the sending of this envoy served to show that Alexander was unshakable in his determination not to give way.

Schön told Hardenberg that the Tsar had publicly answered Narbonne to the effect that Russia could not say whether or not she accepted the proposals of France until she had lost five battles in succession; and Schön adds that these words were spoken to raise the enthusiasm of the army and to give the war as national a character as possible.

About the same time Mathieu Dumas reminded Berthier of an important conversation he had had with Niebuhr.

"In 1807," Niebuhr had said to Dumas," I spent three months with Barclay de Tolly, who had been so severely wounded at Eylau; and Barclay described to me the plan of campaign he had formed: i.e., to entice the Grand Army into the heart of Russia, even to beyond Moscow, far from its base of operations, to tire and wear it out, and inflict upon it a second Pultava."

Berthier repeated these words to the Emperor, but the Emperor took no heed of them.

He was to go down before Alexander's stubborn will. Even when he knew of the result of the battle of the Moskova, even when he heard of the taking of Moscow, Alexander persisted and declared to Colonel Michaud,

that he would fight to the bitter end; that he would let his beard grow to his waist and go to eat potatoes with the meanest of his peasants in the depths of Siberia rather than sue for peace.

NAPOLEON AND "L'AFFAIRE MALET"

I

ON October 23, 1812, General Malet, by a stroke of unprecedented audacity, made an attempt to overthrow the Empire, and the Maréchale Lefebvre—Madame Sans-Gêne—described the event to her husband in these words:

"Here's truly wonderful news from Paris; it seems to me like a regular farce; a man must be longing for death to attempt such a thing. General Malet, La Horie, and Guidal, Generals of Brigade, all three in prison, all three escaped without anybody knowing anything about it; stirring up six hundred men in barracks without anybody knowing anything about it; assassinating General Hulin without anybody knowing anything about it. If the pistol shot had not been fired, I give you my word of honour—I can't tell you what ideas pass through my head; I will only say, by the way, that our good city of Paris ought to have some lookers-on; for I can assure you the honest folk have proved their attachment to the Sovereign, their interest

in and love for him and all his family, for on every side they were calling out hopes that nothing had happened to Her Majesty the Empress and the King of Rome." "Mon Dieu," adds the Maréchale, "how I should like to be a bird to see the Emperor when he received the news and what his great soul thought of it!" [1]

II

Without being a bird, or even a bird-man, let us try to see the Emperor when he received the news; to trace his thoughts, to reproduce, by using his own words, the working of his mind.

It was the 6th of November, that fatal 6th of November when the snow began to fall heavily, thickly covering the ground—at Mikhaïlevska, on the way between Dorogobouje and Smolensk, that Napoleon heard of Malet's conspiracy. A courier, the first that had reached the army for ten days, brought the news. Suddenly General Daru, the Commissary-General, was seen to run up, and a circle of vedettes was formed round him and Napoleon.

The Emperor heard of Malet's rash attempt and its punishment at the same moment; but his countenance did not betray the agitation of his mind, and those who were looking at him from a distance could read nothing on his features.

[1] Wirth, *Le Maréchal Lefebvre*, p. 487.

"Well, suppose we had stayed on in Moscow!" was all he said to Daru.

In fact, Daru had advised him not to beat a retreat, but to spend the whole winter in Moscow.

Nevertheless, when with Daru he had entered the stockade that had lately served as post-house, he gave vent to his surprise and anger. Then he summoned the most devoted of his officers to hear their impressions, and he noticed that uneasiness and consternation reigned amongst them. Evidently they no longer felt the same confidence in his power and luck.

Murat was present. His first words were terrible. "It's all inconceivable! How was it no one thought of speaking of the King of Rome! It would have been so natural—so proper a thing!"

But as if he recognized he had made a foolish blunder, he hastened to flatter the Emperor, and congratulated him on his *sangfroid*.

"Sire," said he, "you are superior to all events"; and he went on to say that, after all, the affair was ridiculous and had miscarried from the first; that one need think no more of Malet, the scoundrel had expiated his crime.

The bystanders agreed with Murat, but afterwards, amongst themselves, there was melancholy talk.

So the Revolution was not done with, and discontent still existed! Who could tell if further attempts like

that of Malet might not be made? Would they witness a renewal of civil war?

The most loyal, the most Napoleonic, of them all was Davout, who, though occasionally snubbed by the Emperor, desired his sons to become good and faithful servants of the King of Rome. He cursed Malet and his accomplices, the handful of wretches who owed their lives to the Imperial clemency and who had disturbed public tranquillity at a time when Napoleon was enduring hardships and risking his life to obtain a general peace. But, said Davout in conclusion, the Emperor could see by this the devoted affection his people felt for him, and Malet's plot had met with nothing but reprobation.

Besides, at such a time, what did Malet matter? The Russians were there, and so were the rigours of winter. The next day, and even dating from the very evening of the 6th of November, the imminent danger drove away all such thoughts.

"Our first misfortunes," says Peyrusse, "absorbed us so completely that this important event left us indifferent."

III

But the Emperor alone, in the midst of the plans and movements of the Retreat, pondered incessantly over the events of the 24th of October, saying to himself:

"What an extraordinary affair! But is the whole truth of it known, or wouldn't it be best to wait for the

evidence at the trial? Yes, we must wait for the evidence, and in order to put an end to the rumours that must surely arise in France and in Europe, publish it with absolutely no detail omitted.

"Yes, everything must be told to show what this Malet really was—this disreputable fellow, one of the greatest scoundrels ever seen, and what were the wretched anarchists who gave him their assistance. What happened on the 24th of October must be told, but beforehand there must be given a couple of pages containing a plain and concise statement of the plots hatched by this person three or four years ago, as well as the reports made by Dubois, the Prefect of Police, and Fouché, the Police-minister during that time. There must also be given all the cross-examinations; the letters of the State councillors who visited the prisons; their opinion about Malet, and their decision to send him to an asylum; a note concerning La Horie and Lafon; and finally the present affair, what took place at the Ministry of Police, the reports of Hulin, Pasquier, Doucet, Laborde and Dériot; and the entire trial; and then publish it under the title of 'Divers Plots Hatched by Certain Individuals.'

"Such a volume would throw a light on both periods of the affair—the two plots: the second which has just miscarried, and how the first was discovered, and why it was not followed up.

"No set phrases, but the documents, preceded and

followed by a few comments. Nothing must be allowed to be a mystery for the citizens in a matter which concerns them so nearly, and which, when all's said, is of no consequence. It is only by printing everything and concealing nothing that the public will be convinced that it *is* of no consequence.[1]

"As a matter of fact," Napoleon goes on, "it is really of no consequence, but that idiot Savary isn't a good Prefect of Police. Why didn't he know the temper of the troops and especially the temper of the Paris regiment? How could he be ignorant of what had been going on in the Barracks since five o'clock in the morning? Why didn't he keep his eye upon Malet? How could he let him stay on in Paris?

"Cambacérès anyhow showed some sense, and I shall tell him of my approval, and Clarke, too, acted well; he had Colonel Rabbe arrested, Rabbe who neither risked his person nor shed a drop of blood to quell the rebellion! Truly a Colonel with an odd idea of his duties as a citizen! I'll see to his punishment, and I shall write to Clarke that the Paris regiment as well as the 10th troop are to be sent to the Army.

"And those others—the members of the Provisional Government Malet established! There was a certain Jacquemont who was concerned in the plot of four

[1] See the note 1 (in the Appendix) as to this project, which came to nothing.

years ago and whom I set at liberty. His whereabouts must be discovered and if he has moved; and if there is a trace of irregularity in his conduct, he must be rearrested. There were about thirty civilians concerned in that first affair, I think; they were all arrested; if they have all been released through a foolish oversight, they must be taken up again, especially any of those inferior ruffians who may be in Paris at the present time. And Tracy! and Garat—that fool Garat! Malet made them, like Jacquemont, members of the Provisional Government. Truly, the nomination is not to their discredit, though not a title of honour; but they must have shown disaffection for me and allowed themselves to talk equivocally for Malet to believe he might rely on them!

"And Frochot, the Prefect of the Seine! What Clarke tells me of his behaviour astonishes me. But before coming to a decision about him and the whole business I must wait for his letter and the definite report from Savary as well as the evidence at the trial. Yes, before taking action I can only wait for the evidence.

"And the worst of it is that Murat is right: *No one mentioned the King of Rome!* That's true—only too true; no one thought of my son.

"And I had thought the fate of France hung upon my dynasty—this fourth dynasty I have founded! Neither soldiers nor magistrates cried the rallying cry that should have been heard: 'L'Empereur est mort,

vive l'Empereur!' Oh! cowardly soldiers and chicken-hearted magistrates!

"At once they accept the proposed government, a provisional government, a government of ideologists! Ideologists! They are the real culprits, the subtle seekers after first causes, preaching the sovereignty of the people, proclaiming revolt as a duty and making everything depend on the will of an assembly—these fine metaphysicians who neither study the human heart nor understand the lessons of history and do not know, or wish to know, the advantage and benefits of a monarchy!"

IV

Such were the thoughts that beset Napoleon before reaching Smolensk, and at Smolensk itself on the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th of November, 1812, and already there awoke in him the idea of returning in all haste to Paris to consolidate his shaken authority.

Of those around him, some guessed that he was haunted by the thought of returning, and Rigau asserts that "Malet's prank foretells a departure as near as urgent."

Certain generals do not conceal their joy; they hold that misfortunes make for good at times, and hope that Malet's conspiracy may hasten the retreat, that Napoleon will be the first to leave and will for the future stay in France to watch over the internal safety of the Empire.

There are even officers and men who, when there is talk of the Paris plot, smile incredulously as they answer that it is a fable, a pretext invented by the Emperor for leaving the army.

Napoleon's enemies, too, suspect his approaching departure.

"It would not be surprising," said the *London Courier*, of the 3rd of November, "if Bonaparte made this event an excuse for returning to Paris."

COCO LEFEBVRE

I

MARSHAL LEFEBVRE was a lucky man, or at least appeared to be so. His promotion had been prodigious; the Guardsman had become a Marshal of France and Duc de Dantzig. But he had a son, Joseph, who was the torment of his life and often drove him to despair.

Born at Paris in March, 1785, and godson to the Marquis de Valady, later on a member of the National Convention, but then an officer in the French Guards, Joseph Lefebvre, in April, 1802, was appointed sub-lieutenant of the Consul's mounted grenadiers and aide-de-camp to Bessières.

Two years later we find him aide-de-camp to Soult and lieutenant in the 8th regiment of dragoons. Captain in the Imperial Guard in 1807, colonel of the 23rd regiment of mounted infantry in 1809, his father's aide-de-camp, an adjutant-major in the Army of Spain; after the battle of the Moskova on the 11th of Sep-

tember, 1812, he was given the rank of Brigadier-General.

II

Such had been his military career, and by all accounts he was what we call now a "*fils à papa*," for without his father he would not have risen so high.

"I have read, and seen for myself," so in 1789 wrote his great-uncle the Abbé Lefebvre to him, "that the sons of great men degenerate from their fathers' virtues, because, finding themselves in an assured position, they slumber idly under the shade of the laurels of their illustrious fathers, without having the courage to imitate them."

And the good Abbé implored his nephew to forget his position, to imagine he had not a penny, and to work with unflagging zeal.

Joseph Lefebvre did not follow this advice. He was brave; he distinguished himself by his valour at Prenzlau in 1806, at the siege of Dantzig in 1807, when he drove the enemy from the trenches, and in the expedition to the Tyrol in 1809. But he indulged in all sorts of excesses, and more than once, when with the army or in garrison, he was put under arrest.

He took leave without permission; he ran into debt; —and truth to tell in 1805 the Marshal made him a monthly allowance of only a hundred francs.

In the hospital at Boulogne, where he spent several months, an orderly, who cost him five francs a day extra pay, had to be stationed at the foot of his bed to prevent his running away.

Before Dantzig, he was guilty of so grave a misdemeanour that his father addressed him in the harshest fashion and even threatened to strike him.

"You scoundrel!" he cried, "do you want to bring dishonour on your father! You forget that I am the son of a peasant!" and he raised his cane.

Joseph Lefebvre was not wanting in wit at times.

"I am well aware," he answered, "that you are the son of a peasant, but I know, too, that I am the son of a Marshal of France."

And touched and softened, old Lefebvre's anger suddenly turned to delight and he embraced his son and gave him a handful of crowns.

When his father became Duc de Dantzig, Joseph became a Count; but the new Comte de Dantzig's behaviour showed no change. In 1811, when in charge of a convoy from Vittoria to Bayonne, he pushed on to Paris without the slightest authority, and it was then that his father begged General Hulin, who was in command of the first Military Division, to threaten and frighten his young scatterbrain.

"Give him as big a fright as you can; you'll save him much disgrace, and me my life. Ah! how lucky you are to have no children!"

But there was small amendment in Joseph.

In 1812, during the Retreat of the Grand Army, he committed a fresh folly.

In a wretched hovel, where the Duc de Dantzig had been entertaining General Pajol and the aide-de-camp Biot, he took advantage of his father's absence, and with the help of a couple of companions he drank up the small store of wine and liqueurs the Marshal kept in reserve at the bottom of a trunk in his carriage.

III

He had been given the nickname of Coco, no doubt because this was his familiar name with his father and mother. The whole army called him Coco, and Coco, says Castellane, passed for an ill-bred fellow given to low jokes.

In order to tone down Coco's impetuosity, the Marshal wanted him to marry, and on the 20th of December, 1811, Coco obtained leave for some months, to enable him to espouse Mlle de Fenoyl.

The future Comtesse de Dantzig, the Marshal proudly declared, was the daughter of his old lieutenant in the French Guards.

But the marriage was delayed, and the two Lefebvres, father and son, set off for the Russian campaign.

Coco died during the Retreat; attacked by a low

fever, he reached Vilna on the 9th of December, 1812, at eleven o'clock at night. He could go no further; his father had to leave him, recommending him to the care of the general of the Russian vanguard. His son, he wrote, remained at Vilna; but the enemy would be as honourable as they were brave, and would treat this voluntary prisoner generously.

The old soldier wept; his grief was painful to behold.

Mme Fusil, a French actress from the Moscow theatre, whom he had brought to Vilna in his carriage from Liady to Vilna, gave him a little consolation. "I will stay with your son," she said to him, "and I will look after the Comte de Dantzig like a mother."

Lefebvre accepted her offer, he left his aide-de-camp, Viriot, and his steward at Vilna, giving them money and letters of credit, and went his way, full of a profound sadness and a presentiment that he would never see his boy again.

On the morning of the 10th of December, the Russians entered Vilna, and the General of the Vanguard sent a guard for young Lefebvre's protection; but it consisted of Cossacks. They went into the sick man's room, they caught sight of a pile of coins on the table; they threatened him with their lances, demanding money from him, and would not go till Mme Fusil took a little model of the Virgin of Kiev from her neck, and laying it on Lefebvre, said in Russian: "God will punish you if you attack a dying man!"

At four in the afternoon came the Commander-in-Chief, Tchitchagov, and he left a guard of eighteen men.

But Coco had been upset, and his malady grew irremediably worse.

He had heard the doctor, Desgenettes, say that he might be given anything he asked for, and he asked for everything.

He died on the 15th of December. He was conscious to the last, and a little while before he died he called for Mme Fusil.

"I shall not get through the night," he said in a weak voice; "you will go back to France, for they don't detain women. You must see my mother and tell her everything. Cut off a lock of my hair before I die, for afterwards you will be afraid of me; take it to my parents and tell them I recommend you to their care; I haven't the strength to write."

Mme Fusil wept over him.

"Poor young fellow," she thought; "of mean birth, suddenly raised to the height of grandeur, wealthy, about to make one of the most brilliant of marriages, and dying in a strange land with no one but us three to mourn for him! What food for thought!"

He was decently buried. According to Russian custom he was fully dressed, and at that last moment Mme Fusil once more beheld him as she had first seen him; he slept at Vilna as he had slept at Liady, wearing the same uniform, lying in the same position.

"All things so alike," she writes, "the passing from life to death in so short a time made me burst into tears. Ah! life isn't worth the trouble we take to preserve it!" [1]

IV

Thus, in the arms of Mme Fusil, died the Comte de Dantzig, nicknamed Coco.

"I am afraid," his father had said to M. de Rémusat, "that he won't die worthily."

Coco died at least an honourable and pathetic death.

It was very long before the Marshal heard of his son's death. On December 28 he still knew nothing of Joseph Lefebvre's fate, and he wrote sadly to Berthier: "The King of Naples promised me that he would have the enemy asked for news of my unfortunate son. Since he makes no further mention of him, no doubt he has been told of his death. If the boy is really dead, it is a great calamity. If he had perished sword in hand, I could have found some consolation; but to see him die in misery is a mortal blow to me and my wife, who is already half dead, though she is still ignorant of her loss."

On January 4, 1813, there is another letter from the Marshal to Berthier: he declares that at this moment

[1] Mme Fusil, *L'Incendie de Moscow*, pp. 43–50.

he cannot undertake any active service, "Everlastingly haunted as he is by the thought of his son's fate." [1]

Under the Restoration, in the wall of the Cemetery of the Bernardins at Vilna, the Duc and Duchesse of Dantzig placed above their son's grave a slab of white marble inscribed with the following epitaph:

"Here rests the body of Joseph Lefebvre, Comte de Dantzig; General of Brigade; Officer of the Legion of Honour; Knight of the Royal Order of Saxony and Baden; died at Vilna, the 15th of December, 1812, aged twenty-seven."

But the epitaph is followed by these ridiculous lines:

Sous les yeux d'un héros, enfant de la victoire,
Cent fois au champ d'honneur il brava le trépas.
Fils d'un guerrier fameux, il aimait les combats;
It aimait, comme lui, son pays et la gloire.
Mais la Parque fatale, au printemps de ses jours,
De ses nobles travaux vint arrêter le cours.
Si loin des siens, si loin de sa patrie,
Finir hélas, si tristement sa vie!
Emule de Turenne, il enviat son sort.
Ah! pourquoi n'a-t-il pas trouvé la même mort?

* * * * *

Child of victory, under a hero's eyes.
A hundred times on the battlefield he defied death.
Son of a famous warrior, fighting he loved,
Like him he loved his fatherland and glory.
But ruthless Fate, in the spring-time of his days,
Stayed the course of his noble labours.

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[1] A. Chuquet, *La Guerre de Russie, Notes et Documents*, iii, pp. 214 and 268.

So far from his own people, so far from his country,
Alas ! so sadly to end his life !
Rival of Turenne, he envied his fate,
Ah ! why did he not find a like death ?

Coco, rival of Turenne !

THE PAYMASTER DUVERGER

I

IN 1812 a young Parisian of eighteen, B. J. Duverger, had just finished his course of study at the Lycée Napoléon. He had a wish to travel, like the greater number of the friends and companions of his youth who had become soldiers and, as he expressed it, were laying up a store of glory.

The First Army Corps Davout was mustering at Hamburg, was growing into an army and appeared to be the vanguard of a formidable expedition.

Where was this mass of fighting men bound for?

Turkey, to deprive the Sultan of his possessions in Europe and Asia? To the Indies, to drive out the English? Or was it to invade Russia, the ally of France? Rumours of rupture were already current; the Tsar was accused of bad faith; he was reproached with being disloyal to the Continental blockade.

But what did it matter to Duverger?

All he wanted was to be up and doing; to see, as

said Horace, whom he had been lately translating, the customs and the cities of men.

Provided with letters of recommendation, he went to Hamburg, and obtained a post as paymaster in Campans's division.[1]

II

It was in this way that he followed the Grand Army to Russia.

In the early days of June he was on the banks of the Niemen and beginning to know something of the discomforts of war.

Hitherto he had been surrounded by comfort; now he had to bivouac, sleeping in the open air, sometimes on straw, when he could find it, sometimes on the bare ground, and faring meagrely. Where now were the quarters of France and Germany? Where were the little amenities of the paternal roof and his soft bed and abundant table?

Duverger had to put up with it all.

When he crossed the Niemen with the advance guard he does not seem to have suffered from the storm described by Ségur; he heard no claps of thunder, he did not see the heavens discharge their cataracts of rain.

[1] See his "Souvenirs" in the *Magazine Français* of December, 1833, pp. 163–189.

What he recalls was the look of the mounted grenadiers of the Guard in the evening: their long white cloaks; their enormous bearskins; their big black horses they held by the bridle; the silence that reigned in their ranks; all this made a profound impression on the young man's mind; all this, he says—and in this part of his account can be traced the influence of Ossian—all this called up before his eyes the fantastic pictures in the poetry of the bards of the North.

The next day he received another impression—a disquieting and alarming impression, which he describes with a very good grace. He lost his way and strayed about in an immense wood. For two hours he rode about without meeting a soul, and, little by little, all his stock of martial and heroic sentiments faded away, His love of adventure deserted him, and every bush, every branch of a tree took on the shape of a Cossack.

Was he, an inoffensive official, to be the first victim of the war?

He turned back and hurried towards the bridge over the Niemen.

Disillusion followed disillusion.

During the march of the Army on Vilna, the rain fell in torrents and many horses perished. Their progress was difficult under a broiling sun; no more fresh meat, no more wine; the retiring enemy took the cattle with them and emptied the cellars; nothing to drink

but brackish, stinking water, and nothing to eat but a little biscuit.

Duverger is astonished at himself for having but one thought left in his head—eating and drinking; in the towns and villages all he seeks is victuals. At Dorogobouge, in a dark corner, he discovers a small bag of white haricot beans. Rejoicing over the windfall, he has some goose-fat heated and pours the haricots into it; but they harden to such a pitch that he throws them away angrily, exclaiming that he ought to have been taught the elements of the culinary art rather than a smattering of Greek and Latin. And a few weeks later, during the Retreat, when he is acting as cook, and the fire he is feeding with pine-branches sends up a black and resinous smoke that gets into his eyes, and he burns a stew of horse-flesh, thereby incurring the reproaches of his comrades, he expresses the same regrets with even more anger and grief. Why, why, doesn't he know how to cook?

III

The Army halts at Vitebsk and Smolensk; but the Russians perpetually evade a decisive engagement. Before Smolensk they make a stubborn defence and in order to delay the advance of the victor, they burn the suburbs. They execute their retreat steadily

and in order, leaving behind them neither men nor equipages.

"We come upon houses," says Duverger, "but not a Russian; everywhere the inhabitants make off at our approach."

At last, on the 7th of September, a terrible fight takes place, and a week later Moscow displays itself before the amazed eyes of the French.

The town is entered; all is silence and tranquillity; no disorder; at the windows a few people looking timidly at the invaders.

Duverger mounts to the Kremlin and thence contemplates the conquered city. On all sides reigns a sinister silence, broken by the neighing of the horses and the march of the troops as they cross Moscow to gain their quarters.

But at night, while he sleeps, cries break forth: "Fire, fire!"

He wakes, goes down into the street; the horizon is blood-red and the fire spreading from every point, "with a sound as of distant waters in flood."

Inhabitants and soldiers run hither and thither, and by the light of the flames Duverger reads on every countenance dismay and despair.

Moreover, he feels not the slightest doubt as to the cause of the catastrophe.

He has seen men "carrying in their hands the fatal match," he has seen the men clothed in rags, "with the

faces of robbers and slaves," the troops have taken in the very act and hung or shot without delay or formalities; and they were Russians.

At the end of five days, when the fire has subsided, having bivouacked a mile from the town, they go back to it, settle in, and "are busy finding quarters"; and Duverger describes the novel spectacle now presented by Moscow—pillage officially recognized; discipline disregarded; soldiers and moujiks removing gold, jewels and food from the ruins; dogs howling dismally and pursuing strangers who drive them off with sword-thrusts; flames bursting forth again at times in the night.

Misgiving ceased by degrees; Duverger is living in a fine palace, the only house left standing in the street; he makes the acquaintance of a young Russian who speaks German and is not afraid of the French, whom the common people looked upon as ogres and child-eaters; beneath his windows is a public promenade and a long avenue of trees; every morning he sees the Royal Italian Guards marching past to the sound of music; he goes at times to the plays at the French theatre. His meals are modest, but sufficient; he finds some figs and some macaroni, coffee and liqueurs.

One day he actually gives a dinner-party. He has discovered some wine and some white bread; from the caterer of the Guard he gets a round of beef, and, thanks to his servant, a dirty, slovenly Jew, but a good cook, he

treats his guests—there were twelve of them—to soup, boiled beef, forcemeat balls fried in oil, and a larded fillet.

At dessert they drink to the coming campaign, fresh victories, and the entrance of the French into St. Petersburg!

IV

On the 19th of October the Army beats a retreat, and Duverger contemplates with astonishment the concourse of vehicles of every description—carts, barouches, and droschkis drawn by little horses called konias, laboriously crossing a sandy plain. Every one has his carriage; every one means to carry his share of the booty back to France. One of two friends of Duverger's is taking an immense box of Peruvian bark; the other, a book-case full of beautiful books with gilt edges and bound in red Morocco.

As for Duverger himself, he has saddled himself with jewels, furs and pictures—pictures by great masters as he believes, and which he has rolled up for convenient carrying—but he doesn't forget his own comfort; he has rice, sugar and coffee, not to mention three big pots of jam, two of cherries, and one of gooseberries.

The weather is splendid, and for fifteen days courage and confidence reign; villages are burnt, and the march

goes on boldly between two hedges of flame. But mists and a fine rain foretell the approaching severity of the weather; and, on the 6th of November, the snow begins to fall.

Then begins a new kind of life—a strange, cruel, horrible life.

To be warmly dressed is essential, and Duverger wraps himself up in a woman's pelisse of yellow taffeta; the sleeves are too long for his arms, and the surplus serves him for a handkerchief.

Provisions give out, and one has to eat horse-flesh. When a horse succumbs from fatigue and hunger, it is cut up and the pieces disputed over.

Duverger pronounces horse-flesh tough, stringy, but wholesome.

But too often horse-flesh and pure water fail; then they make what they call Spartan broth.

Would you like the recipe? Here it is: Melt a great quantity of snow and so obtain a small quantity of water; sprinkle flour into it; add some fat to it, o if there is no fat to be got, some cart-grease; put in salt, or if there's no salt, powder; serve hot and eat it if you are very hungry.

Hunger appeased, Duverger and his friends lie down before a bivouac fire, sometimes on a little straw, often on the damp and frozen ground.

On waking, they find it difficult to get up; and, says Duverger, like the old horses that draw the hackney-

coaches and chaises in Paris, they stagger about from foot to foot, walking unsteadily and crookedly, until the blood begins to circulate again and they get warm with walking.

It need hardly be added that many of them never rose again; that many that had risen fell by the way and, once fallen, were stripped and left naked by their comrades.

"Death," says Duverger, "took on strange manifestations. One man accosted you with a cheerful countenance and a laughing eye, pressing your hand. He was doomed. Another looked at you gloomily, uttering words of anger and despair. He, too, was doomed. But selfishness was the order of the day; friends and relations were forgotten. Hearts were broken, souls dead; they looked at one another with dull indifference, kicking away the corpse that usurped a place near the fire; angrily pushing away the dying man who fancied he had a right to fill the vacant place."

Such was the picture before Duverger's eyes for two months. He soon lost his horse, his poor Cocotte which had carried him from Mecklenburg to Moscow, and could not get used to the daily want of hay and oats.

But either on one of the Treasury-wagons, or more often on foot, on he went across two hundred leagues of country, guided by nothing but the instinct of safety; ignorant of what lay to right or left of him; knowing only one thing—that the enemy was behind him;

hoping only one thing—that he would reach his own country, that country which lay yonder in front of him, far, very far away.

This hope kept him up; he was fully convinced that the hour of his death had not yet struck.

He was prudent, too; he managed to keep his stores of rice and sugar and coffee for a long time, and in spite of its being forbidden by his chiefs, he sometimes lay down on the wagons, and this stolen sleep gave him fresh strength.

V

The Army had once more seen Ghiatsk, Viasma and Dorogobouge, and was but a few days' march from Smolensk.

Duverger was sent on in advance to get horses and provisions from Smolensk and bring them back to headquarters. The approaches to the town were already crowded; Duverger had to fight with both hands and feet to get through.

In the struggle he jostles a short and rather stout man, dressed in a green pelisse and wearing a velvet cap. The man turns round. It is the Emperor.

"He addressed me very rudely," says Duverger, "and I apologized to the best of my ability, begging him to let me pass and undertaking to force a way

for him. He stepped a little aside, and I went forward. At the name of the Emperor, every one made way ; that name never lost its magical influence. When overwhelmed with disasters, we cursed the Emperor ; we blamed him for our sufferings ; if he appeared, his prestige, the kind of halo that surrounds great men, dazzled us and every one regained confidence and obeyed his slightest wish."

After Smolensk came Krasnoï. There, as Duverger relates, took place a lengthy and bloody fight. But when the fight was over, all useless objects had to be left behind—private carriages, wagons not absolutely needed for the transport of treasure ; and, to use Duverger's expression, there was a general unloading.

One left his case of Peruvian bark, the other tried to sell the library he had acquired retail, without finding a buyer. Duverger threw away his pictures nobody wanted, and made presents of his furs, wanted by everybody.

During this part of the Retreat, between Krasnoï and Orcha, his life was more than once in danger. He was with Claparéde's division, which had charge of the Treasury.

One day, while the convoy was passing through a ravine, the Cossacks who held the heights and had with them small guns mounted on sledges, broke the wheel of a wagon in the rear-guard with a cannon-ball.

The wagon upsets and bars the pass ; the Paymaster-

General orders Duverger to run on to warn Claparéde. The young man rushes off, in spite of his blistered feet; for his boots are so worn-out that his heels are almost on the ground; but he hastens onwards and is close to the head of the convoy, when some other Cossacks emerge from a wood and stop his way.

The soldiers who should have faced the enemy flee with cries of fright, and Duverger has only just time to throw himself into a ditch and crawl under the snow.

Presently the outcries cease, and there is silence; Duverger ventures to look around. No more Cossacks in sight; a few bold fellows have rallied and withstood them.

Duverger goes on his way, finds Claparéde and tells him what has happened.

"You're a set of cowards," says Claparéde, with his usual brutality; "you tremble at a shadow of danger."

"General," answers Duverger; "if the treasury is carried off, you will have to answer for it to the Emperor."

Claparéde turns back and extricates the convoy.

The Cossacks were thus perpetually disquieting and harassing the army; they were supposed near when they were actually far away, and at the slightest sound there was a cry of "Cossacks!"

The famished Poles at times took advantage of these fears. They would come up shouting the terrible "hourra" of the Cossacks; the crowd would rush off,

and the Poles, seating themselves by the Frenchmen's fires, would devour their meagre provisions.

One night, however, the Cossacks proved agreeable. Duverger was looking for a shelter in the fields, pretty far from the high road; several soldiers of the Guard were with him. They came upon a group of buildings. A Cossack sentry signed to them to go on, pointing out a barn at some distance. Not one of the Frenchmen thought of attacking the Cossack. In silence they walked on, entered the barn, stretched themselves out on clean straw, where they slept peacefully, and next day at dawn, when they set forth on their way back they saw the Cossacks going off in the opposite direction, and one who spoke French called out to them in a loud voice, "Adieu, you fellows, till we meet at Orcha!"

VI

Duverger met the Cossacks again, not at Orcha, but on the banks of the Beresina.

There, not far from Borissov, he witnessed the march past of all that remained of the Grand Army.

The Imperial Guard, already much reduced, still kept its arms, and a remnant of discipline; the other Corps existed but in name; they were a confused medley of men fantastically clothed, some rigged out in the sheepskin of the peasant, some in the most costly

furs; wearing tattered caps; shod with bits of linen or of leather tied on with string; carrying a stick in place of a gun, and covered with vermin which, "made lively by the warmth of the bivouac fires, ravaged their bodies and were an incessant torment."

He ought to have been able to cross the Beresina bridge without obstacle or difficulty; he was with the Army-Treasury wagons, and the pick of the armed police had been told off to protect the convoy and prevent other vehicles from passing it; but equipages of all sorts pushed on to the approach to the bridge and mingled with the Treasury wagons.

An open carriage comes up and boldly takes up a position in front of Duverger's wagon; he rushes up to drive it back and tumbles into a dry well, and here he is, thirty feet underground![1]

He shouts at the top of his voice, calling for his companions' help, and to convince them that he is worth the trouble of saving, he swears that he is safe and sound. There were college friends of his present and they threw down more or less workable ropes with a big stick tied at the end.

Duverger sits astride the stick and his friends hoist him up; he rises with outstretched arms to seize the

[1] Lajeune, in fact, relates how in the village of Stoudienka near the bridge, officers and men were constantly falling into wells.

rim of the well, but the rope breaks and he falls back again, luckily without hurting himself.

Again he shouts to his companions, entreating them not to forsake him ; he recommends himself to Heaven ; he registers a vow that if he escapes he will marry a girl his parents have chosen for him and who does not please him—and whom he found married on his return !

At last, with the help of fresh ropes, he is again hoisted up, and this time he gets out of the cursed well without accident.

They put him into the wagon, and, still shaken and feverish from his fall, he goes to sleep.

When he awakes, he sees the burnt bridges, and in the distance a frightful confusion ; he hears the sound of artillery. During his sleep he has crossed the Beresina.

But crossing the river was not all that had to be done ; there was a vast swamp to traverse in which the soil had to be strengthened with boughs of trees every dozen steps.

A league from the Beresina came a long and narrow causeway ending in three big pine-wood bridges standing one after the other above streams and bogs.

The Russians ought to have burnt these bridges, and then the French would assuredly have run the risk of danger much worse than the first.

They had left them as they were, and several years later, when Duverger wrote his Memoirs, he was still

wondering whether the Russian generals were fools or traitors, inept or corrupt.

VII

As for Duverger himself, Providence, as he says, was kind to him.

Soon after the passage of the Beresina, he meets a courier starting for France in a sledge drawn by two little horses; he makes arrangements with him and is about to take his seat beside him when a friend of the courier's gets first choice.

Next day Duverger catches sight of an overturned sledge on the road; near by lie two dead men—the courier and his companion, murdered by Cossacks.

On trying to go to sleep one night in a barn he felt an acute pain in his eyes; his eyelids were inflamed and his sight greatly impaired; he suffered greatly the whole night through and thought he was going blind.

Next morning, as they were setting off, several of his comrades, thinking him past hope of recovery, were inclined to leave him behind; but one of them took him by the arm and laid him down on the fodder in a wagon, and, after some hours' sleep, the inflammation in his eyelids had disappeared and he had recovered his sight.

They were nearing Vilna, where there were immense

stores of provisions, and the army was again to take up its quarters.

At midnight of December 9, Duverger, in his wagon drawn by seven horses, is but two leagues from the town; in another three hours he will get a good meal and a warm room.

But he comes upon another paymaster, also in charge of a wagon, and this wagon, No. 48, which contains two millions in gold, has sunk over its wheels into the snow. The paymaster begs Duverger to stay with him, and the Paymaster-General, coming up, implores Duverger not to leave his colleague till the morrow.

That night, as was known later, there were twenty-eight degrees of cold.

The two men lighted a fire in a house open to all the winds of heaven and standing, for all support, on four posts.

They hadn't a morsel to eat.

The Paymaster-General's cook rides past, a large sack before him.

"What have you got there?"

"Some provisions."

With one accord Duverger and his comrade knock the bag off.

The cook protests, but fearing blows, and perhaps worse—for what mattered a man more or less then?—makes off.

The two paymasters go back to their bivouac.

There they find an old sapper, whose face is pale and thin, with dull and haggard eyes, and beard hung with icicles; on his head a fur cap worn bare on one side with rubbing against the ground, his usual pillow.

"Here's something to eat," says Duverger, opening the sack, which contains rice, and flour, and fat, and a saucepan.

He discovers some wood and feeds the fire; he finds water at a spring near at hand; he cooks the rice and prepares to taste it. Hard luck! the rice is mixed with sand; Duverger has dipped the saucepan too deep into the spring and the sand has got into it. He repairs his error; using the end of his pelisse as a strainer, he obtains pure and clear water, and soon a good flour-thickened soup succeeds the sand-soup.

Then he and the other paymaster lie down upon the cook's sack, wrap themselves up in a woollen quilt and, their feet against the dwindling fire, go to sleep.

When they wake, the sapper is dead; the men they have with them to guard the wagons are dead, too; out of thirteen horses only six are still alive.

In the morning arrive men sent by the Paymaster-General, who drag the wagon that holds the two millions out of the snow; it was probably the only one that managed to reach Dantzig.

Duverger's wagon stayed where it was; French and Russians pillaged it in turn.

A paymaster had accompanied the relief party of men

and horses; he gave Duverger some white bread and some raw sausages.

"Fancy revelling in white bread and raw sausages!" exclaimed Duverger.

He spent the night of December 10 at Vilna in the house of an old Jewess to whom he gave twelve eggs to make an omelet and who stole six of them. On the 11th he started for Kovno. He walked stoutly over the frozen ground, stumbling at every step, but he had the good sense not to stay in Kovno; he lost no time in crossing the bridge, and, worn-out as he was, he walked two leagues on the road to Tilsit.

Next day Marshal Ney's cook caught him up. This man had with him an enormous saucepan; for several days he lived with Duverger and his friends and won their commendation; the clever artist could serve up a dinner in less than fifteen minutes and make something out of nothing.

Before reaching Insterburg, on Prussian territory, Duverger halted at the house of a peasant.

An Italian in a discoloured and ragged uniform followed him in. He belonged to the Neapolitan contingent that one night's cold had almost entirely destroyed. Though but nineteen years old his face was lined and fleshless. In a low voice he said something his host did not understand, which Duverger translated.

The poor wretch, his strength gone, felt his last hour was approaching and not wishing to expire in the

open road, was asking permission to die under a roof.

It was at Insterburg that, for the first time for six weeks, Duverger knew the delight of eating at a table and off plates, and of sleeping in a bed.

He hastened back to France, and when once more he saw the paternal hearthstone, he was fully determined, he writes, to be satisfied with this bid for fame and to send in his resignation as an amateur warrior.

ORIOT THE CUIRASSIER

I

CHARLES ORIOT, born in Haute-Marne and nephew of General Beurnonville, sub-lieutenant in the 10th Hussars in 1803, Captain in the 9th Regiment of Cuirassiers since the 12th of March, 1812, took part in the Russian expedition, and described it in a long letter to his sister which, although unfinished, is worth the trouble of reading, analysing and criticising.[1]

The beginning of the campaign was delightful. The regiment made two long halts in Prussia, one at Preussisch-Holland, the other at Eylau.

At the first, like Napoleon and Murat at Finckenstein five years earlier, Oriot went shooting the swans which swarmed on the ponds. At Eylau in the first days of June he was living in a pretty château half a mile from the village, and he never tired of descanting on his

[1] In our *Lettres de 1812*, p. 52, we have proved that the author of the anonymous letter published by M. J. A. Leherc in 1885 (*Lettre d'un capitaine de cuirassiers sur le campagne de Russie*) was Captain Oriot.

happiness there: enchanting country, a splendid garden; lilacs whose scent was exquisite, and as he calls it, sentimental, shaded the kiosk, the "hut" where they lived; and the band of the regiment which came two or three days a week to play its finest tunes, and, as he says again, to intoxicate him with sweet sounds.

But after Prussia came Russia, and until Moscow was reached, a daily march that seemed unending.

Oriot fought but twice—at the Moskova and in the engagement at Ostrovno, which he emphatically describes as one of the greatest and most memorable of battles; still at Ostrovno he did not charge; he "stood still in the midst of the firing of the cannon."

It was the same at the Moskova. There, too, his regiment did not charge, but stood still under the rain of balls, shells and grape-shot, and sustained heavy losses. Oriot surveyed the countenances of his men, and was satisfied with their look and bearing; on the field itself, after the fashion of Napoleon, he said to them: "I am pleased with you."

Nevertheless he witnessed, as he himself says, terrible things.

Sub-lieutenant Grammont, when he was complimenting him on his coolness, answers: "I've nothing to complain of, and I only want a glass of water to drink"; and, as he speaks, a cannon-ball cuts the sub-lieutenant in two.

Oriot turns to another officer, saying how much he

regrets poor Grammont; a cannon-ball kills his horse. He gets another mount, and while a cuirassier is holding his fresh horse, a shell hits the man and strikes him dead.

Oriot, covered with the earth scattered by the shell, has not even a scratch.

Whence came his coolness?

He allows that he would have preferred to charge and fight; the heat of the fray, the excitement that fills the mind, leaves no room for reflection, it is like a game of base-ball.

But to stand motionless under fire; to wait unmoved for death; to see one's comrades fall all around, wounded or dying, truly that is a thing often too much for human strength.

How then did Oriot manage to rise so courageously above all fear, all anxiety, and what his secret means for preventing tremor or shudder in the midst of battle?

He tells himself that this battle is but a lottery; that he can die but once, and it is better to die with honour than live dishonoured.

The recipe looks simple; it is not so easy to most of us as it was to Oriot.

The day after the Moskova, the French Army set out for Moscow, and nothing remarkable happened till the 14th of September. The enemy abandoned its positions without making the slightest resistance. Oriot found leisure to admire the roads. What a triumph of skill

they were![1] Ten carriages could drive abreast along this kind of avenue, and on each side were two rows of very tall trees with a footway for passengers between them.

The trees, resembling weeping-willows, afforded a cool shade during the great heat of summer, and in winter served as landmarks amid the snows.

During this march, Oriot felt a presentiment of coming disaster. On the 12th of September an officer of the Russian Guards came to parley; for two hours he talked with Oriot and predicted the catastrophe.

"We know as well as you do that we shall be beaten," he said; "but the winter will make us ample amends and will prove our salvation. Your courage will fail before cold and hunger. Believe me, I know the climate of my country; I hope you may not experience its malignant power."

III

At noon on the 14th of September, our cuirassier

[1] Oriot's words seem exaggerated; but Chambray, speaking of the Russian high roads, very wide and lined on each side with a double row of birch-trees, says that this "produced a very fine effect"; and Peyrusse declares that the road leading from Orcha to Tolotchin is incontestably one of the finest in Europe, and that, laid out in a straight line, it has on each side a magnificent double row of birch-trees. Cf. Castellane, *Journal*, I, p. 192: "Those beautiful avenues of birch-trees on the high-road."

caught his first sight of Moscow, and at that sight some indefinable feeling seized him.

The city looked so strange, so marvellous, so oriental, and it was so far from France, from La Champagne!

He entered it—as he always remembered—at a quarter to three—and it took him five hours to walk through it; it seemed to him endless, and he calls it the capital of the world.

Still at moments his mind misgave him. He had seen the Emperor on foot waiting for the keys of the town and no one had appeared to hand them over. Moreover, Moscow looked empty and deserted; in the streets and at the windows no one was to be seen but men of the people such as the army was presently to shoot or hang as *chauffeurs*.

Oriot's regiment bivouacked a mile away; but the next day the Captain spent part of the day in Moscow. He came upon a house where some ladies who spoke French very well, gave him a most agreeable welcome; they dreaded pillage and rejoiced at having an officer in the house and willingly acquainted their guest with Russian customs.

Moscow, said Napoleon, is an extremely fine town. Oriot thought the same, and he writes that Moscow is much larger than Paris and contains innumerable mansions—five hundred more than Paris—the largest shops in the world, and a Castle, the Kremlin, which alone includes at least five hundred houses,

But Oriot was strangely deceived in believing that he had come to the end of his troubles. The fire burst forth, at first in separate quarters, and then everywhere. The important shops that, according to Oriot, could have fed the invaders for two years, fell a prey to the fire; Oriot saw the people mingle with the soldiers in plundering them. He had to quit the town by streets in flames and his cloak long retained the smell of smoke.

IV

The *coq rouge* was crowing in other places than Moscow. While his troop bivouacked Oriot lodged in the neighbouring village.

One night, as he lay asleep on a truss of straw, fire burst out, and the house, built like all the Russian peasants' houses, of pine-wood, was speedily in flames.

Luckily a bad attack of diarrhœa had awaked Oriot; he got up and, well-nigh suffocated by the smoke, dragged himself to the door, which was opened for him by his servants.

That very day he had to set out with his regiment for Kalouga—Caligula, as Napoleon, who at times liked to be facetious, called it.

There was a river to cross. Oriot—that cursed diarrhœa!—had gone apart for a moment. He hastens to rejoin his regiment, falls into a hole and it is a quarter of an hour before he succeeds in getting out of it. More-

over he is frozen with cold. No fire, no house, and a strong wind! He undresses himself and, for two hours, while his clothes dry, he runs up and down like a madman to warm himself.

In one day he had escaped being burnt and drowned. But he was enormously strong; his fellow-officers agreed in saying that they knew no one whose constitution was so robust as Oriot's.

V

He spent several weeks in the famous camp at Vinkovo, called the famine camp, which might be called also the camp of cold, that camp where the French Cavalry, already worn-out and exhausted, finally withered away.

The horses died by scores; Oriot's company had but ten mounted men left; to get food for the beasts that were still alive necessitated a daily journey of five or six leagues to look for a little chaff, and for that little to risk one's life.

It was a melancholy existence, says Oriot.

But in that camp he won his cross; and if he had nothing but horse-flesh to eat, he had, he says, one great comfort. His servant had brought him from Moscow a carriage loaded with sugar and coffee, and day and night Oriot drank coffee and he declares that the coffee saved his life.

Mme Fusil—the French actress who followed our troops in the Retreat, and who published the story of her adventures—was of the same opinion; a cup of coffee was enough to warm and revive her.

"I owe a great debt to coffee," she writes; "it was the only thing that restored my strength; it would be possible to live a long time on coffee alone."

Flags of truce came and went; the French hoped peace would be made, and, as Oriot confesses, spent some pleasant hours under this agreeable delusion.

Then suddenly, on the morning of the 18th of October, a swarm of Cossacks fell upon the French camp.

"Look!" cried one of the lieutenants to Oriot; "they're close upon us!"

Oriot mounted his horse, the Cuirassiers formed into battle-line and the artillery fired grape-shot at the assailants; but the Cossacks were too many for them; they were all about, says Oriot; nothing was to be seen but Cossacks; the earth groaned under them—in front, in the rear, on the flanks, and the firing had to be on every side. So they retired, and, as Oriot adds, in good order.

It was then he performed a brilliant but useless act of prowess which earned him a wound. With some fellow-officers he was marching behind his regiment—which now consisted of but one company, when, at a little distance, he caught sight of four Cossacks plundering a carriage.

What are four Cossacks to one Frenchman? He runs up to them and puts them to flight. Their officer appears on the scene; Oriot challenges him and pursues him into the midst of the Cossacks; he slashes the face of the first Cossack he meets, then that of the second; he pursues a third whose sheepskin he tries in vain to pierce. But he is surrounded, hemmed in; a blow on the head from the lance of a Cossack knocks off his helmet; he catches it by the plume, and, while he stoops, the lance of another Cossack pierces his thigh. Luckily help is at hand; his comrades come up and drive the Cossacks back a quarter of a league.

"You'll always be a hussar, it seems," says the Colonel when he sees Oriot again; "does a man fight like that just for fun?" [1]

Oriot's wound was a deep one; he tore up the front of his shirt as a bandage and went on riding. Ten days later he was well again.

VI

The Retreat of the Grand Army began at once, and on the 23rd of October Oriot heard in the distance the blowing up of the Kremlin; the concussion was awful, he says; it was like an earthquake.

[1] Oriot had enlisted in the 10th Hussars in 1796 and had risen to the rank of corporal in 1798, sergeant-major and sub-lieutenant in 1803, and had not joined the 9th regiment of Cuirassiers till 1809.

Then came bad weather, cross-roads, many swamps, and constant attacks by Cossacks, those Cossacks the Comte de Lobau had likened to troublesome insects. Twenty thousand vehicles were burnt and the Comte de Lobau exchanged his for Oriot's. It was a splendid carriage that had cost at least a hundred louis; Lobau thought it too heavy, but Oriot, possessing some strong horses, finds it quite to his taste. He loaded it with sugar and coffee, cashmere shawls and lengths of cloth.

Unluckily, going downhill, a gun, driven at a gallop, caught and broke a wheel of this beautiful big carriage. Oriot had to leave it with all its contents; a little later he did not regret it, for willy-nilly he must have left it on the road.

He gives an exact description of the sort of life they led during the Retreat. They marched as they pleased, and all day long by the light of burning villages, keeping up their strength by a morsel of horse-flesh. At night they lay down on the snow in some spot sheltered from the wind, and as near as possible to the bivouac-fire. Next morning, very early, they started again.

As far as Smolensk Oriot succeeded in keeping his horses, which he looked upon as the best and finest in the whole army. He had seven of them, and had refused an offer of eleven hundred francs for even one of the least good of them.

At Vinkovo or Taroutina, on the 18th of October, before rushing into the thick of the fight, he had ordered his

servant to get them away from the enemy and off to the rear with all speed. So when he arrived at Smolensk he looked out for a shelter for his horses and found it in the last house but one of the outskirts—the house of a colonel of Polish hussars, where there was a stable and plenty of provender. Oriot established himself there and remained two days.

The cook was a very beautiful woman, but she made not the slightest impression on him; his heart was turned to ice, he says, and, like Castellane and many others, just then he would have preferred a bottle of poor Burgundy to the prettiest girl in the world.

He did not leave Smolensk till the Russians made their appearance; and many of our sick and wounded officers were still left in the town.

"It was necessary," writes Oriot; "it was the fortune of war; but oh! I pity those thousands of victims!"

The letter, the *grandis epistola* of the captain, ends here. But we know he was one of those who survived the miseries and horrors of the Retreat.

At the Passage of the Beresina he lost the horses he had loved so dearly except the one he rode, and that was stolen from him a few days later at Vilna.

In one day he lost everything he possessed; a packed trunk, a portmanteau; a sum of two hundred and fifty louis; jewels of great value, and twenty-two pounds of silver he had picked up on the road.

What did it matter? He was escaping from the cold and the Russians.

"Lucky is the man," he exclaimed, "who, having been in that cursed country, succeeded in saving his skin!"

VII

Before long he was re-mounted and equipped; with the pay due to him he bought three horses from his Major, who was setting off for France.

The little *dépôt* of the regiment at Elbing furnished him with a portmanteau, and to his infinite delight, he was able, for the first time for seven weeks, to change his shirt. At a small cost he bought all he needed when the effects of the dead or imprisoned officers were sold.

In the month of February, 1813, he was at Hildesheim —it was from there he wrote his letter to his sister— and feeling no ill effects from the hardships of the campaign. In fact he was twice as well as he had been before it, and he declares he feels stronger than he was when he was twenty.

He spent all his leisure in sport; friends of his in the neighbourhood gave or lent him guns and all kinds of dogs. After such a terrible ordeal wasn't a great deal of exercise the thing? He says that neither by night nor day can he keep in any hot or shut-up place, that he can't bear a fire in his room and almost always leaves his windows open.

What became of him?

He never rose above the rank of captain, although he had been through the German campaign in 1813 and the French in 1814, and, in spite of the interest of his Uncle Beurnonville, he retired from the service on the 1st of September, 1815, with a pension of 1,200 francs and without having reached the rank of major to which he had aspired.

LIEUTENANT JACQUEMONT

I

PORPHYRE JACQUEMONT, brother of the celebrated traveller, was a lieutenant of Artillery in 1812 and went through the Russian Campaign.

At first sight the notes he kept of the journey seem of very little interest; he was not at Moscow—whatever his brother Victor may say [1]—nor at the Passage of the Beresina, and he remained in the rear of the Grand Army.

Moreover he was as calm and phlegmatic as were his father and brother, and he recounts events simply and shortly; he is writing for himself, not for other people, and intending only to put down what he wants to remember, so as to be able later to re-read the notes he has hastily jotted down on paper.

Still, a *résumé* of this note-book, short and dry as it is, will not be useless; and if, as Porphyre Jacquemont

[1] *Correspondance*, I, pp. 40 and 192.

says, there is often nothing striking to record, certain details seem to us worth knowing.[1]

II

Jacquemont, attached to the Arsenal at Vilna, has spent the first part of the campaign in that town, killing time as best he can.

Sometimes he goes to the balls given by the Governor, Hogendorp, and in boots with spurs and riding-breeches dances the polonaise and the mazurka with the ladies of Vilna, who all speak French. Sometimes at a restaurant kept by a compatriot called Bordais, or else at the Café de Milan, or at Esther's, the *cantinière* of the Artillery, he sits at table with friends who are crossing Vilna to join the army or to return to France; and if at times he is satisfied with a couple of slices of bread and butter and a glass of rum, on certain other evenings he is a little "on."[2]

Occasionally he leaves Vilna to escort convoys of

[1] *Carnet de Route d'un officier d'artillerie, 1812–1813*, published by Victor Jacquemont du Donjon in No. 8 of the 25th February, 1899, of the Review *Souvenirs et Mémoires*.

[2] In his note-book he mentions Vieillard, who was tutor to Napoleon III and Senator under the Empire; Lebrun, who became Colonel and Director of the *Musée d'Artillerie*; Morlot, who was a ship-owner at Havre and, in 1848, deputy of Seine-Inférieure (it was in Morlot's house at Villeneuve Saint-Georges that Porphyre Jacquemont died in 1854); the Chevalier Noizet de Saint-Paul, Jacquemont's cousin-german, who retired as Colonel of Artillery; and Emon, who defended Belfort in 1814.

vehicles drawn by oxen or little Polish horses called konias.

In October he travels to Minsk, and in that wretched town can find nothing but dirty, dark streets and a number of convents and churches, staying the night sometimes with Jews, sometimes with barons. The French, as we know, called every one who possessed a castle or a fine house a baron[1]; but Jacquemont declares that on the 3rd of November, three leagues from Smorgoni, he had lodged with a very poor peasant who actually, and with a noble air, bore the title of Baron.

As for the Jews, Jacquemont thought them disgusting, and accuses them of keeping dirty inns, working at all trades, especially usury.

III

What does he know about the Grand Army?

Very little, and like the rest of the world, he is ignorant of what is taking place further on, near Moscow, a hundred leagues away.

Eye-witnesses have told him that the battle of the Moskova was a very bloody one; that over fifty officers of the Artillery were killed and the Cuirassiers badly mauled; that the Russians fought desperately and had lost more men than we. He hears that three-quarters

[1] Cf. our *Etudes d'Histoire*, iv, p. 249. Perhaps our soldiers simply Frenchified the word "*barine*."

of Moscow have been burnt, but that nevertheless plenty of munitions and provisions had been discovered.

But it is not till much later that he hears of the retreat of the Army in a letter one of his comrades receives from Fominskoe on the 9th of November.

"The nobility, the magistrates, the rich tradesmen have fled," it says; "and released prisoners, the mob and prostitutes wander about Moscow, now delivered over to them. In spite of the exertions of our men, the convicts have set fire to several quarters of the town by order of the Governor, Count Rostoptchine. Then the Emperor decided on a retreat, which began on the 16th of October with the Cavalry of the Italian Guards. The army is gorged with treasures."[1]

The Grand Army is in retreat! But, like every one else, Jacquemont does not know for certain what this retreat means. He must doubtless have had gloomy presentiments; for he notes in his diary that communication with the Army is interrupted; that Vilna is snowed up; that the horses of the gun-carriages have to be rough-shod; that the thermometer marks thirty degrees of frost; and on the 3rd of December he writes that a messenger has spread about "extremely unpleasant" rumours of the troops being in the greatest disorder,

[1] This remark recalls what Stendhal says in a letter of November 10, 1812: "The soldiers are bursting with gold napoleons, diamonds and pearls." See our *Episodes et Portraits*, iii, p. 260.

and having left on the banks of the Beresina more than 20,000 men and two hundred pieces of ordnance.

On the same day comes another piece of news, almost as grave.

Loison's division, which has just arrived at Vilna, is to start next day to join the Army ; and it is rumoured in the town that Napoleon intends to go and that Loison's division is ordered to put to flight the Cossacks who " are marching in advance of the retreating army " and wish to " seize the Emperor."

Isn't it strange that in Vilna, on the 3rd of December, it is guessed, known, that Napoleon proposes to leave for France ?

Loison's division leaves Vilna with two detachments of artillery under the command of a friend of Jacquemont's called Lebrun. It is the 4th of December, and Jacquemont celebrates the festival of *Sainte-Barbe* by drinking a glass of punch with his friends at Esther, the *cantinière's*.

The artillery of the Grand Army in full retreat, in spite of the misery, the horrors all around them, do the same. At Bienitsa, Drouot, Pion des Loches and other officers of the Guard empty some bottles of wine, too, on the 4th of December.

But on the second day, early in the morning, Jacquemont sees Lebrun, white and haggard, come into his room.

The poor fellow had followed Loison's division, getting

as far as Ochmiana, and there, on the 5th of December, at nightfall, in the market-place of the village, he had been mauled by Cossacks.

He was looking for lodgings when suddenly behind him he heard their hourra, and, thinking it a joke of the Neapolitan troopers, he turned round to answer them.

They were Cossacks—Seslavin's Cossacks—coming up at a trot. One of them made a thrust at him with his lance which he parried with his left arm but which knocked him down and pierced his hand; the rest rode over his body, and the last, to make sure he was dead, dealt him another blow with his lance, cleverly relieving him of his cape with the point of the weapon.

A little later a French officer in a sledge passed; he picked up Lebrun, whose knee was crushed.

Such was the story Lebrun told to Jacquemont at eight o'clock in the morning of December 6.

"Lay in your stores," he said; "the Army will arrive to-morrow and leave nothing behind it."

The next day Jacquemont writes in his diary: "On Monday, December 7, the Emperor entered the town incognito, at about eleven o'clock. He merely changed horses and went on his way towards Kovno, without an escort, leaving behind him that which had brought him from Ochmiana. It was made up of the remnants of three regiments of Neapolitan cavalry whose

endurance had given out under a night-encampment with twenty-two degrees of cold."

IV

On the very day when the Emperor passed through Vilna, a small number of the survivors of the Grand Army appeared, as Lebrun had told Jacquemont would happen; then, on the 8th and 9th of December, the fugitives, clearing with difficulty the thronged gates, burst into Vilna.

But, says Jacquemont, they found all the shops closed and could not procure a morsel of bread, though the military stores were stuffed with grain and flour. Jacquemont takes the artillery-officers he meets, with him, and if he can't feed them he at least gives them shelter; "they were in bad case, but anyhow they were warm."

On December 10 came orders to the troops to evacuate Vilna and to Jacquemont to blow up the arsenal. At half-past eight in the morning the fuses were placed and lighted, when, suddenly, the gunners ran away as fast as their legs could carry them.

Jacquemont pursues them, calls out to them to come back, that there is no danger—the fuses ought to last for five minutes.

But the gunners were flying from Cossacks, and the Cossacks were in time to extinguish the fuses.

So the arsenal at Vilna was not blown up and Porphyre

Jacquemont missed the opportunity of connecting his name with an event that doubtless would have been one of the memorable episodes of the campaign.

A few minutes later, Jacquemont reaches the foot of the hill of Ponari. What a sight meets his eyes!

The vehicles which could not climb the hard-frozen slope are being burnt and pillaged, and so is the army-treasury; soldiers pass laden with money, and the colours taken from the Russians, the cross of St. Ivan carried off from the Kremlin [1]—the trophies, as they were called—lie scattered on the ground.

Jacquemont with his gunners climbs to the top of Ponari, and, that evening on bivouac, he sups on a smoked fish and some biscuit washed down with a drop of rum.

On December 11, in twenty-nine degrees of frost, he sets out at four o'clock in the morning, sometimes stopping in front of the houses set on fire by the fugitives to warm himself, and at ten o'clock at night, in the village of Chichmori, he lies down on the snow near a bivouac fire.

On the 12th he is at Kovno, where he drinks schnaps with officers of his arm of the service and sleeps in the corner of a room.

[1] Not the enormous cross that the sappers, ordered to carry it off, let fall and which broke into a thousand pieces, but a little gold cross, about six inches high, which was let into the middle of the big one. According to Castellane it had already disappeared at Krasnoï on the 15th of November.

On the 13th he sleeps in a barn after eating some potatoes his men have discovered.

He passes the night of the 14th in a stable not far from Staropol and gets an unhoped-for meal; the artillery-men have found a fowl and two little pigs. The golden age is come again! says Jacquemont.

On the 15th he realizes, to his great dismay, that his toes are beginning to freeze a little.

On the 16th walking is very painful, but in the evening he reaches Prussian territory, and "begins to live again."

He hires a sledge, and, on the 20th, he is at Königsberg, happy at having left Russia and at last escaped from that land of misery; exclaiming that he is saved and declaring that never was there so magnificent a town as Königsberg.

But Königsberg, where he stayed twelve days, was not the term of his sufferings; and the surgeon who dressed his feet did not cure him.

On January 3, 1813, Jacquemont left, to find only deplorable roads and miserable lodgings; in a village near Elbing straw swarming with lice that caused intolerable itching till he reached Berlin; in an inn at the gates of Elbing, a room so crowded with soldiers that he had to sleep in the stable.

Our allies, the Prussians, were already showing hostility. At Königsberg the authorities receive Murat with barely-concealed coldness; in a wood near Star-

gard a detachment of Cavalry attempt an attack on a company of French Artillery; and people are daring to say that they don't want to harbour Frenchmen!

It is not surprising that at Cüstrin Jacquemont caught a violent fever.[1]

He recovered by swallowing emetics, but he had a relapse at Brandeburg and was delirious.

"I had a fine lot of delusions," he says; and it was the victims of such delusions that, under the maddening cold, lost their reason.

Fortunately he goes on to Magdeburg, and into the hospital there, and five days later his fever is gone.

Here ends the note-book of Porphyre Jacquemont. The war is to begin again; the artillery is re-organized. "My company," writes our lieutenant with his usual calmness, "was made up again; there were many missing."

V

It is a pity we have not got the letters Porphyre Jacquemont sent in 1812 from Minsk, Vilna and other places to his father, Wenceslas and his brother Victor.

"I remember the letters you wrote me then," writes

[1] At Vilna, at the end of November, a malignant fever was already raging which "carried off many gunners," and the fever had taken hold of Jacquemont thirty-six hours before leaving Königsberg.

Victor in 1829, " as well as if they had been read to me yesterday. My ideas of war and military life were formed entirely on your experiences. On my bad days I shall think of those you spent of old, frozen and famished, and I shall never deem myself unlucky."

Wanting Porphyre Jacquemont's letters, let us accept his travel-journal; reading it carefully we shall discover more than one curious, touching and striking detail.

CAPTAIN RIGAU

I

CAPTAIN RIGAU, who became Colonel of Cavalry and left memoirs,[1] was in 1812 an officer on Berthier's staff.

These memoirs are little known, and perhaps it may not be useless to give here a summary of what there is in them of interest concerning the Russian Campaign. Though not abundant, the harvest is not unimportant.

Rigau was one of those Frenchmen, so numerous in those days, who thought themselves invincible; he retained an unshakable conviction that the defeat of the Grand Army was brought about by the elements and by them alone. He blindly worshipped Napoleon and abominated Rostoptchine and Hudson Lowe.

[1] *Souvenirs des guerres de l'Empire, réflexions, pensées, maximes, anecdotes, lettres diverses, testament philosophique*, the Cavalry-Colonel Rigau, Paris, 1846. The author was the son of the Brigadier-General Antoine Rigau, who was sentenced to death by default in 1816, for having favoured the return of the Bourbons.

II

First of all he carries despatches to King Jerome, who is in command of the right wing of the Army, and he is present at a brilliant cavalry fight, the fight at Mia, when he praises the courage of the Poles. We note that he is favourable to Jerome ; he declares that the manœuvres of the King of Westphalia were swift, that the Emperor was mistaken when he deprived his brother of the command, and that, as it was impossible for Jerome to take orders from Marshal Davout, he was right to leave the army and return to his dominions.

On his way, he takes stock of certain men of arms : General Sebastiani, " given to allowing himself to be taken by surprise," and that the men had in fact nicknamed " General Surprise " ; Colonel Marbeuf, " that promising officer " ; the Comte de Narbonne, whose distinction and kindness Rigau extols.

Narbonne, he writes, was one day waiting for his servant, Jean, to bring him his horse. Jean was very long in coming. At last he appeared, and as soon as he caught sight of the Count he began to bewail himself : " Mon Dieu, mon Dieu," said he, " what a fool I must be to keep such a good master waiting ! "

All Narbonne said in his usual kindly way as he put his foot into the stirrup, was : " Don't repeat yourself,

Jean; I was going to say the same thing to you—you took it out of my mouth."[1]

He has been close to Berthier and Monthion. The relations of Monthion with the staff-officers, says Rigau, were always pleasant and urbane.[2]

Berthier, under a rough exterior, had ever a warm heart. Like Napoleon, he found it difficult to get used to new faces; but he followed the careers of the officers under his immediate orders and gave them his kindly interest and protection.

As often as they started on a mission he charged them not to be taken, and, if they were, to destroy their despatches. If he did not do all the good he might have done, he never did any harm, according to Rigau.

He continually bit his nails, which gave him a vacant and pre-occupied look.

His office was a difficult one; the Emperor had him called five or six times every night.[3]

When he was told, "His Majesty wants you," he put on his coat, buckled on his sword, and, with his hat under his arm, preceded by an usher carrying two candles, he went to the Emperor's room.

[1] "A hedge was between Narbonne and me," says Rigau; "he did not know I could see him."

[2] But in 1815 Davout says "that Monthion is foolish beyond words"; cf. Dixen, *Mem.*, p. 262, "Monthion was a conceited person."

[3] One night at Warsaw, January 8, 1807, Dedem relates, the Emperor had Berthier called as many as seventeen times.

When they said: "His Majesty wants you at once," he hurried in in dressing-gown and night-cap—a comical night-cap the officers could not look at without laughing—a cap encircled by a wide ribbon with a *chou* or rosette—and as he came back, he woke up the young men lying on the ground with: "Come, Messieurs, we must start."

Otherwise Rigau thought Berthier a very ordinary man. "The Emperor," he writes, "encroached upon his own glory to cloak the Chief of his Staff with it." [1]

III

The beginnings of the Campaign did not appear very brilliant to Captain Rigau. He recounts how the army marched through melancholy, gloomy forests, over shifting sands, in overwhelming heat greater than that in Italy and Spain; that in less than thirty leagues,

[1] Compare this portrait with that drawn by Stendhal (A. Chuquet, *Stendhal-Beyle*, p. 381; and with Dedem's *Mem.* p. 262, "Berthier was beginning to age"; and with what Baltazard says on the 24th of January, 1813: "He is in a state of health which gives rise to fears for his life, and little or no hope of his being able to continue his duties."

"Berthier," says Planat, "was incapable of undertaking an important command; but as he was the habitual interpreter of the Emperor's plans and ideas, it was thought he would preserve their tradition and act in accordance with them; but after the disaster at Vilna, we saw that he was no good."

from Kovno to Vilna, they had lost nearly five thousand horses[1]; that there they suffered from incessant rains; that the Russians, setting everything on fire, left very few resources behind them; that the "very existence of the men had become a problem," but that never did any army more heroically endure fatigue and privations.

He was at the battle of the Moskova, and the day before had seen the Emperor ride in front of his troops to discover the enemy's position, and the veterans crowding to the Imperial tent to look at the portrait of the King of Rome Bausset had brought from Paris.

As for the battle itself, which he describes as immense and gigantic, he makes no criticism; he looks upon it as "one of the Emperor's greatest feats of arms."

He admires Moscow. "This town," he says, "excites more wonder than any other in Europe; it has not the monotony of London and other capitals; the weary traveller revives at its sight; it reminds one more of the East than of the West; yet one can get some idea of it by picturing five hundred of the most beautiful and sumptuous *châteaux* surrounded by small towns, villages or country-houses, so immense are the gardens, as well as the commercial establishments. It is the mart of Asia and Europe."

Like all the narrators of the campaign, he describes

[1] Others said ten thousand, and Matthew Dumas, the Intendant-General, said seven thousand.

the feeling of joy and pride that filled all hearts at the look of this Promised Land.

"The look of the gilded cupolas, the belfries surmounted by the Greek cross, encircled by little chains waving like wreaths in the air, electrified the imagination of the Army and brought hope to the spirit, mingled, as was allowable after such toil and glory, with a touch of pride. The thoughts of many of us flew back to the past. Mine went back to Oporto."

He is given the command of one of the quarters of Moscow and takes measures to maintain order; but the fire speedily breaks out, and, for some days, the army quits the town whose destruction appears inevitable.

On the night of September 17, Rigau, returning from some mission, and ignorant of the abandonment of Moscow, seeks everywhere for the Staff-officer.

"I was well-nigh suffocated by the violence of the wind, by the smoke and the rarefaction of the air caused by the heat of the fire. Moscow looked like a pit surrounded by a sea of flames; they reached from the North to the South, rising to the skies; the sound of the sheets of iron crashing down from domes and houses on to the wide pavements struck sadness into the heart. It is certain that Rostoptchine will go down to posterity as the author of this infamous deed; and indeed it would be a pity if his name were forgotten and so prevent the eternal execration of such a monster. It is

to be hoped that a suitable punishment waits him and Hudson Lowe, the bull-dog and gaoler of St. Helena."

Rigau regretted the long stay Napoleon made in Moscow. Since the city was burnt, he held, he says, "that the army ought to be given eight days to rest and eat, and then, before the setting in of the great cold, return to the Niemen. In that case our fate would have been very different; a prudent retreat, which is not the consequence of a defeat, takes nothing from the victory gained. Besides, the Russians would have cursed Rostoptchine all the more deeply, for the burning of Moscow would have been to no purpose."

Berthier ordered him to keep with Marshal Mortier, who was to stay to the last in Moscow to blow up the Kremlin.

"I stayed, therefore, with the Duc de Trévise until he rejoined the Emperor at Vilna. As we left Moscow, we heard the explosion of the mine, but I doubt if it did much damage to the Kremlin."

Here is an anecdote of the march from Moscow to Vereza. Marshal Mortier was very angry with a soldier who shot at a crow.

"Why," said Rigau to the man, "did you lay yourself open to reproof, and a crow isn't good eating anyhow, is it!"

"Hunger would have made me think it good," answered the other.

Another anecdote.

Rigau, on foot in the midst of a crowd of jaded and almost unarmed men, caught sight of a very small and swarthy officer walking beside three guns and smoking the short pipe the soldiers called a *brule-gueule.* The man, who appeared to be a lieutenant of artillery, was wearing a blue great-coat with a cape that reached his elbows and a hat edged with a narrow plain ribbon.

Suddenly a group of Cossacks appears on the horizon; the officer perceives Rigau, calls him comrade, begs him to get together as many men as possible to mask his guns, which he at once turns on the enemy, leaving room to take aim.

The Cossacks come within firing distance; the officer takes aim, fires one of his pieces, and the ball falls into the very midst of the Russians, who make off as fast as they can. The column goes on its way, and Rigau, congratulating the gunner on the accuracy of his fire, learns that he is General Allix, whose bit of a pipe is still alight.[1]

From Vereza to Smolensk the Army endures "many hardships difficult to describe and too painful to recall."

It hears of Malet's "prank" and already foresees "the departure, as near as urgent, of Napoleon."

Moreover, the Emperor "showed more solicitude

[1] See Bodenhausen's report (*Mem.* of King Jerome, vi, p. 16): "On the 15th of November, at Krasnoï, Allix, having only four pieces of ordnance left, and not enough gunners, himself served the guns with the help of the officers still left standing."

for his soldiers than had been his wont in any of his compaigns. He would stop when he caught sight of a sick and wounded man walking with difficulty, and not leave him until he felt sure there was a possibility of saving him by putting him on one of the gun carriages."

At Krasnoï Rigau loses his brother-in-law, Major Vilmain, formerly aide-de-camp to Bernadotte, "one of the best and most capable of officers." [1]

At Orcha the troops found shops and food, and rations were given out. Then came a thaw, and this thaw eased some of the troubles of the Army and made it almost forget the severe cold that had crushed it since leaving Smolensk, and the bivouacs less unbearable.

But it did not last long; the cold returned; the winter grew more terrible than ever, and of the seven horses Rigau had possessed when he crossed the Niemen not one was left; at Orcha he had had to kill the last to feed his comrades; "no sooner was it cut up than we filled our pockets and nose-bags with bits of its flesh."

The Beresina is crossed, and Rigau gives enthusiastic praise to the sappers; they showed, he says, "an heroic devotion—quite superhuman; they all perished, sacrificing their lives; their sole motive being honour and obedience to duty."

[1] Vilmain, born at Spincourt in la Meuse in 1771, lieutenant and then captain in the 3rd battalion of la Meuse; aide-de-camp to Bernadotte in 1806, had been a major since 1807 and in 1804 had joined the 53rd regiment.

He gives praise also to the Guard.

"The march of the Emperor, surrounded by his Guard, was, in spite of all our misfortunes, a majestic sight.

"The soldierly and sorrowful countenances of his Grenadiers looked all the finer and more striking because of the grief in their hearts. A superhuman strength inspired these strongly-tempered spirits, upheld by their devotion. They halted but to fall down and die, faithful and uncomplaining; all their anxiety was for the Emperor.

"The whole world must render homage to these Guards; they understood the grandeur of their mission; they felt they were the flower of the nation and the Army."

The Emperor left the Army at Smorgoni on the 5th of December. But Rigau approves of his action: "The Emperor has acted on the best advice"; he alone "could hasten the formation of the fresh forces necessary to replace our losses"; he alone could "expedite new resources," and, adds Rigau, "as for myself, I was relieved of a great weight when I knew the Emperor was gone and out of danger."

After Smorgoni, came Vilna, and then Kovno. But they only passed through Vilna. "There," says Rigau, "I was greatly grieved by the death of the brave General Dornès, who succumbed to fatigue and old wounds. He was in command of a Brigade of

Cuirassiers, and was a fine soldier; an honour to the Army."

At the end of his story, Rigau makes the following remarks:—

"Posterity will look on it as a fable that an army, exhausted with hunger, thirst, sickness, a fatal climate, a most unusual winter, even for Russia, should have endured a retreat lasting several months, in which, in the midst of forests and deserts, men perished by thousands, wandering through snow and ice; while Death in his most terrible forms pursued men who were nothing but skeletons, but who yet found strength to conquer when the enemy believed them at any moment an easy prey. The elements alone vanquished us; and we had to fight the best of soldiers save ourselves; for the Russian soldier is sober, patient, tough, religious—if somewhat idolatrous and superstitious—bearing round his neck a picture of St. Nicholas, and knowing how to die uncomplainingly."

MAJOR PION

I

PION, born at Pontarlier in 1770, and, as the youngest of seven children, destined for the Church, entered the Seminary at Besançon in 1789, and some months later, in 1790, he was already a professor in the college of his native town and head of the establishment. One got on quickly in the days of the Revolution.

But he refused to take the oath of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, so incurring the persecution of the Patriots, who imprisoned him at Lons-le-Saunier, where he had taken refuge, and afterwards put him under supervision. So in 1793 he obeyed the call to arms and joined the Army.

Entered in the School of Artillery at Chalons, 1795, from that time he followed the military career, it must be owned, with no great enthusiasm.

In his *Mémoires* [1] he describes with striking sincerity his impressions of war.

[1] *Mes Campagnes* (1792–1815), Notes and Correspondence of Colonel Pion des Loches of the Artillery, arranged and published by Maurice Chipon and Léonce Pingaud.

Sent from Chalons to Strasbourg and thence to the Fort of Kehl, which the Austrians had invested and were bombarding, he owns his perplexity and awkwardness.

What's the good of mathematics? He doesn't know even how to turn a gun-carriage, or repair a breast-work. "A warning to *Messieurs les Élèves* who join the corps with heads stuffed with x and y!"

But he soon gained the needful coolness, confidence and experience. He was at the siege of Peschiera and in the campaigns of 1805, 1806 and 1807. In 1805 he remarks on the knavish tricks of the generals and the wastefulness of the soldiers, who destroyed everything, spilling the flour about the houses and the wine in the cellars.

In 1806 he is present at the Battle of Jena and owns that to him it was quite incomprehensible: "Where were we? What part of the battlefield did we occupy? Who was at our right or at our left? I haven't the slightest idea even now."

It was the same at Eylau. He hears the firing but sees nothing; all he knows is that the weather was mild and there was a thaw; that the horses sank up to their bellies in the snow; that the sun shone at times; that there was a violent wind; that the snow blinded the combatants, and that the next day he was not surprised to learn that Augereau's corps had gone astray amongst the Russians and had been roughly handled by them.

He returned to France by Berlin, where terrible poverty reigned; Prussian officers implored his help, and an aged captain of seventy, formerly one of Frederick's soldiers, asked him for alms.

Pion then, with the rank of captain, joins the foot artillery of the Imperial Guard. He fights in Spain and in Russia, and the chapter of his *Souvenirs* devoted to the campaign of 1812 is perhaps the most interesting in the book.

On his return in 1813 he was made Major of the 2nd regiment of Artillery at La Fère. At Villette, in 1814, he fired his last shot. In 1815, on hearing the news of Napoleon's landing, he won over the wavering d'Aboville and shut the gates of La Fère in General Lallemand's face.

He had his reward; Louis XVIII gave him the rank of Colonel and ennobled him.

Thenceforth Pion styled himself the Chevalier Pion des Loches, and when he died in 1819 he left behind him the reputation of a pure and ardent champion of the throne and altar. Soldier in his own despite, Pion detested war. He has no love for his profession—"a convict's trade"—and he remains in the Service because he "must complete his career." Had he not said that "at the present time an honest and sensible man is not made for the profession of arms!" And in 1803 he had applied for a post as Professor in the School of Fontainebleau and of Collector of Taxes in Franche-Comté.

He is an original figure; a soldier of Napoleon who is not dazzled by the victories and conquests that cause the hearts of succeeding generations to beat, and the great events in which he takes a part—however small a part—apparently do not move him. He pities the vanquished; he deplores the wrongs done under his eyes by the army; he sees, with regret and disgust, men with neither education nor principles promoted over his head; but he has no ambition; he despises intrigue; he will not "sue for the patronage of the great or buy their favours by cringing."

He has still, he says, a bit of religion about him, and he never loses the stamp of the Seminary.

At Metz in 1802, when they hear of the restoration of Sunday, his fellow-officers ask him jestingly to become their Chaplain.

Assuredly he was one of the best-educated officers in the Imperial Army; jotting down in Latin the events of his life; speaking Latin "to his heart's content" in Germany with the Curés and Pasteurs; respectfully visiting the ruins of the house where Catullus had lived with Lesbia; making his men in 1815 take an oath consisting of four verses from *Athalie*; fond of dissertations; devoting a long digression in one of his letters to the subject of interest on loans.

One can understand his companions looking upon him as a marvel and a queer fish.

II

The portion of his writings concerning the campaign of 1812 is vividly interesting.

Even before reaching Russia, Pion foresees the disastrous results of the expedition. There is no fodder for the horses; *as usual* there is no order or administration; the Army must live by the sword, and even on Prussian territory and with their allies, the troops pillage atrociously, as if they were in an enemy's country.

The Niemen is crossed, and Pion is already wishing the war was ended, and that he were on the other bank of the river on his way back to France.

The nights are icy-cold, killing a third of the horses, and the troops suffer fearfully from the storm of the last days of June.

"We have gone through a bivouac such as no army has ever experienced; for forty-eight hours an appalling cold rain fell in torrents."

From the moment he reaches Vilna, he foresees that if the Emperor proceeds further it will be to his own hurt and detriment. On the way from Vilna to Vitebsk, he notices that the soldiers scatter to look for provisions.[1] At Vitebsk, Smolensk and Viasma he realizes that the intention of the Russians is unmistakably to deprive

[1] This relaxation of discipline had not escaped Napoleon's notice: "They rush helter-skelter after victuals," he wrote at that time to Berthier.

the invader of resources; to entice the French Army as far as possible, and to crush it when it is perishing of cold and hunger.

His comrades in arms already see the Emperor entering Moscow and dictating terms of peace. Pion tells them they are blind, and like Hagen saying to the Niebelungen that never will they see Burgondian country again, he tells them quietly that never again will they see France; and they call him a bird of ill omen.

At the Moskova, on September 7, like Boulart,[1] on all sides he hears a terrible cannonade, and only at intervals through the smoke discerns the position of the enemy. Like Boulart, he is close to Napoleon and, from the beginning of the action till four o'clock in the afternoon, he never takes his eyes off him.

"The Emperor," he writes, "did nothing but walk about in a state of agitation, listening to the reports of the staff-officers and generally waving them back without uttering a single word."[2]

When Pion arrives at Moscow he has not fired a single cannon. He enters the town, walks over a great part of it, and, seeing scarcely a soul about, feels terror-stricken. In the evening he is offered hospitality in a French household, and at the house of his compatriots, met by chance, he makes the best meal of his life—vermicelli soup, rib of beef, macaroni, Bordeaux, and

[1] See the following chapter.

[2] See Appendix II, "Napoleon at the Moskova."

coffee; and the mistress of the house assures him that he will find Moscow very pleasant, that he will get quarters in a palace, and that the city is a city of luxury and riches.

Suddenly his host, who has gone out, appears, wild with terror.

"Messieurs, the Bourse is on fire! What is the Bourse? A building bigger than the Palais Royal."

Moscow is a prey to fire; Pion, in his *Souvenirs*, dwells strongly on the scenes of pillage. He sees the streets strewn with books, china, furniture and clothing of all sorts; he sees the army utterly demoralized, and on every side drunken men loaded with spoils; he sees the officer in charge of the gate of Moscow on the Petrovski road levying a duty on all booty brought out by the military, and heaping up baskets of eggs and bottles of wine in his guard-room.

The fire subsided. There is a return to Moscow and taking up of quarters. Pion, established in Prince Bariatinsky's palace, and with the rank of Major, keeps open house; his fellow-officers dine sumptuously with him and drink the most delicious wines.

But he is never in agreement with his guests, who fancy that the Tsar will make peace, while he calls them simpletons and blames their credulity in trusting to wild rumours.

How can they believe that after having led the French on into the very heart of the Empire, after

having deprived them of all means of resistance, Alexander would lay down his arms?

He foresees that the Army must speedily retreat, and he makes preparation by buying some excellent furs and piling his baggage-wagon with provisions.

His presentiments prove correct; on the 18th of October on parade at the Kremlin, while the Emperor is reviewing the third Corps, comes Bérenger, an aide-de-camp of the King of Naples, who whispers to his friends: "Things are going badly"; and the Emperor, reading the despatch he has brought, learns of the repulse at Vinkovo and Taroutino.

Next day they set off, and two or three weeks later, the retreat has degenerated into a rout. Each man marches as he pleases and looks to his own safety; the artillery burns its ammunition and its gun-carriages; the soldiers cast away their knapsacks and their arms; many of them fall into the hands of the Cossacks foraging far away from the high-road; others die of cold and hunger.

Thanks to his baggage-wagon, neither Pion nor his friends suffer from hunger at first; but the Emperor decrees that the amount of baggage must be diminished at all costs and that half the vehicles must be burnt. So the precious baggage-wagon has to be abandoned, and so as not to lose the hundred and fifty bottles of wine and liqueurs it contains, they are drunk, and what

was to have been the consolation of several days disappears in a few hours.

One Major has kept his canteen; but at Smorgoni, on the 5th of December a gunner steals it, and, caught in the act, smashes the bottles against the wheel of a carriage in a rage.

Major Boulart, Captain Oriot and Mme Fusil all declared they owed their lives to coffee; Pion owed his to sugar; during the Retreat he lived entirely on sugar, eating more than a pound of it a day; his palate is raw with it. However, he kept wonderfully well, and could have said, like Napoleon, that his health had never been better—if it hadn't been for his boots!

Since leaving Smolensk, he had not dared to take off his boots for fear of not being able to get them on again. The frost had made them shrink, and for the first few steps he took in the morning he was obliged to walk on the toe or the heel or the side of the boot, so as to bend the sole. His feet swelled, and he could not sleep at night for the atrocious pain in them. At last, on the 15th of December, at Vilkoviski, he got his boots taken off by a servant of the post-house.

The sturdy Pole could not succeed at first, and proposed cutting up the accursed boots; but a five-franc piece gave him strength and courage; he set to work again and his efforts were crowned with success.

Pion's feet were black and numb, but the skin was not broken. How he sighed with relief and comfort

as he put on a pair of furred shoes? On the same day he crossed the Russian frontier.

III

In Pion's story there are several personages who especially claim the attention of the reader: Sorbier, Drouot, and Napoleon.

Sorbier is Commander-in-Chief of the Artillery of the Imperial Guard. He is the harsh, hard and peremptory Sorbier painted by Major Boulart; the Sorbier Lejeune describes as hot-headed; the man who at the Moskova, when he receives orders to bring up his guns, does not leave the aide-de-camp time to deliver his message but exclaims impatiently:

"I've been waiting for you more than an hour!"

Pion quotes some of Sorbier's speeches. At times the General's language was of an exceedingly vigorous and crude character.

Before Vilna, when the celebrated storm burst, he boldly declared that it was madness to attempt such ventures; and when Pion complained of the loss of his gun-carriages: "You're put out at the loss of your guns," says Sorbier; "I don't care a rap; it's quite immaterial whether you lose them to-day or to-morrow; all the better for the gunners who work themselves to death trying to save them; in spite of all the trouble

you're taking, not a single one of your carriages will get to the Niemen."

At Fontainebleau, on the 1st of April, 1814, he says to General Neigre, the Superintendent of Artillery, who applies for cloth for cartridge-cases : " Parbleu, Neigre ; you can do what you please about it. This is what that fellow has brought us to after twenty-five years of revolution, and there's nobody found to put a bullet into him ! "

This is the Sorbier who, under the influence of Lallemand, mortifies and humiliates Drouot, accusing him of wanting both ability and zeal, of managing his guns with less intelligence than the lowest corporal in the regiment, and of always pushing himself forward.[1]

Pion is equally severe on Drouot. According to him, Drouot is an egoist, a hypocrite devoured by ambition and thinking only of his own advancement ; during the Retreat he keeps his provisions to himself, and, at the Passage of the Beresina, he makes haste to get across the river without a thought of his companions or his horses.

But, like Lallemand, Pion is jealous of Drouot, who, " in one year, becomes First officer of the Legion, Count, General of Division, Adjutant and Major-General of the Guard," and who, in 1815, is " the second person of

[1] " Sorbier," says Planat, " was a man of medium height, thin and sallow, of harsh, forbidding aspect, and what in military slang is called a nasty customer,"

the Empire " ; and, in consequence, Pion refuses to see any merit in him.

Yet he himself had twice said that Drouot bore " a high reputation " in the Army, and that that reputation ought " to win him the rank of General."

Had he not said also that on the 4th of December, the feast of Sainte-Barbe, at Bienitsa, this Drouot he calls close-fisted, distributed bottles of wine to his fellow-officers !

As we know from other witnesses, Drouot did more than his duty during the Russian campaign, and did he not write that the loss of his poor gunners, whom he had seen die of cold and hunger, tore his heart ?

When he was given the rank of general, he declared he was sorry for the promotion; he was content with his rank as a colonel and had no wish to rise above it.

And what involuntary praise Pion gives Drouot in his report of one of their conversations during the Retreat.

" Misfortunes sometimes make for good," says Drouot; " after this campaign the Emperor will mix some water with his wine ; he will be satisfied with the fame already won and run after no further adventures. He was beaten by the elements, not by the Russians. Well, then, he can make peace and give up the right bank of the Rhine without dishonour."

Through the Revolution, as under the Empire, Pion

had always remained a Royalist, always loved and regretted the Bourbons. When he meets Drouet, who had been called the jailer of Louis XVI, now the *Sous-préfet* of Sainte-Ménehould, he shudders with indignation; there never was, according to him, a person with such a frightful countenance, and he is furious at the sight of the ribbon of the Legion on the breast of a man whom he thinks unworthy of respect.

At Dresden he is amazed that the King of Saxony—so pious, so devout a man—can be the friend of Napoleon.

When, on the 9th of April, 1814, in a *café* at Amboise, he finds the first newspaper bearing the shield of France and the three fleurs-de-lis, he feels like one born blind whose eyes have been opened. On the following 17th of May, when at the Tuileries the King and his august family walk through the rooms to go to Mass, Pion's eyes fill with tears at the cry: *Vive le Roi!* bursts from his lips.

On January 21, 1815, at La Fère, without any order from the Ministry and without communicating his intention to any one, he reads out to his men the will of Louis XVI; and if, after the return from Elba, he stays on with his regiment and does not emigrate to Ghent, it is solely in order to restrain the *canaille* of La Fère and not leave the place open to the Jacobins.

Pion, as he says, had never had any love for either

the person or the rule of Napoleon, and he foresaw and looked forward to his fate. From the beginning of the year 1812 he had asserted that the Russian expedition would entail the ruin of the Emperor, and in the November of 1813, when he was asked how things would end, he boldly answered: "Bonaparte will be dethroned; by Christmas his reign will be over."

In consequence his verdict on Napoleon's rôle in 1812 is a very severe one, sometimes rightly so, sometimes unjustly.

He calls the Emperor the greatest fool in the world; he styles him a deserter and taunts him with having left his army at the mercy of all the freaks of the adventurer Murat; he maintains that Napoleon "gloated over" the sight of his disorganized troops, and adds in this connexion that several soldiers: "Cursed Napoleon at the top of their voices."

Is it worth while to refute him on these points?

Need we answer, with Ségur, that if there were curses, they were never uttered in the Emperor's presence, and that, amidst so many ills, the worst still seemed to be displeasing him?

Must we repeat with Fantin, that from the ranks of the Army came no single murmur, and that if the Emperor no longer heard the shouts of love and enthusiasm that welcomed him of old, censure at least was spared him?

In one passage of his *Souvenirs* Pion complains that

under the Empire his promotion had been "slow and slight." May we not gather that if he had won the same measure of promotion as Drouot, he might have spoken of Napoleon in gentler terms?

MAJOR BOULART

I

MAJOR in the Artillery of the Guard, with the rank of Colonel in the Line, officer of the Legion of Honour and Baron of the Empire, le Rémois Jean François Boulart, who was to be promoted to General of Brigade in 1813, and who commanded the Artillery in the Army of the Rhine in 1815, made the Russian campaign,[1] and told its story, and was during the Retreat one of those dauntless men who, as Napoleon said, never seemed to be put-out or to lose their good-humour and energy.

II

He leaves Mayenne on March 16, 1812—for, for us, remarks Boulart, Mayenne meant France—and on May 29 arrives at Posen, having met with nothing of interest on the way; since to the soldiers, as he says, towns that evoke no great memories are but military land-marks, sign-posts, even simply inns.

[1] *Mémoires Militares du Général baron Boulart*, pp. 238–283.

At Thorn, on June 5, the Emperor reviews the artillery, and talks with Boulart and others in the gay, familiar and charming fashion of his when he was not preoccupied. A captain ventures to ask for a post as Director of Indirect Taxes for his brother-in-law, who was not even an official in the Administration, and Napoleon grants the request. Boulart is bold enough to say that with such troops and such guns as that of the Guard, the Emperor could march to the conquest of India; and Napoleon smiles.

No one dreamed that the campaign could come to grief; full of enthusiasm and faith in the genius of their Chief, all repeated after the Emperor that Russia was doomed.

"We'll celebrate the 15th of August at St. Petersburg!" cried Boulart.[1]

But who would not have believed in victory when the army had crossed the Niemen, when on every side sprang up battalions and squadrons as if they had risen out of the ground?

A magnificent, an unique spectacle!

A storm burst; rain fell in torrents; the thunder growled and flashes of lightning pierced the clouds without a break; battalions and squadrons kept on the move, and this vain unloosing of the powers of the

[1] Boulart does not quote this speech; it is reported by Pion (*Mes Campagnes*, p. 282).

heavens against the earth made, says Boulart, a most imposing spectacle.

III

Thus the French entered Russia, proud of their strength and certain of success; but their tone soon changed. Nature began to turn against them; first came unbearable heat, as great as in Madrid, Boulart reports; then on June 29 came a fresh and awful and extraordinary storm; such a terrible tempest had not been known in the memory of man.

Thunder and lightning burst forth from every side of the horizon; soldiers were struck dead; torrents of rain flooded the bivouacs; the downpour lasted all the next day.

This was the first of the disasters.

With incredible difficulty they had to make their way over cut-up roads, and those who had fought in 1807 had fresh experience of the thick and sticky mud of Pultusk.

Worst of all was the loss of horses; nearly ten thousand perished. On June 30, when he reached Vilna, Boulart had lost ninety draft-horses and seventy of the little ponies of the country.

He had not had time to bring a store of oats from Thorn, and the poor beasts had nothing to eat but the still-green wheat, the most unwholesome food they

could have had in the state of overwork in which they were constantly kept. The green food had weakened them; the glacial rain finished them off.

The Artillery of the Guard renewed its teams at Vilna, and on July 31 they bivouacked in the neighbourhood of Vitebsk; but they were tired out with marches over muddy roads through woods, and they had not yet fired a shot.

Would the Russians flee onwards for ever without standing their ground? Would the battle they longed for never come off?

Moreover, Boulart thought it would be wiser to go no further. He remembered that the bad weather begins early in Russia, and believed it would be more prudent not to undertake a further advance, but to take up permanent quarters at Vitebsk, and next year push on into the heart of Muscovy.

For a moment he half thought this plan would be accepted; the Emperor had some houses pulled down to enlarge a square where the daily parade took place. Who knows that he had not some idea of restoring the Kingdom of Poland? That was the ardent desire of the Lithuanians.

Boulart was living in a country house some miles outside Vitebsk, and the mistress of the house told him she detested the Russians, and if Napoleon proclaimed the independence of Poland, the Lithuanians would rise in a body and help him to their utmost; but that if he

kept silent, anxiety would take hold on them and put a stop to the enthusiasm of the people.

But who takes up winter-quarters at the end of July or the beginning of August?

Napoleon hadn't come from Paris to sit down at Vitebsk, and when, on parade, he invested Friant with the command of the Grenadiers of the Guard, he spoke these words: that he should always keep the Grenadiers under his own eyes, and that General Friant, whom he still needed, would continue to lead his division during the campaign.

On August 13, after a ten days' rest which, as reports another member of the expedition, had done great good to both the bipeds and the quadrupeds of the Army,[1] the Guard left Vitebsk, and by forced marches reached the shores of the Dnieper, the ancient Borysthenis whose name revived Boulart's Memories of the Classics.[2] On the 17th it appeared before Smolensk.

A desperate fight took place under the walls of the

[1] Fantin des Odoards, *Journal*, p. 315.

[2] The Borysthenis, with its sonorous name, appeared to the French a mean sort of river; some of them said of it: "Seen from afar, it's something, but from near, just nothing at all"; and Peyrusse writes: "This river has been much extolled; I don't think it comes up to its reputation." And another writes: "We reach the shores of the Dnieper, so here is the ancient Borysthenis! There's nothing remarkable about its banks, and it isn't more than three or four hundred feet wide. All one's illusions about this ancient limit of the East vanished at the sight of the beggarly reality. A glance was enough!"

fortress; but it was not the battle the French had longed for, nor was it the victory they were in haste to gain and which was to end the war.

"God grant we may at last have the good fortune of coming up with the enemy we have been pursuing so long!" exclaimed Drouot.

But they did not come up with the enemy's army; once more it stole away, and the Russians who were defending Smolensk held out till night-fall and on retreating set the town on fire.

On the top of the ramparts their figures stood out against a background of flames like dissolving views, and Boulart's spirit was filled with a profound sadness.

Evidently the enemy was exasperated and would not make peace so easily. Next day, when he went into Smolensk, his heart was torn at the sight; houses burnt down or still burning on every side, ruins and corpses everywhere, the inhabitants taking refuge in the churches and looking at the French with hostile or despairing eyes.[1]

Once more arose the question, would Napoleon halt at Smolensk.

He had appeared, Boulart declares, to have no other aim but the crossing of the Dnieper and making a left-

[1] Cf. in our 1812, *La guerre de Russie, notes et documents*, vol. i, p. 61, a letter from an officer: "Never shall I forget the sight of the interior of Smolensk; picture to yourself all the streets, every square heaped with dead or dying Russians, and the flames all round lighting up this awful picture."

wheel fall upon the rear of the Russian army to cut it off from Moscow. He arrived too late; but the taking of Smolensk, adds Boulart, was an important advantage, and Smolensk would make excellent head-quarters; as the Comte de Lobau had said to Napoleon: "Smolensk is a fine position for cantonments."

But the Emperor pushed on towards Moscow.

In his fifteenth bulletin he writes that the taking of Smolensk, Smolensk the Sacred and the Strong, has had a very depressing effect on the minds of the Russians; that the people looked upon it as the key to Moscow and that the peasants were constantly repeating: "Whosoever owns Smolensk, owns Moscow."

But the march of the French army was again very fatiguing; the heat was intense, and as the Russians retired, they set fire to the towns and villages on their way.

"Since we left Smolensk," reports a French officer, "I have been constantly surrounded by flames."

IV

At last, on September 7, at Borodina, the battles so long desired and looked forward to, took place.

The Emperor was in front of the Redoubt of Chevardino, captured two days earlier; behind him was massed the Guard, looking its finest, and Boulart,

standing at a little distance, could observe him at his ease.

For a great part of the day, the Emperor stayed there, walking to and fro, his hands behind his back, or standing still and resting. Sometimes calling for Berthier; sometimes giving instructions to his officers or listening to their reports; sometimes talking with wounded Generals who came up from time to time.

Around the Emperor and amongst the Guard reigned a silence which was a strange contrast to the appalling noise of the battle. Through the dust and smoke, the movements of the troops could be dimly seen, and little by little the success of our attack was learnt. But it was known, too, that the field had been bought dear and the taking of the redoubt had cost much blood.

Those around tried to discover what the Emperor was thinking; they wanted to see his face grow cheerful, light up as it used to do; such a brightening would have been the sign of an undoubted and complete victory; but he remained gloomy and anxious.

At last the Guard was ordered to advance, and there was something serious and solemn about its moving; it seemed as if on it must depend the issue.

Suddenly it came to a halt.

Once more Boulart had not fired a shot, and he owns that he was struck with amazement.

From afar he had seen the Russians effect their retreat without disorder, and he said to himself that

the French Army had fought in vain and, after so long drawn-out and bloody an action, gained nothing but a position.[1]

On the 14th, from a height, he gazed at Moscow with its gilded domes and its innumerable cupolas of every colour; he wondered at the Asiatic aspect of the city; he thought how, after eight hundred leagues of journeying, after so many privations and hardships, he was looking upon the cradle of this great Russian Empire, the ancient capital of Muscovy, the Holy City; he tells himself that he has reached the end of his troubles; this is the Promised Land, the oasis after the desert.

V

That very night the fire broke out; a fire which in a short time spread beyond belief.

On the 15th Boulart entered the town, placed his guns in an immense square not far from the Kremlin, and had the neighbouring houses searched and watched, for he knew already the prisons were thrown open and he had caught sight of *chauffeurs* of hideous and ferocious aspect.

But the fire spread and reached the quarter where Boulart had established himself, and sparks carried by the wind fell close to his guns.

[1] See Appendix II, "Napoleon at the Moskova."

Our Major received no orders, and it was the most restless night he had ever spent.

On the 16th, at dawn, he went to the Kremlin, running great risks; at times passing under a canopy of fire; hearing the sinister sound of metal plates falling continually from the Palace roofs; sometimes struck by falling fragments; surrounded by dense smoke; closing his eyes for the intense heat of the flames as they came near him; scarcely able to see his way, urging on his trembling horse when it refused to go forward.

At last he emerges from the burning zone, crosses a quarter in absolute ruins and reaches the gates of the Kremlin. He enters, and sees nothing but countenances full of dismay; discouraged and doubting men; and General Curial orders him to follow the Emperor, who is leaving the Kremlin and Moscow.

Boulart followed the Emperor and the Guard to the Castle of Petrowski. Two days later he returned to the town and, with the Guard, took up his quarters near the Kremlin.

He wanted for nothing; he had a good cook, Jarlot from Laon, and he feasted his friends richly.

But there was no stopping in Moscow; on October 19 they set forth again, and Boulart was glad to go southward, towards a new country and away from frosts.

VI

Still he could not help comparing the army to that of Xerxes, the army, the *caravan* several leagues long and which carried with it so many wagons and so many luxurious carriages. He himself possessed a splendid brougham, quite new and laden with sugar, tea, furs and rare books.[1]

But the battle of Malo-Iaroslavets robbed him of hope; he realized at once that the action fought between one only corps forming the advance-guard and the Russian army, must end disastrously and bring grievous consequences; and that the Retreat, in altering its direction, must be made through a country already scoured and drained.[2]

As a matter of fact, the Army returned through Mojaisk and re-crossed the field of the battle of the Moskova, and Boulart's heart ached when he saw that spot of desolation and horror once again.

Up to November 6 the weather, though cool and damp, was still bearable and supplies did not fail. While the rear-guard was fighting, the rest of the Army went quietly forward in a single column; but marching at ease became habitual and the number of stragglers increased.

On November 6 snow fell, covering the road, and

[1] Cf. "L'Armée de Xerxès," in Appendix III.

[2] It was, Lejeune says, casting us back into the desert and amongst the ashes.

then began the misery which was to increase day by day for six weeks.

Boulart describes it all—the wind lashing one's face; the snow hardened by the trampling of feet till it becomes ice; the holes and ditches into which those who strayed to right or left of the beaten track fall and disappear; the awful cold; the men who fall and whom no one lifts up; whose comrades, without a pause, without a look, leave to claw at the snow and struggle vainly against Death.

He describes the life of the fugitives. During the day they march without a halt for fear of the Cossacks, breakfasting on a bit of bread or biscuit or sugar; biscuit and sugar, dry and hard as stones, breaking the teeth and laying bare the gums.

In the evening, near some village, eight or ten of them crowd close together round a bivouac-fire; they eat a wretched soup made of flour mixed with snow-water, then sleep, and the next day the march begins again.

"Since we left Moscow," sighed Berthier, "we have never ceased marching"; and the soldiers grumbled at this "pig-tail" which grew even longer and longer and seemed to have no end.

The garb of all these men, like their aspect, has something savage about it. Sunken eyes; beards grown thick; long moustaches; dirty and smoke-dried skins; they wear pelisses and furred great-coats of all

shapes and colours, and are shod with rags, scraps of cloth or fur, more or less badly tied on with string.

On November 13, at Smolensk, there came a sort of lull in the storm.

On that day, when supplies were dealt out to the Guard, Boulart had ranged his guns near one of the gates of the town, on a sort of promenade where the trees sheltered them from the snow.

He had received bread, biscuits and a big joint of meat, which the clever Jarlot dressed, and round his bivouac-fire he gathered together and regaled some of his friends, among others, Colonel Griois.

While he lived Griois never forgot the repast given him by Boulart. The cold was intense —27 degrees— and the wine had to be broken up with a hatchet and melted at the fire; but Griois thought it a feast.

The next day but one, November 15, as a contrast and a sort of make-weight, was for Boulart the hardest day of the Retreat.

Harassed by the Cossacks, he, with his guns, was due at Krasnoï. It was evening.

He comes to a narrow pass obstructed by vehicles of every kind, and for three hours, which he uses in feeding men and horses, he halts.

But there is no giving way of the obstruction, and the Major is assured that to get through it is absolutely impossible.

Boulart does not hesitate; to wait longer would be

fatal, laying himself open to falling into the hands of the Russians.

He issues orders that his carriages are to follow close upon one another, without a stop, and boldly, pitilessly, he makes his way through the confused mass of wagons; he pushes aside, he knocks down, any who bar his passage; he breaks and crushes everything in his way, giving no ear to cries and groans; he comes out upon an open road, rigid with ice; he has earth taken from the sides of the road and spread over the ground; one by one the gun-carriages are hoisted up to the top of the ascent, and, at last, at dawn, he reaches Krasnoï.

He acknowledges that he had to display energy and a determined will to overcome the difficulty, but he had thought the matter out.

After him, no one cleared the pass; the Russians took up their position on the height and seized the equipages through which Boulart had so determinedly cloven his way.

He had other troublous moments.

During the engagement at Krasnoï, he had to sacrifice part of his baggage; to throw cannon and ammunition into a lake; to burn gun-carriages and wagons. To get out of Krasnoï he had to leave one of his guns to the Cossacks.

Before reaching Liady, he had to cover Davout's retreat, and he envied the lot of the foot-soldiers, and

well-nigh cursed his branch of the Service, so painful and tiring it was.

At Orcha, on November 19, he was able to rest, and the Russians did not trouble this respite.

The French were already recovering their spirits; hope was born again in them, and, on the 20th, as they marched on Borissov, they believed better days were coming.

"Good God!" exclaims Boulart; "how we were trapped!"

It was learnt that Tchitchagov, holding Borissov, stopped the passage of the Beresina, and that, on the right of the Army, Wittgenstein was advancing.

It was then that Berthier made the appalling speech heard by Dedem: "We are cut off on every side!" and Boulart writes in the same strain: "We are hemmed in; it is a terrible situation, and consternation reigns on all sides."

But he adds that they did not quite despair, and that the confidence of the Army in the Emperor was prodigious.[1]

The Beresina is crossed, Tchitchagov repulsed; the

[1] "The sight of the Emperor re-assured the Army," writes Ségur. "For long it had been accustomed to rely on him, not for life but for conquest. This was the first unlucky campaign, and there had been so many lucky ones. All there was to do was to follow him; he alone, who had been able to raise his soldiers so high and so to dash them down, could save them! He lived in the midst of his army as hope lives in the heart of man!"

lengthy highway to Zembin travelled over, and they are on the road to Vilna.

Alas! the cold becomes more and more cruel. On December 8, Boulart, sleeping in a church where men are dying by scores, is awakened by a sinister and terrible cry, which makes him shudder: "Fly! fly! Every one is dying here!"

On the 9th, a couple of leagues from Vilna, in a farrier's shop without window or door and open to all the winds of heaven, with seven others, he crouches at a wretched little fire, his toes almost in the flames, and without a morsel to eat!

At last, on the 10th, he reaches Vilna, satisfies his hunger and sleeps in a good bed.

Suddenly he is snatched from sleep: Vilna can't be held; it must be left; and our gallant Major departs. He gets into an open carriage with Colonel Lallemand and Captain Evain, arrives at Kovno, and, on the 19th, he is at Gumbinnen, on Prussian soil.

VII

On February 12, 1813, he once more saw his wife and children, whom he had left eleven months earlier. What events had taken place since then! The journey across Germany; the passage of the Niemen; the storm-deluge that had overtaken the Army on its march to Vilna; the taking of Smolensk; the battle of the Moskova; the disaster at Krasnoï; the Beresina; "the

most disastrous, the most awful Retreat the world had ever seen!"

"After that," ends Boulart, "you can fancy what happiness I felt to be in the midst of all I hold most dear!"

But he was amongst the bravest of the year 1812; never allowing himself to be discouraged and never, for a moment, giving way to weakness.

COLONEL FEZENSAC

I

SON-IN-LAW of the Duc de Feltre, and with the rank of Major, Fezensac[1] easily got permission to join the Russian Campaign.

Berthier, Major-General of the Grand Army, took him as his aide-de-camp, and at the beginning of the month of May, 1812, Fezensac went to Posen.

He crossed Prussia, remarking on his way the discontent of the people oppressed by billeting and requisitions. Not only had the peasants to feed their lodgers, they had to furnish the regiments with carts and horses and frequently take them fifty leagues from their villages, where, sick of war, they ended by leaving them.

[1] Raymond, Viscount, then Duc de Montesquiou-Fezensac, Brigadier-General, March 4, 1813; Lt.-General, July 30, 1823. In 1849 he published first a part of his *Journal de la Campagne de Russie*, then the whole of his military recollections from the time of his entering the Service in 1804 to the end of the Empire. In his *Souvenirs Militaires*, in three volumes, the second, consisting of ten chapters, is devoted to the Russian Campaign, and it is that alone we consider here.

But what mattered the complaints of the Prussians? The Grand Army was on the march, certain of victory. And what immense preparations! Each general possessed several carriages, and every officer had his. The number of servants, horses and baggage of all sorts was prodigious.

Officials abounded, and when Berthier reviewed the civil servants, from a distance they looked like troops drawn up in battle array.

And what an imposing mass of infantry, cavalry and artillery! And was not the quality as fine as the quantity?

At the beginning of the campaign, Fezensac was often sent with messages to the Generals, and each time he extols the bearing of the regiments, their enthusiasm, the order and precision of their evolutions.

These regiments had only to appear; the Niemen was crossed without difficulty, Vilna entered without resistance. In a trice, the Emperor separated the two Russian armies and drove them before him. He made Vilna his headquarters and kindled the zeal of the Poles. Fezensac was present at the proclamation of the independence of Poland in the cathedral of the town; the men, dressed in the ancient costume, and the women, wearing ribbons of the national colours—red and purple—heard the act with acclamations.

But how great the difference between Poland and Prussia! In Prussia, comfort, well-cultivated land,

well-built houses. In Poland, poverty and servitude; a sottish peasantry, horribly dirty Jews, fields scarcely cleared, noisome huts.

The resources of the country were not sufficient for the Army, already in want of supplies; the stragglers and loiterers, whose number increased day by day, gave themselves up to pillage, and the *sous-préfet* of Novo-Troki, on his way to his post, arrived at the town he was to manage almost naked; our soldiers had robbed him!

The weather was unfavourable, at times stifling heat, at others torrents of rain which spoiled the roads, often consisting of nothing but long pieces of wood thrown over swamps.

Ten thousand horses perished in a few days.

II

Napoleon quits Vilna on June 16 and drives the Russians to the gates of Vitebsk. A great battle is expected; the regiments are afire with eagerness; their behaviour in several fights, and notably at Ostrovno, presages success; but the enemy falls back upon Smolensk.

There is a rest of a few days at Vitebsk—from June 29 to July 12—and Fezensac and his fellow-officers congratulate themselves on this fine beginning: Lithuania won, the Russians retaining no portion of it;

and the genius of the Emperor, the skill of his Generals, the valour of his soldiers, unite in giving hopes of a coming victory to be called the victory of Smolensk..

Still, some of the officers do not conceal their anxiety. The French Army is reduced by a third; the Cavalry have lost a number of horses; the artillery gets on not without difficulty; the ambulance-convoys and the baggage-wagons with medicaments are still in the rear. The Russians, on the other hand, are retiring in admirable order, leaving behind not a single gun, a single carriage, a single sick man.

On August 16 these ever-retreating Russians are come up with before Smolensk, and they defend the town. On the 17th the attack is begun, the outskirts taken; and the assault would have taken place the same day if the wall the batteries attempted to breach had not been of a thickness that recalled that of the ramparts of Saint-Jean-d'Acre to the officers who had served with the Army of Egypt.

But in the night the Russians evacuated and set fire to Smolensk, leaving their wounded to perish in the flames and the inhabitants to huddle into the Cathedral, where they died of hunger.

On the 19th they were pursued, caught up with at Valoutina, and beaten; and the 3rd Corps, under Ney, displayed on that day so splendid a courage that the enemy believed itself faced by the Imperial Guard.

Still the victory was incomplete; no prisoners were

taken, and the enemy, as usual, retired in perfect order to take up another position further on.

Fezensac thought it would have been better to halt between the Dwina and the Dnieper; to restore order to Lithuania and repair the losses of the Army. But the Emperor was convinced that a decisive battle would lead to peace; and to secure that battle, he marched to Moscow. On September 1 he heard that Koutouzov was resolutely awaiting him, and, truly, says Fezensac, never was news more welcome.

Napoleon had got his battle at last, and, on the 7th, when it came off, he refused to manœuvre to the right so as to turn the Russians' left wing; he would have the battle at whatever cost and dreaded to let it escape him.

But Fezensac seems to regret that he took no personal part in the action and did not order the Guard to make the victory complete.

III

On September 11 Berthier's aide-de-camp was made Colonel of the 4th Regiment of the Line. He was twenty-six years old!

From the earliest days of his command he is struck by the look of exhaustion of the troops and their numerical weakness. The 4th Regiment used to have a strength of 2,800 men; now it has but 900 and forms two battalions instead of four. The 3rd Corps, to

which he belongs—Marshal Ney's Corps—formerly numbered 25,000 combatants and now counts but 8,000.

The effect on men's spirits of these very serious losses is evident; there is no more gaiety, no more songs or funny stories; the men keep a gloomy silence and the officers serve now only from a sense of duty and honour.

The burning of Moscow makes the gloom complete. Fezensac's regiment is encamped three-quarters of a mile behind the town, which it is expressly forbidden to enter; and if its young Colonel tacitly allows his men to go in and take their share in the pillaging, they get no good out of the permission; for when they return with their booty, their kind comrades of the 1st Corps and of the Imperial Guard relieve them of the whole of it.

Later on, the 3rd Corps is quartered in a suburb of Moscow, and the 4th Regiment crosses the town to the beat of drums and the sound of martial music; but past what a scene of misery does this triumphal march roll on!

The air is filled with a horrible smell of burning; rubbish of all sorts obstructs the way; the houses look as if they had been razed to the ground, and those still left standing are nothing but smoke-blackened walls.

Here and there a cottage, a house or a church rises above the wreckage. The inhabitants wander like spectres amongst the ruins, living on the vegetables still to be found in the gardens, the flesh of the horses fallen

in the streets, or the fermented wheat fished out of the river into which the Russian army has cast it.

Fezensac's regiment is little better off; sugar and vegetables and preserves it has, but little meat and little bread. It possesses furs, but neither clothes nor shoes; it has diamonds, jewellery, ornaments, but it is on the eve of dying of hunger. Troops of auxiliaries already surround Moscow; Cossacks attack the foragers; peasants massacre the marauders.

Thus a month goes by.

On October 18 Napoleon reviews the 3rd Corps in the Court of the Kremlin. The regiments are in splendid case, and perhaps, says Fezensac, their appearance made the Emperor believe that with such troops nothing was impossible to him.

Then suddenly Berenger, Murat's aide-de-camp, makes his appearance and tells Napoleon of the repulse at Taroutino.

The Emperor cannot conceal his emotion; he hurries on the review, and gives the Colonel the order to leave next day.

On October 19 they start. Fezensac leaves the flour he can't carry with him to the people of the house he has lived in, and the blessings they shower upon him brought him luck, he thinks.

IV

This departure, which took place at night, had some-

thing lugubrious and sinister about it; the darkness, the silent march, the still smoking ruins beneath their feet, all awoke feelings of sadness and anxiety.

But during the last days of October Fezensac had nothing but praise to give to all his men.

On the way to Kalouga they were exposed to torrential rains, and their march was by absolutely broken crossroads. As they retraced their steps to Mojaisk they had to go by roads blocked with vehicles and over streams that had overflowed their banks.

But the order and discipline of the 4th Regiment never failed.

In November, after the affair at Viasma, its worst trials began. Up to then, fatigue and hunger were all it had had to contend with; now it was to struggle, as Fezensac says, against Death in every form, while covering with the 3rd Corps the retreat of the Army.

On the evening of the 5th of November, in the defile of Semlevo, Fezensac, unaided, keeps in check the Russian vanguard.

On the 8th, he defends Dorogobouge. Razout's division, shut up in the Castle, is nearly surrounded; Fezensac with his regiment charges up the snow-covered heights, where they scatter and skirmish.

The Russians fall back, and when they renew their attack and Razout orders a return, it is Fezensac again who repulses them.

Ney is displeased.

" What were the enemies' numbers ? " he asks Fezensac.

" We were too close to them for me to count," answers the Colonel.

But the Marshal was right in holding that the enemy had seized Dorogobouge too soon, and when General Joubert described to him the weakness and discouragement of the troops :

" The only question is to get oneself killed," replied Ney ; " and such a death is too fine, too glorious to shun ! "

All day on the 11th, while Ney was falling back on Slob-Pnévo, Fezensac guarded the road leading to the bridge over the Dnieper, and then the blockhouse on the opposite bank, he himself, with Ney, firing on the assailants.

On the evening of the 13th, not without trouble and difficulty, he encamped before Smolensk. But the 3rd Corps was the last to arrive, and it found nothing left in the place ; the corps that had preceded it had broken up and plundered the store-houses ; it had taken no more than twenty-four hours to destroy the supplies for several months.

On the 15th, on the outskirts of Smolensk, amid snow and litter, Fezensac drove off the Russian sharpshooters and prevented them holding the head of the bridge.

From the top of a rampart, Ney watched the fight. He sent word to Fezensac not to advance too far, and

the Colonel remarks that such an order from the Marshal was very rare.

On the 17th, in accordance with the Emperor's instructions, the 3rd Corps left Smolensk, after blowing up the fortifications; and on the 18th on the march to Krasnoï, it found itself surrounded.

An envoy summoned Ney to lay down his arms; Ney's only answer was an order to attack the enemy. Fezensac led the way; but grape-shot overwhelmed his regiment, set on by both infantry and cavalry. In a quarter of an hour the 4th lost three-fifths of its strength.

We know how Ney saved what remained of the 3rd Corps, and how he reached Orcha by the right bank of the Dnieper so quickly as to rejoin the Grand Army, which was moving along the left.

Fezensac distinguished himself during this fine retreat. For a moment he was cut off from the column, and the Cossacks, firing at him point-blank, assailed him in a wood. But he kept his presence of mind and maintained order amongst the men still left him. Bravely they followed him through the midst of the wood, then outside it along the Dnieper, over difficult ground, by rugged ravines and half-frozen streams.

V

When Fezensac reached Orcha, the 3rd Corps numbered only 800 men, and the regiment only 80.

When on November 27, after crossing the Beresina,

the roll was called, out of seventy officers but forty were left, and most of these were sick and worn out; as to the men they made up two half companies.

The 3rd Corps and its regiments had ceased to exist.

Ney decided that the officers with the flags should join the Imperial Guard, and the sound men, making a hundred, should remain with him as an escort.

Fezensac and the officers departed, a drummer at their head—the sole survivor of the drummers and bandsmen of the 3rd Corps—and, after a march of two days and three nights, they came up with headquarters on December 3, between Iliya and Molodetchno, in a forest of pines.

Napoleon was in a carriage with Berthier, the aides-de-camp leading their horses by the bridle, and sometimes sitting behind the carriage to rest themselves [1]; the Guard walked in some kind of order, and after it came footsore men from every regiment.

Arrived at Vilna in the midst of crowding and confusion that recalled the Passage of the Beresina, struggling to suffocation with the crowd at the gates, the officers dispersed.

But on the 9th of December, having supped on a pot of jam and slept upon a board, Fezensac once more found his regiment, the regiment he regretted to have

[1] Castellane says, in fact: "We walked and sat by turns, and nothing was a greater proof of our misery than that great personages looked upon this as a piece of good luck."

left; so true is it, he says, that in war one always repents having left one's post, even by order of one's chiefs, even with the intention of doing right.

He left Vilna with what was still left of the officers and men of the 4th Regiment of the Line; and, if he lost them while climbing the hill of Ponari, he joined them again further on at Chichmori and led them to Kovno: twenty officers and twenty men, of whom not one was fit to fight!

But he was tired to death, and while his men went to look for rum and biscuits, he let himself drop against a milestone in Kovno.

Yet, when Ney—Ney the rear-guard, as he might well have been called—ordered that this handful of men should remain with him to defend the place, neither Fezensac nor his companions replied that they had done enough and their task was ended.

Fezensac's pages concerning the taking of Kovno contain heartbreaking details.

French soldiers, sitting round bivouac fires in the streets, gaze indifferently at Fezensac and his friends as they pass; and when they are told that they will fall into the hands of the Cossacks, hang their heads, and without a word crowd round the fire.

Already the inhabitants stare insolently at the Frenchmen, and one of them arms himself with a musket, which Fezensac snatches from him.

Men who have dragged themselves as far as the

Niemen fall dead upon the bridge at the very moment when the end of their troubles is at hand.

But beyond the Niemen appear the Russians; they have crossed the river on the ice, blocking the way of the fugitives, and then Fezensac sees two of his officers, stricken with despair, turning back to Kovno to give themselves up as prisoners. In vain he implores them not to forsake the regiment; they have come to the end of their strength, a supreme effort is beyond their powers; weeping, they embrace their Colonel and go back to the town.

For the last time Marshal Ney saves his companions in arms. Under cover of the darkness he descends the Niemen, and, turning to the left, takes a road through the woods that leads to Königsberg. All night and the next day the march goes on. "A white horse we rode barebacked by turns was a great help to us," says Fezensac.

VI

Such is Fezensac's story.

He blames the expedition—the most disastrous history records; it was colossal, superhuman and, in consequence, doomed to failure.

What was the use of the enormous Commissariat the Grand Army dragged behind it? Despite the zeal and the ability of the Intendant-General Dumas, it was

wellnigh useless from the very beginning of the campaign, and, in the end, became absolutely detrimental.

It is not enough to give orders; it is necessary that such orders should be carried out; and, "what with the rapidity of the movements, the concentration of troops in one spot, the bad state of the roads, and the difficulty of feeding the horses, how could it have been possible to serve out regular rations and to organize the hospital service properly?"

Some of his criticisms on the men and officers are curious and instructive.

Some leagues from Vilna Fezensac meets with several regiments of the Young Guard, among others the regiment of "*Flanqueurs*."

This regiment, since leaving Saint-Denis, has had but two days of rest, one at Mayenne and one at Marienwerder; moreover, after the day's march, it has to drill after reaching its quarters because the Emperor does not think it smart enough. Now this regiment is composed of very young men: "Therefore it was the first to go to pieces; already the men were dying of exhaustion on the roads."

He classes the officers of the regiment he commands as follows: some, fresh from the Military College, active, zealous, but too young and raw to endure the excessive hardships of the campaign; others, old non-commissioned officers, excellent soldiers, and who know

everything the practice of warfare can teach in the lower grades, but wanting in intelligence and education; others, cultivated, experienced, hardy and anxious to distinguish themselves, but of whom, unluckily, there is but a small number.

He draws the portraits of the generals and colonels of his Army Corps—Ledru des Essarts, who has a marvellous knowledge of the details of the Service; Razout, shortsighted, unable to distinguish anything about him, and always uncertain, irresolute and undecided; Joubert, of a commonplace kind; d'Hénin, who, long a prisoner in England, has lost the habit of his profession; Pelleport, who commands the 18th Regiment with rare distinction.

He praises both Mortier and Berthier.

Mortier, ordered to blow up the Kremlin, manages the task in a fashion that diminishes something of its severity, and his dealings with the sick and wounded and the care he takes of them do honour to his character and his heart.

Berthier treats his aides-de-camp roughly but kindly, and lets them want for nothing. He spends the day, and even the night, in despatching the Emperor's commands, and never were seen such obedience and such absolute devotion. Nevertheless, as recompense for his services, he gets nothing but rebuffs and severe reprimands; but his zeal never abates and his patience is untiring. Incapable of high command, he possesses

in the highest degree the qualifications necessary for Napoleon's Chief of Staff.

Fezensac has less praise for Marshal Davout.

In one short sentence he alludes to the Prince d'Eckmühl, blaming him for his pitiless severity when, acting as rear-guard, he was ordered to set fire to everything: "Never was order carried out with more exactness and fewer scruples."

Our Colonel speaks but little of Napoleon. He remarks that the Emperor visited the wounded after the battle of the Moskova, and gave orders that they were to be well looked after.

He notes his habit of smartly rating the supply and hospital officials, and in consequence the soldiers, dying of want, would blame no one but these same officials, saying: "It's very unfortunate; for the Emperor takes a great deal of trouble about us."

Finally, Fezensac describes a fit of anger of Napoleon's; one of those fits Napoleon called "my blood-red rages."

At Viasma, on August 30, seeing some men plundering a brandy-store, the Emperor rushes in amongst them, hurling abuse at them, and striking them with his riding-whip; and Fezensac gathers from this performance that the conqueror, exasperated at his failure to reach the Russians, who ravage and burn without granting him the battle he longs for, gave way to fits of ill-temper of which those around him were often the victims.

The hero of these recollections, the personage whose figure dominates this little volume and whose great personality claims both Fezensac's homage and ours, is Marshal Ney.

Harde ned by experience of war, rough and harsh, but neither cruel nor malicious, Ney ended by holding that all soldiers ought to die on the field of battle, and so fulfil their destiny.

"Let me be carried off," a wounded man calls out to him. "Eh!" answers the Marshal; "what do you want me to do about it? You are a victim of the war"; and he passes on.

Fezensac mourns the death of Alfred de Noailles. "Bah!" says Ney; "apparently it was his turn, and it is better for us to be regretting him than for him to be regretting us."

But he took no count of his own life, and his boldness, his steadfastness, his coolness, were so wonderful!

In Fezensac's eyes Ney was the best fitted for commanding the rear-guard. Ney ceded Dorogobouge to the Russians with great grief, lamenting his inability to hold it twenty-four hours longer.

At Slob-Pnévoe, in the crossing of the Dnieper, his operations are exceedingly skilful. If he is present, the men's minds are at rest, however great the danger; they are ignorant of what he wants or is able to do; but they know he will do something.

"What have you decided to do?" says an officer to him on the evening of November 18.

"To cross the Dnieper."

"But how?"

"That we shall find out."

"And if the Dnieper is not frozen?"

"It will be frozen."

Thereupon the Marshal catches sight of ice and orders it to be broken; it is a stream flowing into the Dnieper. He follows this stream and reaches a village, where he makes as if to take up his quarters.

The village is deserted, but at last a lame peasant is found who guides the troops to the Dnieper. The river is frozen; they cross it, leaving guns, baggage and carriages to the enemy.

The next day they fight all day with the Cossacks and rest in the evening. At one o'clock in the morning they start again and march till dawn; once more they repulse the Cossacks, from noon till fall of day defending a village backed by a wood, and in the night they come to within a league of Orcha.

The confidence inspired by the Duc d'Elchingen and his unalterable coolness in danger have saved the remnant of the 3rd Corps, and a week later, on November 28, on the right bank of the Beresina, when he succeeds to the command of the wounded Oudinot, it is he that brings about the success of the battle.

From the 9th to the 13th of December, at Vilna and

at Kovno, it is he, the stubborn soldier, who makes the Army's last stand against the Russians; "his absence," says Fezensac, "would have meant total loss and his presence redeemed everything." [1]

VII

But the finest portrait in these memoirs is that of Fezensac, drawn by himself unwittingly in scattered touches.

The reader feels the liveliest sympathy for the Colonel, and applauds the justice of the praises the Duc d'Elchingen bestowed on him after the campaign.

On January 23, 1813, Marshal Ney wrote to the Duc de Feltre: "I want to express to you the great satisfaction I feel in the way M. de Fezensac behaved. That young man found himself in very critical situations, and always showed himself superior to them. I present him to you as a true French knight, and for the future you can look upon him as a colonel of old standing."

Fezensac is full of courage and resolution. After Vilna, he declares that the stragglers, the wretches who, still sound of limb, desert their corps, ought to be driven off at the butt-end of the musket; and, should the enemy make an attack, he threatens to fire on them if they cause the slightest difficulty.

He holds that these stragglers, no longer belonging

[1] See later the chapter entitled: "The Hero of the Retreat."

to any regiment or serving in any way, have no right to be pitied; and he allows his own men, soldiers loyal to the colours and, as rear-guard, alone in their resistance to the enemy, to take from these stragglers their food and clothing.

"We were reduced to destroying each other; but it was an unavoidable necessity."

At Dorogobouge, as soon as Razout orders an advance, Fezensac instantly attacks the Russians, and when Razout orders the retreat, the order has to be repeated before he quits his position; and he draws back slowly, forming his company anew and still facing the enemy.

Energetically he recalls his men to their duty, and on November 14 when, outside Smolensk, they take refuge in the houses to shelter from the terrible cold, he tells them that their honour is at stake, and that to disperse is to expose themselves to a surprise, and so compromise their division and the entire army. He exhorts them to carry out the noble task entrusted to them by Ney, and so always to deserve the Marshal's praise.

He is proud of the fame they have won with him and under his command.

A generous emotion fills his heart when he describes to us how, at Krasnoï, his men walked calmly into the jaws of death. "Let me pay homage to their devotion," he writes, "and congratulate myself on having marched at their head."

How proudly he tells us how his officers rivalled each other in enthusiasm at the fight on the outskirts of Smolensk; how sorrowfully he recalls the destruction of his regiment—his "family"—at Krasnoï!

He owns that his courage failed him when his friends and comrades fell before his eyes; he loved them with all his heart; he shared with them, and they shared with him, their last morsel of bread; for, he says, "authority was paternal in those days and subordination founded on attachment and confidence; the Colonels inspired respect, and the only way to alleviate the many troubles was united life, mutual help and service."

Moreover, Fezensac refused to leave the remnant of his regiment; he wanted to animate, to stimulate it to the end by his example. On December 12, between Chichmori and Kovno, though so worn out with fatigue that more than once he had well-nigh fallen by the way, he answered two officers who offered to take him on in their sledge with an energetic "no"; and he seconds the last efforts of Ney, whose heroic obstinacy he admires.

How touching and true is the epigraph he places at the head of his *Souvenirs*.

O, ashes of Ilion and shades of my companions, I call you to witness that, in your disaster, I recoiled neither before the darts of the enemy, nor before any kind of danger, and that if my destiny had so willed it, I was worthy to die with you.

Iliaci cineres et flamma extrema meorum,
Testor, in occasu vestro, nec tela, nec ullas
Vitavisse vices Danaum ; et si fata fuissent
Ut caderem, meruisse manu."

VIII

Beside so many stories of the same kind, Fezensac's is still worthy of our attention and respect.

With strict but poignant brevity he narrates the march from Krasnoï to Orcha, when Ney's corps, cut off from the Army, found no hope but in despair ; that unequal fight, the finest of the campaign, in which the ability of the General and the devotion of the troops shone with unsurpassed brilliancy.

He depicts the irresistible growth of disorder as soon as it takes hold of a large army.

He describes the Retreat as it really was : the route and the bivouacs looking like a battlefield ; those who could stand the cold, sinking under fatigue ; those who could stand fatigue and cold succumbing to the torments of hunger ; those who had kept a little food, too weak to follow the column and falling into the hands of the enemy ; some frozen to death upon the ice ; others, asleep in the villages, perishing in the flames lighted by their companions ; others distracted, like the soldier who reels all of a sudden, and, wild-eyed, inquires of his companions what has become of his regiment ; those who managed to escape, living miracu-

lously on soaked flour, a little honey or horse-flesh, exhausted, sick, stumbling at every step and with no strength left to carry a gun; struggling over melancholy wastes covered with snow as far as the eye could reach; through great forests of pines and past burnt-out villages; black with dirt and smoke; shod with sheepskin or bits of cloth; heads bound with rags; wrapped in horse-cloths or women's petticoats; and as soon as one falls never to rise again, stripping him of his rags even before he dies.

In Fezensac's *Souvenirs* there is more than one striking and touching passage.

On the night of November 16, on the eve of quitting Smolensk, Fezensac goes about the town, now nothing but a heap of ruins. Some houses are still left standing, but their doors and windows are broken, and their chambers heaped with corpses; on the pavements lie the skeletons of horses, whose flesh has been devoured, in their common distress, by soldiers and inhabitants alike; and Fezensac never forgot the melancholy he felt in those deserted streets; in the glow of the fires reflected on the snow, a strange contrast with the soft radiance of the moon.

Here is a picture of Vilna as it appeared on December 9.

Up to that time the French have seen nothing but towns burnt or abandoned by their inhabitants, and Nature smitten, as it were, by a Divine malediction.

But Vilna is untouched, presenting the aspect of a

wealthy and populous town, its people busy each at his special work.

Suddenly our soldiers flock in, wandering about the streets in rags and dying of hunger; some paying its weight in gold for wretched food, others begging for a morsel of bread.

The inhabitants regard them with a diversity of sentiments—the Poles with grief, the Russians with joy, the Jews with the hope of making much out of them.

Then they begin to be afraid; they dread a famine; they close shops, inns, cafés; they hide their provisions.

Soon comes the noise of cannon; uproar everywhere; the fire-bell rings out; a few of the braver spirits hasten to the gates to repel the enemy; the others, resting either on the pavements or in houses where they are on sufferance, declare they can do no more and will stop where they are.

Shall we quote the passages in which Fezensac tells how the days of plenty followed those of want?

The fugitives are in Prussia. The Jews, who believe the Frenchmen to be loaded with treasures, sell to them the commonest of garments at the highest prices. The Prussians, without concealment of their hatred, question them with malicious curiosity, pity them ironically, give them false news of the approach of the Cossacks, and at times disarm, threaten and ill-treat them.

A Protestant minister tells Fezensac that God has justly punished the Grand Army.

But the French care little for this unpleasant reception; the joy of finding food and sleeping in a warm room makes up to them for everything. Königsberg, in spite of the excessive insolence of its inhabitants, seems to them a land flowing with milk and honey; the cafés and shops are never empty; the officers spend their nights at table; the men traffic in jewellery and other valuables they have brought from Russia; and in a short time "all the money in the town is carried off."

Anecdotes—often incredible anecdotes—abound in these Memoirs. Some of them are horrible.

At Moscow, a French officer discovers a Russian hiding amongst the ruins of a house; by signs he makes him understand that he will protect him, takes him with him and hands him over to a passing comrade, saying; "I give you Monsieur in charge"; and the other officer, mistaking the sense of the words, takes the poor wretch for an incendiary and forthwith has him shot.

During the Retreat, a General, worn out with fatigue, drops down on the road, and a soldier begins to pull off his boots.

"Wait anyhow till I'm dead," says the General, as he tries to sit up; and the man answers; "*Mon Général*, I wish I could; but some one else will take them, and it may just as well be me."

A soldier is stripping a dying man. "Let me, do let me die in peace," says the last.

"I beg your pardon, comrade," replies the other; "I thought you were dead."

And this cruel egoism is sometimes accompanied by a hideous irony.

Two soldiers hear an officer lying on the snow calling to them for help, saying he is an officer of Engineers.

"What, an officer of Engineers!"

"Yes, my man."

"Well, then, draw out your plan!"

But Fezensac tells some touching stories too.

The wife of a drummer of the 7th Light Infantry, the *cantinière* of the same regiment, falls ill at the beginning of the Retreat. The man drives her as long as he has a cart and horse; at Smolensk the horse dies and the man harnesses himself to the cart and draws his wife to Vilna. Once there, he is too weak to go further, and he stays with her as a prisoner.

A *cantinière* of the 33rd Regiment of Infantry gives birth to a child in Prussia before the commencement of the campaign, and accompanies the regiment with her little girl, who is six months old when the Army leaves Moscow.

The child was saved; her mother fed her on nothing but black-puddings made with horses' blood; she had wrapped her up in furs taken at Moscow; twice she lost her and twice found her again, the first time in a field, the second on a mattress in a burnt-out village.

When the Beresina had to be passed, she crossed the

river on horseback, holding the reins with one hand while with the other she held the little girl seated on her head.

Thus, by a series of miracles, this child went through the Retreat without even catching cold.

And did not Bourgoyne see soldiers for days together carrying a wounded officer on their shoulders? Was not General Legrand carried by his grenadiers; General Zayonchek by his Poles; Colonel Marin by his gunners; young Sainte-Croix by his friends?

For the comfort of humanity, says Fezensac, many an act of sublime devotion contrasted there with the many others dictated by selfishness and inhumanity.

GUILLAUME PEYRUSSE

I

APPOINTED Paymaster of the Royal Treasury during the Russian expedition, with a monthly stipend of 940 francs and a daily indemnity of 12 francs, and bound to accompany everywhere the two wagons containing the funds which always followed the Emperor's carriages, Guillaume Peyrusse started on the night of March 5, 1812. He carried with him twelve millions in gold, and five chests of jewels.

Whither was he bound? First of all to Dresden; it was there that Napoleon had asked the Emperor of Austria to meet him, and where there was to be a sort of assembly of princes.

But after that? He hardly knew. Even at Mayenne, even at Posen, he is ignorant of the goal of what he calls the trip. He saw many troops, regiments of workmen of all sorts and battalions of oxen; he saw fine carriages and immense preparations.

But nothing proclaimed war, and everybody, as

we read in one of Peyrusse's letters,[1] invented his fable, knew his bit of gossip, made up stories of every kind.

"Do they want to found a colony," he exclaims, "where I should make the first of a branch of paymasters?"

But, at bottom, it mattered little to him. The Emperor's plans were impenetrable and "His Majesty seems to be very mysterious concerning his progress." Well, as for Peyrusse himself, he must go wherever Napoleon goes, were it to Constantinople, or Egypt, or India; were it to the ends of the earth. Hadn't he got a comfortable carriage and two good horses; *fourgons* full of provisions that he wouldn't begin upon till the last moment, and excellent health?

At Mayenne he had dined with the Comptroller General Reiset and the Préfet Jeanbon Saint-André; at Frankfort he dined with the great banker Gontard, in the company of diplomats and *foireux*—that is to say, wealthy merchants who had come to the fair—and he gives an interesting description of the repast.

Dish after dish; a profusion of German wine not worth one bottle of Burgundy; the German excess of politeness; men bowing to you incessantly, taking your hands and appearing to love you as themselves; servants greedy for tips, and who "must be bold beggars to stand in front of you as you come out from dinner, almost holding out their hands to you."

[1] *Lettres de Peyrusse*, published by L. G. Pelissier, pp. 52–132.

At last, after having seen at Fulde the palace of the Prince-Bishop; at Wartburg, the room, the table and the inkstand of Luther; at Leipzig the fair, which seemed to him to be a picture in little of all Europe; and at Meissen, the porcelain factory; and after having spent eight days in Dresden, the Paymaster Peyrusse travelled towards Posen.

In the month of May he was in Poland, and he uttered a cry of horror. "What wretched villages—what disgusting dirtiness!"

Certainly each village had its castle; but what was this castle but just a house larger than the other houses, and as neglected and ill-kept as the rest?

It was at Posen that he realized—it had taken him some time—that Napoleon proposed to invade Russia. But rumours of peace were in the air; some people believed that the Emperor's stay in Dresden, his brilliant surroundings and the threatening aspect of the Grand Army would decide Alexander to come to terms.[1]

"That will be as the Emperor wishes," repeats Peyrusse; "the longer the journey he causes me to make, the better pleased I am. I travel very comfortably; I receive the consideration due to me, and all this moving about amuses me immensely."

[1] Sergent Lebas, of the 33rd Regiment of Foot, wrote from Dantzig to his family on April 23: "Many of the townspeople tell me every day that they are well assured the Emperor of Russia does not want to fight." 1812, *La guerre de Russie, notes et documents*, passim.

II

But soon there is no more doubt about war. Peyrusse sees the Emperor arrive at Königsberg and make every preparation for his great adventure.

They were "off like a shot," even before a postal service could be inaugurated.

"The Emperor has never been more calm and energetic," writes Peyrusse to his brother; "but I don't know where he intends taking us; he is leading us a pretty dance."

They cross the Niemen and push on towards Vilna.

"A lively resistance was expected," says Peyrusse, "but nothing happened but a little sword-play—no serious engagement; the Russians haven't made up their minds to bite yet; but the two giants will end by meeting one of these days; they will come into collision, and the earth will tremble under the tremendous shock."

He describes the kind of welcome Vilna gave the Emperor; the organization of the Government of Lithuania, and the attitude of Napoleon, who, when a deputation from the Confederation begs him to re-establish the Kingdom of Poland, answers with great reserve and caution.[1]

The Army leaves Vilna and pursues its way past Gloubokoïé and Kamen, and over a sterile country where nothing is to be seen but wretched scattered villages,

[1] M. de Pradt puts it better than Peyrusse: "Napoleon's answer was involved and evasive."

inhabited, says Peyrusse, by a sort of animals with nothing human about them but their faces.

But our Paymaster keeps his cheerfulness; he has taken every precaution; he has supplies. When he bivouacs in the midst of a forest he drinks good wine and eats good biscuit with a savoury salad; he sleeps in a wagon on bear-skins, which serve him for a bed; so he stands the journey very well. He crosses the Plain of Ostrovno, where Murat and the Army of Italy distinguished themselves by fine feats of arms, and, on July 28, he enters Vitebsk.

III

At Vitebsk there is a halt—a long halt—and Peyrusse is happy. For the last two months he has seen nothing but solitude and ruins, and therefore Vitebsk wears the most smiling aspect for him, and his eyes rest with pleasure on a clean and even fashionable town.

For the easier reviewing of his troops, the Emperor has had several houses in the Square in front of the Palace pulled down. There are parades like those at the Tuileries; one might believe oneself living in a time of peace.

Peyrusse and his friends concoct schemes; they reconstruct the kingdom of Poland, giving it Riga and the Dnieper as boundaries; they take from Russia its Turkish provinces to hand them over to Austria or to give them back to the Sultan; they are of opinion

that the appalling growth of the Muscovite Empire must be stopped, and they have absolute confidence in Napoleon. By his tactics he has baffled the Russians, and he will not fail to bend them to his will.

The march recommences on August 11 ; the Dnieper, which is no longer the Borysthenis of the Greeks, is crossed ; they pass through Liady and Krasnoï and arrive under the walls of Smolensk.

But the enemy evacuates the town after making a desperate defence. Peyrusse sees there a " horrible devastation " ; everywhere houses still burning ; squares and churches filled with dead and dying ; a few pale and hopeless inhabitants amongst the ruins.

Again the victors move onwards ; leaving behind them Dorogobouge and Viasma—pretty Viasma, lying on the plain where the river of the same name makes pleasant twists and turns.

But Viasma, like Smolensk, is half destroyed, and accustomed as he has become to fires, Peyrusse casts a look of pity at its people.[1]

IV

On September 3 they are at Ghiatsk ; on the 5th the roar of cannon proclaims that the enemy has ceased retiring, and the wounded bring back word that it is

[1] Fezensac, too, says : " We felt especial regret for the little town of Viasma, whose houses were devoured by the flames."

occupying all the heights, that it looks as if it was determined to hold its position, and that a redoubt covering its left wing has been taken by Compans's Division.

On the 7th the Battle of the Moskova is fought. Peyrusse, from his post at the rear, hears the cannon "roaring furiously," and his hair stands on end; but at a quarter past three, he hears that the Emperor has pronounced these words: "In this way battles are won"; and he is reassured.

On the 8th he walks over the field of battle, and on the plain and in the ravines he sees nothing but the dead and the moaning wounded. The great redoubt is strewn with corpses.

There are few or no prisoners, no trophy to console the Army for the cruel losses it has sustained. Once again the Russians have displayed an extraordinary stubbornness in fight; to kill them you had to knock them down, and so desperate were they, that in the already taken redoubt, in the thick of the fight, or even under the stockades, they went on firing.

The vanquished were pursued; Mojaisk taken. But again the enemy sets fire to the town, and Peyrusse's heart is torn when he sees the wounded Russians crawling along the streets and there, heaped on each other, uttering terrible cries at the sight of the flames eddying around them.

Besides, it is now only by the light of fires kindled

by unseen hands that they advance, and Peyrusse begins to complain.

The bivouacs are no longer amusing; he dislikes sleeping in the open air; he has no more wine; he feels but middling well. Luckily, Moscow is not far off—Moscow, the limit of the expedition, the end of pain and weariness. All hearts are full of joy and hope.

At noon, on September 14, when they reach the Holy Mountain, they see what looks a forest in the air—thousands of spires and belfries.

It is Moscow—holy Moscow—Moscow the Mother, the Russians, from this height, salute with prostrations and reverently making the sign of the cross!

At two o'clock, Peyrusse enters the town, and, as he says, the beauty, the immensity of Moscow, filled him with astonishment; wide streets; walls of various colours; gilded cupolas; magnificent houses; palaces "having a look of grandeur and wealth; how striking a variety!"

But already the shops have been broken into and given up to pillage; wine, brandy, liqueurs run about the streets. Soldiers pass with their booty, loaded with food, bottles, furniture.

About the squares, and on the bridges, in front of the churches and at the gates of the palaces, lie, or rather sprawl, *moujiks*, men belonging to the scum of the people, with evil countenances.

At last Peyrusse reaches the Kremlin. He takes

possession of his quarters, and at once writes to his brother that he is very glad to have reached the goal.

In the action of the 7th the Russians could gauge our strength, "and must have guessed that the French Army would play the devil to get here. It will get in unhindered and will soon be itself again."

V

That same evening the fire broke out; no fire engine nor firemen to be had; the fire consumed two-thirds of Moscow. *Chauffeurs*, carrying torches and bags of gun-powder, were seized and shot or hung; but the Kremlin and the town itself had to be left.

Peyrusse's narrative here becomes very interesting.

The wagons, preceded and followed by a long train of vehicles, make a slow progress across Moscow, along streets blocked by pieces of furniture, and amidst burning beams falling from the houses; to the sound of the cries, or rather howls, of fright uttered by the drivers and coachmen, and surrounded by a mob of soldiers, who incessantly force their way into the palaces and shops, coming and going and carrying off provisions and goods of all kinds.

Peyrusse is forced to stop every few minutes; he is roasted in his carriage, and distressfully wonders if he will ever be able to save the Imperial Treasury and himself.

At the sight of a half-burnt bridge he will have to

cross, he leaves the rank and attempts another passage ; but the fire is all around him and has already reached the forage stored behind the wagons.

Fearing that he will be hemmed in by a labyrinth of flames, Peyrusse makes at full speed towards a bridge still whole at the beginning of the suburbs ; he clears the bridge ; clears the suburb past all sorts of obstacles ; by a supreme effort clears the gate of the town, and with his horses at full gallop, reaches the castle of Petrovski.

Three days he stayed in that castle with its crenellated walls flanked by towers, like the roof, covered with varnished and many-coloured tiles. Thence he gazes sadly at the fire, bent like a rainbow over Moscow, agreeing with his companions in thinking that the entire city is given over to the flames ; for did not successive reports tell that the scourge had reached hitherto safe districts, that the number of incendiaries was increasing, that Moscow was no longer habitable ?

At last, on the 18th, the Emperor decided to go back to the Kremlin. The return to the town was made past the encampments set up to right and left of the road, and there Peyrusse witnessed what was called the Fair of Moscow.

Soldiers, black with mud and smoke, sitting in chairs of crimson velvet, eating soup from plates of porcelain and drinking from glasses of finest crystal. Others, dressed up in Tartar or Chinese costumes, feeding the

bivouac fires with pieces of furniture, logs of mahogany or logwood. Others publicly selling, dirt-cheap, all sorts of wares: sacks of flour and packets of cinnamon; clocks and candelabra; cloth and muslin; precious stuffs and cashmere shawls they had used to wrap ham or cod-fish in; and convicts and prostitutes mingling with them so as to share in the plunder and the sale.

VI

Thus they returned to Moscow in the midst of the chests, the barrels, the rafters that littered the roads.

Peyrusse installed himself anew in the Kremlin, and he describes all he has seen, or half-seen of the town. The Kremlin, fortress and palace in one; the gigantic cross of St. Ivan, which Napoleon wished to place on the dome of the *Invalides*, and which was broken to pieces on the ground because the sappers who were ordered to remove it let it fall; the Bourse, or, as Peyrusse calls it, the *Palais Royal*, where millions of things had been burnt; the churches and their steeples; the palaces, and especially the Orlov palace, where the elegance of the furniture matched the beauty of the gardens and park; the palace of the University, now used as barracks, and other lordly dwellings. Other magnificent houses, whose lower rooms had been turned into guard-houses and where the soldiers boil their saucepans on the drawing-room floors; the German quarter, where,

in fresco-painted houses, live the greater number of the foreign artisans.

A month goes by; little by little they succeed in getting rid of the incendiaries, who, armed with tinder-boxes and tarred sticks, still go on setting fire to houses, even amongst the timbers of the roofs or under the boarding of the floors.

The flames have not destroyed all the supplies in the town; a considerable stock of provisions is found; there is such an abundance of coffee, tea and sugar, that they don't know what to do with it.

To the extreme surprise of the Russians, accustomed to snow from the early days of September, the weather is glorious, and the reviews held by the Emperor are all the more imposing.

But in Moscow not more than a tenth of its houses are left; on whatever side one turns one's eyes, there is nothing to be seen but "devastation and destruction." In certain quarters, the line of the streets can no longer be distinguished, and amidst heaps of cinders and ashes, stand the stone-built palaces, blackened by smoke, and looking, says Peyrusse, like ancient ruins.

Not an open shop, not a shop-keeper; not a laundress, not a tailor, not a shoemaker. Crowds wait round the French shoemakers; forage is rare, syrup and sweet-meats plentiful; so are lemons and liqueurs, but if one can cram oneself with these, there is little meat and little bread.

So wintering in Moscow is an impossibility.

Soon comes news that the peasants are arming; that Cossacks are attacking detachments and the convoys of artillery and provisions; sensible people no longer believe in peace.

After so violent and barbarous a deed as was the burning of Moscow; after so unprecedented an outrage, is it likely the Russians will come to terms with us? exclaims Peyrusse. Still, let them take heed—barbarians, cannibals that they are!

Peyrusse threatens them with reprisals.

Let them go on retiring, even to beyond the Volga; the French will pay them in their own coin! In the coming campaign they will burn St. Petersburg and overwhelm the port of Cronstadt!

VII

On the 18th of October comes the shock of the news that the vanguard has been surprised and defeated at Taroutino; and on the morrow begins the Retreat.

What an endless string of carts and carriages! It is several leagues in length, and never had Peyrusse, he says, seen such a crowd, such baggage, such a crush. The future, adds the Paymaster, looks dark.

It was intended to take the road to Kalouga and march across new country; the battle of Malo-Iaroslavets had been won, the Russians driven back and their posi-

tion taken at the point of the bayonet; but the action was too long drawn out and very bloody, and, despite the gallantry of the troops, who gave the enemy the full benefit of their strength, they had to face about and make their way back towards Mojaisk.

Once more they pass Borodino. Fragments of arms and cuirasses; stumps of guns; scraps of uniforms; skeletons of men and horses; corpses dug up and gnawed by dogs; graves covered with crosses, show plainly enough that this is the field of battle of September 17; and Peyrusse shudders as he looks once more at the great Redoubt that dominates the Plain, the Redoubt whose conquest Caulaincourt had bought by his heroic death.

Already privations of all kinds have to be endured; no rations are served out; there is no way of relieving the sick and wounded they carry with them. In the rear the "hourras" of the Cossacks are heard from time to time.

And behold, on November 6, the heavens themselves turn against the French! The sun is hidden; the wind blows furiously; the snow falls in thick flakes; the cold comes, keen and penetrating.

The burnt-out villages offer no shelter; the gunners forsake their guns; soldiers lie dead by the dead fires of the bivouacs; others sink exhausted and never rise again.

There is hope of rest and food at Smolensk; but dis-

cipline and military bearing have gone; hunger, fatigue and sickness have demoralized the Army. Wild with hunger, the soldiers rush into Smolensk; they slaughter the oxen, butcher the flocks; they break into and pillage the shops, an enormous quantity of provisions is scattered about and trodden under foot.

On November 12 Peyrusse leaves Smolensk, deploring, as he expresses it, the sad effects of the disorder, and through frost and snow, makes his difficult way to the Dnieper.

But the next day, the 13th, how many corpses he sees all along the road!

All the fallen men had thrown away their muskets; the touch of the iron on the bare hand was as painful as touching a live coal.

"This sight," says Peyrusse, "moved me strongly; I was not yet so miserable as to have lost all feeling."

What a night was that of the 14th!

In the distance he hears the cannon at Krasnoï, and in the village of Korytnia, in a wretched shed, by a fire that gives out more smoke than heat, he watches till morning, unable to sleep, in constant anxiety, keeping his servants on the alert, determined to die upon his coffer.

On the 15th, in the defile of Krasnoï, the way is barred by an immense number of equipages and guns; the Cossacks seize the front carriages; it is only by waiting and by favour of the darkness that the *fourgon* of the

Imperial Treasury, with its escort of Grenadiers, can force a way through the crowd.

At dawn of day, on the 16th, Peyrusse reaches Krasnoï by a steep incline, and over a road strewn with cartridges and débris of all kinds, full of spiked guns and horses swallowed up in mud.

He bivouacs on the village-green; everybody is dull and gloomy. As at Smolensk, the soldiers have pillaged the shops and lie down round fires fed with the woodwork of demolished houses.

On the 17th, an excessively cold morning, Napoleon, wearing a green pelisse, a cap on his head and a cane in his hand, comes out of his quarters. The Russians who outflank Krasnoï and intercept the road must be driven off; firing begins and lasts some long time; there is a rush to the road, which is speedily blocked by the crowd of stragglers and a number of vehicles. But the Cossacks, uttering fearful shouts, succeed in making a temporary gap. Soldiers and drivers make off in a fright. Peyrusse urges on his horses, upsets everything that gets in his way, and, at a gallop, reaches Liady.

It is at Liady that he spends the night between the 17th and 18th of November. The French are crowded together in this village, order and subordination no longer exist; the troops are all mixed up; the officers have ceased to command; so what can they henceforth expect of their subalterns?

Peyrusse departs under the protection of Claparéde's

Division ; but the 18th of November is again a cruel day, and the cold is excruciating. Luckily, Doubrovna is reached that evening, and there the Jews sell flour and mead to the fugitives.

The 19th again is icy cold, and there are ravines to cross ; at every moment Peyrusse hears the sound of the powder-chests being blown up by the artillery, which has to leave them behind for want of horses—that sound that so profoundly grieved Eblé, Drouot, Griois and our brave gunners.

He reaches Orcha and the Dnieper. There, at the approach to the two bridges that have been constructed over the river, stand picked gensdarmes, sent from France, who can't conceal their astonishment at the sight of this army in rags. But in vain do they endeavour to keep order and stop the stragglers. Some Cossacks appear, and the crowd of fugitives rushes tumultuously and unchecked to the further bank.

VIII

The situation becomes critical ; Peyrusse sees carriages, papers belonging to the Staff and the Emperor's Council-chamber burnt ; he grows uneasy and alarmed. His well-horsed, well escorted *fourgon* inspires confidence and many officers of the Imperial household have handed over their savings to the Paymaster. So he fears for his deposit ; he can't sleep for thinking

about it, and his excitement is so great that he does not feel the cold; every alarm, every pass makes his fears the worse; he is ashamed of himself.

But, in spite of the Emperor's proclamations and harangues, the confusion continues, and, on the 24th, the 25th, and the 26th of November, once more the thunder of cannon is heard afresh; the rumour spreads that the Bridge of Borissov is burnt, attacked from both banks of the Beresina; that the Russians have got the Army between two fires; the Emperor is manœuvring to outwit them.

By Bobr and Kroupki, our Paymaster arrives, on the evening of the 26th, within view of Borissov, in a terrible wind which whips the snow into one's face, amongst a crowd of equipages, and pale-faced, jaded soldiers, wrapped in tattered pelisses or half-burnt sheepskins.

His *fourgon* falls into a ditch with slippery sides, and to get it out, it has to be unloaded.

But at dawn, on the 27th, on a height beside some houses, he catches sight of the light infantry of the Guard. It is Stoudienka, the headquarters—the Palace, as Napoleon's dwelling, whether mansion or hovel, is called—and he hastens to reach it.

Here again is indescribable disorder, and Peyrusse, thinking of the decisive battle about to be fought; listening to the constant din of the guns and cries of the drivers; seeing the artillery-men striving to force a

way through the crowd; Peyrusse feels more anxious, more troubled than ever.

At three o'clock in the afternoon he has orders to cross the bridge; at seven, he has not yet been able to get a place in the enormous and disorderly mass of vehicles.

But this time he knows no pity; too miserable, he says, to care, like a savage fighting for his own safety, he allows no one to break the rank.

At seven o'clock comes a frightful rush; Peyrusse's wagon is shot to the entrance of the bridge, and heedless of the shaking of the platform caused by so rapid a run, he crosses at full gallop.

In this way he crossed the Beresina, and from his encampment on the right bank, he listened all night to the groans of the poor wretches who lay on its left, crushed by the hoofs of the horses and the wheels of the carts.

But he had escaped, and he returned thanks for Napoleon's genius.

"That passage," he writes some days later, "is a marvel; the result of the Emperor's tactics; the Russians might have done us immense harm."

IX

But his troubles were not over.

On the morning of November 28, while Victor fights on the heights above Stoudienka, our Paymaster, still

benumbed with cold, makes for Zembin, and the next day, as he goes towards Kamen, he again sees Cossacks circling round the flanks of the column and brandishing their lances.

Through dense forests of birch trees, whose snow-laden branches bend to earth like those of weeping-willows, the Army, in mournful silence, steals away from its enemies.

It halts at Iliya, at Molodetchno, at Smorgoni; but the cold is as terrible as ever, and human misery, writes Peyrusse, at its lowest depths. Dead and dying line the roads; some of the soldiers have lost their hearing, some their speech, some their reason; and some with a frenzied laugh approach the bivouac fires and cast themselves into the flames.

Peyrusse is determined not to give way. He hardens himself against the severity of the weather; he swears to keep intact the treasure entrusted to him; for by degrees all the most valuable objects have been locked up in his chest.

He never sleeps now; he urges on his postillions, making up for their apathy and slackness by his own activity and energy; he takes every possible care to get food for his horses; breaks the ice to procure a little water for them to drink, and at night heaps coverings on them to protect them from the cold.

He follows the example of the Emperor, whom he sees daily, and who, he says, in the midst of disaster, shows

the freedom of his mind and the great strength of his character.

"While danger, misfortune, the presence of the enemy, the eternal clamour of the Cossacks press upon us and engross us, Napoleon's energy and elasticity seem only to increase under it all."

X

On the evening of December 5, at Smorgoni, Peyrusse receives a note from Duroc. At eleven o'clock, he is to deliver secretly to the Duc de Frioul a million bills of exchange on the Emperor's account.

At eleven o'clock, he sees the arrival of two carriages, Napoleon with Caulaincourt in one, Duroc with Lobau in the other. The Paymaster hands over the bills of exchange to Duroc, who gives him his instructions. Peyrusse is to hold the same appointment under the King of Naples; the Emperor, who is returning to France, has given over the command to Murat.

"The Emperor," says Peyrusse, "is leaving that he may not witness the death-throes of the Army."

And, truly, after Napoleon's departure, the death-agony of the Army sets in. For an instant its strength revives, because it counts on finding at Vilna, on December 8, supplies of all sorts, and Peyrusse "crowds on all sail" to get as quickly as possible into the town, which he looks upon as the Promised Land.

But at Vilna, as at Orcha, as at Smolensk, a horrible

confusion reigns, and the soldiers seek everywhere for food and shelter in vain.

On December 9 the Cossacks are already at the gates; our troops rush helter-skelter on to the road to Kovno, and Peyrusse, who follows with his *fourgon*, reaches the foot of the hill of Ponari at ten o'clock.

Ponari is but a wooded slope; but the gradient is steep, the frost makes it impracticable and carts overturned or locked together block the pass.

The whole night long, under twenty-five degrees of cold, Peyrusse tries in vain to climb the hill; neither he nor his horses can keep on their feet. So he resigns himself to camping where he is, though no fires can be lighted lest they should betray the position of the Army to the enemy; but he hopes that at last the crowd will pass on, and he relies on being able to get through easily at dawn of day.

Alas! the number of fugitives from Vilna does but increase, and the obstruction grows worse and worse every moment.

How can it be possible in the midst of this throng of men and vehicles—carriages of every kind, guns, wagons, dead horses—to climb the frozen slope of Ponari?

Peyrusse's *fourgon* attempts a step or two, then slips backwards and just escapes falling into a ditch. Far off, from Vilna, echo volleys of firing, and Cossacks make their appearance.

Murat, being consulted, answers that at all costs all

the valuables belonging to the Emperor must be saved as far as possible.

At once, Peyrusse breaks open his chests and packs gold, roubles, jewels and papers into sacks, puts the sacks on horses, giving each horse to one of his servants to lead, sets fire to the *fourgon*, and sets off on foot.

The confusion of the journey and the darkness of the night disperses the convoy, but next day, at Chichmori, Peyrusse succeeds in getting it together again.[1]

What a rout it was! What a lamentable ending to an expedition! The Army now is nothing but a trail of men without arms and wrapped in miserable rags. It evacuates Kovno as it evacuated Vilna, and Peyrusse, on his arrival in the last of the Russian towns, sees, as at Orcha and Smolensk, the shops given over to pillage. In the streets and squares, soldiers, drunk with brandy, and speedily benumbed with cold, pass swiftly from sleep to death.

Peyrusse has put all the contents of his *fourgon* on to a sledge, and when those vile Cossacks, those "devils of madmen," not satisfied with their capture of Ponari, appear, he leaves Kovno; but, instead of attempting the bridge, crowded with fugitives, the sledge where he sits surrounded by his whole "stock" crosses the frozen Niemen.

[1] "Your plate and the money in the hands of the Paymaster of your Household," writes Berthier to Napoleon, "were put into sacks and carried on horses; nothing was lost."

In this fashion he reached Königsberg; thence, as from headquarters, he made his way to Marienburg, to Marienwerder and to Posen, and it seemed to him that the Prussians were as dangerous as the Cossacks.

His belongings, except a few shirts, and everything he had taken or acquired at Moscow, were lost.

Adieu, pelisses, costly furs, boxes of China tea! Adieu, the portrait of the Emperor Alexander, and the hand of the Apostle St. Andrew, that relic Peyrusse had carried off to dazzle his devout female friends with!

But he himself had escaped; he had not fallen into the hands of the Cossacks. "Could there be a more awful fate than to be a prisoner in twenty-six degrees of cold!"

And he had saved his funds.

He had displayed courage, and he was proud of it; a paymaster, a civilian, a *pêkin*, he had not proved "quite a milksop," and he wrote to his brother:

"Since the 19th of October, I haven't had a quiet moment; we were disturbed under the gates of Vilna, followed and hunted as far as Bromberg. Nevertheless my health hasn't suffered for an instant; exercise kept away all ailments and, like an oak-tree, water hardened me. You know me to be active and restless, but if you had seen me with a month's beard on me, as dirty as a pig, struggling, running, calling out to the postillions, whipping up the horses, crossing rivers, climbing mountains, forcing my way sword in hand,

you would have laughed at the new Don Quixote. I had nothing human left about me but speech; I fed on scraps. I owe keeping my health to this constant moving about, for my hands and feet were never frost-bitten but when I had to open my *fourgon* under intense cold, and to empty it, and untie frozen sacks to put my things in; and then to lead my horse and keep his head up lest he should come down."

XI

He did not get his reward till fifteen months later, at the conclusion of the French campaign.

On March 15, 1814, Napoleon made him Sub-Auditor of the Guard's Accounts and Chevalier of the Legion of Honour.

"This accountant," wrote M. de La Bouillerie, Paymaster-in-Chief to the Crown, to the Emperor, "is upright and intelligent. His conduct on the way back from Russia showed rare zeal and energy; he sacrificed everything he possessed to save your Majesty's papers, accounts, and coffers, of which he has given me an exact account. Many officers of high rank of your Majesty's Household deposited their funds with M. Peyrusse and have been repaid in full."

La Bouillerie's testimony was confirmed by that of Daru, the Daru whom Peyrusse called the Grand Patriarch of the Department.

"M. Peyrusse," said Daru, "in the handing in of his

accounts, gave proof of a quite scrupulous probity; and, during the Retreat from Moscow, he sacrificed everything that belonged to him to save the treasure, the papers, the jewels of the Emperor, as well as all his accounts."

Peyrusse followed Napoleon to the Island of Elba, and, in 1815, was appointed Paymaster-in-Chief to the Crown, officer of the Legion of Honour and a Baron of the Empire.

After Waterloo, he retired to Carcassonne, his native town.

"What part of the country do you come from?" Murat asked him on December 11, 1812.

"From Carcassonne, Sire."

"Ah!" replied the King of Naples, "that was my first garrison; it is a pretty country."

Peyrusse lived a long time still in that pretty part of the country, for he did not die till 1860, at the age of eighty; and his thoughts often went back to Russia, the Russia into which, as he said, the Grand Army had hurled itself, to be swallowed up.

THE POLISH JEWS

I

THE Grand Army, writes a witness of the expedition, came across no Jews in Russia properly so called—old Russia. The Russians despised them and would not suffer them in the country. Had not Peter the Great replied when the Jews implored him to tolerate their presence: "My Russians know more about commerce than you do!"

But everywhere in Poland and in the Grand Duchy of Warsaw it met with Jews.

On the further bank of the Niemen, the first men they saw were Jews in rags, and a war commissioner remarked at the time that solitude was better than the presence of such folks.

But these filthy, squalid Jews swarmed and multiplied in the towns and villages of Poland. Kalvary, Marienpol, Posen were filled with Jews to an alarming extent, and an officer jestingly declared that Poland was a Judæa, where one occasionally caught sight of a Pole.

Many hamlets were deserted, but the Jews, the wretched, tattered Jews, prompted by avarice, still remained.

II

These Jews were all alike in appearance—thin, supple, eager; their speech was brief and hurried, their movements quick. They had pointed faces that looked as if they had been stretched, piercing, covetous eyes, and long reddish beards. They wore trailing gowns confined round the waist by a leather belt.

They all fleeced the French shamelessly, and their lust for gain, as well as their uncleanliness, inspired the invaders with contempt and disgust.

On August 3, in an order of the day, the Emperor had forbidden the trade in arms amongst the inhabitants of a country occupied by the Grand Army, especially with the Jews, "who are in the habit of speculating in everything."

They speculated to such good purpose that many enriched themselves. During the second part of the campaign, they gave the Cossacks, in exchange for their daily booty, the sham assignats Napoleon had had circulated in Poland. The Jews, says an eye-witness, got everything, the Cossacks nothing.

Nevertheless, they were attached to Russia, and during the French invasion, at the risk of exposing

themselves to ill-treatment and annoyance, they made no secret of their sentiments; in their synagogues they prayed God to bless the Tsar, while the Poles, in their churches, were cursing him.

In the months of November and December they used to take the Cossacks into the hospitals where the Frenchmen had been left, make them take the best of what belonged to the wounded, and then bought it from them on the spot.

It happened even that dying men were pulled out of their beds, because the Jews thought they might find money in them, or because they had paid the Cossacks in advance for the quilts and sheets and mattresses.

At Vilna they pitilessly drove off the French who begged for shelter, and when Ney's rear-guard was gone, they massacred and stripped naked in the streets every unarmed or sick man they met with.

"If ever," exclaimed an enraged Frenchman, "if ever we come back to this country, sword in hand, there'll be no quarter for the Jews!"

Occasionally they consented to act as emissaries and guides to the French. The Duc de Bassano sent a message to Napoleon by some Jews, and it was a Jew who, on the 24th and 25th of November, escorted Bourgoyne and Picart through the woods to the highroad.

But most often they acted as spies for the Russians.

"How is it possible for us to find out anything?" said a French officer to an officer of the enemy's army;

"we can employ only Jews, and they are all on your side."

It was a Jew who brought news of Wittgenstein to Langeron. In Langeron's presence he lifted the hem of his muddy gown, and, tearing the lining, took out a little paper, a note in which Wittgenstein informed Tchitchagow that he was marching on Borissov to attack Oudinot and Victor.

This cunning and vigilant Jew had managed to pass through Victor's and Oudinot's Corps with impunity. He received twenty-five ducats from Langeron with a letter which he delivered to Wittgenstein the next day, and thus Wittgenstein learnt that Borissov was in the hands of the Russians.

General Pouget, who was commanding in Vitebsk, ended by suspecting all Jews: "those scoundrels that do no hard work except when there is a chance of doing us harm."

When the French set fire to the bridge at Vitebsk, the Jews helped the Russians to extinguish the fire. They inhabited the right side of the Dwina; they stopped Pouget's messengers, and thus enabled the Russians to seize that part of the town without the General's knowledge.

"Oh, those Polish Jews!" writes Pouget; "I had treated them kindly and protected them; they couldn't have said anything but good about me. That vile people is always on the side of the strongest!"

III

But whatever were their faults, the Jews were useful. They spoke a sort of German jargon—a *judish-deutsch*—and that was the only language the French understood; they furnished the distressed invaders with many necessaries. "When nobody knows what to do," testifies a man from Baden, "the Jew sees to everything."

At Smorgoni, at Doghinov, at Souraj, at Veliz, the 4th Corps, on the march to Moscow, has constant recourse to the Jews. Smorgoni is very dismal, but the place seems pleasant because there are children of Israel who sell bread and beer. Doghinov is entirely Jewish, and there brandy can be bought; the same at Souraj; most of the inhabitants are Jews and they keep well enough stocked shops. It is the same at Veliz; the population, wholly composed of Jews, amply supplies the wants of Villata's brigade.

"In spite of everything," says an officer, "the Jews were our only means of procuring anything, and when we got to Old Russia, we were sorry not to find them there."

Another, at Smolensk, on August 22, remarks that it is annoying that the Jews have been banished from Old Russia; he sighs for the "purveyors" our money attracted and declares that their nasal voices were pleasant to his ears.

Consequently, when the French Army beats a retreat, it meets the Jews once more with no repugnance; it has missed them.

It is at Liady that they first make their appearance, and they are no longer repulsive to the vanquished army. One of the Emperor's secretaries hails the re-appearance of these "Jewish colonists of Poland." Griois rejoices that they have not fled and that gold can purchase a few potatoes from them—those potatoes before which Stendhal fell on his knees. Castellane accosts them "with great pleasure"; Peyrusse calls them "our principal foster-fathers"; Labaume, as he says, forgets the dirtiness of this mercenary people, when for money he manages to find provisions in an apparently ruined town; and he considers that the cupidity of the Jews was a good thing for us.

Mme Fusil, with greater enthusiasm and extravagance, exclaims: "They were Jews, no doubt, but at least they were living creatures, and I would have embraced them willingly!"

It is the same at Doubrovna. The Jews sell the French a little flour, schnaps and mead, and the soldiers believe a time of plenty is coming and their ills will end. The same, too, at Orcha; there again, thanks to the Jews, there is something to eat.

Unluckily, at Smorgoni there are no Jews; they have

all fled and, as one of the fugitives expresses it, have deprived us of their help.[1]

But further on they catch them up.

At Kovno, in the house of a Jew, Griois and his comrades are regaled with a delicious soup, and all night long their hostess, a beautiful woman with an aquiline nose and great black eyes—a Judith of the Italian School—makes bread of exquisite whiteness and delicious flavour for them.[2]

At Vilkoviski Castellane sits at table with a Jew, who serves him with white bread and coffee and milk; and if his breakfast does cost him twelve francs, at least he has had "something for his money, and that was a thing that hadn't happened to him for a long time."

And that is about all the good and the bad our soldiers said about the Polish Jews in 1812.

[1] Yet, at Smorgoni, Brandt buys from an old Jewess bread, rice and a little coffee.

[2] Fezensac says, too: "At Kovno we spent the day of the 14th of December at the house of a Jew, where we found some provisions and a great deal of brandy."

THE GUARD

I

THE Guard—and by that we mean the Old Guard, Grenadiers and Light Infantry and Cavalry, Lancers and Artillery—the Guard was the mark for envy and jealousy on account of its privileges, and because the Emperor was lavish in his praise of it and yet but rarely made use of it.

No doubt he employed it in moments of difficulty; he knew how to make use of his troops when and how he had need of them.

At Eylau, for example, when he saw a square he depended on being broken up by the Russians, he called out to Ney: "Get together all the cavalry of the Guard you have, and let every man of them be killed rather than give way; I didn't decorate them to save their lives!"

But still it was freely said that the Emperor spoiled the Guard, and this crack corps was accused of arrogance and of claiming an insolent supremacy.

In the campaign of 1806 had not the soldiers of the

Guard been known to fail in respect towards the officers of the Line? And in 1805 the whole army had maliciously applauded the words of the Artillery officers when the officers of the Guard wanted to turn them out of their room:

"Eh, Messieurs; if you belong to the Guard, we belong to the advance-guard."

II

As early as the days at Kovno, it was evident that everything was to give way to the Guard. It alone entered the town, and sentinels posted at the gates prevented the entrance of men, officers and generals. All the other corps surrounded the walls, and the Guard pillaged the shops and houses. They would have perhaps pillaged Vilna if it had not been for a threatening notice from Napoleon.

On June 30 the Emperor sent it word by Marshal Lefebvre that it was to look upon Vilna as sacred, and that if his Grenadiers and Light Infantry were complained of he should send them to serve in an Army Corps.

Still, only the Guard was quartered in Vilna; the other corps were either at bivouac or on the march.

At Vitebsk, once more, the Guard was the object of the Emperor's especial care.

What an extraordinary ceremony was that that took

place in the square of the town, in front of the house he called the Palace, when he gave a new commander to the Grenadiers, and with voice, hand and sword presented General Friant to them!

The gallant Friant, said Napoleon, would remain at the head of the Division he commanded in the 1st Corps; but the Grenadiers were, and would always, be under the Emperor's own eye.

It is true that in the burnt-out town of Smolensk, the Guard pillaged the houses which had escaped the flames, and that the greater number of their inhabitants took refuge in the Cathedral, where they died of hunger.

It is true, too, that one evening the Emperor, greatly displeased, had the fire-alarm sounded to muster the Guard, assigned quarters to each regiment and gave the strictest orders for putting an end to all excesses.

But between Smolensk and Mojaïsk, to avoid any surprise, he never marches but with a large detachment of the Cavalry of his Guard as escort; his headquarters are always surrounded by his Grenadiers and Light Infantry; and when he halts in the open, Grenadiers and Infantry form a square inside which his tents are pitched.

On September 6, the eve of the great battle, what great solicitude he shows for his Guard!

Several times he sends for Bessières, asking each time if they have everything they want; ordering them

three days' rations of biscuit and rice from his own supplies.

The next day the Guard, whose intervention ought surely to have given Napoleon a complete victory, does not charge, and again murmurs break out in the Army.

Why didn't the Emperor wish them to charge? Why is there a corps that no longer faces fire?

Why should the other corps bear the whole burden of battles? If the Emperor had sent in the Cavalry of the Guard at the end of the action, could the Russians have effected their retreat undisturbed?

At Moscow there are fresh complaints. The Guard seizes on everything, occupies all the houses, and there's no booty for any one that doesn't belong to the Guard. Even after the fire, it insists on and exercises its rights; ransacks the cellars, takes away the wine, the liqueurs, goods of every kind, and sets up shops and bazaars, where it traffics in its spoils.

The Fair of Moscow it is called; and the indignant Army calls the soldiers of the Guard the tradesmen, the Jews of Moscow.

"What!" cry the men of the Line, "we're as good as the Guard, and yet they're selling us the supplies of the enemy *we* defeated!"

The troops in camp outside Moscow are the angriest; they are suffering from hunger and undergoing a thousand hardships, while the Guard is living at ease in Moscow!

Napoleon was aware of these misdoings. On September 21 he forbade pillage and marauding by the Guard; on the 29th he threatened it with the severest penalties. Certain men belonging to it had knocked down sentries; broken open cellars and store-houses of flour intended for the Army. He ended by keeping all the Guard to the Kremlin. But in the Kremlin, writes an eye-witness, something of everything was to be found in the barrack-rooms—silver plate, diamonds, pearls and silken stuffs.

When the time for leaving came, Napoleon must have his Guard around him, and more than ever had he need of a faithful and absolutely steadfast troop. It did not cover the Retreat—that duty was confided to Davout, to Victor, and especially to Ney—and Napoleon accorded it exceptional treatment.

At Smolensk it received at once rations for fifteen days, and the 1st and 4th Corps got not a morsel of bread until forty-eight hours later.

The Guard could not carry away all they received from the war commissariat, while the other troops had not enough. So it was said that the Guard, always favoured, had more food than the Line, and that the Army, perpetually sacrificed to this privileged class, got only its leavings.[1]

[1] After Napoleon's departure, on the 6th of December, at Ochmiana, where they found 20,000 rations, Murat and Berthier had half given to the Guard and the other half to the rest of the Army.

What did it matter if they committed abuses? what did it matter that at Viasma, on November 2, after the Emperor's departure, they broke open the post-houses, rifled the store-houses, and in a few moments consumed the provisions with difficulty got together by General Teste; while Teste, impotent and desperate, declares in vain that this is the cruellest day of his life?

The Emperor had neither the time nor the wish to remonstrate with his Guard as it deserved; it was his escort.

At Orcha, and at Doubrovna, he fondles his veterans, and stroking the old, frost-covered moustaches of some amongst them, says: "You ought to reckon on me as I reckon on my Guard to fulfil the great destiny to which it is called!"

It is easy to understand the strong enmity which from that time showed itself between the Guard and the Army during the campaign.

"It was for the sake of the Guard," wrote the Würtemberg General, Schelen, to his King, "that the plundering of Moscow was permitted. These Imperial Guards are the sutlers of the Army, and they get rich, though they have done nothing; which causes them to be hated."

More than once, during the Retreat, when they came under cover or to bivouac-fires, they were thrust away: "Be off, you hucksters! Be off, you Jews!" was shouted at them.

They were ridiculed, the contempt of former days paid back to them. Look at them ! the men that didn't fight ! Here they are—the Immortals ! And now they are as wretched as the rest of us !

There were duels. At Smolensk an officer of Carabineers killed an officer of the Grenadier Guards.

III

" The Guard," said Napoleon, " is a bulwark of granite " ; and in fact it was his last resource and his supreme reserve. He had not sent it into action at the Moskova because he looked forward to doing so a few days later in the second, and greater, battle the enemy would no doubt give them before Moscow. It was in that action the Guard must charge, with material results, striking the decisive blow.

That second battle did not come off. But at the distance he was from Paris Napoleon looked upon his Guard as a stronghold, and believed that under its shelter his troops must always be able to rally. If the Guard had been seriously cut up, could the rest of the Army have re-crossed the Niemen ? Was it not the Guard that kept up the courage of the faint-hearted during the Retreat ? During those critical weeks, it alone retained some energy ; it alone, despite its daily losses, kept together and showed itself a body of men—weak no doubt, but still a body.

Little by little the prejudice against the Guard seemed

to die out; it was felt that it was more orderly, more used to the Service, bolder and more resolute. When at Velitchevo, before dawn of day on October 31, Planat hears the drummer of a battalion of the Guard sounding the *reveillé*, he experiences one of the pleasantest sensations he has had during the Retreat; in the midst of the disorganization setting in, there is still some regular service, and a few minutes later, when he sees the battalion under arms, he commends their fine bearing.

The Guard had not charged at the Moskova, but on the march their coolness was to be admired.

On the countenances of the men neither impatience, nor anxiety, nor enthusiasm, was to be read; their expression told merely of the certainty of victory, and it seemed as if the battle in which they were going to engage was in their eyes but one victory the more.

At Krasnoï, on November 16, it is with the Guard that Napoleon, playing, as he says, the General and not the Emperor, turns back upon the enemy to tear Davout and Ney out of their clutches; and the Guard, by its aspect, its steady bearing, by the memories of its last year's victories, stops the Russians, who dare not face it, though to crush it they had but to fall upon it with their weight of numbers.

"The Guard," writes a Prussian about November 21, "whose spirit was very fine, held out incomparably better than all the other troops; it is intact; it has not

yet fired a shot, and apparently it has been more considered and better treated than the others; but after having been an object of envy and spite to the other corps, it has now won their actual good-will, and they look upon it as a rallying point and a help in which they have great confidence."

The next day but one, November 23, at Bobr, an officer of the Vistula regiment witnesses the arrival of the Guard. It appears to be decimated and the men's clothes have fallen into tatters. But it keeps what the other corps no longer have—a remnant of military bearing; the old sunburnt faces still keep something of a martial air, and the veterans are more striking than ever, because they are stiffer, more morose and more laconic—in a word still more the veteran.

Five days later, at the Beresina, on November 28, the Guard acts as reserve to Oudinot's 2nd Corps and so secures the outlets to the bridges from Tchitchagov's attacks.

It was the Guard which on December 2, led by the Comte de Lobau, drove the Cossacks out of Ilija and saved the officers and the eagles of the 3rd Corps.

On December 7 it is still on its way in as good order as is possible, and the next day but one, at the approach to Vilna, the Infantry, before they are pushed and dragged into the town by the torrent of fugitives, march in column and in a double line to keep the road and prevent confusion.

No doubt the Guard no longer had the same blind belief in the Emperor. On December 3 Fezensac, rejoining it at Molodetchno, reads gloom and discontent on the men's faces.

At the departure from Smolensk, as it left the gates of the town for Krasnoï, it let fly some home truths at Napoleon as he went by. They did not appear to be aimed at him; but ironical speeches, which he seemed not to hear, came from the ranks.

Some loudly regretted their comfortable barracks at Courbevoie, and the days when they regaled themselves with Suresnes wine and *la mère aux bouts* pudding.

Others said that Moreau would have led them better; still others spoke of Napoleon as a "greenhorn"; only a greenhorn would have remained so long in Moscow. Wasn't a fortnight long enough to eat and drink up all there was in the town?

Ah! he had led his soldiers a pretty dance for the last sixteen years, and in Egypt, and Syria, and Spain, they had toiled and drudged; but what was that compared with Russia and its deserts of snow and ice? A man need have nine lives to endure such trials!

Nevertheless, the Emperor remained the Emperor to his Guard.

Old Picart sheds big tears when he sees him walking on foot with a cane in his hand: "It makes me cry," he says, "to see him like that, so great as he is, and so proud as we are of him!"

He fancies the Emperor has looked at and recognized him, and that look restores confidence and courage to the veteran who the instant before had been calling the Emperor a greenhorn.

Besides, while the majority of the men had thrown away their muskets, the Guard always kept its arms. The other Corps existed now only in name and on paper; the Guard existed still.

On December 5 it was reduced to 1,400 men; on the 11th, to 800; on the 16th, to 300.

But it went on marching with the King of Naples, the Major-General, and the Marshals, while the rest of the army followed it in the most complete disorder, in a column that extended for several leagues.

Of all the Corps, it alone, as was said, mustered and kept somewhat together, and a German reports that the Grand Army bore the appearance of a lawless, unbridled horde, with the exception of a small portion of the Guard.

It was this portion of the Guard which on December 9, at Vilna, found itself in the Square when the fire-alarm was sounded; when at the noise of cannon, Marshal Lefebvre ran about the town calling out, "To arms!" when Picart said to Bourgoyne as he slapped him on the back: "Come along, fellow-countryman; we belong to the Imperial Guard; we must be the first to charge these blackguard Russians."

It was this portion of the Guard that escorted Murat and Berthier from Kovno to Königsberg.

"Cold and hunger," relates Peyrusse, "thinned our ranks; there was no longer any trace of an organized corps; but what remained of the Guard, though struggling painfully under the weight of every kind of human misery, still kept up a little smartness."

But, at last, that portion of the Guard, too, fell inevitably into disorder.

"Pillage, insubordination, disorganization—everything is at its height," wrote Berthier.

There were therefore offences against discipline, and three leagues beyond Kovno, stragglers from the Guard pillaged the Army Treasury.

It was in consequence of this, that, on its arrival at Königsberg, and during its stay on Prussian territory, the Guard became more unpopular than ever, and no one remembered the services it had rendered.

"It has quite lost its reputation and become the object of general aversion," said an officer in the month of January, 1813.

Rumour ran that Napoleon intended henceforth to have Body-guards. All that were left of the Imperial troops applauded this decision.

"The institution of Body-guards," some one wrote from Berlin, "is already known of and ardently desired by the detractors of the actual Guard."

Among these detractors—at least for a time—was Marshal Bessières, the Duc d'Istrie, who commanded the Cavalry of the Imperial Guard.

He held that the Horse and Foot and the Grenadiers stood in need of complete re-modelling; that the lists and two-thirds of the men should be changed, and that the sergeants and officers should be transferred to the Line.

According to Bessières, there were not ten officers worthy of belonging to the Guard, and it had been a great mistake for some time past to give sergeants in the Guard commissions as lieutenants in the same corps.

But the Duc d'Istrie spoke after this fashion—January 27, 1813—under the influence of his first outburst of anger at certain reprehensible doings. A week later, he declared that the Old Guard had resumed its former discipline, and now gave him nothing but satisfaction.

IV

In spite of criticisms, the Guard lived on.

Clearly, during the Campaign of 1812, it held out longer than the rest of the Army because it got food, and because it was not the Rear-guard.

But it had been like a living fortress, and during the Retreat its prestige impressed the Russians with awe; the enemy believed that man could not prevail against it, and nothing but cannon could destroy it.

Gourgaud, therefore, is right in saying that it was the very heart of the Army; that it never fell below its

reputation under the most critical circumstances, and that the sentiment of honour, courage and devotion which inspired it, ended only with itself, when it preferred death to surrender.

DAVOUT IN 1812

I

DAVOUT, Duc d'Auerstädt and Prince d'Eckmühl, who, in 1812, was given the command of the 1st Corps of the Army destined for the Russian Expedition, approved of the war and considered it unavoidable.

It was an extraordinary war, he said, but it would be useful because it would protect the next generation from invasion by the barbarians of the North.

At Hamburg, in 1811, he was perpetually questioning Rist, the Danish Consul-General, about the Muscovite administration and Army.

One day, as with hands behind his back, he was walking up and down the Court of the Castle, he said to Rist:

"What do you suppose would be the plan of campaign of the Russian General?"

"Not to give you battle, but to retire, drawing you after him."

"That plan of yours is no good; towns and lands are not given up in that fashion; we shall not go further than is necessary when once we have taken their capital."

"Take care—Russia is a big place."

He had advised the Emperor to make this war, and at the beginning of 1811, the Emperor had sent him to Hamburg to prepare for it. Commandant of the Intelligence Corps of the Elbe, Davout organized the vanguard of the army of invasion.

II

During the campaign, he wrote letters to his wife, in our possession, which contain valuable details.

From the first he finds his command much too important and difficult from every point of view, " whether for ensuring supplies, or for deciding on the field of battle."

But his Divisions seem to him smart and well-disposed. Besides, the Emperor is there; " I get on ten times better when I know he is about; for he alone is capable of making this complicated machinery work harmoniously; he understands how to utilize every fitting."

He sees Napoleon at Marienburg, and joyfully exclaims: " I was in need of this; a word or two from him gives me fresh spirit and braces me against envy "; and he begs his wife henceforth to feel sure of his success.

In the same fashion, in April, 1812, when he hears the Emperor has joined the Army, he is filled with delight and writes that matters will soon take a turn for the better.

On June 29 he is at Vilna.

"The Emperor's tactics," he says, "will prevent this campaign being a bloody one; we have taken Vilna without a fight and forced the Russians to evacuate the whole of Poland. Such an opening of a campaign is as good as a big victory."

His letters to his wife of the 9th, 13th, and 15th of July, express the same certainty of a happy issue. The heat and the fatigue are both excessive; but "without fighting, we continue to disorganize the Russian Army and make them incapable of going on with the war. In six weeks we shall be at Moscow. This campaign will be made on our legs for the most part; it is to be supposed that it will end sooner than could have been hoped for; that it will be more tiring than sanguinary; and that there will be no general engagement."

Nevertheless, on July 23, there *is* an engagement, and, as Davout writes, a very lively one.

Two of his Divisions, the only ones with him, those of Compans and Dessaix, repulse a part of Bagration's Corps; and, as usual, he "comes out of it without a scratch, and, thanks to the steadiness of his troops, with success."

Then, after a few days' rest, which does the Army immense good in the increasing heat, comes the Battle of Smolensk.

The Prince d'Eckmühl had then but few men under his command; and if the regiments were good, he could not say the same of the Generals; an unjust verdict,

for apparently neither Compans nor Dessaix deserved such harsh treatment.

Gudin's, Friant's and Morard's Divisions—his old and faithful Divisions—rejoined him, and "his moral courage is trebled."

On August 17, after a fight in which Davout does not get even the slightest contusion, Smolensk, one of the most important towns in Russia, and the bulwark of Moscow, is taken.[1]

On September 7, the Battle of the Moskova was fought; that battle, says Davout, so ardently desired by the French, because they had so great a chance of winning it, and because it must end the war.

This time, Davout is hit; he is wounded, or rather, badly bruised, in two places, one on the abdomen, early in the action, and the other, an hour later, on the right thigh, which interfered with his riding. If it had been any one but Davout, he would have quitted the field of battle; but that would have proved him, he says, a very bad servant of the Emperor and a man without heart.

He stayed on to preach by his example and inspire his men with his own steadfastness.

After the victory he had to follow his Army Corps in

[1] He does not record how he himself fired the guns. But Bourgoyne saw him sniping the Russians. Standing at a garret-window above a gate that overlooked the Dnieper, Davout discharged all the guard-house guns at the enemy, who from the opposite bank, from behind walls and garden-fences, fired back.

one of the light carriages called "wursts," and he suffered cruelly till he reached Moscow.

There, after forty-eight hours' rest and taking of baths, he was able to walk and drive in a carriage without feeling the least pain.

III

The battle, as Davout told his wife, had cost dear; but it was a decisive one and ought to be final; for did it not open the gates of Moscow to the victors?

Alas! Moscow, one of the largest, most beautiful and wonderful towns in Europe—so does Davout describe it—is soon nothing but a heap of ashes, or nearly so; to preserve even a quarter of this magnificent city has been a work of difficulty; and it was the Russians themselves that set it on fire! Over a hundred incendiaries, when arrested, confess that they were only acting under orders.

What an atrocity! Doesn't it do more harm to Russia than four lost battles?

But Davout is not discouraged; there's still cloth and a quantity of eatables of all sorts in Moscow.

"The monsters who destroyed the town have missed their mark; we have enough houses left to lodge the army, and enough provisions to feed it well."

As a matter of fact, the soldiers are daily recovering from their fatigue; the wounded, healed, returning to

their corps ; use is made of what can be snatched from the flames. They recruit their strength, they rest, they recover, " beyond anything one could have expected."

Everything improves day by day, and soon they will be as smart as they were at Hamburg : " I needn't say, as good."

IV

But Davout reckoned without the Russians and the climate. He believes that the Russians will speedily make peace ; that peace alone can save them from utter ruin ; that their army, weary, reduced, demoralized by its losses in Generals and Officers, will be unable to fight again after this Campaign, the finest the Emperor has ever made ; that its Infantry is useless, since it is made up of undisciplined and inexperienced militiamen ; and that only its Cavalry remains to it.

He believes that the temperature will not alter so soon ; that the severity of the climate is exaggerated ; that the great frosts will not make their appearance till towards the end of November ; and he adds—on October 9—that the men are taking precautions, and that, thanks to these, they will be able to endure, if necessary, thirty degrees of cold.

But the Russians and the climate were not what Davout imagined.

On October 17, the Marshal acknowledges that the

Russians, under English influence, will not realize their misfortunes or wish for peace *for several months*; and on the day but one after that, the Retreat begins.

On November 12, the Marshal declares that, for the first time since leaving Moscow, he has slept under a roof.

The severe frosts, which he had not anticipated till the end of November, have made their appearance sooner than he expected, and have triumphed over the men's precautions.

"Privations, and especially the excessive cold," writes Davout on December 17, "have done us much harm; we have often had twenty-five degrees of frost; no power or genius on earth could prevent the harm the weather is doing us."

So it is the weather—the accursed weather, as the troopers called it—it is the climate Davout looks upon as the principal, the only, cause of the disaster.

"Such bitter and early cold as this year's, is not remembered here; and it is to that that must be attributed the evacuation of the enemy's country."

Seven or eight times his nose had been frost-bitten, and seven or eight times he had thawed it by rubbing it with snow.

Almost all his servants were dead; he had had to make four-fifths of the way on foot, and he was ready to drop with fatigue; he possessed nothing but what he had on and might have said like Stendhal:

"I have lost everything, and have nothing but the clothes I am wearing."

V

This is what we read in Davout's intimate letters; but they do not tell everything. The Duc d'Auerstädt feared postal indiscretions, and he did not want to sadden and discourage his wife and those around her.[1] Therefore he is silent on many points.

When he left for Russia, he was not so optimistic as he seems in his familiar correspondence, and several times he mentions the presentiments of which he had talked to his wife at Cüstrin.

"Those presentiments," he writes, "have but too surely come to pass"; and after the Campaign, in January, 1813, he does not conceal from his wife that he suffered great mental troubles, troubles so acute, that if he had been an atheist, if he could not have hoped that something of us was still left, he would no longer be of this world, "I should have destroyed myself."

What were these troubles?

First of all, Berthier's hostility.

Beginning in April, 1812, at Thorn, Davout recounts to his wife how he has to put up with annoyances, and

[1] The words of Peyrusse which explain the reserved or too optimistic tone of the letters of our combatants in 1812 may be remembered. "Great caution is ordered; the bulletins are meant to report the operations of the army."

that the letters of the Chief of Staff day by day show more spite.

This was because, in 1809, in spite of Berthier, and by disobeying him and repairing his mistakes, Davout had got the Army out of a scrape. Because, too, during 1811, Napoleon corresponded directly with Davout and showed extreme confidence in him; no doubt a cause for ill-will and jealousy on the part of the Prince de Neuchatel.

On June 6, 1812, at Marienburg, Davout and Berthier had a violent altercation in Napoleon's presence, using threats to each other, while Davout bitterly reproached the Chief of Staff for his incompetence.

According to Berthier, Davout looked upon himself as indispensable; put on airs as if he were leading the Army; boasted of having foreseen and arranged everything; he was already claiming the glory of the Campaign, and wasn't he aspiring to the throne of Poland, the country where he had formerly been in command, and where he possessed the estate of Lowiez?

After the fight with Berthier came the fight with Jerome.

The King of Westphalia ought to have pressed Bagration closely and driven him vigorously to the narrow causeway of which Davout, holding Minsk, occupied the outlet. But the task was too heavy for Jerome, and Napoleon decided that Davout should have the two Army Corps.

Jerome, incensed, left, and Bagration, slackly pursued by the Westphalians, was able to escape Davout by a turn.

Then came the conflict with Murat.

Firm, deliberate, and methodical, Davout maintained discipline, order and harmony in his Division, and the 1st Corps was held up as a model to all the other Army Corps.

After Smolensk, when Murat's Cavalry and Davout's Infantry were pursuing the Russians, and the impetuous Murat rushed his squadrons along and tired them to death, Davout refused to jeopardize his men.

On August 28, at Semlevo, in presence of Napoleon, who was amusing himself by kicking about a Russian bullet, the King of Naples and the Duc d'Auerstädt began to quarrel.

Davout censured the thoughtlessness and want of foresight of Murat, who harassed his troops and uselessly wasted their ammunition and their strength; it would end, he declared, in the destruction of the Cavalry; but while he was in command of the Infantry of the 1st Corps, he would not allow that to be thrown away in the same fashion.

Murat retorted that Davout was too cautious; he even went so far as to say that the Prince d'Eckmühl had been his enemy ever since the days in Egypt, and that they ought to settle their differences between themselves without making the Army suffer for them.

Napoleon enjoined them both to understand each other better for the future.

But Murat needed a division of Infantry and he sent Belliard to ask for it.

Napoleon sent for General Compans, who assured him that the Cavalry would not again be stopped by the narrowest pass, or the smallest bridge in need of repairs, if it was accompanied by Infantry ; and thenceforth Compans's Division marched in the van under Murat's orders.

At the Kremlin, in October, there were fresh differences.

Napoleon had summoned his lieutenants to a Council of War. Davout's opinion was that the retreat to Smolensk should be made by Medyn.

The King of Naples interrupted him, begged him to hold his tongue, and accused him of proposing a most imprudent thing, and of wishing for the loss of the Army. According to Murat, it would be better to reach Smolensk by Mojaïsk.

Whereupon, Davout retorted that the Medyn route, besides being shorter, ran through a fertile and untouched country, while the other, and longer, one, crossed an already exhausted region ; that, moreover, the Emperor alone had the right to order him to be silent ; that Murat was not his sovereign and never would be.

And finally, came the conflict with Ney.

Napoleon, accompanied by his Guard, had quitted

Smolensk on November 14; Davout was to start on the 16th, Ney, on the 17th.

But Ney was cut off and succeeded in taking Orcha only at the cost of heroic efforts.

He maintained that Davout had deserted him; but Davout had not deserted the Duc d'Elchingen until he had begged him to push on, and by Napoleon's orders.

VI

Even Napoleon himself ended by blaming Davout. He valued the Prince d'Eckmühl; he praised his talents as an administrator; he congratulated him on his able handling of his troops and the way he provided for their needs.

When, at the opening of the action on September 7, it was reported to him that the Marshal had been thrown from his horse and was thought to be dead, he did not speak; but when he heard that Davout was safe and sound, he exclaimed effusively: "Thank God!"

But, in the quarrel between Davout and Murat, he had taken the part of the King of Naples. He preferred Murat's ardour to Davout's caution; such a man as Murat was better fitted than Davout to end the war; and he had said to Davout: "A man can't possess every kind of virtue, and you are better suited for an engagement than for leading a vanguard."

On September 6, the eve of the Battle of the Moskova,

when Davout proposed what seemed a decisive manœuvre which would turn and overthrow the left wing of the Russians, the Emperor answered irritably that such a movement was dangerous and would mean a loss of time; and indeed it would have to have been made during the night-time and in a wooded and unknown country; the Cossacks would have promptly discovered it, and at the news, Kontonzov would have made ready, or would have decided to beat a retreat and defer the battle.

On September 2, in the very heat of the action, when Davout came to give his account of the attack of the 1st Corps, the Emperor, dissatisfied with what he rightly considered an undecided and hesitating movement, bluntly ordered him back to his post.

Davout, as he said later, had "manœuvred badly."

Some days later, at Moscow, when luck turned, Napoleon remembered that Davout had advised him not only to carry the war into Russia, but to march on Moscow, assuring him that the Russians, dismayed at the taking of the Holy City, would sue for peace; and the Emperor sorrowfully declared that Davout had deceived him.

During the Retreat, in a fit of passion, he violently abused the Prince d'Eckmühl.

"It was you who advised me to go to Moscow!" He even went so far as to call Davout a coward; and

in talking to General Krasinski, he said: "If I dared, there are people I should have shot." [1]

And finally, he complained loudly that Davout managed his retreat too slowly.

Davout, to whom he had temporarily given the command of the rear-guard, held that the more precipitate a retreat was, the more disastrous it became. But, wrote Napoleon, was there any need for Davout to keep back the viceroy and Prince Poniatowski for every Cossack he caught sight of?

After this, it is not to be wondered at that, when, at Smorgoni Napoleon summoned his Generals, in order to explain to them his proposed departure and to ask their advice, and said to Davout: "Why don't I ever see you now? Have you given me up?" Davout answered: "Sire, I supposed you were offended with me."

VII

Davout approved of the Emperor's "journey," but he regretted that command was given to Murat and not to Prince Eugène. He knew that Murat did not possess enough energy to conduct the Retreat, and in vain he proposed to place the treasury on sledges instead of wagons. The treasury, left upon the wagons, was abandoned and plundered.

[1] Rist declares that he knows on good authority that by his "bold and vehement" words Davout had persuaded Napoleon to go to Moscow.

In vain he proposed to halt at Vilna; by Murat's orders, the Army quitted Vilna in haste, and, as Davout said, too precipitately. Moreover the King of Naples, Davout rather unjustly adds, had neither informed the greater number of military of all ranks that filled the town nor even thought of destroying the provision, clothing and ammunition store-houses.

He had a very lively passage of arms with the King of Naples on December 17, at Gumbinnen.

Murat, who was planning his own departure and preparing his excuses, said to Davout in the presence of Berthier and Ney:—

"It is no longer possible to serve the Emperor. Not a soul in Europe has any faith in his word or his treaties, and I regret not having made my peace with the English."

Then he spoke with approval of Bernadotte and criticized Napoleon's behaviour to the King of Holland.

Berthier held his peace; but Davout angrily answered Murat:—

"You forget you are a King only by favour of the Emperor and thanks to the blood of Frenchmen! You are a French Prince and have no right to make peace with the Emperor's enemies without the Emperor's consent!"

The King of Naples replied—not without embarrassment—that he could do as he pleased, and that he was

King of Naples just as much as the Emperor of Austria was Emperor of Austria.

The Duc d'Auerstädt therefore felt no surprise at Murat's sudden departure.

"He left us without warning," he wrote to his wife, 'and the Viceroy is in command; the Emperor's affairs must gain by this," and, including Berthier and Murat in his censure, he adds: "I owe it to myself to despise men who do a real harm to the Empire by listening to nothing but their own egotistical, petty passions. The Prince de Neuchâtel and the King of Naples are the cause of the ill-success of the Campaign. Heaven grant that it is nothing worse than ineptitude on their part!"

This was saying too much, and Davout, restless, distrustful, suspicious as he was, and thinking that no one but himself did his duty, was wrong in looking upon Murat and Berthier as traitors.

Doubtless, Berthier was not up to his work then. He was as active as ever, he still kept his marvellous memory; and day and night he indefatigably received and transmitted orders; but at Moscow he showed nothing but negligence and want of foresight; recommending no great precautions; repeating word for word the Imperial decisions; writing down at his Sovereign's dictation the very smallest details, without making any propositions of his own.

On December 3, when Napoleon announced his inten-

tion of returning in all haste to Paris, Berthier was desperate with grief, saying that he had never left the Emperor before and wanting to accompany his master.

Five days later, one morning at Miedniki, when he heard the call to arms, he lost his head, and rushing into the room where the orderly-officers were at breakfast, cried shame upon them.

Murat, too, was demoralized. At Vilna, on the evening of December 9, when an officer came to tell him of the approach of Cossacks, Murat—Murat who throughout the Campaign had displayed incredible audacity and fearlessly faced the greatest dangers—made off with Berthier on foot, leading his horse by the bridle!

But Davout himself—may his shade forgive us!—was not he, too, at moments as demoralized as Murat and Berthier?

VIII

Before entering Moscow, he had seen his own Army-Corps, one of the finest that ever existed, very cruelly tried; Gudin's Division had been destroyed at Valoutina, and Friant's Division, fruitlessly exposed to grape-shot in the Battle of the Moskova, through Murat's imprudence at the affair at Fominskoïe, had lost more than 1,200 men and the pick of its officers.

Once at Moscow, Davout endeavoured to reorganize his troops, and of all those in command, it was he who displayed most zeal and energy.

But if he was loved by his men, the Colonels and Generals detested him for his attention to detail and his hardness, or to give it its right name, the inflexible severity he showed towards pillage and want of discipline.

His Lieutenants, in consequence, took a malicious pleasure in privately defeating his measures, and were delighted to hear that Napoleon had snubbed him.

Hence, all the troubles that came upon Davout during the Retreat. He gave the example of bravery, and, one day in December, on the road to Vilna, having failed in getting together some armed men, he acted as sole rear-guard himself.

But he did not cease to be rough, passionate and exacting.

He inveighed against an officer of Artillery who had fired a gun without his orders, and who, nevertheless, by taking the initiative had saved the battery and put the Cossacks to flight.

He insisted upon the staff-accounts being kept as correctly as in days of absolute peace.

At every pass, he stayed behind to keep the men to their ranks; he lost time in inciting them against those who had thrown away their arms and thought of nothing but booty; he endeavoured to conceal all trace of disorder in the Army from the eyes of the Russians who were following him.

Evidently, this sudden and terrible catastrophe had

bewildered and baffled him; at the sight of this unprecedented disorganization he lost his head; and he kept saying that only men of iron were capable of enduring such an ordeal; that human strength had its limits and these limits were overpassed.

Viasma gave the death-blow to his reputation.

That day—November 3—Davout, who commanded the rear-guard, got under way with excessive slowness; delaying so as to save baggage and wagons; several times facing the attacks of the Cossacks, forgetful of the fact that to get away, to get away quickly, was absolutely necessary, thus jeopardizing the safety of the entire army; since all the other corps regulated their march by that of the rear-guard.

Again, in this unfortunate affair at Viasma, he was very clumsy. Harassed by the Russian Cavalry and impeded by a host of stragglers, he followed in Prince Eugène's wake, turned to the right instead of the left, thus leaving his flank open to the enemy, and the troops fell into irremediable disorder.

"The *fusion* of the Army," wrote Murat (he meant to say the *con*fusion) "began at Viasma in Davout's Corps," and on November 4, the day after the fight, Ney, though with great reluctance, informed the Emperor that the disorder in the 1st Corps had given a disastrous example to the soldiers and a shake to their morals, and that he must give the blame to the methods of his "comrade" Davout. If these methods had been of a

better kind, a more favourable result would have followed.

Thereupon, Napoleon at once decided that Ney should cover the Retreat.

Castellane, too, said that Davout had by no means distinguished himself at Viasma, and, in the disaster of 1812, had not displayed any greatness of soul.

An officer sent from Paris to Berlin in January, 1813, to report on the spirit of the troops, came also to the conclusion that the Prince d'Eckmühl "had fallen terribly in public estimation."

GENERAL EBLÉ AT THE BERESINA

I

EBLÉ, writes Gassendi in his *Aide-Memoire*, was without any doubt the first General of Artillery in France. Untiring in work, and gifted with a strong will, he commanded the Artillery of the Army of the North from 1794, and, as he himself says—in words that fit his whole career—by dint of zeal and energy, made that enormous machine work.

Moreau looked upon him as an extremely valuable officer, and declares that if it had not been for the trouble Eblé took, the Army would not have had the enormous quantity of ammunition it used.

It is Eblé who leads the Artillery at Kehl and reorganizes the Corps of Pontoniers. It is Eblé who in 1800 commands the Artillery of the Army of the Rhine, and Moreau extols his conspicuous services, and Dissolle proclaims him one of the best officers of that arm in Europe.

In 1804, he ought, as Gourgaud testifies, to have

been promoted to the rank of Marshal; but up to that time he had not fought under Napoleon's orders.

As Governor of Magdeburg from 1806 to 1808, he inspired the inhabitants of the town with such affection, that they had his portrait painted and called him the venerable and noble Eblé and the friend of the people.

In 1808 and 1809, he is War Minister of the Kingdom of Westphalia, a hard-working and upright Minister, and Jerome acknowledges that such men are rare.

In 1810 and 1811, he commands the Artillery at the sieges of Ciudad-Rodrigo and Almeida, and in the trying Portuguese Campaign is Massena's most useful collaborator.

II

In 1812 Napoleon puts him in charge of the pontoon-trains, and it is Eblé who constructs the bridges over the Niemen, the Dwina and the Dnieper.

"He took," says Castellane, "enormous trouble to move on the pontoon-train while it was still in existence, and to manage the various crossings of the rivers."

What did he think of the expedition?

We know that after the day at the Moskova he extolled the genius of the Emperor, whom he called an extraordinary man, the superior of all others. But we know, too, that before Smolensk he said in his grave

and impressive voice: "The Emperor always wants to take the bull by the horns; why doesn't he send the Poles to cross the Dnieper a couple of leagues above the town?"

We know that from the early days, after the storm in which the army had incurred such heavy losses, on the way to Vilna, he felt gloomy forebodings, and that one evening on bivouac, he spoke of the enterprise in terms that Mathieu Dumas never forgot.

Be that as it may, on October 19, when the Retreat began, Eblé had to burn thirty carriages of the pontoon-train in order to hand over their teams to the Artillery; and when he arrives at Orcha, where he has left sixty boats with their rigging, and provided with beams and planks, he has to burn them, too.

In vain he proposes to take on anyhow a part of these; Napoleon wants to save the guns and to lessen the long line of vehicles which hinders the march.

On November 20, the whole train is burnt; and, six days later, when the Russians, beaten by Oudinot, have broken down the Borissov bridge over the Beresina as they fly, how is another bridge to be constructed without delay? Everything is wanting, and Napoleon regrets that he did not listen to Eblé.

The General had begged for no more than fifteen boats, which thirty carriages, drawn by three hundred horses, could have quickly conveyed.

If he had had those fifteen boats, the passage of

the Beresina would have been child's play; in an hour the bridge would have been thrown across.[1]

So Eblé had but very inadequate means at his command.

He has with him his seven companies of pontoniers, made up of four hundred brave and disciplined men, who have all retained their muskets.

But how wretched an apparatus! Two wagons of coal; two field-forges, and six chests of tools he has wisely kept, while each of his men carries besides a tool, twenty big nails and a few clamps or cramp-irons!

III

On November 20, at five o'clock in the evening, Murat, Oudinot, Eblé, and the General of Division, Chasseloup,

[1] Gourgaud has tried to justify Napoleon. The Emperor he says, did order the pontoon-train teams to be transferred to the Artillery at Orcha; but he would have found it difficult to get these pontoon-trains to Borissov, and at that time, he could not suppose that, in spite of the instructions previously given to the Duc de Bellune and the Duc de Reggio, the important Borissov bridge would fall so promptly into the hands of the enemy. That is why "he preferred taking guns rather than heavy boats that seemed useless, and which, badly horsed, must have stuck on the way." This is the order sent by Berthier from Orcha to Eblé on November 20. "The Emperor orders you to leave at dawn of day for Bobr. You will leave an officer and a detachment of sappers to receive General Lariboisière's instructions for destroying all the pontoons. You will place all the pontoon teams at the disposal of General Lariboisière."

who is Commander-in-Chief of the Engineers of the Army, decide to construct three bridges on shores at Stoudienka, four leagues above Borissov, at a spot where the river is between four and five hundred feet in width and about six feet at its greatest depth. Two of the bridges are to be constructed by the Artillery; the third is entrusted to the Engineers.

The work begins at once.

In the night between the 25th and 26th of November, Eblé has the village of Stoudienka pulled down; he has the wood from the demolished houses gathered together and selected; he has nails and clamps forged; he has three small rafts built, capable of carrying ten men each; and, on the 26th, at eight o'clock in the morning, 400 men of Oudinot's Infantry make use of these rafts—ten men at most were as much as they could carry—to get to the further bank.

A squadron of Corbineau's Brigade, each horseman carrying a foot-soldier behind him, had already swum across the Beresina.

All these form up to drive off the Cossacks from the brushwood that covers the right bank; and to the fire of the sharp-shooters is added that of some guns of the Artillery of the 2nd Corps and of the Guard crossing the height of Stoudienka.

Two Russian guns emerge from a wood, but incontinently retire. At the same moment, an orderly-officer of the Emperor's, Gourgaud, who swam across the river,

comes back to announce that the pieces of ordnance can establish themselves on the opposite shore without the use of fascines, and that the ground, though marshy, is sufficiently hardened by the frost to be practicable for carriages.

In this way the constructing of the bridges is facilitated.

Soon Chasseloup déclares that he is unable to throw his bridge across; he has under his orders what still remains of the battalion called the Battalion of the Danube, the Mechanics of the Marines.

But he acknowledges that he is powerless; he has neither forge, nor nail, nor hammer; he hands over his sappers, with the props they have made, to Eblé, saying that Eblé must succeed, having found, and assuredly being capable of using, the means for success.

So now there are only two bridges to construct; Eblé constructs them at a distance from each other of about 380 feet; each of them has twenty-three shores, and to hold and fix these shores, the sappers, tired as they are, have to stand up to their breasts in the water full of drifting ice. They work hastily, not troubling to square the trusses; and in the afternoon of the 26th, the bridges are finished, the right-hand one at one o'clock, the left at four.

The right-hand bridge or, as they call it, the upper bridge, is intended for the Infantry and Cavalry; the lower one, larger and stronger, for the Artillery and

vehicles. But there is an entire absence of joists. The bridge on the right is made of nothing but wretched boards a few inches thick, old boards that had covered the roofs of Stoudienka which are not joined together, and under the horses ' feet get continually out of place.

As to the left-hand bridge—the only one that broke down—its supports standing unevenly in the oozy soil, shake beneath the violent shocks in the passing of carriages and guns given to the flooring, uneven itself and made of logs. The right-hand bridge, therefore, has to have its platform very often repaired; the other to have its supports thrice renewed, while the passing of all vehicles is thrice suspended for several hours at a time.[1]

In order to lessen the strain on the two bridges, they had also to strew them frequently with hemp and hay.

But at the call of Eblé and his officers, Chapelle, Chapius, Peyerimhoff, Zabern, Delarue, pontoniers and sappers tore themselves from their bivouacs where they were resting and warming themselves, to undertake this urgent but painful task.

In spite of accidents and mishaps, on the 26th, the 27th and the 28th of September the passage was made.

On the 26th, at one o'clock in the day, Oudinot's

[1] To make this still clearer, this is what happened to the left-hand bridge. On the 26th at eight o'clock in the evening, three supports gave way; on the 27th, at two o'clock in the morning, three supports, and at four o'clock in the afternoon, two supports, gave way. To repair the bridge the first time took three hours' work, the second time four hours, the third, three hours.

Corps, with orders to keep off the Russians on the right bank, pass over the right-hand or upper bridge; first Castex's Cavalry brigade; then the Infantry-brigade of Albert; then the rest of Legrand's Division, and of the 2nd Corps with two pieces of ordnance.

All these troops are to take up their position on the Borissov road and protect the road to Zembin.

They number only 7,000 men, but they are full of mettle, saluting the Emperor with shouts of enthusiasm; and Castellane marvels at their bearing and their resolute expression.

"It is a great pleasure to us once more to see troops in good order—real soldiers."

At four o'clock in the afternoon, over the other, and left-hand bridge, passes the Artillery of the 2nd Corps, of the Guards and of the other Corps, as well as the great battery, under command of General Neigre and composed of three hundred vehicles, fifty being cannon.

As soon as the Duc de Reggio with all his men is on the further bank, Ney posts guards at the two bridges, and, following Berthier's instructions, orders that no one else is to cross.

On the morning of the 27th all the troops commanded by Ney—the 3rd Corps, the Poles, Claparêde's Division—in their turn cross the river to support Oudinot who is certain to be attacked by Tchitchagov.

The bridge the Artillery is crossing has given way the previous evening for three hours, from 8 to 11; but,

as Berthier says, it is mended, and to spare it, the Major-General advises that the guns and wagons shall be pushed along by hand.

On the evening of the 27th the Guard crosses.

In the night between the 27th and the 28th, the 4th Corps, Prince Eugène's Corps, crosses, and after him the 1st, or the Prince d'Eckmühl's Corps.

Victor, with the 9th Army Corps, must wait till the last; he forms the rear-guard, fighting obstinately against Wittgenstein's Russians and striving to drive them away from the river.

His duty is also to keep order and to get everything he can over.

"You cannot be too vigilant and careful," Berthier writes to him, "in repairing the bridges and keeping them constantly in good order."

But the enemy was quite as much as Victor could manage, and it was Eblé who kept the bridges he had built.

IV

All day and all night of the 27th and 28th, the baggage-wagons and the carriages of the wounded have been able to cross the bridge; each night the foot-passengers of every kind likewise have got across the river; but on the evening of the 27th the block begins.

All the stragglers come up, and the crowd of men,

horses and equipages is already so dense and the pressure so great that it is impossible without extreme difficulty to get to the bridges without risk of being trampled on and crushed.

Several times the passage is entirely blocked by the obstacles and confusion at the abutments of the bridges; disputes and fights take place; all the eye-witnesses declare that the disorder was frightful.

On the morning of the 28th, when Russian projectiles fell upon the tail of this enormous, disorderly, tumultuous column, confusion is at its height. Men, beasts, vehicles are so heaped and crushed together that the crowd fronting the entrance to the bridges, measuring over a thousand yards across to three hundred yards in depth, can no longer move. A commissary succeeds in getting through the mass after two hours' efforts; but he is tired to death and streaming with sweat in spite of the intense cold.

Some officers of the 2nd Regiment of Prussian Hussars take five hours to make the hundred and eighty steps that separate them from the river; and even so, they have pitilessly cut about to right and left with their sabres; for, says a Frenchman, some of us used our arms to pierce through the crowd that had no strength left but to cry out, and made no defence but by curses.

At one o'clock in the day, the Russian batteries, descrying the bridges, sent a rain of bullets and shells into the midst of the mob of fugitives.

Then terror seized on all hearts, and there was an indescribable rush towards the bridges.

Carriages caught in each other and were upset; officers and men were stifled or trampled under foot; some, falling into the Beresina, perished there; several, by clinging to the supports, were able to climb upon the bridges.

Horses, precipitated into the river, were caught in the ice; others came and laid their heads upon the flooring of the bridge, making a row all along one side, staying there as long as they had sufficient strength to keep themselves up in the water; others, left on the land and crowding together, formed an impenetrable mass.[1]

At five o'clock firing on both sides ended with the daylight. But Eblé had to provide access to the bridges for Victor's 9th Corps, which, since the morning, had, with marvellous constancy, kept back the Russians. At his orders, 150 sappers set about making a way, or, as they call it, a cutting, through the mass of overturned wagons and corpses. They contrive openings to right and left of this cutting through which the foot-soldiers file out; they clear the cutting of vehicles and loose horses, which they lead on to the bridge; they throw the vehicles into the river and drive the horses one by one to the right bank. But the dead horses are too

[1] See Appendix IV, "An episode of the Beresina."

many to be carried away or pushed aside, and they must be walked over to reach the bridges.

On November 29, at one o'clock in the morning, the 9th Corps crosses the bridges with its guns, slowly and in good order, as Berthier has enjoined, so that it may not be broken up; and, at half-past six, its small rear-guard crosses in its turn. On the left bank, no movement was made by those left behind. They could have crossed during the night; but the enemy's fire had ceased; they relapsed into apathy and indifference, and lay down by the bivouac fires.

It was found impossible to drag them away, and it is to be regretted that Wittgenstein did not send a ball or two into their midst which would have made them pack off.

In vain Eblé informed them several times that he was going to burn the bridges; in vain, in the hope of shaking and moving this inert mass, at five o'clock in the morning, he had some carriages set on fire. In vain did he announce that the work would begin at seven o'clock, and then generously delayed it till half-past eight.

It was not until half-past eight, when Eblé gave orders for the bridges to be broken down and burnt, that the despairing mob—a mob that was no longer the Army—tried to cross them.

Too late! Then were witnessed the heart-breaking scenes we all know of; men casting themselves into the

devouring flames or on to the ice-fields that gave way beneath their feet; and then the speedy appearance of the Cossacks to capture the whole defenceless crowd.

At that same hour, half-past nine, Eblé, having accomplished the firing of the bridges, started with his pontoniers and sappers on the way to Zembim.

"You can understand," Berthier had written to Victor, "how important it is that both bridges should be completely destroyed"; and he gives orders that the supports prepared for another bridge, as well as all vehicles that cannot get across, are also to be burnt so as to leave nothing behind for the enemy.

But Eblé's work was not over. The Army, on its march to Zembim, had to go through a defile of two leagues in length in the midst of a marshy forest. It was a narrow causeway where the carriages could go only in single file, and, at the end of the causeway lay streams and swamps over which the Russian Government had built three large bridges of pine-wood, some thousand feet in length.

The enemy had not thought of destroying them; if they had, the French Army would have found itself in much worse case than at the Beresina.

Again, it was Eblé who, on the night between November 29 and 30, from ten o'clock at night to four in the morning, worked at the burning of the three bridges of Zembim; so stopping the pursuit of the Russians,

V

Such had been Eblé's doings up to the end of November, 1812.

In less than a day—from the 25th to the 26th—his pontoniers had built two bridges, and these two bridges had been incessantly repaired and kept up by them during the days that followed.

But few of these brave fellows, whose devotion, as Gourgaud says, was of more than human strength, survived. Some died on the very banks of the Beresina, others, crippled and worn out, disappeared during the Retreat.

They all loved and respected Eblé, and they sacrificed their lives because Eblé animated and inspired them by his presence; because Eblé, in spite of his age—he was sixty-four—faced toil and hardship with them, and gave the example of vigorous energy.

Thus, Eblé's name is for ever bound up with the terrible episode of the Beresina; and it was Eblé who, by his energy, his forethought, his coolness and his spirit of order and the influence he had over his men, saved the Army.

"It would be impossible to overpraise him!" exclaims Castellane.

Eblé himself, modest as he was, both during and after

the crossing, could not help sometimes saying with legitimate pride, that the construction of the bridges over the Beresina was the greatest service he had rendered his country during the whole course of his military career.

Need we add that to the very end of this fatal expedition, Eblé was courageous and compassionate?

He went on foot, refusing to get into his carriage; he slept at bivouac, and he made his officers pick up the men who fell by the way.

One day he obliged Drieu, one of his captains, who was dying of hunger, to take the food he still had in his pocket—a little bread and cheese—and set himself to collect provisions from his fellow-generals.

On December 9, Lariboisière fell ill, and he took over his command of the Artillery. But, when he reached Königsberg and reported himself to the Minister, the account he had to give of the material and personal condition of his arm grieved him to the heart. The Artillery had brought back no more than nine guns; what was left of the troops were without muskets, pistols, or any part of their equipment. How could the army be reorganized? What difficulties, what obstacles to surmount!

But this fresh and arduous business was spared him.

Already, on December 17, at Gumbinnen, Griois, noticing Eblé's weakness and dejection, had declared that he was but the shadow of himself and was a striking

example of what suffering and privation can do to the strongest characters and the most robust bodies.[1]

On the 28th Berthier announced that Eblé was dangerously ill and had just lost consciousness, and, on the 30th, Eblé succumbed.

Nine days earlier Lariboisière had died. Lariboisière and Eblé—the glory of the French Artillery!

"Those two men," writes an officer, "were the victims of their devotion, and in them the corps loses its pillars and its supports.[2]

After his return to France, Napoleon thought often of Eblé, Eblé whom all the Army admired, and whom he had known and rewarded but tardily. On December 30, he asked him to watch over the artillery still left at Dantzig and the towns of Prussia; he authorized him to remove cannons from Spandan and Berlin; he urged him to concert with Rapp and Daru in provisioning Dantzig for a siege.

[1] Cf. Planat, p. 119, who saw him at Königsberg and thought him depressed. "He showed me the waistband of his breeches, now too long by half, to prove how much his body was wasted."

[2] Cf. these words of Mme. de Chastenay, a little exaggerated perhaps, for she does not love the Emperor (*Mem.* ii. p. 221). "General Eblé was a model of courage, integrity, and honour. By his knowledge, his energy, his long and constant service, worthy of the command of the Artillery, he was pursued by implacable jealousy and constantly the victim of interest. Given, for want of competitors, the appointment of Chief Inspector of Artillery, he had ceased to exist before hearing the news."

On January 2, 1813, he appointed him Inspector-in-Chief of Artillery.

He knew that Eblé was of the race of the great gunners, "as fine as gold," and at St. Helena, he spoke of him as a man of the highest worth—a truly extraordinary man.

THE HERO OF THE RETREAT

I

MATHIEU DUMAS, Intendant-General of the Grand Army, with his son-in-law, the Baron de Saint-Didier, his friend Combes the Controller, and some others, had crossed the Russian frontier and left "that accursed soil."

The Cossacks were far away and quarters improving.

The little company had halted on Prussian territory, at Neustadt, not far from Gumbinnen, in the house of a doctor where Dumas had put up on his journey out.

They were at breakfast, greatly enjoying some most excellent coffee; when suddenly the door opens and a man enters.

He is dressed in a blue riding-coat; his face is tanned and burnt, his eyes red and shining, his beard grown long.

"Here I am at last!" says this unknown personage.

Those present wonder. "But who are you?"

"What, General Dumas, you don't recognize me? I am the Rear-guard of the Grand Army, Marshal Ney.[1]

[1] The fact, Murat writes to Napoleon, that Ney had not one bayonet left. "He effected his retreat *alone*—personally—with some officers of his staff and of the forces."

I fired the last shot on the bridge at Kovno ; I threw the last of our arms into the Niemen, and I got here through the woods."

There was a cry of admiration, and, says Dumas, "I leave you to imagine with what respectful warmth we welcomed the hero of the Retreat."

The hero of the Retreat ; that was the name given him from 1812.

Major Baltazard, Aide-de-Camp to the Minister of War, wrote from Berlin to the Duc de Feltre, that Marshal Ney was "everywhere called the hero of the Retreat and extolled by all."

Does not Bausset see in Marshal Ney "the real hero of this great catastrophe" ?

And has not Bonneval testified that during the Russian Campaign, Marshal Ney was as calm under fire as in the Palace of the Tuileries, and that each time a projectile whistled past him the intrepid soldier called out : "*Passez coquins*" ? Lajeune says that at Borodino, from the top of the redoubt, Ney with wonderful coolness directed the combatants crowded about his feet ; and Planat, that on that occasion, with dilated nostrils, blazing eyes, urging all on with voice and gesture, the Marshal looked like the God of War.

Does not Castellane, in his journal, say on November 7 that Ney is a man of astonishing gallantry, excellent head, ability that increases with danger ; a man most valuable to an army on the way to be demoralized ?

Does he not add, on November 11, that, with his troops reduced to 1,400 men, Ney acts as rear-guard some leagues from Smolensk, and himself takes a musket to defend the passage?

Does he not say again on November 17, that Ney's advance on Orcha is the finest feat of arms of the century, and on December 8, that the Marshal, amidst the distress they were in, displayed a rare energy?

Again, on February 3, 1813, he says that Ney, back in Paris, is everywhere acclaimed as a hero, and has truly given proof of great determination and singular strength of mind.

Does not Labaume write that the march on Orcha, in which Ney put in practice everything that the most extraordinary skill and courage could do, put the crown on his reputation?

Griois placed him above Murat, above the other Marshals and Generals, as the bravest of the brave, the "beau-ideal of courage."

Does not Ségur describe him as unshaken amid disaster, and when everything gives way or succumbs around him, facing the adversary alone; covering the Retreat till the very end; forsaken, but forsaking neither himself nor his post; keeping back the Russians by his heroism; and so natural, so simple, in his heroism that he would not suppose he had done anything sublime, if his glory did not shine forth from the eyes, the gestures, the acclamations of the entire Army?

The Commandant Lopez, of Joseph-Napoleon's regiment declares that Ney, by his prodigious energy had managed to lead his troop beyond the Dnieper, in spite of the enemy, the elements, hunger and fatigue, and that feat alone would be enough to immortalize him.

Did not Fezensac extol Ney's boldness and steadfastness and presence of mind? Did he not consider that so important, so difficult a duty as acting as Rear-guard could not have been intrusted to a more capable man; a man that was ever attracted by the sound of cannon; a man who by the mere fact of his presence, reassured and cheered his men?

And in the "great drama," the most perilous and critical advance on Orcha from Krasnoï, Fezensac describes the Marshal suddenly deciding on his plan of action, and, betraying neither doubt nor anxiety, pushing across country towards the Dnieper, resolutely carrying out the scheme conceived with such skill and audacity; crossing the river; taking advantage of every irregularity of the ground; resisting the attacks of the pursuing Russians; drawing along with him the remnants of his regiment still marching in step; by his tenacity dragging them out of the desperate situation they are in; a score of times preventing them leaving the ranks by the confidence he inspires, by his coolness, by his resolute bearing and by his brave words; telling them they must know how to die for the honour of France; and, at last, at the end of seventy-two

hours, meeting Prince Eugène, who had believed him lost and welcomes him with transports of joy.

And is that all?

No; the illustrious warrior, adds Fezensac, who saved the 3rd Corps at Krasnoï, on the banks of the Beresina saved the entire army as well as the Emperor.

On November 28, he rallies the 2nd Corps, resumes the offensive, and, by his experience guides the Generals, as by his zeal he inspirits the men.

On December 13, at Kovno, it is Ney who gains time for the fugitives to escape from the last "hourra" of the Cossacks; no sooner does he appear, musket in hand on the ramparts of the town, than the fight begins anew and lasts till night-fall.

Shall we quote Napoleon, who said that Ney was matchless and incomparable on the field of battle, and admirable for his obstinacy in retreat?

In consequence, he was filled with the liveliest anxiety when, after Krasnoï, he had to leave the Marshal behind. But suddenly, while he despairs of Ney's safety, he hears that Ney has escaped from the Russians, and he utters these absolutely authentic words, reported by Bausset, Castellane and Gourgaud:

"I have more than two millions in the vaults of the Tuileries; I would have thankfully given them as ransom for my faithful companion-in-arms!"

On his return to Paris, January 8, 1813, in recognition of Ney's services by what he termed a brilliant reward,

he raised to a principality under the name of the Principality of the Moskova, and conferred on the Duc d'Elchingen and his descendants, the castle and estate of Rivoli in the Department of the Po.

Marshal Davout was then at variance with Ney; nevertheless he applauded the Emperor's decision.

"I do not congratulate the Duc d'Elchingen," he wrote, "because our relations are not sufficiently friendly; but I felt lively satisfaction on hearing that the Emperor has rewarded his energy and his military ability; that Marshal has real merit."

Let us agree with Dedem that, if the Prince of the Moskova was false to his oath in 1815, and perhaps deserved his condemnation, Louis XVIII ought to have pardoned him. France, as Dedem says, was so greatly in his debt!

Méneval thought the same. After saying that Ney had displayed everything that is most sublime in valour, devotion and military practice, "Surely," exclaims Méneval, "the civic wreaths and the laurels upon his brow should have warded off the bolt!"

SPEECHES AND REMARKS OF NAPOLEON DURING THE CAMPAIGN

I

IT may not be without interest to cull from the Memoirs and Diaries of the period certain speeches of Napoleon's—not all, but the principal ones—during the Campaign of 1812, and by collecting these scattered remarks, by quoting and comparing, not the letters and official documents of the Emperor, but his actual words, and thus, by reproducing them *verbally*, *orally*, if I may call it so, and not by writing, paint a little picture, a new and original picture, it seems to us, of the Expedition.[1]

II

War is decided on, and, at Posen, Napoleon says to General Dessolle; "The meeting at Dresden has not induced Alexander to make peace, and we can expect nothing but war from him."

[1] See in Appendix V other speeches and remarks for which there was no room in this chapter.

He is full of hope, and, one night at Posen, after witnessing the march-past of the regiments of the Guard, the officers on duty who sleep near him hear him singing the verse of the *Chant du Départ*—

> "*Et du nord au midi, la trompette guerrière*
> *A sonné l'heure des combats.*
> *Tremblez, ennemis de la France!*"

Nevertheless, on the eve of the passage of the Niemen, when neither spies nor Poles make their appearance, gloom seizes upon him.

As of old he questions Caulaincourt: "Do you think the Russians will give up Vilna without risking a battle?" and when Caulaincourt replies that the Russians will not risk a battle: "In that case," says the Emperor, "Poland is mine; but what a disgrace for Alexander to lose it without a struggle; and won't it cover him with shame in the eyes of the Poles? Let us march upon Vilna, then, and before two months go by, Alexander will be suing for peace."

He crosses the Niemen and marches upon Vilna.

"If the Russians don't fight before Vilna," he says, "I shall take some of them and make something out of it"; and when he sends Castellane to Nansouty: "I am manœuvring to cut off Bagration's Corps. I've got 30,000 of them. Make haste."

He hears of the arrival of a negotiator—the Aide-de-camp Balachov. "My brother Alexander wants to

arrange matters already; he's afraid. My tactics have foiled the Russians. In a couple of months they'll be at my feet."

But Vilna remains indifferent, and Napoleon cannot help noticing that there the Poles are very different from the Poles at Posen.

When he asks Balachov which is the road to Moscow, the Aide-de-camp proudly retorts that Charles XII took that road to Pultowa.

As to Bagration, he has put himself out of reach.

From that moment, Napoleon feverishly pursues a battle, a victory; and at times he believes he has found it. For instance, on July 28. The evening before, he leaves Murat, saying:

"To-morrow, at five o'clock, the sun of Austerlitz."

But the Russians steal away.

For an instant, only an instant, he thinks of halting at Vitebsk, and even says to Mathieu Dumas:

"Consider how to enable us to live here, for we won't commit the same folly as Charles XII; the Campaign of 1812 is ended, and that of 1813 will do the rest."

As if he could take up winter-quarters in July and August!

Moreover, he finds Vitebsk deserted, desolate, and he is heard to say: "I did not come so far as this just to conquer these hovels."

On July 7, when Eblé asked him for horses, did he not answer: "We shall find good carriage-horses at

Moscow" ; and, at Vilna, did he not exclaim in Caulaincourt's presence :

"I shall sign peace in Moscow"?

When he makes Friant Colonel of the Foot-Grenadiers of the Guard, and drawing his sword, himself receives and embraces him, he declares that the struggle is not finished. "This is the reward of your good and faithful services ; but I still have need of you. Continue in command of your Division during this Campaign ; you are more necessary to me there than at the head of your Grenadiers, who are always under my own eye."

So he pushes on towards Smolensk.

On August 14, he gains a slight advantage at Krasnoï, and the next day, his birthday, he says to Prince Eugène who comes to offer his congratulations : "Everything is getting ready for a battle ; I shall win it, and we shall see Moscow."

Now he is at Smolensk, and here, too, for a moment he wishes to halt ; he quotes the Comte de Lobau's remark that Smolensk is a fine base for cantonments, adding that though it may be easy to reach Moscow in the present year, it would be better to do so in two campaigns.

But he has vanquished the Russians at Valoutina, he has seen a field of battle that pleased him : "Four Russians to one Frenchman ! General, that was fine !" and in Smolensk he possesses a good place for warehousing and a base of operations.

If he had thought of wintering at Smolensk, he very soon gave up the idea. His Army, his expeditionary force, as he calls it, continues to advance, and on August 25, on the eve of his entry into Dorogobouge, he says, "We have gone too far to turn back. If I desired only the glory of warlike exploits, I need only go back to Smolensk. I would set up my eagles there and content myself with stretching forth arms to right and left to crush Wittgenstein and Tormassov. Such operations would be brilliant and finish the campaign well; but they would not end the war. Peace is in front of us; we are but a ten days' journey from it; so near the goal, there is nothing more to consider. Let us march on Moscow!"

He enters Dorogobouge, Viasma, and Ghiatsk, and, at last, on September 5, he is able to say: "I've got them." In fact, Koutougov is waiting to give him battle.

On the 6th, Napoleon surveys the position of the Russians, and, as if speaking to himself, says: "A great battle; many men; many, many dead; but the victory will be ours"; and some minutes later: "It will be a terrible battle; but I have 80,000 men; I shall lose 20,000, and I shall enter Moscow with 60,000. The stragglers will rejoin me there; then the marching battalions, and we shall be stronger than before the battle"; and as he passes General Pajol's bivouac, he is heard humming the lines:

"*La victoire en chantant*
Nous ouvre la barrière."

No doubt the news from Spain is pretty bad; Captain Fabvier tells him of the defeat of Arapyles, and Napoleon, guessing that Murat wished to win before the arrival of King Joseph, quotes the words of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau:

"*Que l'impatience indocile*
Du compagnon de Paul-Emile
Fit tout le succès d'Annibal."

But on the same day he has received the portrait of the King of Rome: he has had it placed on a chair outside his tent that every one may look at it.

"We shall see what he will be like at twenty"; he says; and, after a while: "Take him away; it is too soon for him to look at a battlefield."

On the morning of the 7th, after a restless night, he gets up. "Let us march onwards and go to open the gates of Moscow; it is a little cold, but there is a beautiful sun—the sun of Austerlitz."

But neither the Battle of Borodino, nor the Battle of the Moskova was an Austerlitz.

About two o'clock, Marshal Ney sends word to the Emperor that the Cavalry of the Guard has but to charge to complete the rout of the enemy.

The call to horse is sounded; the Cavalry slowly advances. But Bessières approaches Napoleon and,

speaking low, says: "Sire, your Majesty is 800 leagues from your Capital."

Napoleon gives ear to this caution; the Cavalry halts.

He fears he may have to fight again the next day, and the next; he is afraid that Koutougov, with his back to Moscow, may get reinforcements and recommence the fight.

"I want to see the pieces on my board better and more clearly," he says. "We must learn to wait. Time is what everything needs; it is the element out of which all things are made. Nothing is clear yet. If there were a second battle to-morrow, with what should I fight it?"

At the end of the day, when he orders the advance of the Young Guard, three times he charges Mortier to let it "protect the battlefield, nothing more; neither advance nor retire, whatever happens"; and that evening, at supper, he said to Daru and Dumas: "People will wonder why I did not let my reserve charge, so as to gain greater results; but I had to keep them to strike a decisive blow in the great battle which the enemy will give us before Moscow; to-day's success is assured; I was forced to think of the success of the whole campaign, and that is why I keep my reserve."

On the 8th, he goes over the battlefield and makes this fine speech: "After a victory, there are no more enemies, there are only men."

But Moscow is his, and when Bessières tells him of the numbers of wounded generals, he interrupts him with: "A week at Moscow, and there will be no trace of it!"

From the summit of the Holy Mountain he contemplates Moscow lying spread out before his eyes, and exclaims: "Here it is at last, this famous city! It was time!" and he says to Durosnel: "Go into the town, settle with the officials and get together the deputation that ought to bring me the keys."

No deputation makes its appearance, and he learns that Moscow is deserted.

"Moscow deserted! What an inconceivable event! Why, the Russians can't know yet what effect the taking of their capital will have on them!" He enters Moscow, he enters the Kremlin. "Here I am, at last in Moscow; in the ancient palace of the Tsars!"

Suddenly the fire bursts out, and Napoleon's heart fails him—he dreads the future.

On September 16, on the terrace of the Kremlin, he says to the Comte de Lobau: "This forebodes great misfortunes for us"; and he adds: "What a frightful sight! What extraordinary determination! What men! They are Scythians! I am losing the reward I promised my brave army!"

Negotiations were necessary. Napoleon sends Lauriston to Koutougov. "I want peace; I must have peace; I am determined to have it."

The negotiation falls through; time slips away; it is absolutely necessary to form some plan.

Daru advises spending the winter at Moscow, which will become a vast intrenched camp. "It is lion-hearted advice," says Napoleon in answer; "but what will Paris say to it? What will they do there? Who can foresee the result of six months without communication! And Prussia! And Austria!"

After the repulse at Taroutino, he orders the Retreat, which begins on October 19.

"Let us march on Kalouga, and woe to those who find themselves in my way!"

Eugène defeats the Russians at Malo-Iaroslavets, and Napoleon congratulates and embraces him: "Eugène, this fight is your finest feat of arms!"

But, by the advice of his Marshals and against Davout's judgment, he quits the Kalouga road and takes that to Mojaïsk.

He has not lost courage, and he urges his companions forward. On October 30, at Velitchevo, he says to his officers: "A misfortune shared by many is less hard to bear, isn't it?"

But while on the way to Smolensk, he receives unpleasant news. He hears that Pouget, in command at Vitebsk, has been taken prisoner, having refused to forsake his troop of wretched soldiers from Bergen. "Why!" exclaims Napoleon; "he ought to have escaped himself and left them in the lurch!"

He hears of Malet's blunder, and says to Daru: "Well, suppose we had stayed on in Moscow?" and then he wonders that no one seems to have thought of the King of Rome. "And they never thought of Napoleon the Second!"

He leaves Smolensk and goes towards Krasnoï; but Davout and Ney are cut off from the Army. "We must go at once to their aid," says Napoleon, "and attack the enemy; I have played the Emperor long enough; it is time I played the General."

In the night between the 16th and 17th of November, he sends Roguet to surprise several villages. "Let Roguet attack the Russians with the bayonet and make them repent of their insolence!"

He encourages a battalion of his Guards with a jest. "Come, grenadiers, accost these fellows; in war as in love, one must come to close quarters;" and to the Duc de Plaisance who blames him for exposing himself to the fire of the guns: "For twenty-five years bullets have grazed my legs!"

Davout is safe, Ney is left; Napoleon, with a sore heart owning his rescue impossible.

"It is hopeless—we must give up Ney like a forlorn hope."

But disorder prevails in the Army, and the Guard, thrown into confusion, no longer maintains its fine military bearing. On the 19th, at Doubrovna, he calls a halt, and standing in the centre of the column, he

charges the officers to maintain discipline, and harangues the men, assuring them that in these difficult circumstances, he counts on their courage and loyalty, expressing a hope that his Guard will not let itself be drawn astray by the bad example of those who are not used to the privations and risks of a retreat.

"I shall rally my troops at Orcha, and I believe, with their co-operation, I shall carry out my plans." [1]

The Guard's band then plays the air: "*Où peut-on être mieux qu'au sein de la famille?*" But the Emperor interrupts with: "No, play *Veillons au salut de l'Empire.*"

At Orcha there are fresh exhortations.

"Play us a tune to cheer us up"; he says to the Guard's band; "play the *Champ du Départ.*"

But he never ceases to think of Ney, speaking his name and bewailing the wretched state of the poor soldiers he can't rescue and the necessity of getting to Minsk as quickly as possible and without a stop.

And, behold, on the 20th, in the evening, while he is dining at Barany with Marshal Lefebvre, he learns from Gourgaud that Ney has made his way out.

"Is it really true?" cries the Emperor, seizing the officer by both arms; "are you quite sure? I have more than two millions in the vaults of the Tuileries, and I would have given them all to save Marshal Ney!"

Reverses follow one another. Minsk, with its large

[1] See Appendix VI, "The harangue at Donbrovna."

store-houses, falls into the hands of the Russians. "Well," says Napoleon, "there's nothing left for us but to cut our way with our bayonets!"

Then, the Borissov bridge, the only one over the Beresina, is destroyed by Admiral Tchitchagov, and, at this piece of news, the Emperor, striking the ground with his stick, casts a furious glance at the heavens, exclaiming: "Is it written above that we shall commit nothing but follies now?"

How was the Beresina to be crossed? How were both Tchitchagov and Wittgenstein, one on each bank, to be resisted?

But however critical the situation, the soldiers are convinced that Napoleon will "get them out of it." Eblé constructs two bridges over the Beresina; Oudinot at first, and then Ney, repulse Tchitchagov; the Duc de Bellune copes with Wittgenstein, and the brilliant leading of Victor makes the Emperor cry: "This is one of Victor's great days!"

Unluckily, Partouneaux's Division had had to lay down its arms, and he cannot help saying that everything would have been saved as by a miracle, but that that occurrence had spoilt it all.

The Retreat grew faster. Vilna, Molodetchno, then Smorgoni are reached, and from there, on December 5 at ten o'clock at night, Napoleon, with Caulaincourt, Duroc and Lobau, starts for Paris.

Two days earlier, at Molodetchno, he has revealed

his intention to Berthier. "I don't feel strong enough now to have Prussia between me and France. How can I remain at the head of a rout? Ought I not to go to reassure France and come back with fresh troops to the aid of the remnant of the Grand Army? Ought I not to get to France before the news of the disaster and the effect it may produce?"

He adds that Murat will take up the chief command and Berthier will be his Major-General.

Berthier wishes to follow the Emperor; he sheds tears; he implores Napoleon to take him with him.

"That can't be," says Napoleon somewhat brutally; "it is necessary for you to remain with the King of Naples; I know that you are of no use, but nobody believes it, and your name has still some influence with the Army. I give you twenty-four hours to decide; but if you decide to go, you will go to your own estate and I shall forbid you my presence and Paris for ever."

Berthier gives way, and on December 5, Napoleon assembles his lieutenants, and announces his decision.

"We are all liable to make mistakes; mine was in staying too long in Moscow"; and with undue favouring of Prince Eugène, and forgetting the services of Ney: "It is only Eugène that has behaved like an old soldier."

He starts. Did he remember them saying not long ago to Tchernytchev, that the war between France and Russia would be a war to the death; that Russia had great possibilities and a fine and brave Army; that the

God of Battles might side with the Emperor Alexander, and that he, Napoleon, would perhaps be well thrashed and forced to go back home?

But he hopes to take his revenge. At Orcha does he not see the troops of the Confederation looking at him with respectful admiration?

He has no fear of the Cossacks, who may be lying in wait for his passing; he knows that the Poles who form his escort will obstinately defend him to their last breath.

"In case of certain danger," he says to Captain Wonsowiez, giving him a brace of pistols, "kill me rather than let me be taken"; but, he adds, "the night is dark enough to prevent the Russians seeing us, and we can always rely upon chance and luck; one couldn't live without that."

He passes near Vilna, and talks with the faithful Maret: "You assure me that things are all right. You give me fresh life. I think you may be able to persuade the King of Naples to put the Retreat in a new light. Tell him that the salvation of the Army lies there and that I rely on him."

He continues his journey. "I shall go by Warsaw and Dresden," he tells Captain Wonsowiez; "I feel full confidence in the Polish people, and I shall be glad to see my friend the King of Saxony.

At Kovno there is an alarm. At the opposite gate of the town ring out the shouts of the Cossacks and

the sound of the muskets the soldiers of the garrison are firing at them.

"Do you hear that? We have had a narrow escape this time, we must own."

They approach Warsaw; the Emperor gets out of his carriage to enter the town; he wishes to go on foot to the Hôtel d'Angleterre through the district of Cracovia, then the largest street in Warsaw.

"I should like," he says, "to find myself again in that street because I once held a great review there"; and, a little later, in a conversation with the Abbé de Pradt and the Ministers of the Duchy, he confesses to his reverses and his mistakes; but he has faith in his star; he enumerates the favourable chances the future offers him; he undertakes to reappear soon at the head of a fresh army.

"I shall be blamed for going to Moscow and for staying there so long; it was a big and bold thing to do; but there's only a step from the sublime to the ridiculous. Food did not fail us; the cold is the sole cause of the disaster. I am returning to France; I shall travel night and day, and I shall fall into Paris at midnight, like a bomb. The next day, they will be amazed at my return; in the Capital and all over France nothing else will be talked about, and what has happened will be forgotten. I need money and men; I am going to seek them. I will arm and equip an army of 300,000

men, and, in the spring, I will take the field again and destroy the Russians." [1]

He goes on to Dresden and Leipzig.[2]

On December 16, he is at Mayence, and says to old Kellermann, Duc de Valmy: "A great part of my army is lost; but be easy; in a few months from now, I shall have 300,000 bayonets under my command, and I shall prove to my enemies that the elements alone can vanquish us. I was wrong, I confess, to expose my poor soldiers to such a climate; but which of us in this world never makes mistakes? When one recognizes them, one must try to repair them."

[1] See Appendix VII, "Napoleon at Warsaw."

[2] See Appendix VIII, Conversation of Napoleon with the French Consul Thérémin.

Appendix

I

L'AFFAIRE MALET (p. 25).

Did Napoleon follow up his idea of bringing out a volume of documents and observations on the Malet incident, under the title of *Various Plots Hatched by Certain Individuals*?

Yes, and no. It is known that on his return, he railed against Frochot and that the Prefect of the Seine was, so to speak, the scapegoat. The Emperor cashiered him. Now the *précis* Napoleon planned to publish, appeared in the *Moniteur* of December 25, 1812; but it was not meant to "elucidate" the Malet business and its two stages; its sole aim was to justify the cashiering of Frochot and its six pages contained the following documents:—

1. Frochot's statement as to the events which took place at the Hôtel de Ville.
2. The interrogatories undergone by Soulier, commanding the 10th Cohort.
3. A memorandum by Saulnier, Chief Secretary to the Minister of Police, and another by Cluis, Savary's private secretary.
4. A report from the Medical Inspector of the State Prisons.

5. A declaration by Boutrin, Divisional Head of the Prefecture of the Department of the Seine.
6. A letter from Frochot to Savary.
8, 9, 10. The opinions of the legislative departments—home, finance, marine and war—of the Council of State on Frochot's conduct.
12. The decree, dated December 23, which cashiered Frochot and appointed Chabrol in his place.

II

NAPOLEON AT THE MOSKOVA (p. 121).

Perhaps, writing long after the event, Boulart may have been too severe.

From where he stood, whatever our Major may say, and, as Gourgaud relates, he conducted the battle, directing Poniatowski to begin the attack; despatching Davout to assail the Russians again with his own 1st Corps and Ney's 3rd; sending Friant's Division, supported by a part of the Artillery of the Guard, to seize Semenowskvï, and Claparéde's Division to the left where Cossacks had broken in; sending Junot's Westphalians to Davout's right, thus joining him with Poniatowski; replacing the Westphalians, whose position had been in the second line behind Ney's Corps, by the Division of the Young Guard commanded by Roguet; finally ordering Eugène to redouble his efforts, and Murat to carry out a vigorous and decisive attack on the Great Redoubt.

Boulart, like Ségur, holds that the victory was not complete; but could one not answer him, as Gourgaud and Ségur, that a great part of the Russian Army has been annihilated; that Bagration and other Generals have given

in, and that the taking of Moscow is the result of this victory ?

Boulart, like Napoleon, was unaware that the retreat of the enemy along one only road, and during one night only, after the terrible fight, had caused such disorder among the Infantry, that it was now but a confused mass, incapable of fighting.

III

THE ARMY OF XERXES (p. 124).

"Thus must have been formed and have marched the enormous armies of the Persians in their expedition against the Greeks," says Boulart; and Labaume, recalling that Napoleon in his bulletin in the Campaign of 1809, compared the Austrians to the mob of Xerxes, writes that the "mob" of Xerxes never had a greater quantity of baggage than we had during the Russian campaign.[1]

Griois writes that this crowd of men, horses, and carriages looked more like the emigration of a people changing countries than an organized army; and Fezensac, that the sight reminded him of the wars of the conquerors of Asia.

Did not Lajeune, in his *Memoirs*, confess that the progress of the army was hindered by a great number of carts and carriages, and that he himself—"one of the officers who were the most anxious to get rid of encumbrances on the journey"—had, when he left Moscow: (1) five saddle-horses; (2) a barouche drawn by three horses and carrying his property and furs to wrap himself up in on bivouac;

[1] One remembers that in 1870, at the sight of the disorder that broke out in Bazaine's Army when, on August 14, it set out on the way to Verdun, a Staff-Officer called it the Army of Darius.

(3) a wagon with four horses containing the maps and papers of the Staff as well as the kitchen utensils; (4) three small carts each drawn by three little Russian horses, and carrying the clerks, the cook, oats, sugar, coffee, flour, and some trusses of hay; (5) the Secretary's horse; (6) three horses he had harnessed to his sister's carriage.

"All this," adds Lajeune, "made up an encumbrance of six carriages and twenty-five horses, to carry only what was absolutely necessary. The ropes were always breaking, and having to stop hindered progress; sand, defiles, swamps, were so many causes of delay, and the Army spent twelve hours, and often more, in getting over a distance a carriage by itself could have done in two."

IV

AN EPISODE OF THE BERESINA (p. 225).

It was here that occurred one of the most tragic and moving episodes of the Passage.

A young and beautiful woman, the widow of a Colonel killed a few days earlier, is on horseback in the midst of a column of fugitives, holding in front of her her little four-years old daughter.

But she cannot reach the bridge.

Suddenly, a bullet brings her horse to the ground, and strikes her herself in the left thigh above the knee.

She knows herself for lost, and without a word, in dark despair, lifts up the weeping little one, kissing her many times; then, taking the blood-stained garter from her broken leg, she strangles the child, and holding her tight

against her breast, lies down, and lets herself be trampled on by the crowd.[1]

V

OTHER SPEECHES AND REMARKS OF NAPOLEON DURING THE CAMPAIGN.

1.

At the Parade at the Tuileries, the Emperor passes in front of a battalion of the 2nd Regiment of the Vistula.

To Captain Razovski.

"What part of Poland do you come from?"

"How long have you served?"

To Lieutenant Brandt.

"Where is the Captain of the Company?—How many wounds have you? You're still young, you'll be Captain later on."

He tastes a loaf a soldier has in his knapsack.

"Not bad."

He stops in front of a rather corpulent foot-soldier.

"Where did you get so fat?"

"Here, in France."

"Well, take care of yourself; a time will come when you'll be obliged to fast."

To the Sergeant, Dembinski.

"How many wounds have you?"

[1] Letter of the Würtenberg surgeon Huber to his friend Henri de Roos: Cf. in our 1812 *La guerre de Russie, Notes et Documents*, the literal translation of this letter.

"Five."

"I give you the Cross."

To the Colonel.

"To look at the regiment, no one would believe it had come from a fatiguing campaign. I am satisfied with its dress, its equipment and its bearing. Say so to the regiment."

2.

POSEN, *January* 1, 1812.

To the Prefect of Posen.

"The soldiers seem to me too young; I want men able to endure hardships; if they are too young, they only serve to fill the hospitals."

To the Polish nobles in Court-dress in the Great Hall of the former refectory of the Jesuit Monastery.

"Gentlemen, I should have preferred seeing you booted and spurred, sword at side, like your ancestors at the coming of the Tartans and Cossacks. We live in days when it is necessary to be armed from head to foot, with hand ever on the sword's hilt."

To the Countess Mycielcha.

"How many children have you?"

"I have none, Sire."

"Are you divorced, then?"

"I am not married at all, Sire; I am still single."

"Ah! you mustn't be too particular; you've no time to lose." [1]

[1] Brandt, i. pp. 326–327. "What impression did he make on the aristocracy?" Brandt asked of a friend from Posen. "He is thought to have bad manners, a harsh and strident voice, and his

3.

THORN, *June* 5, 1812.

Napoleon is reviewing the Guard, and says to Captain Fantin :

" Where do you come from ? '

" From Embrun, Sire."

" Basses-Alpes ? "

" No, Sire, Hautes-Alpes."

" You are right." [1]

4.

KOVNO, *June* 25, 1812.

The Emperor meets the Crown Prince of Würtemberg and thus addresses him :—

" There are grave disorders in your Division, and I shall write to the King that several of your generals have taken upon themselves to make unpleasant remarks. I've a good mind to have them shot; but they may go; I don't want them." [2]

5.

July, 1812.

At Bivouac, in the presence of Prince Poniatowski, to General Fiszer, Chief of Staff of the 5th Corps.

" But where have you left your men ? "

" Sire, the want of victuals, the hardships, the—— "

tone is imperious and peremptory. He is thought very inferior in these matters to Prince Poniatowski, who is looked upon here as the type of a well-bred gentleman."

A former Chamberlain of King Stanislas described him as: *Nec affabilis, nec amabilis, nec adibilis*; and the Countess Kiviliecka said: " He hasn't improved since 1806."

[1] Fantin des Odoazts, *Journal*, p. 297. After the review, Fantin's chief told him he had been wanting in manners in contradicting the Emperor after a fashion !

[2] The generals Woellworth and Walslehar. But, Fezensac says, the excesses committed by the Würtemberg troops were greatly exaggerated by the French.

"Bah! you're always harping on the same string! Why haven't the other corps left half their men on the road? But I know what that means. You're none of you any good except with your dancers at Warsaw!"

6.

VILNA, *July* 4, 1812.

Napoleon is reviewing the Division of Fusilier-Grenadiers of the Young Guard commanded by Roguet, and is much pleased with the smartness and bearing of the men.

"What fine young fellows! They'd like you to think they are tired because they've come from Salamanca; my Old Guard will be jealous of them; treat them gently."

7.

SMOLENSK, *August* 19, 1812.

Words said to Berthier.

"It looks as if Junot were tired of it; he would not turn the Russians' position. It is his fault that we have had a bloody affair and lost Gudin. I will not allow him to command the Westphalians any longer; his place must be taken by Rapp, who speaks German and will lead them well."

8.

VALOUTINA, *August* 20, 1812.

Napoleon, coming up with 7th Light Infantry, calls up all the Captains round him, and says to them:—

"Point out the best officer in the Regiment."

"They are all good, Sire."

"Well, show me the best."

"Sire, they are all good."

"Come, that's no answer. Say, like Themistocles: 'I am the first, my neighbour is the second.'"

"Sire, it is Captain Moncey, wounded, and, at the present moment, absent."

"What! Moncey, who used to be my page, the son of the Marshal? Give me the name of another."

"There is no better, Sire."

"Very well; I decorate him."

9.

VALOUTINA, *August* 20, 1812.

The Emperor gives an Eagle to the 127*th.*

"Soldiers, here is your Eagle. It will be your rallying-point in time of danger. Swear to me never to forsake this Eagle or the path of honour; to defend your country and never allow our France to be dishonoured."

He raises a Sergeant of Grenadiers from the ranks, and bids the Colonel welcome and embrace the newly-made officer.

"Make that fine fellow known to me at once—Come, Colonel, embrace him, embrace him!"

(*He passes in front of the* 95*th, and the Colonel, amongst those who have distinguished themselves, names only officers.*

"What Colonel, are your men cowards, then?"

10.

SMOLENSK, *August* 22, 1812.

At the review of the 2nd Regiment of the Vistula, the Emperor looks at Brandt, takes him by the button-hole, and says to the Colonel:—

"This man ought to have been made Captain at Paris before this; make him Captain Adjutant-Major."

He sees a Sergeant called Klucha wearing a decoration and with three stripes.

"How is it he is not an officer?"

"Sire, he can neither read nor write."

"What does that matter? Such poor illiterate fellows that nobody heeds, often make the best officers. Make him Ensign and Sub-lieutenant of Grenadiers. I feel very sure he wasn't the last in the assaults on Saragossa!"

11.

KRASNOÏ, *November* 12, 1812.

Napoleon, in order to rescue his lieutenants left behind has resolved to attack the Russians and he summons Rapp.

"We must start at once—but, no, let Roguet and his Division go on alone. You stay; I don't want you to be killed here. I shall need you at Dantzig."[1]

12.

KRASNOÏ, *November* 17, 1812.

Davout is safe, but Marshal Ney does not arrive, and the Rear-guard can no longer defend itself in Krasnoï; it must leave, and Napoleon says to Mortier:—

"I haven't a moment to lose now; the enemy outflanks me on all sides; the Russians may reach Liady and Orcha, and even the Dnieper. I must hurry there with my Guard to occupy the crossings. Davout will relieve you; but you must both endeavour to hang on in Krasnoï till night; after that, you will come and rejoin me."

[1] Rapp was astonished that his Chief, surrounded by enemies, felt so little doubt of his own safety as to think of what he would have to do at Dantzig, a town from which he was separated by winter, two other hostile armies and 180 leagues of country.

VI.

THE HARANGUE AT DOUBROVNA (p. 258).

Here are five versions of Napoleon's allocution to the Grenadiers of the Guard. (Peyrusse, *Letters*, p. 124; Fantin des Odoards, p. 246; Chambray, ii, p. 215; Ségur, ed. Bapst, p. 309; Lajeune, *Mem.* ed. Bapst, II, p. 256.) Which is the correct one? Guess, if you can, and choose, if you dare. We arrange them according to their degree of veracity.

1.

His Majesty orders the Guard to halt. He expresses his belief in their courage and loyalty; he hopes that they will not allow themselves to be led away by the example of those young soldiers little accustomed to the privations and risks of a retreat, etc. He says he will rally them at Orcha and looks forward to their co-operation in the carrying out of his plans.

2.

Don't listen to those poor creatures who sink under misfortune and don't know how to endure. Take the law into your own hands against such as quit the ranks during the march. Establish an internal discipline in each company, and let the men who behave badly be stoned by their comrades.

Soldiers, I have need of my Guard to reach the goal I have in view. I rely on you. You must rely on me.

3.

Grenadiers of my Guard, you see the disorganization of the army; the greater number of the men, by a deplorable

fatality, have cast away their arms. If you follow this disastrous example, all hope is gone. The safety of the Army is in your hands; you will justify the good opinion I have of you. Not only must the officers maintain strict discipline, but the men must exercise among themselves a rigorous supervision, and themselves punish those that leave the ranks.

4

Grenadiers, we are retiring without having been vanquished by the enemy; let us not be vanquished by ourselves! Let us give an example to the Army! Several among you have already forsaken their eagles and even their arms. I do not appeal to martial law to put a stop to this disorder, but to yourselves alone. Do justice amongst yourselves. To your honour I entrust your discipline.

5.

My old veterans, you must rely on me as I rely on my Guard to fulfil the high destiny to which it is called.

VII

NAPOLEON AT WARSAW (p. 263).

These sayings are taken from notes by the Prussian Envoy, General de Krusemark, and the words he attributes to Napoleon agree in general character with those M. de Pradt ascribes to the Emperor.

But we think it may be best to give here the version of M. de Pradt.

"I took Count Stanislas Potoeki and the Minister of

Finance with me. The Emperor had just left the table, and, in answer to the reiterated protestations of these gentlemen of the joy they felt in seeing him safe and sound after so many dangers:

"'Dangers!' he said; "none at all. I live by movement; the more I bustle about, the better I am. It's only the *rois fainéants* that grow fat in palaces; as for me, it's on horseback and the camp. You appear much alarmed here. The army is in splendid condition; I have 120,000 men. I've always beaten the Russians; they dare not face us. They're not like the soldiers of Friedlend and Eylau. Vilna will hold out. I'm going to get together 300,000 men. Success will make the Russians bold; I'll engage them in two or three battles on the Oder, and in six months I shall be at the Niemen again. I'm of greater weight on my throne than at the head of my army. Naturally, I am sorry to leave it; but Austria and Prussia must be watched. What has happened to me is nothing—just a piece of ill-luck, the result of the climate. The enemy had nothing to do with it; I beat him everywhere. They wanted to cut me off from the Beresina. I laughed at that idiot of an Admiral (he could never pronounce his name [1]). I had fine troops and guns; it was a splendid position; thousands of feet of marshland and a river. But I've seen many another! At Marengo, I was being beaten till six o'clock in the evening, and the next day I was the master of Italy. At Essling, I was the master of Austria and the Archduke thought he could stop me. He proclaimed something or other; my army had already gone a league and a half in advance; I hadn't honoured him by telling him my plans; and you know what it is when it comes to that. How could

[1] Tchitchagow, "whose name alone," said Lejeune, "we dreaded more than any harm he could do us."

I prevent the Danube rising six feet in one night! Ah! if it hadn't been for that, it was all up with the Austrian monarchy; but it was written in heaven that I was to marry an Austrian Archduchess. In the same way in Russia; I couldn't prevent its freezing; every morning they came to tell me I had lost ten thousand horses in the night; well! *bon voyage!* Our Norman horses are not so tough as the Russian; they could not stand over nine degrees of frost. It was the same about the men. Go and look at the Bavarians—there's not one left. Perhaps it will be said that I stayed too long in Moscow. That may be. But it was fine; the season was in advance of the usual time. I expected peace. On October 5, I sent Lauriston to talk it over. I thought of going to Petersburg —I had time for it; or of going to the Southern Provinces of Russia; or of spending the winter at Smolensk. They would hold out at Vilna; I had left the King of Italy there. Ah! it was a fine bit of political staging. Who risks nothing, gains nothing. There's only a step from the sublime to the ridiculous. The Russians appear. The Emperor Alexander is beloved. They have swarms of Cossacks. That's something like a nation! The Crown-peasants love their government. The nobility are in the ascendant.

"I was asked to free the serfs; but I would not consent; they would have murdered everybody; it would have been horrible. I was making proper war on Alexander. But who could possibly have believed that they would strike such a blow as the burning of Moscow?

"Now they accuse us of it; but it was they themselves. It would have done credit to Rome. Many Frenchmen followed me; ah! they're good fellows; they'll find me again."[1]

[1] De Pradt, *Histoire de l'Ambassade du Pologne.*

VIII

CONVERSATION OF NAPOLEON WITH THE FRENCH CONSUL THÉRÉMIN.

LEIPZIG, at the Hôtel de Prusse, *December* 15, 1811.

Napoleon. "What is the feeling in Germany?"

Thérémin. "There is resentment in the minds of the people at the news from the army."

N. "Well, but what do they say?"

T. "The officers of the Saxon contingent report that they have lost all their baggage, and the people naturally and angrily conclude from that that all is lost."

N. "Are the French liked in Saxony?"

T. "The Saxons are well aware that without the French the kingdom of Saxony would be lost."

N. "What effect has the war had on the trade of Leipzig?"

T. "It must have been profitable. Leipzig is exempt from providing military quarters. The war-supplies, the purchases made by the corps passing by in the neighbourhood and by the officers who come into the town can't but be profitable to trade."

N. "I am greatly interested in this town. You must pay very special attention to its inhabitants. You must often ask them to dinner. I beg you to look well after them.[1] How many students are there in the university?"

T. "About nine hundred."

[1] Napoleon then speaks of trade, asking if the warehouses of the Leipzig Fair are Crown or town property, and whether the goods remain in the shops or are only put down in the trade-books.

N. "Are there many ideologists amongst them?"

T. "There used to be a certain number, but I am told they are gone."

N. "Is the Governor of Leipzig a very hard man? Does he imprison many people?"

T. "No; he is severe only to such as deserve it."

N. "Have you here a censor of books and newspapers? And does this censor do his duty properly?"

T. "A Prussian officer, M. de Massenbach, recently offered several publishers a lampoon of great hostility to France, but they all refused to print it; which proves either that they do not agree with the writer's views or that they are not allowed to express their sentiments."

N. "Is the king loved?"

T. "He is worshipped, and he well deserves it. His long reign has been a happy one for Saxony, and his subjects acknowledge it."

N. "Has he a palace at Leipzig?"

T. "Yes, in the Great Square."

N. "Does he often inhabit it?"

T. "Only on great occasions."

N. "What occasions?"

T. "For instance, if he were going to meet the Emperor."

N. "How, the Emperor?"

T. "Yes, certainly, to meet the Emperor of the French."

N. "That's all right."[1]

[1] Napoleon is not sure if Thérémin is speaking of him or of the Emperor Alexander.

IX

PRIVATE LETTERS DURING THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN.

These fifteen letters we publish in their chronological order (*archives des affaires étrangères Russie*, 154) are of very great interest. They were copied at the Post, and well "looked after," that is to say, intercepted by Maret and his agents. The greater number contained matter the public was not to know.

How, for instance, could Guilleminot's letter be allowed to pass, in which he said one ought to be made of steel to go through such a campaign; and that the Cossacks were doing great harm to the army? Or Gressot's, who can't understand why the Emperor tarries so long in Moscow and asks for fresh troops, recruits, and everything necessary for a second campaign? Or that of Baraguay d'Hilliers, who writes that the entire army is longing for peace, but that Napoleon is too obstinate to grant their prayer?

1

Marion to Thiébault, in command of the battalion of Engineers, on Marshal Suchet's Staff.

DUNABOURG, *September* 19, 1812.

Since leaving the Rhine, my dear Thiébault, I have received no letter. Our 10th Corps is in a state of complete excommunication from France and the French. All the news I get comes with the orders brought by the estafette officers, coming either from head-quarters or from the political centre of the Duc de Bassano at Vilna. It was from one of these that we heard vaguely of Marshal Suchet's fresh successes in Spain.

I have the honour of being in command of the Engineers of the 10th Corps here, without having under my orders a single French officer but Captain Riencourt; all the others are Prussians or Poles. Our great, our immortal, army, is truly a Tower of Babel as to confusion of tongues. Luckily, we have got an architect and the work gets on well; as the Russians discovered near Mojaïsk.

Will Riga be besieged or not? That is the important question for the 10th Corps and the Siege-brigade (under General Campredon's orders) which is associated with it. We are very much afraid that the Emperor, with a stroke of the pen from Moscow, may rob us of this triumph. Still the head of the bridge on the left bank is kept under observation from afar by the Prussians; the Artillery and the Engineers are near Mitau, and everything is being made ready for the prompt reconstruction of several bridges in the neighbourhood.

Whilst we wait for the signal, with a single Division we have to guard all that portion of the Dwina that flows from Dunabourg to the sea, from Wittgenstein. The enemy, who frequently bestir themselves at Riga in sorties against the Prussians, leave us here in complete peace. Our sole amusement is pegging away with spade and pickaxe at the head of the Dunabourg bridge. It is a considerable piece of work, which was evacuated without striking a blow. As to the fortress they made such a fuss about before the beginning of the Campaign—a model of skill, a Palladium; in fact it is nothing but an attempt, and so far from finished that it isn't even worth destroying. It is an octagon with counter-guarded bastions; which are detached from the curtains which close their gorges and carry a sort of six-sided towers.

If the war had begun two years later, the Engineers would have had their work cut out for them; for it is surely because they were able to build their strongholds on the Dwina and elsewhere that the Russians were enabled to make so long a retreat before being beaten.

2.

Richard to Colonel Borthon, Artillery Superintendent at Lille.

WITTATOFRKA (*sic*) near Polotsk,
September 22, 1812.

We are now masters of all Russian Poland. Several bloody engagements have been fought on the banks of the Dwina; no doubt you will have seen the results in the newspapers. Our Army Corps has set up its cantonments in the neighbourhood of Polotsk. Our losses from sickness are great, and since we began the campaign, we have come across no storehouse of provisions or forage. It is only within the last few days that some have been set up in our rear.

You can imagine the state the places we leave behind are in. I can assure you this is one of the most difficult wars we have ever had up to now. I hope we may come out of it with honour, and that peace with Russia will soon be made.

3.

Count Tolstoi to Prince Bariakinsky at Carlsbad.

PETERSBURG, *September* 23, 1812.

Count W.(ittgenstein) is the general who has best done his duty since the beginning of this war; and whatever the French bulletins may say, he did beat the enemy's corps under Marshal Oudinot, who was rather seriously wounded; and he took over eight thousand prisoners.

In consequence his Majesty has decorated him with two orders and given him a pension of 12,000 roubles, with reversion to his family.

I received your letter, my dear Prince, at a painful moment, for it was a few days after the taking of Moscow; to which the enemy set fire. But I can assure you that this did but give fresh energy to the whole nation. The sacrifices every one is making for the keeping on of the war are incredible. The Russian Empire may become a ruin, but it will never be disgraced. Our generals make mistakes; but they will learn to avoid them. Just as Charles XII taught Peter the Great how to make war on him, so will Napoleon teach us; and here we are with winter upon us; a fine season for the French to bivouac. The number of prisoners already reaches over 24,000. The Battle of Borodino was certainly to our advantage; it is true the general did not avail himself of it; but another couple of similar battles and Napoleon will find out what it is like to fight the Russians in their own country. All his proclamations have no effect; the people themselves burn their own dwellings and the enemy finds no booty anywhere.

Adieu, my dear Prince; let us put our whoel trust in God. Our cause is a fine one; posterity will admire the nation's energy, and France will get no advantage out of this terrible war but that of having devastated a country which had always been her faithful ally.

4.

Rapp to Baron Desportes, Prefect of the Haut-Rhin.

Moscow, *October* 7, 1812.

It is a month to-day since the Emperor won the finest and most terrible battle ever fought since the Revolution.

General Compans having been wounded, his Majesty had given me the command of that fine Division; but in my turn I was hit four times in an hour and a half; first, in the arm by a spent pistol-ball; secondly, by a pistol-shot in the thigh; thirdly, by a cannon-ball in the left arm, and fourthly by grape-shot in my left hip. That knocked me off my horse, and obliged me to give up the game. Luckily no bones were broken and I am almost well again. Every one declares I am not to be killed in war.

5.

Count X. to the Grand-Duchess of Tuscany.

Moscow, *October* 13, 1812.

Since the last letter I had the honour of writing to Monseigneur, we have enjoyed the most complete quiet. The enemy's army is twenty leagues off on the road to Kalouga. For a moment, seeing him take up positions and fortify them, it was supposed he wanted to give us battle again, and we were at once ordered to make ready to start. But the King of Naples, the Duc d'Istrie and Prince Poniatowski appearing, made him evacuate his entrenchments.

It is impossible to say if we shall spend the winter here. At times there are conjectures which seem to point to it; then orders are given which make one think the contrary. Though it is cold, the weather is fine; we are assured the rainy season is past. In a little while we shall be able to travel in sledges, so that we can go to St. Petersburg, Kazan, Kalouga, or Poland. But if we go, we must expect to suffer cruelly; bivouacking will be very hard in this country at this time of the year.

There is much guess-work, mostly incorrect, about peace

or war. If your Highness wishes to attempt it yourself, I will give you all the facts on which each one forms his opinion.

General Lauriston was sent a few days ago to the Russian Army. He had a very long conversation with General Koutougov in the course of which he painted so eloquent a picture of the evils that threatened Russia, that the Russian General could not restrain his tears and displayed a great desire for peace.

On the Ambassador's return, a suspension of arms was announced, but did not take place. Nevertheless, it appears that the Chief of Staff of the Army has been sent to the Emperor Alexander with certain proposals.

Some go so far even as to give in detail every word our Emperor wrote to him.

"In spite of the causes of resentment," they make him say, "I have not forgotten that Alexander was once my friend. It grieves me to witness the evils the mistaken policy of those around him has brought upon his country. In the very heart of his dominions; with a formidable army; about to receive a reinforcement of 30,000 men; certain of victory; able to go wheresoever I will; I offer him peace; but it is for the last time. Let him now play the Emperor. Then preliminaries will be short, and the peace durable, etc."

This is what is reported, but I am very far from saying it is likely.

All the Emperor's secrets are behind one door. The household knows nothing; and as for us, we are sure of nothing but the orders of the day. For instance, it is certain that the wounded are to be cleared out into Poland and that a number of regiments are to start for France; a fact

explained by some as meaning peace, by others as meaning war.

Very few of the inhabitants of Moscow have returned, so that we make a real colony here. We have abundance of unnecessary things and are in need of others more necessary. But, on the whole, we live moderately well.

Since the great fire not another house has been burnt. The Cossacks continue to worry our foragers, and to make communication with the smaller detachments difficult; but they are not so terrible as they were thought, and have not had the temerity to come into the town. Pillage has ceased; the men have gone back to their posts, and everything is in order. Every day some fresh store of flour, wine, or brandy is discovered. Yesterday, some of the regiments took up their quarters in villages whose inhabitants had stayed on. The Guard is ordered to lay up supplies for six months. Everything looks like a time of rest; still it is wise to keep one's portmanteaus packed.

It is a matter of great astonishment that the Prince's Staff has not yet received any honours. If this goes on it will be put down to some secret causes; so general an exclusion can't come from service reasons. There are twenty-five of us; who could possibly believe that not one deserves his cross or promotion? It would be about as reasonable as to say that the cross was awkward to wear! I would rather think we shall be seen to soon.

PS.—I had scarcely finished my letter when the order to depart was given out. The King of Naples has had a skirmish. It seems we are to fight once more. At the same moment the snow is falling for the first time. If we leave Moscow, it is more than probable that we shall never come back to it. But whither are we bound? We can't even

say with Leibnitz that the present is big with the future. Yesterday, as I have just told you, quarters were being taken up; provisions collected for six months; now, wine, flour, hay, oats, got together with such difficulty, will all have to be left behind. It's hard. But we are marching on the enemy; if he waits for us, all will be forgotten.

6.

Bourbon to M. de Celto, Bavarian Ambassador to Paris.

MOJAÏSK, *October* 15, 1812.

I think we shall leave the part of Russia we occupy in a month's time. I have orders to clear out the sick from here on the 20th for Smolensk; which is impossible, there being no means of transport. I get off all who can walk; but they'll clear me out. I am expecting three hundred carriages.

It is said that we shall go to take up our winter quarters in Ukraine, or Hungary, or Poland, or Lithuania. An Army Corps is already on its way on our right to march on Ukraine. The Army is formed in three lines—the right, the left, and ours.

Everything will be laid waste as we retire, and, in the Spring, the war will begin again at other points, for the Russians will not accept the conditions offered them.

Our mounted advance-guard, under the King of Naples, who has behaved like a hero during this whole campaign, is at Podol, about thirty leagues from Moscow.

The Russians have been constantly beaten.

The war made on us by the armed peasants led by their lords—killing and harassing our foragers, our travellers, our convoys—does us more harm than their army, for it deprives us of forage and food.

The Duc d'Abrantès is ordered to be in readiness to start with his 8th Corps, which through sickness, the bad weather and the want of victuals, is reduced to nothing.

I shall follow the Army wherever it goes and shall not go back to France till it returns there. I am not sorry to have come to this country and to have witnessed the extraordinary events of this astonishing campaign.

7.

Grouchy to his Wife.

Moscow, *October* 16, 1812.

The anxiety I and Alphonse caused you when you believed us lying dead on the field of battle; the wretched state of uncertainty in which you lived for two days, and lastly the wish you felt to join us here, touched me nearly and made me shed tears of tenderness. Let us hope that my health will soon permit me to join you or that I may still escape the terrible chances of war.

We are still in the same state of doubt on that second point; that is to say we expect to-morrow the return of Prince Volkonsky, who has been to Petersburg carrying the overtures made by General Lauriston. If, as I fear, these overtures will have no result, I imagine great operations will begin at once; and before the worst severity of the winter is here, a great battle will be fought to endeavour to drive the Russians further off and get sufficient food to enable the army to subsist.

I am always in a state of really annoying pain; I have hardly been able to walk for the last ten days; and I don't seem to get any better.

The Emperor is still here, and every day it is reported

that he is going; but I myself believe it won't be until after Prince Volkonsky returns. Then, as Moscow will be abandoned, I shall follow headquarters in a carriage till I feel better; and, if I don't get better, I shall ask leave to go back to France.

But I try to persuade myself that when the great cold comes I shall suffer less than I do now while the weather is damp and changeable.

God grant it may be so, or that we may have peace! The entire Army wishes for it as much as it needs it.

8.

Guilleminot to his Wife.

Moscow, *October* 16, 1812.

The present war kills more men by marches, privations and hardships than by the sword of the enemy. One must be made of steel to endure it.

I hope soon to be able to tell you good news.

It won't be long before we leave Moscow; the troops are filing off, it is supposed towards Kalouga, Toula, and Little Russia.

There's no more talk about the Turks.

These unruly Cossacks do great harm at our outposts and among our foragers.

9.

N. to Admiral Gauteaume at Paris.

Mosoow, *October* 16, 1812.

The Army, or rather Headquarters, are preparing to move, it is believed, towards Kalouga. I see, too, that Marshal Victor, from Smolensk, is making towards the same

point. The hour of departure is not yet fixed, but all the sick and wounded were sent off yesterday. Perrot is amongst the first; I hope he will be able to reach Vilna, the only place where he can find any assistance.

In any case, it would be impossible for us to winter here; we have no means of doing so. The destruction by fire of five-sixths of the town has deprived us of the greater part of the supplies we hoped to find here. The Cavalry, especially, now greatly reduced, gives cause for the greatest anxiety.

The temper of the Army is of the best; the Russians will not risk a second battle; it is probable they would abandon the ground they occupy if we pursued them.

The Guard is intact and superb. The Marines are under General Sorbier. The Emperor wishes them to have the Guard's batteries. All the Corps of the Guard have had favours heaped upon them except the Marines.

Permit me to tell you that however keenly you may wish to join His Majesty, after having made my observations with perfect impartiality and the greatest coolness, I have reason to believe that the fatigue and privations it would be impossible for you to avoid would not allow you to undertake this campaign.

10.

Castellane to his Father.

Moscow, *October* 17, 1812.

I wrote to you yesterday that General Lauriston had gone to the Russian outposts. He is expected back to-day or to-morrow.

The 18*th.*

General Lauriston came back last night; so I count on

taking the road to Kalouga to-morrow. I have no doubt we shall set off to-morrow.

It is said even that the Emperor is to sleep a league from the town to-night.[1]

II.

Gressot[2] *to his Wife in Paris.*

SKIRZEW, *October* 24, 1812.

Here we are still in our wretched quarters. So far the enemy has done nothing. No doubt they will pay us a visit to-morrow, Sunday, for three Sundays running they have attacked us—at Brzesc, Siematyce, at Biala.

That will mean the recrossing of the Bug and manœuvring on the right bank. This is a very scientific and instructive sort of war, waged in a way I did not know of, and which I am delighted to learn.

Since the 24th of last month, while manœuvring in front of an army twice as strong as ours, we have had but four engagements, in which the enemy was perpetually driven back, without being able to force on us the battle he desired; and in a month's march we have had to yield hardly more than twenty-five miles of ground. We are expecting reinforcements from all parts; may they arrive in time for us to return to Volhynia before winter!

[1] Cf. Castellane's *Journal*. On the 17th, he writes: "Lauriston comes back this evening from the outposts. The Russians won't listen to the Emperor's proposals of peace," and on the 18th: "The Old Guard has orders to start at once. The Emperor announces his intention of sleeping on the way to Kalouga. Every one expects to go."

[2] Gressot was Chief of Staff of the 7th Corps commanded by Reynier and had just been appointed—September 21—General of Brigade.

We are awaiting with great impatience news from Moscow. The Emperor was still there on the 9th of this month. I can't imagine why he stays so long. From what we hear, it seems negotiations are on foot. We get no newspapers or news. It would be interesting to hear what is going on in Spain. What are you doing in France? Are you sending us fresh troops, recruits—in a word, everything needful for making a second campaign?

12

N. to the Countess Krasinska, née Radziwill, at Paris.

MOJAÏSK, *October* 28, 1812.

We are on our way slowly to Smolensk, to take up our Winter-quarters. Poor Kobylinski, Marshal Davout's Aide-de-camp, has been hit by a bullet in the lower part of the stomach. Before he died, he was able to beg the Marshal to grant him a favour, and he asked him not to forget Poland and to speak of it often to the Emperor.[1]

13, 14.

Baraguay d' Hilliers to his Wife at Montigny, near Tillières.

ELNIA, *October* 31, 1812.

I have already told you, Dearest, of my arrival at Elnia where the troops under my command are collecting. Every day small companies of them appear, and all

[1] Kolylinski did not die of it. Cf. Lajeune, "He had come across me at Malo-Iaroslavets when a bullet had torn away his thigh. I found him at Vilna where he had been for two days. Four Jews were carrying him to the house of a noble of the town from the hospital where his wound had been dressed for the first time since he received it. This man of iron had fallen twenty times from the shoulders of the soldiers who carried him. For nearly fifty days he had suffered from cold, hunger and dysentery. He is now Governor of a fortress in the service of Russia."

together amount to no more than one good brigade in the matter of numbers; as to quality, that's another story. All these marching corps wear themselves out with running after the Grand Army without ever catching it up. So far they have not fired a shot, so that they are easily frightened by the Cossacks, who make war after the fashion of the Mamelukes, surrounding them while uttering loud cries.

Still, I hope soon to come up with the Emperor's Corps, and, in consequence, get rid of this unpleasant command which will never be either useful or honourable. I accepted it without a murmur and shall keep it on to the end. But it must be owned that the work that is given me to do here doesn't look like favour or even justice.

Since my last letter, everything has been quiet. The enemy has retired four leagues off and confined itself to keeping me under observation To-day, an old Corps has arrived, and to-morrow I shall employ it in extending my radius of action.

Peace does not seem likely just yet. There must needs be a second campaign; for the Russian Army is still strong in numbers, in spite of its losses, and knows the state of ours and that we are not in a condition to undertake a Winter Campaign. So it will be necessary very shortly to take up quarters for four or five months, so as to be near the storehouses on the Niemen.

I believe that is what the Emperor is working for at the present moment.

There's not a man in the Army that isn't longing for peace; and the officers longing much more for it; so, if the Emperor wishes to grant the most fervent prayers of his Army, he would have the gates of the Temple of Janus closed.

But I know him to be too much set on his own way to believe he will listen to them.

I am always hard-up for money. Three months' pay is owing to me as well as the repayment of my travelling expenses; and I haven't a penny of ready money. Yet I shall greatly need it to replace the losses in my stable.

II.

ELNIA, *November* 4, 1812.

We have had such important business on hand for some days, that I have not had time to write to you, my Dearest; and as I leave to-night for Smolensk, which the Grand Army is to reach from the other side, I don't know when I shall be able to write to you, or where I shall be.

I have reason to believe that the Corps I command, made up of reinforcements for the regiments composing the principal corps, will be broken up as soon as they meet. So I shall go elsewhere.

I've had to fight every day—luckily without damage. But I don't want to wait the coming of the Russians, which will certainly take place in a few days. I should not shine with my recruits. I shall think myself lucky when I can get rid of the burden entrusted to me. When a man is a veteran he wants experienced men under him.

There is no sign of peace, the Russians manœuvred skilfully, and the Emperor is hurrying to save his rear and the storehouses which are said to be in great danger.

The weather is fine, though all the rivers are frozen hard enough to bear skaters. There is not a bit of snow on the ground, and we bivouac as if it were warm. I don't know when the weather will be severe enough to put an end

to hostilities; the Russians themselves are astonished at the kind of weather we are having.

We lead an advance-guard life; sleeping on straw; up a couple of hours before dawn; often on horseback three parts of the day; never taking off our boots; wakened twenty times in the night; living poorly, no wine; nothing but rye-bread to eat and very bad water to drink; a man must be very strong to endure it, and I don't wonder at the number of sick in the Army. This diet and the climate are more dangerous enemies than the Russians.

If you only knew how often I think of you; how I regret you; how I long for you! Still it is for you, and you alone, I sacrifice my tastes, my rest, my happiness, and my health. If it had not been for you, I should long ago have given up my profession, satisfied and more than satisfied with a moderate fortune. Most certainly I don't blame you for it; I owe you all such sacrifices; the very thought of making them for you keeps me up in times of lukewarmness, disgust and weariness.

But still there is a limit to all things, and after this campaign, I think I shall have reached it.[1]

Queen Hortense to Prince Eugène.

SAINT-LEU, *November* 13, 1812.

It is a very long time since I had any news of you. I hope you are well, but I should like to feel sure of it.

By now you must know of the doings in Paris. Every

[1] It is known that the poor wretch was about to come to grief. He allowed General Augereau's Brigade to be taken under his very eyes; such are Napoleon's own words; he was deprived of his post, sent back to his estates, and died of grief on his way, at Berlin, on January 6, 1813. Cf. our 1812 *Le Guerre de Russie, notes et documents*, i, p. 133, and iii, p. 329.

one is very anxious to know how the Emperor takes it. Though the police are laughed at, people are concerned about them and believe that the Emperor will not sacrifice men who are devoted to him.

I don't quote the jokes to you; to ridicule things is always harmful; and besides they are very laboured.

The last Bulletin caused alarm. We *clever folk* believe you are preparing for a very wise retrograde movement; but the gossip has made many people think that perhaps the Emperor is dead. Everybody is inquiring about him, and though one doesn't believe it, still it makes those who are not in reach of news a little anxious.

As for me, I repeat what the Empress told me: that the Emperor had written to her that he hoped to see her soon.

If that takes place here, it will make us very happy; but if he makes her go to Warsaw, we shall have a frightfully dull winter.

In spite of my poor health, they talk already of my receiving. If that is the Emperor's pleasure, of course I shall do it; but I am putting it off as long as possible to be quite sure it is, and to rest myself.

If you find a proper moment to give my respects to the Emperor, it will be kind of you.

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