

MINUTES OF A CONVERSATION

WITH

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE,

DURING HIS RESIDENCE AT ELBA, IN JANUARY, 1815.

with Mr. Williams

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In the year 1815, it was my good fortune, in company with a friend with whom I was travelling, to be admitted to an interview with the Emperor Napoleon, at Elba. A detailed account of what passed was written to my brother, then a Major-General on the Staff in England, and by him shewn to Lord Liverpool and several of His Majesty's Ministers, some short time before the account of the news of Napoleon's escape reached them. After his death, knowing how interesting every authentic particular relating to him must be to the public, at the suggestion of some friends I was induced to print that, which up to this period had only been seen in manuscript : the little work then published having been long out of print, I have now had a few copies struck off for private distribution.

I. H. VIVIAN.

St. James's Place, London,
March 21st, 1839.

EXTRACTS, &c.

I REACHED Leghorn, in company with my friend and travelling companion, Mr. W., on the evening of the 16th January 1815, with the intention of embarking from that place for the Island of Elba, in the expectation of seeing, and, if possible, of conversing with perhaps the most extraordinary man that ever ruled an empire. Immediately on our arrival we proceeded to make inquiries respecting our proposed excursion, when we learned that Colonel (afterwards Sir Neill) Campbell, who was appointed by the British Government to accompany Napoleon to Elba, had landed from thence a few hours before, and had immediately set off for Florence. Having forwarded to Colonel Campbell the letters of introduction to him which we had received from a mutual friend at Vienna, whilst awaiting his reply we fortunately became acquainted with Captain Adye, commander of the Partridge sloop of war, then in attendance on Colonel Campbell; who, on being informed of the disappointment we had experienced in the departure of the Colonel from Elba, kindly offered to convey us to the Island. We gladly accepted of this proposal, and on the 20th, four days after our arrival at Leghorn, we embarked on board the Partridge. We sailed at noon on the 21st, and early on the morning of the

22nd arrived in the bay of Porto Ferrajo. That part in which we anchored is completely landlocked;—on the inner side of a steep and rocky neck of land that projects into it and covers it from the sea, is situated the town of Porto Ferrajo; the houses of which rising like an amphitheatre, from the shore towards the summit, have a picturesque appearance. On the top of the ridge, the one side of which commands a view of the town, whilst the other looks towards the sea, stands the building which was converted into a habitation for Napoleon. It was composed of a centre and two wings;—the latter, I understood, had formerly been detached, and were occupied by the officers of the engineers stationed on the island; but after Napoleon's arrival they were connected by the centre which consisted of two floors. The ground floor was divided into several small apartments; over these, one large room, with windows on each side, occupied the entire length and breadth of the edifice. A little below the residence of the exiled Emperor, and towards the point of the promontory, is a fort with a battery which commands the entrance to the harbour;—near to this is a lighthouse. On the crown of the hill, above the residence, stands the citadel, which is of considerable extent. The rocks below it, fronting the sea, are so steep as to render the ascent on that side impracticable, and a kind of wet ditch or canal had been cut across a flat piece of ground which lies between the Citadel

hill and the Island, by which this rocky promontory was insulated, and the approach on the land side was rendered exceedingly difficult. In the upper part of the town, immediately below the citadel, are the barracks, in which the guards that accompanied Napoleon were stationed.

We landed at the mole under the town, in which there are several fathoms of water. At the entrance is the health office, in front of which all vessels are obliged to pass, and where the papers of strangers are examined; but as we came from the ship, we were not subjected to any such scrutiny. It was, however, necessary to shew ourselves at the police-office, and deliver up our passports. In the mole were a number of vessels, consisting chiefly of feluccas and other coasters which lay there wind-bound. The gun-brig of Napoleon particularly attracted our attention; she carried 18 guns, and displayed a white flag crossed diagonally by a red bar, on which were embroidered three golden bees.

Immediately on leaving the police-office, we proceeded to the residence of Count Bertrand, who was not at home; we therefore left our cards, and proceeded to call on General Drouot, the Governor of the Island. The General being also absent, we continued our stroll about the town, the weather being beautifully fine.—Count Bertrand still retained the title of Grand Mareschal, and the etiquette of Imperial state was scrupulously observed, as it had been at the Thuilleries. It being Sunday,

we observed different officers of the household, in full dress, repairing to the residence of Napoleon, in order to attend the levee, which, according to established custom, he continued to hold on that day.—We did not obtain a sight of *l'Empereur* this day; but spent our time agreeably enough, lounging about the town, and viewing his stables and stud. The stables were situated near the mole, close to the water's edge, and contained, altogether, between 70 and 80 horses. Bonaparte's favourite saddle horses were, a grey charger which had been presented to him by the Emperor of Russia, and a chesnut, called *le Roitelet*, which the groom informed us he generally rode in action; the animal being so steady that his rider could safely throw the bridle on his neck, whilst he was occupied in giving directions, examining plans, &c. This horse was slightly wounded at Arcis Sur Aube.

The next day, 23d of January, we employed in visiting the celebrated Iron Mines, situated at Rio, on the eastern coast of the Island.

On the morning of the 24th, we visited the town, and proceeded to the house of General Bertrand, in order to request an introduction to the Emperor. The Count received us most courteously, kindly undertook to make the arrangements for the desired interview, and invited us to dine with him that day, which we did. As Madame Bertrand was indisposed, she did not appear at table, and the party consisted only of the Count, his two in-

teresting children, and ourselves.—Count Bertrand was lodged in the Hotel de Ville, which is situated in the Piazza, or square, of the town; but in apartments of a most miserable, barrack-like description. We ascended to the sitting-room by three unconnected flights of stone steps; the furniture consisted of about half a dozen chairs, a couple of tables, and a mattress laid on chairs, by way of sofa, for the accommodation of Madame Bertrand:—the floor was of brick, the walls were bare, and the windows were without curtains. The dining apartment was very small, and the furniture pretty much of the same description as that in the sitting-room. How different, as Madame Bertrand observed to me, from the apartments they had occupied in the Thuilleries.—Nothing could exceed the kindness and attention which we experienced from the Count and Countess, during our stay on the Island; which, owing to contrary winds and other causes, was protracted much beyond what we anticipated. At his residence we found a welcome at all hours; he furnished us with books; presented us with tickets for the balls given at the theatre; procured for us an introduction to Napoleon, his mother, and sister, and, in short, did all in his power to render our stay agreeable. It was quite delightful to see him with his children;—the eldest, called Napoleon, was born a few days before the battle of Wagram; the second was a remarkably fine little girl. Count Bertrand has made the greatest sacrifices in order

to follow the fortunes of his master, and has indeed proved himself a faithful and firmly attached friend. He bears universally a good character;—in France, I heard him spoken of with respect; at Vienna, he was entrusted with the destruction of the fortifications, and he executed the task in a manner as little injurious to the inhabitants as possible; attending, as far as he could, to their representations, and sparing water-courses, drains, &c. At Trieste, likewise, where he was Governor, he was well spoken of. Madame Bertrand is a fine woman, of pleasing manners; she is connected with the Irish family of Dillon, and our conversation with her was carried on both in French and English; the two languages being frequently used in the same sentence. She was very minute in her inquiries respecting the Empress Maria Louisa and the young Prince, whom we had seen at Vienna.—The Count understood English sufficiently to read it, and apprehend the meaning of a person speaking it, though unable to converse in it himself.—In the evening we attended a *Bal masqué* at the Theatre, which had been fitted up by order of Bonaparte, for the amusement of the Officers of his guard and his attendants; and which had been opened on the name-day of his sister Pauline;—the building was formerly the church of a convent, but had afterwards been used as an hospital.

On the morning of the 26th, we received a note from Count Bertrand, informing us that the Em-

peror would see us on the following day. In the course of this day, we were gratified with a sight of this extraordinary personage. Whilst we were lounging near the stables, a carriage drove up, from which Bonaparte and Bertrand alighted and walked into the stables, where they remained a short time; on their return, several of the horses were led out, and examined by Napoleon. The inspection over, they entered the carriage, and proceeded along the bay, round the edge of which a road was then forming to a new country residence, called St. Martin, which had been purchased by Bonaparte after his arrival on the island. It stands on the side of a hill, at the head of a small valley, looking towards the bay, and is between three and four miles from the town. In his drives at Elba, Napoleon was always accompanied by Count Bertrand or General Drouot;—the attendant constantly remained uncovered, until they were clear of the town.—The carriage was accompanied by an escort of four or five lancers, and about the same number of officers.

In the evening, we went to an entertainment at the theatre, which was then open every night, it being the time of Carnival. We found the French officers and the inhabitants whom we met there remarkably civil and polite, and we derived great pleasure from conversing with the former, on various subjects connected with the Russian and other campaigns in which they had served.

The evening of the 26th being appointed for our presentation to the Emperor, we attired ourselves in our Local Militia uniform, and having taken coffee with Count Bertrand, at a little after eight o'clock we proceeded from his apartments to the Imperial residence, amidst a flood of rain. From the entrance, which was situated in the left wing, we passed into an anti-chamber containing two windows, and the walls of which were hung with a number of good prints. Here we remained whilst the Count went to announce our arrival, and we were shortly after ushered into the presence of Napoleon, without any form or ceremony whatever. We found him standing by the fire, at the further end of a room adjoining the anti-chamber, and into which he had come, on being informed of our arrival. This room was about the size of that we had left, and was fitted up with old yellow furniture, brought, as we understood, from the palace of his sister, at Piombino. On our entrance, he advanced towards us, and we took our station with our backs against a table that stood between the windows. Whilst he was advancing he began the conversation :*—

* The notes of this conversation were written immediately after it had taken place, and, therefore, their accuracy may be entirely relied on. Where the exact expressions used by Napoleon, on any topic that appeared particularly interesting, were accurately remembered, they are given in French. In the first part of the conversation, the form of the dialogue is preserved, which will serve to give a tolerably correct notion of Bonaparte's mode of conveying his ideas.

“ Quel uniforme est celui que vous portez ? ” —
 “ Celui de la Milice. ”

“ De quel conté ? ” — “ De Cornouailles. ”

“ C'est un pays bien montagneux ? ” — “ Oui, assez. ”

“ De quelle hauteur sont les montagnes, comme celles-ci ? ” — “ Elles sont plus hautes, d'une forme différente, et moins isolées. ”

“ Sont-elles aussi hautes que celles, de la Principauté de Galles ? ” — “ Pas tout-à-fait. ”

“ Combien de toises de hauteur ont-elles ; 6 à 800 toises ? ” — “ Elles ne sont pas si hautes ; peut-être de 3 à 400 toises. ”

“ Quelle est la capitale de Cornouailles ? ” —
 “ Truro est une des villes principales. ”

“ Comment ! Truro, tout pres de Falmouth. ”

“ Combien de temps par an étiez-vous assemblés ? ” — “ Un mois chaque année. ”

“ Qui vous payoit — Le Gouvernement ? ” — “ Oui, le Gouvernement nous payoit, mais le Prince Régent nous habilloit. ”

“ Quel rang avez-vous — Colonel ? ” — “ Non — Major. ”

“ Ah ! Major. ” — “ Nous sommes la Milice des Mineurs de Cornouailles. ”

“ Ah ! il y a des mines d'étain dans ce pays là ? ” — “ Oui, et aussi de cuivre. ”

“ Le Prince Régent a-t-il des droits sur les mines ? ” — “ Oui, sur l'étain, mais non pas sur le cuivre. ”

“ Combien reçoit-il par an de ces droits ? ” — “ De neuf à dix mille livres sterling. ”

Then turning to my friend Mr. W. he said :

“ Et vous ? ” — “ Je suis aussi de la Milice. ”

“ De quel conté ? ” — “ De Kent. ”

“ Ah ! nous étions voisins. ”

He then addressed himself to me, and asked respecting the route I had taken, and when I had left England ? — I replied that I had left England nearly twelve months before ; that I had passed by Paris and Bourdeaux, to Thoulouse, in order to visit a brother, a General Officer, who had been severely wounded there. He made no remark upon this, but observed : —

“ Then you passed by the Garonne and Montauban ; a very pretty little town, with excellent wine. — You drink a good deal in England. ” — (*Vous buvez beaucoup en Angleterre.*)

He had before, I understood, made the same observation to some other English travellers, who had been introduced to him. — I told him, that formerly much more had been drunk in England, than at present : and that the custom of sitting very long after dinner had, in a great measure, been done away ; but that as we still sat after the ladies had left the table, we had more time and greater inducement to drink, than other nations.

“ Where did you cross the Rhone — at Lyons ? ” —

“ No, at Avignon. ”

“Ah! you passed then the Pont de Gard.—Is the bridge at Avignon finished?”—“No, over one branch of the river only.”

“Ah! but you passed over the Durance, where I had made a long wooden bridge.—You visited Nice?”—“Yes.”

“Did you go to Genoa?”—“No, I wished to do so, but the wind was not favourable.”

“The road I was making is not yet finished, is it?”*—“No,—we crossed the Maritime Alps, to Turin.”

“Ah! by the *Col de Tende*?”—“Yes,—a very bad passage, and very badly kept.”

“That is not of my making; it was made by the King of Sardinia.—I passed it twenty-five years ago; but it is only over the *Col de Tende*, that it is so bad.—I did a little to the excavation, and had some idea of making a good road over it, but I did not care much about it.—I was desirous of reigning also over Italy.—(*Comme je voulais dominer aussi sur l'Italie.*)—My principal object was to connect that country with France, as much as possible, by means of good roads on the side of Mont Cenis and the Simplon.”

I told him that I had passed the Simplon, and complimented him on the greatness of the undertaking, and the excellence of the execution;—upon which he observed, that there was a grand road he had been making from Wesel to Hamburg, not yet

* He had been making a road by the coast, from Nice to Genoa.

finished ; which had cost a considerable sum of money.—I remarked that we, travellers, at every step recognized his works.—With this observation he appeared to be pleased.—He then asked, if the road over the Simplon was kept in good repair.—I told him, that as yet, it was in good order ; but that it was feared it would be neglected ; that the Vallais and neighbouring countries could not support the expense of maintaining it. He said :—

“ That must be done by a toll, which would answer very well.”

He asked, if I had passed by Milan—“ a fine city ”—and then enquired particularly if the bridges he had laid out between Turin and Milan, were finished.—I told him that the bridge over the Tessino was not completed, but that the pillars were all above water.

“ Those over the Sesia, at Vercelli, and over the Dora, are they finished ? ”—“ Yes.”

From the subject of roads he touched on that of canals—and asked if the canal from Pavia to Milan was finished.—I replied that I believed not ; and I asked him if he had not a project of uniting the Rhine and the Danube.—He replied that it was very easy to do so ; that it was an affair only of twenty millions of francs ; that he had united the Rhine and the Rhone ; the German ocean and the Mediterranean.—On his asking from whence I last came, and my answering from Vienna, he exclaimed :—

“ A poor little city (*une pauvre petite ville*) with large suburbs, unpaved, and the ramparts?—(*et les ramparts?*)”

I told him they were precisely in the situation in which he had left them.—He said:—

“ Yes, Bertrand performed that kind office for them very effectually.”

I observed, that at Frankfort and at Manheim, where he had demolished the fortifications, they were laid out with taste.—“ Yes,” said he, “ in fine promenades.” (*Oui des belles promenades.*)

His next subject was politics;—he asked me how Congress went on.—I told him that there were plenty of fetes, but that little progress was said to be made in business; and I mentioned to him the bon mot of the Prince de Ligne, who said:—“*Le Congrès, dance mais ne marche pas*”—at which he smiled. I added, that Poland was understood to be a stumbling-block; that it was said the Emperor of Russia wanted to form a kingdom of it, but that the other powers, it was supposed, feared Russia’s becoming too formidable. He remarked that it was a power that went on increasing; a very rising power. He then said that the treaty of peace between himself and the Allies, should have been signed at Frankfort; separating Germany entirely from France, and taking Holland, Italy, and Spain from him; but that he never could have consented to leave France less in territory, than it was when he ascended the throne.—I asked him why he did

not make peace at Dresden, when those terms were offered to him ;—he said that the Allies were not sincere,* and that besides *les choses* at that time were different ; that had peace been then made, England would have been saved some thousands of men and much money ; that he considered it very bad policy of England to appropriate Belgium to herself ; that it would be a constant source of expense, and would probably draw her into a war ; for that any other continental power would be sure of France as an ally, by offering Belgium as a bribe. “Supposing,” said he, “for instance, Russia were to say to France, ‘do you take Belgium, and let me have Poland.’—In short,” added he, “England cannot maintain herself as a power of the first rank on the Continent ;—Belgium must be lost on the first *coup de canon*. The English Government should have covered and fortified Holland, but Antwerp is the object ; for a battle fought and lost before Brussels, which is close to the gates of Paris, would open the road to Holland.† England, with her immense colonies, instead of being obliged to keep up a large army to cover Belgium, should withdraw

* A French officer, to whom I put the same question, said, that there were some articles besides those which were generally understood to have been proposed.

† It is remarkable, that within five months from the time of this conversation, the battle of Waterloo was fought, and the road to Paris, not that to Holland, opened.—The expression of this opinion, at this time, by Bonaparte, and his subsequent conduct in conformity with it, proves, clearly, the sincerity with which he was speaking.

within her Island, and act when and where she chose." He spoke of the Dutch troops, and appeared to have but a poor opinion of them;—their marine, he said, was much reduced.—He expressed himself with much contempt of the Austrian soldiers, who "would not fight without a belly full."—Referring to the campaign in France, he said that he should have beaten the Allies, had he not been betrayed; for that the peasants were taking arms in their rear. I asked him by whom he had been betrayed; whether by Talleyrand, whom I had heard accused.—He answered so as to give me to understand he had been a party; but he principally blamed Marmont and Augereau. The latter, he told me, had a fine army, superior to the Austrians, and was to have joined him (Bonaparte) in his last movement; but that he had made his terms with the Allies a fortnight before, and that he had narrowly escaped being massacred by his soldiers for his conduct.—I observed to him, that when I had passed through Paris, I had heard there was an opinion amongst the lower orders, that he and Paris had been sold—" *Que l'Empereur et Paris étoient vendus.*"

Blücher, he said, was a brave man, but not a great general; and added, that he had lost two armies. The Prussians had fought well.—Of Schwartzberg, as an officer, he expressed himself favourably.—Upon my asking him if he did not consider the Duke of Wellington a good general; he replied,

“ *Oui.* ”—I was not satisfied with this, but repeated the question in stronger terms ; asking if he was not a very good—an excellent general. He answered, “ *Oui, oui!* ” with emphasis, but not another word. —Touching on the Corunna campaign, he said, Moore was a good general, and had saved that army. The Spaniards, as soldiers, he held very cheap. In the mountains they had done something, their character was obstinacy (*opiniâtreté*)—they wanted valour. I mentioned the gallant defence they had made at Saragossa. This, he said, was *opiniâtreté* ; —they were 50,000 men within the walls, attacked by 15,000. I observed that, at least, the Portuguese had proved themselves very good troops. This he admitted. “ But then,” added he, “ they were officered by British, and of this the national pride (*Fierté*) of the Spaniards would not admit ;—besides, the Spaniards are bigots in religion, and you know that you are heretics ” (*vous savez que vous êtes des hérétiques,*) said he, laughing. The French soldiers, he asserted, were *peu constans* ; that they wanted *tenacité* ; that if they had a little more *tenacité*, any thing might be done with them ;—that Cæsar had well defined their character in that respect, and that it had not changed ;* that he (Bonaparte) knew

* The passage in Cæsar that is here referred to is doubtless that in Book 3. Sec. 20, of Clark's Edition. “ *Nam ut ad bella suscipienda Gallorum alacer et promptus est animus, sic mollis ac minime resistens ad calamitates preferendas mens eorum est.* ”

Livy's trait of the French soldier is equally remarkable, B. 10.

it well, and had acted upon it in the campaign in France: that the soldiers could not bear such a check (*Secousse*).—He enquired if the English soldiers, when drunk, were not ungovernable; observing that the French, at such times, were loving (*doux et tendres*).

Speaking of Switzerland, he said there appeared much to be settled in that country; that he had given them a constitution which it should seem they wished to change. I remarked that the Canton of Berne wanted to recover what had been separated from it.—“Yes,” replied he, “the large to domineer over the small; there is no yoke (*joug*) so severe as that of a people.”—The fate of Italy he lamented much, divided as it was into small states. Italy, he said, should have been preserved as a Kingdom. I agreed with him entirely in regretting the fate of Italy, but asked, who was to be king, and who was to nominate. “Oh! it matters little,” said he, “who it is—some Italian—or by whom appointed;” and he instanced Murat.* “A sovereign,” added he, “is made for his people, and

Ch. 28. “Gallorum quidem etiam corpora intolerantissima laboris atque æstus fluere; primaque eorum prælia plusquam virorum, postrema minus quam fœminarum esse.”

* By his instancing the case of Murat, and what followed, I understood he meant to say, that Murat was a proof, that Kings so appointed would care but little for those by whom they were appointed, when their interest required another line of conduct; and that Murat, although owing every thing to him, had not hesitated to join his enemies.

not a people for their sovereign."—The Italians, he observed, were a people of strong passions (*passionés*); and had a great deal of excellent stuff (*étouffe*) in them as soldiers,—much of the old Roman left.—He spoke of the bad policy of the Austrian cabinet towards Italy, and that of the Austrian officers towards the inhabitants, in not associating with them, as the French had done.—He added, that he had done much to reform the Italian people; that he had found them effeminate, and living for the women and with them, all day long;—that it was a fine country. Upon this I remarked, that by transporting to Paris the best of the paintings, &c. he had taken considerably from the interest of Italy. To this he made no reply, but spoke of Bologna* as a *bonne et jolie ville*.—In speaking, I think, of Turin, he mentioned a fine street called *via Napoleon*; he knew not what they called it now.

To the Pope, as the head of the church and as a sovereign, he seemed to have a great aversion; he said that he was always sacrificing his conscience to some miserable little piece of policy; that the existence of a Pope was a great misfortune for Europe (*un grand malheur pour l'Europe*); that we were very much indebted to our King Henry VIII., for getting rid of him; that he had attempted to do

* I had heard that from another English party admitted to an audience, he had enquired after his *bonne ville de Bologna*, as if he had a particular attachment to it.

the same, but could not succeed ; that the government of priests was detestable, and that every sovereign should be at the head of his own church, as in England, Prussia, &c. ; that, as a man, the Pope was a very good sort of person (*un bien bon homme*); that he had entertained him very well at Fontainebleau, and made him very comfortable there; that he (the Pope) was ignorant in the extreme ; and that amongst all his Cardinals (for he had seen them all at Paris), there was not one he would allow to fill a fourth rank in his (Bonaparte's) council. Ecclesiastical States, he added, should on no account be allowed ;—the empire of the church was not of this world.

Speaking of the Americans, he said, they wanted a ten years' war to make them a nation ; that at present they had no noblesse, which they would acquire by a war ; that they were now a nation of merchants (*une nation de marchands*), as was shewn in the case of the sale of Jefferson's library to the highest bidder ;* that had we (the English) made peace with them before, we should have gone to Congress with more weight ; that America had carried on the war with spirit after France had fallen (*après que la France eut succombé*), and that the war, after all, was about nothing—a few feet more or less of lake. He then said something of a great project he had with respect to Mexico, of

* I did not understand the allusion, but he laughed when he made the observation.

which I could not catch the meaning; and observed, that we should one day or other lose Canada; adding—"Of what great consequence is it to England, with her numerous colonies." He said, that when America became more powerful, she would probably rival us in our marine; that he had made the attempt to do this, but had failed. With respect to the Right of Search, which I called a droit, he said it was no droit, but a mere *théorie*; that when we were very strong we should exercise it, but if, on the contrary, we had Russia, Sweden, and Denmark against us, we probably should not insist on it. He gave it as his opinion, that England and France should be allied. On my signifying, by a shake of my head, the improbability of such an event, he said; "Why not?—the world is large enough—France does not want to meddle too much with commerce. There was a man, Fox, who could have effected it, but unfortunately he is dead." (*Mais pourquoi pas, le monde est assez grand—La France n'a pas besoin de se mêler trop du commerce. Il y avoit un homme, Fox, qui auroit pu le faire mais malheureusement il est mort.*) He then asked where we were going from Elba, and on my answering, "To Rome and Naples," he replied, "Ah! then you will see there a magnificent Lazarone;"* adding, "From Naples, I suppose, you return to England by sea." Upon my saying that it was my intention to return by Italy and the Mont Cenis, as I had seen all the other Passes

* Alluding to Murat.

of the Alps, having come from Vienna by the Tyrol, he observed, "No, there is still that over the Julian Alps." On saying this, he made us a low bow, wished us a *trés bon voyage*, and retired.

We found Count Bertrand waiting for us in the anti-room, who, looking at his watch, exclaimed, "*Parbleu!* you have had a long audience."—Upon which I could not help expressing how agreeably it had passed; and I can truly say that I never passed an hour, or indeed an hour and quarter—for our interview lasted from half-past eight o'clock until a quarter before ten more agreeably. We stood during the whole time, I may say almost *nez à nez*; for I had my back against the table, and he had advanced close to me, looking full in my face.—After the first few minutes I felt most perfectly at my ease, and the conversation never flagged;—his strain and manner were as familiar and good-natured as possible; so very much so, that I felt no hesitation whatever in putting any question to him.—He had on a green coat, cut off in front, faced with the same colour, and trimmed with red at the skirts; and wore the stars of two orders.—Under his left arm he held his hat, and in his hand a plain snuff-box, from which he every now and then took a pinch; but as he occasionally sneezed, it appeared to me that he was not addicted to snuff-taking. His hair was without powder, and quite straight;—his shape, inclined to corpulence.

Bonaparte's manner was so unreserved, and he communicated his ideas with so much apparent candour, that, after the interview, I regretted much it had not occurred to me to touch upon a point on which there has always existed much diversity of opinion ;—whether he had ever seriously contemplated the invasion of England. However, I took an opportunity on the following day of introducing the subject to Count Bertrand, during a conversation I had with him.—He reasoned for a considerable time, as if it had really been Bonaparte's intention to make the attempt ;—the Emperor, he said, had forty sail of the line collected in the Mediterranean and at Cadiz ; it was intended that the ships in these different ports should form a junction, and then proceed to the Channel, where the fleet would have been joined by ten sail of the line kept in readiness for that purpose. This force, he remarked, would probably have given them the command of the Channel for a fortnight or three weeks, which time would, it was calculated, have elapsed before Nelson could have discovered their real destination, and reached the scene of action. When the combined fleet had once obtained the command of the Channel, a force of 100,000 men, or more, could have been assembled on the French coast in forty-eight hours, and might have been passed over before the arrival of the British fleet. The invading army, it was conceived, would have been sufficiently strong to overpower any opposition

that could have been made to its progress before it had reached London, and taken possession of the seat of Government. I replied, that supposing all these plans had succeeded according to their wishes, their army must inevitably have been destroyed, as they could not have obtained reinforcements.—He observed, that they could have kept possession of some small ports, and could have smuggled men over ;—for as the run is so short, this could not have been wholly prevented by any precautions on the part of the English.—I said, that the opinion in England was, that the threat of an invasion was a mere pretext for bringing a large force together in order to be prepared to pounce upon one or other of the Continental Powers, as in fact the Emperor had done, in the case of Austria.—He replied, “ *Cela est possible.* ”—Here the conversation ended. My own opinion is, that Bonaparte at first seriously contemplated the invasion of this country ; but that afterwards he became better informed as to the little probability there was of success. Had circumstances proved favourable, at an early period, to the project of his fleet obtaining a temporary superiority in the Channel, the attempt would probably have been made. Some of the officers of the Imperial Guard, with whom I conversed at Elba, were decidedly of opinion that, had the invasion of England been attempted, the enterprise would have failed.

At one time, in conversation with Bertrand, I

expostulated on the injustice of Napoleon's conduct towards the English who were in France when he last resolved to go to war with Great Britain, and whom he detained as soon as war was declared, in violation of the usage of civilized nations. The Count said, that my countrymen had been detained as a measure of retaliation for the capture of French vessels by the English, immediately on the issuing of the declaration of war against France, without allowing fixed periods for the return of vessels from different parts of the world;—in place of which, we seized all we could lay hands upon. The probability is that Bonaparte ordered the detention of the English under the influence of a temporary irritation, and that he was afterwards unwilling to revoke the mandate he had issued.

With respect to the most material of the charges that have been urged against Bonaparte, I understood from Captain Adye, who had opportunities of conversing with travellers that had been introduced to the ex-Emperor prior to my arrival, that he had given the following explanations respecting the points on which he has been most strongly censured,—putting the Turkish prisoners to death, and poisoning his own soldiers in Egypt; the seizure and execution of the Duke d'Enghien, and the case of Captain Wright:—

The Turks who were shot by his order, he said, had been taken prisoners on a former occasion, and had been liberated, on their parole, not to serve

against the French, unless they were exchanged. Having, in violation of this engagement, been subsequently taken in arms, they were subject to military execution by the laws of war ; but that he should not have put them to death, had he not been in absolute want of bread for the use of the army, and therefore wholly unable to provide for so many additional mouths. The expressions Bonaparte used on this occasion, as repeated to me, were,—
“ Il n’y avoit point de pain ; ou les Turcs ou les François devoient se briser contre la Muraille, je ne balançai pas.” With regard to poisoning his own soldiers, he said, that it had never been intended to treat more than two or three in that manner ; that these men were ill of the plague, which rendered their removal dangerous to the whole army, and their recovery almost hopeless, and that he had recommended to the surgeon to free them from their miseries by administering opium in their food. With this recommendation the surgeon refused to comply, and they were consequently left behind, and were butchered by the Turks who followed the French army. Respecting the execution, or rather, the atrocious murder (for I cannot apply any milder term) of the Duc d’Enghien, I was informed he had observed, that the Duke was the most restless of all the members of his family ; that he was a conspirator against the acknowledged government of his country, and that he had been tried by a regular military tribunal, found guilty,

and shot,—not during the night, or at an early hour in the morning, as had been stated, but at noon-day. When the case of the unfortunate Captain Wright was mentioned to him, he is said to have replied, that he had no recollection of him: but that he thought he had heard of an Englishman who had made away with himself in prison. I understood that whilst conversing on these subjects, Bonaparte had observed, that it had frequently been proposed to him to take off the Bourbons by assassination, and that even smugglers had been found who were ready to undertake this atrocious project; but that he had always spurned the idea. This fact was also stated to me by Count Bertrand; who observed, that it had been asserted the Emperor had always been surrounded by his guards, in order to secure him from personal violence; but that directly the contrary was the fact. The Emperor, he said, had never adopted any such precautions; he (Count Bertrand) had had the command of the guard at the Thuilleries, and, including the gardens, the duty was performed by (as well as I recollect) 117 men.

With respect to the habits of Napoleon, I heard, in the course of conversation, that he dined at six or seven o'clock; went to bed early, and generally rose in the middle of the night and read for three or four hours, after which he again lay down, and rose about eight or nine o'clock. He slept little, and in the summer suffered much from heat.

I remarked to Madame Bertrand that I had heard the Emperor was writing the history of his own life. She replied, that it was not so, and that he amused himself with reading.

I understood that Bonaparte was distressed for money, as the pension, for the payment of which the Allied Powers had pledged themselves, had been withheld by the French Government, who had engaged to remit it every six months.—It was said that he had declared he never would apply for it; but I was informed that Madame Mère (his mother) was loud in her complaints respecting the non-payment of the allowance which she was to receive. Madame Bertrand assured me that the Emperor had not a farthing in the English funds, or in those of any foreign country; though the contrary had been so confidently reported; that she fully believed he had never entertained the idea of making such an investment, as in fact, he had never conceived it possible that he should lose his throne. She also stated, that he had brought scarcely any thing with him from France, having left behind him his jewels and his private property, observing, that in losing the Empire (*en perdant l'Empire*) he had lost every thing:—and that the service of plate he had with him was merely that which he had used in his campaigns, and in travelling.

It is somewhat singular that both the Count

and the Countess Bertrand had an idea, at the time I was at Elba, that the Emperor was to be removed to St. Helena; and they were very anxious in their enquiries respecting the proceedings of the Congress then sitting at Vienna. From the events that have since taken place, it should really seem that such a plan was then in agitation, although, as I told Madame Bertrand, it was not even whispered at Vienna. In case his removal to St. Helena had, at that time, been really intended, it was believed that Napoleon would have resisted it to the utmost, and submitted only to force. He certainly was occupied in keeping up the forts at Elba; but resistance on his part would have been vain, had it been determined to carry the measure into execution; as the place might easily have been starved, and during the summer months, there is even a scarcity of water on the Island. The force he had at Elba consisted of about 600 of the Imperial Guard, who were fine old soldiers; some Corsicans, whom he had enlisted; about 120 Polish Lancers, and five or six Mamelukes. I confess I am induced to believe, that the fear of being sent to St. Helena, and the pecuniary difficulties under which he laboured, in a very great degree, occasioned his making that apparently almost hopeless, and certainly most desperate, but eventually, most successful attempt, to regain the throne of France, which

shortly afterwards astonished all Europe. I know that much has been said and written to shew, that it was a concerted measure, with the numerous, and, assuredly, very active friends he had in France; but I cannot satisfy myself that this was the case. On the contrary, I cannot but consider it as an attempt made without any general previous understanding with a party in France; although the possibility of it might have been contemplated by some few persons; but still, with a full conviction on the part of Napoleon, that the army would gladly embrace an opportunity of replacing him on the throne. The extraordinary and rapid march from Antibes to Paris, without the loss of a single life, was a circumstance so completely beyond all calculation, as to afford a decisive proof of the enthusiasm which so generally existed throughout France, in favour of Bonaparte. From this enthusiasm, which was scarcely to be created by any plot, together with the various observations I had an opportunity of making from a number of little circumstances and occurrences which took place whilst I was at Elba, as well as from what I afterwards learned at Paris, and in different parts of France, I am persuaded that although, on the part of Napoleon, the measure might have been contemplated, the moment at which it was to be undertaken was undecided, and that, undertaken almost in desperation, it succeeded solely

through the ardour excited amongst the French army and the people, by the re-appearance of him who had so often led them to victory.

An opinion prevailed on the continent, immediately after the escape of Bonaparte from Elba, that the British Government had connived at his departure; and in England I have heard that Colonel Campbell was censured for not having exercised a proper degree of vigilance, in observing the movements of Napoleon. Although this idea has been successfully refuted, both in and out of Parliament, I may observe, that nothing could be more absurd than to suppose that it was in Colonel Campbell's power to have prevented the escape of the Ex-Emperor. It is true that Colonel Campbell was not on the island at the time of Napoleon's departure; but it was by no means intended that he should have remained there constantly; and even if he had been on the island, he had no means of preventing the embarkation of the troops; he was possessed of no authority whatever; Bonaparte held the island in full sovereignty, having his army (composed of infantry, cavalry, and artillery), his navy, his treasury—he imposed taxes; in short, no monarch could be more absolute;—and to his credit be it related, that small as were his means, he in one particular instance shewed an example to other more powerful monarchs well worthy of imitation; he declared war with the African pirates, and forbade their entering his ports. As Sovereign

of Elba, he took possession of the Island of Pianosa, and intended to establish a colony there;—an attempt which had formerly been made, but which had failed, as the colony had been carried into slavery by the African marauders. This island, which had been used only for breeding horses, Napoleon meant to cultivate, in order to supply Elba with corn. It may be said, in reply to the foregoing observations, that we had a sloop of war on the station, to watch the movements of Bonaparte. This, however, was not exactly the case. The Partridge was stationed at Leghorn, not at Elba, and her cruising ground extended from Genoa to Civita Vecchia. Captain Adye himself expressed his regret to me that he could not run down with us to Civita Vecchia, (which was many leagues to the south of Elba, and consequently out of the line for intercepting any communication with France,) as Colonel Campbell might want to return. The French Government had also a squadron in that part of the Mediterranean, for the purpose, as was supposed, of preventing Bonaparte from obtaining recruits from Corsica. I saw this squadron off the island, during my stay at Porto Ferrajo;—it consisted of two frigates, two corvettes, and two brigs. I confess it appears to me that there was, in the first instance, a great mistake in selecting the Island of Elba as the residence of Napoleon, or rather, which I believe was the case, in allowing

him to have selected it; its position gave him a facility of communicating both with Italy and France, of which his character might have afforded certain assurance he would have taken advantage; and it was truly short-sighted policy, and very slight knowledge of human nature which could have led any one to suppose that a man who had for so long a period exercised such a degree of power in both these countries, would not have retained in each a most powerful number of friends, both civil and military.

Having had our audience with Napoleon, we were anxious to proceed on our route, it being our wish to reach the Eternal City before the conclusion of the Carnival. Accordingly, on the 27th of January, we hired a felucca to take us to Civita Vecchia; but the wind unfortunately proved adverse during the three following days, and our Padrone did not shew any great anxiety to move. During our prolonged stay, we had an opportunity, through the kind offices of Count Bertrand, of being presented to Madame Mère, Bonaparte's mother, and to his sister, the Princess Pauline. Madame resided in a house near that occupied by her son; the apartments which we saw were comfortably fitted up; the servants wore the Imperial liveries, green and gold, and two *Dames d'Honneur* were in attendance. From her appearance it was evident that she had been a fine woman. The

Princess, who occupied the large room in the centre of Bonaparte's residence, possessed a fine figure; her smile was fascinating, and her manners peculiarly pleasing. She received us with great affability, spoke much of the Empress and the young Prince, whom we had seen at Vienna; observed that it was cruel not to allow her to join the Emperor; spoke with great affection of her brother, *l'Empereur*; said that he, with *Maman* and herself formed a little society, and played at cards in the evening; that the Emperor shewed himself a perfect *philosophe*, not bestowing a thought on what he had been, and frequently not reading the newspapers for some days after he received them;—she observed, “*qu'il travailloit beaucoup*; and even there, as he had done elsewhere, was exerting himself to benefit and ornament the country.” (Alluding to a new road he was making round the edge of the bay, the sides of which were planted with trees; and to a new garden he was forming at the back of the residence above the cliffs.) In the course of our conversation, the Princess complained of the gross misrepresentations which were put forth in the public journals, respecting her brother; their denial of the benefits he had conferred on France, and the infamous slanders which had been propagated, especially through the Paris papers, as to his being deficient in personal courage. She expressed herself in very indignant terms on these

points, and appeared to feel acutely what she conceived the unmerited calumnies that had been heaped upon a man who had done so much for the French people. She said, that at Rome we should see her brother Louis, an “*excellent homme* ;” and Lucien, “*qui avoit beaucoup esprit*,” and desired us to say, “*bien de choses*,” for her, to her sister at Naples.

Our prolonged stay on the island gave us an opportunity of seeing more of the Princess, and availing ourselves of an invitation to a ball which she gave on the 29th, in a temporary room built in the garden at the back of the residence, to which we went with a large party, composed principally of her *Dames d'Honneur* and officers of Napoleon's Guard, whom we had met at dinner at the house of a French family then resident at Porto Ferrajo. We spent a very pleasant evening, and were highly gratified by the attentions of all who were present ; and on taking leave, the Princess kindly offered us letters of introduction to her brother Lucien, at Rome, and to her sister Caroline, Queen of Naples.

On the evening of the 31st of January we took our departure from Porto Ferrajo in an open boat. After about an hour's sail, we cleared the island, and in two hours more reached Piombino. The width of the channel between this part of the Italian coast and the Island of Elba is about three

leagues. We were detained for an hour on the shingles whilst our bill of health was scrutinized, and on arriving at the inn our passports were taken to the Austrian Commandant. During the time we remained on the shingles, the post-boat from Elba arrived. A soldier who appeared to belong to it, in a conversation I had with him, informed me that several of the Imperial Guard had quitted Elba and returned to France: the reason he assigned was, that they (the soldiers) found so little amusement on the island. It is, however, very possible that this means of communication with the old army, kept alive the remembrance of Napoleon, and contributed most materially to his subsequent success.

Piombino was formerly the residence of Napoleon's sister Elize, the Princess Baciocchi. A building that had originally been a convent, situated on a promontory, between the town and the sea, had been converted into a palace, with suitable gardens and approaches. From Piombino we proceeded to Civita Vecchia, and from thence to Rome and Naples.

Shortly after our arrival at Naples, where Murat held his Court in all the pomp of regal splendour, we heard of the departure of Napoleon from Elba; and in less than five months from the time of my interview, was fought the memorable battle of Waterloo, which hurled from his throne, a second

time, that most wonderful man, who in his conversation with me had contemplated, but with the anticipation of far different results, the very battle he had now lost, and to the brilliant result of which the distinguished valour of the British arms so gloriously contributed.



THE END.

NORMAN AND SKEEN, PRINTERS, MAIDEN LANE, COVENT GARDEN.