

CONCLUDING VOLUME OF NAPOLEON'S CORRESPONDENCE.

(From the Pall Mall Gazette.)

The Imperial Commission charged with the collection of Napoleon's letters has just terminated, its task in a rather abrupt and unsatisfactory manner; it is evident that a great many letters must have been suppressed out of consideration for families who support the present regime, and for the regime itself. The twenty-eighth and last volume embraces the period generally known as "The Hundred Days," during which time Napoleon pleaded in appeal, and tried to quash the judgment which had sent him an exile to Elba. Before landing in France he drew up various manifestoes; to the army he spoke of the victories they had gained together, and complained of the defection of Marmont and Augereau, which had compromised everything. He made a concession to the Republican party which he had always hated more than the most rabid chouans—he called the French people "citoyens," and accepted the proffered services of Carnot. Convinced of the necessity of conciliation, he then held out his hand to the constitutional party, and offered the country the famous "additional act" which was drawn up by Benjamin Constant, and was certainly a more liberal instrument than the charter which Louis XVIII. conceded as an act of his sovereign will.

The first letters in this volume show that great difficulty was experienced in getting men, and arms, and money to pay the artisans engaged in mending damaged firelocks. Napoleon even proposed to purchase 100,000 stand of arms in England, and in default of men he took lads from school to fight his battles. Whilst his Majesty was yet at Lyons he wrote the following note to Ney:—"My cousin,—My adjutant general will send you your marching orders. I feel sure that on hearing of my arrival in this city you have persuaded your troops to return to the tricoloured flags. Execute the orders sent by Bertrand, and come and join me at Chalons. I shall receive you as on the morning after the battle of Borodino—Napoleon." Ney a few days before had accepted the command of the Royal troops, and had promised to bring back "that madman in an iron cage."

In spite of all the weighty matters of State with which his Majesty had hourly to deal, his old habit of meddling with trifles was still strong in him. He must know every piece produced on the Paris stage; and on the 25th of March he wrote this highly characteristic letter to the same General Count Bertrand who had sent orders to Ney:—"M. le Comte Bertrand,—There are disputes amongst the members of my household. My first "maitre d'hotel" shall be the one I had at Porto Ferrajo. The sieur Dousseau shall be my chief cook, the sieur Pierron my head scullion. Dismiss all individuals pretending to the contrary. Present me a simple organisation for my household. I do not wish to see any persons filling two offices," &c., &c.

On the 29th of March his Majesty took a more important step. He issued a decree, the first article of which was thus couched:—"From the date of the present decree the slave trade is abolished." On the same date he despatched a curious note to Fouché, ordering him to recover some pictures "which belonged to Prince Joseph; I had them brought from Spain." It is needless to ask how the ex-King Joseph came by them.

On the 1st of April Napoleon wrote to the Emperor of Austria in these terms;—

"Monsieur my Brother and very dear Father-in-Law,—At a moment when Providence brings me back to my capital and my States, my most ardent desire is to see again the objects of my tenderest affection, my wife and my son. As a long separation has afflicted my heart, so the virtuous princess united to my destiny by your Majesty is impatient for a reunion. If the dignity of the conduct or the Empress during the time of my misfortune has increased the tenderness of your Majesty for a daughter already dear you will understand, Sir, how much I desire the moment to arrive when I may show her my gratitude. My efforts tend solely to consolidate this throne, which the love of my people has restored to me, and to leave it one day to the infant which your Majesty has surrounded with paternal care. The duration of peace being essentially necessary," &c.

As early as April, Napoleon seems to have divined the intentions of the Allies; he ordered Davoust to prepare Paris for fear of an attack, but assured him that the month of May would pass over quietly, and that nothing was to be apprehended till June. In the meantime every nerve was strained to fill up the ranks of the army. On the 20th of May the Emperor wrote to his War Minister:—"My cousin, let me know when one will be able to place the Spanish, Piedmontese, Belgian, Polish, and other foreign battalions in line; and on the 22d his Majesty demanded six engineers well acquainted with Belgium and the left bank of the Rhine.

On the 7th June Napoleon opened the Chambers, and portions of his speech have lost none of their interest. He commenced by stating that he had been clothed by the people with unlimited power, that now the dearest wish of his heart was accomplished he had commenced a constitutional monarchy. He declared a monarchy necessary to France in order to guarantee her liberty; his ambition was to see France enjoy all possible freedom—he said possible, because anarchy always brought back an absolute government. The liberty of the press he considered inherent to the present constitution, nor could any change be made without altering the whole political system. He then alluded to the threatened invasion of France, which might soon call him to the frontier, and he asked the two Houses to show an example to the nation, and, like the Senate of a great people of antiquity, to prefer death rather than survive the dishonour and degradation of France. We know that this language fell exceedingly flat on the ears of the two Chambers. On the same 7th of June Soult, who had replaced Berthier, was ordered to repair to Lille incognito he was to create a spy office and collect intelligence from the wood-rangers of the Ardennes. A few days later Napoleon left Paris, and placed himself at the head of his troops. He directed his War Minister to recruit two battalions amongst the Polish prisoners. He concluded his instructions with these curious words:—"I attach great importance to having the 500 Poles mounted as soon as possible, for by placing them in the advanced posts they will aid other Poles to desert!"

On the 15th of June, Prince Joseph received a letter from Baron Fain:—"Monseigneur,—It is nice in the evening. The Emperor, who has been on horseback since three in the morning, has just entered, overcome by fatigue. He has thrown himself on a bed for a few hours' sleep. He is to be on horseback again at midnight. . . . The army has forced the Sambre near Charleroi," &c., &c. On the 16th of June we have only three letters—a short note to Prince Joseph, in which the Emperor regrets

the loss of General Letort in the body of the letter, and says he is better in a postscript; an order to Ney telling him to hold himself in readiness to march on Brussels, and acquainting him with his own movements and those of Grouchy; and finally, a despatch to Grouchy directing him to march on Sombrefe with the right wing, and evidently written early in the morning. On the 17th, there are no letters; on the 18th, merely an order to the army, dated 11 a. m., directing the attack on Mont Saint Jean by d'Erlon's corps.

There is something tragical in the way this volume ends with the sudden collapse of a great empire; on the 20th the Emperor, who had stopped in his flight at Leod, wrote his account of the battles of Ligny and Waterloo. He attributed the loss of Waterloo to Ney sacrificing his cavalry. "After eight hours' fighting the army saw with satisfaction," he said, "the battle won and the field in our power. At 8.30 p. m. the four battalions of the middle guard which had been sent up the plateau beyond Mont Saint Jean to sustain the cuirassiers, being harassed by the enemy's grape, marched forward to carry his batteries with the bayonet. The battle was drawing to a close when a charge made on their flank by several squadrons of English threw them into disorder; the fugitives repassed the ravine; the neighbouring regiments who saw some of the guard retiring in confusion thought that it was the old guard, and broke. Cries of "All is lost," an "The guard is repulsed" were heard." Then came a frightful panic, and it was found impossible to re-form a single corps; everything was swept away in dire confusion. The Emperor in his report made no complaint of Grouchy not coming up to save the day; he stated that after the manner in which the cavalry had been employed a decided success was not to be hoped for, "but Marshal Grouchy, having learned the movement of the Prussian corps, was following it, and this assured us a brilliant success the next day." It is clear that Napoleon's impression two days after Waterloo was that Grouchy could not have reached the field in time to have taken any part in the action of the 18th of June. As regards the Prussians, the Emperor said that early in the morning he was made aware that a column 15,000 strong had quitted the main body, and might be expected to come into action towards evening, falling on his right flank. "About 3 p. m. this column commenced skirmishing with Lobeau's division, and Napoleon was afterwards obliged to send his young guard and several reserve batteries to attack it before marching against the British centre. He makes no mention of more Prussian troops arriving after Bulow's corps had been driven back.

On the 21st Napoleon alighted at the Elysee, and sent a message to the Chambers announcing the result of his campaign. The next day he abdicated in favour of his son. On the 25th of June Bertrand writes by order of the Emperor to Barbier, the Imperial librarian, for various works, especially works on the United States and a complete collection of the *Moniteur*. His library was to be consigned to some house in America. On the 14th of July Napoleon wrote his memorable letter to the Prince Regent, in which he compared himself to Themistocles, and desired to place himself "under the laws of the most powerful, the most constant, and the most generous of his enemies." The collection closes with the protest written on board the Bellerophon, in which Napoleon takes history to witness that, having for twenty years made war upon the English people, he came of his own free will to seek