

NAPOLÉON: THE LAST PHASE

endeavoured to repeat. Nor is it easy to see, in the absence of an efficient fleet, what other weapon was available with which to attack his world-wide enemy. Again, the Spanish expedition was a blunder in method, but not necessarily in policy. Louis XIV. had carried out the same policy with conspicuous success. And Napoleon could not foresee that a people which had long supported dynasties so contemptible would rise like one man against his own. Again, the Russian expedition was a blunder, but Russia was the fatal leak in his continental system, and he might well refuse to believe that the Russia, which had succumbed after Friedland, would burn her ancient capital and her secular shrines rather than again submit. Again, the contest with the Pope was a blunder, so grave that some thinkers believe that it mainly contributed to his fall. But it was the blunder of the Holy Roman Emperor and most Catholic King, Charles V., who had aspired to add the sacred crowns of the Papacy to his own diadem, and accumulate in his own person all the prerogatives, secular and divine, of supreme authority. Napoleon's methods towards the Holy See were brutal, but Charles sacked Rome.

We have no doubt that Napoleon, after bringing Russia into his system, and crippling or crushing Great Britain, aspired vaguely to becoming in some way Lord Paramount of Europe. We question, however, whether the idea ever assumed actual shape, except in regard to the West, or was ever more than a dream of dominion. He must have known that he could not bequeath so personal a power to his son, but he probably thought that a mere remnant of his empire would be a rich inheritance for his posterity. For himself, he would have outstripped those dead rivals who looked back on him from the page of history, and lured him