

Winter drew on and no word fell from Napoleon that he was other than resolved to end his days in Elba. Meanwhile the restored Bourbon rule in France was steadily helping the cause of its enemies. Men were found to say in blind adulation that when God made Louis XVIII He paused for rest after labour so great. Officers who had served under Napoleon were objects of scorn and contempt and were dismissed by hundreds and even thousands from the army. Their men were treated with similar derision. The returned nobles began to clamour for the revival of the feudal rights over the peasantry which they had enjoyed before the Revolution. They alarmed the thousands of innocent purchasers of lands, which had been seized and sold during the revolution, by demanding that these new owners should be dispossessed. The restored royalists indulged in many foolish acts of revenge. The restored Church was eager to persecute those who had raised their hands against it. From all this came a state of opinion which would have alarmed any but the blind and the deaf. Soldiers and peasants in France were alike growing eager for a change, and were turning in thought to the old leader. Napoleon knew what was happening in France. Newspapers came freely and there was constant communication with the Continent.

Nothing was spared by an incredibly stupid government to make Napoleon resolve to attempt his own restoration. By a truly barbarous tyranny his wife and his son were not allowed to go to him. It was openly debated at the Congress of Vienna whether, for greater safety, he should not be sent to some remoter island. In this connection the ominous name of St. Helena was already mentioned. St. Lucia, too, was suggested on the ground that the deadly climate would soon kill him. High circles made it quite clear that his assassination would be welcome, and base hirelings lurked even in his garden, awaiting a chance to kill him. Though Napoleon could easily have frustrated so wild a plan, it is quite certain that encouragement was given to Moorish pirates to make a sudden descent upon the island and kidnap him. The island swarmed with spies and some of them lived in the domestic circle at the Mulini. The treaty made with him was not regarded as binding. Though by it he was to have an income of 2,000,000 francs a year, France was fatuous enough to break faith and to pay nothing; Talleyrand said it would be folly to give Napoleon the means to carry on new intrigues. He had taken about 4,000,000 francs to Elba. This was a small sum for a sovereign, and he was soon face to face with dire poverty. He reduced some of the meagre salaries of his officials; he sold off part of his stable; he cut down the scale of his receptions and, in a hundred ways, with the Corsican frugality of his early youth, tried to live within his means.