Chapter 43

LORD GRENVILLE'S REPLY

While the events we have just recorded were transpiring, and occupying the minds and newspapers of the provinces, other events, of very different import, were maturing in Paris, which were destined to occupy the minds and newspapers of the whole world.

Lord Tanlay had returned, bringing the reply of his uncle, Lord Grenville. This reply consisted of a letter addressed to M. de Talleyrand, inclosing a memorandum for the First Consul. The letter was couched in the following terms:

DOWNING STREET, February 14, 1800 Sir--I have received and placed before the King the letter

which you transmitted to me through my nephew, Lord Tanlay.

His Majesty, seeing no reason to depart from the

long-established customs of Europe in treating with foreign

states, directs me to forward you in his name the official

reply which is herewith inclosed. I have the honor to be, with the highest esteem, your very

humble and obedient servant, GRENVILLE.The letter was dry; the memorandum curt. Moreover, the First Consul's letter to King George was autographic, and King George, not "departing from the long-established customs of Europe in treating with foreign States," replied by a simple memorandum written by a secretary.

True, the memorandum was signed "Grenville." It was a long recrimination against France; against the spirit of disorder, which disturbed the nation; against the fears which that spirit of disorder inspired in all Europe; and on the necessity imposed on the sovereigns of Europe, for the sake of their own

safety, to repress it. In short, the memorandum was virtually a continuation of the war.

The reading of such a dictum made Bonaparte's eyes flash with the flame which, in him, preceded his great decisions, as lightning precedes thunder.

"So, sir," said he, turning to Lord Tanlay, "this is all you have obtained?"

"Yes, citizen First Consul."

"Then you did not repeat verbally to your uncle all that I charged you to say to him?"

"I did not omit a syllable."

"Did you tell him that you had lived in France three years, that you had seen her, had studied her; that she was strong, powerful, prosperous and desirous of peace while prepared for war?"

"I told him all that."

"Did you add that the war which England is making against France is a senseless war; that the spirit of disorder of which they speak, and which, at the worst, is only the effervescence of freedom too long restrained, which it were wiser to confine to France by means of a general peace; that that peace is the sole _cordon sanitaire_ which can prevent it from crossing our frontiers; and that if the volcano of war is lighted in France, France will spread like lava over foreign lands. Italy is delivered, says the King of England; but from whom? From her liberators. Italy is delivered, but why? Because I conquered Egypt from the Delta to the third Cataract; Italy is delivered because I was no longer in Italy. But--I am here: in a month I can be in Italy. What do I need to win her back from the Alps to the Adriatic? A

single battle. Do you know what Masséna is doing in defending Genoa? Waiting for me. Ha! the sovereigns of Europe need war to protect their crowns? Well, my lord, I tell you that I will shake Europe until their crowns tremble on their heads. Want war, do they? Just wait--Bourrienne! Bourrienne!"

The door between the First Consul's study and the secretary's office opened precipitately, and Bourrienne rushed in, his face terrified, as though he thought Bonaparte were calling for help. But when he saw him highly excited, crumpling the diplomatic memorandum in one hand and striking with the other on his desk, while Lord Tanlay was standing calm, erect and silent near him, he understood immediately that England's answer had irritated the First Consul.

"Did you call me, general?" he asked.

"Yes," said the First Consul, "sit down there and write."

Then in a harsh, jerky voice, without seeking his words, which, on the contrary, seemed to crowd through the portal of his brain, he dictated the following proclamation:

SOLDIERS!--In promising peace to the French people, I was your

mouthpiece; I know your power. You are the same men who conquered the Rhine, Holland and Italy,

and granted peace beneath the walls of astounded Vienna. Soldiers, it is no longer our own frontiers that you have to

defend; it is the enemy's country you must now invade. Soldiers, when the time comes, I shall be among you, and

astounded Europe shall remember that you belong to the race

of heroes!

Bourrienne raised his head, expectant, after writing the last words.

"Well, that's all," said Bonaparte.

"Shall I add the sacramental words: 'Vive la République!'?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because we have issued no proclamation during the last four months, and something may be changed in the ordinary formulas."

"The proclamation will do as it is," said Bonaparte, "add nothing to it."

Taking a pen, he dashed rather than wrote his signature at the bottom of the paper, then handing it to Bourrienne, he said: "See that it appears in the 'Moniteur' to-morrow."

Bourrienne left the room, carrying the proclamation with him.

Bonaparte, left alone with Lord Tanlay, walked up and down the room for a moment, as though he had forgotten the Englishman's presence; then he stopped suddenly before him.

"My lord," he asked, "do you think you obtained from your uncle all that another man might have obtained in your place?"

"More, citizen First Consul."

"More! more! Pray, what have you obtained?"

"I think that the citizen First Consul did not read the royal memorandum with all the attention it deserves."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Bonaparte, "I know it by heart."

"Then the citizen First Consul cannot have weighed the meaning and the wording of a certain paragraph."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it; and if the citizen First Consul will permit me to read him the paragraph to which I allude--"

Bonaparte relaxed his hold upon the crumpled note, and handed it to Lord Tanlay, saying: "Read it."

Sir John cast his eyes over the document, with which he seemed to be familiar, paused at the tenth paragraph, and read:

> The best and surest means for peace and security, and for their continuance, would be the restoration of that line of princes who for so many centuries have preserved to the French nation its internal prosperity and the respect and consideration of foreign countries. Such an event would have removed, and at any time will remove, the obstacles which are now in the way of negotiations and peace; it would guarantee to France the tranquil possession of her former territory, and procure for all the other nations of

Europe, through a like tranquillity and peace, that security which

they are now obliged to seek by other means.

"Well," said Bonaparte, impatiently, "I have read all that, and perfectly understood it. Be Monk, labor for another man, and your victories, your renown, your genius will be forgiven you; humble yourself, and you shall be allowed to remain great!"

"Citizen First Consul," said Lord Tanlay, "no one knows better than I the difference between you and Monk, and how far you surpass him in genius and renown."

"Then why do you read me that?"

"I only read that paragraph," replied Sir John, "to lead you to give to the one following its due significance."

"Let's hear it," said Bonaparte, with repressed impatience.

Sir John continued:

But, however desirable such an event may be for France and for

the world, it is not to this means alone that his Majesty

restricts the possibility of a safe and sure pacification.

Sir John emphasized the last words.

"Ah! ah!" exclaimed Bonaparte, stepping hastily to Sir John's side.

The Englishman continued:

His Majesty does not presume to prescribe to France her form of government, nor the hands into which she may place the necessary authority to conduct the affairs of a great and powerful nation.

"Read that again, sir," said Bonaparte, eagerly.

"Read it yourself," replied Sir John.

He handed him the note, and Bonaparte re-read it.

"Was it you, sir," he asked, "who added that paragraph?"

"I certainly insisted on it."

Bonaparte reflected.

"You are right," he said; "a great step has been taken; the return of the Bourbons is no longer a condition _sine quâ non_. I am accepted, not only as a military, but also as a political power." Then, holding out his hand to Sir John, he added: "Have you anything to ask of me, sir?"

"The only thing I seek has been asked of you by my friend Roland."

"And I answered, sir, that I shall be pleased to see you the husband of his sister. If I were richer, or if you were less so, I would offer to dower her"--Sir John made a motion--"but as I know your fortune will suffice for two," added Bonaparte, smiling, "or even more, I leave you the joy of giving not only happiness, but also wealth to the woman you love. Bourrienne!" he called.

Bourrienne appeared.

"I have sent it, general," he said.

"Very good," replied the First Consul; "but that is not what I called you for."

"I await your orders."

"At whatever hour of the day or night Lord Tanlay presents himself, I shall be happy to receive him without delay; you hear me, my dear Bourrienne? You hear me, my lord?"

Lord Tanlay bowed his thanks.

"And now," said Bonaparte, "I presume you are in a hurry to be off to the Château des Noires-Fontaines. I won't detain you, but there is one condition I impose."

"And that is, general?"

"If I need you for another mission--"

"That is not a condition, citizen First Consul; it is a favor."

Lord Tanlay bowed and withdrew.

Bourrienne prepared to follow him, but Bonaparte called him back. "Is there a carriage below?" he asked.

Bourrienne looked into the courtyard. "Yes, general."

"Then get ready and come with me."

"I am ready, general; I have only my hat and overcoat to get, and they are in the office."

"Then let us go," said Bonaparte.

He took up his hat and coat, went down the private staircase, and signed to the carriage to come up. Notwithstanding Bourrienne's haste, he got down after him. A footman opened the door; Bonaparte sprang in.

"Where are we going, general?" asked Bourrienne.

"To the Tuileries," replied Bonaparte.

Bourrienne, amazed, repeated the order, and looked at the First Consul as if to seek an explanation; but the latter was plunged in thought, and the secretary, who at this time was still the friend, thought it best not to disturb him.

The horses started at gallop--Bonaparte's usual mode of progression--and took the way to the Tuileries.

The Tuileries, inhabited by Louis XVI. after the days of the 5th and 6th of October, and occupied successively by the Convention and the Council of Five Hundred, had remained empty and devastated since the 18th Brumaire. Since that day Bonaparte had more than once cast his eyes on that ancient palace of royalty; but he knew the importance of not arousing any suspicion that a future king might dwell in the palace of the abolished monarchy.

Bonaparte had brought back from Italy a magnificent bust of Junius Brutus; there was no suitable place for it at the Luxembourg, and toward the end of November, Bonaparte had sent for the Republican, David, and ordered him to place the bust in the gallery of the Tuileries. Who could suppose that David, the friend of Marat, was preparing the dwelling of a future emperor by placing the bust of Cæsar's murderer in the gallery of the Tuileries? No one did suppose, nor even suspect it.

When Bonaparte went to see if the bust were properly placed, he noticed the havoc committed in the palace of Catherine of Medicis. The Tuileries were no longer the abode of kings, it is true, but they were a national palace, and the nation could not allow one of its palaces to become dilapidated. Bonaparte sent for citizen Lecomte, the architect, and ordered him to _clean_ the Tuileries. The word might be taken in both senses --moral and physical.

The architect was requested to send in an estimate of the cost of the cleaning. It amounted to five hundred thousand francs. Bonaparte asked if for that sum, the Tuileries could be converted into a suitable "palace for the government." The architect replied that the sum named would suffice not only to restore the Tuileries to their former condition, but to make them habitable.

A habitable palace, that was all Bonaparte wanted. How should he, a Republican, need regal luxury? The "palace of the government" ought to be severely plain, decorated with marbles and statues only. But what ought those statues to be? It was the First Consul's duty to select them.

Accordingly, Bonaparte chose them from the three great ages and the three great nations: from the Greeks, from the Romans, from France and her rivals. From the Greeks he chose Alexander and Demosthenes; the genius of conquest and the genius of eloquence. From the Romans he chose Scipio, Cicero, Cato, Brutus and Cæsar, placing the great victim side by side with the murderer, as great almost as himself. From the modern world he chose Gustavus Adolphus, Turenne, the great Condé, Duguay-Trouin, Marlborough, Prince Eugene, and the Maréchal de Saxe; and, finally, the great Frederick and George Washington--false philosophy upon a throne, and true wisdom founding a free state.

To these he added warlike heroes--Dampierre, Dugommier, Joubert--to prove that, while he did not fear the memory of a Bourbon in the great Condé, neither was he jealous of his brothers-in-arms, the victims of a cause already no longer his.

Matters were in this state at the period of which we are now speaking; that is, the last of February, 1800. The Tuileries had been cleaned, the busts were in their niches, the statues were on their pedestals; and only a favorable occasion was wanting.

That occasion came when the news of Washington's death was received. The founder of the liberty of the United States had ceased to breathe on the 14th of December, 1799.

It was that event of which Bonaparte was thinking, when Bourrienne saw by the expression of his face that he must be left entirely to the reflections which absorbed him.

The carriage stopped before the Tuileries. Bonaparte sprang out with the same haste with which he had entered it; went rapidly up the stairs, and through the apartments, examining more particularly those which had been inhabited by Louis XVI. and Marie-Antoinette. In the private study of Louis XVI. he stopped short.

"Here's where we will live, Bourrienne," he said, suddenly, as if the latter had followed him through the mental labyrinth in which he wandered, following the thread of Ariadne which we call thought. "Yes, we will lodge here; the Third Consul can have the Pavilion of Flora, and Cambacérès will remain at the Chancellerie."

"In that way," said Bourrienne, "when the time comes, you will have only one to turn out."

"Come, come," said Bonaparte, catching Bourrienne by the ear, "that's not bad."

"When shall we move in, general?" asked Bourrienne.

"Oh, not to-morrow; it will take at least a week to prepare the Parisians to see me leave the Luxembourg for the Tuileries."

"Eight days," exclaimed Bourrienne; "that will do."

"Especially if we begin at once. Come, Bourrienne, to the Luxembourg."

With the rapidity that characterized all his movements when serious matters were in question, he passed through the suites of apartments he had already visited, ran down the stairs, and sprang into the carriage, calling out: "To the Luxembourg!"

"Wait, wait," cried Bourrienne, still in the vestibule; "general, won't you wait for me?"

"Laggard!" exclaimed Bonaparte. And the carriage started, as it had come, at a gallop.

When Bonaparte re-entered his study he found the minister of police awaiting him.

"Well, what now, citizen Fouché? You look upset. Have I, perchance, been assassinated?"

"Citizen First Consul," said the minister, "you seemed to attach the utmost importance to the destruction of those bands who call themselves the Companions of Jehu."

"Evidently, since I sent Roland himself to pursue them. Have you any news of them?"

"We have."

"From whom?"

"Their leader himself."

"Their leader?"

"He has had the audacity to send me a report of their last exploit."

"Against whom?"

"The fifty thousand francs you sent to the Saint-Bernard fathers."

"What became of them?"

"The fifty thousand francs?"

"Yes."

"They are in the possession of those brigands, and their leader informs me he will transfer them shortly to Cadoudal."

"Then Roland is killed?"

"No."

"How do you mean, no?"

"My agent is killed; Colonel Maurice is killed; but your aide-de-camp is safe and sound."

"Then he will hang himself," said Bonaparte.

"What good would that do? The rope would break; you know his luck."

"Or his misfortune, yes--Where is the report?"

"You mean the letter?"

"Letter, report, thing--whatever it was that told you this news."

The minister handed the First Consul a paper inclosed in a perfumed envelope.

"What's this?"

"The thing you asked for."

Bonaparte read the address: "To the citizen Fouché, minister of police. Paris." Then he opened the letter, which contained the following.

CITIZEN MINISTER--I have the honor to inform you that the fifty thousand francs intended for the monks of Saint-Bernard came into our hands on the night of February 25, 1800 (old style), and that they will reach those of citizen Cadoudal within the week. The affair was well-managed, save for the deaths of your agent and Colonel Saint-Maurice. As for M. Roland de Montrevel, I have the satisfaction of informing you that nothing distressing has befallen him. I did not forget that he was good enough to receive me at the Luxembourg. I write you, citizen minister, because I presume that M. Roland de Montrevel is just now too much occupied in pursuing us to write you himself. But I am sure that at his first leisure moment you will receive from him a report containing all the details into which I cannot enter for lack of time and facilities for writing. In exchange for the service I render you, citizen minister, I will ask you to do one for me; namely, inform Madame de Montrevel,

without delay, that her son is in safety. MORGAN. Maison-Blanche, on the road from Mâcon to Lyons, Saturday, 9 P.M.

"Ha, the devil!" said Bonaparte; "a bold scamp!" Then he added, with a sigh: "What colonels and captains those men would make me!"

"What are your orders, citizen First Consul?" asked the minister of police.

"None; that concerns Roland. His honor is at stake; and, as he is not killed, he will take his revenge."

"Then the First Consul will take no further notice of the affair?"

"Not for the present, at any rate." Then, turning to his secretary, he added, "We have other fish to fry, haven't we, Bourrienne?"

Bourrienne nodded affirmatively.

"When does the First Consul wish to see me again?" asked the minister.

"To-night, at ten o'clock. We move out in eight days."

"Where are you going?"

"To the Tuileries."

Fouché gave a start of amazement.

"Against your opinion, I know," said the First Consul; "but I'll take the whole business on myself; you have only to obey."

Fouché bowed, and prepared to leave the room.

"By the way!" exclaimed Bonaparte.

Fouché turned round.

"Don't forget to notify Madame de Montrevel that her son is safe and sound; that's the least you can do for citizen Morgan after the service he has rendered you."

And he turned his back on the minister of police, who retired, biting his lips till the blood came.