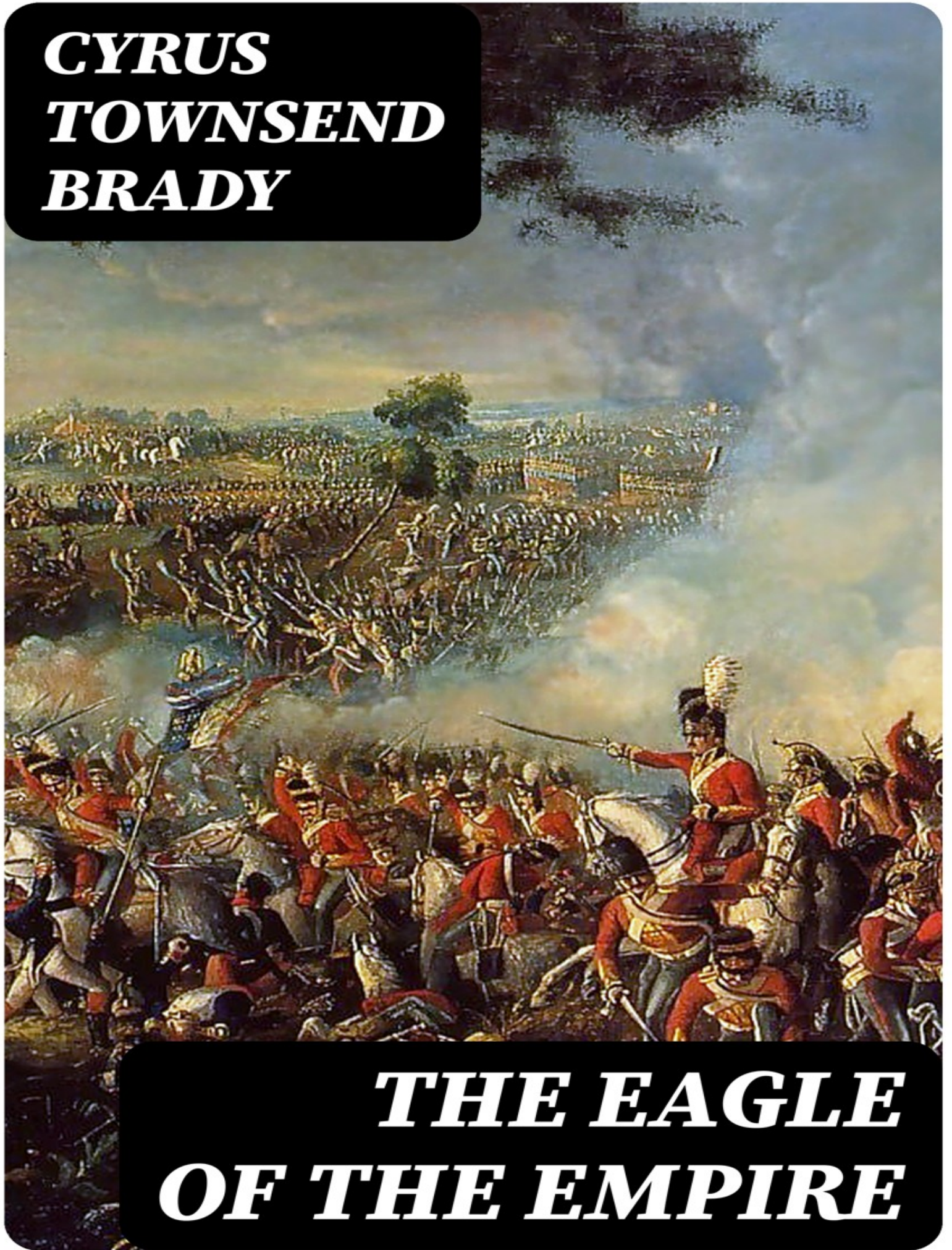


***CYRUS
TOWNSEND
BRADY***



***THE EAGLE
OF THE EMPIRE***

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TOWNSEND
BRADY**



***THE EAGLE
OF THE EMPIRE***

Cyrus Townsend Brady

The Eagle of the Empire

A Story of Waterloo

EAN 8596547119470

DigiCat, 2022

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NEW YORK

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THE MOUNT VERNON TRUST COMPANY of MOUNT VERNON, NEW YORK

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PREFACE

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The Battle of Waterloo, which was fought just one hundred years ago and with which the story in this book ends, is popularly regarded as one of the decisive battles of the world, particularly with reference to the career of the greatest of all Captains. Personally some study has led me to believe that Bautzen was really the decisive battle of the Napoleonic wars. If the Emperor had there won the overwhelming victory to which his combinations and the fortunes of war entitled him he would still have retained his Empire. Whether he would have been satisfied or not is another question; and anyway as I am practically alone among students and critics in my opinions about Bautzen they can be dismissed. And that he lost that battle was his own fault anyway!

However Napoleon's genius cannot be denied any more than his failure. In this book I have sought to show him at his best and also almost at his worst. For sheer brilliance,

military and mental, the campaigning in France in 1814 could not be surpassed. He is there with his raw recruits, his beardless boys, his old guard, his tactical and strategical ability, his furious energy, his headlong celerity and his marvelous power of inspiration; just as he was in Italy when he revolutionized the art of war and electrified the world. Many of these qualities are in evidence in the days before Waterloo, but during the actual battle upon which his fate and the fate of the world turned, the tired, broken, ill man is drowsily nodding before a farmhouse by the road, while Ney, whose superb and headlong courage was not accompanied by any corresponding military ability, wrecks the last grand army.

And there is no more dramatic an incident in all history, I believe, than Napoleon's advance on the Fifth-of-the-line drawn up on the Grenoble Road on the return from Elba.

Nor do the Roman Eagles themselves seem to have made such romantic appeal or to have won such undying devotion as the Eagles of the Empire.

This story was written just before the outbreak of the present European war and is published while it is in full course. Modern commanders wield forces beside which even the great Army of the Nations that invaded Russia is scarcely more than a detachment, and battles last for days, weeks, even months—Waterloo was decided in an afternoon!—yet war is the same. If there be any difference it simply grows more horrible. The old principles, however, are unchanged, and over the fields upon which Napoleon marched and fought, armies are marching and fighting in practically the same way to-day. And great Captains are still

studying Frederick, Wellington and Bonaparte as they have ever done.

The author modestly hopes that this book may not only entertain by the love story, the tragic yet happily ended romance within its pages—for there is romance here aside from the great Captain and his exploits—but that in a small way it may serve to set forth not so much the brilliance and splendor and glory of war as the horror of it.

We are frightfully fascinated by war, even the most peaceable and peace-loving of us. May this story help to convey to the reader some of the other side of it; the hunger, the cold, the weariness, the suffering, the disaster, the despair of the soldier; as well as the love and the joy and the final happiness of the beautiful Laure and the brave Marteau to say nothing of redoubtable old Bal-Arrêt, the Bullet-Stopper—whose fates were determined on the battlefield amid the clash of arms.

CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY.

THE HEMLOCKS,
EDGECLIFF TERRACE, PARK-HILL-ON-HUDSON.
YONKERS, N. Y.

EPIPHANY-TIDE, 1915.

PROLOGUE

VIVE L'EMPEREUR

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The weatherworn Château d'Aumenier stands in the midst of a noble park of trees forming part of an extensive domain not far to the northwest of the little town of Sézanne, in the once famous county of Champagne, in France. The principal room of the castle is a great hall in the oldest part of the venerable pile which dates back for eight hundred years, or to the tenth century and the times of the famous Count Eudes himself, for whom it was held by one of his greatest vassals.

The vast apartment is filled with rare and interesting mementos of its distinguished owners, including spoils of war and trophies of the chase, acquired in one way or another in the long course of their history, and bespeaking the courage, the power, the ruthlessness, and, sometimes, the unscrupulousness of the hard-hearted, heavy-handed line. Every country in Europe and every age, apparently, has been levied upon to adorn this great hall, with its long mullioned windows, its enormous fireplace, its huge carved stone mantel, its dark oak paneled walls and beamed ceiling. But, the most interesting, the most precious of all the wonderful things therein has a place of honor to itself at the end farthest from the main entrance.

Fixed against this wall is a broken staff, or pole, surmounted by a small metallic figure. The staff is fastened to the wall by clamps of tempered steel which are further secured by delicate locks of skillful and intricate workmanship. The pole is topped by the gilded effigy of an eagle.

In dimensions the eagle is eight inches high, from head to feet, and nine and a half inches wide, from wing tip to

wing tip. Heraldically, "*Un Aigle Éployé*" it would be called. That is, an eagle in the act of taking flight—in the vernacular, a "spread eagle." The eagle looks to the left, with its wings half expanded. In its talons it grasps a thunderbolt, as in the old Roman standard. Those who have ever wandered into the Monastery of the Certosa, at Milan, have seen just such an eagle on one of the tombs of the great Visconti family. For, in truth, this emblem has been modeled after that one.

Below the thunderbolt is a tablet of brass, three inches square, on which is a raised number. In this instance, the number is five. The copper of which the eagle is molded was originally gilded, but in its present battered condition much of the gilt has been worn off, or shot off, and the original material is plainly discernible. If it could be lifted its weight would be found to be about three and a half pounds.

Around the neck of the eagle hangs a wreath of pure gold. There is an inscription on the back of it, which says that the wreath was presented to the regiment by the loyal city of Paris after the wonderful Ulm campaign.

One of the claws of the eagle has been shot away. The gold laurel wreath has also been struck by a bullet, and some of its leaves are gone. The tip of one wing is missing. The head of the eagle, originally proudly and defiantly erect, has been bent backward so that, instead of a level glance, it looks upward, and there is a deep dent in it, as from a blow. And right in the breast gapes a great ragged shot-hole, which pierces the heart of the proud emblem. The eagle has seen service. It has been in action. It bears its honorable wounds. No attempt has been made to repair it.

The staff on which the eagle stands has been broken at about half its length, presumably by a bullet. The shattered, splintered end indicates that the staff is made of oak. It had been painted blue originally. The freshness of the paint has been marred. On one side, a huge slice has been cut out of it as if by a mighty sword stroke. The tough wood is gashed and scarred in various places, and there is a long, dark blur just above the broken part, which looks as if it might be a blood stain.

Below the eagle, and attached to the remainder of the staff for about three-fourths of its length, is what remains of a battle flag. The material of it was originally rich and heavy crimson silk, bordered with gold fringe. It is faded, tattered, shot-torn, bullet-ridden, wind-whipped; parts of it have disappeared. It has been carefully mounted, and is stretched out so as to present its face to the beholder. In dull, defaced letters of gold may be read inscriptions—the imagination piecing out the missing parts. Here is a line that runs as follows:

**Napoleon, Empereur des Français, au
5e Infanterie
de la Ligne.**

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And underneath, in smaller and brighter letters, as if a later addition:

Grenadiers du Garde Imperiale.

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There has been some sort of device in the middle, but most of it has disappeared. From what remains, one guesses that it was a facsimile of the eagle on the staff-head. There are little tarnished spots of gold here and there. A close observation discloses that they are golden bees. In the corners near the staff, the only ones that are left are golden wreaths in the center of which may be seen the letter "N".

On the other side of the flag, hidden from the beholder, are a series of names. They have been transcribed upon a silver plate, which is affixed to the wall below the broken staff. They read as follows:

"Marengo; Ulm; Austerlitz; Jena; Berlin; Eylau; Friedland; Madrid; Eckmuhl; Wagram; Vienna; Smolensk; Moskowa; Bautzen; Leipsic; Montmirail; Arcis."

Beneath this list is a heavy dash and below all in larger letters, which unlike the rest have been filled with black enamel, is the last word,

"WATERLOO."

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The eagle, the staff, and the flag are enclosed and protected from careless handling by a heavy glass case, the panes set in steel and silver, and the doors carefully locked to prevent its being stolen away. But its security is not entrusted to these inanimate materials alone. Every hour of the day and night there keeps watch over it an old soldier. He is armed and equipped as if for battle, in the uniform of

the old Fifth Regiment of the Line, somehow temporarily incorporated in the Imperial Guard as a supplementary regiment of the Grenadiers thereof. The black gaiters, the white trousers, the blue and scarlet coat, with its crossed belts and brilliant decorations, the lofty bearskin head-dress, are all strangely in keeping with the relic and its surroundings.

Sometimes the soldier—and there are five of them whose sole and only business it is to watch over the flag—paces steadily up and down in front of it, like a sentry on his post. Sometimes he stands before it at parade rest. As to each individual's movements, he suits his fancy. These are old soldiers, indeed, highly privileged, veterans of twenty campaigns, fifty pitched battles, and smaller affairs without number. Their weatherbeaten faces are lined and wrinkled, their mustaches are as white as snow.

The guard is always relieved at the appointed intervals with military formality and precision. One soldier, older, taller than the rest, is in command of the other four. From his buttonhole dangles from a white ribbon a little cross of white enamel. Though he shows no insignia of rank higher than that of a Sergeant of the Guard, he has won the proud distinction of the Legion of Honor.

At one stated hour in the day, a tall, handsome, distinguished, middle-aged man, wearing for the occasion the uniform of a colonel in the Imperial Guard, a blood-stained, tarnished, battered, battle-worn uniform, be it observed, comes into the room. He is more often than not attended by a lovely lady of beauty and grace, in spite of her years, who leads with either hand a handsome youth

and a beautiful maiden. The four soldiers are always present in full uniform under the command of their sergeant at this hour. As the officer enters they form line, come to attention, and present arms, a salute he gravely and punctiliously acknowledges. Attendants follow, bearing decanters and glasses; wine for the officer and his family, something stronger for the soldiers. The glasses are filled. With her own fair hands, the lady hands them to the men. When all are ready the officer holds up his glass. The men, stacking arms, do the same. The eyes of all glance upward. Above the eagle and the flag upon a shelf upon the wall stands a marble head, product of Canova's marvelous chisel. It is Napoleon. White it gleams against the dark stone of the old hall. At a nod the soldiers face about, and——

"*Vive l'Empereur*," says the officer quietly.

"*Vive l'Empereur*," in deep and solemn tones repeats the old sergeant.

"*Vive l'Empereur*," comes from the lips of the four soldiers, and even the woman and the young people join in that ancient acclaim.

The great Emperor is dead long since. He sleeps beneath the willows in the low valley in the lonely, far-off, wave-washed islet of St. Helena. But to these men he will never die. It is their blood that is upon that eagle staff. It was in their hands that it received those wounds. While they carried it, flung to the breeze of battle, it was shot-torn and storm-riven. It is a priceless treasure to them all. As they followed it with the ardor and devotion of youth so they now guard it and respect it with the steadier but not less intense consecration of maturity and old age.

The eagle of a vanished empire, the emblem of a fame that is past. It is as real to them as when into the hands of one of them it was given by the Emperor himself on the Champ de Mars so long ago when he was lord of the world. And so long as they live they will love it, reverence it, guard it, salute it as in the past.

BOOK I

THE EMPEROR AT BAY

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CHAPTER I

BEARERS OF EVIL TIDINGS

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The Emperor walked nervously up and down the long, low-ceiled apartment, the common room of the public inn at Nogent. Grouped around a long table in the center of the room several secretaries were busy with orders, reports and dispatches. At one end stood a group of officers of high rank in rich uniforms whose brilliance was shrouded by heavy cloaks falling from their shoulders and gathered about them, for the air was raw and chill, despite a great fire burning in a huge open fireplace. Their cloaks and hats were wet, their boots and trousers splashed with mud, and in general they were travel-stained and weary. They eyed the Emperor, passing and repassing, in gloomy silence mixed with awe. In their bearing no less than in their faces was expressed a certain unwonted fierce resentment, which flamed up and became more evident when the Emperor turned his back in his short, restless march to and fro, but which subsided as suddenly when he had them under observation. By the door was stationed a young officer in the uniform of the Fifth

Regiment of the infantry of the line. He stood quietly at attention, and was evidently there on duty.

From time to time officers, orderlies and couriers came into the room, bearing dispatches. These were handed to the young officer and by him passed over to the Emperor. Never since the days of Job had any man perhaps been compelled to welcome such a succession of bearers of evil tidings as Napoleon on that winter night.

The Emperor's face was pale always, but there was an ashy grayness about his pallor in that hour that marked a difference. His face was lined and seamed, not to say haggard. The mask of imperturbability he usually wore was down. He looked old, tired, discouraged. His usual iron self-control and calm had given place to an overwhelming nervousness and incertitude. He waved his hands, he muttered to himself, his mouth twitched awry from time to time as he walked.

"Well, messieurs," he began at last, in sharp, rather high-pitched notes—even his voice sounded differently—as he lifted his eyes from perusing the latest dispatch and faced the uneasy group by the fireplace, "you are doubtless anxious to know the news." The Emperor stepped over to the table as he spoke, and gathered up a handful of dispatches and ran over them with his hands. "It is all set forth here: The Germans and the English have shut up Carnot in Antwerp," he continued rapidly, throwing one paper down. "The Bourbons have entered Brussels,"—he threw another letter upon the table—"Belgium, you see, is lost. Bernadotte has taken Denmark. Macdonald is falling back on Épernay, his weak force growing weaker every hour.

Yorck, who failed us once before, is hard on his heels with twice, thrice, the number of his men. Sacken is trying to head him off. The King of Naples seeks to save the throne on which I established him by withdrawing from me now—the poor fool! The way to Paris along the Marne is open, and Blücher is marching on the capital with eighty thousand Russians, Prussians and Bavarians. Schwarzenburg with many more is close at hand."

Something like a hollow groan broke from the breasts of the auditors as the fateful dispatches fell one by one from the Emperor's hand. The secretaries stopped writing and stared. The young officer by the door clenched his hands.

"Sire——," said one of the officers, the rich trappings of whose dress indicated that he was a Marshal of France. He began boldly but ended timidly. "Before it is too late——"

Napoleon swung around and fixed his piercing eyes upon him, as his voice died away. The Emperor could easily finish the uncompleted sentence.

"What, you, Mortier!" he exclaimed.

"I, too, Sire," said another marshal more boldly, apparently encouraged by the fact that his brother officer had broken the ice.

"And you, Marmont," cried the Emperor, transfixing him in turn with a reproachful glance.

Both marshals stepped back abashed.

"Besides," said the Emperor gloomily, "it is already too late. I have reserved the best for the last," he said with grim irony. "The courier who has just departed is from Caulaincourt." He lifted the last dispatch, which he had torn open a moment or two since. He shook it in the air, crushed

it in his hand, laughed, and those who heard him laugh shuddered.

"What does the Duke of Vicenza say, Sire?" chimed in another marshal.

"It is you, Berthier," said the Emperor. "You, at least, do not advise surrender?"

"Not yet, Sire."

"But when?" asked Napoleon quickly. Without waiting for an answer to his question, he continued: "The allies now graciously offer us—think of it, gentlemen—the limits of 1791."

"Impossible!" cried a big red-headed marshal.

"They demand it, Prince of the Moskowa," answered the Emperor, addressing Marshal Ney.

"But it's incredible, Sire."

"What!" burst out Napoleon passionately. "Shall we leave France less than we found her, after all these victories, after all these conquests, after all these submissions of kings and nations? Shall we go back to the limits of the old monarchy? Never!"

"But, Sire——" began Marshal Maret.

"No more," said the Emperor, turning upon the Duc de Bassano. "Rather death than that. While we have arms we can at least die."

He flashed an imperious look upon the assembly, but no one seemed to respond to his appeal. The Emperor's glance slowly roved about the room. The young captain met his look. Instantly and instinctively his hand went up in salute, his lips framed the familiar phrase:

"*Vive l'Empereur!* Yes, Sire, we can still die for you," he added in a low respectful voice, but with tremendous emphasis nevertheless.

He was a mere youth, apparently. Napoleon looked at him approvingly, although some of the marshals, with clouded brows and indignant words of protest at such an outburst from so young a man, would have reproved him had not their great leader checked them with a gesture.

"Your name, sir," he said shortly to the young officer who had been guilty of such an amazing breach of military decorum.

"Marteau, Sire. Jean Marteau, at the Emperor's service," answered the young soldier nervously, realizing what impropriety he had committed.

"It remains," said the Emperor, looking back at the marshals and their aides, "for a beardless boy to set an example of devotion in which Princes and Dukes of the Empire, Marshals of France, heroes of fifty pitched battles, fail."

"We will die for you, Sire, for France, die with arms in our hands, if we had them, and on the field of battle," began impetuous Ney.

"If we don't starve first, Sire," said cautious Berthier gloomily.

"Starve!" exclaimed the Emperor.

"The army is without food," said Marmont bluntly.

"It is half naked and freezing," added Victor.

"Ammunition fails us," joined in Oudinot.

"We have no arms," added Mortier.

"Do you, then, advise that we abandon ourselves to the tender mercies of the allies?" asked Napoleon bitterly.

"Messieurs, it is surely better to die hungry and naked and without arms for the Emperor than to consent to his dishonor, which is the dishonor of France," suddenly burst forth the young man at the door.

"How dare you," thundered the usually cool and collected Berthier angrily, "a mere boy, monsieur, assume to speak in the presence of the Emperor, to say nothing of these great captains?"

"May my life be forfeit, *Monsieur le Duc*," said the young soldier more boldly, since Napoleon had condoned his first remark, "if I have done wrong in assuring my Emperor that we would still die for him."

"Of what regiment are you?" said Napoleon, waving Berthier of the frowning face into silence.

"I belong to the fifth of the line, Sire."

"He is in my corps, Sire," said Ney. "I have brigaded that veteran regiment with the new recruits of the Young Guard."

"But I have seen service before," said the young captain.

"And I have seen you before," said Napoleon, fixing upon him a penetrating glance.

"Yes, Sire, at the end of the bridge over the Elster at Leipsic. You were watching the men streaming across when the bridge was blown up. I was among the last to cross the bridge."

"Go on," said the Emperor, as the young man paused.

"Your majesty was pleased to say——"

"I recall it all now. I saw you plunge into the river and bring back to shore an Eagle—that of your regiment. You fell

at my feet. You should have had the Legion of Honor for it. I promised it to you, did I not?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Why did you not claim it?"

"I was wounded and left for dead; when I got back to France and my regiment I could not add to your anxiety by ____"

"Here," said the Emperor, "I still have power to reward faithful servants and bold spirits." He took off his own cross, fastened it on the heaving breast of the amazed young soldier. "Prince," continued the Emperor, turning to Ney.

"Sire?"

"Spare me this young man. I need him on my staff."

"I can ill spare any officer from my weak corps of boys and old men, much less a veteran," the marshal laughed. "One campaign makes us veterans, it seems, nowadays, but you shall have him."

"Berthier," continued Napoleon, "make out the transfer. Give the young man a step up. Let him be Major."

"Very well, Sire," said Berthier, turning to one of the secretaries and giving him directions.

"Meanwhile, what's to be done?" continued Napoleon.

"Tell Caulaincourt to agree to anything," said Maret bluntly.

"I yet live," said Napoleon proudly. "Naked, starving, unarmed, though we may be, I and my soldiers have not forgot our trade. Courage, messieurs. All is not yet lost while your Emperor breathes. Here at Nogent, at Montereau and farther back we still have seventy thousand men. With seventy thousand men and Napoleon much may be

accomplished. Blücher, it is true, marches on Paris. He counts on the army of Schwarzenberg to contain us. He marches leisurely, with wide intervals between his divisions. What shall prevent us——"

"Your majesty," cried Marmont, his eyes flashing as he divined the Emperor's plan.

He was the quickest witted and most brilliant of the marshals, but by no means the hardest fighter, or the most loyal and devoted subordinate.

"I am worn out," said the Emperor, smiling more kindly upon them. "I have scarcely been out of the saddle—I have scarcely had an hour of sleep since the bloody day of La Rothière. I must have rest. Let none disturb me for two hours. Hold the messenger from the Duke of Vicenza. I will give an answer then."

The Emperor drooped, as he spoke, much of the animation went out of his face and figure. He looked grayer than ever, heavier than ever, older than ever.

"In two hours awaken me," he said.

He stepped toward the door that led to the room reserved for himself, but before he reached it two officers were admitted. Napoleon stopped and looked at them. They saluted him, walked over to Berthier, the Chief of Staff.

"The soldiers are dying of hunger," said the first. "The Commissary General has nothing to give them. He expected a convoy of provisions, but Cossacks, who are reported at Fontainebleau, have captured the train. What shall we do?"

Berthier threw up his hands, and turned to the other officer to hear his report.

"Ten thousand men are without arms, or with arms unserviceable and broken. The supply of powder is low. Where shall we get any more?"

The silence in the room was terrible.

"Sire," said Berthier in a low voice, turning to Napoleon, standing staring, "you hear?" He stretched out his hand in appealing gesture.

The Emperor turned on his heel, without deigning to look or speak.

"Watch the door for two hours," he said to the young officer, crashing to the door behind him. "Awaken me then."

"Gentlemen," said Berthier despairingly to the other officers, "we shall never persuade him. You had better repair to your commands. Some of you must have something to eat. Divide what you have with the less fortunate divisions. Arm and equip the best men. There is a small supply at Nogent, I am told. The others must wait."

"If we could only get at these pigs of Prussians, these dogs of Russians," said Ney, "we could take food and guns and powder from them."

"Doubtless," said Berthier, not caring to argue that point.

He bowed to the officers, as they saluted, and went out of the door muttering and arguing noisily and insubordinately, it must be admitted, and then turned to the table where the secretaries sat. One of them had laid his head down on his arms, stretched out on the table and was fast asleep. The marshal awoke him and dismissed him with most of the rest. From another Berthier took a paper. He examined it, signed it, sealed it, and handed it to the young officer on guard at the door.

"Your commission, monsieur," he said. "Once I was young and full of enthusiasm and hope and determination. It is well for France that some of her children still retain those things."

"I thank the Prince de Wagram," said the young officer, bowing low, "and I beg his pardon for having spoken."

"The Emperor has forgiven," said Berthier indifferently. "His absolution covers us all. At least if I fall behind you in those other qualities of youth I shall not fall behind you in devotion. Come, Maret," continued the grand marshal.

The two worthies turned away and went out. The long room sank into silence. A soldier came in after a while and replenished the fire, saluted and passed out. The pen of the busy secretary, the only one left of the group, ceased scratching on the paper. He, too, sank back in his chair asleep. The short day faded into twilight and then into darkness. From outside beyond the courtyard of the inn came confused noises, indicating moving bodies of men, the rumble of artillery, the clatter of cavalry, faint words of command. A light snow began to fall. It was intensely raw and cold. The officer picked up his cloak, wrapped it around him, and resumed his immobile guard.

CHAPTER II

THE EMPEROR DREAMS

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Within a mean room, which had hastily been prepared for his use, upon a camp bed, having cast himself down, fully clothed as he was, lay the worn-out, dispirited, embittered Emperor. He sought sleep in vain. Since Leipsic, with its horrible disaster a few months before, one reverse of fortune had succeeded another. He who had entered every country a conqueror at the head of his armies, whose myriads of soldiers had overrun every land, eating it up with ruthless greed and rapacity, and spreading destruction far and wide, was now at bay. He who had dictated terms of peace in all the capitals of Europe at the head of triumphant legions was now with a small, weak, ill-equipped, unfed army, striving to protect his own capital. France was receiving the pitiless treatment which she had accorded other lands. With what measure she had meted out, it was being measured back to her again. The cup of trembling, filled with bitterness, was being held to her shrinking lips, and she must perforce drain it to the dregs. After all Napoleon's far-flung campaigns, after all his overwhelming victories, after the vast outpouring of blood and treasure, after all his glory and all his fame, the end was at hand.

The prostrate Emperor stared out through the low window into the gray sky with its drift of snow across the panes. He heard faintly the tumult outside. Disaster, ruin, despair entered his heart. The young conscripts were disheartened by defeat, the steady old veterans were pitifully few in number, thousands of them were in foreign prisons, many more thousands of them were dead. Disease was rife among the youthful recruits, unused to such hard campaigning, as he had summoned to the colors. Without

food and without arms, they were beginning to desert their Eagles. The spirit of the marshals and great officers whom he had raised from the dust to affluence and power was waning. They were worn out with much fighting. They wanted peace, almost at any price. He remembered their eager questions when he had joined the army a month ago.

"What reinforcements has your majesty brought?"

"None," he had been compelled to answer.

"What, then, shall we do?" queried one after the other.

"We must try fortune with what we have," he had declared undauntedly.

Well, they had tried fortune. Brienne, where he had been a boy at school, had been the scene of a brilliantly successful action. They had lost no glory at La Rothière afterward—although they gained nothing else—where with thirty thousand men he had beaten back through one long bloody day and night thrice that number, only to have to retreat in the end for the salvation of those who had been left alive. And, to him who had been wont to spend them so indifferently, men had suddenly become precious, since he could get no more. Every dead or wounded man was now unreplaceable, and each loss made his problem harder to solve. Since those two first battles he had been forced back, step by step, mile by mile, league by league, everywhere; and all his lieutenants likewise. Now Schwarzenberg, with one hundred and thirty thousand men, confronted him on the Seine and the Aube, and Blücher, with eighty thousand men, was marching on Paris by way of the Marne, with only Macdonald and his beaten and dispirited men, not ten

thousand in number, to hold the fiery old Prussian field marshal in check.

"How had it all come to this, and why?" the man asked himself, and, with all his greatness and clearness of vision, the reason did not occur to him. For he had only himself to blame for his misfortunes. He was not the man that he had been. For a moment his old spirit had flashed out in the common room of the inn two hours before, but the reaction left him heavy, weary, old, lonely. Physically, he felt unequal to the strain. His human frame was almost worn out. Mere men cannot long usurp the attributes of God. Intoxicated with success, he had grasped at omnipotence, and for a time had seemed to enjoy it, only to fail. The mills of the gods do grind slowly, but they do grind immeasurably small in the end.

What a long, bloody way he had traversed since Toulon, since Arcola, since the bridge at Lodi, since Marengo? Into what far-off lands it had led him: Italy, Egypt, Syria, Spain, Austria, Prussia and the great, white, cold empire of the North. And all the long way paved with corpses—corpses he had regarded with indifference until to-day.

It was cold in the room, in spite of the fire in the stove. It reminded him of that dreadful retreat. The Emperor covered his face with his hand. No one was there. He could afford to give away. There rose before him in the darkness the face of the wife of his youth, only to be displaced by the nearer woman, the Austrian wife and the little son whom he had so touchingly confided to the National Guard a month ago when he left Paris for the last try with fortune for his empire and his life. Would the allies at last and finally beat him;

would Francis Joseph, weak monarch whom he hated, take back his daughter, and with her Napoleon's son, and bring him up in Austria to hate the name of France and his father? The Emperor groaned aloud.

The darkness fell upon the world outside, upon the room within, upon the soul of the great Captain approaching the nadir of his fortunes, his spirit almost at the breaking point. To him at last came Berthier and Maret. They had the right of entrance. The time for which he had asked had passed. Young Marteau admitted them without question. They entered the room slowly, not relishing their task, yet resolute to discharge their errand. The greater room outside was alight from fire and from lanterns. Enough illumination came through the door into the bed-chamber for their purpose—more than enough for the Emperor. He turned his head away, lest they should see what they should see. The two marshals bowed and stood silent.

"Well?" said the Emperor at last, his voice unduly harsh, as if to cover emotion with its roughness, and they noticed that he did not look at them.

"Sire, the courier of the Duke of Vicenza waits for his answer," said Maret.

There was another long pause.

"Will not your majesty give way for the good of the people?" urged Berthier. "Give peace to France, sire. The army is hungry——"

"Am I God, messieurs, to feed thousands with a few loaves and fishes?" cried the Emperor bitterly.

"No, Sire. Therefore, authorize the duke to sign the treaty, and——"