

statue of Liberty was set up in Paris; and in the course of two years more than fifteen hundred persons were beheaded at the feet of that statue, men and women indiscriminately. The frenzy spread throughout all France. In the wholesale butcheries which were reported to the National Convention, by its agents, as so many triumphs of equality and justice, not less than eighteen thousand lives were sacrificed by the executioner. It seemed as if God had abandoned the unhappy nation who had denied Him, and that they were delivered over, as the severest chastisement, to the devices of their own hearts. Before this madness was exhausted, the wretches who had thrust themselves into the government paid the earthly penalty of their guilty elevation. One faction did justice upon another: in the same place where dogs had licked the blood of Louis and his queen, there in succession did they lick the blood of Brissot, Danton, Hebert, Robespierre, and their respective associates. When the theorists, the fanatics, and the bolder villains, had perished, a set of intriguers, who had accommodated themselves in turn to all, came forward, and divided the spoil; till the unhappy nation, disgusted with such intrigues, and weary of perpetual changes, acquiesced with joy in the usurpation of a military adventurer, which promised them stability, at least, if not repose.

The revolution had given the government absolute command over the whole physical force of France; and this prodigious power was now at the disposal of an individual, unchecked by any restraint, and subject to no responsibility. Perhaps it would not have been possible to have selected among the whole human race any other man, to whom it would have been so dangerous to commit this awful charge. Napoleon Buonaparte possessed all the qualities which are required to form a perfect tyrant. His military genius was of the highest order; his

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*Character of
Napoleon
Buonaparte.*

CHAP. talents were of the most imposing kind ; his ambition insatiable ;
 I. his heart impenetrable : he was without honour, without veracity, without conscience ; looking for no world beyond the present, and determined to make this world his own, at whatever cost. The military executions committed in Italy by his orders had shown his contempt for the established usages of war, the law of nations, and the common feelings of humanity : the suppression of the Papal government, the usurpation of the Venetian states, and the seizure of Malta, had proved that neither submissiveness nor treaties afforded any protection against this fit agent of a rapacious and unprincipled democracy. But it was during the Egyptian expedition that the whole atrocity of his character was displayed. He landed in Egypt, proclaiming that he was the friend of the Grand Seignior, and that the French were true Mussulmen, who honoured Mahommed and the Koran. His first act was to storm a city belonging to the Grand Seignior, which he never summoned to surrender, and which was incapable of defence. The butchery was continued for some hours after the resistance had ceased. The very perpetrators of this carnage have related that they put to death old and young, men, women, and children, in the mosques, whither these unoffending and helpless wretches had fled to implore protection from God and from their prophet ; and they have avowed that this was done deliberately, for the purpose of astonishing the people. Thus it was that Buonaparte commenced his career in Egypt. He left Alexandria, exclaiming, “ The Virtues are on our side ! Glory to Allah,” he said ; “ there is no other God but God : Mahommed is his prophet, and I am his friend.” He proclaimed to the Egyptians that Destiny directed all his operations, and had decreed from the beginning of the world, that after beating down the Cross, he should come into that country to fulfil the task assigned him ;

*His crimes
in Egypt
and Syria.*

and he called upon them to enjoy the blessings of a system, in which the wisest and the most virtuous were to govern, and the people were to be happy. It is literally true, that the Egyptian mothers mutilated or killed their daughters, to save them from the brutality of his troops; and that wherever the French moved, a flock of kites and vultures followed, sure of the repast which these purveyors every where provided for them. Their general entered Syria, took Jaffa by assault, and issued a proclamation upon its capture, professing that he would be "clement and merciful, after the example of God." Four days after the capture, and after that profession of clemency had been made, he drew out his prisoners, some three thousand in number, and had them deliberately slaughtered. A whole division of his army was employed in this massacre; and when their cartridges were exhausted, they finished the work with the bayonet and the sword, dragging away those who had expired, in order to get at the living, who, in the hope of escaping death, had endeavoured to hide themselves under the bodies of the dead. To complete this monster's character, it was only needful that he should show himself as inhuman toward his own soldiers as his prisoners; and that it might be complete in all parts, this proof of his disposition was not wanting. When Sir Sidney Smith and Captain Wright, then Sir Sidney's lieutenant, compelled him to raise the siege of Acre, the sick and wounded in his army were more than he had means of removing: any other general would have recommended them to the humanity of an English enemy; but this would have been humiliating to Buonaparte, and therefore poison was administered to them by his orders.

Yet this man, like Augustus, had an opportunity of earthly redemption afforded him; and, while he fabricated for himself a splendid fortune, might have deserved the gratitude of Europe,

*Opportunity
of redeem-
ing his cha-
racter at the
peace of
Amiens.*

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not only in the existing generation, but through after ages. When he had attained the supreme authority, he might have restored the Bourbons in France, and taken Italy for his own reward: an arrangement, for which no fresh act of injustice would have been required; which none whom it offended would have been able to oppose; and which, more than any other conceivable alteration in the state of Christendom, might have tended to the general good. Here was an object worthy of ambition, and a richer prize than military ambition had ever yet achieved: so great would have been the public benefit; so signal and durable the individual glory. Even if, incapable as he was of aiming at such true greatness, he could have contented himself with the situation in which he was recognized by the peace of Amiens, and have borne his faculties meekly in that unexampled elevation, the world is charitable to all extremes of fortune, and would have forgiven his former crimes; which, public and notorious as they were, were loudly denied by his advocates, and already disbelieved by his infatuated admirers. But the heart of Napoleon Buonaparte was evil; he regarded his fellow-creatures merely as instruments for gratifying his desire of empire, . . . pieces with which he played the game of war: in the presumptuousness of his power he set man at defiance, and in his philosophy God was left out of the account. Unhappily, the internal circumstances of France accorded but too well in all things with the disposition and the views of its autocrat.

*Military
power of
France.*

The revolutionary governments, through all their changes, had steadily pursued the favourite object of placing the military establishment of the country upon the most formidable footing, and thereby enabling France to give laws to the rest of Europe. During the first years, immense armies were filled with enthusiastic volunteers; and before that spirit exhausted itself,

provision was made for permanently supporting so disproportionate a force by means of the conscription. The conscription originated in Prussia, when Prussia was under a mere military despotism; it was now carried to its utmost extent in France. The law declared that every Frenchman was a soldier, and bound to defend his country: but the principle of general law which the latter clause of the sentence announces served to introduce a code, whereby the whole youth of France were placed at the disposal of the government, to be sent whithersoever its ambitious projects might extend, . . . to the sands of Egypt, or the snows of Moscovy. A view of this system will equally elucidate the strength, the resources, and the character, of the French government during these disastrous years.

Under the new arrangement of its territory, France was divided into departments, districts, cantons, and municipalities. The departments were governed by a prefect, and a council of prefecture; the districts by a sub-prefect and his council; the cantons and municipalities by a mayor and town-court: to which were added, on the part of the general government, a commissary of police, and his adjuncts. There was also a military division of the country into thirty districts, each under a general of division, with a long establishment of commissaries, inspectors, and military police-officers. On a certain day in every year, notice was given in every municipality that all men, between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, should within eight days appear at the town-house, and enrol their names: if any individual failed, not he alone, but his family also, were subject to a criminal prosecution. The names of the absent were to be enrolled by their nearest relations, and concealment was thus rendered impossible: the man who was not in his usual domicile being doubly registered; as an absentee in one place, and as a temporary sojourner in another. From these registers the

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*System of
military
conscription.*

CHAP. I. returns for the conscription were prepared in five lists, according to age, and the names in each were carefully arranged according to seniority. The civil officers by whom these lists were formed were responsible for any omission; and, as a farther precaution, every village and every house was visited at stated and at unexpected times, publicly and secretly. After such preparations, the machine was easily put in motion. The war-minister gave notice what number of men were required; the senate voted them from the conscripts of that year which was next in course, and the prefects were ordered to provide their contingents: they called upon the sub-prefects; these again upon the municipalities; and within sixteen days from the date of the prefect's orders, the ballot took place. Tickets, numbered to the amount of all who were upon the list, were put into the urn, and the men were registered in the order of the numbers which they had drawn. The first numbers, up to the sum required, were for immediate service; the others were to be called upon in sequence, in case of necessity only: but, under Buonaparte, that necessity always existed. They were marched off under military escort, and distributed among the artillery, cuirassiers, dragoons, infantry, or sappers and miners, according to their stature and bodily strength.

Exemptions.

The infirmities which might be pleaded as exemptions were severely scrutinized, and were determined by the law with critical inhumanity: inveterate asthma, habitual spitting of blood, and incipient consumption only entitled the sufferer to a provisional dispensation. Men who were incapable of enduring the fatigues of war, or who might be more useful to the state in pursuing their own employments or their studies, were allowed to provide substitutes or purchase an exemption by the payment of three hundred francs; but this was an early law, and it is not likely that the pecuniary alternative was ever accepted when the waste

of men became excessive. The substitute was required to be a Frenchman, between twenty-five and forty years of age (and therefore not liable to the conscription), not below five feet one, of a strong constitution, and in robust health. In addition to his own name, he was to take that of the person for whom he served, and by that name he was to be known in the army: the principal was still upon the list, and subject to be called upon if his representative deserted or withdrew; nor could he obtain a definitive exemption unless he produced proof that the substitute had either been killed or disabled in service, or had served the full time which the laws required: during war the term was indefinite, in peace it was fixed at five years. During the latter years of Buonaparte's government men who could be admitted as substitutes were necessarily so rare, that their price rose from two hundred to a thousand Napoleons.

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Substitutes.

No constituted authority, no branch of the civil or military administration, might retain in its service a conscript who was called upon in his turn. No Frenchman, being, or having been, liable to the conscription, could hold any public office, or receive any public salary, or exercise public rights, or receive a legacy, or inherit property, unless he produced a certificate that he had conformed to the law, and either was actually in service, or had obtained his dismissal, or was legally exempted, or that his services had not been required. They who failed to join the army within the time prescribed were deprived of their civil rights, a circular description of their persons was sent to all the chiefs of the *gendarmerie* throughout the empire, and they were pursued as deserters. Eleven depôts were appointed, where these refractory conscripts were disciplined in an uniform of disgrace, with the hair cut close: they were employed upon the fortifications, or in other hard labour, for which they received no additional pay or rations. This, however, was

Punishments for evading the conscription.

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*Punish-
ments for
desertion.*

thought too lenient when the emperor's expenditure of men became more lavish, and it was then decreed that such offenders were to be punished as if they had actually deserted. A deserter was condemned to a fine of fifteen hundred francs, chargeable upon whatever property might fall to him at any future time, if he was not able to pay it immediately. In addition to this fine, the punishment for the simple offence of deserting into the interior was three years' labour upon the public works. The culprits wore a particular uniform, and were allowed shoes; their heads were shaved every eighth day, and they were not permitted either to shave their beards or to cut them. Their rations were the soldiers' bread, rice, or dry pulse; their pay half that of a common labourer; and of this a third was withheld till they should have served out their time, a third was deducted for their expenses, and the remainder was all which they had for purchasing better food than their miserable allowance. He who had deserted from the army, or a frontier place, or in a direction toward the enemy, or with a companion, or who had scaled ramparts in effecting his escape, was sentenced to public labour for ten years, with a bullet of eight pounds weight fastened to him by a chain eight feet long. He was to work eight hours a day during five months, ten during the better part of the year, and to be chained in prison all the rest of the time: he wore wooden shoes, and an uniform differing both in colour and fashion from that of the troops; his mustachios, as well as his head, were shaved every eight days; his beard was never shaved, nor shorn, nor shortened; his rations and pay were like those of the common deserters, because, indeed, life could not be supported upon less. The punishment of death, which was inflicted upon those who had deserted to the enemy, and in other aggravated cases, was mercy when compared to this.

By the operation of this system the French were made a military nation, a change equally inconsistent with their own welfare and with the safety and independence of the surrounding states. Beginning at first with all men between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, enrolling the whole rising generation afterwards as they attained to manhood, and retaining all who were embodied as long as their services were required, in other words, as long as they were capable of serving, . . . the government had thus brought within its disposal every man who was capable of bearing arms; and this was the tremendous power which Buonaparte found already organized to his heart's desire when he assumed the supreme authority. Such power might have kindled ambition in an ordinary mind; no wonder then that the most ambitious of the human race, when he saw himself in possession of it, supposed universal empire to be within his reach. His supply of men might well appear inexhaustible; there was neither difficulty nor expense in raising them; he had only to say what number he required, and the rest was mere matter of routine. After his armies had once passed the frontier, there was no cost in maintaining them; war was made to support itself. This system also had been matured for him by his republican predecessors. The contributions which he levied upon conquered or dependent states discharged the soldiers' pay: in an ally's country their subsistence was expected as a proof of alliance; in an enemy's it was taken as the right of war. And the perfection of the French commissariat was admired and extolled in England as a masterpiece of arrangement by the blind admirers of France, who either did not or would not perceive how easy the duties of that department were made, when every demand was enforced by military power, and nothing was paid for.

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*Effect of
this system.**War made
to support
itself.*

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*Former
constitution
of the
French
army.*

When Louis XVI. began his unhappy reign, the French army was still constituted upon a feudal principle which had been well adapted to the circumstances of later times. The corps were divided into proprietary companies, the captains of which, receiving pay proportionate to the required expenditure, provided every thing for the men, and raised them among their own vassals. The system was liable to abuse, but it had great advantages: for if the captain should act upon no worthier motive than mere selfishness, it was his interest to be careful of his men, lest he should incur the expense of recruiting them; and it might reasonably be expected that he would treat them kindly to prevent desertion, and that he would spare no means for keeping them in health or restoring them in sickness. But there were better principles brought into action: the character both of the captain and of the men, in their native place, depended upon what each should report of the other; the men also knew that their fidelity would not be forgotten when their services were over, and that, if they fell, their good conduct would be remembered to the benefit of their family. Both parties were always in the presence of that little world, to the opinion of which they were more immediately amenable, and from which applause or condemnation would most sensibly affect them; and local and hereditary attachments, with all their strength and endurance, were thus brought into the service of the state. The system was abolished when M. de St. Germaine was minister at war, for the sake of some sordid speculations upon clothing and victualling the troops. Subalterns, who were learning their profession, and acquiring the love and confidence of the soldiers, were disbanded as a sacrifice to the prevailing fashion of economical reform: at the same time the penal discipline of the Germans was introduced, . . . a poor substi-

*Change introduced by
M. de St.
Germaine.*