CAMPAGNE DE RUSSIE.
RETRAITE DE MOSKOW.
We have now arrived at the History of the Russian Campaign in 1812, and now also begins our favorite work. In this relationship, we are particularly committed to reproducing the truth of the facts; for the most ingenious fictions cannot take their place. At the same time, we have sought to revive in people's minds impressions that are still thrillingly topical.

In our work, the great figure of Napoleon dominates with all the height of his genius over those grouped around him. We have followed the great man on his excursions, in the midst of his councils, in the camps, in his tent and even on the battlefields. We kind of identified with him; we have surprised his most secret thoughts; in a word, we tried to show him as he really was when he travelled, discussed, commanded or fought. We have referred to times and places; we have researched the unforeseen circumstances which must have acted on him, and on the basis of which he in turn acted.

We were lucky enough, or so we hope to find the local color and the word of the moment; and, without dwelling on idle details, we have rushed to the event: our story has only been faster and our pictures have gained from it as a whole.

We have also endeavored to restore the facts in their natural order and in their correct proportions, to give them more lucidity; finally, in the large number of battles that we had to describe, we tried to preserve our narrative from strategic jargon: too many writers - in our opinion - have abused it to decide for the general-in-chief, to judge according to the event, and to place happy chances or unforeseen catastrophes among the combinations of genius or the consequences of incapacity. Moreover, we cannot cite a judge more competent in these matters than Napoleon himself, who said, being at Saint Helena, in connection with the Russian campaign in 1812:

"Men almost always take the accident for the principle: thus, it was claimed, from what I failed against the Russians, that they are invincible at home. But yet what was that?... Let wise and enlightened minds be asked, let Emperor Alexander himself be consulted, and the feelings he had then. Was it the efforts of his generals that paralyzed my army? No! The thing was due only to pure accidents, only to true fatalities: it was a burnt capital in spite of its inhabitants; it was a winter whose sudden appearance and excess were a kind of phenomenon; these are false reports, foolish intrigues, many things, finally, that we will know one day, and which will be able to
attenuate or justify the small fault, in diplomacy and in war, that we have the right to attribute to myself: that of having engaged in such an enterprise, leaving on my wings, which soon became my rear, two allied armies which the slightest failure, on our side, was to render enemies, and two cabinets of which I was not the master...But, to conclude everything on this point,” added Napoleon, “I would say that our sole winner was the cold, the premature severity of which deceived the Russians themselves. Schwarzenberg’s countermarches did the rest. Thus, the incredible audacity of an arsonist, childish ambitions, a few faults, perhaps treason and shameful mysteries, such are the causes that brought me back to the point from which I had started. Do we ever see more favorable chances disturbed by more unforeseen annoyances? The Russian campaign will none the less be the most glorious, the most difficult and the most honorable that modern history can mention!”
FRENCH EMPIRE.

CHASSEUR A CHEVAL. -- CARABINIER.
FIRST PART.

BREAK BETWEEN FRANCE AND RUSSIA.
EUROPE DECLARES ITSELF IN FAVOR OF NAPOLEON.
HUGE PREPARATIONS FOR WAR

From 1 January to 9 May 1812
“Alexander and I had the attitude of two men who warn each other without wanting to fight, and who only seek to frighten each other. I would gladly not have gone to war: I was surrounded, encumbered with inopportune circumstances, and all that I have learned since assures me that Alexandre had even less desire for it than I did.”

(Memorial, volume III, page 123)
FIRST CHAPTER

CAUSES WHICH BROUGHT WAR BETWEEN FRANCE AND RUSSIA.

Retrospective look at the political situation in Europe. --France, England, Austria, Prussia and Russia. --Montesquieu's prediction realized. --Sending an aide-de-camp from the King of Prussia to the Emperor of Russia to engage him not to break with France. --Reason for this negotiation. --Welcome to this officer by Alexander. --The Czar's secret intentions. --The reunion of the Duchy of Oldenburg with the French empire was never anything but a pretext for a split on the part of Russia. --The Duke of Vicence, Ambassador of France at the Court of St. Petersburg. --Delicate proceedings of Napoleon towards Alexander. --Diplomatic negotiations. --M. Chernishev. --Remarkable and confidential letter from Napoleon to Alexander. --Question of Poland. --New difficulties arise between the two cabinets. --Napoleon's instructions addressed to Prince Kurakin, Russian Ambassador at Paris. --General Lauriston replaces the Duke of Vicence. --Audiences granted to this new ambassador by the Czar. --Project formed at St. Petersburg to declare war on France, and to attack her from the beginning of the year 1811. --The King of Prussia was the soul of this resolution: why. --The war is adjourned. --Napoleon, at Saint Helena, explains the cause of this delay.

Never did monarch or citizen, new prince or hereditary sovereign, either in antiquity or in modern times, exercise such a high influence as Napoleon, and above all an influence which was, like his, the product of his acts as a warrior, as a legislator, as a politician and as an organizer. Of what elements was the world subjugated by Alexander the Great, compared with those of which present-day Europe is formed? What were the empires of Asia and their means of resistance, compared with the monarchies of France, Austria, Russia and Prussia? As for Caesar, who waged only one war for Rome, and whose chief glory was perhaps to conquer the civil wars, what advantage, in this respect alone, does not Napoleon have over him, whose all the triumphs were obtained on the foreign enemy! In less distant centuries, to dominate Europe, did Charlemagne and Charles V require so much genius? Considered in 1805, in 1807, in 1809 and in 1811, Napoleon rises as the most dazzling of these sparkling beacons which God causes to shine, from time to time, on the great ocean of the ages, to show what wonders the most complete development of human intelligence, assisted in its action by all the favors of fortune. Do these phenomena of greatness and power bring with them happiness for the peoples? Happiness! no; but they give shocks to the social order which are not without useful results for the human race.

Until the end of 1811 Napoleon's efforts, even in the midst of his incessant wars, to open to the French nation all sources of domestic wealth and prosperity, will make the opinion of future generations indulgent towards him. Not only, in the course of his campaigns and despite his remoteness from France, his invigorating thought revealed itself and acted on all points of the interior, but also commerce, industry, science and the arts rushed in the wake of his armies and went to collect a share of his conquests: in favor of the good that Napoleon did, we will forgive Napoleon the evil he may have done.
From the end of the XVII Century, all balance was lost in Europe; the powers of the first order had no other ideas than ideas of aggrandizement, and when they armed themselves against the French Revolution, they really armed themselves only to conquer. At Valenciennes, to Condé, Austria made no secret of it; and afterwards she no longer concealed that her principal object in the war had been the possession of Italy.

Toulon, Quiberon, shouted rather loudly that destroying our navy was the constant thought of England. Was it for European balance that she attempted conquests in the West Indies, India, and South America? Wasn't Russia expanding every day at the expense of Turkey and Persia?

The spoliations, the encroachments to which these cabinets indulged, our indulgence considered them as the effects of a natural policy, while our government, which had only conquered territory by repelling the invasion of our own soil, only avenged the First Coalition by giving itself Belgium; of the Second, that by keeping Piedmont; of the Third, by placing Naples and Venice in its federative system; of the Fourth, finally, only by reducing the Prussian monarchy; and it is France that will be accused of immoderation, even when before the war of 1805, and in the desire to ensure peace on the continent, she offered her alliance to Prussia, by proposing to her to establish as a fundamental condition, "that in the event of war, no State would be incorporated either into the French Empire or into the Kingdom of Italy!"

*Bignon, History of France under Napoleon, volume VI, chap. LXXIV.

When Austria, England and Russia above all were launched into the wave of a perpetual expansion, could France, called in turn by these powers to the fields of battle, remain circumscribed? Was it in its power to have a fixed limit, when others would not recognize one; and that, the day after the peace, they again contested the frontier which the treaties had assured him the day before? It seems that at the end of each war all that was done was to mark the point from which the next war was to start, and each of these three powers marked it, this point, as far as it could, on the enemy's ground. In this regard, let us admire here, as one of the most incredible predictions of a great genius, an observation of Montesquieu made soon a century ago:

"Until now," he said, "we have seen the peoples of the North, attracted by the climate, invade the South and found lasting settlements there. It is possible, it is even probable that, within a century, the peoples of the South are flowing back towards the North; but the chances will not be the same, and large armies will have to perish there."

Without believing in predictions, is it not permissible to be struck by this one, when in 1812 we saw, for the third time in six years, the two most powerful monarchs of southern and northern Europe declare war?

Indeed, long before 1812, the misunderstanding between the Emperors of France and Russia had assumed too serious a character for no one to expect to see a serious rupture between them soon.
All the cabinets of the European powers had set in motion. Prussia, no longer showing the same eagerness as in the past to ally herself with Napoleon, unofficially attempted a sort of mediation between France and Russia.

Frederick-William sent his aide-de-camp Knesebeck to St. Petersburg, to conjure the Emperor Alexander not to avoid the explanations which the Emperor Napoleon seemed to desire, and to give sufficient powers to his ambassador in Paris, Kurakin, to treat for a reconciliation. The King of Prussia believed himself authorized to take this step, as much by the bonds of friendship which existed between him and Alexander, as by the interest of his States, which would have had to suffer more than any other from the burden of this war, if it had come to break out.

To appreciate the welcome given by Alexander to this overture, it must not be forgotten that after the Treaty of Tilsit he had not been long without conceiving the thought of escaping the pre-eminence of France; that after Napoleon's marriage to Marie-Louise, he guessed that the great crisis was approaching which was to consolidate or annihilate Russian domination on the continent. He therefore applied himself, from that moment, to organizing all the means to support this terrible struggle. Already, in 1810, he adopted a plan of campaign which had been communicated to him and the execution of which was prepared secretly. A ukase, published throughout the Russian Empire, ordered a levy of two recruits out of five hundred men.* Alexander was therefore decided on war; he didn't have to do anything to avoid it, only he wouldn't attack and would constantly be on the defensive. Later, he had the project of enjoining M. de Nesselrode at Paris to enter frankly into an explanation, but he considered this step useless, and the presence of his ambassador must have sufficed. As for the continental system, the Czar claimed to have no relations with England. He maintained that, not having undertaken to prohibit commerce with neutrals, he could not deprive his nation of it; and that in the end, with the forces which he kept on his feet, more condescension would be weakness.

* See this exhibit in the appendix to part one.

The obligation in which Alexander claimed to be, to protest against the reunion to France of the Duchy of Oldenburg, was not reduced to a vain threat. In the month of February 1811, Prince Kurakin had addressed to the Duke of Cadore (M. de Champagny), still Minister for Foreign Affairs, a note previously announced as containing a protest. The Duke of Cadore returned his missive to Prince Kurakin unopened, not wishing, he told him, "if it was a protest, to receive it: because a protest* is an unfriendly act, and that, joined to the ukase of his master, on the customs, would leave no more doubt that Russia wanted to separate from France."


As the Emperor Alexander continued to see an infringement of the Treaty of Tilsit in the displacement of the Duchy of Oldenburg, Napoleon, for his part, found one in the ukase on customs. This ukase, of 13/19 December 1810, by prohibiting French wines and silks, modified the tariff in a direction quite favorable to English trade. Napoleon consequently reminded Russia of Article 5 of this treaty, which, pending the conclusion of a new pact of commerce, restored the commercial relations of the two countries to the footing on which they had previously been.
The Duke of Vicenza, in attributing the change in his situation in Russia to the bad humor produced by the reunion of the Duchy of Oldenburg, forgot that, from 13 December 1810, the very day on which the senatus-consultum was adopted in France relating to this meeting, he had written: “They are silent with me; the trust that was granted to me here is worn out.” The silence kept towards this ambassador since the beginning of December, the cooling of the Czar's relations with him, thus dated back to a period prior to the acts on which the Russian recriminations rested: this court had therefore already taken a decision in advance? Be that as it may, the Duke of Vicenza, ill and upset, despairing of reviving between the two emperors the same kind of relations, long maintained by his care, asked for his recall: Napoleon consented. Jealous to show again in this circumstance how much he had at heart to please Alexander in everything Napoleon made known to this prince, by the Duke of Vicenza himself, the individuals on whom he had cast his eyes to replace him: they were Mme. de La Rochefoucauld, who had been ambassador at The Hague; M. de Narbonne, then Minister at Munich, and General Lauriston, his aide-de-camp. “He wished to know,” he said in his letter, "which of these three persons it was whose choice would be more agreeable to the Czar?"

However, before the Duke of Vicenza left Russia, Napoleon gave him further instructions on the language he should use regarding the Duchy of Oldenburg. "The terms of the senatus-consultum are precise," he said to him; "I have done what was depended on me by offering the Duchy an exact and real indemnity. I charge you with having a conference M. de Romanzoff and the Emperor, to declare to both of them that I persist in the alliance; that I see no possible circumstance in which I will make war against Russia, the only case except when she would place herself with the England; that I have no alliance with any power, and that my policy is in the same position."* These statements were true: no other alliance had yet been formed; nowhere were negotiations started. Moreover, we cannot do better here than to let Napoleon speak again, and to let him speak in this language which belonged to him alone, with those forms and expressions which can only be for the use of a powerful prince, placed outside the vulgar line of sovereigns. The letter which we are about to quote, in almost all its extent, is dated 28 February 1811; it was brought to the Emperor Alexander by M. de Chernishev, his aide-de-camp, and the most active intermediary in the correspondence between the two emperors.

*Confidential letter from the Emperor to the Duke of Vicenza, Ambassador to Russia, dated 27 February 1811.

After announcing to the Czar that he had appointed General Lauriston to succeed the Duke of Vicenza near him and telling him that he instructed Colonel Chernishev to speak to His Imperial Majesty of his sentiments of affection for him, Napoleon added: "These feelings will not change, although I cannot hide from myself that Your Majesty no longer has any friendship for me. It causes me to make protests and all kinds of difficulties for Oldenburg, when I do not refuse to give an equivalent indemnity and when the situation of this country, which has always been the center of smuggling with Great Britain, makes me an indispensible duty, for the success of the struggle in which I am engaged with her, of the reunion of Oldenburg to my States."

"Your Majesty's last ukase, in substance and especially in form, is specially directed against the commerce of France. In other times, Your Majesty, before taking such a step, would have made it known to me, and I might perhaps have suggested to him means which, in fulfilling his intentions, would, however, have prevented this from appearing, in the eyes of Europe, as a
change of system. Everyone has considered it thus, and already our alliance no longer exists in the opinion of England. This opinion, supposing it to be false, is none the less a great evil."

"Let Your Majesty allow me to tell him frankly: he has forgotten the good he has gained from our alliance; and yet, let him examine what has happened since Tilsit? By this treaty, Your Majesty was to restore Moldavia and Wallachia* to the Turks; however, instead of restoring them, he united them in his influence. Moldavia and Wallachia make up a third of Turkey of Europe: it is an immense conquest which, by supporting the vast Russian empire on the Danube, removes all strength from Turkey, and, one can even say it, annihilates the Ottoman Empire; but, without my confidence in your Majesty, several very unfortunate campaigns could not have led France to despoil her former ally in this way. In Sweden, while I was restoring the conquests I had made over that power, I consented to your Majesty keeping Finland, which makes up a third of the Swedish States. Since this meeting, we can say that there is no longer Sweden, since Stockholm is at the forefront of the kingdom; and yet Sweden, in spite of the false policy of her king, was also one of the old friends of France. As a reward, Your Majesty excludes my trade from Moldavia to Finland and worries me about what I am doing below the Elbe! Insinuating men, stirred up by England, weary your Majesty's ears with slanderous talk. I want, they claim, “to restore Poland! I was able to do it at Tilsit; twelve days after the battle of Friedland, I could have been in Vilna.”

*The Emperor Alexander, less to make a serious objection than to play on the words, said to the Duke of Vicence: “Valais is well worth Wallachia.”

"If I had wanted to restore Poland, I would have disinterested Austria in Vienna, in 1809."

"I could in 1810, when all of Your Majesty's troops were engaged against the Ottoman Porte."

"I probably could again, and at the same time, without waiting for your Majesty to complete, with Turkey, an arrangement which will probably be concluded soon."

"Since I did not do it at any of these times, it is therefore that the restoration of Poland was not in my intentions; but, if I do not want to change anything in the state of Poland, I also have the right to demand that no one meddling in what I am doing on this side of the Elbe. However, it is true that our enemies have succeeded: the fortifications that Your Majesty has erected on twenty points of the Dvina, the protest of which Prince Kurakin spoke for Oldenburg, and the ukase sufficiently prove it. I am the same for you; but I am struck by the evidence of the facts and compelled to think that Your Majesty is entirely disposed, as soon as circumstances permit, to arrange with England, which is the same thing as bringing war between the two empires. Your Majesty once abandoning our alliance and burning the conventions of Tilsit, it is evident that war would ensue, a few months sooner or a few months later. That state of mistrust and uncertainty has disadvantages for your Majesty's empire as for mine. The result must be, for one as for the other, to stretch the springs of the two empires to put us in a position, all this is unfortunate. If Your Majesty has no plans to get back together with England, he will feel the need, for he and for me, to dissipate all these clouds. You have no security, since you told the Duke of Vicence that you would make war on your borders; and security is the primary good of two great states."
"I beg Your Majesty to read this letter in a good spirit, to see nothing in it that is not conciliatory and likely to eliminate, on both sides, all species of mistrust, and to re-establish the two nations, under all points of view in the intimacy of an alliance which, for nearly four years, has been so happy."

If this letter from Napoleon to Alexander presents neither the pomp nor the brilliance of the language which the historians of antiquity ordinarily lend to their heroes, if this letter, we say, does not offer the laborious concision of some publicists, it contains none the less very remarkable passages, and at least doubles its value, as far as history is concerned, because it was Napoleon who dictated it, at a single stroke, to his secretary, indicating to him the words that should be emphasized.

In truth, when Napoleon said to Alexander: "In other times, before taking such measures against my trade, Your Majesty would have made it known to me," he is readying the flank for a just and easy retaliation of the same reproach applied to the occupation of the Duchy of Oldenburg; but Napoleon was far from exaggerating the facts when he recalled the sacrifices to which he had consented for the advantage of Russia, the abandonment of a third of Turkey in Europe and that of a third of Sweden, the oldest allies from France. Napoleon did not even give these concessions their real gravity, for he himself did not appreciate them as they really were; but he was right when he complained of having contributed to the aggrandizement of Russia only to give greater latitude to the interdiction of French trade, by extending this exclusion from Moldavia to Finland.

With regard to Russian anxieties about Poland, Napoleon proved only too well that he had never formed a fixed project for the re-establishment of that State, since he had not taken advantage of any of the opportunities which had been offered to him to undertake it; in short, if he had been wronged in his conduct, it was not for Russia to make him a crime, but she had known how to profit by it.

Nevertheless, the difficulties which arose between the two cabinets of Saint-Cloud and Saint-Petersburg, on the terms of the convention to be concluded on the subject of Poland, seeming to cause much concern to Russia, the Duke of Cadore ordered the ambassador to make M. de Romanzoff understand that all the symptoms of discord which still alarmed Europe came from him and his stubbornness in sticking to one drafting rather than another, and that he himself had missed the opportunity to link the Emperor by a convention, of which His Majesty would have admitted all the stipulations, while refusing only a sentence of propriety. "In conversing with the Emperor Alexander," added the French minister, "speak also to his heart; interest his honor and his sensibility. Tell him that the sovereign whom he places in such a painful position is he who, by his own admission, served him so well; the one to whom he said at Tilsit: You have saved the Russian Empire. The price of this eminent service would therefore be for the Emperor Napoleon to be forced to make war on Russia in order to save his own honor, and to avoid the reproach of having suffered, at this point of glory at which he has arrived, what Louis XV, asleep in the arms of his mistresses, would never have endured; etc."

Despite the deep resentment caused him by the Russian customs regulations, Napoleon nevertheless did not want to see in this obvious aggression a cause of war, but rather a reason to
be on his guard. "I will not make war," he wrote*, "for reasons of ukase and tariff; but I will hold myself in measure against the effects of the evil spirit which dictated this act... I said myself to M. de Chernishev that, since I learned of the ukase, I had levied conscription in my Empire, and that this act cost me a hundred million this year. I am therefore sending six Polish battalions to reinforce the Danzig garrison."

*Letter from Napoleon to his Minister of Foreign Affairs, 3 March.

Napoleon also wanted the Duke of Vicence to be informed of these arrangements to reassure the cabinet of St. Petersburg: the Ambassador was to say that they had been made to protect that place against the attempts of the English.

Precisely on the same day that Napoleon transmitted this kind of information to his ambassador in Saint Petersburg, Alexander used the same mode of justification. According to him, it was France which had made the first arming. "England," he said, "has vainly knocked at all the doors in my house: all have remained closed to her. If I have made any interior preparations, it is only with the object of not being taken unawares, if applicable." We shall soon see if the Emperor of Russia was in good faith in these belated and modest confessions.

In the meantime, General Lauriston had arrived at St. Petersburg on 9 May 1811. The Duke of Vicence had, two days later, his audience of leave, and the new ambassador, on the same day, his first audience with the Czar. At first glance, this prince endeavored to demonstrate that it was the Emperor Napoleon who had lacked confidence in him*. The territorial meetings had undoubtedly hurt him; and if they had been so sensitive to him, it was because no notice had been given of them before their execution. However, an article, published in Paris by the Gazette de France, on the union of the two empires, had been very agreeable to him.


Then Alexander said to General Lauriston:

"If your emperor only showed the desire to go an inch ahead of me, I would soon have gone a fathom ahead of him."

However, in all Napoleon's letters to the Emperor of Russia, there was a very marked character of advances, and if he had not spoken in a more precise manner, it was because they had affected with him to elude even the most friendly explanations, and that Russia always seemed to place herself, towards him, in a threatening attitude. Also, in a somewhat lively explanation with Prince Kurakin, he had said to him:

"Hey! Mr. Ambassador, you come to me with your helmet on your head, instead of having a white baton in your hand."*

*Bignon, History of France Under Napoleon, volume X, chap. I.

At the second audience that Alexander granted Lauriston, he said to him:
"The Emperor Napoleon has taken Oldenburg; it is up to him to offer something for compensation. As for me, I cannot make a request which would tend to despoil anyone. I will prove to the Emperor your master "that I had no desire for the Duchy of Danzig, for I will not attack. If I had wanted to attack, I have been ready for more than two months... Who could have prevented me? who still prevents me from doing so?"*

*Letter from General Lauriston, 1 June 1811.

This is precisely what Napoleon well knew; he even know much more than the Czar confessed. It was well known in Paris that there must have existed in St. Petersburg, at the beginning of 1811, a formal project of breaking abruptly with France. According to a concept reputed to be indisputable, the resolution was taken, the plan established, the means collected. The war against Turkey would have been reduced to a defensive which would have occupied only a few people. A feeble corps of observation would have sufficed on the side of Sweden, from which there was nothing to fear. An army of 120 to 130,000 men, closely followed by a reserve of 60 to 80,000 men, would have invaded the Duchy of Warsaw. A part of this army would have immediately marched on the Oder; it would have drawn Prussia into its movement, and obliged Saxony, if not to take sides against France, at least to invoke neutrality as a favor. Without waiting for an entirely free addition of the King of Prussia*, they counted on the intelligence already shared with the principal military leaders of this kingdom, on the exaltation of the Prussian officers, who would have made the army march with them, the government to itself and the entire population; but for this enterprise to succeed, promptness and suddenness of execution were necessary. Everything in Russia was perfectly arranged in this spirit. Sealed orders, which were to be opened only on later advice, had been sent to the Russian generals; all that remained was to give the signal, but this signal was not given.**

*M. General Count Philippe de Ségur also speaks, in his beautiful book on the Russian campaign in 1812 (volume I, chap. II, page 17), of a resolution adopted in Russia to attack at the beginning of 1811, a resolution, according to the eloquent historian, provoked by Frederick-William himself, who believing his ruin sworn by Napoleon, because the latter had exclaimed one day and in a moment of bad humor, speaking of the King of Prussia: "It may have left so many countries to this man!" Frederick-William, we say, would have liked to make a last effort to escape this imaginary ruin.

**Bignon, History of France under Napoleon, tome X, chap. I.

It must also be said that Alexander had completely subjugated, fascinated the Duke of Vicence; his words seemed sacred to this ambassador, who had a kind of worship for the czar. M. de Caulaincourt was therefore no longer capable of following, of appreciating a situation outside his mind. Alexander had only made him write to his court, what he had wanted. In such delicate circumstances, at a time when so many clouds were rising between the two empires, Napoleon had thought it his duty, at the request of his ambassador himself, to send General Lauriston to Saint Petersburg to replace him. He had befriended for a long time and in whom he had complete confidence. One might think him an observer shrewd enough to appreciate the true state of minds in Russia. He had enough study to grasp the character of Alexander, a mixture of generosity and ambition, loyalty and shrewdness; true expression of that Russian spirit which derives simultaneously from Slavic vanity and the skill of the Greeks of the old world. Personally well
received by the Czar, Lauriston did not, however, enjoy the favor that his predecessor had obtained. And then, the dispatches of the new ambassador had, on principle, another military bearing: "You are being deceived," he wrote to Napoleon; -Preparations are being made here (St. Petersburg) with discretion and promptness; Alexander is operating on a vast scale; etc."*

* Correspondence from M. de Lauriston, May 1812.

"Who prevents me from attacking?" had the Emperor Alexander indeed said to General Lauriston? We don't know; however, it would be curious to know why the Czar, if he had not intended to take the initiative in this great rupture, happened to have such a lead in his gathering of troops, that he could have attacked. Indeed, from the month of February 1811, while for a similar attack Napoleon would still have needed immense dispositions and long marching movements... Well! it is Napoleon himself who teaches us in Sainte-Hélène**:

** Memorial.

"The Emperor Alexander," he said, "is a clever, very ambitious man, who seeks to make himself popular. It is his weakness to believe himself learned in the art of war; he does not likes nothing so much as to hear himself complimented on that, although all the military operations which he himself has directed have been judged false and disastrous. 1805, 1806 and 1807, had advised him, was badly treated by Alexander, because of the resolutions he had made him take; and, when at the beginning of 1811 this same M. de Romanzoff gave him, again, the certainty that the time had come when, embarrassed by Spanish affairs, I would make sacrifices to avoid war, that the opportunity was most favorable, that it had to be seized, that it was only a question of to show himself and to speak firm; this time, Alexandre, although he had put himself perfectly in position, did not believe in the predictions of M. de Romanzoff; perhaps also did he not have faith in his allies, Prussia above all, and he was right; all this, I say, added Napoleon, caused the war in Russia, instead of beginning in 1811, to take place only in 1812: that is the whole secret."