

The SAINT JOHN GAZETTE.

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THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE
COURT AND CABINET OF ST. CLOUD.
As a series of Letters from a resident in Paris to a Noble-
man in London, written during the months of
August, September and October, 1805.

LETTER XLII.

Paris, September, 1805.

MY LORD,

I AM told that it was the want of pecuniary resources that made Buonaparte so ill-tempered on his last levee day. He would not have come here at all, but preceded his army to Stralburgh, had his minister of finances, Gaudin, and his minister of the public treasury, Marbois, been able to procure forty-four millions of livres, (1,800,000l.) to pay a part of the arrears of the troops; and for the speedy conveyance of ammunition and artillery towards the Rhine.

Immediately after his arrival here, Buonaparte sent for the Directors of the bank of France, informing them that within twenty-four hours they must advance him thirty-six millions of livres, (1,500,000l.) upon the revenue of the last quarter of 1803. The president of the bank, Senator Garat, demanded two hours to lay before the Emperor the situation of the bank, that His Majesty might judge what sum it was possible to spare, without ruining the credit of an establishment, hitherto so useful to the commerce of the empire. To this Buonaparte replied, that he was not ignorant of the resources, or of the credit of the bank, no more than of its public utility; but that the affairs of state suffered from every hour's delay, and that therefore he insisted upon having the sum demanded even within two hours, partly in paper and partly in cash; and were they to shew any more opposition, he would order the bank and all its effects to be seized that moment. The directors bowed and returned to the bank; whither they were followed by four waggons escorted by Hussars and belonging to the financial department of the Army of England. In these were placed eight millions of livres in cash; and twenty-eight millions in bank notes were delivered to M. Lefevre, the secretary-general of Marbois, who presented, in exchange, Buonaparte's bond and security for the amount, bearing an interest of five per cent. yearly.

When this money-transaction was known to the public, the alarm became general, and long before the hour the bank is usually open, the adjoining streets were crowded with persons, desiring to exchange their notes for cash. During the night, the directors had taken care to pay themselves for the bank notes in their own possession with silver or gold; and as they expected a run, they ordered all persons to be paid in copper coin, as long as any money of this metal remained. It required a long time to count those half-pennies and centimes, (five of which make a sous or half-penny) but the people were not tired with waiting until towards three o'clock in the afternoon, when the bank is shut up. They then became so clamorous, that a company of Gens d'Armes was placed, for protection, at the entrance of the bank; but as the tumult increased, the street was surrounded by the police guards, and above six hundred individuals, many of them women, were carried, under an escort, to different police commissaries, and to the prefecture of the police; there most of them, after being examined, were reprimanded and released. The same night the police spies reported in the coffee-houses of the Palais Royal, and on the Boulevards, that this run on the bank was encouraged, and paid for by English emissaries, some of whom were already taken, and would be executed on the next day. On the morning, however, the streets adjoining the bank were still more crowded, and the crowd still more tumultuous, because payment was refused for all notes but those of five hundred livres (211l.) The activity of the police agents, supported by the Gens d'Armes and police soldiers, again restored order, after several hundred persons had been again taken up for their mutinous conduct. Of these, many were, on the same evening, loaded with chains, and placed in carts, under military escort, paraded about near the bank and the Palais Royal; the police having as a measure of safety, under suspicion that they were influenced by British gold, condemned them to be transported to Cayenne; and the carts set out on the same night for Rochefort, the place of their embarkation.

On the following day, not an individual approached the bank, but all trade and all payments were at a stand; nobody would sell but for ready-money, and nobody, who had bank notes would part with cash. Some Jews and money-brokers, in the Palais Royal, offered cash for these bills, at a discount of from ten to twenty per cent. But these usurers were, in their turn, taken up and transported, as agents of Pitt. An interview was then demanded by the directors and principal bankers, with the ministers of finances and of the public treasury. In this conference it was settled, that as soon as the two millions of dollars, on their way from Spain, had arrived at Paris, the bank should re-assume its payments. These dollars government would lend the bank for three months, and take in return its notes, but the bank was nevertheless to pay an interest of six per cent, during that period. All the bankers agreed not to press, unnecessarily, for any exchange of bills into cash; and to keep up the credit of the bank even by the individual credit of their own houses.

You know, I suppose, that the bank of France has never issued but two sort of notes; those of one thousand livres (211l.) and those of five hundred livres (211l.) At the day of its stoppage, sixty millions of livres (2,500,000l.) of the former, and fifteen millions of livres, (625,000l.) of the latter, were in circulation; and I have heard a banker assert, that the bank had not then six millions of livres, (250,000l.) in money and bullion, to satisfy the claims of its creditors, or to honour its bills.

The shock given to the credit of the bank by this last requisition of Buonaparte, will be felt for a long time, and will with difficulty ever be repaired under his despotic government. Even now, when the bank pays in cash, our merchants make a difference from five to ten per cent, between purchasing for specie or paying in bank notes; and this mistrust will not be lessened hereafter. You may perhaps, object, that as long as the bank pays, it is absurd for any one possessing its bills to pay dearer than with cash, which might so easily be obtained. This objection would stand with regard to your, or any other free country, but here where no payments are made in gold, but always in silver or copper, it requires a cart to carry away forty, thirty, or twenty thousand livres, in coin of these metals; and would immediately excite suspicion, that a bearer of these bills was an emissary of our enemies, or an enemy of our government. With us, unfortunately, suspicion is the lance as conviction, and chastisement follows it as its shadow.

A manufacturer of the name of Debrais established in the Rue St. Martin, where he had for years carried on business in the woollen line, went to the bank, two days after it had begun to pay. He demanded, and obtained exchange, for twenty-four thousand livres, (1000l.) in notes, necessary for him to pay what was due by him to his workmen. The same afternoon six of our custom-house officers, accompanied by police agents and Gens d'Armes, paid him a domiciliary visit under pretence of searching for English goods. Several bales, as being of that description, were seized, and Debrais was carried a prisoner to La Force. On being examined by Fouche, he offered to prove by the very men who had fabricated the suspected goods, that they were not English. The minister silenced him by saying, that government had not only evidence of the contrary, but was convinced that he was employed as an English agent to hurt the credit of the bank, and therefore if he did not give up his accomplices or employers, had condemned him to transportation. In vain did his wife and daughters petition to Madame Buonaparte; Debrais is now at Rochefort, if not already embarked for our colonies.

When he was arrested, a seal, as usual, was put on his house; from which his wife and family were turned out, until the police should have time to take an inventory of his effects, and had decided on his fate. When Madame Debrais, after much trouble and many pecuniary sacrifices, at last obtained permission to have the seals removed and re-enter her house, she found that all her plate, and more than half her goods and furniture, had been stolen and carried away. Upon her complaint of this theft, she was thrown into prison for not being able to support her complaint with proofs, and for attempting to vilify the characters of the agents of our government. She is still in prison, but her daughters are by her orders disposing of the remainder of their parents' property, and intend to join their father, as soon as their mother has recovered her liberty.

The same tyranny that supports the credit of our bank, also keeps up the price of our stocks. Any of our great stock-holders, who fell out to any large amount, if they are unable to account for, or unwilling to declare the manner in which they intend to employ their money, are immediately arrested; sometimes transported to the colonies; but more frequently exiled into the country, to remain under the inspection of some police agent; and are not allowed to return here without the previous permission of our government. Those of them who are upstarts, and have made their fortunes since the revolution by plunder, or as contractors, are still more severely treated; and are often obliged, to renounce part of their ill-gotten wealth to save the remainder; or to preserve their liberty or lives. A revival of their former accounts, or an inspection of their past transactions, are certain and efficacious threats to keep them in silent submission, as they all well understand the meaning of them.

Even foreigners, whom our numerous national bankruptcies have not yet disheartened, are subject to these measures of rigour or vigour requisite to preserve our public credit. In the autumn last year a Dutchman of the name of Vander Winkel, sold out by his agent for three millions of livres (125,000l.) in our stock on one day, for which he bought up bills upon Hamburg and London. He lodged in the hotel des quatre nations, Rue Grenelle, where the landlord who is a patriot, introduced some police agents into his apartments during his absence. These broke open all his trunks, drawers and even his writing desk, and when he entered, seized his person, and carried him to the Temple. By his correspondence it was discovered that all this money was to be brought over to England; a reason more than sufficient to incur the suspicion of our government.—Vander Winkel spoke very little French, and he continued therefore in confinement three weeks before he was examined, as our secret police had not at Paris, any of its agents, who spoke Dutch. Carried before Fouche, he

avowed that the money was destined for England, there to pay for some plantations which he desired to purchase in Surinam and Barbice. His interpreter advised him by the orders of Fouche, to alter his mind; and as he was fond of colonial property, lay out his money in plantations at Cayenne, which was in the vicinity of Surinam, and where government would recommend him advantageous purchases.—It was hinted to him also, that this was a particular favour, and a proof of the generosity of our government; as his papers contained many matters, that easily might be construed to be of a treasonable nature. After consulting with Schimmelpenninck, the ambassador of his country, he wrote for his wife and children, and was seen safe with them to Bourdeaux by our police agents, who had hired an American vessel to carry them all to Cayenne. This certainly is a new method to populate our colonies with capitalists.

LETTER XLIII.

Paris, September, 1805.

MY LORD,

Hanover has been a mine of gold to our government, to its generals, to its commissaries, and to its favourites. According to the boasts of Talleyrand, and avowal of Berthier, we have drawn from it, within two years, more wealth than has been paid in contributions to the Electors of Hanover for this century past; and more than half a century of peace can restore to that unfortunate country. It is reported here, that each person employed in a situation to make his fortune, in the continental states of the King of England (a name given to Hanover in courtesy to Buonaparte) was laid under contribution, and expected to make certain *doitours* to Madame Buonaparte; and it is said that she has received from Mortier, three hundred thousand livres, and from Bernadotte two hundred and fifty thousand livres, besides other large sums from our military commissaries, treasurers, and other agents in the Electorate.

General Mortier is one of the few favourites officers of Buonaparte, who have distinguished themselves under his rivals Pichegru and Moreau, without ever serving under him. Edward Adolph Casimir Mortier, is the son of a shopkeeper, and was born at Cambrai in 1768. He was a shopman, with his father until 1791, when he obtained a commission, first as Lieutenant of Carabiniers, and afterwards as Captain of the first battalion of volunteers of the department of the North. His first fight of an enemy was on the 30th of April 1793, near Quivrain, where he had a horse killed under him. He was present in the battles of Jemappes, of Neerwinde and of Pellenberg. At the battle of Hondschoote he distinguished himself so much, as to be promoted to an adjutant-general. He was wounded at the battle of Fleurus, and again at the passage of the Rhine in 1795 under General Moreau. During 1796 and 1797, he continued to serve in Germany, but in 1798 and 1799, he headed a division in Switzerland; from which Buonaparte recalled him in 1800 to command the troops, in the capital and its environs. His address to Buonaparte, announcing the votes of the troops under him respecting the consulate for life, and the elevation to the Imperial throne, contain such mean and abject flattery, that, for a true soldier, it must have required more self-command and more courage to pronounce them, than to brave the fire of a hundred canons; but these very addresses, contemptible as their contents are, procured him the field-marshal's staff. Mortier well knew his man, and that his cringing in anti-chambers would be better rewarded than his services in the field. I was not present when Mortier spoke so shamefully; but I have heard from persons who witnessed this farce, that he had his eyes the whole time fixed on the ground, as if to say; "I grant that I speak as a despicable being, and I grant that I am so; but what shall I do, tormented as I am by ambition, to figure among the great, and to riot among the wealthy. Have compassion on my weakness, or if you have not, I will console myself with the idea, that my meanness is only of the duration of half an hour, while its recompense—my rank,—will be permanent."

Mortier married in 1799 the daughter of the landlord of the *Belle Sauvage* inn at Coblenz, who was pregnant by him, or by some other guest of her father. She is pretty but not handsome; and she takes advantage of her husband's *complaisance*, to console herself both for his absence and infidelities. When she was delivered of her last child, Mortier positively declared that he had not slept with her for twelve months, and the babe has, indeed, less resemblance of him than of his valet de chambre. The child was baptised with great splendour; the Emperor and the Empress were the sponsors, and it was christened by cardinal Fesch. Buonaparte presented Madame Mortier on this occasion with a diamond necklace, valued at one hundred and fifty thousand livres (6000l.)

During his different campaigns, and particularly during his glorious campaign in Hanover, he has collected property to the amount of seven millions of livres, laid out in estates and lands. He is considered by other generals as a brave captain, but an indifferent chief; and among our fashionables and our courtiers, he is held up as a model of connubial fidelity; satisfying himself with keeping three mistresses only.

There was no truth in the report, that his recall from Hanover was in consequence of any disgrace; on the contrary it was a new proof of Buonaparte's confidence and attachment. He was recalled to take the command of the