

TIME LIMIT HAS NOW EXPIRED

Story of a Brutal Murder by Napoleon — For Twenty-Five Years Has Been Kept a Secret—Now First Given to the Public By State of Prussia, To Whom It Was Bequeathed By an Eye-Witness to the Cold-Blooded Act

The author of the following historical sketch, Dr. Heinrich Durrer, witnessed Napoleon's murderous frenzy, at Erfurt, in June, 1812. Durrer was a school-boy at Erfurt, when the great emperor held a review there before entering upon the Russian campaign, says the Cincinnati Enquirer. Durrer bequeathed his manuscript to the Prussian state on condition that it should not be made public until twenty-five years after his death. The time limit has now expired.

In the middle of June, 1812, the emperor Napoleon re-entered Erfurt, which, six years before, he had taken from the king of Prussia. There were no newspapers in those days that dared print anything concerning the great Caesar's movements, except such information as his minister of police furnished. Our local adviser, Le Moniteur, organ of the French administration in Erfurt, officially announced that nothing more serious than a great maneuver, covering the whole of Thuringia, was contemplated, but the rumors that the conqueror was preparing to invade the Russian empire wouldn't down.

They had been in the air for some months past. Now the drum was beating in all the kingdoms and duchies lying in the path of Napoleon's feet, and, with the exception of Muscovites and Britains, all nations were arming, in obedience to the peremptory orders from the Tuileries, while the citizens paying for the gigantic war preparations were told to believe the peace would not be disturbed.

The reports of the great struggle that was to ensue in the North were correct, though. A week after Napoleon's entry in our city, June 22, 1812, he declared war against Alexander, whom, until recently, he had called his only friend.

A HIGH SCHOOL BOY.

I was then in my fifteenth year and a pupil of the Latin High School. These reminiscences are taken from a diary I kept in these youthful days, when the mind is open to impressions and undisturbed by prejudice. Napoleon occupied his old quarters in the government building, once the residence of the representatives of the electoral princes of Mayence, who were Erfurt's sovereigns from 1685 to 1802, but his visit was void of the pomp and circumstance he sometimes chose to affect. I remember that my parents and others indulged in fearful comment on that account, as they regarded it as sure prognostics of political disturbances. There was no courtly display and no more ceremony about his coming and going, as if he were a general in camp.

No wonder that the Erfurters drew comparisons between Napoleon's last visit and this. When he was in the city in September, 1806, for the avowed purpose of dictating peace to England, he had always a dozen or more sovereigns trotting at his heels, and beautiful Theresa Bourgois, the famous tragedienne of the Theatre Francaise, had apartments near his own at Government House. One day she and her troupe performed "Phedra" before a veritable "parquet of kings," defeated

one of them; on the next Theresa publicly entered the headquarters of Czar Alexander. Napoleon had "given" her to his imperial friend, at the same time warning him against her over-generosity in matters of the heart. Now all was changed. There were none of the gorgeous trappings of royalty, no gayeties. It was reported that Napoleon didn't even have a traveling coach along.

ORDERED A GRAND REVIEW.

In his wake came vast masses of cavalry, that went into bivouac on the outskirts of Erfurt and along the river Gera. Napoleon let them rest for a day and night, but at 3 a. m. on the second morning caused the alarm to be sounded, ordering a grand review for 6 o'clock sharp.

From the orderly of a French officer quartered at my father's home I learned that the parade was to be held on the triangle bounded by the city and the villages of Dillestedt and Meichenhof, and with my schoolmates set out early to witness the show. As luck would have it, we secured an excellent look-out at the Rabenstein, or Gallow Hill, which in those days was the city's place of execution.

We had no sooner taken our stand there, when we noticed a cloud of dust in the road leading from Krampfer gate, and as it came nearer we distinguished the breast plates and horse-tailed helmets of imperial cuirassiers, indicating the presence of the caesar, whereupon we all ran down the hill and lined up along the road. The cuirassiers were followed by a platoon of mounted chasseurs, some buglers and the master of horse. Then came Napoleon, who had already slaughtered a million of men.

He was no longer "lean, shy, laconic, all fire and spirit," as described in the school book of the day, but fat and apparently phlegmatic of mien. Physical decay had already left its impress on that powerful frame and countenance. His face was bloated, earthen of color; his imperious eye seemed the only feature about him that was alive.

THE IMPERIAL PARADE.

The cavalcade having passed, we closed in behind, and so kept in touch with the imperial party for quite a while until the Weimar road, then in course of construction, was reached. At that point a cordon of troops made us halt. We were now about 500 paces distant from the actual review grounds, where the troops were drawn up in parallel formation, the open long-front facing us.

At a bugle sound, the emperor's guard of honor, composed of the foremost Erfurt citizens, fell back, and the inspection began. While all drums were beating and bands playing, Napoleon rode down the front, escorted by the colonel of each of the regiments in line and by his staff. The hoarse cries "Vive l'empereur" now rose from these, now from another thousand throats. It was a great sight, and the enthusiasm of the troops was spontaneous enough to be overwhelming.

After finishing the inspection of the left wing and the center of his army, Napoleon rode straight toward the right, drawing rein in front of the



Every day adds to New York's amazement over the sensational achievement of Eddie McDuffie, the fearless automobilist who daily drives his machine up an inclined plane of 45 degrees from the roof of Madison Square Garden to the top of the tall tower.

troopers standing at the extreme angle. Of course my comrades and myself immediately made for that part of the parade field, too, and got near enough to hear the emperor's voice, ringing out in sharp angry tones: we were, however, unable to distinguish his words.

EMPEROR WAS DISPLEASED.

The regiment to which he addressed himself was the Thirteenth Horse artillery, wearing green uniform. Something in its formation must have displeased the emperor, for he repeatedly rode down its front and flanks and through its lines, shooting wrathful glances at the men. Finally he picked out three troopers, ordering them to ride to the center of the open quadrangle. Arrived there they were told to dismount and unsaddle. At any rate, they dropped their blankets on the ground and deposit on it successively their arms and every piece of horse equipment. Napoleon scrutinizing their every movement with his eagle eye. But though this part of the inspection didn't seem to bring forth any infraction of the service rules, Napoleon was still unsatisfied.

Notwithstanding the fact that numerous ladies in carriages and on foot were present, the emperor commanded the troopers to undress. I didn't actually hear him issue the order, but the men would not have acted as they did but for an explicit command. At any rate, they doffed every one of their garments, including every shirt off their back, the emperor inspecting each in detail, trying the very buttons of the underclothes, while the disheartened audience followed his imperious gestures

and the violent words he uttered with increasing astonishment.

MURDERED THE OFFICER.

Finally Napoleon addressed himself again to the colonel of the Thirteenth, heaping abuse upon him, as far as we could make out. The latter thereupon approached the emperor, and hat in hand, seemed to offer explanations. I didn't catch his words, but I am sure he spoke in a dignified and respectful manner. Having said what he had to say he was about to withdraw—in fact, he was urging his horse, when Napoleon, suddenly advancing, drew his sword and thrust it to the hilt in the officer's breast.

As everybody saw, the blow was dealt with powerful impetus. I noticed the colonel wavering in the saddle for a moment or two, then he sank forward while a fountain of blood gushed in a crescent above his horse's head.

A moment later the emperor's numerous staff formed around the group, making it impossible for us to see what happened next, but after a minute passed in dreadful silence King Murat galloped forth and gave the sign for the bands to strike up, while at the same time a number of adjutants rode off in different directions, apparently with orders for the different commanders. The review was at an end, and the troopers prepared to return to bivouac. Once more the great body stood at attention, presenting arms, flags, flying, trumpets braying, a hundred golden eagles gliding in the sun. And the emperor faced the shouting thousands, raised his hat, and wheeled about to ride back to the city.

AUTOMOBILE CLIMB TO THE CLOUDS

only under the breath and among friends for at that time when spies were everywhere a word of criticism of Napoleon's acts cost many a man life and liberty. Mainly for that reason I have never been able to find out what prompted Napoleon to commit this crime, which, under the pressure of the ensuing political events, was soon forgotten. I thought of it again when I heard of Napoleon's remark after his retreat from Moscow, namely "that his health was never better." He boasted of feeling good when he had lost 200,000 soldiers!

Less than three years after the Erfurt murder the great emperor embarked for St. Helena, but in the meanwhile he had caused another 500,000 of human beings to be slaughtered.

THE TINY EARTH AND THE VAST UNIVERSE.

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