

**A NARRATIVE OF THE EVENTS WHICH
HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN FRANCE,
LANDING OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE,
ON THE FIRST OF MARCH, 1815, TILL THE
RESTORATION OF LOUIS XVIII**

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A narrative of the events which have taken place in France, Landing of Napoleon Bonaparte, on the first of march, 1815, till the restoration of Louis XVIII by Helen Maria Williams

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HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS

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WILLIAMS'S EVENTS IN FRANCE.

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OF
THE EVENTS WHICH HAVE TAKEN
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FROM THE
Landing of Napoleon Bonaparte

ON THE FIRST OF MARCH, 1815, TILL THE
RESTORATION OF LOUIS XVIII.

With an Account of the State of Society and Public
Opinion at that Period.

BY
HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS.



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NARRATIVE
OF
EVENTS IN FRANCE.

LETTER I.

MY DEAR SIR,

PARIS, April, 1815.

IF in the list of moral maxims anything had been left unsaid upon the evil of procrastination, this would be a fit occasion to add something to the stock of luminous observations made on that subject since the beginning of time. But why have you furnished me with a sad example of the truth of these precepts? Why, when the English hastened in multitudes to Paris, have you delayed your journey from week to week, till it can no longer be accomplished?

Although divided from each other by a geographical space of only a few short leagues, at what an immeasurable distance were the two countries which we inhabit separated by the ascendancy of that Implacable Will which had placed a barrier between the nations more insurmountable than

the wall of China! You will easily believe that I saw with pleasure the arrival once more of those groups of travellers who speak my native language, who remind me of the scenes of early life, who conjure up those images of the past which no heart recalls without emotion, and which "breathe a second spring." But amidst those successive crowds, why have I not seen the friend of my youth? Why have your chariot-wheels tarried, till I can no longer urge you to come, although I believe you would incur no personal danger by so doing? Our re-installed emperor is extremely mortified at the precipitation with which the English visitors fly from his dominion. It may indeed be observed, that in our paroxysms of political madness in this country we have usually imagination enough to blend a little variety in our proceedings; and therefore the English having been once detained, was probably the very reason why they had no such measure again to apprehend, since its folly and impolicy had been amply recognized. The English might, therefore, have applied to themselves the observation made long since by M. de la Fayette to the people, when they wanted the oath of the first federation to be repeated: "*Mes amis, le serment n'est pas une arriette, qu'on joue deux fois.*"

Fear, however, is very subject to reason amiss; the English have departed, and you will naturally defer your visit till the end of the present dynasty, which to me excludes not the hope of seeing you, perhaps ere long, in Paris. In the mean time I shall trace, as you desire, in a series of letters, the events which are passing before me, and which you will one day give to the public, if you consider my sketches as worthy its attention. I have been often asked by my countrymen of late, why I have so long discontinued to describe the scenes which are passing around me? I have perhaps done wrong, since I may at least pretend to be qualified for the task, inasmuch as it respects a knowledge of the subject, — I who, during my residence in Paris, have witnessed all the successive phases of its revolutions, who have so long marked the list of its remembrances, its calamities, its triumphs, and its crimes!

But the iron hand of despotism has weighed upon my soul, and subdued all intellectual energy. The Chevalier de Boufflers used to call Bonaparte "le cochemare de l'univers," the night-mare of the world; and indeed the idea of the consequences with which those were menaced who ventured to collect forbidden materials for history, was sufficient to chill this sort of courage. We

long believed the tyranny of Bonaparte to be confirmed, while now, persuaded that his new usurpation will not be durable, I shall no longer hang my harp upon the willows, and despair of the future.

I shall begin with the second volume of Napoleon's history, or, to use the words of Madame de Staël, of Bonaparte's adventures, leaving the first volume to a future period, or an abler historian. It would indeed be quite impossible for me, in the present agitation of my mind, to "begin at the beginning." I partake the common feeling experienced by all who have witnessed the French Revolution, that of an insuperable repugnance to returning on the past. When we reflect on all we have seen and suffered in this country, the soul recoils from such a host of fearful recollections, and we experience a moral sentiment which has perhaps some kind of analogy to the physical sensation described by Shakspeare, when he says,

"The very place puts toys of desperation,
Without more motive, into every brain."

Connected with this sentiment, those who have witnessed the Revolution feel also a sort of weariness of the memory of what is past. If the succession of time be measured by that of events, we have lived, not years, but ages of revolutionary life, and we are tired of the retrospect. In one