The King finding himself seated in the carriage, where he could neither speak to me nor be spoken to without witness, kept a profound silence . . .

The procession lasted almost two hours; the streets were lined with citizens, all armed, some with pikes and some with guns, and the carriage was surrounded by a body of troops, formed of the most desperate people of Paris. As another precaution, they had placed before the horses a number of drums, intended to drown any noise or murmur in favour of the King; but how could they be heard? Nobody appeared either at the doors or windows, and in the street nothing was to be seen, but armed citizens—citizens, all rushing toward the commission of a crime, which perhaps they detested in their hearts.

The carriage proceeded thus in silence to the Place de Louis XV and stopped in the middle of a large space that had been left round the scaffold: this space was surrounded with cannon, and beyond, an armed multitude extended as far as the eye could reach. As soon as the King perceived that the carriage stopped, he turned and whispered to me, 'We are arrived, if I mistake not.' My silence answered that we were. . . As soon as the King had left the carriage, three guards surrounded him and would have taken off his clothes, but he repulsed them with haughtiness: he undressed himself, untied his neckcloth, opened his shirt, and arranged it himself. The guards, whom the determined countenance of the King had for a moment disconcerted, seemed to recover their audacity. They surrounded him again and would have seized his hands. 'What are you attempting?' said the King, drawing back his hands. 'To bind you,' answered the wretches. 'To bind me,' said the King, with an indignant air. 'No! I shall never consent to that: do what you have been ordered, but you shall never bind me. . .'

The path leading to the scaffold was extremely rough and difficult to pass; the King was obliged to lean on my arm, and from the slowness with which he proceeded, I feared for a moment that his courage might fail; but what was my astonishment, when arrived at the last step, I felt that he suddenly let go my arm, and I saw him cross with a firm foot the breadth of the whole scaffold; silence, by his look alone, fifteen or twenty drums that were placed opposite to me; and in a voice so loud, that it must have been heard at the Pont Tournant, I heard him pronounce distinctly these memorable words: 'I die innocent of all the crimes laid to my charge; I pardon those who have occasioned my death; and I pray to God that the blood you are going to shed may never be visited on France.'

He was proceeding, when a man on horseback, in the national uniform, and with a ferocious cry, ordered the drums to beat. Many voices were at the same time heard encouraging the executioners. They seemed reanimated themselves, in seizing with violence the most virtuous of Kings, they dragged him under the axe of the guillotine, which with one stroke severed his head from his body.

All this passed in a moment. The youngest of the guards, who seemed about eighteen, immediately seized the head, and showed it to the people as he walked round the scaffold; he accompanied this monstrous ceremony with the most atrocious and indecent gestures. At first an awful silence prevailed; at length some cries of 'Vive la République!' were heard. By degrees the voices multiplied, and in less than ten minutes this cry, a thousand times repeated, became the universal shout of the multitude, and every hat was in the air.


**Discussion Questions**

**Clarifying**

1. How did Louis XVI respond as he faced execution?
2. How did the French citizens who witnessed the king's execution react?
3. **Making Inferences** Why do you think the soldier ordered the drums to beat as Louis XVI spoke from the scaffold?
Napoleon's Proclamation at Austerlitz

Napoleon Bonaparte, emperor of France, conducted a brilliant military campaign to expand the French empire. After French troops crushed a Third Coalition army of Austrians and Russians in the Battle of Austerlitz, Napoleon issued this victory proclamation on December 3, 1805. How do you think a French soldier might have responded to this proclamation?

Soldiers, I am satisfied with you. In the battle of Austerlitz you have justified what I expected from your intrepidity [unflinching courage]. You have covered yourselves with eternal glory. An army of one hundred thousand men which was commanded by the emperors of Russia and Austria has been in less than four hours either cut off or dispersed. Those that escaped your swords have thrown themselves into the lakes. Forty stands of colors, the stands of the Russian imperial guard, one hundred and twenty pieces of cannon, twenty generals, and above thirty thousand prisoners are the fruits of this ever-memorable battle. Their infantry, so celebrated and so superior to you in numbers, has proved unable to resist your charge, and henceforth you have no rivals to fear.

Thus in less than two months the third coalition is conquered and dissolved. Peace cannot be far off; but, as I promised my people before crossing the Rhine, I will conclude it only upon terms consistent with my pledge, which shall secure not only the indemnification [compensation for loss], but the reward, of my allies.

Soldiers, when the French people placed the imperial crown upon my head I trusted to you to enable me to maintain it in that splendor of glory which could alone give it value in my estimation. But at that moment our enemies entertained the design of tarnishing and degrading it; and the iron crown, which was gained by the blood of so many Frenchmen, they would have compelled me to place on the head of my bitterest foe—an extravagant and foolish proposal, which you have brought to naught on the anniversary of your emperor's coronation. You have taught them that it is easier for them to defy and to threaten than to subdue us.

Soldiers, when everything necessary to the security, the happiness, and the prosperity of our country has been achieved, I will return you my thanks in France. Then will you be the objects of my tenderest care. My people will receive you with rapture and joy. To say to me, "I was in the battle of Austerlitz," will be enough to authorize the reply, "That is a brave man."


Discussion Questions
1. **Clarifying** According to this proclamation, what happened to the Third Coalition army in the Battle of Austerlitz?
2. **Summarizing** What did French troops achieve as a result of this battle?
3. **Making Inferences** How would you characterize Napoleon's attitude toward the French soldiers?