

"To his majesty, King Frederick William of Prussia :

"HEADQUARTERS, WOLKERSDORF, June 8, 1809.

"SIR, MY BROTHER : The Prince of Orange, who has arrived at my headquarters here, has told me unreservedly, and with full confidence, of the repeated conversations he had with your majesty during his recent sojourn at Königsberg. You left no doubt in his mind as to your firm conviction that the existence of our two monarchies can be protected from the rapacious system of the Emperor Napoleon only by an active and cordial alliance. For a long time past, aware of the opinions and wisdom of your majesty, I could foresee that your majesty would not refuse to take a step, justified not less by the logic of events than the loyalty of the nations which Providence has confided to our care.

"The bearer, Colonel Baron Steigentesch, a distinguished staff-officer of my army, will confer with your majesty's government as to the questions which may arise in regard to an alliance between the two countries : he is authorized to regulate the proportions of the forces to be employed on both sides, and the other arrangements not less salutary than indispensable for the security of the two states. For the same reasons I shall speedily send instructions to my ambassador at Berlin in conformity with the overtures made by Count von der Goltz.

"Your majesty will permit me to assure you that I remain as ever,

Your most obedient,

"FRANCIS, Emperor of Austria."\*

While Count Stadion was reading the letter, the emperor closely watched the effect it produced upon the archduke. He saw that John was at first surprised, that his eyes gradually brightened, that his face crimsoned with joy, and that a smile played round his lips.

When Count Stadion was through, the archduke stepped up to the emperor with an expression of profound emotion and intense gratitude.

"Your Majesty," he cried, "you have filled me both with shame and ecstasy. Oh, give me your hand, let me press it to

\* "Lebensbilder," vol. iii., p. 266.

my lips ; let me thank you for this gracious punishment ! I am grateful, too, for the gracious confidence with which you initiate me into your plans."

"That is unnecessary," said the emperor, without giving him his hand ; "you need not thank me. Nor was it my intention to give you a special proof of my confidence. I did not cause the letter to be read to you in order to have you participate in my plans, but only to prove to you that I can make up my mind without your advice, and to request you not to molest me henceforth with any such suggestions. Now, brother, we have nothing further to say to each other. Return to Comorn, and carry out the generalissimo's order, as behooves a good officer, promptly, carefully, and without grumbling. Fortify and hold Raab, defend Presburg, take Altenburg by a *coup de main* ; in short, do all that the generalissimo wants you to do. If I should need your advice and wisdom, I shall send for you ; and when Baron Steigentesch returns from his mission to Prussia, you shall be informed of the results. Farewell, brother, and let me soon hear of new victories !"

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE REPLY OF THE KING OF PRUSSIA.

TWO weeks after this interview between the Archduke John and the emperor, the archduke, at the request of the emperor, repaired again to the imperial headquarters at Wolkersdorf, and sent in his name to his brother.

"You come just in time, brother," said the emperor, when John entered his cabinet. "I knew that Baron Steigentesch would arrive here to-day, hence I sent for you, for I promised to let you hear the reply of the King of Prussia to my proposal. The colonel did arrive a few minutes ago, and waits in the anteroom for an audience."

"Before admitting him, your majesty, pray listen to me," said John, in a grave, tremulous voice.

"I hope you do not intend to reveal a secret to me?" asked the emperor.

"No, your majesty; unfortunately that which I have to say to you will soon be known to everybody, and our enemies will take care to let their triumphant bulletins circulate the news throughout Europe."

"It is a defeat, then, that you have to announce to me?" asked the emperor, gloomily.

"Yes, your majesty, a defeat. I met the enemy yesterday at Raab [June 14, 1809]. Our men fought bravely; some performed the most heroic exploits; but the odds of the enemy were too overwhelming. The Viceroy of Italy attacked us with his well-disciplined veteran troops, thirty-nine thousand strong. In the outset, we, that is, the Archduke Palatine and I, were about as strong, including the Hungarian volunteers. But the very first attack of the enemy, the first volleys of musketry, caused the volunteers to fall back; they fled panic-struck, abandoned the hill where I had posted them, and rushed in wild disorder from the field of battle. The enemy then occupied the hill, and this decided the fate of the day against us, shortly after the commencement of the battle. However, we might have held out and gained a victory, if all had carried out my orders promptly and carefully, and if, as usually during this campaign, no obstacles had been placed in my way."

"Ah, archduke, to avoid charges being preferred against yourself, you intend to prefer charges against others!" exclaimed the emperor, shrugging his shoulders.

"Yes, your majesty; I charge Ignatius Giulay, Ban of Croatia, with violation of my orders, disobedience, and intentional delays in making the movements I had prescribed. I had ordered the Ban in time to join me at Comorn on the 13th of June, and he had positively assured me, by letter and verbally, that he would promptly be on hand on the stated day. I counted upon his arrival, and made my dispositions accordingly. The generalissimo had instructed me to keep open my communications with the main army on the right bank of the Danube by way of Raab; and I, therefore, started on the morning of the 13th from Comorn, firmly convinced that

Giulay's troops would join me in time and follow me. But I waited for him in vain; he failed me at the critical moment, despite my orders and his promises, and this was the principal reason why we lost the battle."\*

"You prefer a grave charge against a man whom I have always found to be faithful, brave, and honorable," said the emperor, with cutting coldness.

"Your majesty, I beg you to be so gracious as to call the Ban of Croatia to a strict account," exclaimed John, vehemently. "I beg you to be so gracious as to send for the orders which I gave him, and ask him why he did not obey them."

"I shall do so," replied the emperor, "and it is my conviction that he will be able to justify himself completely."

The Archduke John gave a start, a deathly pallor overspread his cheeks, his eyes shot fire, his lips opened to utter an impetuous word, but he restrained it forcibly; compressing his lips, pale and panting, he hastily moved back a few steps and approached the door.

"Stay!" ordered the emperor, in a harsh voice. "I have yet some questions to put to you. You are responsible for this battle of Raab, and you owe me some explanations concerning it. How was the retreat effected? Where are your forces now?"

"The retreat was effected in good order," said John, in a low, tremulous voice. "I marched with four battalions of grenadiers and two battalions of Gratz militia slowly along the heights to Als, where we arrived at midnight; and to-day we went back to Comorn. There our forces are now."

"And Raab? Have the enemy taken it already?"

"No, your majesty, it still holds out: but it will fall, as I told your majesty two weeks ago, for the generalissimo has sent me neither ammunition nor re-enforcements, despite my most pressing requests."

"Is that to be another charge?" asked the emperor, sternly.

"No," said John, mournfully; "it is only to be my defence, for unfortunately it is always necessary for me to defend myself."

\* See Schlosser's "History of the Eighteenth Century," vol. vii., p. 540.

"Ah, archduke, you always consider yourself the victim of cabals," exclaimed the emperor; "you believe yourself always persecuted and calumniated; you suspect invariably that you are slighted and placed in false positions by those who are jealous of your exalted qualities, and envious of your talents. You think that your greatness excites apprehensions, and your genius and learning create misgivings, and that you are therefore persecuted; that intrigues are entered upon against you, and that not sufficient elbow-room is given to your abilities. But you are mistaken, archduke. I am not afraid of you, and although I admire you, and think, like you, that you are the greatest captain of the age—"

"Your majesty," interrupted John, in a loud, vehement voice, "your majesty, I—"

"Well, what is it?" cried the emperor, hastily advancing a few steps toward his brother, and staring at him with defiant eyes. "What have you got to say to me?"

"Nothing, your majesty," said John, in a hollow voice; "you are the emperor! I am silent, and submit."

"And you are very prudent in doing so, for, as you say, I am the emperor, and I will remain the emperor, despite all my great and august brothers. If your imperial highness does not like this, if you think you are treated unjustly, if you consider yourself a martyr, why do you not imitate what the generalissimo has done already three times during the present campaign—why do you not offer your resignation? Why do you not request your emperor to dismiss you from his service?"

"Will your majesty permit me to make a frank and honest reply to this question?" asked John, looking at the emperor firmly and gravely.

"I will."

"Well, then, your majesty, I do not offer my resignation because I am not an invalid; because I am young, strong, and able to work. I request the emperor not to dismiss me from the service, because I serve not only him, but the fatherland, and because I owe to it my services and strength. I know well that many would like me to retire into privacy and withdraw entirely from public affairs; but I cannot fulfil

their wishes, and never shall I withdraw voluntarily from the service. No matter what wrongs and slights may be inflicted upon me, they will be fruitless, for they will never shake my purpose. All the disagreeable things that happen to me in my career, I think proceed from individuals, and not from the fatherland; why should I, then, avenge myself on the fatherland by resigning and depriving it of my services when it has done me no wrong?\* I serve the fatherland in serving your majesty; should I resign, I should be unfaithful to both my masters, and only then would your majesty have a right to despise me."

"Listen," said the emperor; "the word fatherland is a dangerous and two-edged one, and I do not think much of it. The insurgents and revolutionists have it always in their mouths; and when rising against their prince and refusing him obedience, they likewise say that they do so in the service of the fatherland, and devote their strength and fidelity to it. The soldier, above all, has nothing to do with the fatherland, but only with his sovereign; it is to him alone that he has sworn allegiance, and to him alone he must remain faithful. Now, as you are a soldier and wish to remain in the service, pray bear in mind that you have sworn allegiance to your emperor, and let me hear no longer any of your subtle distinctions between your emperor and your fatherland. And now that you have reported to me the result of the disastrous battle of Raab, Baron Steigentesch may come in and report the results of his mission to Königsberg. Stay, therefore, and listen to him."

The emperor rang the bell, and ordered the footman who entered the room to admit immediately Minister Count Stadion and Colonel Baron Steigentesch. A few minutes later the two gentlemen entered the cabinet.

"Now, colonel," said the emperor to him, "you are to report the results of your mission to Königsberg, and I confess I am quite anxious to hear them. But before you commence, I wish to say a few words to your minister of foreign affairs. On the same day that I dispatched Colonel Steigentesch to

\* The archduke's own words.—See his "Letters to Johannes von Müller," p. 92.

Königsberg, I handed you a sealed paper and ordered you to preserve it till my ambassador's return. Have you done so?"

"I have, your majesty."

"And have you brought it with you now?"

"Here it is, your majesty," said Count Stadion, drawing a sealed envelope from his bosom, and presenting it to the emperor, with a low bow. Francis took it, and examined the seal with close attention, then held it to his nose and smelled it.

"Indeed," he exclaimed joyfully, "it has retained its perfume, and is as fresh and brilliant as though it had been put on only at the present moment. And what a beautiful crimson it is! I have, then, at length, found the right receipt for good sealing-wax, and this, which I made myself, may vie with that made at the best Spanish factories. Oh, I see, this sealing-wax will drive my black cabinet to despair, for it will be impossible to open a letter sealed with it; even the finest knife will be unable to do it. Do you not think so too, minister?"

"I am no judge of sealing-wax," said Count Stadion, coldly, "and I confess that I did not even look at the seal of this envelope; your majesty ordered me to keep it and return it to you after Baron Steigentesch's return. I complied with your majesty's orders, that is all."

The emperor smiled, and laid the sealed paper with a slight nod on the table by his side; then he sank into an easy-chair, and beckoned to the gentlemen to take seats on the chairs on the other side of the table.

"Now, Colonel Steigentesch, let me hear the results of your mission. In the first place, tell me, has King Frederick William sent no letter to me in reply to mine?"

"No, your majesty," replied Colonel Steigentesch, with a significant smile; "I am only the bearer of a verbal reply. I believe the king thought a written answer too dangerous, or he was afraid lest he should thereby compromise himself. But after every interview I had with the king or the queen, I noted down every word their majesties spoke to me; and if your majesty permits, I shall avail myself of my diary in replying to you."

"Do so," said Francis, "let us hear what you noted down in your diary."

Colonel Steigentesch drew a memorandum-book from his bosom and opened it.

"Well, then, how did the king receive you?" inquired Francis, after a pause.

"The king received me rather coldly and stiffly," read Colonel Steigentesch from his diary; "he asked me what was the object of my mission. I replied that my emperor's letter stated this in a sufficiently lucid manner. The king was silent for a while; then he said rather morosely: 'The emperor asks for succor now; but hereafter he will, perhaps, conclude a separate peace and sacrifice me.' I replied, 'The Emperor Francis, my august master, does not ask for succor. The battle of Aspern has proved that means of defence are not wanting to Austria. But as it is the avowed object of this war that the powers should recover their former possessions, it is but just and equitable that they should take an active part in the contest, whose only object can be attained by seizing the favorable moment. I have not been sent to you to argue a question which should be settled already, but to make the arrangements necessary for carrying it into effect.'"

"An expedient reply," exclaimed the emperor, nodding his head eagerly. "And what did the King of Prussia answer to you?"

"The king was silent a while, and paced his room repeatedly, his hands clasped on his back. Then he stood still in front of me, and said in a loud, firm voice: 'Despite the fear which I might have of being deserted by Austria, I am determined to ally myself *one day* with your court; but it is not yet time. Continue the war; in the mean time I will gradually strengthen my forces; only then shall I be able to take a useful part in the contest. I lack powder, muskets, and money; my artillerists are all young and inexperienced soldiers. It is painful to me to avow the whole wretchedness of my position to an Austrian officer; but I must do so to prove to your master what it is that keeps me back at this juncture. You will easily convince yourself that I am striv-

ing to be useful to you by all means. Your sick soldiers are nursed at my hospitals and sent to their homes; I give leave of absence to all my officers who wish to serve in your army. But to ask me to declare now in your favor, is to call upon me to sign my own ruin. Deal the enemy another blow, and I will send an officer out of uniform to your emperor's headquarters to make all necessary arrangements.\* After these words the king bowed to me and dismissed me."

"Ah, indeed, the King of Prussia gives very wise advice," exclaimed the emperor; "we are to deal Bonaparte another blow, and then Prussia will negotiate with us. After we have gained another victory, the cautious King of Prussia will enter into secret negotiations with me, and send to my headquarters an officer, but, do you hear, out of uniform, in order not to compromise himself. Did you not wear your uniform, then, colonel?"

"Pardon me, your majesty, I did. But this seemed to be disagreeable to the king, and he asked me to doff my uniform at Königsberg; but I replied, that I was, since the battle of Aspern, so proud of my uniform that I could not doff it. † The king thereupon requested me to state publicly that I had come to Prussia only for the purpose of asking of the king permission to buy corn in Silesia and horses in Prussia."

"And you complied with this request, colonel!"

"I did not, your majesty. I replied that I could not even state this, for it was repugnant to my sense of honor; however, I would not contradict such a rumor if it were circulated."

"Very well, colonel," said the emperor, smiling; "you have acted in a manner worthy of a true Austrian. And now tell me, did you see the queen also?"

"I did, your majesty. Her majesty sent for me on the day of my arrival. The queen looked pale and feeble, but she seemed to take pains to conceal her sufferings under a smile which illuminated her face like a sunbeam."

"See, see," exclaimed the emperor, sarcastically; "our colo-

\* The king's own words.—See "Lebensbilder," vol. iii., p. 262.

† Ibid.

nel talks in the enthusiastic strain of a poet now that he refers to the queen. Is she so very beautiful, then?"

"Your majesty, she is more than beautiful; she is at the same time a noble, high-spirited woman, and an august queen. Her misfortunes and humiliations have not bent her neck, but this noble lady seems even more august and majestic in the days of adversity than in those of splendor and prosperity."

"And what did the queen say to you? Was she of her husband's opinion that Austria should not be succored at this juncture, and that Prussia, before declaring in our favor, ought to wait and see if Austria can defeat France single-handed?"

"Your majesty, the queen was more unreserved and frank in her utterances than the king. She openly avowed her hatred against Napoleon, and it is her opinion that Prussia should take a decided stand against France. 'For,' she said, 'I am convinced that the hatred of the French emperor against Austria, and his intention to overthrow all dynasties, leave no hope of peace. I am the mother of nine children, to whom I am anxious to preserve their inheritance; you may, therefore, judge of the wishes which I entertain.'"

"If such were the queen's sentiments, I suppose she profited by the great influence which she is said to have over her husband, to prevail upon him to take a bold stand, and you bring me the news of it as the final result of your mission, do you not?"

"Pardon me, your majesty, I do not. It seems the influence of the queen does not go far enough to induce the king to change his mind after he has once made it up. Now, the king has resolved not to ally himself with Austria at this juncture, but to wait until Austria, as he says, 'has dealt the Emperor of the French another blow.' All my interviews with the king were, as it were, only variations of this theme. In the last interview which I had with the king, he did not express any thing but what he had already told me in the first. He repeated that he would, as soon as Austria had dealt France another decisive blow, send an officer out of uni-

\* The queen's own words.—See "Lebensbilder," vol. iii., p. 260.

form to the headquarters of your majesty ; but then, he added, 'I hope to come myself, and not alone.' When I took leave of the queen, she was even sadder than usual, and her voice was tremulous, and her eyes filled with tears, when she said to me she hoped to meet me soon again under more favorable circumstances."

"And what did the other persons at the Prussian court say? How did the princes, the generals, and ministers express themselves?"

"Prince William, the king's brother, said to me with a shrug: 'You will not find the spirit reigning here much to your taste. The king's irresolution will ruin him again.' The princess, his wife, apologized for not inviting me to dinner, the king having positively forbidden her to do so. The king's generals and ministers unreservedly gave vent to their impatience and indignation. Grand-chancellor von Beyme said to me: 'The king would like to unite with you, but he cannot make up his mind to do so. However, as everybody about him is earnestly in favor of an alliance with Austria, I hope that the king will be carried away.'\* General Blücher wrote to the king in his impetuous, frank manner, that 'he would not witness the downfall of the throne, and would prefer serving in a foreign army, provided it were at war with the French.' Scharnhorst, the minister of war, spoke as violently, and with as undisguised hostility against France. He presented to the king a memoir, in which he said: 'I will not go dishonored into my grave; I should be dishonored did I not advise the king to profit by the present moment, and declare war against France. Can your majesty wish that Austria should return your states to you as alms, if she were still generous enough to do so; or that Napoleon, if victorious, should disarm your soldiers like the militia of a free city?' But all these remonstrances, these supplications, nay, even the tears of the queen, were in vain. The king repeated that he would unite with Austria one day, but it was not yet time. Austria ought first to deal France another blow, and gain a decisive victory; then would have come for Prussia the moment to declare openly against France. This, your majesty, is the

\* "Lebensbilder," vol. iii., p. 262.

only reply which I bring with me from my mission to Prussia."

"Well, I must confess that this reply is decidedly cautious and wise!" exclaimed the emperor, laughing. "After we have drawn the chestnuts out of the fire, Prussia will be kind enough to sit down with Austria and help her to eat them. Well, what do you think of it, brother John?"

"I think that this hesitating policy of Prussia is a misfortune not only for Austria and Prussia, but for Germany. For if France and Russia join hands now against our disunited country, Germany will be lost. The welfare of Europe is now inseparably bound up with an alliance between Austria and Prussia, which can alone prevent the outbreak of a European war. But this alliance must be concluded openly, unreservedly, and with mutual confidence. No private interests, no secondary interests calculated to frustrate the enterprise, but the great ends of saving the states, and restoring peace and prosperity to humanity, should be kept constantly in view; then, and then only, success will crown the great undertaking."\*

"And Prussia seems little inclined to keep such ends in view," said the emperor. "Well, minister, you do not say a word. You were so eloquent in trying to gain me over to this alliance with Prussia; you assured me so often that Prussia was waiting only for me to call upon her, when she would ally herself with me; and now—"

"Now, your majesty," said Count Stadion, mournfully, "I see, to my profound sorrow, that Prussia prefers her separate interests, to the interests of Germany; and I confess that I was mistaken in Prussia."

"And you tried to convince me that I was wrong in entertaining a different opinion; and my esteemed brother yonder spoke so wisely and loftily of our Prussian brethren, and the united Germany which we would form together! Well, you shall see at least that, although I yielded, and, to get rid of all you wise men, applied to Prussia, I did not believe in the success of the mission. Minister, be kind enough now to take

\* The archduke's own words.—See his "Letters to Johannes von Müller," p. 91.

the letter which you have kept for me so long. There! Now break the nice seal, open the letter, and read to us what I wrote on the day when I dispatched Colonel Steigentesch to the King of Prussia. Read!"

Stadion unfolded the letter and read:

"Colonel Steigentesch will return from his mission without accomplishing any thing. Prussia and Austria are rivals in Germany, and will never join hands in a common undertaking. Austria can never forgive Prussia for taking Silesia from her, and Prussia will always secretly suspect that Austria is intent upon weakening her rising power and humbling her ambition. Hence, Prussia will hesitate and temporize even at this juncture, although it is all-important now for Germany to take a bold stand against her common enemy, rapacious and insatiable France; she will hesitate because she secretly wishes that Austria should be humiliated; and she will not bear in mind that the weakening of Austria is fraught with danger for Prussia, nay, the whole of Germany."

"Now, gentlemen," said the emperor, when Count Stadion was through, "you see that my opinion was right, and that I well knew what I had to expect from Prussia. We must now carry on the struggle against France single-handed; but, after dealing her another blow, for which the King of Prussia longs, we shall take good care not to invite Prussia to our victorious repast. It would be just in us even to compel her to give us the sweet morsel of Silesia for our dessert. Well, we shall see what time will bring about. Our first blow against France was successful.—Archduke, go and help us to succeed in dealing her another; and, after defeating France single-handed, we shall also be masters of Germany."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE BATTLE OF WAGRAM.

"At length!" exclaimed the Archduke John, joyously, holding up the letter which a courier of the generalissimo had just brought him from the headquarters of Wagram. "At

length a decisive blow is to be struck.—Count Nugent, General Frimont, come in here! A courier from the generalissimo!"

So saying, the archduke had opened the door of his cabinet, and called the gentlemen who were in the anteroom.

"A courier from the generalissimo," he repeated once more, when the two generals came in.

"Your highness's wish is fulfilled now, is it not?" asked Nugent. "The generalissimo accepts the assistance which you offered to him. He permits you to leave this position with your troops and those of the Archduke Palatine and reinforce his own army?"

"No, he does not reply to my offer. It seems the generalissimo thinks that he does not need us to beat the French. But he writes to me that he is about to advance with his whole army, and that a decisive battle may be looked for. He says the enemy is still on the island of Lobau, busily engaged in erecting a *tête-de-pont*, and building a bridge across the Danube."

"And our troops do not try to prevent this by all means!" cried General Frimont, vehemently. "They allow the enemy to build bridges? They look on quietly while the enemy is preparing to leave the island, and do not prevent him from so doing?"

"My friend," said the archduke, gently, "let us never forget that it does not behoove us to criticise the actions of the generalissimo, and that our sole duty is to obey. Do as I do; let us be silent and submit. But let us rejoice that something will be done at length. Just bear in mind how long this inactivity and suspense have lasted already. The battle of Aspern was fought on the 22d of May, to-day is the 3d of July; and in the mean time nothing has been done. The enemy remained quietly on the island of Lobau, nursing his wounded, reorganizing his troops, erecting *têtes-de-pont*, and building bridges; and the generalissimo stood with his whole army on the bank of the Danube, and took great pains to watch in idleness the busy enemy. Let us thank God, therefore, that at last the enemy is tired of this situation, that he at length takes the initiative again, and brings about a decision.