CHAPTER V.

PRUSSIA AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

AS the allied army retreated, after its defeat at Valmy, in September, 1792, Gen. Dumouriez pursued a division of twenty-five thousand Austrians under Gen. Clairfayt. On the 4th of November he overtook the fugitives, strongly intrenched upon the heights of Jemappes, near Mons. One day was employed in concentrating the French forces and arraying the batteries. Twenty-five thousand men were behind the ramparts: sixty thousand advanced to storm them. Early in the morning of the 6th, the cannonade began: a hundred pieces of artillery opened their thunders. All day long, war's fierce tornado, with its whirls, its eddies, and its onward rush, swept the field. The Austrians were routed. In broken bands they fled, having lost fifteen hundred prisoners, and four thousand five hundred in killed and wounded.

"The sensation," writes Thiers, "produced by this important battle, was prodigious. The victory of Jemappes instantaneously filled all France with joy, and Europe with new surprise. Nothing was talked of but the fact of the coolness with which the Austrian artillery had been confronted, and the intrepidity displayed

in storming their redoubts. The danger and the victory were even exaggerated; and throughout all Europe the faculty of gaining great battles was again awarded to the French."[1]

The Duke of Orleans (subsequently King Louis Philippe), at that time a young man, known as the Duke of Chartres, greatly signalized himself by his bravery in this conflict. The French armies now swept triumphantly towards the Rhine, driving their foes before them. Cheered by these victories, the convention in Paris, on the 19th of November, 1792, issued the decree, —

"That they would grant fraternity and succor to every people who were disposed to recover their liberty; and that they charged their generals to give aid to all such people, and to defend all citizens who had been or might be disquieted in the cause of freedom."

This decree was followed by another, on the 15th of December, declaring that France would proclaim, in all the provinces it conquered, "the sovereignty of the people, the suppression of all the constituted authorities, of all feudal and territorial rights, of all the privileges of nobility, and exclusive privileges of every description."[2]

The people were invited to meet, and organize new republican governments founded on popular suffrage. By these defeats, the Prussians were placed in a very deplorable condition. Winter was at hand; disease was making dreadful ravages in their camps; republican principles were penetrating even the ranks of the army. A flag of truce was sent by Frederick William III. to

[1] Thiers' History of the French Revolution, vol. ii. p. 10.
[2] Jomini, Histoire des Guerres de la Révolution, ii. 264.

confer upon terms of compromise. Dumouriez wrote to the French Government, —

"The proposals of the King of Prussia do not appear to offer a basis for negotiation; but they demonstrate that the enemy's distress is very great. I am persuaded that the King of Prussia is now heartily sorry in being so far in advance, and that he would readily adopt any means to extricate himself from his embarrassments." [1]

The negotiations for peace were not successful.

During the winter, the allies gathered their forces anew; and, in the spring, Frederick William commenced another campaign by besieging the French fortress of Mayence, on the left bank of the Rhine. The King of Prussia brought forward fifty-five thousand men; and Austria sent enough troops to swell the number to eighty thousand. The French had about the same number in the Valley of the Moselle and in their fortresses on the Rhine.

The King of Prussia crossed the river, without opposition, at a point a little below Mayence, and invested the city from both sides of the Rhine. The garrison consisted of twenty thousand men. The investment commenced in April, 1793.

The city of Mayence, nearly opposite the mouth of the River Mayne, was even then a very strongly fortified place. The King of Prussia, in person, conducted the siege. There were the usual scenes of bombardment, tumult and blood, storming-parties repulsed, and *sorties* driven back. Two hundred pieces of artillery played upon the fortress; while floating batteries, placed upon

[1] Dumouriez' despatch to the French Government.

the Rhine, threw into the streets an incessant storm of shells.

"Distress was at its height. Horseflesh had long been the only meat the garrison had. The soldiers ate rats, and went to the banks of the Rhine to pick up the dead horses which the current brought down with it. A cat sold for six francs; horseflesh, at the rate of forty-five sous per pound. The officers fared no better than the soldiers. Gen. Albert Dubayet, having invited his staff to dinner, set before it, by way of a treat, a cat, flanked by a dozen mice.

"Communications were so completely intercepted, that, for three months, the garrison was wholly ignorant of what was passing in France. The Prussians, who had practised all sorts of stratagems, had false "Moniteurs printed at Frankfort, stating that Dumouriez had overthrown the Convention, and that Louis XVIII. was reigning with a regency. The Prussians placed at the advanced posts transmitted these false "Moniteurs" to the soldiers in the French garrisons.

"At length the distress became so intolerable, that two thousand of the inhabitants solicited permission to depart. Albert Dubayet granted it; but, not being received by the besiegers, they remained between two fires, and partly perished under the walls of the place. In the morning, soldiers were seen bringing in wounded infants wrapped in their cloaks." [1]

On the 25th of July, the starved garrison was compelled to capitulate. The King of Prussia allowed the troops to march out with their arms and baggage. They simply engaged not to serve, for a year, against the allies.

[1] Thiers' French Revolution, vol. ii. p. 250.

But Frederick William III. had now become weary of the war. He would have abandoned the enterprise; but England came forward with liberal promises of gold. England, uniting with Holland, agreed to pay the King of Prussia two hundred and fifty thousand dollars a month, and also to meet all the expenses of bread and forage for the Prussian army. There was also granted the Prussian king a gratuity of one million five hundred thousand dollars to aid him in commencing operations, with the promise of five hundred thousand dollars upon his return to the Prussian States.

In consideration of this subsidy, Frederick William agreed to furnish sixty-four thousand five hundred men to the coalition; of which coalition, England was now the acknowledged head. The Prussian army was to be under a Prussian commander. All the conquests made of French territory were to belong jointly to England and Holland.[1]

"The discontent of the Prussian troops," writes Alison, "was loudly proclaimed when it transpired that they were to be transferred to the pay of Great Britain. They openly murmured at the disgrace of having the soldiers of the great Frederick sold like mercenaries to a foreign power. The event soon demonstrated that the succors stipulated from Prussia would be of the most inefficient description."

The conflict raged on the Rhine, month after month, with varying success. Gen. Kleber, who was in command of the French forces, driving the allies before him, crossed the Rhine, and carried the horrors of war into the territory of the enemy. Ere long he encountered overwhelming numbers, and was compelled to retreat across the Rhine, back into France. Again, reenforcements arriving, the French republicans assumed the offensive, and carried the war across the river to the right bank. Thus the blood-red tides of battle ebbed and flowed.

[1] Thiers' French Revolution, vol. iii. p. 18.

This majestic stream, the Rhine, which had so long been the boundary of the Roman Empire, mainly separated the antagonistic armies from the Alps to the ocean. The allies had an immense advantage in still holding the strong fortress of Mayence, which they had captured on the French side of the Rhine; but as the republican troops gained victory after victory, and Prussia itself was threatened with invasion by the tricolor flag, Frederick William, disheartened and trembling, again resolved to withdraw from the alliance.

Republican France had so roused herself, that she had twelve hundred thousand men under arms. All the important military points on the Rhine were in their possession. Holland was organizing as the Republic of the United Provinces, and entering into alliance with the French Republic.

Frederick William III. sent a commissioner to the headquarters of the French commander to propose peace. The commissioners met at Basle; and on the 5th of April, 1795, peace was concluded with Prussia. The French agreed to evacuate all the provinces they had conquered on the right bank of the Rhine. The Prussian king pledged himself to friendly relations with the French Republic.

Still England, Austria, and Naples continued the war for three years longer. The French armies, having encountered some repulses in the conflict with the Aus-

trians, occupied the left bank of the Rhine, and, with that broad and rapid river for their protection, warded off invasion from Germany. Immense French victories gained by the young general, Bonaparte, over the Austrians in Italy, led to a convention at Rastadt to confer upon terms of peace. We give the substance of these negotiations as stated by M. Thiers. The intelligent reader will be deeply interested in comparing the claims of France and the reply of Germany in 1798 with the claims of Germany and the reply of France in 1870.

France demanded, not only that the line of the Rhine should be the recognized frontier between the two countries, but that France should also have possession of all the islands in the Rhine, which were very important in a military point of view. France also demanded Kehl and its territory, opposite to Strasburg; and Cassel and its territory, opposite Mayence; and that fifty acres of land on the German side of the Rhine, facing the old bridge of Huningen, should be transferred to the Republic. In addition to this, France insisted that the important fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, nearly opposite Coblentz, should be demolished. These concessions, it was asserted, were essential to protect France from the menace of Germanic invasion.

The deputation of the German Empire, on the other hand, replied, that the River Rhine was the natural boundary between the two nations, offering equal security to both; that, if France were to keep all the offensive points, this security would cease to exist for Germany. They proposed, as the real boundary, the channel of the main branch of the river, — all the islands on the right of that line to belong to Germany; all on the left, to France. The deputation was not willing

that France should retain any offensive points on the river, while Germany was to lose them all.[1]

After long negotiation, the obviously reasonable German proposition was accepted. The main channel of the River Rhine was declared to be the boundary between France and Germany. This important treaty was signed in September, 1798.

The establishment of, first the consulate, and then the empire, in France, increased rather than diminished the exasperation of the old feudal monarchies. Under these new organizations, the republican doctrine of equal rights for all men was retained. Hereditary nobility was rejected, at first entirely rejected, and then but partially revived. Titles of honor were conferred as the reward of merit only. The doctrine of the "divine right" of kings was utterly repudiated; and the powers of government were based upon popular suffrage.

The feudal kings and nobles of Europe were not to be deceived by a name. The fact that the Republic called itself an Empire, and that the elected executive was called Imperator, instead of President, rendered republicanism, thus arrayed, as formidable as ever. The principles avowed were in direct antagonism with all the old *régimes:* consequently, coalition after coalition was organized against these democratic principles, whatever names they might assume.

The antagonism which had so long existed between Prussia and Austria was one of the influences which induced Frederick William III. to withdraw from the alliance against France. During the ten years of

[1] Thiers' History of the French Revolution, vol. iv. p. 295.

peace which Prussia enjoyed, the kingdom had rapidly increased in population and wealth. The vicissitudes of war had thrown a large portion of the commerce of Germany into its hands. The population had increased to nine million five hundred thousand souls; its net income amounted to about fifty million dollars, its standing army numbered two hundred thousand highly-disciplined troops.[1]

"The Prussian capital was one of the most agreeable and least expensive in Europe. No rigid etiquette, no rigid line of demarcation, separated the court from the people. The royal family lived on terms of friendly equality, not only with the nobility, but with the leading inhabitants of Berlin. An easy demeanor, a total absence of aristocratic pride, an entire absence of extravagance or parade, distinguished all the parties given at court; at which the king and queen mingled on terms of perfect equality with their subjects.

"Many ladies of rank, both in Paris and London, spent larger sums annually on their dress than the Queen of Prussia. None equalled her in dignity and grace of manner and the elevated sentiments with which she was inspired. Admiration of her beauty, and attachment to her person, formed one of the strongest feelings of the Prussian monarchy."[2]

The King of Prussia was the first of the monarchs, among the great powers, who recognized the empire in France. When, in 1804, Russia, in coalition with Austria and England, was preparing to send down her Muscovite legions into France, Frederick entered into an agreement with the French Empire to maintain a

[1] Bignon, Histoire de France depuis le 18me Brumaire, t. ii. p. 293.
[2] Alison's History of Europe, vol. ii. p. 288.

strict neutrality, and not to permit Russian or any other foreign troops to cross her territories.

Early in the spring of 1805, England, Austria, and Russia formed a new coalition against France, into which Sweden, Hanover, Sardinia, and Naples were soon drawn. The united army of the allies was to number five hundred thousand men.

"It was a great object," writes Sir Archibald Alison, "if possible, to unite Prussia in the alliance. For this purpose, M. Noviltzoff was despatched to Berlin. Notwithstanding all the efforts of England and Russia, it was found impossible to overcome the leaning of Prussia towards the French interest. The real secret of this partiality was the effect of the glittering prize, which her ministers had long coveted, in the electorate of Hanover. The Prussian Government could never divest itself of the idea, that by preserving a dubious neutrality, and reserving her interposition for the decisive moment, she might, without danger, add that important acquisition to her domains.

"The Prussian ministers at length openly broached the project of taking provisional possession of that electorate, 'as the union of the Continental dominions of his Britannic Majesty to Prussia is of such consequence to that monarchy, that it can never relinquish the prospect of gaining such an acquisition, providing it can be done without compromising the character of his Majesty.'

"The king at length put the question, 'Can I, without violating the rules of morality, without being held up in history as a king destitute of faith, depart, for the acquisition of Hanover, from the character which I have hitherto maintained?'

"It was easy to see in what such contests between duty and interest would terminate. Before the middle of August, the Prussian cabinet intimated to the French minister at Berlin their willingness to conclude a treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, with the French Government, on the footing of the annexation of Hanover to their dominions. Subsequent events prevented the treaty being signed, and saved Prussia from this last act of cupidity and infatuation."[1]

During all this time, there was a strong minority in Prussia in favor of war, against the rapidly-spreading liberal opinions of France. The Queen Louisa and Prince Louis were prominent in this party. A French army-corps had marched through a corner of Anspach, thus violating the territory of Prussia. Though immediate apology was made, "the cabinet at Berlin," writes Alison, "had taken umbrage to an extent which could hardly have been anticipated, and which was greatly beyond the amount of the injury inflicted.

"Matters were in this inflammable state when the Emperor Alexander arrived at Berlin, and employed the whole weight of his great authority, and all the charms of his captivating manners, to induce the king to embrace a more manly and courageous policy. Under the influence of so many concurring causes, the French influence rapidly declined.

"On the 3d of November, 1805, a secret convention was signed between the two monarchs, for the regulation of the affairs of Europe, and to erect a barrier against the encroachments of France.

"The conclusion of this convention was followed by

[1] Alison, vol. ii. p. 322.

a scene as remarkable as it was romantic. When they signed it, both were fully aware of the perilous nature of the enterprise on which they were adventuring. The Archduke Anthony had arrived two days before with detailed accounts of the disastrous result of the combats around Ulm.

"Inspired with a full sense of the dangers of the war, the ardent and chivalrous mind of the queen conceived the idea of uniting the two sovereigns by a bond more likely to be durable than the mere alliance of cabinets with each other. This was to bring them together at the tomb of the great Frederick, where, it was hoped, the solemnity and recollections of the scene would powerfully contribute to cement their union.

"The emperor, who was desirous of visiting the mausoleum of that illustrious hero, accordingly repaired to the church of the garrison at Potsdam, where his remains are deposited; and at midnight the two monarchs proceeded together, by torchlight, to the hallowed grave. Uncovering when he approached the spot, the emperor kissed the pall; and taking the hand (sword?) of the King of Prussia, as it lay on the tomb, they swore an eternal friendship to each other, and bound themselves by the most solemn oaths to maintain their engagements inviolate in the great contest for European independence in which they were engaged.

"A few hours after, Alexander departed for Gallicia, to assume, in person, the command of the army of reserve, which was advancing through that province to the support of Kutusoff. Such was the origin of that great alliance, which, though often interrupted by misfortune, and deeply checkered with disaster, was yet destined to be brought to so triumphant an issue, and

ultimately wrought such wonders for the deliverance of Europe." [1]

Before the Prussians had brought their two hundred thousand troops into the field, the French armies, under Napoleon, had captured Vienna, and had almost annihilated the Russian army in the great victory of Austerlitz. Prussia had, as yet, made no declaration of war. The treaty was kept a profound secret. The 15th of December, 1805, was the appointed day in which war was to be declared against France, and hostilities were to commence. The result we give in Sir Archibald Alison's words, somewhat abbreviated.

The Prussian minister, "Hauguitz, had come to Vienna to declare war against Napoleon; but the battle of Austerlitz had totally deranged their plans. The armistice had completely detached Austria from the coalition. The severest morality could not condemn a statesman who sought to withdraw his country from a contest which now appeared hopeless. But, not content with this, Hauguitz resolved to go a step farther.

"On the breaking-up of the confederacy into which he had just entered, he determined to secure a part of the spoils of his former allies, and, if he could not chase the French standards beyond the Rhine, at least wrest from England those Continental possessions which she now appeared in no condition to defend.

"With matchless effrontery, he changed the whole object of his mission; and when admitted into the presence of Napoleon, after the victory, congratulated him upon his success, and proposed a treaty, the basis of which should be the old project of annexing Hanover to the Prussian dominions.

[1] Alison's History of Europe, vol. ii. p. 357.

"Although Napoleon had not received full accounts of the treaty of the 3d of November, he was aware of its substance. Upon receiving Hauguitz, therefore, he broke out into vehement declamation against the perfidy of the Prussian cabinet; informed him that he was acquainted with all their machinations; and that it now lay with him alone, after concluding peace with Austria, to turn his whole forces against Prussia; wrest from them Silesia, whose fortresses, unarmed and unprovisioned, were in no condition to make any defence; excite an insurrection in Prussian Poland, and punish them in the most signal manner for their perfidy.

"Reasons of state, however, he added, sometimes compelled sovereigns to bury in oblivion the best founded cause of animosity. On this occasion, he was willing to overlook their past misconduct, and ascribe it entirely to the efforts of England; but this could be only on one condition, — that Prussia should at length abandon its doubtful policy, and enter, heart and hand, into the French alliance. On these terms, he was still willing to incorporate Hanover into their dominions, in exchange for some of its detached southern possessions, which were to be ceded to France and Bavaria.

"Overjoyed at the prospect thus afforded of extricating his country, not only without loss, but with great accession of territory, Hauguitz at once accepted the stipulations. It was agreed that Prussia should enter into an alliance with France, and receive, besides the margraviate of Baireuth, the whole electorate of Hanover, in full sovereignty, as well as all the other Continental dominions of his Britannic Majesty." [1]

[1] Alison's History of Europe, vol. ii. p. 394.

This treaty was signed on the 15th of December, 1805, — the very day on which Prussia was to have commenced hostilities against France. The indignation which this transaction excited in Great Britain was intense. Mr. Fox, who was then minister, said in his place in parliament, "The conduct of Prussia is a union of every thing that is contemptible in servility with every thing that is odious in rapacity." [1]

[1] Parliamentary Debates, vi. 891.

CHAPTER VI.

PRUSSIA OVERWHELMED.

LOUISA, the Queen of Prussia, was, intellectually, far the superior of her husband. She saw clearly that the principles of the French Revolution, organized in the empire of France, if unchecked, would inevitably undermine the Prussian and all other feudal thrones. The war-party in Berlin, with the queen and Prince Louis at its head, were unmeasured in their vituperation of this alliance with France. Their remonstrances, however, were of no avail.

The annexation of Hanover to Prussia gave to that kingdom an increase of territory amounting to fourteen thousand eight hundred square miles (equal to about twice the State of Massachusetts), and increased the population by over a million. The course, however, which Prussia pursued, was so vacillating, that "all sincere friendship had become impossible between Prussia and France. Prussia was regarded as a suspected power, whose hollow friendship had ceased to have any value." [1]

England was greatly exasperated. The Prussian harbors were immediately declared in a state of blockade,

[1] Bignon, Histoire de France, t. v. p. 223.