

into the kingdom of Westphalia. The kingdom of Prussia was reduced from about nine million of inhabitants to about five millions. Her revenue of twenty-four million dollars was diminished to fourteen million dollars. The fortresses left her, whether in Silesia or on the Oder, remained in the hands of France as security for the payment of the war-contributions.<sup>1</sup>

"At the same time," writes Alison, "enormous contributions, amounting to the stupendous, and, if not proved by authentic documents, the incredible sum of twenty millions sterling, were imposed on the countries which had been the seat of war between the Rhine and the Niemen. This grievous exaction completely paralyzed the strength of Prussia, and rendered her, for the next five years, totally incapable of extricating herself from that iron net in which she was enveloped by the continued occupation of her fortresses by the French troops."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bignon's *Histoire de France*, t. vi. p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Alison, vol. ii. p. 547

## CHAPTER VII.

### FREDERICK WILLIAM III. AND THE NEW COALITION.

**F**REDERICK WILLIAM of Prussia, though of moderate abilities, seems to have been an honest and humane man. The following touching proclamation, which he issued to the inhabitants of his lost provinces, won for him the esteem of every generous heart in Europe:—

"Dear inhabitants of faithful provinces, districts, and towns, my arms have been unfortunate. Driven to the extreme boundaries of my empire, and having my powerful ally conclude an armistice, and sign a peace, no choice remained to me but to follow his example. That peace imposed on me the most painful sacrifices. The bonds of treaties, the reciprocal ties of love and duty, the fruit of ages of labor, have been broken asunder. All my efforts (and they have been most strenuous) have proved in vain. Fate ordains it. A father is compelled to depart from his children. I hereby release you from your allegiance to me and my house. My most ardent prayers for your welfare will always attend you in your relations to your new sovereigns. Be to them what you have ever been to me.



Neither force nor fate shall ever sever the remembrance of you from my heart."<sup>1</sup>

The grief of the unhappy Queen of Prussia wore so heavily upon her spirits, that she soon sank into the grave, when but thirty-nine years of age. She, above all others, had instigated the war; and she could not brook the ruin which she had thus brought upon her country and her house. Her life was indeed a sad one, full of trouble. Her virtues were her own: her faults were to be attributed to her education and the times.

The kingdom of Frederick the Great had apparently met with an irreparable blow; but the king, Frederick William III., instead of sinking in despair, nobly roused himself to additional exertions to develop the wealth and resources of his diminished realms. The calamity which had befallen Prussia, in the end proved a blessing. A new era of freedom and equality dawned upon the realm, which had hitherto been governed by absolute power.

The illustrious Baron Stein, in the retirement of his estates, had pondered the great questions which were now agitating Europe. His mind, greatly liberalized, had become deeply convinced of the necessity of political reform. Upon being appointed minister of the interior, he issued an ordinance, conferring upon peasants and burghers the right, hitherto confined to the nobles, of acquiring and holding landed property. The nobles, in their turn, were permitted, without losing caste, to engage in pursuits of commerce and industry. Every species of slavery and of feudal servitude was forever abolished. The inhabitants of cities were allowed to choose councillors, who should regulate all

<sup>1</sup> Scott's Napoleon.

local and municipal concerns. Thus the disasters which Prussia had encountered led her to relax the fetters of the feudal system, and vigorously to commence the introduction of republican reforms.<sup>1</sup>

Gen. Scharnhorst was appointed minister of war. "In him," says Alison, "a blameless life and amiable manners were combined with the purest patriotism and the soundest judgment. Exalted attainments were undisfigured by pride."

Gen. Scharnhorst, following the admirable example of Baron Stein, threw open to the common soldiers the higher offices of the army, from which they had hitherto been excluded. He abolished those degrading corporal punishments under which the self-respect of the soldier had wilted. He also abolished those invidious distinctions, which, by exempting the aristocratic classes from the burden of military service, caused its weight to fall more severely upon those who were not relieved.

By the engagements with France, it was stipulated that Prussia should not keep on foot an army of more than forty-two thousand men. The letter of this agreement was kept, while its spirit was evaded, by never having more than the agreed number at once in arms. The young recruits, having been thoroughly drilled, were sent to their homes; and others took their places: thus, while but forty thousand were enrolled, there were soon more than two hundred thousand thoroughly trained to arms.

In the year 1812, Napoleon commenced his fatal campaign to Moscow. The latter part of December,

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires d'un Homme d'État* (Prince Hardenberg), t. ix. p. 460.



the tidings of the utter disaster which had overwhelmed the French armies reached Berlin. The opponents of the French alliance, still numerous in Prussia, were clamorous for a general uprising, to attack the French in the disorder, the misery, and the helplessness of their retreat; but the king, and his able minister Hardenberg, remained faithful to their treaty-obligations. Great anxiety was felt in Paris in consequence of the past fickleness of Prussia: but Augereau, the French minister at Berlin, wrote to the French Government, that France had no cause for anxiety; that the Berlin cabinet would remain firm to the French alliance.<sup>1</sup>

Still the opponents of France were unwearied in their endeavors to change the policy of the government, and enter into an alliance with Russia. One of the Prussian generals, De York, treacherously entered into a secret treaty with a Russian general to do nothing to oppose the advance of the Russian troops in their pursuit of the French. He excused himself for this act of perfidy by the declaration that the French were so utterly routed, and his own forces so weak, that in this way only could he save his army-corps from destruction. In a despatch to the King of Prussia, he stated, —

“Now or never is the time for your Majesty to extricate yourself from the thralldom of an ally whose intentions in regard to Prussia are veiled in impenetrable darkness, and justify the most serious alarm. That consideration has guided me: God grant it may be for the salvation of the country!”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Augereau to Berthier, Dec. 22, 1812.

<sup>2</sup> Baron Fain, *Campagne de 1814*, t. ii. p. 209.

“Never,” writes Alison, “was a monarch more embarrassed by a step on the part of a lieutenant than the King of Prussia was on this occasion. His first words were, ‘Here is enough to give one a stroke of apoplexy.’ Deeply impressed with the sanctity of his existing treaties with France, and feeling, as every man of honor would, that the obligation to maintain them inviolate was only rendered the more stringent by the disasters which had overwhelmed the imperial armies, he saw clearly that the agitation in his dominions was such, that it was not improbable that the people would ere long take the matter into their own hands, and, whatever the government might do, join the Russians as soon as they advanced into the Prussian territory.”<sup>1</sup>

Oppressed by these embarrassments, the king remained faithful to his treaty-obligations. Gen. De York was ordered under arrest. His command of fifteen thousand men was conferred on Gen. Kleist, who was ordered to take his contingent as rapidly as possible to the aid of the retreating French. At the same time, Prince Hardenberg submitted to the French ambassador at Berlin, with the approval of the king, a proposal to consolidate the union between Prussia and France by the marriage of the Prince Royal of Prussia with a princess of the family of the French emperor. Frederick William engaged, under these circumstances, to raise the Prussian contingent in the service of France to sixty thousand men.<sup>2</sup>

Frederick William wrote to the French minister, the Duke of Bassano, on the 12th of January, 1813, —

“Tell the emperor, that, as to pecuniary sacrifices,

<sup>1</sup> Alison, iv. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Baron Fain, *Campagne de 1814*, t. i. p. 207.



they are no longer in my power; but that, if he will give me money, I can raise and arm fifty thousand or sixty thousand men for his service. I am the natural ally of France. By changing my system of policy, I should only endanger my position, and give the emperor grounds for treating me as an enemy. I know there are fools who regard France as struck down; but you will soon see it present an army of three hundred thousand men as brilliant as the former."<sup>1</sup>

Early in January, 1813, the Russian armies, pursuing the retreating French, entered the Prussian territory. Proclamations were scattered broadcast, urging the inhabitants of Prussia to rise, and join in the war against France. The Russians rapidly took possession of the fortresses of Prussia. On the 4th of March, the advance guard of Cossacks entered Berlin; and, on the 11th, Berlin became the headquarters of the Russian army. Still the Prussian monarch, who had retired to Breslau, remained firm in his allegiance to France.

On the 15th of May, 1813, the Prussian minister, Hardenberg, wrote to the French minister, St. Marsau, —

"The system of the king has undergone no alteration. No overtures, direct or indirect, have been made to Russia. If the emperor approves the steps which have been taken to secure the neutrality of Silesia, and will grant some pecuniary assistance to Prussia, the alliance could be contracted more closely than ever. Nothing but despair will throw Prussia into the arms of Russia."<sup>2</sup>

"There can be no doubt," writes Alison, "that these protestations on the part of the Prussian monarch were

<sup>1</sup> Baron Fain, t. i. p. 213.    <sup>2</sup> Mémoires d'un Homme d'État, t. xii. p. 32.

sincere; and that it only lay with Napoleon, by giving him some pecuniary assistance, to secure the cabinet of Berlin in the French alliance, and gain an auxiliary force of sixty thousand men to aid him in defending the course of the Elbe."<sup>1</sup>

But it was obvious to the emperor, that Prussia, overrun by the triumphant armies of Russia, would be compelled to join in the coalition against France. He judged correctly. The anti-French party, sustained by the Russian armies, rapidly increased in influence. Secret negotiations were opened between them and the Russian general. At length a treaty was formed, called the "Treaty of Kalisch," to which Frederick William was induced, with great difficulty, to give his assent.

By this treaty, an alliance, "offensive and defensive," was formed between the Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia to prosecute the war with France. Prussia agreed to bring eighty thousand men into the field, independent of the garrisons in the fortresses. Neither party was to make peace without the consent of the other: jointly, they were to do every thing in their power to induce Austria to join the alliance, and to induce England to afford pecuniary aid to Prussia. The Emperor of Russia engaged never to lay down his arms until all the possessions wrested from Prussia in the campaigns of Jena and Auerstadt were restored. The treaty was to be kept secret from France for two months, while privately communicated to England, Austria, and Sweden.<sup>2</sup>

"Frederick William," writes Alison, "who was only brought to accede to this treaty with the utmost diffi-

<sup>1</sup> Alison, vol. iv. p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Martin's Collections de Traité de Pays, sup. iii. 234.



culty, was well aware that his political existence was thenceforth bound up in the success of Russia in the German war. His first words, after agreeing to the alliance, were, 'Henceforth, gentlemen, it is an affair of life and death.' Great pains, accordingly, were taken to conceal the treaty from the knowledge of the French ambassador: but, notwithstanding every effort, its existence soon transpired; and it was thought unnecessary to dissemble any longer. The French Government, informed of these facts, which were not unexpected, replied to the Prussian minister, —

"As long as the chances of war were favorable to us, your court remained faithful to its engagements; but scarcely had the premature rigors of winter brought back our armies to the Niemen than the defection of Gen. De York excited the most serious suspicions. His Majesty the Emperor of France prefers an open enemy to an ally always ready to abandon him. A power whose treaties are considered binding only so long as they are deemed serviceable can never be either useful or respectable. The finger of Providence is manifest in the events of last winter. It has produced them, to distinguish the true from the false friends of humanity. His Majesty feels for your situation, M. Baron, as a soldier and a man of honor, on being obliged to sign such a declaration.'"<sup>1</sup>

The Emperor of France, speaking upon this subject at St. Helena, said, —

"The King of Prussia, in his private character, is a good, loyal, and honorable man; but, in his political capacity, he was unavoidably forced to yield to necessity.

<sup>1</sup> Baron Fain, t. i. p. 260.

You were always the master with him when you had force on your side, and the hand uplifted."<sup>1</sup>

Frederick William issued a proclamation, informing his subjects, that, if they would volunteer their services, he would, as a reward, confer upon them a constitution securing to them many civil rights.<sup>2</sup> Universal enthusiasm pervaded the nation. In the terrible conflict which ensued, the Prussian troops took a conspicuous part.

At Waterloo, it was the appearance of Blucher with sixty-five thousand Prussians, late in the day, upon the field, which secured the victory of the allies, the overthrow of the French Empire, and the re-establishment in France of the old *régime* of the Bourbons.

"It is almost certain," says Gen. Jomini, "that Napoleon would have remained master of the field of battle, but for the arrival of sixty-five thousand Prussians in his rear."

The Prussian army returned in triumph to Berlin. And now the people demanded the promised constitution; but the Emperor of Austria interposed.

"I cannot allow," he said, "free institutions so near my throne. They will excite disaffection among my subjects. I shall therefore consider the granting of a constitution as a declaration of war against me."

The Emperor of Russia also issued an equally imperative remonstrance. Thus the king forfeited his pledge, being unable to redeem it without involving his kingdom in a desolating and hopeless war.

When the allies met at Vienna to partition out

<sup>1</sup> Las Casas, ii. 365

<sup>2</sup> "This was a gigantic contest; for his enemies, by deceiving their subjects with false promises of liberty, had brought whole nations against him." — *Napier's War in the Peninsula*, vol. iv. p. 205.



Europe among them, they were not generous in their treatment of Prussia. Though the kingdom was considerably enlarged, the treaties of 1815 did not give compactness to her irregular territory. The kingdom was divided into two very unequal parts, — the eastern and the western, — separated by the German States of Hesse, Hanover, and Brunswick. With but a third of the population of France, Prussia had seven hundred miles more of frontier to guard. One extremity of Prussia reached the walls of the French fortress of Thionville, on the Moselle, far west from the Rhine; while the other extremity was bordered by the Memel and the Niemen. There were, in reality, three Prussias, — one in Poland, one in Germany, and one on the Rhine.<sup>1</sup>

After these terrible convulsions, Europe, exhausted, enjoyed repose for many years. Nothing occurred in Prussia particularly calling for historic notice. In the year 1840, Frederick William III. died, in the sixty-sixth year of his age. His reign was long, exceedingly disastrous at its commencement; and though, at its close, he left Prussia apparently prosperous and happy, the fires of approaching revolution were slumbering beneath the surface.

The sceptre passed to the king's son, Frederick William IV. To the surprise and consternation of the king and court, at the time of his coronation, the Prussian diet passed a motion, by a majority of ninety to five, requesting the king to grant a new law for the organization of the provincial diets, by which *the national representation should be chosen by the people*, in accordance with the royal declaration of 1815, which had never yet been fulfilled.

<sup>1</sup> Encyclopædia Americana.

After an embarrassing delay, the king declared that "he would never consent to a general popular representation, but that he would pursue a course in accordance with historical progress, and suited to German nationality."<sup>1</sup>

Republican principles were now bursting forth in all directions throughout the kingdom of Prussia. There were loud demands that the censorship of the press should be abolished, that a general parliament of the whole kingdom should be convoked, and that there should be publicity of debates. This fermentation of liberty was peculiarly active in the Rhine provinces. There was now a steady, constant struggle for many years, without revolutionary violence, — on the part of the people for reform, and on the part of the court to check the progress of liberal ideas.

At length, in the year 1847, the demand for a representative government had become so loud and universal, that the royal cabinet could no longer venture to resist. On the 3d of February an edict was issued, convoking a general assembly of the States of Prussia. This was an immense step in the path of popular liberty. But still the spirit of the court was manifest in the royal speech at the opening of the assembly.

"I have convoked this assembly," said the king, "to make myself acquainted with the wants of the people; but the government will not be changed in its essence. The absolute monarchy has only become *consulting*. I do not deem it for the interest of my people to adopt a proper representative government. I consider it my duty to resist the levelling and innovating spirit of the

<sup>1</sup> Annual History, vol. xxiii. p. 422.



age. I will never permit a charter to intervene between me and the duty I owe my people. I will never yield to the rule of majorities, and will resist to the last extremity the ruinous democratic designs which are the disgrace and peril of the age."<sup>1</sup>

A stormy debate, of course, followed these bold declarations. There were three hundred and fifty-three members of the assembly. Even in this body, the royal party — that is, the party in favor of absolute government — was so strong, that only by a majority of fifty-three could a vote be carried in favor of a constitution. Germany consisted of a conglomeration of a large number of States, consisting of kingdoms, electorates, duchies, and principalities. Each State was independent in the regulation of its local affairs, but bound in offensive and defensive alliance with the great confederation. Austria had long been the predominating power in this league. Though the crown of the Germanic Empire was elective, it had for some time been almost hereditary in the royal family of Austria. Prussia had become exceedingly jealous of the domination of Austria.

A party had arisen in Germany, as in Italy, calling for unity. Germany contained a population of forty million inhabitants, and had two thousand walled cities. It was affirmed, that, by concentration and unity like that which existed in France and Russia, Germany might become the controlling power in Europe. There were many leading minds in Prussia in favor of this unification, hoping by diplomatic intrigue to secure the imperial crown of United Germany for the King of Prussia.

<sup>1</sup> Annual History, vol. xxx. p. 325.

On the 18th of March, 1848, Frederick William IV. issued a royal proclamation, in which he said, —

"Above all, we demand that Germany shall be transformed from a confederation of States into *one federal State*. We demand a general military system for Germany; and we will endeavor to form it after that model under which our Prussian armies reaped such unfading laurels in the War of Independence. We demand that the German army be assembled under one single federal banner; and we hope to see a federal commander-in-chief at its head," &c.

This remarkable document placed the King of Prussia at the head of the party in favor of German unity, which was then considered the liberal or popular party. Austria was by no means disposed thus to yield her supremacy. The ultra democrats of the liberal party regarded this movement of the Prussian king as a mere feint to gain power which he would wield against them.

On the evening of March 19, 1848, — the day after the issuing of the proclamation, — there was an immense gathering of the populace in King Street, opposite the palace, in Berlin, to testify their gratitude to the monarch who had thus apparently espoused their cause. When the king appeared upon the balcony, the sky was rent with their acclamations.

A squadron of cavalry and a body of infantry were drawn up under the windows of the palace to preserve order. The disaffected party wished to provoke the hostility of the people against the government by exciting a collision between the citizens and the royal troops. With this design, in the midst of the tumult caused by the immense gathering, some pistol-shots were fired at



the troops; and an eager party commenced throwing up barricades.

The cavalry, without drawing their swords or making a charge, moved their horses forward, upon the walk only, to clear the square. Either by design or accident, two muskets were discharged from the ranks of the infantry into the retreating mass of the populace. The response was a general discharge of fire-arms upon the soldiers from numerous insurgents who had come prepared for that purpose.

The insurrection proved to be very formidable. The students of the university, as brave as they were intelligent, were at its head. A battalion of the guard soon joined them.

"The cavalry now drew their sabres, and charged the mob in good earnest. A sanguinary conflict ensued; for the insurgents had among them a great number of old soldiers as well trained to arms as the royal troops, and the students combated with the utmost resolution. The conflict continued until nightfall, and even long after it had become dark, by the light of the burning houses, several of which were broken into, and, after being sacked, were set on fire by the inhabitants.

"Overwhelmed with terror at this calamitous event, which cost sixty persons their lives, besides four times that number wounded, the king issued a proclamation, addressed to 'My beloved Berliners,' in which he expressed the utmost regret at the events which had occurred, and declared that the conflict had arisen from accident and the shots first fired from King Street."

<sup>1</sup> Alison, vol. viii. p. 413.

The king was an ultra absolutist. His cabinet was in perfect sympathy with him in his hatred of popular liberty. The more intelligent of the liberal party understood full well that the king, in advocating German unity, sought only to consolidate the powers of despotism. He wished to become emperor of united Germany, that he might sway a sceptre of unrestrained power like that wielded by the Sultan of Turkey and the Czar of Russia. He could thus easily silence the clamors of the people for reform. But the king was greatly alarmed by the indication the insurrection gave of the most formidable opposition to his views. There was infinite danger that the *insurrection* would become *revolution* unless he instantly retraced his steps.

"The next morning, the king gave token of his submission by accepting the resignation of his whole ministers, who were immediately succeeded by a new cabinet, composed of known liberals.

"On the 20th, a general amnesty was proclaimed; and the whole persons in custody on account of the insurrection were liberated without bail; and two additional ministers were appointed, known to belong to the most advanced liberals. On the 22d, the bodies of the citizens who had been killed in the affray on the evening of the 18th were paraded with great pomp before the royal palace; and the king was obliged to submit to the humiliation of inclining his head before the lifeless remains of those who had perished under the sabres of his guards. At the same time, the king published a decree appointing a national guard in the capital, and ordered the royal troops to leave the city; and after riding through the streets in the German uniform, in the




course of which he made repeated protestations of his anxious desire for German freedom, he issued two proclamations, in which he openly announced his intention of putting himself at the head of the restored and united German nation."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Alison, vol. iii. p. 418.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### STRUGGLES FOR LIBERTY.

T is a great mistake to suppose, that, in the great conflicts which have agitated the monarchies of Europe, there has been a clearly-marked line of division between the oppressed people on the one side, and the despotic kings and courts on the other. The people have been in antagonism between themselves; and often the large majority have been in favor of the old feudal despotisms. The people in Prussia were thus divided. The Catholic party, which was quite numerous, and which embraced a large part of the peasantry, strongly opposed the liberal movement. The Poles were mostly in favor of it. As a general rule, the liberals, as they were called, were confined to the large towns. The peasantry were opposed to change.

While Prussia was in this state of agitation, the newly-appointed assembly met, on the 2d of April, to draw up a constitution. The king, in opening the assembly, said, —

“His Majesty has promised a real constitutional charter, and we are assembled to lay the foundation-stone of the edifice. We hope that the work will