

# NAPOLEON AND BLUCHER.

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## NAPOLEON AT DRESDEN.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### FREDERICK WILLIAM AND HARDENBERG.

It was a fine, warm day in May, 1812. The world was groaning under the yoke of Napoleon's tyranny. As a consolation for the hopeless year, came the laughing spring. Fields, forests, and meadows, were clad in beautiful verdure; flowers were blooming, and birds were singing everywhere—even at Charlottenburg, which King Frederick William formerly delighted to call his "pleasure palace," but which now was his house of mourning. At Charlottenburg, Frederick William had spent many and happy spring days with Queen Louisa; and when she was with him at this country-seat, it was indeed a pleasure palace.

The noble and beautiful queen was also now at Charlottenburg, but the king only felt her presence—he beheld her no more. Her merry remarks and charming laughter had ceased, as also her sighs and suffering; her radiant eyes had closed forever, and her sweet lips spoke no more. She was still at Charlottenburg, but only as a corpse. The king had her mausoleum erected in the middle of the garden. Here lay her coffin, and room had been left for another, as Frederick William intended to repose one day at the side of his Louisa.

From the time that the queen's remains had been deposited there—from that day of anguish and tears—the king called Charlottenburg no longer his "pleasure palace." It was henceforth a tomb, where his happiness and love were buried. Still, he liked to remain there, for it seemed to him as though he felt the presence of the spirit of his blessed queen, and

understood better what she whispered to his soul in the silent nights when she consoled him, and spoke of heaven and a renewed love. The bereaved husband, however, did not prefer to dwell in the magnificent abode of his ancestors, where he had formerly passed in spring so many happy days with his beloved Louisa. He had, therefore, a small house near the palace; it was into this plain and humble structure that he had retired with his grief-stricken heart. Here, in his solitude, he had already passed two springs.

The second year had nearly elapsed since the queen's death, and Frederick William's heart was still overburdened with sorrow, but yet he had learned what time teaches all mortals—he had learned to be resigned. Yes, resignation in these melancholy days was the only thing that remained to the unfortunate King of Prussia. It was a sad and difficult duty, for he had lost happiness, love, greatness, and even his royal independence. It is true, he was still called King of Prussia, but he was powerless. He had to bow to the despotic will of Napoleon, and scarcely a shadow of his former greatness had been left him. The days of Tilsit had not yet brought disgrace and humiliation enough upon him. The Emperor of the French had added fresh exactions, and his arrogance became daily more reckless and intolerable. In the face of such demands it only remained for Frederick William to submit or resist. He looked mournfully at his unhappy country; at those whom the last war had deprived of their husbands and fathers; at his small army; at the scanty means at his disposal, compared with the resources of Napoleon, and—the king submitted.

He had indeed hesitated long, and struggled strongly with his own feelings. For, by submitting to Napoleon's behests, he was to become the open enemy of the Emperor Alexander, and the King of Prussia was, jointly with the Emperor of the French, to arm against the Emperor of Russia. It was a terrible necessity for Frederick William to sacrifice his friend to his enemy, and at the very moment when Alexander had offered his hand for a new league, and proposed to conclude an offensive and defensive alliance with Prussia and England.

But such an alliance with distant Russia could not strengthen Prussia against neighboring France, whose armies were encamped near her frontiers. The danger of being crushed by Napoleon was much more probable than the hope of being supported by Russia. Russia had enough to do to take care

of herself. She was unable to prevent France from destroying Prussia, if Napoleon desired, and the crown might fall from the head of Frederick William long before a Russian army of succor could cross the Prussian frontier. He submitted therefore, and accepted with one hand the alliance of France, while threatening her with the other.

On the 24th of February, 1812, the Prussian king signed this new treaty. As was stipulated by the first article, he entered into a defensive alliance with France against any European power with which either France or Prussia should hereafter be at war. Napoleon, the man who had broken Queen Louisa's heart, was now the friend and ally of King Frederick William, and the enemies of France were henceforth to be the enemies of Prussia!

It was this that the king thought of to-day, when, in the early part of May, he was alone, and absorbed in his reflections, at his small house in Charlottenburg. It was yet early, for he had risen before sunrise, and had been at work a long time, when he ceased for a moment and yielded to his meditations. Leaning back in his easy chair, he gazed musingly through the open glass-doors, now on serene sky, and again on the fragrant verdure of his garden.

But this quiet relaxation was not to last long; the door of the small anteroom opened, and the footman announced that his excellency Minister and Chancellor von Hardenberg requested to see his majesty.

"Let him come in," said the king, as he rose, turning his grave eyes, which had become even gloomier than before, toward the door, on the threshold of which the elegant and somewhat corpulent form of the chancellor of state appeared. He bowed respectfully. His noble and prepossessing countenance was smiling and genial as usual; the king's, grave, thoughtful, and sad.

"Bad news, I suppose?" asked the king, briefly. "You come at so early an hour, something extraordinary must have happened. What is it?"

"Nothing of that kind, your majesty," said Hardenberg, with his imperturbable smile. "Yet, it is true, we are constantly in an extraordinary situation, so that what otherwise might appear unusual is now nothing but a very ordinary occurrence."

"A preamble!" said Frederick William, thoughtfully. "You have, then, to tell me something important. What is

it? Take a seat and speak!" The king pointed to a chair, and resumed his own. Hardenberg seated himself, and looked down for a moment with an air of embarrassment.

"Any thing the matter in Berlin?" asked the king. "Perhaps, a quarrel between the citizens and the French?"

"No, your majesty," said Hardenberg, to whose thin lips came his wonted smile. "The people of Berlin keep very quiet, and bear the arrogance of the French with admirable patience. I have to report no quarrels, and, on the whole, nothing of importance; I wished only to inform your majesty that I received a courier from Dresden late last night."

The king started, and looked gloomy. "From whom?" he asked, in a hollow voice.

"From our ambassador," replied Hardenberg, carelessly. "Suprising intelligence has reached Dresden. They are expecting the Emperor Napoleon. He left Saint Cloud with the Empress Maria Louisa on the 9th of May, and no one knew any thing about the object or destination of the journey. It was generally believed that the emperor, with his consort, intended to take a pleasure-trip to Mentz, but immediately after his arrival there he informed his suite that he was on his way to a new war, and would accompany his wife only as far as Dresden, where they would meet their Austrian majesties. Couriers were sent from Mentz to Vienna, to Dresden, to King Jerome, and to all the marshals and generals. The columns of the army have commenced moving everywhere, and are now marching from all sides upon Dresden. As usual, Napoleon has again succeeded in keeping his plans secret to the very last moment, and informing the world of his intentions only when they are about to be realized."

"Yes," exclaimed the king, in a tone of intense hatred and anger—"yes, he wears a kind, hypocritical mask, and feigns friendship and pacific intentions until he has drawn into his nets those whom he intends to ruin; then he drops his mask and shows his true arrogant and ambitious face. He caressed us, and protested his friendship, until we signed the treaty of alliance, but now he will insist on the fulfilment of the engagements we have entered into. He commences a new war, and, by virtue of the first article of our treaty, I have to furnish him an auxiliary corps of twenty thousand men and sixty field-pieces."

"Yes, your majesty, it is so," said Hardenberg, composedly. "The new French governor of Berlin, General Durutte, came

to see me this morning, and demanded in the name of his emperor that the Prussian auxiliary troops should immediately take the field."

"Auxiliary troops!" exclaimed the king, angrily. "The Prussian victims, he ought to have said, for what else will my poor, unfortunate soldiers be but the doomed victims of his ambition and insatiable thirst for conquest? He will drive them into the jaws of death, that they may gain a piece of blood-stained land, or a new title from the ruin of the world's happiness; he does not care whether brave soldiers die or not, so long as his own ambition is served."

"Yes," said Hardenberg, solemnly, "his path leads across corpses and through rivers of blood, but the vengeance of God and man will finally overtake him, and who knows whether it may not do so during this wild Russian campaign?"

"My evil forebodings, then, are proving true," said the king, sighing; "the expedition is directed against Russia?"

"Yes, against Russia," said Hardenberg, sneeringly; "the master of the world intends to crush Russia also, because she ventured to remain an independent power, and the Emperor Alexander was so bold as to demand the fulfilment of the promises of Tilsit and Erfurt. Providence is always just in the final result, your majesty. It punishes the Emperor Alexander for suffering himself to be beguiled by the flatteries and promises of Napoleon, and the territories which he allowed Napoleon to give him at Tilsit, at the expense of Prussia, will be no precious stones in his crown."

"Not a word against Alexander!" exclaimed the king, imperiously. "However appearances may be against him, he has always proved a true friend of mine, and perhaps especially at a time when we suspected it the least. His keen eyes penetrated the future, and behind the clouds darkening our horizon he believed he could descry light and safety. He yielded, in order to lull Napoleon to sleep; he pretended to be fascinated, in order to convince him of his attachment and devotedness. He wished to be regarded as Napoleon's friend until he had armed himself, and felt strong enough to turn against the usurper. Hush! do not contradict me. I have heard all this from Alexander's own lips. On his return from Erfurt he confided the plans of his future to me and the queen, under the seal of secrecy. Louisa carried the secret into her grave, and I have preserved it in my breast. Now I may communicate it to you, for the hour of decision has come;

it finds me on the side of France, and God has decreed that I should turn my arms against my friend, against Alexander! Ah, happy the queen, because she did not live to see this day and witness my new humiliation and disgrace! And was it, then, unavoidable? Was it, then, really necessary for me to enter into this hateful alliance? Was there no way of avoiding it?"

And as the king put this question to himself rather than to Hardenberg, he laid his head against the back of his easy-chair, and looked gloomy and thoughtful.

"There was no way, unfortunately, of avoiding it," said Hardenberg, after a short pause. "Your majesty knows full well that we submitted to stern necessity only; to act otherwise would have been too dangerous, for the crown on the head of your majesty would have been menaced."

"It is better to lose the crown and die a freeman than live a crowned slave!" exclaimed the king, impetuously.

"No, pardon me, your majesty, for daring to contradict you," said Hardenberg, smiling; "it is better to keep the crown, and submit to necessity as long as possible, in order to be able to take future revenge on the oppressor. At times I am likewise tortured by the doubts and fears now disquieting the noble soul of your majesty. But at such hours I always repeat to myself, in order to justify our course, a few words from the letter which the Duke de Bassano addressed to our ambassador, Baron von Krusemark, as the ultimatum of the Tuileries. I have learned this letter by heart, and, if you will graciously permit me, I will repeat a few words." The king nodded assent, and Hardenberg added: "This letter read: 'My dear baron, the moment has come when we must give you our views about the fate of Prussia. I cannot conceal from you that this is a matter of life and death for your country. You know that the emperor entertained already at Tilsit very unfriendly intentions against Prussia. These intentions still remain the same, but will not be carried out at this time, on the condition that Prussia become our ally, and a faithful one. The moments are precious, and the circumstances very grave.'"\*

"An outrageous letter!" muttered Frederick William to himself.

"Yes, an outrageous letter," repeated Hardenberg, bowing, "for it contained a serious threat, and yet, on the other hand,

\* "Mémoires d'un Homme d'État," vol. xi., p. 324

it offered us a sort of guaranty. Prussia was lost, in case she refused to join the alliance, for Austria had likewise acceded to it, and, by holding out against the wishes of France, Prussia would have run the risk of being crushed by two armed enemies in the north, as well as in the south, and blotted out from the list of nations. We, therefore, were obliged to submit; we had no other choice."

"But what did we gain by submitting?" asked the king, angrily. "In order to preserve my people from the horrors of war, I bowed to Napoleon's will, and accepted the disgraceful alliance. I thereby wished to secure peace to my unfortunate country, which stands so greatly in need of it. Instead of attaining this object, the alliance plunges us into the very abyss which I intended to avoid, and I am compelled to send my soldiers into the field for an unjust cause against a monarch who is my friend, and under the orders of a commander-in-chief who is my enemy, and has always shown his bitter hostility to me."

"But your majesty has at least prevented your own country from being devastated by war. It is true, you send out your army, but the war will not lay waste the fields of Prussia; it will not trample in the dust the crops of the Prussian farmer, interrupt the labors of the mechanic, or carry its terror into our cities and villages, our houses and families. The enemy is at least far from our own country."

"You only wish to palliate the calamity," exclaimed the king. "The enemy is here, and you know it. He is dogging every step of ours; he is listening to every word of mine, and watching every movement. An inconsiderate word, an imprudent step, and the French gendarmes will rush upon me and conduct the King of Prussia as a prisoner to France, while no one can raise his hand to prevent them. We have the enemy in Berlin, in Spandau, and in all our fortresses. Our own soldiers we have to send into the field, and our cities and fortresses are occupied by French garrisons. An army of four hundred and eighty thousand infantry and seventy thousand cavalry cover Prussia like a cloud of locusts; Berlin, Spandau, Königsberg, and Pillau, have received French garrisons; only Upper Silesia, Colberg, and Graudenz, have remained exempt from them. The whole country, as though we were at war, is exposed to the robberies, extortions, and cruelties in which an enemy indulges: this time, however, he comes in the garb of a friend; and, as our ally, he is irritating

and impoverishing the farmers, and plundering the mechanics and manufacturers. And I am not only obliged to suffer all this in silence, but I must send my own soldiers, the natural defenders of our states, into a foreign country, and command them to obey the man who has heaped the vilest insults not only on myself, but on the whole of Prussia, and has broken the heart of my beloved wife!" And the king, quite exhausted, breathless with his unusually long speech, and almost ashamed of his own tremulous excitement, buried his face in his hands and groaned aloud.

Hardenberg gazed upon him for a moment with an expression of profound sympathy; he then looked around the room with searching glances, which seemed to pierce every niche, every fold of the curtains, and every piece of furniture and sculpture. "Is your majesty sure that no one can hear and watch us here?" he asked in a low voice.

The king dropped his hands from his face, and looked at him in surprise.

"Your majesty, you yourself say that you are surrounded by spies, and eavesdroppers," added Hardenberg. "Does your majesty suspect any such to be here?"

"No," said the king, with a mournful smile, "it is the last blessing of my Louisa that she has secured me this quiet asylum. The spies do not venture to penetrate here—this retreat is not desecrated by their inquisitive and lurking glances."

"Well," said Hardenberg, almost joyously, "if we need not be afraid of the eyes and ears of spies, your majesty will permit me to speak freely to you. My king, great events are maturing; while impenetrable darkness still seems to surround us, morning is gradually dawning, and the day of retribution is not distant. Europe is utterly tired of war, and this incessant bloodshed; she has practised forbearance until it is exhausted and converted into an intense indignation. Thanks to his unscrupulous machinations, Napoleon has hitherto succeeded in bringing about wars between the different nations of Europe in order to derive benefits for France alone from these fratricidal struggles. It was he who drove the Poles and Turks into a war against the Russians, the Italians against the Austrians, the Danes against the Swedes and English, and armed the princes of the Rhenish Confederation against their German countrymen and brethren. He instigated all against each other; he made them continue

the struggle until they sank from loss of blood, for he knew that he would then be able to take the property of those whom he had made murder each other. And who could prevent him? The warriors, exhausted by their long and bloody work—the starving people, to whom, in their hunger and anguish, only he who brought them peace and a little bread seemed a true friend! Italy wished to deliver herself from the Austrian yoke, and after long struggles the liberty that Napoleon had promised her consisted but in entire submission to his own behests. To Poland, too, he promised deliverance, and, after the unfortunate country had risen, and spent her last strength and her best blood in the war against Russia, she became exhausted, and offered no resistance when he claimed her as his spoil, and declared the Poles, who had dreamed that they were free, to be subjects of France. The princes of the Rhenish Confederation were compelled to send their German troops to Spain, to wage war against a nation that was struggling for independence; and Napoleon in the meantime placed a French adventurer upon a throne in the middle of Germany, and erected a kingdom for him from the spoils he had taken from German princes. Holland, which had endeavored to preserve some vestiges of liberty, was suddenly deprived of her sovereign, and converted into a French province; and when Napoleon had succeeded in bringing about a war between Sweden and Russia, and instigating unfortunate Finland to resist the latter power, he profited by the favorable moment, and took Stralsund and the Island of Rügen, both of which belonged to the King of Sweden, who had been his ally up to that time. In Italy only the Pontifical states and the holy father at Rome still resisted him, after the remainder of the peninsula had awakened from its dreams of liberty under the rule of French marshals and Napoleonic princes. He instigated Naples and Sardinia against Rome, and when the struggle had commenced, he magnanimously hastened to the assistance of his brother-in-law Murat, arrested the pope, conveyed him as a prisoner to France, and declared Rome to be the property of that country until the pope should submit to his will. No country, no nation, escaped his intrigues—conflagrations, devastation, and death accompanied him everywhere! But the nations, as I have stated already, are at length impatient; they are wearied of fighting; or, rather, if they still fight, they intend to do so only in order to conquer peace for themselves, and bring

retribution on him who was the sole cause of all this bloodshed."

"And they commenced by rushing, at his command, into the field—by entering upon another war!" exclaimed Frederick William, shrugging his shoulders with a sneer.

"Your majesty," said Hardenberg, solemnly, "they will do so now for the last time. Napoleon is digging his own grave, and, by consolidating the forces of all countries into one vast army, he makes friends of those whom he hitherto successfully tried to make enemies and adversaries of each other. But when the nations have once found out that they are really brethren, it only needs a voice calling upon them to unite for one grand object—that is to say, for the deliverance of Europe from the tyrant's yoke!"

"Those are Utopian dreams," said the king. "Whence should this voice come? Who would be so audacious as to utter it?"

"Whence should this voice come?" asked Hardenberg. "Your majesty, it will come from heaven, and find an echo on the whole earth. It will resound from the hundred thousand graves of the soldiers killed in battle; from the breasts of sorrowing widows and orphans, and, like the noise of the tempest, it will come from the lips of thousands of humiliated and disgraced men. This voice will not be that of a single man; but God, Nature, and all nations, will unite, and millions will utter that one shout of 'Liberty! Let us rise and expel the tyrant!'"

"But, then, the story of the tower of Babel will be re-enacted," said Frederick William, sighing; "the nations will not understand each other; an endless confusion of languages will ensue, and, finally, the building, which they intended jointly to erect, will fall to ruins and they be dispersed."

"In order to prevent this, a chieftain must gladly place himself at their head, and direct their will," exclaimed Hardenberg. "I hope God will intrust this leadership to your majesty."

"To me?" asked the king, almost angrily. "Will you take the liberty of mocking my distress, or do you believe that I ought to be consoled in the calamities of the present by such hopes of the future?"

"No, your majesty, I am only convinced that God will one day intrust the task of retribution to Prussia, because it is she that has suffered most."

"Let us leave retribution to God," said the king, gently.

"No, your majesty," exclaimed Hardenberg, "let us now take upon ourselves the task of avenging our wrongs, and only pray to Heaven for a blessing on our efforts. And that God is with us, that He at last averts His face from the man who has so long trampled the world under foot, is shown by the new war into which Napoleon is about to enter. This expedition to Russia is the first step to his ruin!"

"Oh, you are mistaken!" exclaimed the king, almost indignantly. "It will be a new triumphal procession for Napoleon. Russia will succumb to him, as we all have done. He marches upon the position of his enemy with the armies of all his allies—half a million of warriors and thousands of cannon—while Russia stands alone; she has no force compared with his, and no allies whatever."

"She has one friend more powerful than any Napoleon has," said Hardenberg, solemnly—"Nature. When this ally appears, with its masses of ice and snow-storms, Napoleon is lost."

"But he will take good care not to wait for this reënforcement," exclaimed the king. "As always, he will finish the war in a few weeks, vanquish the feeble forces of Alexander with his own tremendous columns in one or two decisive battles, and then, on the ruins of the Russian empire, dictate terms of peace to the humiliated emperor. This has been the course of events ever since Bonaparte commanded, and so it will be hereafter."

"Your majesty, it will not; for, during twelve years, he has been the instructor of the world, and the nations have learned from him not only the art of war, but his special strategies. His secret consists in the rapidity of his movements. He has made Macchiavelli's words his own: 'A short and vigorous war insures victory!' He must, therefore, be opposed by a protracted and desultory war—his enemies must fight long, not with heavy columns, but with light battalions, now here, now there; they must take care not to bring on a general battle, but slowly thin the ranks of his army, and exhaust his resources and his patience. This was the course which the Spaniards pursued, and their hopes are, therefore, promising; they are carrying on a guerilla warfare, and he is obliged to renew the struggle every day without being able to defeat them in a decisive battle. Russia will adopt a similar plan. She will take pains to draw Napoleon farther and