

pate in this struggle; they will die eating poisoned bread with the enemy, rather than give him wholesome food."

"You are exaggerating!" exclaimed Napoleon, sneeringly. "In truth, it is mere imagination to compare the Russian serf—the blood in whose veins is frozen by Siberian cold, and whose back is cut up and bowed by the knout—with the Spaniard, passionate and free beneath a torrid sun, and who in his rags still feels himself noble and a grandee. But these exaggerations shall not influence me! The die is cast: I cannot recede! Great Heaven! this tedious old Europe! I will bring from Russia the keys to unlock a new world. Or do you believe, you short-sighted little men, that I have undertaken, merely for the sake of Russia, this greatest expedition that military history will ever engrave upon its tablets? No; Moscow is to me but the gate of Asia! My route to India passes that way. Alexander the Great had as long a route to the Ganges as I shall have from Moscow, and yet he reached his destination. Should I shrink from what he succeeded in accomplishing? Since the days of St. Jean d'Acre I have thought of this scheme; if it had not been for the discontinuance of the siege and the plague, I should at that time have conquered one-half of Asia, and have thence returned to Europe for the thrones of Germany and Italy. Do not look at me so wonderingly, Narbonne. I tell you nothing but my real schemes. They shall be carried into effect, and then you and the world will have to acknowledge that my words are oracles, my actions miracles, and every day a new one!* In the morning I set out early and repair to the headquarters of my army. Do not say a word, Narbonne! I leave Dresden early in the morning. The fate of Russia is decided! Go!" He waved his hand toward the door, and turned his back to Narbonne.

The count left the imperial cabinet with a sigh. In the corridor outside he met Berthier and Duroc, who seemed to await him. "Well," both of them asked eagerly, "were your representations successful? Will the emperor, at the eleventh hour, make peace?"

Narbonne shook his head sadly. "It was all in vain," he replied. "He wishes war, and you do not even dream how far he means to carry it. When listening to him, one believes him to be either a demigod, to whom temples should be built, or a lunatic, who should be sent to Bedlam!" †

* Napoleon's own words.—Vide Villemain, "Souvenirs," vol. i., p. 180.
† Count Louis de Narbonne's own words.—Vide "Souvenirs," vol. i.

THE LAST DAYS OF 1812.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CONSPIRATORS OF HELGOLAND.

THE storm was howling over the ocean, revealing its depths, and hurling its foaming waves to the sky. They dashed wildly against yonder lofty rock that calmly overlooked the anger of the tempest. It was the rock of Helgoland. In times of old, it towered even more proudly above the unruly element surrounding it. It was then a terror to seafaring nations, and when the ships of the rich merchants of Hamburg, Bremen, Holland, and Denmark, passed it at as great a distance as possible, the masters made the sign of the cross, and prayed God would deliver them from this imminent danger. In ancient days Helgoland was ten times larger than it is now, and on this old rocky island, which had been the last asylum of the gods of northern paganism, lived a warlike people, who knew no other laws than those of their own will, no other toil than piracy, and who submitted to no other master than the chieftain chosen from among their most colossal fellows. The pirates of Helgoland were desperate men, who had selected for themselves as a coat of arms a wheel and a gallows, which they wore embroidered on the sleeves of their jackets; and their last chieftain, who especially terrified the hearts of sea-captains passing the island, called himself: "I, by my own grace, and not that of God, Long Peter, Murderer of the Dutch, Destroyer of the Hamburgers, Chastiser of the Danes, and Scourge of the Bremen Ships." But Long Peter, "by his own grace, and not that of God," had at length fallen a victim to the vicissitudes of life. The women of Helgoland, revolting against his cruelty, baseness, and tyranny, surrendered the island, the seat of the ancient gods, to Admiral Paulsen, of the Danish navy. This occurred in 1684, and since then Helgoland remained under the authority of the

Danish crown until 1807. The conflagration of Copenhagen melted the chains that fastened the old gray rock to Denmark, and England, that triumphantly conveyed the whole Danish fleet to her own shores, annexed Helgoland.

The island had become much smaller ever since Long Peter, its last chieftain, died. The storms had swept over it, tearing rocky masses from its shores, and flinging them far into the sea, which had undermined the foundations of Helgoland, and hidden the conquest beneath the waves. Although small, it was the beacon of Europe. In the last days of 1812 the eyes of all German patriots were fixed longingly and hopefully upon that lonely rock in the North Sea. It was British territory—the first advance which England had made to the shores of suffering Germany, and, her proud flag waving over it, made it the asylum of persecuted patriots and members of the secret leagues. To the red rock, in the midst of the sea, came no French spies; there were no traitors' ears, for the pilot at the light-house kept a good lookout, and no suspicious ship was permitted to anchor; no one was allowed to land without having given a good account of himself, and satisfying the authorities that confidence might be reposed in him. Those allowed to disembark were heartily welcomed, for, by setting foot on the rocky island, they had become members of the vast family of Napoleon's enemies—of the brethren who had united against his power—of the conspirators whose sworn duty it was to oppose Napoleon with the weapons of cunning as well as force—of intrigue creeping in the dark, or of brave and manly defiance.

In Helgoland the swarms of smugglers sheltered, who had taken upon themselves the risk of trading English goods, against which Napoleon's hatred tried to shut the entire continent. There came the crowd of foreign merchants, to purchase of English dealers the goods which Napoleon's decrees had prohibited in his own dominions, as well as in those of his allies. Every British manufacturer and wholesale dealer had his counting-house and depot at Helgoland. Vast warehouses, resembling palaces, rose on the plateau of the island, and approaching ships beheld them from afar. In these warehouses were stored all the articles which British industry was able to offer to the rest of Europe, and which the people of the whole continent desired the more ardently, the more rigorously they were forbidden to purchase them. A very large commercial firm of London and Manchester had branches

of their business on the island; every wealthy banker had an office there, and people were justified in calling Helgoland "Little London." You would have thought yourself in the city of London, when passing through the narrow streets of the island, lined on both sides with vast warehouses, and reading on each the names of the most celebrated London firms. You would almost have fancied you were in the gigantic harbor of the Thames, when looking at the forest of masts, the animated crowds, the ships and boats, where from three to four hundred vessels cleared and entered every day.

Not only merchants and smugglers, adventurers and speculators, flocked to Helgoland, but diplomatists, politicians, and patriots found on the rocky island a refuge and convenient point, where they might meet their brethren and reunite kindred hearts. The members of the great secret league hastened from the north and the south of Europe to Helgoland, to hold meetings there, concert plans, and communicate to each other what they had succeeded in accomplishing.

On one of the last days in September, 1812, an unusual commotion prevailed on the island. It was noon, and yet more than two hundred ships had arrived and cast anchor. All the stores were open and the goods displayed; brokers and speculators elbowed themselves in busy haste through the multitude of merchants, owners of ships, smugglers, and sailors, that filled the whole upper part of the island, offering goods for sale in all languages; and among them were to be seen the beautiful girls of Helgoland, dressed in their strange costume, and carrying in baskets and on plates all sorts of delicacies, for which they sought purchasers.

At a distance from the throng stood three men, who paid but little attention to the merry, excited crowd. They were closely wrapped in cloaks, with their hats drawn over their foreheads, and looked steadfastly upon the sea. Far on the horizon there appeared another small dark speck, which gradually assumed a definite shape.

"A ship!" ejaculated one of the three men, eagerly.

"Yes, a ship," repeated his two companions. They paused, looking eagerly at the vessel, which rapidly darted across the waves, and could now be discerned by the unaided eye.

"Look," said one of the three, "she is a man-of-war. I see the port-holes."

"But I do not see her flag," said one of his companions.

"I do," exclaimed the third, who had hitherto looked at

the ship through a large telescope. "Yellow and blue, the Swedish colors."

"At length!" exclaimed the first speaker, joyously. "I hope it is he!"

"There is another ship," said the second speaker, pointing his hand to a different part of the horizon. "How she is dashing along!—her keel cuts the waves so that their foaming crests sweep like a silver chain behind her. Oh, I like that ship! it seems to me as though she brings us glad tidings, and comes for our sake, and not for commercial purposes."

"Now she unfurls her flag!" exclaimed the third speaker. "It is the union jack! Oh, you are right, she comes for our sake, and I hope some friend is on board. But we are forgetting the Swedish vessel. Where is she?"

"There! The little fish has become a whale. And see, the English ship, too, is much larger, and is dancing along like a beauty. Both are very fast, and in half an hour they will be at anchor in the harbor."

"Heaven grant that the friends for whom we are looking may be on board!" said his two companions, sighing.

"Your wish will be granted," said their friend. "God is with us and blesses our league. Has He not already for twelve days bidden the sea be calm, and not detain us or one of ours by adverse winds? Have we not all arrived to-day, as we had agreed to, from three different parts of the world? Why should the other brethren of our league not be able to do the same?"

"Yes, you are right," said the first speaker, smiling. "Heaven does seem to be with us, and it is apparently for our sake that this rock emerged from the waves as a snug little boudoir for our European rendezvous. Bonaparte may often enough cast angry glances in this direction, but the lightning of his eyes and the thunder of his words do not reach our sea-girt asylum, which God Himself has built and furnished for us. Grim Bonaparte cannot hurt us here, but we will try to hurt him, and one day he will find out what we are doing at the political boudoir of Helgoland."

"Look," exclaimed his friend, "the two ships have reached the island at the same time, and are now anchoring."

"They are lowering their boats," exclaimed the third speaker. "The passengers are going ashore."

"Let us go to the place agreed upon, and see whether they are the brethren we are looking for," said the first speaker.

"Yes, let us go," exclaimed his two companions.

Without exchanging another word, they turned and walked hastily through the busy crowds to the staircase leading from the upper part of the island to the lower shore. Here they passed through the streets of small, neat fishermen's huts, and then entered the last building. A footman in a gorgeous livery received them in the small hall, and opened with reverential politeness the door leading into the only room of the hut. The three men walked in, and locked the door carefully. One of them took off his hat and cloak, and now stood before his two companions in splendid uniform, his breast covered with orders. "Permit me, gentlemen," he said, smiling—"permit me to greet you here as guests of mine, for you are now at my house. I have bought this building for the purpose of holding the meetings of the members of our league. Up to this time we have recognized each other as friends only by the signs and passwords that had been agreed on; but now, if you please, we will drop our incognito. I am Count Munster, minister of the Elector of Hanover and the King of England."

"And I," said the second gentleman, taking off his cloak—"I have the honor of introducing myself to your excellency as the chief of the Berlin police, who was proscribed and exiled by Bonaparte. My name is Justus Gruner."

"A name that I have known a long time, though I was not acquainted with the man himself," said Count Munster, kindly offering him his hand. "Let me bid you welcome as a faithful and zealous adherent of the good cause—as a noble patriot in whom Germany confides and hopes."

"It is my turn now to unmask," said the third, whose countenance had hitherto been almost entirely invisible, so closely had he muffled himself. Taking off his cloak and hat and bowing to his companions, he said, "My name is Frederick William of Brunswick."

"I had the honor to recognize your highness when you were yet in the boat, and I stood on the shore," said Count Munster, smiling and bowing respectfully.

"And why did you not tell me so?" asked the duke, eagerly.

"Because I respected your incognito, your highness," said the count.

The duke shook his head, which was covered with dark, curly hair. "No etiquette, count," he said, almost indignantly. "I am nothing but a poor soldier, who scarcely

knows where to lay his head, whom grief is tormenting, and whose hunger for vengeance is not appeased."

"There will be a time when all those who are hungry, like your highness, will be satisfied," said Justus Gruner, solemnly.

"If you speak the truth, my friend," exclaimed the duke, with emphasis, the eyes of my blind father, who died in despair, will reopen, and he will look down with blissful tears upon the delivered world. And they will blot out his last dying words, that are burning like fire in my heart. 'Oh, what a disgrace! what a disgrace!' were the last words my father uttered. I hear them night and day; they are always resounding in my ears like the death-knell of Germany; they are ever smarting in my heart like an open wound. Germany is groaning and lamenting, for Napoleon's foot is still on her neck, and, mortally wounded and blinded like my father, we are all crying, 'Oh, what a disgrace! what a disgrace!'"

"But the time will soon come when our wounds will heal," said Count Munster, gravely. "Our night is passing, the morning dawns, and the star of Bonaparte will fade forever."

"I do not think it," said the duke, sighing. It is still shining over our heads—he is rather like a threatening meteor, and its eccentric course is over the snow-fields of Russia. But hush! footsteps are approaching." The duke was not mistaken. They heard the door of the hut violently open and close, and shortly after some one rapped at the locked door.

"The password!" shouted Count Munster, putting his hand on the key.

"*Il est temps de finir!*" replied a sonorous voice outside.

Count Munster opened the door. A gentleman of imposing stature entered the room. "Count Nugent," exclaimed Count Munster, joyously, offering both his hands to the friend whom he had known for many years. Was it you who arrived on the last English ship?"

"Yes," said the count, saluting the other gentlemen. But I believe there will be more guests here directly. I saw close behind me two men wrapped in cloaks, who were also moving hither. Ah, they are passing the window at this moment."

"And now they are entering the house," said the count, listening.

Another rapping was heard, and the call for the password was answered again by the shout of "*Il est temps de finir!*"

"They are the passengers from the Swedish vessel, as I

hoped they would be," said Count Munster, opening the door. Two men in cloaks entered, and bowed silently to the others.

"Gneisenau! My dear Gneisenau!" exclaimed Count Munster, tenderly embracing the gentleman who had entered last. "Then, you have really kept your word! You have come in spite of all dangers! I thank you in the name of Germany!"

"You will thank me only after having learned what new ally I have enlisted for our holy cause," said Gneisenau, smiling, and pointing to his companion, who, still closely muffled, was standing by his side silent and motionless.

"You come from Stockholm," said Count Munster, joyously, "you bring us a delegate of the crown prince of Sweden, the noble Bernadotte, do you not? My heart does not deceive me—I am sure!"

"No, your heart does not deceive you," said Gneisenau, smiling. "This gentleman is an envoy of the crown prince of Sweden, who promises us his friendship and assistance."

"No," said the stranger, slowly and solemnly. "At this hour there must be truth between us. I am not an envoy of the crown prince of Sweden, I am he himself, I am Bernadotte!" He took off his hat and cloak, and bowed to the astonished gentlemen. "I wish to prove to you, and to those whom you are representing, that I am in earnest," said Bernadotte, in the most dignified manner. "My French heart had to undergo a long and painful struggle, but the crown prince of Sweden conquered it. I must think no longer of the blood that is flowing in my veins, but remember only that, by the decree of the noble Swedish nation, I have been destined to become its king, and that, therefore, the interests of Sweden must be more important and sacred to me than my own heart. The Emperor of the French has offered me an alliance. But Russia and Prussia are urging me to espouse their cause. The interest of Sweden requires me to ally myself with those who have justice, strength, and honor on their side; I shall, therefore, side with Russia, England, and Prussia. This is the reply which I made to the Russian ambassadors, and likewise to the Prussian General Gneisenau here. But, at the same time, I asked opportunity to complete my preparations, and until that can be done, I have requested the ambassadors to keep secret my accession to the northern alliance. It seemed to me as though this request of mine were looked upon as a proof of my vacillation, and as a want of candor, and as though doubts were entertained as to

my ultimate decision. Hence I wished to manifest my true spirit by coming myself to you instead of sending a delegate. Now, you have heard my political confession. Are you content with it, and may I participate in your deliberations?" And the crown prince of Sweden, uttering the last words, turned with a winning smile to Count Munster, and sank his head as a prisoner waiting for sentence.

"I pray your royal highness, in the name of my friends present, to remain and participate in our discussions," said Count Munster. "We are now waiting for no further arrivals—all the invited guests have come. Let us take our seats. Let the conference commence. But first permit me to introduce the gentlemen to each other."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EUROPEAN CONSPIRACY.

THE six gentlemen sat down on chairs placed around the table standing in the middle of the room. Count Munster bowed to them. "As it was I who invited you to attend this conference," he said, "I must take the liberty of addressing you first. I must justify myself for having called upon you in the name of Germany, in the name of Europe, to come hither notwithstanding the dangers and hardships of the journey. Yes, gentlemen, Germany stands in need of our assistance. But not only Germany—Spain, drenched in the blood of her patriots; poor, enslaved Italy; Holland, ruthlessly annexed to France; in short, all the states that are groaning under the tyrant's yoke; yea, France herself!—all are crying for deliverance from slavery. But whence is help to come when every one shuts his eyes against the despairing wail of Europe; when every one idly folds his hands and waits for some one else to be bold enough to call upon the people to take up arms? Every individual must be animated with this courage; must regard himself as chosen by Providence to commence the task of liberation. Each one must act as though it were he who is to set the world in motion, and were the head of the great and holy conspiracy by which mankind is to be delivered from the tyrant. I told myself so when I saw all Germany sinking; I repeat it to myself every day, and it is my excuse now for having ventured to invite thither men who are my superiors

in every respect. But to Germany alone we shall give an account of what we have hitherto done for her liberation; for her let us deliberate as to what we further ought to do, and what plans we should pursue. The world lies prostrate, but we must raise it again; the nations are manacled, but we must be the files that imperceptibly cut through the fetters, and we must then tell the people that it is easy for them to gain their independence; that it is only necessary to take the sword, and prove by deeds that they feel themselves free—then they will be free. This is our task—the task of all generous patriots. Every one has been conscious of this, but also, that there should be a bond connecting all the members of this secret league, to which every patriot belongs. That was the idea which caused several friends and myself to unite our efforts. We did so, and this union made us feel doubly strong; we conferred as to our duties and schemes, and by doing so they became clearer to us, and better matured. We made ourselves emissaries of the sacred cause of the fatherland, and went into the world to enlist soldiers, to create a new nation, awaken the sleepers, enlighten the ignorant, bring back the faithless, undeceive the deceived, and console the despairing. For this purpose I have struggled for years, and so have all my friends, and so do all good and faithful patriots, without perhaps being fully conscious of it. But it is necessary, too, that those who, like us, are fully alive to their duty, should from time to time give each other an account of what they have accomplished, that they may agree upon new plans for the future. I, therefore, requested my friends Count Nugent and General Gneisenau, to come hither; I wrote to Minister von Stein, who is now at Prague, either to come himself, or send a reliable representative, and I requested another in Northern Germany to send one of his intimate friends. Four months ago I dispatched my invitations; the meeting was to take place to-day, and we have all promptly responded to the call. My friend in Northern Germany induced the noblest and most faithful soldier of the fatherland, Duke Frederick William of Brunswick, to go to Helgoland. Minister von Stein, who, in the mean time, was obliged to go to Russia, sends us a noble representative in the person of Justus Gruner, and the magnanimous crown prince of Sweden offers us, by his voluntary appearance in our midst, a new guaranty for the success of our schemes. We know now what has called us hither. Let us communicate to each other what we have hitherto done,