

wild eyes. "Be calm, Blucher," she said. "Calm your great, heroic heart, else you shall and must not hear any thing further.—General Scharnhorst, I am sure you will not tell him anything as long as he is so agitated."

"I will be calm," said Blucher. "You see that I am so already, and that I sit here as still as a lamb. Scharnhorst, tell me, therefore, every thing. I am all attention."

"And while listening to him, take again your old friend, which has so often comforted you in your afflictions—put your pipe again into your mouth," said Amelia, handing it to him.

But Blucher refused it, almost indignantly. "No," he said, "one does not smoke at church, nor when the Lord speaks, and Scharnhorst is about to tell me that the Lord has spoken. While listening to such words, the heart must be devout, and the lips may bless or pray, but they must not hold a pipe. And now speak, Scharnhorst; I am quite calm and prepared for good and bad news."

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE OATH.

"SPEAK," said Blucher, once more. "I am prepared for every thing. Tell me about Bonaparte in Russia."

"You know how victoriously and irresistibly Napoleon penetrated with the various columns of his army into the interior of Russia," said Scharnhorst. "Nothing seemed to have been able to withstand him—nothing powerful enough to arrest his triumphant progress. The Russian generals, as if panic-stricken, retreated farther and farther the deeper Napoleon advanced into the heart of the empire. Neither Kutusoff, nor Wittgenstein, nor Barclay, dared risk the fate of Russia in a decisive battle; even the Emperor Alexander preferred to leave the army and retire to Moscow to wait for the arrival of fresh reënforcements, and render new resources available. Napoleon, in the mean time, advanced still farther, constantly in search of the enemy, whom he was unable to find anywhere, and everywhere meeting another enemy whom he was nowhere able to avoid or conquer. This latter was the Russian climate. The scorching heat, the drenching rains, bred diseases which made more havoc in the ranks of the

French than the swords of living enemies would have been able to do. At the same time supplies were wanting, so that the immense host received but scanty and insufficient rations. The soldiers suffered the greatest privations, and the Russian people, incited by their czar and their priests to intense hatred and fanatical fury, escaped with their personal property and their provisions from the villages and the small towns rather than welcome the enemy and open to him their houses in compulsory hospitality. The French army, reduced by sickness, privations, and hunger, to nearly one-half of its original strength, nevertheless continued advancing; it forced an entrance into Smolensk after a bloody struggle; after taking a short rest in the ruined, burning, and entirely deserted city, it marched upon Moscow. In front of this ancient capital of the czars it met at length on the 7th of September the living enemy it had so long sought. Bagration, Kutusoff, and Barclay, occupied with their army positions in front of it in order to prevent the approaching foe from entering holy Moscow. You know the particulars of the bloody battle on the Moskwa. The Russians and the French fought on this 7th of September for eleven long hours with the most obstinate exasperation, with truly fanatical fury; whole ranks were mowed down like corn under the harvester's scythe; their generals and chieftains themselves were struck down in the unparalleled struggle; more than seventy thousand killed and wounded covered the battle-field, and yet there were no decisive results. The Russians had only been forced back, but not defeated and routed in such a manner as to stand in need of peace, in order to recover from the terrible consequences of the struggle. To be sure, Napoleon held the battle-field, and, on the 14th of September, made his entry into Moscow, but no messengers came to him from Alexander to sue for peace; no submissive envoys to meet him, as he had been accustomed to see in other conquered cities, and surrender him the keys; the streets were deserted, and no excited crowd appeared either there or at the windows of the houses to witness his entry. The city, whence the inhabitants and authorities had fled, was a vast gaping grave."

"But the grave soon gave signs of animation," exclaimed Blucher, excitedly; "the desert was transformed into a sea of fire, and the burning city gave a horrible welcome to the French. The governor of Moscow, Count Rostopchin, intended to greet the entering conqueror with an illumination,

and, as he had no torches handy, he set fire to the houses. He removed the stores and supplies, compelled the inhabitants to leave, had the fire-engines concealed, ordered inflammable oils and rosin to be placed everywhere in order to intensify the fury of the conflagration, and then released the convicts that they might set fire to the city. The first house kindled was Rostopchin's own magnificent palace, close to the gates of Moscow. Well, it is true, Rostopchin acted like a barbarian; but still the man's character seems grand, and his ferocity that of the lion shaking his mane, and rushing with a roar upon his adversary. To be sure, it was no great military exploit to burn down a large city, but still it was a splendid stratagem, and, in a struggle with a hateful and infamous enemy, all ways and means are permitted and justifiable. I do not merely excuse Rostopchin, but I admire his tremendous energy, and believe, if I were a Russian, I would likewise have done something of the sort. His act compelled the enemy soon to leave, as he could not establish his winter-quarters amid smoking ruins, and to retreat instead of advancing, and obliged the Emperor Alexander to cease his vacillating course—inasmuch as, after the conflagration, further attempts at bringing about a compromise and reconciliation between the belligerents were entirely out of the question."

"No, general, Rostopchin did not bring this about," exclaimed Scharnhorst, "but it was our great friend Stein who did it. God Himself sent Minister von Stein to Russia, that he might stand as an immovable rock by the side of the mild and fickle Alexander, and that his fiery soul might strengthen the fluctuating resolutions of the czar, and inspire him with true faith in, and reliance on, the great cause of the freedom of the European nations, which was now to be decided upon the snowy fields of Russia. We owe it to Stein alone that the peace party at the Russian headquarters did not gain the emperor over to their side; we owe it to Stein that Alexander determined to pursue a manly, energetic course; that he refused to allow the diplomatists to interfere, but left the decision to the sword alone, and constantly and proudly rejected all the offers of peace which Napoleon now began to make to him. And Stein found a new ally in the climate uniting with him in his inexorable hostility to the French. Napoleon felt that he ought not to await the approach of winter at Moscow, and on the 18th of October he left the inhospitable city with the remnants of his army. But winter

dogged his steps; winter attached itself as a heavy burden to the feet of his soldiers; it laid itself like lead on their paralyzed brain, and caused the horses, guns, and caissons, to stick fast in the snow and ice. Winter dissolved the French army. Men and beasts perished by cold; discipline and subordination were entirely disregarded; every one thought only of preserving his own life, of appeasing his hunger, and relieving his distress. Piles of corpses and dead horses marked the route of this terrible retreat of the French; and when, on the 9th of November, they entered Smolensk, the whole grand army consisted only of forty thousand armed men, and crowds of stragglers destitute of arms and without discipline."

"And still this cruel tyrant and heartless braggart, the great Napoleon, dared to boast of his victories, and the splendid condition of his army," exclaimed Blucher, angrily. "And he sent constantly new bulletins of pretended victories into the world, and the stupid Germans believed them to be true, the supposed successes causing them to tremble. I have read these lying bulletins, and the perusal made me ill. They dwelt on nothing but the victories, the glorious conduct, and the fine condition of the grand army."

"But now you shall read a new one, friend Blucher," exclaimed Scharnhorst; "here is the twenty-ninth bulletin, and I will communicate to you also the latest news from the grand army and the great Napoleon, which couriers from Berlin and Dresden brought me last night, and which induced me to set out so early to-day in order to reach my Blucher, and tell him of a new era. Here is the twenty-ninth bulletin, and in it Napoleon dares no longer boast of victories; he almost dares tell the truth."

"Let me read it!" exclaimed Blucher, impatiently seizing the printed sheet which Scharnhorst handed to him. Gasping with inward emotion, he began to read it, but his hands soon trembled, and the letters swam before his eyes.

"I cannot read it through," said Blucher, sighing. "There is a storm raging in my heart, and it blows out the light of my eyes. Read the remainder to me, my friend. I have read it to the engagement on the Beresina, where Napoleon says that General Victor gained another victory on the 28th of November."

"But this victory consisted only in the fact that General Victor, with his twelve thousand men, prevented the Russians from reaching the banks of the Beresina, so that two bridges

could be built across it, and that the ragged wretches composing the grand army could reach the opposite side of the river. That passage of the Beresina was a terrible moment, which will never be forgotten by history—a tragedy full of horrors, wretchedness, and despair. Stein's agents have sent me Russian reports of this event, which contain the most heart-rending and revolting details. Books will be written to depict the dreadful scenes of that day; but neither historians, nor painters, nor poets, will find words or colors to portray those unparalleled horrors."

"And does he describe those scenes in his bulletin?" asked Blucher. "Read me its conclusion. Does he allude to those horrors of the Beresina?"

"No, general; he speaks only of the victory and the passage across the river, and then continues: 'On the following day, the 29th of November, we remained on the battle-field. We had to choose between two routes: the road of Minsk, and that of Wilna. The road of Minsk passes through the middle of a forest and uncultivated morasses; that of Wilna, on the contrary, passes through a very fine part of the country. The army, destitute of cavalry, but poorly provided with ammunition, and terribly exhausted by the fatigues of a fifty days' march, took with it its sick and wounded, and was anxious to reach its magazines.'"

"That is to say," exclaimed Blucher, "they died of hunger, and, as he says that they were terribly exhausted by a fifty days' march, dropped like flies. Oh, it is true, the Emperor Napoleon is very laconic in his account of that retreat, but he who knows how to penetrate the meaning of his few lines cannot fail to receive a deep impression of the wretchedness that unfortunate army had to undergo. Read on, dear Scharnhorst."

Scharnhorst continued: "If it must be admitted that it is necessary for the army to reestablish its discipline, to recover from its long fatigues, to remount its cavalry, artillery, and *matériel*, it is only the natural result of the events which we have just described. Repose is now, above all, indispensable to the army. The trains and horses are already arriving; the artillery has repaired its losses, but the generals, officers, and soldiers, have suffered intensely by the fatigues and privations of the march. Owing to the loss of their horses, many have lost their baggage; others have been deprived of it by Cossacks lying in ambush. They have captured a great

many individuals, such as engineers, geographers, and wounded officers, who marched without the necessary precautions, and exposed themselves to the danger of being taken prisoners rather than quietly march in the midst of the convoys."

"And the Cossacks have spared *him!*" exclaimed Blucher, impatiently. "They did not take him prisoner! What is he doing, then, that the Cossacks cannot catch him? Tell me, Scharnhorst—the bulletin, then, does not, like its predecessors, dwell on the heroic exploits of the great emperor? He does not praise himself as he formerly used to do?"

"Oh, he does not fail to do so. Listen to the conclusion: 'During all these operations the emperor marched constantly in the midst of his guard, the marshal Duke d'Istria commanding the cavalry, and the Duke de Dantzic the infantry. His majesty was content with the excellent spirit manifested by the guard, always ready to march to points where the situation was such that its mere presence sufficed to check the enemy. Our cavalry lost so heavily, that it was difficult to collect officers enough, who were still possessed of horses, to form four companies, each of one hundred and fifty men. In these companies, generals performed the services of captains, and colonels those of non-commissioned officers. The "Sacred Legion," commanded by the King of Naples and General Grouchy, never lost sight of the emperor during all these operations. The health of his majesty never was better.'"

"And he dares to proclaim that!" exclaimed Blucher, indignantly. "His army is dying of hunger and cold, and he proclaims to the world, as if in mockery, that his health never was better! It is his fault that hundreds of thousands are perishing in the most heart-rending manner, and he boasts of his extraordinary good health! He must have a stone in his breast instead of a heart; otherwise, a general whose army is perishing under his eyes cannot be in extraordinary good health. He will be punished for it, and will not always feel so well."

"He has already been punished, my friend," said Scharnhorst, solemnly. "It has pleased God to chastise the arrogant tyrant and to bow his proud head to the dust."

Blucher jumped up, and a deep pallor overspread his cheeks. "He has been punished?" he asked, breathlessly. "Napoleon in the dust! What is it? Speak quickly, Scharnhorst;

\* Fain, "Manuscrit de 1812."

“speak, if you do not want me to die! What has happened?”

“He has left his army, and secretly fled from Russia!”

Blucher uttered a cry, and, without a word, rushed toward the door. Scharnhorst and Amelia hastened after him and kept him back.

“What do you wish to do?” asked Scharnhorst.

“I wish to pursue him!” exclaimed Blucher, vainly trying to disengage himself from the hands of his wife and the general. “Let me go—do not detain me! I must pursue him—I must take him prisoner! If he has fled from his army, he must return to France, and if he wants to return to France, he must pass through Germany. Let me go! He must not be permitted to escape from Germany!”

“But he has already escaped,” said Scharnhorst, smiling.

“What! Passed through Germany?” asked Blucher. “And no one has tried to arrest him?”

“No one knew that he was there. He left his army on the 6th of December; attended only by Caulaincourt and his Mameluke Roustan, recognized by no one, expected by no one, he sped in fabulous haste in an unpretending sleigh through the whole of Poland and Prussia. Only after he set out was it known at the places where he stopped that he had been there. He travelled as swiftly as the storm. On the 6th of December he was at Wilna, on the 10th of December at Warsaw, and in the night of the 14th of December suddenly a plain sleigh stopped in front of the residence of M. Serra, French ambassador at Dresden: two footmen were seated on the box, and in the sleigh itself there were two gentlemen, wrapped in furred robes, and so much benumbed by the cold that they had to be lifted out. These two gentlemen were the Emperor Napoleon and Caulaincourt. Napoleon had an interview with the King of Saxony the same night, and, continuing his journey, reached Erfurt on the 15th, and—”

“And to-day is already the 17th of December,” said Blucher, sighing; “he will, therefore, be beyond the Rhine. And I must allow him to escape! I am unable to detain him! Oh, that the little satisfaction had been granted me of capturing Napoleon! Well, it has been decreed that this should not be; but one thing at least is settled. Napoleon has been deserted by his former good luck; Dame Fortune, who always was seated in his triumphal car, has alighted from it, and now we may hope to see her soon restored to her old place on the top

of the Brandenburg gate at Berlin. Hurrah, my friend! we are going to rise; I feel it in my bones, and the time has come when old Blucher will again be permitted to be a man, and will no longer be required to draw his nightcap over his ears.”

“Yes, the time has come when Prussia needs her valiant Blucher,” said Scharnhorst, tenderly laying his arm on Blucher’s. “Now raise your head, general—now prepare for action, for Blucher must henceforth be ready at a moment’s notice to obey the call of Prussia, and place himself at the head of her brave sons, who are so eager for the fray.”

“Yes, yes, we shall have war now,” exclaimed Blucher. “Soon the drums will roll, and the cannon boom—soon Blucher will no longer be a childish and decrepit old man whom wiseacres think they can mock and laugh at—soon Blucher will once more be a man who, sword in hand, will shout to his troops, ‘Forward!—charge the enemy!’ Great Heaven, Scharnhorst, and I have not even dressed becomingly—I still wear a miserable civilian’s coat! Suppose war should break out to-day, and they should come and call me to the army? Why, Blucher would have to hang his head in shame, and acknowledge that he was not ready!—John! John!—my uniform! Come to my bedroom, John! I want to dress!—to put on my uniform!”

Fifteen minutes afterward Blucher returned to the sitting-room, where his wife was gayly chatting with Scharnhorst. He was not now the sick, suffering old man whom we saw this morning sitting on the easy-chair at the window, but he was once more a fiery soldier and a hero. His head was proudly erect, his eyes were flashing, a proud smile was playing round his lips; his broad-shouldered form was clothed in the uniform of a Prussian general; orders were glittering on his breast, and the long rattling sword hung at his left side.

Blucher approached his wife and General Scharnhorst with dignified steps, and, giving his hands to both, said in a grave and solemn voice, “The time for delay, impatience, and folly, is past. With this uniform I have become a new man. I am no longer an impatient septuagenarian, cursing and killing flies on the wall because he has no one else on whom to vent his wrath; but I am a soldier standing composedly at his post, and waiting for the hour when he will be able to destroy his enemy. Come, my friends,—come with me!”

He drew the two with him, and walked so rapidly through the rooms that they were scarcely able to accompany him.

They entered the large reception-room, opened only on festive occasions. It contained nothing but some tinselled furniture, a few tables with marble tops, and on the pillars between the windows large Venetian mirrors. Otherwise the walls were bare, except over the sofa, where hung, in a finely-carved and gilded frame, a painting, which however was covered with a large veil of black crape.

Blucher conducted the two to this painting; for a moment he stood still and gazed on it gravely and musingly, and, raising his right hand with a quick jerk, he tore down the mourning-veil.

"Queen Louisa!" exclaimed Scharnhorst, admiring the tall and beautiful lady smiling on him. "Yes," said Blucher, solemnly, "Queen Louisa! The guardian angel of Prussia, whose heart Napoleon broke! This pride and joy of all our women had to depart without hoping even in the possibility that the calamities which ruined her might come to an end. On the day she died I covered her portrait with this veil, and swore not to look again at her adored countenance until able to draw my sword, and, with Prussia's soldiers, avenge her untimely death. The time has come! Louisa, rise again from your grave, open once more your beautiful eyes, for daylight is at hand, and our night is ended. Now, my beautiful queen, listen to the oath of your most faithful servant!" He drew his sword, and, raising it up to the painting, exclaimed: "Here is my sword! When I sheathed it last, I wept, for I was to be an invalid, and should no longer wield it; I was to sit here in idleness, and silently witness the sufferings of my fatherland. But now I shall soon be called into service, and I swear to you, Queen Louisa, that I will not sheathe this sword before I have avenged your death, before Germany and Prussia are free again, and Napoleon has received his punishment. I swear it to you, as sure as I am old Blucher, and have seen the tears which Prussia's disgrace has often wrung from your eyes. May God help me! may He in His mercy spare me until I have fulfilled my oath! Amen!"

"Amen!" repeated Scharnhorst and Amelia, looking up to the portrait.

"Amen!" said Blucher again. "And now, Amelia," he added, quickly, "come and give me a kiss, and, by this kiss, consecrate your warrior, that he may deliver Germany and overthrow Napoleon. For Napoleon must now be hurled from the throne!"

## CHANCELLOR VON HARDENBERG.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE INTERRUPTED SUPPER.

It was on the 4th of January, 1813. The brilliant official festivities with which the beginning of a new year had been celebrated, were at an end, and, the ceremonious dinner-parties being over, one was again at liberty to indulge in the enjoyment of familiar suppers, where more attention was paid to the flavor of choice wines and delicacies than to official toasts and political speeches. Marshal Augereau gave at Berlin on this day one of those pleasant little entertainments to his favored friends, to indemnify them, as it were, for the great gala dinner of a hundred covers, given by him on the 1st of January, as official representative of the Emperor Napoleon.

To-day the supper was served in the small, cozy saloon, and and it was but a *petit comité* that assembled round the table in the middle of the room. This *comité* consisted only of five gentlemen, with pleasant, smiling faces, in gorgeous, profusely-embroidered uniforms, on the left sides of which many glittering orders indicated the high rank of the small company. There was, in the first place, Marshal Augereau, governor of Berlin, once so furious a republican that he threatened with death all the members of his division who would address any one with "monsieur," or "madame"—now the most ardent imperialist, and an admirer of the Emperor Napoleon. The gentleman by his side, with the short, corpulent figure and aristocratic countenance, from which a smile never disappeared, was the chancellor of state and prime minister of King Frederick William III., Baron von Hardenberg. He was just engaged in an eager conversation with his neighbor, Count Narbonne, the faithless renegade and former adherent of the Bourbons, who had but lately deserted to Napoleon's camp, and allowed himself to be used by the emperor on