

years of waiting are past, and now comes the day of vengeance. Like a thunderstorm we must burst upon the French. Before they expect us we must expel what troops of theirs remain in Germany, dissolve the Confederation of the Rhine, and by our bold exploits stir up all Germany that she may rally round our flag, and form an enormous army before Napoleon has concentrated his newly-organized forces. That is our task, and, if it pleases God, we will fulfil it."

CHAPTER XXXI.

AFTER THE BATTLE OF BAUTZEN.

FOR two days the battle had been raging, and even now, in the afternoon of the 22d of May, the struggle was undecided. Blucher, who, with his Prussians, occupied the heights of Kreckwitz, near Bautzen, still hoped to achieve a victory. For two days the Prussians and Russians fought like lions along the extended line of battle; they engaged the hostile legions with undaunted courage and joyful enthusiasm, regardless of the scorching heat, hunger, thirst, and exhaustion. During these days Blucher was constantly in the midst of his troops. Where the shower of bullets was thickest, where the danger was most imminent, his voice was heard inciting the soldiers; where the enemy approached with his most formidable columns, Blucher stood with his faithful companion Gneisenau at the head of his Prussians, brandishing his sword, advancing with exulting cheers upon the enemy, and causing him to retreat.

The heights of Kreckwitz had to be held till General Barclay de Tolly, with his Russians, would arrive, and Generals York and Kleist, with their Prussians, to cover Blucher's left flank, which was threatened by Marshal Ney. The booming of cannon was incessant. The Russians stood like a wall, and when the front ranks were swept down, others took their places; the living stepped over the dying, undaunted, and remembering only one thing—that they had to take revenge for the lost battle of Lutzen.*

"Boys," shouted Blucher to his soldiers, just as the balls of

* Fought May 2, 1813. The French call this battle that of Lutzen; the Germans generally that of Gross-Görschen. Both sides claimed a victory. But the latest German historians, especially Beitzke, admit that the Germans were defeated.

the enemy struck down whole ranks, "boys, remember that we have resolved to sabre the French. They have exhausted the soil of Germany, we must fertilize it with French corpses. Remember Gross-Görschen, where they wounded our General Scharnhorst. We must chastise them for that, and capture a few French generals.* We must get at least four of their marshals in return for General Scharnhorst, for the fellows are light, and four of them do not weigh as much as one Scharnhorst. Now, tell me, shall we get those four French marshals?"

"Yes, Father Blucher, yes!" shouted the Prussians, jubilantly. "Long live Father Blucher!"

"Only a little longer, and the day is ours!" cried Gneisenau, in a ringing voice. "The legions of Marshal Ney are charging again, but General Barclay, with his Russians, has occupied the Windmill-knoll, near Gleime, and will repulse him as we shall Napoleon's columns. The heights of Kreckwitz are the Thermopylæ of the Prussians, and we will fall to a man rather than surrender!"

"Yes, that we will do!" cried the officers, enthusiastically, and the soldiers echoed their shouts.

At this moment a terrific cannonade resounded on the right wing of the Prussian troops. "There are the French!" exclaimed Blucher. "Boys, now bring in those marshals!" The cannon roared, the muskets rattled, and, as though heaven desired to participate in this struggle of the nations, the thunder rolled, and flashes of lightning darted into the clouds of battle-smoke.

But who was galloping up suddenly on a charger covered with foam, his hair fluttering in the breeze, and his face pale and terrified? It was a Prussian colonel, and still he does not join in the exultation of his countrymen. He approached Generals Blucher and Gneisenau.

"Halloo! Lieutenant-Colonel von Müffling," shouted Blucher, "are you back? Do you bring us greetings from Barclay de Tolly? Has he finished the French? Well, we are just about to recommence our work here—the last work for to-day."

"General," cried Müffling, anxiously, "the French will soon have finished Barclay de Tolly, and defeated us! For he is

* General Scharnhorst was wounded at the battle of Gross-Görschen by Blucher's side. He believed his wound was not dangerous, but he left the headquarters to be cured. He went at first to Altenburg, and then to Prague, to attend the peace congress. His wound reopened, and he died at Prague on the 20th of June, 1813.

unable to hold out. He has only fifty thousand men, and Ney is attacking him with a much larger force. Barclay sends me for reënforcements, and if we do not strengthen his line, he cannot maintain himself on the Windmill-knoll. In a quarter of an hour it will be in Ney's hands."

"No; in a quarter of an hour Ney will be in our hands," shouted Blucher, confidently. "Ney is a marshal, and we must have him! Boys," he cried, drawing himself up in his stirrups, and looking back toward his troops—"boys, we must have Marshal Ney, must we not?"

"Yes, Father Blucher, we must have Marshal Ney!"

Heaven responded with a loud clap of thunder, the earth was shaken by the booming of the cannon, the air was rent by the cheers of the living, and the groans and imprecations of the wounded and dying. Blucher still stood with his Prussians on the heights of Kreckwitz, his face radiant with enthusiasm, his eye flashing with courage; but a warning adviser stood by his side.

"General," whispered Müffling, "we are lost if we remain here longer. We must retreat."

"Retreat!" cried Blucher, in an angry voice, and a clap of thunder burst at that moment.

Müffling pointed silently down into the plain, and over to the Windmill-knoll. "Look yonder! Napoleon is advancing directly upon our front, the Windmill-knoll is evacuated, Barclay has gone, and the Russians are routed!"

"But we still stand," cried Blucher, triumphantly, "and we shall stand in spite of Napoleon and the devil! And, then, we are not without support. The Russian artillery attached to our corps is thundering against the enemy, and York and Kleist are covering our left wing."

"But, general, listen! The Russian artillery is firing less rapidly; General Kleist is no longer able to cover our left wing, for the sovereigns have sent him to Bairuth to cover Barclay's flank; and as for York, he was unable to prevent the enemy from placing a battery near Basantwitz. I saw it when I rode hither. We are, therefore, in a triple cross-fire." And, as though the enemy intended to confirm these warning words, the cannon flashed from three sides, and hurled their balls into the ranks of the Prussians.

The flush of hoped-for victory paled in Blucher's face; Gneisenau grew grave and gloomy. The staff came nearer to their chieftain, and tried to read his thoughts in his eyes.

The jubilant shouts of the soldiers were hushed; heaven was still thundering, and in the distance burning villages, like gigantic torches, lit up the landscape, and shed a blood-red lustre over the gray sky. Blucher looked around in silence; his lip quivered, his eyebrows contracted, and large drops of cold perspiration stood on his forehead. Gneisenau was by his side, gloomy and taciturn, like his chieftain. Behind them halted the staff-officers, mournful as their leaders, for now every one recognized the danger, and knew that, if they remained at the "Thermopylæ of Prussia," they would have to defend themselves to the last man, or lay down their arms, because, as soon as the enemy closed up the fourth side, escape would be impossible.*

On the other side of Blucher halted Colonel Müffling, who had brought back such calamitous tidings from his reconnoissance. He pointed silently to the French columns of Marshal Ney, that just commenced climbing the heights, and then pulled out his watch. "We have fifteen minutes left," he said, in a loud, solemn voice, "fifteen minutes to extricate ourselves from the noose. Afterward we shall be hemmed in. If we do not improve the time the cowards will surrender, and the brave die fighting to the last, but unfortunately without promoting in the least the welfare of the fatherland." †

Blucher did not reply, gazing down with a sombre eye on the enemy, coming up in increasing masses. The cannon of the French, firing from three sides, spoke a disheartening language. The Russian batteries had ceased firing, for their ammunition was exhausted.

"Gneisenau," asked Blucher at last, in a hollow voice, and sighing, as though a stone weighed down his breast, "Gneisenau, what do you say?"

"I must admit that Lieutenant-Colonel von Müffling is right," sighed Gneisenau. "Under the present circumstances all further bloodshed will be useless, and it is our bounden duty to preserve our men for a better opportunity. We must hasten to retreat." ‡

A single savage imprecation burst from Blucher's lips, but only the nearest bystanders heard it, for it was drowned by the roar of artillery and the thunder of heaven. With a quick jerk he drew his cap over his forehead, so that his eyes were shaded—those eyes which had flashed so defiantly, but which

* Müffling, "Aus meinem Leben," p. 42.

† Müffling's words.—Ibid., p. 43.

‡ Gneisenau's words.—Ibid., p. 43.

were now dim, who could say whether from the rain that was pouring down, or the smoke of battle, or from despairing tears? He slowly turned toward the gentlemen of his staff. "We must descend, therefore, from the heights," he said, in a harsh voice. "Forward! March down the turnpike toward Weissenberg. Make the enemy at least pay dearly for compelling us to retreat. Let the cavalry advance, covering our retreat, and let not a single man or standard fall into the hands of the French! Come, gentlemen, listen to what I have still to say to you."

The quarter of an hour allowed by Müffling had not yet elapsed when the Prussians commenced slowly descending the heights of Kreckwitz, and marching down the turnpike toward Weissenberg. Blucher had ridden from the position at a brisk trot, with Gneisenau and the officers of his staff, and galloped a short distance along the level valley-road; then halting suddenly, and, turning his horse, he looked up to the heights, from which the Prussians were descending in perfect order, but in gloomy silence. "This is the second time we have been obliged to retreat," said Blucher, mournfully, "the second time that Bonaparte is luckier than we are; the blockheads will now say again that Bonaparte is invincible, and that they are fools who resist him, God being on his side, and fortune never forsaking him. But I say it is false; the good God is not on his side, but the devil is, and fortune is only lulling him to sleep, to plunge him the surer and deeper into the abyss. But it is true, nevertheless, that this is the second battle we have lost, and the second time that we are obstructed in our advance. But I swear here—and may Heaven record my oath!—that this shall be the last time that I fall back; that I will specially pay Bonaparte for my grief and anxiety for the past month, and that I will bring him as much trouble as one man can to another. What a fearful account Bonaparte has to settle with me! how much he has to pay me! But, no matter; my sword is sharp, and will surely erase one item of his indebtedness after another. From this day I will begin. Will you lend me your assistance, gentlemen?"

"Yes," replied the officers of his staff, "we will!"

"Well, then it is all right," said Blucher, nodding; "from to-day M. Napoleon had better beware of me. Hitherto, I have only hated him; now I abhor him, and the word backward exists no longer for me and my Prussians!" He quickly galloped up to his troops. "Well, boys," he cried, "the

heights of Kreckwitz are of no use to us, and it is better for us, therefore, to descend from them, and leave them to Bonaparte, who may put them into his pocket, if it affords him pleasure; but henceforth let us reverse matters, and put *him* into our pocket and keep him warm; otherwise, he might feel cold again, as he did in Russia. Forward now, boys; forward! And as we are now moving, I am sure you see that we do not move backward; he who asserts that we are retreating is a blockhead. Forward!"

But whatever Blucher said—how plausibly soever he tried to represent to his troops that they were not retreating, but advancing—it was unfortunately but too true that the battle of Bautzen was lost, and that the Prussians and Russians were obliged to fall back. It is true, they did so in excellent order, but—they retreated and Napoleon could boast of a new victory on German soil.

The whole army of the allies commenced retreating about dusk on the same day, and turned again toward Silesia. The troops marched sullenly, and sombre too were the faces of the two sovereigns, the Emperor Alexander and King Frederick William. Full of hope that they would achieve a victory, they had taken the field with their troops; but now their hopes were blasted, and they were compelled to return whence they had set out.

While the troops were marching down the wide highways, the two sovereigns, preceding their forces, took a short cut to Reichenbach. They were alone; only two footmen followed them at some distance; not a vestige of their earthly greatness surrounded them. They were both silent; slowly riding along, the king looked grave, while the emperor frequently turned his eyes, with an expression of mournful emotion, upon his friend, or raised them heavenward with an entreating glance. Silence reigned around; only at a great distance was heard the dull rumbling of wagons, and here and there on the horizon still flickered the burning ruins of a village.

For some time they thus rode side by side, when the king stopped his horse. "There must be a change!" he exclaimed, in a tone of grief and despair. "We are moving eastward, but we must advance westward."

"We must all move eastward," said the emperor, in a deep, fervent tone; "from the east came our salvation; eastward, therefore, every good Christian turns his face whenever he prays for assistance and redemption."

The king, perhaps, did not hear these words, for he made no reply, but looked moody and thoughtful. Both did not notice that the sky had brightened, and that the sun in its splendor was shedding its setting beams. It was a beautiful evening. The earth, refreshed by the rain, exhaled sweet odors; the air was fresh and balmy, and the blooming fields waved as a gentle sea. The sovereigns were too much concerned with themselves to be attracted by the beauties of outward nature. Their eyes were turned inward.

"Oh," resumed the king, after a pause, "what will be the end of all this? Were not they right who cautioned me against this war, and pointed to Napoleon's luck in order to prevent me from entering upon it? Have not my troops done all that can be demanded of human strength? Have they not braved with heroic resolution all fatigues and privations, and behaved in battle with unsurpassed valor? Have not the Russians also manifested the noblest devotion, and the most intrepid constancy? And still our armies have been defeated in two pitched battles—and still we are retreating? What have we to hope for? What new resources have we? May we still hope for the accession of Austria to our alliance?"

He uttered these questions in an undertone and thoughtfully, as if to himself, and forgetful of the presence of another who could hear him. When the emperor, therefore, replied to him, Frederick William gave a start, and raised his head almost in surprise.

"No," said the emperor, gravely—"no, we must not count on Austria; or, if you please, *not yet*. The mission of Count Stadion ought to have proved this to us. They sent their diplomatist to treat with us that, in case of a victory, we might not consider Austria, too, as our enemy. Now, that we have not been victorious, Count Stadion will undoubtedly leave our headquarters, repair to those of Napoleon, and assure him of the most faithful and sincere devotion of Austria. Austria desires only negotiation—to fight with words, not with the sword."

"But, without Austria," cried the king, vehemently, "we are too weak! Oh, at times it seems to me as though no human strength were able to accomplish any thing against the surpassing genius of Napoleon, and as though God alone, who made him so great, and raised him so high, could humble him! We have done all that men could do, but it is all in vain! He has conquered!"

"But we have made him purchase his victories very dearly," said Alexander, "and if we yielded, it was at least with honor. None of our battalions were dispersed, and I believe the number of prisoners is about the same on both sides. On the whole, nothing is lost as yet, and with God's help we will soon do better."

"Yes, but only with God's help," cried the king; "we need it above all; without it we are lost."

"But God is with us," exclaimed Alexander, enthusiastically, "I know it; I have gained this firm conviction ever since the great and terrible days of Moscow and the Beresina. God sent me those days of trial and terror that I might believe—and now I do believe. Until then I was a man enthralled by worldly doubts, relying upon my own strength, and rejoicing, not without vanity, in my earthly greatness. I thought of God, I loved Him, but He did not fill my whole soul—I pursued my own path, and diverted myself. But the conflagration of Moscow illuminated my mind, and the judgment of the Lord on the ice-fields filled my heart with a fervor of faith which it had never felt until then. With the flames of the holy city the hand of God wrote on the reddened sky, 'I am the Lord thy God!' With the rivers of blood flowing from the grand army of the French, the finger of the Lord wrote on the snow-fields, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me!' Since then there is a wonderful joy, an indescribable humility, and an immovable faith in my heart—since then I have become another man. To the deliverance of Europe from utter ruin I owe my own soul's salvation."*

"It is He alone who is able to deliver us," said the king, profoundly moved; "I bow my head in humility, and confess that we are nothing without Him. May He send us His support!"

"He will," exclaimed Alexander, fervently; "God will be with us, for we are engaged in a just cause!"

"Yes, it is just," responded Frederick William, with deep emotion, and, slowly raising his eyes, he whispered, "Pray for us, Louisa, that we may conquer!"

Both were silent, and, with pious emotion, they lifted their hearts to heaven. Suddenly a joyful gleam kindled the face of the king, and, offering his hand to Alexander, he said in a deeply-moved tone, "We must not despond, but courageously continue the struggle. If God, as I hope, bless our united

*The emperor's words.—Vide Eylert, "Frederick William III.," vol. ii., p. 248.

efforts, we will profess before the whole world that the glory belongs to Him alone."*

"Yes," cried Alexander, putting his right hand into that of his friend. "Let us not be ashamed to declare that the glory belongs to God. And now, my friend," exclaimed the emperor, when they halted, "let us repair to our headquarters, and hold a council of war with our generals."

"Very well," replied Frederick William; "let us examine the strength of our forces, and see what ought to be done. The battle of Bautzen must not be the end of this war."

CHAPTER XXXII.

BAD NEWS.

A MOMENT of repose had interrupted the great contest. Napoleon had offered an armistice to the allies prior to the battle of Bautzen; they rejected it, full of confidence in their strength. After the battle of Bautzen, the offer was repeated, and accepted. Time was needed for levying additional troops, organizing new regiments, and concentrating new corps. But Napoleon, deceived by his victories, relying on his good luck, and on the mistakes of his enemies, was fully satisfied that this armistice was but the forerunner of peace; and that the allies, warned by the two lost battles, would be eager to accept any peace not altogether dishonorable. The negotiations were opened at Prague. France, Prussia, and Russia, sent their plenipotentiaries to that city; and Austria, having taken upon herself the part of a mediator, instructed her envoy, Minister Metternich, to participate in the congress. The armistice was from the 4th of June to the 24th of July—time enough for agreeing on a peace equally advantageous to both sides—time enough, too, in case it should not be concluded, to concentrate the armies and bring reinforcements from France.

So soon as the armistice was signed, Napoleon returned to Dresden, to await there the result of the negotiations. At the Marcolini Palace the emperor again established his headquarters; but no brilliant festivals were given, as previous to his expedition to Russia; the kings and princes of Germany did not gather round the powerful conqueror. The Emperor

* The king's words.—Vide Eylert, "Frederick William III.," vol. ii., p. 248.

of Austria remained quietly but sullenly at Vienna; the King of Prussia was at Reichenbach, and was now the enemy of Napoleon, and all the princes of the German Confederation of the Rhine, who, but a year before, were humble courtiers of Napoleon, kept aloof in morose silence, or refused obedience to their former master, and raised difficulties when called upon to furnish new troops and open additional resources. None of them came to offer homage to him whom they had just feared as the most powerful ruler in the world. Only the old, feeble King of Saxony (who, at the commencement of the war had fled with his millions, and the diamonds of the Green Vault, to Plauen, in the most remote corner of his territories),* returned at the rather imperious request of Napoleon to Dresden. The emperor dined with him sometimes, but only in the most intimate family circle, and without any outward splendor; at night he went to the French theatre, which had been ordered to Dresden during the armistice. Sometimes, his favorites, the ladies Mars and Georges, and the great Talma, were allowed to sup with the emperor after the performance, and the beautiful Mars, the impassioned fervor of the gifted Georges, and the conversation of the no less genial than adroit Talma, succeeded in dispelling the emperor's discontent. But no sooner was he alone with his thoughts, his labors, his plans, than his countenance assumed its sombre expression. Thus days and weeks elapsed, and the congress was still assembled at Prague; the end of the armistice was drawing nigh, and the plenipotentiaries had not yet been able to agree on the conditions of peace.

It was on the morning of the 28th of June. Napoleon had just finished his breakfast, and entered his map-room to conceive there the plans of future campaigns, when the door of the reception-room opened, and Minister Maret, Duke de Bassano, came in. Maret belonged to the few men in whom his master placed implicit confidence, and whose fidelity he never doubted; to those who had at all times free access to him, and were permitted to enter his apartments without being announced. Nevertheless, his arrival seemed to surprise Napoleon. Never before had the duke entered his room at so early an hour, for he knew well that the emperor, engaged in examining his maps and devising plans, did not like to be disturbed. It was undoubtedly something unusual that induced the Duke de Bassano to come to him at such a time.

* "Lebensbilder," vol. iii., p. 466.