

the Silesian army. Between us lies the Rhine. Put your other finger on the Rhine, Gneisenau." Gneisenau put his middle-finger on the black line marking the Rhine. "Now put your little-finger down here, between Mannheim and Kehl; there stands the army of Bohemia under Prince Schwartzberg; and up here, where I hold my thumb, in Holland, is Bulow, with his corps. See, on this side, we have therefore completely hemmed in France; and, on the other side, where the Atlantic Ocean is—or is it no longer there on your new-fangled maps?"

"Yes, your excellency," exclaimed Gneisenau, laughing, "it is still there."

"Well, then, England posts her ships there; and in the south, on the Pyrenees, stand the Spaniards, who have sworn to revenge themselves on Bonaparte. Now we advance all at the same time into France. Prince Schwartzberg penetrates with his army through Switzerland; Bulow marches through the Netherlands, after conquering them, and joins my forces; and I cross the Rhine here in three large columns with the Silesian army—the first column at Mannheim, the second at Kaub, and the third—well, now I have no finger left to—"

"Here is mine, your excellency," said Gneisenau, raising the finger marking the line of the Rhine.

But Blucher hastily pressed it down. "Do not remove that!" he cried; "what is to become of my whole plan if that finger should desert its position? Keep it there, then!—Well, here, where I hold my left thumb, at Coblenz, the third column will cross the Rhine. On the other bank we shall all unite, take Sarrebruck, advance by forced marches upon Metz, and—"

"Your excellency," shouted the pipe-master, throwing open the door, "a courier from the King of Prussia, from Frankfort-on-the-Main!"

"Let him come in!" cried Blucher, hastily throwing off his military cloak, and putting on his uniform-coat. He had not yet quite done so when the courier entered the room.

"What orders do you bring from my king and master?" inquired Blucher, meeting the officer.

"Your excellency, his majesty King Frederick William III., and his majesty the Emperor Alexander, request Field-Marshal Blucher to repair immediately to Frankfort, where the monarchs have an important communication to make to

the field-marshal. They wish your excellency to start forthwith, in order to reach Frankfort as soon as possible."

"Inform their majesties that I shall be there in two hours.—Well, Gneisenau, what do you say now?" asked Blucher, when the courier left the room.

"I say that the monarchs have at length discovered who alone can give them efficient assistance and valuable advice, and that they have, therefore, applied to Field-Marshal Blucher."

"And I tell you," shouted Blucher, in a thundering voice, "that the monarchs send for me to inform me that we are to face about and go home. If it were any thing else, they would have sent me word by an officer; but, as it is, they are afraid lest I grow furious, and so they intend to inform me in the mildest possible manner of their decision, and wish to pat my cheeks tenderly while telling me of it. But they mistake; I shall tell them the truth, as I would any one else, and they shall see that it is all the same to me whether they have a crown on their heads or a forage-cap; the truth must out, and they shall hear it, as sure as my name is Blucher! But I must dress for the occasion—it shall be a gala-day for me. With my orders on my breast, and the emperor's sword of honor at my side, I will appear before them and tell them the truth."

CHAPTER XLI.

PASSAGE OF THE RHINE.

THE Emperor Alexander and King Frederick William were in the king's cabinet, awaiting Field-Marshal Blucher, for the courier had just returned and reported that the field-marshal promised to be at Frankfort within two hours.

"The two hours have just elapsed," said Alexander, glancing at the clock, "and Blucher, who is known to be a very punctual man, will undoubtedly soon be here. Ah, there is a carriage; it is he, no doubt!"

"Yes, it is he," said the king, who had stepped to the window, and was looking out. "He is alighting with the nimbleness of a youth, in spite of his seventy-one years. He is really a hero!"

"And will your majesty be so kind as to enter into my jest? Will you assist me in it, and confirm my words?"

"Certainly, sire; but I tell you, beforehand, our jest may render the old firebrand very grave, and we may happen to get a scolding."

"That is just what I am longing for," replied the emperor, smiling. "Old Blucher's scolding is wholesome, and invigorates the heart; it is a new and vital air which his words breathe upon me. It is flattering to be scolded for once like a common mortal."

"Well, if you desire that, sire," said the king, smiling, "Blucher will certainly afford you this pleasure to-day."

The door opened; a footman entered and announced Field-Marshal Blucher. The two monarchs met him. Both shook hands with him, and bade him welcome with great cordiality. This, however, instead of gladdening Blucher, filled him with distrust.

"They pat me, because they want to scratch me," said Blucher to himself, "but they shall not fool me!" His features assumed a defiant expression, and a dark cloud covered his brow.

"To-day is your birthday, field-marshal," said the king; "that is the reason we have sent for you; we desired to congratulate you in person. You have passed through a year of heroism, and the new one cannot bring you nobler laurels than those you have already."

"Ah, your majesty, I believe it might after all," said Blucher, quickly. "The laurels growing in France are the noblest of all; that is why I should like to gather them."

"Ah! the Emperor Napoleon will not suffer it," said Alexander. "He values them too highly, and it is not advisable for us to seek them, for he is not the man to allow us to take what belongs to him."

"But he was the very man to take a great many things that did not belong to him," cried Blucher, vehemently.

"That which did not belong to him we have taken again, and have satisfied the ends of justice," said the king, gravely.

"No, we have not satisfied the ends of justice," cried Blucher. "It is justice if we march to Paris—to take all from him whom your majesties still call the Emperor Napoleon, but who, in my eyes, is nothing but an infamous tyrant, presumptuous enough to put a crown on his head, and ascend a throne to which he has no right whatever, and who, moreover, has treated us Germans as though we were his slaves. Ay, it is justice if we take from the robber of kingdoms, the

braggart winner of battles, all that he has appropriated, and send him back to Corsica. That would be justice, your majesty; and if it is not administered, it is a morbid generosity that prevents it, and which is utterly out of place in regard to him."

The emperor cast a glance full of indescribable satisfaction on the king, who responded to it with a gentle nod.

"My dear Blucher," said Alexander, kindly, "you have not yet permitted me to wish you joy of your birthday. God bless you, my dear field-marshal, and may this year bring us the peace and repose which one so much needs after the exposures of campaign life, and especially when he is seventy-one years old!"

"I do not know whether I am as old as that," said Blucher, indignantly; "I know only that I am by no means desirous of repose, but rather deem it a great misfortune just now."

The emperor seemed not to have heard him, but continued quietly: "Yes, certainly, my dear field-marshal, you need retirement; at your venerable age we should not subject ourselves to such prolonged fatigues in the field."

"Besides, I am sure you wish peace, like the rest of us," said the king, who saw that the veins on Blucher's forehead were swelling, and who wished to forestall too violent a reply. "We have reflected a long while how we might give you a pleasant surprise on your birthday, but it was difficult for us. You have already all the orders and honor we can bestow; you are blessed with riches, and we have found it difficult to make you a present worthy of the respect and love we entertain for you."

"But his majesty the king has resolved to give you something which will gladden your noble heart. Field-marshal, we give you peace as a birthday present! We have resolved to make peace with Napoleon; and to-day, on your birthday, the conditions, which, you know, have for a long time past formed the subject of secret negotiations, are to be signed. The Emperor Napoleon has declared his readiness to accept them, and, therefore, there are no further obstacles to the cessation of war."

"To-morrow our troops will set out for home," said the king. "The requirements of honor and duty have been satisfied; the welfare and prosperity of our subjects demand peace. You, my dear field-marshal, have been selected to direct the retreat of the troops. Conformably to the wishes of his maj-

esty the Emperor Alexander, and his royal highness the crown prince of Sweden, I appoint you commander-in-chief of all the retreating troops. The generals will have strictly to comply with your orders; and, just as Prince Schwartzberg was general-in-chief of the advance, you, field-marshal, are general-in-chief of the retreat. Confiding in your energy, sagacity, and zeal, we hope that you will conduct the retreat satisfactorily, and the men will reach their homes as soon as possible. You are now, therefore, commander-in-chief; that is your birthday gift, and we hope you will be content with it."

"No," cried Blucher, drawing a deep breath, and unable longer to restrain his anger, "I am not content with it—not at all; and I must say that I do not wish this appointment, which seems to me a disgrace. General-in-chief of the retreating armies! I should like to ask his majesty the Emperor of Russia why his soldiers have given me the honorary title of 'Marshal Forward,' if I am now to be 'General-in-chief Backward?' If your majesty has given me the golden-sheathed sword only for the purpose of wearing it on parade, I do not want it. Sire, here it is; I lay it down at your feet with due respect. Your majesty, you desired to give it to the general-in-chief of the retreating troops, and that I am not, and cannot be!" He hastily unbuckled his sword, and laid it on the table beside the emperor.

"And why can you not?" asked Alexander, composedly.

"Because I cannot disgrace my honest name by doing dishonest things," cried Blucher, vehemently.

"Blucher, you forget yourself," said the king, almost sternly; "your words are too strong."

"Yes, your majesty, I know that they are strong," exclaimed Blucher; "but the truth is strong, too; I must relieve myself of it; I can no longer keep it back, and, the truth is, that it would be a shame and a stupidity if we retreat without reconquering, on the left bank of the Rhine, that which we were obliged to cede to France. Your majesties have said that the requirements of honor and justice are satisfied. Permit me to reply that this is not so, and cannot be, if we retreat; for we show that we are still distrusting our own power, and, notwithstanding our superior army, deem ourselves too weak to attack the man who has been attacking us for nearly twenty years, and to whom nothing was sacred, whether treaties, or rights of property, or nationality. No, the requirements of justice are not satisfied if we face about

now and consider the frontiers of France more sacred than the French have ever considered the frontiers of Germany. Bonaparte has as yet Holland, a piece of Germany, and Italy, and he says he will not yield a single village which he has conquered, though the enemy stand on the heights of Paris. It would but be right for us to march to that city, and compel him to disgorge, not merely a village, but all that he has taken. And if this be not done, if the peace-croakers attain their object, a cry of disappointment and anger will be forth throughout Europe, and the nations, lifting their hands to God, will curse the pusillanimity and weakness of their princes. They would be justified in doing so; for it was not for this that brave men, at the first call of their king, left their families; it was not for this that they sacrificed their property on the altar of the fatherland. The women did not become nurses and sisters of charity, nor did their husbands and sons shed their blood, that only one great battle might be gained over Bonaparte, and that he then might be allowed leisurely to evacuate Germany. We did not even pursue him, but marched slowly, while he safely wended his way to the Rhine. And now he is to remain quietly in France! The world is to receive no satisfaction, and the tyrant is not to be punished! If that be right and just, well—no matter! I am an old soldier, and am not versed in the tricks of diplomats! Nor do I care to be versed in them! They know how to manage matters so insidiously that at last they convert wrong into right—falsehood into truth, and disguise their cowardice in such a manner that it looks like wisdom. The only thing I understand is, that I am no more of any use, and I request your majesty to give me my discharge as a birthday present—be so kind as to grant it immediately. I am much too young to become General-in-chief Backward, and it is, therefore, better for me to stand aside, and let others take the command of the retreating troops. Your majesties will graciously pardon me if I take the liberty of withdrawing." He bowed with respect and turned quickly toward the door.

"But why in such haste?" asked the king. "Pray stay; I have not yet granted your discharge."

"But your majesty, I know, will grant it, and I consider you have already done so. I beg leave to withdraw."

"But stay!" exclaimed Alexander.

"Pardon me, your majesty, I must go!"

"Why? Tell us honestly the truth, field-marshal."

"Well," said Blucher, standing at the door, "if your majesty orders me to tell the truth, I will do so. I must go, because I cannot endure it here; I must find some place where I may give vent to my rage, and, by a vast amount of swearing, relieve my heart."

"What!" cried Alexander, laughing. "Your heart is still oppressed?"

"Yes, your majesty, what I have said is as nothing," replied Blucher, in a melancholy tone; "those words were only as a few rain-drops; the whole violence of my anger, with its thunder, lightning, hail, and storm, is still in my heart, and may God have mercy on him on whom it will burst! Your majesties may see that it is high time for me to withdraw."

"Otherwise, you think, the thunder-storm might burst here?" inquired Alexander, smiling.

"I am afraid so, sire," replied Blucher, gravely.

"Perhaps it may be allayed, however," said Frederick William, approaching Blucher. "You have determined, then, not to accept the position offered you?"

"I demand at once my discharge, your majesty; my discharge!"

"You do not wish to be commander-in-chief of the retreating troops?" asked Alexander.

"My name is 'Marshal Forward!'" said Blucher, proudly.

"And it is your firm belief, field-marshal," asked the king, "that it would be neither just nor honorable for the allies now to make peace and go home?"

"Your majesty, it is—it is my earnest conviction, and I shall never be able to change it."

"Well, then," said Alexander turning toward the king, "is not your majesty, too, of the opinion that it would be advantageous for us to allow ourselves to be directed by the views and convictions of so brave and experienced a general? Do you not believe that we owe it to him, in consideration of the distinguished services which he has performed, to believe him, the brave soldier, rather than the tricky diplomatists?"

"I have no doubt of it," said the king, smiling, "and I confess that all that the field-marshal has told us has greatly modified my views, and induced me to adopt another course. If Blucher insists that, in order to satisfy the requirements of honor and justice, we should not now make peace, I believe him."

"And if he has insurmountable objections to being called

Marshal Backward," exclaimed the emperor, merrily, "well, then, he must retain the name my soldiers have given him."

"But, your majesty," cried Blucher, who listened with amazement, "what means all this?"

"It means," said the king, putting his hand on Blucher's shoulder, "it means that I cannot grant you the discharge which you have requested, because I need your services more than ever."

"It means," said the emperor, putting his hand on Blucher's other shoulder, "that Marshal Forward is the very man we need at this juncture. For, in spite of all ministers, diplomatists, and peace-croakers (I thank you for that word), we have determined to carry on the war to the best of our power."

Blucher uttered a cry of joy, and lifting up his large eyes, he exclaimed: "Good Heaven, I thank Thee, with all my heart; for the day is dawning now, and we shall soon see how the sun shines in Paris!"

"You did not wish to be commander-in-chief of the retreating army," said the king, kindly; "let us appoint you, then, second general-in-chief of the advancing army."

"How so? I do not understand that," said Blucher, bewildered. "That is to say, I remain general-in-chief of my Silesian army?"

"Yes, but with enlarged power and independence, and with a greater number of troops. Your corps has suffered a great deal; on your victorious fields of Möckern and Leipsic you lost many brave soldiers. Your ranks need filling up, in order that you may act vigorously and energetically. Therefore, three new corps will be added to your forces*—a Prussian corps under General Kleist, a Hessian corps under the crown prince of Hesse, and a mixed corps under the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, the whole amounting to about fifty thousand fresh soldiers. With these reënforcements, added to your own eighty-five thousand men, you will be at the head of an army with which great things may be accomplished, and with which I believe you may gather your laurels in France."

"Moreover," said Alexander, kindly, "you will hereafter not be responsible to any other commander. We shall consider jointly with you all operations of the war, and the whole plan of the campaign, and lay before you all general communications. Prince Schwartzemberg will always keep you well instructed of

* Varnhagen von Ense, "Biography of Prince Blucher of Wahlstatt," p. 205.

the movements of the grand army, and only *request* you to inform him of those you deem it best for the Silesian army to make in coöperation with the former.* You will, therefore, be entirely at liberty to carry your own plans into execution, and will have only to report to Schwartzberg and to us what you are doing. Are you now content, Blucher?"

"Do you still demand your discharge as a birthday present?" inquired the king.

"You ask me whether I am content, or demand my discharge?" cried Blucher, cheerfully. "Now that we advance, I would not take my discharge, and should your majesty give it to me, to punish me for my unseemly conduct, I would secretly accompany the army and fight in the ranks; for you ought to know that I do not advocate a vigorous prosecution of the war on account of the honor it might reflect on me, but for the rights of all Germany; and for this reason I am not only content, but I thank Heaven, my king, and the Emperor Alexander, from the bottom of my heart; and especially for the great confidence you place in me. This is the most flattering of all the honors you have lavished upon me, and I shall endeavor with head and arm to render myself worthy of it. I shall always remember that my king intrusted me with the sacred mission of blotting out the disgrace of Jena, and of causing our angel, Queen Louisa, who shed so many tears for us on earth, to rejoice in heaven over our deeds—and—" his words choked his utterance, his eyes grew dim; pressing his hand to them with a quivering movement, he said, in a stifled voice, "I believe—may God forgive me!—I believe I am weeping! But my tears are tears of joy; they do my heart good, and your majesties will forgive them!—Well, now I am all right again," he added, after a pause. "I request your majesties to give me instructions, and tell me what is to be done, and when we shall cross the Rhine."

Toward nightfall Blucher returned from Frankfort to Höchst. In front of his door he was met by General Gneisenau, Colonel Müffling, and several other gentlemen of his staff. Blucher made a very wry face, receiving them with loud grumbling. "Oh, it is all very well," he said, alighting from his carriage. "I can now communicate bad news to you. We shall lie still here, like lazy bears, during the whole winter; we shall neither advance nor retreat. The diplomatists have hatched out the idea, and I am sure they will arrange a

* Varnhagen von Ense, "Biography of Prince Blucher of Wahlstatt," p. 205.

pretty treaty of peace for us! Well, I do not care; I will try to suppress my grief, and lead a happy life. If we are inactive, we shall at least try to kill time in as pleasant a manner as possible. I shall commence diverting myself this very day, and, despite the apostles of peace, show that they have not ruffled my temper. The officers of York's corps will give a ball at Wiesbaden to-night. I will go, immediately setting out for Wiesbaden, and conveying the tidings to old York. Well, gentlemen, prepare to accompany me; and you, General Gneisenau, be so kind as to go with me to my room for a minute or two. I wish to tell you something." He saluted the officers, and stepped quickly into the house. Followed by Gneisenau, he entered the room, and carefully locked the door. The wrinkles now disappeared from his forehead, and an expression of happiness beamed in his face. "Gneisenau," he said, encircling the tall form of his friend in his arms, "now listen to what I have to say. What I told you about peace was not true. We are to advance—ay, to advance! and it seems to me as if I hear Bonaparte's throne giving way!"

"What, your excellency!" exclaimed Gneisenau, joyfully, "we are going to advance—to march into France?"

Blucher hastily pressed his hand on his mouth. "Hush, general!" he whispered. "At present no one must hear it; it is a secret, and we must try to conceal our movements as much as possible. We ought to do our best to mislead the enemy—that is my plan. We must make him believe that the whole offensive force of the allies is turning toward Switzerland, and that the Silesian army is to remain on the Rhine as a mere corps of observation. Napoleon will make his dispositions accordingly: he will leave but a small force on the bank of the Rhine opposite us, and on passing over to the other side we shall meet with little resistance."

"That is again a plan altogether worthy of my Ulysses," said Gneisenau, smiling. "It is all-important now for us to let every one, and above all Napoleon, know as soon as possible that we stay here."

"I will swear and rave so loudly that he will certainly hear it in Paris," said Blucher. "Let us curse the necessity imposed on us, and secretly make all necessary dispositions, inform the commanders, and issue the orders, so that we may all cross the Rhine at midnight on the 31st of December."

"What! The passage is to take place at midnight on the 31st of December?" asked Gneisenau.

"Yes, general. Let us begin the new year with a great deed, that we may end it with one."

"But will that be possible, field-marshal? Can all our troops be prepared at so short a notice?"

"That is your task, Gneisenau; ideas are your province, execution is mine. You are my head, I am your arm; and these two, I believe, ought jointly to enable us to cross the Rhine at midnight on the 31st of December, as the holy army of vengeance, which God Himself sends to Bonaparte as a New-Year's gift. But come, Gneisenau, let us ride to the ball. I must dance! Joy is in my legs, and I must allow it to get out of them. I shall ask old York to dance, and, while we two are hopping around, I must tell him what is to be done. We are to advance!"

Blucher's resolutions were carried into effect. All dispositions were made in a quiet and efficient manner; and while the field-marshal scolded vehemently at the inactivity of the winter, General Gneisenau secretly took steps to prepare for the passage of the Rhine. Napoleon's spies at Frankfort and on the Rhine heard only the grumbling of Blucher, but they did not see the preparations of Gneisenau.

On the 26th of December orders were dispatched to the commanders of the different corps of the great Silesian army, communicating the time and place of crossing the Rhine, and on the 31st every soldier of that army stood on the bank ready for the passage. This was to be effected at three different points—Mannheim, Caub, and Coblenz. The grand, all-important moment had come; midnight was at hand.

It was a clear and beautiful night; the deep-blue sky was spangled with stars, and the air cold and bracing. None saw the black columns moving toward the Rhine. The French, on the opposite side, were asleep; they did not perceive Field-Marshal Blucher, who, at Caub, on the bank of the river, was halting on horse back by the side of his faithful Gneisenau, apparently listening in breathless suspense. Suddenly, the stillness was interrupted by the chime of a neighboring church-clock; another struck, and, like echoes, their notes resounded down the Rhine, in all cities and villages, proclaiming that the old year was past, and a new one begun.

Blucher took off his gray forage-cap, and, holding it before his face, uttered a low, fervent prayer. "And now, forward!" he said, in a resolute tone. "Let us in person convey our 'happy New-Year' to the French!—And Thou, great God,

behold Thy German children, who are shaking off the thralldom of long years, and who have become again brave men! Heavenly Father, bless our undertaking! Bless the Rhine, that it may flow to the ocean again as a free German river for German freeman!—And now, boys, forward! Build your bridges, for Heaven sends us to France to punish Bonaparte, and sing him a song of the Rhine! Forward!"

CHAPTER XLII.

NAPOLEON'S NEW-YEAR'S-DAY.

It was early on the morning of the 1st of January. Napoleon was angrily pacing his cabinet, while the police-minister, Duke de Rovigo, was standing by the emperor's desk, and waiting, as if afraid to look at his master, lest his anger burst upon his head.

"Why did you not tell me so yesterday, Savary?" asked Napoleon, with his flaming eyes on the police-minister. "Why did you not inform me, immediately after the close of the meeting of the Chamber of Deputies, of the seditious and refractory spirit of the speeches which certain members dared to deliver?"

"Sire, I had no proofs of their guilt. Speeches, it is true, had been made, but they vanish, and offer no solid grounds for convicting men of crime. As I have not the honor of being a member of the committee which your majesty has appointed to take the condition of France into consideration, I was unable to hear the speeches delivered at the meeting. I had to obtain palpable evidence. I knew, not only that the commission of the Chamber of Deputies had resolved to have an address to your majesty published, but that the opposition speaker of the committee, M. Raynouard, intended to have his speech printed and circulated, in order to prove to France that the committee of the Chamber had done every thing to give peace to the nation."

"As if that were the task of those gentlemen—as if they had to give me advice, or could influence me!" cried Napoleon, vehemently. "They have never dared raise their voices against me; but now that we are surrounded by enemies—now that it is all-important for France to startle the world by her energy and the unanimity of her will, these men dare op-