

from the emperor my master, and the king your master, and am commissioned to inform you of the determination taken at headquarters, and to obtain your consent and coöperation."

"Is it a secret mission?" asked Gneisenau.

"On the contrary, the whole army will have to hear it to-night," said the general. "My first news, then, is, that the congress of Chatillon was dissolved on the 19th of March."

"Without leading to any results?" asked Blucher, breathlessly. "Without agreeing on a treaty of peace, or an armistice?"

"Nothing of the kind, your excellency. The congress has had an entirely opposite result—the speedy and energetic prosecution of the war. All the diplomatists, and the Emperor Francis with them, after the dissolution of the congress, retired southward to Dijon."

"And Schwartzberg?" cried Blucher.

"Prince Schwartzberg remained, and held a council of war with the monarchs yesterday near Vitry. The result of this I am commissioned to communicate to you. The resumption of the offensive against Paris has been decided upon. Prince Schwartzberg agrees with the sovereigns that Paris is the decisive point, and that it is all-important for us to cut off Napoleon from the capital, and take the city before he is able to reach it. Prince Schwartzberg, therefore, sends word to your excellency that from this day all his standards are turned toward Paris, and that the army of Bohemia is marching in three columns. To-night they encamp at Fère Champenoise, where the headquarters of the allies are to be. Now, Prince Schwartzberg invites you to participate with the Silesian army in this advance, starting at once, and advancing by the road of Montmirail and La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, and then form a connection with the army of Bohemia."*

"Yes, I shall certainly do so," joyfully cried Blucher. "Hurrah! This is good news; now the word is not only with us, but everywhere, 'Forward!' Tell their majesties, and, above all, Prince Schwartzberg, that they have made me very happy, and have performed a truly miraculous cure. I was sick and desponding; now, since you have come, I am again well and in good spirits. I feel no longer any pain, and my eyes will be all right again, now that they know that they are to see the city of Paris. I thought that it would come to

*Beitzke, vol. iii., p. 431.

this—that my brave brother Schwartzberg would at length agree with me. We shall soon now put an end to the war. Bonaparte must be dethroned, and that speedily."*

CHAPTER XLIX.

ON TO PARIS!

NAPOLEON'S courage was not yet paralyzed; he had not yet given up the struggle. His indomitable heart was still wrestling with adversity, and hoping that he would be able to overcome it. It is true, the disastrous battle of Bar-sur-Aube, where the army of Bohemia had gained a victory on the 20th of March, had greatly weighed him down; but a few days sufficed to restore his determination and energy. On the 26th, when he arrived with his army at St. Dizier, he had already devised new plans, and was again resolved to give battle to the allies. "We are still strong," he said to Caulaincourt, who had just joined him at St. Dizier. "We have upward of fifty thousand men here. I have issued orders to Marshals Marmont and Victor, as well as to all reinforcements that are on the road from Paris, to join our army. When they arrive, my forces will be eighty thousand, and the allies will not dare march on Paris, where they will find me. If I can now induce them to hesitate, and retard their operations a short time, by drawing reinforcements from the neighboring fortresses of the Meuse and the Moselle, I shall increase my army to upward of one hundred thousand, and it will then be easy for me to delay the progress of the enemy by constantly renewed attacks, and thus prolong the war."

"But I am afraid, sire, you labor under a delusion as to one point: that it is still possible for you to delay the progress of the allies by any means whatever," sighed Caulaincourt. "I have examined every thing on my trip to your majesty's headquarters; I have conversed with every prisoner fallen into the hands of our troops, and I do not believe that the army of Bohemia is in the rear of your majesty, but that it has outstripped you, and is already on the road to Paris."

Napoleon shrugged his shoulders and stepped to the door, which he opened, shouting, "The mayor of St. Dizier!" The corpulent form of the mayor, who greeted the emperor with

*Blucher's own words.—Vide Varnhagen von Ense, "Blucher," p. 375.

awkward obeisances, appeared immediately. "Pray repeat your statements," said the emperor. "The enemy's troops were here yesterday, were they not?"

"They were, sire; all St. Dizier was occupied by them. It was General Winzingerode, with the soldiers of the allies. They stated that they were the vanguard of the principal army. General Winzingerode inspected all the large houses in the city, and reserved the best, adding that the Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia would arrive here tomorrow, and take up their quarters at those houses;* but when the approach of your majesty was reported, the enemy quickly left the city."

"Very well; you may go," said Napoleon, motioning to the mayor to leave the room.—"Well, Caulaincourt, have you satisfied yourself now? Do you see now that the allies are not in our front, but still in our rear?"

"Sire, suppose it were a delusion, after all?" sighed Caulaincourt. "Suppose the allies had devised this stratagem, to mislead your majesty?—if none but Winzingerode's corps follow us, while the principal army is hastening toward Paris by different routes? Oh, I implore your majesty, do not suffer your keen eyes to be blinded by false hopes! Look around and examine the evidences that confirm my views. All the prisoners report that the armies of Bohemia and Silesia have united, and are now marching on Paris. Besides, on our way from Bar-sur-Aube to this place, we have nowhere met with large columns of troops, and nothing whatever indicates the approach of the enemy in force."

"Well," cried Napoleon, vehemently, "if we have not met with the enemy's forces, it may be because they are in full retreat toward Lorraine, and that they are at last tired of carrying on a fruitless struggle with me." †

"Ah, your majesty still thinks that you are opposed only by the timid and desponding enemies of former times!" said Caulaincourt, sighing; "but this is a mistake, which will prove disastrous."

"Ah!" cried Napoleon, vehemently, "you dare tell me that?"

"Sire," said Caulaincourt, calmly, "it is my duty to tell you the truth, and you are in duty bound to listen to it. ‡

* This was a stratagem, resorted to by Winzingerode, in order to mislead Napoleon as to the march of the allies.

† Fain, "Manuscrit de 1814," p. 142.

‡ Caulaincourt's words.—"Mémoires d'un Homme d'État," vol. xii., p. 392.

Now, the truth is, that the allies are firmly determined to carry on the war to the last extremity, and that, at the best, they will leave to your majesty the frontiers of France as they were under the Bourbons. I venture, therefore, once more to implore your majesty to make peace; sire, peace at any cost! Perhaps it may be time yet. Send me once more to the allied monarchs! Tell them that you will now accept the ultimatum offered us at the congress of Chatillon, and that you will content yourself with the frontiers of France, as they were previous to the rise of the empire. Send me with this declaration to the Emperor Alexander of Russia, who, at the bottom of his heart, is still your friend!"

"And whose devoted friend you are!" cried Napoleon. "Yes, you are Alexander's servant, and not mine! You are a thorough Russian!"

"No, sire, I am a Frenchman!" said Caulaincourt, proudly, looking the emperor full in the face, "and I believe I prove it by imploring your majesty to give peace to France and save your crown."

"Ah, save my crown!" exclaimed Napoleon. "Who dares, then, threaten my crown?"

"Sire, the allies and the Bourbons. The former have issued a proclamation, stating that they come to this country to make war on the Emperor Napoleon, and not on France; and the Bourbons, who are now in France, at the headquarters of the allies, have issued another proclamation, calling upon the nation to return to its duty and to the allegiance due to its legitimate king."

"I am neither afraid of the allies nor of the Bourbons," said Napoleon. "The French nation knows no Bourbons; it knows none but *me*, its emperor, and we two shall not break the faith we have plighted to each other. We shall conquer together. Dare no longer ask me to accept the ignominious terms of the congress of Chatillon. It is better to die beneath the ruins of my throne than be at the mercy of my enemies. The allies are in my rear, and the arrival of reinforcements will soon enable me to give them battle; I shall win, and it will be for me to dictate terms. Under the walls of Paris the grave of the Russians will be dug. My dispositions have been made, and I shall not fail." *

Caulaincourt sighed, and gazed with an air of painful astonishment on the serene face of the emperor. "Sire," he

* Napoleon's words.—Vide Constant, "Mémoires," vol. vi., p. 48.

said, solemnly, "I call Heaven to witness that I have tried my best to incline your majesty to my prayers! You have refused to listen to me."

"Because I am not at liberty to do so, Caulaincourt; and, besides, I do not believe in your apprehensions. Suppose that Alexander and Frederick William should determine to continue the war, there is a third sovereign who will decide the matter—the Emperor Francis, my father-in-law, and grandfather of the King of Rome. You see, therefore, that, though the present prospects were unfavorable to me, I should at least have nothing to fear from the Bourbons; for the emperor will not permit his daughter to be robbed of her crown, nor his grandson of his rightful inheritance."

"Sire," said Caulaincourt, in a low voice, "do not rely too much on the attachment of the Emperor Francis. I know that, though he is your father-in-law, he has never forgotten the day when, after the battle of Austerlitz, he met you as an humble supplicant at your camp-fire, and begged you to spare him and make peace with him. I know that that recollection has greater power over him than any bonds of relationship. I know that Metternich, who is still devoted to your majesty, vainly tried a few days ago to prevail upon the Emperor Francis to intercede energetically with the other monarchs for his son-in-law and daughter, and that he unsuccessfully urged him to take into consideration the future of his grandson, the King of Rome."

"And what did the emperor reply?" asked Napoleon, quickly.

"Sire, the emperor replied, in his strong Austrian dialect, 'Do not always talk to me about the child! I have at home many children of whom I ought to think first.'"^{*}

"That is not true; he did not say so!" cried Napoleon.

"Sire, he did; Prince Metternich told me so."

Napoleon paused a moment. A low knocking at the door interrupted his meditation. One of the adjutants entered, and reported that the emperor's equerry, Count Saint-Aignan, whom the emperor had intrusted with a mission, had returned, and requested an audience of his majesty. The emperor himself hastened to the door, and eagerly motioned to the count to approach. "Well, Saint-Aignan," he asked,

^{*} The Emperor Francis said: "Rüdt's mier nit alleweil von dem Kind; bei mier z' Haus hab' ich gar vielle Kinder, an die ich z'erst denken muess."—Hormayr, "Lebensbilder," vol. i., p. 98.

"what did you find? How is the disposition of the people in the south of France?"

"Sire," said the count, mournfully, "I bring no news that will gladden your majesty's heart. Southern France is discontented; the people are complaining of the duration of the war; they desire peace at any price, and are disposed to resort to extreme measures in order to reëstablish it."

"What does that mean?" asked the emperor. "I do not understand you; express yourself more distinctly."

"Well, then, sire, the people there have read the proclamation of the Bourbons, and think of reinstating them, for the purpose of putting an end to the war."

"They will not dare to do that," cried Napoleon, casting an angry glance on Saint-Aignan.

"They have already, sire," said the count. "The city of Bordeaux has declared for the Bourbons, and the Count d'Artois, as well as the Duke and Duchess d'Angoulême, have made their entrance into the city, and—"

"And have been received with enthusiasm by the population!" cried Napoleon. "Pray, finish your sentence, and tell me so. Add that the inhabitants of Bordeaux have returned to their duty, and that you, too, have discovered what your duty is, and that you intend to return to the legitimate rulers of France! Go! I permit you; I relieve you of the duties of your office! Go to the Bourbons!"

Count Saint-Aignan did not stir; pallor overspread his cheeks; his eyes, fixed on the emperor with an indescribable expression of grief, filled with tears, and his quivering lips were unable to speak.

"Sire," said the Duke de Vicenza, "your majesty does injustice to the count. You commanded him to give a reliable report of his mission; he was not at liberty, therefore, to conceal any thing, but was obliged to tell you the whole truth."

"The truth!" cried Napoleon, violently stamping, "that which you fear or desire you call the truth! You all see through the colored spectacles of your anxiety, and would compel me to do so, too; but I will not; my eyes are open, and see things as they are. Go, Count Saint-Aignan; your report is finished!" The count, with a sigh, approached the door, and, slowly walking backward, left the room. "The Bourbons!" murmured Napoleon to himself; "they shall not dare to threaten me with this spectre! There are no Bourbons! I am the Emperor of France, and it is to me alone

that the French nation owes allegiance!" He looked thoughtfully, with a dark and wrinkled forehead, but, presently lifting his head—"Oh, Caulaincourt," he exclaimed, "I will personally satisfy myself whether the army of the allies is really in our rear, or whether your fears are well grounded. Let us set out for Vitry!"

"Heaven be praised!" replied the Duke de Vicenza, joyfully. "All is not yet lost; for Vitry is on the road to Paris."

On the following morning the emperor moved with his forces toward Vitry, and took up his quarters at Marolles, a short distance from the little fortress. Here at length he was to find out the true state of affairs. He was met by inhabitants of Fère Champenoise, who had fled to Marolles, and informed him that Marshals Marmont and Mortier had suffered decisive defeats at the hands of the allies; that the divisions of General Pacthod and Aurey had been annihilated, and that the united armies of Bohemia and Silesia were in rapid march on Paris.

An expression of terror passed over the face of Napoleon, and his equanimity seemed to be shaken; but he soon overcame the effect of this news, calmly remarking, "Well, if the allies are marching on Paris, we must march too."

"Yes, on to Paris!" cried the marshals. "That is the most important point in present circumstances, and it can be defended, if the emperor hasten with his army."

"On to Paris, then!" exclaimed Napoleon. "But we must move with the speed of the wind!" He appeared to have regained his whole energy; his eyes beamed again, his face resumed its old determination, and he issued his orders in a firm and cheerful voice.

It was all-important to defend the emperor's throne at Paris, and to protect the inheritance of the King of Rome from the allies and the Bourbons. Forward, then, by forced marches! Napoleon's headquarters were soon at Montier-en-Der—much nearer the capital. On the 28th of March he reached Doulerant, when a horseman, covered with dust, pale and breathless, coming from the direction of the capital, galloped up to the head of the column. "Where is the emperor?" he cried. Having been conducted to him, "Sire," he whispered, "I am sent by the postmaster-general, your faithful Count La Valette, to deliver this paper."

The emperor unfolded the paper and read. A slight tremor pervaded his frame, and his eyes grew gloomier. He

cast another glance on the paper, and then, seizing it with his teeth, he tore it to pieces. None but himself was to learn the contents of that paper, which read: "The adherents of the invaders, encouraged by the defection of Bordeaux, are raising their heads; secret intrigues are helping them. The emperor's presence is necessary, if he wishes to prevent his capital from being delivered into the hands of the enemy. We must march immediately. Not a moment is to be lost."*

"Forward!" shouted the emperor. "We must hasten to Paris, and be there to-morrow!" The emperor, with the cavalry of his guard, headed the column. His countenance was still calm and impenetrable; but at times a gleam lit up his sombre eyes, as he moved on in a violent thunderstorm.

Another courier galloped up and asked for the emperor. "Announce me to him. The lieutenant-general of the empire, King Joseph, the emperor's brother, sends me."

He was conducted to Napoleon, who received him with the words, "News from my brother in Paris? Give me your dispatch!"

"Sire, I have no dispatch to deliver; dispatches may be lost, or revealed if their bearer should be arrested; but memory betrays nothing. I have ridden from Paris in fourteen hours. Here are my credentials, King Joseph's signet-ring."

"I recognize it. Speak!" By a wave of his hand Napoleon ordered the marshals to retire, and, bending his head toward his brother's messenger, he repeated calmly, "Speak!"

"Sire," whispered the messenger, "the king informs your majesty that the allies are near Paris; that Marshals Marmont and Mortier, though determined to defend the capital, have no hope of holding their positions. The king implores your majesty most urgently to leave nothing undone to hasten to the assistance of your capital."†

Having heard this message, the emperor's face was unveiled; it was quivering with anguish, and his eyes turned to heaven in despair. "Oh, if I had wings!" he cried, in an outburst of grief; "if I could be in Paris at this hour!" Then he became silent, and his head sank on his breast. His generals surrounded him, when he lifted his head again with drops of sweat on his forehead, but his face resumed its wonted calmness. "General Dejean," he cried, in a powerful

*Fain, "Manuscrit de 1814."

†Fain, "Manuscrit de 1814."

voice, "ride to Paris as fast as you can. Inform my brother that I am making a forced march to the capital. Hasten then to Marmont and Mortier; tell them to resist to the last, and leave nothing untried in order to hold out but for two days. In that time I shall be in front of Paris, and it is safe! Marmont is to dispatch a courier to Prince Schwartzberg, and inform him that I have sent an envoy to the Emperor Francis with propositions leading to peace. Schwartzberg will hesitate, and we shall gain time. Haste, Dejean, and remember that the fate of my capital rests with you!"

When General Dejean rode off, Napoleon sought his faithful friend, the Duke de Vicenza. He was by his side before the emperor had uttered his name. "Caulaincourt," he said, in a gentle voice, "you were right. I have lost two days. I might now be in Paris. Fate is behind me, intent on crushing me, and death itself refuses to take me! At the battle of Bar-sur-Aube I did all I could to die while defending my country. I plunged into the thickest of the fight; the balls tore my clothes, and yet not one of them injured me. I am a man doomed to live*—a man that, for the welfare of his people, is to subscribe his own humiliation and disgrace! Caulaincourt, go to the Emperor Francis of Austria. Tell him I accept the ultimatum which the allies offered me at Chatillon. I sign the death-warrant of my glory! Hasten! And now, forward! In two days we must reach Paris!"

CHAPTER L.

DEPARTURE OF MARIA LOUISA.

ON the same day, and nearly at the same hour of the 29th of March, while the emperor was moving with his troops toward Paris, a scene of an entirely different description took place at the rooms of the empress, his consort, in the Tuileries. Napoleon, in his despair, wished for wings to fly to Paris; Maria Louisa, in her anguish, wished for wings to fly away from Paris; for the enemy was at its gates, and it was plain that the city must either capitulate or run the risk of an assault.

As yet Maria Louisa called the allies threatening the throne of her husband, and the inheritance of her son, her enemies,

*Napoleon's words.—Vide Bausset's "Mémoires," vol. ii., p. 246.

although her own father was among them. She deemed herself in duty bound to stand by her husband, to brave the vicissitudes of fortune jointly with him, and obey his will. The emperor desired that his consort and his son should not remain in the city if any danger should menace them. When the news reached the Tuileries that the allies had arrived at the walls of Paris, and it became obvious that the corps of Marmont and Mortier were not strong enough to withstand the armies of the enemy, King Joseph, the lieutenant of the emperor, summoned the regent, Maria Louisa, and the council of state, to deliberate on the grave question whether or not the empress and the King of Rome should remain, or be withdrawn to a place of safety beyond the Loire.

The decision was left with Maria Louisa; but the regent had declared it was not for her to settle this question; it was for the very purpose of advising her and guiding her steps that the emperor had associated the council of state with her. King Joseph produced a letter from Napoleon of a nature to indicate his wishes. It was dated Rheims, 15th of March, and read:

"In accordance with the verbal instructions which I have given, and with the spirit of all my letters, you are in no event to permit the empress and the King of Rome to fall into the hands of the enemy. I am about to manœuvre in such a manner that you may possibly be several days without hearing from me. Should the enemy advance upon Paris with such forces as to render all resistance impossible, send off in the direction of the Loire the empress, the King of Rome, the great dignitaries, the ministers, the officers of the senate, the president of the council of state, the great officers of the crown, and the treasure. Never quit my son; and keep in mind that I would rather see him in the Seine than in the hands of the enemies of France! The fate of Astyanax, a prisoner in the hands of the Greeks, has always appeared to me the most deplorable in history.

"Your brother, NAPOLEON."*

This, of course, put an end to all debate. The emperor's precise and final order, providing for the very case which had occurred, could not be disregarded, and Maria Louisa accordingly determined to leave with her son and her suite for Rambouillet. The morning of the 29th of March was fixed for the departure. The travelling-carriages, loaded with bag-

*Baron de Meneval, "Marie Louise et Napoléon," vol. ii., p. 230.