PART VII.

RETURN FROM EXILE.

God gave him reverence for laws,
Yet stirring blood in freedom's cause,
A spirit to his *rocks* akin,
The eye of the hawk and the fire therein.

COLERIDGE.

Auf einmal seh' ich Rath
Und schreibe getrost: im Anfang war die That.

GOETHE.

CHAPTER I.

PRUSSIA AND RUSSIA REUNITED.

THE fall of Napoleon seems at first sight to follow naturally and inevitably on the Russian disaster. If the throne of Augustus was shaken in his old age by the loss of three legions, it may be thought a matter of course that Napoleon's would be overthrown by the loss of half a million of men. A young dynasty can seldom support military disaster, and such disaster as this, the greatest known to history, might have brought down the oldest dynasty in the world. It came also with every possible aggravation, for it came at the end of a long period of war, when the French nation, like the English at the time of Malplaquet, might be supposed to have grown tired of shedding their blood. Nor could any excuse be offered for it; for if there never was a military expedition so great, there certainly never was one so unreasonable or so unprovoked. By such considerations we may persuade ourselves that the fall of Napoleon was as natural as that of his nephew after Sedan; the rising of the

nations against him, their alliances, and finally their victories and success, may strike us as that which might have been anticipated beforehand and as a mere matter of course.

But we have only to look closer, and we shall find that this view is mistaken. In the first place, the circumstances were so peculiar that the French themselves did not and could not desert Napoleon, as they did his nephew after his defeat, but clung to him more closely than ever. An unparalleled disaster coming on the sudden in the midst of a series of unparalleled successes did not work as even a calamity less signal might have worked, if it had been preceded by a phase of decline or by other slighter misfortunes gradually producing discontent. To desert Napoleon at that moment was indeed impossible to France, for no other Government could be thought of, and he alone could be expected to save the nation in the danger he himself had brought on it. Accordingly no cry of *déchéance* was raised. On the contrary, France made sacrifices for her Emperor in his need, such as she had made for her Revolution in 1793. While Prussia was rousing herself for her *levée en masse*, France, which had just lost half a million of men, enabled Napoleon between January and May to create another army, which outnumbered all that Russia and Prussia could bring against it. But is it true that though France stood firm, yet Napoleon's loss in reputation and resources was such that the other nations, seeing their opportunity, immediately threw off their fear of him and uniting crushed him with the weight of superior force? Nothing of this sort happened within the

limits of what we may call Napoleon's Empire. The Confederation of the Rhine did not dissolve, nor was there even for some time any defection from it. Italy, Holland, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Left Bank of the Rhine, remained quiet. What is still more to be noted, Austria did not stir, nor, though no doubt she looked forward to recovering part of what she had lost, had she as yet any thought of taking up a position of hostility towards Napoleon, much less of overthrowing him. The defection of Austria from his cause did not take place till a later time, when all the circumstances were altered. It took place when Napoleon's losses had to all appearance been repaired, when he was again at the head of a force superior to that of his enemies, when he had again taken the offensive, and had proved by new victories that the talisman of success had not been lost with the old army. Thus instead of crumbling away at the first touch of disaster, his empire showed an astonishing stability. A shock, which might have seemed irresistible, passed over it without shaking most of the supports on which it rested. The actual political effects of the Russian catastrophe were two only. First Russia was encouraged to assume the offensive against France; secondly Prussia, which we have watched wavering through so many years between the French and Russian alliance, and which had lately been forced to adopt the former, now takes courage to renounce it, and forms an alliance with Russia. Europe, in fact, is brought back to the state of affairs before the Peace of Tilsit, and a new campaign is fought between the same belligerents that were engaged in the campaign of Eylau and Fried-

land. The French Empire is no doubt somewhat faint from hæmorrhage, but in other respects, through the great enlargement of the Confederation of the Rhine, through the Austrian marriage and the birth of one who represents at once the old Empire and the new, it is a far firmer fabric than it was in 1807.

Again, these results which actually did follow Napoleon's failure in Russia, this combined attack upon the French Empire by Russia and Prussia, ought not to be regarded as inevitable and a mere matter of course. We hear much of Napoleon's vast losses in Russia, but we seldom remark that the Russian loss was equally great. If France might be expected to be exhausted, so might Russia. In such a condition was it a matter of course that she should pursue her enemy beyond her frontier, hunt him through Germany into France, and not rest till she had crushed him? Such an undertaking might at first sight seem even rasher than Napoleon's enterprise against Russia. And what occasion was there for it? Did even revenge call for it? Was it not enough for revenge that almost all the invaders lay buried under the Russian snows? Was it not enough for the honour of Russia that she had given the tyrant such a lesson as never tyrant received before? But if Russia was bent upon obtaining some indemnity for all her sacrifices, why should she seek it from Napoleon himself? What she might take from him could not fall to her. She would be none the better for the dissolution of the Confederation of the Rhine, none the better, but perhaps even the poorer, for the restoration of Prussia to greatness, none the better for the deposition

of Napoleon and the return of the Bourbons. On the other hand, how natural and easy for her to indemnify herself in another way! Among the accomplices of Napoleon appeared Prussia. The army of Prussia had marched under his orders, and his army had been largely provisioned from her territory. It was true that no injury could better deserve forgiveness than one committed under such extreme compulsion. But it would serve for a pretext; Prussia was still nominally an enemy and Napoleon's ally, and she was close at hand while he was far off. What more natural then than for Russia to indemnify herself at Prussia's expense by taking the opportunity of extending her frontier, say to the Weichsel? On the other hand, it was not obviously the interest of Prussia to become the offensive ally of Russia against Napoleon. She had suffered much from Russia at Tilsit and since, and Russia had now risen, first by the help of Napoleon, and then by his defeat, to an immense greatness in Europe. The Russian alliance would be almost as oppressive as Napoleon's, and the country would now be flooded with Cossacks, as in the past year it had been overrun by the French. It was more natural for Prussia to return to her old neutrality between France and Russia, which might now be maintained in a better spirit by the help of the nationality doctrine and by the support of Austria. The natural course was for Prussia and Austria to stand by each other, and try to keep the balance even between the great Western and the great Eastern Power, and at the same time to keep the German territory free from the armies of both.

This is not conjectural. We have positive evidence both of the reluctance of Russia to undertake an offensive war against Napoleon and of her disposition to seize Prussian territory, and of Prussia's disinclination both to war with France and to close alliance with Russia. It is particularly to be noted that Napoleon himself continued to count upon Prussia as an ally. He thought he could bribe her by restoring some of her greatness, and threw out hints that he was tired of Jerome. Nay, in one of those fits of portentous blindness with respect to popular forces which occasionally visited him, he imagines himself commencing another offensive campaign against Russia, with Saxony supporting his right and Prussia his left. Thus it was not by an easy and unavoidable calculation of interests and of chances that Russia and Prussia were led to form their offensive alliance. This alliance was a great and memorable work concerning which it is reasonable to inquire, Who were its authors, and by what means did they bring it to pass? One of its principal authors then was Stein, and hardly at any time in his life did he work more powerfully or more beneficially. But as he shares with Hardenberg the honour of having regenerated the Prussian institutions, and with Scharnhorst that of having revived the Prussian national spirit, so in this work of reviving the Russian alliance, he has a colleague in one who by a single bold act procured for himself an imperishable name in Prussian history, General Yorck. When we remember what had happened after the battle of Friedland, how irresistibly Russian feeling had declared itself against continuing the war

when no directly Russian interest was at stake, when we observe that the exhaustion of the country was much greater now than then, and that leading men, such as Kutusoff, held now the same language that Bennigsen had held then, we cannot fail to see the importance of the fact that a Prussian statesman of European celebrity, of the largest views and the strongest character, stood beside Alexander. We have seen reason to think that the Czar's firmness after the loss of Moscow was not attributable in any considerable degree to Stein's influence, but chiefly to the commanding force of public opinion. The same explanation cannot be given of Alexander's second great resolve, which certainly public opinion did not dictate. Let us now inquire what advice on the subject he received from Stein.

A Memoir, written by Stein at St Petersburg, November 5, 1812, may be given here almost entire. In this second period of his public life it answers to that Representation of the Faulty Organisation of the Cabinet, by which in 1806 he may be said to have commenced the first period. The fierce personal attack he now makes upon Romanzoff answers to that which in the earlier paper he directed against Haugwitz and Lombard.

He begins thus:

> The French army in dissolution from hunger, sickness and the sword, Napoleon in flight, covered with shame, racked with fury and the pangs of conscience (on what is this founded?)—such are the successes achieved by the wise and strong measures of the Emperor Alexander, the admirable energy of the Russian people and the valour of the army. What are the immediate consequences of these great events?

An alteration in the character of the war and in its arena, and in all the foreign relations and alliances of Russia.

The war will probably become offensive instead of defensive, its arena will be transferred beyond the frontier; it will therefore no longer be waged in wild, half-cultivated districts, and it will have to be conducted by the military force alone, without the help of an armed population; it must therefore be conducted more scientifically, with more economy as to means, and with careful consideration of the spirit of the nationalities which are to be roused to activity. We can no longer reckon on deserts, devastations, masses and the force of physical conditions alone; we shall have to fight for our ground, husband our resources, gain influence over the inhabitants; we need insight, energy, humanity and liberal notions in the generals; we need discipline in the soldiers.

We see that he assumes at once as about to happen what actually did happen, yet what was opposed by a large party about the Czar, and was not at this time contemplated or wished at the Prussian court, an advance of the Russians into Germany. But what are they to do in Germany?

Since the war is passing into Germany we must lay down general principles as to the attitude to be assumed towards the Princes and the inhabitants. The general principle will be: to spare the inhabitants, to set them in action against the common enemy, but as to the Governments to watch and direct them, and in certain cases to establish a dominion over them. We must declare our settled purpose of restoring the independence of Germany, of annihilating the Confederation of the Rhine, and we must invite all Germans to join the allied armies, in order to conquer their liberties; we must cause the Russian army to be accompanied, at the moment of its entrance into Germany, by men who have remained faithful to the cause of their Fatherland, as well as by the German Legion, which must receive a wider extension through the population of the territory now to be occupied. The Princes who adhere to the common cause must then guarantee the sincerity and solidity of their views by sur-