

CHAPTER III.

THE SECOND CONSPIRACY TO RE-
UNITE CANADA AND LOUISIANA.

(1800—1810.)

Napoleon, who had arrived to greatness in France and was first consul in 1798, prevailed on Spain to cede Louisiana to France in 1800 by the treaty of St. Idelphonse. He prepared an expedition of 15,000 men and a train of artillery for New Orleans, but the chief of this expedition was obliged to lend the aid of his troops to put down the servile revolt in the French province of San Domingo, where almost all of the soldiers perished of fever and malaria. At the same time, war with England was likely to occur and his newly acquired province of Louisiana was left without defense. The Yankees were already separating themselves from their previous concurrence with England to possess Louisiana, and their agent, Livingston, was in Paris ready to make any arrangement with the French for the possession of Louisiana, in spite of their pledges of an alliance with England. Napoleon was too shrewd to place any faith in Yankee promises founded on but he knew that if he sold Louisiana to the United States he would at least have the money for it, and at the same time make a break in their friendly intercourse with England.

On April 10, 1803, he called his two colleagues together and thus addressed them: "I know the value of Louisiana and I had wished to repair the fault of the French negociator who had abandoned it in 1763. A few strokes of the pen have recovered it, and I see that very soon I must give it up again. But, if it escapes me, one day it will cost dear to those who cause me the sacrifice. The English have taken from France successively, Canada, Isle-Royal, Newfoundland and Acadia, and the richest parts of Asia. They have worked and plotted in San Domingo. But they shall not have the Mississippi Basin. Louisiana is nothing in comparison to their aggrandisement in other parts of the world. Yet their jealousy at seeing this colony return to France announces that they have in mind to seize it. Already they have twenty vessels in the Gulf of Mexico and they sail those seas as sovereigns. I wish, if there be yet time, to deprive them of the possibility of ever possessing

it. I wish to cede it to the United States."

Calling for the advice of his colleagues, he was responded to by one in this manner: "It is necessary to give up the place. . . . You have scarcely fifty soldiers there. Where are your means of sending garrisons? of constructing a line of forts along 400 leagues of frontier? . . . Louisiana is open to the English from the north by the Great Lakes, and if at the same time they present themselves at the mouth of the river, New Orleans must fall. . . . On the other hand, the conquest would be easier for the United States. They can invade the country by several navigable rivers of which it is necessary for them only to enter to become masters. . . ." The other colleague was of a contrary mind. "We are," said he, "yet at peace with England. The colony which has been ceded to us, depend on the willingness of the first consul. It would not be wise to abandon, in the fear of a doubtful danger, the most important establishment we have outside of France herself, and to rob ourselves without any other cause than the possibility of war. Better far be it taken from us by force of arms. If peace is maintained, its cession cannot be justified, and this premature act would be the subject of profound regrets. Its preservation on account of commerce and navigation will be of great value and an inestimable joy in our maritime provinces. The advantages drawn already from our colonies are yet present to us. Ten flourishing cities have been created by this commerce and the opulence and luxury which embellish Paris are the effects of colonial industry. . . . You will not submit it; you will not acknowledge it by your resignation, that England is the mistress of the seas and that one may not possess colonies save at her good pleasure! . . . If they might seize Louisiana, as you fear, Hanover is yet in our hands as a pledge for their good behaviour. France, deprived of her marine and colonies is robbed of half of her splendor and a great part of her power. Louisiana is able to recompense us for all our losses. Nowhere on the globe is there a port capable of becoming so important as New Orleans. . . . The Mississippi is at the door, re-enforced by twenty rivers which surpass the grandest and most beautiful of Europe. The navigation to the Indies, in doubling Cape of Good Hope, has altered the marts of commerce and ruined Venice and Genoa. Then what will happen if some day, a canal is open through the Isthmus of Pa-