

him to take a bold stand. Send somebody to the Archduke Charles; request him to repair likewise to the emperor and influence him in the same direction. I have paved the way for you. I hope the French ambassador will, in spite of himself, be our ally, and by his defiant and arrogant bearing, attain for us the object which we have hitherto been unable to accomplish by our persuasion and our arguments. Make haste! Burn this paper."

The archduke signed to his two confidants to come to him, and pointed to the paper. When they had hastily read the lines, he threw the paper into the flames, and turned to the two gentlemen who stood behind him.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he inquired. "Shall I do what these mysterious lines ask of me? Shall I go to the emperor without being summoned to him?"

"The empress requests you to do so, and she is as prudent as she is energetic," said Count Nugent.

"I say, like the empress, the decisive hour is at hand," exclaimed Baron von Hormayr. "Hasten to the emperor; try once more to force the sword into his hand, and to wrest at length the much-wished-for words, 'War against France!' from his lips. The Tyrolese are only waiting for these words, to rise for their emperor and become again his loving and devoted subjects. All Austria, nay, all Germany, is longing for these words, which will be the signal of the deliverance of the fatherland from the French yoke. Oh, my lord and prince, hasten to the emperor; speak to him with the impassioned eloquence of the cherubim, break the fatal charm that holds Austria and the Tyrol enthralled!"

At this moment the large clock standing on the mantel-piece commenced striking.

"Eleven o'clock," said the archduke—"the hour when the emperor is to give an audience to the French ambassador. It is high time, therefore. Nugent, hasten to my brother; implore him to repair forthwith to the emperor, and to act this time at least in unison with me. Tell him that everything is at stake, and that we must risk all to win all. But you, Hormayr, go to my dear Tyrolese; tell them that I will receive them here at twelve o'clock to-night, and conduct them

to me at that hour, my friend. We will hold a council of war at midnight."

"And your imperial highness does not forget that you promised to go to the concert to-night?" asked Nugent. "Your highness is aware that our friends not only intend to-night to give an ovation to the veteran master of German art, Joseph Haydn, but wish also to profit by the German music to make a political demonstration; and they long for the presence of the imperial court, that the emperor and his brothers may witness the patriotic enthusiasm of Vienna."

"I shall certainly be present," said the archduke, earnestly, "and I hope the empress will succeed in prevailing on the emperor to go to the concert.—Well, then, my friends, let us go to work, and may God grant success to our efforts!"

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE EMPEROR FRANCIS.

THE Emperor Francis had to-day entered his study at an earlier hour than usual, and was industriously engaged there in finishing a miniature cup which he had commenced cutting from a peach-stone yesterday. On the table before him lay the drawing of the model after which he was shaping the cup; and Francis lifted his eyes only from time to time to fix them on the drawing, and compare it with his own work. These comparisons, however, apparently did not lead to a cheering result, for the emperor frowned and put the cup rather impetuously close to the drawing on the table.

"I believe, forsooth, the cup is not straight," murmured the emperor to himself, contemplating from all sides the diminutive object which had cost him so much labor. "Sure enough, it is not straight, it has a hump on one side. Yes, yes, nothing is straight, nowadays; and even God in heaven creates His things no longer straight, and does not shrink from letting the peach-stones grow crooked. But no matter—what God does is well done," added the emperor, crossing

himself devoutly ; "even an emperor must not censure it, and must not grumble when his cup is not straight because God gave the peach-stone a hump. Well, perhaps, I may change it yet, and make the cup straight."

He again took up the little cup, and commenced industriously working at it with his sharp files, pointed knives, and gimlets. It was hard work : large drops of sweat stood on the emperor's forehead ; his arms ached, and his fingers became sore under the pressure of the knives and files ; but the emperor did not mind it, only from time to time wiping the sweat from his brow, and then continuing his labor with renewed zeal.

Close to the small table containing the tools stood the emperor's large writing-table. Large piles of documents and papers lay on this table, and among them were scattered also many letters and dispatches with broad official seals. But the emperor had not yet thought of opening these dispatches or unsealing these letters. The peach-stone had engrossed his attention this morning, and he had unsealed only one of the papers ; the emperor had read only the report of the secret police on the events of the previous day. These reports of the secret police and the *Chiffre-Cabinet* were the favorite reading matter of the Emperor Francis, and he would have flown into a towering passion if he had not found them on his writing-table early every morning.

Thanks to these reports, the emperor knew every morning all that had occurred in Vienna during the previous day ; what the foreign ambassadors had done, and, above all things, what his brothers, the Archdukes Charles, Ferdinand, Joseph, and John, had said, done, and perhaps only thought. To-day's report had not communicated many important things to the emperor ; it had only informed him that, at daybreak, a courier from Paris had arrived at the house of the French ambassador, Count Andréossi, and that there were good reasons to believe that he had brought highly important news.

It was exactly for the purpose of dispelling the anxiety with which this unpleasant intelligence had filled him, that Francis had laid aside the report and recommenced his work on the cup ; and by this occupation he had succeeded in forgetting the burdensome duties of his imperial office.

He was just trying very hard to plane one side of his cup, when a low rap at the small door leading to the narrow corridor, and thence to the apartments of the empress, interrupted him. The emperor gave a start and looked toward the door, listening and hoping, perhaps, that his ear might have deceived him. But no, the rapping was heard once more : there could no longer be a doubt of it—somebody sought admittance, and intended to disturb the peaceful solitude of the emperor.

"What does the empress want?" murmured Francis. "What does she come here for? I am afraid something unpleasant has happened again."

He rose with a shrug from his chair, put his miniature cup hastily into the drawer of his table, and hurried to open the door.

Francis had not been mistaken. It really was the Empress Ludovica, the third consort of the emperor, who had married her only a few months ago. She wore a handsome dishabille of embroidered white muslin, closely surrounding her delicate and slender form, and trimmed with beautiful laces. The white dress reached up to the neck, where a rose-colored tie fastened it. Her beautiful black hair, which fell down in heavy ringlets on both sides of her face, was adorned with a costly lace cap, from which wide ribbons of rose-colored satin flowed down on her shoulders. But the countenance of the empress did not correspond to this coquettish and youthful dress. She was young and beautiful, but an expression of profound melancholy overspread her features. Her cheeks were transparently white, and a sad, touching smile quivered round her finely-chiselled, narrow lips ; her high, expansive forehead was shaded, as it were, by a cloud of sadness ; and her large black eyes shot, from time to time, gloomy flashes, which seemed to issue from a gulf of fiery torture. But whatever passions might animate her delicate, ethereal form, the empress had learned to cover her heart with a veil, and her lips never gave utterance to the sufferings of her soul. Only her confidantes were allowed to divine them ; they alone knew that twofold tortures were racking Ludovica's fiery soul, those of hatred and wounded pride. Napoleon ! it was he whom the empress hated with indescribable bitterness ; and the neg-

lect with which her consort, the Emperor Francis, treated her cut her proud heart to the quick. Thanks to the intrigues and immense riches of her mother, Beatrix of Este, Duchess of Modena, she had become the wife of an emperor, and herself an empress; but she had thereby obtained only an august position, not a husband and partner. She was an empress in name only, but not in reality. Francis had given her his hand, but not his heart and his love. He disdained his beautiful, lovely wife; he avoided any familiar intercourse with her with anxious timidity; only in the presence of the court and the public did he treat the empress as his consort, and tolerate her near his person. At first Ludovica had submitted to this strange conduct on the part of her husband with proud indifference, and not the slightest murmur, not the mildest reproach, had escaped her lips. For it was not from love that she had chosen this husband, but from ambition and pride. She had told herself that it would be better for her to be Empress of Austria than Princess of Modena and Este; and even the prospect of being the *third* wife of Francis of Austria, and the stepmother of the ten children whom his second wife had borne to him, had not deterred her. She meant to marry the emperor, and not the man; she wished to play a prominent part, and exert a powerful influence on the destinies of the world. But these hopes were soon to prove utterly futile. The emperor granted her publicly all the privileges of her exalted position by his side; but in the privacy of her apartments he never made her his confidante; he refused to let her have any influence over his decisions; he never consulted her as to the measures of his administration; nay, he avoided alluding to such topics in her presence.

Such was the grief that was gnawing at the heart of the young empress—the wound from which her proud and lofty soul was bleeding. But for a few weeks past she had overcome her silent grief, and the presence of her mother, the shrewd and intriguing Duchess of Modena, seemed to have imparted fresh strength to the empress, and confirmed her in her determination to conquer the heart and confidence of her husband. Whereas she had hitherto met his indifference by proud reticence, and feigned not to notice it, she was now

kind and even affectionate toward him; and it often happened that, availing herself of the privilege of her position, she traversed the private corridor separating her rooms from those of her husband, and, without being summoned to him, entered his cabinet to talk politics with him in spite of his undisguised aversion to doing so.

The emperor hated these interviews from the bottom of his heart; a shudder pervaded his soul, and a cloud covered his brow, whenever he heard the low rap of the empress at his private door. To-day, too, the dark cloud covered his forehead even after the empress had entered his cabinet. Ludovica noticed it, and a mournful smile overspread her pale face for a moment.

“As your majesty did not come to me to bid me good-morning, I have come to you,” she said, in a gentle, kind voice, holding out her beautiful white hand to the emperor.

Francis took it and pressed it to his lips. “It is true,” he said, evidently embarrassed, “I did not come this morning to pay my respects to you, but time was wanting to me. I had to go at once to my cabinet and work; I am very busy.”

“I see,” said Ludovica; “your majesty’s dress still bears the traces of your occupation.”

The emperor hastened to brush away with his hands the small particles of the peach-stone that had remained on his shirt-bosom and his sleeve; but while he was doing this his brow darkened still more, and he cast a gloomy and defiant glance on the empress.

“Look, empress,” he said; “perhaps you belong to the secret police, and have been employed to watch me in order to find out what I am doing when I am alone in my cabinet. Why, if I found out that that was so, I should be obliged to be on my guard and have this door walled up, so that my esteemed consort might no longer be able to surprise and watch me.”

“Your majesty will assuredly not do that,” said Ludovica, whose voice was tremulous, and whose cheeks had turned even paler than before. “No, your majesty will not make me undergo the humiliation of making known to the world the deplorable secret with which we alone have hitherto been acquainted. Your majesty will not deprive me of the only

privilege which I enjoy in common with your former consorts, and thereby proclaim to the world that I am in this palace a stranger who has not even access to the rooms of her husband."

"I do not say that I intend to do it," said Francis, shrugging his shoulders; "I say only that it is highly repugnant to me to have my steps dogged and watched in any manner. It is true, my former consort had also the keys of this private corridor, but—pardon me for this remark, your majesty—the empress never used these keys, but always waited for me to open the door."

"And she did not wait in vain," said the empress, quickly; "your majesty never failed to come, for you loved your consort, and I have been told you never suffered even a few hours to pass by without leaving your cabinet and crossing the secret corridor to repair to the rooms of the empress."

"But the good Empress Theresa," exclaimed the emperor, "when I was with her, never endeavored to talk to me about politics and state affairs."

"I understand that," said Ludovica; "you had both so many mutual interests to converse about. You had your mutual love, your children, to talk about. I, who am so unhappy as not to be able to talk with you about such matters, how intensely so ever my heart longs for it, must content myself with conversing with my husband on different subjects; and I desire to share at least his cares when I cannot share his love. My husband, I beseech you, do not disdain my friendship; accept a friend's hand, which I offer to you honestly and devotedly."

"My God, that is precisely what I long for!" exclaimed the emperor fervently, again pressing to his lips the hand which the empress held out to him. "My fondest wish is fulfilled when your majesty will give me your friendship, and confide in me as your best, most devoted, and faithful friend!"

"But this confidence must be reciprocated, my dearest friend," said Ludovica, putting her hand on the emperor's shoulder, and gazing long and ardently into his eyes. "Your majesty must confide in me too, and count implicitly on my fidelity."

"That is what I do," said Francis, hastily; "never should

I dare to doubt the fidelity of the purest, chastest, and most virtuous empress and lady—the fidelity of my wife."

"I did not refer to the wife's fidelity," said Ludovica, sighing, "but to the fidelity of my friendship, which is joyously ready to share all your cares and afflictions."

"Well, then," said the emperor, nodding to her smilingly, "I will give you a proof of my faith in your friendship. Yes, you shall share my cares and afflictions."

"Oh, my husband, how happy you make me by these words!" exclaimed Ludovica, and a faint blush beautified her noble face.

"I will let you participate in my work to-day, and you shall give me your advice," said the emperor, nodding to the empress, and stepping to the writing-table, from whose drawer he took the little cup. "Look, my dear friend," added the emperor, handing the cup to his consort, "I wished to make a little cup from this peach-stone and give it to Maria Louisa, who delights in such things; but when I had nearly finished it, I discovered suddenly that the peach-stone was crooked and not equally round on both sides. Now give me your advice, my fair friend; tell me what I am to do in order to straighten the cup. Look at it, and tell me how to fix it. It would be an everlasting disgrace for an emperor to be unable to straighten a thing which he himself made crooked."

The empress had turned pale again; her dark eyes shot fire for a moment, and she compressed her lips as if to stifle a cry of indignation. But she overcame her agitation quickly, and hastily took the little cup which the emperor still held out to her.

"Your majesty is right," she said; the "cup is really crooked, and will not stand erect when you put it on the table. As your majesty has asked me what ought to be done about it, I advise you to get rid of the thing, declare war against the little cup, and remove it forever by touching it in this manner with your little finger."

She upset the miniature cup with her slender little finger, so that it rolled to the other end of the table.

"That is very energetic advice, indeed," said Francis, smil-

ing, "but I do not like it. To upset a thing that is not well done is no way of improving it."

"Yes, your majesty, to destroy what is not well done is paving the way for something better," exclaimed Ludovica. "You yourself said just now it would be an everlasting disgrace for an emperor to be unable to straighten anything which he himself made crooked. It seems to me, now, an emperor should extricate himself from any position imposing on him the necessity of doing anything crooked and unworthy of his imperial dignity. If such is his duty in regard to a thing so insignificant as a peach-stone, how much more urgent is this duty, when there is at stake something so great and sacred as the independence and honor of your empire and policy!"

"See, see!" said the emperor, scratching his head with an expression of ludicrous surprise; "then we have really got back from the peach-stone to political affairs and the war-question. Now, this war-question is a hard peach-stone to crack, and the mere thought of it sets my teeth on edge."

"Ah," said Ludovica, "your teeth are firm and strong, for they are composed of three hundred thousand swords, and thousands of cannon and muskets. If the lion is determined to use his teeth, he will easily succeed in destroying the were-wolf; for this rapacious and bloodthirsty were-wolf is brave and invincible only when he has to deal with lambs; only the feeble and disarmed have reason to fear him."

"In speaking of a were-wolf, I suppose you refer to the Emperor Napoleon?" asked the emperor, smiling. "I must tell you, however, that, in your warlike enthusiasm, you do him injustice. It seems to me he is brave not alone when he has to deal with lambs, and not alone the feeble and disarmed have reason to fear him. I think I did not march lambs against him at Austerlitz, but brave men, who were not feeble and disarmed, but strong and well-armed. Nevertheless, Bonaparte overpowered them; he gained the battle of Austerlitz over us, and we had to submit to him, and accept the terms of peace which he imposed on us."

"Yes, your majesty had to submit to him," cried the em-

press, ardently; "you were obliged to repair to the proud usurper's camp and beseech him to grant you peace!"

"I was not obliged to go to him, but I did so in order to restore peace to my people, and prevent all Austria from sinking into ruin. It is true, it was a dreadful walk for me, and when I saw the Emperor of the French at his camp-fire, he became utterly distasteful to me.\* Nevertheless, the truth cannot be gainsaid, and the truth is that the Emperor Napoleon is more than a were-wolf killing only lambs; he is a lion whose furious roar causes all thrones to tremble, and who, when he shakes his mane, shakes all Europe to its foundations."

"The more is it incumbent on us then to put an end to this unnatural state of affairs," exclaimed the empress, vehemently; "to strengthen the thrones, and restore at length tranquillity to Europe. And there is only one way of doing this, my lord and emperor, and that is war! We must destroy the lion in order to restore tranquillity to the peaceable nations."

"But what if, instead of destroying the lion, we should be destroyed by him?" asked the emperor, with a shrug. "What if the lion should a second time place his foot on our neck, trample us in the dust, and dictate to us again a disgraceful and humiliating peace? Do you think that the present position of the King of Prussia is a pleasant and honorable one, and that I am anxious to incur a similar fate? No, madame! I am by no means eager to wear a martyr's crown instead of my imperial crown, and I will rather strive to keep my crown on my head, regardless of the clamor of the German war-party. These German shriekers are nice fellows. They refuse to do any thing, but think it is enough for them to cry, 'War! war!' and that that will be sufficient to conquer Bonaparte. But, empress, a great deal more is required for that purpose than the fanatical war-clamor of the aristocratic saloons, and the scribblings of the journalists and patriotic poets; in order to attain so grand an object, it is indispensable that all Germany should rise, take up arms, and attack the enemy with united forces."

\* The emperor's own words.—See "Lebensbilder aus dem Befreiungskriege," vol. i.

"It is as your majesty says," exclaimed Ludovica, enthusiastically ; "all Germany is ready for the struggle against the enemy. The nation is only waiting for Austria to give the signal, draw the sword, and advance upon France, when all Germany will follow her."

"I know these fine phrases," said Francis, shrugging his shoulders ; "I hear them every day from my brothers, who are eager for war, and who manage to gain a great deal of popularity in so comfortable a manner. But after all, they are phrases with very little sense in them. For just tell me, empress, where is the Germany which, you say, is only waiting for Austria to give the signal ? Where are the German armies which, you say, are only waiting for Austria to advance, when they will follow her ? I have good sound eyes, but I cannot see such armies anywhere. I am quite familiar with the geography of Germany, I know all the states that belong to it, but among them I vainly look for those which are waiting for us to give such a signal. Prussia is utterly powerless, and cannot do any thing. The princes of the Rhenish Confederacy, it is true, are waiting for the signal, but Bonaparte will give it to them, and when they march, they will march against Austria and strive to fight us bravely in order to obtain from the French Emperor praise, honors, titles, and grants of additional territories. No, no, I cannot be blinded by brave words and bombastic phrases ; I know that Austria, in case a war should break out, would stand all alone, and that she must either conquer or be ruined. In 1805, when, in consequence of the disastrous battle of Austerlitz, I lost half my states, I was not alone, Russia was my ally. But Russia has recently declared that, in case a war should break out, she would not assist us against Napoleon, but observe a strict neutrality as long as possible ; if she should, however, be obliged to take a decided stand, she would be on the side of France and against us. Consequently, I am entirely isolated, and Napoleon has numerous allies."

"But your majesty has a powerful ally in the universal enthusiasm of the Austrians and Germans, in the universal indignation of the nations against Napoleon. You have public opinion on your side, and that is the most powerful ally."

"Ah, let me alone with that abominable ally," cried the emperor, vehemently ; "I do not want to hear of it nor to have anything to do with it. Public opinion is the hobby which my brother, the popular Archduke John, is riding all the time ; but it will throw him one day into the mire, and then he will find out what it really amounts to. Pray, never speak to me again of public opinion, for I detest it. It smells of revolution and insurrection, and, like a patient donkey, suffers itself to be led by whosoever offers it a thistle as a bait. I renounce once for all the alliance of public opinion, and I do not care whether it blesses or crucifies me, whether it calls me emperor or blockhead. You see now, empress, that I am entirely isolated, for the ally which you offer to me will do me no good ; I do not want it, and I have no other allies. I thought it necessary to arm, in view of the formidable armaments of France, and show our adversary that I am not afraid of him, but am prepared for every thing. I therefore put my army on the war footing, and showed Bonaparte that Austria is able to cope with him, and that money and well-disciplined armies are not wanting to her. But just now I shall not proceed any further, and, unless something important should occur, all this war-clamor and all importunities will make no impression on me. The important event to which I alluded would be Napoleon's defeat in Spain, whereby he would be compelled to keep his armies there. In that event, I should no longer be isolated, but Spain would be my ally, and I should probably declare war. But if matters should turn out otherwise, if fortune should favor Napoleon there as everywhere else, necessity alone will determine my course. I shall not attack, and thereby challenge fate of my own accord ; but I shall wait, sword in hand, for Napoleon to attack me. If he does, God and my good right will be on my side, and whatever may be the result of the struggle, people will be unable to say that I rashly plunged into war and broke the peace. If we succumb, it is the will of God and the Holy Virgin, and not, our fault. And now, empress," said the emperor, drawing a deep breath, "I have complied with your wishes and talked politics with you. I think it will be enough once for all, and you and you political friends will perceive that you cannot do any

thing with me, and that it will be best for you to let me entirely alone; for I am so stubborn as not to allow others to lead me, but pursue my own course. You have promised me, empress, to be a faithful friend to me. I ask you now to give me a proof of your friendship. Let us speak of something else than politics; that is all that I ask of your friendship."

"Well, then, let us drop the subject," said the empress, with a deep sigh. "Your majesty will be kind enough to permit me now to ask a favor of you?"

"Ah, you speak as if there were anything that I could refuse you," exclaimed the emperor, smiling.

Ludovica bowed slightly. "I pray you, therefore," she said, "to be kind enough to accompany me to the concert which is to be given at the university hall. Haydn's 'Creation' will be performed there, and I believe the old *maestro* himself will be present to receive the homage of his admirers."

"H'm, h'm! I am afraid there is something else behind it," said the emperor, thoughtfully, "and the audience will not content itself with merely offering homage to old Haydn. But no matter, your majesty wishes to go to the concert, and it will afford me pleasure to accompany my empress."

At this moment they heard a low rap at the door leading from the emperor's cabinet into the conference-room, where the officers of the private imperial chancery were working.

"Well, what is it?" exclaimed the emperor. "Come in!"

The emperor's private chamberlain slipped softly through the half-opened door, and, on beholding the empress, he stood still without uttering a word.

"Never mind, the empress will excuse you," said Francis. "Just tell me what you have come in for."

"Your majesty," said the chamberlain, "the French ambassador, Count Andréossi, has just arrived, and requests your majesty to grant him an audience. He says he wishes to communicate information of great importance to you."

"Why did he not apply to my minister of foreign affairs?" asked the emperor, indignantly.

"Your majesty, the ambassador begs your pardon, but he

says the Emperor Napoleon gave him express orders to endeavor if possible to speak with your majesty."

"And he is already in the anteroom, and waits for an immediate audience?"

"Yes, your majesty."

"Well, then, I will receive him," said the emperor, rising. "Conduct the ambassador to the small audience-room.—Well?" asked the emperor, wonderingly, when the chamberlain did not withdraw. "You do not go? Do you wish to tell me anything else?"

"I do, your majesty. A courier has just arrived from Paris with pressing dispatches from Count Metternich to your majesty."

"Ah, that changes the matter!" exclaimed the emperor. "Tell the ambassador that I can not receive him now, but that he is to come back in an hour, at eleven precisely, when I shall be ready to receive him. Tell the courier to come to me at once."

The chamberlain slipped noiselessly out of the door, and the emperor turned again to the empress.

"Empress," he said, "do me the honor of permitting me to offer you my arm, and conduct you back to your rooms. You see I am a poor, tormented man, who is so overwhelmed with business that he cannot even chat an hour with his wife without being disturbed. Pity me a little, and prove it to me by permitting me henceforth to rest in your presence from the cares of business, and not talk politics."

"The wish of my lord and emperor shall be fulfilled," said the empress, mournfully, taking the arm which the emperor offered to her to conduct her back to her rooms.

Just as she crossed the threshold of the imperial cabinet, and stepped into the corridor, she heard the voice of the chamberlain, who announced: "The courier from Paris, Counsellor von Hudelist."

"All right, I shall be back directly!" exclaimed the emperor, and he conducted the empress with a somewhat accelerated step through the corridor. In front of the door at its end he stood still and bowed to the empress with a pleasant smile.

"I have conducted you now to the frontier of your realm," said Francis; "permit me, therefore, to return to mine. Farewell! We shall go to the concert to-night. Farewell!"

Without waiting for the reply of the empress, he turned and hastily re-entered his cabinet.

Ludovica entered her room and locked the door behind her. "Closed forever!" she said, with a sigh. "At least I shall not try again to avail myself of this door, and shall not expose myself again to the sneers of the emperor. I must, then, bear this disgrace; I must submit to being disdained and repudiated by my husband; I—But hush!" the empress interrupted herself, "this is no time for bewailing my personal fate, for the fate of all Austria is at stake at this juncture. Highly important events must have occurred at Paris, else Metternich would not have sent his confidant and assistant Hudelist, nor would Andréossi demand an audience in so impetuous a manner. Perhaps this intelligence may at length lead to a decision to-day, or we may at least contribute to such a result. I will write to the Archduke John, and ask him to see the emperor. Perhaps he will succeed better than I did in persuading my husband to take a determined stand."

She hastened to her writing-desk, and penned that mysterious little note which she sent to the Archduke John in the book which she pretended he had lent to her.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE COURIER AND THE AMBASSADOR.

THE emperor, in returning to his cabinet, like the empress, carefully locked the door behind him. He then turned hastily to the courier, who was standing near the opposite door, and was just bowing most ceremoniously to his majesty.

"Hudelist, it is really you, then?" asked the emperor. "You left your post by the side of Metternich without obtain-

ing my permission to come to Vienna? Could you not find any other man to bring your dispatches? I had commissioned you to remain always by the side of Metternich, watch him carefully, and inform me of what he was doing and thinking."

"Your majesty, I have brought my report with me," said Hudelist; "and as for your majesty's order that I should always remain by the side of Count Metternich, I have hardly violated it by coming to Vienna, for I believe the Count will follow me in the course of a few days. Unless your majesty recalls him to Vienna, the Emperor Napoleon, I think, will expel him from Paris."

"You do not say so!" exclaimed Francis, shrugging his shoulders. "You think he will issue a manifesto against Metternich, as he did against the Prussian minister Von Stein? Well, let me hear the news. What have you to tell me?"

"So many important things, your majesty, that the count and myself deemed it expedient to report to your majesty verbally, rather than send a dispatch which might give you only an unsatisfactory idea of what has occurred. Hence I came post-haste to Vienna, and arrived here only a quarter of an hour since; I pray your majesty therefore to pardon me for appearing before you in my travelling-dress."

"Sit down, you must be tired," said the emperor, good-naturedly, seating himself in an arm-chair, and pointing to the opposite chair. "Now tell me all!"

"Your majesty," said Hudelist, mysteriously, while a strange expression of mischievous joy overspread his ugly, pale face, "the Emperor Napoleon has returned from Spain to France."

The Emperor Francis gave a start and frowned. "Why?" he asked.

"Because he intends to declare war against Austria," said Hudelist, whose face brightened more and more. "Because Napoleon is distrustful of us, and convinced that Austria is intent on attacking him. Besides, he felt no longer at ease in Spain, and all sorts of conspiracies had been entered into in