

CHAPTER XXI.

FRANCE AND AUSTRIA.

BONAPARTE had scarcely reached his room and just closed the door, when the opposite door opened, and the entering footman announced, "His excellency Count Louis Cobenzl."

Bonaparte waved his hand and went to meet the count in the anteroom, where he welcomed him with the utmost kindness and courtesy.

The two gentlemen thereupon reëntered the room hand in hand, a pleasant smile playing on their lips, while both were assuring each other of their kind intentions, but at the same time secretly entertaining the ardent desire and purpose to divine their mutual thoughts, but to conceal their own schemes. The general, with great politeness, offered the seat of honor on the sofa to the count, and sat down in an arm-chair in front of him. A small round table with writing-materials and paper stood between them, forming as it were the frontier between Austria and France.

"So the ardent desires of Austria are fulfilled now," said Count Cobenzl, with a sweet smile. "France will no longer oppose us; she will be our friend and ally."

"France will welcome this new friend and ally of hers," exclaimed Bonaparte, feelingly, "provided Austria's intentions are loyal. Ah, my dear count, no protestations now! In politics words prove nothing, deeds every thing. Let Austria, then, prove by her deeds that she really desires to keep up a good understanding with France, and that she has given up forever her hostile attitude toward the republic."

"But has not Austria given proof of her intentions toward France already?" asked the count, in surprise. "Has not his majesty the emperor declared his willingness to resume diplomatic relations with France, and thereby formally and before the whole world to recognize the French Republic?"

"Sir," exclaimed Bonaparte, "the French Republic does not humbly solicit to be recognized. She compels hostile states to recognize her, for, like the sun, she sheds her light over the whole globe, and she would pierce the eyes of such as would feign not to see her, rendering them blind for all time to come!* Austria beheld this radiant sun of the republic at Lodi, at Rivoli, Arcole, and Mantua; whence, then, would she derive courage enough to refuse

* Bonaparte's own words.—Vide Constant, vol. i., p. 284.

recognizing France? But instead of words, prove to us by your actions that your friendship is honest and sincere."

"We are ready to do so," said Count Cobenzl, politely. "Austria is ready to give a public and brilliant proof of her devotion to the great general whose glory is now filling the whole world with astonishment and admiration. His majesty the emperor, in the letter which I had the honor of delivering to you some time ago, told you already in eloquent words how greatly he admired the conqueror of Italy, and how gladly his majesty, if it were in his power, would grant you such favors as would be agreeable to you. But at that time you rejected all such offers, general, and nothing could induce you to accept of what we wished to present to you. It seemed not to have value enough to—"

"Rather say, count, it was all too valuable not to be looked upon as a bribe," exclaimed Bonaparte. "I was negotiating with you, sword in hand, and it would not have been becoming of me to lay the sword aside in order to fill my hands with your presents."

"But now, general, now that we have laid the sword aside, that we have made peace, that we have exchanged the ratifications of the treaty—now that you tender your hand to Austria in friendship and peace, you might permit his majesty the Emperor of Austria to deposit something in your friendly hand, that might prove to you how sincerely my august master the emperor is devoted to you."

"And what does the emperor desire to deposit in my hand?" asked Bonaparte, with a quiet smile.

Count Cobenzl hesitated a little before making a reply. "General," he then said, "when I see you thus before me in your marble beauty, I am involuntarily reminded of the heroes of Rome and Greece, who have immortalized the glory of their countries, but whom the admiration of posterity had to compensate for the ingratitude of their contemporaries. General, republics never were grateful to their great men, and only too often have they stigmatized their most glorious deeds; for the republics deprecated the greatness of their heroes, because he who distinguished himself, thereby annulled the equality and fraternity of all the citizens. Pericles was banished from Athens, and Julius Cæsar was assassinated! General, will modern republics be more grateful than those of antiquity? For my part, I dare say, it is rather doubtful, and the French being descendants of the Romans, I am afraid they will not prove any more grateful than the latter. The emperor, my august master, shares my fears, and as he loves and venerates you, he would like to exalt you so high as to prevent the hands of the political factions from reaching up to you. His majesty therefore proposes to create a principality for you in Germany, and to make you the

sovereign ruler of two hundred thousand people, appointing you at the same time a prince of the German empire, and giving you a seat and vote at the imperial diet.* General, do you accept my emperor's offer?"

"To become the emperor's vassal?" asked Bonaparte, with an imperceptible smile. "A small prince of the German empire who on solemn occasions might be deemed worthy to present the wash-basin to the emperor, or to be his train-bearer, while every king and elector would outrank me. No, my dear count, I do not accept the offer. I sincerely thank the emperor for the interest he takes in my welfare, but I must accept no gifts or favors not coming directly from the French nation, and I shall always be satisfied with the income bestowed upon me by the latter.†"

"You reject the emperor's offer?" asked Cobenzl, mournfully—"you disdain wearing a crown?"

"If the crown should crush the few laurels with which my victories have adorned me, yes; in that case I should prefer to decline the crown in favor of my laurels. And, my dear count, if I had been so anxious for a crown, I might have picked up one of those crowns that fell down at my feet in Italy. But I preferred to crush them under my heels, just as St. George crushed the dragon; and the gold of the crushed crowns, as it behooved a good and dutiful son, I laid down on the altar of the great French Republic. So you see I am not longing for crowns. If I might follow my own inclinations, I should return to the silence and obscurity of my former life, and I should lay my sword aside in order to live only as a peaceable citizen."

"Oh, general, if you should do so," exclaimed Cobenzl, "there would soon be men to pick up your sword in order to fight with it against the Republic and to recall the Bourbons to the throne of the lilies."

A rapid flash from Bonaparte's eyes struck the count's face and met his sharp, searching glance.

"Count Cobenzl," he said, quietly and coldly, "the lilies of France have dropped from their stems, and, being drowned in the blood of the guillotine, they could not be made to bloom again. He would be a poor, short-sighted gardener who would try to draw flowers from seeds dead and devoid of germs. And believe me, we are no such poor, short-sighted gardeners in France. You alluded just now to the ingratitude of republics, and you apprehended lest I might likewise suffer thereby. Let me assure you, however, that even my country's ingratitude would be dearer to me than the grati-

* Historical.—Vide "Mémoires d'un Homme d'État," vol. v., p. 67.

† Bonaparte's own reply.—Vide "Mémoires d'un Homme d'État," vol. v., p. 67.

tude of a foreign power, and that the crown of thorns, which France may press upon my head, would seem to me more honorable than the coronet with which an enemy of France might adorn my brow. And now, count, a truce to such trifling matters! Let us speak about business affairs. We have signed the ratifications of peace, which are to be laid before the congress; it only remains for us to sign the *secret* articles which shall be known by none but France and Austria. The main point is the evacuation of Mentz by your troops, so that our army may occupy the fortress."

"I am afraid, general, this very point will be a stumbling-block for the members of the congress. They will raise a terrible hue and cry as soon as they learn that we have surrendered Mentz."

"Let these gentlemen say what they please," said Bonaparte, contemptuously; "we have called them hither that they may talk, and while they are talking, we shall act!"

"They will say that Austria has sacrificed the welfare and greatness of Germany to her own private interests," exclaimed Count Cobenzl, anxiously.

"Fools are they who care for what people will say!" replied Bonaparte, shrugging his shoulders. "A prudent man will pursue his path directly toward his aim, and the hum of babblers never disturbs him. Hear, then, my last words: in case the Austrian troops do not leave Mentz within one week, and surrender the fortress to the French forces, the French army will remain in Venice, and I would sooner send the latter city to the bottom of the sea than to let Austria have a single stone of hers. Mentz must be ours, or I tear the treaty, and hostilities will recommence!"

And Bonaparte, with a furious gesture, seized the papers lying on the table and was about to tear them, when Count Cobenzl suddenly jumped up and grasped his hands.

"General," he said, imploringly, "what are you going to do?"

"What am I going to do?" exclaimed Bonaparte, in a thundering voice, "I am going to tear a treaty of peace, which you merely wanted to sign with words, but not with deeds! Oh, that was the nice little trick of your diplomacy, then! With your prince's coronet you wanted to dazzle my eyes—with the two hundred thousand subjects you offered me just now, you wanted me to corrupt my soul, and induce me to barter away the honor and greatness of France for the miserable people of a petty German prince! No, sir. I shall not sell my honor at so low a price. I stand here in the name of the French Republic and ask you, the representative of Austria, to fulfil what we have agreed upon at Campo Formio. Mentz must be ours even before our troops leave Venice. If you refuse that, it is a plain infringement of the treaty, and hostilities will be resumed.

Now, sir, come to a decision. I am only a soldier, and but a poor diplomatist, for with my sword and with my word I always directly strike at my aim. In short, then, count, will you withdraw your troops from Mentz and from the other fortresses on the Rhine, and surrender Mentz to our army? Yes, or no?"

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Count Cobenzl, with a sigh, "we will fulfil your wishes—we will withdraw our troops from Mentz and surrender the fortress to the French."

"When will the surrender take place? As speedily as possible, if you please."

"On the ninth of December, general."

"Very well, on the ninth of December. The matter is settled, then."

"But let there be no solemn ceremonies at the surrender," said the count, imploringly. "Let our troops withdraw quietly—let your forces occupy the place in the same manner, so that when the delegates of the German empire, assembled in congress in this city, and to whom the Emperor of Germany has solemnly guaranteed the entire integrity and inviolability of the empire, hear the news of the transaction, the latter may be already an accomplished fact, to which every one must submit."

"Be it so, if that be Austria's desire," said Bonaparte, smiling. "And now we will consider the other secret articles. The Austrian troops retire from the German empire up to the line of the Inn and Lech, occupying hereafter only Austrian territory."

"Yes, general; in return for all these concessions on our part, the French troops will evacuate on the thirtieth of December the fortresses and territory of Venice, which has been ceded to Austria by the treaty of Campo Formio, and retire behind the line of demarcation."

"Granted! At the same time the troops of the republic seize the *tête-de-pont* at Mannheim either by intimidating the isolated garrison, or by making a sudden dash at the position,* and during the continuation of the negotiations here at Rastadt, the French forces leave the left bank of the Rhine and occupy the right bank from Basle to Mentz."

"Granted," sighed Count Cobenzl. "Austria yields the frontier of the Rhine to France—that is, by the simultaneous retreat of her own forces she surrenders to the republic the most important points

* "Mémoires d'un Homme d'État." The French took the *tête-de-pont* at Mannheim by assault, on the 25th of January, 1798, the garrison refusing to evacuate it. Mentz surrendered without firing a gun, and during the night of the 28th of December, 1797, the French entered this great fortress, which was thereupon annexed to the French Republic.

of the German empire, including Ehrenbreitstein. The congress of the states of the German empire will deliberate, therefore, under the direct influence produced by the immediate neighborhood of a French army."

"In case the delegates of Germany do not like the looks of the French soldiers, they may turn their eyes to the other side, where the Austrian army is encamped on the Danube and on the Lech," exclaimed Bonaparte. "Thus the delegates will be surrounded by two armies. This fact may interfere a little with the freedom of speech during the session of congress, but it will be advantageous, too, inasmuch as it will induce the delegates to accelerate their labors somewhat, and to finish their task sooner than they would have done under different circumstances."

"It is true, right in the face of these two armies at least the small German princes will not dare to oppose the German emperor in ceding the entire left bank of the Rhine to France. But it is only just and equitable for us to indemnify them for their losses. In one of our secret articles, therefore, we should acknowledge the obligation of promising compensations to the princes and electors—"

"Yes, let us promise compensations to them," said Bonaparte, with a tinge of sarcasm. "As to the possessions of Prussia on the left bank of the Rhine, France declares her readiness to give them back to the King of Prussia."

"But both powers agree not to allow the King of Prussia to acquire any new territory," exclaimed Count Cobenzl, hastily.

"Yes, that was our agreement at Campo Formio," said Bonaparte. "Austria's increase of territory, besides Venice, will consist of Salzburg and a piece of Upper Bavaria. In case she should make further conquests in the adjoining states, France may claim a further aggrandizement on the right bank of the Rhine."*

"Yes, that was the last secret article of the preliminaries of Campo Formio," said Cobenzl, sighing.

"Then we have remained entirely faithful to our agreement," said Bonaparte. "We have not made any alterations whatever in the programme which we agreed upon and deposed in writing at the castle of Campo Formio. It only remains for us to-day to sign these secret articles."

He took the pen and hastily signed the two documents spread out on the table.

Count Cobenzl signed them also; but his hand was trembling a little while he was writing, and his face was clouded and gloomy. Perhaps he could not help feeling that Austria just now was signing the misery and disgrace of Germany in order to purchase thereby

* Schlosser's "History of the Eighteenth Century," vol. v., p. 43.

some provinces, and that Austria enlarged her territory at the expense of the empire whose emperor was her own ruler—Francis II.

Their business being finished, the two plenipotentiaries rose, and Count Cobenzl withdrew. Bonaparte accompanied him again to the door of the anteroom, and then returned to his cabinet.

A proud, triumphant smile was now playing on his pale, narrow lips, and his eyes were beaming and flashing in an almost sinister manner. Stepping back to the table, he fixed his eyes upon the document with the two signatures.

"The left bank of the Rhine is ours!" he said, heavily laying his hand upon the paper. "But the right bank?"

He shook his head, and folding his arms upon his back, he commenced pacing the room, absorbed in profound reflections. His features had now resumed their marble tranquillity; it was again the apparition of Julius Cæsar that was walking up and down there with inaudible steps, and the old thoughts of Julius Cæsar, those thoughts for which he had to suffer death, seemed to revive again in Bonaparte's mind, for at one time he whispered, "A crown for me! A crown in Germany. It would be too small for me! If my hand is to grasp a crown, it must—"

He paused and gazed fixedly at the wall as if he saw the future there, that arose before him in a strange phantasmagoria.

After a long pause, he started and seemed to awake from a dream.

"I believe I will read the letter once more, which I received yesterday by mail," he murmured, in an almost inaudible tone. "It is a wonderful letter, and I really would like to know who wrote it."

He drew a folded paper from his bosom and opened it. Stepping into a bay window, he perused the letter with slow, deliberate glances. The bright daylight illuminated his profile and rendered its antique beauty even more conspicuous. Profound silence surrounded him, and nothing was heard but his soft and slow respiration and the rustling of the paper.

When he had finished it, he commenced perusing it again, but this time he seemed to be anxious to hear what he was reading. He read it, however, in a very low and subdued voice, and amidst the silence surrounding him the words that fell from the lips of the resurrected Cæsar sounded like the weird whispers of spirits.

"You have to choose now between so great an alternative," he read, "that however bold your character may be, you must be uncertain as to the determination you have to come to, if you are to choose between respect and hatred, between glory or disgrace, between exalted power or an abject insignificance, that would lead

you to the scaffold, and, finally, between the immortality of a great man, or that of a punished partisan."

"Ah!" exclaimed Bonaparte, and his voice was now loud and firm. "Ah! I shall never hesitate between such alternatives. I should bear disgrace, abject insignificance, and an utter lack of power? And my hand should not be withered—it should be able yet to grasp a sword and pierce my breast with it?"

He lowered his eyes again and continued reading: "You have to choose between three parts: the first is to return quietly to France and to live there as a plain and unassuming citizen; the second, to return to France at the head of an army and there to become the leader of a party; the third, to establish a great empire in Italy and proclaim yourself king of the peninsula. I advise you to do so, and to grasp the Italian crown with a firm hand." *

"He is a fool," said Bonaparte, "who believes a man might make himself king of Italy and maintain himself on the throne, unless he previously has seized the sovereign power in France.† But no one must hear these thoughts! I will go to Josephine!"

He hastily folded the paper and concealed it again in his bosom. Then stepping to the looking-glass, he closely scanned his face in order to see whether or not it might betray his thoughts; and when he had found it to be as pale and impassive as ever, he turned round and left the room.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BANNER OF GLORY.

FOUR days had elapsed since Bonaparte's arrival at Rastadt, and the congress had profited by them in order to give the most brilliant festivals to the French general and his beautiful wife. All those ambassadors, counts, barons, bishops, and diplomatists seemed to have assembled at Rastadt for the sole purpose of giving banquets, tea-parties, and balls; no one thought of attending to business, and all more serious ideas seemed to have been utterly banished, while every one spoke of the gorgeous decorations of the ball-rooms and of the magnificence of the state dinners, where the most enthusiastic toasts were drunk in honor of the victorious French general; and the people seemed most anxious entirely to forget poor, suffering, and patient Germany.

* Sabatier de Castres, living at that time in exile at Hamburg, had written this anonymous letter to Bonaparte.

† "Mémoires d'un Homme d'État," vol. v., p. 69.

Josephine participated in these festivities with her innate cheerfulness and vivacity. She was the queen of every party; every one was doing homage to her; every one was bent upon flattering her in order to catch an affable word, a pleasant glance from her; and, encouraged by her unvaried kindness, to solicit her intercession with her husband, in whose hands alone the destinies of the German princes and their states now seemed to lie.

But while Josephine's radiant smiles were delighting every one—while she was promising to all to intercede for them with her husband, Bonaparte's countenance remained grave and moody, and it was only in a surly mood that he attended the festivals that were given in his honor. His threatening glances had frequently already been fixed upon his wife, and those moody apprehensions, ever alive in his jealous breast, had whispered to him: "Josephine has deceived you again! In order to silence your reproaches, she invented a beautiful story, in which there is not a word of truth, for the letter that was to call you back to Paris does not arrive, and the Directory keeps you here at Rastadt."

And while he was indulging in such reflections, his features assumed a sinister expression, and his lips muttered: "Woe to Josephine, if she should have deceived me!"

Thus the fourth day had arrived, and the Bavarian ambassador was to give a brilliant *soirée*. Bonaparte had promised to be present, but he had said to Josephine, in a threatening manner, that he would attend only if the expected courier from Paris did arrive in the course of the day, so that he might profit by the Bavarian ambassador's party to take leave of all those "fawning and slavish representatives of the German empire."

But no courier had made his appearance during the whole morning. Bonaparte had retired to his closet and was pacing the room like an angry lion in his cage. All at once, however, the door was hastily opened, and Josephine entered with a radiant face, holding in her uplifted right hand a large sealed letter.

"Bonaparte!" she shouted, in a jubilant voice, "can you guess what I have got here?"

He ran toward her and wanted to seize the letter. But Josephine would not let him have it, and concealed it behind her back. "Stop, my dear sir," she said. "First you must beg my pardon for the evil thoughts I have read on your forehead during the last few days. Oh, my excellent general, you are a poor sinner, and I really do not know if I am at liberty to grant you absolution and to open the gates of paradise to you."

"But what have I done, Josephine?" he asked. "Was I not as patient as a lamb? Did I not allow myself to be led like a dancing-

bear from festival to festival? Did I not look on with the patience of an angel while every one was making love to you, and while you were lavishing smiles and encouraging, kind glances in all directions?"

"What have you done, Bonaparte?" she retorted gravely. "You inwardly calumniated your Josephine. You accused her in your heart, and day and night the following words were written on your forehead in flaming characters: 'Josephine has deceived me.' Do you pretend to deny it, sir?"

"No," said Bonaparte, "I will not deny any thing, dear, lovely expounder of my heart! I confess my sins, and implore your forgiveness. But now, Josephine, be kind enough not to let me wait any longer. Let me have the letter!"

"Hush, sir! this letter is not directed to you, but to myself," replied Josephine, smiling.

Bonaparte angrily stamped his foot. "Not to me!" he exclaimed, furiously. "Then is it not from the Directory—it does not call me back from Rastadt?"

"Hush, Bonaparte!" said Josephine, smiling, "must you always effervesce like the stormy sea that roared around your cradle, you big child? Be quiet now, and let me read the letter to you. Will you let me do so?"

"Yes, I will," said Bonaparte, hastily. "Read, I implore you, read!"

Josephine made a profound, ceremonious obeisance, and withdrawing her hand with the letter from her back, she unfolded several sheets of paper.

"Here is first a letter from my friend Botot," she said, "just listen:—'*Citoyenne Générale*: The Directory wished to send off today a courier with the enclosed dispatches to General Bonaparte. I induced the gentlemen, however, to intrust that dispatch to myself, and to permit me to send it to you instead of the general. It is to yourself chiefly that the general is indebted for the contents of this dispatch from the Directory. It is but just, therefore, *citoyenne*, that you should have the pleasure of handing it to him. Do so, *citoyenne*, and at the same time beg your husband not to forget your and his friend.—BOTOT.' That is *my* letter Bonaparte, and here, my friend, is the enclosure for yourself. You see, I am devoid of the common weakness of woman, I am not inquisitive, for the seal is not violated, as you may see yourself."

And with a charming smile she handed the letter to Bonaparte. But he did not take it.

"Break the seal, my Josephine," he said, profoundly moved. "I want to learn the contents of the letter from your lips. If it should

bring me evil tidings, they will sound less harshly when announced by you; is it joyful news, however, your voice will accompany it with the most beautiful music."

Josephine nodded to him with a tender and grateful glance, and hastily broke the seal.

"Now pray, quick! quick!" said Bonaparte, trembling with impatience.

Josephine read:

"The executive Directory presumes, citizen general, that you have arrived at Rastadt. It is impatient to see and to weigh with you the most important interests of the country. Hence it desires you to bring the exchanged ratifications personally to Paris, and to inform us what dispositions you have taken in regard to the occupation of Mentz by our troops, in order that this event may take place without further delay. It may be, however, that you have forwarded this intelligence to us already by means of a courier or an aide-de-camp; in that case it will be kept secret until your arrival. The journey you are now going to make to Paris will first fulfil the sincere desire of the Directory to manifest to you publicly its most unbounded satisfaction with your conduct and to be the first interpreter of the nation's gratitude toward you. Besides, it is necessary for you to be fully informed of the government's views and intentions, and to consider in connection with it the ultimate consequences of the great operations which you will be invited to undertake; so we expect you immediately, citizen general. The executive Directory also desires you to indicate to the returning courier, who is to deliver this dispatch to you, the precise day of your arrival at Paris. In the name of the Directory:

"BARRAS."

"We shall set out at once!" exclaimed Bonaparte, radiant with joy.

"In order to arrive together with the courier?" asked Josephine, laughing, "and to lose all the triumphs which the grateful country is preparing for you? No, my impatient friend, you will patiently remain to-day by the side of your Josephine and we shall start only to-morrow. Do you promise it?"

"Well, be it so!" he exclaimed, glowing with excitement, "we will set out to-morrow for Paris. My task in Italy is accomplished; if it please God, there will be new work for me at Paris."

"Your enemies will soon find means to drive you away from the capital, if you should be incautious, and if they should fear lest your presence might become dangerous to themselves. Nothing is more dangerous to small, insignificant souls than a great man. Remember that, my friend, and do not irritate them."

Bonaparte eagerly grasped her hand. "Believe me," he said, in a low voice, "as soon as I have reached Paris, I shall know what line of policy I must pursue hereafter. Two years shall not elapse ere the whole ridiculous republican edifice will be overthrown."*

"And then," exclaimed Josephine, joyfully, "when you have accomplished that—when you stand as a victorious general on the ruins of the republic—you will reestablish the throne over them, I hope?"

"Yes, I will reestablish the throne,"† said Bonaparte, enthusiastically.

"And your arm will place upon this throne him to whom this throne is due. Oh, my generous and noble friend, what a heavenly day it will be when the King of France by your side makes his solemn entry into Paris, for you will recall the legitimate king, Louis XVIII., from his exile."

Bonaparte stared at her in amazement. "Do you really believe that?" he asked, with a peculiar smile.

"I have no doubt of it," she said, innocently. "Bonaparte can do whatever he wishes to do. He has overthrown thrones in Italy, he can reestablish the throne in France. I repeat, Bonaparte can do whatever he wishes to do."

"And do you know, then, you little fool, do you know what I really wish to do?" he asked. "I wish to be the great regulator of the destinies of Europe, or the first citizen of the globe. I feel that I have the strength to overthrow every thing and to found a new world. The astonished universe shall bow to me and be compelled to submit to my laws. Then I shall make the villains tremble, who wished to keep me away from my country.‡ I have made the beginning already, and this miserable government has to call me back to Paris notwithstanding its own secret hostility. Soon it shall be nothing but a tool in my hands, and when I do not need this tool any longer, I shall destroy it. This government of lawyers has oppressed France long enough. It is high time for us to drive it away."§

"Hush, Bonaparte, for God's sake, hush!" said Josephine, anxiously. "Let no one here suspect your plans, for we are surrounded in this house by austere and rabid republicans, who, if they had heard your words, would arraign you as a criminal before the Directory. Intrust your plans to no one except myself, Bonaparte. Before the world remain as yet a most enthusiastic republican, and

* "Mémoires d'un Homme d'État," vol. v., p. 60.

† Bonaparte's own words.—"Mémoires d'un Homme d'État," vol. v., p. 70.

‡ Le Normand, vol. i., p. 247.

§ "Mémoires d'un Homme d'État," vol. v., p. 70.

only when the decisive hour has come, throw off your tunic and exhibit your royal uniform!"

Bonaparte smiled, and encircled her neck with his arms.

"Yes, you are right," he said; "we must be taciturn. We must bury our most secret thoughts in the deepest recesses of our souls, and intrust them to no one, not even to the beloved. But come, Josephine, I owe you my thanks yet for the joyful tidings you have brought me. You must permit me to make you a few little presents in return."

"Give me your confidence, and I am abundantly rewarded," said Josephine, tenderly.

"Henceforth I shall never, never distrust you," he replied, affectionately. "We belong to each other, and no power of earth or heaven is able to separate us. You are mine and I am thine; and what is mine being thine, you must permit me to give you a trinket sent to me to-day by the city of Milan."

"A trinket?" exclaimed Josephine, with radiant eyes; "let me see it. Is it a beautiful one?"

Bonaparte smiled. "Yes, beautiful in the eyes of those to whom glory seems more precious than diamonds and pearls," he said, stepping to the table from which he took a small morocco casket. "See," he said, opening it, "it is a gold medal which the city of Milan has caused to be struck in my honor, and on which it confers upon me the title of 'The Italian.'"

"Give it to me," exclaimed Josephine, joyfully—"give it to me, my 'Italian!' Let me wear this precious trinket which public favor has bestowed upon you."

"Public favor," he said, musingly—"public favor, it is light as zephyr, as fickle as the seasons, it passes away like the latter, and when the north wind moves it, it will disappear."*

He was silent, but proceeded after a short pause in a less excited manner.

"As to my deeds," he said, "the pen of history will trace them for our grandchildren. Either I shall have lived for a century, or I shall earn for all my great exploits nothing but silence and oblivion. Who is able to calculate the whims and predilections of history?"†

He paused again, and became absorbed in his reflections.

Josephine did not venture to arouse him from his musing. She fixed her eyes upon the large gold medal, and tried to decipher the inscription.

Bonaparte suddenly raised his head again, and turned his gloomy eyes toward Josephine. "I suppose you know," he said, "that I

*Le Normand, vol. i., p. 261.

†Ibid., vol. i., p. 262.

have always greatly distinguished the Duke of Litalba among all Milanese, and that I have openly courted his friendship?"

"You have always manifested the greatest kindness for him," said Josephine, "and he is gratefully devoted to you for what you have done for him."

"Gratefully!" exclaimed Bonaparte, sarcastically. "There is no gratitude on earth, and the Duke of Litalba is as ungrateful as the rest of mankind. I called him my friend. Do you know how he has paid me for it, and what he has said of me behind my back?"

"Oh, then, they have told you libels and made you angry again by repeating to you the gossip of idle tongues?"

"They shall tell me every thing—I want to know every thing!" retorted Bonaparte, violently. "I must know my friends and my enemies. And I believed Litalba to be my friend, I believed him when he told me, with tears in his eyes, how much he was afflicted by my departure, and how devotedly he loved me. I believed him, and on the same day he said at a public casino, 'Now at last our city will get rid of this meteor that is able all alone to set fire to the whole of Europe, and to spread the sparks of its revolutionary fire to the most remote corners of the world.'* He dared to call me a meteor, a shining nothing which after lighting up the sky for a short while explodes and dissolves itself into vapor. I shall prove to him and to the whole world that I am more than that, and if I kindle a fire in Europe, it shall be large enough to burn every enemy of mine."

"Your glory is the fire that will consume your enemies," said Josephine, eagerly. "You will not reply to their calumnies—your deeds will speak for themselves. Do not heed the voice of slander, my Italian, listen only to the voice of your glory. It will march before you to France like a herald, it will fill all hearts with enthusiasm, and all hearts will hail your arrival with rapturous applause—you, the victorious chieftain, the conqueror of Italy!"

"I will show you the herald I am going to send to-day to France, to be presented there in my name by General Joubert to the Directory," replied Bonaparte. "It is a herald whose mute language will be even more eloquent than all the hymns of victory with which they may receive me. Wait here for a moment. I shall be back directly."

He waved his hand to her and hastily left the room. Josephine's eyes followed him with an expression of tender admiration. "What a bold mind, what a fiery heart!" she said, in a low voice. "Who will stem the bold flight of this mind, who will extinguish the flames of this heart? Who—"

*Ibid., vol. i., p. 262.

The door opened, and Bonaparte returned, followed by several footmen carrying a rolled-up banner. When they had reached the middle of the room, he took it from them and told them to withdraw. As soon as the door had closed behind them, he rapidly unrolled the banner so that it floated majestically over his head.

"Ah, that is the proud victor of the bridge of Arcole!" exclaimed Josephine, enthusiastically. "Thus you must have looked when you headed the column, rushing into the hail of balls and bullets, and bearing the colors aloft in your right hand! Oh, Bonaparte, how glorious you look under your glorious banner!"

"Do not look at me, but look at the banner," he said. "Future generations may some day take it for a monument from the fabulous times of antiquity, and yet this monument contains nothing but the truth. The Directory shall hang up this banner in its hall, and if it should try to deny or belittle my deeds, I shall point at the banner which will tell every one what has been accomplished in Italy by the French army and its general."

Josephine looked in silent admiration at the splendid banner. It was made of the heaviest white satin, trimmed with a broad border of blue and white. Large eagles, embroidered in gold, and decorated with precious stones, filled the corners on both sides; warlike emblems, executed by the most skilful painters, filled the inside of the colored border, and inscriptions in large gold letters covered the centre.

"Read these inscriptions, Josephine," said Bonaparte imperiously, pointing at them with his uplifted arm. "It is a simple and short history of our campaign in Italy. Read aloud, Josephine; let me hear from your lips the triumphal hymn of my army!"

Josephine seized the gold cord hanging down from the banner and thus kept it straight. Bonaparte, proudly leaning against the gilt flag-staff, which he grasped with both hands, listened smiling and with flashing eyes to Josephine, who read as follows:

"One hundred and fifty thousand prisoners; one hundred and seventy stands of colors; five hundred and fifty siege-guns; six hundred field-pieces; five pontoon parks; nine line-of-battle ships, of sixty-four guns; twelve frigates of thirty-two guns; twelve corvettes; eighteen galleys; armistice with the King of Sardinia; treaty with Genoa; armistice with the Duke of Parma; armistice with the King of Naples; armistice with the Pope; preliminaries of Leoben; treaty of Montebello with the Republic of Genoa; treaty of peace with the emperor at Campo Formio.

"Liberty restored to the people of Bologna, Ferrara, Modena, Massacarrara, of the Romagna, of Lombardy, Brescia, Bergamo, Mantua, Cremona, Chiavenna, Bormio, and the Valtellino; further,

to the people of Genoa, to the vassals of the emperor, to the people of the department of Corcyra, of the Ægean Sea and Ithaca.

"Sent to Paris all the masterpieces of Michel Angelo, Guercino, Titian, Paul Veronese, Correggio, Albarro, the two Carracci, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci."*

"Ah, my friend," exclaimed Josephine, enthusiastically, "that is a leaf from history which the storms of centuries will never blow away!"

Bonaparte slowly lowered the banner until it almost covered the floor and then he muttered gloomily: "Men are like leaves in the wind; the wind blows the leaves to the ground, † and—but no," he interrupted himself, "I shall write my name on every rock and every mountain in Europe, and fasten it there with iron-clasps in such a manner that no winds shall blow it away! Oh, footmen! come in, roll up the banner again, and put it back into the case!"

The footmen hastened to obey, and took the banner away. Bonaparte turned again to his wife with a smile.

"I promised you a few presents," he said. "As yet I have given you only the medals. The best gift I have kept back. Marmont sent me the statue of the Holy Virgin which he removed from Loretto."

"Then you have not fulfilled my urgent prayers!" said Josephine, reproachfully. "Even the property of the Church and of the Holy Father at Rome have not been safe from the hands of the conquerors!"

"That is the law of war," said Bonaparte. "Woe to the places which war touches on its bloody path! But you may reassure yourself, Josephine. I have only taken from the Holy Father these superfluous things which he may easily spare. I only took his plate, his jewelry, and diamonds, thus reducing him to the simplicity of the apostles; and I am sure the good old man will thank me for it. I have, moreover, only striven to promote the welfare of his soul by doing so, and the Roman martyrologist some day will add his name to the list of saints. ‡ The jewels and the gold I sent to Paris, together with the statue of the Madonna of Loretto, but I retained a few relics for you, Josephine. See here the most precious one of them all!"

He handed her a small paper, carefully folded up. Josephine

* This wonderful banner was hung up in the hall of the Directory while the members of the latter were occupying the Luxemburg. It afterward accompanied the three consuls to the Tuileries, and was preserved there in the large reception-room. It is now in the "Dome des Invalides" in the chapel containing the emperor's sarcophagus.

† Homer.

‡ Le Normand, vol. i., p. 243.

hastily opened it and asked, in surprise—"A piece of black woollen cloth! And that is a relic?"

"And a most precious one at that! It is Loretto's most priceless treasure. It is a piece of the gown of the Virgin Mary, in which she was mourning for the Saviour.* Preserve this relic carefully, dear Josephine, and may it protect you from danger and grief!"

Josephine folded up the piece of cloth, and opening a large locket hanging on her neck on a heavy gold chain, she laid the cloth into it, and then closed the locket again.

"That shall be the sanctuary of my relic," she said. "I shall keep it till I die."

"Why do you speak of dying?" he exclaimed, almost indignantly. "What have we to do with grim-death? We, to whom life has to fulfil and offer so much! We shall return to Paris, and, if it please God, a great future is awaiting us there!"

"If it please God, a happy future!" said Josephine, fervently. "Oh, Bonaparte, how gladly I shall reënter our dear little house in the *Rue Chantecaine*, where we passed the first happy days of our love!"

"No, Josephine," he exclaimed, impetuously, "that little house will not be a fitting abode for the conqueror of Italy. I am no longer the poor general who had nothing but his sword. I return rich in glory, and not poor as far as money is concerned. I might have easily appropriated the spoils amounting to many millions; but I disdained the money of spoliation and bribery, and what little money I have got now, was acquired in an honest and chivalrous manner.† It is sufficient, however, to secure a brilliant existence to us. I shall not be satisfied until I live with you in a house corresponding with the splendor of my name. I need a palace, and shall have it decorated with all the stands of colors I have taken in Italy. To you alone, Josephine, to you I intrust the care of designating to me a palace worthy of being offered to me by the nation I have immortalized, and worthy also of a wife whose beauty and grace could only beautify it.‡ Come, Josephine—come to Paris! Let us select such a palace!"

* *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 245.

† Bonaparte at St. Helena said to Las Casas that he had brought only three hundred thousand francs from Italy. Bourrienne asserts, however, Bonaparte had brought home no less than three million francs. He adds, however, that this sum was not the fruit of peculation and corruption, Bonaparte having been an incorruptible administrator. But he had discovered the mines of Yorda, and he had an interest in the meat contracts for the army. He wanted to be independent, and knew better than any one else that he could not be independent without money. He said to Bourrienne in regard to it, "I am n. Capuchin!"—*Mémoires de Bourrienne*, vol. ii., p. 47.

‡ *Le Normand*, vol. i., p. 265.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MINISTER THUGUT.

THE prime minister, Baron Thugut, was in his study. It was yet early in the morning, and the minister had just entered his room in order to begin his political task. On the large green table at which Thugut had just sat down, there lay the dispatches and letters delivered by the couriers who had arrived during the night and early in the morning. There were, besides, unfolded documents and decrees, waiting for the minister's signature, in order to become valid laws. But the minister took no notice whatever of these papers, but first seized the newspapers and other periodicals, which he commenced reading with great eagerness. While he was perusing them, his stern features assumed a still harsher mien, and a gloomy cloud settled on his brow. Suddenly he uttered a wild oath and violently hurling the paper, in which he had been reading, to the floor, he jumped up from his chair.

"Such impudence is altogether intolerable!" he shouted, angrily. "It is high time for me to teach these newspaper scribblers another lesson, and they shall have it! I—"

Just then, the door of the anteroom opened, and a footman entered. He informed his master that the police minister, Count Saurau, wished to see him.

Baron Thugut ordered him to be admitted at once, and went to meet him as soon as he heard him come in.

"You anticipate my wishes, my dear count," he said. "I was just going to send for you."

"Your excellency knows that I am always ready to obey your calls," replied Count Saurau, politely. "I acknowledge your superiority and submit to you as though you were my lord and master; notwithstanding our position in society and in the state service, which is almost an equal one, I willingly permit you to treat me as your disciple and inferior."

"And I believe that is the wisest course you can pursue, my dear little count," said Thugut, laughing sarcastically. "It has been good for you to do so, I should think, and so it has been for the whole Austrianship of state, that has been intrusted to my guidance. Yes, sir, the son of the ship-builder Thunichtgut has shown to you and your fellow-members of the ancient aristocracy that talents and ability are no exclusive privileges of your class, and that a common ship-builder's son may become prime minister, and that a low-born Thunichtgut may be transformed into a Baron von Thugut. The