

been martyrs to our liberal opinions; the whole world would have admired and pitied us, and the king would not have refused us a pension."

"Certainly," whispered Mr. Krause, "he would have granted us a pension, and the whipping would have made us famous. It has never been forgotten of the English poet, Payne, that King Charles the First had his ears cut off, because he wrote against him. He is not celebrated for his writings, but for his chopped ears. We, too, might have become famous if this Gotzkowsky had not, in the most uncalled-for manner, interfered, and—but look!" cried he, interrupting himself, "the interview with the Council is finished, and it is now our turn to thank him."

The two editors hastened toward him in order, in well-arranged speech, and with assurances of eternal gratitude, to offer their thanks.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A ROYAL LETTER.

MR. KRAUSE had not yet finished the declamation of the poem which his inspiration had produced in honor of Gotzkowsky, when a loud noise was heard at the door of the hall, and Gotzkowsky's body-servant rushed in. A messenger of the Council was without, he announced; a letter had just arrived from the king, and, as he was to deliver it to the burgomaster in person, the messenger had brought him here. He handed Herr von Kircheisen a letter, and the latter broke the seal with majestic composure.

A pause of anxious expectation ensued. Each one inquired of himself with trembling heart what could be the meaning of this royal letter.

The countenance of the chief magistrate grew more and more cheerful, and suddenly he called aloud: "This is indeed a message of gladness for our poor town. The king, our gracious lord, releases us from our obligation to pay the promised war-tax of a million and a half. He wishes to retaliate for the Wurzburg and Bamberg bonds captured from the Aulic Council. For which reason his majesty's order is that we do not pay."

A single cry of joy sounded from the lips of all present. Gotzkowsky alone was silent, with downcast eyes, and his earnest, pensive expression contrasted strongly with the bright, joyous countenances which were illuminated by the order of the king to keep their money.

Among the happiest and most radiant, however, were the rich mint farmers Ephraim and Itzig, and the chief burgomaster.

"The royal decree relieves our town of a horrible burden," said Herr von Kircheisen, with a happy smile.

"The whole mercantile community must be grateful to the king," cried Ephraim. "Berlin saves a million and a half, and the Russian is sold."

Suddenly Gotzkowsky drew himself up erect, and his eagle eye ran over the whole assembly with a bold, beaming glance. "The Russian is not sold," cried he, "for Berlin will pay him the balance of a million and a half. Berlin has pledged her word, and she will redeem it."

The countenances of those around grew dark again, and here and there were heard words of anger and wild resentment.

"How!" cried Itzig, "do you require of the mer-

chants to pay what they can keep for themselves? The king has said, 'You shall not pay!'"

"And I say, we will pay," cried Gotzkowsky. "What is written is written, and what is promised must be performed, for this our honor requires. The king possesses not the power of annulling a promise or revoking an oath! He who does not fulfil his word of honor is not a man of honor, were he even a king."

"But," said Herr von Kircheisen, pathetically, "there are nevertheless circumstances which render impossible the fulfilment of an obligation."

Gotzkowsky answered ardently: "If such do occur, the man of honor dies when he cannot fulfil his word. But you—you do not wish to die. Oh no! You wish to break your word in order to live pleasantly. You wish to profit by your breach of promise. You wish to declare yourselves insolvent and cheat your creditors of their money, and thereby amass wealth."

A general storm of indignation interrupted Gotzkowsky, and the very men who had come for the purpose of making a formal demonstration of their gratitude now approached him with angry gestures and threatening words.

"A million and a half is no child's play," screamed Ephraim. "Money is more precious than honor."

"I say money is honor," cried Itzig. "As long as we keep our millions, we keep our honor."

"You are very generous," sneered Kretschmer. "Like a gentleman, you pay your debts out of other people's pockets, and the citizens will have to pay millions to enable you to keep your word."

Gotzkowsky cast one look of contemptuous pity on him, and replied: "You forget, sir, that I did not act in my own name, but in that of the magistracy and

merchants of Berlin. Not I alone would be faithless to my word, but the whole town of Berlin."

"But I repeat," said the chief burgomaster, "that the king has released us from the obligation of keeping our word."

"No king can do that," interrupted Gotzkowsky. "A man of honor must keep his word, and no one, not even a king, can absolve him from it."

"Let us not quarrel about matters of opinion," said Kircheisen, shrugging his shoulders. "My opinion is, that we do not pay this sum."

"No, we will not pay it!" cried all in tumultuous excitement, as they surrounded the burgomaster, discussing in cheerful conversation the advantages of non-payment.

Gotzkowsky stood listening to them alone, unobserved, and forgotten. His heart was heavy with sadness, and painfully did he reflect: "This is the unholy influence of money, hardening the heart and silencing the voice of honor. For a few millions of dollars do they sell their good name. One final attempt let me make. I will see what their cowardice will do."

Again did he enter their midst, and with convincing words and ardent eloquence portray the danger which would ensue from the non-payment of the bonds.

The Russian was not very far from Berlin: if he had retired in forced marches he could return thither with equal rapidity in order, in the wantonness of his wrath, to take vengeance on the faithless town.

"In an unlucky moment," said he, "the Russians might gain a victory over our king. He would then return and rend us like a tiger. I would then no longer have the power of protecting you, for General Tottleben's anger would be turned principally against me,

who guaranteed the payment of the contribution. God himself does not protect him who breaks his word. He is an outlaw."

A deep silence followed Gotzkowsky's speech. All the faces were again overcast, and in the contracted brow and anxious countenances could be read the fact that his words had painfully convinced them that it was necessary to pay.

Even Herr von Kircheisen in his fear of the return of the Russians, forgot the enormous amount of the sums to be paid, and said, with a melancholy sigh: "Gotzkowsky is, I am afraid, right. It is very hard to pay the money, but it is very dangerous not to do it."

"It might cost us our heads," confirmed the first councilman.

Ephraim stood with his head cast down, and muttered to himself, "Money is very dear, but life is still dearer."

Itzig cried out in despair: "Let us keep our money. Without money the Jew is nobody."

But the chief burgomaster, who had consulted the councilmen, now approached Gotzkowsky, and, with a smile, offered him his hand. "We thank you," said he, "for you have spoken wisely, and your advice shall be followed. We will pay, for we cannot help ourselves. But we must beg you to do us another important service. Go to the king and beg him not to be angry with us if we do not obey his order."

"Yes, do so, do so, Gotzkowsky!" cried all the others. "Go to the king, he is friendly toward you—beg for us."

Gotzkowsky's countenance beamed with generous satisfaction. "Very well," said he; "I will go to the king and beg him to allow the town of Berlin to preserve its honor immaculate, and pay the promised sum."

"Use all your eloquence, that the king may remain favorably inclined toward us, and not become angry with us for acting this once against his orders," admonished the chief burgomaster.

"The king is a high-minded and noble man," said Gotzkowsky, enthusiastically. "He looks upon a man's word as sacred, and will understand us and honor us for not wishing to break ours."

An hour later the chief citizens and merchants of Berlin repaired to the spacious town-hall, where an elegant banquet had been prepared, and merriment prevailed, and glasses sounded; and Berlin, rescued, celebrated the first day of joy and happiness.

But John Gotzkowsky, to whom this feast was given, whom Berlin called her deliverer and benefactor, was not present at this banquet. Deeply buried in furs he had just entered his carriage, and braving danger and toil, in the cold and darkness he drove away toward Meissen, where the king had established his headquarters.