loud, penetrating cry, several times repeated, then hasty steps approaching the hall.

The courtiers murmured and whispered to one another, and their faces grew white.

"What is it?" asked the king, still sitting in the coffin.

No one answered; all exchanged timid glances, but no one dared speak.

"I *will* know what is happening," cried the king, painfully trying to rise.

The major-domo stepped forward. "Your majesty, there are two soldiers without who were keeping watch in the corridor. They both assert that a tall, white figure, with veiled face and black gloves, slowly passed them, coming hither. They, thinking someone was masking, followed the apparition, and saw it enter the salon here. They hastened hither to check it, but your majesty sees that no one is here."

"The white lady, the white lady," murmured the king, terror-stricken, sinking back, weak and broken, into the coffin. "The white lady veiled, with black gloves; that means my approaching end."

"The white lady," whispered the courtiers, shuddering, and involuntarily moving from the door through which the unholy apparition was said to have entered their midst.

The queen alone was silent. She looked with a strange, questioning glance to the grave, marble figures of the Electors, and her mind was far away with her beloved son Frederick.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAID-OF-HONOR AND THE GARDENER.

It was a delicious May day. The elder was in bloom, the birds sang, and the swans rocked softly on the smooth mirror of the water-lily bedecked, flower-garlanded pond in the midst of the crown prince's garden in Rheinsberg. It was early morning. The windows were closed and curtained, and nothing was yet heard of the joyous, unrestrained life that, at other times, delighted the occupants of this charming castle. No other music was to be heard than the nightingale's trills, the jubilant twitter of finches hidden in leafy roofs of lofty trees. The crown prince slumbered still, for his flute was silent, and that was a sure sign for all the inhabitants of the castle that its master was not yet awake, or at least was not yet ready to begin the day. The music of his flute was the morning sacrifice with which the young prince greeted every day, and which, like Memnon's statue that resounded when the first ray touched it, betrayed to the flattering courtiers that their sun, too, had arisen. But now the flute was silent. The sun had not yet arisen, although, here in the park, she cast her golden sheen upon the shrubbery and scented bloom, and had drunk the dew from the flower-chalices.

It had been a hot night, and the dew had refreshed the plants and blossoms but sparingly. Fritz Wendel, the gardener, was at work already, sprinkling the flowers with the great watering-pot, and drenching the dust from the plants. But, while doing so, he selected the finest flowers and plucked them, hiding them carefully under the shrubbery, perhaps to shield them from the sun, or perhaps to keep them safe from the inquisitive eyes of passers-by. And yet there were such eyes there now, watching him, resting upon him with so tender and smiling an expression, that it was easy to see that the maiden to whom the eyes belonged had an especial interest in the handsome young gardener, who seemed to realize the fables of old, in his modest costume and striking beauty. One might have taken him for the god Apollo, who, attracted by some Daphne, and clad in working dress, had come to dwell near the shepherdess of his love. Perhaps this charming young girl thought of that, hidden behind the elder-bushes watching him, or perhaps she thought him a prince, and waited longingly for the moment when he would throw aside his mask, and stand, her equal, at her side. For she was, though not a princess, maid-of-honor to a princess, and of distinguished birth. But what does youth care for genealogy and escutcheons? And what need this thirteen-year-old child ask whether Fritz Wendel be the son of a peasant or a prince? He pleased her, for he was young and handsome, and he had another very great advantage for her. He was her first adorer. All the rest of the world still called Fraülein von Schwerin a child, and played with the little Louise. The crown princess had begged her from her mother as a sort of toy for amusement in lonely hours, and the title "maid-of-honor" that had been given to the child was only a jest that was laughed at, and meant to assure Fraülein von Schwerin certain access to the crown princess at all hours of the day.

But the little Louise was a child in years only. She possessed already heart and mind of a mature woman. In all her feeling, thought, imagination, and desires, she was a passion-

ate, fiery, loving woman. So nothing wounded her pride so much as being called a child, and never was she happier than when her years seemed forgotten in favor of her understanding and mature mind.

Fritz Wendel, the young gardener, had had the good fortune not to know their number. For him "little Fraülein von Schwerin" was a thoroughly grown-up lady. More than that, she was the goddess whom he worshipped; the fairy whose glance sufficed to make his flowers bloom and his heart beat. For her alone he cultivated the flowers, tended the peaches and melons on the sunny walls. For her alone had God created the world, for she was the queen of the world; and it was therefore perfectly natural that poor Wendel, too, should be at her feet and make her the ruler of his whole being.

The little maid had now been watching her silent, romantic, first love long enough to be weary of such unnatural silence; and just as Fritz Wendel plucked a lovely narcissus she stepped from behind the elder-bush, and smilingly wished him good morning. Fritz Wendel started, and a bright blush covered his face. He was so embarrassed that he quite forgot to reply to her greeting, and only bent lower over the flowers.

"For whom are the flowers?" asked Louise, now standing close to him. "And why hast thou hidden away the best, so as not to add them to the bouquet which the princess must have every morning?"

"No one commanded me always to pick the loveliest flowers for the princess," said Fritz Wendel, who still did not dare to look at the little maid. "The prince merely commanded me to put fresh flowers in the vases every morning; that is all."

"That seems to me not to be all," cried Louise; "for thou hast picked other flowers besides these. For whom are they, if not for the princess?"

Fritz Wendel now ventured to lift his eyes, and slyly look at the little girl standing smiling at him.

"They, too, are for a princess," he said, softly, "my princess!"

"Ah! Thou, too, hast an especial princess for whom thou choosest flowers?"

"Yes; I have my princess whom I serve, who commands me, for whom I am ready to give my life, to become a robber, a murderer, a highwayman, if she wills it so, and but gives me a sign to do it," cried the youth, with all the energy of his passionate nature.

Louise played carelessly with a tuft of elder that she held

in her hand. She plucked single blossoms off it and tossed them in the air, and blew them, standing upon tip-toe and springing about, sending the blossoms up again whenever they fluttered downward.

"I should like to know," she said, laughing, "whence it comes that I find such a splendid bouquet every morning in my room, and who is so bold as to pick a bouquet that contains lovelier flowers than the princess' vases."

"Certainly it is someone who worships the gracious Fraülein," said the young gardener, with downcast eyes, blushing at his own boldness.

"It must be some distinguished gentleman—one of the crown prince's courtiers, perhaps," exclaimed Fraülein von Schwerin, with a teasing side-glance at her embarrassed adorer. "Who else could venture to love me, and send me flowers?"

"Yes, you are right, who could venture?" murmured Fritz Wendel, sadly. "But, Fraülein, have you never heard of madmen who lose the consciousness of what they are, and compare themselves with emperors, kings, even God himself? Perhaps he who brings you flowers is such a madman, and, just because he is mad, holds himself for your equal."

"Heavens! how pale thou art," said Louise, looking at the youth with undisguised tenderness. "And why art thou crying, Fritz?"

She took his hand and looked at him steadily, with a strange, half-inquisitive, half-provoking expression in her eyes.

Fritz Wendel started, with shuddering delight, at her touch, and snatched his hand away almost rudely. "Because I am a wretched gardener," he muttered; "because I am not rich and noble and brilliant, like your courtiers."

"Yesterday at table Baron Kaiserling was telling of an Austrian general who had been a poor peasant's son and a cow-herd," said Louise, suggestively. "Now he is a general, and has married a countess."

Fritz Wendel's face glowed with energy and courage. "Heavens! why is there no war?" he exclaimed, full of enthusiasm. "I, too, should become a general, for I should fight like a lion."

"Ah! you, too, wish to become a general, and marry a countess?"

"Not a countess, but——"

"Fritz Wendel! Fritz Wendel!" they heard a voice calling in the distance.

"It is the head gardener," said the poor lad sorrowfully.

"Farewell, Fraulein. Be gracious and merciful, and go to walk in the garden again to-morrow."

He took his flower-basket, and hastened down the long alley.

Fraulein von Schwerin looked angrily after him.

"Again no declaration," she murmured, indignantly, stamping the ground like a defeated child. "But he *shall* make me a declaration of his love. Madame Morien told me that there is no sensation more divine than that of the first declaration. And she says it is wisest not to choose one's lover of one's own rank, because then one is certain of not being deserted by him. She told me yesterday that no one had adored her so faithfully as the huntsman's lad that served her father when she was my age; and that no other man had so truly loved and admired her. Well, Fritz Wendell adores me, and I wish him to declare himself, and I must finally know whether it really is such a superb sensation. To-morrow he shall do it. To-morrow I shall be so friendly and so tender that he cannot help telling me his love. But now, to the castle, so as not to be found here."

And the little maid sprang away as lightly as a gazelle.

CHAPTER VIII.

DIPLOMATIST MANTEUFFEL.

The garden was empty once more. Only the birds sang and fluttered about, the morning breeze played through the tree-tops, everything else was still. But not long. Soon the sound of approaching steps was heard, and a new figure approached the entrance to the *allée*.

It was a lady, who though not so young and beautiful a one as Fraülein von Schwerin, was still attractive enough to make an impression upon susceptible masculine hearts. She wore a remarkably tasteful and becoming morning costume, calculated to set off her noble contour and proud, imposing figure, whose chaste outline ill suited her glowing, challenging eyes, and the alluring, seductive smile that played upon her lips.

She, too, had surely not come to enjoy the beauty and freshness of the morning air and the splendor of the flowers. Her eye wandered listlessly about, not heeding the elder-bushes

and jasmine. Now, at the end of the long *allée*, she stood a moment, searching in all directions. When she saw that no one was near her she glided to one side, into the thick boscage, and, finally, walking through a narrow, overgrown path, reached the boundary wall of the garden. Before a door in this wall she paused, listening with bated breath. Finding all still, she knocked three times with her hand, then listened further. The same threefold knock was then heard at the other side of the door. The lady smiled contentedly, and called, with a loud, silvery voice, "Good morning, in the name of God!"

"And the Devil!" answered a deep, manly voice, at the other side of the gate.

"It is he," whispered the lady, quickly drawing a key from her dress and opening the door.

The man who had stood without instantly stepped within, and, bowing low before the lady, reverently kissed her proffered hand.

"Good morning, Count Manteuffel," said the lady, smiling. "You are indeed as punctual as though you had come to a rendezvous with a sweetheart."

"Tempi passatti," sighed the count, "I am married."

"I, too," laughed the lady; "but that does not prevent ——"

"Your still finding ardent admirers," interrupted the count. "But you are still young and beautiful, while I have grown old. Tell me, gracious one, how you have managed to preserve this youthful freshness and these glancing eyes, that held me so fast in their net when I still had a heart."

The lady bestowed upon him a sharp, scornful look. "Count Manteuffel," said she, "you must want something important of me that you are so adoring. But come. Let us first go to the little pavilion here, in the neighborhood. There are comfortable seats there, and we are secure from eavesdroppers."

They went silently from the wall to the pavilion.

"Here we are safe," said the lady, throwing back the lace veil which she had worn lightly upon her hair. "Come, let us sit on this divan, and first tell me why you asked for this appointment to-day, and why you did not, as usual, send your body-servant to bring my letters to you?"

"I had an unconquerable longing to see you, to look once more into your lovely face," sighed the count.

"Yet you say you have no heart in these days," laughed the lady.

"You are the enchantress who reawakens it. Thanks to you, it is at this moment glowing in my bosom."

"It is easy to see that you are treading a path there in which you do not feel at home. You are insipid when you begin to play the lover; yet in other respects you are confessedly one of the keenest and wariest of diplomatists. But with me, I beg of you, no diplomatic subterfuges! What do you want of me? I reported to you in my last letter most exactly the state of things here as well as the state of my finances, which is precisely that of the crown prince's. That is to say, his coffers are precisely as empty as my own."

"And you both have an empress who is so happy as to be able to fill them both," said Manteuffel, drawing from his bosom a purse through whose silver meshes gold pieces glinted. He handed the purse, with a smile, to the lady. "Unfortunate that they are different empresses who are so happy as to be able to assist the crown prince and Madame Brandt."

"What do you mean by that, count? We no longer understand each other, and I beg of you not to speak in riddles. I fear the effort, for my brain."

"I mean that the crown prince no longer turns to the Empress of Austria in his embarrassment. Yet she, as his nearest relative, as the crown princess' own aunt, possesses a natural right to the confidence of the crown prince."

"But perhaps his burden of debt is heavier than the purse of the Empress of Austria," said Madame Brandt.

"He should have made the experiment, have put the purse of the Empress of Austria to the test, as he often did in earlier days, when not the crown prince alone, but the Margravine of Baireuth, learned to measure the liberality of their imperial aunt. But the crown prince has a fickle heart, and forgets past favors easily."

"Yes, that he does," sighed Madame Brandt. "We poor women have to suffer from that. He has loved and forgotten us all."

"All?" asked Manteuffel, eagerly.

"All, count! We are nothing more to him than the toy of a leisure hour. Then he grows weary of us, and casts us aside. There is but one lady whom he truly and unshakenly loves."

"And the name of that lady?"

"His flute, count. Ah! what a face you make! Certainly this lady cannot be bribed by Austrian gold nor the flatteries of the ingenuous Manteuffel; she is always secretive, and trustworthy. She does not betray the beloved one. Ah! count, we might both learn of the flute. Yes, believe me, I should try to resemble her if I did not need so many things which a flute does not need at all, and if the Austrian gold pieces did not shine so temptingly. But you, Count Manteuffel, why should not you resemble the flute? Why have you your spies and eavesdroppers everywhere? Why are you Austrian spy at the Prussian court—you who have enough money, rank, and honor to resist these ordinary temptations?"

Manteuffel's brow clouded over a little, and he pressed his lips together resentfully. But he soon mastered these symptoms of impatience, and was again the friendly, affable, attentive diplomatist.

"I serve the Austrian throne from inclination," he said, "from preference and loyalty. I serve it because it is my profoundest conviction that Austria is destined to form a united Germany, making all Germany Austria. Prussia must be absorbed by Austria. This is my political conviction, and I live according to it."

"And for this political conviction you accept Austrian gold and Austrian decorations," said Madame Brandt, with a laugh. "For the sake of this political conviction you have your spies everywhere, at court, at Potsdam, Dresden, as well as at our little court of Rheinsberg here. Not enough to have won the crown prince's cook, to have him keep a diary for you, you have succeeded in drawing my small and humble person into your interest, and I know best that that costs you a considerable sum of money. And now you wish to make me believe that that is all for the sake of your political conviction. Oh, no! dearest count! I, too, am a diplomatist in a small way, and I, too, have my convictions. One of them is that Count Manteuffel, that harmless Quinze Vingt, has but one real passion in the world—to play a political rôle, and earn as much money incidentally as he can. And whether it be of Austrian or Prussian origin is wholly indifferent to Manteuffel."

"And to what purpose this amiable jest?" asked Manteuffel, with a forced laugh.

"To the end, dear count, that we play no useless comedy, but act uprightly, and take off both our masks whenever, as now, we are alone. I serve you because you give me money for it; you serve Austria because she gives you gold. I should cease to serve you if you did not, as to-day, bring me a full purse in critical moments; and your enthusiasm for Austria's supremacy would cool off if, some unlucky day, Austria's springs should dry up for you. Now, dear count, I think we understand one another; and now tell me, without

evasion, what do you want of me, what have you to say to me?"

"Much that is of importance."

"I knew it," smiled the lady. "Your flatteries betrayed you. Now to business. Let us begin."

"First, then, dearest baroness, you must know that the crown prince will be king in a few days."

"By no means, count; the crown prince received a messenger yesterday evening who informed him of the king's improved condition. The crown prince was visibly rejoiced, and commanded that the feast determined upon for to-day in honor of Madame Morien's birthday should take place."

"Does she still possess the crown prince's love?"

Madame Brandt shrugged her shoulders.

"Love! I said before that the crown prince loves his flute alone."

"Not even the crown princess?"

"Not even the crown princess! And perhaps he might not love the crown princess, even if she could transform herself into the flute. She is not cut of good wood and yields no harmonious tone, he would say to Quantz, and with that he would shut her up in her case forever."

"And do you believe that he will treat the princess so, though she is not the flute? Do you think he will throw her aside?"

"The crown princess fears that."

"And the empress also."

"But why did they give such a musical prince a wife who not only understands nothing of music, but has a thoroughly rough, hoarse voice, and speaks so indistinctly that the prince would not understand her, even if she said clever things."

"You think, then, that the crown prince, as soon as he is free, that is, becomes king, will separate from his wife?" asked Manteuffel, ponderingly.

"No one can know, count. The crown prince never speaks, with his closest friends, of his wife. And even in the most devoted moment, Madame Morien has tried in vain to learn anything from him about it. He is very prudent and distrustful."

"Madame Morien must be won," murmured Manteuffel.

"That is a very difficult task," said Madame Brandt, "for she is unfortunately very rich, and attaches slight importance to money. There is but one means. Get her a lover, handsomer, more ardent, than the crown prince, and she may be won. For you know very well that the good Morien has a very susceptible heart."

"I beg of you, baroness, let us speak seriously. These are things of great importance which we are discussing, and our time is limited. Madame Morien must be won. She alone now has influence over the prince's heart; she must use that influence to keep him from separating from his wife. You, dearest baroness, must use your bewitching eloquence to make Madame Morien understand that the only atonement possible, the only means of reconciliation with Heaven, is her leading back the unfaithful husband to the arms of his wife."

"She cannot lead him back where he never has been."

"But she can prevent his dishonoring the crown princess and the court by a separation. The crown princess must remain his wife, even after he has become king. That is the only bond which can reunite him with Austria. For Austria has many dangerous enemies in the crown prince's company, and the most dangerous of them all is Suhm."

"He, at least, does not belong to the crown prince's company, for you know very well that he is in St. Petersburg as Saxony's ambassador."

"That is just the misfortune. The crown prince trusts him unreservedly. They write one another in cipher, which all our efforts have thus far failed to interpret. Suhm has obtained the crown prince a loan of ten thousand thalers from the Duke of Courland, and now has a yearly allowance for him, until his coronation, of twenty-four thousand thalers from the Empress Anna. The prince has just received the first annual payment."

"That is an idle tale," laughed Madame Brandt. "The crown prince is poor as Job, and has been regularly besieged by his creditors for some time past. No day passes without some vampire's coming either by letter or in person to torture him."

"And it must be Russia that brings him help in this embarrassment!" exclaimed Manteuffel, despairingly. "But we must make every effort to counteract this most dangerous enemy and win Prussia for Austria. Germany needs quiet, and Prussia must not be upon bad terms with Austria. Prussia in arms against Austria would mean the balance of power in all Europe lost, and a war that would perhaps bathe Germany for years in blood and tears. Austria will do all that lies in her power to avoid this. We two, my noble friend, will be Austria's allies, will help her as far as we may. Russia has given Prussia money, it is true. But such obligations

are at an end the moment that money is given back. When the crown prince ascends the throne he will pay his debts to Russia, and all will be over. We must therefore seek another bond which may unite Prussia with Austria more lastingly. You must help me weave this. The crown prince must not be permitted to separate from his wife. Then will the future Queen of Prussia be the niece of the Empress of Austria, and that lays upon the king duties of relationship. But to increase these, to make the relationship closer, we must bring about another marriage in the Austrian interest. Prince Augustus William, the probable successor of the present crown prince, must, like him, marry a princess of Brunswick."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Frau Brandt.

"Impossible? why impossible?"

"Because Prince Augustus William will never agree to this plan; because he bears a passionate love in his heart, a love which would move even you if you had a soul capable of pity."

"By heavens! we are discussing affairs of state, and you mix love up with them," exclaimed Manteuffel, with a disdainful smile. "What have politics to do with love? Let the prince love whom he pleases, provided he marries the Princess of Brunswick."

"But this is a great, true, profound love. A love over which we have no power, for there it is not the Devil who has his hand in the play. It is as pure as Heaven, and wishes for the blessing of Heaven. That you must give up, count. Prince Augustus William will not marry this princess. His heart belongs to Laura von Pannewitz, and he is far too noble, too high-hearted, to bestow his hand without his heart."

Manteuffel laughed aloud. "A royal prince who loves a little maid-of-honor, and would marry her! How romantic, how transcendental! What delicious stuff to make a novel of. Ah! my dear baroness, I congratulate you! This invention does credit to your fancy, and I see the time approaching when you will be famed as a novelist."

"Scoff as you please, count. I repeat it, none the less. Prince Augustus William will not marry the Princess of Brunswick, for he loves the queen's beautiful maid-of-honor, and is determined to marry her."

"This determination will be broken," smiled Manteuffel; "the crown prince himself will help us, believe me. He is no love-blind enthusiast, and will never consent to his brother's entering upon a *mésalliance*."

"And the prince, I tell you, will die rather than abandon his beautiful Laura."

"Well, if he will not abandon her, he must," said Manteuffel, with cruel quiet.

"Poor Laura," sighed Madame Brandt; "she loves him so warmly, her heart will break if she must give him up."

"Ah! bah! every woman's heart is broken once, if not several times, but it always heals. And when it is illuminated afresh by the sun of a new love, the old scars vanish. You yourself have experienced that, dearest baroness. Do but remember the day of our burning, passionate love. Did we not both think we should perish when we were forced to part? Did we not wring our hands to heaven, and pray for death as the most welcome release? And are we not alive today, to smile pityingly at the pains of those days, and remember how many times between we have greeted coming fortune and built triumphal arches in our hearts for entering love?"

"True," sighed Madame Brandt, "we survive pain, and the heart of woman much resembles the earthworm, that lives and writhes on, even when it has been cut in pieces."

Manteuffel laughed. "Now," he continued, "the heart of the beautiful Laura von Pannewitz is but an earthworm, too, and we must not hesitate to tear it to pieces, for it will go on merrily living. You, my friend, shall be the knife to perform the operation. Do you agree to it?"

Madame Brandt was silent, looking sadly in front of her, as if lost in thought. "It is true," she whispered; "we survive it, but the best that is in us dies. I should never have been what I am if I had not been brutally torn from the dream of my first love. We shall kill Laura von Pannewitz; not her body, but her soul."

"And as we are happily not shepherds of men's souls, we need not disquiet ourselves upon that point. Political activity must not inquire about it, and state-craft demands that Prince Augustus William marry the Princess of Brunswick. Further considerations of state require that the crown prince do not separate from his wife, but that, on the contrary, the niece of the Empress of Austria ascend the Prussian throne. To both achievements you must help us. You must watch over the prince and his beloved, and await the suitable moment to bring it to an *éclat*. You must induce Madame Morien to influence the crown prince not to divorce his wife. Such is your task, a noble one; to guard the peace of one marriage, lead two noble hearts back to their duties to the world, and bind with a new bond two mighty houses of Germany. The wife of Emperor Charles VI., the noble empress,

will not be thankless to her ally, Madame Brandt. On the day on which Prince Augustus William marries Princess Amalie of Brunswick, Madame Brandt will receive from the empress a gift of twenty thousand thalers, to buy a set of diamonds."

Madame Brandt's face glowed with pleasure and desire.

"The prince shall and will marry the Princess Amalie," she said; "I vouch for that. From to-day I shall be the evil demon who will poison this sensitive, romantic love of Laura with a poisoned breath, and worry it to death. Heavens! why should I pity her? She does but suffer the fate of all women—my own fate. Who pitied me? Who saved me? No one heard my cry for help, and no one shall hear the plaint of the beautiful Laura von Pannewitz. She is condemned, count. But listen! Do you hear that light, brooding tone that floats toward us? The crown prince is awake; he has opened his windows, and is playing the flute. We must part, for the garden will be full of life at once. We have a sail on the lake this morning, and then, here in the pavilion, Chazot will read us aloud Voltaire's latest play."

CHAPTER IX.

CROWN PRINCE FREDERICK.

Madame Brandt had not been mistaken. The crown prince was awake, and his flute brought a musical morning sacrifice to the beautiful sunny out-door world that was sending its scented greetings to him. The whole man seemed filled with the purest harmony of sensation, and the soft, melting tones of the flute were but the language of his soul. Suddenly he paused and bent his head sidewise, with an expression of rapt attention, as though to catch once more the dying tones still trembling in the air.

"That was good," he said, smiling, "and I think I may note down this adagio without arousing Quantz's scorn."

So speaking, he left the boudoir and went to his "library." As he entered it a pleasant smile played upon his lips, and he bowed his head as if in greeting. It is hard to imagine anything more charming and tasteful than this library. Built according to the prince's own plans, it bore his character and was, in a measure, his portrait. Art and nature, the simplicity of the student, the luxury of the prince, the taste of the

connoisseur, the sensitiveness and enthusiasm of the youth, and the stern bitterness of the king's son early ripe in sorrow and suffering—all this was to be found mirrored in that room, and all this had combined to make it a temple of the Muses, the sciences, and friendship. The apartment was located in the new tower which Knobelsdorf had added to balance the one already there. Its round form gave it a peculiar character, and made the comparison with a temple a natural one. Along the walls in glass cases stood the master-works of the poets of all times—Voltaire, Racine, Molière, Corneille, with Livy, Homer, Cæsar, Cicero, Terence, Ovid; and the poets of modern Italy—Dante, Petrarch, and with these Machiavelli kept them company. Everything that possessed a name in the literature of the nations found its way into the crown prince's library; everything but the works of German authors. Between the bookcases, adorned here and there with busts of famous authors, small divans upholstered in red silk filled the niches, and above them hung portraits of famous contemporaries and friends of the prince. The largest and most beautiful of these was a portrait of Voltaire. To him was given the place of honor, and if the crown prince, seated at his table, glanced up from his work, it was always to meet the face of the French poet sparkling with intellect, spirit, and malice. This had been from youth his chosen friend, with whom for years he had carried on a correspondence carefully concealed from the king. The high, arched windows stood open, and through them opened a glorious view of the garden and the lake gleaming in the sun like molten silver.

The crown prince strode to his table and, without heeding the unopened letters that lay there, took up a blank music-sheet and began to write, humming the melody as he noted it. At times he threw aside the pencil and took up the flute which lay at hand to test certain passages once more before writing them down.

"Finished," said the crown prince, laying the pencil aside. "I fancy Quantz will have to bring himself for once to be content with his pupil; and if the Bendas put on their connoisseur manner again to-day I shall tell them—nothing!" he added, laughing and pushing the sheet aside. "Why take the trouble to let these gentlemen see that I value their approval and seek their applause? That human beings must never see, for ours is a pitiful, petty race, and he who trusts mankind has built on sand. He who sacrifices himself, who gives himself for that race and loves it, is lost.

Oh! I see a time coming when I shall despise all mankind, distrust the whole world! And yet my heart is tender and beats warmly for what is good and beautiful, and I were happy could I but love and trust my fellow-men. But they will not have it; they cannot bear it. I am surrounded by spies who watch my every motion, catch every word to report it faithfully at Berlin, and drop it—a poison drop—in the king's ear. But away with such spider-webs! I have no time to sigh and dream."

He arose and strode several times hastily up and down the room; then he approached the table again and picked up the letters. As his eye rested upon the first address a proud, happy expression stole over his face.

"From Voltaire!" he murmured, breaking the seal and opening impatiently a paper containing two letters and some loose printed sheets. The prince uttered a cry of pleased surprise, and scarcely heeding either letter, his gaze fastened with an inexpressible, half tender, half inquisitive expression upon the printed sheets which he held in his hand.

"At last, at last!" he exclaimed. "The first step is taken, and I am no longer an insignificant, unknown man, with no other claim to acknowledgment than the accident of birth as a king's son—heir to a throne. I shall have a name of my own, for I shall be an author, a poet taking his own place in the republic of letters, and I shall need no crown to insure my being chronicled in the books of history. The first step has been taken. My 'Anti-Machiavelli' is in press. I shall tread under foot this monster of devilish statecraft, and all Europe shall see that a German prince is the first to break a lance against the dragon Machiavelli, who makes human beings the slaves of princes and would subject them to the yoke of trembling, unthinking obedience; who makes of princes monsters whom men must curse, hating them to the very depth of their souls. But what noise is this?" the prince interrupted himself, approaching the door of the anteroom.

Excited voices were heard outside; evidently several persons were having an angry argument.

"I tell you, sir, I must and will speak to the prince himself this day," snarled a rasping voice. "I have been waiting for months, have written the most humble and respectful letters to the prince, and have not even been honored with an answer. Now I have come in person to get my answer, and I swear I will not budge until I have gone to the bottom of the matter."

"It is Ephraim," muttered the crown prince, and his brow darkened.

"Then you can stand on this spot till you turn to a pillar of salt like your great-great-grandmother," cried a second voice.

"Knobelsdorf!" whispered the prince, and a smile flitted over his face.

"The comparison is a happy one," answered the first voice; "for truly this reminds one of Sodom and Gomorrah! But I'll not turn to a pillar of salt. That others shall do for terror and rage when I come with the sword of justice, for justice I mean to have, and if I find none here I'll get it of the king."

"Of the king!" cried a third voice, horrified. "Do you not know that his majesty lies at death's door?"

"Not at all, not at all! If that were so I should not be here. Then I should have waited quietly, whatever the crown prince refuses me. But the king has recovered; and I saw him myself yesterday being pushed in his roller-chair about the garden in Potsdam. The king will get well; and so I am here, and insist upon speaking with the crown prince himself."

"But, I tell you his royal highness is still asleep."

"I answer you, that it is not true, for I heard him playing the flute."

"That was Quantz."

"Oh! nonsense. Quantz! How could Quantz play an adagio as I heard? No, no, that was the crown prince."

"This creature means to bribe me with his flattery," smiled the prince. "But a sorry Orpheus am I, whose tones cannot even still a creditor!"

"But—I repeat it—it was Quantz playing the flute," insisted the discomfited Knobelsdorf. "The crown prince is in bed, unwell, and has given orders to admit no one."

"Oh! I know all that! These noble gentlemen are always unwell when they are in danger of breathing the same air as their creditors," shrieked Ephraim, with a scornful grin. "But I tell you, I shall stay here until I have spoken with the prince, until he gives me back my four thousand thalers that I lent him, without interest and without security, a year ago. I'll have my money again—I must have it—if I'm not to go to pieces myself. And that the prince surely cannot wish. He cannot wish to punish me so sorely for my softness of heart and my sympathy with his hard lot!"

"Now, by God! that is too much," shouted Knobelsdorf.

"Do you know, sir, that you're a brazen knave! You dare to speak of your pity for the heir to the throne! You boast that you lent the crown prince money, when you know very well that you only did it because you knew he would give it back with usurer's interest!"

"If Ephraim knows that, he knows more than I," said the crown prince, with a sorrowful smile; "for, however much I may be heir to the throne, I do not know at this moment where I'm to get the sorry rag of a four thousand thalers to satisfy this vulture. But I must not leave poor Knobelsdorf in this situation any longer. I must silence this usurer's snarling."

CHAPTER X.

THE CROWN PRINCE AND THE JEW.

JUST as Knobelsdorf had threatened Ephraim, the Jew, to call the footmen and have him thrown out, the crown prince opened the door and revealed to both the combatants his handsome, proud, quietly smiling countenance.

"Come in, sir," said the crown prince, with a slight nod. "I grant you the audience for which you have so fervently prayed."

The prince stepped with perfect calmness back into the room, while Ephraim, confused and humbled by the quiet dignity of the prince, entered the room with downcast eyes and bowed head, and remained standing near the door.

"Dear Knobelsdorf," said the prince, turning with a smile to the fat, coughing courtier; "dear Knobelsdorf, request the ladies and gentlemen to assemble. We shall sail this morning. In five minutes I shall be with you."

"Five minutes!" said Ephraim to himself, as Knobelsdorf withdrew. "For every thousand thalers scarcely more than a minute's audience. That is a proud debtor! And I should have done better to have nothing to do with him. But I'll not let myself be terrorized—I'll meet him boldly."

"Now, what have you to say to me?" asked the prince, turning his flashing eyes upon Ephraim.

"What have I to say to your Royal Highness?" said Ephraim, astonished. "I loaned your Royal Highness four thousand thalers a year ago, and have received thereof neither principal nor interest."

"Well?"

"Well?" asked Ephraim in astonishment.

"Go on! You cannot have come from Berlin to Rheinsberg to tell me what I've known as well as yourself for a year past!"

"I thought your Royal Highness had forgotten it," said Ephraim, raising his eyes to the crown prince and dropping them instantly to the floor as he met that flaming, penetrating gaze.

"Forgotten!" said the prince, shrugging his shoulders. "I've a good memory for friendliness, and also for every offence against the reverence due the son of the king."

His voice was now so hard and threatening that Ephraim trembled to the depths of his soul and quakingly muttered some words of excuse.

"My Prince," he said, summoning courage, "I am a Jew—that is, a despised, down-trodden, persecuted man, or, rather, not a man, but a creature to be kicked like a dog that is poor and neglected, and treated like a human being only when it has money and treasure. A dog is better off than a Jew in Prussia. A dog that has brought forth young rejoices when the pain is past. But the Jewess who has brought forth her child in agony cannot rejoice, for the laws of the land hang a sword over her, and she may be banished because perchance the child she has born exceeds the number permitted to a Jewess. Perhaps the father is not rich enough to pay the thousand thalers with which he must each time purchase from the state the right to become a father. So our money is the only protecting wall that we Jews can rear between ourselves and misfortune. Money is our honor, our home, our family, our rank, our fate! Without money we are nothing, and he only to whom we offer a gilded palm offers his hand without feeling, contaminated by the touch of a Jew. Judge, then, your Majesty, how greatly I must love and esteem you, to whom I have given a part of my honor, my fortune, my money! What I have done for no one in the world, I have done for your Majesty; for I gave you four thousand thalers without security and without interest. I lent Baron Knobelsdorf, for the crown prince, on his word of honor, my honorable gold. And what have I for it now? No answers to my letters in which I humbly beg repayment of this debt; I am scoffed at, scorned, threatened with the closing of that door which opened so wide when I came to bring the money. Such action is neither righteous nor wise, for as the worm turns when it is trodden upon, the Jew, too,