CHAPTER XXXI.

A SOIRÉE AT THE QUEEN DOWAGER'S.

"The king is coming," whispered Augustus William, and strode with a sigh toward the boudoir of the queen mother. But the door opened and the two queens hastened forth to go to the garden salon to welcome the king. Both faces were disturbed and deeply moved. Sophia Dorothea felt a sort of awe and dread of the meeting with her son, who might, perhaps, read in the reddened eyes of his sweetheart the story of the past hour, and be angry that they made her weep. She was obliged to confess that she had, perhaps, gone too far—let her rage master her too completely—and this made her constrained and ill at ease.

Elizabeth Christine was not uneasy, but deeply moved. Her heart beat longingly at this meeting with her husband, whom she had not seen since coronation day, with whom she had not spoken since the fateful and sorrowful conversation of that memorable night. For not once had the king addressed her on coronation day, once only had he taken her hand, and that was after the homage, when he had led her into the circle of the assembled court and said: "See, this is your queen."

Both ladies were so moved, so occupied with their own thoughts that, hastening through the salon, they scarcely observed the prince, who had stepped aside to let them pass. The queen mother nodded to him abstractedly, then turned again to Elizabeth, who had scarcely patience to maintain the slow, measured pace of the queen mother instead of hastening forward to meet her husband.

"If this Pannewitz complains to him, I shall have a dreadful scene," said Sophia Dorothea to herself.

"She will not complain," answered Elizabeth.

"All the worse, for then she will play the generous, injured woman," cried the queen, bitterly, "and that I shall still less forgive than a complaint."

The doors opened, the king, accompanied by his retinue and that of both the queens, entered the salon. The expression of both ladies changed instantly. No feature betrayed disquiet. Both greeted him with calm brows and innocent smiles. The king hastened to his mother, and bowing low

before her, tenderly kissed her proffered hand, greeting her with reverent and cordial expressions of affection. Then he turned to his wife, and made a formal, ceremonious bow. But he neither offered to take her hand nor spoke one word. Elizabeth Christine responded with a bow, and as she bent her head suppressed a tear. The queen mother's face was now glowing and triumphant once more. The king knew nothing thus far, and it was only necessary to prevent his speaking with Laura alone and unobserved. Her eye roamed in the direction of the court ladies, and she observed the young girl talking with Prince Augustus William, her face serious and unembarrassed.

"I shall prevent her speaking alone with the king," thought the queen, with rejoicing.

From this moment Sophia Dorothea was in so merry a mood that her spirits seemed to animate her son. There was a play of witty jests hither and thither, a strife of *bons mots* in which the queen yielded naught to her son, and seemed at times to excel him. Elizabeth stood silent and sorrowful at one side, and when at intervals the king's glance, as though by chance, flitted past her face, it seemed contemptuous and repellant. Then her cheeks grew whiter, and she retained with difficulty the stereotyped smile upon her lips. The queen mother proposed a walk in the garden, then an improvised ball in the lighted halls, as the court mourning still forbade all formal festivities.

"But why go seeking for flowers in the garden when there are so many charming ones here?" asked the king, aloud, his smiling glance straying about the circle of court ladies, who all blushed deeply with modestly downcast eyes. Three pairs of eyes followed this glance of the king with exact attention.

"He had scarcely noticed Laura," thought the queen mother, with a long breath of relief.

"He scarcely saw me," thought Elizabeth Christine, with a sigh.

"He did not pause an instant at any of the faces," thought Pöllnitz, "so it is clear that he gives a preference to none of them. I shall succeed with my beautiful Doris."

The king, whose only intention in making his proposition had been to relieve his mother, whose afflicted foot and increasing weight made walking increasingly difficult, now led her to a sofa, silently bowing to his wife and reaching her his left hand to lead her to the same seat. Sophia Dorothea, who noticed every gesture, every syllable of her son on that day, observed this cruel silence, and pitied the poor, pale, si-

lent wife. So the queen mother bent toward the king, who was leaning, hat in hand, against the high back of the sofa.

"My son," she whispered, softly, "I think you have not addressed one word to your wife this day."

The king's face darkened. "Madame," he answered, in the same low tone, but harshly, "madame, Elizabeth Christine is my queen but not my wife."

And, as though fearing further discussion, he beckoned Marquis Algarotti and Count Chazot to approach and participate in the conversation of the two queens.

Suddenly a lady appeared who was entitled to be presented to the queen, having apparently just arrived. This lady was of a striking pallor, which was the more conspicuous because of her black costume relieved by no flower or other decoration. Her eyes, deep in their sockets, glowed with feverish brightness, her thin lips, upon which a labored smile played, were firmly closed, as though to suppress a cry or sigh. No one could have recognized in this pale, majestic, slowly moving figure the "Tourbillon" of old, the merry, arrogant, irrepressible Madame Morien. No one could have dreamed that her beauty, once so fresh, rosy, luxuriant, could attain in so few months this sad, grave character. This was Madame Morien's first appearance at the court of the queen mother, and people said that she was just recovering from a long and serious illness. No one knew the nature of this illness, and the backbiting, insidious court people whispered divers scornful and injurious suggestions about it among themselves. They said Madame Morien had become ill of the withdrawn love of Frederick, suffering from a cold which had attacked, not herself but the king. They hinted that she was afflicted with a new consumption, not of the lungs but the heart, a repetition of the malady which had afflicted Dido when cruel Æneas deserted her.

The queen mother received the beautiful, pale woman very graciously, reaching her hand to be kissed and smiling condescendingly.

"It is a whole eternity since we have seen you here, baroness," she said. "It seems you have wished to be invisible, and quite forgotten that we rejoice to see you."

"Your Majesty is very good to remember that," said Madame Morien, softly. "Death almost made me a candidate for oblivion, and I surely should not have ventured to-day to approach your Majesty with my pale, sad face, if your express command had not emboldened me to do so."

There was something in the low, suffering tone of Madame

Morien's voice which aroused pity and disarmed even the anger of the young queen. For the first time since the banquet at Rheinsberg, Elizabeth Christine now met this woman, who had suffered and wept so much. And in view of the pale face, she forgave her all the pain she herself had suffered through Madame Morien. For, with the instinct of a loving heart, the queen guessed all the terrible affliction of her rival, that it was the same as her own, that she was consuming herself in the woe of a despised and rejected love. For the king had no glance or greeting for his "bewitching Leontine," seemed not to have observed her presence, and quietly continued his conversation with Chazot and Algarotti, without considering Madame Morien's deep reverence worthy of recognition.

"I have some news for your Majesty, too," said the king, turning to the queen. "We are about to transform Berlin into a temple of science and art and to make it a seat of learning. The muses, too, when the mood seizes them, may descend from Olympus and always find a hospitable reception in Berlin. For listen to this last new item. Voltaire comes this autumn to Berlin to visit us, and Maupertius, the great scholar, who first showed to the world the form of the earth, will take up his abode with us as President of the Academy of Sciences; Vaucanson, too, who has made a duck that would do no shame to the real creation, and soon we can call Eulert from St. Petersburg, our own."

"That is all very fine," said Sophia Dorothea, smiling, "but I fear your Majesty, when surrounded by so many scholars, artists, and poets, will quite forget us poor, ignorant women, or banish us from your learned court."

"That would be banishing pleasure, beauty, happiness, the graces, madame, and such barbarity you surely will not attribute to the son of my noble and exalted mother," replied the king, with a smile. "What were the arts without women? Even the Catholic Church was wise enough to see that it never could draw mankind within the meshes of its net with the mere trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and it called a woman to its assistance, whose beautiful, mysterious, immaculate virginity is the finest, most piquant, and intoxicating perfume of the miracle-flower of their religion. And what would the great painters have been without women, without the enchanting sweethearts whom they transformed into holy virgins, making of the dainty creatures chaste madonnas before whom wise children of men fall on their knees in worship to this day, before the eternally feminine, the mysterious

virgin? How many madonnas Raphael made of his Lais Fornarina, and how well Correggio understood transforming his enchanting wife into a repentant Magdalen. I have a real disgust for the weeping, sighing Magdalens who, worn out with earthly passion, coquette with heaven, and swear the same vows of fidelity to God which they have sworn a thousand times to men and broken a thousand times more. If I were in God's place, I should not accept these curious saints, for I hate pale, lean, sighing, tearful beauties, and the farcical exhibition of their woes could never touch me."

With these words the king darted a glance for the first time in the direction of Madame Morien, and his eye rested upon her with a long, cold, penetrating stare. She had heard every word which he had spoken, and each was like a poisoned dagger thrust into her heart. Though her eyes were fixed upon the ground, she felt that his gaze rested upon her, and she felt its crushing force. She neither cried out nor burst into tears, but, steadily and almost smiling, replied to the questions of Elizabeth Christine, which were meant to keep her from hearing the king's cruel words.

"You have forgotten to mention one great surprise, my son," said the queen mother, who wished to turn the conversation and draw it away from the dangerous domain of religion. "You have not mentioned that you have bestowed upon this excellent and inquisitive city of Berlin two German newspapers and a French one. Yet I assure you that I always await with impatience the day when these papers appear, and bury myself in the new and surprising reading-matter which makes politics a charming subject of conversation for everyone and reports the events of the day most faithfully."

"Let us hope that these journals may have great events to report to us," said the king, gravely; then, resuming his lighter tone, he continued: "But we are quite forgetting that your Majesty promised the ladies a little ball. See how impatiently our little princesses are watching us, and with what wrathful looks my little Amalie is trying to pierce me because I have obliged her to sit in her fauteuil like a maid of honor, while she longs so to dance about us like a merry zephyr. Come, my dear little princess sister, and, to appease you, I beg the first dance."

The king gave his hand to his sister and led her into the dancing-room, whither the queens and the court followed them.

"Now he will doubtless seek his opportunity of speaking to the Pannewitz," thought the queen mother, "so we must take measures." She beckoned her second son, Prince Augustus William, to her side. "My son," she said, "I have a trifling favor to ask of you."

"Your Majesty knows that you have but to command."

"I know that you are a good son, ready to serve your mother. So listen. I have weighty reasons for wishing that the king should not converse for any length of time, alone, with Fräulein von Pannewitz this evening. I will explain at another time why I wish to avoid this. I beg of you, therefore, pay court a little to Fräulein von Pannewitz. Should the king approach her, seem not to see his glance of dismissal, but mingle unembarrassed in the conversation, and do not leave the lady's side until the king has departed. Will you do this for me, my son?"

"I will fulfil exactly the commands of my royal mother," said the prince, with perfect gravity.

He bowed to his mother, and hastened to obey her commands, placing himself at Laura's side. The queen mother, now wholly quieted, took her place with her daughter-in-law and the cavaliers at the card-table, while the king remained in the dancing-hall, inviting almost every lady in the room in turn. With Madame Morien alone he did not dance, her alone he passed unnoticed. Not once did his eye meet hers, that followed him everywhere with a tender, beseeching, melancholy expression.

"So sad?" whispered Madame Brandt, who, radiant with beauty and merriment, came to her side, having just danced with the king. Madame Morien offered, with a smile, her lean, transparent hand. "Dear friend," she whispered "you were right; I should not have come here. I thought myself stronger than I am. I thought my mourning would awaken his sympathy."

"Sympathy," laughed Madame Brandt; "men never have sympathy with women—they can only worship or despise them. They either place us upon an altar or hurl us in the dust under their feet. So we must take care gradually to build up so high the altar upon which they mount us, that they cannot reach us later to drag us down."

"You are right," sighed Madame Morien. "I should have been more prudent, cold, discreet. But I believed in his having a heart, for I loved him."

"You believed in the heart of a man! What woman can boast that she has shut up that chasm, and holds its key?"

"Yes, the heart of a man is an abyss," said Madame Morien, mournfully. "At first they cover it over with flowers, but we think we are dwelling in Paradise; but when the flowers

have wilted they no longer sustain our weight, and we plunge downward, to perish miserably in the depths."

Madame Brandt laid her diamond-laden hand upon her friend's shoulder, and looked with a mischievous expression into her pale face.

"Dear Morien," she said, "not all the blame must be cast upon the men. If a day comes when they free themselves of their love, the blame rests quite as much with the women, if they misuse their power or do not understand making the most of it. It is not enough to love and be loved in return. Besides love itself, one must possess the tactics of love. These tactics are necessary. Women who cannot rule the heart they possess soon lose possession. That is your case, dear friend. You are too much a woman and too little a diplomatist in your love. You gave way to your feeling too completely, and, instead of fanning passion by resistance, you went to meet it; and stimulated by the resistance which you found, you have plunged into that abyss in which, poor Leontine, you have for the moment left health and strength. But it must not remain so. You must emerge proud and triumphant. I will give you my hand, will assist you. While you are sighing, I shall be thinking for you. While you are weeping, I shall use my eyes for you."

Madame Morien shook her head sadly.

"You will only see that he never sees me, has wholly forgotten me."

"If I see that, I shall close my eyes not to see it. And if you see it, you must smile the more brightly, look about you the more victoriously. Dearest friend, what has love made of you? Where is your coquetry and your cleverness? You have become a young girl again, sentimental as a child over its first love. But tender as one may be, one must not be swallowed up in one's love, not lose one's individuality. One must not be a mere charming something rosy to look at, decked with lace like the cushion on which one dreams of one's love. In one corner of our devoted heart there must always be a tigress hidden away, ready to use her claws to tear to pieces him whom she loves, if he venture to spring from her. So cease to be a sentimental, tearful Magdalen. Be a revengeful, cruel tigress. Besides, you have a brilliant object in life outside of your passion. Think of it. First Lady of the Order of Virtue, bearing the cross of modesty upon your chaste breast. What an exalted goal! You will attain it. I bring you the best assurance thereof, an autograph letter from the empress, such as you wished. You see

your conditions are faithfully fulfilled. The empress writes you and assures you of her grace, and that the intended order shall soon be founded. You know what that 'soon' means. The king has not divorced his wife, so you receive the imperial autograph. Now help to get Prince Augustus William married to Princess Amalie of Brunswick, and you shall be First Lady of the Austrian Order of Virtue. There, take the empress's letter, first of all."

And Madame Brandt, plunged her hand in the pocket of her satin skirt to draw out the letter. She started and grew pale.

"Heavens!" she murmured, breathlessly, "the letter is not in my pocket. Yet I am certain that I put it there. A few moments before I came to you I felt the empress' seal quite plainly. The letter was there. Where can it be? Who has stolen it from me? Impossible. I must recover it. It must be in my pocket."

Trembling with fear, in breathless haste Madame Brandt drew forth all the small objects hidden in her pocket to see whether the hapless letter might not have caught in her gold-embroidered handkerchief, or have slidden into the open case of her smelling-bottle. She never thought that they might be observed, and her disquiet and anxiety seen. And truly no one heeded her, for each was busy with his own enjoyment.

In the dancing-room, the couples were circling about in a merry dance to the music. But poor Madame Brandt sought in vain for her letter. Had she lost it, or had it been stolen? Suddenly she remembered that, a little while before, in talking with Pöllnitz she had drawn her fan from her pocket. Perhaps she had drawn out the note with it. Perhaps Pöllnitz had found it, and was seeking Madame Morien to give it to her. She looked in vain about the room for Pöllnitz.

Madame Morien had not noticed her friend's anguish, or had forgotten it. She was gazing about in search of the king, as vainly as Madame Brandt for Pöllnitz.

"I cannot see him," she murmured, sorrowfully.

"Whom?" asked Madame Brandt, searching her pocket once more, in dire anxiety.

"The king," said Madame Morien, astonished that her friend could ask that question. "He must have left the dancing-room. A little while ago he was talking with Pöllnitz, and now——"

"With Pöllnitz?" interrupted Madame Brandt, hastily, and her eye roamed once more, anxiously searching for the master of ceremonies. Suddenly she uttered a low cry, and a

purple flush spread over her face. She had seen the king, and their eyes had met, for his sharp, observant glance was directed steadily upon her. He was standing aside in a window-niche, half-concealed by the long, heavy curtains, staring at both ladies.

"I see the king," said Madame Morien.

"And I see Pöllnitz standing beside him," said Madame Brandt. She hastily pushed the smelling-bottle case and handkerchief into her pocket, and opened her fan to hide her flushed, heated face behind it, for the king's observant look alarmed her.

"Let us make a tour of the halls, dearest Morien," said Madame Brandt, rising. "The heat here smothers me. And I should like to search a little for the letter, which I may, perhaps, have lost somewhere and can find again."

"What letter?" asked Madame Brandt, indifferently.

Her friend looked at her in amazement.

"Have you heard nothing that I've been saying to you?"

"Oh, yes; you said you had given me the autograph letter of the Empress of Austria."

"But I have lost that letter, here, in the dancing-room."

"Then someone will find it and give it to me, as it is probably addressed to me."

"But, dear Morien, I do beseech you, be not so indifferent. This is a very serious and important matter. If I have really lost this letter, and not merely forgotten it in my room, we are in danger of being suspected by the king as Austrian spies."

At mention of the king's name Madame Morien was all attention and sympathy.

"Will they be able to read the letter? Was it not sealed?" she asked.

"That, indeed; but with the private seal of the empress, and her name encircles the coat-of-arms of Austria. Without opening the letter it will, therefore, be recognized as coming from the Empress of Austria, and will awaken suspicion. But listen. It was wrapped in paper which bore no address, but which must compromise us both, if people know that it was meant for me."

"And what was in the paper?"

"These words: 'The enclosed note, dear friend, you will have the goodness to forward to its destination. You see, the empress keeps her word; let us do the same, and not forget our promise. A happy marriage is a good thing, pleasing not alone to God but also to mankind—helping on the one hand to virtue, on the other to a set of diamonds.'"

"Was the letter signed?"

"No, it was not signed, but if it should find its way into the king's hands he will know from whom it comes, for he knows Manteuffel's writing."

"Come, come, let us look for it," said Madame Morien, anxious and alarmed at last. "We must have this hapless paper again. Come!"

She took her friend's arm and went with her down the dancing-room, both examining the floor in alarm to see if something white were not to be found upon the brown parquetry.

"You are right," said the king, emerging from the window-niche. "You are right, Pöllnitz, they are looking for something, and it was therefore Madame Brandt to whom this letter was addressed. Let them search. They will find as little as the eleven thousand foolish virgins. But listen well, Baron, to what I have to say to you. This whole affair remains a secret, of which no one is to know anything. You are to forget that you have found this letter and given it to me, or you may remember that it was a dream—nothing more!"

"Yes, your Majesty," said Pöllnitz, smiling; "a dream like Eckert's, when he thought the house in the Jaeger Street his, which, nevertheless, when he awakened belonged to your Majesty."

"You are a fool," said the king, with a smile, nodding to the baron and going to meet the two queens, who had now finished their game of cards and were returning to the dancing-room. The queen mother offered her hand to her son with a friendly smile. She wished to carry out her project and keep her promise to Count Rhedern. She did not at all doubt that the king, who was so reverential and devoted to her, would grant her the request, the court being once more a witness to the great influence which she exercised upon the king.

She stood with her son directly beneath the great chandelier in the middle of the hall. Near her were the reigning queen and the princes and princesses of the royal house. It was an interesting picture, this group, sharply illuminated from above, the faces all so alike in feature, yet so different in expression—all flowers of one tree, differing each from each in size and form. The courtiers stood in close groups looking at the family picture.

"Your Majesty," said the queen, in her full, silvery voice, "I have one more request to make of you to-day."

The king bowed reverently and kissed his mother's prof-

fered hand. "Oh, your Majesty," he said, "you know well that you have not to request, but to command."

Sophia Dorothea smiled proudly and nodded to the king with a most friendly smile. "I thank you for this word, my son. Listen, then: My marshal, Count Rhedern, is thinking of marrying. I have promised him to obtain your consent to his marriage."

"If my royal mother acquiesces in the marriage of her marshal I also assent to it, assuming, of course, that the betrothed of the count is of good and respectable family. What is the bride's rank?"

The queen looked somewhat embarrassed. "Your Majesty, she has no rank."

The king's brow darkened a little. "Then she was not born to become a countess," he said, "and your marshal would do better to keep silent touching this folly instead of seeking my refusal. I hate every *mésalliance*, and shall tolerate nothing of the sort at my court."

These words, pronounced in a loud, stern voice, produced a different effect upon different members of the family circle. Some faces paled, others flushed. Sophia Dorothea flushed with pleasure, for these words of the king's freed her from the fear that he wished a divorce from his wife to enter upon an unlawful marriage with Fräulein von Pannewitz, and she was too virtuous a woman to believe in the possibility of a mistress *régime* in the Prussian court. So, for the moment, she was perfectly quieted, and the king's love for the beauty, Laura, seemed to her now a mere poetic fancy liable to pass away, and nothing more. Meanwhile, the queen mother was by no means conquered by her son's words. Her pride resented so sudden a defeat in the presence of her court and her family. She had, moreover, pledged her royal word to Count Rhedern, and must redeem the pledge. She tried once more to obtain the king's approval, but he was unyielding. Sophia Dorothea, irritated beyond measure, became obstinate in her determination to carry her point.

"Your Majesty is doubtless perfectly right in wishing to protect the nobility from unworthy *mésalliances*, but there are single exceptional cases where one must consider the good of the nobility itself;" and leaning over to her son she continued, softly, "Count Rhedern is totally ruined and must go to pieces if you prevent his making this rich marriage."

The king was attentive and sympathetic in an instant. "Is the lady so very rich?" he asked.

"Immensely rich, sire. She brings him a dowry of a

million thalers. It is a daughter of the silk factor Orguelin."

"Ah! of Orguelin! He is a worthy man, who has brought much wealth into the country through his factories," said the king, visibly softened.

"It were much to be regretted should this money be withdrawn from the country," continued the queen.

"What do you mean, your Majesty?" asked the king, sharply.

"Mademoiselle Orguelin has several wooers, thanks to her million, and at this moment a young Dutch merchant is the count's rival. This merchant has the father's consent, and will have the daughter's too unless Count Rhedern obtains the advantage over him."

"That must not be," cried the king, quickly. "This Orguelin must not marry the Hollander; a good million must not be lost to the country!"

"Yet your Majesty could not prevent this maiden's marrying according to her choice, nor her father's giving her a suitable dowry."

The king was silent a moment and seemed to be reflecting. Then he said, with a smile: "Your Majesty, you are too excellent an advocate to be resisted. I yield the point. Count Rhedern has my consent to his marriage with Mademoiselle Orguelin."

"But this, alas! is not enough, sire," said the queen, with her most beguiling smile. "There is another trifling condition, without the fulfilment of which the proud millionnaire will not bestow her hand. She will become the count's wife only when he can give her the assurance that she shall appear at court as fits her rank."

"Really!" exclaimed the king, with an ironical smile. "This millionnaire holds it a desirable thing to appear at our court."

"This seems to her a greater happiness than the possession of a husband who is a count."

The king looked reflective, then turning upon his mother a roguish smile, he said: "You know, mother, that I can refuse you nothing, and, since you wish it, Mademoiselle Orguelin when married shall be received as new-made countess at my court. But, favor for favor, I promise this upon condition that Count Néal be presented at your court."

"Count Néal!" cried the queen, angrily. "Your Majesty knows——"

"I know," interrupted the king, with a bow—"I know that

Count Néal is of quite as good ancestry as Countess Rhedern will be, and that, like her, he possesses several millions, which I have secured for our country by the recognition of his count's title. We agree, then, do we not? The Countess Rhedern shall be received at my court as well as Count Néal at yours?"

He offered the queen his hand; she reluctantly gave him hers. "My son, you have outwitted me cruelly," she whispered.

The king smiled. "Madame, we retain for our country three million thalers, and these weigh heavier in the end than a handful of mouldy ancestors. The Prussia of the future will win in battle by means of its nobility, but it will be mighty through its industries, richer and mightier than through its battles!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

UNDER THE LINDENS.

UNTER DEN LINDEN, in Berlin, now the most beautiful street of the great city, was a lonely and deserted region in the year 1740. Frederick the First was the king of display and splendor. Of him Sophia Charlotte said, upon her death-bed, when they told her that the king would mourn her demise, "He will divert his mind with providing me a gorgeous funeral, and if all goes well with the ceremony and nothing is wanting in the decorations he will be comforted."

Frederick the First had had the lindens planted to make the way which led to Lützelburg, his wife's pleasure palace, more shady and agreeable. This palace he had given her, and it was called, in honor of her, Charlottenburg. He had done what he could to redeem the region that intervened between the city and the palace, but the zeal of the Berliners had done little to help him. No one went willingly to this remote part of the city, and all the buildings erected there had been at royal expense. A few rich men of the nobility had, to please the king, built large houses here, which, however, they did not occupy. One of these stately edifices belonged, not to Count Dohna or Baron von Plessen, but to the famous and respectable Court Tailor Pricker. And for a few days past a new and brilliant sign blazed before his door, upon which in large letters stood the legend, "Court Tailor

to her Majesty the Queen Mother and her Majesty the reigning Queen." Immediately adjoining the great Pricker establishment stood the dwelling of poor Anna Schömmer—the quondam Doris Ritter—and her family.

Deep stillness reigned in this part of the city. Only the royal equipages passed frequently when the king invited his court and nobles to some festivity at Charlottenburg. To-day, however, the royal vehicle stopped and four gentlemen descended from it—the king with his architect, Knobelsdorf, Pöllnitz, and Jordan.

"You must cleanse me this Augean stable, Knobelsdorf," said the king; "you may prove yourself Hercules here. You have the strength for it, and I shall furnish the money. We shall erect ourselves a monument here, making of these sand-fields something brilliant. Here shall come palaces, and a temple of science, art, and religion. At present pretty much everything is wanting which could make of Berlin a suitable abode for the Muses. Knobelsdorf must take care that we can offer them comfortable quarters. What do you think, Jordan—were this site well chosen for the erection of all the fine buildings we dreamed of so often in Rheinsberg? Could we build our acropolis here—our temple of Jupiter and Minerva?"

"To prove to all the world what people already suspect—that your Majesty is no Christian, but a heathen more inclined to revere the religion of the ancient Greeks than that of the new-church fathers?"

"Do people say this? Then they are not wrong if they think I have no especial affection for the priesthood and the Christian Church. Not Christ built this church, but the priests, and a sly business they have carried on with their eternal blessedness. But now, Knobelsdorf, you shall build me here a temple such as I have long dreamed of—a temple of God, majestic without, divinely beautiful within."

"Then the palace of her majesty the queen mother is to be here?" asked Knobelsdorf.

"No, not here; let us go somewhat farther to seek a site for that."

"If your Majesty permits," said Pöllintz, as the king and his escort walked slowly down the middle allée of the lindens, "I should like to suggest what seems to me a most fitting place for the royal palace: it is at the end of the linden allée, the entrance to the park, and possesses both ample space and a charming situation."

"Show us the place," commanded the king, striding forward.