

FREDERICK THE GREAT AND HIS FAMILY.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

THE KING.

THE king laid his flute aside, and with his hands folded behind his back, walked thoughtfully up and down his room in Sans-Souci. His countenance was now tranquil, his brow cloudless; with the aid of music he had harmonized his soul, and the anger and displeasure he had so shortly before felt were soothed by the melodious notes of his flute.

The king was no longer angry, but melancholy, and the smile that played on his lip was so resigned and painful that the brave Marquis d'Argens would have wept had he seen it, and the stinging jest of Voltaire have been silenced.

But neither the marquis nor Voltaire, nor any of his friends were at present in Potsdam. D'Argens was in France, with his young wife, Barbe Cochois; Voltaire, after a succession of difficulties and quarrels, had departed forever; General Rothenberg had also departed to a land from which no one returns—he was dead! My lord marshal had returned to Scotland, Algarotti to Italy, and Bastiani still held his office in Breslau. Sans-Souci, that had been heretofore the seat of joy and laughing wit—Sans-Souci was now still and lonely; youth, beauty, and gladness had forsaken it forever; earnestness and duty had taken their place, and reigned in majesty within those walls that had so often echoed with the happy laugh and sparkling jest of the king's friends and contemporaries.

Frederick thought of this, as with folded hands he walked up and down, and recalled the past. Sunk in deep thought, he remained standing before a picture that hung on the wall above his secretary, which represented Barbarina in the fascinating costume of a shepherdess, as he had seen her for the first time ten years ago; it had been painted by Pesne for the king. What recollections,

what dreams arose before the king's soul as he gazed at that bewitching and lovely face; at those soft, melting eyes, whose glance had once made him so happy! But that was long ago; it had passed like a sunbeam on a rainy day, it had been long buried in clouds. These remembrances warmed the king's heart as he now stood so solitary and loveless before this picture; and he confessed to that sweet image, once so fondly loved, what he had never admitted to himself, that his heart was very lonely.

But these painful recollections, these sad thoughts, did not last. The king roused himself from those dangerous dreams, and on leaving the picture cast upon it almost a look of hatred.

"This is folly," he said; "I will to work."

He approached the secretary, and seized the sealed letters and packets that were lying there. "A letter and packet from the queen," he said, wonderingly opening the letter first. Casting a hasty glance through it, a mocking smile crossed his face. "She sends me a French translation of a prayer-book," he said, shrugging his shoulders. "Poor queen! her heart is not yet dead, though, by Heaven! it has suffered enough."

He threw the letter carelessly aside, without glancing at the book; its sad, pleading prayer was but an echo of the thoughts trembling in her heart.

"Bagatelles! nothing more," he murmured, after reading the other letters and laying them aside. He then rang hastily, and bade the servant send Baron Pöllnitz to him as soon as he appeared in the audience-chamber.

A few minutes later the door opened, and the old, wrinkled, sweetly smiling face of the undaunted courtier appeared.

"Approach," said the king, advancing a few steps to meet him. "Do you bring me his submission? Does my brother Henry acknowledge that it is vain to defy my power?"

Pöllnitz shrugged his shoulders. "Sire," he said, sighing, "his highness will not understand that a prince must have no heart. He still continues in his disobedience, and declares that no man should marry a woman without loving her; that he would be contemptible and cowardly to allow himself to be forced to do what should be the free choice of his own heart."

Pöllnitz had spoken with downcast eyes and respectful countenance; he appeared not to notice that the king reddened and his eyes burned with anger.

"Ah! my brother dared to say that?" cried the king. "He has the Utopian thought to believe that he can defy my wishes. Tell him he is mistaken; he must submit to me as I had to submit to my father."

"He gives that as an example why he will not yield. He believes a forced marriage can never be a happy one; that your majesty had not only made yourself unhappy by your marriage, but also your queen, and that there was not a lady in the land who would exchange places with your wife."

The king glanced piercingly at Pöllnitz. "Do you know it would have been better had you forgotten a few of my wise brother's words?"

"Your majesty commanded me to tell you faithfully every word the prince said."

"And you are too much a man of truth and obedience, too little of a courtier, not to be frank and faithful. Is it not so? Ah! *vraiment*, I know you, and I know very well that you are playing a double game. But I warn you not to follow the promptings of your wicked heart. I desire my brother to marry, do you hear? I will it, and you, the grand chamberlain, Baron Pöllnitz, shall feel my anger if he does not consent."

"And if he does?" said Pöllnitz, in his laughing, shameless manner; "if I persuade the prince to submit to your wishes, what recompense shall I receive?"

"On the day of their betrothal, I will raise your income five hundred crowns, and pay your debts."

"Ah, sire, in what a pitiable dilemma you are placing me! Your majesty wishes Prince Henry to engage himself as soon as possible, and I must now wish it to be as late as possible."

"And why?"

"Because I must hasten to make as many debts as possible, that your majesty may pay them."

"You are and will remain an unmitigated fool; old age will not even cure you," said the king, smiling. "But speak, do you think my brother may be brought to reason?"

Pöllnitz shrugged his shoulders, gave a sly smile, but was silent.

"You do not answer me. Is my brother in love? and has he confided in you?"

"Sire, I believe the prince is in love from *ennui* alone, but he swears it is his first love."

"That is an oath that is repeated to each lady-love; I am not afraid of it," said the king, smiling. "Who is the enchantress that has heard his first loving vows? She is doubtless a fairy—a goddess of beauty."

"Yes, sire, she is young and beautiful, and declares it is also her first love, so no one can doubt its purity; no one understands love as well as this fair lady; no other than Madame von Kleist, who, as your majesty remembers, was lately divorced from her husband."

"And is now free to love again, as it appears," said the king, with a mocking smile. "But the beautiful Louise von Schwerin is a dangerous, daring woman, and we must check her clever plans in the bud. If she desires to be loved by my brother, she possesses knowledge, beauty, and experience to gain her point and to lead him into all manner of follies. This affair must be brought quickly to a close, and Prince Henry acknowledged to be the prince royal."

"Prince Henry goes this evening to Berlin to attend a feast given by the Prince of Prussia," whispered Pöllnitz.

"Ah! it is true the prince's arrest ceases at six o'clock, but he will not forget that he needs permission to leave Potsdam."

"He will forget it, sire."

The king walked up and down in silence, and his countenance assumed an angry and threatening appearance. "This struggle must be brought to a close, and that speedily. My brother must submit to my authority. Go and watch his movements; as soon as he leaves, come to me."

Long after Pöllnitz had left him, the king paced his chamber in deep thought. "Poor Henry! I dare not sympathize with you; you are a king's son—that means a slave to your position. Why has Providence given hearts to kings as to other men? Why do we thirst so for love? as the intoxicating drink is always denied us, and we dare not drink it even when offered by the most bewitching enchantress!"

Involuntarily his eye rested upon the beautiful picture of *Barbarina*. But he would have no pity with himself, as he dared not show mercy to his brother. Seizing the silver bell, he rang it hastily.

"Take that picture from the wall, and carry it immediately to the inspector, and tell him to hang it in the picture-gallery," said Frederick.

He looked on quietly as the servant took the picture down and carried it from the room, then sighed and gazed long at the place where it had hung.

"Empty and cold! The last token of my youth is gone! I am now the king, and, with God's blessing, will be the father of my people."

CHAPTER II.

PRINCE HENRY.

PRINCE HENRY sat quiet and motionless in his lonely room; dark thoughts seemed to trouble him; his brow was clouded, his lips compressed. Had you not known him, you would have taken him

for the king, so great was the resemblance of the two brothers; but it was only an outward resemblance. The prince had not the spiritual expression, his eyes had not the passionate fire, his face (beautiful as it was) wanted the fascinating geniality, the sparkling inspiration, that at all times lighted the king's countenance like a sunbeam.

The prince possessed a greater mind, a clearer understanding, but he wanted soul and poetic feeling, and allowed himself at times to ridicule his brother's poetic efforts. The king, knowing this, was inclined to regard the shortcomings of the prince as a determined contempt and resistance to his command; and as the prince became more reckless and more indifferent, he became more severe and harsh. Thus the struggle commenced that had existed for some time between the two brothers.

For the last four days the prince had been in arrest for disobeying orders, but the hour of his release was approaching, and he awaited it with impatience.

The bell of the nearest church had just announced the hour of six. The door opened immediately, and an officer, in the name of the king, pronounced his arrest at an end.

The prince answered with a low bow, and remained seated, pointing haughtily to the door; but as the officer left him he arose and paced hastily to and fro.

"He treats me like a school-boy," he murmured; "but I shall show him that I have a will of my own! I will not be intimidated—I will not submit; and if the king does not cease to annoy me, if he continues to forget that I am not a slave, but son and brother of a king, no motives shall restrain me, and I also will forget, as he does, that I am a prince, and remember only that I am a free, responsible man. He wishes me to marry, and therefore has me followed, and surrounds me with spies. He wishes to force me to marry. Well, I will marry, but I will choose my own wife!"

The prince had just made this resolve, when the door opened, and the servant announced that Messrs. Kalkreuth and Kaphengst awaited his commands.

He bade them enter, and advancing smilingly gave them his hand.

"Welcome! welcome!" he said; "the cage is open, and I may enjoy a little air and sunshine; let us not delay to make use of this opportunity. Our horses shall be saddled."

"They are already saddled, prince," said Baron Kalkreuth. "I have ordered them to the court, and as soon as it is dark we will mount them."

"What! is it not best that we should mount before my door and ride openly away?" said the prince, wonderingly.

"It is my opinion that is the best plan," cried Baron Kaphengst, laughing gayly. "Every one will believe your highness to be simply taking a ride, while curiosity would be raised if we left the city on foot."

"I think leaving in the dark, and on foot, looks as if I were afraid," said the prince, thoughtfully.

"Secrecy is good for priests and old women, but not for us," cried Kaphengst.

"Secrecy suits all who wish to do wrong," said Kalkreuth, earnestly.

The prince glanced hastily at him. "You believe, then, we are about to do wrong?"

"I dare not speak of your highness, but we two are certainly doing wrong; we are about to commit an act of insubordination. But still, my prince, I am ready to do so, as your highness wishes us to accompany you."

The prince did not answer, but stepped to the window, and looked out thoughtfully and silently. In a few moments he returned, looking calm and resolute.

"Kalkreuth is right—we were going to do wrong, and we must avoid it. I shall write to the king, and ask leave for you and myself to go to Berlin."

"That is, unfortunately, impossible," said a sweet voice behind him, and as the prince turned he saw the smiling face of Pöllnitz. "I beg pardon, your highness, for having entered unannounced, but you allowed me to come at this hour and give you an account of the commissions you gave me."

"Why do you say it is impossible to obtain leave of the king to-day?" asked Henry, hastily.

"Because his majesty is already in the concert-saloon, and your highness knows that he has strictly forbidden any one to disturb him there."

"We shall, then, have to give up our plan and remain here," said the prince.

Kaphengst glanced angrily and threateningly at his friend.

"And why should your highness do this?" asked Pöllnitz, astonished. "All your preparations are made, all your commands fulfilled. I have procured your costumes; no one will recognize you, and if they should, would not dare to betray you to the king. Only two persons know that you are to visit the ball, the Prince of Prussia, and a lovely lady, whose beautiful eyes were misty with tears when I delivered her your message. 'Tell the prince,' she murmured, in a tender voice, 'I will await him there, even if I knew the king would crush me with his anger.'"

The prince blushed with joy. "And you say it is impossible for me to see the king?"

"Impossible, my prince."

"Well, we will have to renounce it," said the prince, sighing.

"Renounce seeing the king, yes! for he will not leave his rooms in Sans-Souci to-day."

"Then we would be entirely safe; he would not notice our departure," said Kaphengst, quickly.

"Entirely safe," said Pöllnitz.

"That is, if Baron Pöllnitz does not himself inform the king," said Baron Kalkreuth, whose quick, clear glance rested upon the smiling face of the courtier, and appeared to read his inmost thoughts.

Baron Pöllnitz cast a suspicious and angry glance at Kalkreuth. "I did not know that borrowing money from you gave you the right to speak rudely to me!"

"Silence! gentlemen," cried the prince, who, until now, had stood quietly struggling with his own wishes. "Take your cloaks and let us walk. Did you not say that horses were awaiting us at the door, Baron Kalkreuth?"

"I said so, your highness."

"And you Pöllnitz? Did you not say that three costumes awaited us in Berlin?"

"Yes, your highness."

"Well, then," said the prince, smiling, "we must not allow the horses and costumes to await us any longer. Come, gentlemen, we will ride to Berlin."

"Really it was hard to get him off," murmured Pöllnitz, as he regained the street, and saw the three young men fading in the distance. "The good prince had quite a dutiful emotion; if the king only knew it, he would forgive him all, and renounce the idea of his marriage. But that would not suit me—my debts would not be paid! I must not tell the king of his brother's inward struggle."

"Well!" said the king, as Pöllnitz entered, "has my brother really gone to Berlin?"

"Yes, your majesty, and accompanied by the two Messieurs—"

"Silence!" cried the king, hastily; "I do not wish to know their names, I should have to punish them also. He has then gone, and without any hesitation, any reluctance?"

"Yes, sire, without hesitation. He thinks he has the right to go where he pleases, and to amuse himself as he can."

"Order the carriage, Pöllnitz," said the king. "Without doubt my brother has taken the shortest road to Berlin?"

"Yes, sire."

"Then there is no danger of our meeting them and being recognized; and as we have relays on the road, we will reach Berlin before them."

CHAPTER III.

LOUISE VON KLEIST.

MADAME VON KLEIST was alone in her boudoir. She had just completed her toilet, and was viewing herself with considerable pleasure in a large Venetian glass. She had reason to be pleased. The costume of an *odalisque* became her wonderfully; suited her luxuriant beauty, her large, dreamy blue eyes, her full red lips, her slender, swaying form. At twenty-eight, Louise von Kleist was still a sparkling beauty; the many trials and sorrows she had passed through had not scattered the roses from her cheek, nor banished youth from her heart.

Louise von Kleist resembled greatly the little Louise von Schwerin of earlier days—the little dreamer who found it romantic to love a gardener, and was quite ready to flee with him to a paradise of love. The king's watchfulness saved her from this romantic folly, and gave her another husband. This unhappy match was now at an end. Louise was again free. She still felt in her heart some of the wild love of romance and adventure of the little Louise; she was the same daring, dreamy, impressible Louise, only now she was less innocent. The little coquette from instinct was changed into a coquette from knowledge.

She stood before the glass and surveyed once more her appearance; then acknowledged with a pleased smile that she was beautiful enough to fascinate all men, to arouse in all hearts a painful longing.

"But I shall love no one but the prince," she said, "and when my power over him is sufficient to induce him to marry me, I shall reward him by my faith, and entire submission to his wishes. Oh! I shall be a virtuous wife, a true and faithful mother; and my lovely little Camilla shall find in her mother a good and noble example. I shall promise this to my angel with my farewell kiss; and then—to the ball!"

She entered the next chamber, and stood at her child's bed. What a strange sight! This woman, in a fantastic, luxuriant costume, bending over the cot of the little girl, with such tender, pious looks, with folded hands, and soft, murmuring lips, uttering a prayer or holy wish!

"How beautiful she is!" murmured Louise, not dreaming that her own beauty at this moment beamed with touching splendor—that mother love had changed the alluring coquette into an adorable saint—"how beautiful she is!"

The gay, ringing laughter of her daughter interrupted her; the child opened her large black eyes, and looked amused.

"You naughty child, you were not asleep," said Louise.

"No, mamma, I was not asleep; I was playing comedy."

"Ah! and who taught you to play comedy, you silly child?" said Louise, tenderly.

The child looked earnestly before her for a few moments as children are wont to do when a question surprises them.

"I believe, mamma," she said, slowly—"I believe I learned it from you."

"From me, Camilla? When have you seen me act?"

"Oh, very often," she cried, laughing. "Just a few days ago, mamma, don't you remember when we were laughing and talking so merrily together, Prince Henry was announced, and you sent me into the next room, but the door was open, and I saw very well that you made a sad face, and I heard the prince ask you how you were, and you answered, 'I am sick, your highness, and how could it be otherwise, as I am always sad or weeping?' Now, mother, was not that acting?"

Louise did not answer. Breathing heavily, she laid her hand upon her heart, for she felt a strange sorrow and indescribable fear.

Camilla continued, "Oh! and I saw how tenderly the prince looked at you; how he kissed you, and said you were as lovely as an angel. Oh, mamma, I too shall be beautiful, and beloved by a prince!"

"To be beautiful, darling, you must be good and virtuous," said the fair *odalisque*, earnestly.

Little Camilla arose in her bed; the white gown fell from her shoulders and exposed her soft childish form, her brown ringlets curled down her neck and lost themselves in her lace-covered dress. The chandelier that hung from the ceiling lighted her lovely face, and made the gold and silver embroidered robes and jewels of her mother sparkle brilliantly.

At this moment, as with folded arms she glanced up at her mother, she looked like an angel, but she had already dangerous and earthly thoughts in her heart.

"Mamma," she said, "why should I be virtuous, when you are not?"

Louise trembled, and looked terrified at her daughter. "Who told you I was not virtuous?"

"My poor, dear papa told me when he was here the last time. Oh, he told me a great deal, mamma! He told," continued the child, with a sly smile, "how you loved a beautiful gardener, and ran off with him, and how he, at the command of the king, married you and saved you from shame; and he said you were not at all grateful, but had often betrayed and deceived him, and, because he was so unhappy with you, he drank so much wine to forget his sorrow. Oh, mamma, you don't know how poor papa cried as he told me all this, and besought me not to become like you, but to be good, that every one might love and respect me!"

Whilst Camilla spoke, her mother had sunk slowly, as if crushed, to the floor; and, with her face buried in the child's bed, sobbed aloud.

"Don't cry, mamma," said Camilla, pleadingly; "believe me, I will not do as papa says, and I will not be so stupid as to live in a small town, where it is so still and lonesome."

As her mother still wept, Camilla continued, as if to quiet her: "I shall be like you, mamma; indeed, I will. Oh, you should but see how I watch you, and notice how you smile at all the gentlemen, what soft eyes you make, and then again, how cold and proud you are, and then look at them so tenderly! Oh, I have noticed all, and I shall do just the same, and I will run away with a gardener, but I will not let papa catch me—no, not I."

"Hush, child, hush!" cried the mother, rising, pale and trembling, from her knees; "you must become a good and virtuous girl, and never run away with a man. Forget what your bad father has told you; you know he hates me, and has told you all these falsehoods to make you do the same."

"Mamma, can you swear that it is not true?"

"Yes, my child, I can swear it."

"You did not run off with a gardener?"

"No, my child. Have I not told you that a virtuous girl never runs away?"

"You did not make papa unhappy, and, being his wife, love other men?"

"No, my daughter."

"Mamma," said the child, after a long pause, "can you give me your right hand, and swear you did not?"

Louise hesitated a moment; a cold shiver ran through her, she felt as if she was about to perjure herself; but as she looked into the beautiful face of her child, whose eyes were fixed on her with a strange expression, she overcame her unwillingness.

"Here is my hand—I swear that all your father told you is false!" Camilla laughed gleefully. "Oh, mamma, I have caught you:

you always want me to tell the truth, and never give my right hand when a thing is not true, and now you have done it yourself."

"What have I done?" said the mother, trembling.

"You gave me your right hand, and swore that all papa told me was false; and I say it is true, and you have sworn falsely."

"Why do you believe that, Camilla?" she asked.

"I don't believe it, I know it," said the child, with a sly smile. "When papa spoke to you, for the last time, and told you good-by forever, he told you the same he had told me. Oh! I was there and heard all; you did not see me slip into the room and hide behind the fire-place. Papa told you that you had been the cause of all his unhappiness and shame; that from the day you had run off with the gardener and he, at the king's command, went after you, and married you—from that day, he had been a lost man, and when he said that, you cried, but did not tell him, as you told me, that it was not true."

Louise did not answer. This last taunt had crushed her heart, and silenced her. Still leaning on the bed, she looked at her child with painful tenderness. Camilla's mocking laughter had pierced her soul as with a dagger.

"Lost," she murmured, "both of us lost!"

With passionate despair she threw her arms around the child, and pressed her closely; kissed her wildly again and again, and covered her face with burning tears.

"No, Camilla, no! you shall not be lost, you must remain good and pure! Every child has its guardian angel; pray, my child, pray that your angel may watch over you!"

She pressed her again in her arms, then returned to her chamber, sadder and more hopeless than she had ever been before.

But this unusual sadness commenced to annoy her; her heart was not accustomed to feel sorrow, and her remorseful, dreary feeling made her shudder. "If the carriage would but come!" she murmured, and then, as if to excuse her thoughtlessness, she added, "it is now my holy duty to listen to the prince; I must regain the respect of my child. Yes, yes, I must become the wife of Henry! I can accomplish this, for the prince loves me truly."

And now, she was again the coquette, whose captivating smile harmonized perfectly with her alluring costume—no longer the tender mother, no longer the sinner suffering from repentance and self-reproach.

She stood before the glass, and arranged her disordered dress and smoothed her dishevelled hair.

"I must be bewitching and fascinating," she murmured, with a smile that showed two rows of pearl-like teeth; "the prince must

gain courage from my glance, to offer me his hand. Oh, I know he is quite prepared to do so, if it were only to annoy his brother!"

As she saw the carriage drive up, she exclaimed, with sparkling eyes, "The battle begins—to victory!"

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE MASKED BALL.

THE feast had commenced. As Louise von Kleist, the beautiful *odalisque*, entered the dancing-saloon, she was almost blinded by the gay and sparkling assembly. The fairy-like and fantastic robes sparkled with gold and jewels. The sea of light thrown from the crystal chandelier upon the mirrors and ornaments of the brilliant saloon dazzled the eye. The entertainments of the Prince of Prussia were renowned for their taste and splendor.

Unrecognized, the beautiful Louise slipped through the gay assembly of masks, and, when detecting some friends under the muffled chiefs of their disguise, she murmured their names, and some mischievous and witty remark; then springing gayly on to shoot again her arrow, and excite astonishment and surprise.

"Oh, that life were a masked ball!" she murmured softly to herself, "mysterious and sweet! where you find more than you seek, and guess more than is known. No one recognizes me here. The brave and handsome Count Troussel, who is leaning against that pillar, and casting such melancholy glances through the crowd, hunting for the one his heart adores, never dreams that she is standing opposite him, and is laughing at his perplexity. No, he does not recognize me, and no one knows my costume but the prince and Pöllnitz, and as they have not yet found me, I conclude they have not arrived. I will therefore amuse myself during their absence."

She was just approaching the sentimental cavalier, when she suddenly felt her arm touched, and, turning around, saw two masks wrapped in dark dominoes before her.

"Beautiful *odalisque*, I bring you your sultan," murmured one of them, in whom she recognized Baron Pöllnitz.

"And where is my sultan?" she asked.

"Here," said the second mask, offering the beautiful lady his arm. Louise saw those glorious eyes beaming upon her through his mask—eyes which the king and Prince Henry alone possessed.

"Ah, my prince!" she murmured softly and reproachfully, "you see that it is I who have waited."

The prince did not answer, but conducted her hastily through the crowd. They had soon reached the end of the saloon. A small flight of steps led them to a little boudoir opening on a balcony. Into this boudoir Pöllnitz led the silent pair, then bowing low he left them.

"My God! your highness, if we should be surprised here!"

"Fear nothing, we will not be surprised. Pöllnitz guards the door. Now, as we are alone and undisturbed, let us lay aside our disguises."

Thus speaking, the supposed prince removed his mask and laid it upon the table.

"The king!" cried Louise, terrified and stepping back.

The king's eyes rested upon her with a piercing glance. "What!" he asked, "are you still acting? You appear astonished; and still you must have known me. Who but the king would show the beautiful Madame von Kleist such an honor? In what other cavalier could you place such perfect confidence as to accompany him into this lonely boudoir? with whom but the king could you have trusted your fair fame? You need not be alarmed; to be in my presence is to be under my protection—the kind guardianship of your king. I thank you that you knew me, and, knowing me, followed me trustingly."

The searching glance of the king alarmed Louise; his mocking words bewildered her, and she was incapable of reply.

She bowed silently, and allowed herself to be conducted to the divan.

"Sit down, and let us chat awhile," said the king. "You know I hate the noise of a feast, and love to retire into some corner, unnoticed and unseen. I had no sooner discovered the fair Louise under this charming costume, than I knew I had found good company. I ordered Pöllnitz to seek out for us some quiet spot, where we might converse freely. Commence, therefore."

"Of what shall I speak, your majesty?" said Louise, confused and frightened. She knew well that the king had not found her by chance, but had sought her with a determined purpose.

"Oh! that is a question whose *naïveté* reminds me of the little Louise Schwerin of earlier days. Well, let us speak on that subject which interests most deeply all who know you; let us speak of your happiness. You sigh. Have you already paid your tribute? Do you realize the fleetness of all earthly bliss?"

"Ah! your majesty, an unhappy marriage is the most bitter offering that can be made to experience," sighed Madame von Kleist. "My life was indeed wretched until released by your kindness from that bondage."

"Ah, yes, it is true you are divorced. When and upon whom will you now bestow this small, white hand?"

Louise looked up astonished. "What!" she stammered, confused, "your majesty means—"

"That you will certainly marry again. As beautiful a lady as you will always be surrounded by lovers, and I sincerely hope that you will marry. You should go forward as an example to my brothers, your youthful playmates, and I will tell my brother Henry that marriage is not so bad a thing, as the beautiful Madame von Kleist has tried it for the second time."

"I doubt very much, sire," said Louise, timidly, "if the example of so insignificant a person would have the desired effect upon the prince."

"You do yourself injustice. The prince has too strong an admiration for you, not to be influenced by your encouraging example. My brother must and shall marry according to his birth. I am assured that, contrary to my wishes and commands, he is about to make a secret and illegitimate marriage. I am not yet acquainted with the name of his wily mistress, but I shall learn it, and, when once noted in my memory, woe be unto her, for I shall never acknowledge such a marriage, and I shall take care that his mistress is not received at court—she shall be regarded as a dishonored woman."

"Your majesty is very stern and pitiless toward the poor prince," said Madame Kleist, who had succeeded in suppressing her own emotions, and, following the lead of the king, she was desirous to let it appear that the subject was one of no personal interest to herself.

"No," said the king, "I am not cruel and not pitiless. I must forget that I am a brother, and remember only I am a king, not only for the good of my family, but for the prosperity of my people. My brother must marry a princess of wealth and influence. Tell Prince Henry this. Now," said the king, with an engaging smile, "let us speak of your lovely self. You will, of course, marry again. Have you not confidence enough in me to tell me the name of your happy and favored lover?"

"Sire," said Louise, smiling, "I do not know it myself, and to show what unbounded confidence I have in your majesty, I modestly confess that I am not positively certain whether among my many followers there is one who desires to be the successor of Kleist. It is easy to have many lovers, but somewhat difficult to marry suitably."

"We need a marrying man to chase away the crowd of lovers," said the king, smiling. "Think awhile—let your lovers pass in

review before you—perhaps you may find among them one who is both ardent and desirable."

Louise remained thoughtful for a few moments. The king observed her closely.

"Well," he said, after a pause, "have you made your selection?"

Madame von Kleist sighed, and her beautiful bright eyes filled with tears. She took leave of her most cherished and ambitious dream—bade farewell to her future of regal pomp and splendor.

"Yes, sire, I have found an *épouseur*, who only needs encouragement, to offer me his heart and hand."

"Is he of good family?"

"Yes, sire."

"Military?"

"Yes, sire. He wears only a captain's epaulets. Your majesty sees that I am modest."

"On the day of his marriage he shall be major. When the Church pronounces her blessing, the king's blessing shall not be wanting. We are, of course, agreed. When will you be engaged?"

"Sire, that depends upon my lover, and when I succeed in bringing him to terms."

"We will say in eight days. You see I am anxious to become speedily acquainted with one blissful mortal, and I think that the husband of the beautiful Madame Kleist will be supremely happy. In eight days, then, you will be engaged, and, to complete your good work, you must announce this happy fact to my brother Henry. Of course, he must not even surmise that you sacrifice yourself in order to set him a good example. No, you will complete your noble work, and tell him that a love which you could not control induced you to take this step; and that he may not doubt your words, you will tell your story cheerfully—yes, joyously."

"Sire, it is too much—I cannot do it," cried Madame von Kleist. "It is enough to trample upon my own heart; your majesty cannot desire me to give the prince his death-blow."

The king's eyes flashed angrily, but he controlled himself.

"His death!" he repeated, shrugging his shoulders, "as if men died of such small wounds. You know better yourself. You know that the grave of one love is the cradle of another. Be wise, and do as I tell you: in eight days you will be engaged, and then you will have the kindness to acquaint Prince Henry with your happy prospects."

"Ah, sire, do not be so cruel as to ask this of me," cried Louise, gliding from the divan upon her knees, "be merciful. I am ready to obey the commands of my king, to make the sacrifice that is asked of me—let it not be too great a one. Your majesty asks that

I shall draw down the contempt of the man I love upon myself; that this man must not only give me up, but scorn me. You require too much. This is more than the strongest, bravest heart can endure. Your majesty knows that the prince loves me passionately. Ah, sire, your brother would have forfeited his rank and your favor by marrying me, but he would have been a happy man; and I ask the king if that is not, at last, the best result? Are you, sire, content and happy since you trampled your breathing, loving heart to death at the foot of the throne? You command your brother to do as you have done. Well, sire, I submit—not only to resign the prince, but to marry again, to marry without love. Perhaps my soul will be lost by this perjury, but what matters that—it is a plaything in the hands of the king? He may break my heart, but it shall not be dishonored and trodden in the dust. The prince shall cease to love me, but I will not be despised by him. He shall not think me a miserable coquette, despise, and laugh at me. Now, sire, you can crush me in your anger. I have said what I had to say—you know my decision.”

She bowed her head almost to the earth; motionless, kneeling at the foot of the king, her hands folded on her breast, she might in reality have been taken for an *odalisque* but that her sad, tearful face was not in unison with the situation or costume.

A long pause ensued—a solemn, fearful pause. The king struggled with his rage, Louise with her disappointment and distress. Sounds of laughter, the gay notes of music reached them from the dancing-saloon. The ball had commenced, and youth and beauty were mingling in the dance. These sounds aroused the king, and the sad contrast made Louise shudder.

“You will not, then, comply with my request?” said the king, sternly.

“Sire, I cannot!” murmured Louise, raising her hands imploringly to the king.

“You cannot!” cried the king, whose face glowed with anger; “you cannot, that means you will not, because your vain, coquettish heart will not resign the love of the prince. You submit to resign his hand, because you must; but you wish to retain his love: he must think of you as a heavenly ideal, to be adored and longed for, placed amongst the stars for worship. Ah, madame, you are not willing to make the gulf between you impassable! You say you wish, at least, to retain the respect of Prince Henry. I ask you, madame, what you have done to deserve his respect? You were an ungrateful and undutiful daughter; you did not think of the shame and sorrow you prepared for your parents, when you arranged your flight with the gardener. I succeeded in rescuing you from dishonor by marrying you to a brave and noble cavalier. It depended upon

you entirely to gain his love and respect, but you forgot your duty as a wife, as you had forgotten it as a daughter. You had no pity with the faults and follies of your husband, you drove him to despair. At last, to drown his sorrows, he became a drunkard, and you, instead of remaining at his side to encourage and counsel him, deserted him, and so heartlessly exposed his shame that I, to put an end to the scandal, permitted your divorce. You not only forgot your duty as a wife and daughter, but also as a mother. You have deprived your child of a father, you have made her an orphan; you have soiled, almost depraved her young soul; and now, after all this, you wish to be adored and respected as a saint by my poor brother! No, madame! I shall know how to save him from this delusion; I shall tell to him and the world the history of little Louise von Schwerin! Fritz Wendel still lives, and, if you desire it, I can release him, and he may tell his romantic story.”

“Oh, for the second time to-day I have heard that hateful name!” cried Louise; “the past is an avenger that pursues us mercilessly through our whole lives.”

“Choose, madame!” said the king, after a pause; “will you announce your betrothal to my brother in a gay and unembarrassed tone, or shall I call Fritz Wendel, that he may sing the unhappy prince to sleep with his romantic history?”

Whilst the king spoke, Louise had raised herself slowly from her knees, and taken a seat upon the divan. Now rising, and bowing lowly, she said, with trembling lips and tearful voice: “Sire, I am prepared to do all that you wish. I shall announce my betrothal to the prince cheerfully, and without sighs or tears. But be merciful, and free me forever from that hideous spectre which seems ever at my side!”

“Do you mean poor Fritz Wendel?” said the king, smiling. “Well, on the day of your marriage I will send him as a soldier to Poland; there he may relate his love-adventures, but no one will understand him. Are you content?”

“I thank you, sire,” said Louise, faintly.

“Ah, I see our conversation has agitated you a little!” said the king. “Fortunately, we are now at an end. In the next eight days, remember, you will be engaged!”

“Yes, sire.”

“The day of your marriage, I will make your captain a major. You promise to tell my brother of your engagement, and that it is in accordance with the warmest wishes of your heart?”

“Yes, sire; and you will banish the gardener forever?”

“I will; but wait—one thing more. Where will you tell my brother of your engagement, and before what witnesses?”

"At the place and before the witnesses your majesty may select," said Madame von Kleist.

The king thought a moment. "You will do it in my presence," said he; "I will let you know the time and place through Pöllnitz. We have arranged our little affairs, madame, and we will descend to the saloon where, I think, your *épouseur* is sighing for your presence."

"Let him sigh, sire! With your permission, I should like to retire."

"Go, madame, where you wish. Pöllnitz will conduct you to your carriage."

He offered her his hand, and, with a friendly bow, led her to the door.

"Farewell, madame! I believe we part friends?"

"Sire," she answered, smiling faintly, "I can only say as the soldiers do, 'I thank you for your gracious punishment!'"

She bowed and left the room hastily, that the king might not see her tears.

CHAPTER V.

A SECRET CAPTAIN.

THE king looked long after her in silence; at first with an expression of deep pity, but this soon gave place to a gay, mocking smile.

"She is not a woman to take sorrow earnestly. When mourning no longer becomes her, she will lay it aside for the rosy robes of joy. She is a coquette, nothing more. It is useless to pity her."

He now stepped upon the balcony that overlooked the saloon, and glanced furtively from behind the curtains upon the gay assembly below.

"Poor, foolish mankind! how wise you might be, if you were not so very childish—if you did not seek joy and happiness precisely where it is not to be found! But how is this?" said the king, interrupting himself, "those two giant forms at the side of the little Armenians are certainly Barons Kalkreuth and Kaphengst, and that is my brother with them. Poor Henry! you have made a bad use of your freedom, and must, therefore, soon lose it. Ah! see how searchingly he turns his head, seeking his beautiful *odalisque*! In vain, my brother, in vain! For to-day, at least, we have made her a repentant Magdalen; to-morrow she will be again a life-enjoying Aspasia. Ah, the prince separates himself from his followers. I have a few words to whisper in the ear of the gay Kaphengst."

The king stepped back into the room, and after resuming his mask, he descended into the saloon, accompanied by his grand chamberlain.

Mirth and gayety reigned; the room was crowded with masks; here stood a group in gay conversation; there was dancing at the other end of the saloon. Some were listening to the organ-player, as he sang, in comical German and French verses, little incidents and adventures that had occurred during the present year at court, bringing forth laughter, confused silence, and blushes. Some were amusing themselves with the lively, witty chat of the son of the Prince of Prussia, the little ten-year-old, Prince Frederick William. He was dressed as the God of Love, with bow and quiver, dancing around, and, with an early-ripened instinct, directing his arrow at the most beautiful and fascinating ladies in the room.

Prince Henry paid no attention to all this; his wandering glance sought only the beautiful Louise, and a deep sigh escaped him at not having found her. Hastily he stepped through the rows of dancers which separated the two cavaliers from him.

"It appears," murmured Baron Kalkreuth to his friend, "it appears to me that the prince would like to get rid of us. He wishes to be entirely unobserved. I think we can profit by this, and therefore I shall take leave of you for a while, and seek my own adventures."

"I advise you," murmured Baron Kaphengst, laughingly, "to appoint no rendezvous for to-morrow."

"And why not, friend?"

"Because you will not be able to appear; for you will doubtless be in arrest."

"That is true, and I thank you for your prudent advice, and shall arrange all my rendezvous for the day after to-morrow. Farewell."

Baron Kaphengst turned laughingly to another part of the saloon. Suddenly he felt a hand placed on his shoulder, and a low voice murmured his name.

Terrified, he turned. "I am not the one you seek, mask," he said; but as he met those two large, burning eyes, he shuddered, and even his bold, daring heart stood still a moment from terror. Only the king had such eyes; only he had such a commanding glance.

"You say you are not the one I seek," said the mask. "Well, yes, you speak wisely. I sought in you a brave and obedient officer, and it appears that you are not that. You are not, then, Lieutenant von Kaphengst?"

Kaphengst thought a moment. He was convinced it was the king that spoke with him, for Frederick had not attempted to dis-

guise his voice. Kaphengst knew he was discovered. There remained nothing for him but to try and reconcile the king by a jest.

He bowed close to the king, and whispered: "Listen, mask—as you have recognized me, I will acknowledge the truth. Yes, I am Lieutenant von Kaphengst, and am incognito. You understand me—I came to this ball incognito. He is a scoundrel who repeats it!" and, without awaiting an answer, he hastened away to seek the prince and Baron Kalkreuth, acquaint them with the king's presence, and fly with them from his anger.

But Prince Henry, whose fruitless search for his sweetheart had made him angry and defiant, declared he would remain at the ball until it was over, and that it should be optional with the king to insult his brother openly, and to punish and humble a prince of his house before the world.

"I, unfortunately, do not belong to the princes of the royal house, and I therefore fear that the king might regard me as the cat who had to pull the hot chestnuts from the ashes, and I might suffer for all three. I therefore pray your highness to allow me to withdraw."

"You may go, and if you meet Kalkreuth, ask him to accompany you. You officers must not carry your insubordination any further. I, as prince, and Hohenzollern, dare the worst, but, be assured, I shall pay for my presumption. Farewell, and hasten! Do not forget Kalkreuth."

Kaphengst sought in vain. Kalkreuth was nowhere to be found, and he had to wend his way alone to Potsdam.

"I shall take care not to await the order of the king for my arrest," said Baron Kaphengst to himself, as he rode down the road to Potsdam. "I shall be in arrest when his order arrives. Perhaps that will soften his anger."

Accordingly, when Kaphengst arrived at the court guard, in Potsdam, he assumed the character of a drunken, quarrelsome officer, and played his rôle so well that the commander placed him in arrest.

An hour later the king's order reached the commander to arrest Baron Kaphengst, and with smiling astonishment he received the answer that he had been under arrest for the last hour.

In the mean time, Kaphengst had not miscalculated. The prince was put under arrest for eight days, Kalkreuth for three. He was released the next morning, early enough to appear at the parade.

As the king, with his generals, rode down to the front, he immediately noticed the audacious young officer, whose eye met his askance and pleadingly. The king beckoned to him, and as Baron Kaphengst stood erect before him, the king said, laughingly:

"It is truly difficult to exchange secrets with one of your height; bow down to me, I have something to whisper in your ear."

The comrades and officers, yes, even the generals, saw not without envy that the king was so gracious to the young Lieutenant von Kaphengst; whispered a few words to him confidentially, and then smiling and bowing graciously, moved on.

It was, therefore, natural that, when the king left, all were anxious to congratulate the young lieutenant, and ask him what the king had whispered. But Baron Kaphengst avoided, with dignified gravity, all inquiries, and only whispered to his commander softly, but loud enough for every one to hear, the words, "State secrets;" then bowing profoundly, returned with an earnest and grave face to his dwelling, there to meditate at his leisure upon the king's words—words both gracious and cruel, announcing his advancement, but at the same time condemning him to secrecy.

The king's words were: "You are a captain, but he is a scoundrel who repeats it!"

Thus Baron Kaphengst was captain, but no one suspected it; the captain remained a simple lieutenant in the eyes of the world.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LEGACY OF VON TRENCK, COLONEL OF THE PANDOURS.

BARON WEINGARTEN, the new secretary of legation of the Austrian embassy in Berlin, paced the ambassador's office in great displeasure. It was the hour in which all who had affairs to arrange with the Austrian ambassador, passports to *visé*, contracts to sign, were allowed entrance, and it was the baron's duty to receive them. But no one came; no one desired to make use of his ability or his mediation, and this displeased the baron and put him out of humor. It was not the want of work and activity that annoyed him; the baron would have welcomed the *dolce far niente* had it not been unfortunately connected with his earnings; the fees he received for passports, and the arrangement of other affairs, formed part of his salary as secretary of legation, and as he possessed no fortune, this was his only resource. This indigence alone led him to resign his aristocratic independence and freedom of action. He had not entered the state service from ambition, but for money, that he might have the means of supporting his mother and unmarried sisters, and enable himself to live according to his rank and old aristocratic name. Baron Weingarten would have made any sacrifice, submitted to any service, to obtain wealth. Poverty had demoral-