

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-

ized him, pride had laid a mildew on his heart and stifled all noble aspirations. As he read a letter, just received from his mother, complaining of wants and privations, telling of the attachment of a young officer to his sister, and that poverty alone prevented their marriage, his heart was filled with repining, and at this moment he was prepared to commit a crime, if, by so doing, he could have obtained wealth.

In this despairing and sorrowful mood he had entered the office, and awaited in vain for petitioners who would pay him richly for his services. But the hours passed in undisturbed quiet, and Baron Weingarten was in the act of leaving the office, as the servant announced Baron von Waltz, and the court councillor, Zetto, from Vienna.

He advanced to meet the two gentlemen, with a smiling countenance, and welcomed his Austrian countrymen heartily.

The two gentlemen seated themselves silently; Weingarten took a seat in front of them.

A painful, embarrassed pause ensued. The majestic Baron von Waltz looked silently at the ceiling, while the black, piercing eyes of the little Councillor Zetto examined the countenance of Weingarten with a strangely searching and penetrating expression.

"You are from Vienna?" said Weingarten at last, putting an end to this painful silence.

"We are from Vienna," answered the baron, with a grave bow.

"And have travelled here post-haste to have an interview with you."

"With me?" asked the secretary of legation, astonished.

"With you alone," said the baron, gravely.

"We wish you to do the King of Prussia a great service," said Zetto, solemnly.

Weingarten reddened, and said confusedly: "The King of Prussia! You forget, gentlemen, that my services belong alone to the Empress Maria Theresa."

"He defends himself before he is accused," said Zetto, aside. "It is then true, as we have been told, he is playing a double game—serves Austria and Prussia at the same time." Turning to Baron Weingarten, he said: "That which we ask of you will be at the same time a service to our gracious empress, for certainly it would not only distress, but compromise her majesty, if an Austrian officer committed a murder in Prussia."

"Murder!" cried the secretary of legation.

"Yes, an intentional murder," said Baron Waltz, emphatically—"the murder of the King of Prussia. If you prevent this crime, you will receive ten thousand guilders," said Zetto, examining

Weingarten's countenance closely. He remarked that the baron, who was but a moment ago pale from terror, now reddened, and that his eyes sparkled joyously.

"And what can I do to prevent this murder?" asked Weingarten, hastily.

"You can warn the king."

"But to warn successfully, I must have proofs."

"We are ready to give the most incontrovertible proofs."

"I must, before acting, be convinced of the veracity of your charges."

"I hope that my word of honor will convince you of their truth," said Baron Waltz, pathetically.

Weingarten bowed, with an ambiguous smile, that did not escape Zetto. He drew forth his pocket-book, and took from it a small, folded paper, which he handed to Weingarten.

"If I strengthen my declaration with this paper, will you trust me?"

Weingarten looked with joyful astonishment at the paper; it was a check for two thousand guilders. "My sister's dowry," thought Weingarten, with joy. But the next moment came doubt and suspicion. What if they were only trying him—only convincing themselves if he could be bought? Perhaps he was suspected of supplying the Prussian Government from time to time with Austrian news—of communicating to them the contents of important dispatches!

The fire faded from his eye, and with a firm countenance he laid the paper upon the table.

"You are mistaken, gentlemen! that is no document, but a check."

"With which many documents could be purchased," said Zetto, smiling. Placing the paper again in his pocket-book, he took out another and a larger one. It was a check for three thousand guilders.

But Weingarten had regained his composure. He knew that men acting thus must be spies or criminals; that they were testing him, or luring him on to some unworthy act. In either case, he must be on his guard.

"I beg you to confirm your charge in the usual manner," said he, with a cold, indifferent glance at the paper. "Murder is a dreadful accusation—you cannot act too carefully. You say that an Austrian officer intends to murder the King of Prussia. How do you know this?"

"From himself," said Baron Waltz; "he communicated his intentions to me, and confided to me his entire plan."

"It appears," remarked Weingarten, mockingly, "that the officer had reason to believe he might trust you with this terrible secret."

"You see, however, that he was mistaken," said the baron, smilingly. "I demand of you to warn the King of Prussia of the danger that threatens him."

"I shall be compelled to make this danger clear, give all particulars, or the king will laugh at my story and consider it a fairy tale."

"You shall give him convincing proof. Say to him that the murder is to be committed when his majesty attends the Austrian review at Königsberg."

"How will the officer cross the Prussian border?"

"He is supplied with an Austrian passport, and under the pretence of inheriting a large property in Prussia, he has obtained leave of absence for a month."

"There remains now but one question: why does the officer wish to murder the king? what motive leads him to do so?"

"Revenge," said Baron von Waltz, solemnly—"an act of vengeance. This Austrian officer who is resolved to murder the king of Prussia, is Frederick von Trenck."

Weingarten was embarrassed, and his countenance bore an uneasy and troubled expression. But as his eye fell upon the weighty paper that lay before him, he smiled, and looked resolved.

"Now I have but one thing more to ask. Why, if your story is authentic, and well calculated to startle even the brave king, have you thought it necessary to remove my doubts with this document?"

Baron Waltz was silent, and looked inquiringly at Zetto.

"Why did I hand you this document?" said the councillor, with a sweet smile; "because gold remains gold, whether received from an Austrian councillor or from a Prussian prince."

"Sir, do you dare to insult me?" cried the secretary of legation, fiercely.

Zetto smiled. "No, I only wish to notify you that we are aware that it is through you that Baron von Trenck receives money from a certain aristocratic lady in Berlin. It is, therefore, most important that the king should be warned by you of his intended murder—otherwise you might be thought an accomplice."

Weingarten appeared not to be in the least disconcerted by this statement—he seemed not even to have heard it.

"Before I warn the king," he said, with calm composure, "I must be convinced of the truth of the story myself, and I acknowledge to you that I am not convinced, cannot understand your motives for seeking the destruction of Baron von Trenck."

"Ah! you search into our motives—you mistrust us," cried Zetto,

hastily. "Well, we will prove to you that we trust you, by telling you our secret. You know the story of the inheritance of Trenck?"

"He is the only heir of the pandour chieftain, Franz von Trenck."

"Correct. And do you know the history of this pandour chieftain Trenck?"

"I have heard a confused and uncertain statement, but nothing definite or reliable."

"It is, however, a very interesting and instructive story, and shows how far a man with a determined will and great energy can reach, when his thoughts are directed to one end. Baron Trenck wished to be rich, immensely rich—that was the aim of his life. Seduced by his love of money, he became the captain of a band of robbers, then a murderer, a church-robber; from that a brave soldier, and, at last, a holy penitent. Robbing and plundering everywhere, he succeeded in collecting millions. The pandour chieftain Trenck soon became so rich, that he excited the envy of the noblest and wealthiest men in the kingdom, so rich that he was able to lend large sums of money to the powerful and influential Baron Lowenwalde. You see, baron, it only needs a determined will to become rich."

"Oh! the foolish man," said Weingarten, shrugging his shoulders; "lending money to a noble and powerful man, is making an irreconcilable enemy."

"You speak like a prophet. It happened, as you say. Lowenwalde became Trenck's enemy. He accused him of embezzling the imperial money, of treachery and faithlessness—and Trenck was imprisoned."

"His millions obtained his release, did they not?"

"No. His riches reduced him to greater misery. His lands were sequestered, and a body of commissioners were selected to attend to them. Baron Waltz and myself belonged to this commission."

"Ah! I begin to understand," murmured Weingarten.

Baron Zetto continued, with a smile: "The commissioners made the discovery that report had greatly exaggerated the riches of Trenck. He had not many treasures, but many debts. In order to liquidate those debts, we desired his creditors to announce themselves every day, and promised them a daily ducat until the end of the process."

"I hope you two gentlemen were among his creditors," said Weingarten.

"Certainly, we were, and also Baron Marken."

"Therefore you have a threefold advantage from Trenck's im-

prisonment. first, your salary as a member of the commission; secondly, as a creditor—?”

“And thirdly—you spoke of a threefold advantage?”

“And thirdly,” said Weingarten, laughing, “in searching for the missing treasures of Baron Trenck which had disappeared so unfortunately.”

“Ah, sir, you speak like those who suspected us at court, and wished to make the empress believe that we had enriched ourselves as commissioners. Soon after this Trenck died, and Frederick von Trenck hastened from St. Petersburg to receive his inheritance. How great was his astonishment to find instead of the hoped-for millions a few mortgaged lands, an income of a hundred thousand guilders, and sixty-three creditors who claimed the property.”

“He should have become one of the commissioners,” remarked Weingarten, mockingly. “Perhaps it would have then been easier for him to obtain his possessions.”

“He attempted it in another way, with the aid of money, bribery, and persuasion. He has already succeeded in obtaining fifty-four of his sixty-three processes, and will win the others in a few days.”

“And then he will doubtless cause the commissioners to give in their accounts, and close their books.”

“Exactly. He has already commenced to do so. He ordered an investigation to be made against the quartermaster, and the commander of the regiment to which Franz von Trenck belonged. This man had accused Trenck of having embezzled eight thousand of the imperial money, and Trenck succeeded so far, that it was declared that it was not he, but his accusers, who had committed the crime. The consequence was, that the quartermaster was deposed; and it would have fared as badly with the commander, had he not found powerful protection.”

“And now the dangerous Frederick von Trenck will seize the property of the commissioners.”

“He would do so if we did not know how to prevent him. We must employ every means to remove him, and, believe me, we are not the only men who wish for his disappearance. A large and powerful party have the same desire, and would joyfully pay ten thousand guilders to be freed from his investigations.”

Weingarten's eyes sparkled for a moment, and his heart beat quickly; but he suppressed these joyful emotions, and retained his calm and indifferent expression.

“Gentlemen,” he said, quietly, “as you are speaking of a real criminal, one who intends committing so great a crime, I am at your service, and no money or promises are necessary to buy my assistance.”

“Is he really a man of honor, and have we received false information?” thought Zetto, who was misled for a moment by the quiet and virtuous looks of the secretary of legation.

“In the mean while you will not prevent those for whom you are about to do a great service from showing their gratitude,” said Baron Waltz. “Every one has a right to give or to receive a present.”

“Gentlemen,” said Baron Weingarten, smilingly, “no one has spoken of a present, but of a payment, a bribery, and you can readily understand that this is insulting to a man of honor.”

“Ah, he leaves open a door of escape,” thought Zetto. “He is won, he can be bought.—You are right, baron,” he said aloud, “and we are wrong to offer you now that which hereafter will be a debt of gratitude. We will speak no more of this, but of the danger that threatens the king. You alone can save him by warning him of his danger.”

“You really believe, then, that Trenck has the intention of murdering the king?” said Weingarten.

“We *will* believe it,” said Zetto, with an ambiguous smile.

“We must believe it!” cried Baron Waltz, emphatically. “We must either believe in his murderous intentions, or be ourselves regarded as traitors and robbers. You will think it natural that we prefer the first alternative, and as he resolved to ruin us, we will anticipate him, and set the trap into which he must fall.”

“Why could you not lay your snares in Austria, gentlemen? Why could you not accuse him of intending to murder the empress?”

Zetto shrugged his shoulders. “That would not be credible, because Trenck has no motive for murdering Maria Theresa, while he might very well thirst to revenge himself upon Frederick. You know that the king and Trenck are personal enemies. Trenck has boasted of this enmity often and loud enough to be understood by the whole world, and I do not believe that this animosity has diminished. Enemies naturally desire to destroy each other. Trenck would succeed if we did not warn the king, and enable him to anticipate his enemy.”

“How can this be done? Will the king really go to Königsberg to be present at the Austrian festivities?”

“It has been spoken of.”

“Well, Trenck now proposes to go to Dantzic, and he has boasted that he will enter Königsberg at the same time with the King of Prussia, who will not dare to arrest him.”

“We have made a bet with him of a hundred louis d'or on this boast,” said Baron Waltz, “and for greater security we have put it in writing.”

"Have you it with you?"

"Here it is."

The baron handed Weingarten a paper, which he seized hastily, unfolded, and read several times.

"This is indeed written in very ambiguous language, and calculated to ruin Trenck should it reach the hands of the king," said Baron Weingarten with a cruel smile.

Zetto returned this smile. "I wrote the document, and you will naturally understand that I measured the words very closely."

"Who copied the letter?" asked Weingarten. "Doubtlessly Baron Trenck was not magnanimous enough to do that."

"Baron Waltz is a great adept in imitating handwriting, and he happily possessed original letters of Trenck's," said Zetto, smilingly.

"You will find it most natural that I should try to win my bet," said Baron Waltz. "If Trenck is arrested before he goes to Königsberg, I have won my bet, and will receive the hundred louis d'ors from the commissioners."

All three laughed.

"These commissioners will soon have to pay you ten thousand guilders," whispered Zetto. "Here is a bond. On the day that Trenck is a prisoner of the king of Prussia, this bond is due, and you will then find that the commissioners are not backward in paying." Zetto laid the document upon the table. "You will now have the kindness to receive our testimony, and, if you desire it, we will add our accusations, or you can mention that this can be done."

Weingarten did not answer; a repentant fear tormented his heart, and for a moment it appeared as if his good and evil genius were struggling for his soul.

"This involves probably the life of a man," he said, softly; "it is a terrible accusation that I must pronounce: if not condemned to death, the king will imprison him for many long years, and I shall be responsible for this injustice."

Councillor Zetto's attentive ear heard every word; he stood near him like the evil one, and his piercing eyes rested upon the agitated countenance of Weingarten and read his thoughts.

"Have you not lived the life of a prisoner for many years?" asked Zetto, in a low, unnatural voice; "have you not always been a slave of poverty? Will you now, from weak pity, lose the opportunity of freeing yourself from this bondage? Ten thousand guilders is no fortune, but it may be the beginning of one—it may be the thread of Ariadne to lead you from the labyrinth of poverty to freedom and light; and who will thank you if you do not seize this thread—who recompense you for your generosity and magnanimity? If you tell

it to the wise and cunning, they will laugh at you; and if the foolish hear it, they will not understand you. Every one is the moulder of his own happiness; and woe unto him who neglects to forge the iron while it is hot!"

Baron Weingarten felt each of these words. He did not know if they were uttered by human lips, or if they came from the depths of his own base soul.

"It is true, it is true!" he cried, in a frightened voice; "he is a fool who does not seize the hand of Fortune when tendered by the laughing goddess—a fool who does not break his fetters when he has the power to rend them. Come, gentlemen! we take the testimony, and when that is done, I will conduct you to our ambassador, Baron Puebla."

"Not so—when that is done, we shall depart with post-haste; you alone shall receive thanks and recompense. Now to work!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE KING AND WEINGARTEN.

THE king paced his room hastily; he was very pale, his lip trembled, and his eyes sparkled angrily.

He suddenly remained standing before the Austrian secretary of legation, and gazed long and earnestly into his face; but his glance, before which so many had trembled, was sustained by the secretary with so quiet and innocent a countenance that it deceived even the king.

"I see that you are convinced of the truth of what you tell me," the king said at last; "you really believe that this madman has the intention of murdering me?"

"I am convinced of it, sire," replied Weingarten, humbly, "for I have the proof of his intention in my hand."

"The proof—what proof?"

"This paper which I allowed myself to hand to your majesty, and which you laid upon the table without reading."

"Ah, it is true! I forgot that in my excitement," said the king, mildly. "I beg you to read me the contents of this paper."

Baron Weingarten received the paper from the king with a respectful bow; his voice did not tremble in the least as he read the important words which refined malice and cruel avarice had written there—words which, if literally interpreted, would fully condemn Trenck.

The words were:

"In consequence of a bet, I pledge myself to be in Königsberg the same day in which the King Frederick of Prussia, my cruel enemy and persecutor, shall arrive there. I shall go there to do, in the king's presence, that which no one has done before me, and which no one will do after me. If I do not succeed in accomplishing my purpose, or if I should be arrested, I have lost my bet, and shall owe Baron Waltz one hundred louis d'or, which must be paid him by the commissioners of the Trenck estate.

"BARON FREDERICK VON TRENCK."

"And Trenck wrote this note himself?" said the king.

"If your majesty is acquainted with Trenck's handwriting, you will perhaps have the goodness to examine it yourself."

"I know his handwriting; give me the paper."

He took the paper and glanced over it searchingly. "It is his handwriting," he murmured; "but I will examine it again."

Speaking thus, he stepped hastily to his *escritoire*, and took from a small box several closely written yellow papers, and compared them with the document which Weingarten had given him.

Ah, how little did Trenck dream, as he wrote those letters, that they would witness against him, and stamp him as a criminal! They were already a crime in the king's eyes, for they were tender letters that Trenck had dared to write from Vienna to the Princess Amelia. They had never reached her!

And not those tender epistles of a tearful and unhappy love must bear witness against the writer, and condemn him for the second time!

"It is his handwriting," said the king, as he laid the letters again in the box. "I thank you, Baron Weingarten; you have saved me from a disagreeable occurrence; for, if I will not even believe that Trenck intended murder, he was at all events willing to create a scene, if only to gratify his vanity. It appears that he has now played out his rôle at Vienna, as well as in St. Petersburg and Berlin; and the world would forget him if he did not attract its attention by some mad piece of folly. How he intended to accomplish this I do not know; but certainly not by a murder—no, I cannot believe that!"

"Your majesty is always noble and magnanimous, but it appears to me that these words can have but one meaning. 'I shall go to Königsberg,' writes Baron Trenck, 'and there do in the presence of the king what no one has done before me, and what no one will do after me.' Does not this make his intention pretty clear?"

"Only for those who know his intentions or suspect them, for others they could have any other signification; some romantic threat, nothing more. Baron Trenck is a known adventurer, a species

of Don Quixote, always fighting against windmills, and believing that warriors and kings honor him so far as to be his enemies. I punished Trenck when he was in my service, for insubordination; now he is no longer in my service, and I have forgotten him, but woe be unto him if he forces me to remember him!"

"Your majesty will soon see if he is falsely accused. These reliable and irreproachable men came especially to warn your majesty, through me. You will discover if they have calumniated Trenck, by giving this testimony. If he does not go to Dantzic, does not enter Prussia, they have sworn falsely, and Trenck is innocent."

"He will not dare to cross the borders of my state, for he knows he will be court-martialled as a deserter. But I am convinced that he is a bold adventurer; he has boasted that he will defy me; that is certainly what no one has done before him, and what no one will do after him; but it will rest there, you may believe me."

Baron Weingarten bowed silently. The king continued, with an engaging smile:

"However, monsieur, I owe you many thanks, and it would please me to have an opportunity of rewarding you."

Until this moment, Weingarten had been standing with bowed head; he now stood erect, and his eye dared to meet that of the king.

"Sire," he said, with the noble expression of offended innocence, "I demand and wish no other reward than that you may profit by my warning. If the fearful danger that threatens your majesty is averted through me, that will be my all-sufficient recompense. I must decline any other."

The king smiled approvingly. "You speak emphatically, and it appears that you really believe in this danger. Well, I thank you only as that is your desire. I will respect your warning and guard myself from the danger that you believe threatens me; but to do that, and at the same time to convince ourselves of Trenck's evil intentions, we must observe the most perfect silence in this whole affair, and you must promise me to speak of it to no one."

"Sire, secrecy appeared to me so necessary, that I did not even communicate it to Baron Puebla, but came to your majesty on my own responsibility."

"You did well, for now Trenck will fall unwarned into the trap we set for him. Be silent, therefore, upon the subject. If you should ever have a favor to ask, come to me with this *tabatière* in your hand. I will remember this hour, and if it is in my power will grant you what you wish."

He handed Weingarten his gold, diamond-studded *tabatière*, and received his thanks with approving smiles.

After he had dismissed the secretary of legation, and was alone, the smile faded from his face, and his countenance was sad and disturbed.

"It has come to this," he said, as he paced his room, with his hands folded behind his back. "This man, whom I once loved so warmly, wishes to murder me. Ah! ye proud princes, who imagine yourselves gods on earth, you are not even safe from a murderer's dagger, and you are as vulnerable as the commonest beggar. Why does he wish my death? Were I a fantastic, romantic hero, I might say he hoped to claim his sweetheart over my dead body! But Amelia is no longer a person for whom a man would risk his life; she is but a faint and sad resemblance of the past—her rare beauty is tear-stained and turned to ashes, but her heart still lives; it is young and warm, and belongs to Trenck! And shall I dissipate this last illusion? Must she now learn that he to whom she sacrificed so much is but a common murderer? No, I will spare her this sorrow! I will not give Trenck the opportunity to fulfil his work; even his intention shall remain doubtful. I shall not go to Königsberg; and if, in his presumptuous thirst for notoriety or for vengeance, he should enter Prussia, he shall be cared for—he shall not escape his punishment. Let him but try to cross my borders—he will find a snare spread, a cage from which he cannot escape. Yes, so it shall be. But neither the world nor Trenck shall suspect why this is done. If my brothers and envious persons hold him up in future as an example of my hardness of heart, what do I care for their approval, or the praise of short-sighted men! I do my duty, and am answerable only to God and myself. Trenck intends to murder me—I must preserve myself for my people. My mission is not yet accomplished; and if a poisonous insect crosses my path, I must crush it."

### CHAPTER VIII.

#### THE UNWILLING BRIDEGROOM.

PRINCE HENRY had again passed eight days in arrest—eight tedious days, days of powerless anger and painful humiliation. This arrest had been, by the king's express orders, so strict, that no one was allowed to see the prince but Pöllnitz, who belonged, as the king said, to the inventory of the house of Hohenzollern, and, therefore, all doors were open to him.

Pöllnitz alone had, therefore, the pleasure of hearing the complaints, and reproaches, and bitter accusations of the prince against his brother. Pöllnitz always had an attentive ear for these com-

plaints; and after listening to the prince with every appearance of real feeling and warm sympathy, he would hasten to the king, and with drooping eyelids and rejoicing heart repeat the bitter and hateful words of the unsuspecting prince—words that were well calculated to increase the king's displeasure. The prince still declared that he would not marry, and the king insisted that he must submit to his will and commands.

Thus the eight days had passed, and Pöllnitz came to-day with the joyful news that his arrest was at an end, and he was now free.

"That means," said the prince, bitterly, "that I am free to wander through the stupid streets of Potsdam; appear at his table; that my clothes may be soiled by his unbearable four-legged friends, and my ears deafened by the dull, pedantic conversation of his no less unbearable two-legged friends."

"Your highness can save yourself from all these small annoyances," said Pöllnitz; "you have only to marry."

"Marry, bah! That means to give my poor sister-in-law, Elizabeth Christine, a companion, that they may sing their sorrows to each other. No, I have not the bravery of my kingly brother, to make a feeling, human being unhappy in order to satisfy state politics. No, I possess not the egotism to purchase my freedom with the life-long misery of another."

"But, *mon Dieu!* my prince," said Pöllnitz, in his cynical way, "you look at it in too virtuous a manner. All women are not as good and pure as poor Elizabeth Christine, and know how to compensate themselves in other quarters for the indifference of their husbands. We are not speaking here of a common marriage, but of the betrothal of a prince. You do not marry your heart, but your hand. Truly such a marriage-ceremony is a protecting talisman, that may be held up to other women as an iron shield upon which all their egotistical wishes, all their extravagant demands must rebound. Moreover, a married man is entirely *sans conséquence* for all unmarried women, and if they should love such a one, the happy mortal may be convinced that his love is really a caprice of the heart, and not a selfish calculation or desire to marry."

The prince regarded the smiling courtier earnestly, almost angrily. "Do you know," he said, "that what you say appears to me very immoral?"

"Immoral?" asked Pöllnitz, astonished; "what is that? Your princely highness knows that I received my education at the French court, under the protection of the Regent of Orleans and the Princess of the Palatinate, and there I never heard this word *immoral*. Perhaps your highness will have the kindness to explain it to me."

"That would be preaching to deaf ears," said the prince, shrug-

ging his shoulders. "We will not quarrel about the meaning of a word. I only wish to make you understand that I would not marry at my brother's *bon plaisir*. I will not continue this race of miserable princes, that are entirely useless, and consequently a burden to the state. Oh! if Heaven would only give me the opportunity to distinguish myself before this people, and give to this name that is so small, so unworthy, a splendor, a color, a signification!"

"Your highness is ambitious," said Pöllnitz, as the prince, now silent, paced his room with deep emotion.

"Yes, I am ambitious—I thirst for action, renown, and activity. I despise this monotonous, colorless existence, without end or aim. My God! how happy I should be, if, instead of a prince, I could be a simple private man, proprietor of a small landed estate, with a few hundred subjects, that I should endeavor to make happy! But I am nothing but a king's brother, have nothing but my empty title and the star upon my coat. My income is so small, so pitiful, that it would scarcely suffice to pay the few servants I have, if, at the same time, they were not paid by the king as his spies."

"But all this will cease as soon as you speak the decisive word; as soon as you declare yourself prepared to marry."

"And you dare to tell me this?" cried the prince, with flashing eyes—"you, that know I love a lady who is unfortunately no princess; or do you believe that a miserable prince has not the heart of a man—that he does not possess the ardent desire, the painful longing for the woman he loves?"

"Oh, women do not deserve that we should love them so ardently; they are all fickle and inconstant, believe me, my prince."

The prince cast a quick, questioning glance at the smiling countenance of the courtier.

"Why do you say this to me?" he asked, anxiously.

"Because I am convinced of its truth, your highness; because I believe no woman has the power to preserve her love when obstacles are placed in the way, or that she can be faithful for the short space of eight days, if her lover is absent."

The prince was startled, and looked terrified at Pöllnitz.

"Eight days," he murmured; "it is eight days—no, it is twelve since I saw Louise."

"Ah, twelve days!—and your highness has the really heroic belief that she still loves you?"

The prince sighed, and his brow clouded, but only for a few moments, and his countenance was again bright and his eyes sparkled.

"Yes, I have this belief; and why should I not have it, as my own heart had stood the trial? I have not seen her for twelve days, have not heard of her, and still my love is as great and as ardent as

ever. Yes, I believe that at the thought of her my heart beats more quickly, more longingly than if I had her in my arms."

"The reason of this," said Pöllnitz, almost sympathetically, "is that it is your first love."

Prince Henry looked at him angrily

"You are wrong and most unjust to this beautiful woman, who remained good and pure in the midst of the corrupting and terrible circumstances in which destiny placed her. She preserved a chaste heart, an unspotted soul. Her misfortunes only refined her, and therefore I love her, and believe that God has placed me in her way that, after all her sufferings, I might make her happy. Oh, precisely because of her sorrows, the shameful slanders with which she is pursued, and all for which she is reproached, I love her."

"Well, my prince," sighed Pöllnitz, with a tragical expression, "I never saw a bolder hero and a more pious Christian than your highness."

"What do you mean by that, Pöllnitz?"

"That an enormous amount of bravery is necessary, prince, to believe Madame von Kleist chaste and innocent, and that only a pious Christian can count himself so entirely among those of whom Christ says, 'Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.' May a good fairy long preserve you your bravery and your Christianity! But surely your highness must have important and convincing proofs to believe in the innocence and faithfulness of this woman. I confess that any other man would have been discouraged in his godlike belief by facts. It is a fact that for twelve days Madame von Kleist has sent you no message through me; it is a fact that she was not at the masked ball; that as often as I have been to her in these last days, to deliver letters for your highness, and to obtain hers in return, she has never received me, always excused herself; and, therefore, I could not receive her letters, nor deliver those of your highness."

"And were you not in Berlin early this morning? Did you not go to her as I ordered you, and tell her she might expect me this evening?"

"I went to her house, but in vain; she was with the queen-mother, and I was told that she would not return until late in the evening, I therefore could not deliver the message, your highness."

The prince stamped his foot impatiently, and walked hastily to and fro; his brow was clouded, his lips trembled with inward emotion. The sharp eye of the baron followed with an attentive, pitiless glance every movement of his face, noted every sigh that came from his anxious heart, that he might judge whether the seeds of mistrust that he had sown in the breast of the prince would grow.



But Prince Henry was still young, brave, and hopeful; it was his first love they wished to poison, but his young, healthy nature withstood the venom, and vanquished its evil effects. His countenance resumed its quiet, earnest expression, and the cloud disappeared from his brow.

"Do you know," he said, standing before Pöllnitz, and looking smilingly into his cunning face—"do you know that you do not descend, as the rest of mankind, from Adam and Eve, but in a direct line from the celebrated serpent? And truly you do honor to your ancestor! No paradise is holy to you, and to do evil gives you pleasure. But you shall not disturb my paradise; and as much of the old Adam as is still in me, I will not be foolish enough to eat of the bitter fruit that you offer me. No, you shall not succeed in making me jealous and distrustful; you shall not destroy my faith: and see you, those that believe are still in paradise, notwithstanding your ancestor, the serpent."

"My prince," said Pöllnitz, shrugging his shoulders, "your highness looks upon me as a kind of Messiah—at least it pleases you to give me a mother and no father. But oh, my prince! if you are right about my descent, philosophers are certainly wrong, for they maintain that the serpent of paradise left gold as a fearful inheritance to mankind. I shall accuse my great-grandmother the serpent of disinheriting me and condemning me to live upon the generosity of my friends and patrons."

He looked at the prince, with a sly, covetous glance, but he had not understood him; engaged in deep thought, he had stepped to the window, and was gazing up at the heavens, where the clouds were chasing each other.

"She will be the entire day with my mother, and I shall not see her," he murmured. Then, turning hastily to Pöllnitz, he asked, "How is the queen-mother? Did I not hear that she was suffering?"

"Certainly, your highness, a severe attack of gout confines her to her chair, and holds her prisoner."

"Poor mother! it is long since I saw you."

"It is true, the queen complained of it the last time I spoke with her," said Pöllnitz, with a perfectly serious face, but with inward rejoicing.

Another pause ensued. The prince appeared to reflect, and to struggle with his own thoughts and wishes. Pöllnitz stood behind him, and noted every motion, every sigh that he uttered, with his malicious smiles.

"I believe," said the prince, with still averted face, perhaps to prevent Pöllnitz from seeing his blushes—"I believe it would be

proper for me to inquire to-day personally after my mother's health; it is not only my duty to do so, but the desire of my heart."

"Her majesty will be pleased to see her beloved son again, and this pleasure will hasten her recovery."

The prince turned hastily and glanced sharply at Pöllnitz, as if he wished to read his inmost thoughts. But the countenance of the courtier was earnest and respectful.

"If that is your opinion," said the prince, with a happy smile, "my duty as a son demands that I should hasten to the queen, and I will go immediately to Berlin. But as I am going to my mother, and solely on her account, I will do it in the proper form. Have, therefore, the kindness to obtain my leave of the king—bring me my brother's answer immediately, I only await it to depart."

"And I hasten to bring it to your highness," said Pöllnitz, withdrawing.

Prince Henry looked thoughtfully after him.

"I shall see her," he murmured; "I shall speak with her, and shall learn why she withdrew herself so long from me. Oh, I know she will be able to justify herself, and these slanders and evil reports will flee before her glance as clouds before the rays of the sun."

In the mean while, Pöllnitz hastened to Sans Souci, where he was immediately received by the king.

"Your majesty," he said, joyfully, "the young lion has fallen into the net that we set for him."

"He goes then to Berlin, to the queen-mother?" asked the king, quickly.

"He begs your majesty's permission to take this little trip."

"He really charged you with this commission?"

"Yes, sire: it appears that his obstinacy is beginning to relent, and that he thinks of submitting."

The king was silent, and walked thoughtfully to and fro, with clouded brow, then remained standing before Pöllnitz, and looked sharply and piercingly at him.

"You rejoice," he said, coldly, "but you only think of your own advantage. You are indifferent to the sorrow we are preparing for my brother. You only think that your debts will be paid. Yes, I will pay them, but I shall never forget that you have betrayed my brother's confidence."

"I only acted according to your majesty's commands," said Pöllnitz, confounded.

"Certainly, but if you had resisted my commands, I would have esteemed and prized you the more. Now, I shall pay your debts, but I shall despise you. No one has reasons for thanking you."

"Sire, I desire no other thanks. Had I been paid with money

for my services, instead of fine speeches, I would have been as rich as Croesus."

"And a beggar in virtue," said the king, smiling. "But go, I was wrong to reproach you. I shall now go to Berlin, and when my brother arrives he shall find me there. Go now, my grand chamberlain, and take the prince my permission for a three days' absence."

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE FIRST DISAPPOINTMENT.

A FEW hours later the equipage of Prince Henry arrived in the court-yard of Monbijou, and the prince demanded of his mother, the widowed queen, permission to pay her his respects.

Sophia Dorothea was suffering greatly. The gout, that slow but fatal disease, which does not kill at once, but limb by limb, had already paralyzed the feet of the poor queen, and confined her to her chair. To-day her sufferings were greater than usual, and she was not able to leave her bed. Therefore, she could not receive the prince as a queen, but only as a mother, without ceremony or etiquette. That the meeting might be entirely without constraint, the maids of honor left the queen's room, and as the prince entered, he saw the ladies disappearing by another door; the last one had just made her farewell bow, and was kissing respectfully the queen's hand.

This was Louise von Kleist, for whose sake the prince had come, and for whom his heart throbbed painfully. He could have cried aloud for joy as he saw her in her bewildering loveliness, her luxuriant beauty. He longed to seize her hands and cover them with kisses—to tell her how much he had suffered, how much he was still suffering for her sake.

But Louise appeared not to have seen him, not to have noticed his entrance. She had only eyes and ears for the queen, who was just dismissing her with winning words, telling her to remain in the castle and return when she desired to see her.

"I shall remain and await your majesty's commands," said Louise, withdrawing hastily.

The queen now greeted the prince as if she had just observed him, and invited him to be seated on the *fauteuil* near her couch.

The prince obeyed, but he was absent-minded and restless, and the more the queen endeavored to engage him in harmless and unconstrained conversation, the more monosyllabic and preoccupied

he became. The poor prince remembered only that his beloved was so near, that only a door separated them, and prevented him from gazing on her beauty.

Yes, Louise was really in the next room, in the cabinet of the queen, sorrowful and exhausted; she had fallen upon the little sofa near the door, the smile had left her lips, and her brilliant, bewitching eyes were filled with tears. Louise wept; she wept for her last youthful dream, her last hope of happiness and virtue, for her sad, shadowed future and wounded pride; for to-day she had to resign forever the proud hopes, the brilliant future for which she had striven with so much energy.

But it was vain to struggle against this hard necessity. The king had given her his orders and was there to see them carried out. He sat behind that *portière* that led into the grand saloon; he had just left Louise, and, before going, had said to her, in a stern, commanding tone:

"You will fulfil my commands accurately. You know that Fritz Wendel still lives, and that I shall be inexorable if you do not act as you have promised."

Louise submitted respectfully to the king's commands; she accepted her fate, but she wept bitterly, and when she felt that the king's eyes were no longer upon her, her tears flowed unceasingly.

Perhaps Frederick still saw her, or suspected her weakness, for the *portière* opened slightly, and his noble, but stern countenance appeared.

"Madame," he said, "if the prince sees you with tearful eyes, he will not believe in your happiness."

Louise smiled painfully. "Ah! sire, he will believe I am weeping for joy. I have often heard of joyful tears."

The king did not reply; he felt for her agony, and closed the *portière*.

"I will cry no more," she said; "I have accepted my destiny, and will fulfil it bravely for the sake of my daughter. It concerns Camilla's happiness more than my own. I will deserve the respect of my unfortunate child."

In saying this, a smile like a sunbeam illuminated her countenance. But now she started up, and laid her hand in terror upon her heart. She heard steps approaching. The door moved, and in a moment the king appeared and motioned to her.

"Courage, courage!" murmured Louise, and with instinctive fear she flew away from the door and placed herself in the niche of the last window.

To reach her, the prince must cross the saloon; that would give her a few moments to recover. The door opened and Prince Henry