

but I counsel him not to play it before the King of Prussia; he would, in his jealousy, declare it was not music, nothing but sound, and signifying nothing."

"Bravo, my friend," said Frederick, taking his friend's hand; "yes, he would say that. Mr. Zoller played like a true *virtuoso*, that is to say, without intellect and without soul; he did not make music, only artistic tones. But here comes the pasty, and I shall relish it wondrous well. It is the first meat I have ever earned with my flute. Let us eat, brother Henry."

CHAPTER XV.

THE KING WITHOUT SHOES.

THE pie was really worthy of its reputation, and the king enjoyed it highly. He was gay and talkative, and amused himself in recalling the varied adventures of the past five days.

"They will soon be *tempi passati*, these *giorni felici*," he said, sighing. "To-day is the last day of our freedom and happiness; to-morrow we must take up our yoke, and exchange our simple brown coats for dashing uniforms."

"I know one, at least, who is rejoicing," said Balby, laughing. "the unhappy Deesen, who has just sworn most solemnly that he would throw himself in the river if he had to play much longer the part of a servant without livery—a servant of two unknown musicians; and he told me, with tears in his eyes, that not a respectable man in the house would speak to him; that the pretty maids would not even listen to his soft sighs and tender words."

"Dress makes the man," said the king, laughing; "if Deesen wore his cabinet-hussar livery these proud beauties who now despise, would smile insidiously. How strangely the world is constituted! But let us enjoy our freedom while we may. We still have some collections of paintings to examine—here are some splendid pictures of Rembrandt and Rubens to be sold. Then, last of all, I have an important piece of business to transact with the great banker, Witte, on whom I have a draft. You know that Madame Blaken is expensive, and the picture-dealers will not trust our honest faces; we must show them hard cash."

"Does your— Shall I not go to the bankers and draw the money?" said Balby.

"Oh no, I find it pleasant to serve myself, to be my own master and servant at the same time. Allow me this rare pleasure for a few hours longer, Balby."

The king took his friend's arm, and recommenced his search for paintings and treasures to adorn his gallery at Sans-Souci. Everywhere he was received kindly and respectfully, for all recognized them as purchasers, and not idle sight-seers. The dealers appreciated the difference between idle enthusiasm and well-filled purses.

The king understood this well, and on leaving the house of the last rich merchant he breathed more freely, and said:

"I am glad that is over. The rudeness of the postmaster at Gravo pleased me better than the civilities of these people. Come, Balby, we have bought pictures enough; now we will only admire them, enjoy without appropriating them. The rich banker, Abramson, is said to have a beautiful collection; we will examine them, and then have our draft cashed."

The banker's splendid house was soon found, and the brothers entered the house boldly, and demanded of the richly-dressed, liveried servant to be conducted to the gallery.

"This is not the regular day," said the servant, with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders, as he measured the two strangers.

"Not the day! What day?" asked the king, sharply.

"Not the day of general exhibition. You must wait until next Tuesday."

"Impossible, we leave to-morrow. Go to your master and tell him two strangers wish to see his gallery, and beg it may be opened for them."

There was something so haughty and irresistible in the stranger's manner, that the servant not daring to refuse, and still astonished at his own compliance, went to inform his master of the request. He returned in a few moments, and announced that his master would come himself to receive them.

The door opened immediately, and Mr. Abramson stepped into the hall; his face, bright and friendly, darkened when his black eyes fell upon the two strangers standing in the hall.

"You desired to speak to me," he said, in the arrogant tone that the rich Jews are accustomed to use when speaking to unknown and poor people. "What is your wish, sirs?"

The king's brow darkened, and he looked angrily at the supercilious man of fortune, who was standing opposite him, with his head proudly thrown back, and his hands in his pockets. But Frederick's countenance soon cleared, and he said, with perfect composure:

"We wish you to show us your picture-gallery, sir."

The tone in which he spoke was less pleading than commanding, and roused the anger of the easily-enraged *parvenu*.

"Sir, I have a picture-gallery, arranged for my own pleasure.

and paid for with my own money. I am very willing to show it to all who have not the money to purchase pictures for themselves; and to satisfy the curiosity of strangers, I have set aside a day in each week on which to exhibit my gallery."

"You mean, then, sir, that you will not allow us to enter your museum?" said the king, smilingly, and laying his hand at the same time softly on Balby's arm, to prevent him from speaking.

"I mean that my museum is closed, and—"

A carriage rolled thunderingly to the door; the outer doors of the hall were hastily opened, a liveried servant entered, and stepping immediately to Mr. Abramson, he said:

"Lord Middlestone, of London, asks the honor of seeing your gallery."

The countenance of the Jewish banker beamed with delight.

"Will his excellency have the graciousness to enter? I consider it an honor to show him my poor treasures. My gallery is closed to-day, but for Lord Middlestone, I will open it gladly."

His contemptuous glance met the two poor musicians, who had stepped aside, and were silent witnesses of this scene.

The outer doors of the court were opened noisily, and a small, shrivelled human form, assisted by two servants, staggered into the hall. It was an old man, wrapped in furs; this was his excellency Lord Middlestone. Mr. Abramson met him with a profound bow, and sprang forward to the door that led to the gallery.

Every eye was fixed upon this sad picture of earthly pomp and greatness; all felt the honor to the house of Mr. Abramson. Lord Middlestone, the ambassador of the King of England, desired to see his collection. This was an acknowledgment of merit that delighted the heart of the banker, and added a new splendor to his house.

While the door was being opened to admit his lordship, Balby and the king left the house unnoticed.

The king was angry, and walked silently along for a time; suddenly remaining standing, he gazed steadily at Balby, and broke out into a loud, merry laugh, that startled the passers-by, and made them look wonderingly after him.

"Balby, my friend," he said, still laughing, "I will tell you something amusing. Never in my life did I feel so humble and ashamed as when his excellency entered the gallery so triumphantly, and we slipped away so quietly from the house. Truly, I was fool enough to be angry at first, but I now feel that the scene was irresistibly comic. Oh! oh, Balby! do laugh with me. Think of us, who imagine ourselves to be such splendidly handsome men, being shown the door, and that horrid shrunken, diseased old man being

received with such consideration! He smelt like a salve-box, we are odorous with ambrosia; but all in vain, Abramson preferred the salve-box."

"Abramson's olfactories are not those of a courtier," said Balby, "or he would have fainted at the odor of royalty. But truly, this Mr. Abramson is a disgraceful person, and I beg your majesty to avenge Mr. Zoller."

"I shall do so. He deserves punishment; he has insulted me as a man; the king will punish him."*

"And now we will have our check cashed by Mr. Witte. I bet he will not dismiss us so curtly, for my draft is for ten thousand crowns, and he will be respectful—if not to us, to our money."

The worthy and prosperous Madame Witte had just finished dusting and cleaning her state apartment, and was giving it a last artistic survey. She smiled contentedly, and acknowledged that there was nothing more to be done. The mirrors and windows were of transparent brightness—no dust was seen on the silk furniture or the costly ornaments—it was perfect. With a sad sigh Madame Witte left the room and locked the door with almost a feeling of regret. She must deny herself for the next few days her favorite occupation—there was nothing more to dust or clean in the apartment and only in this room was her field of operation—only here did her husband allow her to play the servant. With this exception he required of her to be the lady of the house—the noble wife of the rich banker—and this was a rôle that pleased the good woman but little. She locked the door with a sigh and drew on her shoes, which she was accustomed always to leave in the hall before entering her state apartment, then stepped carefully on the border of the carpet that covered the hall to another door. At this moment violent ringing was heard at the front door. Madame Witte moved quickly forward to follow the bent of her womanly curiosity and see who desired admittance at this unusual hour. Two strangers had already entered the hall and desired to see the banker.

"Mr. Witte is not at home, and if your business is not too pressing, call again early to-morrow morning."

"But my business is pressing," said Frederick Zoller, hastily; "I must speak with Mr. Witte to-day."

"Can they wish to borrow money from him?" thought Madame Witte, who saw the two strangers through the half-opened door. "To borrow, or to ask credit, I am sure that is their business."

* The king kept his word. The Jew heard afterward that it was the king whom he had treated so disrespectfully, and he could never obtain his forgiveness. He was not allowed to negotiate with the Prussian government or banks, and was thus bitterly punished for his misconduct.

"May I ask the nature of your business?" said the servant. "In order to bring Mr. Witte from the Casino I must know what you wish of him."

"I desire to have a draft of ten thousand crowns cashed," said Frederick Zoller, sharply.

The door was opened hastily, and Madame Witte stepped forward to greet the stranger and his companion. "Have the kindness, gentlemen, to step in and await my husband; he will be here in a quarter of an hour. Go, Andres, for Mr. Witte." Andres ran off, and Madame Witte accompanied the strangers through the hall. Arrived at the door of the state apartment, she quickly drew off her shoes, and then remained standing, looking expectantly at the strangers.

"Well, madame," said the king, "shall we await Mr. Witte before this door, or will you show us into the next room?"

"Certainly I will; but I am waiting on you."

"On us? And what do you expect of us?"

"What I have done, sirs—to take your shoes off."

The king laughed aloud. "Can no one, then, enter that room with shoes on?"

"Never, sir. It was a custom of my great-grandfather. He had this house built, and never since then has any one entered it with shoes. Please, therefore, take them off."

Balby hastened to comply with her peremptory command. "Madame, it will suffice you for me to follow this custom of your ancestors—you will spare my brother this ceremony."

"And why?" asked Madame Witte, astonished. "His shoes are no cleaner or finer than yours, or those of other men. Have the kindness to take off your shoes also."

"You are right, madame," said the king, seriously. "We must leave off the old man altogether; therefore, you ask but little in requiring us to take off our shoes before entering your state apartment." He stooped to undo the buckles of his shoes, and when Balby wished to assist him, he resisted. "No, no; you shall not loosen my shoes—you are too worthy for that. Madame Witte might think that I am a very assuming person—that I tyrannize over my brother. There, madame, the buckles are undone, and there lie my shoes, and now we are ready to enter your state apartment."

Madame Witte opened the door with cold gravity, and allowed them to pass. "To-morrow I can dust again," she said, gleefully, "for the strangers' clothes are very dirty."

In the mean time, the two strangers awaited the arrival of Mr. Witte. The king enjoyed his comic situation immensely. Balby

looked anxiously at the bare feet of the king, and said he should never have submitted to Madame Witte's caprice. The floor was cold, and the king might be taken ill.

"Oh, no," said Frederick, "I do not get sick so easily—my system can stand severer hardships. We should be thankful that we have come off so cheaply, for a rich banker like Witte in Amsterdam, is equal to the Pope in Rome; and I do not think taking off our shoes is paying too dearly to see the pope of Holland. Just think what King Henry IV. had to lay aside before he could see the Pope of Rome—not only his shoes and stockings and a few other articles, but his royalty and majesty. Madame Witte is really forbearing not to require the same costume of us."

The door behind them was opened hastily, and the banker Witte stepped in. He advanced to meet them with a quiet smile, but suddenly checked himself, and gazed with terror at the king.

"My God! his majesty the King of Prussia!" he stammered. "Oh! your majesty! what an undeserved favor you are doing my poor house in honoring it with your presence!"

"You know me, then?" said the king, smiling. "Well, I beg you may not betray my incognito, and cash for Frederick Zoller this draft of ten thousand crowns."

He stepped forward to hand the banker the draft. Mr. Witte uttered a cry of horror, and, wringing his hands, fell upon his knees. He had just seen that the king was barefooted.

"Oh! your majesty! Mercy! mercy!" he pleaded. "Pardon my unhappy wife, who could not dream of the crime she was committing. Why did your majesty consent to her insane demand? Why did you not peremptorily refuse to take off your shoes?"

"Why? Well, *ma foi*, because I wished to spare the King of Prussia a humiliation. I believe Madame Witte would rather have thrown me out of the house than allowed me to enter this sacred room with my shoes on."

"No, your majesty, no. She would—"

At this moment the door opened, and Madame Witte, drawn by the loud voice of her husband, entered the room.

"Wife!" he cried, rising, "come forward; fall on your knees and plead for forgiveness."

"What have I done?" she asked, wonderingly.

"You compelled this gentleman to take off his shoes at the door."

"Well, and what of that?"

"Well," said Mr. Witte, solemnly, as he laid his arm upon his wife's shoulder and tried to force her to her knees, "this is his majesty the King of Prussia!"

But the all-important words had not the expected effect. Ma-

dame Witte remained quietly standing, and looked first upon her own bare feet and then curiously at the king.

"Beg the king's pardon for your most unseemly conduct," said Witte.

"Why was it unseemly?" asked his better-half. "Do I not take off my shoes every time I enter this room? The room is mine, and does not belong to the King of Prussia."

Witte raised his hands above his head in despair. The king laughed loudly and heartily.

"You see I was right, sir," he said. "Only obedience could spare the King of Prussia a humiliation.* But let us go to your business-room and arrange our moneyed affairs. There, madame, I suppose you will allow me to put on my shoes."

Without a word, Mr. Witte rushed from the room for the king's shoes, and hastened to put them, not before the king, but before the door that led into his counting room.

With a gay smile, the king stepped along the border of the carpet to his shoes, and let Balby put them on for him.

"Madame," he said, "I see that you are really mistress in your own house, and that you are obeyed, not from force, but from instinct. God preserve you your strong will and your good husband!"

"Now," said the king, after they had received the money and returned to the hotel, "we must make all our arrangements to return to-morrow morning early—our incognito is over! Mr. Witte promised not to betray us, but his wife is not to be trusted; therefore, by to-morrow morning, the world will know that the King of Prussia is in Amsterdam. Happily, Mr. Witte does not know where I am stopping. I hope to be undisturbed to-day, but by to-morrow this will be impossible."

The king prophesied aright: Madame Witte was zealously engaged in telling her friends the important news that the King of Prussia had visited her husband, and was now in Amsterdam.

The news rolled like an avalanche from house to house, from street to street, and even reached the mayor's door, who, in spite of the lateness of the hour, called a meeting of the magistrates, and sent policemen to all the hotels to demand a list of the strangers who had arrived during the last few days. In order to greet the king, they must first find him.

Early the next morning, a simple *calèche*, with two horses, stood at the hotel of the "Black Raven." The brothers Zoller were about to leave Amsterdam, and, to Madame Blaken's astonishment, they not only paid their bill without murmuring, but left a rich *douceur*

* The king's own words. See Nicolai's "Anecdotes of Frederick the Great," collection v., p. 31.

for the servants. The hostess stepped to the door to bid them farewell, and nodded kindly as they came down the steps. Their servant followed with the little carpet-bag and the two music-cases.

When Deesen became aware of the presence of the hostess, and the two head-servants, he advanced near to the king.

"Your majesty, may I now speak?" he murmured.

"Not yet," said he king, smiling, "wait until we are in the carriage."

He descended the steps, with a friendly nod to the hostess. Balby and himself left the house.

"See, my friend, how truly I prophesied," he said, as he pointed down the street; "let us get in quickly, it is high time to be off; see the crowd advancing."

Frederick was right; from the end of the street there came a long procession of men, headed by the two mayors, dressed in black robes, trimmed with broad red bands. They were followed by the senators, clothed in the same manner. A great number of the rich aristocrats of the city accompanied them.

Madame Blaken had stepped from the house, and was looking curiously at the approaching crowd, and while she and her maids were wondering what this could mean, the two Mr. Zollers entered the carriage, and their servant had mounted the box.

"May I speak now?" said Deesen, turning to the king.

"Yes, speak," said the king, "but quickly, or the crowd will take your secret from you."

"Hostess!" cried Deesen, from the box, "do you know what that crowd means?"

"No," she said, superciliously.

"I will explain; listen, madame. The magistrates are coming to greet the King of Prussia!"

"The King of Prussia!" shrieked the hostess. "Where is the King of Prussia?"

"Here!" cried Deesen, with a malicious grin, as he pointed to the king, "and I am his majesty's cabinet-hussar! Forward, postilion!—quick, forward!"

The postilion whipped his horses, and the carriage dashed by the mayors and senators, who were marching to greet the King of Prussia. They never dreamed that he had just passed mischievously by them.

Two days later, the king and his companions stood on the Prussian border, on the spot where, in the beginning of their journey, the king had written the words "majesty" and "sire."

"Look!" he said, pointing to the ground, "the two fatal words have not vanished away; the sun has hardened the ground, and they

are still legible. I must lift them from the sand, and wear them henceforth and forever. Give me your hand, Balby; the poor musician, Frederick Zoller, will bid farewell to his friend, and not only to you, Balby, but farewell also to my youth. This is my last youthful adventure. Now, I shall grow old and cold gracefully. One thing I wish to say before I resume my royalty; confidentially, I am not entirely displeased with the change. It seems to me difficult to fill the rôle of a common man. Men do not seem to love and trust each other fully; a man avenges himself on an innocent party for the wrongs another has committed. Besides, I do not rightly understand the politenesses of common life, and, therefore, received many reproaches. I believe, on the whole, it is easier to bestow than to receive them. Therefore, I take up my crown willingly."

"Will your majesty allow me a word?" said Deesen, stepping forward.

"Speak, Deesen."

"I thank Mr. Zoller for saving my life. As true as God lives, I should have stifled with rage if I had not told that haughty Hollander who Mr. Zoller was and who I was."

"Now, forward! Farewell, Frederick Zoller! Now I am on Prussian soil, the hour of thoughtless happiness is passed. I fear, Balby, that the solemn duties of life will soon take possession of us. So be it! I accept my destiny—I am again Frederick of Hohenzollern!"

"And I have the honor to be the first to greet your majesty on your own domain," said Balby, as he bowed profoundly before the king.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

THE UNHAPPY NEWS.

THE Princess Amelia was alone in her room. She was stretched upon a sofa, lost in deep thought; her eyes were raised to heaven, and her lips trembled; from time to time they murmured a word of complaint or of entreaty.

Amelia was ill. She had been ill since that unhappy day in which she intentionally destroyed her beauty to save herself from a hated marriage.* Her eyes had never recovered their glance or early fire; they were always inflamed and veiled by tears. Her voice had lost its metallic ring and youthful freshness; it sounded from her aching and hollow chest like sighs from a lonely grave. Severe pain from time to time tortured her whole body, and contracted her limbs with agonizing cramps. She had the appearance of a woman of sixty years of age, who was tottering to the grave.

In this crushed and trembling body dwelt a strong, powerful, healthy soul; this shrunken, contracted bosom was animated by a youthful, ardent, passionate heart. This heart had consecrated itself to the love of its early years with an obstinate and feverish power.

In wild defiance against her fate, Amelia had sworn never to yield, never to break faith; to bear all, to suffer all for her love, and to press onward with unshaken resignation but never-failing courage through the storms and agonies of a desolate, misunderstood, and wretched existence. She was a martyr to her birth and her love; she accepted this martyrdom with defiant self-reliance and joyful resignation.

Years had passed since she had seen Trenck, but she loved him still! She knew he had not guarded the faith they had mutually sworn with the constancy that she had religiously maintained; but she loved him still! She had solemnly sworn to her brother to give up the foolish and fantastic wish of becoming the wife of Trenck; but she loved him still! She might not live for him, but she would

* See "Berlin and Sans-Souci."