

officers cannot be always on the watch, and God's world is large; it is impossible to guard every point. My soldiers accompany him to the brook Cöslin. I commend the officer who will be discharged for neglect of duty to your highness.

"He will have my help and my eternal gratitude," whispered Amelia; she then pressed the letter of the duke passionately to her lips. "Oh, my God! I feel to-day what I have never before thought possible, that one can be happy without happiness. If fate will be merciful, and not thwart the noble purpose of Duke Ferdinand, from this time onward I will never murmur—never complain. I will demand nothing of the future; never more to see him, never more to hear from him, only that he may be free and happy."

In the joy of her heart she not only fulfilled her promise to give the messenger a gold piece for every hour of his journey, but she added a costly diamond pin for Pöllnitz, which the experienced baron, even while receiving it from the trembling hand of the princess, valued at fifty louis d'or.

The baron returned with a well-filled purse and a diamond pin to his dwelling, and with imposing solemnity he called John into his boudoir.

"John," said he, "I am content with you. You have promptly fulfilled my commands. You returned the seventh day, and have earned the extra thalers. As for your money, how much do I owe you?"

"Fifty-three thalers, four groschen, and five pennies."

"And the half of this is—"

"Twenty-seven thalers, fourteen groschen, two and a half pennies," said John, with a loudly beating heart and an expectant smile. He saw that the purse was well filled, and that his master was taking out the gold pieces.

"I will give you, including your extra guldens, twenty-eight thalers, fourteen groschen, two and a half pennies," said Pöllnitz, laying some gold pieces on the table. "Here are six louis d'or, or thirty-six thalers in gold to reckon up; the fractions you claim are beneath my dignity. Take them, John, they are yours."

John uttered a cry of rapture, and sprang forward with outstretched hands to seize his gold. He had succeeded in gathering up three louis d'or, when the powerful hand of the baron seized him and held him back.

"John," said he, "I read in your wild, disordered countenance that you are a spendthrift, and this gold, which you have earned honestly, will soon be wasted in boundless follies. It is my duty, as your conscientious master and friend, to prevent this. I cannot allow you to take all of this money—only one-half; only three louis

d'or. I will put the other three with the sum which I still hold, and take care of it for you."

With an appearance of firm principle and piety, he grasped the three louis d'or upon which the sighing John fixed his tearful eyes.

"And now, what is the amount," said Pöllnitz, gravely, "which you have placed in my hands for safe-keeping?"

"Thirty-two thalers, fourteen groschen, and five pennies," said John; "and then the fractions from the three louis d'ors makes a thaler and eight groschen."

"Pitiful miser! You dare to reckon fractions against your master, who, in his magnanimity, has just presented you with gold! This is a meanness which merits exemplary punishment."

CHAPTER II.

TRENCK ON HIS WAY TO PRISON.

BEFORE the palace of the Duke of Wurtemberg, in Cöslin, stood the light, open carriage in which the duke was accustomed to make excursions, when inclined to carry the reins himself, and enjoy freedom and the pure, fresh air, without etiquette and ceremony.

To-day, however, the carriage was not intended for an ordinary excursion, but to transport a prisoner. This prisoner was no other than the unhappy Frederick Trenck, whom the cowardly republic of Dantzic, terrified at the menaces of the king, had delivered up to the Prussian police.

The intelligence of his unhappy fate flew like a herald before him. He was guarded by twelve hussars, and the sad procession was received everywhere throughout the journey with kindly sympathy. All exerted themselves to give undoubted proofs of pity and consideration. Even the officers in command, who sat by him in the carriage, and who were changed at every station, treated him as a loved comrade in arms, and not as a state prisoner.

But while all sighed and trembled for him, Trenck alone was gay; his countenance alone was calm and courageous. Not one moment, during the three days he passed in the palace of the duke, was his youthful and handsome face clouded by a single shadow. Not one moment did that happy, cheerful manner, by which he won all hearts, desert him. At the table, he was the brightest and wittiest; his amusing narratives, anecdotes, and droll ideas made not only the duke, but the duchess and her maids, laugh merrily. In the afternoons, in the saloon of the duchess, he astonished and enraptured the whole court circle by improvising upon any given

theme, and by the tasteful and artistic manner in which he sang the national ballads he had learned on his journeys through Italy, Germany, and Russia. At other times, he conversed with the duke upon philosophy and state policy; and he was amazed at the varied information and wisdom of this young man, who seemed an experienced soldier and an adroit diplomat, a profound statesman, and a learned historian. By his dazzling talents, he not only interested but enchained his listeners.

The duke felt sadly that it was not possible to retain the prisoner longer in Cöslin. Three days of rest was the utmost that could be granted Trenck, without exciting suspicion. He sighed, as he told Trenck that his duty required of him to send him further on his dark journey.

Trenck received this announcement with perfect composure, with calm self-possession. He took leave of the duke and duchess, and thanked them gayly for their gracious reception.

"I hope that my imprisonment will be of short duration, and then your highness will, I trust, allow me to return to you, and offer the thanks of a free man."

"May we soon meet again!" said the duke, and he looked searchingly upon Trenck, as if he wished to read his innermost thoughts. "As soon as you are free, come to me. I will not forsake you, no matter under what circumstances you obtain your freedom."

Had Trenck observed the last emphatic words of the duke, and did he understand their meaning? The duke did not know. No wink of the eyelid, not the slightest sign, gave evidence that Trenck had noticed their significance. He bowed smilingly, left the room with a firm step, and entered the carriage.

The duke called back the ordnance officer who was to conduct him to the next station.

"You have not forgotten my command?" said he.

"No, your highness, I have not forgotten; and obedience is a joyful duty, which I will perform punctually."

"You will repeat this command, in my name, to the officer at the next station, and commission him to have it repeated at every station where my regiments are quartered. Every one shall give Trenck an opportunity to escape, but silently; no word must be spoken to him on the subject. It must depend upon him to make use of the most favorable moment. My intentions toward him must be understood by him without explanations. He who is so unfortunate as to allow the prisoner to escape, can only be blamed for carelessness in duty. Upon me alone will rest the responsibility to the King of Prussia. You shall proceed but five or six miles each day: at this rate of travel it will take four days to reach the last barracks

of my soldiers, and almost the entire journey lies through dark, thick woods, and solitary highways. Now go, and may God be with you!"

The duke stepped to the window to see Trenck depart, and to give him a last greeting.

"Well, if he is not at liberty in the next few days, it will surely not be my fault," murmured Duke Ferdinand, "and Princess Amelia cannot reproach me."

As Trenck drove from the gate, Duke Ferdinand turned thoughtfully away. He was, against his will, oppressed by sad presentiments. For Trenck, this journey over the highways in the light, open carriage, was actual enjoyment. He inhaled joyfully the pure, warm, summer air—his eyes rested with rapture upon the waving corn-fields, and the blooming, fragrant meadows through which they passed. With gay shouts and songs he seemed to rival the lark as she winged her way into the clouds above him. He was innocent, careless, and happy as a child. The world of Nature had been shut out from him in the dark, close carriage which had brought him to Cöslin; she greeted him now with glad smiles and gay adorning. It seemed as if she were decorated for him with her most odorous blossoms and most glorious sunshine—as if she sent her softest breeze to kiss his cheek and whisper love-greetings in his ear. With upturned, dreamy glance, he followed the graceful movements of the pure, white clouds, and the rapid flight of the birds. Trenck was so happy in even this appearance of freedom, that he mistook it for liberty.

The carriage rolled slowly over the sandy highways, and now entered a wood. The sweet odor of the fir-trees drew from Trenck a cry of rapture. He had felt the heat of the sun to be oppressive, and he now laid his head back under the shadow of the thick trees with a feeling of gladness.

It will take us some hours to get through this forest," said the ordnance officer. "It is one of the thickest woods in this region, and the terror of the police. The escaped prisoner who succeeds in concealing himself here, may defy discovery. It is impossible to pursue him in these dark, tangled woods, and a few hours conduct him to the sea-shore, where there are ever small fishing-boats ready to receive the fugitive and place him safely upon some passing ship. But excuse me, sir! the sun has been blazing down so hotly upon my head that I feel thoroughly wearied, and will follow the example of my coachman. Look! he is fast asleep, and the horses are moving on of their own good-will. Good-night, Baron Trenck."

He closed his eyes, and in a short time his loud snores and the nodding of his head from side to side gave assurance that he, also, was locked in slumber.

Profound stillness reigned around. Trenck gave himself wholly to the enjoyment of the moment. The peaceful stillness of the forest, interrupted only at intervals by the snorting of the horses, the sleepy chatter of the birds among the dark green branches, and the soft rustling and whispering of the trees, filled him with delight.

"It is clear," he said to himself, "that this arrest in Dantzic was only a manoeuvre to terrify me. I rejected the proposal of the Prussian ambassador in Vienna, to return to Berlin and enter again the Prussian service, so the king wishes to punish and frighten me. This is a jest—a comedy!—which the king is carrying on at my expense. If I were really regarded as a deserter, as a prisoner for the crime of high treason, no officer would dare to guard me so carelessly. In the beginning, I was harshly treated, in order to alarm and deceive me, and truly those twelve silent hussars, continually surrounding the closed carriage, had rather a melancholy aspect, and I confess I was imposed upon. But the mask has fallen, and I see behind the smiling, good-humored face of the king. He loved me truly once, and was as kind as a father. The old love has awakened and spoken in my favor. Frederick wishes to have me again in Berlin—that is all; and he knows well that I can be of service to him. He who has his spies everywhere, knows that no one else can give him such definite information as to the intentions and plans of Russia as I can—that no one knows so certainly what the preparations for war, now going on throughout the whole of Russia, signify. Yes, yes; so it is! Frederick will have me again in his service; he knows of my intimacy with the all-powerful wife of Bestuchef; that I am in constant correspondence with her, and in this way informed of all the plans of the Russian government.* Possibly, the king intends to send me as a secret ambassador to St. Petersburg! That would, indeed, open a career to me, and bring me exalted honor, and perhaps make that event possible which has heretofore only floated before my dazzled sight like a dream-picture. Oh, Amelia! noblest, most constant of women! could the dreams of our youth be realized? If fate, softened by your tears and your heroic courage, would at last unite you with him you have so fondly and so truly loved! Misled by youth, presumption, and levity, I have sometimes trifled with my most holy remembrances, sometimes seemed unfaithful; but my love to you has never failed; I have worn it as a talisman about my heart. I have ever worshipped you, I have ever hoped in you, and I will believe in you always, if I doubt and despair of all others. Oh, Amelia! protecting angel of my life! perhaps I may now return to you. I shall see you again,

* Frederick Trenck's "Memoirs."

look once more into your beauteous eyes, kneel humbly before you, and receive absolution for my sins. They were but sins of the flesh, my soul had no part in them. I will return to you, and live free, honored, and happy by your side. I know this by the gracious reception of the duke; I know it by the careless manner in which I am guarded. Before the officer went to sleep he told me how securely a fugitive could hide himself in these woods. I, however, have no necessity to hide myself; no misfortune hovers over me, honor and gladness beckon me on. I will not be so foolish as to fly; life opens to me new and flowery paths, greets me with laughing hopes."*

Wholly occupied with these thoughts, Trenck leaned back in the carriage and gave himself up to bright dreams of the future. Slowly the horses moved through the deep, white sand, which made the roll of the wheels noiseless, and effaced instantaneously the footprints of men. The officer still slept, the coachman had dropped the reins, and nodded here and there as if intoxicated. The wood was drear and empty; no human dwelling, no human face was seen. Had Trenck wished to escape, one spring from the low, open carriage; a hundred hasty steps would have brought him to a thicket where discovery was impossible; the carriage would have rolled on quietly, and when the sleepers aroused themselves, they would have had no idea of the direction Trenck had taken. The loose and rolling sand would not have retained his footprints, and the whispering trees would not have betrayed him.

Trenck would not fly; he was full of romance, faith, and hope; his sanguine temper painted his future in enchanting colors. No, he would not flee, he had faith in his star. Life's earnest tragedy had yet for him a smiling face, and life's bitter truths seemed alluring visions. No, the king only wished to try him; he wished to see if he could frighten him into an effort to escape; he gave him the opportunity for flight, but if he made use of it, he would be lost forever in the eyes of Frederick, and his prospects utterly destroyed. If he bravely suffered the chance of escape to pass by, and arrived in Berlin, to all appearance a prisoner, the king would have the agreeable task of undeceiving him, and Trenck would have shown conclusively that he had faith in the king's magnanimity, and gave himself up to him without fear. He would have proved also that his conscience was clear, and that, without flattering, he could yield himself to the judgment of the king." No, Trenck would not fly. In Berlin, liberty, love, and Amelia awaited him; he would lose all this by flight; it would all remain his if he did not allow himself to be enticed by the flattering goddess, opportunity, who now beck-

* "Frederick Trenck's Memoirs."

oned and nodded smilingly from behind every tree and every thicket. Trenck withstood these enticements during three long days; with careless indifference he passed slowly on through this lonely region; in his arrogant blindness and self-confidence he did not observe the careworn and anxious looks of the officers who conducted him; he did not hear or understand the low, hesitating insinuations they dared to speak.

"This is your last resting-point," said the officer who had conducted him from the last station. "You will remain here this afternoon, and early to-morrow morning the cavalry officer Von Halber will conduct you to Berlin, where the last barracks of our regiment are to be found; from that point the infantry garrison will take charge of your further transportation."

"I shall not make their duties difficult," said Trenck, gayly. "You see I am a good-natured prisoner; no Argus eyes are necessary, as I have no intention to flee."

The officer gazed into his calm, smiling face with amazement, and then stepped out with the officer Von Halber, into whose house they had now entered, to make known his doubts and apprehensions.

"Perhaps the opportunities which have been offered him have not been sufficiently manifest," said Von Halber. "Perhaps he has not regarded them as safe, and he fears a failure. In that he is right; a vain attempt at flight would be much more prejudicial to him than to yield himself without opposition. Well, I will see that he has now a sure chance to escape, and you may believe he will be cunning enough to take advantage of it. You may say this much to his highness the duke."

"But do not forget that the duke commanded us not to betray his intention to prepare these opportunities by a single word. This course would compromise the duke and all of us."

"I understand perfectly," said Von Halber; "I will speak eloquently by deeds, and not with words."

True to this intention, Von Halber, after having partaken of a gay dinner with Trenck and several officers, left his house, accompanied by all his servants.

"The horses must be exercised," said he; and, as he was unmarried, no one remained in the house but Trenck.

"You will be my house-guard for several hours," said the officer to Trenck, who was standing at the door as he drove off. "I hope no one will come to disturb your solitude. My officers all accompany me, and I have no acquaintance in this little village. You will be entirely alone, and if, on my return, I find that you have disappeared in mist and fog, I shall believe that *ennui* has extinguished you—reduced you to a bodiless nothing."

"Well, I think he must have understood that," said Von Halber, as he dashed down the street, followed by his staff. "He must be blind and deaf if he does not flee from the fate before him."

Trenck, alas! had not understood. He believed in no danger, and did not, therefore, see the necessity for flight. He found this quiet, lonely house inexpressibly wearisome. He wandered through the rooms, seeking some object of interest, or some book which would enable him to pass the tedious hours. The cavalry officer was a gallant and experienced soldier, but he was no scholar, and had nothing to do with books. Trenck's search was in vain. Discontented and restless, he wandered about, and at last entered the little court which led to the stable. A welcome sound fell on his ears, and made his heart beat joyfully; with rapid steps he entered the stable. Two splendid horses stood in the stalls, snorting and stamping impatiently; they were evidently riding-horses, for near them hung saddles and bridles. Their nostrils dilated proudly as they threw their heads back to breathe the fresh air which rushed in at the open door. It appeared to Trenck that their flashing eyes were pleading to him for liberty and action.

"Poor beasts," said he, stepping forward, and patting and caressing them—"poor beasts, you also pine for liberty, and hope for my assistance; but I cannot, I dare not aid you. Like you, I also am a prisoner, and like you also, a prisoner to my will. If you would use your strength, one movement of your powerful muscles would tear your bonds asunder, and your feet would bear you swiftly like wings through the air. If I would use the present opportunity, which beckons and smiles upon me, it would be only necessary to spring upon your back and dash off into God's fair and lovely world. We would reach our goal, we would be free, but we would both be lost; we would be recaptured, and would bitterly repent our short dream of self-acquired freedom. It is better for us both that we remain as we are; bound, not with chains laid upon our bodies, but by wisdom and discretion.

So saying, he smoothed tenderly the glossy throat of the gallant steed, whose jofyful neigh filled his heart with an inexplicable melancholy.

"I must leave you," murmured he, shudderingly; "your lusty neighing intoxicates my senses, and reminds me of green fields and fragrant meadows; of the broad highways, and the glad feeling of liberty which one enjoys when flying through the world on the back of a gallant steed. No! no! I dare no longer look upon you; all my wisdom and discretion might melt away, and I might be allured to seek for myself that freedom which I must receive alone at the hands of the king, in Berlin."

With hasty steps Trenck left the stable and returned to the house, where he stretched himself upon the sofa, and gave himself up to dreamland. It was twilight when Halber returned from his long ride.

"All is quiet and peaceful," said he, as he entered the house. "The bird has flown, this time; he found the opportunity favorable."

With a contented smile, he entered his room, but his expression changed suddenly, and his trembling lips muttered a soldier's curse. There lay Trenck in peaceful slumber; his handsome, youthful face was bright and free from care, and those must be sweet dreams which floated around him, for he smiled in his sleep.

"Poor fellow!" said Von Halber, shaking his head; "he must be mad, or struck with blindness, and cannot see the yawning abyss at his feet."

He awakened Trenck, and asked him how he had amused himself, during the long hours of solitude.

"I looked through all your house, and then entered the stables and gladdened my heart by the sight of your beautiful horses."

"Thunder and lightning! You have then seen my horses," cried Halber, thoroughly provoked. "Did no wish arise in your heart to mount one and seek your liberty?"

Frederick Trenck smiled. "The wish, indeed, arose in my heart, but I suppressed it manfully. Do you not see, dear Halber, that it would be unthankful and unknighly to reward in this cowardly and contemptible way the magnanimous confidence you have shown me."

"Truly, you are an honorable gentleman," cried Halber, greatly touched; "I had not thought of that. It would not have been well to flee from my house."

"To-morrow he will fly," thought the good-natured soldier, "when once more alone—to-morrow, and the opportunity shall not be wanting."

Von Halber left his house early in the morning to conduct his prisoner to Berlin. No one accompanied them; no one but the coachman, who sat upon the box and never looked behind him.

Their path led through a thick wood. Von Halber entertained the prisoner as the lieutenant had done who conducted Trenck the day he left Cöslin. He called his attention to the denseness of the forest, and spoke of the many fugitives who had concealed themselves there till pursuit was abandoned. He then invited Trenck to get down and walk with him, near the carriage.

As Trenck accepted the invitation, and strolled along by his side in careless indifference, Von Halber suddenly observed that the ground was covered with mushrooms.

"Let us gather a few," said he; "the young wife of one of my

friends understands how to make a glorious dish of them, and if I take her a large collection, she will consider it a kind attention. Let us take our hats and handkerchiefs, and fill them. You will take the right path into the wood, and I the left. In one hour we will meet here again."

Without waiting for an answer, the good Halber turned to the left in the wood, and was lost in the thicket. In an hour he returned to the carriage, and found Trenck smilingly awaiting him.

He turned pale, and with an expression of exasperation, he exclaimed:

"You have not then lost yourself in the woods?"

"I have not lost myself," said Trenck, quietly; "and I have gathered a quantity of beautiful mushrooms."

Trenck handed him his handkerchief, filled with small, round mushrooms. Halber threw them with a sort of despair into the carriage, and then, without saying one word, he mounted and nodded to Trenck to follow him.

"And now let us be off," said he, shortly. "Coachman, drive on!"

He leaned back in the carriage, and with frowning brow he gazed up into the heavens.

Slowly the carriage rolled through the sand, and it seemed as if the panting, creeping horses shrank back from reaching their goal, the boundary-line of the Wurtembergian dragoons. Trenck had followed his companion's example, and leaned back in the carriage. Halber was gloomy and filled with dark forebodings. Trenck was gay and unembarrassed; not the slightest trace of care or mistrust could be read in his features.

They moved onward silently. The air was fresh and pure, the heavens clear; but a dark cloud was round about the path of this dazzled, blinded young officer. The birds sang of it on the green boughs, but Trenck would not understand them. They sang of liberty and gladness; they called to him to follow their example, and fly far from the haunts of men! The dark wood echoed Fly! fly! in powerful organ-tones, but Trenck took them for the holy hymns of God's peaceful, sleeping world. He heard not the trees, as with warning voices they bowed down and murmured, Flee! flee! Come under our shadow, we will conceal you till the danger be overpast! Flee! flee! Misfortune, like a cruel vulture, is floating over you—already her fangs are extended to grasp you. The desert winds, in wild haste rushed by and covering this poor child of sorrow with clouds of dust, whispered in his ear, Fly! fly!—follow my example and rush madly backward! Misfortune advances to meet you, and a river of tears flows down the path you are blindly

following. Turn your head and flee, before this broad, deep stream overtakes you. The creaking wheels seemed to sob out, Fly! fly! we are rolling you onward to a dark and eternal prison! Do you not hear the clashing of chains? Do you not see the open grave at your feet? These are your chains!—that is your grave, already prepared for the living, glowing heart! Fly! then, fly! You are yet free to choose. The clouds which swayed on over the heavens, traced in purple and gold the warning words, Fly! fly! or you look upon us for the last time! Upon the anxious face of Von Halber was also to be seen, Fly now, it is high time! I see the end of the wood!—I see the first houses of Böslin. Fly! then, fly!—it is high time! Alas, Trenck's eyes were blinded, and his ears were filled with dust.

"Those whom demons will destroy, they first strike with blindness." Trenck's evil genius had blinded his eyes—his destruction was sure. There remained no hope of escape. The carriage had reached the end of the wood and rolled now over the *chaussé* to Böslin.

But what means this great crowd before the stately house which is decorated with the Prussian arms? What means this troop of soldiers who with stern, frowning brows, surround the dark coach with the closed windows?

"We are in Böslin," said Von Halber, pointing toward the group of soldiers. "That is the post-house, and, as you see, we are expected."

For the first time Trenck was pale, and horror was written in his face. "I am lost!" stammered he, completely overcome, and sinking back into the carriage he cast a wild, despairing glance around him, and seized the arm of Halber with a powerful hand.

"Be merciful, sir! oh, be merciful! Let us move more slowly. Turn back, oh, turn back! just to the entrance of the wood—only to the entrance of the street!"

"You see that is impossible," said Von Halber, sadly. "We are recognized; if we turn back now, they will welcome us with bullets."

"It were far better for me to die," murmured Trenck, "than to enter that dark prison—that open grave!"

"Alas! you would not fly—you would not understand me. I gave you many opportunities, but you would not avail yourself of them."

"I was mad, mad!" cried Trenck. "I had confidence in myself—I had faith in my good star—but the curse of my evil genius has overtaken me. Oh, my God! I am lost, lost! All my hopes were deceptive—the king is my irreconcilable enemy, and he will revenge my past life on my future! I have this knowledge too late. Oh, Halber! go slowly, slowly; I must give you my last testament.

Mark well what I say—these are the last words of a man who is more to be pitied than the dying. It is a small service which I ask of you, but my existence depends upon it: Go quickly to the Duke of Wurtemberg and say this to him: 'Frederick von Trenck sends Duke Ferdinand his last greeting! He is a prisoner, and in death's extremity. Will the duke take pity on him, and convey this news to her whom he knows to be Trenck's friend? Tell her Trenck is a prisoner, and hopes only in her!' Will you swear to me to do this?"

"I swear it," said Von Halber, deeply moved.

The carriage stopped. Von Halber sprang down and greeted the officer who was to take charge of Trenck. The soldiers placed themselves on both sides of the coach, and the door was opened. Trenck cast a last despairing, imploring glance to heaven, then, with a firm step, approached the open coach. In the act of entering, he turned once more to the officer Von Halber, whose friendly eyes were darkened with tears.

"You will not forget, sir!"

These simply, sadly-spoken words, breaking the solemn, imposing silence, made an impression upon the hearts of even the stern soldiers around them.

"I will not forget," said Von Halber, solemnly.

Trenck bowed and entered the coach. The officer followed him and closed the door. Slowly, like a funeral procession, the coach moved on. Von Halber gazed after him sadly.

"He is right, he is more to be pitied than the dying. I will hasten to fulfil his last testament."

Eight days later, the Princess Amelia received through the hands of Pöllnitz a letter from Duke Ferdinand. As she read it, she uttered a cry of anguish, and sank insensible upon the floor. The duke's letter contained these words:

"All my efforts were in vain; he would not fly, would not believe in his danger. In the casemates of Magdeburg sits a poor prisoner, whose last words directed to me were these: 'Say to her whom you know that I am a prisoner, and hope only in her.'"

CHAPTER III.

PRINCE HENRY AND HIS WIFE.

PRINCE HENRY walked restlessly backward and forward in his study; his brow was stern, and a strange fire flamed in his eye. He felt greatly agitated and oppressed, and scarcely knew the cause himself. Nothing had happened to disturb his equanimity and give

occasion for his wayward mood. The outside world wore its accustomed gay and festal aspect. To-day, as indeed almost every day since the prince resided at Rheinsberg, preparations were being made for a gay entertainment. A country *fête* was to be given in the woods near the palace, and all the guests were to appear as shepherds and shepherdesses.

Prince Henry had withdrawn to his own room to assume the tasteful costume which had been prepared for him; but he seemed to have entirely forgotten his purpose. The tailor and the *friseur* awaited him in vain in his dressing-room; he forgot their existence. He paced his room with rapid steps, and his tightly-compressed lips opened from time to time to utter a few broken, disconnected words.

Of what was the prince thinking? He did not know, or he would not confess it to himself. Perhaps he dared not look down deep into his heart and comprehend the new feelings and new wishes which were struggling there.

At times he stood still, and looked with a wild, rapt expression into the heavens, as if they alone could answer the mysterious questions his soul was whispering to him; then passed on with his hand pressed on his brow to control or restrain the thoughts which agitated him. He did not hear a light tap upon the door, he did not see it open, and his most intimate and dearest friend, Count Kalkreuth enter, dressed in the full costume of a shepherd.

Count Kalkreuth stood still, and did nothing to call the attention of the prince to his presence. He remained at the door; his face was also dark and troubled, and the glance which he fixed upon Prince Henry was *almost* one of hatred.

The prince turned, and the count's expression changed instantly; he stepped gayly forward and said:

"Your royal highness sees my astonishment at finding you lost in such deep thought, and your toilet not even commenced. I stand like Lot's blessed wife, turned to stone upon your threshold! Have you forgotten, my prince, that you commanded us all to be ready punctually at four o'clock? The castle clock is at this moment striking four. The ladies and gentlemen will now assemble in the music-saloon, as you directed, and you, prince, are not yet in costume."

"It is true," said Prince Henry, somewhat embarrassed, "I had forgotten; but I will hasten to make good my fault."

He stepped slowly, and with head bowed down, toward his dressing-room; at the door, he stood and looked back at the count.

"You are already in costume, my friend," said he, noticing for the first time the fantastic dress of the count. "Truly, this style becomes you marvellously; your bright-colored satin jacket shows

your fine proportions as advantageously as your captain's uniform. But what means this scarf which you wear upon your shoulder?"

"These are the colors of my shepherdess," said the count, with a constrained smile.

"Who is your shepherdess?"

"Your highness asks that, when you yourself selected her!" said Kalkreuth, astonished.

"Yes it is true; I forgot," said the prince. "The princess, my wife, is your shepherdess. Well, I sincerely hope you may find her highness more gay and gracious than she was to me this morning, and that you may see the rare beauty of this fair rose, of which I only feel the thorns!"

While the prince was speaking, the count became deathly pale, and looked at him with painful distrust.

"It is true," he replied, "the princess is cold and reserved toward her husband. Without doubt, this is the result of a determination to meet your wishes fully, and to remain clearly within the boundary which your highness at the time of your marriage, more than a year ago, plainly marked out for her. The princess knows, perhaps too well, that her husband is wholly indifferent to her beauty and her expression, and therefore feels herself at liberty to yield to each changeful mood without ceremony in your presence."

"You are right," said Prince Henry, sadly, "she is wholly indifferent to me, and I have told her so. We will speak no more of it. What, indeed, are the moods of the princess to me? I will dress, go to the music-saloon, and ask for forgiveness in my name for my delay. I will soon be ready; I will seek the princess in her apartments, and we will join you in a few moments."

The prince bowed and left the room. Kalkreuth gazed after him thoughtfully and anxious.

"His manner is unaccountably strange to-day," whispered he. "Has he, perhaps, any suspicion; and these apparently artless questions and remarks, this distraction and forgetfulness— But no, no! it is impossible; he can know nothing—no one has betrayed me. It is the anguish of my conscience which makes me fearful; this suffering I must bear, it is the penalty I pay for my great happiness." The count sighed deeply and withdrew.

The prince completed his toilet, and sought the princess in her apartment, in the other wing of the castle. With hasty steps he passed through the corridors; his countenance was anxious and expectant, his eyes were glowing and impatient. Haste marked every movement; he held in his hand a costly bouquet of white camelias. When he reached the anteroom of the princess he became pallid, and leaned for a moment, trembling and gasping for breath, against

the wall; he soon, however, by a strong effort, controlled himself, entered, and commanded the servant to announce him.

The Princess Wilhelmina received her husband with a stiff, ceremonious courtesy, which, in its courtly etiquette, did not correspond with the costume she had assumed. The proud and stately princess was transformed into an enchanting, lovely shepherdess. It was, indeed, difficult to decide if the princess were more beautiful in her splendid court toilet, adorned with diamonds, and wearing on her high, clear brow a sparkling diadem, proud and conscious of her beauty and her triumphs; or now, in this artistic costume, in which she was less imposing, but more enchanting and more gracious.

Wilhelmina wore an under-skirt of white satin, a red tunic, gayly embroidered and festooned with white roses; a white satin bodice, embroidered with silver, defined her full but pliant form, and displayed her luxurious bust in its rare proportions; a bouquet of red roses was fastened upon each shoulder, and held the silvery veil which half concealed the lovely throat and bosom. The long, black, unpowdered hair fell in graceful ringlets about her fair neck, and formed a dark frame for the beautiful face, glowing with health, youth, and intellect. In her hair she wore a wreath of red and white roses, and a bouquet of the same in her bosom.

She was, indeed, dazzling in her beauty, and was, perhaps, conscious of her power; her eyes sparkled, and a ravishing smile played upon her lips as she looked up at the prince, who stood dumb and embarrassed before her, and could find no words to express his admiration.

"If it is agreeable to your highness, let us join your company," said the princess, at last, anxious to put an end to this interview. She extended her hand coolly to her husband; he grasped it, and held it fast, but still stood silently looking upon her.

"Madame," said he, at last, in low and hesitating tones—"madame, I have a request to make of you."

"Command me, my husband," said she, coldly; "what shall I do?"

"I do not wish to command, but to entreat," said the prince.

"Well, then, Prince Henry, speak your request."

The prince gave the bouquet of white camelias to his wife, and said, in a faltering, pleading voice, "I beg you to accept this bouquet from me, and to wear it to-day in your bosom, although it is not your shepherd who offers it!"

"No, not my shepherd, but my husband," said the princess, removing angrily the bouquet of roses from her bodice. "I must, of course, wear the flowers he gives me."

Without giving one glance at the flowers, she fastened them in her bosom.

"If you will not look upon them for my sake," said the prince, earnestly, "I pray you, give them one glance for the flowers' sake. You will at least feel assured that no other shepherdess is adorned with such a bouquet."

"Yes," said Wilhelmina, "these are not white roses; indeed, they seem to be artificial flowers; their leaves are hard and thick like alabaster, and dazzlingly white like snow. What flowers are these, my prince?"

"They are camelias. I recently heard you speak of these rare flowers, which had just been imported to Europe. I hoped to please you by placing them in your hands."

"Certainly; but I did not know that these new exotics were blooming in our land."

"And they are not," said Prince Henry. "This bouquet comes from Schwetzingen; there, only, in Germany, in the celebrated green-houses of the Margravine of Baden can they be seen."

"How, then, did you get them?" said the princess, astonished.

"I sent a courier to Schwetzingen; the blossoms were wrapped in moist, green moss, and are so well preserved, that they look as fresh as when they were gathered six days since."

"And you sent for them for me?" said Wilhelmina.

"Did you not express a wish to see them?" replied the prince; and his glance rested upon her with such ardent passion that, blushing, she cast her eyes to the ground, and stood still and ashamed before him.

"And you have not one little word of thanks?" said the prince, after a long pause. "Will you not fasten these pure flowers on your bosom, and allow them to die a happy death there? Alas! you are hard and cruel with me, princess; it seems to me that your husband dare claim from you more of kindness and friendship."

"My husband!" cried she, in a mocking tone. She turned her eyes, searchingly, in every direction around the room. "It appears to me that we are alone and wholly unobserved, and that it is here unnecessary for us to play this comedy and call ourselves by those names which we adopted to deceive the world, and which you taught me to regard as empty titles. It is, indeed, possible that a wife should be more friendly and affectionate to her husband; but I do not believe that a lady dare give more encouragement to a cavalier than I manifest to your royal highness."

"You are more friendly to all the world than to me, Wilhelmina," said the prince, angrily. "You have a kindly word, a magic glance, a gracious reception for all others who approach you. To me alone

are you cold and stern; your countenance darkens as soon as I draw near; the smile vanishes from your lips; your brow is clouded and your eyes are fixed upon me with almost an expression of contempt. I see, madame, that you hate me! Well, then, hate me; but I do not deserve your contempt, and I will not endure it! It is enough that you martyr me to death with your cutting coldness, your crushing indifference. The world, at least, should not know that you hate me, and I will not be publicly humiliated by you. What did I do this morning, for example? Why were you so cold and scornful? Wherefore did you check your gay laugh as I entered the room? wherefore did you refuse me the little flower you held in your hand, and then throw it carelessly upon the floor?"

The princess looked at him with flashing eyes.

"You ask many questions, sir, and on many points," said she, sharply. "I do not think it necessary to reply to them. Let us join our company." She bowed proudly and advanced, but the prince held her back.

"Do not go," said he, entreatingly, "do not go. Say first that you pardon me, that you are no longer angry. Oh, Wilhelmina, you do not know what I suffer; you can never know the anguish which tortures my soul."

"I know it well; on the day of our marriage your highness explained all. It was not necessary to return to this bitter subject. I have not forgotten one word spoken on that festive occasion."

"What do you mean, Wilhelmina? How could I, on our wedding-day, have made known to you the tortures which I now suffer; from which I was then wholly free, and in whose possibility I did not believe?"

"It is possible that your sufferings have become more intolerable," said the princess, coldly; "but you confided them to me fully and frankly at that time. It was, indeed, the only time since our marriage we had any thing to confide. Our only secret is, that we do not love and never can love each other; that only in the eyes of the world are we married. There is no union of hearts."

"Oh, princess, your words are death!" And completely overcome, he sank upon a chair.

Wilhelmina looked at him coldly, without one trace of emotion.

"Death?" said she, "why should I slay you? We murder only those whom we love or hate. I neither love nor hate you."

"You are only, then, entirely indifferent to me," asked the prince.

"I think, your highness, this is what you asked of me, on our wedding-day. I have endeavored to meet your wishes, and thereby, at least, to prove to you that I had the virtue of obedience. Oh, I

can never forget that hour," cried the princess. "I came a stranger, alone, ill from home-sickness and anguish of heart, to Berlin. I was betrothed according to the fate of princesses. I was not consulted! I did not know—I had never seen the man to whom I must swear eternal love and faith. This was also your sad fate, my prince. We had never met. We saw each other for the first time as we stood before God's altar, and exchanged our vows to the sound of merry wedding-bells, and the roar of cannon. I am always thinking that the bells ring and the cannon thunders at royal marriages, to drown the timid, trembling yes, forced from pallid, unwilling lips, which rings in the ears of God and men like a discord—like the snap of a harp-string. The bells chimed melodiously. No man heard the yes at which our poor hearts rebelled! We alone heard and understood! You were noble, prince; you had been forced to swear a falsehood before the altar; but in the evening, when we were alone in our apartment, you told me the frank and honest truth. State policy united us; we did not and could never love each other! You were amiable enough to ask me to be your friend—your sister; and to give me an immediate proof of a brother's confidence, you confessed to me that, with all the ardor and ecstasy of your youthful heart, you had loved a woman who betrayed you, and thus extinguished forever all power to love. I, my prince, could not follow your frank example, and give a like confidence. I had nothing to relate. I had not loved! I loved you not! I was therefore grateful when you asked no love from me. You only asked that, with calm indifference, we should remain side by side, and greet each other, before the world, with the empty titles of wife and husband. I accepted this proposal joyfully, to remain an object of absolute indifference to you, and to regard you in the same light. I cannot, therefore, comprehend why you now reproach me."

"Yes! yes! I said and did all that," said Prince Henry, pale and trembling with emotion. "I was a madman! More than that, I was a blasphemer! Love is as God—holy, invisible, and eternal; and he who does not believe in her immortality, her omnipresence, is like the heathen, who has faith only in his gods of wood and stone, and whose dull eyes cannot behold the invisible glory of the Godhead. My heart had at that time received its first wound, and because it bled and pained me fearfully, I believed it to be dead, and I covered it up with bitter and cruel remembrances, as in an iron coffin, from which all escape was impossible. An angel drew near, and laid her soft, fine hand upon my coffin; my wounds were healed, my youth revived, and I dared hope in happiness and a future. At first, I would not confess this to myself. At first, I

thought to smother this new birth of my heart in the mourning veil of my past experience; but my heart was like a giant in his first manhood, and cast off all restraint; like Hercules in his cradle, he strangled the serpents which were hissing around him. It was indeed a painful happiness to know that I had again a heart, that I was capable of feeling the rapture and the pain, the longing, the hopes and fears, the enthusiasm and exaltation, the doubt and the despair which make the passion of love, and I have to thank you, Wilhelmina—you alone, you, my wife, for this new birth. You turn away your head, Wilhelmina! You smile derisively! It is true I have not the right to call you my wife. You are free to spurn me from you, to banish me forever into that cold, desert region to which I fled in the madness and blindness of my despair. But think well, princess; if you do this, you cast a shadow over my life. It is my whole future which I lay at your feet, a future for which fate perhaps intends great duties and greater deeds. I cannot fulfil these duties, I can perform no heroic deed, unless you, princess, grant me the blessing of happiness. I shall be a silent, unknown, and useless prince, the sad and pitiful hanger-on of a throne, despised and unloved, a burden only to my people, unless you give freedom and strength to my sick soul, which lies a prisoner at your feet. Wilhelmina, put an end to the tortures of the last few months, release me from the curse which binds my whole life in chains; speak but one word, and I shall have strength to govern the world, and prove to you that I am worthy of you. I will force the stars from heaven, and place them as a diadem upon your brow. Say only that you will try to love me, and I will thank you for happiness and fame."

Prince Henry was so filled with his passion and enthusiasm, that he did not remark the deadly pallor of Wilhelmina's face—that he did not see the look of anguish and horror with which her eyes rested for one moment upon him, then shrank blushing and ashamed upon the floor. He seized her cold, nerveless hands, and pressed them to his heart; she submitted quietly. She seemed turned to stone.

"Be merciful, Wilhelmina; say that you forgive me—that you will try to love me."

The princess shuddered, and glanced up at him. "I must say that," murmured she, "and *you* have not once said that you love me."

The prince shouted with rapture, and, falling upon his knees, he exclaimed, "I love you! I adore you! I want nothing, will accept nothing, but you alone; you are my love, my hope, my future. Wilhelmina, if you do not intend me to die at your feet, say that

you do not spurn me—open your arms and clasp me to your heart."

The princess stood immovable for a moment, trembling and swaying from side to side; her lips opened as if to utter a wild, mad cry—pain was written on every feature. The prince saw nothing of this—his lips were pressed upon her hand, and he did not look up—he did not see his wife press her pale lips tightly together to force back her cries of despair—he did not see that her eyes were raised in unspeakable agony to heaven.

The battle was over; the princess bowed over her husband, and her hands softly raised him from his knees. "Stand up, prince—I dare not see you lying at my feet. You have a right to my love—you are my husband."

Prince Henry clasped her closely, passionately in his arms.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FETE IN THE WOODS.

No *fête* was ever brighter and gayer than that of Rheinsberg. It is true, the courtly circle waited a long time before the beginning of their merry sports. Hours passed before the princely pair joined their guests in the music-saloon.

The sun of royalty came at last, shedding light and gladness. Never had the princess looked more beautiful—more rosy. She seemed, indeed, to blush at the consciousness of her own attractions. Never had Prince Henry appeared so happy, so triumphant, as to-day. His flashing eyes seemed to challenge the whole world to compete with his happiness; joy and hope danced in his eyes; never had he given so gracious, so kindly a greeting to every guest, as to-day.

The whole assembly was bright and animated, and gave themselves up heartily to the beautiful idyl for which they had met together under the shadow of the noble trees in the fragrant woods of Rheinsberg. No gayer, lovelier shepherds and shepherdesses were ever seen in Arcadia, than those of Rheinsberg to-day. They laughed, and jested, and performed little comedies, and rejoiced in the innocent sports of the happy moment. Here wandered a shepherd and his shepherdess, chatting merrily; there, under the shadow of a mighty oak, lay a forlorn shepherd singing, accompanied by his *zitter*, a love-lorn ditty to his cruel shepherdess, who was leading two white lambs decked with ribbons, in a meadow near by, and replied to his tender pleading with mocking irony. Upon the little