

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

lake, in the neighborhood of which they had assembled, the snow-white swans swam majestically to and fro. The lovely shepherdesses stood upon the borders and enticed the swans around them, and laughed derisively at the shepherds who had embarked in the little boats, and were now driven sportively back in every direction, and could find no place to land.

Prince Henry loved this sort of *fête*, and often gave such at Rheinsberg, but never had he seemed to enjoy himself so thoroughly as to-day. His guests generally *sympathized* in his happiness, but there was one who looked upon his joyous face with bitterness. This was Louise du Trouffle, once Louise von Kleist, once the beloved of the prince.

She was married, and her handsome, amiable, and intelligent husband was ever by her side; but the old wounds still burned, and her pride bled at the contempt of the prince. She knew he was ignorant of the great sacrifice she had been forced to make—that he despised, in place of admiring and pitying her.

The prince, in order to show his utter indifference, had invited her husband and herself to court. In the pride of his sick and wounded heart, he resolved to convince the world that the beautiful Louise von Kleist had not scorned and rejected his love. In her presence he resolved to show his young wife the most lover-like attentions, and prove to his false mistress that he neither sought nor fled from her—that he had utterly forgotten her.

But Louise was not deceived by this acting. She understood him thoroughly, and knew better than the prince himself, that his indifference was assumed, and his contempt and scorn was a veil thrown over his betrayed and quivering heart to conceal his sufferings from her. Louise had the courage to accept Prince Henry's invitations, and to take part in all the festivities with which he ostentatiously celebrated his happiness. She had the courage to receive his cutting coldness, his cruel sarcasm, his contempt, with calm composure and sweet submission. With the smile of a stoic, she offered her defenceless breast to his poisoned arrows, and even the tortures she endured were precious in her sight. She was convinced that the prince had not relinquished or forgotten her—that his indifference and contempt was assumed to hide his living, breathing love. For some time past the change in the manners and bearing of the prince had not escaped the sharp, searching glance of the experienced coquette. For a long time he *appeared* not to see her—now she felt that he *did not* see her. He had been wont to say the most indifferent things to her in a fierce, excited tone—now he was self-possessed, and spoke to her softly and kindly.

"The wound has healed," said Louise du Trouffle to herself. "He

no longer scorns because he no longer loves me." But she did not know that he had not only ceased to love her, but loved another passionately. This suspicion was excited, however, for the first time to-day. In the flashing eye, the glad smile, the proud glance which he fixed upon his fair young wife, Louise discovered that Henry had buried the old love and a new one had risen from its ashes. This knowledge tortured her heart in a wild storm of jealousy. She forgot all considerations of prudence, all fear, even of the king. She had been compelled to relinquish the hand of the prince, but she would not lose him wholly. Perhaps he would return to her when he knew what a fearful offering she had made to him. He would recognize her innocence, and mourn over the tortures he had inflicted during the last year. She would try this! She would play her last trump, and dare all with the hope of winning.

There stood the prince under the shadow of a large tree, gazing dreamily at his wife, who, with other shepherdesses, and her shepherd, Count Kalkreuth, was feeding the swans on the border of the lake. The prince was alone, and Louise rashly resolved to approach him. He greeted her with a slight nod, and turning his eyes again upon his wife, he said, carelessly, "Are you also here, Madame du Trouffle?"

"Your royal highness did me the honor to invite me—I am accustomed to obey your wishes, and I am here."

"That is kind," said the prince, abstractedly, still glancing at the princess.

Louise sighed deeply, and stepping nearer, she said, "Are you still angry with me, my prince? Have you never forgiven me?"

"What?" said the prince, quietly; "I do not remember that I have any thing to forgive."

"Ah, I see! you despise me still," said Louise, excitedly; "but I will bear this no longer! I will no longer creep about like a culprit, burdened with your curse and your scorn. You shall at least know what it cost me to earn your contempt—what a fearful sacrifice I was compelled to make to secure your supposed personal happiness. I gave up for you the happiness of my life, but I can and will no longer fill a place of shame in your memory. If, from time to time, your highness thinks of me, you shall do me justice!"

"I think no longer of you in anger," said the prince, smiling. "That sorrow has long since passed away."

"From *your* heart, prince, but not from mine! My heart bleeds, and will bleed eternally! You must not only forgive—you must do me justice. Listen, then; and so truly as there is a God above us, I will speak the truth. I did not betray you—I was not faithless. My heart and my soul I laid gladly at your feet, and thanked God

for the fulness of my happiness. My thoughts, my existence, my future, was chained to you. I had no other will, no other wish, no other hope. I was your slave—I wanted nothing but your love.”

“Ah, and then came this Monsieur du Trouffle, and broke your fetters—gave your heart liberty and wings for a new flight,” said Prince Henry.

“No, then came the king and commanded me to give you up,” murmured Louise; “then came the king, and forced me to offer up myself and my great love to your future welfare. Oh, my prince! recall that terrible hour in which we separated. I said to you that I had betrothed myself to Captain du Trouffle—that of my own free choice, and influenced by love alone, I gave myself to him.”

“I remember that hour.”

“Well, then, in that hour we were not alone. The king was concealed behind the *portière*, and listened to my words. He dictated them!—he threatened me with destruction if I betrayed his presence by look or word; if I gave you reason to suspect that I did not, of my own choice and lovingly, give myself to this unloved, yes, this hated man! I yielded only after the most fearful contest with the king, to whom, upon my knees and bathed in tears, I pleaded for pity.”

“What means could the king use, what threats could he utter, which forced you to such a step?” said the prince, incredulously. “Did he threaten you with death if you did not obey? When one truly loves, death has no terrors! Did he say he would murder me if you did not release me? You knew I had a strong arm and a stronger will; you should have trusted both. You placed your fate in my hands; you should have obeyed no other commands than mine. And now shall I speak the whole truth? I do not believe in this sacrifice on your part; it would have required more than mortal strength, and it would have been cruel in the extreme. You saw what I suffered. My heart was torn with anguish! No, madame, no; you did not make this sacrifice, or, if you did, you loved me not. If you had loved me, you could not have seen me suffer so cruelly; you would have told the truth, even in the presence of the king. No earthly power can control true love; she is self-sustained and makes her own laws. No! no! I do not believe in this offering; and you make this excuse either to heal my sick heart, or because your pride is mortified at my want of consideration; you wish to recover my good opinion.”

“Alas! alas! he does not believe me,” cried Louise.

“No, I do not believe you,” said the prince, kindly; “and yet you must not think that I am still angry. I not only forgive, but I thank you. It is to you, indeed, Louise, that I owe my present

happiness, all those noble and pure joys which a true love bestows. I thank you for this—you and the king. It was wise in the king to deny me that which I then thought essential to my happiness, but which would, at last, have brought us both to shame and to despair. The love, which must shun the light of day and hide itself in obscurity, pales, and withers, and dies. Happy love must have the sunlight of heaven and God’s blessing upon it! All this failed in our case, and it was a blessing for us both that you saw it clearly, and resigned a doubtful happiness at my side for surer peace with Monsieur du Trouffle. From my soul I thank you, Louise. See what a costly treasure has bloomed for me from the grave of my betrayed love. Look at that lovely young woman who, although disguised as a shepherdess, stands out in the midst of all other women, an imperial queen! a queen of beauty, grace, and fascination! This charming, innocent, and modest young woman belongs to me; she is my wife; and I have your inconstancy to thank you for this rare gem. Oh, madame, I have indeed reason to forgive you for the past, to be grateful to you as long as I live. But for you I should never have married the Princess Wilhelmina. What no menaces, no entreaties, no commands of the king could accomplish, your faithlessness effected. I married! God, in his goodness, chose you to be a mediator between me and my fate; it was His will that, from your hand, I should receive my life’s blessing. You cured me of a wandering and unworthy passion, that I might feel the truth and enjoy the blessing of a pure love, and a love which now fills my heart and soul, my thoughts, my existence for my darling wife.”

“Ah, you are very cruel,” said Lousie, scarcely able to suppress her tears of rage.

“I am only true, madame,” said the prince, smiling. “You wished to know of me if I were still angry with you, and I reply that I have not only forgiven, but I bless your inconstancy. And now, I pray you let us end this conversation, which I will never renew. Let the past die and be buried! We have both of us commenced a new life under the sunshine of a new love; we will not allow any cloud of remembrances to cast a shadow upon it. Look, the beautiful shepherdesses are seeking flowers in the meadows, and my wife stands alone upon the borders of the lake. Allow me to join her, if only to see if the clear waters of the lake reflect back her image as lovely and enchanting as the reality.”

The prince bowed, and with hasty steps took the path that led to the lake.

Louise looked at him scornfully. “He despises me and he loves her fondly; but she—does the princess love him?—not so! her glance is cold, icy, when she looks upon him; and to-day I saw her turn

pale as the prince approached her. No, she loves him not; but who then—who? she is young, ardent, and, it appears to me, impassible; she cannot live without love. I will find out; a day will come when I will take vengeance for this hour. I await that day!"

While Louise forced herself to appear gay, in order to meet her husband without embarrassment, and the prince walked hastily onward, the princess stood separated from her ladies, on the borders of the lake, with the Count Kalkreuth at her side. The count had been appointed her cavalier for the day, by the prince her husband; she seemed to give her undivided attention to the swans, who were floating before her, and stretching out their graceful necks to receive food from her hands. As she bowed down to feed the swans, she whispered lightly, "Listen, count, to what I have to say to you. If possible, laugh merrily, that my ladies may hear; let your countenance be gay, for I see the prince approaching. In ten minutes he will be with us; do you understand my low tones?"

"I understand you, princess; alas! I fear I understand without words; I have read my sentence in the eyes of your husband. The prince suspects me."

"No," said she, sadly bowing down and plucking a few violets, which she threw to the swans; "he has no suspicion, but he loves me."

The count sprang back as if wounded. "He loves you!" he cried, in a loud, almost threatening tone.

"For pity's sake speak low," said the princess. "Look, the ladies turn toward us, and are listening curiously, and you have frightened the swans from the shore. Laugh, I pray you; speak a few loud and jesting words, count, I implore you."

"I cannot," said the count. "Command me to throw myself into the lake and I will obey you joyfully, and in dying I will call your name and bless it; but do not ask me to smile when you tell me that the prince loves you."

"Yes, he loves me; he confessed it to-day," said the princess, shuddering. "Oh, it was a moment of inexpressible horror; a moment in which that became a sin which, until then, had been pure and innocent. So long as my husband did not love me, or ask my love, I was free to bestow it where I would and when I would; so soon as he loves me, and demands my love, I am a culprit if I refuse it."

"And I false to my friend," murmured Kalkreuth.

"We must instantly separate," whispered she. "We must bury our love out of our sight, which until now has lived purely and modestly in our hearts, and this must be its funeral procession. You see I have already begun to deck the grave with flowers, and

that tears are consecrating them." She pointed with her jewelled hand to the bouquet of white camelias which adorned her bosom.

"It was cruel not to wear my flowers," said the count. "Was it not enough to crush me?—must you also trample my poor flowers, consecrated with my kisses and my whispers, under your feet?"

"The red roses which you gave me," said she, lightly, "I will keep as a remembrance of the beautiful and glorious dream which the rude reality of life has dissipated. These camelias are superb, but without fragrance, and colorless as my sad features. I must wear them, for my husband gave them to me, and in so doing I decorate the grave of my love. Farewell!—hereafter I will live for my duties; as I cannot accept your love, I will merit your highest respect. Farewell, and if from this time onward we are cold and strange, never forget that our souls belong to each other, and when I dare no longer think of the past, I will pray for you."

"You never loved me," whispered the count, with pallid, trembling lips, "or you could not give me up so rashly; you would not have the cruel courage to spurn me from you. You are weary of me, and since the prince loves you, you despise the poor humble heart which laid itself at your feet. Yes, yes, I cannot compete with this man, who is a prince and the brother of a king; who—"

"Who is my husband," cried she, proudly, "and who, while he loves me, dares ask that I shall accept his love."

"Ah, now you are angry with me," stammered the count; "you—"

"Hush!" whispered she, "do you not see the prince? Do laugh! Bow down and give the swans these flowers!"

The count took the flowers, and as he gave them to the swans, he whispered:

"Give me at least a sign that you are not angry, and that you do not love the prince. Throw this hated bouquet, which has taken the place of mine, into the water; it is like a poisoned arrow in my heart."

"Hush!" whispered the princess. She turned and gave the prince a friendly welcome.

Prince Henry was so happy in her presence, and so dazzled by her beauty, that he did not remark the melancholy of the count, and spoke with him gayly and jestingly, while the count mastered himself, and replied in the same spirit.

The princess bowed down to the swans, whom she enticed once more with caresses to the borders of the lake. Suddenly she uttered a loud cry, and called to the two gentlemen for help. The great white swan had torn the camelias from the bosom of the princess, and sailed off proudly upon the clear waters of the lake.

CHAPTER V.

INTRIGUES.

WHILE Prince Henry celebrated Arcadian *fêtes* at Rheinsberg, and gave himself up to love and joy, King Frederick lived in philosophic retirement at Sans-Souci. He came to Berlin only to visit the queen-mother, now dangerously ill, or to attend the meetings of his cabinet ministers. Never had the king lived so quietly, never had he received so few guests at Sans-Souci, and, above all, never had the world so little cause to speak of the King of Prussia. He appeared content with the laurels which the two Silesian wars had placed upon his heroic brow, and he only indulged the wish that Europe, exhausted by her long and varied wars, would allow him that rest and peace which the world at large seemed to enjoy.

Those who were honored with invitations to Sans-Souci, and had opportunities to see the king, could only speak of that earthly paradise; of the peaceful stillness which reigned there, and which was reflected in every countenance; of Frederick's calm cheerfulness and innocent enjoyment.

"The king thinks no more of politics," said the frolicsome Berliners; "he is absorbed in the arts and sciences, and, above all other things, he lives to promote the peaceful prosperity of his people."

The balance of power and foreign relations troubled him no longer; he wished for no conquests, and thought not of war. In the morning he was occupied with scientific works, wrote in his "Histoire de mon Temps," or to his friends, and took part in the daily-recurring duties of the government. The remainder of the day was passed in the garden of Sans-Souci, in pleasant walks and animated conversation, closing always with music. Concerts took place every evening in the apartments of the king, in which he took part, and he practised difficult pieces of his own or Quantz's composition, under Quantz's direction. From time to time he was much occupied with his picture-gallery, and sent Gotzkowsky to Italy to purchase the paintings of the celebrated masters.

King Frederick appeared to have reached his goal; at least, that which, during the storm of war, he had often called his ideal; he could devote his life to philosophy and art in the enchanting retirement of his beloved Sans-Souci. The tumult and discord of the world did not trouble him; in fact, the whole world seemed to be at peace, and all Europe was glad and happy.

Maria Theresa was completely bound by the last peace contract at Dresden; besides, the two Silesian wars had weakened and im-

poverished Austria, and time was necessary to heal her wounds before she dared make a new attempt to reconquer the noble jewel of Silesia, which Frederick had torn from her crown. Notwithstanding her pious and Christian pretensions, she hated Frederick with her whole heart.

England had allied herself with Russia. France was at the moment too much occupied with the pageants which the lovely Marquise de Pompadour celebrated at Versailles, not to be in peace and harmony with all the world; yes, even with her natural enemy, Austria. Count Kaunitz, her ambassador at Paris, had, by his wise and adroit conduct, banished the cloud of mistrust which had so long lowered between these two powers.

This was the state of things at the close of the year 1775. Then was the general quiet interrupted by the distant echo of a cannon. Europe was startled, and rose up from her comfortable *siesta* to listen and inquire after the cause of this significant thunderbolt.

This roar of cannon, whose echo only had been heard, had its birth far, far away in America. The cannon, however, had been fired by a European power—by England, always distinguished for her calculating selfishness, which she wished the world to consider praiseworthy and honorable policy. England considered her mercantile interests in America endangered by France, and she thirsted with desire to have not only an East India but a West India company. The French colonies in America had long excited the envy and covetousness of England, and as a sufficient cause for war had utterly failed, she was bold enough to take the initiative without excuse!

In the midst of a general peace, and without any declaration of war, she seized upon a country lying on the borders of the Ohio River, and belonging to French Canada, made an attack upon some hundred merchant-ships, which were navigating the Ohio, under the protection of the ships-of-war, and took them as prizes.*

That was the cannon-shot which roused all Europe from her comfortable slumber and dreamy rest.

The Empress of Austria began to make warlike preparations in Bohemia, and to assemble her troops on the borders of Saxony and Bohemia. The Empress of Russia discontinued instantaneously her luxurious feasts and wild orgies, armed her soldiers, and placed them on the borders of Courland. She formed an immediate alliance with England, by which she bound herself to protect the territory of George II. in Germany, if attacked by France, in retaliation for the French merchant-ships taken by England on the Ohio River. Hanover, however, was excepted, as Frederick of Prussia might

* "Characteristics of the Important Events of the Seven Years' War," by Retson.

possibly give her his aid. For this promised aid, Russia received from England the sum of £150,000 sterling, which was truly welcome to the powerful Bestuchef, from the extravagant and pomp-loving minister of the queen.

Saxony also prepared for war, and placed her army on the borders of Prussia, for which she received a subsidy from Austria. This was as gladly welcomed by Count Brühl, the luxurious minister of King Augustus the Third of Poland and Saxony, as the English subsidy was by Bestuchef.

The King of France appeared to stand alone; even as completely alone as Frederick of Prussia. Every eye therefore was naturally fixed upon these two powers, who seemed thus forced by fate to extend the hand of fellowship to each other, and form such an alliance as England had done with Russia, and Austria with Saxony.

This contract between Prussia and France would have been the signal for a general war, for which all the powers of Europe were now arming themselves. But France did not extend her hand soon enough to obtain the friendship of Prussia. France distrusted Prussia, even as Austria, England, Russia, and Saxony distrusted and feared the adroit young adventurer, who in the last fifty years had placed himself firmly amongst the great powers of Europe, and was bold, brave, and wise enough to hold a powerful and self-sustained position in their circle.

France—that is to say, Louis the Fifteenth—France—that is to say, the Marquise de Pompadour, hated the King of Prussia manfully. By his bold wit he had often brought the French court and its immoralities into ridicule and contempt.

Austria and her minister Kaunitz and Maria Theresa hated Frederick of Prussia, because of his conquest of Silesia.

Russia—that is to say, Elizabeth and Bestuchef—hated the King of Prussia for the same reason with France. Frederick's cutting wit had scourged the manners of the Russian court, as it had humiliated and exposed the court of France.

Saxony—that is to say, Augustus the Third, and his minister, Count Brühl—hated Frederick from instinct, from envy, from resentment. This insignificant and small neighbor had spread her wings and made so bold a flight, that Saxony was completely overshadowed.

England hated no one, but she feared Prussia and France, and this fear led her to master the old-rooted national hatred to Russia, and form an alliance with her for mutual protection. But the English people did not share the fears of their king; they murmured over this Russian ally, and this discontent, which found expression

in Parliament, rang so loudly, that Frederick might well have heard it, and formed his own conclusions as to the result.

But did he hear it? Was the sound of his flute so loud? Was his study hermetically sealed, so that no echo from the outside world could reach his ears?

There was no interruption to his quiet, peaceful life; he hated nobody, made no warlike preparations; his soldiers exercised no more than formerly. Truly they exercised; and at the first call to battle, 150,000 men would be under arms.

But Frederick seemed not inclined to give this call; not inclined to exchange the calm pleasures of Sans-Souci for the rude noises of tents and battle-fields. He seemed to be in peaceful harmony with all nations. He was particularly friendly and conciliating toward the Austrian embassy; and not only was the ambassador, Count Peubla invited often to the royal table, but his secretary, Baron Weingarten, came also to Potsdam and Sans-Souci. The king appeared attached to him, and encouraged him to come often, to walk in the royal gardens.

Frederick was gracious and kind toward the officials of all the German powers. On one occasion, when the wife of Councillor Reichart, attached to the Saxon embassy, was confined, at Frederick's earnest wish, his private secretary, Eichel, stood as god-father to the child.*

In order to promote good feeling in Saxony, the king sent Count Mattzahn, one of the most eloquent cavaliers of the day, to the Dresden court; and so well supplied was he, that he dared compete in pomp and splendor with Count Brühl.

Frederick appeared to attach special importance to the friendship of Saxony, and with none of his foreign ambassadors was he engaged in so active a correspondence as with Mattzahn. It was said that these letters were of a harmless and innocent nature, relating wholly to paintings, which the count was to purchase from the Saxon galleries, or to music, which Frederick wished to obtain from amongst the collection of the dead Hesse, or to an Italian singer Frederick wished to entice to Berlin.

The world no longer favored Frederick's retirement. The less disposed he was to mingle in politics, the more Maria Theresa, Elizabeth of Russia, Augustus of Saxony, and the Marquise de Pompadour agitated the subject.

France had not forgotten that the contract between herself and Prussia was about to expire. She knew also that the subsidy money between England and Russia had not yet been voted by Parliament. It was therefore possible to reap some advantages from this point.

* "Characteristics of the Important Events of the Seven Years' War."

With this view, France sent the Duke de Nivernois as special ambassador to Berlin, to treat with the king as to the renewal of the old alliance.

The Duke de Nivernois came with a glittering suite to Berlin, and was received at the Prussian court with all the consideration which his rank and official character demanded. The grand master of ceremonies, Baron von Pöllnitz, was sent forward to meet him, and to invite him, in the name of the king, to occupy one of the royal palaces in Berlin.

Every room of the palace was splendidly decorated for the reception of the duke, and as soon as he arrived, two guards were placed before the house—a mark of consideration which the king had only heretofore given to reigning princes.

The duke accepted these distinguished attentions with lively gratitude, and pleaded for an immediate audience, in order to present his credentials.

Pöllnitz was commissioned to make all necessary arrangements, and agree with the duke as to the day and hour of the ceremony.

The king, who wished to give the French duke a proof of his consideration, intended that the presentation should be as imposing as possible, and all Berlin was to be witness of the friendship existing between the French and Prussian courts.

Upon the appointed day, a dazzling assemblage of equipages stood before the palace of the Duke de Nivernois. These were the royal festal carriages, intended for the members of the French embassy. Then followed a long line of carriages, occupied by the distinguished members of the Prussian court. Slowly and solemnly this pompous procession moved through the streets, and was received at the portal of the king's palace by the royal guard. Richly-dressed pages, in advance of whom stood the grand master of ceremonies with his golden staff, conducted the French ambassador to the White saloon, where the king, in all his royal pomp, and surrounded by the princes of his house, received him.

The solemn ceremony began; the duke drew near the throne, and, bowing his knee, handed his credentials to the king, who received them with a gracious smile.

The duke commenced his address; it was filled with flowery phrases, suited to the great occasion. Frederick listened with the most earnest attention, and his reply was kind, but dignified and laconic.

The public ceremony was over, and now came the important part of the audience, the confidential conversation. To this point the duke had looked with lively impatience; for this, indeed, had he been sent to Berlin.

The king descended from the throne, and laying aside all the solemnity of court etiquette, he approached the duke in the most gracious and genial manner, welcomed him heartily, and expressed his sincere delight at his arrival.

"Ah, sire," said the duke, with animation, how happy will my king be to learn that his ambassador has been so graciously received, by your majesty!"

The king smiled. "I thought the ceremony was all over," said he, "and that I no longer spoke with the ambassador, but with the Duke de Nivernois, whom I know and love, and whose intellectual conversation will afford me a rare pleasure. Let us, therefore, chat together innocently, and forget the stiff ceremonies with which, I think, we have both been sufficiently burdened to-day. Tell me something of Paris, monsieur, of that lovely, enchanting, but overbold coquette, Paris, whom the world adores while it ridicules, and imitates while it blames."

"Ah, sire, if I must speak of Paris, I must first tell you of my king—of my king, who wishes nothing more ardently than the renewal of the bond of friendship between your majesty and himself, and the assurance of its long continuance; who—"

"That is most kind of his majesty," said Frederick, interrupting him, "and I certainly share the friendly wishes of my exalted brother of France. But tell me now something of your learned men; how goes it with the Academy? do they still refuse Voltaire a seat, while so many unknown men have become academicians?"

"Yes, sire; these academicians are obstinate in their conclusions; and, as the Academy is a sort of republic, the king has no power to control them. If that were not so, my exalted master, King Louis, in order to be agreeable to your majesty, would exert all his influence, and—"

"Ah, sir," interrupted the king, "it is just and beautiful that the Academy is a free republic, which will not yield to the power and influence of the king. Art and science need for their blossom and growth freedom of thought and speech. Fate ordained that I should be born a king; but when alone in my study, alone with my books, I am fully content to be republican in the kingdom of letters. I confess the truth to you when, as a wise republican, I read thoughtfully in the pages of history, I sometimes come to the conclusion that kings and princes are unnecessary articles of luxury, and I shrug my shoulders at them rather contemptuously."

"And yet, sire, the arts need the protection of princes; that the republic of letters blooms and flourishes in a monarchy is shown in Prussia, where a royal republican and a republican king governs his people, and at the same time gives freedom of thought and speech

to science. France should be proud and happy that your majesty has adopted so many of her sons into your republic of letters; we dare, therefore, come to the conclusion that your majesty will not confine your interest wholly to them, but that this alliance between France and Prussia, which my king so earnestly desires and—"

"Unhappily," said the king, interrupting him eagerly, "the distinguished Frenchmen who have become my allies, are exactly those whom their strong-minded, fanatical mother, *La France*, has cast out from her bosom as dishonored sons. Voltaire lives in Ferney. Jean Jacques Rousseau, whom I admire but do not love, lives in Geneva, where he has been obliged to take refuge. I have also been told that the pension which, in a favorable moment, was granted to D'Alembert, has been withdrawn. Have I been falsely informed? has my friend D'Alembert not fallen into disgrace? is not my friend the encyclopædian, regarded as a transgressor, and a high traitor because he uses the undoubted right of free thought, does not blindly believe, but looks abroad with open eyes and a clear intellect?"

The duke replied by a few confused and disconnected words, and a shadow fell upon his clear countenance; three times had Frederick interrupted him when he sought to speak of the King of France and his friendship for his brother of Prussia. The duke did not dare choose this theme for the fourth time, which was so evidently distasteful to the king; he must, therefore, submit and follow the lead of his majesty, and in lieu of alliances and state questions discuss philosophy and the arts. So soon as the duke came to this conclusion, he smoothed his brow, and, with all his amiability, animation, and intelligence, he replied to the questions of the king, and the conversation was carried on in an unbroken stream of wit and gayety.

"At the next audience I will surely find an opportunity to speak of politics," said the duke to himself. "The king cannot always be so immovable as to-day."

But the second and the third audience came, and the king was as inexplicable as the first time; he conversed with the duke kindly and freely showed him the most marked attention and personal confidence; but so often as the duke sought to introduce the subject of politics and the public interests which had brought him to Berlin, the king interrupted him and led the conversation to indifferent subjects. This lasted two weeks, and the French court looked with painful anxiety for intelligence from the Duke de Nivernois that the old alliance was renewed and fully ratified, and she had, therefore, nothing to fear from Prussia. This uncertainty was no longer to be borne, and the duke determined to end it by a *coup d'état*.

He wrote, therefore, to the king, and asked for a private audi-

ence. To his great joy his request was granted; the king invited him to come the next day to Sans-Souci.

"At last! at last!" said the duke, drawing a long breath; and with proud, French assurance, he added, "To-morrow, then, we will renew this contract which binds the hands of Prussia, and gives France liberty of action."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRIVATE AUDIENCE.

THE king received the French ambassador without ceremony. There were no guards, no pages, no swarms of curious listening courtiers, only a few of his trusty friends who welcomed the duke and conversed with him, while Pöllnitz entered the adjoining room and informed the king of his arrival.

"His majesty entreats the duke to enter," said Pöllnitz, opening the door of the library. The king advanced. He was dressed simply; even the golden star, which was seldom absent from his coat, was now missing.

"Come, duke," said the king, pleasantly, "come into my *tusculum*." He then entered the library, quickly followed by the duke.

"Well, sir," said the king, "we are now in that room in which I lately told you I was but a republican. You have crossed the threshold of the republic of letters!"

"But I see a king before me," said the duke, bowing reverentially; "a king who has vanquished his republic, and surpassed all the great spirits that have gone before him."

The king's glance rested upon the shelves filled with books, on whose back glittered in golden letters the most distinguished names of all ages.

"Homer, Tacitus, Livy, Petrarch!—ye great spirits of my republic! hear how this traitor slanders you."

"How I honor you, sire, for truly it is a great honor to be subdued and vanquished by such a king as Frederick the Second."

The king looked at him fixedly. "You wish to bewilder me with flattery, duke," said he, "well knowing that it is a sweet opiate, acceptable to princes, generally causing their ruin. But in this chamber, duke, I am safe from this danger, and here in my republic we will both enjoy the Spartan soup of truth. Believe me, sir, it is at times a wholesome dish, though to the pampered stomach it is bitter and distasteful. I can digest it, and as you have come to visit me, you will have to partake of it."

"And I crave it, sire—crave it as a man who has fasted for two weeks."

"For two weeks?" said the king, laughing. "Ah, it is true you have been here just that time."

"For two long weeks has your majesty kept me fasting and longing for this precious soup," said the duke, reproachfully.

"My broth was not ready," said the king, gayly; "it was still bubbling in the pot. It is now done, and we will consume it together. Let us be seated, duke."

If Frederick had turned at this moment, he would have seen the grand chamberlain Pöllnitz advancing on tiptoe to the open door, in order to listen to the conversation. But the king was looking earnestly at the ambassador. After a few moments of silence, he turned to the duke.

"Is my soup still too hot for you?" said he, laughingly.

"No, sire," said the duke, bowing. "But I waited for your majesty to take the first spoonful. Would it not be better to close that door?"

"No," said the king, hastily; "I left it open, intentionally, so that your eyes, when wearied with the gloom of my republic, could refresh themselves on the glittering costumes of my courtiers."

"He left it open," thought the duke, "for these courtiers to hear all that is said. He wishes the whole world to know how he rejected the friendship of France."

"Well," said the king, "I will take my spoonful. We will commence without further delay. Duke de Nivernois, you are here because the contract made between France and Prussia is at an end, and because France wishes me to fancy that she is anxious for a renewal of this treaty, and for the friendship of Prussia."

"France wishes to convince you of this, sire," said the duke.

"Convince me?" said the king, ironically. "And how?"

"King Louis of France not only proposes to renew this contract, sire, but he wishes to draw the bonds of friendship much closer between France and Prussia."

"And to what end?" said the king. "For you well know, duke, that in politics personal inclinations must not be considered. Were it not so, I would, without further delay, grasp the friendly hand that my brother of France extends toward me, for the whole world knows that I love France, and am proud of the friendship of her great spirits. But as, unfortunately, there is no talk here of personal inclinations but of politics, I repeat my question. To what end does France desire the friendship of Prussia? What am I to pay for it? You see, duke, I am a bad diplomatist—I make no digression, but go to the point at once."

"And that, perhaps, is the nicest diplomacy," said the duke, sighing.

"But, duke, do tell me, why is France so anxious for the friendship of Prussia?"

"To have an ally in you and be your ally. By the first, France will have a trusty and powerful friend in Germany when her lands are attacked by the King of England; by the last, your majesty will have a trusty and powerful friend when Prussia is attacked by Russia or Austria."

"We will now speak of the first," said the king, quietly. "France, then, thinks to transplant this war with England to German ground?"

"Everywhere, sire, that the English colors predominate. England alone will be accountable for this war."

"It is true England has been hard upon you, but still it seems to me you have revenged yourselves sufficiently. When England made herself supreme ruler of the Ohio, France, by the conquest of the Isle of Minorca, obtained dominion over the Mediterranean Sea, thereby wounding England so deeply, that in her despair she turned her weapons against herself. Admiral Byng, having been overcome by your admiral Marquis de la Gallissionaire, paid for it with his life. I think France should be satisfied with this expiation."

"France will wash off her insults in English blood, and Minorca is no compensation for Canada and Ohio. England owes us satisfaction, and we will obtain it in Hanover."

"In Hanover?" repeated the king, angrily.

"Hanover will be ours, sire, though we had no such ally as Germany; but it will be ours the sooner if we have that help which you can give us. Standing between two fires, England will have to succumb, there will be no escape for her. That is another advantage, sire, that France expects from the treaty with Prussia. But I will now speak of the advantages which your majesty may expect from this alliance. You are aware that Prussia is surrounded by threatening enemies; that Austria and Russia are approaching her borders with evil intentions, and that a day may soon come when Maria Theresa may wish to reconquer this Silesia which, in her heart, she still calls her own. When this time comes, your majesty will not be alone; your ally, France, will be at your side; she will repay with faithful, active assistance the services which your majesty rendered her in Hanover. She will not only render her all the assistance in her power, but she will also allow her to partake of the advantages of this victory. Hanover is a rich land, not rich only in products, but in many other treasures. The Electors of Hanover have in their residences not only their chests filled with

gold and precious jewels, but also the most magnificent paintings. It is but natural that we should pay ourselves in Hanover for the expenses of this war of which England is the cause. You, then, will share with us these treasures. And still this is not all. France is grateful; she offers you, therefore, one of her colonies, the Isle of Tobago, as a pledge of friendship and love."

"Where is this isle?" said the king, quietly.

"In the West Indies, sire."

"And where is Hanover?"

The duke looked at the king in amazement, and remained silent. The king repeated his question.

"Well," said the duke, hesitatingly, "Hanover is in Germany."

"And for this German land which, with my aid, France is to conquer, I am to receive as a reward the little Isle of Tobago in the West Indies! Have you finished, duke, or have you other propositions to make?"

"Sire, I have finished, and await your answer."

"And this answer, duke, shall be clearer and franker than your questions. I will begin by answering the latter part of your speech. Small and insignificant as the King of Prussia may appear in your eyes, I would have you know he is no robber, no highwayman; he leaves these brilliant amusements without envy to France. And now, my dear duke, I must inform you, that since this morning it has been placed out of my power to accept this alliance; for this morning a treaty was signed, by which I became the ally of England!"

"It is impossible, sire," cried the duke; "this cannot be!"

"Not possible, sir!" said the king, "and still it is true. I have formed a treaty with England—this matter is settled! I have been an ally of Louis XV.; I have nothing to complain of in him. I love him; well, am I now his enemy? I hope that there may be a time when I may again approach the King of France. Pray tell him how anxiously I look forward to this time. Tell him I am much attached to him."

"Ah, sire," said the duke, sighing, "it is a great misfortune. I dare not go to my monarch with this sad, unexpected news; my monarch who loves you so tenderly, whose most earnest wish it is for France to be allied to Prussia."

"Ah, duke," said Frederick, laughing, "France wishes for ships as allies. I have none to offer—England has. With her help I shall keep the Russians from Prussia, and with my aid she will keep the French from Hanover."

"We are to be enemies, then?" said the duke, sadly.

"It is a necessary evil, for which there is no remedy. But Louis

XV. can form other alliances," said Frederick, ironically. "It may be for his interest to unite with the house of Austria!"

The duke was much embarrassed.

"Your majesty is not in earnest," said he, anxiously.

"Why not, duke?" said Frederick; "an alliance between France and Austria—it sounds very natural. If I were in your place, I would propose this to my court."

He now rose, which was a sign to the duke that the audience was at an end.

"I must now send a courier at once to my court," said the duke, "and I will not fail to state that your majesty advises us to unite with Austria."

"You will do well; that is," said the king, with a meaning smile—"that is, if you think your court is in need of such advice, and has not already acted without it. When do you leave, duke?"

"To-morrow morning, sire."

"Farewell, duke, and do not forget that in my heart I am the friend of France, though we meet as enemies on the battle-field."

The duke bowed reverentially, and, sighing deeply, left the royal library, "the republic of letters," to hasten to Berlin.

The king looked after him thoughtfully.

"The die is cast," said he, softly. "There will be war! Our days of peace and quietude are over, and the days of danger are approaching!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRAITOR.

THE sun had just risen, and was shedding its golden rays over the garden of Sans-Souci, decking the awaking flowers with glittering dew-drops. All was quiet—Nature alone was up and doing; no one was to be seen, no sound was to be heard, but the rustling of trees and the chirping of birds. All was still and peaceful; it seemed as if the sound of human misery and passion could not reach this spot. There was something so holy in this garden, that you could but believe it to be a part of paradise in which the serpent had not yet exercised his arts of seduction. But no, this is but a beautiful dream. Man is here, but he is sleeping; he is still resting from the toils and sorrows of the past day. Man is here!—he is coming to destroy the peacefulness of Nature with his sorrows and complaints.

The little gate at the farthest end of that shady walk is opened,