

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,

and a man enters. The dream is at an end, and Sans-Souci is now but a beautiful garden, not a paradise, for it has been desecrated by the foot of man. He hastens up the path leading to the palace; he hurries forward, panting and gasping. His face is colorless, his long hair is fluttering in the morning wind, his eyes are fixed and glaring; his clothes are covered with dust, and his head is bare.

There is something terrifying in the sudden appearance of this man. Nature seems to smile no more since he came; the trees have stopped their whispering, the birds cannot continue their melodious songs since they have seen his wild, anxious look. The peacefulness of Nature is broken. For man—that is to say, misery, misfortune; for man—that is to say, sin, guilt, and meanness—is there, pouring destroying drops of poison in the golden chalice of creation.

Breathlessly he hurries on, looking neither to right nor left. He has now reached the terrace, and now he stops for a moment to recover breath. He sees not the glorious panorama lying at his feet; he is blind to all but himself. He is alone in the world—alone with his misery, his pain. Now he hastens on to the back of the palace. The sentinels walking before the back and the front of the castle know him, know where he is going, and they barely glance at him as he knocks long and loudly at that little side window.

It is opened, and a young girl appears, who, when perceiving this pale, anxious countenance, which is striving in vain to smile at her, cries out loudly, and folds her hands as if in prayer.

“Hush!” said he, roughly; “hush! let me in.”

“Some misfortune has happened!” said she, terrified.

“Yes, Rosa, a great misfortune; but let me in, if you do not wish to ruin me.”

The young girl disappears, and the man hastens to the side door of the castle. It is opened, and he slips in.

Perfect peace reigns once more in the garden of Sans-Souci. Nature is now smiling, for she is alone with her innocence. Man is not there! But now, in the castle, in the dwelling of the castle warder, and in the room of his lovely daughter Rosa, all is alive. There is whispering, and weeping, and sighing, and praying; there is Rosa, fearful and trembling, her face covered with tears, and opposite her, her pale, woe-begone lover.

“I have been walking all night,” said he, with a faint and hollow voice. “I did not know that Berlin was so far from Potsdam, and had I known it, I would not have dared to take a wagon or a horse; I had to slip away very quietly. While by Count Puebla’s order my room was guarded, and I thought to be in it, I descended into the garden by the grape-vine, which reached up to my window. The gardener had no suspicions of how I came there, when I required

him to unlock the door, but laughed cunningly, thinking I was bound to some rendezvous. And so I wandered on in fear and pain, in despair and anger, and it seemed to me as if the road would never come to an end. At times I stopped, thinking I heard behind me wild cries and curses, the stamping of horses, and the rolling of wheels; but it was imagination. Ah! it was a frightful road; but it is past. But now I will be strong, for this concerns my name, my life, my honor. Why do you laugh, Rosa?” said he, angrily; “do you dare to laugh, because I speak of my name—my honor?”

“I did not laugh,” said Rosa, looking with terror at the disturbed countenance of her lover.

“Yes, you laughed, and you were right to laugh, when I spoke of my honor; I who have no honor; I who have shamed my name; I upon whose brow is the sign of murder: for I am guilty of the ruin of a man, and the chains on his hands are cursing my name.”

“My God! he is mad,” murmured Rosa.

“No, I am not mad,” said he, with a heart-breaking smile. “I know all, all! Were I mad, I would not be so unhappy. Were I unconscious, I would suffer less. But, no, I remember all. I know how this evil commenced, how it grew and poisoned my heart. The evil was my poverty, my covetousness, and perhaps also my ambition. I was not content to bear forever the chains of bondage; I wished to be free from want. I determined it should no more be said that the sisters of Count Weingarten had to earn their bread by their needlework, while he feasted sumptuously at the royal table. This it was that caused my ruin. These frightful words buzzed in my ears so long, that in my despair I determined to stop them at any price; and so I committed my first crime, and received a golden reward for my treason. My sisters did not work now; I bought a small house for them, and gave them all that I received. I shuddered at the sight of this money; I would keep none of it. I was again the poor secretary Weingarten, but my family was not helpless; they had nothing to fear.”

To whom was he telling all this? Certainly not to that young girl standing before him, pale and trembling. He had forgotten himself; he had forgotten her whom in other days he had called his heart’s darling.

As she sank at his feet and covered his hands with her tears, he rose hastily from his seat; he now remembered that he was not alone.

“What have I said?” cried he, wildly. “Why do you weep?”

“I weep because you have forgotten me,” said she, softly; “I weep because, in accusing yourself, you make no excuse for your crime; not even your love for your poor Rosa.”

"It is true," said he, sadly, "I had forgotten our love. And still it is the only excuse that I have for my second crime. I had determined to be a good man, and to expiate my one crime throughout my whole life. But when I saw you, your beauty fascinated me, and you drew me on. I went with open eyes into the net which you prepared for me, Rosa. I allowed myself to be allured by your beauty, knowing well that it would draw me into a frightful abyss."

"Ah," said Rosa, groaning, "how cruelly you speak of our love!"

"Of our love!" repeated he, shrugging his shoulders. "Child, in this hour we will be true to each other. Ours was no true love. You were in love with my noble name and position—I with your youth, your beauty, your coquettish ways. Our souls were not in unison. You gave yourself to me, not because you loved me, but because you wished to deceive me. I allowed myself to be deceived because of your loveliness and because I saw the golden reward which your deceitful love would bring me."

"You are cruel and unjust," said Rosa, sadly. "It may be true that you never loved me, but I loved you truly. I gave you my whole heart."

"Yes, and in giving it," said he, harshly—"in giving it you had the presence of mind to keep the aim of your tenderness always in view. While your arms were around me, your little hand which seemed to rest upon my heart, sought for the key which I always kept in my vest-pocket, and which I had lately told you belonged to the desk in which the important papers of the embassy were placed. You found this key, Rosa, and I knew it, but I only laughed, and pressed you closer to my heart."

"Terrible! terrible!" said Rosa, trembling. "He knew all, and still he let me do it!"

"Yes I allowed you to do it—I did not wish to be better than the girl I loved; and, as she desired to deceive me, I let myself be deceived. I allowed it, because the demon of gold had taken possession of me. I took the important papers out of my desk, to which you had stolen the key, and hid them. Then the tempters came and whispered of golden rewards, of eternal gratitude, of fortune, honor; and these fiendish whispers misled my soul. I sold my honor and became a traitor, and all this for the sake of gold! So I became what I now am. I do not reproach you, Rosa, for most likely it would have happened without you."

"But what danger threatens you now?" asked Rosa.

"The just punishment for a traitor," said he, hoarsely. "Give me some wine, Rosa, so that I can gain strength to go to the king at once."

"To the king at this early hour?"

"And why not? Have I not been with him often at this hour, when I had important news or dispatches to give him? So give me the wine, Rosa."

Rosa left the room, but returned almost instantly. He took the bottle from her and filled a glass hastily.

"Now," said he, breathing deeply, "I feel that I live again. My blood flows freely through my veins, and my heart is beating loudly. Now to the king!"

He stood before a glass for a moment to arrange his hair; then pressed a cold kiss upon Rosa's pale, trembling lips, and left the room. With a firm, sure tread, he hurried through the halls and chambers. No one stopped him, for no one was there to see him. In the king's antechamber sat Deesen taking his breakfast.

"Is the king up?" asked Weingarten.

"The sun has been up for hours, and so of course the king is up," said Deesen, proudly.

"Announce me to his majesty; I have some important news for him."

He entered the king's chamber, and returned in a few moments for Weingarten.

The king was sitting in an arm-chair by a window, which he had opened to breathe the fresh summer air. His white greyhound, Amalthea, lay at his feet, looking up at him with his soft black eyes. In his right hand the king held his flute.

"You are early, sir," said he, turning to Weingarten. "You must have very important news."

"Yes, sire, very important," said Weingarten, approaching nearer.

The king reached out his hand. "Give them to me," said he.

"Sire, I have no dispatches."

"A verbal message, then. Speak."

"Sire, all is lost; Count Puebla suspects me."

The king was startled for a moment, but collected himself immediately. "He suspects, but he is certain of nothing?"

"No, sire; but his suspicion amounts almost to certainty. Yesterday I was copying a dispatch which was to go that evening, and which was of the highest importance to your majesty, when I suddenly perceived Count Puebla standing beside me at my desk. He had entered my room very quietly, which showed that he had his suspicions, and was watching me. He snatched my copy from the desk and read it. 'For whom is this?' said he, in a threatening tone. I stammered forth some excuses; said that I intended writing a history, and that I took a copy of all dispatches for my work. He

would not listen to me. 'You are a traitor!' said he, in a thundering voice. 'I have suspected you for some time; I am now convinced of your treachery. You shall have an examination to-morrow; for to-night you will remain a prisoner in your room.' He then locked my desk, put the key in his pocket, and, taking with him the dispatch and my copy, left the room. I heard him lock it and bolt my door. I was a prisoner."

"How did you get out?" said the king.

"By the window, sire. And I flew here to throw myself at your majesty's feet, and to beg for mercy and protection."

"I promised you protection and help in case of your detection—I will fulfil my promise. What are your wishes. Let us see if they can be realized."

"Will your majesty give me some sure place of refuge where Count Puebla's threats cannot harm me?"

"You will remain here in the dwelling of the castle-warder until a suitable residence can be found for you. What next? What plans have you made for the future?"

"I would humbly beseech your majesty to give me some position in your land worthy of my station, such as your highness promised me."

"You remember too many of my promises," said the king, shrugging his shoulders.

"Your majesty will not grant me the promised position?" said Count Weingarten, tremblingly.

"I remember no such promise," said Frederick. "Men of your stamp are paid, but not rewarded. I have made use of your treachery; but you are, nevertheless, in my eyes a traitor, and I will have none such in my service."

"Then I am lost!" said Weingarten. "My honor, my good name, my future are annihilated."

"Your honor has been weighed with gold," said the king, sternly, "and I think I have already paid more for it than it was worth. Your good name, it is true, will be from now changed into a bad one; and your mother will have to blush when she uses it. Therefore I advise you to let it go; to take another name; to begin a new existence, and to found a new future."

"A future without honor, without name, without position!" sighed Weingarten, despairingly.

"So are men!" said the king, softly; "insolent and stubborn when they think themselves secure; cowardly and uncertain when they are in danger. So you were rash enough to think that your treacherous deeds would always remain a secret? You did not think of a possible detection, or prepare yourself for it. In treading the road which you have trodden, every step should be considered.

This, it seems to me, you have not done. You wish to enjoy the fruits of your treachery in perfect security; but you have not the courage to stand before the world as a traitor. Do away with this name, which will cause you many dangers and insults. Fly from this place, where you and your deeds are known. Under a different name look for an asylum in another part of my land. Money shall not fail you; and if what you have earned from me is not sufficient, turn to me, and I will lend you still more. I will not forget that to me your treachery has been of great use, and therefore I will not desert you, though I shall despise the traitor. And now, farewell! This is our last meeting. Call this afternoon upon my treasurer; he will pay you two hundred louis d'or. And now go." And with a scornful look at Weingarten's pale countenance, he turned to the window.

Weingarten hurried past the halls and chambers, and entered Rosa's room. She read in his pale, sad face that he had no good news to tell her.

"Has it all been in vain?" said she, breathlessly.

"In vain?" cried he, with a scornful smile. "No, not in vain. The king rewarded me well; much better than Judas Iscariot was rewarded. I have earned a large sum of money, and am still to receive a thousand crowns. Quiet yourself, Rosa; we will be very happy, for we will have money. Only I must ask if the proud daughter of the royal castle-warder will give her hand to a man who can offer her no name, no position. Rosa, I warn you, think well of what you do. You loved me because I was a count, and had position to offer you. From to-day, I have no position, no name, no honor, no family. Like Ahasuerus, I will wander wearily through the world, happy and thanking God if I can find a quiet spot where I am not known, and my name was never heard. There I will rest, and trust to chance for a name. Rosa, will you share with me this existence, without sunshine, without honor, without a name?"

She was trembling so, that she could barely speak.

"I have no choice," stammered she, at last; "I must follow you, for my honor demands that I should be your wife. I must go with you; fate wills it."

With a loud shriek she fainted by his side. Weingarten did not raise her; he glanced wildly at the pale, lifeless woman at his feet.

"We are both condemned," murmured he, "we have both lost our honor. And with this Cain's mark upon our foreheads we will wander wearily through the world."*

* Count Weingarten escaped from all his troubles happily. He married his sweetheart, the daughter of the castle-warder, and went to Altmark, where, under the name of Veis, he lived happily for many years.

The king, in the mean while, after Weingarten had left him, walked thoughtfully up and down his room. At times he raised his head and gazed with a proud, questioning glance at the sky. Great thoughts were at work within him. Now Frederick throws back his head proudly, and his eyes sparkle.

"The time has come," said he, in a loud, full voice. "The hour for delay is past; now the sword must decide between me and my enemies." He rang a bell hastily, and ordered a valet to send a courier at once to Berlin, to call General Winterfeldt, General Retzow, and also Marshal Schwerin, to Sans-Souci.

CHAPTER VIII.

DECLARATION OF WAR.

A FEW hours after the departure of the courier, the heavy movement of wheels in the court below announced to the king, who was standing impatiently at his window, the arrival of the expected generals. In the same moment, his chamberlain, opening wide the library door, ushered them into his presence.

"Ah!" said the king, welcoming them pleasantly, "I see I am not so entirely without friends as my enemies think. I have but to call, and Marshal Schwerin, that is, wisdom and victory, is at my side; and Generals Winterfeldt and Retzow, that is, youth and courage, boldness and bravery, are ready to give me all the assistance in their power. Sirs, I thank you for coming to me at once. Let us be seated; listen to what I have to say, and upon what earnest important subjects I wish your advice."

And in a few words the king first showed them the situation of Europe and of his own states, so as to prepare them for the more important subjects he had to introduce before them.

"You will now understand," said he, "why I was so willing to make this contract with England. I hoped thereby to gain Russia, who is allied to England, to my side. But these hopes have been destroyed. Russia, angry with Britain for having allied herself to Prussia, has broken her contract. Bestuchef, it is true, wavered for a moment between his love of English guineas and his hatred of me, but hate carried the day."

"But, sire," said Retzow, hastily, "if your majesty can succeed in making a reconciliation between France and England, you may become the ally of these two powerful nations. Then let Austria, Russia, and Saxony come upon us all at once, we can confront them."

"We can do that, I hope, even without the assistance of France,"

said the king, impetuously. "We must renounce all idea of help from France; she is allied to Austria. What Kaunitz commenced with his wisdom, Maria Theresa carried out with her flattery. All my enemies have determined to attack me at once. But I am ready for them, weapons in hand. I have been hard at work; all is arranged, every preparation for the march of our army is finished. And now I have called you together to counsel me as to where we can commence our attack advantageously."

Frederick stopped speaking, and gazed earnestly at his generals, endeavoring to divine their thoughts. Marshal Schwerin was looking silently before him; a dark cloud rested upon General Retzow's brow; but the young, handsome face of Winterfeldt was sparkling with delight at the thought of war.

"Well, marshal," said the king, impatiently, "what is your advice?"

"My advice, sire," said the old marshal, sighing; "I see my king surrounded by threatening and powerful foes; I see him alone in the midst of all these allied enemies. For England may, perchance, send us money, but she has no soldiers for us, and moreover, we must assist her to defend Hanover. I cannot counsel this war, for mighty enemies are around us, and Prussia stands alone."

"No," said Frederick, solemnly, "Prussia stands not alone!—a good cause and a good sword are her allies, and with them she will conquer. And now, General Retzow, let us have your opinion."

"I agree entirely with Marshal Schwerin," said Retzow. "Like him, I think Prussia should not venture into this strife, because she is too weak to withstand such powerful adversaries."

"You speak prudently," said Frederick, scornfully. "And now, Winterfeldt, are you also against this war?"

"No, sire," cried Winterfeldt, "I am for the attack, and never were circumstances more favorable than at present. Austria has as yet made no preparations for war; her armies are scattered, and her finances are in disorder; and now it will be an easy task to attack her and subdue her surprised army."

The king looked at him pleasantly, and turning to the other generals, said quietly:

"We must not be carried away by the brave daring of this youth; he is the youngest among us, and is, perhaps, misled by enthusiasm. But we old ones must reflect; and I wished to convince you that I had not failed to do this. But all has been in vain."

"Now is the time," said Winterfeldt, with sparkling eyes, "to convince the crippled, unwieldy Austrian eagle that the young eagle of Prussia has spread her wings, and that her claws are strong enough to grasp all her enemies and hurl them into an abyss."

"And if the young eagle, in spite of his daring, should have to succumb to the superiority of numbers," said Marshal Schwerin, sadly. "If the balls of his enemies should break his wings, thereby preventing his flight for the future? Were it not better to avoid this possibility, and not to allow the whole world to say that Prussia, out of love of conquest, began a fearful war, which she could have avoided?"

"There is no reason in this war," said General Retzow; "for, though Austria, Saxony, and Russia are not our friends, they have not shown as yet by any open act that they are our enemies; and though Austria's alliance with France surprised the world, so also did Prussia's alliance with England. Our soldiers will hardly know why they are going to battle, and they will be wanting in that inspiration which is necessary to excite an army to heroic deeds."

"Inspiration shall not be wanting, and my army as well as yourselves shall know the many causes we have for this war. The reasons I have given you as yet have not satisfied you? Well, then, I will give you others; and, by Heaven, you will be content with them! You think Austria's unkindly feelings to Prussia have not been shown by any overt act. I will now prove to you that she is on the point of acting." And Frederick, lifting up some papers from his desk, continued: "These papers will prove to you, what you seem determined not to believe, namely, that Saxony, Russia, and France are prepared to attack Prussia with their combined forces, and to turn the kingdom of Prussia into a margraviate once more. These papers are authentic proofs of the dangers which hover over us. I will now inform you how I came by them, so that you may be convinced of their genuineness. For some time I have suspected that there was, amongst my enemies, an alliance against me, and that they had formed a contract in which they had sworn to do all in their power to destroy Prussia. I only needed to have my suspicions confirmed, and to have the proofs of this contract in my hands. There proofs were in the Saxon archives, and in the dispatches of the Austrian embassy. It was therefore necessary to get the key of these archives, and to have copies of these dispatches. I succeeded in doing both, Chance, or if you prefer it, a kind Providence, came to my aid. The Saxon chancellor, Reinitz, a former servant of General Winterfeldt, came from Dresden to Potsdam to look for Winterfeldt and to confide to him that a friend of his, Chancellor Minzel of Dresden, had informed him that the state papers interchanged between the court of Vienna and Dresden were kept in the Dresden archives, of which he had the key. Winterfeldt brought me this important message. Reinitz conducted the first negotiations with Menzel, which I then delivered into the

hands of my ambassador in Dresden, Count Mattzahn. Menzel was poor and covetous. He was therefore easily to be bribed. For three years Mattzahn has received copies of every dispatch that passed between the three courts. I am quite as well informed of all negotiations between Austria and France, for the secretary of the Austrian legation of this place, a Count Weingarten, gave me, for promises and gold, copies of all dispatches that came from Vienna and were forwarded to France. You see the corruption of man has borne me good fruit, and that gold is a magic wand which reveals all secrets. And now, let us cast a hasty glance over these papers which I have obtained by the aid of treachery and bribery."

He took one of the papers and spread it before the astonished generals. "You see here," he continued, "a sample of all other negotiations. It is a copy of a share contract which the courts of Vienna and Dresden formed in 1745. They then regarded the decline of Prussia as so sure an occurrence that they had already divided amongst themselves the different parts of my land. Russia soon affixed her name also to this contract, and here in this document you will see that these three powers have sworn to attack Prussia at the same moment, and that for this conquest, each one of the named courts was to furnish sixty thousand men."

While the generals were engaged in reading these papers, the king leaned back in his arm-chair, gazing keenly at Retzow and Schwerin. He smiled gayly as he saw Schwerin pressing his lips tightly together, and trying in vain to suppress a cry of rage, and Retzow clinching his fists vehemently.

When the papers had been read, and Schwerin was preparing to speak, the king, with his head thrown proudly back, and gazing earnestly at his listeners, interrupted him, saying:

"Now, sirs, perhaps you see the dangers by which we are surrounded. Under the circumstances, I owe it to myself, to my honor, and to the security of my land, to attack Austria and Saxony, and so to nip their abominable designs in the bud, before their allies are ready to give them any assistance. I am prepared, and the only question to be answered before setting our army in motion, is where to commence the attack to our advantage? For the deciding of this question, I have called you together. I have finished and now, Marshal Schwerin, it is your turn."

The old gray warrior arose. It may be that he was convinced by the powerful proofs and words of the king, or that knowing that his will was law it were vain to oppose him, but he was now as strongly for war as the king or Winterfeldt.

"If there is to be war," said he, enthusiastically, "let us start tomorrow, take Saxony, and, in that land of corn, build magazines

for the holding of our provisions, so as to secure a way for our future operations in Bohemia."

"Ah! now I recognize my old Schwerin," said the king, gayly pressing the marshal's hand. "No more delay! 'To anticipate' is my motto, and shall, God willing, be Prussia's in future."

"And our army," said Winterfeldt, with sparkling eyes, "has been accustomed, for hundreds of years, not only to defend themselves, but also to attack. Ah, at last it is to be granted us to fight our arch-enemies in open field, mischief-making Austria, intriguing Saxony, barbarous Russia, and finally lying, luxurious France, and to convince them that, though we do not fear their anger, we share their hatred with our whole hearts."

"And you, Retzow," said the king, sternly, turning to the general, who was sitting silently with downcast head; "do your views coincide with Schwerin's? Or do you still think it were better to wait?"

"Yes, sire," said Retzow, sadly; "I think delay, under the present threatening circumstances, would be the wisest course; I—"

He was interrupted by the entrance of a valet, who approached the king, and whispered a few words to him.

Frederick turned smilingly to the generals. "The princes, my brothers, have arrived," said he; "they were to be here at this hour to hear the result of our consultation. And, it strikes me, they arrive at the right moment. The princes may enter."

CHAPTER IX.

THE KING AND HIS BROTHERS.

THE door was thrown open and the princes entered. First came the Prince of Prussia, whose pale, dejected countenance was to-day paler and sadder than usual. Then Prince Henry, whose quick, bright eyes were fixed inquiringly on General Retzow. The general shrugged his shoulders, and shook his head. Prince Henry must have understood these movements, for his brow became clouded, and a deep red suffused his countenance. The king, who had seen this, laughed mockingly, and let the princes approach very close to him, before addressing them.

"Sirs," said he, "I have called you here, because I have some important news to communicate. The days of peace are over, and war is at hand!"

"War! and with whom?" said the Prince of Prussia, earnestly.

"War with our enemies!" cried the king. "War with those who

have sworn Prussia's destruction. War with Austria, France, Saxony, and Russia!"

"That is impossible, my brother," cried the prince, angrily. "You cannot dream of warring against such powerful nations. You cannot believe in the possibility of victory. Powerful and mighty as your spirit is it will have to succumb before the tremendous force opposed to it. Oh! my brother! my king! be merciful to yourself, to us, to our country. Do not desire the impossible! Do not venture into the stormy sea of war, to fight with your frail barks against the powerful men of war that your enemies will direct against you. We cannot be victorious! Preserve to your country your own precious life, and that of her brave sons."

The king's eyes burned with anger; they were fixed with an expression of deep hatred upon the prince.

"Truly, my brother," said he, in a cold, cutting tone, "fear has made you eloquent. You speak as if inspired."

A groan escaped the prince, and he laid his hand unwittingly upon his sword. He was deadly pale, and his lips trembled so violently, that he could scarcely speak.

"Fear!" said he, slowly. "That is an accusation which none but the king would dare to bring against me, and of which I will clear myself, if it comes to this unhappy war which your majesty proposes, and which I now protest against, in the name of my rights, my children, and my country."

"And I," said Prince Henry, earnestly—"I also protest against this war! Have pity on us, my king. Much as I thirst for renown and glory, often as I have prayed to God to grant me an occasion to distinguish myself, I now swear to subdue forever this craving for renown, if it can only be obtained at the price of this frightful, useless war. You stand alone! Without allies, it is impossible to conquer. Why, then, brave certain ruin and destruction?"

The king's countenance was frightful to look at; his eyes were flashing with rage, and his voice was like thunder, it was so loud and threatening.

"Enough of this!" said he; "you were called here, not to advise, but to receive my commands. The brother has heard you patiently, but now the King of Prussia stands before you, and demands of you obedience and submission. We are going to battle; this is settled; and your complaints and fears will not alter my determination. But all those who fear to follow me on the battle-field, have my permission to remain at home, and pass their time in love idyls. Who, amongst you all, prefers this? Let him speak, and he shall follow his own inclinations."

"None of us could do that," said Prince Henry, passionately.

"If the King of Prussia calls his soldiers, they will all come and follow their chieftain joyfully, though they are marching to certain death. I have already given you my personal opinion; it now rests with me to obey you, as a soldier, as a subject. This I will do joyfully, without complaining."

"I also," said Prince Augustus William, earnestly. "Like my brother, I will know how to subdue my own opinions and fears, and to follow in silent obedience my king and my chieftain."

The king threw a glance of hatred upon the pale, disturbed countenance of the prince.

"You will go where I command you," said he, sharply; and not giving the prince time to answer, he turned abruptly to Marshal Schwerin.

"Well, marshal, do you wish for a furlough, during this war? You heard me say I would refuse it to no one."

"I demand nothing of your majesty, but to take part in the first battle against your enemies. I do not ask who they are. The hour for consultation is past; it is now time to act. Let us to work, and that right quickly."

"Yes, to battle, sire," cried Retzow, earnestly. "As soon as your majesty has said that this war is irrevocable, your soldiers must have no further doubts, and they will follow you joyfully, to conquer or to die."

"And you, Winterfeldt," said the king, taking his favorite's hand tenderly; "have you nothing to say? Or have the Prince of Prussia's fears infected you, and made of you a coward?"

"Ah, no! sire," said Winterfeldt, pressing the king's hand to his breast; "how could my courage fail, when it is Prussia's hero king that leads to battle? How can I be otherwise than joyous and confident of victory, when Frederick calls us to fight against his wicked and arrogant enemies? No! I have no fears; God and the true cause is on our side."

Prince Henry approached nearer to the king, and looking at him proudly, he said:

"Sire, you asked General Winterfeldt if he shared the Prince of Prussia's fears. He says no; but I will beg your majesty to remember, that I share entirely the sentiments of my dear and noble brother."

As he finished, he threw an angry look at General Winterfeldt. The latter commenced a fierce rejoinder, but was stopped by the king.

"Be still, Winterfeldt," he said; "war has as yet not been declared, and till then, let there at least be peace in my own house." Then approaching Prince Henry, and laying his hand on his shoulder, he said kindly: "We will not exasperate each other, my brother.

You have a noble, generous soul, and no one would dare to doubt your courage. It grieves me that you do not share my views as to the necessity of this war, but I know that you will be a firm, helpful friend, and share with me my dangers, my burdens, and if God wills it, also my victory."

"Not I alone will do this," cried Prince Henry, "but also my brother, Augustus William, the Prince of Prussia, whose heart is not less brave, whose courage—"

"Hush, Henry! I pray you," said the Prince of Prussia, sadly; "speak not of my courage. By defending it, it would seem that it had been doubted, and that is a humiliation which I would stand from no one."

The king appeared not to have heard these words. He took some papers from the table by which he was standing, and said:

"All that remains to be told you now, is that I agree with Marshal Schwerin. We will commence the attack in Saxony. To Saxony, then, gentlemen! But, until the day before the attack, let us keep even the question of war a secret."

Then, with the paper under his arm, he passed through the saloon and entered his library.

There was a long pause after he left. The Prince of Prussia, exhausted by the storm which had swept over his soul, had withdrawn to one of the windows, where he was hid from view by the heavy satin damask curtains.

Prince Henry, standing alone in the middle of the room, gazed after his brother, and a deep sigh escaped him. Then turning to Retzow, he said:

"You would not, then, fulfil my brother's and my own wishes?"

"I did all that was in my power, prince," said the general, sighing. "Your highness did not wish this war to take place; you desired me, if the king asked for my advice, to tell him that we were too weak, and should therefore keep the peace. Well, I said this, not only because you desired it, but because it was also my own opinion. But the king's will was unalterable. He has meditated this war for years. Years ago, with Winterfeldt's aid, he drew all the plans and made every other arrangement."

"Winterfeldt!" murmured the prince to himself, "yes, Winterfeldt is the fiend whose whispers have misled the king. We suspected this long ago, but we had to bear it in silence, for we could not prevent it."

And giving his passionate nature full play, he approached General Winterfeldt, who was whispering to Marshal Schwerin.

"You can rejoice, general," said the prince, "for now you can take your private revenge on the Empress of Russia."

Winterfeldt encountered the prince's angry glance with a quiet, cheerful look.

"Your highness does me too much honor in thinking that a poor soldier, such as I am, could be at enmity with a royal empress. What could this Russian empress have done to me, that could call for revenge on my part?"

"What has she done to you?" said the prince, with a mocking smile. "Two things, which man finds hardest to forgive! She outwitted you, and took your riches from you. Ah! general, I fear this war will be in vain, and that you will not be able to take your wife's jewels from St. Petersburg, where the empress retains them."

Winterfeldt subdued his anger, and replied: "You have related us a beautiful fairy tale, prince, a tale from the Arabian Nights, in which there is a talk of jewels and glorious treasures, only that in this tale, instead of the usual dragon, an empress guards them. I acknowledge that I do not understand your highness."

"But I understand you perfectly, general. I know your ambitious and proud plans. You wish to make your name renowned. General, I consider you are much in fault as to this war. You were the king's confidant—you had your spies everywhere, who, for heavy rewards, imparted to you the news by which you stimulated the king."

"If in your eyes," said Winterfeldt, proudly, "it is wrong to spend your gold to find out the intrigues of your own, your king's, and your country's enemies, I acknowledge that I am in fault, and deserve to be punished. Yes, everywhere I have had my spies, and thanks to them, the king knows Saxony's, Austria's, and Russia's intentions. I paid these spies with my own gold. Your highness may thus perceive that I am not entirely dependent on those jewels of my wife which are said to be in the Empress of Russia's possession."

At this moment the Prince of Prussia, who had been a silent witness to this scene, approached General Winterfeldt.

"General," said he, in a loud, solemn voice, "you are the cause of this unfortunate war which will soon devastate our poor land. The responsibility falls upon your head, and woe to you if this war, caused by your ambition, should be the ruin of our beloved country! I would, if there were no punishment for you on earth, accuse you before the throne of God, and the blood of the slaughtered sons of my country, the blood of my future subjects, would cry to Heaven for revenge! Woe to you if this war should be the ruin of Prussia!" repeated Prince Henry. "I could never forgive that; I would hold your ambition responsible for it, for you have access to the king's heart, and instead of dissipating his distrust against these foreign

nations, you have endeavored to nourish it—instead of softening the king's anger, you have given it fresh food."

"What I have done," cried Winterfeldt, solemnly raising his right hand heavenward—"what I have done was done from a feeling of duty, from love of my country, and from a firm, unshaken trust in my king's star, which cannot fade, but must become ever more and more resplendent! May God punish me if I have acted from other and less noble motives!"

"Yes, may God punish you—may He not revenge your crime upon our poor country!" said Prince Augustus William. "I have said my last upon this sad subject. From now on, my private opinions are subdued—I but obey the king's commands. What he requires of me shall be done—where he sends me I will go, without questioning or considering, but quietly and obediently, as it becomes a true soldier. I hope that you, my brother, Marshal Schwerin, and General Retzow, will follow my example. The king has commanded—we have but to obey cheerfully."

Then, arm in arm, the princes left the audience-room and returned to Berlin.

CHAPTER X.

THE LAUREL-BRANCH.

WHILE this last scene was passing in the audience-room, the king had retired to his study, and was walking up and down in deep thought. His countenance was stern and sorrowful—a dark cloud was upon his brow—his lips were tightly pressed together—powerful emotions were disturbing his whole being. He stopped suddenly, and raising his head proudly, seemed to be listening to the thoughts and suggestions of his soul.

"Yes," said he, "these were his very words: 'I protest against this war in the name of my rights, my children, and my country!' Ah, it is a pleasant thought to him that he is to be heir to my throne. He imagines that he has rights beyond those that I grant him, and that he can protest against an action of mine! He is a rebel, a traitor. He dares to think of the time when I will be gone—of the time when he or his children will wear this crown! I feel that I hate him as my father hated me because I was his heir, and because the sight of me always reminded him of his death! Yes, I hate him! The effeminate boy will disturb the great work which I am endeavoring to perform. Under his weak hands, this Prussia, which I would make great and powerful, will fall to pieces, and all