

"Yes, there are other things, but they are more difficult, more dangerous."

"So much the better; the more dangerous the stronger the proof of my love. Speak, dear Carlo!"

"It is forbidden for the captive officers to send sealed letters to their friends or relatives. All our letters must be read, and if a word of politics is found in them, they are condemned. All other persons have the right to send sealed letters in every direction. Have you not friends to whom you write, Marietta?"

"I have, and from this time onward your friends will be mine, and I will correspond with them."

As she said this, with a roguish smile, a ray of joy lighted up Ranuzi's eyes.

"You understand me, my beloved; your intellect is as clear and sharp as your heart is warm and noble. Think well what you do—what danger threatens you. I tell you plainly, Marietta, this is no question of common friendly letters, but of the most earnest, grave, important interests!"

She bowed to his ear and whispered: "All that you espy in Berlin you will confide to these letters; you will concert with your friends, you will design plans, perhaps make conspiracies. I will address these letters and take them to the post, and no one will mistrust me, for my letters will be addressed to some friends in Vienna, or to whom you will. Have I understood you, Carlo? Is this all right?"

He clasped her rapturously in his arms, and the words of tender gratitude which he expressed were not entirely wanting in sincerity and truth.

Marietta was proudly happy, and listened with sparkling eyes to his honeyed words.

As Ranuzi, however, after this long interview, arose to say farewell, she held him back. Laying her hands upon his shoulder, she looked at him with a curious expression, half laughing, half threatening.

"One last word, Carlo," she said; "I love you boundlessly. To prove my love to you, I become a traitress to this king, who has been a gracious master to me, whose bread I eat—who received and protects me. To prove my love, I become a spy, an informer. Men say this is dishonorable work, but for myself I feel proud and happy to undertake it for you, and not for all the riches and treasures of this world would I betray you. But, Carlo, if you ever cease to love me, if you deceive me and become unfaithful, as true as God helps me, I will betray both myself and you!"

"I believe truly she is capable of it," said Ranuzi, as he reached

the street; "she is a dangerous woman, and with her love and hate she is truly like a tigress. Well, I must be on my guard. If she rages I must draw her teeth, so that she cannot bite, or flee from her furious leaps. But this danger is in the distance, the principal thing is that I have opened a way to my correspondence, and that is immense progress in my plans, for which I might well show my gratitude to my tender Marietta by a few caresses."

## CHAPTER IV.

## LOUISE DU TROUFFLE.

MADAME DU TROUFFLE paced her room restlessly; she listened to every stroke of the clock, every sound made her tremble.

"He comes not! he comes not!" murmured she; "ne received my irony of yesterday in earnest and is exasperated. Alas! am I really an old woman? Have I no longer the power to enchain, to attract? Can it be that I am old and ugly? No, no! I am but thirty-four years of age—that is not old for a married woman, and as to being ugly—"

She interrupted herself, stepped hastily to the glass, and looked long and curiously at her face.

Yes, yes! she must confess her beauty was on the wane. She was more faded than her age would justify. Already was seen around her mouth those yellow, treacherous lines which vanished years imprint upon the face; already her brow was marked with light lines, and silver threads glimmered in her hair.

Louise du Trouffle sighed heavily.

"I was too early married, and then unhappily married; at eighteen I was a mother. All this ages a woman—not the years but the storms of life have marked these fearful lines in my face. Then it is not possible for a man to feel any warm interest in me when he sees a grown-up daughter by my side, who will soon be my rival, and strive with me for the homage of men. This is indeed exasperating. Oh, my God! my God! a day may come in which I may be jealous of my own daughter! May Heaven guard me from that! Grant that I may see her fresh and blooming beauty without rancor; that I may think more of her happiness than my vanity."

Then, as if she would strengthen her good resolutions, Louise left her room and hastened to the chamber of her daughter.

Camilla lay upon the divan—her slender and beauteous form was wrapped in soft white drapery; her shining, soft dark hair fell around her rosy face and over her naked shoulders, with whose ala-



baster whiteness it contrasted strongly. Camilla was reading, and so entirely was she occupied with her book that she did not hear her mother enter.

Louise drew softly near the divan, and stood still, lost in admiration at this lovely, enchanting picture, this reposing Hebe.

"Camilla," said she, fondly, "what are you reading so eagerly?"

Camilla started and looked up suddenly, then laughed aloud.

"Ah, mamma," said she, in a silver, clear, and soft voice, "how you frightened me! I thought it was my tyrannical governess already returned from her walk, and that she had surprised me with this book."

"Without doubt she forbade you to read it," said her mother, gravely, stretching out her hand for the book, but Camilla drew it back suddenly.

"Yes, certainly, Madame Brunnen forbade me to read this book; but that is no reason, mamma, why you should take it away from me. It is to be hoped you will not play the stern tyrant against your poor Camilla."

"I wish to know what you are reading, Camilla."

"Well, then, Voltaire's 'Pucelle d'Orléans,' and I assure you, mamma, I am extremely pleased with it."

"Madame Brunnen was right to forbid you to read this book, and I also forbid it."

"And if I refuse to obey, mamma?"

"I will force you to obedience," cried her mother, sternly.

"Did any one succeed in forcing you to obey your mother?" said Camilla, in a transport of rage. "Did your mother give her consent to your elopement with the garden-boy? You chose your own path in life, and I will choose mine. I will no longer bear to be treated as a child—I am thirteen years old; you were not older when you had the affair with the garden-boy, and were forced to confide yourself to my father. Why do you wish to treat me as a little child, and keep me in leading-strings, when I am a grown-up girl?"

"You are no grown-up girl, Camilla," cried her mother; "if you were, you would not dare to speak to your mother as you have done: you would know that it was unseemly, and that, above all other things, you should show reverence and obedience to your mother. No, Camilla, God be thanked! you are but a foolish child, and therefore I forgive you."

Louise drew near her daughter and tried to clasp her tenderly in her arms, but Camilla struggled roughly against it.

"You shall not call me a child," said she, rudely. "I will no longer bear it! it angers me! and if you repeat it, mamma, I will declare to every one that I am sixteen years old!"

"And why will you say that, Camilla?"

Camilla looked up with a cunning smile.

"Why?" she repeated, "ah! you think I do not know why I must always remain a child? It is because you wish to remain a young woman—therefore you declare to all the world that I am but twelve years old! But no one believes you, mamma, not one believes you. The world laughs at you, but you do not see it—you think you are younger when you call me a child. I say to you I will not endure it! I will be a lady—I will adorn myself and go into society. I will not remain in the school-room with a governess while you are sparkling in the saloon and enchanting your followers by your beauty. I will also have my worshippers, who pay court to me; I will write and receive love-letters as other maidens do; I will carry on my own little love-affairs as all other girls do; as you did, from the time you were twelve years old, and still do!"

"Silence, Camilla! or I will make you feel that you are still a child!" cried Louise, raising her arm threateningly and approaching the divan.

"Would you strike me, mother?" said she, with trembling lips. "I counsel you not to do it. Raise your hand once more against me, but think of the consequences. I will run away! I will fly to my poor, dear father, whom you, unhappy one, have made a drunkard! I will remain with him—he loves me tenderly. If I were with him, he would no longer drink."

"Oh, my God, my God!" cried Louise, with tears gushing from her eyes; "it is he who has planted this hate in her heart—he has been the cause of all my wretchedness! She loves her father who has done nothing for her, and she hates her mother who has shown her nothing but love." With a loud cry of agony, she clasped her hands over her face and wept bitterly.

Camilla drew close to her, grasped her hands and pulled them forcibly from her face, then looked in her eyes passionately and scornfully. Camilla was indeed no longer a child. She stood erect, pale, and fiercely excited, opposite to her mother. Understanding and intellect flashed from her dark eyes. There were lines around her mouth which betrayed a passion and a power with which childhood has nothing to do.

"You say you have shown me nothing but love," said Camilla, in a cold and cutting tone. "Mother, what love have you shown me? You made my father wretched, and my childish years were spent under the curse of a most unhappy marriage. I have seen my father weep while you were laughing merrily—I have seen him drunk and lying like a beast at my feet, while you were in our gay saloon receiving and entertaining guests with cool unconcern. You



say you have shown me nothing but love. You never loved me, mother, never! Had you loved me, you would have taken pity with my future—you would not have given me a step-father while I had a poor, dear father, who had nothing in the wide world but me, me alone! You think perhaps, mother, that I am not unhappy; while I am giddy and play foolish pranks, you believe me to be happy and contented. Ah, mother, I have an inward horror and prophetic fear of the future which never leaves me; it seems to me that evil spirits surround me—as if they enchanted me with strange, alluring songs. I know they will work my destruction, but I cannot withstand them—I must listen, I must succumb to them. I would gladly be different—be better. I desire to be a virtuous and modest girl, but alas, alas, I cannot escape from this magic circle to which my mother has condemned me! I have lived too fast, experienced too much—I am no longer a child—I am an experienced woman. The world and the things of the world call me with a thousand alluring voices, and I shall be lost as my mother was lost! I am her most unhappy daughter, and her blood is in my heart!" Almost insensible, crushed by excitement and passion, Camilla sank to the earth.

Her mother looked at her with cold and tearless eyes; her hair seemed to stand erect, and a cold, dead hand seemed placed upon her heart and almost stilled its beatings. "I have deserved this," murmured she; "God punishes the levity of my youth through my own child." She bowed down to her daughter and raised her softly in her arms.

"Come, my child," she said, tenderly, "we will forget this hour—we will strive to live in love and harmony with each other. You are right! You are no longer a child, and I will think of introducing you to the world."

"And you will dismiss Madame Brunnen," said Camilla, gayly. "Oh, mamma, you have no idea how she tortures and martyrs me with her Argus-eyes, and watches me day and night. Will you not dismiss her, mamma, and take no other governess?"

"I will think of it," said her mother, sadly. But now a servant entered and announced Count Ranuzi. Madame du Trouffle blushed, and directed the servant to conduct him to the parlor.

Camilla looked at her roguishly, and said: "If you really think me a grown-up girl, take me with you to the parlor."

Madame du Trouffle refused. "You are not properly dressed, and besides, I have important business with the count."

Camilla turned her back scornfully, and her mother left the room; Camilla returned to the sofa and Madame du Trouffle entered the saloon. In the levity and frivolity of their hearts they had both forgotten this sad scene in the drama of a demoralized family life;

such scenes had been too often repeated to make any lasting impression.

Madame du Trouffle found Count Ranuzi awaiting her. He came forward with such a joyous greeting, that she was flattered, and gave him her hand with a gracious smile. She said triumphantly to herself that the power of her charms was not subdued, since the handsome and much admired Ranuzi was surely captivated by them.

The count had pleaded yesterday for an interview, and he had done this with so mysterious and melancholy a mien, that the gay and sportive Louise had called him the Knight of Toggenberg, and had asked him plaintively if he was coming to die at her feet.

"Possibly," he answered, with grave earnestness—"possibly, if you are cruel enough to refuse the request I prefer."

These words had occupied the thoughts of this vain coquette during the whole night; she was convinced that Ranuzi, ravished by her beauty, wished to make her a declaration, and she had been hesitating whether to reject or encourage him. As he advanced so gracefully and smilingly to meet her, she resolved to encourage him and make him forget the mockery of yesterday.

Possibly Ranuzi read this in her glance, but he did not regard it; he had attained his aim—the interview which he desired. "Madame," said he, "I come to make honorable amends, and to plead at your feet for pardon." He bowed on one knee, and looked up beseechingly.

Louise found that his languishing and at the same time glowing eyes were very beautiful, and she was entirely ready to be gracious, although she did not know the offence. "Stand up, count," said she, "and let us talk reasonably together. What have you done, and for what must I forgive you?"

"You annihilate me with your magnanimity," sighed Ranuzi. "You are so truly noble as to have forgotten my boldness of yesterday, and you choose to forget that the poor, imprisoned soldier, intoxicated by your beauty, carried away by your grace and amiability, has dared to love you and to confess it. But I swear to you, madame, I will never repeat this offence. The graceful mockery and keen wit with which you punished me yesterday has deeply moved me, and I assure you, madame, you have had more influence over me than any prude with her most eloquent sermon on virtue could have done. I have seen my crime, and never again will my lips dare to confess what lives and glows in my heart." He took her hand and kissed it most respectfully.

Louise was strangely surprised, and it seemed to her not at all necessary for the count to preserve so inviolable a silence as to his



love; but she was obliged to appear pleased, and she did this with facility and grace.

"I thank you," she said, gayly, "that you have freed me from a lover whom, as the wife of Major du Trouffle, I should have been compelled to banish from my house. Now I dare give a pleasant, kindly welcome, to Count Ranuzi, and be ready at all times to serve him gladly."

Ranuzi looked steadily at her. "Will you truly do this?" said he, sighing—"will you interest yourself for a poor prisoner, who has no one to hear and sympathize in his sorrows?"

Louise gave him her hand. "Confide in me, sir count," said she, with an impulse of her better nature; "make known your sorrows, and be assured that I will take an interest in them. You are so prudent and reasonable as not to be my lover, and I will be your friend. Here is my hand—I offer you my friendship; will you accept it?"

"Will I accept it?" said he, rapturously; "you offer me life, and ask if I will accept it!"

Louise smiled softly. She found that Ranuzi declared his friendship in almost as glowing terms as he had confessed his love. "So then," said she, "you have sorrows that you dare not name?"

"Yes, but they are not my own individual griefs I suffer, but it is for another."

"That sounds mysterious. For whom do you suffer?"

"For a poor prisoner, who, far from the world, far from the haunts of men, languishes in wretchedness and chains—whom not only men but God has forgotten, for He will not even send His minister Death to release him. I cannot, I dare not say more—it is not my secret, and I have sworn to disclose it to but one person."

"And this person—"

"Is the Princess Amelia of Prussia," said Ranuzi.

Louise shrank back, and looked searchingly at the count. "A sister of the king! And you say that your secret relates to a poor prisoner?"

"I said so. Oh, my noble, magnanimous friend, do not ask me to say more; I dare not, but I entreat you to help me. I must speak with the princess. You are her confidante and friend, you alone can obtain me an interview."

"It is impossible! impossible!" cried Madame du Trouffle, rising up and pacing the room hastily. Ranuzi followed her with his eyes, observed every movement, and read in her countenance every emotion of her soul.

"I will succeed," said he to himself, and proud triumph swelled his heart.

Louise drew near and stood before him.

"Listen," said she, gravely; "it is a daring, a dangerous enterprise in which you wish to entangle me—doubly dangerous for me, as the king suspects me, and he would never forgive it if he should learn that I had dared to act against his commands, and to assist the Princess Amelia to save an unhappy wretch whom he had irretrievably condemned. I know well who this prisoner is, but do not call his name—it is dangerous to speak it, even to think it. I belong not to the confidantes of the princess in this matter, and I do not desire it. Speak no more of the prisoner, but of yourself. You wish to be presented to the princess. Why not apply to Baron Pöllnitz?"

"I have not gold enough to bribe him; and, besides that, he is a babbler, and purchasable. To-morrow he would betray me."

"You are right; and he could not obtain you a secret interview. One of the maids of honor must always be present, and the princess is surrounded by many spies. But there is a means, and it lies in my hands. Listen!"

Louise bowed and whispered.

Ranuzi's face sparkled with triumph.

"To-morrow, then," said he, as he withdrew.

"To-morrow," said Louise, "expect me at the castle gate, and be punctual."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE FORTUNE-TELLER.

THE heavy curtains were drawn down, and a gloomy twilight reigned in this great, silent room, whose dreary stillness was only interrupted by the monotonous stroke of the clock, and the deep sighs and lamentations which came from the sofa in a distant part of the room. There in the corner, drawn up convulsively and motionless, lay a female form, her hands clasped over her breast, her eyes fixed staringly toward heaven, and from time to time uttering words of grief and scorn and indignation.

She was alone in her anguish—ever alone; she had been alone for many years; grief and disappointment had hardened her heart, and made it insensible to all sorrows but her own. She hated men, she hated the world, she railed at those who were gay and happy, she had no pity for those who wept and mourned.

Had she not suffered more? Did she not still suffer? Who had been merciful, who had pitied her sorrows? Look now at this poor,



groaning woman! Do you recognize these fearful features, deformed by sickness and grief; these blood-shot eyes, these thin, colorless lips, ever convulsively pressed together, as if to suppress a wild shriek of agony, which are only unclosed to utter cold, harsh words of scorn and passion? Do you know this woman? Has this poor, unhappy, deformed being any resemblance to the gay, beautiful, intellectual Princess Amelia, whom we once knew? and yet this is the Princess Amelia. How have the mighty fallen! Look at the transforming power of a few sorrowful years! The sister of a mighty hero king, but a poor desolate creature, shunned and avoided by all; she knows that men fly from her, and she will have it so; she will be alone—lonely in the midst of the world, even as *he* is, in the midst of his dark and gloomy prison. Amelia calls the whole world her prison; she often says to herself that her soul is shut in behind the iron bars of her body and can never be delivered, that her heart lies upon the burning gridiron of the base world, and cannot escape, it is bound there with the same chains which are around about and hold *him* in captivity.

But Amelia says this only to herself, she desires no sympathy, she knows no one will dare to pity her. Destiny placed her high in rank and alone—alone she will remain; her complaints might perhaps bring new danger to him she loves, of whom alone she thinks, for whose sake alone she supports existence, she lives only for him. Can this be called life? A perpetual hope—and yet hopeless—a constant watching and listening for one happy moment, which never comes! She had not been permitted to live for him, she would not die without him. So long as he lived he might need her aid, and might call upon her for help in the hour of extremest need, so she would not die.

She was not wholly dead, but her youth, her heart, her peace, her illusions, her hopes were dead; she was opposed to all that lived, to the world, to all mankind. In the wide world she loved but two persons: one, who languished in prison and who suffered for her sake, Frederick von Trenck; the other, he who had made her wretched and who had the power to liberate Trenck and restore their peace—the king. Amelia had loved her mother, but she was dead; grief at the lost battle of Collin killed her. She had loved her sister, the Margravine of Baireuth; but she died of despair at the lost battle of Hochkirch. Grief and the anger and contempt of the king had killed her brother, the Prince Augustus William of Prussia. She was therefore alone, alone! Her other sisters were far away; they were happy, and with the happy she had nothing to do; with them she had no sympathy. Her two brothers were in the field, they thought not of her. There was but one who remem-

bered her, and he was under the earth—not dead, but buried—buried alive. The blackness of thick darkness is round about him, but he is not blind; there is glorious sunshine, but he sees it not.

These fearful thoughts had crushed Amelia's youth, her mind, her life; she stood like a desolate ruin under the wreck of the past. The rude storms of life whistled over her, and she laughed them to scorn; she had no more to fear—not she; if an oak fell, if a fair flower was crushed, her heart was glad; her own wretchedness had made her envious and malicious; perhaps she concealed her sympathy, under this seeming harshness; perhaps she gave herself the appearance of proud reserve, knowing that she was feared and avoided. Whoever drew near her was observed and suspected; the spies of the king surrounded her and kept her friends, if she had friends, far off. Perhaps Amelia would have been less unhappy if she had fled for shelter to Him who is the refuge of all hearts; if she had turned to her God in her anguish and despair. But she was not a pious believer, like the noble and patient Elizabeth Christine, the disdained wife of Frederick the Great.

Princess Amelia was the true sister of the king, the pupil of Voltaire; she mocked at the church and scorned the consolations of religion. She also was forced to pay some tribute to her sex; she failed in the strong, self-confident, intellectual independence of Frederick; her poor, weak, trembling hands wandered around seeking support; as religion, in its mighty mission, was rejected, she turned for consolation to superstition. While Elizabeth Christine prayed, Amelia tried her fortune with cards; while the queen gathered around her ministers of the gospel and pious scholars, the princess called to the prophets and fortune-tellers. While Elizabeth found comfort in reading the Holy Scriptures, Amelia found consolation in the mystical and enigmatical words of her soothsayers. While the queen translated sermons and pious hymns into French, Amelia wrote down carefully all the prophecies of her cards, her coffee-grounds, and the stars, and both ladies sent their manuscripts to the king.

Frederick received them both with a kindly and pitiful smile. The pious manuscript of the queen was laid aside unread, but the oracles of the princess were carefully looked over. Perhaps this was done in pity for the poor, wounded spirit which found distraction in such child's play. It is certain that when the king wrote to the princess, he thanked her for her manuscripts, and asked her to continue to send them.\* But he also demanded perfect silence as to this strange correspondence; he feared his enemies might falsely interpret his consideration for the weakness of the princess; they

\* Thiébauld, p. 279.



might suppose that he needed these prophecies to lead him on to victory, as his adversaries needed the consecrated sword.

This was one of the days on which the princess was accustomed to receive her fortune-teller; she had been very angry when told that she was under arrest; neither the prophet nor the fortune-teller were at liberty, and the princess was not able to obtain their release. She would, therefore, have been compelled to forego her usual occupation for the evening, had not Madame du Trouffle come to her aid. Louise had written that morning to the princess, and asked permission to introduce a new soothsayer, whose prophecies astonished the world, as, so far, they had been literally fulfilled. Amelia received this proposition joyfully, and now waited impatiently for Madame du Trouffle and the soothsayer; but she was yet alone, it was not necessary to hide her grief in stoical indifference, to still the groans of agony which, like the last sighs from a death-bed, rang from her breast.

The princess suffered not only from mental anguish; her body was as sick as her soul. The worm gnawing at her heart was also devouring her body; but neither for body nor soul would she accept a physician, she refused all sympathy for intellectual and physical pain. Amelia suffered and was silent, and only when as now she was certain there was no eye to see, no ear to hear her complaints, did she give utterance to them. And now the maid entered and announced Madame du Trouffle and the prophet.

"Let them enter," said the princess in a hollow, death-like voice; "let them enter, and remain yourself, Fraulein Lethow; the soothsayer shall tell your fortune."

The door opened, and Madame du Trouffle entered. She was gay and lovely as ever, and drew near the princess with a charming smile. Amelia returned her salutation coldly and carelessly.

"How many hours have you spent at your toilet to-day?" said she, roughly; "and where do you buy the *rouge* with which you have painted your cheeks?"

"Ah, your royal highness," said Louise, smiling, "Nature has been kind to me, and has painted my cheeks with her own sweet and cunning hand."

"Then Nature is in covenant with you, and helps you to deceive yourself to imagine that you are yet young. I am told that your daughter is grown up and wondrously beautiful, and that only when you stand near her is it seen how old and ugly you are."

Louise knew the rancor of the unhappy princess, and she knew no one could approach her without being wounded—that the undying worm in her soul was only satisfied with the blood it caused to flow. The harsh words of the princess had no sting for her. "If I

were truly old," said she, "I would live in my daughter: she is said to be my image, and when she is praised, I feel myself flattered."

"A day will come when she will be blamed and *you* will also be reproached," murmured Amelia. After a pause she said: "So you have brought me another deceiver who declares himself a prophet?"

"I do not believe him to be an impostor, your highness. He has given me convincing proofs of his inspiration."

"What sort of proofs? How can these people who prophesy of the future prove that they are inspired?"

"He has not told me of the future, but of the past," said Louise.

"Has he had the courage to recall any portion of your past to you?" said the princess, with a coarse laugh.

"Many droll and merry portions, your highness, and it is to be regretted that they were all true," she said, with comic pathos.

"Bring in this soothsayer, Fraulein von Lethow. He shall prophesy of you: I think you have not, like Madame du Trouffle, any reason to fear a picture of your past."

The prophet entered. He was wrapped in a long black robe, which was gathered around his slender form by a black leathern girdle covered with curious and strange figures and emblems; raven black hair fell around his small, pale face; his eyes burned with eluded fire, and flashed quickly around the room. With head erect and proud bearing, he drew near the princess, and only when very near did he salute her, and in a sweet, soft, melodious voice, asked why she wished to see him.

"If you are truly a prophet, you will know my reasons."

"Would you learn of the past?" said he, solemnly.

"And why not first of the future?"

"Because your highness distrusts me and would prove me. Will you permit me to take my cards? If you allow it, I will first prophesy to this lady." He took a mass of soiled, curiously painted cards, and spread them out before him on the table. He took the hand of Fraulein Lethow and seemed to read it earnestly; and now, in a low, musical voice, he related little incidents of the past. They were piquant little anecdotes which had been secretly whispered at the court, but which no one dared to speak aloud, as Fraulein Lethow passed for a model of virtue and piety.

She received these developments of the prophet with visible scorn. In place of laughing, and by smiling indifference bringing their truth in question, she was excited and angry, and thus prepared for the princess some gay and happy moments.

"I dare not decide," said Amelia, as the prophet ceased, "whether what you have told is true or false. Fraulein Lethow alone can



know that; but she will not be so cruel as to call you an impostor, for that would prevent me from having my fortune told. Allow me, therefore, to believe that you have spoken the truth. Now take your cards and shuffle them."

"Does your highness wish that I should tell you of the past?" said the soothsayer, in a sharp voice.

The princess hesitated. "Yes," said she, "of my past. But no; I will first hear a little chapter out of the life of my chaste and modest Louise. Now, now, madame, you have nothing to fear; you are pure and innocent, and this little recitation of your by-gone days will seem to us a chapter from 'La Pucelle d'Orléans.'"

"I dare to oppose myself to this lecture," said Louise, laughing. "There are books which should only be read in solitude, and to that class belong the volumes of my past life. I am ready in the presence of your highness to have my future prophesied, but of my past I will hear nothing—I know too much already."

"Had I been alone with Fraulein Lethow, I should have told her many other things, and she would have been forced to believe in my power. Only when these cards are under your eyes is my spirit clear."

"I must, then, in order to know the whole truth from you, be entirely alone?" said the princess.

The prophet bowed silently. Amelia fixed a piercing glance upon him, and nodded to her ladies.

"Go into the next room," said she. "And now," said the princess, "you can begin."

The magician, instead of taking the cards, knelt before the princess and kissed the hem of her robe. "I pray for mercy and forgiveness," said he; "I am nothing but a poor impostor! In order to reach the presence of your royal highness, I have disguised myself under this mask, which alone made it possible. But I swear to you, princess, no one knows of this attempt, no one can ever know it—I alone am guilty. Pardon, then, princess—pardon for this bold act. I was forced to this step—forced to clasp your knees—to implore you in your greatness and magnanimity, to stand by me! I was impelled irresistibly, for I had sworn a fearful oath to do this thing."

"To whom have you sworn?" said the princess, sternly. "Who are you? what do you ask of me?"

"I am Count Ranuzi, Austrian captain and prisoner of war. I implore you, noble princess, to have mercy upon a poor, helpless prisoner, consumed with grief and despair. God and the world have forsaken him, but he has one protecting angel in whom he trusts, to whom he prays—and her name is Amelia! He is bound

in chains like a wild beast—a hard stone is his couch, and a vault beneath is his grave—he is living and buried—his heart lives and heaves and calls to you, princess, for rescue."

The Princess Amelia shrank back trembling and groaning on the sofa; her eyes were wide open, and staring in the distance. After a long pause, she said, slowly: "Call his name."

"Frederick von Trenck!"

Amelia shuddered, and uttered a low cry. "Trenck!" repeated she, softly; "oh, what sad melody lies in that word! It is like the death-cry of my youth. I think the very air must weep when this name vibrates upon it. Trenck, Trenck! How beautiful, how lovely that sounds; it is a sweet, harmonious song; it sings to me softly of the only happiness of my life. Ah, how long, how long since this song was silenced! All within me is desolate! On every side my heart is torn—on every side! Oh, so drear, so fearful! All! all!" Lost in her own thoughts, these words had been slowly uttered. She had forgotten that she was not alone with her remembrances, which like a cloud had gathered round about her and shut off the outward world.

Ranuzi did not dare to recall her thoughts—he still knelt at her feet.

Suddenly her whole frame trembled, and she sprang up. "My God! I dream, while he calls me! I am idly musing, and Trenck has need of me. Speak, sir, speak! What do you know of him? Have you seen him? Did he send you to me?"

"He sent me, your highness, but I have not seen him. Have the grace to listen to me. Ah, your highness, in what I now say I lay the safety of a dear and valued friend, yes, his life, at your feet. One word from you, and he will be delivered over to a court-martial and be shot. But you will not speak that word—you are an angel of mercy."

"Speak, sir—speak, sir," said Amelia, breathlessly. "My God! do you not see that I am dying from agitation?"

"Princess, Trenck lives—he is in chains—he is in a hole under the earth—but he lives, and as long as he has life, he hopes in you—has wild dreams of liberty, and his friends think and hope with him. Trenck has friends who are ready to offer up their lives for him. One of them is in the fortress of Magdeburg—he is lieutenant of the guard; another is a Captain Kimsy, prisoner of war; I am a third. I have known Trenck since my youth. In our beautiful days of mirth and revelry, we swore to stand by each other in every danger. The moment has come to fulfil my oath—Trenck is a prisoner, and I must help to liberate him. Our numbers are few and dismembered—we need allies in the fortress, and still more in the



city. We need powerful assistance, and no one but your highness can obtain it for us."

"I have an assured and confidential friend in Magdeburg," said the princess; "at a hint from me he will be ready to stand by you to—"

Suddenly she was silent, and cast a searching, threatening glance at Ranuzi. She had been too often deceived and circumvented—snares had been too often laid at her feet—she was distrustful. "No, no," said she, at last, sternly, rudely—"I will take no part in this folly. Go, sir—go. You are a poor soothsayer, and I will have nothing to do with you."

Ranuzi smiled, and drew a folded paper from his bosom, which he handed to the princess. It contained these words: "Count Ranuzi is an honest man—he can be trusted unconditionally." Under these words was written: "Nel tue giorni felici, vicordati da me."

The breast of Amelia heaved convulsively—she gazed at these written characters; at last her eyes filled with tears—at last her heart was overcome by those painful and passionate feelings which she had so long kept in bondage. She pressed the paper, the lines on which were written with his blood, to her lips, and hot tears gushed from those poor eyes which for long, long years, had lost the power to weep.

"Now, sir," said she, "I believe in you, I trust you. Tell me what I have to do."

"Three things fail us, princess: A house in Magdeburg, where Trenck's friends can meet at all hours, and make all necessary preparations, and where he can be concealed after his escape. Secondly, a few reliable and confiding friends, who will unite with us and aid us. Thirdly, we must have gold—we must bribe the guard, we must buy horses, we must buy friends in the fortress, and lastly, we must buy French clothing. Besides this, I must have permission to go for a few days to Magdeburg, and there on the spot I can better make the final preparations. A fair pretext shall not fail me for this; Captain Kimsky is my near relative—he will be taken suddenly ill, and as a dying request he will beg to see me; one of his comrades will bring me notice of this, and I will turn imploringly to your highness."

"I will obtain you a passport," said Amelia, decisively.

"While in Magdeburg, the flight will be arranged."

"And you believe you will succeed?" said the princess, with a bright smile, which illuminated her poor deformed visage with a golden ray of hope.

"I do not only believe it, I know it; that is, if your royal highness will assist us."

The princess made no reply; she stepped to her desk and took from it several rolls of gold, then seated herself and wrote with a swift hand: "You must trust the bearer fully, he is my friend; assist him in all that he undertakes." She folded the paper and sealed it.

Ranuzi followed every movement with flashing eyes and loudly beating heart. As she took the pen to write the address a ray of wild triumph lighted his dark face, and a proud smile played about his mouth. As Amelia turned, all this disappeared, and he was dignified and grave as before.

"Take this, sir," said she; "you see that I place in your power a faithful and beloved friend, he is lost if you are false. As soon as you reach Magdeburg go to him, and he will make other friends and allies known to you."

"Can I make use of this address, and write under it to my friend Kimsky?" said Ranuzi.

"Yes, without danger. To-day I will find means to inform him that he may expect this letter. Here is gold, two hundred ducats, all that I have at present. When this is exhausted, turn again to me and I will again supply you."

Ranuzi took the gold and said, smilingly, "This is the magic means by which we will break his chains."

Amelia took a costly diamond pin, which lay upon the table, and gave it to Ranuzi. She pointed to the paper marked with blood, which she still held in her hand.

"This is a most precious jewel which you have given me—let us exchange."

Ranuzi fell upon his knees and kissed her hand as he took the pin.

"And now, sir, go. My maid is a salaried spy, and a longer interview would make you suspected. You would be watched, and all discovered. Go! If I believed in the power of prayer, I would lie upon my knees night and day, and pray for God's blessing upon your effort. As it is, I can only follow you with my thoughts and hopes. Farewell!"

"Your royal highness sends no reply to these lines, written with Trenck's heart's blood?"

Amelia took the pen and wrote a few hasty lines upon the paper, which she handed Ranuzi. The words were: "Ovunque tu sei vicina ti sono."

"Give him that," said she; "it is not written with my heart's blood, but my heart bleeds for him—bleeds ever inwardly. And now resume your rôle of soothsayer—I must call my ladies."

The afternoon of this day Ranuzi wrote to his friend, Captain Kimsky, prisoner of war at Magdeburg:



"The train is laid, and will succeed. The fortress will soon be in our hands. A romantic, sentimental woman's heart is a good thing, easily moved to intrigues. Magdeburg will be ours! Prepare everything—be ill, and call for me; I shall get a passport. I have a powerful protectress, and with such, you know, a man may attain all the desires of his heart!"

## CHAPTER VI.

## A COURT DAY IN BERLIN.

It was the birthday of Prince Henry, and was to be celebrated with great pomp at the court. The king had himself written explicitly on this subject to the master of ceremonies, Baron Pöllnitz. Pöllnitz was, therefore, actively occupied in the early morning, and no general ever made his preparations for a battle with more earnestness and importance than the good baron gave his orders for the splendid *fête* which was to be given in the royal apartments that night.

And this was indeed a great opportunity. The people of Berlin were to enjoy a ball and a concert, at which all the Italian singers were to be present; and then a rare and costly supper, to which not only the court, but all the officers who were prisoners of war were to be invited.

This supper was to Pöllnitz the great circumstance, the middle point of the *fête*. Such an entertainment was now rare at the court of Berlin, and many months might pass away ere the queen would think of giving another supper. Pöllnitz knew that when he thirsted now for a luxurious meal he must enjoy it at his own cost, and this thought made him shudder. The worthy baron was at the same time a spendthrift and a miser.

Four times in every year he had three or four days of rare and rich enjoyment; he lived *en grand seigneur*, and prepared for himself every earthly luxury; these were the first three or four days of every quarter in which he received his salary. With a lavish hand he scattered all the gold which he could keep back from his greedy creditors, and felt himself young, rich, and happy. After these fleeting days of proud glory came months of sad economy; he was obliged to play the *rôle* of a parasitical plant, attach himself to some firm, well-rooted stem, and absorb its strength and muscle. In these days of restraint he watched like a pirate all those who were in the condition to keep a good table, and so soon as he learned that a dinner was on hand, he knew how to conquer a place. At these

times he was also a passionate devotee of the card-table, and it was the greatest proof of his versatility and dexterity that he always succeeded in making up his party, though every man knew it cost gold to play cards with Pöllnitz. The grand-master had the exalted principles of Louis XV. of France, who was also devoted to cards. Every evening the great Louis set apart a thousand louis d'or to win or lose. If the king won, the gold went into his private pocket; if he lost, the state treasury suffered.

Following this royal example, Pöllnitz placed the gold he won in his pocket; if he lost, he borrowed the money to pay—he considered this borrowed sum as also the clear profit of his game; he was assured to win, and in this way he obtained his pocket money.

To-day, however, he would not be merry at a strange table; he himself would do the honors, and he had conducted the arrangements of the table with a scholarship and knowledge of details which would have obtained the admiration of the Duke de Richelieu.

On this occasion it was not necessary to restrain his luxurious desires and tastes. Honor demanded that the court should show itself in full pomp and splendor, and prove to the world that this long, wearisome war had not exhausted the royal treasury, nor the royal table service of silver; in short, that it was an easy thing to carry on the war, without resorting to the private treasures of the royal house.

It was, therefore, necessary to bring out for this great occasion the golden service which had been the king's inheritance from his mother. Frederick's portion had been lately increased by the death of the Margravine of Baireuth, who had explicitly willed her part to her brother Frederick.\*

The queen and the princesses were to appear in all the splendor of their jewels, and by their costly and exquisite toilets impose upon these proud and haughty officers, whom fate had sent as prisoners of war to Berlin, and who would not fail to inform their respective governments of all they saw in the capital.

This *fête* was a demonstration made by the king to his over-confident enemies. He would prove to them that if he wished for peace it was not because the gold failed to carry on the war, but because he wished to give rest and the opportunity to recover to Europe, groaning and bleeding from a thousand wounds. Besides this, the king wished to show his subjects, by the celebration of his brother's birthday, how highly he honored the prince—how gladly he em-

\* When the court fled, after the battle of Künendorf, to Magdeburg, they took the golden service which the king inherited from his mother with them; that portion given to Frederick by the margravine was left in Berlin, and the next year, 1760, was seized by the Russians and carried to Petersburg.—"Geschichte Berlins," vol. v., p. 2.