

"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.

braced the opportunity to distinguish the young general who, during the whole war, had not lost a single battle; but, by his bold and masterly movements, had come to the king's help in the most difficult and dangerous moments.

This celebration should be a refutation of the rumors spread abroad by the king's enemies, that Frederick regarded the success and military talent of his brother with jealous envy.

There were, therefore, many reasons why Pöllnitz should make this a luxurious and dazzling feast; he knew also that Prince Henry would receive a detailed account of the celebration from his adjutant, Count Kalkreuth, who had lingered some months in Berlin because of his wounds, was now fully restored, and would leave Berlin the morning after the ball to return to the army.

And now the important hour had arrived. Pöllnitz wandered through the saloons with the searching glance of a warrior on the field of battle; he pronounced that all was good.

The saloons were dazzling with light; pomp and splendor reigned throughout, and on entering the supper-room you were almost blinded by the array of gold and silver adorning the costly *buffet*, on whose glittering surface the lights were a thousand times reflected.

Suddenly the rooms began to fill; everywhere gold-embroidered uniforms, orders, stars, and flashing gems were to be seen; a promiscuous and strange crowd was moving through these lofty saloons, illuminated by thousands of lights and odorous with the fragrance of flowers.

Side by side with the rich, fantastic uniform of the Russian, was seen the light and active French *chasseur*; here was to be seen the Hungarian hussar, whose variegated and tasteful costume contrasted curiously with the dark and simple uniform of the Spaniard, who stood near him, both conversing gayly with an Italian, dressed in the white coat of an Austrian officer.

It seemed as if every nation in Europe had arranged a rendezvous for this day in the royal palace at Berlin, or as if the great Frederick had sent specimens to his people of all the various nations against whom he had undertaken this gigantic war.

There were not only Germans from all the provinces, but Italians, Spaniards, Russians, Swedes, Hungarians, Netherlanders, and Frenchmen. All these were prisoners of war—their swords had been stained with the blood of Prussians; the fate of war now confined them to the scabbard, and changed the enemies of the king into guests at his court.

Hundreds of captive officers were now waiting in the saloon for the appearance of the queen, but the Prussian army was scarcely represented. All who were fit for service were in the field, only

the invalids and the old warriors, too infirm for active duty had remained at the capital; even the youths who had not attained the legal age for military duty, had hastened to the army, full of courage and enthusiasm, inspired by the example of their fathers and brothers.

The dazzling appearance of these royal saloons was therefore mostly owing to the flashing uniforms of the prisoners of war. Only a few old Prussian generals, and the courtiers, whose duties prevented them from being heroes, were added to the number.

Herr von Giurgenow, and his friend Captain Belleville, were invited to the ball, and were well pleased to offer their homage to the majesty of Prussia. Count Ranuzi, who, reserved and silent as usual, had been wandering through the saloons, now joined them, and they had all withdrawn to a window, in order to observe quietly and undisturbed the gay crowd passing before them.

"Look you," said Ranuzi, laughing, "this reminds me of the frantic confusion in the anterooms of hell, which Dante has described in such masterly style. We all wear our glittering masks, under which our corpses are hidden; one word from our master and this drapery would fall off, and these grinning death-heads be brought to ruin. It depends solely upon the will of Frederick of Prussia to speak this word. He is our master, and when he commands it, we must lay aside our swords and exchange our uniforms for the garments of a malefactor."

"He will not dare to do this," said Giurgenow; "all Europe would call him a barbarian, and make him answerable for his insolence."

"First, all Europe must be in a condition to call him to account," said Ranuzi, laughing; "and that is certainly not the case at present, I am sorry to say."

"You have not heard, then," said Belleville, "of the glorious victory which our great General Broglie has gained over Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick; all France is jubilant over this happy event, and the Marquise de Pompadour, or rather King Louis, has made this second Turenne, our noble Broglie, marshal."

"I know of this," said Ranuzi; "but I know also that the fortune of battles is inconstant, otherwise we would not now be here."

"It is to be hoped we will not be here long," said Giurgenow, impatiently. "Does it not lie in our power to go at once? What think you? Have we not our swords? They have not dared to take them from us! They tremble before us, and honor, in our persons, the nations we represent. Look at the complaisance and consideration with which we are met on all sides. The King of Prussia fears his powerful enemies, and does all in his power to conciliate them."

Suppose that to-night, as soon as the royal family are assembled, we draw our swords and take them all prisoners; we have overpowering numbers, and I think it would be an easy victory. We could make a fortress of this palace, and defend ourselves; they would not dare to make a violent attack, as the queen and princesses would be in our power. What think you of this plan, Count Ranuzi?"

Ranuzi met the sharp and piercing glance of the Russian with cool composure.

"I think it bold, but impossible. We could not maintain our position, one hour. The garrison of Berlin would overcome us. We have no thousands of prisoners in the casements here, as in Küstrin, to aid us in such an attempt."

"The count is right," said Belleville, gayly; "such a grandiose and warlike conspiracy would amount to nothing. We must revenge ourselves in another way for the tedious *ennui* we are made to endure here, and my friends and myself are resolved to do so. We will no longer submit to the shackles of etiquette, which are laid upon us; we will be free from the wearisome constraint which hems us in on every side. These proud ladies wish us to believe that they are modest and virtuous, because they are stiff and ceremonious. They make a grimace at every *équivoque*. We will prove to them that we are not blinded by this outward seeming, and not disposed to lie like Dutchmen, languishing at the feet of our inexorable fair ones. Our brave brothers have conquered the Prussians at Hochkirch and at Bergen; we cannot stand side by side with them in the field, but here, at least, we can humble the Prussian women!"

"I can well believe," whispered Giurgenow, "that you would be pleased to humble the beautiful Fraulein von Marshal?"

"Ah, my friend," said Ranuzi, laughing, "you touch the wound of our poor friend. You do not seem to know that the beautiful Marshal is responsible for the scorn and rage of Count Belleville. She is indeed a haughty and presumptuous beauty; she not only dared to reject the love of the fascinating count, but she showed him the door; and when afterward he ventured to send her a passionate and tender billet-doux, she informed him, through her servant, that she would give the letter to her chambermaid, for whom, without doubt, it was intended."

"*Eh bien*, what do you say to this insolence?" cried the enraged Frenchman. "But she shall do penance for it. I have already made the necessary arrangements with my friends. This is not simply a personal affair, it touches the general honor. The whole French army, all France, is insulted in my person. It is necessary we should have satisfaction, not only from this presumptuous lady,

but from all the ladies of the court! We will have our revenge this evening! We will show to these dull dames what we think of their prudery. And the queen shall see that we are not at all inclined to bow down to her stiff ceremonies. She is, in our eyes, not a queen—simply the wife of an enemy over whom we will soon triumph gloriously."

"I counsel you, however, to wait till the hour of triumph for your revenge," said Ranuzi. "Your intentions may lead to the worst consequences for us all. The great Frederick will never be a harmless adversary till he is dead, and we would all be ignominiously punished for any contempt shown the queen. You have a personal affair with Fraulein Marshal; well, then, you must make her personally responsible; but do not involve us all in your difficulties. It would be an easy thing to forfeit even this appearance of freedom."

"You are right," said Giurgenow; "we might be banished from Berlin, and that would be a bitter punishment for us all."

"But look! the doors are being thrown open, and the queen and court will appear; you will have the happiness of seeing your cruel fair one," whispered Ranuzi to the Frenchman.

"I assure you she shall repent of her cruelty to-night," said Belleville, gnashing his teeth. Exchanging a significant glance with several French officers, who were standing not far off, he advanced into the saloon to the outer circle, which was formed on both sides, and through which the queen and court must pass.

Now the grand master of ceremonies appeared on the threshold, with his golden staff. Behind him the queen and the Princess Amelia entered the room; both appeared in all the pomp and splendor of their rank. A small diamond-crown glittered in the blonde hair of the queen, a magnificent necklace of diamonds and emeralds was clasped around her dazzlingly white and beautifully formed throat.

Bielfeld had once declared that this necklace could purchase a kingdom. A white robe worked with silver and a dark-red velvet shawl trimmed with ermine fell in graceful folds around the noble and graceful figure of the queen, whose bowed head, and quiet, modest bearing contrasted strangely with the luxury and splendor which surrounded her.

Another striking contrast to the queen was offered in the presence of the Princess Amelia. Like her royal sister, she appeared in complete toilet, adorned with all her jewels—her arms, her throat, her hair, and her hands flashed with diamonds. The festoons of her robe of silver gauze were fastened up with diamond buttons, and beneath appeared a green robe embroidered with silver. The

princess knew full well that all this splendor of toilet, all these flashing gems, would bring into contemptuous notice her sharp, angular figure, and her poor deformed visage; she knew that the eyes of all would be fixed upon her in derision, that her appearance alone would be greeted as a cherished source of amusement, and as soon as her back was turned the whole court would laugh merrily. She assumed, as usual, a cold contemptuous bearing; she met mockery with mockery, and revenged herself by sharp wit and cutting irony for the derisive glances which plainly spoke what the lips dared not utter. She no sooner entered the saloon than she began to greet her acquaintances; every word contained a poisonous sting, which inflicted a grievous wound. When she read in the faces of her victims that her sharp arrows had entered the quivering flesh, a malicious fire sparkled in her eyes, and a bitter smile played upon her lips.

Behind the queen and Princess Amelia appeared the Princess Henry. She was also superbly dressed, but those who looked upon her thought not of her toilet; they were refreshed, enraptured by her adorable beauty—by the goodness and purity written on her rosy cheek. To-day, however, the eyes of the princesses were less clear and dazzling than usual—a gleam of sadness shadowed her fair brow, and her coral lips trembled lightly as if in pain. Perhaps it was the remembrance of the beautiful and happy days, past and gone like a dream, which made the lonely present seem so bitter. Absent-minded and thoughtful, she stepped forward without looking to the right or left, regardless of the flashing orders and stars, of the handsome officers and courtly circle bowing profoundly before her as she passed on.

The court had now passed; the bowed heads were raised, and now the young French officers cast impertinent, almost challenging glances, at the ladies of the queen and the princesses, who drew near and bestowed here and there stolen smiles and light greetings upon their admirers.

Fraulein Marshal did not seem to be aware that the insolent eyes of these haughty Frenchmen were fixed upon her. Proudly erect she advanced; her large blue eyes were turned toward the princess; she gave neither glance nor smile to any one; her noble and beautiful countenance had a stern, resolved expression—her lips were pouting, and her usually soft eyes told tales of an angry soul. There was something Juno-like in her appearance—she was lovely to behold, but cold and stern in her beauty.

As she passed by Count Belleville, he exclaimed with a sigh to his neighbor: "Ah, look at this majestic Galatea, this beautiful marble statue, which can only be awaked to life by kisses."

Fraulein Marshal trembled slightly; a crimson blush suffused her

face, her shoulders, and even her back; but she did not hesitate or turn. She moved on slowly, though she heard the officers laughing and whispering—though she felt that their presumptuous eyes were fixed upon her.

The queen and princesses made the *grande tournée* through the rooms, and then mingled with the guests; all formal etiquette was now laid aside, and a gay and unembarrassed conversation might be carried on till the beginning of the concert. This seemed to degenerate, on the part of the French officers, to an indiscreet, frenzied levity. They laughed and talked boisterously—they walked arm in arm before the ladies, and remarked upon them so boldly, that crimson blushes, or frightened pallor, was the result. Even the queen remarked the strange and unaccountable excitement of her guests, and to put an end to it, she entered the concert-room and ordered the music to commence. Even this had no effect. The royal *capello* played an overture composed by the king, with masterly precision—the singers emulated them in an Italian *aria*—but all this did not silence the noisy conversation of the Frenchmen. They laughed and chatted without restraint; and neither the amazed glances of the princesses nor the signs of the grand-master of ceremonies, made the slightest impression upon them.

Suddenly there was a slight pause, and the Princess Amelia rose up from her seat and beckoned with her fan to Baron Pöllnitz. In a loud and angry voice, she said: "Baron Pöllnitz, I insist upon your forcing these shrieking popinjays of the Marquise de Pompadour to silence. We cannot hear the music for their loud chattering. The like birds may pass very well in the gallant boudoir of a certain marquise, but not in a royal palace of Berlin."

Pöllnitz shrank back in alarm, and fixed an imploring look upon the princess. Amongst the French officers arose an angry murmur, swelling louder and louder, more and more threatening, and completely drowning the music which was just recommencing.

The queen bowed down to the princess. "I pray you, sister," said she, in a low voice, "remember that we are poor, unprotected women, and not in a condition to defend ourselves. Let us appear not to remark this unmannerly conduct, and let us remember that the king has made it our duty to receive the French officers with marked attention."

"You, sister, are simply a slave to the commands of the king. He is more truly your master than your husband," said the princess, angrily.

The queen smiled sweetly. "You are right; I am his slave, and my soul has chosen him for its lord. Blame me not, then, for my obedience."

"Do you intend to allow the arrogant presumption of these haughty Frenchmen to go unpunished?"

"I will take pains not to observe it," said the queen, turning her attention again to the music. During all this time, Count Belleville stood behind Fraulein Marshal. While the concert was going on, he bowed over her and spoke long and impressively. Fraulein Marshal did not reply; neither his ardent love-assurances, nor his glowing reproaches, nor his passionate entreaties, nor his bold and offensive insolence, could draw from her one word, one look.

When the concert was over, and they were about to return to the saloon where, until supper, they could dance and amuse themselves, the young maiden turned with calm composure and indifference to Count Belleville. "Sir, I forbid you to molest me with your presence, and I counsel you no longer to offend my ears with these indecent romances, which you have no doubt learned upon the streets of Paris. But if, believing that I am unprotected, you still dare to insult me, I inform you that my father has this moment arrived, and will certainly relieve me from your disagreeable and troublesome society." She spoke aloud, and not only Belleville, but the group of French officers who stood behind him, heard every word. She passed by them with calm indifference and joined a large, elderly officer, who was leaning against a pillar, and who stretched out his hand smilingly toward her.

"Father," she said, "God himself put it in your heart to come to Berlin this day. You are by my side, and I have nothing to fear. I know you can protect me."

In the mean time, the musicians commenced to play the grave and at the same time coquettish minuet, and the officers drew near the ladies to lead them to the dance. This was done, however, in so bold and unconstrained a manner, with such manifest *nonchalance*, the request was made with such levity, the words were so little respectful, that the ladies drew back frightened.

Princess Amelia called Fraulein Marshal to her side. She took her hand with a kindly smile.

"My child," she said, "I rejoice that you have the courage to defy these shameless coxcombs. Go on, and count upon my protection. Why are you not dancing?"

"Because no one has asked me."

At this moment an officer drew near with diligent haste, apparently to lead her to the dance. While in the act of offering his hand to her he made a sudden movement, as if he had just recognized the lady, turned his back, and withdrew without a word of apology.

The princess was enraged. "I promise you they shall be pun-

ished for this presumption." She turned to Baron Marshal, who stood behind his daughter: "Baron," said she, "if this leads to a duel, I will be your second!"

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE WINDOW-NICHE.

WHILE these events were occurring in the dancing-room, and the queen was seated at the card-table, the Princess Wilhelmina, wife of Prince Henry, stood in the window-niche of the ball-room and conversed with Count Kalkreuth, the friend and adjutant of her husband. The count had been sent home amongst the wounded, but he was now restored and about to return to the camp. They spoke quickly and impressively together, but the music drowned their words and made them indistinct to all others. What said they to each other? Seemingly petty and indifferent things. They had, perhaps, a deeper, secret meaning, for the countenance of the princess and that of the count were grave, and the sweet smile had vanished from the charming face of the princess. They spoke of unimportant things, perhaps, because they had not the courage for the great word which must be spoken—the word farewell!

"Your royal highness has then no further commission to give me for the prince?" said the count, after a pause.

"No," said the princess; "I wrote to him yesterday by the courier. Describe the ball to him, and tell him how we are, and how you left me."

"I must tell him, then, that your highness is perfectly gay, entirely happy, and glowing with health and beauty," said the count. These were simple and suitable words, but they were spoken in a hard and bitter tone.

The princess fixed her large soft eyes with an almost pleading expression upon the count; then with a quick movement she took a wreath of white roses, which she wore in her bosom, and held them toward him. "As a proof that I am gay and happy," said she, "take these flowers to my husband, and tell him I adorned myself with them in honor of his *fête*."

The count pressed his lips convulsively together and looked angrily upon the princess, but he did not raise his hand to take the flowers—did not appear to see that she held them toward him.

"Well, sir," said the Princess Wilhelmina, "you do not take the flowers?"

"No," said he, passionately, "I will not take them."

The princess looked anxiously around; she feared some one might have heard this stormy "No." She soon convinced herself that there was no listener nearer than her maid of honor; Fraulein Marshal was still near the Princess Amelia, and she was somewhat isolated by etiquette; she saw, therefore, that she dared carry on this conversation.

"Why will you not take my flowers?" she said, proudly.

The count drew nearer. "I will tell you, princess," said he—"I will tell you, if this passionate pain now burning in my breast does not slay me. I will not take your flowers, because I will not be a messenger of love between you and the prince; because I cannot accept the shame and degradation which such an office would lay upon me. Princess you have forgotten, but I remember there was a wondrous time in which I, and not the prince, was favored with a like precious gift. At that time you allowed me to hope that this glowing, inextinguishable feeling which filled my heart, my soul, found an echo in your breast; that at least you would not condemn me to die unheard, misunderstood."

"I knew not at that time that my husband loved me," murmured the princess; "I thought I was free and justified in giving that heart which no one claimed to whom I would."

"You had no sooner learned that the prince loved you than you turned from me, proud and cold," said the count, bitterly; "relentlessly, without mercy, without pity, you trampled my heart under your feet, and not a glance, not a word showed me that you had any remembrance of the past. I will tell you what I suffered. You have a cold heart, it will make you happy to hear of my anguish. I loved you so madly I almost hated you; in the madness of my passion I cursed you. I thanked God for the war, which forced me to that for which I had never found the moral strength to leave you. Yes, I was grateful when the war called me to the field—I hoped to die. I did not wish to dishonor my name by suicide. I was recklessly brave, because I despised life—I rushed madly into the ranks of the enemy, seeking death at their hands, but God's blessed minister disdained me even as you had done. I was borne alive from the battle-field and brought to Berlin to be nursed and kindly cared for. No one knew that here I received daily new and bitter wounds. You were always cruel, cruel even to the last moment; you saw my sufferings, but you were inexorable. Oh, princess, it would have been better to refuse me entrance, to banish me from your presence, than to make my heart torpid under the influence of your cold glance, your polished speech, which ever allured me and yet kept me at a distance. You have played a cruel game with me, princess, you mock me to the last. Shall I be your messenger to the prince?"

You know well that I would give my heart's blood for one of those sweet flowers, and you send them by me to another. My humility, my subjection is at an end; you have sinned against me as a woman, and I have therefore the right to accuse you as a man. I will not take these flowers! I will not give them to the prince! And now I have finished—I beg you to dismiss me."

The princess had listened tremblingly; her face became ever paler—completely exhausted, she leaned against the wall.

"Before you go," whispered she, "listen to a few words; it may be that the death you seek may be found on the battle-field—this may be our last interview in this world; in such a moment we dare speak the truth to each other; from the souls which have been closely veiled, may cloud and darkness be for one moment lifted. What I now say to you shall go as a sacred secret with you to the grave, if you fall; but if God hears my prayer, and you return, I command you to forget it, never to remind me of it. You say I have a cold heart. Alas! I only choked the flame which raged within me; I would have my honor and my duty burned to ashes. You say that my eyes are never clouded, that they shed no tears. Ah! believe me, I have wept inwardly, and the silent, unseen tears the heart weeps are bitterer than all others. You reproach me for having received you when you returned here sick and wounded, and for not having closed my doors against you. I know well *that* was my duty, and a thousand times I have prayed to God on my knees for strength to do this, but He did not hear me or He had no mercy. I could not send you off; had my lips spoken the fearful words, the shriek of my heart would have called you back. My lips had strength to refuse an answer to the question which I read in your face, in your deep dejection, but my heart answered you in silence and tears. Like you, I could not forget—like you I remembered the bounteous sweet past. Now you know all—go! As you will not take these flowers to the prince, they are yours, were intended for you; I have baptized them with my tears. Farewell!"

She gave him the flowers, and without looking toward him, without giving him time to answer, she stepped forward and called her chamberlain.

"Count Saldow, be kind enough to accompany Count Kalkreuth, and give him the books and papers my husband has ordered."

Wilhelmina passed on proudly, calmly, with a smile on her lips, but no one knew what it cost her poor heart. She did not look back. Kalkreuth would have given years to take leave once more of the lovely face, to ask pardon for the hard, rude words he had dared to say. The princess had still the bashful timidity of virtue; after the confession she had made she dared not look upon him. The count

controlled himself; he followed Saldow. He was bewildered, rapturously giddy. As he left the castle and entered his carriage he looked up at the window and said: "I will not die!—I will return!"—then pressed the bouquet to his lips and sank back in the carriage.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NUTSHELLS BEHIND THE FAUTEUIL OF THE QUEEN.

PRINCESS WILHELMINA, as we have said, did not look back; she stepped silently through the ball-room, and approached the Princess Amelia. She stood for a moment behind a couple who were dancing the *Francaise*. The French officers had just taught this dance to the Prussian ladies as the newest Parisian mode.

It was a graceful and coquettish dance, approaching and avoiding; the ladies stood opposite their cavaliers, and advanced with smiling grace, then appeared to fly from them in mocking haste. They were pursued in artistic tours by their cavaliers; at the end of the dance their hands were clasped in each other's, and they danced through the room with the graceful time and step of the minuet.

Princess Wilhelmina stood silent and unobservant; she knew not the dance was ended; she knew not that the music was silenced. A softer, sweeter, dearer melody sounded in her ears; she heard the echo of that voice which had spoken scornfully, despairingly, and yet love had been the sweet theme.

The sudden stillness waked her from her dream and she stepped forward. The general silence was interrupted by the well-known coarse, stern voice of the Princess Amelia.

"Does this dance please you, Baron Marshal? The French officers have taught it to our ladies as a return for the dance which our brave Prussian soldiers taught the French at Rossbach; at Rossbach, however, they danced to a quicker, faster *tempo*. These Frenchmen are now calling out, '*En avant!*' but at Rossbach, I am told, '*En arrière!*' was the word of command."

A death-like silence followed these sarcastic words of the princess, and throughout the room her mocking, derisive laugh which followed these words was distinctly heard. She rose, and leaning upon the arm of Baron Marshal, advanced to meet the Princess Wilhelmina, and cast a fierce glance at the officers, who were assembled in groups and talking in low tones but earnestly with each other.

Suddenly Belleville, leaning on another officer, advanced from

one of these groups; they walked backward and forward, laughing and chattering loudly, without regarding the presence of the princess. They then drew near the orchestra, and called out in a jovial tone:

"Messieurs, have the kindness to play a Dutch waltz, but in the quick time which the Austrians played at Hochkirch, when they drove the Prussians before them; and in which Field-Marshal Broglie played at Bergen, when he tramped upon the Prussians! Play on, messieurs! play on!"

Belleville then danced forward with great levity of manner to Fraulein Marshal, who stood by the side of her father; without saluting her, he seized her hand.

"Come, *ma toute belle*," said he, "you have played the marble statue long enough for one day; it is time that you should awake to life in my arms. Come, then, and dance with me your lascivious Dutch waltz, which no respectable woman in France would dare to dance! Come! come!"

Belleville tried to drag Fraulein Marshal forward, but at the instant a powerful and heavy arm was laid upon him, and his hand was dashed off rudely.

"I have heard you to the end," said Baron Marshal, calmly; "I wished to see a little of the renowned gallantry of which the Frenchman is so proud. It appears to me that a strange *ton* must now reign in Paris, well suited, perhaps, to the boudoirs of mistresses, but not fitting or acceptable to the ears of respectable women. I beg you therefore, sir, not to assume this *ton* in Berlin; I am resolved not to endure it."

Belleville laughed aloud, drew very near the baron, and looked him insolently in the face.

"Who are you, monsieur, who dare take the liberty of begging me, who do not know you, to do or not do any thing?"

"I am Baron Marshal, the father of this lady whom you have dared to offend!"

Belleville laughed still louder than before.

"Aha! that is a beautiful fairy tale! You who are as hideous as a baboon, and have borrowed the eyes of the cat!—you the father of the lovely Galatea Marshal!—tell that tale to other ears—I do not believe in such aberrations of Nature. I repeat my question: who are you? what is your name?"

"I repeat to you, I am Baron Marshal, the father of this lady."

"You are more credulous, sir, than I am, if you believe that," said Belleville, coarsely.

"Perhaps I am less credulous than you suppose," said Marshal, quietly. "It would, for example, be difficult for me to believe that

you are a nobleman. I can assure you, however, that I am not only noble, but a man of honor."

Belleville was in the act of giving a passionate answer, when the doors of the supper-room were thrown open, and a sea of light irradiated the room.

At this moment, the queen and her ladies entered from the card-room, and, at her appearance, every word, every sound was hushed. Silently, and with a conciliatory smile, the queen passed through the saloon, and seated herself at the table; she then gave the sign to the grand-master, that her guests should be seated. And now the servants, in golden liveries, flew from side to side bearing silver plates, containing the rare and fragrant viands which the inventive head of Baron Pöllnitz had ordered for the favored guests of her majesty the Queen of Prussia.

Nothing is so well calculated to quiet the perturbed soul as a costly and well-prepared feast. The haughty Frenchmen soon forgot their mortified vanity and resentment, and were well pleased to be seated at the table of the "great Frederick." They ate and drank right merrily in honor of the bold and brave prince who had sent them here from Rossbach; but if the rich dishes made them forget their mortification, the fiery wine excited yet more their presumptuous levity. They forgot that they were the guests of a queen. Louder and more extravagant was their gayety, more boisterous, more indiscreet their unrestrained laughter. In their frantic merriment they dared to sing aloud some of the little ambiguous, equivocal *chansons*, which belonged to the *gamins* of Paris, and at which the Marquise de Pompadour laughed till she shed tears when sung sometimes by the merry courtiers.

In vain the grand-master besought them, in his most polished manner, not to sing at table.

"We have been so long forced to listen to the dull, screeching discord of your singers, that we must have some compensation!" said they. "Besides," said Belleville, in a loud voice, "it belongs now to *bon ton* to sing at the table; and the Prussian court should thank us for introducing this new Parisian mode."

They sang, chatted, laughed, and almost overpowered the music by their boisterous levity. Their presumptuous revelry seemed to be every moment on the increase. The Austrian and Russian officers looked upon them with disgust and alarm, and entreated them to desist; but the French officers were regardless of all etiquette. During the dessert, Belleville and some of his friends arose and drew near the table at which the queen and the princesses were seated; this was in the middle of the room, and slightly separated from the other tables. They gazed at the princesses with insolent eyes, and,

placing themselves behind the chair of the queen, they began to crack nuts with their teeth, and throw the shells carelessly upon the floor, near her majesty.

The queen continued a quiet conversation with the Princess Wilhelmina, and appeared wholly unconscious of this rudeness and vulgarity; but her face was pallid, and her eyes filled with tears.

"I pray your majesty to rise from the table!" said the Princess Wilhelmina. "Look at the Princess Amelia; her countenance glows with anger; there is a tempest on her brow, and it is about to burst upon us."

"You are right; that is the best way to end this torture." She rose from the table, and gave a sign for a general movement.

When the queen and her suite had left the room, Baron Marshal drew near Count Belleville.

"Sir," said he, "I told you before that I was not sufficiently credulous to take you for a nobleman. Your conduct at the table has proved that I did well to doubt you. Yourself and friends have shown that you are strangers to the duties of cavaliers, and utterly ignorant of the manners of good society."

"Ah!" cried Belleville, "this offence demands satisfaction."

"I am ready to grant it," said Baron Marshal; "name the time and place of meeting."

"You know well," cried Belleville, "that I am a prisoner, and have given my word of honor not to use my sword!"

"So you were impertinent and shameless, because you knew you were safe? You knew that, thanks to your word of honor, you could not be chastised!"

"Sir," cried Belleville, "you forget that you speak not only to a nobleman, but to a soldier."

"Well, I know that I speak to a Frenchman, who lost his powder-mantle and pomatum-pot at Rossbach."

Belleville, beside himself with rage, seized his sword, and half drew it from the scabbard.

"God be praised, I have a sword with which to revenge insult!" he cried. "I have given my word not to use it on the battle-field against the Prussians, but here we stand as private adversaries, man to man, and I challenge you, sir—I challenge you to mortal combat. I will have satisfaction! You have insulted me as a nobleman, as a Frenchman, and as a soldier. No consideration shall restrain me. I dare not use my sword—well, then, we will fight with pistols. As to time and place, expect me to-morrow, at eight o'clock, in the Thiergarten."

"I accept the conditions, and I will await you with your seconds," said Baron Marshal.

"If the baron has not chosen his seconds," said a soft voice behind him, "I beg to offer my services."

Baron Marshal turned, and saw an officer in the Austrian uniform.

"Count Ranuzi," cried Belleville, astonished; "how, monsieur! you offer yourself as second to my adversary? I had thought to ask this service of you."

"I suspected so," said Ranuzi, with his accustomed calm and quiet manner, "therefore I anticipated you. The right is certainly on the side of Baron Marshal, and in offering myself as his second, I do so in the name of all the Austrian officers who are present. They have all seen the events of this evening with painful indignation. Without doubt the world will soon be acquainted with them; we wish to make an open, public demonstration that we wholly disapprove the conduct of the French officers. The nutshells thrown behind the *fauteuil* of the queen have made us your adversaries, Count Belleville."

"That is not the occasion of this duel, but the affront offered me by Baron Marshal," cried Belleville. "This being the case, will you still be the second of my opponent?"

"I was compelled to insult you," said Baron Marshal, "because you would have given me no satisfaction for the nutshells thrown behind the *fauteuil* of the queen; but be assured that I don't fight with you in order that you may wash out my offence with my blood, but wholly and alone that your blood may wash away the nutshells from the feet of the queen."

Baron Marshal then turned to Ranuzi. "I accept your offer, sir, and rejoice to make the acquaintance of a true nobleman. Have the goodness to meet the seconds of Count Belleville, and make all necessary arrangements. I will call for you early in the morning. I only say further that it is useless to make any attempts at reconciliation—I shall not listen to them. Prussia and France are at war. My great king has made no peace—I also will not hear of it. The nutshells lie behind the *fauteuil* of the queen, and only the blood of Count Belleville can wash them away."

He bowed to Ranuzi, and joined his daughter, who, pale and trembling, awaited him in the next room.

"Oh, father," said she, with tears gushing from her eyes, "your life is in danger—you meet death on my account!"

"No, thank God, my child, your name will not be mixed up in this affair. No one can say that the mortified father revenged an insult offered to his daughter. I fight this duel not for you, but because of the nutshells behind the *fauteuil* of the queen."

CHAPTER IX.

THE DUEL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

EARLY in the morning two horsemen dashed down the Linden. Their loud conversation, their pert and noisy laughter, aroused the curiosity of the porters who stood yawning in the house-doors, and the maids opened the windows and gazed curiously at the two gallant French officers who were taking such an early ride to the Thiergarten. When the girls were young and pretty, Belleville threw them a kiss as he passed by, and commanded them to give it with his tenderest greeting to their fair mistress.

"Happily," said his companion, "these good Berliners do not understand our speech sufficiently to inform their mistresses of this last insolence of Count Belleville."

"They do not, but their mistresses do, and I cannot think that they are still sleeping. No, I am convinced they have risen early, and are now standing behind their maids, and watching us go by. In this street dwell those who call themselves society; they were at the castle yesterday, and know of this duel. I think our good marquise will one day reward me richly for this duel, when I tell her I stood behind the queen and cracked nuts like a *gamin* in Paris, and that I was shot at because of the nutshells. She will laugh tears—tears which I will strive to convert into diamonds for myself."

"You feel assured that you will return unharmed from this duel?"

"Yes, I cannot doubt it. I always won the prize at our pistol-shooting in Paris, and then, this stupid Dutchman is, without doubt, horrified at the thought of shooting at a man, and not at a mark. No, *vraiment*, I do not doubt but I shall be victorious, and I rejoice in anticipation of that *déjeuner dinatoire* with which my friends will celebrate it."

"But," said his second, "let us for a moment suppose that you are not victorious; one must ever be prepared in this poor world, ruled by accident, for the worst that can befall. In case you fall, have you no last commissions to give me?"

Count Belleville stopped his horse as they were in the act of entering the garden.

"You positively insist on burying me? Well, then, I will make my last will. In case I fall go instantly to my quarters, open my writing-desk, and press upon a small button you will see on the left side; there you will find letters and papers; tie them carefully, and send them in the usual way to Countess Bernis. As to my heritage,