

place, and think of his personal safety. His answer was—"We must seek, at this point, to win the battle. I must do my duty here with the rest."*

Many voices cried out—"Where is the king now?"

The courier did not answer; but the question was so fiercely, so stormily repeated, that he was compelled to go on.

"The king, in the midst of the confusion and horror of the flight, had called him, and commanded him to gallop to Berlin, and bear the fatal news to Minister Herzberg. He had then galloped by him, exactly against the enemy, as if he wished their balls to strike him; a little troop of his most faithful soldiers had followed!"

"The king is lost! the king is a prisoner—wounded—perhaps dead!" cried the terrified people.

Suddenly, the mad tumult was interrupted by loud shouts of joy, which swelled and thundered like an avalanche from the other side of the square. A fifth courier had arrived, and brought the news of the complete defeat of the Russians, and a glorious Prussian victory.

Now, one of those memorable, wondrous-grand scenes took place, which no earthly phantasy could contrive or prepare, to which only Providence could give form and color. As if driven by the storm-winds of every powerful earthly passion, this great sea of people fluctuated here and there. At one point, thousands were weeping over the news which the unhappy messenger had brought. Near by, thousands were huzzaing and shouting over the joyful intelligence brought by the fifth courier, while those who had been near enough to the fourth courier to understand his words, turned aside to give the sad news to those who were afar off. Coming at the same time from the other side, they were met by a mighty mass of men, who announced, with glad cries, the news of victory, brought by the fifth courier. Here you could see men, with their arms raised to heaven, thanking God for the hardly-won victory. A little farther on, pale, frightened creatures, motionless, bowed down, and grief-stricken. Here were women, with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes, shouting over their hero king. There, the people wept and moaned; their king had disappeared, was a prisoner, or dead. As at the Tower of Babel, the people spoke in a thousand tongues, and no one listened to another; every one was lost—blinded by his own passionate hopes and fears.

At last the two couriers were called upon to come face to face and decide these important questions. Strong men lifted them upon their shoulders and brought them together; a profound and fearful silence ensued, every man felt that he stood upon the eve of a mighty revelation; fifty thousand men were waiting breathlessly

*The king's own words.—See Thiébault, p. 214.

for news of happiness beyond compare, or of unspeakable woe. The conversation of the two horsemen standing upon the shoulders of their townsmen was quick and laconic.

"At what hour did the king send you off?" said the fourth courier to the fifth.

"At six. The king himself commissioned me."

"Where stood our army at that time?" said the fourth courier.

"They stood before the hollow ground, and the Russians had withdrawn to the intrenchments of Zudenberg; we had taken a hundred and twenty cannon, and many of our soldiers were wandering about the battle-field looking at the batteries they had taken."*

"Yes," said the fourth courier, sadly, "that was at six, but at seven we were in full flight. Loudon had risen from the ground, and the frightened, conquered Russians had recovered themselves. You left at six, I at eight; I have ridden more rapidly than you. Unhappily, I am right, the battle is lost!"

"The battle is lost!" howled the people; "the king is also lost! Woe! woe!"

At this moment the royal equipages were seen making their way slowly through the crowd, and the advance guard were praying the people to open a way for the travelling carriages to reach the castle.

These words excited new alarm. "We are lost! Let us fly, let us fly! The court, the queen, and the princesses flee—let us save ourselves! The Russians will come to Berlin—they will annihilate us. We are deserted and lost, lost!—no one knows where our king is!"

As if driven by madness, the crowds rushed against each other, like the sea when it divides, and in billowy streams pours itself out here and there; and the cry of anguish which now rang out from the castle square, found its echo in every street and every house.

CHAPTER XI.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

THE cannon were silenced, the discharges of musketry had ceased. On the great plain of Künersdorf, where, a few hours before, a bloody battle had been raging, all was quiet. Could this be called repose? How cruel was the tranquillity which rested now upon this fearful battle-field!

It was the peace of death—the stillness which the awful messenger of Heaven presses as a sign and seal of his love upon the pale

*Bodman.

lips of the dead. Happy they whose immortal spirits were quickly wafted away by the dread kiss—they no longer suffer. Woe to those who yet live, though they belong to death, and who lie surrounded by grinning corpses! The cold bodies of their comrades are the pillows upon which they lay their bloody heads. The groans of the dying form the awful melody which awakes them to consciousness; and the starry sky of this clear, transparent summer night is the only eye of love which bows down to them and looks upon them in their agony.

Happy those whom the murderous sword and the crushing ball carried off in an instant to the land of spirits! Woe, woe to those lying upon the battle-field, living, breathing, conscious of their defeat and of their great agony! Woe! woe! for they hear the sound of the tramping and neighing of horses—they come nearer and nearer. The moon throws the long, dark shadows of those advancing horsemen over the battle-field. It is fearful to see their rash approach; spurring on over thousands of pale corpses, not regarding the dying, who breathe out their last piteous sighs under the hoofs of these wild horses.

The Cossack has no pity; he does not shudder or draw back from this monstrous open grave, which has received thousands of men as if they were one great corpse. The Cossack has come to rob and to plunder; he spares neither friend nor foe. He is the heir of the dead and of the dying, and he has come for his inheritance. If he sees a ring sparkling upon the hand of a grinning corpse, he springs from his horse and tears it off. If his greedy, cruel eye rests upon a rich uniform he seizes it, he tears it off from the bleeding, wounded body, no matter whether it is dead or still breathing and rattling.

Look at that warrior who, groaning with anguish, his limbs torn to pieces, bleeding from a thousand wounds, is lying in an open grave; he is wounded to death; he still holds his sword in his left hand—his right arm has been torn off by a cannon-ball, a shot has crushed his legs, and his comrades have placed him in this grave that he might not be trampled upon by the horses' hoofs; they are forced to leave him in the hands of God and to the mercy of man.

But the Cossack knows no mercy. That is a word he has never heard in his Russian home; he has no fear of God before his eyes—he fears the Czar and his captain, and above all other things, he fears the knout. He knows nothing of pity, for it has never been shown him—how then should he exercise it?

When the Cossack saw the Prussian officer in his gold-embroidered uniform, he sprang from his horse and threw the bridle over him; a shrill whistle told the wild steed, the Cossack's better half, that he must stand still. He sprang into the grave where the Prus-

sian warrior, the German poet, was laid to rest. Yes, a great German poet lies there—a poet by the grace of God. All Germany knows him, "their songster of the spring." All Germany had read and been inspired by his lays. The Austrian and the Saxon considered the Prussian Major Ewald von Kleist their enemy, but they loved and admired the poet, Ewald von Kleist. The people are never enemies to poesy, and even politics are silent before her melodious voice.

There he lies, the gallant warrior, the inspired, noble poet; his broken eyes are turned to heaven; his blue, cold lips are opened and wearily stammering a few disconnected words. Perhaps he thinks in this last hour of the last words of his last poem. Perhaps his stiffening lips murmured these words which his mangled hand had written just before the battle:

"Death for one's fatherland is ever honorable.
How gladly will I die that noble death
When my destiny calls!"

Yes, death might have been beautiful, but fate is never propitious to German poets. It would have been noble and sweet to die in the wild tumult of battle, under the sound of trumpets, amid the shouts of victory; sweet thus, with a smile upon the lip to yield up the immortal spirit.

Ewald von Kleist, the German poet, received his death-wound upon the field of battle, but he did not die there; he lives, he knows that the battle is lost, that his blood has been shed in vain. The Cossack has come down into his grave—with greedy eyes he gazes at the rich booty. This bleeding, mangled body—this is to the Cossack not a man, it is only a uniform which is his; with hands trembling with greed he tears it from the quivering, bleeding form. What to him is the death-rattle and the blood—even the bloody shirt excites the covetousness of the barbarian, and he tears it from the dying frame.*

The Prussian warrior, the German poet, lay there naked, his own blood alone covered his wounded body, wrapped it in a purple mantle, worthy of the poet's crown with which his countrymen had decked his brow.

But Ewald von Kleist is no longer a poet or a hero—he is a poor, suffering, tortured child of earth; he lies on the damp ground, he pleads for a few rags to cover his wounds, into which the muddy water of the hole in which he lies is rushing.

And now fate seems favorable. A Russian officer is riding by—he takes pity on the naked man with the gaping wounds; he throws

* "History of the Seven Years' War."—Thiébault, 368.

him a soldier's old mantle, a piece of bread, and a half gulden.* The German poet receives the alms of the Russian thankfully—he covers himself with the cloak, he tries to eat the bread.

But destiny is never propitious to German poets. The Cossacks swarm again upon the battle-field, and again they approach the groaning warrior in the open grave; he has no longer a glittering uniform, but the Cossack takes all; the poor old mantle excites his greed—he tears it from the unresisting soldier; he opens his hands and takes out the half gulden which Ewald von Kleist had received from the Russian hussar.

Again he lies naked, again the muddy water forces into his wounds, and adds cruel torture to the agonies of death. So lies he till the next day, till the enemy takes pity upon him and carries him as a prisoner to Frankfort. †

Happy those who meet with sudden death. It is true all the living did not share the cruel fate of Ewald von Kleist, but all those thousands who were borne wounded and bleeding from the battle-field were conscious of their sufferings and their defeat.

The little village of Otschef near the battle-field was a hospital. During the battle all the inhabitants had fled. The wounded had taken possession of the huts and the surgeons were hastening from house to house giving relief where it was possible. No one entered into those two little huts which lay at the other end of the village, somewhat separated from the others. And yet those huts contained two wounded men. They had been brought here during the battle—the surgeon had examined their wounds and gone out silently, never to return. Groaning from time to time, these two wounded men lay upon the straw, their eyes fixed upon the door, longing for the surgeon to bring them help, or at least alleviation.

And now the door was indeed opened, and an officer entered. Was it the obscurity of twilight, or had blood and pain blinded the eyes of the wounded men so that they could not recognize the stranger? It was true his noble and generally cheerful face was now grave and stern, his cheeks were ashy pale, and his great, flashing eyes were dim; but there was still something inexpressibly majestic and commanding in his appearance—though defeated and cast down, he was still a hero, a king—Frederick the Great!

Frederick had come to take up his quarters in this lonely hut, to be alone in his great grief; but when he saw the two wounded men,

* "Seven Years' War," 253.

† Ewald von Kleist died a few days after this, on the 24th of August. The Russians gave him an honorable burial; and as there was no sword upon his coffin, Captain Bulow, chief of the Russian dragoons, took his own from his side and placed it upon the bier, saying, "So worthy an officer shall not be buried without every mark of honor."—Archenholtz, 262.

his expression changed to one of earnest sympathy. With hasty steps he drew near to the two officers, bowed over and questioned them kindly. They recognized his voice—that voice which had so often inspired them to bold deeds in the wild whirl of battle, but whose tones were now mild and sympathetic.

"The king!" cried both in joyful surprise, and forgetting their wounds and helplessness, they strove to rise, but sank back with hollow groans, with the blood streaming anew from their wounds.

"Poor children," said Frederick, "you are badly wounded."

"Yes," groaned Lieutenant von Grabow, "badly wounded, but that is of small consequence, if, your majesty, we only knew that we had gained the day. We had taken two redoubts, and were storming the third, when this misfortune befell us. Tell us, your majesty, is it not true? Is not the victory ours?"

A dark shadow passed over the face of the king, but soon disappeared.

"You must now think only of yourselves. You have proved that you are brave—the rest is accident or fate. Do not despond, all will be well. Have your wounds been dressed? Have you been fed?"

"Ah, sire, no devil will dress our wounds," groaned Lieutenant von Hubenfall.

"How," cried the king, "have they left you here without care and assistance?"

"Yes, sire, there is no earthly hope for us."

The king was about to answer, when several people, bearing hand-barrows, accompanied by a surgeon, entered.

"What do you wish?" said the king, angrily.

"Sire," answered the surgeon, "we will remove the wounded, as your majesty will make your night-quarters here."

The king threw a scornful glance upon them.

"And you suppose that I will allow this? The wounded men remain here. I will seek shelter elsewhere. But, above all things, examine the wounds of these two officers at once, and dress them."

The surgeon advanced, and examined them carefully, then drew near the king.

"Your majesty," said he, shrugging his shoulders, "it would be all in vain. A cannon-ball has torn off the right arm of one of these men, and he must die of gangrene. The other has a cartridge-load of iron in his face and in his body. It is impossible to bind up these wounds."

The king did not answer him. He stepped hastily to the straw-bed, and took both the wounded men by the hand. Then, turning to the surgeon, he said—

"Look, now, these two men are young and powerful—they have

no fever. With such young blood and fresh hearts Nature often does wonders. Dress them, and bind up their wounds, and, above all things, see that they have nourishment—they have need of it.”

“Ah, yes, your majesty; we have been hungry and thirsty a long time,” said Grabow.

The king smiled. “See, now, you think they are lost, and yet they have healthy stomachs; so long as a man is hungry he will not die.”

The surgeon opened his case of instruments and commenced to dress the wounds. The king watched him for a long time, then stooped down and said, tenderly, “Children, do not despair; I will learn how it goes with you, and if you are no longer fit for service, I will take care of you. Believe that I will not forget you.” He bowed kindly and left the room. His adjutants were awaiting him at the door of the tent.*

The king signed to them to follow him, and stepping rapidly through the village, he passed by the huts from which loud cries of anguish and low murmurs were heard.

“Ah,” cried Frederick, “Dante did not know all the horrors of hell, or he forgot to paint those I now suffer.” He hastened on—on—in the obscure twilight of the summer night, pursued by the sighs and groans of his dying and wounded soldiers; a deep, immeasurable sadness lay upon his brow; his lips were trembling; cold perspiration stood upon his forehead; his eyes wandered over the battle-field, then were raised to heaven with a questioning and reproachful expression. Already the village lay far behind him; but he hurried on, he had no aim, no object; he wished only to escape this hell, this cry of despair and woe from the condemned. An adjutant dared at last to step forward and awake him from his sad mood.

“Sire,” said he, “the Cossacks are swarming in every direction, and if your majesty goes on, the most fearful results may be anticipated. The Cossacks shoot at every man who wears a good coat.”

The king shook his head sadly. “There is no ball for me,” said he in a low tone; “I have in vain called upon death. I have prayed in mercy for a ball; it came, but it only grazed my breast. No, no—there is no ball for me!” He advanced, and the adjutant dared once more to interrupt him.

“Sire,” said he, “will not your majesty seek night-quarters?”

*The king's own words. The whole scene is historical. These two officers, whom the king saved in this way from death, recovered rapidly. After they were completely restored, they again took part in the contest, and were again severely wounded at Kolberg. They served until peace was declared, and then retired on the invalid list, and, by the express order of the king, were most kindly cared for.—See Nicolai.

Frederick raised his head, and was in the act of answering nastily, then said: “Yes, I need night-quarters.” He looked around and saw an empty peasant's house by the wayside, drew near and entered silently.

CHAPTER XII.

A HEROIC SOUL.

“I WILL pass the night here,” said he, “the place appears deserted; we will disturb no one.”

The king was right. The miserable old hut was empty. No one advanced to meet him as he entered. In one corner of the room there was some dirty straw; in the other a wooden table and stool—this was all.

“It suffices for me,” said the king, smiling. “I will pass the night here. Have you my writing materials with you?”

“I sent Adjutant von Goltz for them, sire, as I did not wish to leave you alone.”

Goltz now entered with the king's portfolio, and informed him that he had brought two grenadiers to guard the house.

“Have I still grenadiers?” murmured the king, in a trembling voice. His head fell upon his breast, and he stood thus lost in deep thought for a while. “Gentlemen,” said he, at length, “inspect the house. See if there is a more comfortable room than this; if not, I suppose we can manage to sleep here. Send one of the guard for some soldiers, by whom I can forward my dispatches.”

The adjutants bowed, and left the room. The king was alone. He could at last give way to his despair—his grief.

“All, all is lost!” murmured the king, and a voice within him answered: “When all is lost, there is no escape but death! It is unworthy to continue a life without fame, without glory. The grave alone is a resting-place for the broken-hearted, humiliated man!”

The king listened attentively to this voice. He had borne with patience the sorrows and deprivations of the past years, but he could not survive the ruin of his country. His country was lost. There was no chance of saving it; his army was gone. The victorious enemy had taken all the neighboring provinces. The Russians could now march undisturbed to Berlin. They would find no resistance, for the garrison there consisted of invalids and cripples.

Berlin was lost! Prussia was lost! The king was resolved to die, for he was a king without a crown, a hero without laurels. He

wished to die, for he could not survive the destruction of his country. But first he must arrange his affairs, make his will, and bid adieu to his friends. The king opened the door hastily, and desired that a light should be brought—it was no easy thing to procure in this dismal, deserted village. The adjutant succeeded at last, however, in getting a few small tallow candles, and placing them in old bottles, in the absence of candlesticks of any description, he carried them to the king. Frederick did not observe him; he stood at the open window, gazing earnestly at the starry firmament. The bright light aroused him; he turned, and approached the table.

"My last letters!" murmured he, sinking upon the wooden stool, and opening his portfolio.

How his enemies would have rejoiced, could they have seen him in that wretched hovel! He first wrote to General Fink, to whom he wished to leave the command of his army. He must fulfil the duties of state, before those of friendship. It was not a letter—rather an order to General Fink, and read as follows:

"General Fink will find this a weary and tedious commission. The army I leave is no longer in a condition to defend itself from the Russians. Haddeck will hasten to Berlin. Loudon also, I presume. If you intercept them, the Russians will be in your rear; if you remain by the Oder, Haddeck will surround you. I nevertheless believe, were Loudon to come to Berlin, you could attack and defeat him. This, were it possible, would give you time to arrange matters, and I can assure you, time is every thing, in such desperate circumstances as ours. Köper, my secretary, will give you the dispatches from Torgau and Dresden. You must acquaint my brother, whom I make general-in-chief of the army, with all that passes. In the mean time, his orders must be obeyed. The army must swear by my nephew. This is the only advice I am able to give. Had I any resources, I would stand fast by you.

"FREDERICK."*

"Yes, I would have stood by them," murmured the king, as he folded and addressed his letter. "I would have borne still longer this life of oppression and privation; but now, honor demands that I should die."

He took another sheet of paper. It was now no order or command, but a tender, loving, farewell letter to his friend, General Finkenstein.

"This morning, at eleven o'clock, I attacked the enemy; we drove them back to Gudenberg. All my men performed deeds of daring and bravery, but, at the storming of Gudenberg, a terrific number of lives were lost. My army became separated. I reassem-

*The king's own words.

bled them three times, but in vain. At last, they fled in wild disorder. I very nearly became a prisoner, and was obliged to leave the field to the enemy. My uniform was torn by the cannon-balls, two horses were shot underneath me, but death shunned me; I seemed to bear a charmed life; I could not die! From an army of forty-eight thousand men, there now remains three thousand. The consequences of this battle will be more fearful than the battle itself. It is a terrible misfortune, and I will not survive it. There is no one to whom I can look for help. I cannot survive my country's ruin. Farewell!"

"And now," said the king, when he had sealed and directed his letter, "now I am ready; my worldly affairs are settled. I am at the end of my sufferings, and dare claim that last, deep rest granted by Nature to us all. I have worked enough, suffered enough; and if, after a life of stormy disasters, I seek my grave, no one can say it was cowardly not to live—for all the weight of life rolled upon me, forced me to the ground, and the grave opened beneath my feet. I continued to hope, when overwhelmed with defeat at every point. Every morning brought new clouds, new sorrows. I bore it courageously, trusting that misfortune would soon weary, the storms blow over, and a clear, cloudless sky envelop me. I deceived myself greatly; my sorrows increased. And now, the worst has happened; my country is lost! Who dares say I should survive this loss? To die at the proper time is also a duty. The Romans felt this, and acted upon it. I am a true scholar of the old masters, and wish to prove myself worthy of them. When all is lost, the liberty to die should not be denied. The world has nothing more to do with me, and I laugh at her weak, unjust laws. Like Tiberius, will I live and die! Farewell, then, thou false existence; farewell, weak man! Ah! there are so many fools—so few men amongst you; I have found so many faithless friends, so many traitors, so few honest men! In the hour of misfortune they all deserted me! But, no!" said he; "one remained true. D'Argens never deceived me, and I had almost forgotten to take leave of him. Well, death must wait for me, while I write to D'Argens!"

A heavenly inspiration now beamed on his countenance; his eyes shone like stars. The holy muse had descended to comfort the despairing hero, to whisper loving and precious words to him. Thus standing at death's portals, Frederick wrote his most beautiful poem, called "*Ami le sort en est jeté.*" A great wail of woe burst from his soul. The sorrows, the grievances hid until now from all, he portrayed in touching, beautiful words to his absent friend. He pictured to him his sufferings, his hopes, his struggles, and finally, his determination to die. When all this had been

painted in the most glowing colors, when his wounds were laid bare, he wrote a last and touching farewell to his friend:

“ Adieu, D’Argens! dans ce tableau,
De mon trépas tu vois la cause;
Au moins ne pense pas du néant du caveau,
Que j’aspire à l’apothéose.
Tout ce que l’amitié par ces vers propose,
C’est que tant qu’ici-bas le céleste flambeau,
Eclairera tes jours tandis que je repose,
Et lorsque le printemps paraissant de nouveau,
De son sein abondant t’offre les fleurs écloses,
Chaque fois d’un bouquet de myrthes et de roses,
Tu daignes parer mon tombeau.” *

“ Ah!” murmured the king, as he folded and addressed his poetical letter, “ how lovely it must now be at Sans-Souci! Well, well! my grave shall be there, and D’Argens will cover it with flowers. And have I no other friends at Sans-Souci? My good old hounds, my crippled soldiers! They cannot come to me, but I will go to them.”

The king then arose, opened the door, and asked if a messenger was in readiness; receiving an answer in the affirmative, he gave the three letters to the adjutant. “ And now my work is finished,” said he, “ now I can die.” He took from his breast-pocket a small casket of gold which he always carried with him, and which, in the late battle, had served him as a shield against the enemy’s balls. The lid had been hollowed in by a ball; strange to say, this casket, which had saved his life, was now to cause his death. For within it there was a small vial containing three pills of the most deadly poison, which the king had kept with him since the beginning of the war. The king looked at the casket thoughtfully. “ Death here fought against death; and still how glorious it would have been to die upon the battle-field believing myself the victor!” He held the vial up to the light and shook it; and as the pills bounded up and down, he said, smiling sadly, “ Death is merry! It comes eagerly to invite me to the dance. Well, well, my gay cavalier, I am ready for the dance.”

He opened the vial and emptied the pills into his hand. Then arose and approached the window to see once more the sky with its glittering stars and its brightly-beaming moon, and the battle-field upon which thousands of his subjects had this day found their death. Then raised the hand with the pills. What was it that caused him to hesitate? Why did his hand fall slowly down? What were his eyes so intently gazing on?

* See note, page 572.

The king was not gazing at the sky, the stars, or the moon; but far off into the distance, at the Austrian camp-fires. There were the conquerors, there was Soltikow and Loudon with their armies. The king had observed these fires before entering the hut, but their number had now increased, a sign that the enemy had not advanced, but was resting. How? Was it possible that the enemy, not taking advantage of their victory, was not following the conquered troops, but giving them time to rally, to outmarch them, perhaps time to reach the Spree, perhaps Berlin?

“ If this is so,” said the king, answering his own thoughts, “ if the enemy neglects to give me the finishing-blow, all is not lost. If there is a chance of salvation for my country, I must not die; she needs me, and it is my duty to do all in my power to retrieve the past.”

He looked again at the camp-fires, and a bright smile played about his lips.

“ If those fires speak aright,” said he, “ my enemies are more generous—or more stupid—than I thought, and many advantages may still be derived from this lost battle. If so, I must return to my old motto that ‘ life is a duty.’ And so long as good, honorable work is to be done, man has no right to seek the lazy rest of the grave. I must ascertain at once if my suspicions are correct. Death may wait awhile. As long as there is a necessity for living, I cannot die.”

He returned the pills to the vial and hid the casket in its former resting-place. Then passing hastily through the room, he opened the door. The two adjutants were sitting upon the wooden bench in front of the hut; both were asleep. The grenadiers were pacing with even tread up and down before the house; deep quiet prevailed. The king stood at the door looking in amazement at the glorious scene before him. He inhaled with delight the soft summer air; never had it seemed to him so balmy, so full of strengthening power, and he acknowledged that never had the stars, the moon, the sky looked as beautiful. With lively joy he felt the night-wind toying with his hair. The king would not tire of all this; it seemed to him as if a friend, dead long since, mourned and bewailed, had suddenly appeared to him beaming with health, and as if he must open his arms and say, “ Welcome, thou returned one. Fate separated us; but now, as we have met, we will never leave one another, but cling together through life and death, through good and evil report.”

Life was the friend that appeared to Frederick, and he now felt his great love for it. Raising his eyes in a sort of ecstasy to the sky, he murmured, “ I swear not to seek death unless at the last ex-

tremity, if, when made a prisoner, I cannot escape. I swear to live, to suffer, so long as I am free."

He had assumed the harness of life, and was determined to battle bravely with it.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TWO GRENADIERS.

SMILING, and with elastic step, the king advanced to meet the two grenadiers, who stood rooted to the spot as he approached them.

"Grenadiers," said he, "why are you not with your comrades?"

"Our comrades fled," said one.

"It is dishonorable to fly," said the other.

The king was startled. These voices were familiar, he had surely heard them before.

"I ought to know you," said he; "this is not the first time we have spoken together. What is your name, my son?"

"Fritz Kober is my name," said the grenadier.

"And yours?"

"Charles Henry Buschman," said the other.

"You are not mistaken, sir king! we have met and spoken before, but it was on a better night than this."

"Where was it?" said the king.

"The night before the great, the glorious battle of Leuthen," said Fritz Kober, gravely; "at that time, sir king, you sat at our tent-fire and ate dumplings with us. Charles Henry knows how to cook them so beautifully!"

"Ah! I remember," said the king; "you made me pay my share of the costs."

"And you did so, like a true king," said Fritz Kober. "Afterward you came back to our tent-fire, and Charles Henry Buschman told you fairy tales; nobody can do that so beautifully as Charles Henry, and you slept refreshingly throughout."

"No, no, grenadier," said the king, "I did not sleep, and I can tell you to-day all that Charles Henry related."

"Well, what was it?" said Fritz Kober, with great delight.

The king reflected a moment, and then said, in a soft voice:

"He told of a king who was so fondly loved by a beautiful fairy, that she changed herself into a sword when the king went to war and helped him to defeat his enemies. Is that it, Fritz Kober?"

"Nearly so, sir king; I wish you had such a fairy at your side to-day."



FREDERICK AND THE TWO GRENADIERS.

"Still, Fritz," whispered Charles Henry Buschman, "our king does not need the help of a fairy; our king can maintain his own cause, and God is with his sword."

"Do you truly believe that, my son?" said the king, deeply moved. "Have you still this great confidence in me? Do you still believe that I can sustain myself and that God is with me?"

"We have this confidence, and we will never lose it!" cried Charles Henry, quickly. "Our enemies over there have no Frederick to lead them on, no commander-in-chief to share with them hunger and thirst, and danger and fatigue; therefore they cannot love their leaders as we do ours."

"And then," said Fritz Kober, thoughtfully, "I am always thinking that this war is like a battle of the cats and hounds. Sometimes it looks as if the little cats would get the better of the great bulldogs; they have sharp claws, and scratch the dogs in the face till they can neither see nor hear, and must for a while give way; they go off, however, give themselves a good shake, and open their eyes, and spring forward as great and strong and full of courage as ever; they seize upon the poor cats in the nape of the neck and bite them deadly with their strong, powerful teeth. What care they if the cats do scratch in the mean while? No, no, sir king, the cats cannot hold out to the end; claws are neither so strong nor so lasting as teeth."

"Yes," said the king, laughing, "but how do you know but our foes over there are the hounds and we are the little cats?"

"What!" cried Fritz Kober, amazed, "we shall be the cats? No, no, sir king, we are the great hounds."

"But how can you prove this?"

"How shall I prove it?" said Fritz Kober, somewhat embarrassed. After a short pause, he cried out, gayly, "I have it—I will prove it. Those over there are the cats because they are Russians and Austrians, and do not serve a king as we do; they have only two empresses, two women. Now, sir king, am I not right? Women and cats, are they not alike? So those over there are the cats and we are the bulldogs!"

Frederick was highly amused. "Take care," said he, "that 'those over there' do not hear you liken their empresses to cats."

"And if they are empresses," said Fritz Kober, dryly, "they are still women, and women are cats."

The king looked over toward the camp-fires, which were boldly shining on the horizon.

"How far is it from here to those fires?" said he.

"About an hour," said Charles Henry, "not more."

"One hour," repeated the king, softly. "In one hour, then, I

could know my fate! Listen, children, which of you will go for me?"

Both exclaimed in the same moment, "I will!"

"It is a fearful attempt," said the king, earnestly; "the Cossacks are swarming in every direction, and if you escape them, you may be caught in the camp and shot as spies."

"I will take care that they shall not recognize me as an enemy," said Charles Henry, quietly.

"I also," said Fritz Kober, zealously, "You stay, Charles Henry, we dare not both leave the king. You know that only this evening, while upon the watch, we swore that, even if the whole army of the enemy marched against us, we would not desert our king, but would stand at our post as long as there was a drop of blood in our veins or a breath in our bodies."

The king laid his hands upon the two soldiers and looked at them with much emotion. The moon, which stood great and full in the heavens, lighted up this curious group, and threw three long, dark shadows over the plain.

"And you have sworn that, my children?" said the king, after a long pause. "Ah, if all my men thought as you do we would not have been defeated this day."

"Sir king, your soldiers all think as we do, but fate was against us. Just as I said, the cats outnumbered us to-day, but we will bite them bravely for it next time. And now tell me, sir king, what shall I do over there in the camp?"

Before the king could answer, Charles Henry laid his hand upon his arm.

"Let me go," said he, entreatingly; "Fritz Kober is so daring, so undaunted, he is not cautious; they will certainly shoot him, and then you have lost the best soldier in your army."

"Your loss, I suppose, would not be felt; the king can do without you."

"Listen, children," said the king, "it is best that you both go; one can protect the other, and four ears are better than two."

"The king is right, that is best—we will both go."

"And leave the king alone and unguarded?"

"No," said the king, pointing to the two sleepers, "I have my two adjutants, and they will keep guard for me. Now, listen to what I have to say to you. Over there is the enemy, and it is most important for me to know what he is doing, and what he proposes to do. Go, then, and listen. Their generals have certainly taken up their quarters in the village. You must ascertain that positively, and then draw near their quarters. You will return as quickly as possible, and inform me of all that you hear and see."

"Is that all?" said Fritz Kober.

"That is all. Now be off, and if you do your duty well, and return fresh and in good order, you shall be both made officers."

Fritz Kober laughed aloud. "No, no, sir king, we know that old story already."

"It is not necessary that you should promise us any thing, your majesty," said Charles Henry; "we do not go for a reward, but for respect and love to our king."

"But tell me, Fritz Kober, why you laughed so heartily?" said the king.

"Because this is not the first time that your majesty has promised to make us officers. Before the battle of Leuthen, you said if we were brave and performed valiant deeds, you would make us officers. Well, we were brave. Charles Henry took seven prisoners, and I took nine; but we are not officers."

"You shall be to-morrow," said the king. "Now, hasten off, and come back as quickly as possible."

"We will leave our muskets here," said Charles Henry; "we dare not visit our enemies in Prussian array."

They placed their arms at the house door, and then clasping each other's hands, and making a military salute, they hastened off.

The king looked after them till their slender forms were lost in the distance.

"With fifty thousand such soldiers I could conquer the world," murmured he; "they are of the true metal."

He turned, and stepping up to the two sleepers, touched them lightly on the shoulders. They sprang up alarmed when they recognized the king.

"You need not excuse yourselves," said Frederick kindly, "you have had a day of great fatigue, and are, of course, exhausted. Come into the house, the night air is dangerous; we will sleep here together."

"Where are the two grenadiers?" said Goltz.

"I have sent them off on duty."

"Then your majesty must allow us to remain on guard. I have slept well, and am entirely refreshed."

"I also," said the second lieutenant. "Will your majesty be pleased to sleep? we will keep guard."

"Not so," said the king, "the moon will watch over us all. Come in."

"But it is impossible that your majesty should sleep thus, entirely unguarded. The first Cossack that dashes by could take aim at your majesty through the window."

Frederick shook his head gravely. "The ball which will strike

me will come from above,* and that you cannot intercept. No, it is better to have no watch before the door; we will not draw the attention of troops passing by to this house. I think no one will suppose that this miserable and ruinous barrack, through which the wind howls, is the residence of a king. Come, then, messieurs." He stepped into the hut, followed by the two adjutants, who dared no longer oppose him. "Put out that light," said the king, "the moon will be our torch, and will glorify our bed of straw." He drew his sword, and grasping it firmly in his right hand, he stretched himself upon the straw. "There is room for both of you—lie down. Good-night, sirs."

Frederick slightly raised his three-cornered hat in greeting, and then laid it over his face as a protection from the moonlight and the cold night air. The adjutants laid down silently at his feet, and soon no sound was heard in the room but the loud breathing of the three sleepers.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RIGHT COUNSEL.

HAND in hand the two grenadiers advanced directly toward the battle-field. Before they could approach the enemy's camp they must borrow two Austrian uniforms from the dead upon the plain. It was not difficult, amongst so many dead bodies, to find two Austrian officers, and the two Prussian grenadiers went quickly to work to rob the dead and appropriate their garments.

"I don't know how it is," said Charles Henry, shuddering, "a cold chill thrills through me when I think of putting on a coat which I have just taken from a dead body. It seems to me the marble chillness of the corpse will insinuate itself into my whole body, and that I shall never be warm again."

Fritz Kober looked up with wide-open eyes! "You have such curious thoughts, Charles Henry, such as come to no other man; but you are right, it is a frosty thing." And now he had removed the uniform and was about to draw off his own jacket and assume the white coat of the Austrian. "It is a great happiness," said he, "that we need not change our trousers, a little clearer or darker gray can make no difference in the night."

Charles Henry was in the act of drawing on the coat of the dead man, when Fritz Kober suddenly seized his arm and held him back. "Stop," said he, "you must do me a favor—this coat is too narrow,

*The king's own words.—See Nicolai, p. 118.

and it pinches me fearfully; you are thinner than I am, and I think it will fit you exactly; take it and give me yours." He jerked off the coat and handed it to his friend.

"No, no, Fritz Kober," said Charles Henry, in a voice so soft and sweet, that Fritz was confused and bewildered by it. "No, Fritz, I understand you fully. You have the heart of an angel; you only pretend that this coat is too narrow for you that you may induce me to take the one you have already warmed."

It was well that Fritz had his back turned to the moon, otherwise his friend would have seen that his face was crimson; he blushed as if detected in some wicked act. However, he tore the uniform away from Charles Henry rather roughly, and hastened to put it on.

"Folly," said he, "the coat squeezes me, that is all! Besides, it is not wise to fool away our time in silly talking. Let us go onward."

"Directly over the battle-field?" said Charles Henry, shuddering.

"Directly over the battle-field," said Kober, "because that is the nearest way."

"Come, then," said Charles, giving him his hand.

It was indeed a fearful path through which they must walk. They passed by troops of corpses—by thousands of groaning, rattling, dying men—by many severely wounded, who cried out to them piteously for mercy and help! Often Charles Henry hesitated and stood still to offer consolation to the unhappy wretches, but Fritz Kober drew him on. "We cannot help them, and we have far to go!" Often the swarming Cossacks, dashing around on their agile little ponies, called to them from afar off in their barbarous speech, but when they drew near and saw the Austrian uniforms, they passed them quietly, and were not surprised they had not given the pass-word.

At last they passed the battle-field, and came on the open plain, at the end of which they perceived the camp-fires of the Russians and Austrians. The nearer they approached, the more lively was the scene. Shouts, laughter, loud calls, and outcries—from time to time a word of command. And in the midst of this mad confusion, here and there soldiers were running, market-women offering them wares cheap, and exulting soldiers assembling around the camp-fires. From time to time the regular step of the *patrouille* was heard, who surrounded the camp, and kept a watchful eye in every direction.

Arm in arm they passed steadily around the camp. "One thing I know," whispered Fritz Kober, "they have no thought of marching. They will pass a quiet, peaceful night by their camp-fires."