

CHAPTER VII.

THE ACCUSATION.

THIS time Marietta did not call him back; she did not gaze after him from the window, as she was accustomed to do; she stood, pale as death, in the middle of the room, with panting breath, with flashing eyes; motionless, but with eager and expectant mien, as if listening to something afar off.

To what was Marietta listening? Perhaps to the echo of his step in the silent, isolated street; perhaps to the memories which, like croaking birds of death, hovered over her head, as if to lacerate and destroy even her dead happiness; perhaps she listened to those whispering voices which resounded in her breast and accused Ranuzi of faithlessness and treachery. And was he, then, really guilty? Had he committed a crime worthy of death?

Marietta was still motionless, hearkening to these whispered voices in her breast.

"I will deliberate yet once more," said she, walking slowly through the room, and sinking down upon the divan. "I will sit again in judgment upon him, and my heart, which in the fury of its pain still loves him, my heart shall be his judge."

And now she called back once again every thing to her remembrance. The golden, sunny stream of her happy youth passed in review before her, and the precious, blissful days of her first innocent love. She recalled all the agony which this love had caused her, to whose strong bonds she had ever returned, and which she had never been able to crush out of her heart. She thought of the day in which she had first seen Ranuzi in Berlin; how their hearts had found each other, and the old love, like a radiant Phoenix, had risen from the ashes of the past, to open heaven or hell to them both. She remembered with scornful agitation those happy days of their new-found youthful love; she repeated the ardent oaths of everlasting faith and love which Ranuzi had voluntarily offered; she remembered how she had warned him, how she had declared that she would revenge his treachery and inconstancy upon him; how indolently, how carelessly he had laughed, and called her his tigress, his anaconda. She then recalled how suddenly she had felt his love grow cold, how anxiously she had looked around to discover what had changed him—she could detect nothing. But an accident came to her assistance—a bad, malicious accident. During the war there were no operas given in Berlin, and Marietta was entirely unoccupied; for some times she had been giving singing

lessons—perhaps for distraction, perhaps to increase her income; she had, however, carefully preserved this secret from Ranuzi—in the unselfishness of her love she did not wish him to know that she had need of gold, lest he might offer her assistance.

One of her first scholars was Camilla von Kleist, the daughter of Madame du Trouffle, and soon teacher and scholar became warm friends. Camilla, still banished by her mother to the solitude of the nursery, complained to her new friend of the sorrows of her home and the weariness of her life. Carried away by Marietta's sympathy and flattering friendship, the young girl had complained to the stranger of her mother; in the desire to make herself appear an interesting sacrifice to motherly tyranny, she accused that mother relentlessly; she told Madame Taliazuchi that she was always treated as a child because her mother still wished to appear young; that she was never allowed to be seen in the saloon in the evening, lest she might ravish the worshippers and lovers of her mother. Having gone so far in her confidences, the pitiable daughter of this light-minded mother went so far as to speak of her mother's adorers. The last and most dangerous of these, the one she hated most bitterly, because he came most frequently and occupied most of her mother's time and thoughts, she declared to be the Count Ranuzi.

This was the beginning of those fearful torments which Marietta Taliazuchi had for some months endured—tortures which increased with the conviction that there was truly an understanding between Ranuzi and Madame du Trouffle; that Ranuzi, under the pretence of being overwhelmed with important business, refused to pass the evening with her, yet went regularly every evening to Madame du Trouffle.

Marietta had endured this torture silently; she denied herself the consolation of complaining to any one; she had the courage, with smiling lips, to dispute the truth of Camilla's narratives, and to accuse her of slander; she would have conviction, she longed for proof, and Camilla, excited by her incredulity, promised to give it.

One day, with a triumphant air, she handed Marietta a little note she had stolen from her mother's writing-desk. It was a poem, written in French, in which Ranuzi, with the most submissive love, the most glowing tenderness, besought the beautiful Louise to allow him to come in the evening, to kneel at her feet and worship as the faithful worship the mother of God.

Marietta read the poem several times, and then with quiet composure returned it to Camilla; but her cheeks were deadly pale, and her lips trembled so violently, that Camilla asked her kindly if she was not suffering.

"Yes," she replied, "I suffer, and we will postpone the lesson. I must go home and go to bed."

But Marietta did not go home. Beside herself, almost senseless with pain and rage, she wandered about through the streets, meditating, reflecting how she might revenge herself for this degradation, this faithlessness of her beloved.

At last she found the means; with firm step, with crimson cheeks, and a strange smile upon her tightly-compressed lips, she turned toward the castle. There she inquired for the Marquis d'Argens, and Ranuzi's evil genius willed that D'Argens should be found at that time in Berlin—he was generally only to be seen at Sans-Souci. Marietta did not know the marquis personally, but she had heard many anecdotes of the intellectual and amiable Provençal; she knew that the marquis and the king were warmly attached, and kept up a constant correspondence. For this reason, she addressed herself to D'Argens; she knew it was the easiest and quickest way to bring her communication immediately before the king. The marquis received her kindly, and asked her to make known her request.

At first Marietta was mute, regret and repentance overcame her; for a moment she almost resolved to be silent and to go away. Soon, however, her wrath was awakened, and armed her with the courage of despair: with panting breath, with strange disordered haste, she said: "I have come to tell you a secret—an important secret, which concerns the king."

The good marquis turned pale, and asked if it related to any attempt upon the life of the king?

"Not to his life; but it was a secret of the greatest importance," she replied. Then, however, when the marquis asked her to make a full disclosure, she seemed suddenly to see Ranuzi's handsome face before her; he looked softly, reproachfully at her with his great fathomless eyes, whose glance she ever felt in the very depths of her heart; she was conscious that the old love was again awake in her, and by its mighty power crowding out the passion of revenge. A lingering hesitation and faint-heartedness overcame her—confused and stammering, she said she would only confide her secret to the king himself, or to that person whom the king would authorize to receive it.

The marquis, in a vivacious manner, pressed her to speak, and made conjectures as to the quality of her secret. Marietta found herself involved in a net of cross-questions and answers, and took refuge at last in absolute silence. She rose and told the marquis she would return in eight days, to know whom the king had selected to receive her communication.

The eight days had now passed, and Marietta had, during this time, many struggles with her own heart—her ever newly awakening love pleaded eloquently for forgiveness—for the relinquishment of all her plans of vengeance.* She had almost resolved not to seek the marquis again, or if she did so, to say that she had been deceived—that the secret was nothing—that she had only been bantered and mystified. But now, all these softer, milder feelings seemed burnt out in the wild fire of revenge and scorn which blazed through her whole being. "He is a traitor—a shameless liar!" she said, pressing her small teeth firmly and passionately together; "he is a coward, and has not the courage to look a woman in the face and confess the truth when she demands it; he is a perjurer, for he took the oath which I exacted from him—he swore to love me alone and no other woman; he had the impudent courage to call down the vengeance of God upon himself if he should break this oath. Why do I hesitate longer?" cried she, springing from her seat; "the perjured traitor deserves that my betrayed and crushed heart should avenge itself. He called down the vengeance of God upon himself. Let it crush him to atoms!"

Now all was decision, courage, energy, and circumspection. She took the two letters she had received from Ranuzi and concealed them in her bosom, then dressed herself and left her dwelling.

With a firm step she passed through the streets which led to the castle. As she drew near the house of Madame du Trouffle, she hesitated, stood still, and looked up at the windows.

"If only this once he did not deceive me! If he is not here; if he told me the truth!" His countenance had been so open, so calm, so smiling when he said to her that he had a rendezvous with some friends at the Catholic priest's; and in a graceful, roguish mockery, asked her if she was jealous of that meeting. No, no! this time he was true. He could not have played the hypocrite with such smiling composure. Scarcely knowing what she did, Marietta entered

*The marquis, in one of his letters to the king, described his interview with Madame Taliazuchi, with great vivacity and minuteness, and expressed his own suspicions and conjectures; which, indeed, came very near the truth, and proved that, where he was warmly interested, he was a good inquisitor. He entreated Frederick not to look upon the matter carelessly, as in all probability there was treason on foot, which extended to Vienna. Madame Taliazuchi had much intercourse in Berlin with the captive Italian officers, and it might be that one of these officers was carrying on a dangerous correspondence with Vienna. In closing his letter, the marquis said: "Enfin, sire, quand il serait vrai que tout ceci ne fut qu'une bête italienne qui se serait échauffée, et qui aurait pris des chimères pour des vérités, ce qui pourrait encore bien être, cette femme ne paraît rien moins que prudente et tranquille. Je crois, cependant, que la peine qu'on aurait prise de savoir ce qu'elle veut déclarer serait si légère, qu'on ne la regretterait pas, quand même on découvrirait que cette femme n'est qu'une folle."—"Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand," vol. xix. p. 91.

the house, and asked if Camilla was at home—then hastened on to the door of Camilla's room.

The young girl advanced to meet her with a joyous greeting. "I am glad you have come, Marietta. Without you I should have been condemned to pass the whole evening shut up in my room, wearying myself with books. But I am resolved what I will do in future. If mamma insists upon my being a child still, and banishes me from the parlor when she has company, I will either run away, or I will invite company to amuse me. My cousin, Lieutenant Kienhouse, is again in Berlin; his right arm is wounded, and the king has given him a furlough, and sent him home. When mamma is in the saloon, I will invite my cousin here." She laughed merrily, and drew Marietta dancing forward. "Now I have company, we will laugh and be happy."

"Who is in the saloon?" said Marietta, "and why are you banished to-day?"

"Well, because of this Italian count—this insufferable Ranuzi. He has been here for an hour, and mamma commanded no one to be admitted, as she had important business with the count."

"And you believe that he will remain the whole evening?" said Marietta.

"I know it; he remains every evening."

Marietta felt a cold shudder pass over her, but she was outwardly calm.

"Poor child!" said she, "you are indeed to be pitied, and, if you really desire it, you shall have my society; but first, I have a commission to execute, and then I will bring some notes, and we will sing together." She kissed Camilla upon the brow, and withdrew.

The last moment of respite had expired for Ranuzi; there was no longer a ray of mercy in Marietta's heart. Rushing forward, she soon reached the castle, and announced herself to the marquis. She was introduced into his study, and the marquis advanced to meet her, smiling, and with an open letter in his hand.

"You come at the right time, madame," said he; "an hour since I received this letter from his majesty."

"Has the king named the person to whom I am to confide my secret?" she said, hastily.

"Yes, madame, his majesty has been pleased to appoint me for that purpose."

"Let me see the letter," said Marietta, extending her hand.

The marquis drew back. "Pardon me," said he, "I never allow the king's letters to pass out of my own hands, and no one but myself can see them. But I will read you what the king says in relation to this affair, and you will surely believe my word of honor.

Listen, then: 'Soyez, marquis, le dépositaire de mes secrets, le confident des mystères de Madame Taliazuchi, l'oreille du trône, et le sanctuaire où s'annonceront les complots de mes ennemis.'* Madame, you see that I am fully empowered by the king to receive your confidence, and I am ready to hear what you will have the goodness to relate." He led her to a divan, and seated himself opposite to her.

"Tell the king to be on his guard!" said Marietta, solemnly. "A great and wide-spread conspiracy threatens him. I have been made a tool by false pretences; by lies and treachery my confidence was surreptitiously obtained. Oh, my God!" cried she, suddenly springing up; "now all is clear. I was nothing but an instrument of his intrigues; only the weak means made use of to attain his object. He stole my love, and made of it a comfortable, convenient robe with which to conceal his politics. Alas! alas! I have been his *postillon de politique*." With a loud, wild cry, she sank back upon the divan, and a torrent of tears gushed from her eyes.

The marquis sprang up in terror, and drew near the door; he was now fully convinced that the woman was mad.

"Madame," said he, "allow me to call for assistance. You appear to be truly suffering, and in a state of great excitement. It will be best for you, without doubt, to forget all these political interests, and attend to your physical condition."

Marietta, however, had again recovered her presence of mind; she glanced with a wan smile into the anxious countenance of the marquis.

"Fear nothing, sir, I am not mad; return to your seat. I have no weapons, and will injure no one. The dagger which I carry is piercing my own heart, and from time to time the wound pains; that is all. I promise you to make no sound, to be gentle and calm—come, then."

The marquis returned, but seated himself somewhat farther from the signora.

"I tell you," said Marietta, panting for breath, "that he made use of my credulity—made me a tool of his political intrigues—these

* "I will give the conclusion of this letter which the polite marquis did not read aloud: 'Pour quitter le style oriental, je vous avertis que vous aurez l'oreille rebattue de misères et de petites intrigues de prisonniers obscurs et qui ne vaudront pas le temps que vous perdrez à les entendre. Je connais ces espèces de personnes du genre de Madame Taliazuchi—elles envisagent les petites choses comme très-importantes; elles sont charmées de figurer en politique, de jouer un rôle, de faire les capables d'étaler avec faste le zèle de leur fidélité. J'ai vu souvent que ces beaux secrets révélés n'ont été que des intrigues pour nuire au tiers ou au quart à des gens auxquelles ces sortes de personnes veulent du mal. Ainsi, quoique cette femme vous puisse dire, gardez-vous bien d'y ajouter foi, et que votre cervelle provençal ne s'échauffe pas au premier bruit de ces récits.'"—Œuvres, vol. xix., p. 92.

intrigues which threaten the lands if not the life of the king. The treason I will disclose would place an important fortress in the hands of the Austrians."

"And you are convinced that this is no chimera?" said the marquis, with an incredulous smile.

"I am convinced of it, and I have the incontestable proof with me." She took the two letters which she had received from Ranuzi, and gave them to the marquis. "Take them, and send them to the king; but, not to-morrow, not when it is convenient, but to-day; even this hour. If you are not prompt, in eight days King Frederick will be a fortress the poorer. Besides this, say to his majesty to be ever on his guard against the captive officers in Berlin, especially on his guard against my countryman, Count Ranuzi. He is the soul of this enterprise; he has originated this daring undertaking, and, if this falls to pieces, he will commence anew. He is a dangerous enemy—a serpent, whose sting is most deadly, most to be feared when he seems most gentle, most quiet. Say to King Frederick he will do well to protect himself from the traitor, the Austrian spy, Ranuzi." Marietta stood up, and bowing to the marquis, she advanced to the door. D'Argens held her back.

"Madame," said he, "if these things are really so, Count Ranuzi is a man to be feared, and we should make sure of him."

"He is indeed a dangerous man," said Marietta, with a peculiar smile. "Ask the beautiful Madame du Trouffle; she will confirm my words."

The black, flashing eyes of the marquis fixed themselves searchingly upon the face of the signora. He remembered that the king had warned him to be upon his guard as to the communication of Madame Taliazuchi, that such mysteries were often nothing more than feigned intrigues, by which the discoverer sought to bring sorrow and downfall to an enemy.

"Ah, signora! I understand now," said the marquis; "you did not come here for patriotism or love for Prussia or her king, but from frantic jealousy; not to serve King Frederick, but to overthrow Ranuzi."

Marietta shrugged her shoulders with a contemptuous expression.

"I am an Italian," said she, laconically.

"And the Italians love revenge," said the marquis.

"When one dares to injure them—yes."

"This Count Ranuzi has dared to injure you?"

A flash of scorn flamed for a moment in her eyes, then disappeared. "Would I otherwise have betrayed him?" said she. "I am an Italian, and you cannot ask that I shall feel patriotism for King Frederick or for Prussia. Count Ranuzi is my countryman;

judge, then, how deeply I have been injured when I betray him, and give him over to death."

"To death? it is also then a crime worthy of death which these letters will disclose to the king? You do not deceive yourself? Your thirst for revenge does not make these things appear blacker, more important than they really are?"

"No, I do not deceive myself. I speak but the simple truth."

"Then," said the marquis, with horror, "it is dangerous to leave Ranuzi at liberty. I must apply to the commandant of Berlin, and ask that he be arrested upon my responsibility."

Marietta was already at the door, but these words of the marquis arrested her. With her hand resting upon the bolt, she stood and turned her pale face back to D'Argens. "Certainly, it would be best and surest to arrest him instantly," said she; and her heart bounded with delight when she said to herself, with cruel pleasure: "When once arrested, he can go no more to Madame du Trouffle."

The marquis did not reply, but he stepped thoughtfully through the room. Marietta's eyes followed every movement with a fiery glance. At length the marquis stood before her.

"I cannot take upon myself the responsibility of arresting this man. I do not know that these letters, which I shall send to the king, are really as dangerous as you say. The king must decide; I will send them off by a courier to-day. But, in every event, Ranuzi must be watched, and you shall be his guard. You must see that he does not escape. I make you answerable. Ranuzi must not leave Berlin, and when the king's answer is received, he must be found here."

"You shall find him with me," said she; "and if not, I shall at least be able to tell you where he is. Fear nothing; he shall not escape! I am his guard! When you receive the reply of the king, have the goodness to inform me. This is the only reward I demand."*

"I will inform you, madame," said the marquis, opening the door; "and, as to the Count Ranuzi, I read in your features that you hate him with a bitter hatred, and will not allow him to escape."

* D'Argens wrote to the king: "Si votre majesté ne m'avait point écrit en propres termes. Quoique cette femme puisse vous dire, gardez-vous bien d'y ajouter foi. J'aurai prié le commandant de faire arrêter le nommé Ranuzi jusqu'à ce qu'elle eut mandé ce qu'elle veut qu'on en fasse; cet homme me paraissant un espion de plus agréés. Mais je me suis contenté de dire à Madame Taliazuchi que si cet homme sortait de Berlin, avant la réponse de votre majesté elle en répondrait, et elle m'a assuré qu'elle le retiendrait."—Œuvres, vol. xix., p. 93.

CHAPTER VIII.

REVENGE.

FIVE days had passed since Marietta's interview with the marquis. They had wrought no change in her heart; not for a single instant had her thirst for revenge been allayed. Her hatred of Ranuzi seemed to have become more intense, more passionate, since she understood his plans—since she had learned that he had never loved her, and that she was merely the instrument of his intrigues. Since that time she had watched his every thought and deed.

One day while apparently embracing him, and whispering words of endearment in his ear, she had secretly drawn a folded paper from his pocket, which had just been brought to him by a strange servant who, having vainly sought him at his own house, had followed him to that of Marietta. Having thus obtained the paper, she made an excuse for leaving the room in order to inspect it. She carefully closed the door of the room in which Ranuzi sat, and then examined the paper. After reading it, she drew her note-book from her pocket, and hastily tearing out a leaf, she wrote upon it with a pencil: "Lose no time, if you do not wish him to escape. He has received to-day, through the agency of Madame du Trouffle, the necessary passport and permission to go to Magdeburg. I have no longer the power to detain him. What is done must be done quickly."

She folded the paper and passed cautiously through the hall and into the kitchen where her maid was. "Listen, Sophie," she said; "take this note and go as quickly as you can to the castle and ask for the Marquis d'Argens. You must give the note into his own hands, and if you bring me an answer within the hour, I will reward you as if I were a queen. Do not speak, only go."

The maid hurried down the steps, and Marietta returned, smilingly, to Ranuzi, who received her with reproaches for her long absence.

"I have arranged a little supper for us, and have sent my maid to obtain some necessary articles. You will not leave me to-day, as you always do, to go to your conference with the Catholic priest."

"I would not, Marietta, but I must," said Ranuzi. "Believe me, my dear child, if I followed the dictates of my heart, I would never leave this room, which in my thoughts I always call my paradise, and in which I enjoy my only bright and happy moments. But what would you have, my angel? It is not ordained that men should have undisturbed possession of the joys of paradise. Mother

Eve sinned, and we must expiate her misdeeds. I must leave you again to-day to join that conference which you so heartily detest."

"But not yet," she said, tenderly, putting her arms about his neck. "You will not leave me yet?"

Thus besought, he promised to remain. Never was he more amiable, more brilliant, more attentive, or more tender. Never was Marietta gayer, more excited, or more enchanting. Both had their reasons for this—both had their intentions. Love smiled upon their lips, but it was not in their hearts—each wished to deceive the other. Ranuzi wished to quiet every suspicion by his tenderness—he must not dream that this was their last meeting, and that he intended leaving Berlin this night, perhaps forever. Marietta wished to chain him to her side and prevent his departure.

Time flew by amid gay laughter and tender jests, and at length Marietta heard the house-door open and hurried steps mounting the stairway. It was the maid who had returned. Marietta's heart beat so violently that she could scarcely conceal her emotion.

"The maid has returned with her purchases," she said, hastily; "I will go out and tell her that you cannot remain with me to-day." She left the room and met Sophie in the hall, who was quite out of breath with her hurried walk, and who handed her a note. Marietta broke the seal with trembling hands. It contained only these words: "Keep him but a few moments longer, and one will arrive who will release you from your watch, and relieve you forever from your enemy by bearing him to prison. The answer of the one to whom I sent your paper has come; he is condemned."

"Very well, Sophie," said Marietta, concealing the paper in her bosom. "When the count leaves, you shall receive your reward. Now listen; the soldiers are coming. As soon as you hear them on the steps, you must tap at my door, that I may know they have arrived."

She hastened back to Ranuzi, but she no longer smiled—she no longer approached him with open arms—but she advanced toward him with flashing eyes, with her arms folded haughtily across her breast, and her countenance pale with passion.

"Ranuzi, the hour of revenge has come! You have most shamefully betrayed and deceived me—you have mocked my love—you have trodden my heart under foot. Lies were upon your lips—lies were in your heart. And whilst you swore to me that you loved no other, you had already betrayed me to a woman. I am acquainted with Madame du Trouffle, and I know that you visit her every evening. This was the conference with the Catholic fathers, for whose sake you left me. Oh, I know all—all! I will not reproach you; I will not tell you of the martyrdom I suffered—of the wretched days

and nights through which I wept and sighed, until at length I overcame the love I had borne you. That suffering is passed. But you have not forgotten that I once said to you: 'Should you forsake me, or turn faithlessly from me, I will be revenged.'

"I have not forgotten," said Ranuzi, "and I know that you will fulfil your promise; but before you do so—before you point me out to the government as a dangerous spy—you will listen to my defence, and only then if you are not satisfied, will you condemn me, and revenge yourself."

"I have all-sufficient proof," she said. "Day by day, hour by hour, have these proofs been forced upon me, as the contents of the poisoned cup are forced upon the condemned man. My love and happiness are dead, but you also shall die—you also shall suffer as I have done. My love was insufficient to keep for me a place in your memory; perhaps my revenge will do so. When you are wretched and miserable, think of me and repent."

"Repent of what?" he asked, proudly. "I have done nothing of which I am ashamed—nothing of which I repent. I have offered up my entire life, my every thought and desire, to a holy, a noble cause. To it I have subjected all my feelings, wishes, and hopes, and had it been necessary, I would without tears have sacrificed all that was dearest to me on earth. It became necessary for the good of this cause that I should appear to betray your love. A plan had been formed in which this woman you have just named could alone aid me. I dared not ask my heart what it suffered, for my head told me that this woman was necessary to me, and it became my duty to obtain her assistance by any means. So I became the daily companion of Madame du Trouffle, so—"

A light tap at the door interrupted the count, and startled him inexplicably.

"What does that mean?" he asked, turning pale.

Marietta laughed aloud. "That means," she said, slowly and scornfully, "that you will not go to Magdeburg to-morrow—that you cannot make use of the passport which your beloved Madame du Trouffle obtained for you. Ah, you wished to leave me secretly—you did not wish me to suspect your intended departure. You were mistaken, Ranuzi. You will remain in Berlin, but you will never go to *her* again. I will prevent that."

At this moment loud knocking was heard at the door, and two policemen entered the room without waiting for an invitation, and through the open door armed soldiers might be seen in the hall guarding the entrance.

When Ranuzi first beheld these servants of justice, he shuddered and became deathly pale, but as they approached him, he recovered

his wonted composure, and advanced proudly and coldly to meet them.

"Are you Count Ranuzi?" asked one of the policemen.

"I am," he said, calmly.

"I arrest you in the name of the king; you are our prisoner."

"With what offence am I charged?" asked he, as he slowly placed his hand in his bosom.

"The court-martial will inform you."

"Ah, I am to be tried by a court-martial. Spies and conspirators are always thus tried. I am charged then with spying and conspiring," cried Ranuzi, and then slowly turning to Marietta, he asked: "And this is your work?"

"Yes; this is my work," she said, triumphantly.

"You must come now," said the policeman, roughly, as he stepped nearer to Ranuzi, at the same time giving his companion a sign to do the same. "Come immediately and quietly. Do not compel us to use force."

"Force," cried Ranuzi, shrugging his shoulders, as he drew his hand from his bosom and pointed a pistol toward the policemen, from which they shrunk back terrified. "You see that I need not fear force," he said. "If you dare to approach nearer or lay your hand on me I will fire on both of you, for happily my pistol has more than one ball, and it never fails. You see that we are playing a dangerous game, upon whose issue may depend your lives as well as mine. I can shoot you if I desire it, or I can direct this weapon against my own brow if I wish to avoid investigation or imprisonment. But I promise you to do neither the one nor the other, if you will give me the time to say a few words to this lady."

"Be quick, then," said the policeman, "or I will call in the soldiers, and they can shoot you as easily as you could shoot us."

Ranuzi shrugged his shoulders. "You will be very careful not to shoot me. The dead do not speak, and it is very important for my judges that I should speak. Go to that door; I give my word that I will follow you."

As if to strengthen his words, he raised the hand which held the pistol, and the two men withdrew with threatening glances, to the door.

Ranuzi then turned again to Marietta, who turned her great flashing eyes upon him with an expression of anger and astonishment, mixed with hatred and admiration.

"Marietta," he said, gently. She trembled at the sound of his voice. He perceived this, and smiled. "Marietta," he repeated, "you have betrayed me; you have revenged your love! I do not

reproach you, my anaconda, but I pray you to tell me one thing; did you send the last letters which I gave you to the post?"

"No," she replied, compelling her eyes, with a mighty effort, to meet his

"Wretch! What did you do with them."

"I sent them to the King of Prussia."

Ranuzi uttered a shriek, and fell back a step. "Then I am indeed lost," he murmured, "as well as that unhappy creature, who pines for light and freedom. Poor Trenck! Poor Amelia! All is lost; all through the jealousy of this wretched woman. I tell you, Marietta," he continued aloud, as he placed his hand heavily on her shoulder, "it is not necessary that I should curse you, you will do that yourself. This hour will act as deadly poison on your heart, of which you will die. It is true, you have revenged yourself. To-day you rejoice in this, for you believe that you hate me, but to-morrow you will repent; to-morrow grief will overtake you, and it will grow with every day—you will feel that you must love me for ever and ever; you must love me, because you have wrought my ruin. Yes, you are right—you have discovered the means to keep yourself in my remembrance. In my dungeon I will think of you. I will do so, and curse you; but you also will think of me; and when you do, you will wring your hands and curse yourself, for revenge will not kill the love in your heart. Be that your punishment. Farewell!"

He passed before her, and quietly approached the policeman. "Come, gentlemen, I am quite ready to follow you; and that you may be entirely at ease I will leave my pistol here. It is my legacy to that lady—my last souvenir. Perhaps she may use it in the future."

He placed the pistol upon her writing-table and hastily approached the door. "Come, gentlemen; I am your prisoner!"

He signed to them to follow him, and walked proudly through the hall.

Marietta stood there trembling and deadly pale—her eyes dilated, her lips opened, as if to utter a shriek. Thus she watched him, breathless, and as if enchained with horror.

Now she saw him open the door of the hall, and throwing back at her one cold, flashing glance, he went out, followed by the police and the soldiers.

"He is gone! he is gone!" she shrieked, as if in a frenzy. "They are leading him to imprisonment—perhaps to death. Oh, to death! It is I who have murdered him. He is right. I am indeed cursed. I have murdered him, and I love him." And with a wild shriek she sank fainting to the ground.

CHAPTER IX.

TRENCK.

TRENCK still lived; neither chains nor years of loneliness had broken his strength or bowed his spirit. His tall, gigantic form had shrunk to a skeleton; his hair had whitened and hung around his hollow face like an ashen veil. Heavy chains clasped his feet and his throat; a broad iron band encircled his waist, which was attached to the wall by a short chain—a thick bar held his hands apart; but still he lived. For years he had paced, with short, restless steps, this little space that covered his grave; but he smiled derisively at the coarse stone which bore his name.

Trenck still lived. He lived because he had a fixed desire, a grand aim in view—he thirsted for freedom, and believed it attainable. Trenck could not die, for without was liberty, the sun, life, and honor. He would not die; for to be willing to die, he must first have lived. His life had been so short—a few fleeting years of youth, of careless enjoyment—a joyous dream of love and ambition! This had been his fate. Then came long, weary years of imprisonment—a something which he knew not, but it was not life—had crept to him in his prison, and with a cruel hand marked years upon his brow—years through which he had not lived, but suffered. And still he remained young in spite of gray hairs and wrinkles. He glowed with hope and defiance; his sluggish blood was warmed from time to time with new hopes, new expectations. His imagination painted wonderful pictures of future happiness. This hope always remained smiling and vigorous; notwithstanding his many disappointments—his many useless attempts to escape, Trenck still hoped for freedom. As often as the subterranean passages which he dug were discovered, he recommenced his work, and dug new ones; when the sentinels whom he had won by gold and flattery were detected and punished, he found means to obtain other friends.

Truly, friends did not fail; the buried but still living prisoner had friends who never forgot him; bold, loving friends, risking their lives for him. The mighty power of his great misfortunes won him friends. The soldiers who guarded him were seized with shuddering horror and pity at the sight of this sunken form, reminding them of the picture of the skeleton and the hour-glass which hung in the village church. Trenck knew how to profit by this. The officers, who came every day to inspect his prison, were charmed and amazed by the freshness of his spirit, his bright conversation, and gay remarks. These interviews were the only interruption to

the dulness of their garrison life. They came to him to be cheered. Not being willing to sit with him in the dark, they brought their lights with them; they opened the door of his cell that they might not be obliged to remain with him in the damp, putrid air. They wondered at his firmness and courage; they sympathized with his youth and loneliness, and this sympathy made for him earnest, useful friends, who revelled in the thought that Trenck's renewed attempts at escape would at last be crowned with happy results, that he would obtain his freedom.

He was on the eve of a great day. To-morrow he would live again, to-morrow he would be free; this time it was no chimera, no dream—he must succeed.

"Yes, my plan cannot fail," murmured Trenck, as he sat upon his stone seat and gazed at the iron door, which had just closed behind the Commandant Bruckhäusen. "My cruel jailer has discovered nothing, carefully as he searched my cell; this time I have dug no mines, broken no walls; this time I shall pass through that door, my comrades will greet me joyfully, and the poor prisoner shall be the mighty commander of the fortress. Only one night more, one single night of patience, and life, and love, and the world shall again belong to me. Oh, I feel as if I would go mad with joy. I have had strength to endure misfortunes, but perhaps the rapture of freedom may be fatal. My God! my God! if I should lose my senses! if the light of the sun should scorch my brain! if the hum of the busy world should crush my spirit!"

He lifted his hands in terror to his brow; he felt as if wrapped in flames, as if fire were rising from his brain; the chains rattled around him with unearthly sounds. "The slightest error, the least forgetfulness would endanger my plan. I will be quiet—I will repeat once more all that we have agreed upon. But first away with these slavish chains, to-morrow I shall be a free man; I will commence my rôle to-day."

He removed the handcuffs, and with his free right hand loosened the girdle from his waist, at the point where the blacksmith, who fastened it upon him, told him it might be opened by a pressure light as a feather. Now he was free; he stretched with delight his thin, meagre form, and let his arms swing in the air as if to prove their muscle.

This was a sweet, a wonderful prelude to freedom; many weeks and months he had worked upon these chains to prepare for the moment of freedom. Now these chains had fallen. He was already a free man; he cared not for these dark, damp walls. He did not see them; he was already without, where the sun was shining, the birds were singing; where the blue arch of heaven looked down

upon the blooming earth. What did he care for the death-like stillness which surrounded him? he heard the noise in the streets; he saw men running here and there in busy haste; he listened to their bright conversation, their merry laughter; he mixed among them with lively greeting, and shared their joys and cares.

Suddenly he again pressed his brow fearfully, and cried; "I shall go mad! A thousand dancing pictures and happy faces are swarming around me; I shall go mad! But no, I will control myself; I will be calm." He raised his head with his accustomed bold defiance. "I will look freedom in the face; my eyelids shall not quiver and my heart shall beat calmly. I will be quiet and thoughtful. I will think it all over once more. Listen to me, oh friend! you, who have heard all my sighs and my despair; you, who know my misery; listen to me, oh gloomy cell. You have always been faithful; you have never wished to forsake or leave me; and when I struggled to escape, you called me always back. But this is our last day together; you shall hear my confession, I will tell you all my plans, by what means I shall escape from you, my true friend, my dark, dreary cell. Know first that this garrison is composed of nine hundred men, who are much dissatisfied. It will not be difficult to win them, particularly if they are well bribed. Besides this, there are two majors and two lieutenants conspiring with me; they will tell their soldiers what to do. The guard at the star-port, is composed of but fifteen men, and if they do not obey me willingly, we will know how to compel obedience. At the end of the star-port lies the city gate. At this only twelve men and one officer are stationed; these we shall easily overpower. On the other side, close to the gate, the Austrian Captain von Kinsky is awaiting me with the remainder of the prisoners of war. All the officers, who have pledged themselves to assist my undertaking, are concealed in a safe house rented for this purpose. At my first call they will rush forward and fall upon the guard; we will overpower them and enter the city. There other friends await us; one of them, under some pretext, holds in his quarters arms for his company, and at my call he will join me with his armed band. Oh my God! my God! I see every thing so plainly and clearly before me. I see myself rushing joyfully through the streets, dashing into the casemates, which contain nine thousand prisoners. I call to them: 'Up, comrades, up; I am Frederick von Trenck, your captain and your leader; arm yourselves and follow me.' I hear them greet me joyfully and cry, 'Long live Trenck!' They take their arms and we rush to the other casemates, where seven thousand Austrian and Russian prisoners are confined. We free them, and I head a little army of sixteen thousand men. Magdeburg is mine; the fortress, the magazine of

the army, the treasury, the arsenal, all is in our power. I shall conquer all for Maria Theresa. Oh, King Frederick! King Frederick! I shall avenge myself on you for these long years of misery, for the martyrdom of this fearful imprisonment. Trenck will not be obliged to leave Magdeburg; he will drive away the Prussians, and make himself master."

He laughed so loudly that the old walls echoed the sound, and a wailing sigh seemed to glide along the building. Trenck started and looked timidly around him.

"I am still alone," he murmured, "no one has heard my words; no, no one but you," he continued cheerfully, "my old silent friend, my faithful prison. To-morrow morning the officer on guard will enter and order the sentinels to remove the bed; as soon as they enter I shall rush out and lock the door. The sentinels being locked up, I put on the clothes which are lying in readiness for me in the passage, and then forward to my soldiers. I shall distribute gold freely among them—a friend will meet me with the money at the house of Captain von Kleist, and if he has not sufficient, Amelia has richly supplied me. Arise, arise from your grave, my secret treasures."

He crouched close to the wall and removed the mortar and chalk carefully; he then drew out a stone and took from under it a purse full of gold.

His eye, accustomed to the darkness, saw the gold through the silk net; he nodded to it and laughed with delight as he poured it out and played madly with it. His countenance suddenly assumed an earnest expression.

"Poor Amelia," he murmured softly, "you have sacrificed your life, your beauty, and your youth for me. With never-failing zeal you have moved around me like my guardian angel, and how am I repaying you? By taking from your brother, King Frederick, his finest fortress, his money, his provisions; by compelling you and yours to fly from a city which no longer belongs to you, but to the Empress of Austria, your enemy. With your money I have taken this city; Amelia, you are ignorant of this now, and when you learn it, perhaps you will curse me and execrate the love which has poisoned your whole life. Oh, Amelia! Amelia, forgive me for betraying you also. My unfortunate duty is forcing me onward, and I must obey. Yes," he said, springing from his seat, "I must yield to my fate, I must be free again—I must be a man once more; I can sit no longer like a wild animal in his cage, and tell my grief and my despair to the cold walls. I must reconquer life—I must again see the sun, the world, and mankind—I must live, suffer, and act."

He walked violently to and fro, his whole being was in feverish

expectation and excitement, and he felt alarmed. Suddenly he remained standing; pressing his two hands against his beating temples, he murmured:

"I shall indeed go mad. Joy at my approaching deliverance confuses my poor head; I will try to sleep, to be calm—collect my strength for to-morrow."

He lay down upon his miserable couch, and forced himself to be quiet and silent—not to speak aloud to himself in his lonely cell, as he was accustomed to do. Gradually the mad tension of his nerves relaxed, gradually his eyes closed, and a soft, beneficial slumber came over him.

All was still in the dark cell; nothing was to be heard but the loud breathing of the sleeper; but even in sleep, visions of life and liberty rejoiced his heart—his face beamed with heavenly joy; he murmured softly, "I am free!—free at last!"

The hours passed away, but Trenck still slumbered—profound stillness surrounded him. The outer world had long since been awake—the sun was up, and had sent a clear beam of its glory through the small, thickly-barred window, even into the comfortless, desolate cell, and changed the gloom of darkness into a faint twilight.

CHAPTER X.

"TRENCK, ARE YOU THERE?"

TRENCK slept. Sleep on, sleep on, unfortunate prisoner, for while asleep you are free and joyous; when you awake, your happy dreams will vanish; agony and despair will be your only companions.

Listen! there are steps in the passage; Trenck does not hear them—he still sleeps. But now a key is turned, the door is opened, and Trenck springs from his pallet.

"Are you there, my friends? Is all ready?"

But he totters back with a fearful shriek, his eyes fixed despairingly upon the door. There stood Von Bruckhäusen, the prison commandant, beside him several officers, behind them a crowd of soldiers.

This vision explained all to Trenck. It told him that his plan had miscarried—that again all had been in vain. It told him that he must remain what he was, a poor, wretched prisoner—more wretched than before, for they would now find out that when alone he could release himself from his chains. They would find his gold,