

pray you, therefore, to be gracious, sire, and promise me to receive my poet kindly."

"I promise," said the king: "I wish also to become acquainted with this model.

"Promise me, however, one thing. If the German poet resembles the German scholar, you will make me no reproaches if I turn away from all such commodities in future?"

## CHAPTER XII.

### GELLERT.

GELLERT was just returning from the university, where, in the large hall, he had recommenced his lectures on morality. A large audience had assembled, who had given the most undivided attention to their beloved master. As he left the rostrum the assembly, entirely contrary to their usual custom, burst forth in loud applause, and all pressed forward to welcome the beloved teacher on his return to his academic duties after his severe illness.

These proofs of love had touched the sensitive German poet so deeply in his present nervous and suffering condition, that he reached his lodging deathly pale and with trembling knees; utterly exhausted, he threw himself into his arm-chair, the only article of luxury in his simple study.

The old man, who sat near the window in this study, was busily engaged in reading, and paid him no attention; although Gellert coughed several times, he did not appear to remark his presence, and continued to read.

"Conrad," said Gellert, at length, in a friendly, pleading tone.

"Professor," answered the old man, as he looked up unwillingly from his book.

"Conrad, it seems to me that you might stand up when I enter; not, perhaps, so much out of respect for your master, as because he is delicate and weak, and needs your assistance."

"Professor," said the old man, with composure, "I only intended finishing the chapter which I have just commenced, and then I should have risen. You came a little too soon. It was your own fault if I was compelled to read after you came."

Gellert smiled. "What book were you reading so earnestly, my old friend?"

"The 'Swedish Countess,' professor. You know it is my favorite book. I am reading it now for the twelfth time, and I still think

it the most beautiful and touching, as well as the most sensible book I ever read. It is entirely beyond my comprehension, professor, how you made it, and how you could have recollected all these charming histories. Who related all that to you?"

"No one related it to me, it came from my own head and heart," said Gellert, pleasantly. "But no, that is a very presumptuous thought; it did not come from myself, but from the great spirit, who occasionally sends a ray of his Godlike genius to quicken the hearts and imaginations of poets."

"I do not understand you, professor," said Conrad, impatiently. "Why do you not talk like the book—I understand all that the 'Swedish Countess' says, for she speaks like other people. She is an altogether sensible and lovely woman, and I have thought sometimes, professor—"

Old Conrad hesitated and looked embarrassed.

"Well, Conrad, what have you thought?"

"I have thought sometimes, sir, perhaps it would be best for you to marry the 'Swedish Countess.'"

Gellert started slightly, and a light flush mounted to his brow.

"I marry!" he exclaimed; "Heaven protect me from fastening such a yoke upon myself, or putting my happiness in the power of any creature so fickle, vain, capricious, haughty, obstinate, and heartless as a woman. Conrad, where did you get this wild idea? you know that I hate women; no, not hate, but fear them, as the lamb fears the wolf."

"Oh, sir," cried Conrad, angrily, "was your mother not a woman?"

"Yes," said Gellert, softly, after a pause—"yes, she was a woman, a whole-hearted, noble woman. She was the golden star of my childhood, the saintly ideal of the youth, as she is now in heaven the guardian angel of the man; there is no woman like her, Conrad. She was the impersonation of love, of self-sacrifice, of goodness, and of devotion."

"You are right," said Conrad, softly, "she was a true woman; the entire village loved and honored her for her benevolence and piety; when she died, it seemed as though we had all lost a mother."

"When she died," said Gellert, his voice trembling with emotion, "my happiness and youth died with her; and when the first handful of earth fell upon her coffin I felt as if my heart-strings broke, and that feeling has never left me."

"You loved your mother too deeply, professor," said Conrad; "that is the reason you are determined not to love and marry some other woman."

"Why, man, do not talk to me again of marrying," cried Gellert. "What has that fatal word to do in my study?"

"A great deal, sir; only look how miserable every thing is here; not even neat and comfortable, as it should certainly be in the room of so learned and celebrated a professor. Only think of the change that would be made by a bright young wife. You must marry, professor, and the lady must be rich. This state of things cannot continue; you must take a wife, for you cannot live on your celebrity."

"No, Conrad, but on my salary," said Gellert. "I receive two hundred and fifty thalers from my professorship; only think, two hundred and fifty thalers! That is a great deal for a German poet, Conrad; I should consider myself most fortunate. It is sufficient for my necessities, and will certainly keep me from want."

"It would be sufficient, professor, if we were not so extravagant. I am an old man, and you may very well listen to a word from me. I served your father for fifteen years—in fact, you inherited me from him. I have the right to speak. If it goes so far, I will hunger and thirst with you, but it makes me angry that we should hunger and thirst when there is no necessity. Have you dined to-day?"

"No, Conrad," said Gellert, looking embarrassed. "I had, accidentally, no money with me as I came out of the academy, and you know that I do not like to go to the eating-house without paying immediately."

"Accidentally you had no money? You had probably left it at home."

"Yes, Conrad, I had left it at home."

"No, sir; you gave your last thaler to the student who came this morning and told you of his necessities, and complained so bitterly that he had eaten nothing warm for three days. You gave your money to him, and that was not right, for now we have nothing ourselves."

"Yes, Conard, it was right, it was my duty; he hungered and I was full; he was poor and in want, and I had money, and sat in my warm, comfortable room; it was quite right for me to help him."

"Yes, you say so always, sir, and our money all goes to the devil," muttered Conrad. "With what shall we satisfy ourselves to-day?"

"Well," said Gellert, after a pause, "we will drink some coffee, and eat some bread and butter. Coffee is an excellent beverage, and peculiarly acceptable to poets, for it enlivens the fancy."

"And leaves the stomach empty," said Conrad.

"We have bread and butter to satisfy that. Ah, Conrad, I assure

you we would often have been very happy in my father's parsonage if we had had coffee and bread and butter for our dinner. We were thirteen children, besides my father and mother, and my father's salary was not more than two hundred thalers. Conrad, he had less than I, and he had to provide for thirteen children."

"As if you had not provided for yourself since you were eleven years old—as if I had not seen you copying late into the night to earn money, at an age when other children scarcely know what money is, and know still less of work."

"But when I carried the money which I had earned to my mother, she kissed me so tenderly, and called me her brave, noble son—that was a greater reward than all the money in the world. And when the next Christmas came, and we were all thirteen so happy, and each one received a plate filled with nuts and apples and little presents, I received a shining new coat. It was the first time I had ever had a coat of new cloth. My mother had bought the material with the money I had earned. She had kept it all, and now my writings had changed into a beautiful coat, which I wore with pride and delight. No coat is so comfortable as one we have earned ourselves. The self-earned coat is the royal mantle of the poor."

"But we need not be poor," scolded Conrad. "It is that which makes me angry. If we were careful, we could live comfortably and free from care on two hundred and fifty thalers. But every thing is given away, and every thing is done for others, until we have nothing left for ourselves."

"We have never gone hungry to bed, Conrad, and we need not hunger. To-day we have coffee, and bread and butter, and to-morrow I will receive something from my publishers from the fourth edition of my fables. It is not much, it will be about twenty thalers, but we will be able to live a long time on that. Be content, Conrad, and go now into the kitchen and prepare the coffee; I am really rather hungry. Well, Conrad, you still appear discontented. Have you another grievance in reserve?"

"Yes, professor, I have another. The beadle tells me that the university have offered you a still higher position than the one you now hold. Is it true?"

"Yes, Conrad, it is true. They wished me to become a regular professor."

"And you declined?"

"I declined. I would have been obliged to be present at all the conferences. I would have had more trouble, and if I had had the misfortune to become rector I would have been lost indeed, for the rector represents the university; and if any royal personages should arrive it is he who must receive them and welcome them in the

name of the university. No, no; protect me from such honors. I do not desire intercourse with great men. I prefer my present position and small salary, and the liberty of sitting quietly in my own study, to a regular professorship and a higher salary, and being forced to dance attendance in the antechambers of great people. Then, in addition to that, I am delicate, and that alone would prevent me from attending as many lectures as the government requires from a regular high-salaried professor. You must never receive money for work that you have not done and cannot do. Now, Conrad, those are my reasons for declining this situation for the second time. I think you will be contented now, and prepare me an excellent cup of coffee."

"It is a shame, nevertheless," said Conrad, "that they should say you are not a regular professor. But that is because you have no wife. If the Swedish countess were here, every thing would be changed; your study would be nicely arranged, and you would be so neatly dressed, that no one would dare to say you were not a regular professor."

"But that is no offence, Conrad," cried Gellert, laughing. "In the sense in which you understand it, I am more now than if I had accepted this other position, for I am now called an extraordinary professor."

"Well, I am glad that they know that you are an extraordinary professor," said Conrad, somewhat appeased. "Now I will go to the kitchen and make the coffee. That reminds me that I have a letter for you which was left by a servant."

He took a letter from the table, and handed it to his master. While he was breaking the seal, Conrad approached the door slowly and hesitatingly, evidently curious to hear the contents of the letter. He had not reached the door, when Gellert recalled him.

"Conrad," said Gellert, with a trembling voice, "hear what this letter contains."

"Well, I am really curious," said Conrad, smiling.

Gellert took the letter and commenced reading:

"My dear and honored professor, will you allow one of your—"

Here he hesitated, and his face flushed deeply. "No," he said, softly; "I cannot read that; it is too great, too undeserved praise of myself. Read it yourself."

"Nonsense!" said Conrad, taking the letter; "the professor is as bashful as a young girl. To read one's praise, is no shame. Now listen: 'My dear and honored professor, will you allow one of your pupils to seek a favor from you? I am rich! God has enriched you with the rarest gifts of mind and heart, but He has not bestowed outward wealth upon you. Your salary is not large, but your heart

is so great and noble, that you give the little you possess to the poor and suffering, and care for others while you yourself need care. Allow me, my much-loved master, something of that same happiness which you enjoy. Grant me the pleasure of offering you (who divide your bread with the poor, and your last thaler with the suffering) a small addition to your salary, and begging you to use it so long as God leaves you upon earth, to be the delight of your scholars, and the pride of Germany. The banker Farenthal has orders to pay to you quarterly the sum of two hundred thalers; you will to-morrow receive the first instalment.

"YOUR GRATEFUL AND ADMIRING PUPIL."

"Hurrah! hurrah!" cried Conrad, waving the paper aloft. "Now we are rich, we can live comfortably, without care. Oh, I will take care of you, and you must drink a glass of wine every day, in order to become strong, and I will bring your dinner from the best eating-house, that you may enjoy your meal in peace and quiet in your own room."

"Gently, gently, Conrad!" said Gellert, smiling. "In your delight over the money, you forget the noble giver. Who can it be? Who among my pupils is so rich and so delicate, as to bestow so generously, and in such a manner?"

"It is some one who does not wish us to know his name, professor," cried Conrad, gayly; "and we will not break our hearts over it. But now, sir, we will not content ourselves with bread and coffee; we are rich, and we need not live so poorly! I will go to the eating-house and bring you a nice broiled capon, and some preserved fruit, and a glass of wine."

"It is true," said Gellert, well pleased; "a capon would strengthen me, and a glass of wine; but no, Conrad, we will have the coffee; we have no money to pay for such a meal."

"Well, we can borrow it! To-morrow you will receive the first quarterly payment of your pension, and then I will pay for your dinner."

"No, Conrad, no!" said Gellert, firmly. "You should never eat what you cannot pay for immediately. Go to the kitchen and make the coffee." Conrad was on the point of going discontentedly to obey the command of his master, when a loud and hasty ring was heard at the outer door of the professor's modest lodging.

"Perhaps the banker has sent the money to-day," cried Conrad, as he hurried off, whilst Gellert again took the letter and examined the handwriting.

But Conrad returned, looking very important.

"The Prussian major, Quintus Icilius, wishes to speak to the professor, in the name of the king," he said, solemnly.

"In the name of the king!" cried Gellert; "what does the great warrior-hero want with poor Gellert?"

"That I will tell you," replied a voice from the door; and as Gellert turned, he saw before him the tall figure of a Prussian officer. "Pardon me for having entered without your permission. Your servant left the door open, and I thought—"

"You thought, I hope, that Gellert would be happy to receive an officer from the king, especially one who bears so celebrated a name," said Gellert, courteously, as he signed to Conrad to leave the room—a sign that Conrad obeyed most unwillingly, and with the firm determination to listen outside the door.

"In the first place, allow me to say how happy I am to make the acquaintance of so learned and celebrated a man as Professor Gellert," said Quintus, bowing deeply; "then I must announce the cause of my appearance. His majesty the King of Prussia wishes to know you, and he has sent me to conduct you to him at once."

"At once?" cried Gellert. "But, sir, you must see that I am weak and ill. The king will not care to see a sick man who cannot talk."

Quintus glanced sympathizingly at the poor professor, and said:

"It is true, you do not look well, and I cannot force you to go with me to-day; but allow me to make one remark: if you think to escape the interview altogether, you are mistaken. The king desires to speak with you, and it is my duty to bring you to him. If you cannot go to-day, I must return to-morrow; if you are then still unwell, the day after; and so on every day, until you accompany me."

"But this is frightful!" cried Gellert, anxiously.

Quintus shrugged his shoulders. "You must decide, sir," he said; "I give you an hour. At four o'clock I will return and ask if you will go to-day, or another time."

"Yes; do that, major," said Gellert, breathing more freely. "In the mean time, I will take my dinner, and then see how it is with my courage. Conrad! Conrad!" exclaimed Gellert, as Quintus Icilius left him, and his servant entered the room. "Conrad, did you hear the bad tidings? I must go to the King of Prussia."

"I heard," said Conrad, "and I do not think it bad tidings, but a great honor. The king sent for Professor Gottsched a few days since, and conversed with him a long time. Since then, his entire household act as if Gottsched were the Almighty Himself, and as if they were all, at least, archangels. Therefore, I am glad that the king has shown you the same honor, and that he desires to know you."

"Honor!" murmured Gellert. "This great lord wishes to see the

learned Germans for once, as others visit a menagerie, and look at the monkeys, and amuse themselves with their wonderful tricks. It is the merest curiosity which leads such men to desire to behold the tricks and pranks of a professor. They know nothing of our minds; it satisfies them to look at us. Conrad, I will not go; I will be ill to-day and every other day. We will see if this modern Icilius will not yield!"

And the usually gentle and yielding poet paced the room in angry excitement, his eyes flashing, and his face deeply flushed.

"I will not—I will not go."

"You must go, professor," said Conrad, placing himself immediately in front of his master, and looking at him half-imploringly, half-threateningly—"you must go; you will give your old Conrad the pleasure of being able to say to the impudent servants of Herr Gottsched that my master has also been to the King of Prussia. You will not do me the injury of making me serve a master who has not been to see the king, while Herr Gottsched has been?"

"But, Conrad," said Gellert, complainingly, "what good will it have done me to have declined the position of regular professor, that I might be in no danger of becoming rector, and being obliged to see kings and princes?"

"It will show the world," said Conrad, "that a poet need not be a regular professor in order to be called into the society of kings and princes. You must go—the king expects you; and if you do not go, you will appear as the Austrians do, afraid of the King of Prussia."

"That is true," said Gellert, whose excitement had somewhat subsided; "it will look as though I were afraid."

"And so distinguished a man should fear nothing," said Conrad, "not even a king."

"Well, so be it," said Gellert, smiling, "I will go to the king to-day, but I must first eat something; if I went fasting to the king I might faint, and that would disgrace you forever, Conrad."

"I will run and bring the coffee," said the delighted old servant.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE POET AND THE KING.

GELLERT had scarcely finished his frugal meal, and arranged his toilet a little, when Major Quintus arrived and asked the poet if he were still too unwell to accompany him to the king.

"I am still indisposed," said Gellert, with a sad smile, "but my

indisposition is of a kind that leaves me neither to-day, to-morrow, nor any day; it is therefore better for me to gratify the king's commands at once. I am ready to accompany you, sir; let us depart."

He took his three-cornered hat, which Conrad handed him with a delightful smirk, and followed the major to the splendid house where the king had taken his quarters for the winter.

"Allow me a favor, sir," said Quintus, as they mounted the steps; "the king is prejudiced against German poets and philosophers, and it would be of the greatest advantage to the literary and political world of Germany for these prejudices to disappear, and for the great Frederick to give to Germany the sympathy and encouragement which until now he has lavished upon the French and Italians. Think of this, sir, and endeavor to win the king by your obliging and pleasing manner."

"Oh, major!" sighed Gellert, "I do not understand the art of pleasing the great ones of this world. I cannot utter words of praise and flattery; my heart and manners are simple and not showy."

"Exactly, this is beautiful and attractive," said the major, smiling: "the king cannot endure pretension or conceited wisdom. Be simply yourself; imagine that you are in your own study, conversing frankly and freely with a highly-honored friend, to whom politeness and attention are due."

The king, with his flute in hand, was walking up and down the room, when the door opened, and Major Quintus entered with Gellert.

Frederick immediately laid his flute aside, and advanced to meet the poet with a gracious smile. Gellert's gentle and intellectual countenance was composed, and his eyes were not cast down or confused by the piercing glance of the king.

"Is this Professor Gellert?" said the king, with a slight salutation.

"Yes, your majesty," said Gellert, bowing profoundly.

"The English ambassador has spoken well of you," said the king; "he has read many of your works."

"That proves him to be a thoughtful and benevolent gentleman, who hopes something from German writers," said Gellert, significantly.

Frederick smiled, and perhaps to excite him still more, said quickly:

"Tell me, how does it happen, Gellert, that we have so few celebrated writers?"

"Your majesty sees before you now a German poet whom even

the French have translated, and who call him the German La Fontaine."

"That is great praise, great praise," said the king, whose large eyes fastened themselves more attentively upon Gellert's modest, expressive face. "You are then called the German La Fontaine? Have you ever read La Fontaine?"

"Yes, sire, but I did not imitate him," said Gellert, ingenuously, "I am an original."

The king nodded gayly; Gellert's quick frankness pleased him.

"Good," he said, "you are an excellent poet; but why do you stand alone?"

Gellert shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"Your majesty is prejudiced against the Germans."

"No, I cannot admit that," said the king, quickly.

"At least against German writers," replied Gellert.

"Yes, that is true; I cannot deny that. Why have we no good writers in Germany?"

"We have them, sire," said Gellert, with noble pride. "We boast a Maskow, a Kramer—who has set Bossuet aside."

"How!" cried the king, astonished; "Bossuet? Ah, sir, how is it possible for a German to set Bossuet aside?"

"Kramer has done so, and with great success," said Gellert, smiling. "One of your majesty's most learned professors has said that Kramer has the eloquence of Bossuet, and more profound historical accuracy."

The king appeared really astonished, and walked several times thoughtfully up and down his room.

"Was my learned professor capable of deciding that question?"

"The world believes so, sire."

"Why does no one translate Tacitus?"

"Tacitus is difficult," said Gellert, smiling; "there are some bad French translations of this author."

"You are right," said the king.

"Altogether," continued Gellert, "there are a variety of reasons why the Germans have not become distinguished in letters. When art and science bloomed in Greece, the Romans were becoming renowned in war. Perhaps the Germans have sought their fame on the battle-field; perhaps they had no Augustus or Louis XIV. who favored and encouraged the historians and poets of Germany."

This was a daring and broad allusion, but Frederick received it smilingly.

"You have had an Augustus, perhaps two, in Saxony," he said.

"And we have made a good commencement in Saxony. We should have an Augustus for all of Germany."

"What!" cried the king, quickly, and with sparkling eyes, "you desire an Augustus for Germany?"

"Not exactly," said Gellert, "but I wish that every German sovereign would encourage genius and letters in his country. Genius needs encouragement; and when it does not find it in its own land, and from its native princes, it cannot retain the great and joyous power of creation."

The king did not answer, but walked thoughtfully up and down; from time to time he glanced quickly and searchingly at Gellert, who was standing opposite to him.

"Have you ever been out of Saxony?" said the king, at last.

"Yes, sire, I was once in Berlin."

"You should go again," said the king—then added, as if he regretted having shown the German poet so much sympathy, "at all events, you should travel."

"To do so, your majesty, I require health and money."

"Are you sick?" asked the king, in a gentle, sympathizing voice. "What is your malady? Perhaps too much learning."

Gellert smiled. "As your majesty thinks so, it may bear that interpretation. In my mouth it would have sounded too bold."

"I have had this malady myself," said the king, laughing; "I will cure you. You must take exercise—ride out every day."

"Ah, sire, this cure might easily produce a new disease for me," said Gellert, terrified; "if the horse should be healthier than I, I could not ride it, and if it were as weak as myself, we would not be able to stir from the spot."

"Then you must drive," said the king, laughing.

"I have not the money, sire."

"That is true," said the king. "All German writers need money, and we have fallen upon evil times."

"Yes, truly, sire, evil times; but it lies in your majesty's hands to change all this, if you would give peace to Germany."

"How can I?" cried the king, violently. "Have you not heard that there are three against me?"

"I care more for ancient than modern history," said Gellert, who did not desire to follow the king upon the slippery field of politics.

"You, then, are accurately acquainted with the ancients?" said the king. "Which, then, do you think the greatest and most renowned of that epoch—Homer or Virgil?"

"Homer, I think, merits the preference, because he is original."

"But Virgil is more polished and refined."

Gellert shook his head violently. Now that the old writers were being discussed, the German sage overcame his timidity.

"We are entirely too widely separated from Virgil to be able to

judge of his language and style. I trust to Quintilian, who gives Homer the preference."

"But we must not be slaves to the judgment of the ancients," said the king, aroused.

"I am not, sire; I only adopt their views when distance prevents my judging for myself."

"You are certainly right in this," said the king, kindly. "Altogether you appear to be a wise and reasonable man. I understand that you have greatly improved the German language."

"Ah, yes, sire, but unfortunately it has been in vain."

"Why is this?" said the king. "You all wish me to interest myself in German, but it is such a barbarous language, that I often have quires of writing sent me, of which I do not understand a word. Why is it not otherwise?"

"If your majesty cannot reform this, I certainly cannot," said Gellert, smiling; "I can only advise, but you can command."

"But your poems are not written in this stiff, pompous German. Do you not know one of your fables by heart?"

"I doubt it, sire, my memory is very treacherous."

"Well, try and think of one. In the mean while I will walk backward and forward a little. Well, have you thought of one?"

"Yes, your majesty," said Gellert, after a brief silence. "I believe I remember one."

"Let us hear it," said the king; and, seating himself upon the *fauteuil*, he gazed fixedly at Gellert, who, standing in the middle of the room, his clear glance turned toward the king, now began his recitation.

#### "THE PAINTER.

"A painter, Athens his abode,  
Who painted less for love of gain  
Than crowns of laurel to obtain,  
Mars' portrait to a connoisseur once showed,  
And his opinion of it sought.  
The judge spoke freely what he thought,  
'Twas wholly not unto his taste, he said,  
And that, to please a practised eye,  
Far less of art should be displayed.  
The painter failed not to reply,  
And though the critic blamed with skill,  
Was of the same opinion still.

"Then in the room a coxcomb came,  
To scan the work with praise or blame,  
He with a glance its worth descried;  
'Ye gods! A masterpiece!' he cried.  
'Ah, what a foot! what skilled details,  
E'en to the painting of the nails!

A living Mars is here revealed,  
 What skill—what art in light and shade—  
 Both in the helmet and the shield,  
 And in the armor are displayed !

“The painter blushed with humbled pride,  
 Looked at the judge with woful mien,  
 ‘Too well am I convinced,’ he cried,  
 ‘Unjust to me thou hast not been.’  
 The coxcomb scarce had disappeared,  
 When he his god of battle smeared.”

“And the moral,” cried the king, with vivacity, as Gellert ceased for a moment.

“Here is the moral, sire :

“If what you write offends the critic’s rules,  
 It is an evil sign, no doubt ;  
 But when ’tis lauded to the skies by fools,  
 ’Tis time, indeed, to blot it out.”

“That is beautiful—very beautiful ; you have something gallant in your person. I understand every thing you say. I received a translation of ‘Iphigenia’ by Gottsched, and Quintus read it to me. I had the French with me, and I did not understand a word. He also brought me a poem by Pietsh, but I threw it aside.”

“I threw it aside, also,” said Gellert, smiling.

The king smiled pleasantly. “Should I remain here, you must come often and bring your fables to read to me.”

Gellert’s brow clouded slightly. “I do not know whether I am a good reader,” he said, in some embarrassment. “I have such a sing-song, monotonous voice.”

“Yes, like the Silesians,” said the king, “but it sounds pleasantly. You must read your fables yourself. No one else can give the proper emphasis. You must visit me soon again.”

“Do not forget the king’s request,” said Quintus Icilius, as he escorted Gellert to the door. “Visit him soon, and be assured you shall never come in vain. I will take care that the king receives you always.”

Gellert looked up smilingly at the major. “My dear sir, in many respects I am quite an old-fashioned man ; for example, I have read a great deal in the Old Scriptures for instruction. I have read, ‘Put not your trust in princes.’ These words seem wise to me, and you must allow me to interpret them literally, and act accordingly.”

Gellert withdrew, and hastened home. The major returned to the king, admiring, almost envying, Gellert’s modest, independent, and beautiful character.

“Quintus,” said the king, “I thank you sincerely for my new

German acquaintance. The poet is better than the philosopher. Gellert is the wisest and cleverest poet of his time—a much worthier man than Gottsched, with all his pompous knowledge. Gellert’s fame will outlive his. He is perhaps the only German who will not be forgotten. He attempts but little, and succeeds well.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE KING AND THE VILLAGE MAGISTRATE.

IN the little village of Voiseilvitz, near the Silesian frontier, there was a great stir and excitement. The quartermaster of the army had just arrived and announced the king’s approach. He then went on to the next village to seek quarters for the army. After their many sufferings and wants, the weary soldiers were much in need of rest and refreshment. They had passed many, many miserable weeks, during which the most patient had become disheartened. The king alone had retained his courage, his presence of mind, his activity and energy. He had borne, without complaint, every want and privation. Surrounded by powerful enemies, his great and clear mind had contrived the intrenchments which encompassed his camp, and which had filled his enemies with wonder. Neither Daun, Loudon, Butterlin, nor Ternitschow, dared attack the camp that had suddenly become a strong fortress. They gazed in wild amazement at their daring, invincible enemy, whom they had so often thought to ruin, and who had continually with his lion strength broken the nets they had laid for him. Not daring to attack him with their cannon and their swords, the allies relied upon another much more fearful weapon—hunger ! It was impossible for the king, surrounded as he was by enemies, to obtain food for his troops and fodder for the horses. But Frederick did not cease to hope : he turned night into day and day into night ; thus he was prepared for any movement. During the day he could observe all that passed in the enemy’s camp ; a few slight guards were placed in the intrenchments, while the rest of the army slept. But at night they did not sleep ; as soon as evening came, all the tents were taken down, the cannon were planted, and behind them the regiments were placed in line of battle. Thus they stood listening in breathless silence for any sound or movement that would announce the enemy’s approach. All were ready and waiting for them, determined to die rather than surrender.

In spite of privations, want of rest and food, the army remained hopeful, for their king shared their danger, wants, and sleepless

nights. He was always with them—he hungered and worked with them. If the soldiers were deprived of their rations, they had at least the consolation of knowing that the king suffered likewise. This strengthened and encouraged them.

The Prussians had fortitude to bear their sufferings, but their enemy had not the patience to wait. Butterlin, the Russian commander, tired of watching Frederick, withdrew to Poland; and Loudon, not feeling secure now in his isolated position, retired also.

After four weeks of agony and want, the Prussian army could leave their encampment and seek both food and rest. They were to recruit themselves in the villages in the vicinity of Strehlen; the king and his staff were to rest at Voiseilvitz. The house of the magistrate had been chosen as the only dwelling-place fit for these noble guests. The magistrate, elated at the honor, was marching from room to room, scolding, imploring his servants to have every thing clean and orderly.

"Remember," said he, "a king is to inhabit this house; he will be enraged if there is the least spot or stain upon the floors or windows, for of course he wears beautiful garments, covered with pearls and diamonds, and embroidered in gold and silver. How fearful, then, would it be were he to ruin them at my house! He would be infuriated, for money is scarce now, and I dare say as hard for him to get as for us."

At last, thanks to threats and entreaties, the house was in readiness for the king. The front room was beautifully clean, and white blinds were at the windows. The deal table was covered with a snow-white damask cloth. Beside a window in which were placed some bright plants, an old leathern arm-chair was standing, which the magistrate intended for a throne. The walls were covered with some portraits of the royal family of Prussia. Around a wretched engraving of Frederick a wreath of *immortelles* and *forget-me-nots* was woven. In a corner stood a large bed with clean white curtains in readiness for the king. When every thing was arranged, with a last proud look at his handsome dwelling, the magistrate hurried to the front door, waiting anxiously for his guest. His heart beat high with expectation—his whole being was in commotion—he was to see a king for the first time, and he asked himself how this king would look. "How glorious his eyes must be! I think he must radiate like the sun. It must almost blind the eyes to dwell upon his splendor."

Lost in these thoughts, he did not observe a cavalcade consisting of three riders passing through the street. The foremost one was enveloped in an old faded blue mantle, his large three-cornered hat hung far over his brow, shading his eyes and his thin, pale counte-

nance. His heavy army boots were in need both of brushing and mending. His two companions formed an agreeable contrast to him. They wore the rich, glittering uniforms of Prussian staff officers. All about them was neat and elegant, and pleased the magistrate right well. The cavalcade now stopped at his house, and, to the amazement of the villagers, the two spruce young officers sprang to the ground and hastened to assist the man in the blue mantle to alight from his horse. But he waved them aside, and springing lightly from the saddle, advanced to the house door. The magistrate blocked up the way, and looking haughtily at the stranger, said:

"You undoubtedly belong to the servants of the king, and think, therefore, to enter my house. But that cannot be. The king alone will dwell with me. If you are what I suppose you to be, you must go next door. My neighbor may have quarters for you."

The stranger smiled. Fixing his large, brilliant eyes sternly upon the magistrate, he caused him to draw back almost in terror, feeling as if the sun had really blinded him.

"I am not one of the king's servants," said the stranger, gayly, "but I am invited to dine with him."

"Then it is all right," said the magistrate, "you can enter. But you must first go into that little side-room and brush your shoes before the king sees you, for he would surely be enraged to find you in dusty boots."

The king laughed gayly, and entered the house. "I will go to the king's chamber at once. I think he will forgive my shoes." He beckoned to the two officers and entered his room, the door of which he left open.

The magistrate took no more notice of him, but remained outside, looking eagerly for the king.

Frederick still did not come to illuminate the street with his splendor. In his stead came generals and officers, with gold epaulets and bright stars sparkling on their coats, and entered the king's chamber, without a word to the magistrate.

"They are all waiting for the king," murmured he, "but I shall see him first. How splendid and magnificent are all these officers! How grand, how glorious then must the king be, who is far nobler than they! He does not come; I will enter and pass the time in looking at all these splendidly-dressed soldiers." He stepped lightly to the door, and peered in. He started; a low cry of terror escaped him, as he looked at the scene before him.

The generals—the officers dressed in the gold and silver embroidered uniforms—stood around the room with bared heads; in their midst stood the stranger with the dusty boots. He alone had his hat on. He alone bore neither epaulets nor stars; he was clad in



simple uniform, without a single ornament, and still, wonderful to say, it now seemed to the magistrate that he was more noble, more splendid-looking than all the others. He was the smallest amongst them, but seemed much taller. They stood with bowed heads before him; he alone was raised proudly to his full height. There was something grand and glorious in his countenance; and when his large, luminous eyes fell upon the magistrate, he endeavored in vain to slip away—he was rooted to the spot as if by magnetism.

"Will you not stay with us until the king comes?" said Frederick, laughing.

The magistrate answered the smile with a broad grin. "I see, sir," said he, "that you are laughing at me. You know that you yourself are the king."

Frederick nodded an assent, and then turned to Prince Anhalt von Dessau.

"You see, sir, how precarious a thing is the glory and magnificence of a king. This man took me for a servant; his dull eyes could not perceive my innate glory."

"Your majesty justly calls this man's eyes dull," said the prince, laughing.

Frederick looked at him kindly, and then began a low, earnest conversation with his generals, who listened attentively to his every word.

The magistrate still stood at the door. It seemed to him that he had never seen any thing so splendid-looking as this man with the muddy boots, the simple coat, and torn, unwieldy hat, whose countenance beamed with beauty, whose eyes glittered like stars.

"That, then, is really the king?" said he to one of the royal servants—"the King of Prussia, who for five years has been fighting with the empress for us?"

"Yes, it is him."

"From to-day on I am a Prussian at heart," continued the magistrate; "yes, and a good and true one. The King of Prussia dresses badly, that is true, but I suppose his object is to lighten the taxes." Passing his coat-sleeve across his misty eyes, he hastened to the kitchen to investigate dinner.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE.

SOME days had passed since the king entered Voiseilvitz. He dwelt in the house of the magistrate, and the generals were quartered in the huts of the village. The regiments were in the neighboring

hamlets. The king lived quietly in his house, wholly given up to anxiety and discontent. He ate alone in his room, spoke to no one, or if he did, said only a few grave words. All jesting was vanished from his lips; he was never seen to smile, never heard to play the flute. The grief which oppressed his heart was too profound to be confided to the soft and melting tones of his flute. Even that cherished companion could now give him no consolation. Fearful, horrible intelligence had followed him from the encampment at Strehlen. It had poisoned these days of long-denied and necessary rest, and shrouded the gloomy future with yet darker presentiments of evil.

Schweidnitz, the strong fortress, the key of Silesia, which had been so long and with such mighty effort defended, had fallen!—had yielded to the Austrians—and Frederick had thus lost the most important acquisition of the last year, and thus his possession of Silesia was again made doubtful. He looked sadly back upon all the precious blood which had been shed to no purpose—upon all the great and hardly-won battles, won in vain. He looked forward with an aching heart to the years of blood and battle which must follow. Frederick longed for rest and peace—he was weary of bloodshed and of war. Like an alluring, radiant picture of paradise, the image of his beloved Sans-Souci passed from time to time before his soul. He dreamed of his quiet library and his beautiful picture-gallery. And yet his courage was unconquered—and he preferred the torture of these wretched days—he preferred death itself to the unfavorable and humiliating peace which his proud enemies, made presumptuous by their last successes, dared to offer him. They stood opposed to him in monstrous superiority, but Frederick remained unshaken. With a smaller army and fewer allies Alexander demolished Persia. "But happily," he said to himself, "there was no Alexander to lead his enemies to victory."

Frederick did not despair, and yet he did not believe in the possibility of triumph. He preferred an honorable death to a dishonorable peace. He would rather fall amidst the proud ruins of Prussia, made great by his hand, than return with her to their former petty insignificance. They offered him peace, but a peace which compelled him to return the lands he had conquered, and to pay to his victorious enemies the costs of the war.

The king did not regard these mortifying propositions as worthy of consideration, and he commanded his ambassador, whom he had sent to Augsburg to treat with the enemy, to return immediately. "It is true," he said to his confidant, Le Catt, "all Europe is combined against me—all the great powers have resolved upon my destruction. And England, the only friend I did possess in Europe, has now abandoned me."