

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."

"But one has remained faithful."

"Among the faithless, faithful only he' Among the innumerable false, unmoved, unshaken, unterrified, that is my sword. If the exalted empresses are not my friends, the greater honor to my good sword which has never failed me, and which shall go down with me into the dark grave. If in Europe I have neither friends nor allies, I may find both in other parts of the world. Asia may send me the troops which Europe denies. If Russia is my enemy, who knows but for this reason Turkey may become my ally? And who knows but an alliance with the so-called unbelievers would be of more value to Prussia than a league with the so-called believing Russians? They call themselves Christians, but their weapons are lies, intrigues, deceit, and treachery. The Moslem, however, is an honorable man and a brave soldier. If he calls his God Allah, and his Christ Mohammed, God may call him to account. I have nothing to do with it. What has faith to do with the kings of this world? Besides, I believe the Turks and Tartars are better Christians than the Russians."

"Your majesty is really, then, thinking of an alliance with the Turks and Tartars?" said Le Catt.

"I am thinking of it so earnestly," said the king, eagerly, "that day and night I think of nothing else. I have spared no cost, no gold, no labor, to bring it about. Once I had almost succeeded, and the Sublime Porte was inclined to this league; and my ambassador, Rexin, was, with the consent of the Grand Vizier Mustapha, and indeed by his advice, disguised and sent secretly to Constantinople. The negotiations were almost completed, when the Russian and French ambassadors discovered my plans, and by bribery, lies, and intrigues of every base sort, succeeded in interfering. Mustapha broke his promise, and his only answer to me was—that the Sublime Porte must wait for happier and more propitious days to confirm her friendship and good understanding with the King of Prussia.' This was the will of God the Almighty. This propitious year has been a long time coming, but I hope it is now at hand, and this longed-for alliance will at length be concluded. The last dispatches from my ambassador in Constantinople seem favorable. The wise and energetic Grand Vizier Raghile, the first self-reliant and enterprising Turkish statesman, has promised Rexin to bring this matter before the sultan, and I am daily expecting a courier who will bring me a decisive and perhaps favorable answer from Tartary."*

Le Catt gazed with admiration upon the noble, excited countenance of the king. "Oh, sire," said he, deeply moved, "pardon, that in the fulness of my heart, overcome with joy and rapture, I

* Kammer, "History of the Porte," vol. viii., p. 190.

dare for once to give expression in words to my love and my admiration. It is a glorious spectacle to see the proud oak in the midst of the wild tempest firm and unmoved, not even bowing its proud head to the raging elements, offering a bold but calm defiance. But it is a still more exalted spectacle to see a man with a brave heart and flashing eye defy disaster and death; alone, in the consciousness of his own strength, meeting Fate as an adversary and gazing upon it eye to eye unterrified. Misfortune is like the lion of the desert. If a man with steady eye and firm step advances to meet him, he ceases to roar and lies down humbly at his feet; he recognizes and quails before man made in the likeness of God. You, my king, now offer this spectacle to the astonished world. Can you wonder that I, who am ever near you, are filled with devotion and adoration, and must at last give utterance to my emotion? I have seen your majesty on the bloody battle-field, and in the full consciousness of victory, but never have I seen the laurels which crown your brow so radiant as in these days of your misfortune and defeat. Never was the King of Prussia so great a hero, so glorious a conqueror, as during these last weeks of destitution and gloom. You have hungered with the hungry, you have frozen with the freezing; you have passed the long, weary nights upon your cannon or upon the hard, cold earth. You have divided your last drop of wine with the poor soldiers. You did this, sire; I was in your tent and witnessed it—I alone. You sat at your dinner—a piece of bread and one glass of Hungarian wine, the last in your possession. An officer entered with his report. You asked him if he had eaten. He said yes, but his pale, thin face contradicted his words. You, sire, broke off the half of your bread, you drank the half of your wine, then gave the rest to the officer, saying in an almost apologetic tone, 'It is all that I have.' Sire, on that day I did what since my youth I have not done—I wept like a child, and my every glance upon your noble face was a prayer."

"Enthusiast," said the king, giving his hand to Le Catt with a kindly smile, "is the world so corrupt that so natural an act should excite surprise, and appear great and exalted? Are you astonished at that which is simply human? But look! There is a courier! He stops before the door of my peasant-palace. Quick, quick! Le Catt; let me know the news he brings."

Le Catt hastened off, and returned at once with the dispatches.

Frederick took them with impatient haste, and while he read, his grave face lightened, and a happy, hopeful smile played once more upon his lips. "Ah, Le Catt," said he, "I was a good prophet, and my hopes are about to be fulfilled. Europe is against me, but Asia is my ally. The barbarous Russians are my enemies, but the

honest Turks and Tartars are my friends. This dispatch is from my ambassador Rexin. He is coming, accompanied by an ambassador of Tartary, and may be here in a few hours."

"Where will your majesty receive him?" said Le Catt.

The king looked around smilingly at the little room, with the rude walls and dirty floor.

"I will receive him here!" said he; "here, in my royal palace of Voiseilvitz. I am forced to believe that a right royal king would, by his presence, transform the lowliest hut into a palace, and the most ordinary chair into a throne. The eyes of the ambassador may, however, be as dull as those of the worthy possessor of my present palace. It may be that he will not recognize me as the visible representative of God—as king by the grace of God. We must therefore come to his assistance, and show ourselves in all the dazzling glitter of royalty. We must improvise a throne, and, it appears to me, that leathern arm-chair, which certainly belonged to a grandfather, is well suited to the occasion. It will be a worthy representation of my throne, which was my grandfather's throne; he erected it, and I inherited it from him. Shove it, then, into the middle of the room, and fasten some of the Russian flags, which we took at Zorndorf, on the wall behind it; spread my tent-carpet on the floor, and my throne saloon is ready. Quick, Le Catt, make your preparations; call the servants, and show them what they have to do. In the mean time, I will make my toilet; I must not appear before the worthy ambassador in such unworthy guise." The king rang hastily, and his valet, Deesen, entered. "Deesen," said he, gayly, "we will imagine ourselves to be again in Sans-Souci, and about to hold a great court. I must do then, what I have not done for a long time—make *grande toilette*. I will wear my general's uniform, and adorn myself with the order of the Black Eagle. I will have my hair frizzed, and screw up an imposing cue. Well, Deesen, why do you gaze at me so wildly?"

"Sire, the general's coat is here, but—"

"Well, but what?" cried the king, impatiently.

"But the breeches! the breeches!" stammered Deesen, turning pale; "they are torn; and those your majesty now wears, are your last and only ones."

"Well, then," said the king, laughing, "I will continue to wear my last and only breeches; I will put on my general's coat, *voula tout*."

"That is wholly impossible," cried Deesen, wringing his hands. "If your majesty proposes to hold a great court, you cannot possibly wear these breeches!"

"Why not? why not?" said the king, fiercely.

"Sire," murmured Deesen, "sire, that has happened to them which happened to your majesty at Torgau."

"That is to say—" said the king, questioningly.

"That is to say, they are wounded."

Frederick looked surprised, and following the glance of his valet, he found his eyes fixed upon his knees.

"You are right, Deesen," said he, laughing; "that disaster has befallen my breeches which befell me at Torgau: they are wounded, and need a surgeon."

"Your majesty must therefore graciously postpone your great court till to-morrow. Perhaps I may find a tailor in one of the neighboring villages; he will work during the night, and early to-morrow every thing will be in order."

"It must be done to-day—done immediately," cried the king. "In a few hours the injury must be healed, and my apparel fully restored to health."

"But, sire," whispered Deesen, "how can that be possible? Your majesty has but one pair, and you must take them off, in order that they may be mended."

"Well, I will take them off," said the king; "go and seek the tailor. I will undress and go to bed till this important operation is performed. Go at once!"

While the king was undressing, he heard Deesen's stentorian voice, calling out lustily through the streets—"A tailor! a tailor! is there a tailor amongst the soldiers?"

The king was scarcely covered up in bed before Deesen entered, with a joyous face.

"Sire, I have found a soldier who can do the work; he is not a tailor, but he swears he can sew and patch, and he undertakes to dress the wounds."

"And yet, it is said that a higher power rules the world," murmured the king, when he was again alone; "accident—accident decides all questions. If there had been no tailor amongst the soldiers, the King of Prussia could not have received the ambassador of Tartary to-day, and the negotiations might have been broken off."

At this moment the door opened, and Le Catt entered, followed by a servant with the Russian flags and the carpet. When he saw the king in bed, he started back, and asked anxiously "if his majesty had been taken suddenly unwell?"

"No," said Frederick, "I am only making my toilet."

"Your toilet, sire?"

"Yes, Le Catt, did you see a soldier at the door?"

"Yes, sire."

"What was he doing?"

"He seemed to be sewing."

"He is sewing, and he is to-day my first gentleman of the bed-chamber; he is dressing me. Ah! in the presence of this humble patcher, I remember that a wise man said, 'A king is but a man to his *valet de chambre*.' But do not allow my presence to prevent you from building my throne; I will rest here comfortably, and look on."

While the king lay in bed waiting, the soldier who had undertaken the job, sat on a bench before the door. He bent his head zealously over his work, and did not once look up to his comrade who stood near him, leaning against a large oak, gazing rigidly and unweariedly at him. But in this steady and indefatigable glance, there seemed to be a strange, attractive power, which the soldier could not resist. He raised his head involuntarily for a moment, and the sweet and noble face of Charles Henry Buschman was seen.

"Fritz Kober," said he, "why do you gaze at me so, and why do you follow me?"

"Because I have been so accustomed to be where you are!" said Fritz Kober, quietly. "When I heard Deesen call for a tailor, and you answered, 'Here! here!' I stepped out of my tent and followed you; nothing more! But you would also know why I look at you? Well, while it pleases me to see you sewing, it brings strange and pleasant thoughts to my mind."

"What sort of strange and pleasant thoughts, Fritz?" said Charles Henry, bowing down again earnestly over his work.

"I thought," said Fritz Kober, in a trembling voice, "that if ever I should take a wife, she must look exactly as you do, Charles Henry; she must have the same neat little hands, and be expert with the needle as you are. Then I thought further, that in the whole world there was no man so good and brave, so gentle and intelligent as you. Then I considered what would become of me when the war was at an end, and you should desert me and go back to your village. Then I resolved to follow you through the whole world, and not to cease my prayers and entreaties till you promised to come into my hut, and take all that was mine—under the condition that you would keep me always with you—at least as your servant—and never spurn me or cast me off. Then, I thought further, that if you said *no*—if you refused to come into my house, I would wander far away in despair, and, in the anguish of my heart I would become a bad and contemptible man. Without you, Charles Henry, there is no joy or peace in this world for me; you are my good angel! Charles Henry Buschman, do you wish me to be a dissolute drunkard?"

"How can I wish that, Fritz Kober?" whispered Charles Henry.

"But you could never be a bad man; you have the best and noblest heart in the world! No man dare injure or abuse you! You give to those who ask of you, you help those who suffer, and you stand by those who are in difficulty! Then you are a complete, true man, and know how to maintain your own dignity on every occasion. All who approach you are compelled to respect you, and no one will ever dare to cast a reproach on Fritz Kober. You are, at the same time, a hero, a good man, and an innocent child, and my heart rejoices in you."

"What is good in me, I owe to you," said Fritz Kober. "Before I knew you, I was a simple blockhead, and lived on stupidly from day to day, thinking of nothing. Since I knew you, I have learned to open my eyes, and to reflect. But all this will be changed if you desert me, Charles Henry, and I see that you will do so; yes, you will abandon me. For three weeks past you have taken no notice of me. You would not go into my tent with me at Bunzelwitz, but camped out alone. Here, in the village, you would not come into my hut, but quartered with an old peasant woman. So I followed you to-day, to ask you, once for all, if you have the heart to leave me—to spurn me from you? Look at me, Charles Henry! look at me and tell me if you will make a pitiful and unhappy man of me?"

Charles Henry looked up from his work, and gazed at the pale, agitated face of his comrade; and as he did so, tears gushed from his eyes.

"God forbid, Fritz Kober, that I should make you unhappy! I would rather shed my heart's blood to make you happy."

"Hurrah! hurrah!" cried Fritz Kober. "If this is so, listen to me and answer me, Charles Henry Buschman, will you be my wife?"

A glowing blush suffused Charles Henry's face; he bowed down over his work and sewed on in monstrous haste.

Fritz Kober came nearer and bowed so low that he was almost kneeling.

"Charles Henry Buschman, will you be my wife?"

Charles Henry did not answer; tears and sobs choked his voice, and trembling with emotion he laid his head on Fritz Kober's shoulder.

"Does that mean yes?" said Fritz, breathlessly.

"Yes," whispered she, softly.

And now Fritz uttered a wild shout, and threw his arms around the soldier's neck and kissed him heartily.

"God be thanked that it is over," said he; "God be thanked that I did not deceive myself—that you are truly a girl. When you were last sick, and the surgeon bled you, I was suspicious. I said to myself, 'That is not the arm of a man.' I went out, but in the

evening you were praying, and you did not know that I was in the tent, and you said, 'You dear parents in heaven, pity your poor daughter.' I could have shouted with rapture and delight, but I held my peace. I wished to wait and see if you would be good to me."

"But the expression of your eyes was so changed," whispered Charles Henry; "I was obliged to turn away when their glance fell upon me. I felt that my secret was discovered, and therefore I avoided being with you."

"Officer Buschman," cried Deesen, in a commanding voice from the house, "is your work finished?"

"Immediately; I have but a few stitches to do," cried Charles Henry. "Be silent," said he to Fritz, "and let me sew."

But Fritz was not silent; he crouched near officer Buschman, and whispered many and strange things in his ear.

Charles Henry sewed on zealously, blushed often, and replied in low, embarrassed words.

At last the work was completed, and the knees of the great Frederick's breeches were worthily mended with divers patches.

"I will carry them myself to the king, as I have a favor to ask him," said Fritz Kober. "Come with me, Charles Henry; you must hear what the king says."

He took Charles Henry's hand and advanced to the door, but Deesen stood there, and forbade him to enter; he ordered Fritz to give him the breeches.

"No," said Fritz Kober, resolutely, "we have a request to make of the king, and he once gave us permission to come directly to him when we had a favor to ask."

He pushed Deesen aside and entered the room with Charles Henry.

The king sat in his bed reading, and was so absorbed that he did not see them enter. But Fritz stepped up boldly to the bed and laid the breeches upon the chair.

"Did you mend them, my son?" said the king.

"No, your majesty, Charles Buschman mended them, but I came along to say something to your majesty. You remember, no doubt, what you said when we returned from the enemy's camp near Künersdorf, after the battle, when Charles Henry related so beautifully all that we had seen and heard. You said, 'You are both officers from this day, and if you ever need my assistance call upon me freely.'"

"And you wish to do so now?" said the king.

"Yes, your majesty, I have something to ask."

"Well, what is it?"

Fritz Kober drew up grandly and ceremoniously.

"I ask your majesty to allow me to marry officer Charles Henry Buschman—to marry him to-day!"

"Marry him!" said the king, amazed; "is, then, officer Buschman—"

"A woman, your majesty!" interrupted Fritz Kober, with joyful impatience. "He is a woman; his name is Anna Sophia Detzloff, from Brünen."

Frederick's sharp, piercing eye rested for a moment questioningly upon Charles Henry's face; then nodding his head smilingly several times, he said:

"Your bride is a spruce lad and a brave officer, and knows how to blush in his soldier's uniform. Officer Charles Henry Buschman, will you be the wife of officer Fritz Kober?"

"I will, if your majesty consents," whispered Charles Henry.

"Well, go to the field-preacher, and be married—I give my consent. And now go, I must dress."

"At last," said the king to Le Catt, "fortune will be again favorable to me. Signs and wonders are taking place, as they did with Charles VII. of France. When he was in the most dire necessity, surrounded by his enemies, the Lord sent the Maid of Orleans to save him. To me, also, has the Lord now sent a Joan d'Arc, a maid of Brünen. With her help I will overcome all my enemies."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE AMBASSADOR AND THE KHAN OF TARTARY.

THE preparations were completed; the room of the king had become, by means of his inventive genius, a magnificent throne saloon. The great arm-chair, draped with rich hangings, looked almost imposing; the dirty floor was concealed by a costly Turkish carpet. The door which led into the entry had been removed, and the opening hung with banners. The entry itself had been changed by means of carpets, banners, and standards into a tasteful ante-chamber.

The king wore his general's uniform, and the chain of the order of the Black Eagle, and the generals and staff officers stood near him in their glittering dresses. The room of the sheriff had indeed become a royal apartment.

And now an imposing train approached this improvised palace. First appeared two riders, whose gold-embroidered mantles fell below their feet and concealed the well-shaped bodies of the small