

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

THE KING'S RETURN.

BERLIN was glittering in festal adornment! This was a great, a joyous day; the first gleam of sunshine, after many long years of sorrow, suffering, and absolute want. For the last seven years the king had been absent from his capital—to-day he would return to Berlin.

After seven years of bloody strife, the powers at Hubertsburg had declared peace. No nation had enlarged its boundaries by this war. Not one of the cities or fortresses of the King of Prussia had been taken from him, and he was forced to content himself with his former conquest. There had been no successful results! Losses only were to be calculated.

During these seven years, Russia had lost one hundred and eighty thousand men, the French two hundred thousand, the Prussians a hundred and twenty thousand, the English and confederate Germans a hundred and sixty thousand, and the Saxons ninety thousand—lastly, the Swedes and the States sixty thousand. This seven years' war cost Europe nearly a million of men. Their blood fertilized the German soil, and their bones lay mouldering beneath her green sods.

Throughout all Europe, weeping mothers, wives, and children turned their sorrowful faces toward the land which had robbed them of their dear loved ones; they were even deprived the painfully sweet consolation of weeping over these lonely and neglected graves.

Losses were not only to be counted in myriads of men, whose blood had been shed in vain, but uncounted millions had been lavished upon the useless strife.

During this war, the debt of England had increased to seventy million pounds sterling; the yearly interest on the debt was four and a half million crowns. The Austrians calculated their debt at five hundred million guldens; France at two thousand million livres; Sweden was almost bankrupt, and unfortunate Saxony had to pay to Prussia during the war over seven million crowns.

In the strict meaning of the term, Prussia had made no debt, but she was, in fact, as much impoverished as her adversaries. The Prussian money which was circulated during the war was worthless.

At the close of the war, all those who carried these promissory notes shared the fate of the rich man in the fairy tale. The money collected at night turned to ashes before morning. This was the fatal fruit of the war which for seven years had scourged Europe. Prussia, however, had reason to be satisfied and even grateful. Although bleeding from a thousand wounds, exhausted and faint unto death, she promised a speedy recovery; she was full of youthful power and energy—had grown, morally, during this seven years' struggle—had become great under the pressure of hardship and self-denial, and now ranked with the most powerful nations of Europe.

To-day, however, suffering and destitution were forgotten; only smiling, joyous faces were seen in Berlin. The whole city seemed to be invigorated by the golden rays of fortune; no one appeared to suffer, no one to mourn for the lost—and yet amongst the ninety-eight thousand inhabitants of Berlin, over thirty thousand received alms weekly—so that a third of the population were objects of charity. To-day no one thirsted, no one was hungry; all hearts were merry, all faces glad!

They had not seen their great King Frederick for seven years; they would look upon him to-day. The royal family had arrived from Magdeburg.

Every one hastened to the streets to see Frederick, who on his departure had been but the hero-king of Prussia, but who now, on his return, was the hero of all Europe—whom all nations greeted—whose name was uttered in Tartary, in Africa, with wonder and admiration—yes, in all parts of the civilized and uncivilized world!

The streets were filled with laughing crowds; all pressed toward the Frankfort gate, where the king was to enter. The largest arch of triumph was erected over this gate, and all other streets were decorated somewhat in the same manner. Every eye was turned toward this street; all were awaiting with loudly-beating hearts the appearance of that hero whose brow was decked with so many costly laurels. No heart was more impatient, no one gazed so eagerly at the Frankfort gate as the good Marquis d'Argens; he stood at the head of the burghers, near the arch of triumph; he had organized the citizens for this festal reception; he had left his cherished retirement for love of his royal friend; to welcome him, he had ventured into the cutting wind of a cold March morning. For Frederick's sake he had mounted a horse, a deed of daring he had not ventured upon for many a year; in his lively impatience, he

even forgot the danger of being run away with or dragged in the dust.

The marquis knew well that nothing could be more disagreeable to the king than this public reception, but his heart was overflowing with hope and happiness, and he felt the necessity of shouting his *vivats* in the sunny air. In the ecstacy of his love, he forgot to respect the preferences of the king.

Perhaps Frederick suspected this triumph which his good Berliners had prepared for him. Perhaps it appeared to his acute sensibilities and noble heart altogether inappropriate to welcome the returned soldiers with wild shouts of joy, when so many thousand loved ones were lying buried on the bloody battle-field. Perhaps he did not wish to see Berlin, where his mother had so lately died, adorned in festal array.

Hour after hour passed. The sun was setting. The flowers which had been taken from the greenhouses to decorate the arch of triumph, bowed their lovely heads sadly in the rough March winds. The fresh, cool breeze whistled through the light draperies and displaced their artistic folds. Notwithstanding the enthusiasm of the citizens, they began to be hungry, and to long greatly for the conclusion of these solemnities. Still the king came not. The Berliners waited awhile longer, and then one after another quietly withdrew. This bad example was speedily imitated, and the gay *cortège* of riders grew small by degrees and beautifully less. At sunset but a few hundred citizens remained at the gate, and even these heroic Spartans showed but little of the enthusiasm of the morning.

Marquis d'Argens was in despair, and if Frederick had arrived at this moment he would have heard a reproachful phillipic from his impatient friend instead of a hearty welcome. But fortune did not favor him so far as to give him the opportunity to relieve his temper. The king did not appear. The marquis at last proposed to the citizens to get torches, and thus in spite of the darkness give to their king a glittering reception. They agreed cheerfully, and the most of them dashed off to the city to make the necessary preparations.

The streets were soon brilliantly lighted, and now in the distance the king's carriage was seen approaching. Throughout the vast train shouts and *vivats* were heard, and the proud voices of this happy people filled the air as with the thunder of artillery.

"Long life to the king! Long life to Frederick the Great!"

The carriage came nearer and nearer, and now myriads of lights danced around it. The citizens had returned with their torches, and the carriage of Frederick rolled on as if in a sea of fire. It drew up at the arch of triumph. The king rose and turned his face toward his people, who were shouting their glad welcome. The

light from the torches fell upon his countenance, and their red lustre gave his cheek a fresh and youthful appearance.

His subjects saw once more his sparkling, speaking eye, in which shone the same energy, the same imperial power, as in days gone by. They saw the soft, sympathetic smile which played around his eloquent lips—they saw him, their king, their hero, and were glad. They laughed and shouted with rapture. They stretched out their arms as if to clasp in one universal embrace their dear-loved king, who was so great, so beautiful, so far above them in his bright radiance. They threw him fond kisses, and every utterance of his name seemed a prayer to God for his happiness.

But one stood by the carriage who could not speak—whose silent, trembling lips were more eloquent than words. No language could express the delight of D'Argent—no words could paint the emotion which moved his soul and filled his eyes with tears.

The king recognized him, and holding out his hand invited him to take a seat in the carriage. Then giving one more greeting to his people, he said, "Onward—onward to Charlottenburg."

At a quick pace the carriage drove through Berlin. Those who had not had the courage and strength to await the king at the Frankfort gate, were now crowding the streets to welcome him.

Frederick did not raise himself again from the dark corner of the carriage. He left it to the Duke of Brunswick to return the salutations of the people. He remained motionless, and did not even appear to hear the shouts of his subjects. Not once did he raise his hand to greet them—not a word passed his lips.

When they crossed the king's bridge and reached the castle grounds, the people were assembled and closely crowded together. Frederick now raised himself, but he did not see them—he did not regard the brilliantly illuminated houses, or the grounds sparkling in a flood of light. He turned slowly and sadly toward the castle—his eye rested upon that dark, gloomy mass of stone, which arose to the right, and contrasted mysteriously with the brilliant houses around it. It looked like a monstrous coffin surrounded by death-lights. Frederick gazed long and steadily at the castle. He raised his head once more, but not to greet his subjects. He covered his face—he would not be looked at in his grief. D'Argent heard him murmur, "My mother, oh my mother! Oh, my sister!"

The Prussians welcomed joyously the return of their great king, but Frederick thought only at this moment of those who could never return—those whom death had torn from him forever. Onward, onward through the lighted streets! All the inhabitants of Berlin seemed to be abroad. This was a Roman triumph, well calculated to fill the heart of a sovereign with just pride.

The Berliners did not see that Frederick had no glance for them. Gloom and despair veiled his countenance, and no one dreamed that this king, whom they delighted to honor, was at this proud moment a weeping son, a mourning brother.

At last the joyous, careless city lay behind them, and they approached Charlottenburg.

The noise and tumult gradually ceased, and a welcome quiet ensued. Frederick did not utter one word, and no one dared to break the oppressive silence. This triumphant procession seemed changed to a burial-march. The victor in so many battles seemed now mastered by his memories.

The carriage drew up at Charlottenburg. The wide court was filled with the inhabitants of the little city, who welcomed the king as enthusiastically as the Berliners had done. Frederick saluted them abruptly, and stepped quickly into the hall.

The castle had been changed into a temple of glory and beauty in honor of the king's return. The pillars which supported it were wound around with wreaths of lovely, fragrant blossoms; costly draperies, gay flags, and emblems adorned the walls; the floors were covered with rich Turkish carpets; the gilded candelabras shed their variegated lights in every direction, irradiating the faces of the court cavaliers glittering with stars and orders, and the rich toilets of the ladies. The effect was dazzling.

In the middle of the open space two ladies were standing, one in royal attire, sparkling in diamonds and gold embroideries, the other in mourning, with no ornament but pearls, the emblem of tears. The one with a happy, hopeful face gazed at the king; the other with a sad, weary countenance, in which sickness, sorrow, and disappointment had drawn their heavy lines, turned slowly toward him; her large eyes, red with weeping, were fixed upon him with an angry, reproachful expression.

Frederick drawing near, recognized the queen and the Princess Amelia. At the sight of this dearly-beloved face, the queen, forgetting her usual timidity and assumed coldness, stepped eagerly forward and offered both her hands to her husband. Her whole heart, the long-suppressed fervor of her soul, spoke in her moist and glowing eyes. Her lips, which had so long been silent, so long guarded their sweet secret, expressed, though silently, fond words of love. Elizabeth Christine was no longer young, no longer beautiful; she had passed through many years of suffering and inward struggle, but at this moment she was lovely. The eternal youth of the soul lighted her fair brow—the flash of hope and happiness glimmered in her eyes. But Frederick saw nothing of this. He had no sympathy for this pale and gentle queen, now glowing with

vitality. He thought only of the dearly-loved queen and mother who had gone down into the cold, dark grave. Frederick bowed coldly to Elizabeth Christine, and took both her hands in his a short moment.

"Madame," said he, "this is a sad moment. The queen my mother is missing from your side."

Elizabeth Christine started painfully, and the hands which the king had released fell powerless to her side. Frederick's harsh, cruel words had pierced her heart and quenched the tears of joy and hope which stood in her eyes.

Elizabeth was incapable of reply. Princess Amelia came to her relief.

"If my brother, the king, while greeting us after his long absence, is unconscious of our presence and sees only the faces of the dead, he must also be forced to look upon my unhappy brother, Prince Augustus William, who died of a broken heart."

The king's piercing eyes rested a moment with a strangely melancholy expression upon the sorrowful, sickly face of the Princess Amelia.

"Not so, my sister," said he, softly and gently; "I not only see those who have been torn from us by death, I look upon and welcome gladly those who have been spared to me. I am happy to see you here to-day, my sister."

Frederick offered Amelia his hand, and bowing silently to those who were present, he entered his apartment, followed only by the Marquis d'Argens.

Frederick stepped rapidly through the first room, scarcely looking at the new paintings which adorned the walls; he entered his study and threw a long, thoughtful glance around this dear room. Every piece of furniture, every book, recalled charming memories of the past—every thing stood as he had left it seven years ago. He now for the first time realized the joy of being again at home; his country had received him and embraced him with loving arms.

With glowing cheeks he turned toward the marquis, who was leaning against the door behind him.

"Oh, D'Argens! it is sweet to be again in one's own native land—the peace of home is sweet. The old furniture appears to welcome me; that old chair stretches its arms wooingly toward me, as if to lure me to its bosom, and give me soft sleep and sweet dreams in its embrace. Marquis, I feel a longing to gratify my old friend; I yield to its gentle, silent pleadings."

Frederick stepped to the arm-chair and sank into it with an expression of indescribable comfort.

"Ah, now I feel that I am indeed at home."

"Allow me," said D'Argens, "to say, your majesty, what the dear old arm-chair, in spite of its eloquence, cannot express. I, also, am a piece of the old furniture of this dear room, and in the name of all my voiceless companions, I cry 'Welcome to my king!' We welcome you to your country and your home. You return greater even than when you left us. Your noble brow is adorned with imperishable laurels; your fame resounds throughout the earth, and every nation sings to you a hymn of victory."

"Well, well," said Frederick, smilingly, "do not look too sharply at my claims to such world-wide renown, or my fame will lose a portion of its lustre. You will see that chance has done almost every thing for me—more than my own valor and wisdom, and the bravery of my troops combined. Chance has been my best ally during this entire war.* Chance enabled me to escape the famine camp of Bunzelwitz—chance gave me the victory over my enemies. Speak no more of my fame, marquis, at least not in this sacred room, where Cicero, Cæsar, Lucretius, and Thucydides look down upon us from the walls; where the voiceless books with their gilded letters announce to us that we are surrounded by great spirits. Speak not of fame to me, D'Argens, when from yonder book-shelf I see the name of Athalie. I would rather have written Athalie, than to have all the fame arising from this seven years' war." †

"Herein I recognize the peaceful, noble tastes of my king," said D'Argens, deeply moved; "years of hardship and victory have not changed him—the conquering hero is the loving friend and the wise philosopher. I knew this must be so—I knew the heart of my king; I knew he would regard the day on which he gave peace to his people as far more glorious than any day of bloody battle and triumphant victory. The day of peace to Prussia is the most glorious, the happiest day of her great king's life."

Frederick shook his head softly, and gazed with infinite sadness at his friend's agitated countenance.

"Ah, D'Argens, believe me, the most beautiful, the happiest day is that on which we take leave of life."

As Frederick turned his eyes away from his friend, they fell accidentally upon a porcelain vase which stood upon a table near his secretary; he sprang hastily from his chair.

"How came this vase here?" he said, in a trembling voice.

"Sire," said the marquis, "the queen-mother, shortly before her death, ordered this vase to be placed in this room; she prized it highly—it was a present from her royal brother, George II. Her majesty wished that, on your return from the war, it might serve

* The king's own words.

† Ibid.

as a remembrance of your fond mother. At her command, I placed that packet of letters at the foot of the vase, after the queen-mother had sealed and addressed it with her dying hand."

Frederick was silent; he bowed his head upon the vase, as if to cool his burning brow upon its cold, glassy surface. He, perhaps, wished also to conceal from his friend the tears which rolled slowly down his cheeks, and fell upon the packet of letters lying before him.

The king kissed the packet reverentially, and examined with a deep sigh the trembling characters traced by the hand of his beloved mother.

"For my son—the king."

Frederick read the address softly. "Alas! my dear mother, how poor you have made me. I am now no longer a son—only a king!"

He bowed his head over the packet, and pressed his mother's writing to his lips, then laid the letters at the foot of the vase and remained standing thoughtfully before it.

A long pause ensued. Frederick stood with folded arms before the vase, and the marquis leaned against the door behind him. Suddenly the king turned to him.

"I beg a favor of you, marquis. Hasten to Berlin, and tell Benda he must perform the *Te Deum* of my dear Graun here in the castle chapel to-morrow morning at nine o'clock. I know the singers of the chapel can execute it—they gave it once after the battle of Leignitz. Tell Benda to make no difficulties, for it is my express wish to hear the music to-morrow morning. I trust to you, marquis, to see my wish fulfilled, to make the impossible possible, if you find it necessary. Call me capricious if you will, for desiring to hear this music to-morrow. I have so long been controlled by stern realities, that I will allow myself now to yield to a caprice."

He gave his hand to the marquis, who pressed it to his lips.

"Sire, to-morrow morning at nine o'clock the *Te Deum* shall be performed in the chapel, should I even be compelled to pass the night in arousing the musicians from their beds."

The marquis kept his word; he surmounted all difficulties, removed all objections. In vain Benda declared the organ in the chapel was out of tune, the performance impossible; the marquis hastened to the organist and obliged him to put it in order that night. In vain the singers protested against singing this difficult music before the king without preparation; D'Argens commanded them in the name of the king to have a rehearsal during the night. Thanks to his nervous energy and zeal, the singers assembled, and Benda stood before his desk to direct this midnight concert.

When the clock struck nine the next morning every difficulty

had been set aside, and every preparation completed. The organist was in his place, the organ in order; the musicians tuned their instruments, the singers were prepared, and the chapel-master, Benda, was in their midst, *bâton* in hand.

All eyes were directed toward the door opposite the choir, through which the court must enter; all hearts were beating with joyful expectation—all were anxious to see the king once more in the midst of his friends, in his family circle. Every one sympathized in the queen's happiness at being accompanied once more by her husband; laying aside her loneliness and widowhood, and appearing in public by his side.

All eyes, as we have said, were impatiently directed toward the door, waiting for the appearance of their majesties and the court.

Suddenly the door opened. Yes, there was the king. He stepped forward very quietly, his head a little bowed down; in the midst of the solemn stillness of the chapel his step resounded loudly.

Yes, it was Frederick the Great, he was alone, accompanied by no royal state, surrounded by no glittering crowd—but it was the king; in the glory of his majesty, his endurance, and his valor, radiant in the splendor of his heroic deeds and his great victories.

Frederick seated himself slowly, gave one quick glance at the choir, and waved his hand to them. Benda raised his *bâton* and gave the sign to commence. And now a stream of rich harmony floated through the chapel. The organ, with its powerful, majestic tones; the trumpets, with their joyous greeting; the drums, with their thunder, and the soft, melting tones of the violin and flute, mingled together in sweet accord.

The king, with head erect and eager countenance, listened to the beautiful and melodious introduction. He seemed to be all ear, to have no other thought, no other passion than this music, which was wholly unknown to him. And now, with a powerful accord, the sweetly-attuned human voices joined in, and the choir sang in melting unison the *Te Deum Laudamus*, which resounded solemnly, grandly through the aisles. The king turned pale, and as the hymn of praise became more full and rich, his head sank back and his eyes were fixed upon the floor.

Louder and fuller rose the solemn tones; suddenly, from the midst of the choir, a soft, melting tenor sang in a sweet, touching voice, *Tuba mirum spargeus sonum*. Frederick's head sank still lower upon his breast, and at last, no longer able to restrain his tears, he covered his face with his hands.

The lofty strains of this solemn hymn resounded through the empty church, which until now had been wrapped in gray clouds, but in a moment the sun burst from behind the clouds, darted its

rays through the windows, and lighted up the church with golden glory. The king who, until now, had been in the shadow of the cloud, was as if by magic bathed in a sea of light. All eyes were fixed upon his bowed head, his face partially covered with his hands, and the tears gushing from his eyes.

No one could withstand the silent power of this scene; the eyes of the singers filled with tears, and they could only continue their chant in soft, broken, sobbing tones, but Benda was not angry; he dared not look at them, lest they might see that his own stern eyes were veiled in tears.

Frederick seemed more and more absorbed in himself—lost in painful memories. But the loud hosannas resounded and awakened him from his slumber; he dared no longer give himself up to brooding. He arose slowly from his seat, and silent and alone, even as he had entered, he left the church.

CHAPTER II.

PRINCE HENRY.

SEVEN years had passed since Prince Henry had left his wife, to fight with his brother against his enemies. During these long years of strife and contest, neither the king nor the prince had returned to Berlin. Like the king, he also had won for himself fame and glory upon the battle-field. Much more fortunate than his brother, he had won many victories, and had not sustained a single defeat with his army corps. More successful in all his undertakings than Frederick, perhaps also more deliberate and careful, he had always chosen the right hour to attack the enemy, and was always prepared for any movement. His thoughtfulness and energy had more than once released the king from some disagreeable or dangerous position. To the masterly manner in which Prince Henry managed to unite his forces with those of his brother after the battle of Künersdorf, the king owed his escape from the enemies which then surrounded him. And to the great and glorious victory gained by Prince Henry over the troops of the empire and of Austria at Freiberg, the present happy peace was to be attributed. This battle had subdued the courage of the Austrians, and had filled the generals of the troops of the empire with such terror, that they declared at once their unwillingness to continue the war, and their determination to return with their forces to their different countries.

The battle of Freiberg was the last battle of the Seven Years' War. It brought to Prince Henry such laurels as the king had

gained at Leignitz and Torgau; it placed him at his brother's side as an equal. Frederick saw it without envy or bitterness, and rejoiced in the fulness of his great soul, in his brother's fame. When he found himself, for the first time after the Seven Years' War, surrounded at Berlin by the princes and generals, he advanced with a cordial smile to his brother, and laying his hand gently on his shoulder, said aloud:

"You see here, sirs, the only one amongst us all who did not commit a single mistake during the war!"

Seven years had passed since Prince Henry had seen his young wife, Princess Wilhelmina. He could at last return to her—to his beloved Rheinsberg, and find rest after his many years of wandering. He had written to the princess, and requested her not to meet him in Berlin, but to find some pretext for remaining at Rheinsberg. His proud soul could not endure the thought that the woman he loved, who appeared to him fit to grace the first throne of the world, would occupy an inferior position at court—would have to stand behind the queen. He had never envied the king his crown or his position, but his heart now craved the crown of the queen, for the brow of his own beautiful wife, who seemed much better fitted to wear it than the gentle, timid Elizabeth Christine. Princess Wilhelmina had therefore remained at Rheinsberg, feigning sickness.

It was night! The castle of Rheinsberg glittered with the light of the torches by which the gates were adorned, to welcome the prince to his home. The saloons and halls were brilliantly lighted, and in them a gay, merry crowd was assembled. All the prince's friends and acquaintances had been invited by Princess Wilhelmina to greet his return.

Every thing in the castle bore the appearance of happiness—all seemed gay and cheerful. But still, there was one whose heart was beating anxiously at the thought of the approaching hour—it was the Princess Wilhelmina. She was gorgeously dressed; diamonds glittered on her brow and throat, bright roses gleamed upon her breast, and a smile was on her full, red lips. No one knew the agony this smile cost her! No one knew that the red which burned upon her cheek was caused, not by joy, but terror!

Yes, terror! She was afraid of this meeting, in which she was to receive the prince as her loved husband, while, during the long years of absence, he had become a perfect stranger to her. Not even bound to him by the daily occurrences of life, she had no sympathies with the husband who had been forced upon her, and who had once contemptuously put aside the timid heart that was then prepared to love him. This stranger she was now to meet with every sign of

love, because he had one day waked up to the conviction that the heart he had once spurned was worthy of him. It was her duty now to return this love—to consecrate the rich treasures of her heart to him who had once scorned them. Her soul rose in arms at this thought like an insulted lioness, and she felt some of that burning hatred that the lioness feels for her master who wishes to tame her with an iron rod. The prince was to her but her master, who had bound and held her heart in irons, to keep it from escaping from him.

During these seven long years, she had experienced all the freedom and happiness of girlhood; her heart had beat with a power, a fire condemned by the princess herself, but which she was incapable of extinguishing.

Trembling and restless, she wandered through the rooms, smiling when she would have given worlds to have shrieked out her pain, her agony; decked in splendid garments, when she would gladly have been in her shroud. Every sound, every step, filled her with terror, for it might announce the arrival of her husband, whom she must welcome with hypocritical love and joy. Could she but show him her scorn, her hatred, her indifference! But the laws of etiquette held her in their stern bonds and would not release her. She was a princess, and could not escape from the painful restraints of her position. She had not the courage to do so. At times in her day-dreams, she longed to leave all the cold, deceitful glare, by which she was surrounded—to go to some far-distant valley, and there to live alone and unknown, by the side of her lover, where no etiquette would disturb their happiness—where she would be free as the birds of the air, as careless as the flowers of the field. But these wild dreams vanished when the cold, cruel reality appeared to her. By the side of the once-loving woman stood again the princess, who could not surrender the splendor and magnificence by which she was surrounded. She had not the courage nor the wish to descend from her height to the daily life of common mortals. There was dissension in her soul between the high-born princess and the loving, passionate woman. She was capable of making any and every sacrifice for her love, but she had never openly confessed this love, and even in her wildest dreams she had never thought of changing her noble name and position for those of her lover. She could have fled with him to some distant valley, but would she be happy? Would she not regret her former life? Princess Wilhelmina felt the dissension in her soul, and therefore she trembled at the thought of her husband's return. This meeting would decide her whole future. Perhaps she could still be saved. The prince, returning covered with fame and crowned with laurels, might now win her love, and

drive from her heart every other thought. But if he cannot win it—if his return is not sufficient to loosen the chains which bind her—then she was lost—then she could not resist the intoxicating whippers luring her to ruin.

These were Princess Wilhelmina's thoughts as she leaned against a window of the brilliant ball-room, the protection of whose heavy curtains she had sought to drive for a moment from her face the gay smile and to breathe out the sighs that were almost rending her heart. She was gazing at the dark night without—at the bright, starry sky above. Her lips moved in a low prayer—her timid soul turned to God with its fears.

"O God, my God!" murmured she, "stand by me. Take from me the sinful thoughts that fill my heart. Make me to love my husband. Keep my soul free from shame and sin."

Hasty steps, loud, merry voices from the hall, disturbed her dreams. She left her retreat, meeting everywhere gay smiles and joyous faces. At the door stood the prince her husband. He advanced eagerly to her side, and ignoring etiquette and the gay assemblage alike he pressed the princess to his heart and kissed her on both cheeks.

Wilhelmina drew from him in deadly terror, and a burning anger filled her heart. Had she loved the prince, this public demonstration of his tenderness would perhaps have pleased and surely been forgiven by her. As it was, she took his embrace and kisses as an insult, which was only to be endured by compulsion—for which she would surely revenge herself.

Prince Henry was so joyous, so happy at meeting his wife once more, that he did not notice her embarrassed silence, her stiff haughtiness, and thought she shared his joy, his delight.

This confidence seemed to the princess presumptuous and humiliating. She confessed to herself that the prince's manners were not in the least improved by his long campaign—that they were somewhat *brusque*. He took her hand tenderly; leading her to a divan, and seated himself beside her, but suddenly jumping up he left her, and returned in a few moments with his friend Count Kalkreuth.

"Permit me, Wilhelmina," said he, "to introduce to you again my dear friend and companion in arms. Men say I have won some fame, but I assure you that if it is true, Kalkreuth deserves the largest share, for he was the gardener who tended my laurels with wise and prudent hands. I commend him, therefore, to your kindness and friendship, Wilhelmina, and beg you to evince for him a part of that affection you owe to me, and which causes my happiness."

There was something so noble, so open, and knightly in the

prince's manner, that Count Kalkreuth, deeply touched, thought in his heart for a moment that he would not deceive this noble friend with treachery and faithlessness.

The prince's words had a different effect upon the princess. Instead of being touched by his great confidence in her, she was insulted. It indicated great arrogance and self-conceit to be so sure of her love as to see no danger, but to bring his friend to her and commend him to her kindness. It humiliated her for the prince to speak with such confidence of her affection as of a thing impossible to lose. She determined, therefore, to punish him. With a bright smile, she held out her hand to the count, and said to him a few kind words of welcome. How she had trembled at the thought of this meeting—how she had blushed at the thought of standing beside the count with the conviction that not one of her words was forgotten—that the confession of love she had made to the departing soldier belonged now to the returned nobleman! But her husband's confidence had shorn the meeting of all its terror, and made the road she had to travel easy.

The count bowed deeply before her and pressed her hand to his lips. She returned the pressure of his hand, and, as he raised his head and fixed an almost imploring glance upon her, he encountered her eyes beaming with unutterable love.

The court assembly stood in groups, looking with cold, inquisitive eyes at the piquant scene the prince in the innocence of his heart had prepared for them—which was to them an inimitable jest, an excellent amusement. They all knew—what the prince did not for a moment suspect—that Count Kalkreuth adored the princess. They now desired to see if this love was returned by the princess, or suffered by her as a coquette.

None had gazed at this scene with such breathless sympathy, such cruel joy, as Madame du Trouffle. Being one of the usual circle at Rheinsberg, she had been invited by the princess to the present *fête*, and it seemed to her very amusing to receive her own husband, not at their home, but at the castle of her former lover. Major du Trouffle was on the prince's staff, and had accompanied him to Rheinsberg.

Louise had not as yet found time to greet her husband. Her glance was fixed eagerly upon the princess; she noticed her every movement, her every look; she watched every smile, every quiver of her lip. Her husband stood at her side—he had been there for some time, greeting her in low, tender words—but Louise did not attend to him. She seemed not to see him; her whole soul was in her eyes, and they were occupied with the princess. Suddenly she turns her sparkling eyes upon her husband and murmurs: "He is

lost! His laurels will be insufficient to cover the brand which from to-day on will glow upon his brow!" Her husband looked at her in amazement.

"Is this your welcome, after seven long years of absence, Louise?" said he, sadly.

She laid her hand hastily upon his arm, saying, "Hush, hush!" Once more she gazed at the princess, who was talking and laughing gayly with her husband and Count Kalkreuth. "How her cheeks glow, and what tender glances she throws him!" murmured Louise. "Ah! the prince has fallen a victim to his ingenuousness! Verily, he is again praising the merits of his friend. He tells her how Kalkreuth saved his life—how he received the blow meant for his own head. Poor prince! You will pay dearly for the wound Kalkreuth received for you. I said, and I repeat it—he is lost!"

Her husband looked at her as if he feared she had gone mad during his absence. "Of whom do you speak, Louise?" whispered he. "What do you mean? Will you not speak one word of welcome to me to convince me that you know me—that I have not become a stranger to you?"

The princess now arose from her seat, and leaning on her husband's arm she passed through the room, talking merrily with Count Kalkreuth at her side.

"They have gone to the conservatory," said Louise, grasping her husband's arm. "We will also go and find some quiet, deserted place where we can talk undisturbed."

CHAPTER III.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

LOUISE DU TROUFFLE drew her husband onward, and they both followed silently the great crowd which was now entering the splendidly illuminated conservatories. The view offered to the eye was superb. You seemed to be suddenly transplanted as if by magic from the stiff, ceremonious court-saloons into the fresh, fragrant, blooming world of nature. You breathed with rapture the odor of those rare and lovely flowers which were arranged in picturesque order between the evergreen myrtles and oranges. The windows, and indeed the ceiling were entirely covered with vines, and seemed to give color to the illusion that you were really walking in an open alley. Colored Chinese balloons attached to fine chains, fell from the ceiling, and seemed to float like gay butterflies between the trees and flowers. They threw their soft, faint, many-colored lights

through these enchanting halls, on each side of which little grottoes had been formed by twining together myrtles, palms, and fragrant bushes. Each one of these held a little grass-plot, or green divan, and these were so arranged that the branches of the palms were bent down over the seats, and concealed those who rested there behind a leafy screen.

To one of these grottoes Louise now led her husband. "We will rest here awhile," said she. "This grotto has one advantage—it lies at the corner of the wall and has but one open side, and leafy bushes are thickly grouped about it. We have no listeners to fear, and may chat together frankly and harmlessly. And now, first of all, welcome, my husband—welcome to your home!"

"God be thanked, Louise—God be thanked that you have at last known how to speak one earnest word, and welcome me to your side! Believe me, when I say that through all these weary years, each day I have rejoiced at the thought of this moment. It has been my refreshment and my consolation. I truly believe that the thought of you and my ardent desire to see you was a talisman which kept death afar off. It seemed to me impossible to die without seeing you once more. I had a firm conviction that I would live through the war and return to you. Thus I defied the balls of the enemy, and have returned to repose on your heart, my beloved wife—after the storms and hardships of battle to fold you fondly in my arms and never again to leave you." He threw his arms around her waist, and pressed his lips with a tender kiss upon her mouth.

Louise suffered this display of tenderness for one moment, then slipped lightly under his arms and retreated a few steps.

"Do you know," said she, with a low laugh, "that was a true, respectable husband's kiss; without energy and without fire; not too cold, not too warm—the tepid, lukewarm tenderness of a husband who really loves his wife, and might be infatuated about her, if she had not the misfortune to be his wife?"

"Ah! you are still the old Louise," said the major merrily; "still the gay, coquettish, unsteady butterfly, who, with its bright, variegated wings, knows how to escape, even when fairly caught in the toils. I love you just as you are, Louise; I rejoice to find you just what I left you. You will make me young again, child; by your side I will learn again to laugh and be happy. We have lost the power to do either amidst the fatigues and hardships of our rude campaigns."

"Yes, yes," said Louise; "we dismissed you, handsome, well-formed cavaliers, and you return to us clumsy, growling bears; good-humored but savage pets, rather too willing to learn again to