

build them up. God will one day call you to account, and ask this precious soul of you, which you have poisoned by your evil example, which is lost—lost through you alone.”

Louise shuddered fearfully, then rousing herself she tried to shake off these fearful thoughts, and free herself from the stern voices which mastered her. They had so often spoken, so often awaked her in the middle of the night, driven sleep from her couch, and tortured her conscience with bitter reproaches!

Louise knew well this gray phantom which was ever behind her or at her side; ever staring at her with dark and deadly earnestness, even in the midst of her mirth and joyousness; the harsh voice was often so loud that Louise was bewildered by it, and could not hear the ring of joy and rapture which surrounded her. She knew that this pale spectre was conscience; press it down as she would, the busy devil was ever mounting, mounting. But she would not listen, she rushed madly on after new distractions, new pleasures, she quenched the warning voice under shouts of mirth and levity; she threw herself in the arms of folly and worldly pleasures, and then for long months she escaped this threatening phantom, which, with raised finger, stood behind her, which seemed to chase her, and from which she ever fled to new sins and new guilt. Sometimes she had a feeling as if Death held her in his arms, and turned her round in a wild and rapid dance, not regarding her prayers, or her panting, gasping breath; she would, oh how gladly, have rested; gladly have laid down in some dark and quiet corner, away from this wild gayety. But she could not escape from those mysterious arms which held her captive in their iron clasp, which rushed onward with her in the death-dance of sin. She must go onward, ever onward, in this career of vice; she must ever again seek intoxication in the opium of sin, to save herself from the barren, colorless nothingness which awaited her; from that worst of all evils, the weariness with which the old coquette paints the terrible future, in which even she can no longer please; in which old age with a cruel hand sweeps away the flowers from the hair and the crimson from the cheek, and points out to the mocking world the wrinkles on the brow and the ashes in the hair.

“It is cold here,” said Louise, shuddering, and springing up quickly from the grass-plot—“it is cold here, and lonely; I will return to the saloon. Perhaps—”

Hasty steps drew near, and a voice whispered her name. Madame du Trouffle drew back, and a glowing blush suffused her cheek, and as she advanced from the grotto she was again the gay, imperious coquette—the beautiful woman, with the cloudless brow and the sparkling eyes, which seemed never to have been over-

shadowed by tears. The conscience-stricken, self-accusing mother was again the worldly-wise coquette.

Her name was called the second time, and her heart trembled, she knew not if with joy or horror.

“For God’s sake, why have you dared to seek me here? Do you not know that my husband may return at any moment?”

“Your husband is entertaining Prince Henry while the princess dances the first waltz with Count Kalkreuth. All the world is dancing, playing, and chatting, and, while looking at the prince and princess, have for one moment forgotten the beautiful Louise du Trouffle. I alone could not do this, and as I learned from Lady Elliot that you were here, I dared to follow you, and seek in one glance a compensation for what I have endured this day. Ah, tell me, worshipped lady, must I be forever banished from your presence.”

The words of the young man would have seemed insincere and artificial to every unprejudiced ear, but they filled the heart of the vain Louise du Trouffle with joy; they convinced her that she was yet beautiful enough to excite admiration.

“All will be well, Emil,” said she; “I have convinced my husband that I am wise as Cato and virtuous as Lucretia. He believes in me, and will cast all slander from his door. Remain here, and let me return alone to the saloon. *Au revoir, mon ami.*”

She threw him a kiss from the tips of her rosy fingers, and hastened away.

CHAPTER IV.

THE KING IN SANS-SOUCI.

THE ceremonies and festivities of the reception were ended. The king could at length indulge himself in that quiet and repose which he had so long vainly desired. At length, he who had lived so many years to perform the duties of a king, who had in reality lived for his country, might after so many cares and sorrows seek repose. The warrior and hero might once more become the philosopher; might once more enjoy with his friends the pleasure of science and art.

The king entered the carriage which was to bear him to Sans-Souci with a beaming countenance—his deeply-loved Sans-Souci, which had seemed a golden dream to him during the dreary years of the war—a bright goal before him, of which it consoled and strengthened him even to think. Now he would again behold it; now he would again enter those beautiful rooms, and the past would once more become a reality.

He seemed enraptured with the road which led him to Sans-Souci. Every tree, every stone appeared to welcome him, and when the palace became visible, he was entirely overcome by his emotions, and sank back in his carriage with closed eyes.

The Marquis d'Argens, however, the only one who had been allowed to accompany the king in this drive, sprang from his seat, and waving his hat in greeting, exclaimed:

"I greet you, Sans-Souci, you temple of wisdom and happiness! Open wide your portals, for your lord is returning to you. Let your walls resound as did Memnon's pillar, when the sun's rays first greeted it, after a long night. Your night is passed, Sans-Souci; you will be again warmed by the sunbeams from your master's eyes!"

The king smilingly drew his enthusiastic friend back to his seat.

"You are, and always will be a child—an overgrown child."

"Sire," said D'Argens, "that is because I am pious. It is written, 'If you do not become as little children you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven!' Now, Sans-Souci is my kingdom! I have become as the children, that I might be received at the side of my king, and begin once more the days of happiness."

The king gently shook his head. "Oh, I fear, my friend, that the days of happiness will not recommence; the sun which once illumined Sans-Souci has set. Our lips have forgotten how to smile, and joy is dead in our hearts. How many illusions, how many hopes and wishes I still indulged, when I last descended the steps of Sans-Souci; how poor, and weak, and depressed I shall feel in ascending them!"

"What? your majesty poor! You who return so rich in fame, crowned with imperishable laurels?"

"Ah, marquis, these laurels are bathed in blood, and paid for bitterly and painfully with the lives of many thousands of my subjects. The wounds are still gaping which my land received during the war, and they will require long years to heal. Do not speak to me of my laurels; fame is but cold and sorrowful food! In order to prize fame, one should lay great weight on the judgment of men; I have lost all faith in them. Too many bitter experiences have at length destroyed my faith and confidence. I can no longer love mankind, for I have ever found them small, miserable, and crafty. Those for whom I have done most have betrayed and deceived me the most deeply. Think of Chafgotch, he whom I called friend, and who betrayed me in the hour of danger! Remember Warkotch, whom I preferred to so many others, whom I overloaded with proofs of my love, and who wished to betray and murder me! Think of the many attempts against my life, which were always undertaken

by those whom I had trusted and benefited! Think of these things, marquis, and then tell me if I should still love and trust mankind!"

"It is true, sire," said the marquis, sadly; "your majesty has had a wretched experience, and mankind must appear small to you, who are yourself so great. The eagle which soars proudly toward the sun, must think the world smaller and smaller, the higher he soars; the objects which delight us poor earth-worms, who are grovelling in the dust, and mistake an atom floating in the sunshine for the sun itself, must indeed appear insignificant to you."

"Do not flatter me, marquis! Let us, when together, hear a little of that truth which is so seldom heard among men, and of which the name is scarcely known to kings. You flattered me, because you had not the courage to answer my question concerning the unworthiness of mankind, when I said I could no longer love or trust them! You feel, however, that I am right, and you will know how to pardon me, when I appear to the world as a cold, hard-hearted egotist. It is true my heart has become hardened in the fire of many and deep sufferings! I loved mankind very dearly, marquis; perhaps that is the reason I now despise them so intensely; because I know they are not worthy of my love!"

"But, sire, you love them still; for your heart is possessed of that Godlike quality—mercy—which overlooks and pardons the faults and failings of mankind. Intolerance is not in the nature of my king, and forgiveness and mercy are ever on his lips."

"I will endeavor to verify your words, dear friend," said the king, offering D'Argens his hand. "And should I not succeed, you must forgive me, and remember how deeply I have suffered, and that my heart is hardened by the scars of old wounds. But I will indulge such sad thoughts no longer. Only look how Sans-Souci gleams before us! Every window which glitters in the sunlight seems to greet me with shining eyes, and the whispering leaves appear to bid me welcome. There are the windows of my library, and behind them await the great spirits of my immortal friends, who look at me and shake their gray heads at the weak child who has returned to them old and bowed down. Caesar looks smilingly at the laurels I have brought, and Virgil shakes his curly locks, and lightly hums one of his divine songs, which are greater than all my victories. Come, marquis, come! we will go, in all modesty and humility to these gifted spirits, and entreat them not to despise us, because we are so unlike them."

As the carriage reached the lowest terrace, Frederick sprang out with the elasticity of youth, and began to ascend the steps so lightly and rapidly, that the marquis could scarcely follow him.

From time to time the king stood still, and gazed around him,

and then a bright smile illumined his countenance, and his eyes beamed with pleasure. Then hastening onward, he turned his head toward the house that looked so still and peaceful, and seemed, with its open doors, ready to welcome him.

At length, having reached the summit, he turned once more with beaming eyes to look at the lovely landscape which was spread before him in smiling luxuriousness. He then hastily entered the house and the beautiful room in which he had spent so many gay and happy hours with his friends. Now his footsteps echoed in the lonely room, and none of his friends were there to welcome the returning king—none but D'Argens, the dearest, the most faithful of all.

The king now turned to him, and a shadow overspread his countenance, which had been so bright.

"D'Argens," he said, "we are very poor; the most of our friends have left us forever. The prior of Sans-Souci has returned, but his monks have all left him but you, marquis!"

"Does your majesty forget my Lord Marshal, the most amiable and intellectual of your monks? It needs but a sign from his beloved prior to recall him from Neufchatel!"

"It is true," said the king, smiling; "I am not so deserted as I thought. Lord Marshal must return to us, and he must live here in Sans-Souci, as you will. I must surround myself with those who deserve my confidence; perhaps, then, I can forget how bitterly I have been deceived by others. Come, marquis, give me your arm, and we will make a tour of these rooms."

He placed his hand upon the arm of the marquis, and they passed through the silent, deserted rooms, which seemed to greet the king with a thousand remembrances. Perhaps it was that he might the more distinctly hear the whispers of memory that he had commanded that no one should receive him in Sans-Souci, that no servant should appear until called for. Without noise or ceremony, he desired to take possession of this house, in which he had not been the king, but the philosopher and poet. He wished to return here, at least, as if he had only yesterday left the house. But the seven years of care and sorrow went with him; they crept behind him into these silent, deserted halls. He recognized them in the faded furniture, in the dusty walls, and in the darkened pictures. They were not merely around, but within him, and he again felt how utterly he had changed in these years.

As they entered the room which Voltaire had occupied, Frederick's countenance was again brightened by a smile, while that of the marquis assumed a dark and indignant expression.

"Ah, marquis, I see from your countenance that you are ac-

quainted with all the monkey-tricks of my immortal friend," said the king, gayly; "and you are indignant that so great a genius as Voltaire should have possessed so small a soul! You think it very perfidious in Voltaire to have joined my enemies when I was in trouble, and then to send me his congratulations if I happened to win a victory!"

"Does your majesty know that also?" asked the astonished marquis.

"Dear marquis, have we not always good friends and servants, who take a pleasure in telling bad news, and informing us of those things which they know it will give us pain to hear? Even kings have such friends, and mine eagerly acquainted me with the fact that Voltaire wished all manner of evil might befall his friend 'Luc,' as it pleased him to call me. Did he not write to D'Argental that he desired nothing more fervently than my utter humiliation and the punishment of my sins, on the same day on which he sent me an enthusiastic poem, written in honor of my victory at Leuthen? Did he not write on another occasion to Richelieu, that the happiest day of his life would be that on which the French entered Berlin as conquerors, and destroyed the capital of the treacherous king who dared to write to him twice every month the tenderest and most flattering things, without dreaming of reinstating him as chamberlain with the pension of six thousand thalers? He wished that I might suffer '*la damnation éternelle*,' and proudly added, '*Vous voyez, que dans la tragédie je veux toujours que le crime soit puni.*'"

"Yes," replied D'Argens, "and at the same time he wrote here to Formay: '*Votre roi est toujours un homme unique, étonnant, irritabile; il fait des vers charmants dans de temps où un autre ne pourrait faire un ligne de prose, il mérite d'être heureux.*'"

The king laughed aloud. "Well, and what does that prove, that Voltaire is the greatest and most unprejudiced of poets?"

"That proves, sire, that he is a false, perfidious man, a faithless, ungrateful friend. All his great poetical gifts weigh as nothing in the scale against the weakness and wickedness of his character. I can no longer admire him as a poet, because I despise him so utterly as a man."

"You are too hard, marquis," said Frederick, laughing. "Voltaire has a great mind, but a small heart, and that is, after all, less his fault than his Creator's. Why should we wish to punish him, when he is innocent? Why should we demand of a great poet that he shall be a good man? We will allow him to have a bad heart, he can account to Madame Denis for that; and if we cannot love him, we can at least admire him as a poet. We can forgive much wickedness in men, if it is redeemed by great virtues."

"Ah, sire, that is very sad," said D'Argens, "and could only be uttered by one who had the most profound love or the greatest contempt for mankind."

"Perhaps the two are combined in me," said the king. "As Christ said of the Magdalen, 'She has loved much, much will be forgiven her,' so let us say of Voltaire. He has written much, much will be forgiven him. He has lately rendered an immortal service, for which I could almost love him, were it possible to love him at all. He undertook with bold courage the defence of the unhappy Jean Calas, who was murdered by fanatical French priests. The priests, perhaps, will condemn him; we, however, honor him."

"Did not your majesty do the same thing?" asked D'Argens. "Did you not also take pity on the unhappy family of Jean Calas? Did you not send them a considerable amount of money and offer them an asylum in your dominions?"

"That I did, certainly; but what is that in comparison with what Voltaire has done? He gave them the strength of his mind and his work, his best possession, while I could only give them gold. Voltaire's gift was better, more beautiful, and I will now take a vow for his sake, that the persecuted and oppressed shall always find aid and protection in my land, and that I will consider liberty of spirit a sacred thing as long as I live. Freedom of thought shall be a right of my subjects. I will call all free and liberal-minded persons to come to me, for liberty of thought brings liberty of will, and I prefer to rule a thinking people, to a mass of thoughtless slaves, who follow me through stupid obedience. Prussia shall be the land of liberty and enlightenment. The believers and the unbelievers, the pietists and the atheists may speak alike freely; the spirit of persecution shall be forever banished from Prussia."

"Amen," cried D'Argens solemnly, as he glanced at the excited, beaming countenance of the king. "The spirit of love and of freedom hears your words, my king, and they will be written with a diamond-point in the history of Prussia."

"And now, marquis," said the king, "we will visit my library, and then we will repose ourselves that we may enjoy our meal. In the evening I invite you to the concert. My musicians are coming from Berlin, and we will see if my lips, which have been accustomed so long to rough words of discipline, are capable of producing a few sweet notes from my flute."

Thus speaking, the king took the arm of the marquis, and they passed slowly through the room, whose desolate silence made them both sad.

"The world is nothing more than a great, gaping grave, on the brink of which we walk with wild courage," said the king,

softly. "There is no moment that some one does not stumble at our side and fall into the abyss, and we have the courage to continue in the path until our strength fails and we sink, making room for another. Almost all of those who formerly occupied these rooms have vanished. How long will it be ere I shall follow them?"

"May that wretched moment be very distant!" exclaimed D'Argens, with a trembling voice. "Your majesty is still so young and full of life—you have nothing to do with death."

"No," said the king; "I am very old, for I have become indifferent to the world. Things which would have deeply distressed me formerly, now pass unheeded over my soul. I assure you, marquis, I have made great progress in practical philosophy. I am old; I stand at the limits of life, and my soul is freeing itself from this world, which, it is to be hoped, I will soon leave."

"Ah, sire," said D'Argens, smiling, "you are ten years younger than I am, and each time that you speak of your rapidly advancing age, I ask myself how it is possible that a man so much younger than I should complain of old age. Only wait, sire; here, in the quiet of Sans-Souci, in a few months you will feel ten and I fifteen years younger. In the happiness and comforts of our existence, you will live to the age of Abraham and I to that of Jacob."

"But I am much older than you, marquis. During the last seven years, I have had nothing but destroyed hopes, undeserved misfortunes, in short, all that the caprice of Fortune could discover to distress me. After such experiences it is allowable, when one is fifty years old, to say that he is old, that he will no longer be the plaything of Fortune, that he renounces ambition and all those follies which are merely the illusions of inexperienced youth. But no more of these sad thoughts, for here we are at last at the door of my *tusculum*. Fold your hands, you unbelieving son of the Church; the gods and heroes await us in this temple, and you will at least believe in these."

They entered the library, and as the door closed behind them and they were separated from the whole world, as they stood in the centre of the room whose only ornament consisted of rows of books, upon which glittered in golden letters the names of the great minds of all ages, whose only splendor consisted in the marble busts of Cæsar and Virgil, of Cicero and Alexander, the king said, with beaming eyes:

"I am at last in the republic of minds, and I, as a humble citizen, approach the great presidents, who look down so graciously upon me."

And, as the king seated himself in his arm-chair before his writing-table, he recovered his sparkling humor, his gay wit, and re-

counted with a bright smile to the marquis that he intended to work most industriously, that he would certainly write a history of this war which he had just closed, and that he intended always to live at Sans-Souci, as its quiet and repose seemed more agreeable to him than the noise and turmoil of the great city. He then dismissed the marquis for a short time, that he might rest before going to the table.

But the king did not rest. Too many and too powerful thoughts were surging in his breast. Leaning back in his arm-chair, he thought of the future. He recalled his own life and arranged his future course. After sitting thus for a long time, he suddenly arose, his countenance bright with a firm and energetic expression.

"Yes, thus it shall be," he said aloud. "I will be the father of my people. I will live for them, forgetting the wickedness of men, or only avenging myself on them by the prickings of a needle. I have no family, therefore my people shall be my family. I have no children, therefore every one who needs my aid shall become my child, and for them I will do the duties of a father. My country bleeds from a thousand wounds—to heal these wounds shall be the task of my life."

True to this resolution, the king called together his ministers the next day, and commanded them to obtain exact accounts of the condition of his provinces; to inform him of the wants and necessities of the people; and to assist him in relieving them. True to this resolution, the king was untiring in his work for the good of his people. He wished to see all, to prove all. He desired to be the source from which his subjects received all their strength and power. Therefore he must know all their griefs—he must lend an open ear to all their demands.

His first command was, that any one who asked for an interview should be admitted. And when one of his ministers dared to express his astonishment at this order, "It is the duty of a king," said Frederick, "to listen to the request of the most insignificant of his subjects. I am a regent for the purpose of making my people happy. I do not dare close my ears to their complaints." And he listened sympathizingly to the sorrows of his people, and his whole mind and thoughts were given to obtain their alleviation. He was always willing to aid with his counsel and his strength. Untiring in the work, he read every letter, every petition, and examined every answer which was written by his cabinet council. He and he alone, was the soul of his government.

A new life began to reign in this land, of which he was the soul. He worked more than all of his ministers or servants, and music and science were his only pleasure and recreation. He was a hero

in peace as well as in war. He did not require, as others do, the distraction of gay pleasures. Study was his chief recreation—conversation with his friends was his greatest pleasure. Even the hunt, the so-called "knightly pleasure," had no charms for him.

"Hunting," said the king, "is one of the senseless pleasures which excites the body but leaves the mind unemployed. We are more cruel than the wild beasts themselves. He who can murder an innocent animal in cold blood, would find it impossible to show mercy to his fellow-man. Is hunting a proper employment for a thinking creature? A gentleman who hunts can only be forgiven if he does so rarely, and then to distract his thoughts from sad and earnest business matters. It would be wrong to deny sovereigns all relaxation, but is there a greater pleasure for a monarch than to rule well, to enrich his state, and to advance all useful sciences and arts? He who requires other enjoyments is to be pitied."

CHAPTER V.

THE ENGRAVED CUP.

PRINCESS AMELIA was alone in her boudoir—she was ever alone. She lay upon the sofa, gazed at the ceiling, and in utter despair reflected upon her miserable fate. For years she had looked anxiously forward to the conclusion of this unhappy war in which Austria and Prussia were so fiercely opposed. So long as they were active enemies, Trenck must remain a prisoner. But she had said to herself, "When peace is declared, the prisoners of war will be released, and Maria Theresa will demand that her captain, Frederick von Trenck, be set at liberty."

Peace had been declared four months, and Trenck still lay in his subterranean cell at Magdeburg. All Europe was freed from the fetters of war. Trenck alone was unpardoned and forgotten. This thought made Amelia sad unto death, banished sleep from her couch, and made her a restless, despairing wanderer during the day.

Amelia had no longer an object—the last ray of hope was extinguished. Peace had been concluded and Trenck was forgotten! God had denied her the happiness of obtaining Trenck's freedom; He would not even grant her the consolation of seeing him released through others. For nine years Trenck had languished in prison—for nine years Amelia's only thought, only desire, was to enable him to escape. Her life was consecrated to this one object. She thought not of the gold she had sacrificed—she had offered up not only her entire private fortune, but had made debts which her in-