

THE YOUNG QUEEN OF PRUSSIA.

CHAPTER IX.

QUEEN LOUISA.

THE most noble Countess von Voss, mistress of ceremonies at the court of Prussia, was pacing the anteroom of Queen Louisa in the most excited manner. She wore the regular court dress—a long black robe and a large cap of black crape. In her white hands, half covered with black silk gloves, she held a gorgeous fan, which she now impatiently opened and closed, and then again slowly moved up and down like a musical leader's *bâton*.

If anybody had been present to observe her, the noble mistress of ceremonies would not have permitted herself such open manifestations of her impatience. Fortunately, however, she was quite alone, and under these circumstances even a mistress of ceremonies at the royal court might feel at liberty to violate the rules of that etiquette which on all other occasions was the noble lady's most sacred gospel.

Etiquette, however, was just now the motive of her intense excitement, and in its interest she was going to fight a battle on that very spot in Queen Louisa's anteroom.

"Now or never!" she murmured. "What I was at liberty to overlook as long as Frederick William and Louisa were merely 'their royal highnesses, the crown prince and crown princess,' I cannot permit any longer now that they have ascended the royal throne. Hence I am determined to speak to the young king on this first day of his reign* in as emphatic and sincere a manner as is required by a faithful discharge of my responsible duties."

Just at that moment the large folding doors were opened, and a tall and slender young man in a dashing uniform entered the room. It was young King Frederick William III., on his return from the interior palace-yard where he had received the oath of allegiance at the hands of the generals of the monarchy.

The noble and youthful countenance of this king of twenty-seven years was grave and stern, but from his large blue eyes the kindness and gentleness of his excellent heart was beaming, and his

* November 17, 1797.

handsome and good-natured features breathed a wonderful spirit of serenity and sympathy.

He crossed the room with rapid and noiseless steps, and, politely bowing to the mistress of ceremonies, approached the opposite door.

But the mistress of ceremonies, evidently anxious to prevent him from opening that door, placed herself in front of it and gravely said to him:

"Your majesty, it is impossible. I cannot permit etiquette to be violated in this manner, and I must beg your majesty to inform me most graciously of what you are going to do in these rooms?"

"Well," said the king, with a pleasant smile, "I am going to do to-day what I am in the habit of doing every day at this hour—I am going to pay a visit to my wife."

"To your *wife!*" exclaimed the mistress of ceremonies, in dismay. "But, your majesty, a king has no *wife!*"

"Ah! in that case a king would be a very wretched being," said the king, smiling, "and, for my part, I would sooner give up my crown than my beloved wife."

"Good Heaven, your majesty, you may certainly have a wife, but let me implore you not to apply that vulgar name to her majesty in the presence of other people. It is contrary to etiquette and injurious to the respect due to royalty."

"My dear countess," said the young king, gravely, "I believe, on the contrary, that it will only increase the respect which people will feel for us, if her majesty remains a woman in the noblest and truest meaning of the word, and my wife—I beg your pardon, I was going to say the queen—is such a woman. And now, my dear countess, permit me to go to her."

"No," exclaimed the mistress of ceremonies, resolutely. "Your majesty must first condescend to listen to me. For an hour already I have been waiting here for your majesty's arrival, and you must now graciously permit me to speak to you as frankly and sincerely as is required by my duty and official position."

"Well, I will listen to you, my dear countess," said the king, with an inaudible sigh.

"Your majesty," said the mistress of ceremonies, "I consider it my duty to beseech your majesty on this memorable day to confer upon me the power of enforcing the privileges of my office with more severity and firmness."

"And to submit myself to your sceptre. That is what you want me to do, I suppose, dear countess?" asked the king, smiling.

"Sire, at all events it is impossible to keep up the dignity and majesty of royalty if the king and queen themselves openly defy the laws of etiquette."

"Ah!" exclaimed the king, sharply, "not a word against the queen, if you please, my dear mistress of ceremonies! You may accuse me just as much as you please, but pray let me hear no more complaints about my Louisa! Well, then, tell me now what new derelictions I have been guilty of."

"Sire," said the countess, who did not fail to notice the almost imperceptible smile playing on the king's lips—"sire, I perceive that your majesty is laughing at me; nevertheless, I deem it incumbent on me to raise my warning voice. Etiquette is something sublime and holy—it is the sacred wall separating the sovereign from his people. If that ill-starred queen, Marie Antoinette, had not torn down this wall, she would probably have met with a less lamentable end."

"Ah! countess, you really go too far; you even threaten me with the guillotine," exclaimed the king, good-naturedly. "Indeed, I am afraid I must have committed a great crime against etiquette. Tell me, therefore, where you wish to see a change, and I pledge you my word I shall grant your request if it be in my power to do so."

"Sire," begged the mistress of ceremonies, in a low and impressive voice, "let me implore you to be in your palace less of a father and husband, and more of a king, at least in the presence of others. It frequently occurs that your majesty, before other people, addresses the queen quite unceremoniously with 'thou,' nay, your majesty even in speaking of her majesty to strangers or servants, often briefly calls the queen 'my wife.' Sire, all that might be overlooked in the modest family circle and house of a crown prince, but it cannot be excused in the palace of a king."

"Then," asked the king, smiling, "this house of mine has been transformed into a palace since yesterday?"

"Assuredly, sire, you do not mean to say that you will remain in this humble house after your accession to the throne?" exclaimed the mistress of ceremonies, in dismay.

"Now tell me sincerely, my dear countess, cannot we remain in this house?"

"I assure your majesty it is altogether out of the question. How would it be possible to keep up the court of a king and queen in so small a house with becoming dignity? The queen's household has to be largely increased; hereafter we must have four ladies of honor, four ladies of the bedchamber, and other servants in the same proportion. According to the rules of etiquette, Sire, you must likewise enlarge your own household. A king must have two adjutant-generals, four chamberlains, four gentlemen of the bedchamber, and—"

"Hold on," exclaimed the king, smiling, "*my household fortu-*

nately does not belong to the department of the mistress of ceremonies, and therefore we need not allude to it. As to your other propositions and wishes, I shall take them into consideration, for I hope you are through now."

"No, your majesty, I am not. I have to mention a good many other things, and I must do so to-day—my duty requires it," said the mistress of ceremonies, in a dignified manner.

The king cast a wistful glance toward the door.

"Well, if your duty requires it, you may proceed," he said, with a loud sigh.

"I must beseech your majesty to assist me in the discharge of my onerous duties. If the king and queen themselves will submit to the rigorous and just requirements of etiquette, I shall be able to compel the whole court likewise strictly to adhere to those salutary rules. Nowadays, however, a spirit of innovation and disinclination to observe the old-established ceremonies and customs, which deeply afflicts me, and which I cannot but deem highly pernicious, is gaining ground everywhere. It has even now infected the ladies and gentlemen of the court. And having often heard your majesty, in conversation with her majesty the queen, contrary to etiquette, use the vulgar German language instead of the French tongue, which is the language of the courts throughout Germany, they believe they have a perfect right to speak German whenever they please. Yes, it has become a regular custom among them to salute each other at breakfast with a German '*Guten morgen!*'* That is an innovation which should not be permitted to anybody, without first obtaining the consent of her majesty's mistress of ceremonies and your majesty's master of ceremonies."

"I beg your pardon," said the king, gravely, "as to this point, I altogether differ from you. No etiquette should forbid German gentlemen or German ladies to converse in their mother tongue, and it is unnatural and mere affectation to issue such orders. In order to become fully conscious of their national dignity, they should especially value and love their own language, and no longer deign to use in its place the tongue of a people who have shed the blood of their king and queen, and whose deplorable example now causes all thrones to tremble. Would to God that the custom of using the German language would become more and more prevalent at my court, for it behooves Germans to feel and think and speak like Germans; and that will also be the most reliable bulwark against the bloody waves of the French Republic, in case it should desire to invade Germany. Now you know my views, my dear mistress of ceremonies, and if your book of ceremonies prescribes that all court

* Vide Ludwig Häusser's "History of Germany," vol. ii.

officers should converse in French, I request you to expunge that article and to insert in its place the following: 'Prussia, being a German state, of course everybody is at liberty to speak German.' This will also be the rule at court, except in the presence of persons not familiar with the German language. Pray don't forget that, my dear countess, and now, being so implacable a guardian of that door, and of the laws of etiquette, I request you to go to her majesty the queen, and ask her if I may have the honor of waiting upon her majesty. I should like to present my respects to her majesty; and I trust she will graciously grant my request."*

The mistress of ceremonies bowed deeply, her face radiant with joy, and then rapidly entered the adjoining room.

The king looked after her for a moment, with a peculiar smile.

"She has to pass through six large rooms before reaching Louisa's boudoir," he murmured: "this door, however, directly leads to her through the small hall and the other anteroom. That is the shortest road to her, and I shall take it."

Without hesitating any longer, the king hastily opened the small side door, slipped through the silent hall and across the small anteroom, and knocked at the large and heavily-curtained door.

A sweet female voice exclaimed, "Come in!" and the king immediately opened the door. A lady in deep mourning came to meet him, extending her hands toward him.

"Oh, my heart told me that it was you, my dearest!" she exclaimed, and her glorious blue eyes gazed upon him with an indescribable expression of impassioned tenderness.

The king looked at her with a dreamy smile, quite absorbed in her aspect. And indeed it was a charming and beautiful sight presented by this young queen of twenty years.

Her blue eyes were beaming in the full fire of youth, enthusiasm, and happiness; a sweet smile was always playing on her finely-formed mouth, with the ripe cherry lips. On both sides of her slightly-blushing cheeks her splendid auburn hair was flowing down in waving ringlets; her noble and pure forehead arose above a nose of classical regularity, and her figure, so proud and yet so charming, so luxuriant and yet so chaste, full of true royal dignity and winning womanly grace, was in complete harmony with her lovely and youthful features.

"Well?" asked the queen, smiling. "Not a word of welcome from you, my beloved husband?"

"I only say to you, God bless you on your new path, and may

* The king's own words.—Vide "Characterzüge und Historische Fragmente aus dem Leben des Königs von Preussen, Friedrich Wilhelm III. Gesammelt und herausgegeben von R. Fr. Eylert, Bishop, u. s. w. Th. ii., p. 21.

He preserve you to me as long as I live!" replied the king, deeply moved, and embracing his queen with gushing tenderness.

She encircled his neck with her soft, white arms, and leaned her head with a happy smile upon his shoulder. Thus they reposed in each other's arms, silent in their unutterable delight, solemnly moved in the profound consciousness of their eternal and imperishable love.

Suddenly they were interrupted in their blissful dream by a low cry, and when they quickly turned around in a somewhat startled manner, they beheld the Countess von Voss, mistress of ceremonies, standing in the open door, and gloomily gazing upon them.

The king could not help laughing.

"Do you see now, my dear countess?" he said. "My wife and I see each other without any previous interruption as often as we want to do so, and that is precisely as it ought to be in a Christian family. But you are a charming mistress of ceremonies, and hereafter we will call you *Dame d'Etiquette*.* Moreover, I will comply with your wishes as much as I can."

He kindly nodded to her, and the mistress of ceremonies, well aware of the meaning of this nod, withdrew with a sigh, closing the door as she went out.

The queen looked up to her husband with a smile.

"Was it again some quarrel about etiquette?" she asked.

"Yes, and a quarrel of the worst kind," replied the king, quickly. "The mistress of ceremonies demands that I should always be announced to you before entering your room, Louisa."

"Oh, you are always announced here," she exclaimed, tenderly; "my heart always indicates your approach—and that herald is altogether sufficient, and it pleases me much better than the stern countenance of our worthy mistress of ceremonies."

"It is the herald of my happiness," said the king, fervently, laying his arm upon his wife's shoulder, and gently drawing her to his heart.

"Do you know what I am thinking of just now?" asked the queen, after a short pause. "I believe the mistress of ceremonies will get up a large number of new rules, and lecture me considerably about the duties of a queen in regard to the laws of etiquette."

"I believe you are right," said the king, smiling.

"But I don't believe *she* is right!" exclaimed the queen, and, closely nestling in her husband's arms, she added: "Tell me, my lord and king, inasmuch as this is the first time that you come to me as a king, have I not the right to ask a few favors of you, and to pray you to grant my requests?"

* The king's own words.—Vide Eylert, part ii., p. 93.

"Yes, you have that right, my charming queen," said the king, merrily; "and I pledge you my word that your wishes shall be fulfilled, whatever they may be."

"Well, then," said the queen, joyfully, "there are four wishes that I should like you to grant. Come, sit down here by my side, on this small sofa, put your arm around my waist, and, that I may feel that I am resting under your protection, let me lean my head upon your shoulder, like the ivy supporting itself on the trunk of the strong oak. And now listen to my wishes. In the first place, I want you to allow me to be a wife and mother in my own house, without any restraint whatever, and to fulfil my sacred duties as such without fear and without regard to etiquette. Do you grant this wish?"

"Most cordially and joyfully, in spite of all mistresses of ceremonies!" replied the king.

The queen nodded gently and smiled. "Secondly," she continued, "I beg you, my beloved husband, on your own part, not to permit etiquette to do violence to your feelings toward me, and always to call me, even in the presence of others, your 'wife,' and not 'her majesty the queen.' Will you grant that, too, my dearest friend?"

The king bent over her and kissed her beautiful hair.

"Louisa," he whispered, "you know how to read my heart, and, generous as you always are, you pray me to grant what is only my own dearest wish. Yes, Louisa, we will always call each other by those most honorable of our titles, 'husband and wife.' And now, your third wish, my dear wife?"

"Ah, I have some fears about this third wish of mine," sighed the queen, looking up to her husband with a sweet smile. "I am afraid you cannot grant it, and the mistress of ceremonies, perhaps, was right when she told me etiquette would prevent you from complying with it."

"Ah, the worthy mistress of ceremonies has lectured you also to-day already?" asked the king, laughing.

The queen nodded. "She has communicated to me several important sections from the 'book of ceremonies,'" she sighed. "But all that shall not deter me from mentioning my third wish to you. I ask you, my Frederick, to request the king to permit my husband to live as plainly and modestly as heretofore. Let the king give his state festivals in the large royal palace of his ancestors—let him receive in those vast and gorgeous halls the homage of his subjects, and the visits of foreign princes, and let the queen assist him on such occasions. But these duties of royalty once attended to, may we not be permitted, like all others, to go home, and in the midst of our dear little family circle repose after the fatiguing pomp and

splendor of the festivities? Let us not give up our beloved home for the large royal palace! Do not ask me to leave a house in which I have passed the happiest and finest days of my life. See, here in these dear old rooms of mine, every thing reminds me of you, and whenever I am walking through them, the whole secret history of our love and happiness stands again before my eyes. Here, in this room, we saw each other for the first time after my arrival in Berlin, alone and without witnesses. Here you imprinted the first kiss upon your wife's lips, and, like a heavenly smile, it penetrated deep into my soul, and it has remained in my heart like a little guardian angel of our love. Since that day, even in the fullest tide of happiness, I always feel so devout and grateful to God; and whenever you kiss me, the little angel in my heart is praying for you, and whenever I am praying, he kisses you."

"Oh, Louisa, you are my angel—my guardian angel!" exclaimed the king, enthusiastically.

The queen apparently did not notice this interruption—she was entirely absorbed in her recollections. "On this sofa here," she said, "we were often seated in fervent embrace like to-day and when every thing around us was silent, our hearts spoke only the louder to each other, and often have I heard here from your lips the most sublime and sacred revelations of your noble, pure, and manly soul. In my adjoining cabinet, you were once standing at the window, gloomy and downcast; a cloud was covering your brow, and I knew you had heard again sorrowful tidings in your father's palace. But no complaint ever dropped from your lips, for you always were a good and dutiful son, and even to me you never alluded to your father's failings. I knew what you were suffering, but I knew also that at that hour I had the power to dispel all the clouds from your brow, and to make your eyes radiant with joy and happiness. Softly approaching you, I laid my arm around your neck, and my head on your breast, and thereupon I whispered three words which only God and my husband's ears were to hear. And you heard them, and you uttered a loud cry of joy, and before I knew how it happened, I saw you on your knees before me, kissing my feet and the hem of my garment, and applying a name to me that sounded like heavenly music, and made my heart overflow with ecstasy and suffused my cheeks with a deep blush. And I don't know again how it happened, but I felt that I was kneeling by your side, and we were lifting up our folded hands to heaven, thanking God for the great bliss He had vouchsafed to us, and praying Him to bless our child, unknown to us as yet, but already so dearly beloved. Oh, and last, my own Frederick, do you remember that other hour in my bedroom? You were sitting at my bedside, with folded hands,

praying, and yet, during your prayer, gazing upon me, while I was writhing with pain, and yet so supremely happy in my agony, for I knew that Nature at that hour was about to consecrate me for my most exalted and sacred vocation, and that God would bless our love with a visible pledge of our happiness. The momentous hour was at hand—a film covered my eyes, and I could only see the Holy Virgin surrounded by angels, on Guido Reni's splendid painting, opposite my bed. Suddenly a dazzling flash seemed to penetrate the darkness surrounding me, and through the silence of the room there resounded a voice that I had never heard before—the voice of my child. And at the sound of that voice I saw the angels descending from the painting and approaching my bedside in order to kiss me, and the Mother of God bent over me with a heavenly smile, exclaiming: 'Blessed is the wife who is a mother!' My consciousness left me—I believe my ineffable happiness made me faint."

"Yes, you fainted, beloved wife," said the king, gently nodding to her; "but the swoon had not dispelled the smile from your lips, nor the expression of rapturous joy from your features. You lay there as if overwhelmed with joy and fascinated by your ecstatic bliss. Knowing that you were inexpressibly happy, I felt no fear whatever—"

"Well, I awoke soon again," added the queen, joyfully. "I had no time to spare for a long swoon, for a question was burning in my heart. I turned my eyes toward you—you were standing in the middle of the room, holding the babe that, in its new little lace dress, had just been laid into your arms. My heart now commenced beating in my breast like a hammer. I looked at you, but my lips were not strong enough to utter the question. However, you understood me well enough, and drawing close to my bedside, and kneeling down and laying the babe into my arms, you said, in a voice which I shall never forget, 'Louisa, give your blessing to your son!' Ah, at that moment it seemed as if my ecstasy would rend my breast. I had to utter a loud scream, or I should have died from joy. 'A son!' I cried, 'I have given birth to a son!' And I drew my arms around you and the babe, and we wept tears—oh, such tears—"

She paused, overwhelmed with emotion, and burst into tears.

"Ah!" she whispered, deprecatingly, "I am very foolish—you will laugh at me."

But the king did not laugh, for his eyes also were moist; only he was ashamed of his tears and kept them back in his eyes. A pause ensued, and the queen laid her head upon the shoulder of her husband, who had drawn his arm around her waist. All at once she raised her head, and fixing her large and radiant eyes upon the deeply-moved face of the king, she asked:

"My Frederick, can we leave a house in which I bore you a son and crown prince? Will we give up our most sacred recollections for the sake of a large and gorgeous royal palace?"

"No, we will not," said the king, pressing his wife closer to his heart. "No, we will remain in this house of ours—we will not leave it. Our happiness has grown and prospered here, and here it shall bloom and bear fruit. Your wish shall be fulfilled; we will continue living here as man and wife, and if the king and queen have to give festivals and to receive numerous guests, then they will go over to the palace to comply with their royal duties, but in the evening they will return to their happy home."

"Oh, my friend, my beloved friend, how shall I thank you?" exclaimed the queen, encircling his neck with her arms, and imprinting a glowing kiss upon his lips.

"But now, dear wife, let me know your fourth wish," said the king, holding her in his arms. "I hope your last wish is a real one, and not merely calculated to render *me* happy, but one that also concerns yourself?"

"Oh, my fourth wish only concerns myself," said the queen, with an arch smile. "I can confide it to you, to you alone, and you must promise to keep it secret, and not to say a word about it to the mistress of ceremonies."

"I promise it most readily, dear Louisa."

"Well," said the queen, placing her husband's hand upon her heart, and gently stroking it with her fingers. "I believe during the coming winter we shall often have to be king and queen. Festivals will be given to us, and we shall have to give others in return; the country will do homage to the new sovereign, and the nobility will solemnly take the oath of allegiance to him. Hence there will be a great deal of royal pomp, but very little enjoyment for us during the winter. Well, I will not complain, but endeavor, to the best of my ability, to do honor to my exalted position by your side. In return, however, my beloved lord and friend—in return, next summer, when the roses are blooming, you must give me a day—a day that is to belong exclusively to myself; and on that day we will forget the cares of royalty, and only remember that we are a pair of happy young lovers. Of course, we shall not spend that day in Berlin, nor in Parez either; but like two merry birds, we will fly far, far away to my home in Mecklenburg, to the paradise of my early years—to the castle of Hohenzieritz; and no one shall know any thing about it. Without being previously announced, we will arrive there, and in the solitude of the old house and garden we will perform a charming little idyl. On that day you only belong to me, and to nobody else. On that day I am your wife and sweetheart and

nothing else, and I shall provide amusement and food for you. Yes, dearest Frederick, I shall prepare your meals all alone, and set the table and carve for you. Oh, dear, dear friend; give me such a day, such an idyl of happiness!"

"I give it to you and to myself, most joyfully; and let me confess, Louisa, I wish the winter were over already, and the morning of that beautiful day were dawning."

"Thanks—thousand thanks!" exclaimed the queen, enthusiastically. "Let the stiff and ceremonious days come now, and the sneaking, fawning courtiers and the incense of flattery. Through all the mist I shall constantly inhale the sweet fragrance of the roses of the future, and on the stiff gala-days I shall think of the idyl of that day that will dawn next summer and compensate me for all the annoyances and fatigues of court life."

The king placed his right hand on her head, as if to bless her, and with his left lifted up her face that was reposing on his breast. "And you really think, you charming, happy angel, that I do not understand you?" he asked, in a low voice. "Do you think I do not feel and know that you want to offer me this consolation and to comfort me by the hope of such a blissful day for the intervening time of care, fatigue, and restlessness? Oh, my dear Louisa, you need no such consolation, for God has intended you for a queen, and even the burdens and cares of your position will only surround you like enchanting genii. You know at all times how to find the right word and the right deed, and the Graces have showered upon you the most winning charms to fascinate all hearts, in whatever you may be doing. On the other hand, I am awkward and ill at ease. I know it only too well; my unhappy childhood, grief and cares of all kinds, have rendered my heart reserved and bashful. Perhaps I am not always lacking right ideas, but I fail only too often to find the right word for what I think and feel. Hereafter, my dear Louisa, frequent occasions will arise when you will have to speak for both of us. By means of your irresistible smile and genial conversation you will have to win the hearts of people, while I shall be content if I can only win their heads."

"Shall I be able to win their hearts?" asked the queen, musingly. "Oh, assist me, my dearest friend. Tell me what I have to do in order to be beloved by my people."

"Remain what you are, Louisa," said the king, gravely—"always remain as charming, graceful, and pure as I beheld you on the most glorious two days of my life, and as my inward eye always will behold you. Oh, I also have some charming recollections, and although I cannot narrate them in words as fascinating and glowing as yours, yet they are engraved no less vividly on my mind, and,

like beautiful genii, accompany me everywhere. Only before others they are bashful and reticent like myself."

"Let me hear them, Frederick," begged the queen, tenderly leaning her beautiful head on her husband's shoulder. "Let us devote another hour to the recollections of the past."

"Yes, let another hour be devoted to the memories of past times," exclaimed the king, "for can there be any thing more attractive for me than to think of you and of that glorious hour when I saw you first? Shall I tell you all about it, Louisa?"

"Oh, do so, my beloved friend. Your words will sound to me like some beautiful piece of music that one likes better and understands better the more it is heard. Speak, then, Frederick, speak."

CHAPTER X.

THE KING'S RECOLLECTIONS.

"WELL," said the king, "whenever I look back into the past, every thing seems to me covered with a gray mist, through which only two stars and two lights are twinkling. The stars are your eyes, and the lights are the two days I alluded to before—the day on which I saw you for the first time, and the day on which you arrived in Berlin. Oh, Louisa, never shall I forget that first day! I call it the first day, because it was the first day of my real life. It was at Frankfort-on-the-Main, during the campaign on the Rhine. My father, the king, accompanied by myself, returned the visit that the Duke of Mecklenburg, your excellent father, had paid on the previous day. We met in a small and unpretending villa, situated in the midst of a large garden. The two sovereigns conversed long and seriously, and I was listening to them in silence. This silence was, perhaps, disagreeable to my father the king.

"What do you think, your highness?" he suddenly asked your father. "While we are talking about the military operations, will we not permit the young gentleman there to wait upon the ladies? As soon as we are through, I shall ask you to grant me the same privilege."

"The duke readily assented, and calling the footman waiting in the anteroom, he ordered him to go with me to the ladies and to announce my visit to them. Being in the neighborhood of the seat of war, you know, little attention was paid to ceremonies. I followed the footman, who told me the ladies were in the garden, whither he conducted me. We walked through a long avenue and a number of side-paths. The footman, going before me, looked around in every

direction without being able to discover the whereabouts of the ladies. Finally, at a bend in the avenue, we beheld a bower in the distance, and something white fluttering in it.

"Ah, there is Princess Louisa," said the footman, turning to me, and he then rapidly walked toward her. I followed him slowly and listlessly, and when he came back and told me Princess Louisa was ready to receive me, I was perhaps yet twenty yards from the rose-bower. I saw there a young lady rising from her seat, and accelerated my steps. Suddenly my heart commenced pulsating as it never had done before, and it seemed to me as if a door were bursting open in my heart and making it free, and as if a thousand voices in my soul were singing and shouting, 'There she is! There is the lady of your heart!' The closer I approached, the slower grew my steps, and I saw you standing in the entrance of the bower in a white dress, loosely covering your noble and charming figure, a gentle smile playing on your pure, sweet face, golden ringlets flowing down both sides of your rosy cheeks, and your head wreathed with the full and fragrant roses which seemed to bend down upon you from the bower in order to kiss and adorn you, your round white arms only half covered with clear lace sleeves, and a full-blown rose in your right hand which you had raised to your waist. And seeing you thus before me, I believed I had been removed from earth, and it seemed to me I beheld an angel of innocence and beauty, through whose voice Heaven wished to greet me.* At last I stood close before you, and in my fascination I entirely forgot to salute you. I only looked at you. I only heard those jubilant voices in my heart, singing, 'There is your wife—the wife you will love now and forever!' It was no maudling sentimentality, but a clear and well-defined consciousness which, like an inspiration, suddenly moistened my eyes with tears of joy.† Oh, Louisa, why am I no painter to perpetuate that sublime moment in a beautiful and glorious picture? But what I cannot do, shall be tried by others. A true artist shall render and eternize that moment for me,‡ so that one day when we are gone, our son may look up to the painting and say: 'Such was my mother when my father first saw her. He believed he beheld an angel, and he was not mistaken, for she was the guardian angel of his whole life.'"

"Oh! you make me blush—you make me too happy, too happy!" exclaimed the queen, closing her husband's lips with a burning kiss.

* Goethe saw the young princess at the same time, and speaks of her "divine beauty."

† The king's own words, vide Bishop Eylert's work, vol. ii., p. 22.

‡ This painting was afterward executed, and may now be seen at the royal palace of Berlin. The whole account of the first meeting of the two lovers is based upon the communication the king made himself to Bishop Eylert,

"Don't praise me too much, lest I should become proud and overbearing."

The king gently shook his head. "Only the stupid, the guilty, and the base are proud and overbearing," he said. "But, whoever has seen you, Louisa, on the day of your first arrival in Berlin, will never forget your sweet image in its radiance of grace, modesty, and loveliness. It was on a Sunday, a splendid clear day in winter, the day before Christmas, which was to become the greatest holiday of my life. A vast crowd had gathered in front of the Arsenal *Unter den Linden*. Every one was anxious to see you. At the entrance of the *Linden*, not far from the Opera-Place, a splendid triumphal arch had been erected, and here a committee of the citizens and a number of little girls were to welcome you to Berlin. In accordance with the rules of court etiquette, I was to await your arrival at the palace. But my eagerness to see you would not suffer me to remain there. Closely muffled in my military cloak, my cap drawn down over my face, in order not to be recognized by anybody, I had gone out among the crowd and, assisted by a trusty servant, obtained a place behind one of the pillars of the triumphal arch. Suddenly tremendous cheers burst forth from a hundred thousand throats, thousands of arms were waving white handkerchiefs from the windows and roofs of the houses, the bells were rung, the cannon commenced thundering, for you had just crossed the Brandenburger Gate. Alighting from your carriage, you walked up the *Linden* with your suite, the wildest enthusiasm greeting every step you made, and finally you entered the triumphal arch, not suspecting how near I was to you, and how fervently my heart was yearning for you. A number of little girls in white, with myrtle-branches in their hands, met you there; and one of them, bearing a myrtle-wreath on an embroidered cushion, presented it to you and recited a simple and touching poem. Oh, I see even now, how your eyes were glowing, how a profound emotion lighted up your features, and how, overpowered by your feelings, you bent down to the little girl, clasped her in your arms and kissed her eyes and lips. But behind you there stood the mistress of ceremonies, Countess von Voss, pale with indignation, and trembling with horror at this unparalleled occurrence. She hastily tried to draw you back, and in her amazement she cried almost aloud, 'Good Heaven! how could your royal highness do that just now? It was contrary to good-breeding and etiquette!' Those were harsh and inconsiderate words, but in your happy mood you did not feel hurt, but quietly and cheerfully turned around to her and asked innocently and honestly: 'What! cannot I do so any more?*' Oh, Louisa, at that

* Eylert, vol. ii., p. 79.

moment, and in consequence of your charming question, my eyes grew moist, and I could hardly refrain from rushing out of the crowd and pressing you to my heart, and kissing your eyes and lips as innocently and chastely as you had kissed those of the little girl.

"See," said the king, drawing a deep breath, and pausing for a minute, "those are the two great days of my life, and as you ask me now, what you ought to do in order to win the love of your people, I reply to you once more: Remain what you are, so that these beautiful pictures of you, which are engraved upon my heart, may always resemble you, and you will be sure to win all hearts. Oh, my Louisa, your task is an easy one, you only have to be true to yourself, you only have to follow your faithful companions the Graces, and success will never fail you. My task, however, is difficult, and I shall have to struggle not only with the evil designs, the malice, and stupidity of others, but with my own inexperience, my want of knowledge, and a certain irresolution, resulting, however, merely from a correct appreciation of what I am lacking."

The queen with a rapid gesture placed her hand upon the king's shoulder.

"You must be more self-reliant, for you may safely trust yourself," she said, gravely. "Who could be satisfied with himself, if you were to despair? What sovereign could have the courage to grasp the sceptre, if your hands should shrink back from it?—your hands, as free from guilt and firm and strong as those of a true man should be! I know nothing about politics, and shall never dare to meddle with public affairs and to advise you in regard to them; but I know and feel that you will always be guided by what you believe to be the best interests of your people, and that you never will deviate from that course. The spirit of the Great Frederick is looking upon you; he will guide and bless you!"

The king seemed greatly surprised by these words.

"Do you divine my thoughts, Louisa?" he asked. "Do you know my soul has been with him all the morning—that I thus conversed with him and repeated to myself every thing he said to me one day in a great and solemn hour. Oh, it was indeed a sacred hour, and never have I spoken of it to anybody, for every word would have looked to me like a desecration. But you, my noble wife, you can only consecrate and sanctify the advice I received in that momentous hour; and as I am telling you to-day about my most glorious reminiscences, you shall hear also what Frederick the Great once said to me."

The queen nodded approvingly, raising her head from his shoulder and folding her hands on her lap as if she were going to pray.

The king paused for a moment, and seemed to reflect.

"In 1785," he then said, "on a fine, warm summer day, I met the king in the garden at Sans-Souci. I was a youth of fifteen years at that time, strolling carelessly through the shrubbery and humming a song, when I suddenly beheld the king, who was seated on the bench under the large beech-tree, at no great distance from the Japanese palace. He was alone; two greyhounds were lying at his feet, in his hands he held his old cane, and his head reposed gently on the trunk of the beech-tree. A last beam of the setting sun was playing on his face, and rendered his glorious eyes even more radiant. I stood before him in reverential awe, and he gazed upon me with a kindly smile. Then he commenced examining me about my studies, and finally he drew a volume of La Fontaine's 'Fables' from his pocket, opened the book and asked me to translate the fable on the page he showed me. I did so—but when he afterward was going to praise me for the skill with which I had rendered it, I told him it was but yesterday that I had translated the same fable under the supervision of my teacher. A gentle smile immediately lighted up his face, and tenderly patting my cheeks, he said to me, in his sonorous, soft voice: 'That is right, my dear Fritz, always be honest and upright. Never try to seem what you are not—always be more than what you seem!' I never forgot that exhortation, and I have always abhorred falsehood and hypocrisy."

The queen gently laid her hand upon his heart. "Your eye is honest," she said, "and so is your heart. My Frederick is too proud and brave to utter a lie. And what did you say to your great ancestor?"

"I? He spoke to me—I stood before him and listened. He admonished me to be industrious, never to believe that I had learned enough; never to stand still, but always to struggle on. After that he arose and, conversing with me all the time, slowly walked down the avenue leading to the garden gate. All at once he paused, and leaning upon his cane, his piercing eyes looked at me so long and searchingly, that his glance deeply entered into my heart. 'Well, Fritz,' he said, 'try to become a good man, a good man *par excellence*. Great things are in store for you. I am at the end of my career, and my task is about accomplished. I am afraid that things will go pell-mell when I am dead. A portentous fermentation is going on everywhere, and the sovereigns, especially the King of France, instead of calming it and extirpating the causes that have produced it, unfortunately are deluded enough to fan the flame. The masses below commence moving already, and when the explosion finally takes place, the devil will be to pay. I am afraid your own position one day will be a most difficult one. Arm yourself, therefore, for the strife!—be firm!—think of me! Watch over our

honor and our glory! Beware of injustice, but do not permit any one to treat you unjustly!" He paused again, and slowly walked on. While deeply moved and conscious of the importance of the interview, I inwardly repeated every word he had said, in order to remember them as long as I lived. We had now reached the obelisk, near the gate of Sans-Souci. The king here gave me his left hand, and with his uplifted right hand he pointed at the obelisk. 'Look at it,' he said, loudly and solemnly; 'the obelisk is tall and slender, and yet it stands firm amid the most furious storms. It says to you: *Ma force est ma droiture*. The culmination, the highest point overlooks and crowns the whole; it does not support it, however, but is supported by the whole mass underlying it, especially by the invisible foundation, deeply imbedded in the earth. This supporting foundation is the people in its unity. Always be on the side of the people, so that they will love and trust you, as they alone can render you strong and happy.' He cast another searching glance upon me, and gave me his hand. When I bent over it in order to kiss it, he imprinted a kiss on my forehead. 'Don't forget this hour,' he said kindly, nodding to me. He turned around, and accompanied by his greyhounds, slowly walked up the avenue again.* I never forgot that hour, and shall remember it as long as I live."

"And the spirit of the great Frederick will be with you and remain with you," said the queen, deeply moved.

"Would to God it were so!" sighed the king. "I know that I am weak and inexperienced; I stand in need of wise and experienced advisers; I—"

A rap at the door interrupted the king, and on his exclaiming, "Come in!" the door was opened and the court marshal appeared on the threshold.

"I humbly beg your majesty's pardon for venturing to disturb you," he said, bowing reverentially; "but I must request your majesty to decide a most important domestic matter—a matter that brooks no delay."

"Well, what is it?" said the king, rising and walking over to the marshal.

"Your majesty, it is about the bill of fare for the royal table, and I beseech your majesty to read and approve the following paper I have drawn up in regard to it."

With an obsequious bow, he presented a paper to the king, who read it slowly and attentively.

"What!" he suddenly asked, sharply, "two courses more than formerly?"

* The king's own account to Bishop Eylert, in the latter's work, vol. i., p. 455.

"Your majesty," replied the marshal, humbly, "it is for the table of a *king!*"

"And you believe that my stomach has grown larger since I am a king?" asked Frederick William. "No, sir, the meals shall remain the same as heretofore,* unless," he said, politely turning to the queen, "unless *you* desire a change, my dear?"

The queen archly shook her head. "No," she said, with a charming smile; "neither has my stomach grown larger since yesterday."

"There will be no change, then," said the king, dismissing the marshal.

"Just see," he said to the queen, when the courtier had disappeared, "what efforts they make in order to bring about a change in our simple and unassuming ways of living; they flatter us wherever they can, and even try to do so by means of our meals."

"As for ourselves, however, dearest, we will remember the words of your great uncle," said the queen, "and when they overwhelm us on all sides with their vain and ridiculous demands, we will remain firm and true to ourselves."

"Yes, Louisa," said the king, gravely, "and whatever our new life may have in store for us, we will remain the same as before."

Another rap at the door was heard, and a royal footman entered.

"Lieutenant-Colonel von Köckeritz, your majesty, requests an audience."

"Ah, yes, it is time," said the king, looking at the clock on the mantel-piece. "I sent him word to call on me at this hour. Farewell, Louisa, I must not let him wait."

He bowed to his wife, whose hand he tenderly pressed to his lips, and turned to the door.

The footman who had meantime stood at the door as straight as an arrow, waiting for the king's reply, now hastened to open both folding-doors.

"What!" asked the king, with a deprecating smile, "have I suddenly grown so much stouter that I can no longer pass out through one door?" †

The queen's eyes followed her husband's tall and commanding figure with a proud smile, and then raising her beautiful, radiant eyes with an indescribable expression to heaven, she whispered: "Oh, what a man! my husband!" ‡

* Vide Eylert, vol. i., p. 18.

† Ibid., p. 19.

‡ "O, welch ein Mann! mein Mann!"—Eylert, vol. ii., p. 157.