

hastily opened it and asked, in surprise—"A piece of black woollen cloth! And that is a relic?"

"And a most precious one at that! It is Loretto's most priceless treasure. It is a piece of the gown of the Virgin Mary, in which she was mourning for the Saviour.* Preserve this relic carefully, dear Josephine, and may it protect you from danger and grief!"

Josephine folded up the piece of cloth, and opening a large locket hanging on her neck on a heavy gold chain, she laid the cloth into it, and then closed the locket again.

"That shall be the sanctuary of my relic," she said. "I shall keep it till I die."

"Why do you speak of dying?" he exclaimed, almost indignantly. "What have we to do with grim-death? We, to whom life has to fulfil and offer so much! We shall return to Paris, and, if it please God, a great future is awaiting us there!"

"If it please God, a happy future!" said Josephine, fervently. "Oh, Bonaparte, how gladly I shall reënter our dear little house in the *Rue Chantereine*, where we passed the first happy days of our love!"

"No, Josephine," he exclaimed, impetuously, "that little house will not be a fitting abode for the conqueror of Italy. I am no longer the poor general who had nothing but his sword. I return rich in glory, and not poor as far as money is concerned. I might have easily appropriated the spoils amounting to many millions; but I disdained the money of spoliation and bribery, and what little money I have got now, was acquired in an honest and chivalrous manner.† It is sufficient, however, to secure a brilliant existence to us. I shall not be satisfied until I live with you in a house corresponding with the splendor of my name. I need a palace, and shall have it decorated with all the stands of colors I have taken in Italy. To you alone, Josephine, to you I intrust the care of designating to me a palace worthy of being offered to me by the nation I have immortalized, and worthy also of a wife whose beauty and grace could only beautify it.‡ Come, Josephine—come to Paris! Let us select such a palace!"

* *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 245.

† Bonaparte at St. Helena said to Las Casas that he had brought only three hundred thousand francs from Italy. Bourrienne asserts, however, Bonaparte had brought home no less than three million francs. He adds, however, that this sum was not the fruit of speculation and corruption, Bonaparte having been an incorruptible administrator. But he had discovered the mines of Yorda, and he had an interest in the meat contracts for the army. He wanted to be independent, and knew better than any one else that he could not be independent without money. He said to Bourrienne in regard to it, "I am n: Capuchin!"—*Mémoires de Bourrienne*, vol. ii., p. 47.

‡ *Le Normand*, vol. i., p. 265.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MINISTER THUGUT.

THE prime minister, Baron Thugut, was in his study. It was yet early in the morning, and the minister had just entered his room in order to begin his political task. On the large green table at which Thugut had just sat down, there lay the dispatches and letters delivered by the couriers who had arrived during the night and early in the morning. There were, besides, unfolded documents and decrees, waiting for the minister's signature, in order to become valid laws. But the minister took no notice whatever of these papers, but first seized the newspapers and other periodicals, which he commenced reading with great eagerness. While he was perusing them, his stern features assumed a still harsher mien, and a gloomy cloud settled on his brow. Suddenly he uttered a wild oath and violently hurling the paper, in which he had been reading, to the floor, he jumped up from his chair.

"Such impudence is altogether intolerable!" he shouted, angrily. "It is high time for me to teach these newspaper scribblers another lesson, and they shall have it! I—"

Just then, the door of the anteroom opened, and a footman entered. He informed his master that the police minister, Count Saurau, wished to see him.

Baron Thugut ordered him to be admitted at once, and went to meet him as soon as he heard him come in.

"You anticipate my wishes, my dear count," he said. "I was just going to send for you."

"Your excellency knows that I am always ready to obey your calls," replied Count Saurau, politely. "I acknowledge your superiority and submit to you as though you were my lord and master; notwithstanding our position in society and in the state service, which is almost an equal one, I willingly permit you to treat me as your disciple and inferior."

"And I believe that is the wisest course you can pursue, my dear little count," said Thugut, laughing sarcastically. "It has been good for you to do so, I should think, and so it has been for the whole Austrian ship of state, that has been intrusted to my guidance. Yes, sir, the son of the ship-builder Thunichtgut has shown to you and your fellow-members of the ancient aristocracy that talents and ability are no exclusive privileges of your class, and that a common ship-builder's son may become prime minister, and that a low-born Thunichtgut may be transformed into a Baron von Thugut. The

great Empress Maria Theresa has performed this miracle, and baptized me, and I believe Austria never found fault with her for doing so. The ship-builder's son has piloted the ship of state tolerably skilfully through the breakers up to the present time, and he shall do so in future too, in spite of all counts and aristocrats. You see, I do not try to conceal my humble descent; nay, I boast of it, and it is therefore quite unnecessary for you to remind me of what I never want to forget!"

"I see that some late occurrence must have excited your excellency's just anger," exclaimed Count Saurau.

"And being police minister, you doubtless know all about that occurrence," said Thugut, sarcastically.

Count Saurau shrugged his shoulders. "I confess I am unable to divine—"

"Then you have not read the papers this morning?" asked Thugut, scornfully. "You have no idea of the infamous attack which an aristocratic newspaper scribbler has dared to make upon me, nay, upon the emperor himself?"

"I confess that I do not understand what your excellency means," said Count Saurau, anxiously.

"Well, then, listen to me!" exclaimed Thugut, seizing the paper again. "Listen to what I am going to read to you: 'At a time when the whole Austrian people are longing for peace, when our august Empress Theresia and our dearly beloved Archduke Charles share these sentiments of the people and give expression to them at the feet of the throne and in opposition to those who would deluge our cherished Austria with the miseries and dangers of war—at such a time we fondly look back into the great history of our country and remember what has been accomplished by great and gifted members of our imperial house in former periods for the welfare and tranquillity of Austria; we remember, for instance, that Austria in 1619, like to-day, was threatened by enemies and on the eve of a terrible war, not because the honor and welfare of Austria rendered such a war necessary, but because the ambitious and arrogant minister, Cardinal Clesel, was obstinately opposed to peace, and utterly unmindful of the wishes of the people. He alone, he, the all-powerful minister, was in favor of war; he overwhelmed the weak Emperor Mathias with his demands; and when the latter, owing to the anxiety he had to undergo, was taken sick, he even pursued him with his clamor for war into his sick-room. But then the archdukes, the emperor's brothers, boldly determined to interfere. They arrested the rascally minister at the emperor's bedside, and sent him to Castle Ambrass in the Tyrol, where he suffered long imprisonment, a just punishment for his arrogance and for his at-

tempt to involve the country in a war so distasteful to all classes of the people. About half a century later a similar occurrence took place. There was again a minister advocating war in spite of the whole Austrian people. It was in 1673. The minister to whose suggestions the Emperor Leopold lent a willing ear at that time, was Prince Lobkowitz. But the Empress Claudia had compassion on the people, groaning under the heavy yoke of the minister. She alone prevailed upon the emperor by her eloquence and beauty to deprive Prince Lobkowitz suddenly of all his honors and offices and to send him on a common hay-wagon amidst the contemptuous scoffs and jeers of the populace of Vienna to the fortress of Raudnitz, forbidding him under pain of death to inquire about the cause of his punishment.*

"Well," asked Thugut, when he ceased reading, "what do you think of that?"

"I believe the article contains very idle historical reminiscences," said Count Saurau, shrugging his shoulders; "these reminiscences, according to my opinion, have no bearing whatever upon our own times."

"That is, you will not admit their bearing upon our own times, my dear little count; you pretend not to perceive that the whole article is directed against myself; that the object is to exasperate the people against me and to encourage my enemies to treat me in the same manner as Clesel and Lobkowitz were treated. The article alludes to the archdukes who overthrew the minister so obstinately opposed to peace, and to the Empress Claudia who profited by her power over the emperor in order to ruin an all-powerful minister, her enemy. And you pretend not to see that all this is merely referred to for the purpose of encouraging Archduke Charles and the Empress Theresia to act as those have acted? Both are at the head of the peace party; both want peace with France, and in their shortsightedness and stupidity, they are enthusiastic admirers of that French general Bonaparte, whom they call 'the Italian,' unmindful of the great probability of his designating himself some day by the *sobriquet* of 'the Austrian,' unless we oppose him energetically and set bounds to his thirst after conquest. They want to get rid of me in the same manner as their predecessors got rid of Cardinal Clesel. But I hold the helm as yet, and do not mean to relinquish it."

"It would be a terrible misfortune for Austria if your excellency should do so," said Count Saurau, in his soft, bland voice. "I do not believe that either the Empress Theresia or the Archduke Charles will act in a hostile manner toward you."

"And if they should do so, I would not tolerate it," exclaimed

* Vide Hormayer, "Lebensbilder aus dem Befreiungskriege," vol. i., p. 321.

Thugut. "My adversaries, whosoever they may be, had better beware of my elephant foot not stamping them into the ground. I hate that boastful, revolutionary France, and to remain at peace with her is equivalent to drawing toward us the ideas of the revolution and of a general convulsion. Short-sighted people will not believe it, and they are my enemies because I am a true friend of Austria. But being a true friend of Austria, I must combat all those who dare oppose and impede me, for in my person they oppose and impede Austria. First of all things, it is necessary for me to get rid of those newspaper editors and scribblers; they are arrogant, insolent fellows who imagine they know every thing and are able to criticise every thing, and who feel called upon to give their opinion about all things and on all occasions because they know how to wield a goose-quill. The best thing we could do would be to suppress all newspapers and periodicals. Shaping the course of politics ourselves, we do not need any newspapers, which after all are nothing but ruminating oxen of what we have eaten and digested already; the people do not understand any thing about it, nor is it necessary that they should. The people have to work, to obey, to pay taxes, and, if necessary, to give up their lives for their sovereign; they need not know any thing further about politics, and if they do, it is generally detrimental to their obedience. Let us drive away, then, that noxious crowd of newspaper writers and pamphleteers who dare enlighten the people by their political trash. Ah, I will teach Count Erlach that it is a little dangerous to become a newspaper editor and to serve up *entremets* of historical reminiscences to the people of Vienna! I will cram them down his own throat in such a manner as to deprive him—"

"Count Erlach is the author of the article your excellency read to me just now?" asked Count Saurau, in great terror.

"There, his name is affixed to it in large letters," replied Thugut, contemptuously; "he has not even taken pains to conceal it. We have to return thanks to him for his sincerity, and I hope you will take the trouble of expressing our gratitude to him."

"What does your excellency want me to do?" asked the police minister, anxiously. "I believe it would not be prudent for us to make much ado about it."

"Of course not," said Thugut, laughing. "Do I like to make much ado about any thing, which would only give rise to scandal and idle gossip? Just reflect a while, my dear little count. What did we do, for instance, with the Neapolitan Count Montalban, who became a thorn in our side, and endeavored to gain power over the emperor? Did we accuse him of high treason? Did we prefer any charges against him at all? We merely caused him to disappear,

and no one knew what had become of the interesting and handsome count. People spoke for three or four days about his mysterious disappearance, and then forgot all about it.* My dear sir, there is nothing like *oubliettes* and secret prisons. I have often already preached that to you, and you always forget it. Violence! Who will be such a fool as to betray his little secrets by acts of open violence? We happen to stand on the great stage of life, and, like every other stage, there are trap-doors in the floor, through which those will disappear who have performed their parts. Let us, therefore, cause Count Erlach, the political writer, to vanish by means of such a trap-door."

"I implore your excellency to show indulgence for once," said Count Saurau, urgently. "Count Erlach is an intimate friend of Archduke Charles, and even the Empress Theresia is attached to him."

"The greater the necessity for me to get rid of him, and to return my thanks in this manner for the blows they want to deal me by means of their historical reminiscences. This Count Erlach is a very disgusting fellow, at all events; he would like to play the incorruptible Roman and to shine by his virtue. There is nothing more tedious and intolerable than a virtuous man who cannot be got at anywhere. Count Erlach has now given us a chance to get hold of him; let us improve it."

"He has very influential connections, very powerful protectors, your excellency. If he should disappear, they will raise a terrible outcry about it, and make it their special business to seek him, and if they should not find him they will say we had killed him because your excellency was afraid of him."

"I was afraid of him!" exclaimed Thugut, laughing. "As if I ever had been afraid of any one. Even an earthquake would not be able to frighten me, and, like Fabricius, I should only look around quite slowly for the hidden elephant of Pyrrhus. No, I know no fear, but I want others to feel fear, and for this reason Count Erlach must be disposed of."

"Very well, let us get rid of him," replied Count Saurau, "but in a simple manner and before the eyes of the whole public. Believe me for once, your excellency, I know the ground on which we are standing; I know it to be undermined and ready to explode and blow us up. Count Erlach's disappearance would be the burning match that might bring about the explosion. Let us be cautious, therefore. Let us remove him beyond the frontier, and threaten him with capital punishment in case he ever should dare to reënter Austria, but let us permit him now to leave the country without any injury whatever."

* *Lebensbilder*, vol. i., p. 321.

"Well, be it so. I will let you have your own way, my dear anxious friend. Have Erlach arrested to-day; let two police commissioners transport him beyond the frontier, and threaten him with capital punishment, or with my revenge—which will be the same to him—in case he should return. Let the scribblers and newspapers learn, too, why Count Erlach was exiled. The prudent men among them will be warned by his fate, and hereafter hold their tongues; the stupid and audacious fellows, however, will raise an outcry about the occurrence, and thus give us a chance to get hold of them likewise. The matter is settled, then; the aristocratic newspaper writer will be transported from the country, and that is the end of it.* But I shall seek further satisfaction for these articles in the newspapers. Oh, the new Empress Theresia and the archduke shall find out that I am no Clesel or Lobkowitz to be got rid of by means of an intrigue. I shall try to obtain in the course of to-day an order from the emperor, removing the archduke from the command of the army and causing him to retire into private life. He wants peace and repose in so urgent a manner; let him sleep and dream, then, while we are up and doing. I need a resolute and courageous general at the head of the army, a man who hates the French, and not one who is friendly to them. But as for the empress—"

"Your excellency," interrupted Count Saurau, with a mysterious air, "I called upon you to-day for the purpose of speaking to you about the empress, and of cautioning you against—"

"Cautioning me?" exclaimed Thugut, with proud disdain. "What is the matter, then?"

"You know assuredly that the Empress Theresia has fully recovered from her confinement, and that she has held levees for a whole week already."

"As if I had not been the first to obtain an audience and to kiss her hand!" exclaimed Thugut, shrugging his shoulders.

"The empress," continued Saurau, "has received the ambassadors also; she even had two interviews already with the minister of the French Republic, General Bernadotte."

Thugut suddenly became quite attentive, and fixed his small, piercing eyes upon the police minister with an expression of intense suspense.

"Two interviews?" he asked. "And you know what they conferred about in these two interviews?"

"I should be a very poor police minister, and my secret agents

* Count Erlach was really transported beyond the Austrian frontier by two police commissioners. Only after Thugut's overthrow in 1801 was he allowed to return to Austria and Vienna.—*Lebensbilder*, vol. i., p. 321.

would furnish me very unsatisfactory information, if I did not know it."

"Well, let us hear all about it, my dear count. What did the empress say to Bernadotte?"

"In the first audience General Bernadotte began by reading his official speech to her majesty, and the empress listened to him with a gloomy air. But then they entered upon a less ceremonious conversation, and Bernadotte assured the empress that France entertained no hostile intentions whatever against Naples, her native country. He said he had been authorized by the Directory of the Republic to assure her majesty officially that she need not feel any apprehensions in relation to Naples, France being animated by the most friendly feelings toward that kingdom. The face of the empress lighted up at once, and she replied to the general in very gracious terms, and gave him permission to renew his visits to her majesty whenever he wished to communicate any thing to her. He had asked her to grant him this permission."

"I knew the particulars of this first interview, except the passage referring to this permission," said Thugut, quietly.

"But this permission precisely is of the highest importance, your excellency, for the empress thereby gives the French minister free access to her rooms. He is at liberty to see her as often as he wishes, to communicate any thing to her. It seems the general has to make many communications to her majesty, for two days after the first audience, that is yesterday, General Bernadotte again repaired to the *Hofburg* in order to see the empress."*

"And did she admit him?" asked Thugut.

"Yes, she admitted him, your excellency. This time the general did not confine himself to generalities, but fully unbosomed himself to her majesty. He confessed to the empress that France was very anxious to maintain peace with Naples as well as with Austria; adding, however, that this would be much facilitated by friendly advances, especially on the part of Austria. Austria, instead of pursuing such a policy, was actuated by hostile intentions toward France. When the empress asked for an explanation of these words, Bernadotte was bold enough to present to her a memorial directed against the policy of your excellency, and in which the general said he had taken pains, by order of the Directory, to demonstrate that the policy of Baron Thugut was entirely incompatible with a good understanding between Austria and France, and that, without such an understanding, the fate of Naples could not be but very uncertain."

"What did the empress reply?" asked Thugut, whose mien did not betray a symptom of excitement or anger.

* "*Mémoires d'un Homme d'État*," vol. v., p. 485.

"Her majesty replied she would read the memorial with the greatest attention, and keep it a profound secret from every one. She added, however, she feared lest, even if the memorial should convince herself of the inexpediency of Baron Thugut's policy, it might be difficult if not impossible to induce the emperor to take a similar view of the matter—his majesty reposing implicit confidence in his prime minister and being perfectly satisfied of your excellency's fidelity, honesty, and incorruptibility. After this reply, Bernadotte approached the empress somewhat nearer, and cautiously and searchingly glanced around the room in order to satisfy himself that no one but her majesty could overhear his words. Just then—"

"Well, why do you hesitate?" asked Thugut, hastily.

"My tongue refuses to repeat the calumnies which the French minister has dared to utter."

"Compel your tongue to utter them, and let me hear them," exclaimed Thugut, sarcastically.

"With your excellency's leave, then. Bernadotte then almost bent down to the ear of the empress and said to her, whisperingly, the Directory of France were in possession of papers that would compromise Minister Thugut and furnish irrefutable proofs that Minister Thugut was by no means a reliable and honest adviser of his majesty, inasmuch as he was in the pay of foreign powers, England and Russia particularly, who paid him millions for always fanning anew the flames of Austria's hostility against France. Bernadotte added that these papers were on the way and would arrive at Vienna by the next courier. He asked the empress if she would permit him to hand these papers to her for placing them into the hands of the emperor."

"And the empress?"

"The empress promised it, and granted a third audience to the minister as soon as he should be in possession of the papers and apply for an interview with her."*

"Are you through?" asked Thugut, with the greatest composure.

"Not yet, your excellency. It remains for me to tell you that the courier expected by Bernadotte arrived last night at the hotel of the French embassy, and that the minister himself immediately left his couch in order to receive the dispatches in person. Early this morning an extraordinary activity prevailed among the employés of the embassy, and the first *attaché* as well as the secretary of legation left the hotel at a very early hour. The former with a letter from Bernadotte repaired to Laxenburg where the empress, as is well known to your excellency, has been residing with her court for the

*"Mémoires d'un Homme d'État," vol. v., p. 290.

last few days. After the lapse of an hour, he returned, and brought the general the verbal reply from the empress that her majesty would return to Vienna in order to attend the festival of the volunteers, and would then be ready to grant an immediate audience to the ambassador."

"And whither did the secretary of legation go?"

"First to one of our most fashionable military tailors,* and then to a dry-goods store. At the tailor's he ordered a banner, which is to be ready in the course of this evening, and at the dry-goods store he purchased the material required for this banner—blue, white, and red. Now, your excellency, I am through with my report."

"I confess, my dear count, that I have listened to you with the most intense pleasure and satisfaction, and that I cannot refrain from expressing to you my liveliest admiration for the vigilance and energy of your police, who do not merely unfathom the past and present, but also the future. In three days, then, the ambassador of France will have an interview with the empress?"

"Yes, your excellency, and he will then deliver to her the above-mentioned papers."

"Provided he has got any such papers, my friend! Papers that might compromise me! As if there were any such papers! As if I ever had been so stupid as to intrust secrets to a scrap of paper and to betray to it what every one must not know. He who wants to keep secrets—and I understand that exceedingly well—will intrust them just as little to paper as to human ear. I should burn my own hair did I believe that it had got wind of the ideas of my head. I would really like to see these papers which Bernadotte—"

The sudden appearance of the *valet de chambre* interrupted the minister. "Your excellency," he said, "the ambassador of the French Republic, General Bernadotte, would like to see your excellency immediately concerning a very important and urgent affair."

Thugut exchanged a rapid, smiling glance with the count. "Take the ambassador to the reception-room and tell him that I shall wait on him at once."

"Well?" he asked, when the valet had withdrawn. "Do you still believe that Bernadotte has got papers that would compromise me? Would he call on me in that case? He doubtless intends telling me his ridiculous story, too, or he wishes to intimidate me by his interviews with the empress, so as to prevail on me to accede to the desires of France and to become more pliable. But he is entirely mistaken. I am neither afraid of his interviews with the empress, nor of Bernadotte's papers, and shall immovably pursue

* *Military tailors* are tailors who have the exclusive privilege of furnishing uniforms, etc., to the officers of the army.

my own path. If it please God, this path will soon lead me to a point where the battle against those overbearing French may be begun in a very safe and satisfactory manner. Come, my dear count, accompany me to the adjoining room. I shall leave the door ajar that leads into the reception-room, for I want you to be an invisible witness to my interview with the ambassador. Come!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FESTIVAL OF THE VOLUNTEERS.

HE quietly took the count's arm and went with him to the adjoining room. Indicating to him a chair standing not far from the other door, he walked rapidly forward and entered the reception-room.

General Bernadotte, quite a young man, approached him with a stiff and dignified bearing, and there was an expression of bold defiance and undisguised hostility plainly visible on his youthful and handsome features.

Thugut, on his side, had called a smile upon his lips, and his eyes were radiant with affability and mildness.

"I am very glad, general, to see you here at so unexpected an hour," he said, politely. "Truly, this is a distinction that will cause all of our pretty ladies to be jealous of me, and I am afraid, general, you will still more exasperate the fair sex, who never would grant me their favor, against myself, for I am now assuredly to blame if some of our most beautiful ladies now should vainly wait for your arrival."

"I am always very punctual in my appointments, your excellency, whether they be armed rencounters or such rendezvous as your excellency has mentioned just now, and, therefore, seems to like especially," said Bernadotte, gravely. "I call upon your excellency, however, in the name of a lady, too—in the name of the French Republic!"

"And she is, indeed, a very exalted and noble lady, to whom the whole world is bowing reverentially," said Thugut, smiling.

"In the name of the French Republic and of the French Directory, I would like to inquire of your excellency whether or not it is a fact that a popular festival will be held to-morrow here in Vienna?"

"A popular festival! Ah, my dear general, I should not have thought that the French Republic would take so lively an interest in the popular festivals of the Germans! But I must take the liberty of requesting you, general, to apply with this inquiry to Count

Saurau. For it is the duty of the police minister to watch over these innocent amusements and harmless festivals of the people."

"The celebration I refer to is neither an innocent amusement nor a harmless festival," exclaimed Bernadotte, hastily; "on the contrary, it is a political demonstration."

"A political demonstration?" repeated Thugut, in surprise. "By whom? And directed against whom?"

"A political demonstration of Austria against the French Republic," said the general, gravely. "It is true, your excellency pretends not to know any thing about this festival of the thirteenth of April, but—"

"Permit me, sir," interrupted Thugut, "is to-morrow the thirteenth of April?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"Then I must say that I know something about this festival, and that I am able to inform you about it. Yes, general, there will be a popular festival to-morrow."

"May I inquire for what purpose?"

"Ah, general, that is very simple. It is just a year to-morrow, on the thirteenth of April, that the whole youth of Vienna, believing the country to be endangered and the capital threatened by the enemy, in their noble patriotism voluntarily joined the army and repaired to the seat of war.* These young volunteers desire to celebrate the anniversary of their enrolment, and the emperor, I believe, has given them permission to do so."

"I have to beg your excellency to prevail on the emperor to withdraw this permission."

"A strange request! and why?"

"Because this festival is a demonstration against France, for those warlike preparations last year were directed against France, while Austria has now made peace with our republic. It is easy to comprehend that France will not like this festival of the volunteers."

"My dear general," said Thugut, with a sarcastic smile, "does France believe, then, that Austria liked all those festivals celebrated by the French Republic during the last ten years? The festivals of the republican weddings, for instance, or the festival of the Goddess of Reason, or the anniversaries of bloody executions? Or more recently the celebrations of victories, by some of which Austria has lost large tracts of territory? I confess to you that Austria would have greatly liked to see some of those festivals suppressed, but France had not asked our advice, and it would have been arrogant and ridiculous for us to give it without being asked for it, and thus to meddle with the domestic affairs of your country. Hence we

* "Mémoires d'un Homme d'État," vol. v., p. 498.