

published, although the Austrian court had expressly promised to lay the minutes of the commission trying the prisoners, and the results of the whole investigation, before the public. In reality, however, the Austrian authorities tried to hush up the whole affair, so that the world might forget it. And it was forgotten, and remained unpunished. In diplomatic circles, however, the real instigators of the outrage were well known. "It was," says the author of the "Memoirs of a German Statesman" (Count Schlitz), "it was a man who, owing to his exalted position, played a very prominent part at Rastadt; not a very noble one, however. He was actuated by vindictiveness, and he was determined to seize the most secret papers of the ambassadors at any price. The general archives, however, had been forwarded to Strasburg several days before. He had found willing tools in the brutal hussars. These wretches believed that what a man of high standing asked them to do was agreeable to the will of their imperial master. Baseness is easily able to mislead stupidity, and soldiers thus became the assassins of unarmed men, who stood under the sacred protection of international law."

The excitement and indignation produced by this horrible crime were general throughout Europe, and every one recognized in it the bloody seeds of a time of horrors and untold evils; every one was satisfied that France would take bloody revenge for the assassination of her ambassadors. In fact, as soon as the tidings from Rastadt penetrated beyond the Rhine, there arose throughout the whole of France a terrible cry of rage and revenge. The intelligence reached Mentz in the evening, when the theatre was densely crowded. The commander ordered the news to be read from the stage, and the furious public shouted, "*Vengeance! vengeance! et la mort aux Allemands!*"*

In Paris, solemn obsequies were performed for the murdered ambassadors. The seats which Bonnier and Roberjot had formerly occupied in the hall of the *Corps Legislatif* were covered with their bloody garments. When the roll was called and their names were read, the president rose and replied solemnly: "Assassinated at Rastadt!" The clerks then exclaimed: "May their blood be brought home to the authors of their murder!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE COALITION.

COUNT HAUGWITZ, the Prussian minister of foreign affairs, had just returned from a journey he had made with the young king to Westphalia. In his dusty travelling-costume, and notwithstanding

* "*Vengeance! vengeance! and death to the Germans!*"

his exhaustion after the fatigues of the trip, as soon as he had entered his study, he had hastily written two letters, and then handed them to his footman, ordering him to forward them at once to their address, to the ambassadors of Prussia and England. Only then he had thrown himself on his bed, but issued strict orders to awaken him as soon as the two ambassadors had entered the house.

Scarcely an hour had elapsed when the footman awakened the count, informing him that the two ambassadors had just arrived at the same time, and were waiting for him in the small reception-room.

The minister hastily rose from his couch, and without devoting a single glance to his toilet and to his somewhat dishevelled wig, he crossed his study and entered the reception-room, where Lord Grenville and Count Panin were waiting for him.

"Gentlemen," said the count after a hurried bow, "be kind enough to look at my toilet, and then I hope you will excuse me for daring to request you to call upon me, instead of coming to you as I ought to have done. But you see I have not even doffed my travelling habit, and it would not have behooved me to call on you in such a costume; but the intelligence I desire to communicate is of such importance that I wished to lose no time in order to lay it before you, and hence I took the liberty of inviting you to see me."

"As far as I am concerned, I willingly accepted your invitation," said Lord Grenville, deliberately, "for in times like these we can well afford to disregard the requirements of etiquette."

"That I was no less eager to follow your call," said Count Panin, with a courteous smile, "you have seen from the fact that I arrived at the same time with the distinguished ambassador of Great Britain. But now, gentlemen, a truce to compliments; let us come to the point directly, and without any further circumlocution. For the six months that I have been here at Berlin, in order to negotiate with Prussia about the coalition question, I have been so incessantly put off with empty phrases, that I am heartily tired of that diet and long for more substantial food."

"Your longing will be gratified to-day, Count Panin," said Count Haugwitz, with a proud smile, inviting the gentlemen, by a polite gesture, to take seats on the sofa, while he sat down in an arm-chair opposite them. "Yes, you will find to-day a good and nourishing diet, and I hope you will be content with the cook who has prepared it for you. I may say that I am that cook, and believe me, gentlemen, the task of preparing that food for you has not been a very easy one."

"You have induced the King of Prussia at length to join the coalition, and to enter into an alliance with Russia, England, and

Austria against the French Republic?" asked Count Panin, joyfully.

"You have told his majesty that England is ready to pay large subsidies as soon as Prussia leads her army into the field against France?" asked Lord Grenville.

"Gentlemen," said Count Haugwitz, in a slightly sarcastic tone, "I feel greatly flattered by your impetuous inquiries, for they prove to me how highly you value an alliance with Prussia. Permit me, however, to communicate to you quietly and composedly the whole course of negotiations. You know that I had the honor of accompanying my royal master on his trip to our Westphalian possessions, where his majesty was going to review an army of sixty thousand men."

"It would have been better to send these sixty thousand men directly into the field, instead of losing time by useless parades," muttered Count Panin.

The minister seemed not to have heard the words, and continued:

"His majesty established his headquarters at Peterhagen, and there we were informed that Archduke Charles of Austria was holding the Rhine against Bernadotte and Jourdan, and that the imperial army, under the command of Kray, in Italy, had been victorious, too; it is true, however, the Russian auxiliary army, under Field-Marshal Suwarrow, had greatly facilitated Kray's successful operations. This intelligence did not fail to make a powerful impression upon my young king, and I confess upon myself too. Hitherto, you know, I had always opposed to a war against France, and I had deemed it most expedient for Prussia to avoid hostilities against the republic. But the brilliant achievements of Russia and Austria in Italy, and the victories of Archduke Charles on the Rhine, seem to prove at length that the lucky star of France is paling, and that it would be advantageous for Prussia openly to join the adversaries of the republic in their attack."

"A very bold and magnanimous resolution," said Count Panin, with a sarcastic smile.

"A resolution influenced somewhat by the British subsidies I have promised to Prussia, I suppose?" asked Lord Grenville.

"Let me finish my statement, gentlemen," said Count Haugwitz, courteously. "The king, undecided as to the course he ought to pursue, assembled at Peterhagen a council of war, our great commander, Ferdinand, duke of Brunswick, of course, having been invited to be present. His majesty requested us to state honestly and sincerely whether we were in favor of war or peace with France. The duke of Brunswick was, of course, the first speaker who replied to the king; he voted for war. He gave his reasons in a fiery and

energetic speech, and demonstrated to the king that at a time when England was about to send an army to Holland, an advance into Holland by our own army would be highly successful. For my part, I unconditionally assented to the duke's opinion, and Baron Köckeritz declaring for it likewise, the king did not hesitate any longer, but took a great and bold resolution. He ordered the Duke of Brunswick to draw up a memorial, stating *in extenso* why Prussia ought to participate in the war against France, and to send in at the same time a detailed plan of the campaign. He instructed me to return forthwith to Berlin, and while he would continue his journey to Wesel, to hasten to the capital for the purpose of informing you, gentlemen, that the king will join the coalition, and of settling with you the particulars—"

At this moment the door of the reception-room was hastily opened, and the first secretary of the minister made his appearance.

"Pardon me, your excellency, for disturbing you," he said, handing a sealed letter to the count, "but a courier has just arrived from the king's headquarters with an autograph letter from his majesty. He had orders to deliver this letter immediately to your excellency, because it contained intelligence of the highest importance."

"Tell the courier that the orders of his majesty have been carried out," said Count Haugwitz; "and you, gentlemen, I am sure you will permit me to open this letter from my king in your presence. It may contain some important particulars in relation to our new alliance."

The two gentlemen assured him of their consent, and Count Haugwitz opened the letter. When he commenced reading it, his face was as unruffled as ever, but his features gradually assumed a graver expression, and the smile disappeared from his lips.

The two ambassadors, who were closely watching the count's countenance, could not fail to notice this rapid change in his features, and their faces now assumed likewise a gloomier air.

Count Haugwitz, however, seemed unable to master the contents of the royal letter; he constantly read it anew, as though he were seeking in its words for a hidden and mysterious meaning. He was so absorbed in the perusal of the letter that he had apparently become entirely oblivious of the presence of the two gentlemen, until a slight coughing of the English ambassador aroused him from his musing.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," he said, hastily, and in evident embarrassment; "this letter contains some intelligence which greatly astonishes me."

"I hope it will not interfere with the accession of Prussia to the

coalition?" said Panin, fixing his eyes upon the countenance of the minister.

"Not at all," said Count Haugwitz, quickly and smilingly. "The extraordinary news is this: his majesty the king will reach Berlin within this hour, and orders me to repair to him at once."

"The king returns to Berlin!" exclaimed Count Panin.

"And did not your excellency tell us just now that the king had set out for Wesel?" asked Lord Grenville, with his usual stoical equanimity.

"I informed you, gentlemen, of what occurred two weeks ago," said Count Haugwitz, shrugging his shoulders.

"What! Two weeks ago? Nevertheless, your excellency has just arrived at Berlin, and are wearing yet your travelling-habit?"

"That is very true. I left Minden two weeks ago, but the impassable condition of the roads compelled me to travel with snail-like slowness. My carriage every day stuck in an ocean of mire, so that I had to send for men from the adjoining villages in order to set it going again. The axle-tree broke twice, and I was obliged to remain several days in the most forsaken little country towns until I succeeded in getting my carriage repaired."

"The king seems to have found better roads," said Count Panin, with a lurking glance. "The journey to Wesel has been a very rapid one, at all events."

"The king, it seems, has given up that journey and concluded on the road to return to the capital," said Count Haugwitz, in an embarrassed manner.

"It would be very deplorable if the king should as rapidly change his mind in relation to his other resolutions!" exclaimed Lord Grenville.

"Your excellency does not fear, then, lest this sudden return of the king should have any connection with our plans?" asked Panin. "The king has authorized you to negotiate with the English ambassador, Sir Thomas Grenville, and with myself, the representative of the Emperor Paul, of Russia, about forming an alliance for the purpose of driving the rapacious, revolutionary, and bloodthirsty French Republic beyond the Rhine, and restoring tranquillity to menaced Europe?"

"It is true the king gave me such authority two weeks ago," said Count Haugwitz, uneasily, "and I doubt not for a single moment that his majesty is now adhering to this opinion. But you comprehend, gentlemen, that I must now hasten to wait on the returning king, in order to receive further instructions from him."

"That means, Count Haugwitz, that you have invited us to call

on you in order to tell us that we may go again?" asked Panin, frowning.

"I am in despair, gentlemen, at this unfortunate coincidence," said Count Haugwitz, anxiously. "It is, however, impossible for me now to enter into further explanations. I must repair immediately to the palace, and I humbly beg your pardon for this unexpected interruption of our conference."

"I accept your apology as sincerely as it was offered, and have the honor to bid you farewell," said Panin, bowing and turning toward the door.

Count Haugwitz hastened to accompany him. When he arrived at the door, and was about to leave the room, Count Panin turned around once more.

"Count Haugwitz," he said, in a blunt voice, "be kind enough to call the attention of the king to the fact that my imperial master, who is very fond of resolute men and measures, prefers an open and resolute enemy to a neutral and irresolute friend. He who wants to be no one's enemy and everybody's friend, will soon find out that he has no friends whatever, and that no one thanks him for not committing himself in any direction. It is better after all to have a neighbor with whom we are living in open enmity, than one on whose assistance we are never able to depend, and who, whenever we are at war with a third power, contents himself with doing nothing at all and assisting no one. Be kind enough to say that to his majesty."

He bowed haughtily, and entered the anteroom with a sullen face.

Count Haugwitz turned around and met the stern, cold glance of the English ambassador, who was also approaching the door with slow and measured steps.

"Count Haugwitz," said Lord Grenville, quietly, "I have the honor to tell you that, in case the King of Prussia will not now, distinctly and unmistakably, declare his intention of joining the coalition between Russia, Austria, and England, we shall use the subsidies we had promised to pay to Prussia for an army of twenty-five thousand men, in some other way. Besides, I beg you to remind his majesty of the words of his great ancestor, the Elector Frederick William. That brave and great sovereign said: 'I have learned already what it means to be neutral. One may have obtained the best terms, and, in spite of them, will be badly treated. Hence I have sworn never to be neutral again, and it would hurt my conscience to act in a different manner.'* I have the honor, count, to bid you farewell."

* Häusser's "History of Germany," vol. ii., p. 281.

And Lord Grenville passed the count with a stiff bow, and disappeared in the door of the anteroom.

Count Haugwitz heaved a profound sigh, and wiped off the perspiration pearly in large drops on his brow. He then took the king's letter from his side-pocket and perused it once more.

"It is the king's handwriting," he said, shaking his head, "and it is also his peculiar laconic style." And, as if to satisfy himself by hearing the contents of the letter, he read aloud:

"Do not enter into any negotiations with the ambassadors of Russia and Great Britain. We will hold another council of war. I am on my way to Berlin. Within an hour after receipt of these lines, I shall expect to see you in my cabinet. Yours, affectionately,

"FREDERICK WILLIAM."

"Yes, yes, the king has written that," said Haugwitz, folding the letter; "I must hastily dress, therefore, and repair to the palace. I am anxious to know whence this new wind is blowing, and who has succeeded in persuading the king to change his mind. Should my old friend, Köckeritz, after all, be favorable to France? It would have been better for him to inform me confidentially, and we might have easily agreed; for I am by no means hostile to France, and I am quite ready to vote for peace, if there be a chance to maintain it. Or should the young king really have come to this conclusion without being influenced by anybody? Why, that would be a dangerous innovation! We should take quick and decisive steps against it. Well, we will see! I will go and dress."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FRIEND OF PEACE.

THE king, with his wonted punctuality, had reached Berlin precisely at the specified time, and when Count Haugwitz arrived at the palace he was immediately conducted to the king, who was waiting for him in his cabinet.

Count Haugwitz exchanged a rapid glance with Baron Köckeritz, who was standing in a bay window, and then approached the king, who was pacing the room with slow steps and a gloomy air.

He nodded to the minister, and silently continued his promenade across the room for some time after his arrival. He then stepped to his desk, which was covered with papers and documents, and sitting down on a plain cane chair in front of it, he invited the gentlemen to take seats by his side.

"The courier reached you in time, I suppose?" he said, turning to Count Haugwitz.

"Your majesty, your royal letter reached me while holding a conference with the ambassadors of Russia and Great Britain, and just when I was about to inform them of your majesty's resolution to join the coalition."

"You had not done so, then?" asked the king, hastily. "It was your first conference, then?"

"Yes, your majesty, it was our first conference. I invited the ambassadors immediately after my return to call on me."

"It took you, then, two weeks to travel from Minden to Berlin!"

"Yes, your majesty, two weeks."

"And yet these gentlemen are in favor of an advance of the army!" exclaimed the king, vehemently. "Yes, if all of my soldiers were encamped directly on the frontier of Holland and had their base of supplies there! But in order to send a sufficient army to Holland, I should have to withdraw a portion of my soldiers from the provinces of Silesia and Prussia. They would have to march across Westphalia, across the same Westphalia where it took you with your carriage two weeks to travel from Minden to Berlin. And my soldiers have no other carriages but their feet. They would stick in that dreadful mire by hundreds and thousands; they would perish there of hunger, and that march would cost me more men than a great, decisive battle. I had given you my word that I would join the coalition, Count Haugwitz; I had even authorized you to negotiate with the ambassadors of Russia and Great Britain, but on the road to Wesel I was obliged to change my mind. Ask Baron Köckeritz what we had to suffer on the first day of our journey, and how far we had got after twelve hours' travelling."

"Yes, indeed, it was a terrible trip," said General von Köckeritz, heaving a sigh. "In spite of the precautions of the coachman, his majesty's carriage was upset five times in a single day, and finally it stuck so firmly in the mud that we had to send for assistance to the neighboring villages in order to set it going once more. We were twelve hours on the road, and made only three German miles during that time."

"And we had to stop over night in a miserable village, where we scarcely found a bed to rest our bruised and worn-out limbs," said the king, indignantly. "And I should expose my army to such fatigues and sufferings! I should, heedless of all consideration of humanity, and solely in obedience to political expediency, suffer them to perish in those endless marshes, that would destroy the artillery and the horses of the cavalry. And all that for what purpose? In order to drag Prussia violently into a war which might

be avoided by prudence and by a sagacious reserve; in order to hasten to the assistance of other powers not even threatened by France, and only in return to draw upon ourselves her wrath and enmity!"

"But at the same time the sympathies of all Europe," said General von Köckeritz, eagerly. "Your majesty has permitted me to speak my mind at all times openly and honestly, and I must therefore persist in what I previously said to you. Now or never is the time for Prussia to give up her neutrality, and to assume a decided attitude. France has placed herself in antagonism with all law and order, and with all treaties consecrated by centuries of faithful observance; she is threatening all monarchies and dynasties, and is trying to win over the nations to her republican ideas. And at the head of this French Republic there is a young general, whose glory is filling the whole world, who has attached victory to his colors, and who intoxicates the nations by his republican phrases of liberty and fraternity, so that, in their mad joy, they overturn thrones, expel their sovereigns, and awake them from their ecstasy under the republican yoke of France. Your majesty, I believe it to be the duty of every prince to preserve his people from such errors, and, jointly with his people, to raise a bulwark against the evil designs of France. Austria and Russia have already begun this holy task; their heroic armies have driven back on all sides the hosts of the overbearing French, who have been compelled to abandon their conquests in Italy and Switzerland. If your majesty should join England, occupy Holland, restore that country to its legitimate sovereign, and menace the northern frontier of France, while Austria is menacing her southern frontier, the arrogance of the republic would be tamed, the overflowing torrent would be forced back into its natural bed, and Europe would have at last peace and tranquillity."

"First of all, every one ought to think of himself," said the king, sharply. "Prussia has hitherto enjoyed peace and tranquillity, and I believe it to be my principal task to preserve these blessings to my country. I am no ruler hankering after glory and honors; I do not want to make any conquests, nor to acquire any new territory, but I will content myself with the humble renown of having fulfilled my duties as a ruler to the best of my ability, and according to the dictates of my conviction, as the father and friend of my people. Hence I have not dared to identify my name with that of my great ancestor, Frederick the Second, and call myself Frederick the Third, for a name imposes obligations, and I know very well that I am no hero and genius, like Frederick the Great. I assumed, therefore, the name of Frederick William, as

the successor of my peaceable father, Frederick William the Second. It is true, Frederick William the Second has waged a war against France, but precisely that war has satisfied me that a war with France may involve Prussia in the greatest dangers and calamities. I participated in the campaign of 1792, gentlemen, and I must honestly confess that I feel little inclination to resume a war which, at best, will only produce sacrifices for us, and no reward whatever."

"There is a reward, however, your majesty," said Count Haugwitz, solemnly. "It is the preservation of the thrones, and of monarchical principles. We cannot fail to perceive that the thrones are being menaced, and those republics of America, France, and Italy are teaching the nations very dangerous lessons—the lessons of self-government and popular sovereignty. That insatiable General Bonaparte has attached these two words to his colors, and if the princes do not combat him with united strength, and try to take those colors from him, he will soon carry them into the midst of all nations, who will rapturously hail him, and desire to follow the example of France."

"I have no fears for myself," said the king, calmly; "but even if I should be so unfortunate as to be obliged to doubt the love and fidelity of my people, the thought of my personal safety and of the fate of my dynasty ought not to exert a decisive influence upon my resolutions concerning the welfare of my country. I told you before, I want to be the father of my country; a good father always thinks first of the welfare of his children, and tries to promote it; only when he has succeeded in doing so he thinks of himself."

"A good father ought to strive, first of all, to preserve himself to his children," exclaimed Count Haugwitz. "An orphan people is as unfortunate as are orphan children. Your people need you, sire; they need a wise and gentle hand to direct them."

"And yet you want to put the sword in my hand, and that I should lead my people to war and carnage," said the king.

"In order to make peace bloom forth from war and carnage," said Count Haugwitz, gravely. "The bloody monster of war is stalking now through the whole world, and, as it cannot be avoided, it is better to attack it, and to confront it in a bold manner. Russia, Austria, and England are ready to do so, and they stretch out their hands toward you. Refuse to grasp them, and, for the doubtful and dangerous friendship of France, you will have gained three powerful enemies."

"And if I grasp their hands I shall not advance the interests of Prussia by shedding the blood of my people, but only those of Austria and Russia," replied the king. "If France should be greatly

weakened, or even entirely annihilated, serious dangers would arise for Prussia, for Austria and Russia would unite in that case, for the purpose of menacing our own security. They would easily and quickly find compensations for themselves, and Austria especially would profit by the losses of France; for she would recover the Netherlands, which Prussia is to conquer now by the blood of her soldiers, and acquire, perhaps, even Bavaria. But what compensation would fall to the share of Prussia? Or do you believe, perhaps, Austria, from a feeling of gratitude toward us, would cede to Prussia a portion of her former hereditary possessions in the Netherlands? No, no—no war with France! Let Russia and Austria fight alone; they are strong enough for it. I say all this after mature deliberation, and this is not only my opinion, but also that of distinguished and experienced generals. General von Tempelhof, too, is of my opinion, and confirmed it in a memorial which I asked him to draw up for me.”

“Your majesty requested the Duke of Brunswick, also, to write a memorial on the intended coalition against France,” said General von Köckeritz, hastily. “On our arrival I received this memorial and read it, according to your majesty’s orders. The duke persists in the opinion that it is necessary for the honor, glory, and safety of Prussia to join the coalition, and to oppose France in a determined manner. Your majesty, I must confess that I share the view maintained by the duke.”

“So do I!” exclaimed Count Haugwitz, “and so do all your subjects. Sire, your whole people ardently desire to chastise this arrogant France, and to sweep these hosts of Jacobins from the soil of Germany. Oh, my king and lord, only make a trial, only raise your voice and call upon the people to rally around your standards, and to wage war against France! You will see them rally enthusiastically around the Prussian eagles and fervently bless their courageous king. And when you begin this struggle, sire, you and your army will have a formidable, an invincible ally. That ally is *public opinion*, sire! Public opinion requires this war, and public opinion is no longer something dumb and creeping in the dark, but something that has a voice, and that raises it in ringing, thundering notes in the newspaper and magazine. One of these voices spoke a few weeks ago in the *Political Journal*, as follows: ‘Can our monarch abandon the German empire? Can he look on quietly while France is making preparations for attacking Prussia as soon as her turn shall come? It is only necessary for us to think of Italy, Switzerland, and Holland in order to appreciate the friendship of France.’* This voice has reëchoed throughout Prussia, and

* “Political Journal.” Berlin, 1798.

every one is looking up to the throne of your majesty anxiously and hopefully; every one is satisfied that you will draw the sword for the honor and rights of Germany. Sire, at this moment I am nothing but the voice of your people, and therefore I implore your majesty to take a bold and manful resolution. Draw the sword for Prussia’s honor and Germany’s safety.”

“I implore your majesty likewise to do so,” exclaimed General von Köckeritz. “I dare to implore your majesty, in the name of your people. Oh, sire, take a bold and manly resolution! Draw the sword for Prussia’s honor and Germany’s safety.”

The king had risen and paced the room with violent steps. His features, usually so quiet and gentle, were not uneasy and agitated; a gloomy cloud covered his brow, and a painful expression trembled on his lips. He seemed to carry on a violent and desperate inward struggle, and his breath issued painfully and gaspingly from his breast. Finally, after a long pause, he approached the two gentlemen who had risen and were looking at him with evident anxiety.

“I am unable to refute all these reasons,” said the king, sighing, “but an inward voice tells me that I ought not to break my word, and commence hostilities. If the welfare of the state requires it, however, I shall join the coalition, but only on condition that the Austrians attack Mentz in force, take the fortress by assault, and thereby cover the left flank of my base of operations.* And now we will close our consultation for to-day. Go, Count Haugwitz, and resume your negotiations with the ambassadors of Russia and Great Britain. As for you, General von Köckeritz, I beg you to bring me the memorial of the Duke of Brunswick, and then you may return to your house and take some rest, of which you doubtless stand greatly in need after the fatigues you have undergone.”

He greeted the gentlemen with a hasty nod and turned his back to them, without paying any attention to the deep and reverential bows with which the minister and the general withdrew toward the door.

When the two gentlemen had reached the anteroom, they satisfied themselves by a rapid glance that they were alone, and that nobody was able to hear them.

“He was quite angry,” whispered General von Köckeritz; “he only yielded with the utmost reluctance; and, believe me, my friend, the king will never forgive us this victory we have obtained over him; it may produce the worst results and endanger our whole position.”

“It is true,” said Count Haugwitz, sighing, “the king dismissed

* The king’s own words.—Vide “Memoiren zur Geschichte des Preuss. Staats.” By Col. Massenbach. Vol. iii., p. 88.

us in a more abrupt and harsh manner than ever before. It would have been better for us to yield, and let the king have his own way. Who knows but he is right, and an alliance with France, perhaps, would be more advantageous than this coalition with Austria and Russia? It startles me somewhat that Austria should be so anxious to obtain the accession of Prussia to the coalition, for Austria certainly would feel no inclination to propose any alliance that might prove profitable to Prussia. It may be best for Prussia, after all, to side with France."

"But public opinion would execrate such an alliance," said General von Köckeritz, sighing. "Public opinion—"

"My dear friend," interrupted Count Haugwitz, angrily, "public opinion is like the wind, changing its direction every day. Success alone influences and decides public opinion, and if France should vanquish the three powers, the same public opinion which now urges us to join the coalition would condemn us. Public opinion should not induce us to endanger our position and our power over the king for its sake. And I tell you, I am uneasy about this matter. The king was greatly irritated; he seemed angry with us, because he felt that he is not entirely free and independent, and that he has granted us some power over his decisions."

"We should yield even now," said General von Köckeritz, anxiously. "We should confess to the king that his reasons have convinced us, that we have been mistaken—"

"So that he would feel with twofold force that not his own free will, but our altered opinion, decided his action?" asked the minister. "No, we must give the king a chance to decide the whole question by his own untrammelled authority, and to prove that he alone is the ruler of Prussia's destinies. You can give him the best opportunity for so doing, for you have a pretext to return to him at once. Did not the king order you to bring him the memorial of the Duke of Brunswick?"

"Good Heaven! that is true; the king is waiting for the memorial!" exclaimed the general, in terror. "In my anxiety, I even forgot his orders."

"Hasten, my friend, to bring it at once to him," said Count Haugwitz, "and with your leave I shall take a little rest in the room which the king has been kind enough to assign to you here in the palace. He will perhaps countermand the instructions he has just given me."

A few minutes afterward General von Köckeritz, with the memorial in his hands, reëntered the cabinet of the king, who was still slowly pacing the room, without noticing the arrival of his adviser.

"Your majesty," said the general, timidly, "here is the memorial of Ferdinand, duke of Brunswick."

"Just lay it on my desk there," said the king, continuing his promenade.

General von Köckeritz stepped to the desk and placed the memorial on it. Just at that moment the king had arrived at the desk too, and paused in front of the general. He fixed a long and mournful glance upon him and slowly shook his head.

"You have deserted me also," said the king, sighing. "You may be right, gentlemen. I have yielded to your more profound sagacity for the time being, but an inward voice tells me that it is wrong to break the peace because France at the present time is being threatened on all sides, and because her armies have been defeated."

"Your majesty alone has to decide the whole question," said Köckeritz, solemnly. "Your conviction is our law, and we submit in dutiful obedience to your majesty's more profound sagacity. It is for you to command, and for us to obey."

A sudden gleam beamed in the eyes of the king, and a deeper blush mantled his cheeks. The general saw it, and comprehended it very well.

"Moreover," he added, with downcast eyes and with an air of confusion, "moreover, I have to make a confession to your majesty in my own name and in that of Count Haugwitz. While trying to win your majesty by our arguments for the war and for the coalition, it has happened to us that we were converted by the arguments your majesty adduced *against* the war and *against* the coalition, and that your majesty convinced us of the fallacy of our opinion. It is, perhaps, very humiliating to admit that our conviction has veered around so suddenly, but your majesty's convincing eloquence—"

"No, not my poor eloquence, but the truth has convinced you," exclaimed the king, joyfully, "and I thank you for having the truly manly and noble courage to admit that you were mistaken and have changed your mind. I am grateful to Count Haugwitz, too, and I shall never forget this generous and highly honorable confession of yours. It is a new proof for me that you are faithful and reliable friends and servants of mine, men who are not ashamed of acknowledging an error, and who care more for the welfare of the state than for carrying their own point. I therefore withdraw my previous instructions. I shall not join the coalition. Hasten to Haugwitz, my friend. Tell him to go forthwith to the Russian ambassador and inform him that my army will not assist the forces of the coalition, and that I shall take no part whatever in the war against France. Haugwitz is to say the same to the English ambassador,

and to inform him that I shall not claim the subsidy of six million dollars, which England offered to pay me for my auxiliary army. Six million dollars! I believe General Tempelhof was right when he said the siege of a second-rate fortress would cost a million dollars, and in Holland we should have to take more than ten fortresses from the stubborn and intrepid French. This would cost us more than ten million dollars, and, moreover, we should have to use up the powder and ammunition destined for our own defence. Those six million dollars that England would pay me would not cover our outlay; I should be obliged to add four million dollars more, and to shed the blood of my brave and excellent soldiers without obtaining, perhaps, even the slightest advantage for Prussia. Hasten, general, to communicate my fixed and irrevocable resolution to Count Haugwitz. Prussia remains neutral, and takes no part whatever in the war against France!"

"I hasten to carry out your majesty's orders," exclaimed General von Köckeritz, walking toward the door, "and I know that Count Haugwitz will submit to the royal decision with the same joyful humility and obedience as myself."

The king's eyes followed him with an expression of genuine emotion.

"He is a faithful and honest friend," he said, "and that is, indeed, a rare boon for a king. Ah, I have succeeded, then, in averting this bloody thunder-cloud, once more from Prussia, and I shall preserve the blessings of peace to my people. And now, I believe, I may claim some credit for the manner in which I have managed this delicate affair, and repose a little from the cares of government. I will go to Louisa—her sight and the smiles of my children will reward me for having done my duty as a king."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LEGITIMATE WIFE.

THE Prince von Reuss, Henry XIV., Austrian ambassador at Berlin, had died an hour ago. A painful disease had confined him to his bed for weeks, and Marianne Meier had nursed him during this time with the greatest love and devotion. She had never left his bedside, and no one except herself, the physicians, and a few servants had been permitted to enter the sick-room. The brothers and nephews of the prince, who had come to Berlin in order to see their dying relative once more, had vainly solicited this favor. The physicians had told them that the suffering prince was un-

able to bear any excitement, there being great danger that immediate death would be the consequence of a scene between them. The prince, moreover, had sent his trusted *valet de chambre* to his brother, and informed him, even if he were entirely well, he would not accept the visits of a brother who had shown him so little fraternal love, and caused him so much grief by opposing his faithful and beloved friend Marianne Meier in the most offensive and insulting manner.

The distinguished relatives of the prince, therefore, had to content themselves with watching his palace from afar, and with bribing a few of his servants to transmit to them hourly reports about the condition of the patient.

And now Prince Henry XIV. was dead, and his brother was his successor and heir, the prince having left no legitimate offspring. It was universally believed that he had never been married, and that his immense fortune, his estates and titles, would devolve on his brother. It is true there was still that mistress of his, fair Marianne Meier, to whom the prince, in his sentimental infatuation, had paid the honors of a legitimate wife. But, of course, she had no claims whatever to the inheritance; it would be an act of generosity to leave her in possession of the costly presents the prince had made to her, and to pay her a small pension.

The prince had hardly closed his eyes, therefore, and the doctors had just pronounced him dead, when his brother, now Prince Henry XV., accompanied by a few lawyers, entered the palace of the deceased in order to take possession of his property, and to have the necessary seals applied to the doors. However, to give himself at least a semblance of brotherly love, the prince desired first to repair to the death-room, and to take a last leave of the deceased. But in the anteroom he met the two footmen of his brother, who dared to stop his passage, telling him that no one was allowed to enter.

"And who dares to issue such orders?" asked the prince, without stopping a moment.

"Madame has done so," said the first *valet de chambre*. "Madame wants to be alone with the remains of her husband."

The prince shrugged his shoulders, and, followed by the legal gentlemen, he walked to the door, which he vainly tried to open.

"I believe that woman has locked the door," said the prince, angrily.

"Yes, sir, madame has locked the door," said the *valet de chambre*; "she does not want to be disturbed in her grief by mere visits of condolence."

"Well, let us leave her, then, to her grief," exclaimed the prince, with a sarcastic smile. "Come, gentlemen, let us attend to our