

THE PEACE OF LUNEVILLE.

CHAPTER XXXV.

JOHANNES MÜLLER.

THE minister, Baron Thugut, was pacing his cabinet in an excited manner. His face, usually so cold and immovable, was painfully agitated to-day; his shaggy white eyebrows were closely contracted, and his eyes were casting angry glances on the dispatch which he had just thrown on his desk, and which a courier from General Melas, in Lombardy, had brought to him a few minutes ago.

"Another battle lost!" he muttered; "another laurel-wreath placed on the defiant head of General Bonaparte! This man will make me mad yet by his impudent good luck. It is dreadful only to think that he was already defeated at Marengo*—so surely defeated that General Melas issued orders for the pursuit of the enemy, and rode to Alessandria to take his supper in the most comfortable manner. That fellow Melas is a jackass, who only scented the roast meat which he was going to have for supper, but not General Desaix, who arrived with his troops in time to snatch victory from our grasp, and to inflict a most terrible defeat upon our triumphant army. All of our generals are short-sighted fools, from that ridiculously-over-rated Archduke Charles down to General Schwarzenberg, and whatever the names of these gentlemen may be—these gentlemen with the golden epaulets, and decorated breasts, and empty heads—I have no confidence in a single one of them. At the moment of danger as well as of victory they regularly lose their senses, and thereby turn our victories into defeats; while they render our checks in the same way only more disastrous and decisive. I am entirely opposed to placing any more archdukes at the head of our armies. Fortunately, I have succeeded in getting rid of Archduke Charles, and I hope that Archduke John, too, will be badly beaten at no distant period, so that we may remove him, like his brother, from his position at the head of his troops. It will never do. Well—" he interrupted himself in his soliloquy, casting an angry glance on his private

*The battle of Marengo was fought on the 14th of June, 1800.

secretary, Hudlitz, who was just entering the room—"well, why do you disturb me without being called for?"

"Pardon me, your excellency," said Hudlitz, humbly, "but your excellency had instructed me to inform you immediately of the arrival of the custodian of the imperial library, whom your excellency had sent for."

"And he is there now?" asked Thugut.

"Yes, your excellency, Mr. Müller, the aulic councillor and custodian of the imperial library is waiting in the anteroom."

"Admit him, then," said Thugut, waving his hand toward the door.

Hudlitz limped out, and a few minutes later the announced visitor appeared on the threshold of the door. He was a little, slender man, with a stooping form, which had not been bent, however, by the burden of years, but by the burden of learning, of night-watches and untiring studies. His head, covered with a pig-tail wig, according to the fashion of that period, was slightly bent forward. His expansive forehead was indicative of the philosophical turn of his mind; his large eyes were beaming with deep feeling; his pleasing, yet not handsome features, were expressive to an almost touching degree, of infinite gentleness and benevolence, and a winning smile was playing constantly on his thin lips.

This smile, however, disappeared now that he felt the small, piercing eyes of the minister resting upon his countenance. Hat in hand, and without uttering a word, he remained standing at the door; he only raised his head a little, and his eyes were fixed on the minister with a calm and proud expression.

"You are the aulic councillor, Johannes Müller?" asked Thugut, after a short pause, in a somewhat harsh voice.

"Yes, I am Johannes Müller," said the latter, and the smile had already returned to his lips. "I thank your excellency for this salutary question."

"What do you mean by that, sir?" asked Thugut, wonderingly. "Why do you call my question salutary?"

"Because it involves a good lesson, your excellency, and because it informs me that they are wrong who, from motives of mistaken benevolence, would persuade me that I was a well-known person, and that everybody in Vienna was familiar with my name. It is always wholesome for an author to be reminded from time to time of his insignificance and littleness, for it preserves him from giving way to pride, and pride is always the first symptom of mental retrogradation."

Thugut fixed his eyes with a sullen air on the countenance of the *savant*.

"Do you want to give me a lesson?" he asked, angrily.

"By no means, your excellency," said Johannes Müller, calmly; "I only wished to mention the reason why I was grateful to you for your question. And now I trust your excellency will permit me the question—to what am I indebted for the honor of being called to your excellency?"

"Well, I wished to make your acquaintance, Mr. Aulic Councillor," said Thugut. "I wished no longer to remain the only inhabitant of Vienna who had not seen the illustrious historian of Switzerland and the author of the 'Fürstenbund.'* You see, sir, I know your works at least, even though I did not know your person."

"And your excellency did not lose any thing by not knowing the latter, for it is a person that is not worth the trouble to become acquainted with. We men of learning are less able to speak with our tongues than with our pens, and our desk alone is our rostrum."

"And there you are a powerful and most impressive orator, Mr. Aulic Councillor!" exclaimed Thugut, in a tone of unaffected and cordial praise.

An air of joyful surprise overspread the gentle face of Johannes Müller, and he cast a glance of heart-felt gratitude on the minister.

Thugut noticed this glance. "You are surprised that I am able to appreciate your merits so correctly and yet suffered years to elapse without inviting you to call on me? I am a poor man, overburdened with business and harassed with the dry details of my administration, and the direction of political affairs leaves me no leisure to be devoted to literature."

"At least not to German literature," said Müller, quickly; "but every one knows your excellency to be a profound connoisseur of oriental languages; and it is well known, too, that you devote a great deal of attention to them, notwithstanding the immense burden of business constantly weighing you down."

Thugut smiled, and his harsh features assumed a milder expression. Johannes Müller, without intending it perhaps, had touched the chord that sounded most sweetly to Thugut's ears; he had flattered him by referring to his profound oriental studies.

"Well," he said, "you see I am taking likewise a lively interest in German literature, for I invited you to come and see me; and you are a German author, and one of the most illustrious at that. Now, sir, let us speak frankly and without circumlocution, as two men of science ought to do. Let us mutually forget our titles and official positions, and chat confidentially with each other. Come, my dear sir, let us sit down in these two arm-chairs and talk like

* "The League of the Princes," one of the celebrated works of Johannes von Müller.

two German gentlemen; that is, frankly and sincerely. Nobody is here to hear us, and I give you my word of honor nobody shall learn a word of what we are going to say to each other. Perfect irresponsibility and impunity for every thing that will be spoken during this interview. Are you content with this, and will you promise me to open your mind freely to me?"

"I promise it, your excellency, and shall reply truthfully and fearlessly to whatever questions you may address to me, provided I am able to tell you the truth."

"Yes, sir," replied Thugut, shrugging his shoulders. "Every thing has two sides, and both are true according to the stand-point from which one is looking at them. You have two sides yourself, sir, and they are contrasting very strangely with each other. You are a native of Switzerland, and yet you depict the Hapsburg princes in your works with more genuine enthusiasm than any of our Austrian historians. You are a republican, and yet you are serving a monarchy, the forms of which seem to agree with you exceedingly well. You belong to the orthodox reformed church, and yet you have written 'The Voyages of the Popes,' and 'The Letters of Two Catholic Prelates.' You are a friend of justice, and yet you have even discovered good and praiseworthy qualities in that tyrannous King of France, Louis XI. Now tell me, sir, which is your true side, and what you really are?"

"I am a man," said Johannes Müller, gently; "I commit errors and have my failings like all men, my heart is vacillating, but not my head. With my head I am standing above all parties, and above all individual feelings; hence I am able to write 'The Voyages of the Popes,' and 'The Letters of Two Catholic Prelates,' although, as your excellency stated, I am a member of the orthodox reformed church; and hence I am able to praise the Hapsburgs and serve a monarchy, although I am a republican. But my heart does not stand above the contending parties; my heart loves mankind, and takes pity on their failings; hence it is able to discover praiseworthy qualities even in Louis XI. of France, for in the *bad* king, it constantly follows the vestiges of the man whom nature created *good and humane*."

"Those are the views of Jean Jacques Rousseau!" exclaimed Thugut, contemptuously; "but these views are inapplicable to the world and to practical life; he who desires to derive advantages from men, first, of all things, must avail himself of their bad qualities and flatter them. To hold intercourse with perfectly virtuous men is tedious and unprofitable; fortunately, however, there are very few of them. I should have no use whatever for such patterns of virtue, and, instead of admiring them, I should try to annihilate

them. He who is to be a welcome tool for me, must either have a stain by which I may catch him at the slightest symptom of disobedience, like an insect tied to a string, and draw him back to me, or he must be so narrow-minded and ignorant as not to understand me fully, and to be unable to divine and penetrate my hidden thoughts and intentions."*

"In that case I must hope never to be a welcome tool of your excellency," said Müller, gravely.

"Are you so sure of your virtue? Are you unconscious of any stain on your character?"

"If principles be virtue, yes; in that case I am sure of my virtue," said Müller, calmly. "I shall never be unfaithful to my principles, and I hope never to have a stain on my conscience."

"Who is able to say that?" exclaimed Thugut, laughing; "many a one has become a murderer, who was unwilling to tread on a worm, and many a one has become a perjurer, who protested solemnly that he would never utter a lie. But a truce to philosophical discussions. I like to go directly at my aim, and to utter my thoughts clearly and precisely. Listen, then, to me, and learn what I want you to do. You are a great mind, an illustrious historian, a very learned man, and you are pining away among the shelves of your imperial library. The greatest historian of the century is nothing but the custodian of a library, and is subordinate to a chief whom he must obey, although the latter is mentally a pigmy compared with him. Such a position is unworthy of your eminent abilities, or tell me, do you feel contented with it?"

Johannes Müller smiled sadly. "Who is able to say that he feels contented?" he asked. "I am, perhaps, a bad custodian, and that may be the reason why the prefect of the Imperial Library, Baron Fenish, is not on good terms with me, and profits by every opportunity to mortify me. A German *savant* never was an independent man, for he generally lacks the most indispensable requisite for an independent position: he generally lacks wealth."

"Then you are poor?" asked Thugut, with flashing eyes.

"I have no other means than my salary. The Muses will adorn a man, but they will not feed him."

"I will deliver you from your subordinate position," said Thugut, hastily; "you shall be independent, free, and rich. You are a fool to bury yourself, with your glory and with your pen, in the dust of old books. Life and history are calling, and offering you their metal tablets to write thereon. Write, then; write the history of our times; render yourself an organ of the age; assist us, by your

*Thugut's own words.—*Vide* Hormayer, "Lebensbilder aus dem Befreiungskrieg," vol. i., p. 322.

writings, in preserving the government and law and order. Defend, with your ringing voice, the actions of the government against the aspersions of this would-be wise, noisy, and miserable people, and you shall have a brilliant position and an annual salary of four thousand florins. You are silent? You are right; consider well what I am proposing to you. I offer you a brilliant position. I will make you the great historian of our times. It affords you always so much pleasure to praise and commend; well, sir, praise and commend what we are doing. Assist me, at least, in mystifying our contemporaries and posterity a little, and I will reward you in the most liberal manner. A good title, a large salary, and we will, moreover, pay your debts."

"Ah! your excellency knows that I have debts, and you believe that to be the string by which you may draw me to you like an insect?" asked Müller, smiling. "To become the historian of our times is an honorable and welcome offer, and I confess to your excellency that I have already finished many a chapter of it in my head, and that I have devoted a great deal of attention to the special history of Austria. It would be agreeable to me if your excellency would permit me to recite to you a few passages from the history of Austria, as I have elaborated it in my head. This will be the best way for your excellency to obtain the conviction whether I am really able to fill so brilliant a position as your excellency has offered me, and whether my services deserve so liberal a salary."

"Well, sir, let me hear a few passages from your 'History of Austria.' I am very anxious to listen to them."

"And your excellency remembers the promise that there is to be irresponsibility and impunity for whatever will be said during this interview?"

"I do, sir, and I swear that your words shall never be repeated to any one, and that I shall only remember them when I have to reward you for them. I swear, besides, that I will quietly and patiently listen to you until you have concluded."

"I thank your excellency," said Johannes Müller, bowing gracefully. "I should like to recite to your excellency now a chapter that I desire to write on the literature of Austria. I turn my eyes back to the days of Maria Theresa and Joseph the Second. Both of them were lovers of literature, art, and science, which both of them promoted and fostered. Joseph expelled darkness from his states and uttered the great words, '*The mind shall be free!*' And the mind became free. It became active and exalted in every art; the poets raised their voices; the learned sent the results of their studies into the world, and labored powerfully for the advancement and enlightenment of the people. The mind tore down the barriers that stupid

fear had raised between Austria and the other German states, and the great poets who had lately arisen in Germany now became, also, the poets and property of Austria. Austria called Lessing and Klopstock *her* poets; like the rest of Germany, she enthusiastically admired Schiller's 'Robbers,' and wept over 'Werther's Sorrows;' she was delighted with the poetry of Wieland; she learned to love the clear and noble mind of Herder, and the writings of Jean Paul admonished her to learn and to reflect. It was a glorious period, your excellency, for a young nation had arisen in Austria, and it was drawing its nourishment from the breasts of a young literature."

"And sucking from these breasts the revolutionary spirit, and the arrogance of independent thinkers," interrupted Thugut, rudely.

Johannes Müller seemed not to have heard him, and continued: "Joseph the Second died; scarcely a decade has passed, and what has this decade made of Austria? The mind has been chained again; the censor with his scissors has taken his stand again by the side of the Austrian boundary-post; and the wall severing Austria from Germany has been reërected. Every thing now has become again suspicious; even the national spirit of the Austrian, even his hatred of foreign oppression, and his hostility to foreign encroachments. In this hatred itself the government sees the possibility of a rising, and a spirit of opposition, for it sees that the people are no longer asleep, but awake and thinking, and thought in itself is even now an opposition. Every manifestation of enthusiasm for a man who has spoken of the freedom and independence of Germany is looked upon with suspicion, and the noblest men are being proscribed and banished, merely because the people love them, and hope and expect great things from them. The people, according to the wishes of government, shall do nothing but sleep, obey, and be silent; the people shall manifest no enthusiasm for any thing; the people shall love nothing, desire nothing, think nothing; the people shall have no heroes, to whom they are attached; for the glory of the heroes might eclipse the emperor, and the shouts of love sound like shouts of insurrection."

"You refer to the Archdukes Charles and John," said Thugut, quietly. "It is true, I have removed Archduke Charles from his command, for his popularity with the army and people is very great, and would have become dangerous to the emperor. We must conquer through tools, and not through heroes; the latter are very unpleasant to deal with, for they do not gratefully receive their reward as a favor, but they impudently claim and take it as a right. The imperial throne must be surrounded by heroes, but these heroes must never eclipse the imperial throne. Pardon this note to your chapter, and proceed."

"The heroes of the sword are cast aside," continued Johannes Müller, "but neither the heroes of thought nor the heroes of literature are spared. The government tries to disgrace and insult literature, because it is unable to assassinate it entirely; it drags literature into the caves of unworthy censors, and mutilates its most beautiful limbs and destroys the most magnificent splendor of its ideas. The government is *afraid* of the mind; hence it desires to kill it. A government, however, may commit many mistakes, but it never ought to show that it is afraid, fear exposing it to ridicule. And if we ought not to weep over the persecutions which the apprehensions of the government have caused to be instituted against literature, we ought to laugh at them. Whole volumes of the most sublime works of Gibbon, Robertson, Hume, and other great historians have been prohibited; and there is not one of our German poets—neither Goethe, nor Schiller, nor Herder, nor Wieland, nor Lessing, nor Jean Paul—whose works are not ostracized in German Austria. Fear and a bad conscience scent everywhere allusions, references, and hints. Hence history is banished from the stage; for the history of the past constantly points with a menacing finger at the sore spots of the present. Shakespeare's 'King Lear' has been prohibited, because the public might believe princes would lose their heads if weighed down by misfortunes. 'Hamlet,' 'Richard the Third,' and 'Macbeth' must not be performed, because people might get accustomed to the dethronement and assassination of emperors and kings. Schiller's 'Mary Stuart' is looked upon as an allusion to Marie Antoinette; 'Wallenstein' and 'Tell' are ostracized, because they might provoke revolutions and military mutinies. The 'Merchant of Venice' must not be performed, because it might give rise to riotous proceedings against the Jews; and in Schiller's 'Love and Intrigue,' President de Kalb has been transformed into a plebeian *viccdomus*, in order to maintain the respect due to the nobility and to the government functionaries. It is true, it is permitted to represent villains and impostors on the stage, but they must never be noblemen; and if men of ideal character are to be brought upon the stage, they must be either princes, counts, or police-directors. For even more sacred than the dignity of the highest classes is the holy police, the great guardian of the government, the great spy watching the people, who are being deprived of every thing; to whom every intellectual enjoyment, every free manifestation of their enthusiasm is forbidden, and who are yet required to deem themselves happy, and that they shall be faithfully attached to their government! If the government enslaves the people, it must expect that these slaves will lose all sense of honor and justice, and willingly sell themselves to him who holds out to them the most glittering offers, and knows

best how to tempt them by golden promises!—I am through, your excellency," said Johannes Müller, drawing a deep breath; "I have recited to you my whole chapter on the literature of Austria, and I thank you for having listened to me so patiently. Now it is for your excellency alone to decide whether you deem me worthy of filling the honorable position you have offered. I am ready to accept it, and to write the history of our times in *this* spirit, and shall be very grateful if your excellency will grant me for this purpose your protection and a salary of four thousand florins."

Thugut looked with an air of pride and disdain into his glowing face.

"My dear sir," he said, after a long pause—"my dear sir, I was mistaken in you, for I believed you to have a clear head and a strong mind, and I perceive now that you are nothing but a weak enthusiast, dreaming of ideal fancies which one day will turn out entirely differently; to become spectres, from which you will shrink back in dismay. You will not always remain the enthusiastic admirer of freedom as at present; and the proud republican will one day, perhaps, be transformed into the obedient servant of a tyrant. You assured me quite haughtily that you had no stain on your conscience; let me tell you, sir, that there is a stain on your character, and I should have profited by it—you are vain. I should not have tried to bribe you with money, but with flattery, and I had been successful. I had too good an opinion of you, however. I believed you had a vigorous mind, capable of comprehending what is necessary and useful, and of preferring the practical and advantageous to the ideal. Although a native of Switzerland, you are a genuine German dreamer, and I hate dreamers. Go, sir, remain custodian of the Imperial Library and complete your catalogues, but never imagine that you will be able with your weak hand to stem the wheel of history and of political affairs; the wheel would only destroy your hand and what little glory you have obtained, and hurl you aside like a crushed dog. Farewell!"

He turned his back upon Johannes Müller, and placed himself at the window until the soft noise of the closing door told him that the historian had left him.

"What a fool!" he said. Then, turning around again—"a genuine German fool! Wanted to lecture me—*me!*"

And, amused by the idea, Thugut burst into loud laughter. He then rang the bell violently, and as soon as the *valet de chambre* made his appearance he ordered him to get the carriage ready for him.

Fifteen minutes later the minister left the chancery of state for the purpose of repairing, as was his custom every evening, to his

garden in the Währinger Street. The streets through which he had to pass were crowded with citizens, who were talking with ill-concealed rage about the fresh defeat of the Austrians at Marengo, and were loudly calling out that Minister Thugut was alone to blame for Austria's misfortunes, and that he was the only obstacle that prevented the emperor from making peace. And the people surrounded the well-known carriage of the minister with constantly-increasing exasperation, and cried in a constantly louder and more menacing tone: "We do not want war! We want peace! peace!"

Thugut was leaning back comfortably on the cushions of his carriage. He seemed not to hear the shouts of the people, and not to deem them worthy of the slightest notice. Only when the tumult increased in violence, and when the incensed people commenced hurling stones and mud at his carriage, the minister rose for a moment in order to look out with an air of profound disdain. He then leaned back on his seat, and muttered, with a glance of indescribable contempt:

"*Canaille!*" *

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THUGUT'S FALL.

TIDINGS of fresh defeats had reached Vienna; more disasters had befallen the army, and the great victory of Marengo had been followed, on the 3d of December, 1800, by the battle of Hohenlinden, in which Moreau defeated the Austrians under Archduke John.

Even Thugut, the immovable and constant prime minister, felt alarmed at so many calamities, and he was generally in a gloomy and spiteful humor.

He felt that there was a power stronger than his will, and this feeling maddened him with anger. He was sitting at his desk, with a clouded brow and closely compressed lips, his sullen eyes fixed on the papers before him, which a courier, just arrived from the headquarters of the army, had delivered to him. They contained evil tidings; they informed him of the immense losses of the Austrians, and of the insolence of the victorious French general, who had only granted the Austrian application for an armistice on condition that the fortresses of Ulm, Ingolstadt and Philippsburg be surrendered to him; and these humiliating terms had been complied with in order to gain time and to concentrate a new army. For Thugut's stubbornness had not been broken yet, and he still obsti-

* Hormayer's "Lebensbilder," vol. i., p. 230.

nately refused to conclude the peace so urgently desired by the whole Austrian people, nay, by the emperor himself.

"No, no, no peace!" he muttered, when he had perused the dispatches. "We will fight on, even though we should be buried under the ruins of Austria! I hate that revolutionary France, and I shall never condescend to extend my hand to it for the purpose of making peace. We will fight on, and no one shall dare to talk to me about peace!"

A low rap at the door leading to the reception-room interrupted his soliloquy, and when he had harshly called out, "Come in," his *valet de chambre* appeared in the door.

"Your excellency," he said, timidly, "Counts Colloredo, Saurau, and Lehrbach have just arrived, and desire to obtain an interview with your excellency."

Not a muscle moved in Thugut's face to betray his surprise, and he ordered the servant in a perfectly calm voice to admit the gentlemen immediately. He then hastily walked to the door for the purpose of meeting them. They entered a few minutes later: first, Count Colloredo, minister of the imperial household; next, Count Saurau, minister of police; and last, Count Lehrbach, minister without portfolio. Thugut surveyed the three dignitaries with a single searching glance. He perceived that good-natured Count Colloredo looked rather frightened; that the ferocious eyes of Count Lehrbach were glistening like those of a tiger just about to lacerate his victim; and that Count Saurau, that diplomatist generally so impenetrable, permitted a triumphant smile to play on his lips. With the sure tact which Thugut never lost sight of, he saw from the various miens of these three gentlemen what had occasioned their call upon him, and his mind was made up at once.

He received them, however, with a pleasant salutation, and took the hand of Count Colloredo in order to conduct him to an arm-chair. Colloredo's hand was cold and trembling, and Thugut said to himself, "He is charged with a very disagreeable message for me, and he is afraid to deliver it."

"Your excellency is doubtless astonished to see us disturb you at so unexpected an hour," said Count Colloredo, in a tremulous voice, when the four gentlemen had taken seats.

"No, I am not astonished," said Thugut, calmly. "You, gentlemen, on the contrary, have only anticipated my wishes. I was just about to invite you to see me for the purpose of holding a consultation, very disastrous tidings having arrived from the headquarters of our army. We have lost a battle at Hohenlinden—Archduke John has been defeated."

"And Moreau has already crossed the Inn and is now advancing

upon Vienna," said Count Lehrbach, with a sneer. "You have made some terrible mistakes in your hopes of victory, minister."

"Yes, indeed, you have made some terrible mistakes, my dear little baron," said Count Saurau, laying particular stress on the last words.

Thugut fixed a laughing look on him. "Why," he said, "how tender we are to-day, and how big your beak has grown, my dear little count! You seem but slightly afflicted by the misfortunes of the empire, for your face is as radiant as that of a young cock that has just driven a rival from its dunghill. But it must have been a very stupid old cock that has condescended to fight with you. Now, my dear Count Colloredo, let us talk about business. We have been defeated at Hohenlinden, and Moreau is advancing upon Vienna. These are two facts that cannot be disputed. But we shall recover from these blows; we shall send a fresh army against Moreau, and it will avenge our previous disasters."

"However, your excellency, that is a mere hope, and we may be disappointed again," replied Colloredo, anxiously. "The emperor, my gracious master, has lost faith in our victories, unless we should have an able and tried general at the head of our forces—a general equally trusted by the army and the nation."

"Let us, then, place such a general at the head of the army," said Thugut, calmly; "let us immediately appoint Archduke Charles commander-in-chief of the Austrian forces."

"Ah, I am glad that you consent to it," exclaimed Colloredo, joyfully, "for the emperor has just instructed me to go to his distinguished brother and to request him in the name of his majesty to resume the command-in-chief."

"Well, he will accept it," said Thugut, smiling, "for commanding and ruling always is a very agreeable occupation; and many a one would be ready and willing to betray his benefactor and friend, if he thereby could acquire power and distinction. Are you not, too, of this opinion, my dear little Count Saurau? Ah, you do not know how tenderly I am devoted to you. You are the puppet which I have raised and fostered, and which I wanted to transform into a man according to my own views. I am not to blame if you have not become a man, but always remained only a machine to be directed by another hand. Beware, my dear, of ever falling into unskilful or bad hands, for then you would be lost, notwithstanding your elasticity and pliability. But you have got a worthy friend there at your side, noble, excellent Count Lehrbach. Do you know, my dear Count Lehrbach, that there are evil-disposed persons who often tried to prejudice me against you, who wanted to insinuate you were a rival of mine, and were notoriously anxious to supplant

me and to become prime minister in my place? Truly, these anxious men actually went so far as to caution me against you."

"And did not your excellency make any reply to them?" asked Count Lehrbach, laughing.

"*Parbleu*, you ask me whether I have made a reply to them or not?" said Thugut. "I have always replied to those warning voices: 'I need not break Count Lehrbach's neck; he will attend to that himself. I like to push a man forward whom I am able to hang at any time.'"*

"But you have not taken into consideration that the man whom you are pushing forward might reach back and afford you the same pleasure which you had in store for him," exclaimed Lehrbach, laughing boisterously.

"Yes, that is true," said Thugut, artlessly; "I ought to have been afraid of you, after all, and to perceive that you have got a nail in your head on which one may be hanged very comfortably. But, my friends, we detain Count Colloredo by our jokes, and you are aware that he must hasten to the archduke in order to beg him to become our commander-in-chief and to sign a treaty of peace with France. For I believe we will make peace at all events."

"We shall make peace provided we fulfil the conditions which Bonaparte has exacted," said Count Colloredo, timidly.

"Ah, he has exacted conditions, and these conditions have been addressed to the emperor and not to myself?" asked Thugut.

"The dispatches were addressed to me, the minister of the imperial household," said Count Colloredo, modestly. "The first of these conditions is that Austria and France make peace without letting England participate in the negotiations."

"And the second condition is beaming already on Count Lehrbach's forehead," said Thugut, calmly. "Bonaparte demands that I shall withdraw from the cabinet, as my dismissal would be to him a guaranty of the pacific intentions of Austria. † Am I mistaken?"

"You are not; but the emperor, gratefully acknowledging the long and important services your excellency has rendered to the state, will not fulfil this condition and incur the semblance of ingratitude.

"Austria and my emperor require a sacrifice of me, and I am ready to make it," said Thugut, solemnly. "I shall write immediately to his majesty the emperor and request him to permit me to withdraw from the service of the state without delay."

Count Colloredo sighed mournfully; Count Saurau smiled, and Count Lehrbach laughed in Thugut's face with the mien of a hyena.

* Thugut's own words.—Hormayer's "Lebensbilder," vol. i., p. 332.

† Häusser's "History of Germany," vol. ii., p. 324.

"And do you know who will be your successor?" asked the latter.

"My dear sir, I shall have no successor, only a miserable imitator, and you will be that imitator," said Thugut, proudly. "But I give you my word that this task will not be intrusted to you for a long while. I shall now draw up my request to the emperor, and I beg you, gentlemen, to deliver it to his majesty."

Without saying another word he went to his desk, hastily wrote a few lines on a sheet of paper, which he then sealed and directed.

"Count Colloredo," he said, "be kind enough to hand this letter to the emperor."

Count Colloredo took it with one hand, and with the other he drew a sealed letter from his bosom.

"And here, your excellency," he said—"here I have the honor to present to you his majesty's reply. The emperor, fully cognizant of your noble and devoted patriotism, was satisfied in advance that you would be ready to sacrifice yourself on the altar of the country, and, however grievous the resolution, he was determined to accept the sacrifice. The emperor grants your withdrawal from the service of the state; and Count Louis Cobenzl, who is to set out within a few hours for Luneville, in order to open there the peace conference with the brother of the First Consul, Joseph Bonaparte, will take along the official announcement of this change in the imperial cabinet. Count Lehrbach, I have the honor to present to you, in the name of the emperor, this letter, by which his majesty appoints you minister of the interior."

He handed to Count Lehrbach a letter, which the latter hastily opened and glanced over with greedy eyes.

"And you, my dear little Count Saurau?" asked Thugut, compassionately. "Have they not granted you any share whatever in the spoils?"

"Yes, they have; I have received the honorable commission to communicate to the good people of Vienna the joyful news that Baron Thugut has been dismissed," said Count Saurau; "and I shall now withdraw in order to fulfil this commission."

He nodded sneeringly to Thugut, bowed respectfully to Count Colloredo, and left the minister's cabinet.

"I am avenged," he muttered, while crossing the anteroom; "henceforward the shipbuilder's son will call me no longer his 'dear little count.'"

"And I shall withdraw, too," said Count Lehrbach, with a scornful smile. "I shall withdraw in order to make all necessary preparations, so that my furniture and horses can be brought here tomorrow to the building of the chancery of state. For I suppose,

Baron Thugut, you will move out of this house in the course of to-day?"

"Yes, I shall, and you will withdraw now, sir," said Thugut, dismissing the count with a haughty wave of his hand.

Count Lehrbach went out laughing, and Count Colloredo remained alone with Thugut.

"And you," asked Thugut, "do not you wish to take leave of me by telling me something that might hurt my feelings?"

"I have to tell you a great many things, but nothing that will hurt your feelings," said Colloredo, gently. "First of all things, I must beg you not to deprive me of your friendship and advice, but to assist me as heretofore. I need your advice and your help more than ever, and shall do nothing without previously ascertaining your will."

"The emperor will not permit it," said Thugut, gloomily. "He will require you to break off all intercourse with me."

"On the contrary," whispered Colloredo, "the emperor desires you always to assist him and myself by your counsels. The emperor desires you to be kind enough to call every day upon me in order to consider with me the affairs of the day, and there, accidentally of course, you will meet his majesty, who wants to obtain the advice of your experience and wisdom. You will remain minister, but incognito."

A flash of joy burst forth from Thugut's eyes, but he quickly suppressed it again.

"And shall I meet in your house sometimes your wife, the beautiful Countess Victoria?" he asked.

"Victoria implores you, through my mouth, to trust her and never to doubt of her friendship. I beg you to receive the same assurance as far as I am concerned. You have rendered both of us so happy, my dear baron; you were the mediator of a marriage in which both of us, Victoria as well as myself, have found the highest bliss on earth, and never shall we cease to be grateful to you for it; nor shall we ever be able or willing to do without your advice and assistance. You are our head, we are your arms, and the head commanding the arms, we shall always obey you. Victoria implores you to tell her any thing you desire, so that she may give you forthwith a proof of her willingness to serve you. She has charged me to ask you to do so as a proof of your friendship."

"Well," said Thugut, laughing, "I accept your offer, as well as that of your beautiful wife Victoria. Count Lehrbach has been appointed minister and he wants even to move to-morrow into the chancery of state. We will let him move in early in the morning, but, in the course of the day, the emperor will do well to send him

his dismissal, for Count Lehrbach is unworthy of being his majesty's minister of state. His hand is stained with the blood which was shed at Rastadt, and a minister's hand must be clean."

"But whom shall we appoint minister in Lehrbach's place?"

"Count Louis Cobenzl, for his name will offer the best guaranty of our pacific intentions toward France."

"But Count Cobenzl is to go to Luneville to attend the peace conference."

"Let him do so, and until his return let Count Trautmannsdorf temporarily discharge the duties of his office."

"Ah, that is true, that is a splendid idea!" exclaimed Count Colloredo, joyfully. "You are a very sagacious and prudent statesman, and I shall hasten to lay your advice before the emperor. You may rest assured that every thing shall be done in accordance with your wishes. Lehrbach remains minister until to-morrow at noon; he then receives his dismissal, Count Louis Cobenzl will be appointed his successor, and Count Trautmannsdorf will temporarily discharge the duties of the office until Cobenzl's return from Luneville. Shall it be done in this manner?"

"Yes, it shall," said Thugut, almost sternly.

"But this does not fulfil Victoria's prayer," said the count, anxiously. "I am able to attend to these matters, but Victoria also wants to give you a proof of her friendship."

"Well, I ask her to prepare a little joke for me and you," replied Thugut. "Count Lehrbach will move early to-morrow morning with his whole furniture into the chancery of state. I beg Victoria to bring it about that he must move out to-morrow evening with his whole furniture, like a martin found in the dove-cote."*

"Ah, that will be a splendid joke," said Count Colloredo, laughing, "and my dear Victoria will be happy to afford you this little satisfaction. I am able to predict that Count Lehrbach will be compelled to move out to-morrow evening. But now, my dearest friend, I must hasten to Archduke Charles, who, as you are aware, is pouting on one of his estates. I shall at once repair thither, and be absent from Vienna for two days. Meantime, you will take care of Victoria as a faithful friend."

"I shall take care of her if the countess will permit me to do so," said Thugut, smiling, and accompanying Count Colloredo to the door.

His eyes followed him for a long while with an expression of haughty disdain.

* Thugut's wishes were fulfilled. Count Lehrbach lost on the very next day his scarcely-obtained portfolio, and he was compelled to remove the furniture which, in rude haste he had sent to the chancery of state in the morning, in the course of the same evening.—Vide Hormayer's "Lebensbilder," vol. i., p. 330.

"The fools remain," he said, "and I must go. But no, I shall not go! Let the world believe me to be a dismissed minister, I remain minister after all. I shall rule through my creatures, Colloredo and Victoria. I remain minister until I shall be tired of all these miserable intrigues, and retire in order to live for myself."*

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FANNY VON ARNSTEIN.

THE young Baroness Fanny von Arnstein had just finished her morning toilet and stepped from her dressing-room into her boudoir, in order to take her chocolate there, solitary and alone as ever. With a gentle sigh she glided into the arm-chair, and instead of drinking the chocolate placed before her in a silver breakfast set on the table, she leaned her head against the back of her chair and dreamily looked up to the ceiling. Her bosom heaved profound sighs from time to time, and the ideas which were moving her heart and her soul ever and anon caused a deeper blush to mantle her cheeks; but it quickly disappeared again, and was followed by an even more striking pallor.

She was suddenly startled from her musings by a soft, timid rap at the door leading to the reception-room.

"Good Heaven!" she whispered, "I hope he will not dare to come to me so early, and without being announced."

The rapping at the door was renewed. "I cannot, will not receive him," she muttered; "it will be better not to be alone with him any more. I will bolt the door and make no reply whatever."

She glided with soft steps across the room to the door, and was just about to bolt it, when the rapping resounded for the third time, and a modest female voice asked:

"Are you there, baroness, and may I walk in?"

"Ah, it is only my maid," whispered the baroness, drawing a deep breath, as though an oppressive burden were removed from her breast, and she opened the door herself.

* Thugut really withdrew definitely from the political stage, but secretly he retained his full power and authority, and Victoria de Poutet-Colloredo, the influential friend of the Empress Theresia, constantly remained his faithful adherent and confidante. All Vienna, however, was highly elated by the dismissal of Thugut, who had so long ruled the empire in the most arbitrary manner. An instance of his system is the fact that, on his withdrawal from the cabinet, there were found one hundred and seventy unopened dispatches and more than two thousand unopened letters. Thugut only perused what he believed to be worth the trouble of being read, and to the remainder he paid no attention whatever.—"Lebensbilder," vol. i., p. 327.

"Well, Fanchon," she asked, in her gentle, winning voice, "what do you want?"

"Pardon me, baroness," said the maid, casting an inquisitive look around the room, "the baron sent for me just now; he asked me if you had risen already and entered your boudoir, and when I replied in the affirmative, the baron gave me a message for you, with the express order, however, not to deliver it until you had taken your chocolate and finished your breakfast. I see now that I must not yet deliver it; the breakfast is still on the table just as it was brought in."

"Take it away; I do not want to eat any thing," said the baroness, hastily. "And now Fanchon, tell me your errand."

Fanchon approached the table, and while she seized the silver salver, she cast a glance of tender anxiety on her pale, beautiful mistress.

"You are eating nothing at all, baroness," she said, timidly; "for a week already I have had to remove the breakfast every morning in the same manner; you never tasted a morsel of it, and the *valet de chambre* says that you hardly eat any thing at the dinner-table either; you will be taken ill, baroness, if you go on in this manner, and—"

"Never mind, dear Fanchon," her mistress interrupted her with a gentle smile, "I have hardly any appetite, it is true, but I do not feel unwell, nor do I want to be taken ill. Let us say no more about it, and tell me the message the baron intrusted to you."

"The baron wished me to ask you if you would permit him to pay you immediately a visit, and if you would receive him here in your boudoir."

The baroness started, and an air of surprise overspread her features. "Tell the baron that he will be welcome, and that I am waiting for him," she said then, calmly. But so soon as Fanchon had withdrawn, she whispered: "What is the meaning of all this? What is the reason of this unusual visit? Oh, my knees are trembling, and my heart is beating so violently, as though it wanted to burst. Why? What have I done, then? Am I a criminal, who is afraid to appear before her judge?"

She sank back into her arm-chair and covered her blushing face with her hands. "No," she said, after a long pause, raising her head again, "no, I am no criminal, and my conscience is guiltless. I am able to raise my eyes freely to my husband and to my God. So far, I have honestly struggled against my own heart, and I shall struggle on in the same manner. I—ah! he is coming," she interrupted herself when she heard steps in the adjoining room, and her eyes were fixed with an expression of anxious suspense on the door.