

to send the women home, and instead of that, they remain here and sing a plaintive hymn."

"General, the women persist in their request. They persist in their demand for an interview with your excellency in order to hear from your own lips whether it is really impossible for them to obtain a reprieve—a pardon for Palm. They declare they will not leave the place until they have spoken to your excellency, even should you cause your cannon to be pointed against them."

"Ah, bah! I shall not afford them the pleasure of becoming martyrs," exclaimed St. Hilaire, sullenly. "Come, I will put an end to the whole affair. I will myself go down and send them home."

He beckoned his adjutant to follow him, and went with hasty steps down into the market-place, and appeared in the midst of the women.

The hymn died away, but the women did not rise from their knees; they only turned their eyes, which had hitherto been raised to heaven, to the general, and extended their folded hands toward him.

At this moment a dusty travelling-coach drove through the dense crowd on the main street, and entered the market-place to stop in front of the large hotel situated there. A pale young woman leaned out of the carriage, and looked wonderingly at the strange spectacle presented to her eyes.

The kneeling women, who filled the whole market-place, took no notice of the carriage; they did not think of opening their ranks to let it pass; it was, therefore, compelled to halt and wait.

The pale young woman, as if feeling that what had caused all the women here to kneel down must concern her, too, hastily alighted from the carriage and approached the kneeling women.

All at once she heard a loud and imperious voice asking: "What do these ladies want to see me for? You applied for an interview with me: here I am! What do you want?"

"Mercy!" shouted hundreds and hundreds of voices. "Delay of the execution! Mercy for Palm!"

A piercing, terrible cry resounded from the lips of the pale young traveller; she hurried toward the general as if she had wings on her feet.

A murmur of surprise arose from the ranks of the women; they perceived instinctively that something extraordinary was about to occur; their hearts comprehended that this pale young woman, who now stood before the general with flaming eyes and panting breast, must be closely connected with the poor prisoner. Every one of them held her breath in order to hear her voice and understand her words.

"They ask for mercy for Palm?" she asked, in a voice in which her whole soul was vibrating. "They speak of execution? Then you are going to murder him? You have sentenced him infamously and wickedly?"

And while putting these questions to the general, her eyes pierced his face as though they were two daggers.

"Pray choose your words more carefully," said the general, harshly; "the court-martial has sentenced the traitor; hence, he will not be murdered, but punished for the crime he has committed. And for this reason," he added, in a louder voice, turning to the women, "for this reason I am unable to grant your request. The court-martial has pronounced the sentence, and it is not in my power to annul it. The Emperor Napoleon alone could do so if he were here. But as he is in Paris, and consequently cannot be reached, the law must take its course. Palm will be shot at two o'clock this afternoon!"

"Shot!" ejaculated the young woman; for a moment she tottered as if she were about to faint, but then she courageously overcame her emotion, and stretching out her arms to the women, exclaimed: "Pray with me, my sisters, that I may be permitted to see Palm and bid him farewell! I am his wife, and have come to die with him!"

And like a broken lily she sank down at the general's feet. The mass of the women was surging as if a sudden gust of wind had moved the waves; murmurs and sighs, sobs and groans, filled the air, and were the only language, the only prayer the deeply-moved women were capable of.

The general bent down to Anna and raised her. "Madame," he said, so loudly as to be heard by the other women, "madame, your prayer is granted. The only favor for which the prisoner asked was to see you before his death, and we granted it to him. Follow, therefore, my adjutant: he will bring you to him. Palm is waiting for you!"

"Ah, I knew very well that he was waiting for me, and that God would lead me to him in time!" exclaimed Anna, raising her radiant eyes toward heaven.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE LAST HOUR.

PALM had returned to his cell without uttering a complaint, a reproach. Nothing in his bearing betrayed his profound grief, his intense indignation. He knew that neither his complaints nor his

reproaches were able to change his fate, and consequently he wanted to bear it like a man.

He greeted Balthasar with a touching smile; the jailer received him at the door of his cell, and concealed no longer the tears which filled his eyes.

"My poor friend," said Palm, kindly, "then you already knew what was in store for me, and it cut you to the quick to see me so merry and unconcerned! Well, now you may accept my gift, for now I shall be free, so free that no shackles and chains will ever be able to hold me again. And you promised me not to reject my gift when I should be restored to liberty. I have got it, my friend,—take my present, therefore!"

He took the breastpin from the table and handed it to the jailer. The latter received it with a scarcely suppressed groan, and when he bent down to kiss the hand which had given it to him, a scalding tear fell from his eyes on Palm's hand.

"Oh," said Palm, feelingly, "I gave you only a small trinket, and you return to me a diamond for it! I thank you, my friend; I know you will pray for me in my last moments. Now leave me alone for an hour, for I must collect my thoughts and consult with God about what is in store for me. Are you allowed to give me pen and ink?"

"I have already placed writing-materials in the drawer of your table," said Balthasar, in a low voice, "for all prisoners like you have the right to draw up their last will for their family, and I solemnly swear to you that I will forward what you are going to write to its address."

"I thank you, my friend; leave me alone, then, so that I may write. But listen! Do not go too far away; remain in the corridor so that you can open the door to her as soon as *she* comes."

"*She!*" asked the jailer. "Who is it?"

Palm hesitated; he was unable to utter the word at once, for the tears arose from his heart and paralyzed his tongue. "My wife!" he said, painfully, at last. "Go and await her, for I am sure she will come!"

He motioned Balthasar to withdraw, and then sat down, weary and exhausted, in his cane-chair. For a moment he was overwhelmed by the whole misery of his position, and his grief rolled like an avalanche on his poor heart. He dropped his head on his breast; his arms hung down heavy and powerless, and a few tears, as large as those of children, and burning like fire, rolled over his cheeks. But this did not last long, for these scalding drops aroused him from the stupor of his grief.

He raised his head again and dried the tears on his cheeks. "I

have no time to spare for weeping," he said to himself in a low voice; "my hours are numbered, and I must write to my poor Anna my will for her and my children!"

He took from the drawer the writing-materials which Balthasar had kindly placed there, and took a seat at the table in order to write. He placed his chair, however, in such a manner that he was able to see the door of his cell, and frequently, while writing, raised his eyes from the paper and fixed them anxiously on the door.

Now he really heard approaching steps, and the key was put into the lock.

Palm laid his pen aside and rose.

The door opened—Anna entered. She glided toward him with a heavenly smile; he clasped her in his arms, and, kissing her head which she had laid on his breast, whispered: "God bless you for having come to me! I knew that I should not look for you in vain!"

The jailer stood at the open door and wept. His sobs reminded Palm of his presence.

"Balthasar," he said, imploringly, and pointing his hand at Anna who was still reposing on his breast, "Balthasar, I am sure you will leave me alone with her, my friend?"

"I have received stringent orders never to leave prisoners under sentence of death alone with others," murmured Balthasar. "They might easily furnish arms or poison to them; that is what my superiors told me."

Palm placed his hand on his wife's head as if going to take a solemn oath. "Balthasar," he said, "by this sacred and beloved head I swear to you that I shall not commit suicide. Let my murderers take my life. Will you now leave me alone with her?"

"I will, for it would be cruel not to do so," said Balthasar. "God alone ought to hear what you have to say to each other! I give you half an hour; then the officers and the priest will come, and it will no longer be in my power to keep this door locked. But until then nobody shall disturb you."

He left the cell and locked the door.

Man and wife were alone now; they had half an hour for their last interview, their last farewell.

There are sacred moments which, like the wings of the butterfly, are injured by the slightest touch of the human hand, and which, therefore, must not be approached; there are words which no human ear ought to listen to, and tears which God alone ought to count.

Half an hour later the jailer opened the door and reëntered. Palm and his wife stood in the middle of the cell, and, encircling each other with one arm, looked calmly, serenely, and smilingly at each other like two spirits removed from earth.

The paper on which Palm had written was no longer on the table; it reposed now on Anna's heart; the golden wedding-ring which Palm had worn on his finger had disappeared, and glittered now on Anna's hand near her own wedding-ring.

"The priest is there," said the jailer, "and the soldiers, too, are already in the corridor. It is high time."

"Go, then, Anna," said Palm, withdrawing his arm from her neck.

But she clung with a long scream of despair to his breast. "You want me to live, then?" she exclaimed, reproachfully. "You want to sever our paths? Oh, be merciful, my beloved; remember that we have sworn at the altar to share life and death with each other! Let me die with you, therefore!"

"No," he said, tenderly and firmly. "No, Anna, you shall live with me! My children are my life and my heart; they will live with you. Every morning I shall greet you from the eyes of our children, and when they embrace you, think it were *my* arms encircling you. Live for our children, Anna; teach them to love their father who, it is true, will be no longer with them, but whose soul will ever surround you and them! Swear to me that you will live and bear your fate firmly and courageously!"

"I swear it," she said in a low voice.

"And now, beloved Anna, leave me! My last moments belong to God!"

He kissed her lips, which were as cold as marble, and led her gently to the door.

Anna now raised her head in order to fix a long, last look on him. "You want me to live," she said; "I shall do so long as it pleases God. I bid you, therefore, farewell, but not forever, nor even for a very long while. All of us are nothing but poor wanderers whom God has sent on earth to perform their pilgrimage. But at length He opens to us again the doors of our paternal house and calls us home! I long for my return home, my beloved! Farewell, then, until we meet again!"

"Farewell until we meet again!"

They shook hands once more, and gazed at each other with a smile which lighted up their faces like the last beam of the setting sun.

Then Anna, walking backward in order to see him still, and to engrave his image deeply on her heart, crossed the threshold as the jailer hastily closed the door behind her.

Palm heard a heart-rending cry outside; then every thing was silent.

A few minutes later the door opened again, and a Catholic priest entered.

"My wife has fainted, I suppose?" asked Palm.

"No, a sudden vertigo seemed to seize her when the door closed, but she overcame her weakness and hurried away. May the Lord God have mercy on her!"

"He will," said Palm, confidently.

"May He have mercy on you, too, my son," said the priest. "Let us pray; open to me your soul and your heart."

"My soul and my heart lie open before God; He will see and judge them," said Palm. "I do not belong to your church, my father; I am a Protestant. But if you will pray with me, do so; if you will give me your blessing, I shall thankfully accept it, for a dying man always likes to feel a blessing-hand on his forehead."

The clock struck two, and now the drums commenced rolling, and the death-knell resounded from the church-steeple. An awful silence reigned in the whole city of Braunau. All the houses were closed; all the windows were covered.

Nobody wanted to witness the dreadful spectacle which the despotism of the foreign tyrant was preparing for the citizens of Braunau. The women and children had returned to their houses, and were kneeling and praying in their darkened rooms. The men concealed themselves in order not to show their shame and rage.

Nobody was, therefore, on the street when the terrible procession approached. A miserable cart rumbled along in the midst of soldiers and *gens-d'armes*. Palm was seated in this cart, backward, and his hands tied on his back; opposite him sat the priest, holding the crucifix in his hand and muttering prayers.

The German inhabitants of Braunau had done well to close their doors and cover their windows, for the disgrace and humiliation of Germany were at this hour rumbling through their streets.

But not all of them had been so happy as to be permitted to stay at home. The will of the foreign despot had forbidden it, and the members of the municipality and other authorities, in their full official robes, had repaired to the place of execution.

There they stood, dumb with shame, astonishment, and horror, with downcast eyes, like slaves passing under the yoke.

About a hundred spectators stood behind them, but not persons to whom executions are merely a piquant spectacle, a rare amusement, but men with sombre, angry eyes—men who had come to swear secretly in their hearts, on this spot where the last remnant of German honor was to bleed to death, a terrible oath of vengeance to the foreign despot. The blood of the martyr was to stir up their enthusiasm for the long-deferred, sacred deed of atonement.

Palm had alighted from the cart, and walked with rapid, reso-

lute steps to the spot which was indicated to him, and behind which an open grave was yawning.

Refusing the assistance of the provost, he himself took off his coat and threw it into the open grave. He then turned his eyes to the side where the authorities of Braunau and his German brethren were standing.

"Friends," he said, aloud, "may my death be a blessing to you; may my blood not be shed in vain, but make you—"

A loud roll of the drum drowned his words.

The general waved his hand; six guns were discharged.

Palm sank to the ground, but he rose again. Only one bullet had struck him; the blood was gushing from his heart, but he still lived.

Another file of soldiers stepped forward, and once more six guns were discharged at him.

But the soldiers, who were accustomed to aim steadily in battle, had here, where they were to be executioners, averted their eyes, and their hands, which never had trembled in battle, were trembling now.

Palm rose again from the ground, a panting, bleeding victim, and seemed, with his uplifted and blood-stained hands, to implore Heaven to avenge him on his murderers.

A third volley resounded.

This time Palm did not rise again. He was dead! God had received his soul. His bleeding remains lay on the German soil, as if to fertilize it for the day of retribution.

CHAPTER LX.

PRUSSIA'S DECLARATION OF WAR.

KING FREDERICK WILLIAM III. had not yet left his cabinet to-day. He had retired thither early in the morning in order to work. Maps, plans of battles, and open books lay on the tables, and the king sat in their midst with a musing, careworn air.

A gentle rap at the door aroused him from his meditations. The king raised his head and listened. The rap was repeated.

"It is Louisa," he said to himself, and a smile overspread his features as he hastened to the door and opened it.

He had not been mistaken. It was the queen who stood before the door. Smiling, graceful, and merry as ever, she entered the cabinet and gave her hand to her husband.

"Are you angry with me, my dear friend, because I have disturbed you?" she asked, tenderly. "But, it seemed to me, you had

worked enough for the state to-day and might devote a quarter of an hour to your Louisa. You know whenever I do not see you in the morning, my day lacks its genuine sunshine, and is gray and gloomy. For this reason, as you have not yet come to me to-day, I come to you. Good-morning, my king and husband!"

"Good-morning, my queen!" said the king, imprinting a kiss on the white, transparent forehead of the queen. "Add to it, good-day, my dear Louisa, for a wish from so beautiful and noble lips I hope will exorcise all evil spirits, and cause this day to become a really good one. I hope much from it."

The king's forehead, which the queen's appearance had smoothed a little, became clouded again, and he assumed a grave and sombre air.

The queen saw it, and gently placed her hand on his shoulder.

"You are downcast, my friend," she said, affectionately. "Will you not let me have my share of your grief? Is not your wife entitled to it? Or will you cruelly deprive me of what is my right? Speak to me, my husband. Let me share your grief. Confide to me what is the meaning of those clouds on your noble brow, and what absorbs your soul to such an extent that you even forgot me and your children, and deprived us of your kind morning greeting."

But even these tender words of the queen were unable to light up the king's forehead; he avoided meeting her beautiful, lustrous eyes, which were fixed on him inquiringly, and averted his head.

"Government affairs," he said, gravely. "Nothing interesting and worthy of being communicated to my queen. Let us not embitter thereby the happy minutes of your presence. Let us sit down."

The queen knew her husband's peculiarities to perfection. She knew that no one was allowed to contradict him whenever he assumed this forbidding tone, and that it was best then not to take any notice of his moroseness, or, if possible, to dispel it.

She, therefore, followed him silently to the sofa and sat down, inviting him, with a charming smile, to take a seat by her side.

The king did so, and Louisa leaned her head tenderly against his shoulder. "How sweet it is to lean one's weak head against the breast of a strong man!" she said. "It seems to me, as long as I am near you, no misfortune can befall me, and I cling to you trustingly and happily, like the ivy covering the strong oak."

"The comparison is not correct," said the king. "Ivy does not bloom, nor is it fragrant. But you are a peerless rose, the queen of flowers!"

"What! my king condescends to flatter me?" said the queen, laughing merrily, while she raised her head from the king's shoul-

def and looked archly at him. "But, my king, your comparison is not correct either. Roses have thorns, and wound whosoever touches them. But I would not pain and wound you for all the riches of the world! Were I a rose, I should shake off all my fragrant leaves to make of them a pillow on which your noble head should repose from the toils and vexations of the day, and on which you should find dreams of a happy future."

"Only *dreams* of a happy future," said Frederick William, musingly. "You may be right; our hopes for a happy future may be but a dream."

"No," exclaimed the queen, raising her radiant eyes toward heaven, "I firmly believe in the happiness of our future; I believe and know that God has selected you, the most generous and guiltless of princes, to break the arrogance of that daring tyrant, who would like to chain the whole world to his despotic yoke, and who, in his ambitious thirst after conquest, raises his hands against the crowns of all the sovereigns. *Your* crown he shall not touch! It is the rock on which his power will be wrecked, and at the feet of which his proud waves will be broken. Prussia will avenge the disgrace of Germany; I am sure of it, and for this reason I am so happy and confident since you, my king and husband, have cast off the mask of that false friendship for the tyrant, and have shown him your open, angry, and hostile face. A heavy cloud weighed down my heart so long as we still continued mediating, occupying neutral ground, trying to maintain peace, and hoping to derive advantages from that man so devoid of honesty, sincerity, and fidelity."

"Still, who knows whether I was right, after all, in taking such a course!" sighed the king. "Peace is a very precious thing, and the people need it for their prosperity."

"But your people do not want peace!" exclaimed the queen. "They are enthusiastic and clamorous for war, and long for nothing so much as to see an end put to this deplorable incertitude. You have now caused your army to be placed on the war footing, and all faces have already brightened up, and all hearts feel encouraged; announce to your people that you will declare war against the usurper, and all Prussia will rise jubilantly and hasten to the battlefield, as if it were a festival of victory."

"You refer to the army, but not to the people," said the king. "It is true, the army is ready for the fray, and it is satisfied also that it will conquer. But who can tell whether it may not be mistaken? It is long since we have waged war, while the armies of Napoleon are experienced and skilled, and ready to take the field at any moment."

"The army of Frederick the Great, the army of my king has

nothing to fear from the hordes of the barbarian!" exclaimed the queen, with flaming eyes.

The king shrugged his shoulders. "I stand in need of allies," he said; "alone I am not able to sustain such a struggle. If the courts of Northern Germany should comply with my invitation, if they should ally themselves with me, finally, if Austria should accept my proposition and unite with me, in that case I should hope for success. All this will be decided to-day, for I am now looking for the return of two important envoys—for the return of Hardenberg, who has delivered my propositions in Vienna, and for the return of Lombard, whom I have sent to the smaller German courts to offer them an offensive and defensive alliance in opposition to Napoleon's Confederation of the Rhine. I confess to you, Louisa, I await their replies tremblingly; I cannot think of any thing else; this feeling has haunted me all day, and now you know why I even forgot to greet you this morning. I intended not to betray the uneasiness filling my heart, but who is able to withstand such an enchantress as you? Now you know every thing!"

"And do you know already the new misdeed which the tyrant has committed?" asked the queen. "Do you know that he is ruling and commanding on German soil as if Germany were nothing but a French province, and all princes nothing but his vassals? In a time of peace he has caused a German citizen to be dragged from his house; in a German state he has ordered a court-martial to meet, and this court-martial has dared to pass sentence of death upon a German citizen merely because he, a German bookseller, had circulated a pamphlet deploring Germany's degradation!"

"I have already known it for three days," said the king, gloomily. "I concealed it from you in order not to grieve you."

"But public opinion now-a-days conceals nothing," exclaimed Louisa, ardently, "and public opinion throughout Germany cries for vengeance against the tyrant who is murdering German honor and German laws in this manner! In every city subscriptions have been opened for Palm's family, for his young wife and his little girls. The poor as well as the rich hasten to offer, according to their means, gifts of love to the widow and orphans of the martyr; and believe me, the money which Germany is now collecting for Palm's family will be dragon's seeds from which armed warriors will spring one day, and Germany's vengeance will blossom from this blood so unjustly shed. Permit me, my friend, to contribute my share to these seeds of love and vengeance. They brought to me this morning a list on which the most distinguished families had subscribed considerable sums for Palm's family, and I was asked whether my ladies of honor and the members of my household would

be allowed to subscribe for the same purpose. I should like to allow it and do even more—I should like to contribute my mite, too, to the subscriptions. Will you permit me to do so?"

"They will take that again for a demonstration," said the king, uneasily; "they will say we were stirring up strife and discontent among the Germans. I believe it would be prudent not to make a public demonstration prematurely, but to wait and keep quiet till the right time has come."

"And when will the right time come, if it has not come now?" exclaimed the queen, mournfully. "Remember, my beloved husband, all the mortifications and humiliations which you have received of late at the hands of this despot, and which, in your noble and generous resignation, did not resent in order to preserve peace to your people. Remember that he alone prevailed on you to occupy Hanover, that he warranted its possession to you, and then when your troops had occupied it, applied secretly, and without saying a word to you, to England, offering to make peace with her by proposing to restore Hanover to her."

"It was a grievous insult," exclaimed the king, with unusual vivacity; "I replied to it by placing my army on the war footing."

"But our armies remain inactive," said the queen, sadly, "while General Knobelsdorf is negotiating for peace with Bonaparte in Paris."

"He is to negotiate until I am fully prepared," said Frederick William—"until I know what German princes will be for and against me. Above all, it is necessary to know our forces in order to mature our plans. Hence, I must know who is on my side."

"God is on your side, and so is Germany's honor," exclaimed the queen; "moreover, you may safely rely at least on one faithful friend."

"You refer to the Emperor of Russia?" asked the king. "True, I received yesterday a letter from the emperor, in which he announced that he would come to my assistance with an army of seventy thousand men under his personal command, as a faithful friend and neighbor, and appear in time on the battle-field, no matter whether it be on the Rhine or beyond it."

"Oh, the noble and faithful friend!" exclaimed the queen, joyfully.

"Yes," said the king, thoughtfully, "he promises a great deal, but Russian promises march more rapidly than Russian armies. I am afraid events will carry us along so resistlessly that we cannot wait until the Emperor of Russia has arrived with his army. As soon as Napoleon suspects that my preparations are meant for him, he will himself declare war against me. He is always prepared;

his army is always ready for war. Whatever he may be, we cannot deny that he is a brave and great general; and I do not know," added the king, in a low voice, "I do not know whether we have got a general able to cope with him. Oh, Louisa, I envy your courage, your reliance on our cause. Do you feel then, no uneasiness whatever?"

"Uneasiness?" exclaimed the queen, with a proud smile. "I believe and feel convinced that now only one thing remains to be done. We must struggle with the monster, we must crush it, and then only will we be allowed to speak of uneasiness!* I believe, besides, in divine Providence—I believe in you, my noble, high-minded, and brave king and husband, and I believe in your splendid army, which is eager for war! I believe in the lucky star of Prussia!"

"Oh, it seems to me that many clouds are veiling that star," said the king, mournfully.

"The thunder of battle will dispel them!" exclaimed Louisa, enthusiastically. "The smoke of powder purifies the air and destroys its noxious vapors."

Just then the door opened, and the king's *valet de chambre* entered.

"Your majesty," he said, "his excellency, Minister Baron von Hardenberg, requests you to grant him an audience."

"You see the decision is drawing near," said the king, turning to his wife. "I shall request the minister to come in directly."

The *valet de chambre* withdrew. The king paced the room several times, his hands folded on his back, and without uttering a word. Louisa dared not disturb him, but her radiant eyes followed him with an expression of tender anxiety and affectionate sympathy.

All at once, the king stopped in the middle of the room and drew a deep breath. "I do not know," he said, "I feel almost joyful and happy now that the decisive moment is at hand. Francis von Sickingen was right in saying, 'Better an end with terror, than a terror without end!'" †

"Oh," exclaimed the queen, joyfully, "now I recognize my noble and brave husband. When no longer able to avert terrors by mild words and gentle prudence, he raises his chivalrous arm and crushes them. But as we must not keep your minister waiting, I will withdraw. One word more. Will you permit me to add my subscription to the list of contributions for Palm's widow? I do not wish to do so as Queen of Prussia, but as a woman sympathizing with the misfortunes of one of her German sisters, and anxious to comfort

* The queen's own words—Vide Gentz's "Writings," vol. iv., p. 169.

† The motto of the celebrated knight, Francis von Sickingen: "*Besser ein Ende mit Schrecken, als ein Schrecken ohne Ende!*"

her in her distress. I shall not mention my name, but cause our dear mistress of ceremonies to subscribe for me. Will you permit it, my friend?"

"Follow your noble and generous heart, Louisa," said the king, "contribute for the relief of the poor woman!"

"Thanks, my friend, a thousand thanks," exclaimed Louisa, offering her hand to her husband. He kissed it tenderly, and then accompanied the queen to the door.

Louisa wanted here to withdraw her hand from him and open the door, in order to go out, but her husband kept her back, and his features assumed an air of embarrassment.

"I want you to do me a favor," he said, hastily. "When you have caused the mistress of ceremonies to subscribe in your name, please order your grand-marshal to contribute the same sum. I will return it to him from my privy purse."*

The queen made no reply; she encircled the king's neck with her beautiful white arms, and imprinted a glowing kiss on his lips; she then hastily turned around and left the room, perhaps, in order not to let her husband see the tears that filled her eyes.

The king, who had gazed after her with a long and tender look, said in a low voice to himself: "Oh, she is the sunshine of my life. How dreary and cold it would be without her! But now I will see the minister."

He hastened to the opposite door and opened it. "Request Minister von Hardenberg to come in," he said to the *valet de chambre*, waiting in the anteroom.

After a few minutes Hardenberg entered. The king went forward to meet him, and looked at him inquiringly.

"Good news?" he asked.

"Your majesty, 'good' has a very relative meaning," replied Hardenberg, shrugging his shoulders. "I believe an open and categorical reply to be good."

"Then you are the bearer of such a reply," said the king, quietly; "first tell me the result of your mission. You may afterward add the particulars of the negotiations."

"I shall comply with your majesty's order. The result is that Austria wants to remain neutral, and will, for the present, engage in no further wars. Her finances are exhausted, and her many defeats have demoralized and discouraged her armies. Napoleon has vanquished Austria, not only militarily, but also morally. The Austrian soldiers look on the Emperor of the French and his victorious armies

* Palm's widow received large sums of money, which were subscribed for her everywhere in Germany, England, and Russia. In St. Petersburg the emperor and empress headed the list.—Vide "Biography of John Philip Palm," Munich, 1842.

with an almost superstitious terror; the emperor is discouraged and downcast, and his ministers long for nothing more ardently than a lasting peace with France. His generals, on the other hand, are filled with so glowing an admiration for Napoleon's military genius, that the Archduke Charles himself has said: 'he would deem it a crime to continue the war against Napoleon, instead of courting his friendship.'**

"He may be right," said the king, "but he ought to have called it an imprudence instead of a crime. I know very well that we are unable to retrace our steps, and that the logic of events will compel us to draw the sword and risk a war, but I do not close my eyes against the serious dangers and misfortunes in which Prussia might be involved by taking up arms without efficient and active allies. I have taken pains for years to save Prussia from the horrors and evils of war, but circumstances are more powerful than I, and I shall have to submit to them."

"On the contrary, circumstances will have to submit to your majesty and fate."

"Fate!" the king interrupted him, hastily. "Fate is no courtier, and never flattered me much."

"Your majesty, I was going to imitate fate,—I did not want to flatter you, either," said Hardenberg. "I was merely going to say that fate seems to favor us suddenly. I have received letters from Mr. Fox, the English minister. King George the Third, now that he sees that Prussia is in earnest, and is preparing for war, is more inclined to form an alliance with Prussia. The first favorable symptom of this change of views is the fact that England has raised the blockade of the rivers of northern Germany; a British envoy will soon be here to make peace with Prussia, and to conclude an alliance, by virtue of which England will furnish us troops and money."

"Would to God the envoy would arrive speedily," sighed the king, "for we need both, auxiliaries as well as money."†

When Minister von Hardenberg left the king's cabinet, his face was radiant with inward satisfaction, and he hastened with rapid steps to his carriage.

"To Prince Louis Ferdinand," he said to the coachman. "As fast as the horses will run!"

* Vide "Libensbilder aus dem Befreiungskriege," vol. iii.

† The British envoy, Lord Morpeth, unfortunately arrived too late; it was only on the 12th of October that he reached the king's headquarters at Weimar. But the French party, Minister Haugwitz, Lombard, and Lucchesini, managed to prevent him from obtaining an interview with the king; and dismissed him with the reply, that the results of the negotiations would depend on the issue of the battle which was about to be fought.—Vide Häusser's "History of Germany," vol. ii., p. 766.

Prince Louis Ferdinand was in the midst of his friends in his music-room when Minister Hardenberg entered. He was sitting at the piano and playing a voluntary. His fancy must have taken a bold flight to-day, for in the music he evoked from the keys there was more ardor, vigor, and enthusiasm than generally, and the noble features of the prince were radiant with delight. Close to him, her head leaning gently on his shoulder, sat Pauline Wiesel, the prince's beautiful and accomplished friend, and listened with a smile on her crimson lips, and tears in her eyes, to the charming and soul-stirring melodies. In the middle of the room there stood a table loaded down with fiery wines and tropical fruits, and twelve gentlemen, most of them army officers, were seated around it. They were the military and learned friends of the prince, his daily companions, who, like Hardenberg, were always allowed to enter his rooms without being announced.

The minister hastily beckoned the gentlemen who were going to rise and salute him, to keep their seats, and hurried quickly and softly across the room toward the prince, whose back was turned to the door, and who consequently had not noticed his arrival.

"Prince," he said, gently placing his hand on his shoulder, "it is settled now: we shall have war!"

"War!" shouted the prince, jubilantly, and rose impetuously to embrace the minister and imprint a kiss on the lips which had uttered the precious word.

"War!" exclaimed the gentlemen at the table, and emptied their glasses in honor of the news.

"War!" sighed fair Pauline Wiesel, and clinging closely to the prince's shoulder, she whispered: "War, that is to say, I shall lose you!"

"No, it is to say that I shall gain every thing," exclaimed the prince, with flashing eyes. "I beseech you, Pauline, no weakness now, no sentimentality, no tears. The great moment is come. Let us appreciate it. At length, at length we shall avenge our disgrace, at length we shall be able to raise our humiliated heads again, and need not feel ashamed any longer of saying, 'I am a German!'"

"Your royal highness will now be able to say, 'I am a German hero!'" said Hardenberg.

"Would to God you were right!" exclaimed the prince. "May He grant me an opportunity to earn a small laurel-wreath, even had I to atone for it with my blood, nay, with my life! To die for the fatherland is a sublime death; and should I fall thus, Pauline, you ought not to weep, but sing jubilant hymns and envy my happy fate. Tell me, friend Hardenberg, when is the war to commence?"

"As soon as the various army corps can be concentrated," replied

Hardenberg. "We know positively that Napoleon is arming for the purpose of attacking us, and that he intends to declare war against us. We shall hasten and try to outstrip him. Prussia has been insulted too often and too grievously; hence, the challenge ought to come from her."

"And we will take revenge on M. Bonaparte," exclaimed the prince, with flaming eyes. "It shall be an American duel, and only the death of either of the duellists shall put an end to it! Friends, take your glasses and fill them to overflowing. Hardenberg, take this glass; Pauline shall present it to you. Now, let us drink to the honor of Prussia and shout with me, three cheers for the war, for an heroic victory, for an heroic death!"

"Three cheers for the war, for an heroic victory, for an heroic death!" shouted the friends. They emptied their glasses; the eyes of the men were radiant, but Pauline's eyes were filled with tears.*

On the evening of that day the king went, as usual, to the queen to take a cup of tea which she herself served up to him. Notwithstanding the objections of the mistress of ceremonies, they paid at this hour no attention to the rules of etiquette, and their intercourse was as cordial and unceremonious as that of a common citizen's family.

The queen, therefore, was alone when her husband entered the room. None of her ladies of honor were allowed to disturb the enjoyment of this pleasant tea-hour; only when the king wished it, the royal children were sent for to chat with their parents and to receive their supper at the hands of their beautiful mother.

The queen went to meet her husband with a pleasant salutation, and offered him her hands. "Well," she asked, tenderly, "your brow is clouded still? Come, let me kiss those clouds away."

She raised herself on tip-toe, and smiled when she still was unable to reach up to her husband's forehead.

"You must bend down to me," she said, "I am too small for you."

"No, you are great and sublime, and must bend down to me as angels bend down to the poor mortals," said the king. "Ah, Louisa, I am afraid, however, your kiss will no longer be able to drive the clouds from my brow."

"Have you received bad news?" asked the queen. "Have your ambassadors returned?"

"They have. No assistance from Austria! That is the news brought by Hardenberg. No league of the princes of Northern Germany! That is the news brought by Lombard. Every one of them pursues his separate interests, and thinks only of himself. The

* Prince Louis Ferdinand was killed in the first battle of the war, at Saalfeld, on the 10th of October, 1806.

Elector of Saxony would like to be at the head of a Saxon league; the Elector of Hesse promises to ally himself with us if, above all, we secure to him a considerable enlargement of his territory; Oldenburg is going to wait and see what the other states will do; Waldeck and Lippe desire to join the Confederation of the Rhine, because they might derive greater advantages from it; and the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin replied, quite haughtily, he would remain neutral: if he were in danger, he would gratefully accept the protection of Prussia, but he would have to reject any application for supplies in the most decided manner.*

"Oh, those narrow-minded, egotistic men," exclaimed the queen, indignantly. "They dare to call themselves princes, and yet there is not a single exalted thought, not a trace of the spirit of majesty in their minds. Bad seeds are being sown by the cowardly spirit of the princes. Woe unto Germany if these seeds should ripen one day in the hearts of the people! But you did not say any thing about my father; what did Mecklenburg-Strelitz reply?"

"She is on our side; your father is faithful to us."

"But, ah, he is able only to give us his great, true heart and brave, friendly advice!" sighed the queen. "His state is too small to furnish us any other aid. Oh, my husband, I could now give my heart's blood if I only were the daughter of a mighty king, and if my father could hasten to your assistance with an army."

"A single drop of your heart's blood would be too high a price for the armies of the whole world," said the king. "Your father has given to me the most precious and priceless treasure earth contains: a noble, beautiful wife, a high-minded queen! Your father was the richest prince when he still had his daughter, and I am the richest man since you are mine."

He clasped the queen in his arms, and she clung to him with a blissful smile.

"For the rest," said the king, after a pause, "there is at least one German prince who stands faithfully by us, and that is the Duke of Saxe-Weimar."

"The friend of Goethe and Schiller!" exclaimed the queen.

"The duke places his battalion of riflemen at our disposal, and will accept a command in the war."

"There will be war, then?" asked the queen, joyfully.

"Yes, there will be war," said the king, sadly.

"You say so and sigh," exclaimed Louisa.

"Yes, I sigh," replied the king. "I am not as happy as you and those who are in favor of war. I do not believe in the invincibility of my army. I feel that we cannot be successful. There is an in-

* Häusser's "History of Germany," vol. ii., p. 770.

describable confusion in the affairs of the war department; the gentlemen at the head of it, it is true, will not believe it, and pretend that I am still too young and do not understand enough about it. Ah, I wish from the bottom of my heart I were mistaken. The future will soon show it."*

CHAPTER LXI.

A BAD OMEN.

THE decisive word had been uttered! Prussia was at length going to draw the sword, and take revenge for years of humiliation.

The army received this intelligence with unbounded exultation and the people embraced every opportunity to manifest their martial enthusiasm. They demanded that Schiller's "Maid of Orleans" should be performed at the theatre, and replied to every warlike and soul-stirring word of the tragedy by the most rapturous applause. They again broke all the windows in Count Haugwitz's house, and serenaded Prince Louis Ferdinand, Minister von Hardenberg, and such generals as were known to be in favor of war.

All the newspapers predicted the most brilliant victories, and gloated already in advance over the triumphant battles in which the Prussian army would defeat the enemy.

But the proudest and happiest of all were the officers who, in the intoxication of their joy, saw their heads already wreathed with laurels which they would gain in the impending war, and whose pride would not admit the possibility of a defeat. The army of Frederick the Great, they said, could not be vanquished, and there was but one apprehension which made them tremble: the fear lest war should be avoided after all, and lest the inevitable and crushing defeat of Bonaparte should be averted once more by the conclusion of a miserable peace.†

The old generals who had served under Frederick the Great were the heroes in whom the officers believed. "We have got generals who know something about war," said the haughty Prussian officers; "generals who have served in the army from their early youth. Those French tailors and shoemakers who have gained some distinction only in consequence of the revolution, had better take to their heels as soon as such generals take the field against them."‡

And in the enthusiasm inspired by their future victories, the officers gave each other brilliant farewell festivals, and indulged in

* The king's own words.—Vide Henchel von Donnersmark.

† Vide Varnhagen's "Denkwürdigkeiten," vol. i., pp. 389, 390.

‡ Häusser's "History of Germany," vol. ii., p. 358.