

you would be unworthy of the name of princes and grandsons of Frederick the Great. But if, in spite of all efforts, you should fail in restoring the former grandeur of the state, then seek death as Prince Louis Ferdinand sought it!"

CHAPTER VIII.

NAPOLEON IN POTSDAM.

THE unheard-of and never-expected event had taken place; the son of the Corsican lawyer, the general of the Revolution, had defeated the Prussian army, compelled the royal family to flee to the eastern provinces, and now made his triumphal entry into their capital! On the afternoon of the 24th of October he arrived in Potsdam; the royal palace had to open its doors to him; the royal servants had to receive him as reverentially as though he had been their sovereign!

Napoleon was now master of Prussia as well as of all Germany. But his classic face remained as cold and calm in these days of proud triumph as it had been in the days of adversity. His successes seemed to surprise him as little as his early misfortunes had discouraged him. When ascending the broad carpeted staircase, he turned to Duroc, his grand marshal and beckoned him to his side. "Just notice, grand marshal," he said, in so loud a voice that it resounded through the palace, "just notice the strange coincidence. If I remember rightly, it is just a year to-day since the fine-looking Emperor Alexander of Russia arrived here in Potsdam, and paid a visit to the queen. Please ask the steward who received us at the foot of the stairs, whether it is not so."

Duroc went away, and soon returned with the answer that his majesty had not been mistaken; it was just a year to-day since the Emperor of Russia arrived in Potsdam.

A faint smile overspread Napoleon's face. "I will occupy the same rooms which Alexander then occupied," he said, passing on.

Duroc hastened back, to give the necessary orders. Napoleon walked down the corridor with ringing, soldier-like footsteps, followed by his marshals, and entered the large portrait-gallery of the Prussian monarchs, who looked down on him with grave eyes.

The emperor paused in the middle of the hall and glanced

over the portraits with a gloomy air. "All those men had a high opinion of themselves," he said, in a sullen tone; "they were proud of their high birth and of their royal crown, and yet death has trampled them all in the dust. I will now take upon myself the task of death: I will annihilate this Prussia which dared to take up arms against me, and who knows whether this gallery of Prussian kings will not close with Frederick William III.? Nothing on earth is lasting, and sovereigns now-a-days fall from their thrones as over-ripe apples from trees. The crown of Prussia fell to the ground on the battle-fields of Jena and Auerstädt!"

The portraits of the Prussian rulers looked down silently on the triumphant conqueror, and neither his scornful voice, nor the haughty glances with which he contemplated them, disturbed their tranquillity. Not a voice answered these arrogant and insulting words; the marshals stood silent and respectful, and still seemed to listen to the voice of the oracle which had just announced to the portraits of the royal ancestors of the present king the downfall of their house. But Napoleon's brow, which had momentarily beamed with proud thoughts, was again clouded. Joining his hands on his back, he crossed the hall to the large central window, from which there was a fine and extensive view of the lawn, with its old trees and splendid statues, and beyond, of the Havel and its hilly banks. He gazed gloomily at this landscape, then turned and looked again at the pictures, but only for a moment, as though he would threaten them once more, and make them feel again the angry glance of him who had come to dethrone their descendant and appropriate his crown. Then he fixed his eyes on the portrait of a handsome woman whose large blue eyes seemed to gaze at him, and her crimson lips to greet him with a winning smile. Quite involuntarily, and as if attracted by the beauty of this likeness, he approached and contemplated it long and admiringly.

"Truly," he said, "that is a charming creature. That lady must have been wondrously lovely, and at the same time surpassingly graceful and high-spirited."

"Sire," said Duroc, who had followed him and overheard his words, "sire, she is still wondrously lovely, and, as your majesty says, surpassingly graceful and high-spirited. It is the portrait of Queen Louisa of Prussia."

A dark expression mantled Napoleon's face, and, bending an angry glance on Duroc, he said, "It is well known that you were always foolishly in love with the Queen of Prussia,

and, according to your statement, one might believe there was no woman in the whole world so beautiful as she is." He turned his back on the painting and stepped to the next one: "And this, then, doubtless, is Frederick William III.?"

"Yes, sire, it is the portrait of the reigning king."

"Of the reigning king?" repeated the emperor, with a scornful smile. "It is a very good-natured face," he added, looking at the full-sized portrait; "and as I behold his gentle, timid air, I comprehend that he allows himself to be directed by advisers, and follows the will of others rather than his own. But this little King of Prussia is taller than I thought!"

"Sire, he is about as tall as the Grand-duke of Berg," said Duroc.

"As Murat?" asked Napoleon. "It never seemed to me that he was as tall as that. Is not Murat of my own height?"

"No, sire, he is higher than you!"

"You mean he is taller than I," said Napoleon, shrugging his shoulders. "Height of stature is of no consequence. Frederick II. was much smaller than his grand-nephew, and yet he was the greatest of Prussia's kings. We will afterward pay him a visit at Sans-souci. Until then, adieu, gentlemen. Come, Duroc, conduct me to the rooms of the Emperor Alexander!"

He greeted the marshals with a quick nod, and then followed Duroc into the long suite of halls and brilliant rooms which, only a year ago, had been newly decorated and furnished with royal magnificence for the reception of the czar.

"These kings and princes 'by the grace of God' live here very pleasantly," muttered Napoleon in an undertone; "they know better how to build and furnish their residences than to preserve them to their children. Well, I am a good architect, and have come to reconstruct the royal palace of Prussia. Do you think, Duroc, those ingrates will thank me for it?"

"They will see that the lion must have his share," said Duroc, "and they will, doubtless, be thankful if any thing is left to them. Sire, here we are in the czar's bedroom! The steward told me every thing was arranged in it precisely the same as in the days when the Russian emperor was here. Nobody has slept in this bed since."

"I must sleep in it," said Napoleon, quickly, "and I believe I shall sleep in the royal Prussian palace, and in the bed of the Russian emperor, as comfortably as I did in the Tuileries and in the bed of Louis XVI."

He threw his small three-cornered hat with a contemptuous gesture on the bed, which was surmounted by a velvet canopy, embroidered with gold, and then, his arms crossed behind him, commenced slowly pacing the room. Duroc dared not disturb him, and turned toward the paintings and engravings hanging on the walls. The emperor walked a long while gravely and musingly; his brow grew more clouded, and he pressed his lips more firmly together. Suddenly he paused before Duroc, and, being alone, spoke to him no longer in the tone of a master, but with the unreservedness of a friend.

"Legitimacy is a terrible power, Duroc," said he, hastily; "it is what I cannot vanquish with all my cannon. Sovereigns and princes know it full well, and that is the reason of their obstinacy. They oppose their ancestors to my victorious eagles, and when, by virtue of my right as conqueror, I enter their palaces and take possession of them, I find there the proud company of their forefathers, who seem to look scornfully down on me, and tell me, 'You are after all but an intruder and usurper, while we are and shall remain here the rightful owners.' I am sick and tired of playing this part of usurper. I shall overthrow all dynasties, expel all legitimate sovereigns—and there shall be no other throne than mine. I shall be at least the first legitimate monarch of the new era!"

"And expelled princes will sit in some nook of your immense empire," said Duroc, laughing, "and sing to the people the same song of legitimacy; and it will be listened to as one of the fairy stories of childhood, in which they believe no more."

"But they shall believe in *my* legitimacy!" exclaimed Napoleon, quickly. "I will be the first of the Napoleonic sovereigns." His brow was clouded again. "But it is true," he murmured, "in order to found a dynasty, I need a son. I must have legitimate children. It will be no fault of mine if circumstances compel me to divorce Josephine; for I will not, like Alexander of Macedon, conquer exclusively for the benefit of my generals. I need an heir to my empire."

"Sire, you have one in the son of the empress, noble King Eugène."

"No," exclaimed the emperor, gloomily, "the son of the Viscount de Beauharnais cannot be heir to my throne. My blood does not flow in his veins. Oh, why did the young Napoleon die! I had destined him to succeed me, because he

was of my blood, and a scion of my family.* Poor Josephine! if her tears and prayers could have saved the child's life, I should never have thought of taking another wife."

"What!" exclaimed Duroc, in dismay, "your majesty thinks of repudiating the empress!"

"My heart never will repudiate her," replied Napoleon, drawing a sigh. "I shall always love her, for she deserves it. She is generous and high-minded, good and graceful. I never loved another woman as I love her—and never shall. Judge, therefore, what a cruel blow it will be to my heart, should I be compelled to separate from her."

"If you should, sire," said Duroc, in a voice quivering with emotion,—“if you repudiate the empress, you would thereby sign your own death-warrant, and Josephine would not survive it.”

"She will have to survive it like myself," exclaimed the emperor, impetuously. "I shall suffer no less—nay, I shall suffer more than she, for she never loved me as I love her. Her tears will fall for the lost splendor of the throne—not for her husband. But I shall bewail the beloved wife."

"No, sire," said Duroc, almost indignantly, "you are unjust. The empress loves you—you alone. She accepted the crown reluctantly and with tearful eyes, and will not weep when she loses it. She will mourn for her husband only, whom she adores, and not for the crown which adorns but also oppresses her brow."

"Ah, what a warm advocate the empress has!" exclaimed Napoleon, smiling. "Do you really believe that she loves me so disinterestedly?"

"Sire, I am convinced of it, and so is your majesty. The empress loves in you her dear Bonaparte, and not the emperor. She loves you more ardently than any other woman could do. Sire, permit an old, well-trying friend and servant to warn you. Do not banish Josephine from your heart, for she is your guardian angel."

Napoleon did not reply immediately, but looked melancholy and abstracted.

"It is true," he said, after a long pause, "Josephine brought success; until I married her every thing around me was forbidding and dark. She appeared like a sun by my side, and we rose together."

*The oldest son of the King of Holland, Napoleon's brother, and of Hortense, Josephine's daughter, had been declared Napoleon's successor and adopted son. He died of croup, in 1805, in his seventh year.

"Sire, all will darken again, if you suffer your sun to set."

"Ah, bah! these are nothing but fantastic dreams!" exclaimed Napoleon, after a brief silence. "I am the architect of my fortune—I alone. Josephine did not assist me in erecting my edifice; she only adorned it with her smiling grace. I shall do what fate and my people have a right to expect of me, but I do not say that it must be done immediately. I have time enough to wait; for as yet I do not stand on the pinnacle to which I am aspiring. My plans are not yet accomplished. I hope that I shall not die at so early an age as my father. I need ten years more to carry out my purposes. A sovereign ought not to set too narrow limits to his wishes; but mine—they are boundless. Like the conqueror of Darius, I must rule the world, and I hope that my desire will one day be fulfilled. Nay, I feel convinced that I and my family will occupy all the thrones of Europe. Then it will be time for me to have a wife who will give an heir to my empire, and a son to my heart. Until then, my friend, keep the matter secret; do not mention what I have told you. The portraits of the old kings, with their surly faces, have impressed me very disagreeably, and it is in defiance of them that I say, I will one day have a wife—a daughter of the Cæsars—who will think it an honor to bear a son to the modern Cæsar! When the time comes, however, I shall remind you of this hour, and then request you, in the name of the confidence which I have reposed in you, to prepare my poor, beloved Josephine for the blow that is menacing her and myself, and which I then shall ward off no longer. But a truce to these matters! Let us go to Sans-souci. Come!"

"Sire, before your majesty has dined?"

"Ah, you are hungry, then? You would like to dine?"

"Sire, I believe all the gentlemen entertain the same desire. None of us have tasted food for eight hours."

"Eight hours, and you are already hungry again? Truly, this German air exerts a bad effect upon my brave marshals. Like the Germans, you want to eat all the time. Well, let it so be; as we are in Germany, I will comply with your wishes. Let us dine, therefore, and afterward go to the country-palace of Frederick II. Be kind enough to issue your orders, grand-marshal. Let the horses be ready; we shall set out as soon as we have dined. Tell Roustan to come to me!"

Napoleon was now again the sovereign, and it was in this capacity that he dismissed Duroc, who left the room with a

respectful bow. Roustan, who had already heard the order in the anteroom, glided past him to assist Constant in the emperor's toilet.

CHAPTER IX.

SANS-SOUCI.

DUROC hastened once more through the rooms and halls to the corridor, where the palace-steward came to meet him.

"Dinner is ready, grand marshal," he said.

"And have you set another table in the adjoining room?"

"Your orders have been punctually obeyed."

"Be good enough, then, to conduct me to the large dining-hall."

The steward bowed in silence, and led the way. All the marshals and generals were already assembled when Duroc entered.

"Gentlemen," he said, smiling, "his majesty is now occupied with his toilet, and Roustan has assured me that it would last half an hour. We have half an hour, therefore, to take our dinner." Followed by the others, he went into the next room. A table had been set there, and appetizing odors invited them to sit down to it.

"Now, steward, have every thing served up as quick as possible. We have but twenty minutes left." During that time there reigned profound silence, only now and then interrupted by a word or a brief remark. The marshals contented themselves in making the viands disappear, and emptying the bottles. Duroc, who had frequently cast anxious glances at the large clock, now rose hastily. "Gentlemen," he said, "our time is up, and we must be ready for the emperor's dinner. I will go to his majesty, and conduct him to the dining-hall. I hope all of you have eaten well, so as not to need much of the official repast to which we are going. The emperor has graciously ordered us all to dine with him. Be so kind as to repair to the hall."

When Napoleon entered, a few minutes later, preceded by Duroc, he found all the marshals assembled. The dinner commenced, and he, it seemed, was no less hungry than his generals, for not only did he eat his soup with the utmost rapidity, but when he saw one of his favorite dishes placed

near him, he smiled and nodded kindly to the grand marshal, who was standing at his right, and presented him a glass of wine.

"See how attentive these dear Germans are!" he said. "If I am not mistaken, this is my favorite dish, *fricassée à la Marengo*."

"Yes, sire, I sent the bill of fare hither last night by the courier who announced your majesty's arrival, and I am glad to see that it has been punctually attended to."

"So these German cooks know already how to prepare a *fricassée à la Marengo*? Who has taught them this?"

"Your majesty; your majesty is now the cook and butler for all Germany—everybody has become familiar with your favorite dishes."

The emperor smiled. Placing a piece of bread on his fork, he dipped it into the dish, and repeated this several times; and when the grand marshal placed before him a silver plate, filled with a portion of the same, he commenced to eat rapidly. Aware of his habit, his attendants had taken care that the pieces of meat were sufficiently small, and the whole dish not too hot. He began to eat the meat with a fork, and the sauce with a spoon, but he seemed to regard both as too inconvenient; for he laid them aside, and, after the fashion of the Turks, used his delicate white hands, adorned with diamond-rings.* Scarcely twelve minutes had elapsed when he rose. The grand marshal immediately presented to him a golden basin and a napkin to wash his hands.

Napoleon's guests had done well in dining beforehand; for, as the servants did not attend to them so quickly as to their master, and as they, moreover, were not able to eat so fast as he, they would assuredly have risen hungry from the table.†

*Constant, for many years Napoleon's devoted *valet de chambre*, gives in his reminiscences a detailed account of the emperor's habits, and writes as follows about his mode of dining: "The great rapidity with which the emperor was accustomed to eat was frequently very injurious to his health. One of the immediate effects of this habit was, that he did not eat very cleanly. He liked to use his fingers instead of a fork, and, indeed, instead of a spoon. Great care was taken always to place a favorite dish before him. He partook of it in the manner above described, dipping his bread into the sauce, which did not prevent the other guests from eating of the same dish, or at least such as wished to do so, and there were few who did not. I have even seen some who pretended to regard this favorite dish as a way of doing homage to the emperor. Napoleon's favorite dish was a sort of chicken-fricassée, called, in honor of the conqueror of Italy, '*fricassée à la Marengo*.'"—Constant, *Mémoires*, vol. ii., p. 56.

†The guests invited to the imperial table always dined beforehand. The emperor, in the haste with which he ate, did not notice that the others had no time to do so. Once, when he departed from the table, and Eugène, his stepson, rose immediately after him, Napoleon turned to him, and said: "But you have had no time to eat?" "Pardon me," replied the prince, "I dined beforehand."—*Mémoires de Constant*, vol. ii., p. 55.