

example, and to intimidate the haughty aristocracy, because they avoid coming hither and doing homage to the conqueror."

"If that be the intention," sighed Duroc, "the Prince von Hatzfeld is lost. The emperor will be inexorable."

"Is it necessary, then, to have some one put to death in order to frighten the others?" asked Talleyrand. "But you are right. The emperor will have no mercy. The court-martial will assemble to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" said Duroc, sadly. "Oh, into what distress it will plunge the family! The young princess loves her husband passionately; she expects to become a mother in a few months, and is to lose the father of her child before it sees the light!"

Again a smile overspread Talleyrand's face. He inclined closer to the grand marshal and placed his small, emaciated hand on Duroc's vigorous arm. "My friend," he said, in a low voice, "you must try to save the prince!"

"I?" asked Duroc, wonderingly.

Talleyrand nodded. "Yes, you! You have long known the family; you have, on your various missions to Berlin, been repeatedly at Hatzfeld's house, and, as a matter of course, the young princess in her distress and despair will apply to you for advice and assistance. You must procure her an interview with the emperor, and she will thus obtain an opportunity to implore his majesty on her knees to have mercy on her husband. The whole aristocracy, then, in her person will humbly kneel before the emperor, and they will all be pardoned in the person of the prince. My dear sir, you must at all events procure the princess an interview with Napoleon."

"But did you not tell me that the emperor was determined not to pardon the prince, and that the court-martial will assemble to-morrow?"

"I did. I might have added that the emperor, when I begged him to have mercy on Hatzfeld, angrily rejected my application, and told me he would not permit any one to renew it. He was very emphatic about it. Even Duroc, he said, should not dare to conduct the princess to him, and thus enable her to implore his mercy."

"Well?" exclaimed Duroc.

"Well," said Talleyrand, composedly. "I believed I might conclude precisely from this peremptory order, that he wished to indicate to me that he was inclined to pardon the offender in this manner."

"What!" said Duroc, smiling, "the emperor orders us not to admit the Princess von Hatzfeld; he says he will not pardon the prince, and you conclude from all this that he will grant her an audience and the pardon of her husband?"

"Certainly," said Talleyrand. "What is language given us for, unless to veil our thoughts? Whenever I have to deal with sagacious and prominent men, I presume that their thoughts are just the reverse of what their words express. Only simpletons, and men of no position, say what they mean. Try it, by all means. Procure the princess an interview with the emperor, and leave the rest to her eloquence and beauty."

"But I cannot go to her and offer her my intercession. It would look as though the emperor had sent me; and if he then should pardon the prince, it would be generally believed to be a mere *coup de théâtre*."

"You are right. We must avoid by all means letting the affair assume such a character," said Talleyrand, smiling. "If the princess really loves her husband, and if she really intends to save him, she will naturally first think of you; for you are acquainted with her and her family, and are known to be the emperor's intimate and influential friend. It will be but natural for her to invoke your intercession."

"If she does so, I will try, to the best of my power, to be useful to her, for I have spent many pleasant hours at the prince's house, and it would be agreeable to me to do her a favor. But I am afraid you are mistaken. The emperor never takes back his word, and if he has said that he will have no mercy, and not admit the princess, that will be the end of it, and all endeavors of mine will be in vain."

"Try it at least," said Talleyrand. "Perhaps you may accomplish your purpose. But you have no time to lose, for, as I have told you already, the court-martial is to assemble to-morrow. What is to be done, must be done, therefore, in the course of to-day."

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRINCESS VON HATZFELD.

GRAND-MARSHAL DUROC was pacing his room in great agitation. Evening was drawing nigh, and still he had not received any intelligence from the Princess von Hatzfeld.

Yet her husband had been arrested in the course of the forenoon and taken to the palace, in one of the rooms of which he was locked up and kept under strict surveillance. The news of his arrest had spread rapidly through Berlin, and cast a gloom over the whole city. Everywhere in the streets groups of pale and grave men were to be seen, who whispered to each other this latest dreadful event, and vented their anger in secret imprecations.

All were convinced that the Prince von Hatzfeld must die; every one felt it to be a new humiliation inflicted upon himself personally, that one of the most respected and distinguished men in Prussia was to be charged with felony, and tried as a common spy. No one doubted that the court-martial would pass sentence of death upon him; and that Napoleon would show no mercy, nor feel any compassion, could be read in his stern and melancholy air when, followed by his suite, he rode through the streets to Charlottenburg.

All the reproaches heretofore uttered against the Prince von Hatzfeld were forgotten; the people forgave his weakness, his cowardice, his predilection for France. At this hour, when he was menaced by the universal enemy and oppressor they only remembered that he was a German, and that the anger of the conqueror ought to make him a martyr of the German cause. They whispered to each other that Napoleon had selected the prince merely for the purpose of intimidating the opposition by an example of severity, and of frightening the royalists. "He is lost!" they said, mournfully. "The emperor will not pardon him, for he intends to punish in the prince's person ourselves, who love the king and would like to send him information concerning the enemy and his armies."

"The Prince von Hatzfeld is lost!" said Duroc, also, as he was uneasily and sadly pacing his room. "Yes! This time Talleyrand, in spite of all his sagacity, has been mistaken. The emperor does not intend to pardon the prince, for he has selected Davoust, Rapp, and Clarke as members of the court-martial, and they have no mercy on those whom their master has accused. The princess does not think of coming to me and of invoking my intercession. And even if she did, I should not be able to assist her. All my supplications would be in vain. The emperor has resolved on the prince's death from policy, not in anger; hence nothing can save him."

Just then the door opened, and the footman hastily entered. "Grand marshal," he said, "there is a veiled lady outside, who insists on seeing you. I have vainly requested her to give me her name; she will only mention it to your excellency, and—"

Duroc did not longer listen to him. He himself hastened into the anteroom, and, offering his arm to the lady, conducted her into his cabinet.

"Go down-stairs, Jean," he hurriedly said to his footman—"go down-stairs, hasten into the Palace Place, and when you see the emperor approaching in the distance, return and inform me of it."

Jean slipped out of the door, and Duroc locked it after him. "Well, madame," he then said, "speak! We are alone."

The lady hastily removed the veil from her face, and showed her beautiful, pale features bathed in tears.

"The Princess von Hatzfeld!" exclaimed Duroc, successfully feigning an air of great surprise.

"Yes, it is I," she said, breathlessly and with quivering lips. "I come to beseech you to assist me! You must do so—you must not desert me! My husband has been arrested! He is charged with having secretly informed the king of the operations of the French army. He is accused of being a spy. Oh, merciful Heaven! he will die, for the emperor is bent on having him executed; he desires to crush and ruin us all! Do you understand it is my husband?—he whom others charged with being a traitor to his country, because, in his generous exertions to avoid bloodshed, he always admonished the inhabitants to be patient and submissive—he is charged now with having betrayed the emperor, and is to be executed as a spy! They have dragged him from my side and taken him away. I fainted with grief and despair. Oh, I hoped—I wished it were death that prostrated me! But God would not let me die; He preserved my life, that I might try to save my husband. The physician advised me to remain, and endeavor to take rest. Duroc, how can I take rest while the life of my beloved husband is in danger? I rose from my couch, for the thought flashed through my mind, 'Duroc will assist me in saving him!' And now I am here, and beseech you, have mercy on a wife's despair! Duroc, help me, so that I may save the prince! You have a kind and generous heart, and the emperor loves you! Implore him to have

mercy on my husband! By all that is dear to you, I beseech you, beg for him!" And quite beside herself, pale and in tears, the young princess was about to kneel down before Duroc, but he quickly raised her up, and, bowing deeply, kissed her cold, trembling hands.

"I thank you, princess, for having thought of and believed in me," he said. "But I am afraid that your faith will be in vain."

"Pray for my husband," she said, sobbing. "You see, I shall die if I lose him. Have pity on my youth, and on my unborn child! Implore the emperor to have mercy on the prince!"

"You believe the emperor would listen to me?" asked Duroc, sadly. "Then you do not know him; you do not know what he is when he is angry. I have been in more than twenty battles; bullets have hissed all around me; death was at my side, and I did not tremble, but I tremble when the emperor is angry. When I behold his marble face—his flashing eyes—when his voice resounds like the roll of thunder, I comprehend how women faint and flee. I myself feel then what I never felt in the battle-field—I feel fear!"

"Then you will not assist me!" exclaimed the princess, wringing her hands. "You will not do any thing for him? And yet he is innocent. My noble husband never committed the crime with which he is charged. He is no spy—no traitor—and yet he is to die! I have no friend, and the only man who I had hoped would aid me deserts me, because he is afraid of his master's frown!"

"No," said Duroc, "I do not desert you, I only tell you what the emperor is in his wrath; I only tell you that the tempestuous ocean is pleasant, and the thunder mild, compared with him in such a mood. However, I would gladly expose myself to it if I could be useful to you and to your husband. But it is a vain hope. The emperor would not listen to me; he would interrupt me, and order me to be silent. My intercession would irritate him even more, and, instead of delaying the terrible catastrophe, I should be likely to accelerate it."

"Well," exclaimed the princess, wringing her hands, "if you yourself dare not speak and beg for him, let me. I am not afraid of the emperor's anger, and when a woman clasps his knees and implores his mercy, he will at least listen, and his heart may be softened. I beseech you to grant me this

favor—conduct me to the emperor! Let me implore him to pardon my husband!"

"You are right, it is perhaps the only way to save his life. Napoleon has a generous heart; your tears, perhaps, will touch him, for he cannot bear the sight of a weeping woman, and genuine grief always moves his heart. But just because he is conscious of his weakness, he will avoid seeing you, and give stringent orders not to admit any one. You must, at present forget your rank. You must not insist that the footmen announce you, and open the folding-doors, but you must make up your mind to appear, without any regard to etiquette, before the emperor, and oblige him to grant you an audience."

"Do you not see that I am nothing but a poor, unhappy woman, begging for mercy?" said the princess, with a melancholy smile. "Would I have come to you if I thought still of the rules of etiquette? Give me an opportunity to see the emperor, and, though it were in the open street, and thousands standing by, I should kneel down before him, and, like a beggar-woman, ask for the alms of his mercy—for my husband's life is in his hands!"

"Well, if such be your feelings, princess, I hope to be able to procure you access to him. We must act as generals do in the field, and try to outwit the enemy—we must deprive the emperor of the possibility of avoiding an audience. After his return from Charlottenburg and when once in his rooms, all will be in vain; he will admit no one, and close his ears against all supplications of mine. Hence you must meet him at the moment when he enters the palace. You must—"

A rapid knock at the door interrupted him, and Duroc hastened to open it. "Is it you, Jean?" he asked.

"Yes, M. Grand marshal, it is I," said the footman, "I come to inform your excellency that the emperor is just riding up the Linden with his suite. He will be here in a few minutes."

"All right. Go now, Jean."

"Let us go, too," said the princess, quickly approaching the door. "Give me your arm, M. Grand marshal; I am trembling so, I might sink down before appearing in the presence of the emperor!"

"Come, princess," said Duroc, compassionately, "lean firmly on me. Heaven will give you strength, for you have a noble and fearless heart. Come! I will conduct you to the

foot of the staircase, which the emperor will have to ascend in order to reach his rooms. You may accost him there. God and love will impart strength to your words!"

With rapid steps they crossed the suite of rooms and stepped into the so-called Swiss hall, where the orderlies and soldiers of the guard on duty that day were assembled. The bearded warriors looked surprised at the grand marshal—whose face was graver than they had ever seen it in battle—and at this lady, hanging on his arm, as beautiful and pale as a lily. Duroc, who generally had a smile and a pleasant word for the soldiers of the guard, the faithful companions of so many battles, took no notice of them. He hastened with the princess through the hall into the corridor, and down the broad winding stairs opening immediately into the second courtyard of the palace. He then conducted her across through the inside portal to the splendidly-carpeted principal staircase in the rear of the vestibule.

"Await the emperor here," said Duroc, drawing a deep breath. "He will go up this staircase, and he cannot, therefore, avoid meeting you. But he has a sharp eye, and if he should see you from afar, he might, divining your intention, turn around and go the other way. Ascend as far as the first landing. The emperor cannot see you there before he mounts the first steps, and then he will not turn back."

The princess hastily ascended the steps, which she had so often done with a joyous heart, and in a brilliant toilet, when repairing to the festivals of the royal court. Duroc followed her, and told the sentinel posted at the staircase and presenting arms to the grand marshal, that the lady had received orders to wait there for the emperor, who—

Just then the drums rolled, and the guard in the courtyard was called out.

"The emperor!" whispered the princess, sinking down on her knees, clasping her hands and praying silently.

"The emperor!" said Duroc, hastening down-stairs into the second courtyard.

Napoleon rode in at that moment, and Duroc, glancing uneasily at him, saw that his mien was even gloomier than previous to his ride; he saw that flashes of anger darted from his eyes, ready to wither the first being that should come near them. On riding up the Linden to-day, he had again missed the wonted music of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" and noticed that the people, standing here and there in groups in the street,

when he passed them, had frowned instead of greeting him with the usual cheers. This want of respect, this visible defiance had darkened his countenance and embittered his soul. Just as he alighted from his horse, and threw the bridle to Roustan, the Mameluke, the grand marshal, pale, panting, and in visible emotion, stepped up to him. Napoleon noticed it, and his angry glance intimidated Duroc.

"You want to inform me that Berlin is seditious?" he asked, in a stern, hard voice. "I am not astonished at it. This city seems to be inclined to such movements. But I am about to set it a terrible example; I will show Berlin in what manner I punish rebels, and will cure its seditious tendency." Striking his boots with his riding-whip, as was his habit when out of humor, he crossed the courtyard in the direction of the staircase.

"No, sire," said Duroc. "Berlin is not seditious. I only intended to implore your majesty's noble and generous heart to grant me a favor."

The emperor looked at him with some surprise, and, advancing rapidly, he set foot on the first step of the staircase, his eyes directed to the grand marshal. "Well, what is it?" he asked, ascending the second step, and turning to Duroc, who was walking behind him.

"Sire, have mercy on the unhappy Princess von Hatzfeld! I beseech your majesty to grant her an audience."

"No, no," exclaimed the emperor, "do not say a word about that! I do not wish to see her, I— But what is this?" he interrupted himself, for he had now reached the first landing, and beheld the princess. She had knelt down, and, stretching out her clasped hands, fixed her large azure eyes on him with a most heart-rending, suppliant air.

Napoleon's brow grew darker than before, and with an angry air he asked, "What does this mean, M. Grand marshal? Who is this lady?"

"Sire, it is the Princess von Hatzfeld," replied Duroc, in a low voice. "She implored me to procure her an interview with your majesty. Sire, pardon me for having conducted her hither, that she herself might beg your majesty for this audience. I counted on your generous heart, which will forgive the wife who comes to implore your mercy for her husband."

"Have you not been told that I have expressly forbidden this affair to be mentioned to me?" exclaimed the emperor,

in a threatening voice. "The court-martial alone has to judge the prince and I will and must not influence its verdict."

"Oh, sire," exclaimed the princess who was still on her knees, "have mercy on me!—have mercy on my unhappy husband!" Tears choked her voice, and ran in torrents over her pale face.

Napoleon seemed to be moved by this piteous spectacle; his eye became milder, and his frown disappeared. "Madame," he said, bending over her, "rise. A lady in your circumstances ought to kneel before God only. In consideration of your condition, I grant you an interview. Grand marshal, follow me, with the princess." He quickly ascended the staircase, and, without looking round, walked across the halls and rooms to his cabinet. Breathless, scarcely touching the floor with her feet, and strengthened by her profound emotion, the princess walked behind him by the side of Duroc.

"The emperor now enters his cabinet," whispered Duroc.

"You have reached your destination."

"My God, have mercy on me!" sighed the princess, and raised her eyes imploringly to heaven. She was now in the cabinet, and Duroc withdrew to the door. Napoleon stood in the middle of the room; the brightly-burning fire shed a light over his whole figure, and rendered prominent his stern features.

"Sire," exclaimed the princess, falling on her knees, "I beseech you have mercy on my husband! Mercy, sire, mercy!"

"Mercy!" ejaculated Napoleon, harshly. "Do you know the crime of which your husband stands accused?"

"Sire, I know only that he worships your majesty; I therefore do not believe in his guilt," exclaimed the princess.

"He has acted the part of a miserable spy," added Napoleon, raising his voice. "After he had already sworn to me the oath of obedience and fealty, he mailed a letter to the King of Prussia, in which he reported to him the number, the spirit, and movements of the French troops. That is the act of a traitor and a spy, and as such he will be found guilty by the court-martial to-morrow."

"Sire, it is impossible! My husband cannot have done any thing of the kind. Oh, believe me, your majesty, he is innocent! He has been slandered in order to bring about his ruin; but he is innocent—assuredly he is innocent! He never wrote such a letter; he cannot have written it!"

The emperor quickly walked to his desk, and took from it a paper, which he handed to her. "Here is the letter," he said. "Do you know your husband's handwriting?"

The princess fixed her eyes, dimmed by tears, on the paper she held in her trembling hands. She then uttered a cry, so piercing and heartrending, that Duroc, who was standing at the door, felt the tears starting into his eyes. Napoleon himself could not help shuddering.

"It is his handwriting!" muttered the princess, dropping the paper upon the floor. Her quivering lips had now no longer the strength and courage to repeat her prayer—her head fell on her breast, and she uttered only low groans and sobbed.

The emperor seemed to be touched by her wordless yet eloquent grief. His manner, which had hitherto been stern, became gentle and kind, and he looked down with an expression of compassion on that kneeling, despairing form. He stooped, picked up the letter, and placed it in the hands of the princess. "Madame," he said, "here is the letter. Do with it what you please. For this letter is the only thing proving his guilt."

The princess looked up to him with a joyous, surprised glance. The emperor smiled, and pointed silently to the fireplace. She rose hastily from her knees, rushed toward the fire, and threw the paper into it.

"It is burning! It is burning!" she joyfully shouted. "My husband is saved! My husband is free!" and uttering a scream, she tottered back, and fell in a swoon at the emperor's feet.

Duroc rushed to her aid, and, raising her in his arms, was about to carry her out of the room; but the emperor himself rolled an easy-chair toward her, and assisted Duroc in placing her on it.

"Now, call Roustan," said Napoleon, "he will help you to remove the fainting lady. But quick, lest she awake and thank me! Conduct her to her husband, who is here at the palace. Let her personally announce to him that he is free, and tell him that he is indebted for his release solely to her intercession. Make haste!"

Roustan entered as soon as Duroc called him, and both of them carried the princess on the easy-chair out of the room. The emperor gazed musingly after them, and a sarcastic smile played on his lips. "Well," he said to himself, "I believe

this scene will be an excellent match to the oath at the grave of Frederick the Great. It will form a glorious subject for an engraving—one that will be more honorable to me than was the oath to the beautiful queen. Artists will be delighted to publish such an engraving, and the good city of Berlin will say that I am a great man, and know how to forgive injuries."

Just then Talleyrand, who had the right to enter the emperor's cabinet at any time, without being announced, appeared on the threshold.

"Ah, Talleyrand," exclaimed Napoleon, "if you had come a little earlier, you would have witnessed a very touching scene. The Princess von Hatzfeld was here."

"I know it, sire. I have just met the poor fainting lady in the anteroom, and Duroc described to me in a few words what had taken place. How lucky it was that there was a fire in the room!"

The emperor bent a piercing glance upon Talleyrand, but the minister's face was perfectly calm and impenetrable. Not the slightest approach to a sneer was visible in it.

"This proof of generosity will win the hearts of all to your majesty," added Talleyrand. "People will forget Palm; they will only think of Hatzfeld, and praise you as a modern Cæsar. When the letters his enemies had written to Pompey were shown to Cæsar, he refused to read them, and threw them into the fire (there is always a fire burning in the right place and at the right moment), saying, 'Although I am sure to master my anger, yet it is safer to destroy its cause.' Your majesty has followed Cæsar's example, and, if you have no objection, sire, I shall induce Professor Lange to give an enthusiastic and eloquent account of this sublime scene to the inhabitants of Berlin."

"Then you have already gained him over to our side?" asked Napoleon. "The ardent champion of the queen has been converted?"

"He has, sire, thanks to his fear of death, and to the five thousand francs which I offered him, and which had the same effect upon him as a basilisk's eye on the bird. These German journalists, it seems, are even more needy than ours, for they can be had for less."

"Five thousand francs," said Napoleon, musingly, "and for that sum he sells his honor, his fealty, and his conscience! Ah, what miserable creatures men are, after all, and how right are those who despise them!"

"Sire, will you permit me to enter and make my report?" asked Duroc, looking in at the door.

"Come in, grand marshal. And now tell me, how is the poor princess? Has she recovered from her swoon?"

"Yes, sire, she was still unconscious when we carried her into her husband's room. He uttered a loud cry, rushed to her, and clasped her in his arms. She was awakened by his kisses and his anxious and tender ejaculations. A torrent of tears burst forth, and, encircling his neck with her arms, she exclaimed, 'You are saved! You are mine again! the emperor has had mercy on me!'"

"Poor woman! She was really in despair, but behaved very nobly and with a great deal of tact, and I am pleased with her."

Talleyrand scarcely smiled, as he muttered to himself: "Yes, the emperor is right in being pleased with her, for the poor little lady really took the sentimental farce for a tragedy, and neither she nor Duroc looked behind the scenes."*

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SUPPLIANT PRINCES.

THE hour when Napoleon was to give audience had come, and the ministers of the petty German princes, who had hitherto vainly implored Talleyrand to procure them admission to the emperor, were at length to accomplish their purpose, and to receive from the mouth of the conqueror himself the decision of their fate. He was in his cabinet pacing with rapid steps, while Talleyrand was standing at the desk, and with a pencil entering a few notes in his memorandum-book.

*This occurrence is strictly historical, but it is commented upon by the French and German historians in a widely different sense. The French historians, without exception, treat it as a touching proof of the emperor's generosity. So does Thiers in his "Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire," vol. vii., p. 148; and the Duchess d'Abrantes, in her "Mémoires," vol. xi., p. 240; as well as Constant, in his "Mémoires," vol. iii., p. 380. But the German historians treat it as a well-calculated intrigue, in order to intimidate the nobility by an act of severity, and to conciliate them by the subsequent generosity displayed by the emperor.—Vide "Mémoires d'un Homme d'État," vol. ix., p. 316; Schlosser's "History of the Nineteenth Century," vol. vi., p. 232; Hæusser's "History of Germany," vol. iii., p. 42. The view taken by the German historians is supported by the letter of the Prince von Hatzfeld, which formed the sole basis of the charges preferred against him, and which the French take care not to lay before their readers. The incriminated passage was as follows: "Officially I know nothing of the French army, but that I saw yesterday a requisition upon the municipality of Potsdam, signed by D'Aultanne. The French say their army is eighty thousand strong. Others state the number at only fifty thousand. The horses of the cavalry are said to be greatly exhausted."