

you! Oh, do not remain silent—give me a sign that you are still living—tell me at least that you forgive me—that—”

She paused, for a song suddenly resounded in the room; it was not a song of sorrow, but of wrath and manly courage. The words were as follows:

“*Tod du süsßer, für das Vaterland!
Süßter als der Brautgruss, als das Lallen
Auf dem Mutterschooss des ersten Kindes,
Sei mir willkommen!*”

*Was das Lied nicht löset, löst das Schwert,
Blinkend Heil, umgürte meine Hüften,
Von der Schande kannst du Tapfre retten,
Zierde der Tapfern!”**

The voice died away. Camilla was on her knees, with clasped hands; her parents stood behind her in devout silence. Suddenly noisy footsteps drew near. At the entrance of the corridor appeared the footman with the locksmith, who came with his tools to open the door. The old count made a sign to him to stand aloof. He had heard a movement in the room, and he hoped Camilla's lover would voluntarily admit them.

A pause ensued—then a terrible report was heard in the room. Camilla uttered a loud shriek, and sank senseless to the floor.

An hour later, the locksmith succeeded in opening the door, which had been strongly bolted inside. Count Pückler sat in the easy-chair in front of his desk, immovable, with his face calm and uninjured, the pistol still in his hand. He had aimed well. The bullet had pierced his heart. On the desk in front of him lay a sheet of paper, containing the following words:

“Last greeting to Ferdinand von Schill, who took an oath with me that we would live and die as faithful sons of our country! Our country is sinking ignominiously into the dust; I will not, cannot survive the disgrace, and, therefore, I die. Farewell, you who took that oath with me—farewell Schill and Staps! I hope you will be happier than myself! I am the first of us three who dies because he despairs of his country. Will you survive me long? May God give you strength to do so! Farewell until we meet again!

“FREDERICK VON PÜCKLER.”

On the following day the governor of Breslau commenced negotiations with the enemy, and on the 7th of January, 1807, Breslau opened its gates to the French troops, and the Prussian garrison laid down its arms.

* See p. 18.

CHAPTER XXII.

PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.

GENERAL VON ZASTROW, who had temporarily taken charge of the Prussian department of foreign affairs, was pacing his room. His whole appearance was indicative of care and anxiety. Whenever he passed the door leading into the ante-room, he stood still and listened, and then, heaving a sigh and muttering angry words, continued his walk. But at length it seemed as if his expectations were to be fulfilled; he heard approaching steps. The door opened, and the footman announced General von Köckeritz.

General von Zastrow quickly went to meet his visitor, and offered him both his hands. “I thank your excellency from the bottom of my heart for having yielded to my urgent supplications,” he said, passionately, “and at the same time I beg your pardon for having been so bold as to request you to call upon me. But as you reside in the same house as their majesties, and as the king comes to see you frequently and unexpectedly, I believe we can converse here more freely and without fear of being disturbed.”

“You are right, my dear general,” said Köckeritz; “it is better for us to hold our little conferences at your house. My room, moreover, has walls so thin that every word spoken there can be heard outside. Alas, it is on the whole a miserable barrack in which the royal couple and myself are obliged to stay here in Memel! Low, dark rooms—no elegance, no accommodations, no comfort. Every thing is as narrow, gloomy, and smoky as possible and then this fearfully cold weather! Yesterday, during the heavy storm, an inch of snow lay on the window-sill in the queen's room, and, I assure you, it did not melt! Nevertheless, her majesty is perfectly calm and composed; she never complains, never utters any dissatisfaction, but always tries to prove to the king that she likes Memel very well, and that it is as beautiful a capital as Berlin.”

“Ah, my respected friend,” said General von Zastrow, mournfully, “this composure of the queen is very injurious to us. If she were more melancholy—if she bewailed her misfortunes more bitterly—if she manifested a more poignant sorrow, we should not be doomed to sit here on the

extreme frontier of Prussia, but might hope to make our triumphal entry into Berlin, perhaps, in two weeks."

"Into Berlin?" asked General von Köckeritz, greatly surprised. "Why, you are talking of a miracle which I am unable to comprehend."

"Oh, your excellency will understand it soon enough," replied General von Zastrow, smiling, "if you will only be so kind as to listen to me a little."

"I assure you, my friend, I am most anxious to hear your explanations; I am burning with the desire to know how we are to bring it about to leave this accursed, cold Memel, and return to Berlin within so short a time."

"Well, what is the cause of our sojourn here?" asked General von Zastrow. "What has driven us hither? What has deprived the king, our august master, of his states, of his happiness—nay, almost of his crown? What is the cause that our beautiful and amiable queen has to undergo all sorts of privations and inconveniences, and is compelled to reside, instead of in her palace at Berlin, in a miserable, leaky house in Memel, where she is closer to the Bashkirs than to civilized people? The war is the cause of all this!"

"Yes, if my advice had been followed, these calamities would never have befallen us," replied General von Köckeritz, sighing; "we would have remained on terms of friendship and peace with the great man whom Heaven has sent to subjugate the world, and resistance against whom is almost equivalent to blasphemy. He frequently and magnanimously offered us his friendship, but at that time more attention was paid to the vain boastings of the lieutenants of the guard; and the rhodomontades of Prince Louis Ferdinand unfortunately found an echo in the heart of the queen. The advice of older and more prudent officers was disregarded, and the king, in spite of himself, was dragged into this war, which we have had to expiate by the defeats of Jena and Auerstadt, and by the loss of so many fortresses and provinces. And who knows what may be in store for us yet? Who knows what mischief may yet threaten the crown and life of Frederick William!"

"Well," said General von Zastrow, with a sarcastic smile, "it looks as though the fortune of war were now turning in favor of the Russians. Think of the great victories which the Russian General Benningsen has already won. Did not twenty-four trumpeting postilions proclaim to us at Königsberg, on new-year's-day, the Russian victory of Pultusk?"

"Yes, but those twenty-four postilions and that emphatic announcement were the most brilliant parts of the victory," said General von Köckeritz, shrugging his shoulders. "Benningsen was not defeated by Napoleon at Pultusk, but honorably maintained his position on the battle-field—that is what the whole amounted to."

"Yes, but we are celebrating again a great and brilliant triumph. On the 7th and 8th of February the Russian General Benningsen and our General Lestocq claim to have obtained another advantage over Napoleon and his marshals. I suppose you are aware that Benningsen himself has arrived here in order to communicate the news of the victory of Eylau to the royal couple?"

"Yes, I know," said Köckeritz. "But I know also what this new success really amounts to. The Russians are very liberal in issuing victorious bulletins, and if they have not been massacred in a battle to a man, the last ten survivors shout invariably, 'Victory! We have won the battle!' That of Eylau is even more problematic than that of Pultusk. Pray tell me, who held the battle-field of Eylau?"

"Napoleon with his French, of course."

"And who retreated from Eylau toward Königsberg?"

"General Benningsen with his Russians."

"And these Russians, nevertheless, are audacious enough to claim a victory!" exclaimed General von Köckeritz. "These fellows regard it such when Napoleon, instead of pressing them on their retreat, remains where he is, and gives them time to escape."

"They are in ecstasies, because they infer from this delay of Napoleon, and from his unwonted inactivity, that he also stands in need of repose and recreation," said General von Zastrow. "The severe winter, bad quarters, hunger, and thirst, have greatly exhausted the strength of the grand army, and the lion would like to rest a little. For this reason—and now I come to the point concerning which I requested your excellency to call on me—for this reason, the great Napoleon desires to make peace. The conqueror of Jena himself offers it to the vanquished King of Prussia."

"What? Do you really think that to be true?" asked General von Köckeritz.

"I do not only think, but know it to be true," said Zastrow. "General Bertrand arrived here an hour ago, and called on me with the request to present him to the king, that he might

deliver him an autograph letter from the Emperor Napoleon. I told the general that I should return his visit in half an hour, and then conduct him to his majesty. I wished to profit by this half hour, my dear friend, to confer with you about this matter."

"And did General Bertrand inform you that Napoleon would offer peace to our king?"

"Yes, your excellency. He communicated to me the contents of the imperial letter. The lion of Jena magnanimously offers once more to make peace."

"We must strain every nerve to induce the king to accept these overtures," exclaimed Köckeritz, quickly.

"Your excellency is the only man sufficiently powerful to induce the king to come to such a decision," said Zastrow. "You must be so kind as to prove to him that to continue the war with France is to bring about the ruin of Prussia. If he does not accept the offer of Napoleon, he is ruined, for the emperor would not forgive such obstinate hostility; and, if Prussia will not live with him on terms of friendship, he will annihilate her in order to be done with her."

"I shall not threaten the king by laying too much stress on the strength of his enemy," said Köckeritz, "for that would wound the pride of his majesty, and provoke his sense of honor to renewed resistance. But I shall call his attention to the weakness and fickleness of Russia, informing him that our friends, the Russians, are behaving in the most shameful manner in those parts of Prussia which they are occupying, and committing so many outrages that the inhabitants are praying on their knees to God to grant victory to the French, so that they might deliver them from the Russians. I shall tell him that the distress and the extortions the Prussian farmers have to suffer at the hands of our allies are perfectly incredible; that the peasants in the villages have been stripped of every thing, to such an extent that they beg the Cossacks, who have robbed them of their provisions, for their daily bread; that many of them are dying of hunger, and that unburied corpses have been found in the houses of several villages now occupied by our troops. And, above all, I shall beseech his majesty to repose no confidence in the Russian friendship! Whatever the czar may say about his fidelity, he has not the power of carrying his point, and all his resolutions will be frustrated by the resistance of his generals and of his brother. The Grand-Duke Constantine and the larger and

more powerful part of the Russian nobility are anxious for peace; and Constantine, whose views are shared by Benningsen, will leave no intrigues, no cabals untried in order to gain the czar over to his opinion, and plunge him into difficulties from which he will finally be able to extricate himself only by making peace—a peace concluded at the expense of Prussia. Russia and France will be reconciled over the corpse of Prussia! Even now it is distinctly to be seen what we have to expect from the czar's assistance. Our allies are doing nothing really to help us, but whatever steps they are taking are exclusively for their own safety. It is true, they advanced at first, but only in order to prevent the French from approaching their frontier. Since that time, however, in spite of the battle of Pultusk, the Russians have steadily retreated, although the enemy did not compel them to do so. They accomplished thus their own purpose, that is, to devastate a province of Prussia, and protect themselves by this desert from a French invasion."

"It is true," said General von Zastrow, "our friends are ruining us by a mere semblance of aid. If they really were honest and faithful allies, would they not strain every nerve to preserve Dantzic to us? General Benningsen did promise to succor the fortress and raise the siege, if Dantzic held out only two months longer. But what is he doing to redeem his promise? Absolutely nothing! We reproached him with his inactivity, and he excused it by asserting that the army would first have to be reënforced. He admits that the fall of that seaport would be a great disaster, but refuses to do any thing decisive for its safety. Therefore, if we do not give up the equivocal friendship of the Russians—if we do not now make peace with France, Dantzic will be lost, and Colberg and Graudenz will likewise fall, in spite of the efforts of their heroic defenders, Schill and Colomb. Oh, I beg you induce the king to accept the peace if the terms offered to him be not utterly inadmissible. These Russians will never deliver us. Suppose even another general than Benningsen, and better disposed than he, should advance after his so-called victories in the same manner as Benningsen is retreating now, he would restore to us no state, only a desert. The king ought to believe us that they are utterly unwilling to render us assistance, and that they only intend devastating our country in order to protect themselves. Whatever the noble and generous Emperor Alexander may order, it is certain that nothing will be

done. Even though we should protest and clamor against it in the most heart-rending manner, we should be unable to bring about a change."

"But should we succeed in convincing the king," said General von Köckeritz, "how are we to persuade the queen? Her heart, otherwise so gentle and generous, is filled with hatred against Napoleon, and she believes in the friendship of the Russian emperor."

"Will you take it upon yourself, your excellency, to persuade the king to make peace with France?"

"I believe I shall be able to do it," said General von Köckeritz, after a brief reflection.

"Well, for my part, I undertake to persuade the queen to acquiesce, at least in silence, and not advocate so warmly the alliance with Russia."

"I should like to know by what charm you intend to accomplish such a miracle."

"By a very simple one, your excellency. I shall cause my niece, the Countess von Truchsess, who is not merely lady of honor, but also reader to the queen, to read to her majesty the last numbers of the *Berlin Telegraph*, which I have just received. This seems like a riddle, but it is not. That journal contains charges against the queen, which, it appears to me, render it impossible for her to declare so loudly and publicly in favor of a continued alliance with the Russian emperor. Her majesty, therefore, must be informed of the contents of those articles; she must know in what sense public opinion—or, if you prefer, the wicked world—is interpreting her enthusiasm for the Russian alliance. She must learn it this very hour, that, at this momentous crisis, she may not try to stem the tide of events. We must tie her hands in order to prevent her from destroying the work we are taking so much pains to accomplish. While your excellency goes to the king in order to take his heart by storm with your convincing eloquence, and I am afterward conducting General Bertrand to his majesty (to whom he will present the pacific overtures and the autograph letter from Napoleon), my niece, the Countess von Truchsess, will read to the queen the articles published in the *Telegraph*, and if the king should really hesitate, and desire to hear the opinion of his wife, she, in her just indignation, will assuredly not advocate his cause for whose sake she has to bear the slanders of the public press."

"Heaven grant that you may be a true prophet, general!"

said Köckeritz, heaving a sigh. "The queen, however, is so magnanimous that she might even overlook her personal wrongs, and the slanders heaped on her, if she thought the welfare of the country was at stake. I believe she esteems the honor of Prussia even higher than her own, and in case she should believe the former to be endangered, would be willing to sacrifice herself."

"I believe your excellency is mistaken, so far as that is concerned," said General von Zastrow, smiling. "The wife of Frederick William, aside from being a high-minded queen, is a woman who has the utmost regard for her reputation and virtue, and who, for the sake of her husband and children, would not suffer a breath of suspicion upon her honor. Well, we shall see whether you are right or not. It is high time for us to go to work. As you have promised me your assistance, I am quite hopeful, and believe we shall succeed in restoring peace to poor tormented Prussia. Go, then, your excellency, to perform your part; I will go to the Countess von Truchsess, to bring her the newspapers, and then it will be high time to conduct General Bertrand to the king. Well, Heaven bless us all, and cause Prussia to make peace at last with the Corsican lion!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SLANDEROUS ARTICLES.

QUEEN LOUISA was in her cabinet, engaged in reading the letters and journals brought by the courier, who had just arrived from Berlin. She glanced hastily over the papers, and then turned to the letters that lay unopened before her. On the other side of the small table, standing in front of the divan, sat the young Countess von Truchsess, who was occupied in arranging the journals. The queen meantime was reading her letters; during the perusal her features lighted up more and more, and a delicate blush mantled her pale cheeks.

Louisa had but just recovered from a severe and dangerous illness, which had attacked her soon after her arrival at Königsberg. The suffering which her courageous soul was enduring with so much constancy and heroism had undermined her body; weaker than her mind, it had succumbed to