

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

the burden of her grief. A nervous fever had confined her to her bed for weeks; it had afforded her at least some consolation by rendering her unconscious of misfortune, and causing her, in her delirious moments, to live again through the joyful days of the past. While she was dreaming and believing herself happy in the splendors of a former life, real and fearful disasters had befallen her cause. She had not learned that the French were approaching nearer to Königsberg, and that the unfortunate royal family were no longer safe there. She had not been conscious in her fever that she had been lifted from her couch into the travelling-coach, to be conveyed to Memel—that her carriage had been transformed into a sick-bed, and that she had lain on the cushions with burning cheeks, singing sweet lullabies, and rejoicing in her fancied happiness.

But at length her fever subsided, and consciousness returned. All the mournful news which during her illness had been concealed from her, overwhelmed her as soon as she recovered, and for this reason her health had improved but very slowly. At this hour, as we have said, the blush had returned to her cheeks, and her eyes were beaming again with the fire of former days. The letters gave a glimmer of hope to her soul. They told her of the brave defenders of the fortresses that had not surrendered, and of heroic Ferdinand von Schill, who, with his soldiers, was doing so much injury to the enemy, and who had succeeded in capturing one of the commanding generals of the besieging army, Marshal Victor. They told her of Graudenz, the commander of which had sworn to be buried under the ruins of that fortress rather than open its gates to the enemy; they told her also of Dantzic, which was still courageously holding out and hoping for the succor the Russians had promised. And these letters contained still other hopeful news: that Berlin, which, according to former statements, was said to have already submitted to Napoleon, was bowing very reluctantly to the behests of the autocrat, and still waiting for the hour of deliverance.

"Oh, I knew well enough," said the queen, laying aside the last of her letters, "I knew well enough that the inhabitants of Berlin are affectionately devoted to us. I never doubted their constancy, and how should I? Those whom you meet with a heart full of love are compelled, as it were, to return your love. The king and I always loved Berlin, and always counted on its fealty. I am glad, therefore, to hear that our

hopes will be fulfilled one day! It is still a dark, stormy night, but daylight will come—the rising sun will dispel the storm and scatter the darkness. You shake your head, Countess Truchsess? You do not believe in my prophecies?"

"I do not believe in the fidelity of the inhabitants of Berlin, your majesty," sighed the countess, "they are a frivolous, fickle people, who revile those to-day whom they admired but yesterday."

"Oh!" exclaimed the queen, sinking back upon the sofa, "the throbbing of my heart tells me that you have to communicate bad news! What is it?"

"No, most gracious queen, command me rather to be silent," said the lady of honor, imploringly. "Your majesty looks so pale that I am afraid any excitement would injure your weak nerves. You need repose and ought not to be irritated; besides, what does your majesty care for the slanders of the populace? Such arrows recoil from the pure."

"Ah," said the queen, with a faint smile, "you are dealing with me as did Robert the hunter with the count in Schiller's 'Walk to the Forge.' You are stimulating my curiosity by mysterious words—you are talking about slanders, and yet you do not tell me what they are."

"Only with the difference, your majesty, that Robert the hunter told falsehoods, which he himself had invented, while I alluded only to those of others, and despise them from the bottom of my heart."

"Then you mean to say that I have been slandered," exclaimed the queen, in a low voice. "Tell me, countess, what did your friends write to you? What stories have been disseminated? I desire to know!"

"Gracious queen, my friends did not write any thing on the subject. I saw only what, unfortunately, thousands have already seen."

"What did you see?" said the queen, angrily. "What do you refer to? Do not speak any longer in riddles, if you please."

"Your majesty, I have glanced at the pamphlets and journals lying there, and request you not to insist to-day on my reading to you the articles contained in them."

"Ah, that is it!" exclaimed Louisa, laying both her hands on the periodicals which the countess seemingly wished to withhold from her. "These contain the slanders. I must

know what they are. Read them to me, countess." And the queen folded her arms with a resolute air.

"Have mercy on me, your majesty! I am really afraid—my lips cannot easily recite those vile lines, and your majesty, besides, will be angry with me for complying."

"No, no," exclaimed the queen, impatiently, "I am not angry with you. You only did your duty in calling my attention to these things, and having taken upon yourself the task of being my reader, perform it now! What pamphlets are those sent to us?"

"Your majesty," said the countess, in an embarrassed tone of voice, "there is, first, a pamphlet entitled 'A True Account of the Interview of the Emperor Alexander with the King of Prussia at the Grave of Frederick the Great.'"

"Read it," replied the queen, dryly, "it is always good to listen to the true account of events in which we have taken part." And without uttering a word—without even a frown, she listened to the comments on the scene at the grave of Frederick. They were malicious and scornful, representing it as a farce.

"Well," said the queen, when the countess had finished, "if that is the worst, I feel at ease again. We must submit to abuse, and I sincerely pardon all those who expose me to the derision of the world by depicting me as a martial Joan of Arc. It has not been permitted me to live quietly in the shade of domestic happiness. A queen stands alone on a summit; she is seen and watched by every one, and it is, therefore, but natural that she should be hated and abused more relentlessly than other women, particularly if she be unhappy. For sovereigns are never pardoned, although they are subject to human failings, and their misfortunes are always regarded as their own faults. Let the malicious, therefore, deride us as much as they please; the good will only love and respect us the more. Proceed, countess! What else did we receive?"

"Nothing, your majesty, but a few numbers of the *Telegraph*."

"Ah, read them," exclaimed the queen. "I know that journal will not slander me. Its editor, Professor Lange, is a patriot, and, for this reason, I had promised to lend him the portrait of the king which I am wearing in a locket, that he might give his readers a good likeness of their beloved monarch. The disastrous events of the war, and my departure

from Berlin, prevented me from fulfilling my promise. But there will be better times for us, perhaps, and I shall then be able to reward all those who remain faithful to us."

"And I hope your majesty will also be able to punish those who prove treacherous," exclaimed the countess, vehemently.

The queen shook her head. "No," she said, "those who wrong me I will pardon, and those who are faithless I will leave to their own conscience. Now, countess, read to me the articles of the *Telegraph*."

"Does your majesty command me?"

"I do!"

The countess took one of the sheets and read in a tremulous voice: "A reliable account of the reasons why the queen compelled her husband, in spite of his reluctance, to conclude an alliance with the Emperor of Russia, and why she herself entered into a love-affair with Alexander of Russia—"

Louisa started, and a deathly pallor covered her face like a veil.

"Oh, my queen!" exclaimed the countess, imploringly, "do not insist on my reading any further. I have not courage to do so."

"If I have courage enough to listen, you must have courage enough to read," said the queen, almost harshly. "Read—I command you."

And the countess, in a low and tremulous voice, read the disgraceful charge preferred by that journal, which accused the queen of loving the Emperor Alexander in the most passionate manner. "Queen Louisa," said the editor, "was in favor of the alliance with Russia, because her heart had concluded an alliance with the handsome emperor, and she met with her 'fine-looking' friend for the last time in the presence of her husband at the grave of Frederick the Great. The alliance of their hearts was sealed there by a glowing kiss, which Alexander imprinted on the lips of Louisa."

The queen uttered a cry, and sprang up like an angry lioness. "That is not true—that cannot be in the paper!" she cried, almost beside herself.

The lady of honor silently handed her the paper. Louisa seized it, but she trembled so violently that she was hardly able to decipher the characters. She at last read the slanderous article herself. Heart-rending groans escaped her, and a strange twitching and quivering distorted her features. "It

is indeed true, I have been wickedly reviled!" she exclaimed, throwing the paper aside. "My enemies will rob me of the only thing remaining—my honor—my good name. They desire to expose me to the scorn of the world. Oh, this disgrace is more shocking than all my other sufferings. It will kill me!" She covered her face with her hands and wept piteously. The tears trickled between her fingers, and fell on her black dress as if adorning it with diamonds.

The Countess von Truchsess was touched by the queen's grief. She softly gathered up the other papers, and was about to leave the room, but the noise of her footsteps aroused Louisa from the stupor of her despair. She quickly dropped her hands from her face and dried her tears. "Stay here," she said; "read the remainder. I want to hear it all." And as the lady of honor remonstrated against this order—as she implored the queen to spare herself, and to close her ears against such slanders, Louisa said, gravely and imperiously: "I want to know it all! Unknown terrors are even worse than those which we do know. Read!"

The countess, therefore, was obliged to read. The remaining numbers of the journal repeated the same charge. They stated, though in different words, that the queen alone was in favor of the alliance with Russia; that the king would be quite willing to make peace with France, but that his wife would never permit it, because she was passionately enamoured of the emperor of Russia, and maintained a tender *liaison* with him. The queen listened as immovable and cold as a statue; her whole vitality seemed suspended; she then pressed her right hand firmly against her heart; with her left she clung convulsively to the back of the sofa, on which she was sitting, as though she wished to prevent herself from falling. Her eyes stared wildly, as if strange and fearful visions passed before them. Thus she sat, long after the countess had paused, an image of grief and horror. The lady of honor dared not interrupt her; but clasping her hands, and weeping softly, she gazed at the queen, who, in her grief-stricken beauty, seemed to her a martyr. Nothing was heard but the monotonous ticking of the clock, and, at times, a low whistling of the canary-bird, in its gilt cage at the window.

But suddenly Louisa seemed to awake from her stupor; a tremor pervaded her whole frame; the flash of life and consciousness returned to her eyes. "That is his work," she muttered; "this attack comes from him—from my mortal

enemy. It is Napoleon who has aimed this poisoned arrow at my heart, because he knew that nothing could hurt me and my husband more fatally than this dreadful calumny." And uttering a loud cry of despair, and wringing her hands, she exclaimed: "Oh, my God, what did I do, to deserve so terrible a disgrace! What did my husband do that he should be thus exposed to the relentless malice of his foe? Was not the measure of our wretchedness full? Could not that cruel man, who calls himself Emperor of the French, content himself with hurling us into the dust, and with robbing my husband of his states? Is the honor of his wife also to be sacrificed?"

A flood of tears burst from her eyes, and lifting up her arms to heaven, she cried: "My God, why didst Thou desert me! Have mercy on me, and send death to me, that I may conceal my reviled head in the grave! I am accused of an ignominious, sinful love, although I love no one on earth but my husband and my children! And a German pen was bought to write that slander—German eyes did not shrink from reading it, and German men and women permitted it to be repeated in this journal time and again! They did not feel that they were disgraced and reviled in my person—that all Germany was calumniated! For, in my grief as well as in my love, I am the representative of Germany, and to insult me is to insult all German wives and mothers. Woe to you, Napoleon, for stooping to such an outrage! I pardon your attempts to rob me of my crown, but so long as I breathe, I will not forgive your attacks upon my honor!"

She rose slowly and proudly, and lifted her arms and eyes as if to utter a solemn imprecation. "Woe to you, Napoleon!" she cried, in a loud, ringing voice, "woe to you that you did not respect the innocence of the wife, and had no mercy on the honor of a mother! The tears which I am shedding at this hour will one day fall like burning coals on your heart, and for this torment I am now enduring I shall call you to account above! You think you are master of the earth, and, like fate itself, can dispose of empires; but you will be crushed at last—you will one day feel that you are only a weak creature—only dust, like all of us. You will yet sink down in your affliction, and cry for mercy. Let me live to see that day, my God: then my tears will be avenged!"

She paused, her eyes still directed toward heaven, her whole appearance breathing a sublime enthusiasm. She looked like

a prophetess with her beaming face and uplifted arms. But after a while her arms dropped, her eyes turned to earth again, and the inspired prophetess was once more transformed into the unhappy woman, who feared she would die beneath the burden of her grief. She burst again into tears, and repeated again and again that terrible accusation, although every word of it struck her heart like a dagger. Gradually, however, the reviled woman, conscious of her innocence, became the proud and pure queen! With quiet dignity she stretched out her hand toward the countess, who rushed to her, pressed her lips on the royal hand, and sobbing asked to be forgiven.

"I have nothing to forgive," said Louisa, with a faint smile. "I know your intentions were good. Oh, believe me, during hours of great affliction the soul sees and comprehends many things that were hitherto concealed from it. Thus I understood in the outburst of my despair why all this had occurred, and why I had to undergo all these sufferings. Napoleon's poisoned arrow might have fallen powerless at my feet, if your uncle had not instructed you to pick it up and make me feel it. Hush! Do not utter a word of apology! Your uncle, General von Zastrow, is a patriot in his way, and intended to teach me by your intervention how to become a good patriot in his sense—that is to say, to hate Russia, and to turn away from this alliance, for the sake of which I have been insulted. It was policy that induced the Emperor Napoleon to invent these calumnies, and it was policy again that induced your uncle to have you communicate them to me. This is a consolation; for, as it is, I am suffering only for the sake of my people, and you made me a martyr of the German cause. But I will bear all without complaining, however painful it may be; I do not wish it to cease if the welfare and happiness of Prussia should be delayed thereby but a single hour. I shall not ask the king to break off the alliance with Russia. Queen Louisa yesterday believed an alliance with Russia to be necessary and advantageous to the welfare and honor of Prussia; she will not change her mind to-day because Louisa, the woman, is charged with a dishonorable love for the Emperor of Russia. The woman may die of this calumny, but dying she will still be a queen, and say, 'I die for my country, and for my people! May my death be advantageous to Prussia!' Go to your uncle, countess, and tell him so! And now give me the numbers of the journal, and the

pamphlet too; I will take them to the king. My fate, as well as that of Prussia, is in his hands. He alone can absolve me from the charge preferred against me. Give me the papers!"

---

 CHAPTER XXIV.

## THE JUSTIFICATION.

THE king sat at his desk, assiduously engaged in writing, when the door opened, and the queen entered. Her whole bearing breathed an unwonted, solemn earnestness; her head was proudly erect, her cheeks pale, and a melancholy smile was playing on her lips. In her left hand she held a roll of papers. The king rose hastily to meet his wife with a kindly greeting. Louisa gave him her right hand, and laid her head for a moment on his shoulder. Looking into her husband's face with a sweet, touching expression, "Do you love me, Frederick?" she asked in so low and gentle a voice that he scarcely heard it. Frederick William smiled, and, instead of replying to her, imprinted a kiss on her fair brow.

"Do you believe in me?" said Louisa. "Oh, my lord and king, I implore you by every thing that is sacred—by the memory of our children—tell me, sincerely and frankly, as if standing before God, do you believe in me? Do you believe in my love—in my virtue?"

"Louisa," exclaimed the king, indignantly and almost aghast, "this question is too grave to be a jest, and too ludicrous to be grave."

"And yet I am in earnest," exclaimed the queen, in an outburst of excitement, which she was no longer able to restrain. "Look at these papers, Frederick. They contain a terrible charge against your wife—the mother of your children—the queen of our people. They accuse the wife of a disgraceful *liaison*, and the queen of the most infamous selfishness. Frederick, they charge me with loving the Emperor Alexander, and with having induced you, for the purpose of gratifying this passion, to enter into the alliance with Russia. Now, you know the disgrace weighing me down, of which all Germany is aware by this time, and in which the malicious and evil-disposed will surely believe, even though the virtuous and compassionate may refuse to credit it. Read these