

and with upturned glances she indicated her thoughts, singing in a joyful voice the hymn commencing with the words:

In all thy ways—in grief, in fear,
O troubled heart! rely
On that all-faithful, ceaseless care
Of Him who rules the sky.*

CHAPTER XXIX.

BAD TIDINGS.

FREDERICK WILLIAM and Louisa sat hand in hand in the small, wretched room of the mill at Puktupöhnen. They were not a royal couple, but a pair of lovers, thanking God that they were again united, and could read in each other's eyes the love and constancy that animated them. The king, generally taciturn and laconic, found words at this hour; his happiness made him eloquent, and he unbosomed himself unreservedly, telling of his apprehensions and forebodings. "But now," he said, pressing Louisa's hand to his lips, "now you are here, and affairs will assume a more hopeful aspect. Your eyes will strengthen and your voice will encourage me. Alas! I stand greatly in need of your presence, for my soul is well-nigh crushed. I have no longer sufficient strength to withstand my misfortunes and humiliations—they oppress my life day and night, leaving me no rest. At times, when I sat at the dinner-table between the two emperors, and gazed at the sombre features of Napoleon, in contrast with the good-natured face of Alexander, and listened to their jests, I felt as though I ought to interrupt them by an expression of anger, and say to them, 'It is a shame for you to laugh when misfortune is in your company, and seated by your side.' But I suppressed my feelings. Oh, Louisa, I was all alone in my agony. Now you are here, I am no longer alone!" He threw his arms around the queen's neck, and pressed her against his heart, as though afraid she might also be wrested from him. "Oh, beloved Louisa," he whispered, "you are my consolation and my hope; do not desert me—do not give me up—now that the whole world seems to desert me!"

* Befiehl Du Deine Wege
Und was Dein Herze Kränkt,
Der allertreu'sten Pflege
Dess, der den Himmel lenkt.

* * * * *

PAUL GERHARD.

The queen encircled his neck in her arms and kissed him. "I shall always stay with you," she said, smiling in her tears; "so long as my heart throbs it belongs to you, my king, my beloved husband!" They remained locked in an embrace. Their thoughts were prayers, and their prayers love.

A carriage rapidly driving up to the door, and rattling the windows, roused them. "It is Alexander, who comes to pay you a visit," said the king, rising. "I will meet him."

But before he had reached the door, it opened, and the Emperor Alexander appeared. "Ah, I succeeded in surprising both of you," he said, with a good-humored smile. Bowing respectfully to the queen, he added: "I trust your majesty will forgive my entering without announcement, but I longed to see my noble friend Frederick William. God and His saints be praised that the sun has at length risen on us, and that your majesty has arrived!"

"Yes, sire, I have arrived," said Louisa, mournfully; "however, I do not bring the sun with me. Night surrounds us, and it seems to me I cannot see a single star in the darkness."

Alexander became grave; he gazed long and searchingly at the pale face of the queen, and a sigh escaped his breast. "Sire," he said, turning to the king, "can we really make peace with the man who, in the course of a few weeks, changed into the lily the red rose that once adorned the face of the noblest and most beautiful lady? Can we really forgive him for wringing tears from our august queen?"

"Fate does not ask us whether we can," said the king, gloomily. "It tells us only that we must. In my heart I shall never make peace with the man who, although a great captain, is no great man; else he would be less cruel. But God has given him the power, and we must all bow to him."

"But it is not necessary to humble ourselves before him," exclaimed the queen. "Amid our misfortunes we must keep ourselves erect; and if we perish, we ought to do so with unsullied honor."

"But why perish?" said Alexander. "We are shipwrecked, it is true, and we are now drifting on the waves, but we must save ourselves. Every one must try, to the best of his ability, to do so; he must grasp at the first thing that falls into his hands—at a plank, at a straw. Some fortunate rope may at last save us, and draw us to the shore. We shall then build

a new ship, and man her with fresh hands. Do you agree with me, my dear fellow-sufferers?"

"Sire," said Louisa, in a low and mournful voice, "you are magnanimous. You call yourself our fellow-sufferer. And yet the tempest shipwrecked us alone."

"By no means," exclaimed Alexander; "I have also suffered; all my hopes, wishes, and ambition went down. But I did not wish to be drowned, and I stretched out my arms for something to support me. Do you know what I found to sustain me? The Emperor Napoleon! Oh, he is a strong support."

"I have heard, sire, your majesty has of late become an ardent admirer of Napoleon," said the queen, in a tremulous voice.

"Yes," exclaimed Alexander, enthusiastically, "Napoleon is a genius, a demi-god; the great Alexander of antiquity has risen from the dead. He realizes the myths of the ancient heroes. I repeat it to him every day, and, thank God, he believes me!"

The queen cast a surprised and inquiring glance on him. A singular smile played on his lips. "Yes," he repeated, "Napoleon believes me! He is convinced of the sincerity of my admiration, and he is right. I love him as my master—as my teacher—as the great ideal that I will endeavor to imitate!"

"Oh, sire," sighed the queen, reproachfully, "you give me pain!"

"You hate him, then?" asked Alexander, quickly.

"No," replied Louisa, gently, "I do not hate him, but I cannot love and adore him. Only the good can make the world happy, and Napoleon has no good intentions toward the nations. In his unmeasured ambition he thinks of himself and his individual interests only. We may admire, but cannot love him."

"We must, we can love him!" exclaimed Alexander. "He is an instrument in the hand of Providence, that seems to have armed him to rule the world. I love Napoleon," he added, in a whispering tone, "and I am sure he believes in and returns my love. He overwhelms me with attentions and favors; we have long conversations every day; we take our meals together, and make many excursions. A shower surprised us yesterday and gave us a thorough wetting. How amiably the great Napoleon behaved toward me! how kindly

he took care of me! He would not even let me go to my quarters to change my dress, but conducted me himself to his room and lent me his linen and clothing. As a souvenir, he presented me with a superb dressing-case of gold which I chanced to admire. I shall always preserve this gift as a token of his friendship."

He paused a moment, and cast a quick glance at the royal couple. Frederick William had turned toward the window, and seemed to look intently at the sky. Louisa had cast down her eyes, and her features expressed a profound melancholy. The same strange smile played on the emperor's face, but neither the king nor the queen noticed it. He kissed Louisa's hand and asked: "Will your majesty graciously permit me to show you that beautiful dressing-case?"

The queen withdrew her hand almost indignantly. "I thank your majesty," she said, "I am not very anxious to see the gifts of Napoleon."

Alexander approached nearer to her. "That is right," he whispered hastily, "be angry with me—regard me as a faithless man—a renegade, you will yet be undeceived!"

"Sire," said the queen, "sire—"

"Hush!" whispered Alexander, receding from her and approaching the king. "Your majesty knows how much I have at heart your friendship as well as your welfare—what pains I take to soften the heart of the conqueror, and to inspire him with more lenient sentiments toward Prussia. I improve every opportunity; I try to profit by my private interviews to obtain better terms for you; as, for instance, I succeeded yesterday in persuading him to leave you the fortress of Graudenz."

"I thank your majesty," said Frederick William, gravely. "But, as far as I know, Napoleon did not conquer and occupy that fortress at all; it held out bravely and faithfully to the day of the armistice; it remained mine, and I do not see by what right he claims it."

"Oh, your majesty," exclaimed Alexander, carelessly, "the victor claims the right of taking every thing he pleases. You must remember that, now and hereafter—yes, hereafter," repeated Alexander, laying stress on the word. "I was glad, therefore, that I succeeded in preserving Graudenz to you. Unfortunately, however, I did not succeed in recovering the frontiers. Our august queen must use her eloquence, and I have no doubt that the noblest of women will succeed in

bringing about what we and our ministers failed to accomplish. But in order that your majesty may become fully aware of the important interests that are at stake, of the dangers menacing Prussia, and how urgently she needs the assistance of her queen, I have brought the 'ultimatum' of Napoleon. He dictated it to-day, to Talleyrand in my presence, and I requested him to give me a copy. Will you permit me, sire, to communicate it to you?"

"It is always better to know our fate, and look it full in the face," said the king, slowly. "I request your majesty, therefore, to read it."

"And will you also permit me?" asked Alexander, turning to the queen.

Louisa gently nodded. "The king is right," she said, "we should know the worst. Let us sit down, if your majesty please."

She took a seat on the sofa; the emperor and her husband occupied the easy-chairs on the other side of the table.

"I implore your majesties, however, to listen without interrupting me," said Alexander, drawing a paper from his bosom. Glancing over it, he added: "Napoleon demands, above all, that Prussia shall cede to him the whole territory on the right of the Niemen, the city of Memel, and the district extending as far as Tilsit, for he asserts that this is the natural frontier of Russia. He requires your majesty, further, to cede your whole territory on the left of the Elbe to France, for he regards the Elbe as also the natural frontier of the Prussian kingdom. He stipulates expressly that the district of Hildesheim shall not be included in the territory of your majesty on the right of the Elbe, for he desires this district to form part of the new kingdom of Westphalia, which he has resolved to organize. But to compensate you for this loss, he will prevail upon Saxony to cede to you a territory on the right of the Elbe, equivalent to the district of Memel. Napoleon demands the Polish provinces of Prussia for the new kingdom of Poland to be organized; but your majesty is to keep Pomerelia and the districts of Kulm, Elbing, and Marianwerder. The district of the Netze, as well as the canal of Bromberg and Thorn, will be taken from Prussia; Dantzic, with its surroundings, is to be constituted a free—I believe, a free German city, under the joint protection of Saxony and Prussia. Russia is to cede the island of Corfu to France. This is Napoleon's 'ultimatum,'" said Alexander, laying the

paper on the table. "These, queen, are the conditions which your majesty ought to endeavor to render less rigorous, and if possible, to cancel altogether. What do you think of them, your majesty?"

"I think that if we cannot avert our fate, we must submit to it," replied Frederick William in a hollow voice, "but that recourse ought to be had to every means to render it less offensive. For if I am compelled to sign these propositions, I sign the ruin of Prussia."

The queen had listened to the words of the emperor, with breathless attention, and fixed her eyes inquiringly on her husband. On hearing his mournful reply, she sank back exhausted, and tears flowed down her cheeks.

"Your majesty sees how necessary it was that you should come hither," said Alexander to the queen. "You have a great task to perform here. You alone are able to save Prussia!"

Louisa shook her head. "Sire," she said, "he who was arrogant enough to draw up such an 'ultimatum,' is also cruel enough to withstand all solicitation. I have come because my king commanded me; faithful to the duty intrusted to me, I shall try to mitigate our fate, but I do not hope to be successful."

"In these times, nothing can be promised with any degree of certainty; we can only hope for the best," said Alexander. "We must not relax in our efforts to bring about a change in these terms. But I have not yet communicated to you all the demands of the Emperor Napoleon."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the king, with a bitter laugh. "Then there is something still left for Napoleon to take from me?"

"Yes, sire, he demands that your majesty dismiss your minister, Von Hardenberg."

"Hardenberg!" exclaimed the queen, sadly—"the king's most faithful and devoted servant! Oh, your majesty knows him—the generous zeal that animates him, and the noble purposes that he pursues."

"I know him and have tried to lessen Napoleon's hostility," said Alexander, shrugging his shoulders. "But my efforts were unsuccessful. He insists on Hardenberg's removal, and I cannot but advise your majesty, urgently, to comply. I cannot conceal from you that the Emperor Napoleon has declared to me to-day, that he would make no peace, but wage

war with Prussia for forty years rather than consent that Hardenberg, his implacable adversary, should remain your minister for a single day."

"That is too much," exclaimed the queen, indignantly. "Let Napoleon dismember Prussia, since he has the power, but he must not compel us to select or dismiss our servants according to his *bon plaisir*."

"He must not! but he can do so," said the king gloomily, "and as Napoleon does every thing he can, of course he compels me to undergo a fresh humiliation. I must restore peace to my poor, bleeding country; I cannot continue the war. If, therefore, he insists on Hardenberg's removal as a first condition of the peace, I must comply."

"But it is impossible to inform such a faithful and devoted servant of the state so abruptly of his ignominious removal from office," exclaimed the queen, mournfully.

"No," said Alexander, "that is unnecessary. Minister von Hardenberg will send in his resignation. I have had a long conference with him, and, in consequence of it, he has repaired hither to request your majesty to grant him an audience. May I call him?"

"If your majesty desires me I will receive him in your presence and in that of the queen," said Frederick William, walking to the door; he opened it, and cried: "Minister von Hardenberg!"

A few minutes afterward Hardenberg entered the room. The serene expression of his fine, manly features had not disappeared; calm, and kindly as usual, he approached their majesties, and bowed to them respectfully, yet with the pride of a man conscious of his own dignity. He took the liberty, therefore, to violate etiquette, and to speak without being spoken to. "Sire," he said, turning to the Emperor Alexander, "I thank you for being so kind as to procure me an audience with his majesty, and as I may hope that you have communicated to my king and master the reason why I applied for it, I shall have but little to say. Time is precious, and, therefore, I shall be brief."

He approached the king, and, bowing deeply to him, added: "Your majesty knows that I have devoted my life to the service of Prussia. I have served her to the best of my ability and energy so long as the confidence of your majesty permitted me. But circumstances require me now to prove my devotedness in a different way. I can serve her now only

by retiring from the civil service, and by laying the portfolio that your majesty intrusted to me, at your feet. I, therefore, request you to be so gracious as to accept my resignation."

The king made no immediate reply. The queen looked at him, and an expression of anxious suspense and tender solicitude was to be seen in her features. The Emperor Alexander stood with folded arms at the side of the king, and glanced with a smile now at the minister, now at the royal couple.

"Sire," repeated Hardenberg, since the king was still silent, "I request your majesty to be so gracious as to accept my resignation."

Frederick William started. "You know very well," he said, hastily, and almost in a harsh voice, "that it gives me pain to do so. I have to submit to necessity. I have no power to resist the most arrogant demands—no army to continue the war. Hence, I must accept the only terms on which I am able to obtain peace, and must also accept the resignation you tender. You are free, Minister von Hardenberg; I am not allowed to attach you to my cause. Accept my thanks for your valuable services, and, believe me, I regret that I shall have to do without them." He took the minister's hand and added: "I wish you joy of being no longer in office; it will not now be necessary for you to sign the peace which Napoleon offers to us."

"Sire," said Hardenberg, proudly, "I should never have signed that treaty. It is not a treaty of peace, but of servitude. But I forget that I have now no right to meddle with the policy of Prussia. I thank your majesty, and beg leave to depart."

"I have to permit you," said the king; "you are more fortunate than I am; you are a free man."

"Sire, I have, after all, but that freedom which every honorable man ought to preserve even in misfortune," said Hardenberg, gently—"the freedom of not bowing to wrong and injustice, and of perishing rather than enduring disgrace. I intend to depart in the course of an hour."

"Farewell," said Frederick William, hastily; "and when I say farewell, I mean that we shall meet again. I hope there will be better times. If I call you, then, will you come, Hardenberg?"

"I shall never close my ear against the call of your majesty and of Prussia," said Hardenberg, bowing to the king and the queen. He then turned to the Emperor Alexander. "Sire,"

he said, "on taking leave of you, and being, perhaps, for the last time, so fortunate as to see your majesty, it is a comfort to me to remember the day when I beheld you first in the spring of the present year. It was at Kydullen, where your majesty showed to the King of Prussia your lifeguards that accompanied you from St. Petersburg to participate in the war against France. When the soldiers marched past you embraced King Frederick William, and exclaimed with tearful eyes: 'Neither of us shall fall alone; either both, or neither!' These words are still resounding in my ears, and in these disastrous days, when Prussia's honor and existence are at stake, they are my only consolation. Your majesty has not fallen, and hence, you will not allow Prussia to fall. You will remember your oath, the fidelity which Prussia has manifested toward you, and never so stain your glory as to desert her now and suffer her to fall alone! This is my hope, and, comforted by it, I leave you."

"Ah," said Alexander, sighing, "how unfortunate I am! You spoke at my right ear, and you know that there I am deaf. Hence, I did not hear much of what you said. But I believe you wished to take leave of me; I, therefore, bid you a heart-felt farewell, and wish you a happy journey." He offered his hand to Hardenberg, but the deep bow the minister made just then, prevented him, perhaps, from seeing the extended hand of the emperor; he did not grasp it, but withdrew in silence, walking backward to the door.

When he was about to go out, the queen rose from the sofa. "Hardenberg," she exclaimed, vehemently, "and you forget to bid *me* farewell?"

"Your majesty," said the minister, respectfully, "I await your permission to do so."

The queen hastened to him. Tears glistened in her eyes, and she said in a voice tremulous with emotion: "You know what I suffer in these times of humiliation, for you know my sentiments, which can never change—never prove faithless to the objects which we pursued together. A time of adversity compels us to bow our heads; but let us lift our hearts to God, and pray for better times. He will instil courage and patience into the souls of noble and true patriots, and teach them not to despair. Hardenberg, I believe in you, and so does Prussia. Work for the cause in private life, as you are unable to do so in public—prepare for the new era. This is my farewell—this the expression of my gratitude for your

fidelity. May God protect you, that you may be able again to be useful to our country! Whenever I pray for Prussia, I shall remember you! Farewell!" She offered him her hand, and as he bent to kiss it, he could not refrain from tears. He averted his head as if to conceal his emotion, and left the room.

Louisa looked at the king, who stood musing with folded arms. "Oh, my husband!" she exclaimed mournfully, "Napoleon robs you not only of your states, but of your most faithful friends and advisers. God save Prussia!"

CHAPTER XXX.

QUEEN LOUISA AND NAPOLEON.

THE queen had finished her toilet. For the first time during many months, she had adorned herself, and appeared again in regal pomp. A white satin dress, embroidered with gold, surrounded her tall and beautiful form, and fell behind her in a flowing train. A broad necklace of pearls and diamonds set off her superb neck; bracelets of the same kind encircled her arms, that might have served as a model for Phidias. A diadem of costly gems was glittering on her expansive forehead. It was a truly royal toilet, and in former days the queen herself would have rejoiced in it; but to-day no gladness was in her face—her cheeks were pallid, her lips quivering, and her eyes gloomy.

She contemplated her figure in the mirror with a mournful, listless air, and, turning to Madame von Berg, who had accompanied her to Puktupöhnen, and who was to be her companion on her trip to Tilsit, she said: "Caroline, when I look at myself, I cannot help shuddering, and my heart feels cold. I am adorned as the ancient Germans used to dress their victims, when they were about to throw them into the flames to pacify the wrath of their gods. I shall suffer the same fate. I shall die of the fire burning in my heart, yet I shall not be able to propitiate the idol that the world is worshipping. It will be all in vain! With a soul so crushed as mine, I am incapable of accomplishing any thing. But complaints are useless, I must finish what I have begun; I must—but hush! is not that the sound of wheels approaching this house?"

"Yes," said Madame von Berg, hastening to the window;