

## BOOK IV.

### CHAPTER XXXI.

BARON VON STEIN.

PROFOUND sadness reigned for several weeks at the house of Baron Charles von Stein. Tears were in the eyes of his children, and whenever their mother came from her husband's room and joined them for a moment, they seemed in her only to seek comfort and hope. But the anxious face of the baroness became more sorrowful, and the family physician, who visited the house several times a day, was more taciturn and grave. Baron von Stein was ill, and his disease was one of those which baffle the skill of the physician, because their seat is to be sought less in the body than in the mind. Prussia's misfortunes had prostrated Stein. Sick at heart, and utterly broken down, at the commencement of 1807, after the violent scene with King Frederick William, he left Königsberg, and travelled slowly toward Nassau. There he met his family, and ever since lived in retirement. Never in his grief had he uttered a complaint, or manifested any loss of temper, but his face had become paler, his gait slower, and indicative of increasing weakness and exhaustion. He yielded at last to the tears of his wife, and the repeated remonstrances of his physician, to submit to medical treatment.

But medicine did not restore him; his strength decreased, and the fever wrecking his body grew more violent. The disease had recently, however, assumed a definite character; the news of the disaster of Friedland, and of the humiliating treaty of Tilsit, had violently shaken his constitution, and the physician was now able to discern the true character of the malady and give it a name. It was the tertian fever which alternately reddened and paled the baron's cheeks, at times paralyzing his clear, powerful mind, or moving his lips to utter unmeaning words, the signs of his delirium.

Baron von Stein had just undergone another attack of his

dangerous disease. All night long his devoted wife had watched at his bedside, and listened despondingly to his groans, his fantastic expressions, his laughter and lamentations. In the morning the sufferer had grown calmer; consciousness had returned, and his eyes sparkled again with intelligence. The fever had left him, but he was utterly prostrated. The physician had just paid him a visit, and examined his condition in silence. "Dear doctor," whispered the baroness, as he was departing, "you find my husband very ill, I suppose? Oh, I read it in your face; I perceive from your emotion that you have not much hope of his recovery!" And the tears she knew how to conceal in the sick-room fell without restraint.

"He is very ill," said the physician, thoughtfully, "but I do not believe his case to be entirely hopeless; for an unforeseen circumstance may come to our assistance and give his mind some energy, when it will favorably influence the body. If the body alone were suffering, science would suggest ways and means to cure a disease which, in itself, is easily overcome. The tertian fever belongs neither to the dangerous acute diseases nor to any graver class. But, in this case, it is only the external eruption of a disease seated in the patient's mind."

"Whence, then, is recovery to come in these calamitous and depressing times?" said the baroness, mournfully. "His grief at the misfortunes of Prussia is gnawing at his heart, and all the mortifications and misrepresentations he has suffered at the hands of the very men whom he served with so much fidelity have pierced his soul like poisoned daggers. Oh, I shall never pardon the king that he could so bitterly mortify and humble my noble husband, who is enthusiastically devoted to Prussia—that he could mistake his character so grievously, and prefer such cruel charges against him. He called him—the best, the most intelligent and reliable of all his servants—a seditious man; he charged him with being self-willed, stubborn, and proud, and said he was mischievous and disobedient to the state. Oh, believe me, that accusation is what troubles Stein! The King of Prussia has humbled his pride so deeply and unjustly, that a reconciliation between them is out of the question. Stein lives, thinks, and grieves only for his country, and yet the insulting vehemence and unfeeling words of the king have rendered it impossible for him ever to reënter the Prussian service. He sees that his

country is sinking every day, and that she is ruined not only by foreign enemies, but by domestic foes preying at the vitals of her administration. He would like to help her—he feels that he has stored up the means to do so in his experience—and yet he cannot. I ask you, therefore, my friend, where is the balm for his wounded soul?”

“I do not know,” said the physician, “but we must get it. Germany has not now so many high-minded and courageous men that she could spare one, and the best of them all. The genius of Germany will assuredly find a remedy to save her noble champion, Baron von Stein.”

“Ah, you believe still in the genius of Germany?” asked the baroness, mournfully. “You see all the horrors, the shame, the degradation that Germany, and especially Prussia, have to suffer! The calamities of our country, then, my friend, have transformed you into a believer, and made of the rationalist a mystic, believing in miracles? You know I was hitherto pious, and a faithful believer, but now I begin to doubt. Now I ask myself anxiously whether there really is a God in heaven, who directs and ordains every thing, and yet permits us to be thus trampled in the dust.”

“Our duty is, perhaps, to strengthen ourselves by misfortunes,” said the physician. “Germany was sleeping so profoundly that she could only be aroused by calamity, and become fully alive to her degrading position. But, believe me, she is opening her eyes, and seeking for those who can help her. She cannot forget Baron von Stein; but must feel that she stands in need of him.”

“May you be a true prophet!” said the baroness, sighing, “and that your words—but hark! she interrupted herself, “some one is violently ringing the door-bell! He must be a stranger, for none of the citizens would announce a visit in so noisy a manner. The inhabitants manifest sympathy for us; many come every morning to inquire about my husband. Without solicitation our neighbors have spread a layer of straw in front of the house, and along the street, that no noise may disturb the beloved sufferer, and—”

Just then the door opened, and a footman stated that a stranger desired to see the baroness concerning a matter of great importance.

“Me?” she asked, wonderingly.

“He asked first for Baron von Stein,” replied the footman, “and when I told him that my master was very ill, he seemed

alarmed. But he bade me announce his visit to the baroness, and tell her that he had made a long journey, and was the bearer of important news.”

“Admit him, baroness,” said the physician; “he brings, perhaps, news that may be good for our patient. As for me, permit me to withdraw.”

“No, my dear doctor, you must stay,” she said. “You are an intimate friend of my husband and of my family, and this person cannot have any thing to say to me that you may not hear. Besides, your advice and assistance may be necessary; and if the news should be important for my husband, you ought not to be absent.”

“Well, if you wish me to stay, I will,” said the physician; “who knows whether my hopes may not be presently realized?”

“Admit the stranger,” said the baroness; and he entered a few minutes afterward.

“High-Chamberlain von Schladen!” she exclaimed, meeting him.

“You recognize me, then, madame?” asked M. von Schladen. “The memories of past times have not altogether vanished in this house, and one may hope—” At this moment his eyes met the physician, and he paused.

“Doctor von Waldau,” said the baroness, “a faithful friend of my husband, and at present his indefatigable physician. He is one of us, and you may speak freely in his presence, Mr. Chamberlain.”

“Permit me, then, to apply to you directly, and to ask you whether Baron von Stein is so ill that I cannot see him about grave and important business?”

“The baron is very ill,” said the physician, “but there is no immediate danger; and, as the fever has left him to-day, he will be able to converse about serious matters—that is to say, if they are not of a very sad and disheartening character.”

“Grief for Prussia’s misfortunes is my husband’s disease,” said the baroness; “consider well, therefore, if what you intend telling him will aggravate it, or bring him relief. If a change for the better has taken place—if you bring him the news that that disgraceful treaty of Tilsit has been repudiated, and that the war will continue, it will be a salutary medicine, and, in spite of the warlike character of your news, you will appear as an angel of peace at his bedside. But if you come only to confirm the disastrous tidings that have prostrated him, it may cause his death.”

"I do not bring any warlike tidings," said M. von Schladen, sadly; "I do not bring intelligence that the treaty of Tilsit has been repudiated! Hence, I cannot, as you say, appear as an angel of peace. Nevertheless, I do not come croaking of our disasters. I come in the name of, and commissioned by Prussia, to remind Baron von Stein of the words he uttered to the queen when he took leave of her. You, sir, being his physician, are alone able to decide whether I may see him, and lay my communication before him. For this reason I must tell you more explicitly why I have come. You permit me to do so, I suppose, baroness?"

"Oh, speak! my heart is yearning for your words!" exclaimed the baroness.

"I come to see Baron von Stein, not merely because I long to speak to the man for whom I entertain so much love and respect," said M. von Schladen, "but I come in the name of the king and queen. I bring him letters from Minister von Hardenberg, from the Princess Louisa von Radziwill, and from General Blücher, and verbal communications from the queen. I have travelled without taking a moment's rest in order to deliver my letters as soon as possible, and to inform the baron of the wishes of their majesties. And now that I have arrived at my destination, I find the man sick in bed who is the only hope of Prussia. You will, perhaps, even shut his door against me, and all the greetings of love, the solicitations and supplications which I bring, will not reach him! It would be a heavy misfortune for Prussia and for the deeply-afflicted king, who is looking hopefully toward Baron von Stein!"

"He is looking hopefully toward my husband," exclaimed the baroness, reproachfully, "and yet it was he who insulted the baron in so grievous a manner!"

"But the king repents of it, and desires to indemnify him for it," said M. von Schladen. "I come to request Baron von Stein to return to Prussia, and to become once more the king's minister and adviser."

"Oh," exclaimed the physician, joyfully, "you see now that I am a true prophet. The genius of Germany has found a remedy to cure our noble sufferer."

"You permit me, then, to speak to him?" asked M. von Schladen.

"I request you to do so," replied the physician. "I demand that you go to him immediately, and speak to him freely and unreservedly. His mind is in need of a vigorous shock to

become again conscious of its own strength; when it has regained this consciousness, the body will rise from its prostration."

"Doctor, I am somewhat afraid," said the baroness, anxiously. "He was of late so nervous and irritable, you know, that the most trifling occurrence caused him to tremble and covered his brow with perspiration. I am afraid these stirring communications may make too powerful an impression upon him."

"Never mind," exclaimed the physician; "let them make a powerful impression upon him—let them even cause him to faint—I do not fear the consequences in the least; on the contrary, I desire them, for the shock of his nervous system will be salutary, and bring about a crisis that will lead to his recovery."

"But, doctor, excuse me, you know he had a raging fever all night, and is exhausted. What good will it do to communicate the news to him? He cannot obey the king's call, and, at best, weeks must pass before recovering sufficiently to attend to state matters."

"Ah, Baron von Stein accomplishes in days what others perform only in weeks," exclaimed the physician, smiling. "He is one of those men whose mind has complete control of his body. In his case, if you cure the one you cure the other."

"But I doubt whether my husband will accept these offers of the king," said the baroness, hesitatingly; "he has been insulted too grossly."

"But he is a patriot in the best sense of the word," said M. von Schladen; "he will forget personal insult when the welfare of the people is at stake."

"And even though he should not accept," said the physician, "he receives at least a gratifying satisfaction in the king's offer, and that will assuredly be a balm for his wounds. I shall now go to him once more. If he is entirely free from fever, I will let you come in, and you may tell him every thing."

"But you will not go away," said the baroness; "you will stay here, so as to be at hand in case any thing should happen."

"I shall remain in this room," said the physician, "and you may call me if necessary. Now let me see first how our patient is, and whether I may announce M. von Schladen's visit." He hastened back into the sick-room without waiting for a reply;

the baroness sank down on a chair, and, folding her trembling hands, prayed fervently. High-Chamberlain von Schladen looked at the door by which the physician had disappeared, and his face expressed suspense and impatience.

At length the door opened again, and the physician appeared on the threshold. "High-Chamberlain von Schladen," he said aloud, "come in; Baron von Stein awaits you."

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### THE PATRIOT.

HIGH-CHAMBERLAIN VON SCHLADEN entered the sick-room on tiptoe, preceded by the Baroness von Stein, who, hastening to her husband, looked at him anxiously. In fact, the baron looked very ill. His cheeks were hollow and deadly pale; his eyes lay deep in their sockets, and were flashing with that peculiar light emanating from the fever; his thin lips were parched, and he constantly tried to moisten them with his tongue, while his breathing was very painful.

M. von Schladen looked in profound emotion at the patient, and a feeling of melancholy was apparent. He was obliged to acknowledge that the baroness was right, and that this wasted form was not able to rise to obey the king's call; he believed that he had come in vain, and would be compelled to leave without having accomplished any thing, and this conviction was accompanied with a sigh. The sick man heard it, and a faint smile passed over his features. "You find me very ill then, M. von Schladen?" he asked in a tremulous voice. "I suppose I am but the shadow of the healthy, vigorous man who took leave of you at Königsberg a few months since? You see, I am still unable to give up my sympathies for Prussia; indeed, I am like her in every respect. Prussia is also but a shadow of what she was a short time ago; she is undergoing her death-struggle, and will succumb unless a strong arm soon lift her up."

"But this strong arm will come," said M. von Schladen.

"You believe so?" asked Stein. "Would you were right! But all I hear is disheartening. We live in a period of degradation and servitude, when we can do nothing better than seek a refuge in the grave, the only place where we may find liberty. You see that I am already on the brink. But

I will not now speak of myself, but of you. What brought you hither? To what lucky accident am I indebted for your visit? My physician has told me you had casually stopped in this town, and being informed of my illness had desired to see me. What is your destination?"

"I am returning to Memel, to the King and Queen of Prussia," said M. von Schladen.

"Ah, you are a faithful servant, and I envy you," said Baron von Stein, "for your services are gratefully accepted; you are not treated with contumely, and your zeal is not regarded as malice and self-will. You may assist your country with your head, your arm, and your heart. You are not doomed to step aside, and idly dream away your days instead of seeking relief in useful activity. Oh, I repeat again, I envy you!" While he was speaking, his pale cheeks had assumed some color, and his voice, which, at first, had been faint, grew louder. But now, exhausted by the effort, and by his profound emotion, he sank back on the pillow and closed his eyes.

His wife bent over him, and wiped off the perspiration which covered his brow in large drops. In the open door leading into the adjoining room, appeared the kind face of the physician, who looked scrutinizingly at the patient. He then nodded in a satisfied manner, and whispered to the high-chamberlain: "Go on! go on! Tell him every thing. He can bear it."

Baron von Stein opened his eyes again and glanced at M. von Schladen. "You did not yet tell me whence you came, my dear friend?" he said. "Was your journey a mere pleasure-trip, or were graver purposes connected with it?"

"It was no pleasure-trip, for what German cares nowadays for such things?" said M. von Schladen. "My purpose, in undertaking this journey, was not only a grave, but a sacred one. I undertook it for the welfare of our country, and I come to solicit your advice. I know you loved Prussia once; you will not, although you are no longer in her service, withhold your sympathy from her, when you can be useful, you will joyfully render her aid, will you not?"

"Yes, indeed I will," exclaimed Baron von Stein; "my thoughts were with you all the time; my grief arises from your affliction and the misfortunes of Prussia; every new blow inflicted upon her fell on me, and her ruin prostrated me. Tell me, in what way can I aid you?"