

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?"

"Your excellency, by assisting me in finding the man whom I am seeking; on whom the eyes of all good Prussians are fixed, and who is alone able to save the country, to reëstablish its prosperity at home, and to obtain for it respect and authority abroad. The man whom the queen calls her friend, and of whom she expects help—to whom the king offers his hand, and whom he begs (understand me well, begs) to sustain him with his strong arm and his powerful mind, and, for the sake of Prussia, not to remember the wrongs he suffered in by-gone days—your excellency, I am seeking this high-minded man, who forgets insults, and yet does not close his ears against the cry of his country; whom adversity does not deter, and whom the burden to be laid on his shoulders does not cause to tremble; who forgets his own interests in order to have the satisfaction of saving a state to which, from his youth, he has devoted his strength—the man in whom all patriots confide, whom Hardenberg, when Napoleon's despotic will compelled him to resign his office, pointed out to the king as the only one by whom Prussia might still be redeemed. Your excellency, can you tell me where I may find this man?"

While M. von Schladen was speaking, Stein slowly raised his head to listen. His countenance had undergone a marvellous change; his features had regained their wonted expression, and his eyes beamed with energy.

"Your excellency," asked Schladen again, "can you tell me where I may find this man for whom all Prussia is calling?"

"You have not yet told me his name," whispered Baron von Stein. "To find him it is necessary to know his name."

"His name is on this letter which the Princess von Radziwill requested me to deliver to him," said Schladen, taking one from his memorandum-book, and handing it to the patient.

Baron von Stein quickly took it, and, on looking at the superscription, he muttered, "My name! my name is on the letter!"

"And it is your name that is now on all Prussian lips—that the queen is calling from afar—that the king—"

"Ah," interrupted Baron von Stein, "the king has insulted me too deeply; I should almost dishonor myself if I forget it!"

"You will shed the most radiant honor on your name by forgiving it," exclaimed M. de Schladen. "The king has commissioned me to tell you that he hopes in you alone. He will intrust to you the department of the interior and of

finance; he assures you of his most implicit confidence; he promises never to allude again to what has passed between him and you. Here, your excellency, is a communication from Minister von Hardenberg, which will confirm all I have said."

He laid another letter on the table. Baron von Stein took it and looked at the address with a faint smile. "It is Hardenberg's handwriting," he said; "he is a genuine courtier, and takes it always for granted that the king's will is a sacred law for every one. He calls me already 'Prussian Minister of Finance.' And the queen?" he then asked, raising his eyes to M. von Schladen. "What does she say? Does she believe, too, that I can forget, forgive, and return?"

"The queen believes it, because she wishes it, your excellency. 'Stein is my last consolation,' she said to me when I took leave of her. 'Being a man of magnanimity and the keenest sagacity, he may be able to discover ways and means of saving the country that are as yet concealed from us. Tell him that, when he comes, the sun will rise again for me; tell him to remember the sacred vow I received from him to stand faithfully by us, and to come when Prussia stands in need of him, and calls him to her assistance. Tell him that his queen prays Heaven to restore to her country the man who is a defence against wrong and injustice, and one of the noblest sons of Germany.'"

Baron von Stein cast down his eyes; his lips were trembling; and tears rolled slowly down his cheeks.

"Your excellency," said M. von Schladen, urgently, "will you not read the letters? That from the Princess Louisa von Radziwill will give you a more graphic description of the present situation of the court than I am able to do; the one from Minister von Hardenberg will tell you what to do, and how important and necessary it is that you should come as speedily as possible. In Hardenberg's letter you will also find a brief note from General Blücher, who joins in these solicitations. I have been permitted to read these letters, that, if they were lost on the way, I should, nevertheless, be able to communicate their contents to you. Will you not read them?"

"Yes," said Baron von Stein, breathing more freely, "I will read them. They are the first doves that, after the long deluge of affliction, come to me with an olive-branch of peace. I will see what the letters contain." He hastily opened that from the Princess Louisa and commenced reading it. But

the paper soon dropped from his hand; a death-like pallor overspread his cheeks, and, almost fainting, he fell back on the pillow. "Alas," he murmured mournfully, "I forget that I am a poor, sick man! I cannot read; the letters swim before my eyes!" But this faintness lasted only a moment; Stein then raised his head again, and turned his eyes with a tender expression toward his wife, who was sitting at his bedside, and watching all his movements with anxious suspense. "Dear Wilhelmina," he said, "you have been my secretary during the last few weeks, and have rendered evil tidings less disagreeable to me; will you not read these cheering letters to me?"

The baroness bent over him, and, in place of a reply, kissed his forehead. She then read as follows:

"Your friend Hardenberg and the newspapers will have informed you of the melancholy end of all our hopes. Cowardice and weakness, perhaps more than the luck of our enemies, have subjugated us, and Hardenberg's resignation, which he tendered voluntarily, in order to be useful to us even by this sacrifice, and to preserve the king from the humiliation of dismissing him, causes us to feel our yoke painfully. I promised to write to you about the king. He deserves our sympathy at this moment; his courage and firmness have not been shaken by our last disasters; he was ready to make any sacrifice, because he thought it better to fall nobly than to live dishonorably. He clung with sincere attachment to your friend Hardenberg, and just at this moment when all are deserting him, when he has neither power nor will, he loses this well-trying friend, who, actuated by his love of the country, and affection for his master, left him with a grief that deeply moved my heart. At this moment the eyes of us all are turning toward you, my dear Stein. From you we hope for consolation, and for forgetfulness of the wrongs which have removed you from us, and which you will be too generous to remember at a time when he who insulted you only deserves your sympathy and assistance. Can you withstand our solicitations? Can you see this country deserted, and refuse to it the coöperation of those talents that alone are able to raise us from our prostration? Hardenberg sees no other hope for his master than in you, and if you are not restored to us—if you do not yield to the wishes of those yearning for you, what is to become of our future?"

"I admit that to call upon you to share our fortune is to

deem you capable of the greatest disinterestedness; for nothing has ever been done by you to deserve the conduct formerly manifested toward you; but your soul is too generous to remember those insults, and I know you too well not to be sure that you will unhesitatingly come to the assistance of this unfortunate prince, who for five months possesses just claims to sympathy. Even at this juncture he maintains his dignity; he has gained friends and zealous adherents, and appears to me never more estimable than since these disasters, in which I have seen him assert a courage and resignation of which I should never have deemed him capable. It grieved me to see Hardenberg depart; he himself is very sad, and I am sure that only the hope of restoring you to the service of his master sustains him. Do not refuse to comply with our request, my dear Stein, and be not as cruel as that destiny which is taking from us all the distinguished characters that were able to reconcile us with life and mankind. I look for your reply with impatience; may it be favorable to us! It needs no assurance of mine to make you believe in the affectionate and constant attachment which I have always felt for you.

"LOUISA."

Stein listened to the letter with eyes half closed. A faint blush had gradually suffused his cheeks, and a smile was playing on his lips. "And what do you think of this letter, Wilhelmina?" he then asked. "What does your heart reply to this call?"

"I am fearful for you, my beloved friend," said the baroness, mournfully. "My heart shrinks from this career into which you will reënter, and in which you will be exposed again to ingratitude, and the persecutions of your enemies."

"Not to ingratitude," said M. von Schladen. "All Prussia will be grateful to you, and the king will be the first to thank and reward you with his friendship for having complied with his invitation. Your excellency, will you not read the letter from Minister von Hardenberg? It will tell you in the most convincing manner how firmly you may rely on the king and on his gratitude, and how necessary it is that you should repair to him as soon as possible."

"No, no, I will not hear any more," exclaimed Stein, in a loud voice. "It shall not be said that the flattering words of a friend induced me to do what is my duty. Call the doctor; I must see the doctor!"

"The doctor is here," said Dr. von Waldau, entering the

room. "When patients are able to shout in such stentorian tones, they must indeed stand in need of assistance."

"Doctor," exclaimed Stein, "come here; feel my pulse, look me full in the face, and tell me, upon your honor, when I shall be able to set out."

The physician took the proffered hand and laid his finger on the pulse. A pause ensued; all looked in breathless suspense on his face. The doctor smilingly nodded. "It has turned out as I predicted," he exclaimed. "The 'genius of Germany' has come to our assistance, and saved her bravest and noblest champion. The pulse is regular and strong, as it has not been for weeks. The crisis for which I hoped so long has taken place. Baron von Stein, in two weeks you will be well enough to set out."

"In two weeks!" exclaimed the baron, in a contemptuous tone of voice. "You did not hear, then, that Prussia stands in need of me; that the king calls me, and that Hardenberg tells me it is of the highest importance I should immediately enter upon the duties of my office? No, I shall not depart in two weeks, nor in two days, but immediately!" He raised himself in his bed, and imperiously stretching out his arms, he exclaimed, "My clothes! I will rise! I have no more time to be sick! Give me my clothes!"

"But my beloved friend," exclaimed the baroness, in dismay, "this is impossible; just consider that the fever has exhausted your strength, that—"

"Hush, do not contradict him," whispered the physician. "The contradiction would irritate him, and might easily bring about a fresh attack of fever."

"My clothes! my clothes!" exclaimed Baron von Stein, louder and more imperiously than before, and he cast angry glances on his wife.

The physician himself hastened to the clothes-press, and, taking the silken dressing-gown from it, carried it to the patient. "Here is your dressing-gown," he said; "let me be your *valet de chambre*." Baron von Stein thanked him with a smile, and lifted up his arms that the garment might be wrapped around him.

"And here are your slippers," said the baroness; "let me put them on your feet."

"And permit me to support you when you rise," said M. von Schladen, approaching the bed. "Oh, lean on me only for a moment; afterward the whole of Prussia will lean on you."

Baron von Stein made no reply. He put on the dressing-gown and the slippers, and then raised himself, assisted by M. von Schladen. But his face was pallid, and large drops of perspiration gathered on his forehead. He left his couch, and stood free and erect. "I am well again!" he exclaimed. "Prussia calls me! I am not allowed to be ill; I—" His voice died away in a faint groan; his head bent down, and his form sank to the floor. M. von Schladen and the baroness caught him in their arms, and placed him again on his bed.

"Doctor," exclaimed the baroness, in a menacing tone, "if he die, you are his murderer; you have killed him!"

"No," said the physician, quietly, "I have saved him. This swoon is the last struggle of death with triumphant life. When Baron von Stein awakes he will be no longer seriously ill, but convalescent. When he is conscious again, the crisis is over. See, he begins to stir! Ah, his brave mind will not suffer his body to rest, and will assuredly awaken it."

The baron very soon opened his eyes, and looked with a perfectly calm and conscious expression, first at his wife, then at the physician and the king's messenger. "M. von Schladen," he said, "will you read to me Hardenberg's letter? Wilhelmina, lay your arm around me and support my head a little. Waldau is right; I will not be able to set out to-day. I am still very weak."

"But you will be able to set out in ten days," exclaimed the physician. "You see I yield to you. I ask no longer for two weeks, but only for ten days."

Baron von Stein gave him his hand with a grateful glance. "And now, High-Chamberlain von Schladen, I request you to read once more Hardenberg's communication." M. von Schladen looked inquiringly at the physician, who nodded his consent.

"Read, read," said the baron, entreatingly, supporting his head against his wife's shoulder. M. von Schladen opened the letter, and laid General Blücher's note, enclosed in it, on the table and commenced reading.

The letter urgently requested Baron von Stein to accept the two departments of finance and of the interior, which the king wished to intrust to him because the welfare of Prussia required it. Besides, Hardenberg asked Stein to repair immediately to the king, because it was of the highest importance that the ears of Frederick William should not be besieged again by hostile insinuations. He gave him cautious hints as

to the manner in which he would have to win the confidence of Frederick William, and assured him that he would retain it, provided he never pretended to rule over the king. He called upon him in the name of Prussia and Germany not to decline the difficult task, but to fulfil the hopes which patriots were reposing in him. He advised him to impose such conditions as he might deem prudent before accepting the offer, and to address a letter to his majesty in regard to them.

A pause ensued. Stein had listened to the words of his friends in silence. All looked at him anxiously. His face was calm, and when he slowly opened his eyes, they indicated entire composure.

"High-chamberlain von Schladen," asked Stein, "you have made the long journey from Memel to this place for no other purpose than to deliver to me these letters and the order of the king?"

"It was the only object of my journey," said M. von Schladen. "I travelled by way of Copenhagen and Hamburg, in order to avoid French spies."

"And when do you intend setting out again?" asked the baron.

"Your excellency, as soon as I have obtained a reply."

"Ah," exclaimed Stein, with a gentle smile; "you want to prevent me, then, from writing immediately, that I may retain you for some time as a welcome guest?"

"No, your excellency, let me entreat you to give me at once your reply to the solicitations with which the king and the queen—all Prussia—nay, all Germany turn to you, and implore you to lend to the fatherland your strong arm."

"Alas, my hand is so feeble that it can scarcely hold a pen!" said Baron von Stein, sighing. "Wilhelmina, you are always my kind and obliging friend—will you now also lend me your hand, and be my secretary?"

The baroness cast a mournful and loving look on him. "I read in your eyes," she said, sadly, "that you have made up your mind, and that, even though I implore you to desist for my sake and that of our children, it would be in vain. We shall lose you again; your house and my heart will be lonely, and only my thoughts will travel with you! But it hardly becomes me to dissuade you from your purpose. In these days of general distress it does not behoove German patriots to confine themselves to the happiness of their own firesides, and to shut their ears against the cries of the fatherland. Your

heart, I know, belongs to me. Your mind and your abilities belong to the world. Go, then, my beloved husband, and do your duty; I will fulfil mine." She kissed the baron's forehead, and then stepped to the table at the window. "Your secretary is ready," she said, taking the pen; "tell me what to write."

Baron von Stein raised himself, and dictated in a firm voice as follows:

"TO THE KING'S MAJESTY:—Your gracious orders and the offer of the department of the interior, have been communicated to me by a letter from Minister von Hardenberg, *de dato* Memel, July 10, which I received on the 9th of August. I accept the office unconditionally, and leave it to your royal majesty to arrange with what persons, or in what relations to my colleagues, I am to discharge my duties. At this moment of my country's distress it would be wrong to consult my own personal grievances, particularly as your majesty manifests so exalted a constancy in adversity.

"I should have set out immediately, but a violent tertian fever is confining me to my bed; as soon as my health is better, which I trust will be the case in ten days or two weeks, I shall hasten to your majesty. Your obedient servant,

"STEIN."

Baron von Stein kept his word. Two weeks afterward, although still suffering and feeble, he entered his travelling-coach to repair to Memel, and to hold again in his powerful hands the reins of the Prussian government.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

JOHANNES VON MÜLLER.

THE French authorities had informed the municipality of Berlin that peace had been concluded at Tilsit, between the Emperor of the French and the King of Prussia. They ordered that the inhabitants of Berlin, in view of this important event, should manifest their gratification in a public manner. German singers were to perform a *Te Deum* at the cathedral in honor of this treaty, and at night the people were to show, by a general illumination, that they rejoiced at the restoration of peace. The rulers of the city had issued orders to this effect, and the citizens were obliged to obey,