

BOOK VII.

CHAPTER LIII.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

THE 15th of December, 1809, was dawning. Queen Louisa had long looked for this day with a throbbing heart, and now that it had come, she felt embarrassed and anxious. It was the day when the royal family were to leave Königsberg and return to Berlin, where the court was again to reside. Since the 3d of October the French troops and authorities had left the capital, and Berlin was once more a Prussian city, yearning for the return of its king and queen.

The carriages were at the door; the princesses, wrapped in fur robes, were in the anteroom and awaited the queen, whose toilet had long since been finished. But Louisa had not yet left her sitting-room. The king made his appearance, ready to set out, and was somewhat surprised at not finding her with her daughters.

"The queen does not know, perhaps, that the carriages are at the door," said the king. "I will inform her that it is time for us to start." He walked rapidly through the adjoining rooms and noiselessly opened the door of the queen's sitting-room.

Louisa, wrapped in her travelling-robe, sat on the sofa, her hands folded, her face bathed in tears, and her eyes uplifted with an imploring expression. She did not immediately notice the king, who, as if in profound reverence, stood at the door. The queen was praying—how could he dare to disturb her!

At last she lowered her eyes, and suddenly saw that her husband was present. "Oh, my friend," she exclaimed, rising hastily, "my thoughts were with you, and on taking leave of these rooms where, owing to your love, I have enjoyed, these last years, so much calm and sacred happiness, I prayed that God cause it to accompany us to our future residence."

"But while praying you wept, Louisa?" asked the king. "I hoped that the days of tears were past, and that my Louisa would become again as merry and light-hearted as she used to be. Do you not like to return to Berlin?"

The queen looked down musingly. "I cannot tell you," she said, thoughtfully. "When I think that I shall soon be in Berlin, and meet again the faithful people, my heart is joyful, and then again I shed many tears when I consider that, while I may find every thing there as formerly, there may in reality be sad changes, and I do not know how I may be affected. Dismal forebodings are troubling me; I should like best to sit always alone, behind my little lamp, and indulge in my reflections. I am longing for Berlin, and yet I am almost afraid to go there."

"What are you afraid of?" asked the king, pressing his wife tenderly against his breast.

"I believe I am afraid of prosperity," she said, with a gentle smile. "I had become entirely resigned, and forever bidden farewell to outward splendor, so that its return surprises and almost alarms me. Oh, my beloved friend, will it not destroy the humbled, inward repose, which, during the time of privation, was our support, and the only source of our happiness?"

"It is true," said the king, smiling, "during these quiet years here at Königsberg, I was so happy as to have my wife, the charming consoler of my afflictions, always at my side; henceforth, the queen will often take my wife from me, and thousands of hearts which will welcome you so rapturously, will separate me often enough from my ideal. But I am not jealous, and the more my beautiful queen is honored, the greater will be my happiness. Come, my Louisa, let us go! the carriages are in readiness, and the children are waiting for us; but, before we leave this quiet room, accept again my thanks for the fidelity and kindness you have manifested toward me during my misfortunes. I am indebted to you for many alleviations of the sorrows which weighed me down. I am not a man of many words and cannot make fine phrases, but here in my soul I feel fervently that God has placed you at my side as an angel of consolation for the days of adversity, and of happiness for those of prosperity. Because I love you, I gave your name to our youngest daughter, born here at Königsberg. May she become a Louisa!"

"And may our sons inherit the noble spirit and the faith-

ful and devout heart of their father!" exclaimed the queen, deeply moved. "May they bear adversity like him, without despondency, and enjoy prosperity without haughtiness! Oh, my friend, why will we say, then, that we are returning to Berlin poorer and less powerful than when we left the city three years ago? No, we return richer and more powerful: for we left with five children, and we return with seven—seven hearts that love us, and belong to us. Do they not constitute wealth and power? Come, my husband, let us hasten to our children! and with what a mother's pride shall I show our treasures to the good people of Berlin!" She smiled and drew the king along; her eyes, from which the tears had long since disappeared, were now radiant with love and joy—not a shade of melancholy was to be seen in her countenance when she embraced her children.

The journey to Berlin could be performed but slowly and in short stages. The snow-clad roads were almost impassable. Besides, every city and village through which the royal family journeyed, would have its share of congratulation. They were greeted with triumphal arches, and hymns and addresses of welcome. No one had escaped the miseries of war; mourning mothers and wives, amid the ruins of a former prosperity, were everywhere to be seen; but all this was forgotten during those happy hours when the people, delivered at length from foreign oppression, rejoiced again in the presence of the sovereigns who had endured the same afflictions. The whole journey resembled a triumphal procession—everywhere enthusiastic receptions and love-offerings!

On the eighth day at noon they arrived at the village of Weissensee, a league from Berlin. The shouts of thousands of happy people received them. The whole population had gathered at the roadside in order to greet the returning king and his family, and at the entrance of the village were halting fifty young citizens of Berlin mounted on fine horses. They had been commissioned by the inhabitants of the capital to escort the carriage in which Louisa was to make her entry, and which the citizens desired to present to her. It was a splendid gift, richly decorated with silver, and lined with violet velvet, the favorite color of the queen. The eight magnificent horses attached to the carriage wore violet harness, adorned with silver rings and buckles. The queen entered it with her daughter Charlotte and her third son, Prince Charles; the king and the two oldest princes mounted on horseback.

"Now, Louisa," said the king, riding up, "we have nearly reached our destination. There are the spires of Berlin; in half an hour we shall be there. But how pale you are, and your lips quiver! Are you unwell? Are you suffering?"

"No," she said; "I live only in my heart, which is throbbing as though it were ready to burst. Oh, I believe that one may die of joy. But such a death must be very happy!"

"But you shall live in joy," said the king, smiling. "Farewell now, Louisa; I must leave you. According to the ceremonial, I must be with the princes at the head of the procession. *Au revoir* at our house in Berlin!"

"*Au revoir*," said the queen, leaning back on the cushions of the carriage. "Charlotte," she said to the princess sitting at her side, "when we are near the gate, tell me. I want to be surprised, and, until I have reached the dear city, I will look at the sky, and remember that it is the same sky that was over us at Memel in the days of our deepest affliction." She threw back her head. Her eyes, blue and pure as heaven itself, were looking up, and the bright firmament seemed to inspire her with devout and grateful thoughts. Prayers were in her heart, and the memories of other days mingled with her prayers. It was exactly sixteen years since she made her entry into Berlin as a happy young bride. At that time, life was as the flowery spring, and she saw before her in her hopeful dreams only a world of happiness, love, and glory. She was then a bride, beautiful, loving, and beloved by her young husband, the inheritor of a kingdom. Now, at her second entry, she was sixteen years older, a matron of thirty-four, and a mother of seven children. The storms of life had passed over her, destroying many of her hopes. Her heart had been shaken as well as the throne of her husband. The ills of common mortals had befallen the king and his consort, and it was not their innate dignity and majesty that had enabled them to bear up, but their warm human feeling; it was not their self-reliance that had consoled them, but the faith that God, the Father of all, would be merciful to them, if, conscious of their impotence, they recognized His providence and believed in His wisdom and goodness.

The queen thought of all this, and compared the entry of the bride, rejoicing in the dreams of her young love and in the reality of worldly power, with the entry of the mother and queen, disappointed in her hopes and robbed of her dominion.

"And yet it is better to-day," she murmured, "I am richer

now than I was then. My heart is richer, my soul is stronger, I—”

“Mamma,” exclaimed the Princess Charlotte, “I see already the Bernauer gate! Oh, hear the shouts, look at that triumphal arch!”

The queen turned her eyes toward the city. The cheers of the people sounded in her ears like the early greetings of her happiness, and filled her soul with ecstasy. As the king, between his sons, rode into the gateway, the bells rang, and the cannon shook the ground. When the queen’s carriage entered, the soldiers formed in line on both sides of the street, and behind them surged a dense crowd of men and women. Nothing was to be seen but happy, smiling faces; love was beaming from every eye, and with bells, cannon, waving hands, and the cheers of her citizens, Berlin greeted the return of her sovereigns.

The king acknowledged these demonstrations with a grave, thoughtful face; he saluted the people affectionately, but his countenance grew sad. He thought of the many faithful subjects whom he had lost, of the cities and provinces which had been taken from him, of the grievous and bloody sacrifices of the last years; he remembered that he was returning to his ancestors, possessed only of the smaller portion of the inheritance which they had left him, and these reflections overshadowed his joy.

The queen only felt and thought of the happiness of her return. These thousands of hearts throbbing for her, this crowd of greeting men about her carriage to see her and shout words of welcome, filled her soul with profound emotion. She did not restrain her tears, and was not ashamed of this expression of her feelings. She wept, smiled, and rejoiced with her people.

When the cheers reëchoed through the street as she passed, the queen exclaimed aloud: “What grateful music this is! It sounds in my ears as sacred, and the city seems a vast cathedral! Charlotte, my beloved daughter, listen! but with a devout heart. There is hardly any thing more solemn and yet delightful to a princess than the cheers of her subjects. She who deserves them must return the people’s love, and sympathize in their joys and sufferings. My daughter, if you yourself should one day wear a crown, think of this hour, and let the affection of the people now occupy your heart.—But, my child, there is our house, the dear old house where you

children were born! What persons are standing in front of it? Who are they waving their handkerchiefs toward us? The beloved sisters of your father, the Princesses of Orange and Hesse! Who is that tall gentleman at their side? It is my father, my honored father!” The carriage drove up to the portal of the royal palace. “Welcome!” cried the princesses. “Welcome!” shouted the crowd, filling the large square in front.

The queen did not utter a word; but, stretching out her arms toward her father, she greeted him with a smile, while the tears rolled over her cheeks.

The duke pushed the footmen aside and opened himself the door of her carriage, when the queen, disregarding all etiquette, threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him. The people who witnessed this touching scene, became silent. With folded hands and tearful eyes they admired her who had ever been an affectionate and grateful daughter as well as a beneficent sovereign, and their prayers ascended to heaven for her welfare. Half carried in the arms of her father, Louisa entered the palace, and ascended the staircase. The doors of the large reception-room were open. The king met her; her two oldest sons stood behind him, and her two youngest children, held up by their nurses, stretched out their little arms toward her. She joyfully hastened into the room. “Come, my children,” she exclaimed with a smile, “come, my seven radiant stars!”

She took the two youngest children, Albert, not yet three years, and Louisa, one year old, in her arms; the five other children walking by her side, and thus, in the midst of these “seven stars,” she approached her father. Bending her knee before him, she exclaimed: “Grandfather! here are your grandchildren; here is your daughter, who, with her children, asks for your blessing, and here is the most faithful and beloved man, my husband! Oh, father, honor him, for he has preserved to your daughter her happiness!” She placed the two youngest ones at the feet of the duke, and took the king’s hand, which she pressed to her bosom.

The king, who was afraid lest this excitement should become injurious to the feeble health of his wife, after saluting the duke and his own sisters in a cordial manner, proposed an inspection of the rooms of their so long deserted house.

“Yes!” exclaimed Louisa, “let us show my beloved father the temple of our happiness; and the good spirits around us

no doubt welcome him and us. Come!" Walking between her father and her husband, and followed by the princesses and her oldest sons, the queen hastened through the suite of rooms, hallowed by the remembrances of other days, and which now seemed to her as beautiful as the halls of a fairy-palace. "How tasteful, how brilliant!" exclaimed Louisa. "Formerly, the magnificence of these rooms did not strike me at all; but now I am able to perceive and appreciate it. Our houses at Memel and Königsberg were much plainer, and I thought of the beauty of our residence at Berlin.—Ah, and there is my piano! Oh, how often have I longed for it! Will you grant me a favor, my king and husband?"

"The queen is in her own rooms; she has to ask no favors here, but only to command," said the king.

"You will then permit me to salute the good spirits of our house with music, and to sing a hymn of welcome to them?" asked the queen.

The king smilingly nodded, and Louisa, hastening to the piano, quickly took off her gloves, and sat down on a chair in front of the instrument. Her fingers swept over the keys in many brilliant cadences. Her face was cheerful, but gradually she became grave, and, turning her large eyes toward heaven, her concords were slow and solemn. She thought of the past—of the day when, seized with forebodings, she sang here a hymn which she repeated at the peasant's cottage during her flight to Königsberg, when her presentiments were fulfilled. Her hands played almost spontaneously that simple and beautiful air, and again she sang with emotion:

"Who never ate his bread with tears,
Who never in the sorrowing hours
Of night, lay sunk in gloomy fears,
He knows you not, ye Heavenly Powers!"*

CHAPTER LIV.

THE EMPEROR FRANCIS AND METTERNICH.

THE Emperor Francis was pacing his cabinet in evident uneasiness and excitement. Count Clement Metternich, since Stadion's withdrawal from the cabinet, prime minister

*"Wer nie sein Brot mit Thränen ass,
Wer nie die kummervollen Nächte
Auf seinem Bette weinend sass,
Der kennt Euch nicht, Ihr himmlischen Mächte!"

and confidential adviser, was standing at the emperor's desk, and whenever Francis, in walking up and down, turned his back to him, a scornful smile overspread his handsome countenance; this manifestation of contempt disappeared, however, as soon as his master turned again toward him.

"It will stir up a great deal of ill-feeling throughout Germany," said the Emperor Francis, hastily. "No one will believe that I, who was hitherto the most implacable enemy of Bonaparte, should have suddenly done him so much honor."

"But at last every one will have to believe it, your majesty," said Metternich, in his gentle, melodious voice. "The facts will refute the surmises of the incredulous."

"But it is outrageous," cried the emperor, "and I can hardly think it possible that I am to assist Bonaparte in making a decent match, and that I am to stoop so low as to call the son of the Corsican lawyer my son-in-law! Let me tell you, it will never do; I should ever after be afraid of passing the church of the Capuchins; I should always imagine that the tombs of my ancestors opened, and their ghosts arose and asked me, 'How could you permit the imperial blood of the Hapsburgs to mingle with that of the little Corsican lawyer's son, the insurgent and revolutionary captain, who chances to be a successful warrior?' Yes, and I ask myself the question, How can I permit an archduchess, my daughter, to be married to a man seated on a throne which does not belong to him, and which the Bourbons, the legitimate rulers of France, will one day take from him? How can I permit it, I ask, and how am I to bear it, if this fellow without a pedigree should some day take the liberty to call me his dear father-in-law? How is it possible for me to expose myself to such risk?"

"Will your majesty permit me to answer these just questions of your imperial conscience?" asked Metternich.

"Do so," exclaimed Francis. "Explain the whole matter to me as though I were not the emperor, but a common citizen offended at the idea that the Emperor of Austria should permit his daughter to be married to the revolutionary leader who has the impudence to assume the imperial title. What would you say? How would you excuse me?"

Metternich advanced a step toward the emperor, and replied: "I would say the Emperor Francis has acted as a wise statesman and ruler, and as a father of his people. In order to preserve Austria from new wars, he has sacrificed his most precious treasure, his only child. It is a pledge securing