

eyes. I really believe it would be a good idea for your majesty to show this to the archduchess, and tell her afterward that it is the likeness of her future husband. If your majesty has no objection, I will, in the mean time, request an audience of the Empress Ludovica, and try to convince her majesty of the necessity of this marriage."

"Do so," exclaimed the emperor, joyously, "it will be very agreeable to me, and as soon as possible. In the mean time I will go to the archduchess, show her the miniature, and tell her plainly that it is that of her future husband. It is better to tell her so without circumlocution. The princess will not dare to oppose my wishes; she knows that it is the duty of an obedient daughter to accept the husband her father has selected for her. Go to the empress, Metternich; I shall go to the Archduchess Maria Louisa."

CHAPTER LV.

THE ARCHDUCHESS MARIA LOUISA.

THE imperial princes and princesses had just dined together, as had been their custom since the reign of the Emperor Joseph, and were still in the large dining-hall, which was also the play-room of the imperial children. The Emperor Francis, who had recently married his fourth wife, had children by his second marriage only, but numerous enough to secure the continued existence of the dynasty, and, at the same time, furnish beautiful princesses to other sovereign houses. Of these five daughters and two sons, Maria Louisa, who was seventeen years old, was the eldest. But though a grown young lady, she liked to be together with her younger brothers and sisters, and remained sometimes with them after dinner, in order to participate in their merry play and conversation. On this occasion, instead of returning with the mistress of ceremonies to her room, she remained with her brothers and sisters in the dining-hall. While the younger princes and princesses were engaged in playing round a large table, the two oldest, the archduchesses Maria Louisa and Leopoldine, retired into one of the bay-windows to converse without being disturbed.

It was a charming sight—those two young ladies standing in the niche, surrounded by curtains as in a frame, and whose

beauty seemed to have caught a celestial radiance from the light beaming through the windows. Both were in the morning of their age, but Maria Louisa, the older sister, was even more attractive than Leopoldine. Thick ringlets of light-brown hair floated around her forehead. She had large azure eyes, telling of her happiness and the kindly emotions of her soul. Her finely-cut nose gave an aristocratic expression to her countenance, while her crimson lips, in their voluptuous fulness, contrasted not unfavorably with the remarkable refinement of the rest of her features. An enchanting smile played about her mouth, and spoke of her noble simplicity and innocence.

She encircled the neck of her younger sister with her arms, and was gazing at her with a tender expression. "Ah, Leopoldine," she said to her in a sweet voice, "how happy I am that we are at length together again! When I remained here ill and alone, and the enemy was besieging our capital, I was always thinking of none but you, and yearned to be again with you. But when the shells struck our palace, I thanked Heaven that you were not here, and had not to undergo the fear and anguish which I was enduring. When this Bonaparte arrived, I was suffering of the scarlet fever, but the terror brought on an attack of intermittent fever. I shall never forgive him. But, thank God, these evil times are over! Now we need not be afraid of being expelled again from the palace of our ancestors by this bad man, and of seeing our dear Schönbrunn degraded by the presence of his marshals. Now we can live happily and delightfully in undisturbed tranquillity."

"Yes, we can," said the Archduchess Leopoldine, smiling. "But do you not think, sister, that our life is indescribably monotonous and tedious at the present time? Our third mother, the Empress Ludovica, is certainly a very amiable, virtuous, and pious lady, but she really believes us still to be small children, who ought to remain in the nursery, and it does not occur to her that amusements are sometimes necessary for young princesses of our age. We have passed the whole winter in an intolerably quiet and wearisome manner; we are already in the latter part of February, and have not had a single ball at court. Ah, Louisa, it is, after all, not so very pleasant to be a princess. Other girls of our age are at liberty to indulge in a little pleasure, to attend balls, concerts, and parties, where they see new faces and interesting persons.

We are forbidden all this. We must wait until diversion comes to us, and unfortunately we are not thought of at all! We are never allowed to pay visits or accept invitations. A formal court ball, where we may appear for a few hours, and dance with the most aristocratic cavaliers, is our only amusement, and at present we are deprived of that. We are guarded in our apartments like prisoners."

"Yes, it is true," sighed Maria Louisa, "and we have a very rigorous jailer in the Countess of Colloredo. Do you know, Leopoldine, that I have had a violent scene with the mistress of ceremonies to-day?"

"Ah, I am glad of it," exclaimed Leopoldine, laughing. "What was the matter?"

"I wanted to read, and requested the mistress of ceremonies to give me new books. She deferred it until to-day and brought me then one of the works I had asked for, 'the Maid of Orleans,' by Schiller, but it was mutilated and disfigured like all books that are given to us. Whole pages had been cut out, and on those remaining were to be found black spots rendering whole lines and words illegible—a liberty which the mistress of ceremonies is in the habit of indulging in, in reference to all the books we read."

"Yes, it is true," sighed the younger archduchess, "we cannot read a single good book from beginning to end; and we are thus deprived of much pleasure. What did you do, dear sister?"

"I cast the book aside with horror, and requested her to let me have the latest newspapers. She brought them to me, but everywhere the same foul marks; not only all the news from France, but even the local Vienna items were almost illegible to-day; lines had been cut out, words erased, and half a column had entirely disappeared. I was almost beside myself at this treatment. I returned the papers and said, 'Madame, this is doubtless a mistake. I am sure these papers were intended for the nursery, that the little archduchesses might learn to spell; as for myself, I can both spell and read, and I request you, therefore, to give me legible books and newspapers.'"

"Oh," exclaimed Leopoldine, merrily clapping her hands, "that was glorious! You acted like a heroine, my dear sister!"

Maria Louisa smiled and added, "'Madame,' I went on to say, 'I cannot bear any longer this system of surveillance. It

is insulting and repugnant to me to be treated like a child, and considered so weakminded as to be forbidden books which thousands of girls of my age are allowed to read. Or do you want to make me believe that all books and newspapers come to Austria in this mutilated condition? Oh, I know full well that the people would not submit to such a system of tyranny, and that, in case such efforts should be made to deprive them of their mental food, assuredly a revolution would break out, as in France at the time when my unfortunate aunt, Marie Antoinette, was on the throne."

"Did you say so?" asked Leopoldine, in surprise. "But where did you find the courage and the words?"

"I must avow to you that I had reflected about the matter for three days, and drawn up, and learned by heart, this little speech in order to address it to the mistress of ceremonies at the first opportunity. I am really tired of being treated so childishly, when I am a woman, and may expect soon to be married."

"Ah, married!" sighed Leopoldine. "Who knows to what dreadful princes we may be married? For, as a matter of course, we shall not be asked whether we like the match or not, and we shall not be as well off as the daughters of common citizens, who, as my maid told me, marry only those whom they love. We princesses must marry men whom we have never seen, with whom we exchange the first word only after our marriage, and whom perhaps we may not like at all."

"No matter, our marriage makes us free," exclaimed Maria Louisa, impatiently. "We are then at least our own mistresses, and need submit no longer to the restraints imposed on us. The example of our third mother, the Empress Ludovica, shows it. She has taken the liberty to pay no attention to etiquette, and holds a reception at her rooms every night from eight to ten o'clock, when she does not admit the ladies and gentlemen of the court, but invited persons, among whom there are frequently those who do not even belong to the aristocracy."

"She does not invite us to the evening parties," exclaimed Leopoldine, sneeringly. "Maybe we are too aristocratic for her. But you are right, Louisa—as soon as we are married, we shall also have the right to change rules of etiquette and live as we please."

"Do you know the first thing I am going to do after my

marriage?" asked Maria Louisa, quickly. "I shall buy all the books that I have now, and peruse the cut-out and illegible passages. I am sure they are the most interesting and beautiful in the books, and I believe they all treat of love. Ah, Leopoldine, I should like to read for once a work containing a very romantic love-story, and over which one might dream. But, good Heaven! what makes the children shout so merrily? Come, let us see what they are doing."

"Come, let us play with them," exclaimed Leopoldine.

The princesses stepped arm in arm from the bay-window and hastened to the table. The little archduchesses and their brothers, it seemed, were engaged in a highly-interesting game, which their governesses were witnessing with smiling attention. They were standing about the large round table, on which a small army of wax figures in green and blue uniforms had been placed in neatly-arranged rows. At the head of this army stood a somewhat larger figure of the most revolting appearance. It was a little fellow with hunched shoulders, a rotund stomach and an unnaturally large head. The face was of a black-and-green color, and had eyes of a ferocious expression, and a tremendous mouth without lips, showing rows of ugly yellow teeth. This figure was dressed in a green uniform, with broad white facings, and on his head was a little cocked hat. Opposite this army of wax figures a row of small brass cannon was placed, and at their side lay diminutive bows, and arrows furnished with pins. The ammunition-wagons were filled with black peas.

The game had just commenced. The imperial children had opened the campaign against the hostile army of wax-figures. The little Archdukes Ferdinand and Francis Charles stood as gunners at the field-pieces, while the Archduchesses Caroline, Clementine, and Amelia, were armed with small bows. The gunners fired at the ranks of the soldiers; the archduchesses aimed at the terrible captain of the little army. Whenever an arrow hit him, or a cannon-ball struck down one of the soldiers, the children burst into loud cheers.

"What game is this?" asked Maria Louisa, contemplating with evident delight the blushing cheeks and bright eyes of her young brothers and sisters.

"That is the Bonaparte game," exclaimed little Archduke Francis Charles. "Papa emperor presented the game to me when we were at Ofen, and taught me how to play it. It is a long while since we played it, but to-day we will try it again.

Look, sister Louisa, that horrible fellow in front of the soldiers is the villain Bonaparte, who is stealing the states of all the princes. He is made entirely of brass, and no arrow can injure him, but he has a vulnerable spot on the breast, where the heart is, that is made of wax. On shooting at him, you always have to aim there; if you hit it, the arrow remains, and you win the game and obtain the reward. Oh, I am well versed in the Bonaparte game; papa emperor was so gracious as to play it often with me at Ofen, when we were fleeing from that man; and his majesty taught me also how to insult Bonaparte. See, sisters!" and he took the little bow from the hands of the Archduchess Marianne, and laid an arrow on the string. "Now, you miserable fellow," he shouted in an angry voice and with flashing eyes, "now I will kill you without mercy! You thief, you stole Venice and Milan from us—you must die!" He discharged the arrow, but it glanced off from the figure.

"You missed him! you missed him!" shouted the little group.

"It is my turn now," exclaimed the little archduchess, taking the bow from her brother. She put an arrow on it, and, contracting her eyebrows and making her laughing little face assume an angry and menacing air, shouted, "Now tremble, you bad man! for I will put you to death because you drove us twice from Vienna, and frightened us so badly that you compelled us to escape, while you were enjoying yourself in our fine palaces. Yes, I will kill you, because you shot our soldiers and took our cannon. You are a wretch, a miserable thief, and I will now shoot you that you may no longer murder our men and expel our princes, you robber and assassin!" She discharged her arrow, but with no better success than the little archduke, and the laughter of her brothers and sisters punished her for her lack of skill.

"Why, this is a very pretty game," exclaimed the Archduchess Maria Louisa, laughing. "Come, Leopoldine, let us try it, and see whether we are able to hit the monster." The princesses sat down laughingly between the little archdukes, and each took one of the bows.

"Pray let me shoot first, dear sister," exclaimed Leopoldine, eagerly. "Look, my arrow lies already on the string. Now I will aim at you, miserable Bonaparte, and take revenge for all the sufferings you have brought upon us. Your last hour has come; fold your hands and pray, if you can. But

you cannot pray, for you have a conscience burdened with crimes; you have sinned grievously against God by insulting and imprisoning His representative on earth. The Holy Father has excommunicated you for this, and you are accursed, delivered over to the tortures of hell, and every honest Christian turns away from the wretch against whom the bolt of excommunication has been hurled. You must die without confession and absolution—in the midst of your sins." She discharged the arrow, but, like those of her little brother and sister, it glanced from the figure and dropped at its feet.

The little archduchesses and princes, who, on hearing the imprecations uttered by their sister, had assumed a very grave air, felt as though they had been relieved of an oppressive burden, and burst into loud laughter.

"It is my turn now!" exclaimed Maria Louisa. She took the bow and fixed her blue eyes with an expression of profound contempt on the repulsive figure. "You must die—ay, die!" she said, gravely. "Bonaparte, I will deliver the world from you, for you are as insatiable as the Minotaur, that required every day a human victim for breakfast. You devour men and countries, and the wails of whole nations are music to your ears. You must die, also, because you look so horrible! God has marked you, and given you a monstrous body, because your soul is that of a monster. I will kill you, therefore, that you may no longer frighten mankind!" She put the arrow on the string and shot.

A loud shout resounded. The arrow remained in the figure. Maria Louisa had hit Bonaparte.

"Hurrah, the Archduchess Maria Louisa has killed Bonaparte!" cried the little ones. "The monster is dead! The robber lives no more! The wretch and villain!"

"Why, what is going on here? Whom are you abusing so shockingly?" asked a voice behind them, and the children, turning around, saw their father, the Emperor Francis, who had entered unnoticed by them.

"We are abusing the malicious robber, papa emperor," exclaimed the Archduchess Marianne, pointing at the figure.

"Your majesty, dear papa emperor," exclaimed little Francis Charles, eagerly—"only think of it, Maria Louisa has hit the heart of Bonaparte. The monster is dead; he is unable now to steal any thing more from us!"

"Sancta Maria!" cried the emperor, "how can you use such

language, my son? How can you utter such disrespectful epithets about the illustrious Emperor Napoleon?"

The boy looked at his father in dismay. "Your majesty," he said, timidly, "you yourself told me Napoleon could not be abused enough, and a genuine Hapsburg ought to execrate the infamous robber. Those were your majesty's own words, papa!"

"Oh, I was only joking," exclaimed the emperor, angrily, "and a clever prince, like you, ought to have noticed it at once. But I am talking in earnest now, and forbid you playing this stupid game any more, or uttering another word against the Emperor Napoleon. He is a very illustrious, and moreover an excellent man—a very great emperor—whom every one loves and praises."

"Papa emperor," cried the Archduke Francis Charles, wondering, "but your majesty told me at Ofen that every one was abhorring Bonaparte, and—"

"You are a pert little fool!" replied the emperor, vehemently. "What I said then has no sense now. For at that time we were at war, and Napoleon was our enemy. But now we have made peace, and he is our friend, and so dear a friend, that I would willingly intrust to him my most precious treasure; I am sure he would honor and cherish it! Listen to my orders, therefore, all of you: do not utter another word against the Emperor Napoleon. We all love and admire him, and that stupid game must never be played again. It must be laid aside forever."

The children were frightened and downcast; the emperor turned from them, and beckoned to the Archduchess Maria Louisa to follow him. "I came to see you at your rooms," he said; "the mistress of ceremonies told me that I would find you here. I want to speak to you."

"Your majesty was very gracious to come to me instead of sending for me," said the archduchess, bowing to her father. "Does your majesty command me to follow you to your cabinet?"

"No, just step with me into this window-niche," said the emperor; "I will not detain you long. I wish to show you something." He stepped with the princess into the last window-niche, and closed the curtain. "Now look," he said, "I want to show you a miniature, and you must tell me how you like it." He opened the locket and presented it to the archduchess. She gazed at it long and musingly, and a blush

suffused her cheeks. "Well! what do you think of this man?"

"Your majesty, he must be a very great and distinguished man," exclaimed the archduchess. "It is a countenance that makes my heart throb; it is more than merely fine-looking, it is sublime! How much majesty is enthroned on that brow, and yet the smile seems petulant and childlike; but the eyes are magnificent."

"Look at him carefully," said the emperor, "and do not restrain your feelings, but fall in love with him. For let me tell you a secret, Louisa; it is the likeness of your future husband."

A deeper blush crimsoned the face of the archduchess, and half ashamed, half anxious, she fixed her eyes again on the miniature.

"Yes," added the emperor, in a graver tone, "it is the portrait of your husband, and you will receive this very day his ambassador, who will apply to you for your hand. He has already received my consent, and I am sure my daughter knows her duty, and will accept obediently the husband I have destined for her."

"Yes," whispered the archduchess, "I know that to be my duty, and shall humbly submit to the will and commands of my emperor and father."

"And it is a grand destiny that Providence offers you," said the emperor, gravely. "You are to preserve peace to the world, my daughter; you are to be the bond of reconciliation between those who have hitherto hated and waged war with each other."

"Sire," exclaimed the archduchess, anxiously, "your majesty did not tell me whose likeness this is?"

"And whom I have determined to become your husband," added the emperor. "I will tell you now, but be courageous and brave, my daughter, and remember that you must obey me unconditionally."

"I shall not forget to do so, your majesty."

"Well, then, did I not, on entering this room, hear the children rejoice at your having hit the heart of the Emperor Napoleon?"

"I was playing with the children, your majesty, and—"

"And your play is to become earnest now, and you are to take pains to conquer Bonaparte's heart, that he may love and trust you. For, my daughter, this miniature, which you

pronounced so fine-looking, is a correct likeness of the Emperor Napoleon, who will become your husband."

The Archduchess Maria Louisa uttered a cry, and tottered to the wall.

Her father clasped her in his arms, and placed her gently on the easy-chair standing in the niche. The cheeks of Maria Louisa had turned livid, her eyes were closed, and her arms hung down by her side.

"It is strange how easily women faint!" muttered the emperor. "I found that to be the case with all my wives. When they do not know how to do any thing better, they faint. All four of mine did, but they always revived, and so will Louisa. I like it much better that she should faint than that she should weep. She knows now what she had to know, and will act accordingly." He opened the curtain, and stepped back into the room. "Leopoldine!" he shouted to the archduchess, "step in here to your sister, Maria Louisa. She has swooned, but it is of no consequence! Tell her to wake up, and conduct her to her room. She will tell you what has happened to her."

CHAPTER LVI.

THE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY.

THERE were great rejoicings in Berlin. It was the 10th of March, the queen's birthday, and she celebrated it again at the capital for the first time in three years. Every one hastened to manifest his love and sympathy for the queen, and all classes had sent in requests for permission to choose committees to present their congratulations to her majesty. The queen had cheerfully granted these requests, and the deputations of the old aristocracy, the states, the clergy, the municipality, the academy, the painters, and other artists, the mechanics, and citizens, were assembled in the large hall of the royal palace, waiting her arrival.

The folding-doors at length opened, and the queen, preceded by the grand-marshal of the court, entered. She looked pale and exhausted, but received with affability and grace the cheers given by the assembly at her appearance, and walked slowly down the long line of the deputations, addressing a kind word or casting a grateful glance to every one, and