

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

charming all by her beauty, gentleness, and majesty. Suddenly her countenance brightened, and she approached a tall, stout gentleman standing in the midst of the committee of the artists. "M. Manager Iffland,"* she said, "let me bid you welcome. I expected to see you here to-day, in order to express once more my thanks for the joy you afforded me on my last birthday, and for the sufferings you underwent for my sake. But I should like to hear an account of the event from your own lips, and I ask of you, as a birthday present, to relate to me what happened to you last year on this day."

While uttering these words, the queen stepped back into the middle of the hall, and thereby compelled Iffland to leave the committee, and follow her. "Your majesty is really too kind to remember so insignificant an occurrence," said Iffland, bowing respectfully. "I was on that day only so happy as to give expression to the feelings animating all. 'Queen Louisa, our royal lady!' that was the motto encouraging us to bear up under the foreign yoke; it was our consolation when we thought of his majesty, our beloved king. However galling our chains might have been, we felt comfort. 'The royal lady is with him!' we said to each other, and with grateful tears every one remembered his queen."

"Yes, it is true," exclaimed the queen with feeling, "we met with much love and fidelity during the years of affliction, and to-day I thank from the bottom of my heart all those who were faithful to us." Her eyes gazed long and affectionately on the brilliant circle of those assembled, and she then turned again to Iffland. "Well, how was it on my birthday last year?" she asked. "Tell me, but speak loudly, that every one may hear."

"Last year on this day we were not as happy as we are to-day," said Iffland. "Our queen was not with us, and we could not let her read in our eyes the love and fidelity which we had been forbidden from manifesting toward her by word or deed. The French authorities had issued stringent orders everywhere, that the citizens should abstain from any allusions to or recollections of our queen's birthday, and that no demonstrations whatever should be made. We were obliged to submit to the petty tyranny, but our hearts were filled with anger, and the love which we could not assert was strengthened in its concealment. It needed only a spark to bring about an explosion, and the theatre was so fortunate as to

* The celebrated German actor.

kindle this spark in the hearts of the loyal Prussians. On the evening of that 10th of March, a small family drama which I had written was to be performed. It was the simple and affecting history of a family celebrating happily the reunion of a mother and her children. The mother's name was Louisa, and this name was sufficient to fill the house with a distinguished audience. All felt that the theatre was on that day the only place where the public heart, devoted to the queen, was allowed to throb for her; where glances could be exchanged and understood, and where it was permitted to whisper, 'It is her birthday to-day! Heaven bless her!' Every seat was occupied in the galleries as well as in the dress-circle, in the orchestra stalls as well as in the pit, everywhere reigned the same joyous commotion. Only in the boxes of the French, faces were seen that cast an angry and hostile expression on that audience.—The curtain rose, and the performance commenced. The actor Lange and myself appeared in the first scene. Lange had to play the part of a friend of the house, happening to arrive there on that day. I represented the son of Louisa, the mother, and appeared on the stage with a large bouquet on my breast. 'Why do you look so happy and well-dressed to-day?' said Lange. 'I suppose you are celebrating a family festival?' 'Yes!' I exclaimed in a loud and joyous voice, 'we are celebrating a family festival, and it is a beautiful festival; we are celebrating the return of our beloved mother, God bless her! God bless the dear lady who is to receive these flowers!' Carried away by my enthusiasm, I tore the bouquet from my breast, and held it out toward the audience. Moved by one and the same feeling of love and admiration, the whole assembly rose, and thousands of voices shouted, as it were with one mouth and from one heart, 'God bless her! God bless the dear lady—the adored mother!' Oh, queen, it was a sublime moment, and God counted the tears and understood the prayers that we addressed to Him. He has restored to us our queen, the beloved mother of her country and people!"

The queen at first listened smilingly; gradually, however, her countenance became grave. She was standing with profound emotion in front of Iffland, when he concluded his narrative, and tears dropped from her downcast eyes. Silence reigned in the vast hall, and all faces were turned to the queen. She raised her eyes slowly, and directed them toward Iffland with an expression of indescribable kindness. "I

thank you," said Louisa; "you stood faithfully by your queen at a time when many were deserting her. You have been a faithful knight of mine, and the king, therefore, wants you to retain always the title of knight. He permits me to give you to-day another decoration instead of the bouquet you wore on your breast a year ago. In the name of his majesty I have to present to you the insignia of the order of the Red Eagle."

A pallor overspread Iffland's countenance, while he received the order which the queen handed to him. "O queen," he said, deeply affected, "such an honor to me, the actor! I thank your majesty in the name of all my colleagues, from whom you have removed at this moment the interdict excluding them from the honors and dignities of other men."

The queen smiled. "It is true," she said, "I believe you are the first actor who ever received an order in Prussia. And are you not indeed the first actor? However, you owe us still the conclusion of your narrative. You described to us the scene at the theatre, but not the disagreeable consequences of the occurrence."

"Ah! your majesty," exclaimed Iffland, smiling, "the consequences were easy to bear after the sublime moment which I had witnessed. I was imprisoned for forty-eight hours at the French guard-house, where they put me on a diet of bread and water. That was all."

"I thank you for suffering so cheerfully for me," said the queen, dismissing Iffland with a pleasant nod. "Would I were able to reward all those who have suffered for us, and endured persecution in love and patience, and to return days of joy for days of sorrow!"

Iffland, who looked proud and happy, stepped back among the members of his committee, and Louisa continued her walk, uttering words of gratitude and acknowledgment, and charming all by her winning and withal queenly bearing.

After the reception was over, she returned to her apartments: The smile disappeared from her lips, and her countenance assumed a melancholy expression. She motioned to her two ladies of honor to leave her, and remained alone with her confidante, Madame von Berg. "Oh, Caroline," sighed the queen, "I can bear it no longer. My heart succumbs under these tortures. They call this day a holiday, but to me it is a day of terror. To-night a party at the palace—a banquet previous to it,—and I must be gay, though suffering severe pain! My heart is bleeding, and yet I am to dance,

address pleasant words to every one, and assume an appearance of happiness. I do not know whither to escape with my grief! To whom will Prussia belong a year hence? Whither shall we all be scattered? God have mercy on us!"

"Your majesty views the situation in too gloomy a light," said Madame von Berg, consolingly. "No further events have occurred that need alarm you."

"No further events!" exclaimed the queen, vehemently. "You do not know, then, Caroline, that Count Krusemark arrived from Paris this morning?"

"No," replied Madame von Berg, anxiously; "I do not know any thing about it. What is the meaning of this unexpected arrival of the ambassador?"

"A new calamity is threatening us. Count Krusemark is the bearer of a letter from Napoleon to the king. Oh, Caroline, what a letter it is! One cannot help blushing with shame and anger on reading it, and yet it is necessary for us to be silent. Napoleon menaces because the war contributions are not promptly paid: he talks as a superior to his inferior who neglects his duty; he scolds as a schoolmaster does his pupil who has not learned his task. And we must bear it, we must stoop so low as to beg him to be indulgent! Caroline, we must now solicit the forbearance of the man who has insulted us by every word he addressed to us, and by every look he cast upon us. For do you really know what he threatens to do? He writes that if the king does not immediately pay up the arrears of the war contributions, he will send an army to Prussia, to collect the money, and punish the king for his breach of faith. He will send another army to Prussia!—that is to say, the war is to begin anew, and, as we have become powerless, and cannot defend our frontiers, he means to crush us. He will take every thing, and Prussia will cease to exist. And we cannot pay, we have no means to obtain those millions so unjustly claimed!"

"But the ministers will devise means to pay the contribution, dearest queen; the minister of finance will be able to suggest a scheme to fulfil the engagements that have been entered into, and to discharge the claims which Napoleon has against us."

The queen laughed scornfully. "Baron von Altenstein, the minister of finance, is not of your opinion," she said. "The king asked him to suggest measures by which the liabilities we had incurred might be discharged. But Altenstein re-

plied that he did not know of any, and he then proposed to the king to pay the debt by ceding the province of Silesia to Napoleon."

"Dreadful!" exclaimed Madame von Berg, indignantly. "A Prussian minister does not shrink from advising the king, although we are at peace, to sacrifice the best province that has remained, and which even the defeats of Jena and Friedland, and the intriguing days of Tilsit did not endanger!"

"And if we do not consent to such a sacrifice (and we shall not), what next?" exclaimed the queen, despairingly. "Napoleon will send his army and expel or imprison us, as he treated the unfortunate royal family of Spain. Oh, Caroline, I shall be uneasy night and day. Dreadful apprehensions are constantly meeting me. I think of Spain, and fears oppress me lest my husband have the same fate as King Charles. Believe me, his life, his liberty is threatened, and he is every day in danger of being suddenly seized and taken away as a hostage, until we have fulfilled the behests of the tyrant, and given him all that still belongs to us—our honor, our crown, and, perhaps, our lives. We are surrounded by French spies: every word, every look, is watched; only a pretext is sought to ruin us, and it will be found, as it was in Spain. Oh, he will take my husband from me! he will drag him as a prisoner from one place to another as he did the King of Spain; he will sow the seeds of discord in our family as he did in that unhappy country. He, the tyrant Napoleon, brought about a quarrel between the Infante and his father; he compelled, with his iron hand, the unfortunate King Charles to write that his son's guilt had raised a barrier between father and son. But whose hand was it that constructed it? Can there be any doubt? It was his alone! Oh, will there be a time, and shall I live to see it, when the hand of God will at length write the 'Mene, mene, tekell,' on his wall?"

"Your majesty will live to see that time," exclaimed Madame von Berg. "You will witness the judgment of Heaven and of the nations overthrowing the tyrant."

The queen shook her head. "No," she whispered, "I shall not live to see it. I think this will be the last time that I celebrate my birthday here."*

"Oh, Louisa," cried Madame von Berg, bursting into tears, "do not utter such cruel, heart-rending words. You will live, you must live, for the consolation and joy of us all. It would

*The queen's own words.

be an injustice, and we should despair of divine equity, if our queen depart without having seen again the days of deliverance and happiness."

"My dear, Providence permits such acts of injustice," said Louisa, with a mournful smile. "Was it just that noble Palm should be shot, that Schill had to fall, and to be stigmatized as a deserter for his heroic actions? Was it just that Andrew Hofer had to expiate his glorious struggle for freedom by his death? The Emperor of Austria was in the same position as we were. He had to sacrifice Andrew Hofer as we Ferdinand von Schill. The cruel hand of the tyrant rested on him as it did on us. And now they have shot the brave, heroic leader of the Tyrolese at Mantua! My soul mourns for him, for I hoped in him. It is but recently that I understood Schiller's words, 'On the mountains there is freedom!' They resounded in my heart like a prophecy, when in my thought I looked over to the mountaineers who had risen at Hofer's call. My heart fought at his side! And what a man this dear, honest, simple Andrew Hofer was! A peasant who had become a general, and what a general! His weapon—prayer! His ally—God! He fought with folded hands, with bended knees, and struck down the enemy as with a cherub's sword. And the brave Tyrolese were fighting with him—children in the simplicity of their hearts, they fought like Titans, by hurling down rocks from the summits of their fastnesses. And yet it was all in vain! They were sacrificed, and their leader was shot by the man who to-morrow marries the daughter of their emperor. And you doubt that Providence permits acts of injustice? Oh, I do not doubt that God is just, but we mortals are often unable to comprehend his justice, because our life is too short to witness the result of that of which we have seen only the inception; but He knows the end from the beginning. And an end will come for Napoleon with all his glory. But shall I or any of us ever live to witness it?"

"All of us will," said Madame von Berg; "our belief in the final retribution of Divine justice will give us our strength, I hope, for many years."

"I shall not live to see that blessed time," said the queen, solemnly. "This man, who is to be married to a German princess to-morrow, has wounded my heart so that it will at last destroy me. I do not speak figuratively, but mean what I say. There is something in my heart that leaves me no rest

night and day. Its palpitations strike like a death-watch. There is something gnawing there incessantly; at times I feel that it has nearly pierced my life, that death is surely near. And I am dying of the wretchedness and disgrace which he who is enthroned in France has brought upon Prussia! I am dying, and he will win further triumphs; the whole of Europe will lie prostrate at his feet, and his songs of victory will be my dirge, leaving me no rest even in my grave. But hush, hush! Let us say no more. I have allowed you to look into the depths of my soul. You, my friend, are the only one to whom I sometimes raise the veil covering my bleeding heart. But tell no one what you have seen; keep my secret a little while longer, my dear Caroline.—And how is your friend, excellent Baron von Stein? You told me yesterday you had received letters from him. What does he write? Where does he live?"

"He lives in Brünn; his wife and children have joined him, and his life therefore is outwardly at least less sad than formerly. He is in constant communication with the prominent statesmen of Germany; all patriots hope in him, and receive advice and consolation from him. He is preparing quietly and secretly the great work of deliverance, which, when completed, will delight the eyes of my queen and receive her blessing. His eyes are constantly turned toward Prussia, and it is his profoundest sorrow that he is not permitted in these times to devote his services to the king."

"Yes," said the queen, sighing, "it is the terrible misfortune of the king that, in times so calamitous as these, he is deprived of the assistance of the patriotic men who alone would be able to save him and the state. The tyrannous decrees of Napoleon have taken his noblest and best servants from him. Stein is in exile. Hardenberg has to keep aloof from us because the emperor so ordered it. We might have ministers competent to hold the helm of the ship of state and take her successfully into port, but we are not allowed to employ them. Our interests are consequently intrusted to weak and ill-disposed ministers, who will ruin them, and we shall perish, unless assistance come soon—very soon! Stein and Hardenberg are exiled, and we have only Minister Altenstein, who is bold enough to propose the voluntary cession of Silesia to the king! Oh, my beloved, unfortunate Prussia, where is there a prospect of safety for thee?—Ah, the worm is again at my heart—oh, it oppresses me so that I can scarcely

breathe! Tell me, Caroline, what else has Baron von Stein written to you?"

"He describes the deep and painful impression which the marriage of the Archduchess Maria Louisa with the Emperor Napoleon has made throughout Austria. There was no rejoicing, for all regarded it as another humiliation of Austria—as a chain by which she fastens herself to France, and makes herself a vassal of a powerful enemy. The Viennese particularly received the intelligence with profound indignation, and even seditious gatherings took place, which had to be dispersed by the troops. In their sorrow, the inhabitants of the Austrian capital consoled themselves with a little wit; for, on the day when the Viennese had to illuminate their city in honor of the betrothal, the populace, marching through the streets, reached the residence of the French ambassador, and shouted in a loud and scornful tone: 'Napoleon is now ruined! We have at last played him a trick! We have inoculated him with Austrian bad luck and Austrian stupidity!'"*

The queen laughed. "That sounds very silly, and does not indicate much self-esteem, but there is a deep meaning in it after all. A connection with Austria has always been disastrous to France. Louis XVI. died of his marriage with Marie Antoinette, and Napoleon will not derive much benefit from his with the archduchess. He intends to strengthen his empire by this step, but it will alienate his own people from him. By this connection with an old dynasty he recedes from the people and from the liberal ideas of the revolution, which enabled him to ascend the throne. If this throne should ever be shaken, he would find that Austria will not support him."

"It will be shaken and fall!" exclaimed Madame von Berg. "There is an ominous commotion everywhere. Spain is the first fruit of the new era about to dawn upon us. She has not yet been conquered, nor will she be, notwithstanding Napoleon's high-sounding phrases and so-called victories. She is as a rock that will first break the waves of his haughty will. As a proof of the hatred prevailing in Spain, Baron von Stein sent me a page from the catechism, which the priests are teaching the people at the present time, and he added to it a few passages from the new French catechism. Will your majesty permit me to read them?"

"Read," exclaimed the queen; "pray, dear Caroline, let me hear them!"

* Hormayr, vol. i., p. 89, and other historians relate this occurrence.

Madame von Berg drew several papers from her pocket. "Let us first be edified by the Spanish catechism, if it please your majesty," and she read:

"Who are you, my child?"

"A Spaniard, by the grace of God."

"What does that mean?"

"A man of honor."

"Who is our enemy?"

"The Emperor of the French."

"What is the Emperor of the French?"

"A villain, the source of all evil."

"How many natures has he?"

"Two. A human and a diabolical nature."

"How many Emperors of the French are there?"

"One emperor in three."

"What are their names?"

"Napoleon, Murat, and Manuel Godoy."

"Which is the worst?"

"They are all equally bad."

"Whence does Napoleon come?"

"From sin."

"Murat?"

"From Napoleon."

"Godoy?"

"From both."

"What are the French?"

"Christians who have become heretics."

"What punishment deserves the Spaniard who neglects his duties?"

"The death and disgrace of a traitor."

"Is it a sin to kill a Frenchman?"

"No, a man gains heaven by killing one of the heretical dogs."

"Horrible!" exclaimed the queen, shuddering. "But that is their catechism, and these are the doctrines which are actually taught the people, and which filled them with such desperate courage at Saragossa. And now, Caroline, let me hear something of the French catechism."

"Here is a passage reading: 'To honor and serve our Emperor Napoleon, is to honor and serve God Himself, for it is he whom the Lord has given to us, that he may restore the holy faith of our fathers and to rule over us with wisdom and firmness. He is the anointed of the Lord, owing to the con-

secration he has received at the hands of the pope, the head of the Holy Catholic Church. Those who would not fulfil their duties to the Emperor Napoleon would rebel against the will of God, and be doomed eternally.'"

"That is the fanaticism of a man who believes in nothing but himself, and whom this self-deification nevertheless will one day hurl into the abyss," exclaimed the queen. "But hark, it strikes twelve! The king will soon be here to take me to the palace. I will dress, for I must not keep him long waiting. Ah, there he is already!" Louisa rose quickly from the sofa and hastened toward the king, who entered the room. Madame von Berg withdrew quietly, and the king and the queen remained alone.

The king took the hands which the queen extended toward him, and pressed them tenderly to his lips. "I come, perhaps, earlier than you expected," he said, "but I wished to see my beloved Louisa on this festive day, before she again becomes the queen. It seems to me I have not yet seen you to-day. Since early morning the people offering congratulations and presents have perfectly besieged the house."

"That is the consequence of celebrating my birthday in Berlin, my friend," exclaimed the queen laughing; "it is your just punishment for refusing to spend the day with me and the children quietly at our dear Parez, as we always used to do."

"I could not do that," said the king, gravely. "I had to give our subjects an opportunity to manifest their love for you and to indemnify them for the last three years, when they were unable to do so. But do you know, Louisa, why I come now? I should like to present you two acceptable gifts."

"More gifts?" exclaimed the queen, almost reproachfully. "Your love has lavished so many costly and beautiful presents on me to-day that I hardly know what you may give me."

"You need not be afraid, for the gifts are not very expensive; they are only two pieces of paper. They will not make your casket heavier, but I hope they will render your heart lighter. Here is the first." He drew a letter from his bosom and handed it to the queen. "Read the address," he said.

The queen read: "'To his excellency, Count von Hardenberg, at present at the farm of Grohnde.'—What?" she asked, looking joyously at the king. "My friend, you have yourself written to Hardenberg?"

The king nodded. "I myself," he said.

"And what did you write to him?"

"I requested him to come to me without delay, if he feel strong enough, and resume his former position at the head of the government."

"But you know Napoleon does not want Hardenberg to be your minister."

"I am now again, and intend remaining, master in my own country."

"Napoleon ordered that Hardenberg should not come within twenty leagues of the place where the king resides. Remember, dear friend, he is proscribed."

"But I disregard this proscription, and call Hardenberg to my side. If he is courageous enough he will come, and when he is here we shall take pains to pacify the emperor's wrath. He is at present too busily engaged in arranging his wedding festivities, and in preparing for the reception of his young wife; he will not have time to notice that the little King of Prussia has chosen another minister. We shall try to manage the matter as prudently as possible, and prevail upon Napoleon to leave Hardenberg at the head of my cabinet. I cannot do any thing with a minister who proposes to me to sacrifice the province of Silesia, and to sell loyal subjects like cattle. I will dismiss Altenstein, and appoint Hardenberg in his place. I have called him. If he is a good patriot, he will come; he must write a penitent letter to the emperor, that he may permit him to remain with us."*

"Oh, he will come, my friend, and also write the letter," exclaimed the queen.

"And do you approve my resolution to intrust Hardenberg with Altenstein's department?" asked the king.

"Approve it? My heart rejoices at it! Now I have hopes again of Prussia; now I look full of confidence into the future, for Hardenberg is a true German patriot, who has the honor and dignity of his country at heart, who does not want us to become mere vassals of France, and who will not propose to sacrifice provinces when we may discharge our liabilities with money. Oh, my dear, beloved friend, how grateful I am to you for this joyful surprise! This paper is my most precious birthday gift, and it really makes my heart glad."

*Hardenberg complied immediately with the king's request, and came to Potsdam, where he had a long interview with him, and declared his readiness to resume his position at the head of the administration. He submitted also to the galling necessity of conciliating Napoleon by an humble letter, in which he assured the emperor of his devotedness to France, and promised that the war-contributions should be promptly paid. Napoleon was favorably impressed with this letter, and ceased to object to Hardenberg's appointment.

"But I have another paper which will afford you pleasure," said the king, drawing it from his bosom. "Here, my dear, affectionate Princess of Mecklenburg, here is my second gift!"

He placed a folded paper into the hands of the queen. She opened it, and a joyous cry burst from her lips. "'Passenger ticket for Queen Louisa, good for a trip to Mecklenburg-Strelitz,'" she read, laughing. "'First travelling companion: Frederick William.' I am to go to Mecklenburg," cried the queen, joyously, "and you will accompany me? Oh, my beloved husband, you have divined, then, the most secret and ardent wish of my heart, and you grant it even before my lips have uttered it! Oh, how shall I thank you, my own dear friend?" She encircled the king's neck with her arms, with passionate tenderness, and pressed a long kiss on his lips. "Dear, dear husband, how shall I thank you?" she whispered, once more with tearful eyes.

The king looked at her long and lovingly. "That you are with me is my greatest happiness. I was thinking to-day of a poem written by good old Claudius; it expresses my own feelings. It is an echo of my heart's gratitude!"

"What poem is it?" asked the queen.

Frederick William laid his hand on her head, raised his eyes toward heaven, and said aloud:

"Ich danke dir mein Wohl, mein Glück in diesem Leben,
Ich war wohl klug, dass ich dich fand;
Doch ich fand nicht, Gott hat dich mir gegeben,
So segnet keines Menschen Hand!"*

CHAPTER LVII.

LOUISA'S DEATH.

THE happy and long-yearned-for day, the 25th of June, had dawned at last. The queen's wish was to be fulfilled; she was to set out for her old Mecklenburg home, for her paternal roof at Neustrelitz. The king intended to follow her thither in a few days, for he was detained in Berlin by state affairs;

*On thee my joy, my hopes rely!
How wise to win thee mine!
But surely it was Heaven—not I,
That made me ever thine.

To thee, my loving spouse, I owe
Whate'er of good may be,
Nor could a human hand bestow
This priceless gift on me.