

arms were stretched forth to seize him who, an hour before, had been their lord and emperor.

The child, frightened by the aspect of these rough soldiers, bursts out into a cry of alarm, and stretches out its little arms toward its nurse.

She takes him in her arms and weeps over him. The frightened child buries its little face in the bosom of his nurse, and the soldiers now convey them both to the waiting sledges. The dethroned emperor is quickly transported to the dethroned regent at Elizabeth's palace, who, with hot tears, clasps her son to her heart.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RECOMPENSING.

MEANWHILE, Elizabeth had made herself absolute mistress of the imperial palace. Hastening to the throne-room, she had taken possession of the throne of her father, and administered the oath of allegiance to the guards surrounding her.

They lay upon their knees before her, these cowardly instruments of despotism; they bowed their heads in the dust, and these four or five thousand slaves, to which number the followers of the empress already amounted, swore fealty to Elizabeth, ready to strangle the regent and the young emperor at her command, or to serve her the same if, peradventure, the regent should regain a momentary power.*

* "L'Abbé Chappe d'Auteroche," vol. i., p. 138.

While the guards were doing homage in the palace, Grünstein and Woronzow, by Lestocq's command, led their men to Münnich's and Ostermann's, and both were imprisoned; with them, a great number of leading and suspected persons, who, perhaps, might have been disposed to draw the sword for Anna Leopoldowna. Lestocq had thought of every thing, had considered every thing; at the same time that he entered the regent's palace with Elizabeth, he sent to the printer the manifesto which proclaimed Elizabeth as empress. With the appearance of the sun in the horizon, Elizabeth was recognized as empress in the capital, and soon after throughout the whole empire. Who were they who recognized her? It was not the people, for in Russia there are no people—there are only masters and slaves. Elizabeth had become empress because fortune and Anna Leopoldowna's generous confidence had favored her; not the exigencies of the people, nor the tyranny of her predecessor had called her to the throne, but she had attained to it by the cunning and intrigues of some few confederates. She had become empress because Lestocq was tired of being only physician to a poor princess; because Grünstein thought the position of under-officer was far too humble for him, and because Alexis Razumovsky, the former precentor in the imperial chapel, found it desirable to add to his name the title of count or prince!

When St. Petersburg awoke it heard with astonishment the news of a new revolution. From mouth to mouth flew this astounding announcement: "We have changed our rulers! We are no longer the servants of the Emperor Ivan, but of the Empress Elizabeth! A

new dynasty has arisen, and we have a new oath of allegiance to take!"

At first only a few ventured to spread this extraordinary intelligence, and these few were tremblingly and anxiously avoided; it was dangerous to listen to them; people fled from them without answering. But as the rumors became constantly louder and more significant, as at length their truth could be no longer doubted, as it became certain that the regent and her son were dethroned and Elizabeth was established in power, all the doubting and anxious faces were, as by an electric spark, lighted up with joy; then nothing was heard but the cry of triumph and jubilation; then was Anna Leopoldowna loudly cursed by those who had blessed her on the preceding day; then was the new Empress Elizabeth loudly lauded by those who yesterday had smiled with contempt at her powerlessness.

All again hastened to the imperial palace; the great and the noble again brought out their state coaches for the purpose of throwing themselves at the feet of the new possessor of power and swearing a new allegiance; again nothing was heard but the sound of universal rejoicing, nothing seen but faces lighted up by ecstasy and eyes glistening with tears of joy. And this was, in fourteen months, the third time that they had done homage to a new ruler who had as regularly dethroned his predecessor, and they had each time gone through the ceremony with the same evidences of joy, the same ecstasies, the same slavish humility, not commiserating the defeated party, but professing love and devotion to the victor!

And as the day dawned on St. Petersburg, as it glo-

riously beamed upon the young empress, as she saw these thousands of worshipping slaves at her feet, Elizabeth's heart swelled with a proud joy, and looking down upon the masses of humble and devoted subjects, whose mistress she was, she felt herself momentarily overcome by a deep and holy emotion.

"I will be a mother to this people," thought she; "I will love and spare them; I will govern them with mildness; they shall not curse, but adore me!"

Yielding to this first generous impulse of her heart, Elizabeth rose from the throne, and with uplifted hands loudly and solemnly swore that she would be a mother to her subjects—a mother who, when compelled to punish, would never forget love and forbearance!

"No one, however great his crime," said she, with flashing eyes—"no one shall be punished with death so long as I sit upon this throne! From this day the punishment of death is abolished in my realm! I will punish crime, but I will spare the life of the criminal!"

When Elizabeth had thus spoken, the large hall again resounded with the rejoicing shouts of the great and noble—men breathed freer and deeper, they raised their heads more proudly; for centuries the all-powerful word of the czars had swept over the heads of Russians like the sword of Damocles—it now seemed to be removed, and to promise to each one a longer life, a longer unendangered existence. For where was there a subject of the czars who might not at any time be convicted of a crime—where an innocent person who might not at any moment be condemned to death? A glance, a smile, an inconsiderate word, had oft-

en sufficed to cause a head to fall! And now this eternally present danger seemed to be removed! What wonder, then, that they raised shouts of joy, that they embraced each other, that they loudly and solemnly called down the blessings of Heaven upon this noble and merciful empress!

During this time of general rejoicing among the great and noble of the realm in the brilliant imperial halls above, the palace was surrounded by dense masses of people looking up with curiosity at the bright windows, and listening with astonishment to the joyful shouts that reached their ears below. And when they learned the cause of the rejoicing above, they shrugged their shoulders and murmured low: "The empress will henceforth punish no one with death! What is that to us? That the great shall no more be put to death by the empress, is no concern of ours, the serfs of the great! The empress is powerful, but our lords and masters have yet more power over us. They will still scourge us to death, and the empress cannot hinder them!"

That a word of authority from the czarina had abolished the punishment of death, did not stir them up from their dull, expectant silence; but when a messenger from the empress came and announced that Elizabeth had ordered a flask of brandy to be given to each one of the crowd assembled below, that they might drink her health, then came life and movement to these stupid masses, then their dull faces were distorted into a friendly grin, then they screamed and howled with a brutish ecstasy, and they all rushed to the opened door to avail themselves of the promised benevolence of the empress and receive the divine liquor!

For the great, the abolition of capital punishment—for the people, a flask of brandy—these were the first rays that announced the appearance of the newly-rising sun Elizabeth in the horizon of her realm!

No,—Elizabeth did yet more!—in this hour she remembered with a grateful heart the faithful friends who had assisted her to the throne; to reward these was her next and most sacred duty!

A nod from her called to her presence those thirty grenadiers of the Preobrajensky regiment whom Grünstein had won over, and the empress with a gracious smile gave them her hand to kiss.

Then, rising from her throne, and glancing at the assembled magnates and princes, she said, in a clear and flattering tone: "It is service that ennobles, it is fidelity that lends fame and splendor. And service and fidelity have you rendered and shown to me, my faithful grenadiers! I will reward you as you deserve. From this hour you are free; nay, more, you are magnates of my realm; you belong, with the best of right, to their circle, for, in virtue of my imperial power, I raise you to the nobility by creating you barons, all of you, my thirty faithful grenadiers, and you, Grünstein, the leader of this faithful band! Receive them into your ranks, my counts and barons, they are worthy of you!"

Hesitating, not daring to mingle with those proud magnates, stood the new barons; but the princes and counts advanced to them with open arms, with exclamations of tenderness and assurances of friendship. The empress had spoken, the slaves must obey; and these princes and counts,

these generals and field-m Marshals, who yesterday would hardly have thrown away a contemptuous glance upon these grenadiers, now called them friends and brothers, and were most happy to admit them into their circle.

Elizabeth gave a satisfied glance at these hearty greetings: she found it infinitely sweet and agreeable to make so many men happy in so easy a manner, and with pleasure she recollected that she had yet to reward her coachman who had guided her sledge in the great and decisive hour.

She ordered him to be called. A considerable time elapsed, and all were looking expectantly toward the door, which finally opened, and, led by four lackeys, the coachman stumbled into the hall. They had had some trouble in finding him, until at length he was discovered among the people in the court-yard, enjoying the brandy distributed by order of the empress. From this crowd they had withdrawn him in spite of his resistance, in order to bring him to his sovereign.

She received the staggering Petrovitch with a gracious smile, she praised the dauntlessness with which he had guided her sledge in that eventful night, and in gratitude for his good conduct she raised him, as she had the grenadiers, to the rank of a nobleman by naming him a baron of the Russian empire.*

Petrovitch listened to her with a stupid laugh; and when the magnates crowded around him, offering their hands and assuring him of their friendship, he tremblingly and with effort stammered some unmeaning words, and

* Mannstein, "Mémoires, Historiques, Politiques, et Militaires sur la Russie;" Levecque, "Histoire de Russie."

falling upon his knees, he bowed his head in the dust before these great and powerful magnates, humbly kissing the hems of their garments, not suspecting that he was their equal in rank.

And constantly more brilliant and beautiful beamed the imperial grace. None of Elizabeth's faithful friends and servants were forgotten, for she possessed a virtue rare among princes—she was grateful.

She named Lestocq her first physician, president of the medical college, and member of her privy council. She made Grünstein an imperial aide-de-camp, with the rank of brigadier-general; and Woronzow a count and her first chamberlain.

Then, at last, she repeated the name of her friend Alexis Razumovsky. Her fair brow lighted up as with a reflected sunbeam on his approaching her throne, and, holding out to him both hands, she said aloud: "Alexis Razumovsky, I have you most to thank for my success in dispossessing the usurpers who had robbed me of my father's throne; for your wise counsels gave me courage and force: be then, henceforth, next to my throne, my chamberlain, Count Razumovsky!"

Bending a knee before her, Alexis gratefully kissed her beloved hand, and the counts and gentlemen surrounded him, loudly praising the great wisdom of the empress, whose divine penetration enabled her everywhere to discover and reward true service!

"Ah," sighed Elizabeth, when, on the evening of this glorious day, she was again alone with her confidential friends, "ah, my friends, I have now complied with your

wishes and allowed you to make an empress of me! But forget not, Lestocq, that I have become empress only on condition that I am not to be troubled with business and state affairs. This has been a day of great exertion and fatigue, and I hope you will henceforth leave me in repose. I have done what you wished, I am empress, and have rewarded you for your aid, but now I also demand my reward, and that is undisturbed peace! Once for all, in my private apartments no one is to speak of state affairs, here I will have repose; you can carry on the government through your bureaux and *chancelleries*; I will have nothing to do with it! Here we will be gay and enjoy life. Come here, my Alexis,—come here and tell me if this imperial crown is becoming, and whether you found me fair in my ermine-trimmed purple mantle?"

"My lofty empress is always the fairest of women," tenderly responded Alexis.

"Call me not empress," said she, drawing him closer to her. "That brings again to mind all the hardships and wearinesses I have this day encountered."

"Only yet a moment, your majesty; let me remind you that you are now empress, and, as such, have duties to perform!" pressingly exclaimed Lestocq. "You have this day exercised the pleasantest right of your imperial power—the right of rewarding and making happy. But there remains another and not less important duty; your majesty must now think of punishing. The regent, and her husband and son, are prisoners; as, also, are Münnich, Ostermann, Count Löwenwald, and Julia von Mengden. You must think of judging and punishing them."

Elizabeth had paid no attention to him. She was whispering and laughing with Alexis, who had let down her long dark hair, and was now playfully twining it around her white neck.

"Ah, you have not listened to me, your majesty," impatiently cried Lestocq. "You must, however, for a few moments remember your new dignity, and direct what is to be done with the imprisoned traitors."

"Only see, Alexis, how this new lord privy councillor teases me," sighed the princess, and, turning to Lestocq, she continued: "I think you should understand the laws better than I, and should know how traitors are punished."

"In all countries high-treason is punished with death," said Lestocq, gloomily.

"Well, let these traitors fare according to the common usage, and kill them," responded Elizabeth, comfortably extending herself upon the divan.

"But your majesty has this day abolished the punishment of death."

"Have I so? Ah, yes, I now remember. Well, as I have said it, I must keep my word."

"And the regent, Prince Ulrich, the so-called Emperor Ivan, Counts Ostermann, Münnich, Löwenwald, as well as Julia von Mengden, and the other prisoners, are all to remain unpunished?"

"Can they be punished in no other way than by death?" impatiently asked Elizabeth. "Have we not prisons and the knout? Have we not Siberia and the rack? Punish these traitors, then, as you think best. I give you full pow-

ers, and, if it must be so, will even take the trouble to affix my signature to your sentence."

"But we cannot scourge the regent or her son?"

"No," said Elizabeth, with vehemence, "these you must permit to go free and without hindrance to Germany; your judicial powers will not extend to them. It shall not be said that Elizabeth has delivered up her aunt and cousin to torture for the purpose of securing her own advantage. Let them go hence free and unobstructed! I tell you this is my express, imperial will!"

And Elizabeth, exhausted by so great an effort, leaned her head upon the shoulder of Alexis, mechanically playing with his locks.

"And Münnich and Ostermann?" asked Lestocq.

"*Mon Dieu!* will, then, this annoyance never cease?" impatiently exclaimed the empress. "What are Münnich and Ostermann to me? I know them not; they have never injured and are wholly indifferent to me. Do with them as you and your colleagues think best, I shall not trouble myself about it. Judge, condemn, punish them, it is all one to me—only their lives must be spared, as I have promised that no one shall be punished with death."

"I may, then, announce to the council that you will confirm their sentence?"

"Yes, yes, certainly," cried Elizabeth, springing up. "Scourge, banish them, do what you please, but leave me in peace! Come, my Alexis, this good Lestocq is insufferable to-day; he will annoy us to death if we remain any longer here! Come, we will escape from him and his serious face! Oh, we have much more serious subjects of

conversation. To-morrow is my grand gala dinner, and we have my toilet to examine, to be certain that every thing is in the proper order. And then the ball toilet for the evening, which is far more important. I shall open the ball with a *Polonnaise*. You promised me, Alexis, to practise with me the new tour which the Marquis de la Chetardie describes as the latest Parisian mode. Come, let us essay this tour. For a new empress, at her first court ball, there is nothing more important than that she should perform her duty as leader of the dance with propriety and grace. Quick, therefore, to the work! Give me your hand—and now, Alexis, let us commence. Sing a melody to it, and then it will go better."

Alexis began to sing a *Polonnaise*, and, taking the hand of the empress, they commenced the practice of the new *Polonnaise* tour.

"So, that is right," said he, interrupting his singing, "that is very fine. Now let go my hand and turn proudly and majestically around. Beautifully done! Now a half turn sideward. One, two, three—la, la, la, tra la!"

"Yet one more question," interposed Lestocq; "may the council of state sit in judgment upon Löwenwald and de Mengden, and will you confirm their decision?"

"One, two, three—tra, la, la!" sang Alexis, and the empress whirled and made her graceful turn, as he had taught her.

Lestocq repeated his question to the empress.

Elizabeth was precisely in the most difficult tour.

"Yes, yes," she breathlessly cried, "I deliver them all over to you; scourge them, punish them, send them to Si-

beria—whatever you think best! Halt, Alexis, we must try this tour over again. But, indeed, I think I shall acquit myself very well in it.”

“Heavenly!” cried Alexis. “Once more, then! One, two, three—la, la, la, tra la!”

CHAPTER XVII.

PUNISHMENT.

“PUNISH them all, all!” had Elizabeth said, “but the regent, her husband, and her son—they you will permit to return to Germany!”

“We must accomplish the will of the empress, and therefore let them go!”

“We will obey her commands,” said Lestocq to Alexis Razumovsky. “We must let them go free, but it would be dangerous to let them ever reach Germany. With their persons they would preserve their rights and their claims, and Elizabeth would always stand in fear of this regent and this young growing emperor, whose claims to the imperial Russian crown are incontestable. You alone, Razumovsky, can turn away this danger from the head of the empress, by convincing her of its reality, and inducing her to change her mind. Reflect that the safety of the empress is our own; reflect that, as we have risen with her, so shall we fall with her!”

“Rely upon me,” said Alexis, with a confident smile; “this regent and her young Emperor Ivan shall never pass

the Russian boundary! Let them now go, but send a strong guard with them, and travel by slow marches, that our couriers may be able to overtake them at a later period. That is all you have to do in the case.”

And, humming a sentimental song, Alexis repaired to the apartments of the empress.

Before the back door of the palace Elizabeth had occupied as princess, a travelling-sledge was waiting. Gayly sounded and clattered the bells on the six small horses attached to the sledge; gayly did the postillions blow their horns, and with enticing calls resounded the thundering *fanfares* through the cold winter air.

To those for whom this sledge was destined, this call sounded like a greeting from heaven. It was to them the dove with the olive-branch, announcing to them the end of their torments; it was the messenger of peace, which gave them back their freedom, their lives, and perhaps even happiness. They were to return to Germany, their long-missed home; hastening through the Russian snow-fields, they would soon reach a softer climate, where they would be surrounded by milder manners and customs. What was it to Anna that she was to be deprived of earthly elevation and power—what cared she that she henceforth would no more have the pleasure of commanding others? She was free, free from the task of ruling slaves and humanizing barbarians; free from the constraint of greatness, and, finally free to live in conformity with her own inclinations, and perhaps, ah, perhaps, to found a happiness, the bare dreaming of which already caused her heart to tremble with unspeakable ecstasy.