

CHAPTER III.

NAPOLEON AND THE WHITE LADY.

THE emperor had long risen from the supper-table. The imperial suite had been allowed to withdraw. Alone he sat in a comfortable night-dress on the high, antiquated easy-chair, in front of the fire-place, in which, at his express order, notwithstanding the warm weather, a large fire had been kindled. He liked heat; the sun of Egypt and the desert had never been too warm for him; in the hottest summer days in France he frequently felt chilly, and called for a fire. It seemed as though the inflamed blood in his veins made the world appear cold to him; he saw the light of the sunbeams, but did not feel their warmth. He now sat close to the fire, his face bent over the large map that lay on the table. It was a map of Russia. He rapidly drew several lines across it, marking positions with the colored pins, taken from the small boxes beside him. "Yes, this is my plan," he said to himself, after a long pause. "Three of my corps must be placed on the Niemen; Davoust, Oudinot, and Ney, will command them. There, farther to the left, the cavalry reserves, under Nansouty and Montbrun, will take position. Here the old guard, under Lefèbvre; there the young guard, under Mortier and Bessières, with the cavalry of the guard. At this point, farther to the south, the fourth corps, composed of the Italians and Bavarians, will operate, and the Viceroy of Italy, Eugène, will be its general-in-chief. Farther down, here at Grodno and Bialystock, I will place the Poles, Westphalians, and Saxons; the fifth, seventh, and eighth corps to be commanded by my brother Jerome. The Prussians will halt at Tilsit, and form the extreme left wing; Macdonald will be their leader; and below there, at Drohiczyn Schwartzenberg with his Austrians will form the extreme right wing. The preparations are complete, and the thunder-cloud is ready to burst over Russia if Alexander should persist in his obstinacy. Like the waves of the tempestuous ocean, my armies are rolling toward the shores of Russia. They can still be stopped by a suppliant word from Alexander. If he refuses, let his destiny be fulfilled, and let the roar of my cannon inform him that his hour has struck, and that the end of his imperial power draws nigh.

It was his own will. He himself has brought destruction upon his head! He—"

A loud noise above his head, making the walls tremble and the windows rattle suddenly interrupted the stillness. The emperor rose from his seat and shouted "Roustan!" The door of the adjoining room opened and the Mameluke appeared on the threshold.

"What was it?" asked Napoleon hastily.

"Sire, it was as if a wall fell in above us; the noise was as loud as though a cannon were fired in the palace. I rushed immediately into the corridor, but every thing there was quiet. Only the castellan of the palace appeared in the utmost haste in his night-gown, and asked whether an accident had happened in the rooms of the emperor."

"Where is the castellan now?"

"Sire, when I told him that the noise was on the upper floor, he immediately went thither in order to see what had occurred."

"Go and bring him to me," ordered Napoleon; and when Roustan had withdrawn, the emperor fixed his eyes steadfastly on the door, and his compressed lips quivered with impatience.

Finally, the door opened again; Roustan appeared, followed by the castellan, pale and trembling, behind the Mameluke, and clinging with his hands to the door to support himself.

Napoleon cast upon him one of his quick glances. "What was this noise, and why do you tremble so violently?"

"Pardon me, your majesty," faltered Schluter, "but my terror—the surprise—I am afraid I have lost my senses. I have just seen something so unheard of, so incredible, that I—"

"What have you seen?" asked Napoleon. "Speak! What was this noise?"

The castellan slowly raised his head, and stared with terrified eyes at the emperor. "Your majesty," he said, solemnly, "the White Lady made the noise!"

Napoleon started, and his brow grew clouded. "But did they not tell me that the miserable spectre never haunted this part of the palace?" he asked. "Did I not issue orders that rooms should be given me where I should not be disturbed by this apparition?"

"Your majesty, she has hitherto never entered these rooms," exclaimed Schluter. "Never before has the White

Lady directed her steps hither, and this afternoon her portrait stood quietly in a cabinet of the other wing of the palace. I can take an oath that this is true."

"What portrait do you refer to?" asked Napoleon, impatiently.

"The portrait of the White Lady," said Schluter. "I saw it this very day in the cabinet on the other side; all the doors were locked, and now I suddenly find this large painting in the room above you; it was lying on the floor as if in walking it had stumbled over something and fallen. It is the first time that the White Lady appears in this wing of the palace; her portrait has come from the other side, and Heaven alone knows how it has happened. Whenever we wished to convey the painting, with its enormous wooden frame, from one room to another, no less than six men were required to carry it, and now it is here as though it had flitted through the air: and it is lying on the floor as if struck down by lightning."

"And you think the fall of the painting produced the noise?"

"I feel convinced of it. If your majesty wishes me to do so, I will get a few men, go up-stairs to raise the painting, and let it fall again, that your majesty may judge whether it is the same noise or not."

"Ah, you do not feel much respect for your walking portrait," exclaimed the emperor, smiling. "You want to abuse it, and make experiments with it. We will suppose that the fall of the painting was the sole cause of the noise. Now, that it is on the floor, I believe it will lie still and disturb us no longer, unless it be that your portrait should fall asleep and snore. What do you know about that?"

"Your majesty," said Schluter, gravely, "the White Lady never sleeps!"

The emperor cast a searching glance upon him, and then turned away, folded his hands, and slowly paced the room. Suddenly he stood in front of the castellan.

"What about this White Lady?" he asked, hastily. "Who was she, and what is her history?"

"Ah, sire, it is a long and melancholy history concerning the ancestors of the Margraves of Brandenburg," said Schluter, sighing.

"You know the history?"

"Yes, your majesty, I know it well."

"Tell it to me, but very briefly," said Napoleon, throwing

himself on the easy-chair in front the fireplace, and ordering Roustan, by a wave of his hand and the word "Fire!" to add fresh fuel.

"Now, tell me all about it."

"Your majesty," replied Schluter, hesitatingly, "I do not know how to narrate a story in fine words, and you must pardon me if I do not acquit myself very satisfactorily."

"Who was this White Lady?"

"Sire, her name was Cunigunda, Countess von Plassenburg. Her parents had compelled her to marry the old Count von Plassenburg, and when her husband died, after two years of unhappy wedded life, the Countess Cunigunda of Orlamunde and Plassenburg was a young widow, twenty-four years of age, heiress of the splendid Plassenburg, and mother of two children. She was a gay-spirited lady, and looked around for another husband. Her eyes fell on the Burgrave of Nuremberg, the distinguished nobleman Albert the Handsome. The whole German people called him so; and all the girls, far and near, daughters of the nobility, as well as those of the citizens of Nuremberg, loved the fine-looking Burgrave of Nuremberg, who was the ancestor of the House of Hohenzollern. But the noble Count Albert loved only one young lady, beautiful Beatrice of Hainault, and would marry none but her. The Countess Cunigunda of Orlamunde, however, was not aware of this, and sent him a message, asking him whether he would not like to marry her. She would give him, besides her hand, the splendid Plassenburg and all her other property. Burgrave Albert the Handsome smiled when he heard the message; shrugging his shoulders, he said: 'Tell your countess I regard her as very amiable, and should like to marry her, provided four eyes were not in existence. But as it is, I cannot do so.' The burgrave referred to the eyes of his parents, who did not like the Countess of Orlamunde, and he wished to make them responsible for his refusal, so as not to offend the beautiful widow. But Cunigunda interpreted the words differently, and thought the four eyes, which the Burgrave said were in the way of their marriage, were those of her two children. She loved the handsome Burgrave so intensely, that she henceforth hated the children, because she believed them to be the sole obstacles to her marriage. The Evil One and her passion whispered into her ear, 'Go and kill your children.' So Cunigunda rose from her couch; in a long white night-dress, her head covered with a black veil,

she crept to the bed of her children, and, drawing from her raven hair a long golden pin, set with precious stones (a gift which she had once received at the hands of Burgrave Albert), she pierced the heads of her children, penetrating the brain to the vertebra."

"Medea!" ejaculated Napoleon, staring into the fire. "This, then, is the history of the Medea of the Hohenzollern."

"No, sire, the name of the countess was not Medea, but Cunigunda," said Schluter, respectfully.

Napoleon smiled. "Proceed," he said.

"On the following morning there was great wailing at the Plassenburg, for the two sweet little children lay dead in their bed; not a vestige of violence was to be seen, and the physician of the countess decided that a stroke of apoplexy had killed them. The Countess of Orlamunde sent a mounted messenger to Nuremberg to Burgrave Albert the Handsome, requesting him to come and see her. And when the burgrave came she met him in a white bridal dress, and looked at him with radiant eyes; in her uplifted right hand she had the golden hair-pin, and said, 'The four eyes are no longer in existence. For your sake I have stabbed my two children with this pin, your first love-gift; the four eyes are extinguished forever. Now, marry me!' But the burgrave recoiled in terror, and pushed back the murderess, who was about to embrace him. He then dragged her through the rooms to the dungeon of the castle. She begged and cried, but the burgrave had no mercy upon the infanticide, and hurled her down into the dungeon. He then informed the courts of the crime that had been committed. The Countess von Orlamunde, the last member of her family, was put on trial, and sentence of death passed upon her. The burgrave of Nuremberg sent the first executioner from the city to the Plassenburg, and the countess was beheaded in the presence of the burgrave, and in the same room in which she had murdered her children. Before putting her head on the block she glanced at the handsome burgrave, raised both her arms toward heaven, and took a fearful oath that she would avenge herself on him and his house; that, whenever one of his descendants was at the point of death, she would be present, as the burgrave himself was now present at her death; that she would never rest in her grave, but live and walk, though the burgrave had her executed, and that, as she was before him now at her last hour, she would appear to him at his last hour.

After uttering these words, she put her head calmly on the block. The burgrave then had her buried at the convent of Himmelskron, and, by virtue of an old treaty, the Burgraves of Nuremberg now succeeded to the fiefs of the Counts of Orlamunde, whose line had become extinct. The Plassenburg, with Baireuth and Burgundy, and all the possessions of the Counts of Orlamunde, therefore passed into the hands of Burgrave Albert the Handsome. He did not enjoy the inheritance a long time, for, a few years afterward, shortly after he had married the beautiful Countess Beatrice of Hainault, he died very suddenly. His wife was awakened by a loud cry he uttered. He then exclaimed, 'Cunigunda, do you come already to take me away? Woe to me! Woe to me!' All became still; the countess called for the servants and a light. They rushed into the room with torches. Burgrave Albert the Handsome lay in his bed dead. That, your majesty, is the history of the White Lady of Baireuth."

"This lady, then, followed the Hohenzollern from the Plassenburg to Baireuth and Berlin?" asked Napoleon. "For she appears sometimes at Berlin, does she not?"

"At Berlin, and all places where members of the house of Hohenzollern, the descendants of the Burgraves of Nuremberg, are about to die."

"Oh, the dear lady, then, appears only to the family of the Hohenzollern," exclaimed Napoleon, smiling. "Is it not so?"

"No, your majesty, at times she appears also to others," said Schluter; "she walks about the palace, and if there is any one in her way whom she dislikes, she tells them so, and angrily orders him away. She forgets no insult heaped upon her house, and she is terrible in her wrath."

"I have heard of it," exclaimed the emperor, gloomily. "My generals complained vehemently of the annoyances they had suffered here in 1806, owing to the movements of this lady. You were here at that time, were you not?"

"I was, sire, and so I was when General d'Espagne, in 1809, established his headquarters at this palace."

"Ah, I remember," said Napoleon to himself. "Duroc told me the horrible story at that time. Tell me what was it that befell General d'Espagne here?"

"Sire, the general had arrived late at night, and, being weary, had immediately retired. In the night terrible cries were heard in his room. The orderlies hastened into it; the

general's bed, which, when he retired for the night stood at the wall, was now in the middle of the room; it was upset, and, having fainted, he lay under it. He was placed on a couch, and a doctor sent for, who bled him, and, when he awoke, gave him sedative powders. The general declared that the White Lady had appeared to him, and tried to kill him. While struggling with her, his bed was upset, and, when about to succumb, he uttered loud cries for assistance. He described all the particulars of the countenance, form, and dress of the apparition, and, at his express request, I had to conduct him to her protrait. As soon as he saw it, he turned pale, and almost sank to the floor, muttering, 'It is she! She looked exactly like that when she appeared to me! Her apparition, doubtless, indicated my impending death!' His officers tried to dissuade him from this belief, but he adhered to his conviction, and left the palace that very night in order to establish his headquarters at the 'Fantaisie,' the king's little villa near the city. On the following morning General d'Espagne sent a large detachment of soldiers to this palace; they had to open the floor under the direction of their officers, and take down the wall-paper, in order to see whether there were any secret trap-doors or hidden entrances.* But they found nothing, for the White Lady needs no theatrical apparatus; she goes where she pleases, and walls and locked doors open to her. General d'Espagne, however, was unable to overcome his horror. He left Baireuth on the following day, and when he rode out of the gate he said, 'I heard my own death-knell here at Baireuth. I shall soon die!'

"And he really died shortly after, for he was killed at the battle of Aspen," † said Napoleon to himself, staring gloomily into the fire. A pause ensued; suddenly the emperor rose. "It is all right," he said. "Go! Your story of the White Lady was quite entertaining. I hope she will keep quiet now. Go!—And you, too, Roustan! I will afterward call you!" Long after the two had withdrawn, the emperor walked slowly up and down the room. He stood at length in front of the fireplace, and stared moodily into the blazing flames. His face was pale and gloomy. "Foolish stories, which no man of sense can believe! but which, nevertheless, are fulfilled now and then," he added, in a lower voice. "Was it not predicted to Josephine that she would become an empress; and

* Vide Minutoii, "The White Lady," p. 17.

† Ibid., p. 17.

that not death, but a woman, would hurl her from the throne? The prophecy was fulfilled! Poor Josephine! I had to desert you, and, at your lonely palace of Malmaison, you are perhaps praying for me at this hour, because you know I am about to brave new dangers. Poor Josephine!—you were my good angel, and, since you are no longer at my side—no matter!" the emperor interrupted himself; "I will retire to rest." He advanced several steps toward the door leading into his bedroom, where Roustan and Constant were waiting for him, but stopping said, "No, I will first arrange my plans, and fight my decisive battles with the Emperor Alexander." He returned with rapid steps to the table covered with maps, and resumed his seat in the easy-chair. The tapers were burning dimly; the flames in the fireplace flickered, shedding a dark-red lustre on the marble face of the emperor, who, bending over the map, sat motionless. Perhaps it was the heat, or the profound silence, that lulled him to sleep. His head fell back into the chair, and his eyes closed. The emperor slept, but his sleep was not calm, and his features, which when awake were so firm and motionless, were restless, and expressive of various emotions. Once he exclaimed in a tender voice, "My father! Do you at last come to me? Oh, welcome, father!" And a joyous expression overspread the countenance of the sleeper; but it soon faded away, and he appeared angry, and his lips quivered. "No, no," he said, with a faltering tongue, impeded by sleep, "no, father, you are mistaken! my luck does not resemble the changing seasons; I am not yet in autumn, when the fruits drop from the trees and winter is at hand." He paused again, and his face assumed the expression of an attentive listener. "What!" he then exclaimed in a loud voice, "you say my family will leave me, and betray me in adversity? No, that is impossible, I have lavished kindnesses on them, I—" He paused, and seemed to listen again. "Ah," he exclaimed, after a short interval, starting violently, "that is too much! All Europe is unable to overthrow me. My name is more powerful than Fate!"

Awakened, perhaps, by the loud sound of his own voice, he opened his eyes and looked around uneasily. "Ah," he said, putting his hand on his moist forehead, "what a terrible dream it was! My father stood before me, and predicted what would befall me. He prophesied my ruin! He cautioned me against my relatives, and the ingratitude of my

marshals!* It is the second time that this is predicted to me, and just as I now saw and heard my father in my dream, the old sorceress spoke to me by the pyramids of Egypt." And the emperor, absorbed in his reflections, muttered in a hollow voice: "You will have two wives," said the Egyptian sorceress to me; 'your first wife you will unjustly desert. Your second wife will bear you a son, but your misfortunes will nevertheless begin with her. You will soon cease to be prosperous and powerful. All your hopes will be disappointed; you will be forcibly expelled, and cast upon a foreign soil, hemmed in by mountains and the sky. Beware of your relatives! Your own blood will revolt against you!' † Nonsense," exclaimed the emperor, quickly raising his head; "all this is folly. The palace, with its weird traditions, has infected me, and I scent ghosts in the air, and transform my dreams into prophecies. I will retire!"

For the second time he approached the door of the bedroom, but suddenly recoiled and stood with dilated eyes. In front of it appeared a tall female figure, her arms spread out before the door, as if she wished to prevent the emperor from passing out. A long white dress covered her slender form, a black veil concealed her bosom and her erect head; but behind the transparent tissue of the veil was a pale, beautiful face, the eyes of which were flashing like swords' points. Breathless with horror, he fixed his eyes steadfastly on the apparition, that approached him now with uplifted arms. Trembling in spite of himself, he drew back, and, putting his hand on the back of the easy-chair, gazed searchingly at the approaching figure.

"You dare set your foot into the house of the Hohenzollerns?" asked the spectre in a hollow, menacing voice. "You come hither to disturb the repose of the dead? Flee, audacious man—flee, for destruction is pursuing you; it will seize and destroy you! Your last hour has come! Prepare to stand before your Judge!"

"Ay, you will kill me, then, beautiful lady?" asked Napoleon, sneeringly. "You will revenge the defeats I have inflicted on the descendants of Burgrave Albert the Handsome, on the battle-fields of Jena, Eylau, and Friedland? In truth, I should have thought that beautiful Cunigunda of Orlamunde would rather welcome me as a friend, for was it not I who avenged her on the faithless house of Hohenzollern?"

* "Le Normand," vol. ii., p. 421.

† This prophecy is historical.—Vide "Le Normand," vol. ii., p. 487.



THE WHITE LADY APPEARS TO NAPOLEON.

"You try to mock me," said the spectre, "for your heart is filled with doubt, and your soul with pride. But beware, Bonaparte—beware, I tell you for the last time—your hour has come, and every step you advance is a step toward your ruin. Turn back, Bonaparte, if you intend to be saved, for ruin awaits you on the battle-fields of Russia! Turn back, for the souls of your victims cry to God for vengeance, and demand your blood for theirs—your punishment for the ruthlessly destroyed happiness of whole nations! Bonaparte, escape from the soil of Germany, and dare no longer to set foot upon it, for disgraceful defeats are in store for you! Return to France, and endeavor to conciliate those who are cursing you as a perjurer and renegade!"

"Who are they who dare call me a perjurer and renegade?" asked Napoleon, hastily.

"Who are they?" repeated the spectre, advancing a step toward the emperor and fixing her menacing eyes upon him. "The men to whom you once vowed eternal fidelity, and whom you called your brethren—Philadelphians!"

The emperor started in terror, and his cheeks turned livid. His features, which had hitherto had a sneering, scornful air, were now gloomy, and he stared with an expression of undisguised fear at the lady who stood before him in an imposing attitude, with her arm lifted in a menacing manner.

"The Philadelphians?" asked Napoleon, timidly. "I do not know them."

"You do!" said the spectre, solemnly. "You do know that the invisible ones are watching you, and will punish you because you have broken your oath!"

"I know of no oath!"

"Woe to you if you have forgotten it. I will repeat it to you! It was in 1789, at the forest of Fontainebleau, that you appeared at the meeting of the brethren and requested to be initiated. The Philadelphians admitted you into their league and received your oath. Shall I repeat this oath to you?"

"Do so if you can!"

"You swore that never again should a freeman obey kings, and that death to tyrants under all titles and in all governments is justifiable."

"That was the formality of the oath of every club and secret society at that time," exclaimed Napoleon, contemptuously.

"But the Philadelphians demanded still another written oath of you. It read as follows: 'I consent that my life be