

liberation soon strike! We have our hands on our swords, and wait for Germany to call us."

"We are ready, and wait for our country to call us," they said, shaking hands with determined eyes and smiling lips.

"And now, if the gentlemen have no objection, I will adjourn the conference," said Count Munster, after a pause. "We well know each other, and what we have to do. Here is the cipher in which we may write to each other whenever important communications are to be made. Justus Gruner will see to it that his agents will promptly forward the letters to us."

"I will," said Justus Gruner, "and as long as I am not in prison, or dead, you may be sure that your letters will not fall into the hands of enemies or traitors."*

"And now let us go. God save us and Germany!"

CHAPTER IX.

GEBHARD LEBERECHT BLUCHER.

It was a cold and unpleasant morning in December. The dreary sky hung like a pall over the oppressed world. How beautiful and fragrant had been the summer park of the estate of Kunzendorf! now it was bereft of its flowers, and the cold gray trees were moaning in the winter blasts. How bright had been this large room on the lower floor of the mansion of Kunzendorf, when the summer morning flung its beams into the windows, while a merry company were chatting and laughing there! But, on this day, no guests were assembled in it. It contained but two persons, an old gentleman and lady. The gentleman was sitting at the window and looking out mournfully into the cold; he seemed to count the snow-flakes slowly falling. A large military cloak enveloped his tall, powerful form; his right leg, encased in a heavy cavalry-boot, rested on a cushion; his head was leaning against the high back of the easy-chair on which he sat. His bearing and appearance indicated suffering, age, and disease; he who did not look at his countenance could not but believe that he was in

* The predictions and apprehensions of Count Nugent were fulfilled but too soon. Gruner went as far as Prague, but there he was arrested in the last days of October, at the special request of the Prussian police, deprived of his papers and his funds, and sent to an Austrian fortress. The Emperor of Russia succeeded only nine months afterward in obtaining his release.—Vide Pertz's "Life of Baron von Stein," vol. iii., p. 181.

the presence of a sick and decrepit old man; but when his face turned to the beholder, with its large, fiery blue eyes, high and scarcely-furrowed brow, Roman nose, and florid complexion, he thought he saw the head of a man of about fifty years. It is true, the hair which covered his temples in a few thin tufts was snow-white, and so was the mustache which shaded his mouth and hung down on both sides of it, imparting a vigorous and martial expression to the whole face, and contrasting with his bronzed cheeks and flashing eyes.

Opposite him, in the niche of the other window, sat a lady in a plain, yet elegant toilet. Small brown ringlets, threaded here and there with white, peeped forth from the lace cap, trimmed with blue ribbons, and a gray silk dress, reaching to the neck, enveloped her slender and graceful form. Her countenance, which still showed traces of former beauty, was bent over her embroidery, and her white, tapering fingers, adorned with many rings, busily plied the needle.

The old gentleman blew dense clouds of smoke from his long clay pipe, and nothing broke the silence save the parrot (in a large gilded cage on a marble pedestal in the third window-niche), uttering from time to time a loud scream, or exclaiming in a sharp voice, "Good-morning!" The ticking of the bronze clock on the mantel-piece at the other end of the room could be distinctly heard. Suddenly the old gentleman struck the window-board so violently with his right hand that the panes rattled, the lady gave a start, and the parrot screeched. "Well, now it is all right," he exclaimed savagely,— "it snows so thickly that nothing can be seen at a distance of twenty yards. The roads will be blocked up again, and no one will come to us from Neisse to-day. We shall be left alone, and the time will hang as heavily with us as with a pug-dog in a bandbox. But," he exclaimed, jumping up so hastily that his long clay pipe broke on his knee and fell in small pieces on the floor, "it is all right. If the guests from Neisse do not come to me I will go to them." While uttering these words, he fixed his lustrous eyes on the lady, and seemed to wait for a reply from her; but she remained silent, and seemed to ply her needle even more industriously. "Well," he asked at last, hesitatingly, "what do you say to it, Amelia?"

"Nothing at all, Blucher," she replied, without looking at him; "for you did not ask me about it."

"Why, that is an agreeable addition to this horrible

weather, that my wife should pout!" exclaimed Blucher, casting a despairing glance at the sky. He then looked again at his wife. She was still bending over her embroidery and remained silent. He approached, and seizing both her hands with gentle violence, took the embroidery and threw it away. "Why is your attention directed to that old rag, Amelia, instead of looking at me?" he said, with ill-restrained anger. "Wife, you know I am not rude; when with you I am as gentle as a lamb; but you must not pout, Amelia, for that makes me angry. And now speak—tell me honestly—what is it? What have I done to you!"

"Nothing," she said, fixing her dark eyes upon him with a sad expression, "nothing at all!"

"Aha! you do not want to tell me," exclaimed Blucher, looking at her uneasily, "but I know it nevertheless. Yes, I know what ails you, and why you are in bad humor with me. Will you give me a kiss, if I guess what it is?" She nodded, and an almost imperceptible smile played around her finely-formed lips. "Now, listen," he said, drawing her to himself, and putting his hand under her chin. "You are angry because I came home from Neisse so late last night?"

"Last night?" she asked. "I believe it was at five o'clock this morning."

"Yes, I promised you to be back at five o'clock in the afternoon, because the doctor said the night air is injurious to me, and would increase my pains. But, you see, Amelia, it would not do. We went to the 'Ressource,' and there I met some old friends—"

"And there we played faro," his wife interrupted him, "and I lost the two hundred louis d'ors with which I desired to buy four new carriage-horses."

"Yes, it is all true," said Blucher, soothingly. "But what matters it? In the first place, I am quite well, which proves what fools the doctors are; they think they know every thing, and, in fact, know nothing. I feel no pain, and yet have inhaled the night air. And as to the two hundred louis d'ors—well, I am almost glad that I lost them, for I amused myself. Do you know who was among the gamblers? Ex-Major von Leesten!"

"Major von Leesten?" asked his wife, wonderingly. "But he never plays—he is so sensible a gentleman, that—"

"That he does not deal cards, you mean?" interrupted Blucher, smiling. "Yes, you see, I am also a sensible man,

but I deal cards sometimes, and, for the rest, to tell you the truth, I seduced Major von Leesten to play last night."

"That was very wrong," said Madame von Blucher, in a tone of gentle reproach. "Leesten is poor; he has a large family—five full-grown daughters, who, of course, will not be married because they have no fortune. And now you seduce the poor man, and he will lose the last penny belonging to his family. For the most terrible consequences of this gambling passion are, that it deprives men of reflection, attachment to their family, and prudence. A man who is addicted to playing cards, loves nothing but his cards; every thing else seems unimportant to him; see it in your case, Blucher, and it makes my heart ache. You do not love me, your time hangs heavy in my presence; the card-table is your only pleasure, and I believe, when the passion seizes you, and you have lost all your money, you would stake the remainder of your property on a card, and your wife to boot!"

Blucher burst into loud laughter. "Why," he exclaimed, "what an odd idea that is! I stake you on a card, you—"

"You suppose that no one would care about winning me?" asked Madame von Blucher, smiling.

"No, I do not think that," replied Blucher, suddenly growing serious. "Why should no one care about winning you? You are still a very pretty and charming little woman; your eyes still flash so irresistibly, your lips are still so red and full, and—"

"And my hair is beautifully gray," she interrupted him, laughing, "and I am so astonishingly young, scarcely fifty years of age!"

"Well, that is not so very old," said Blucher, merrily. "I have read somewhat a story about one Ulysses, who, in times gone by, was a very famous and shrewd captain. He set out to wage war with the barbarians, and his wife, whose name was Penelope, remained at home with his son Telemachus. Ulysses was absent for twenty long years, and when he returned home he found fifty suitors who were all courting his beautiful wife Penelope. Do you see, fifty suitors, one for every year of Penelope's age, for she must have been well-nigh fifty years old when Ulysses returned, and yet she was still beautiful, and men were gallanting about her. Why should not the same thing happen to you, as you are scarcely forty-eight? And who knows whether the wife of Ulysses was as beautiful and good as you? I am sure she was not. For it

seems to me you are the dearest and best little woman, and look precisely as you did twenty years ago, when you were foolish enough to marry that rough old soldier Blucher, who was already fifty years of age."

"Well, that was not so very foolish," said Madame von Blucher, smiling; "on the contrary, it was very well done, and but for those abominable playing-cards, nothing could be better."

"Ah, the shrewd little general has, by an adroit movement, brought us back to the old battle-ground," exclaimed Blucher. "We have arrived again at last night's faro! Now, tell me first of all—did I guess right? Were you not angry with me because I returned late?"

"Yes," said his wife, "that was the reason."

"Hurrah! Just as I thought!" shouted Blucher, jubilantly. "Now, quick, pay me for my correct guess! You know, you were to give me a kiss!—a kiss such as you used to give me twenty years ago!" He encircled his wife with his arms, and pressed a long and tender kiss on her lips.

"Well, are you pacified now?" he then asked. "I see in your eyes that you are, and now, come, I will tell you all that occurred last night. You see the money is gone, and what matters it! Money is destined to be spent; that is what the good Lord gave it to us for, and men made it round that it might roll away more rapidly. If it were to remain, they would have made it square, when the fingers could hold it better. And, then, why should I hold it? We have enough—more than enough; our two daughters are married to rich men; our two sons are provided for; our estate at Kunzendorf will not roll away, for it is not round and brings us lots of money, and I am sure there will be a day when I shall win very large sums. I do not mean at the gaming-table, Amelia, but on the battle-field. I shall reconquer to the king his cities and provinces. I shall take from Bonaparte all that he has stolen from Prussia; I—"

"You intended to tell me what occurred last night," interrupted his wife, who heard him, to her dismay, beginning again the philippic against Napoleon which he had repeated to her at least a hundred times.

"Yes, that is true," said Blucher, breathing deeply, "I wished to tell you about Major von Leesten. At the 'Resource' I met yesterday in the afternoon an old friend of his, who told me how sad and unhappy Leesten was. His eldest

daughter is betrothed to a young country gentleman: the two young folks would like to marry, but they have no money. If the young man had only a thousand dollars, he might rent an estate in this vicinity; but, in order to do so, he must give a thousand dollars security, and he is not possessed of that sum. Leesten's friend told me all this, and also how disheartened Leesten was. He said he had gone to all sorts of usurers, but no one would lend him any thing, because he could not furnish security, for he has nothing but his pension."

"Poor man! And could not his friends collect the amount and give it to him?"

"His friends have not any thing either! Who has any thing? Every one is poor since the accursed French are in the country, and Bonaparte—"

"You forget again your story of Major von Leesten, my friend."

"Oh, yes. His friends have not any thing either, and even if they had, Leesten would not accept presents. No, believe me, Amelia, when the poor are exceedingly proud, they would die of hunger sooner than accept alms at the hands of a good friend, or ask him for a slice of bread and butter. I know all about it, for I was poor, too, and starved when my pay was spent. And Leesten is proud also; alms and presents he would not accept, or if he did, for the sake of his daughter, his heart would burst with grief. That was what his friend told me; I pitied him, and thought I should like to call on the dear major and shake hands with him, that he might feel that I like him, and that he has friends, how poor soever he may be. Well, I went with his friend to the major. He was glad to see us and took pains to be merry, but I saw very well that he was sad; that his laughter was not genuine, and that, as soon as some one else spoke, he grew gloomy. But I did not ask what ailed him; I feigned not to see any thing, and begged him to accompany us and spend a pleasant evening with a few friends. He refused at first to do so, but I succeeded in overcoming his resistance, and I am not sorry by any means that I did, for the poor major grew quite cheerful at last; he forgot his grief, drank some good wine with us,—more, perhaps, than he had drunk for a year, and then played a little faro with us for the first time in his life. Well, we were all in the best spirits, and that was the reason why I remained so long and came home so late. It was Major von Leesten's fault, and now my story is at an end!"

"No, it is not!" exclaimed Amelia. "You have not yet told me every thing, Blucher. You have not told me who won your two hundred louis d'ors for which you intended to purchase four new carriage-horses?"

"Yes, that was curious," said Blucher, composedly, stroking his long white mustache—"that was really curious. Leesten had never before handled a card; he did not know the game, and yet he won from such an old gambler as I am two hundred louis d'ors in the course of a few hours. Leesten won the money that was to pay for the carriage-horses, and you may give him thanks for being compelled to drive for six months longer with our lame old mares."

A sunbeam, as it were, illuminated Amelia's countenance; her eyes shone, and her cheeks were glowing with joy. Quickly putting her hands on Blucher's shoulders, she looked up to him with a smile. "You made him win the money, Gebhard," she said, in a voice tremulous with emotion. Oh, do not shake your head—tell me the truth! You made Leesten win, because you wished to preserve him from the necessity of accepting alms. You made him win, that his daughter might marry."

"Nonsense!" said Blucher, growlingly, "how could I make him win when he did not really win? He would have found it out, and, besides, I would have been a cheat."

"He did not find it out because you made him drink so much wine, and because he knows nothing about the game; and you are no cheat, because you intentionally made him win; on the contrary, you are a noble, magnanimous man whom Heaven must love. Oh, dear, dearest husband, tell me the truth; let me enjoy the happiness that I have guessed right! You did so intentionally, did you not? The cards did not bring so much good luck to Leesten, but Blucher did!"

"Hush! do not say that so loudly," exclaimed Blucher, looking anxiously around; "if any one should hear and repeat it, and Leesten should find out how the thing occurred, the fellow would return the money to me."

"Ah, now you have betrayed yourself—you have confessed that you lost the money intentionally," exclaimed Amelia, jubilantly. "Oh, thanks, thanks, my noble and generous friend!" She took his hands with passionate tenderness, and pressed them to her lips.

"But, Amelia, what are you doing?" said Blucher, withdrawing his hands in confusion. "Why, you are weeping!"

"Oh, they are tears of joy," she said, nodding to him with a blissful smile—"tears which I am weeping for my glorious, dear Blucher!"

"Oh, you are too good," said Blucher, whose face suddenly grew gloomy. "I am nothing but an old, pensioned soldier—a rusty sword flung into a corner. I am an invalid whom they believe to be childish, because he thinks he might still be useful, and the fatherland might need him. But I tell you, Amelia, if I ever should become childish it would be on account of the course pursued toward me; why, I am dismissed from the service; I am refused any thing to do; I am desired to be idle, and the king has given me this accursed estate of Kunzendorf, not as a reward, nor from love, but to get rid of me, and because he is afraid of the French. When he gave it to me last spring, he wrote that I ought to set out for Kunzendorf immediately, and live and remain there, as it behooved every nobleman, in the midst of my peasants. But his real object was to send me into exile; he did not wish me to remain in Berlin!"

"Well, he had to comply with the urgent recommendations of his ministers," said Madame von Blucher, smiling. "You know very well that all the ministers of the king, with the sole exception of Hardenberg, are friends of the French, and think that Prussia would be lost if she should not faithfully stand by France."

"They are traitors when they entertain such infamous sentiments," cried Blucher, wildly stamping with his foot; "they should hang the fellows who are so mean and cowardly as to think that Prussia would be lost if her mortal enemy did not condescend to sustain her. Ah, if the king had listened to me only once, we should have long since driven the French out of the country, and our poor soldiers would not freeze to death in Russia as auxiliaries of Bonaparte. When the danger is greatest, every thing must be risked in order to win every thing, and when a fellow tries to deceive and insult me, I do not consider much whether I had better endure him because may be weaker than he is, but, before he suspects it, I knock him down if I can. You see, that is defending one's life; this is what the learned call philosophy. But, dearest Amelia, there is but one philosophy in life, and it is this: 'He who trusts in God and defends himself bravely will never miserably perish.' Now, the king and his ministers know only one-half of this philosophy, and that is the reason why

the whole thing goes wrong. They mean to trust in God, even though, from their blind trust alone, all Prussia fall to ruins; but as for bravely defending themselves, that is what they do not understand. It is too much like old Blucher's way of doing things, and that is the reason why the learned gentlemen do not like it. Ah! Amelia, when I think of all the wretchedness of Prussia, and that I may have to die without having chastised Bonaparte—without having wrested from him, and flung into his face, the laurels of Jena, Eylau, and Friedland—ah, then I feel like sitting down and crying like a boy. But Heaven cannot be so cruel; it will not let me die before meeting Bonaparte on the field of battle, and avenging all our wrongs upon him. No, I trust I will not die before that—and, after all, I am quite young! Only seventy years of age! My grandfather died in his ninetieth year, and my mother told me often enough that I looked exactly like my grandfather; I shall, therefore, reach my ninetieth year. I have still twenty years to live—twenty years, that is enough—” Just then the door opened, and a footman entered.

“Well, John,” asked Blucher, “what is it? Why do you look so merry, my boy? I suppose you have good news for us, have you not?”

“I have, your excellency,” said the footman. “There is an old man outside, an invalid, attended by a young fellow who, I believe, is his son. The two have come all the way from Pomerania, and want to see General von Blucher. He says he has important news for your excellency.”

“Important news?” asked Blucher. “And he comes from Pomerania? John, I hope it will not be one who wants to tell me the same old story?”

“Your excellency, I believe that is what he comes for,” said John, grinning.

“Amelia,” exclaimed Blucher, bursting into loud laughter, “there is another fellow who wants to tell me that he took me prisoner fifty years since. I believe it is already the seventh rascal who says he was the man.”

“The seventh who wants to get money from you and swindle you,” said Madame von Blucher, smiling.

“No, I believe they do not exactly want to swindle me,” said Blucher, “but I know they like to get a little money, and as they do not want to beg—”

“They come and lie,” interrupted Amelia, smiling. “They

know already that General Blucher gives a few louis d'ors to every one who comes and says, ‘General, it was I who took you prisoner in Mecklenburg in 1760, and brought you to the Prussians. You, therefore, are indebted to me for all your glory and your happiness.’”

“Yes, it is true,” said Blucher, laughing and smoothing his mustache. “That is what all six of them said. But one of them did take me prisoner, for the story is true, and if I turn away one of those who tell me the same thing, why, I might happen to hit precisely the man who took me, and that would be a great shame. Therefore, it is better I imagine a whole squadron had taken me at that time, and give money to every one who comes to me for it. Even though he may not be the man, why, he is at least an old hussar, and I shall never turn an old hussar without a little present from my door.”*

“Well, I see you want to bid welcome to your seventh hero and conqueror,” said Amelia, smiling. “Very well, I will quit the field and retire into my cabinet. Farewell, my friend, and when your hero has taken leave of you, I will await you.” She nodded pleasantly to her husband, and left the room.

“Well, John,” said Blucher, sitting down again on his easy-chair at the window, “now let the men come in. But first fill me a pipe. You must take a new one, for I broke the one I was smoking this morning.”

John hastened to the elegant “pipe-board” which stood beside the fireplace, and took from it an oblong, plain wooden box; opening the lid, he drew a new, long clay pipe from it.

“How many pipes are in it yet?” asked Blucher, hastily. “A good lot, John?”

“No, your excellency, only seven whole pipes, and eight broken ones.”

“You may ride to Neisse to-morrow, and buy a box of pipes. Now, give me one, and let the hussar and his son come in.”

* Blucher's own words.—Vide “Life of Prince Blucher of Wahlstatt, by Varnhagen von Ense,” p. 8.