

CHAPTER X.

RECOLLECTIONS OF MECKLENBURG.

JOHN, the footman, opened the door of the anteroom, and shouted in a loud and solemn voice, "Your excellency, here is Hennemann, the hussar, and his son Christian!"

"Well, come in!" said Blucher, good-naturedly, puffing a cloud of smoke from his pipe.

An old man with silver-white hair, his bent form clad in the old and faded uniform of a hussar, and holding his old-fashioned shako in his hand, entered the room. He was followed by a young man, wearing the costume of a North-German farmer, his heavy yellow hair combed backward and fastened with a large round comb; his full, vigorous form dressed in a long blue cloth coat, reaching down almost to his feet, and lined with white flannel; under it he wore trousers of dark-green velvet that descended only to the knees, and joined there the blue-and-red stockings in which his legs were encased; his feet were armed with thick shoes, adorned with buckles, while their soles bristled with large nails.

"Where do you come from?" asked Blucher, fixing his eyes with a kind expression on the two men.

"From Rostock, your excellency," said the old man, making a respectful obeisance.

"From Rostock?" asked Blucher, joyously. "Why, that is my native city."

"I know that very well, general," said the old hussar, who vainly tried to hide his Low-German accent. "All Rostock knows it, too, and every child there boasts of Blucher being our countryman."

"Well," said Blucher, smiling, "then you come from Rostock. Do you live there?"

"Not exactly in Rostock, your excellency. My daughter Frederica is married to a tailor in Rostock, and I was with her for four weeks. I myself live at Polchow, a nobleman's estate four miles from Rostock; I am there at the house of my eldest son."

"Is that your eldest son?" asked Blucher, pointing with his clay pipe at the young man, who stood by the side of his aged father, and was turning his hat in his hand in an embarrassed manner.

"No, sir, he is my youngest son, and it is just for his sake that I have come to you. Christian was a laborer in the service of our nobleman at Polchow, and he desired to marry a girl with whom he had fallen in love. But the nobleman would not permit it; he said Christian should wait some ten years until there was a house vacant in the village, and some of the old peasants had died. This drove him to despair; he wanted to commit suicide, and said he would die rather than be a day laborer on an estate in Mecklenburg, which is no better than being the nobleman's slave."

"Yes," cried Christian, indignantly, "that is true, general. A day laborer on an estate in Mecklenburg is a slave, that is all. The nobleman owns him. If he wants to do so, he may disable him, nay, he may kill him. Such a laborer has no rights, no will, no property, no home, no country; he is not allowed to live anywhere but in his village; he cannot settle in any other place, and is not permitted to marry unless the nobleman who owns the village gives his consent, nor can he ever be any thing else than what his father and grandfather were, that is to say, the nobleman's laborers. And I do not wish to be such and do nothing else than putting the horses to the plough. I want to marry Frederica, and become a free man, and if that cannot be I will commit suicide."

"Ahem! he has young blood," said Blucher, well pleased and smiling, "fresh Mecklenburgian blood. I like that! But you must not abuse Mecklenburg, Christian; I love Mecklenburg, because it is my native country."

"It is a good country for noblemen who have money," said Christian, "but for day laborers who have none it is a poor country. And that was the reason why I said to the old man, 'Vatting,* shall I commit suicide or run away and enlist.'"

"And I then said, 'Well, my son, in that case it will be better for you to enlist,'" added the old man, "'and, moreover, you shall enlist under a good general. I will show you that my life is yet good for something; I will do for your sake what I have purposed to do all my lifetime: I will go to General Blucher, tell him whom I am, and ask him to reward my boy for what I did for him.'"

Blucher looked with a good-natured smile at the poor old man who stood before him in the faded and threadbare uniform of a private soldier.

* "Vatting," Low-German for "papa."

"Well, my old friend," he said, "what have you done for me, then?"

The old man raised his head, and a solemn expression overspread his bronzed and furrowed countenance. "General," he said, gravely, "it was I who took you prisoner in Mecklenburg in 1760, and to me, therefore, you are indebted for all your glory and happiness."

Blucher covered his face with his hands, that the old man might not see his smile. "It is just as Amelia told me it would be," he said to himself. He then added aloud: "Well, tell me the story, that I may see whether it was really you who took me prisoner."

"It is a long story," said the old man, sighing, "and if I am to tell it, I must ask a favor of your excellency."

"Well, what is it? Speak, my old friend," said Blucher, puffing a cloud from his pipe, and satisfied that the old hussar would apply to him for money.

"I must beg leave to sit down, general," said the old man, timidly. "We have come on foot all the way from Rostock, and it is only fifteen minutes since we reached this village. We took only time enough at the tavern to change our dress; I put on my uniform, and Christian put on his Sunday coat. I am eighty years old, general, and my legs are not as strong as they used to be."

"Eighty years old!" exclaimed Blucher, jumping up, "eighty years old, and you have come on foot all the way from Rostock! Why, that is impossible! Christian, tell me, that cannot be true!"

"Yes, general, it is true. We have been on the way for three weeks past, for the old man cannot walk very fast, and we had not money enough to ride. We had to be thankful for having enough to pay for our beds at the taverns. And my father is more than eighty years of age! We have brought his certificate of birth with us."

"Eighty years of age, and he came on foot all the way from Rostock, and I allow the old man to stand and offer him no chair!" exclaimed Blucher,—"I do not ask whether he is hungry and thirsty! John! John!" And Blucher rushed to the bell-rope and rang the bell so violently that John entered the room in great excitement. "John, quick!" shouted Blucher. "Quick, a bottle of wine, two glasses, and bread, butter, and ham; and tell them in the kitchen to prepare a good dinner for these men, and have a room with two beds

made ready for them in the adjoining house. Quick, John! In five minutes the wine and the other things must be here! Run!"

John hastened out of the room, and Blucher approached the old man, who looked on, speechless and deeply moved by the kind zeal the general had displayed in his behalf.

"Come, my dear friend," said Blucher, kindly, taking him by the hand and conducting him across the room to his favorite seat at the window. "There, sit down on my easy-chair and rest."

"No, general, no; that would be disrespectful!"

"Fiddlesticks!" replied Blucher; "an octogenarian is entitled to more respect than a general's epaulets are. Now do not refuse, but sit down!" And with his vigorous arms he pressed him into the easy-chair. He then quietly took his clay pipe from the window, and sat down on a cane chair opposite the old hussar. "And now tell me the story of my arrest as a prisoner. I promise you that I will believe it all."

"General, you may believe nothing but what is true," replied the old man, solemnly.

Blucher nodded. "Commence," he said, "but no—wait a while! There is John with the wine and the bread and butter. Now eat and drink first."

"I cannot eat, for I am not hungry. But, if the general will permit me, I will drink a glass of wine."

"Come, John, two glasses!—fill them to the brim! And now, my friend, let us drink. Here's to our native country!" Blucher filled his glass with claret; his eyes flashed, and his face kindled with the fire of youth, when he, the young septuagenarian, touched with his glass that of the feeble octogenarian. "Hurrah, my old countryman," he shouted, jubilantly, "long live Mecklenburg! long live Rostock and the shore of the Baltic! Now empty your glass, my friend, and you, John, fill it again, and then put the wine and the bread and butter on the table beside the fireplace, that Christian may help himself. Eat and drink, Christian, but do not stir, or say a word, for we two old ones have to speak with each other. Now tell me the story, my old friend!"

"Well," said the old man, putting down his empty glass, "I had run away from my parents because I was just in the same difficulty as Christian: I did not wish to remain a day laborer. I also wanted to marry, and the nobleman would not let me. Well, I ran away, and enlisted in Old Fritz's

army, in Colonel Belling's regiment of hussars. It was in 1760; we had a great deal to do at that time; we were every day skirmishing with the Swedes, for we were stationed in Mecklenburg, and the Swedes were so dreadfully bold as to make raids throughout Brandenburg and Mecklenburg. One day, I believe it was in August, 1760, just when we, Belling's hussars, occupied the towpath close to Friedland in Mecklenburg, another detachment of Swedish hussars approached to harass us. They were headed by a little ensign—a handsome young lad, scarcely twenty years of age, a very impertinent baby! And this young rascal rode closely to the old hussars, and commenced to crow in his sweet little voice, abusing us, and told us at last, if we were courageous enough, to come on; he had not had his breakfast, he said, and would like to swallow about a dozen of Belling's hussars. Well, the other hussars rejoiced in the pluck of the young fellow, and a handsome lad he was, with clear blue eyes and red cheeks. But his saucy taunts irritated me, and when the little ensign continued laughing, and telling us we were cowards, I became very angry, galloped up to him and shouted: 'Now, you little imp, I will kill you!'

"Sure enough," exclaimed Blucher, in surprise, "that was what the hussar shouted. It seems to me as though I hear it still sounding in my ears. But none of the other hussars told me this; it is new, and it is true. Hennemann, could it be possible that you should really be the man who took me prisoner at that time?"

"Listen to the remainder of my story, general, and you will soon find out whether it was I or not. I galloped up to him, and while the Prussians and Swedes were fighting, I fixed my eyes on my merry little ensign; when I was quite close to him, I shot down his horse. The ensign was unable then to offer much resistance, and, besides, I was a very strong, active man. I took him by the collar and put him on my horse in front of me."

"And the ensign submitted to that without defending himself?" asked Blucher, angrily.

"By no means! On the contrary, he was as red in the face as a crawfish, and resisting struck me. I held his arms fast, but he disengaged himself with so violent a jerk that the yellow facings of his right sleeve remained in my hand."

"That is true," exclaimed Blucher.

"Yes, it is true," said the old man, calmly; "but it is

true also that I got hold again of the ensign and took him to Colonel von Belling, to whom I stated that I had captured the handsome lad. The colonel liked his face and courageous bearing; he kept the Swedish ensign at his headquarters, where he appointed him cornet the next day, and made the little Ensign Blucher apply to the Swedes for permission to quit their service."

"And I got my discharge," exclaimed Blucher, quite absorbed in his reminiscences, "and became a Prussian soldier. Good, brave Colonel Belling bought me the necessary equipment, and appointed me his aide-de-camp and lieutenant. The Lord have mercy on his dear soul! Belling was an excellent man, and I am indebted to him for all I am."

"No, general," said Hennemann, "it is to me that you are indebted, for if I had not taken you prisoner at that time—"

"Sure enough," exclaimed Blucher, laughing, "if you had not taken me prisoner, I should now be a poor old pensioned Swedish veteran. But you certainly took me prisoner, I really believe you did!"

"I have the proofs that I did," said the old man solemnly. "Christian!"

"Here I am, vatting," said Christian, rising. "What do you want?"

"Give me the memorandum-book with the papers."

Christian drew from his blue coat a red morocco memorandum-book and handed it to his father. "Here, vatting," he said, "every thing is in it, the certificate of birth, the enlistment paper, the discharge, and the other thing."

"I just want to get the other thing," said the old man, opening the memorandum-book, "and here it is!" He took out a yellow piece of cloth and handed it to Blucher.

"It is a piece of my sleeve!" exclaimed Blucher, joyously, holding up the piece of cloth. "Yes, Hennemann, it was really you who took me prisoner, and I am indebted to you for being a Prussian general to-day! And I promise you that I will now pay you a good ransom. Give me your hand, old fellow; we ought to remain near each other. Fifty-two years since you took me prisoner, but now I take you prisoner in turn, and you must remain with me; you shall live at ease, and at times in the evening you must tell me of Mecklenburg, and how it looks there, and of Rostock, and—well, and when you are in good spirits, you must sing to me a Low-German song!"

"Mercy!" exclaimed the old man, in dismay; "I cannot sing, general. I am eighty years old, and old age has dried up the fountain of my song."

"Sure enough, you are eighty years old," said Blucher, puffing his pipe, "and at that age few persons are able to sing. But I should really like to hear again a merry native song. I have not heard one for fifty years, for here, you see, Hennemann, people are so stupid and ignorant as not even to understand Low-German."

"I believe that," said the old man, gravely, "and it is not so easy to understand—one must be a native of Mecklenburg to understand it."

"It is a pity that you cannot sing," said Blucher, sighing.

"But, perhaps Christian can," said old Hennemann.

"Tell me, Christian, can you sing?"

"Yes, vatting," replied Christian, clearing his throat.

"'Vatting!'" exclaimed Blucher. "What does that mean?"

"Well, it means that he loves his father, and therefore calls him, in good Mecklenburg style, 'vatting.'"

"Sure enough, I remember now," exclaimed Blucher.

"Vatting! mutting!* Yes, yes; I have often used these words, 'mutting—my mutting!' Ah, it seems to me as though I behold the beautiful blue eyes of my mother when she looked at me so mildly and lovingly and said, 'You are a wild, reckless boy, Gebhard; I am afraid you will come to grief!' Then I used to beg her, 'My mutting, my mutting! I will no longer be a bad boy! I will not be naughty! Do not be angry any more, my mutting!' And she always forgave me, and interceded for me with my father, whenever he was incensed against me, and scolded me, because, instead of studying my books and going to school, I was always loitering about the fields or hunting in the woods. At last, when I was fourteen years old, and was still an incorrigible scapegrace, they sent me to the island of Rügen, to my sister, who was married to Baron von Krackwitz. But I did not stay there very long. The Swedes came to the island, and I could not withstand the desire to become a soldier; therefore, I ran away from the island and enlisted in the Swedish army. Well, I had to do so, I could not help it, for it was in my nature. Up to that time I was like a fish on dry land, moving his tail in every direction without crushing a fly; when I got into the

* "Mutting," mamma.

water it was all right. If I had been kept much longer out, I would have died very soon.* When I was now in the water—that is to say, when I was a soldier, I lost my mother; I never saw her again, and know only that she wept a great deal for me. And I never was able to beg her to forgive me, and tell her, 'Do not be angry, my dear mutting!' I was a dashing young soldier, and she was weeping for me at Rostock, for she believed I would come to grief. Well, I was first lieutenant in some Prussian fortress when they wrote to me that my mother was dead. Yes, she had died and I was not at her bedside; I was never able to say to her for the last time, 'Forgive me, my mutting!' But now I say so from the bottom of my heart." While uttering these words, Blucher raised his head and fixed his large eyes with a touching and childlike expression on the wintry sky."

Old Hennemann devoutly clasped his hands, and tears ran slowly down his furrowed cheeks. Christian stood at the door, and dried his eyes with his coat-sleeve.

"Thunder and lightning," suddenly exclaimed Blucher, "how foolish I am! That is the consequence of being absorbed in one's recollections. While talking about Mecklenburg I had really forgotten that I am an old boy of seventy years, and thought I was still the naughty young rascal who longed to ask his mutting to forgive him! Well, Christian, now sing us a Low-German song."

"I know but one song," said Christian, hesitatingly. "It is the spinning-song which my Frederica sang to me in the spinning-room."

"Well, sing your spinning-song," said Blucher, looking at his pipe, which was going out.

Christian cleared his throat, and sang:

Spinn doch, spinn doch, min lütt lewes Döchtig,
Ick schenk Di ock'n poor hübsche Schoh!
Ach Gott, min lewes, lewes Mutting,
Wat helpen mi de hübschen Schoh!
Kann danzen nich, un kann nich spinnen,
Denn alle mine teigen Finger,
De dohn mi so weh,
De dohn mi so weh!

Spinn doch, spinn doch, min lütt, lewes Döchtig,
Ick schenk Di ock'n schön Stück Geld.
Ach Gott, min lewes, lewes Mutting,
Ick wull, ick wihr man ut de Welt,
Kann danzen nich, un kann nich spinnen,
Denn alle mine teigen Finger,
De dohn mi so weh,
De dohn mi so weh!

* Blucher's own words.

Spinn doch, spinn doch, min lütt, lewes Döchtling,
 Ick schenk Di ock'n hübschen Mann!
 Ach ja, min lewes, lewes Mutting,
 Schenk min lewsten, besten Mann.
 Kann danzen nu, un kann ock spinnen,
 Denn alle mine teigen Finger,
 De dohn nich mihr weh,
 De dohn nich mihr weh!*

"A very pretty song," said Blucher, kindly. "And I believe I heard the girls sing it when I was a boy. Thank you, Christian, you have sung it very well. But, tell me now, old Hennemann, what is to become of Christian? You yourself shall remain here at Kunzendorf, and I will see to it that you are well provided for. But what about Christian?"

"He is anxious to enlist, general," said Hennemann, timidly, "and that is the reason why I brought him to your excellency. I wanted to request you to take charge of him, and make out of him as good a soldier as you are yourself."

Blucher smiled. "I have been successful, he said, "but those were good days for soldiers. Now, however, the times are very unfavorable; the Prussian soldier has nothing to do, and must quietly look on while the French are playing the mischief in Prussia."

"No, general," said Hennemann, "it seems to me the Prussian soldier has a great deal to do."

"Well, what do you think he has to do?" asked Blucher.

*Spin, spin, my little daughter, dear!
 A pretty pair of shoes for thee!—
 Alas, my mother! let me hear
 What use are pretty shoes to me!
 I cannot dance—I cannot spin:
 And why these promised shoes to win!
 O mother mine, I will not take
 Thy kindly gift. My fingers ache!

Spin, spin, my little daughter dear!
 And a bright silver-piece is thine!—
 Alas, my mother's loving care
 Makes not this shining money mine!
 I cannot dance—I cannot spin;
 What use such wages thus to win?
 O mother dear! I cannot take
 This silver, for my fingers ache.

Spin, spin, my little daughter dear!
 For thee a handsome husband waits.—
 Oh, then, my mother, have no fear;
 My heart this work no longer hates,
 Now can I dance, and also spin,
 A handsome husband thus to win.
 Thy best reward I gladly take!
 No more—no more, my fingers ache.

"To expel the French from Prussia, that is what he has to do," said the old man, raising his voice.

"Yes," said Blucher, smiling, "if that could be done, I should like to be counted in."

"It can be done, general; every honest man says so, and it ought to be, for the French are behaving too shamefully. They must be expelled from Germany. Well, then, my Christian wishes to assist you in doing so; he wishes to become a soldier, and help you to drive out the French."

"Alas, he must apply to some one else if he wishes to do that," said Blucher, mournfully. "I cannot help him, for they have pensioned me. I have no regiments. I—but, thunder and lightning! what is the matter with my pipe to-day? The thing will not burn." And he put his little finger into the bowl, and tried to smoke again.

"The pipe does not draw well, because it was not skilfully filled," said Christian. "I know it was badly filled."

"Ay?" asked Blucher. "What do you know? John has been filling my pipes for four years past."

"John has done it very poorly," said Christian, composedly. "To fill such a clay pipe is an art with which a good many are not familiar, and when it is smoked for the first time it does not burn very well. It ought first to be smoked by some one, and John ought to have done so yesterday if the general wished to use his pipe to-day."

"Why, he knows something about a clay pipe," exclaimed Blucher, "and he is right; it always tastes better on the second day than on the first."

"That is the reason why the second day always ought to be the first for General Blucher," said Christian.

"He is right," exclaimed Blucher, laughing, "it would surely be better if the second were always the first day. Well, I know now what is to be made of Christian; he is to become my pipe-master."

"Pipe-master?" asked old Hennemann and Christian at the same time. "Pipe-master, what is that?"

"That is a man who keeps my pipes in good order," said Blucher, with a ludicrously grave air—"a man who makes the second my first day—who smokes my pipes first—puts them back into the box at night, preserves the broken ones, and fills them, however short they may be. He who does not prize a short pipe, does not deserve to have a long one. A good pipe and good tobacco are things of the highest impor-

tance in life. Ah! if, in 1807, at Lübeck, I had had powder for the guns and tobacco for my men, I would have raised such clouds that the French could not have stood.* Well, Christian, you shall therefore become my pipe-master, and I hope you will faithfully perform the duties of your office."

"I shall certainly take pains to do so," said Christian, "and you may depend on it, general, that I shall preserve the broken, short pipes; I will not throw them away before it is necessary. But suppose there should be war, general, and you should take the field, what would become of me in that case?"

"Well, in that case you will accompany me," said Blucher. "What should I do in the field if I could not get a good pipe of tobacco all the time? Without that I am of no account.† But it is necessary to do good service for Prussia, and hence I need, above all, a good pipe of tobacco in the field. Well, then, tell me now plainly, will you accept the office I offer you in peace and in war, Christian?"

"Yes, general," said Christian, solemnly. "And I swear that General Blucher shall never lack a well-lighted pipe, even though I fetch a match from the French gunners to kindle it."

"That is right, Christian; you are in my service now, and may at once enter upon the duties of your office. You, Hennemann, stay here and do me the favor of living as long and being as merry as possible. Now, pipe-master, ring the bell!"

The new pipe-master rang the bell, and John entered the room.

"John!" said Blucher, "I owe a reparation of honor to this aged hussar. It was he who took me prisoner in 1760. He brought me the proof of it—the yellow facing of the sleeve here. Take it and fasten it to the old uniform of Blucher, the Swedish ensign, which I have always preserved; it belongs to it. You see that hussar Hennemann is an honest man, and that I owe him the ransom. He will stay here, and have nothing to do but eat and drink well, sit in the sun, and, in the evening, when it affords him pleasure, tell you stories of the Seven Years' War, in which he participated. If other hussars come and tell you they took me prisoner, you know it

* Blucher's own words.—Vide "Marshall Forward," a popular biography.
† Blucher's own words.

is not true, and need not admit them. But you must not abuse the poor old fellows for that reason, nor tell them that they are swindlers. You will give them something to eat and drink, a bed overnight, and, in the morning, when they set out, a dollar for travelling expenses. Now take the old man and his son to the adjoining building, and tell the inspector to give them a room where they are to live. And then," added Blucher, hesitatingly, and almost in confusion,—“you have too much to do, John; you must have an assistant. It takes you too much time to fill my pipes, and this young man, therefore, will help you. I have appointed Christian Hennemann my pipe-master. Well, do not reply—take the two men to the building, and be good friends—do you hear, good friends!"

John bowed in silence, and made a sign to the two Mecklenburgians to follow him. Blucher gazed after them with keen glances. "Well, I am afraid their friendship will not amount to much," he said, smiling and stroking his beard. "John does not like this pipe-master business, and will show it to Christian as soon as an opportunity offers. I do not care if they do have a good fight. It would be a little diversion, for it is horribly tedious here. Ah, how long is this to last? How long am I to sit here and wait until Prussia and the king call upon me to drive Napoleon out of the country? How long am I to be idle while Bonaparte is gaining one victory after another in Russia? I have not much time to spare for waiting, and—well," he suddenly interrupted, himself, quickly stepping up to the window, "what is that? Is not that a carriage driving into the court-yard?" Yes, it really is, just entering the iron gate, and rolling with great noise across the pavement. "I wonder who that is?" muttered Blucher, casting a piercing glance into the carriage which stopped at this moment in front of the mansion. He uttered a cry of joy, and ran out of the room with the alacrity of a youth.

CHAPTER XI.

GLAD TIDINGS.

"It is he, it is he!" exclaimed General Blucher, rushing out of the front door, and hastening with outstretched arms toward the gentleman, who, wrapped in a Russian fur robe,