

tended for Kleist and York, and then go to the Russian camp in order to deliver these orders to my generals."

"Will your majesty not write also a letter to the Emperor Alexander, begging him to spare your troops, whom Wittgenstein henceforth will consider enemies, and to address a word of consolation and encouragement to the emperor, whose magnanimous heart will bitterly feel this new disappointment?"

"Very well," said the king, after a brief reflection, "I will write such a letter to Alexander, and Natzmer shall himself take it after previously seeing Murat, Wittgenstein, and York."

An hour afterward the king wrote his letters, and Hardenberg drew up the decree removing York from the command of the army. The chancellor of state then left the king's cabinet to repair to the residence of the French ambassador, and inform him of the resolutions of his majesty. The king looked after him long and musingly, and, folding his hands behind him, paced his room. A profound silence reigned around him; the storm of the cold January night swept dense masses of snow against the windows, making them rattle as if spectral hands were tapping at the panes; the wax-tapers on the silver candelabra, standing on the king's desk, had burned low, and their flickering light flashed on the noble portrait of the queen. The king noticed the fitfully illuminated face gazing upon him, as it were, with a quick and repeated greeting; he could not help gently nodding, as if to return the salutation, and then approached the portrait with slow steps.

"Louisa," he said, in a loud, solemn voice, "God has counted your tears, and taken upon Himself the revenge of your wrongs. It was at Piktupöhnen where you first met Napoleon, and where the overbearing man bowed your noble head in the dust. At Piktupöhnen the Queen of Prussia implored the emperor of the French to spare her country, and grant her lenient terms of peace. It was France now that was waiting for Prussia at the same place, asking Prussia for assistance, and Prussia refused it. Where the disgraceful alliance commenced has been seen its bitter end. God is just; He has counted your tears, and He is preparing your revenge. It began at Piktupöhnen."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DIPLOMATIST.

DURING an hour Chancellor von Hardenberg, in the cabinet of the French ambassador, Count St. Marsan, conferred in an animated and grave manner as to Prussia's new position, and the guaranties she offered to France for the sincerity of her alliance. Count St. Marsan felt entirely satisfied, after reading the letter which King Frederick William had written to the King of Naples, and the decree removing York from his command. He cordially shook hands with the chancellor, and assured him that this disagreeable affair would not leave the least vestige of distrust; that his august emperor would also feel entirely satisfied of the sincerity of the king's sentiments.

"And you may add that this will also satisfy the emperor of the sincerity of my sentiments toward him," said Hardenberg, smiling. "I know that Napoleon has unfortunately often distrusted me, and has believed me to be animated with feelings hostile to his greatness. Henceforth, however, his majesty will have to admit that I am one of his most reliable and faithful adherents. It was I who prevailed upon the king to stand by France so firmly and constantly. You are aware of it, and I need not conceal it from you, that King Frederick William loves the Emperor Alexander, and would be happy, if circumstances enabled him, to renew his alliance with his friend Alexander. The Emperor of Russia has already stretched out his hand toward him, and is only waiting for Frederick William to grasp it. York's defection was carefully prepared on the part of Russia; it was to be the impulse which should cause the king to take Alexander's hand. And let me tell you, confidentially, he was not only greatly inclined to do so, but even the enthusiasm of those gentlemen of his suite, who, heretofore, had always been ardent adherents of the Emperor of the French, had cooled down since the disasters of the grand army in Russia, and they believed it to be incumbent on them to advise the king to join Russia. But I—I have obtained a victory over them all, and, by my zeal and eloquence, have succeeded in convincing Frederick William that just now a firm maintenance of the alliance with France is most advantageous both to the honor and welfare of

Prussia. The king saw the force of my arguments, and the consequence was that he rejected the proposals of Russia, and declared in favor of a faithful continuance of the alliance with France, as is proved by this letter to Murat, and this decree, removing York, which I have drawn up, and which is already signed. France may now confidently count on Prussia, for you see we have passed through our ordeal, and have proved faithful."

"Yes, you have," exclaimed Count St. Marsan, "and the reward and acknowledgment due to your fidelity will soon be conferred on you. The emperor knows full well that the magnanimous and disinterested character of your excellency will not permit him to bestow upon you any other rewards and thanks than those of honor and of the heart. As for the latter, please let me return them to you now in the name of the emperor and of France, and perhaps you will authorize me to inform him that your excellency will consider the grand cross of the Legion of Honor as a sufficient acknowledgment."

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Hardenberg, with a face radiant with joy, "you have divined the object of my most secret wishes. You have read my mind, and understood my ambition. There is but one order to wear which is a proud honor, and this order has not as yet decorated my breast."

Count St. Marsan bent closer to the ear of the chancellor. "My noble friend," he said, smiling, and in a low voice, "we shall fasten this order to the breast of the chancellor of state on the day when we sign the marriage-contract of the crown prince and a princess of the house of Napoleon."

"Yes," exclaimed Hardenberg, "let it be so. I accept this condition. I shall not claim, nor deem myself worthy of receiving this longed-for order before the day when the Prussian crown prince will be betrothed to an imperial princess of France. To bring about this joyful event will henceforth be for me an affair of the heart, and, moreover, to such an extent that, if this honor should previously be offered me, I would refuse it, because I first wish to deserve it."

"And does your excellency believe that you will have to wait long?" asked Count St. Marsan. "Do you believe that the day when the betrothal will take place is yet remote?"

"I hope not. The crown prince will be confirmed next month, and after his confirmation it will be time to speak of his marriage. I am satisfied that all will turn out well, and conformably to our wishes, provided—"

"Well?" asked St. Marsan, when Hardenberg suddenly paused. "Pray, your excellency, confide in me, and tell me the whole truth. You may rest assured of my most heart-felt gratitude, my entire discretion, and the most unreserved confidence on my part. I beseech you, therefore, to speak out."

"Well, then," said Hardenberg, in a low voice, and with an air of entire sincerity, "I was going to say that every thing would turn out conformably to your wishes, provided the king do not listen to the incessant secret entreaties and insinuations of Russia, and the new Russian party at our court. So long as I remain here, I am afraid of nothing; but if those gentlemen should succeed in persuading the king to leave Berlin, and repair to a city where he would be closer to Russia, then I would really be afraid."

"And your excellency believes that the king might entertain such an intention?" asked Count St. Marsan, in breathless suspense.

Hardenberg shrugged his shoulders. "I do not want to believe it," he said, "but I am almost afraid of it. However, both you and I will be vigilant. But listen, your excellency, the clock is striking two! Two o'clock in the morning! Both of us have yet to send off couriers, and then we may well be allowed to seek an hour's sleep for our exhausted bodies. Good-night, then, my dear count and ally!—good-night! I hasten to the king to tell him that France will be content with the satisfaction which we offer her, and thereby I shall procure him a quiet and peaceful slumber for the present night."

"Ah, you are in truth a magician, your excellency!" said St. Marsan, gayly, "for you understand both how to take away and give sleep. So long as I am near you, I forget all weariness; and after you have left me I shall, thanks to your words and promises, be able to sleep more quietly than I have done for a long time. You have quieted my soul, and my body therefore will also find rest. Bid me good-night again, for when *you* say so I will be sure to have it."

"Good-night, then, my dear count," said Hardenberg, shaking hands with his friend, and withdrawing, with a smile, from the room.

This affectionate smile was still playing round the lips of the chancellor when he entered his carriage. But no sooner had its door closed and the carriage was moving, than an expression of gloomy hatred overspread his features. "I hope I have quite succeeded in misleading St. Marsan and arousing

his suspicions in regard to the king," he said to himself. "As the king refuses to listen to my warnings and supplications, and does not believe it to be possible that France should dare seize him, it is time to give him some irrefutable proofs. Perhaps he may then make up his mind to leave Berlin. I may sign this longed-for betrothal at some other place, too, and then fasten on my breast the order for which I am longing. In truth," he added, laughing, "it is no fault of mine that dear Count St. Marsan interprets my desire in the way he does. I did not name to him the order I wish to wear. It is no fault of mine that he imagines I wish for the grand cross of the Legion of Honor. To be sure, I wish to obtain an order of honor, but one of a German patriot, and that I can only obtain from the gratitude of my countrymen and impartial history."

The carriage stopped in front of the royal palace, and Hardenberg hastened to the king. Silence reigned in the ante-room; a few sleepy footmen were sitting on the cane chairs beside the door, and scarcely took notice of the arrival of the chancellor, who passed them with soft, hurried steps, and entered the small reception-room. Here, too, all was still, and the two candles on the table, which had burned low, shed but a dim light in the room. The chancellor noticed two figures sitting on both sides of the door leading into the adjoining room, and slowly swinging to and fro, like the pendulum of a clock. He softly approached the two sleepers. "Ah," he whispered, with a smile, "there sleeps Timm, the chamberlain, who is to announce my arrival to the king; and here sleeps Major Natzmer, to whom I want to say a word before he sets out." He laid his hand gently on the major's shoulder. Natzmer jumped up at once and drew himself up in a stiff, military attitude. "You are very prudent in nodding a little now," said Hardenberg, kindly giving him his hand, "for I am afraid you will not find much time for it during the remainder of the night. You are ready to set out immediately, are you not?"

"I am, your excellency."

"And your dispatches, I believe, are ready, too.—My dear Timm," he then said to the chamberlain, "pray announce my arrival to his majesty."

"I believe it is unnecessary," said Timm, with the familiarity of a favorite servant. "His majesty is waiting for your excellency."

"You had better announce my arrival," said Hardenberg, smiling, "for it might be possible that I surprise the king in the same manner as I did these two gentlemen here, and that would be disagreeable."

"That is true," said Timm, hastily approaching the door. "I will immediately announce your excellency."

No sooner had he left the room, than the chancellor laid his hand on the major's arm, and bent over him. "My friend," he said, in a low, hurried voice, "I know you share my views."

"Your excellency knows that I adore you as the statesman who holds the future happiness of Prussia in his hands, and that I abhor the French, who have brought Prussia to the brink of ruin."

"Will you do something to bring her back from this brink?"

"Yes, your excellency, though it cost my life."

"That would be a high price. No; we stand in need of your life and your arm, for Prussia will soon need all her soldiers. What I ask of you is not near so valuable. Listen to me. The king sends you as a courier to Old Prussia. Repair, in the first place, to Murat's headquarters, and deliver the king's letter to him. Go to the Russian headquarters, and call upon Prince Wittgenstein. All I ask of you is to inform Prince Wittgenstein that you are the bearer of two dispatches. Tell him that one is an autograph letter from the king to the Emperor Alexander, and the other a decree removing General York from his command, and ordering him to be put on his trial before a military commission."

"What!" exclaimed Natzmer, in dismay. "Our noble York is to be removed from his command?"

"Yes; the king has resolved to remove and cashier him, because he has gone over with his corps to the Russians."

"York gone over to the Russians!" exclaimed Natzmer, joyously. "And for this wondrously bold step I am to bring him a decree superseding and cashiering him?"

"That is what the king orders you to do, and, of course, you will have to obey. But, I repeat to you, the only thing I ask of you is to inform Prince Wittgenstein what dispatches are in your hands, and what their contents are."

"But suppose the king should not tell me any thing about them? Suppose their contents, therefore, should be unknown to me?"

"The king himself will communicate the contents to you, and even order you to mention everywhere on the road that you are the bearer of a decree cashiering York, the criminal general. It is of great importance to his majesty that every one, and, above all, France, should learn that he is highly incensed at York's defection, and that— Hush! I hear Timm coming! You will comply with my request?"

"I shall inform Prince Wittgenstein of the contents of my dispatches."

"In that case, I hope York will be safe! Hush!"

The door opened again, and the chamberlain entered. "Your excellency was quite right," he said; "it was well that I announced your arrival. His majesty, like ourselves, had fallen asleep. But now he is awaiting you." He opened the folding-doors, and Hardenberg hastened across the adjoining room to the king's cabinet, to communicate to him the result of his interview with the French ambassador.

An hour afterward Major Natzmer received three dispatches at the hands of the king. The first was a letter to Napoleon's lieutenant at the head of the French army, the King of Naples. In this Frederick William informed Murat that he was filled with the most intense indignation at the step York had taken, and that he had commissioned Major Natzmer to deliver a royal decree to General Kleist, authorizing him to take command of the troops and arrest General York. He declared further in this letter that, as a matter of course, he refused to ratify the convention, and that the Prussian troops, commanded by General Kleist, should be, as they had been heretofore, subject to the orders of the Emperor Napoleon, and his lieutenant, the King of Naples.* The second dispatch was confidential, to the Emperor Alexander, the contents of which the king had not communicated even to his chancellor of state. The third was, the decree superseding York, and ordering Kleist to take command of the troops.

"I think," said the king, after Natzmer had withdrawn, "we have now done every thing to appease Napoleon's wrath, and avert from Prussia all evil consequences. Are you not also of this opinion, M. Chancellor?"

"It only remains to send a special envoy to Napoleon himself and assure him of your majesty's profound indignation," said Hardenberg, gloomily. "The proud emperor, perhaps, expects such a proof of the fidelity of your majesty."

*Droysen's "Life of York," vol. ii., p. 37.

The king cast a quick and searching glance on the gloomy countenance of the chancellor, and then gazed for some time musingly. "You are right," he said, after a pause; "I must send a special envoy to Paris. When it is necessary to appease a bloodthirsty tiger, no means should be left untried. I myself will write to Napoleon and assure him that I will faithfully adhere to the alliance. Prince Hatzfeld will depart with this letter for Paris early in the morning."

"Your majesty will then have done every thing to satisfy the French of the sincerity of your friendly intentions toward them, but I am afraid they do not care to be satisfied."

"You believe, then, seriously that the French are menacing me?" asked the king, with a contemptuous smile.

"I am convinced of it, your majesty."

"But what do you believe, then? What are you afraid of?"

"As I said before, I am afraid they will dare abduct the sacred person of your majesty, and I beseech you to be on your guard; never leave your palace alone and unarmed; never go into the street without being attended by an armed escort."

"Ah," said the king, with a sad smile, "do not the French always see to it that I am attended by an escort? Am I not always surrounded by their spies and eavesdroppers?"

"If your majesty is aware of this, why do you not yield to my entreaties? Why do you not leave Berlin?"

"Perhaps to go to Potsdam? Shall I be less watched there by the spies? Shall I there be less a prisoner?"

"No, your majesty ought to leave Berlin in order to deliver yourself at one blow, and thoroughly, from this intolerable espionage. Your majesty ought to make up your mind to go to Breslau. There you would be nearer your army; there your faithful subjects and followers would rally round you, and the Emperor Alexander perhaps would soon come thither. At all events, your majesty would there be secure from the French spies, and your adherents would be delivered from their anxiety for the personal safety of your majesty."

"To Breslau!" exclaimed the king, anxiously. "That is impossible!—that would be pouring oil into the fire—that would be to advance on the path into which York has entered."

"It would be another step toward the deliverance of your majesty, the salvation of the country, and the annihilation of the tyrant!" said Hardenberg, raising his voice.

The king made no reply; he stepped to the window, and, turning his back to the chancellor, looked out musingly into the night. Hardenberg looked now at him, and then on the queen's portrait. Suddenly his features grew milder, and an indescribable, imploring expression was to be seen in his eyes. "Help me, queen," he whispered, in a fervid tone. "Direct his heart, guardian angel of Prussia; render it strong and firm, and—"

The king turned again to the chancellor and approached him. "I cannot comply with your request," said Frederick William, "for, if I should go to Breslau, it would be equivalent to a declaration of war, and we are, unfortunately, not in a position to justify that. I must not rashly plunge myself and my country into a danger which probably would bring about our utter ruin. But I pledge you my word that, if your apprehensions should really be verified—if I really obtain proofs that my person and liberty are menaced, I shall then deem it incumbent on me to escape from this danger, and remove the seat of government to a safer place—perhaps Breslau."

"Is your majesty in earnest?" exclaimed Hardenberg, joyously. "You really intend, after having satisfied yourself that dangers are threatening you here, to leave Berlin and place yourself beyond the reach of the French?"

"I pledge you my word of honor that such is my intention," said the king, solemnly. "And now, enough! I believe both of us need a few hours' rest. In the course of the forenoon I will write the letter which Prince Hatzfeld is to take to Paris. Good-night, M. Chancellor!"

"Drive me home as fast as your horses can run," shouted Hardenberg to his coachman, on entering his carriage.

"We shall be there in five minutes," muttered the coachman, whipping his horses into a gallop.

Precisely five minutes afterward the carriage stopped in front of the chancellor's residence, and a well-dressed young man, hastily pushing aside the footman, opened the coach door.

"Ah, is it you, my dear Richard?" said Hardenberg, surprised. "Why have you not yet gone to bed?"

"Because I could not sleep while your excellency had not returned," said the young man, assisting the minister in alighting. "It is nearly four o'clock; the whole house was greatly alarmed."

"Well, and what were you afraid of, you dear fools?" asked Hardenberg, smilingly, while ascending the staircase.

"That your enemies had found means to kidnap you, and that the French had resorted to such an outrage to get rid of their most dangerous and powerful adversary."

"Ah, you big children!" exclaimed Hardenberg, laughing. "How could you give way to such senseless apprehensions while I was supping in a friendly way at the house of the French marshal?"

"Just for that reason, your excellency," said Richard, smiling. "We may know well how to get into a mouse-trap, but we do not know how to get out again. A panic prevailed among your servants, and the footmen had already made up their minds to arm themselves, go to the house of Marshal Augereau, and forcibly deliver your excellency."

"I was lucky, therefore, in escaping from such ridicule," said Hardenberg, gravely. "A minister who is taken home by his servants *vi et armis*, because he takes the liberty not to return at an early hour—what a splendid farce that would be! Pray be kind enough to tell my servants that their anxiety was very foolish. The greatest cordiality prevails between myself and the French gentlemen, and never before has there been such a friendly understanding between France and Prussia. My servants should always remember that, and commit no follies."

He intentionally said this in so loud a tone that the two footmen who preceded him with lights, as well as the two servants who followed, heard and understood every word he uttered. Hardenberg knew, therefore, that all his servants, fifteen minutes afterward, would be informed of the new *entente cordiale* between Prussia and France; that all Berlin would be aware of it on the following day, and that he would thus have attained his object.

"Your excellency will not yet retire?" asked Richard, when the minister, instead of going down the corridor to his bedroom, now halted at the door of his cabinet.

"No, M. Private Secretary," said Hardenberg, smiling. "As you are still awake, and apparently not sleepy, let us hold a little business conference. Come!"

No sooner had the servants put the lights on the table and left the room, than the face of the chancellor suddenly assumed a grave air. Ordering, with an imperious wave of his hand, his private secretary to be silent, he hastened to his

desk and quickly wrote a few lines. "Richard," he said, casting the pen aside, and turning his head toward the young man, who witnessed his mysterious proceedings in great surprise, "Richard, come here!"

The young man hastened to him, and when Hardenberg gave him his hand, with a kind smile, Richard stooped down and pressed a tender kiss on it.

"Ah, lips as glowing as yours are, should kiss only beautiful girls," said Hardenberg, smiling.

"But these lips like better to kiss the hand of my benefactor, my protector," exclaimed the young man, "the kind hand of the man who extricated me from poverty, distress, and despair; who caused me to be fed, educated, and instructed; and who (until I myself, by his liberal kindness, was enabled to discharge this sacred duty) secured to my poor sick mother an existence free from cares."

"Do not allude to these trifles," said Hardenberg, carelessly. "Tell me, rather, do you regard me with respect and love?"

"Indescribably, your excellency; with the tenderness of a son, with the devotedness and fidelity of an old servant."

"Will you give me a proof of it?"

"I will, your excellency, and should you demand my heart's blood, I would willingly spill it for you!"

"Listen to me, then! In five minutes you must be on horseback and ride at a gallop, night and day, until you reach the Russian camp."

"In three days," said Richard, gravely, "but the journey will kill my horse."

"I will give you two horses for him, provided you arrive sooner than Major Natzmer at the headquarters of Prince Wittgenstein, commander-in-chief of the Russian troops!"

"Has Natzmer left Berlin already?"

"Yes, about an hour since, and you know that he is considered the most dashing and reckless horseman among all our officers. He has, moreover, another advantage. He will ride through the French camp, and will thence go to the Russian army, which is in the rear of it; but you must ride around the French camp, and go by way of Gumbinnen, unnoticed by the French, to the Russian headquarters. But the main point is, that you arrive there sooner than Major Natzmer."

"I will arrive there sooner. Your excellency knows that I have often been in Königsberg and its surroundings; I know

all the by-ways and short cuts, and am, moreover, a good horseman."

"I know all that. I presume, therefore, that you will be with Wittgenstein before Natzmer reaches him. But you will tell no one that it is I who sent you. It is your task to find means to speak to him alone. But wait—I will give you your credentials. Take this ring. General Wittgenstein knows it; he has often seen it on my finger, and he is familiar with my coat-of-arms. Send him this ring by his aide-de-camp, and he will admit you."

"He will admit me, should I have to shoot down the sentinels."

"As soon as you are face to face with the general, deliver to him this little note, which I have penned. Read it, and then I will direct and seal it." He handed the paper to the young man. "Read it aloud," he said.

"In one or two hours Major Natzmer will arrive at the headquarters of your excellency, and beg leave to pass through the Russian camp in order to repair to General York. If your excellency should grant his request, and allow him to reach York's headquarters, the hopes of Prussian patriots would be annihilated at one fell swoop. But if York remains at the head of his troops, so enthusiastically attached to him—if the whole nation and the whole corps may from this fact derive the hope that York acted in compliance with the secret instructions of his king, then we may hope for a speedy change in our affairs. The fate and the future of Prussia therefore lie in the hands of noble General Wittgenstein."

"Now read over the letter twice for yourself," said Hardenberg, "that you may engrave it on your memory. For in case you should happen to lose the letter, or if it should be stolen from you, you must verbally repeat its contents to Prince Wittgenstein."

"I shall not lose it, and no one can steal it from me, for I shall carry it in my heart. I have nothing further to do than to deliver this letter to him?"

"You have to say yet to the general a few words which I dare not intrust to paper, but only to your memory. You will say to him: 'Every thing is ready, and the period of procrastination and hesitation is drawing to a close. In a few days the king will leave Berlin, where he was in danger of being arrested by the French, and repair to Breslau. At Breslau he will issue a manifesto to his people and call them