

to be prevented from healing poor patients and making suffering humanity happy by my holy science."

"No one shall be allowed to prevent you from doing so as long as I am minister, I pledge you my word," said Hardenberg, gravely. "Take heart, therefore, and do not be afraid. I am your disciple, and at the same time your protector. But now grant me a request: I should like to put to our charming seer yet a few questions in regard to last night's events. She shall, in her inspired and prophetic prescience, give me her advice and tell me what course I must pursue; but, in doing so, I shall have to allude to state secrets, and to speak of affairs which no one is allowed to know but the king and his ministers, and—"

"I pray your excellency to permit me to leave you alone with our young seer," interrupted Doctor Binder, with a polite smile. "I have to see several patients, and my presence is required at the 'Hall of Crises' below, for my two young assistants are scarcely able to restrain our female patients when the crisis sets in."

"Go, then, to your patients," said Hardenberg; "I shall stay here with our clairvoyante until she awakes."

"If your excellency needs any thing," said the doctor, approaching the door, "it will only be necessary for you to ring the bell; the nurse is in the reception-room, and will immediately call my assistants."

He bowed to Hardenberg, bent once more with a searching glance over the couch of his patient, drew with his hands a few circles over her head, and left the room with noiseless steps. The chancellor and the clairvoyante were alone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN ADVENTURESS.

WHEN the physician left the room, the chancellor returned to the bedside of the young woman; her position was the same, and her eyes were still closed. She did not see, therefore, the sarcastic smile with which Hardenberg looked down upon her, or the proud, triumphant expression that was beaming from his eyes. Hers were closed, and, notwithstanding her clairvoyance, she saw nothing, nor did Hardenberg's voice

betray to her aught of the expression of his countenance or the character of his thoughts.

"Frederica," he said, in his soft, gentle voice, "speak to me now, my seer; be my prophetess now, and let me see the future. Tell me what I must do in order to reconcile all these dissensions, and harmonize all these clashing interests. On which side is justice, prosperity, and peace?"

"On the side of the great man whose gigantic strength has lifted the world out of its hinges, and given it a new aspect," she said, gravely. "Stand faithfully by the alliance with France, unless you wish the crown to fall from the head of your king, and Prussia to be divided into two provinces, one annexed to the kingdom of Westphalia, and the other to the duchy of Warsaw."

"But will France then still have power to do so?" asked Hardenberg; "is not France herself on the brink of the abyss into which she has hurled all states, princes, and crowns?"

"France is as powerful to-day as she ever was," responded the seer. "New armies at the beck of Napoleon will spring from the ground, his military chests will be filled with new millions, and the invincible chieftain will lead his legions to new victories. Woe then to Prussia if she proves faithless—woe to her, if, in insensate infatuation, she turns her back upon France, and allows herself to listen to the insinuations and promises by which Russia is trying to gain her over to her side! Russia herself is weak and exhausted; she will be unable to afford Prussia any adequate support. Be on your guard! Russia has always been a perfidious ally; she has always crushed the hand of her allies in her grasp, while seemingly giving a pledge of her good faith. France alone is offering to Prussia substantial guaranties of peace; Napoleon alone must remain the protector of Prussia. Banish, therefore, the insidious thoughts that are troubling your soul; try no longer to dissuade the king from adhering to the alliance. Do not try to persuade him to approve York's defection! He is a traitor, whose head must fall; for such is the decree of the laws of war. To approve his defection is to throw down the gauntlet to France, and annihilate Prussia!"

"You have played your part to perfection!" exclaimed Hardenberg, laughing. "Please accept my sincere congratulations, my dear child; the greatest actress in the world could not perform her *rôle* any better than you have done to-day, and ever since I became acquainted with you."

At the first words of the chancellor, the clairvoyante gave a violent start; a tremor pervaded her whole frame, and a deep blush suffused her cheeks for a moment; but all this quickly passed away, and now she was again as rigid and motionless as she was before.

Hardenberg's eyes were fixed on her. "You do not desire to understand me, Frederica," he said. "Well, then, I will speak somewhat more lucidly. Will you permit me to ask two additional questions?"

"You know very well that I must reply when your soul commands me to do so," said the young woman, in a perfectly calm voice, "for your soul has power over mine, and I must obey it."

"Well, then—my first question: did I really, last night, on returning to my residence, speak with no one but old Conrad? Was no one but he in my room until I went to bed? Look sharp, open the eyes of your soul as wide as you can, and then reply!"

"I see," she said, after a pause; "but I see that you were alone with Conrad, and with the thoughts of a lady who loves you."

"I am very glad that you tell me so," said Hardenberg, calmly, "for I understand from it that my enemies, who are furnishing you with correct reports as to all my doings, have yet remained ignorant of an affair in which I was engaged last night. For there really was another person with me, and your patrons would give a great deal to find out what instructions I gave to that person. Now, as to my second question; but I hope you hear my words, *ma toute belle*, and have not yet passed from an unnatural sleep into a natural one!"

"I hear you, and I am ready to answer if your soul commands me."

"Well, then," said Hardenberg, bending over her, and fixing his piercing eyes upon her countenance, "my question is this: How much do your protectors give you for playing the part which you performed before me?"

A pause ensued. Suddenly the clairvoyante opened her eyes, gazing with an indescribable expression on the face of the minister still bending over her.

"They give me nothing," she said, in a firm, sonorous voice, "but the hope of acquiring a brilliant position in the future."

"You confess, then, that you have played a considerable farce?" asked Chancellor von Hardenberg, smiling.

"I confess that I have played my part very badly, and that your eagle eye is able to penetrate every thing. I confess that I adore you for having unmasked me," she exclaimed, quickly encircling Hardenberg's neck with her arms, drawing his head down to her, and pressing a glowing kiss on his lips. Then, still keeping her arms around his neck, she raised herself from the couch, and leaned for a moment against the manly form of the chancellor.

Disengaging herself from him, she jumped from the bed to the floor, and, spreading out her arms, and throwing back her head, she exclaimed in a jubilant voice: "I am free! I need no longer play my irksome rôle! Oh, I am free!"

Leaping into the middle of the room, as light-footed as a sylph, and fascinating as one, of the graces, she began to dance, raising her feet and moving her arms in a slow, measured manner, at the outset; but, turning more rapidly, with more passionate movement and increasing ardor, her countenance grew more glowing and animated. Her large black eyes flashed fire—an air of wild, bacchantic ecstasy pervaded her whole appearance, her cheeks were burning, her beautiful red lips were half opened, and revealed her ivory teeth, and her uplifted arms (from which the wide sleeves of her *négligée* had fallen back to the shoulders) were of the most charming contour. Concluding her dance, she glided breathless and with panting bosom toward Hardenberg, who had sunk into the easy-chair, and was looking on with wondering eyes. Bursting into loud, melodious laughter, she sat at his feet, and, pressing her glowing face against his knees, looked searchingly and suppliantly into his eyes.

"You are angry with me," she said; "oh, pardon me, but I had first to give vent to my exultation. Now I will be quite sensible."

"And what do you call sensible, then?" asked Hardenberg, who, under the power of the woman's glances, vainly tried to impart to his countenance an air of gravity and sternness.

"I call it sensible to reply honestly to the questions your excellency will put to me now," she said, in a caressing tone.

"Well, then, let us see whether you are really sensible or not," said Hardenberg. "In the first place, please rise."

She shook her head slowly. "No," she said, "I will remain at your feet until you have heard my confession and granted me absolution."

"And suppose I refuse to grant you absolution?"

"Then I shall die at your feet!"

"Ah, it is not so easy to die."

"It is easy to die when one wants to, and has such a friend as this is," she exclaimed, drawing from her hair one of the two long silver pins with which her heavy black tresses were partially fastened.

"Strange girl!" murmured Hardenberg, surprised, while she was looking up to him with radiant eyes, and a smile playing on her lips.

"Will you ask me now?" she then said, gently and almost humbly. "I am lying here at your feet as if you were my confessor, and I am longing with trembling impatience for my absolution."

"Well, then, tell me, in the first place, who you are."

"Who am I?" she asked. "A cheat, who, by intrigues, cabals, and cunning, tried to attain the object she yearned for so intensely, namely, to lie at the feet of a noble and eminent man, as she is doing now, and to tell him that she loves him. Who am I? An adventuress, who has gone out into the world to seek her fortune; to play, if possible, a prominent part; to acquire a distinguished name, and to obtain riches, power, and influence. Who am I? A diver, who has plunged with reckless audacity into the foaming sea, to find at its bottom either pearls or a grave."

"But, my child," said Hardenberg, "do you not know that the divers, when plunging into the sea to seek pearls, always gird a safety-rope around their waist for the purpose of being drawn to the surface whenever they are in danger of drowning?"

"The man who loves me will be my safety-rope and draw me up," she said, gravely.

Hardenberg laughed. "In truth," he said, "I must admire your sincerity and *naïveté*. You must be very courageous to utter such truths about yourself."

"Certainly, it would have been easier to play the virtuous, forsaken, and unfortunate girl," she said, with a contemptuous smile. "It would have been less troublesome to throw myself at your feet, bathed in a flood of tears, and to say, 'Oh, have mercy upon me! Free me from this unworthy rôle which has been forced upon me! Save me from the torture of being compelled to dissimulate, to lie, and to cheat. Virtue dwells in my heart, innocence and truth are upon my lips. I have been forced to play a part that dishonors me. Have mercy



VON HARDENBURG AND THE ADVENTURESS.

upon me, save me from the snares threatening me!" While saying so, she imparted to her features precisely the expression that was adapted to her words; she had spoken in a tremulous, suppliant voice, with folded hands and tearful eyes.

"Poor child," exclaimed Hardenberg, surprised, "you weep, you are deeply moved! Ah, now at last you show me your true face, now you cause me to see the poor, innocent, and unfortunate child that you really are!"

She shook away her tears and burst into laughter. "No," she exclaimed, "I have only proved to you that I would be able to play the virtuous and innocent girl to perfection, and that I might, perhaps, thereby succeed in touching your noble heart. But you have commanded me to tell you the truth, and I have pledged you my word to do so. I tell you, then, I am no persecuted, virtuous girl, no innocent angel; I am a woman, carrying a heaven and a hell in her bosom; I can be an angel, if happiness and love favor me; I will be a demon, if fate be hostile to me. Yes," she exclaimed, jumping up and pacing the room in great agitation, "there are hours and days when I myself believe that I am a demon, an angel hurled down from heaven, and doomed to walk the earth on account of some crime. There are hours when heavenly recollections fill my imagination, when an indescribable, blissful yearning is, as it were, enveloping me in a veil—when there are resounding in my heart the sweetest and most enchanting notes of sacred words and devout prayers, and when it seems to me as though I were sitting in the midst of radiant angels, surrounded by luminous clouds, at the feet of God, His breath upon my cheek, and looking down with compassionate, merciful love upon the world, lying at an unfathomable distance under my feet. And then I say to myself: 'You have reviled and slandered yourself; you are, after all, a good angel; God is with you, and prayer, love, and innocence, are in your heart.' Then it suddenly seems to me as if my heart were rent, and I heard loud, scornful laughter. I fall from my heaven; I look around and behold men, with their bitter-sweet faces, smiling on, and lying to each other; I see all their duplicity and their infamy; I laugh at my own transports and swear never to be human with humanity, but a demon with demons—to cheat as they cheat, to lie, and win from them as much happiness, honor, and wealth, as I can with some mimic talent, a cool and sharp mind, a pretty figure, and an ugly face."

"Ah, you are slandering yourself," exclaimed Hardenberg, smiling. "You have no ugly face."

She hastened to the looking-glass, and gazed on herself with searching glances. "Yes," she said, "I am really ugly. My mouth is too large, my lips too full, my face is angular and by no means prepossessing, my nose is vulgar, my forehead too low and too wide, these bushy eyebrows become rather a grenadier than a young lady, and these large black eyes look like a couple of sentinels, which, with sharp glances, have to watch the rabble of nose, mouth, ear, and cheek, lest one should try to escape from disgust at the ugliness of the others. But I do not regret my want of beauty, for it is uncommon and piquant, and I can imagine that a gifted, eminent man, who is tired of the pretty faces of so-called virtuous women, may feel attracted by my ugliness. Beauty at least always becomes tiresome, for it treats you at once to all that it is and has, but ugliness excites your curiosity more and more from day to day, for, at certain moments, it may be transformed into beauty!"

"Your own case shows that," said Hardenberg, "for, although you call yourself ugly, there is a fascinating beauty in your whole appearance."

She gazed on him with a long and radiant look. "You are a great man, a genius, and you are, therefore, able to understand me. I will tell you my history now, that you may at last grant me the blessing of your forgiveness."

"Well, tell me your history," exclaimed Hardenberg. "Come, Frederica, sit down by my side here on the couch on which you have so often reposed as a modern Pythia, and proclaimed to me the oracles which your mysterious priest had whispered to you. Now you are no priestess uttering equivocal wisdom, but a young woman telling the truth, and making me listen to the revelations of her heart."

"A young woman," she repeated, sighing and reclining on the bed close to the easy-chair on which Hardenberg was sitting. "Am I young, then? It seems to me sometimes as though I were old—so old as no longer to have any illusions, any hopes or wishes; as though I were the 'Wandering Jew' who has been travelling through the world so many centuries, seeking perpetually for the rest which he can nowhere find. But still you are right; I am young, for I am only twenty years old."

"And who are your parents? Where do they live?"

"Who are my parents?" she asked, laughing. "My father

was a holy man, a high-priest in the temple of Time. It depended on him when men were to awake or sleep, eat or work. It was his will that regulated rendezvous and weddings, parties and arrests, and he had no other master than the sun. He allowed the sun alone to guide him, and still he was no Persian!"

"But he was a watchmaker?" asked Hardenberg, smiling.

"Yes, he was a watchmaker, and, thanks to him, the whole town where he lived knew exactly what time it was. Only my mother did not know it. She believed herself to be a great lady, although she was only a poor watchmaker's wife, but was unable to efface the recollections of her youth. She was the daughter of a French marquis, who, after gambling away his whole fortune at the court of Louis XV., had emigrated with his young wife and daughter to Berlin, in order to seek another fortune at the court of Frederick the Great. But Frederick the Great had already become somewhat distrustful of the roving marquises and counts whom France sent to Berlin. Marquis de Barbasson, my worthy grandfather, received, therefore, no office and no money, and a time of distress set in, such as he would previously have deemed utterly unlikely to befall the descendant of his ancestors. He left Berlin with his family, to make his living somewhere else as a teacher of languages. He travelled from one place to another, and arrived at length at a small town called New Brandenburg. There he remained, for his feet were weary, and his poor wife was sick and tired of life. Well, Madame la Marquise de Barbasson died, and the marquis taught the young ladies of New Brandenburg how to conjugate *avoir* and *être*; his daughter assisted him, and, as she was very pretty, she taught many a young man how to conjugate *aimer*. But who would have thought of marrying the daughter of a French adventurer, who, it is true, styled himself marquis, but was as poor as a beggar! He was unable long to bear the privations and humiliations of his life; he fled from his creditors, and perhaps also from his remorse, by committing suicide; and his daughter, who was twenty years of age at that time, remained alone, and without any other inheritance than the debts of her father. One of the principal creditors of the marquis was the proprietor of the house in which father and daughter had lived for three years without paying rent, or refunding the small sums he had lent to them. This proprietor was a young watchmaker, named Hahn, an excellent young man,

who had given the family of the French marquis not only his money, but his heart. He loved the young Marquise de Barbasson, unfortunate, or, if you prefer, fortunate man! for his courtship was successful. Now, after the death of the old marquis, he played the part of an importunate creditor, and told her she had the alternative of paying or marrying him. The young Marquise de Barbasson married him, and then paid the poor watchmaker in a manner which was not very pleasant to him. She never forgave him for having reduced her to the humble position of a watchmaker's wife, and found it disgusting to be obliged to call herself Hahn, after having so long borne the aristocratic name of Barbasson. However that might be, she was his wife, and I have the honor to represent in my humble person the legitimate daughter of Hahn, the watchmaker, and the Marquise de Barbasson."

"And I must confess that you are representing your mother and your father in a highly becoming manner," said Hardenberg. "You have the bearing and the *savoir vivre* of a French marquise, and from your oracular sayings I have seen that you are as familiar with the time as a watchmaker is. But I can imagine that the descent of your parents produced many a discord in your life."

"Say rather that my whole life was a discord," she exclaimed, vehemently, "and that I have lived in an unending conflict between my head and my heart, my reality and my imagination. Oh, how often, when lying in dreary loneliness, in the shade of an oak on the shore of the charming lake near the small town in which we lived—how often did I utter loud cries of anguish, and say to the billows that washed the shore with a low, murmuring sound: 'I am a French marquise; there is aristocratic blood in my veins; it is my vocation to shine at the courts of kings, and to see counts and princes at my feet!' Yet none but the waves of the lake believed my words; men treated me never as a Marquise de Barbasson, but only as little Frederica Hahn, daughter of a poor watchmaker. I felt this as a personal insult, and at many a bitter hour it seemed to me as though, like my mother, I hated my poor father because he had robbed us of our brilliant name and our nobility. My father bore my whims patiently, for he loved me, and I believe he loved nothing on earth better than his daughter. He saw that I was pining away in the wearisome loneliness of our dull life; he knew that ambition was burning in my heart like a torrent

of fire, and he wept with me and begged my pardon for being a poor watchmaker, and no nobleman. He did all he could to make amends for this wrong; he treated me not as his daughter, but as his superior; and, although we were scarcely in easy circumstances, he surrounded me with all comforts becoming an aristocratic young lady. I had my servants, my own room, a tolerably fashionable toilet, a piano, a small library; and my father was proud of being able to have me instructed by the best and most expensive teachers, and of hearing that I was their most industrious and talented pupil. But what good did all this do me? I remained what I was—Frederica Hahn, the watchmaker's daughter—and the blood of the Barbassons revolted against my position in life; and the marquises and viscounts, my distinguished ancestors, appeared to my inward eye, and seemed to beckon me and call me to the proud castles which had formerly belonged to our family. But how should I get thither?—how escape from my small native town?—how rid myself of the burden of my name and my birth? That was the question which put my brain night and day on the rack, and to which my intellect was unable to make a satisfactory reply. An accident, however, came to my assistance."

"Ah, in truth, I am anxious to hear this," exclaimed Hardenberg, "for I am listening to you in breathless suspense, and am as eager to learn the conclusion of your history as though it were the *dénouement* of a drama. An accident, then, furnished you with a reply, my beautiful Marquise de Barbasson?"

"Yes, your excellency, and never shall I forget the day and the hour. It was on a beautiful day last autumn. As I was in the habit of doing every day, I had gone with my book into the forest on the shore of the lake. I lay in my favorite place under a large oak, in the dark foliage of which the birds were singing, while the waves of the lake at my feet were a sweet accompaniment. I was reading the lately published poetry of my favorite bard, Goethe, and had just finished 'The Wandering Fool.' This poem struck my heart as lightning. I dropped the book, looked up to the clouds and shouted to them: 'What are you but wandering fools! Oh, take me with you!' But the clouds did not reply to me; they passed on in silence, and my sad eyes turned to the lake extended before me like a polished mirror, and mingling with the blue mists of the horizon, and I said to the murmuring