

your object, and I have given you proofs of my fidelity and obedience—will you then believe that I love you?"

"We shall see," he said, smiling. "I am, perhaps, not as wise as Ulysses, and shall not fill my ears with wax, but listen to the song of the siren, even at the risk of perishing in the whirlpool of passion. Let us not impose upon ourselves any promises concerning the destiny of our hearts; but your position in the world is an entirely different question. As to this, I must make you promises, and swear that I shall fulfil them. You promise that you will serve me, enter into my plans, and support my policy?"

"Yes, your excellency, I swear to you that your opponents themselves shall beseech the king to leave Berlin, and renounce France."

"Well, then, on the day the king arrives safely at Breslau, you will receive from me a document securing you an annuity on which you will be able to live independently here at Berlin."

"And is that all?" she asked, in a contemptuous tone. "You promise me nothing but money to keep me from starvation?"

"No," said Hardenberg, smiling, "I promise you more than that. I promise that little Frederica Hahn, the watchmaker's daughter, shall be transformed into an aristocratic lady, and that I will procure you a husband, who will give you so distinguished a name that the daughter of the Marquise de Barbasson need not be ashamed of it. Are you content with that, my beauty?"

"Would it be necessary for me to love and honor the husband whom your excellency will give me?" asked Frederica, after a pause.

"Suppose I reply in the affirmative?" asked Hardenberg.

"Then I answer: I prefer remaining Frederica Hahn, for then I shall at least have the right to sit at your feet and worship you, and no troublesome husband will be able to prevent my doing so."

"Well, then, my charming little fool, I shall select for you a husband who will, like a *deus ex machina*, appear only in order to confer his name upon you at the altar, and who will then disappear again. Do you consent to that?"

"Your excellency, that would be precisely such a husband as I would like to have, and as my imagination has dreamed of—a husband *sans conséquence*—not a man, but a manikin!"

"I shall, however, see to it that this manikin, besides his name, will lay at your feet another splendid wedding-gift, and a *corbeille de noce*, which will be worthy of you. You accept my offers, then, my friend?"

"No, unless you add something to them."

"What is it, Frederica?"

"Your love, your confidence, your belief in my love!" she exclaimed, sinking down at his feet.

"Ah," said Hardenberg, "let us not be so audacious as to attempt to raise the veil that may perhaps conceal a magnificent future from our eyes!"*

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TWO DIPLOMATISTS.

THE royal family celebrated an important festival at Potsdam on the 20th of January. Crown-Prince Frederick William had been confirmed at the palace church. In the presence of the whole royal family, of all high officers and foreign ambassadors, the prince, who was now seventeen years of age, had made his confession of faith and taken an oath to the venerable and noble Counsellor Sack that he would faithfully adhere to God's Word, and worship Him in times of weal and woe. After the ceremonies at church were over, a gala-dinner was to take place at court, and invitations had been issued not only to the members of the royal family, but to the dignitaries and functionaries, as well as the ambassadors, who had come over from Berlin. This dinner, however, was suddenly postponed. The king was said to have been unexpectedly taken ill. It was asserted that the excitement which he had undergone at church had greatly affected his nerves, bringing on a bleeding at the nose, which had already lasted several hours, and which even the most energetic remedies were unable to relieve.

The ambassadors repaired to the palace in order to ascertain more about the health of the king, and the principal physician of his majesty was able at least to assure them that his majesty's condition was not by any means alarming or dangerous, but that the king needed repose, and could not, accord-

* This scene is not fictitious, but based upon the verbal statements and disclosures of the lady who played so prominent a part in it.—L. M.

ing to his intention, go to Berlin that day, but would remain at Potsdam, and, for a few days, abstain entirely both from engaging in public affairs and receiving visitors. This news did not seem to alarm any one more seriously than the French ambassador, Count St. Marsan. He left the royal palace in depressed spirits, and, entering his carriage, ordered the driver in a hurried tone to return to Berlin as fast as possible. Scarcely three hours elapsed when the carriage stopped in front of the French legation, and the footman hastened to open the coach-door. Count St. Marsan, however, did not rise from his feet, but beckoned his valet de chambre to come to him. "Have no letters arrived for me?" he asked.

"Yes, your excellency; this was brought to the legation a few minutes since," said the valet, handing a small, neatly-folded letter to the count.

St. Marsan opened the note hastily. It contained nothing but the following words: "I have just returned from Potsdam. I am probably an hour ahead of your excellency, for I had caused three relays to be kept in readiness for me. As soon as your excellency has arrived, I pray you to inform me of it, that I may hasten to you.—H."

"To the residence of Chancellor von Hardenberg!" said the count, putting the letter into his breast-pocket, and leaning back on the cushions. The carriage rolled away, and ten minutes afterward it stopped in front of the residence of the chancellor of state. St. Marsan alighted with youthful alacrity, and, keeping pace with the footman who was to announce his arrival, hastened into the house and ascended the staircase. At the first anteroom the chancellor met him, greeting him with polite words and conducting him into his cabinet. "You have anticipated me, your excellency," he said; "my carriage was in readiness, and I only waited for a message from you to repair immediately to your residence."

"It is, then, highly important news that your excellency will be kind enough to communicate to me?" asked St. Marsan, uneasily.

"On the contrary, I hoped you would communicate important news to me. I cannot conceal from you that we are all in great suspense and excitement; and I suppose it is unnecessary for me to confess to so skilful and experienced a diplomatist as your excellency, that the king's illness and bleeding at the nose were mere fictions, and that his majesty thereby wished only to avoid meeting you."

"Indeed, that was what I suspected," exclaimed St. Marsan; "for the rest, every thing at Potsdam appeared to me very strange and inexplicable; I confess, however, that I do not comprehend what has aroused the king's indignation, and rendered my person so offensive to him?"

"What!" asked Hardenberg, with an air of astonishment. "Your excellency does not comprehend it? It seems to me, however, that this indignation is but too well-grounded. You know the fidelity and perseverance with which Prussia has adhered to the French alliance; that the king has withstood all promises of Russia, however alluring their character, and has proved by word and deed that he intends to remain faithful to his system, and never to dissolve the alliance with France. And now, when my zeal, eloquence, and untiring expositions of the utility of this alliance have succeeded in rendering him deaf to all promises, and attaching his heart more sincerely to France, you mortify and insult the king in so defiant a manner! Ah, count, this is to postpone the attainment of my object to a very distant period, and to take from me, perhaps forever, the order I am longing for. For how can I keep my word?—how can I obtain the king's consent to the betrothal of the crown prince with a princess of the house of Napoleon, if France treats him with so little deference and respect, and proves to him that she herself does not regard the treaties which she has concluded with Prussia as imposing any obligations upon her?"

"But your excellency drives me to despair," exclaimed Count St. Marsan, "for I confess to you again that I do not comprehend what act of ours would justify such grave reproaches."

"Well, permit me, then, to remind you of what has happened, and request a kind explanation. Your excellency, I suppose, is aware that the division of General Grénier, nineteen thousand strong, has approached by forced marches from Italy and occupied Brandenburg?"

"Yes, I am aware of that," said St. Marsan, hesitatingly; "but these troops will rest there but a few days, and continue their march."

"On the contrary," replied Hardenberg, "they are destined to remain in Brandenburg. Their commanders declare emphatically that they will be stationed in this province, and Brandenburg is already so full of French soldiers that I do not see how quarters and sustenance are to be provided for an

additional corps of nineteen thousand men. Besides, this augmentation of the French forces is contrary to the express stipulations of the existing treaties, and it is, therefore, but natural that this fact, which in itself would seem to point to a hostile intention, should have excited the serious displeasure of the king."

"But the extraordinary circumstances in which the French army has been placed ever since the disastrous campaign of Russia, I believe ought to excuse extraordinary measures," said St. Marsan, in his embarrassment. "His majesty the Emperor Napoleon, on learning how offensive to the king is this increase in the number of troops stationed in the province of Brandenburg, will assuredly hasten to explain the necessity of the measure, and, however late it may be, request his ally's consent to it."

"Ah," exclaimed Hardenberg, quickly, "you admit, then, that this reënforcement in Brandenburg is intended to be permanent? But I have not yet laid all my complaints before your excellency. I believe you are aware that, according to the last convention between France and Prussia, no French troops at all are to occupy Potsdam and its environs, and that they are not to stay there even for a single night?"

"Yes; I am aware of this stipulation, and believe it has hitherto been carefully observed."

"Hitherto—that is to say, until to-day! But this forenoon, at the very hour we were at church witnessing the confirmation of the prince, whom you wish to be as a new tie between France and Prussia, this stipulation was violated in as incomprehensible as mortifying a manner. Four thousand men of Grénier's division have marched this morning from Brandenburg to Potsdam, and have tried forcibly—do you understand me, your excellency?—forcibly to occupy this city. The municipal authorities vainly endeavored to assure them that this was entirely inadmissible, and it was only after a very stormy scene that they succeeded in prevailing upon the troops to leave Potsdam, and withdraw several miles from the city.* If no blood was shed, it was not owing to the disposition of your troops, but to the prudence and moderation of the Prussian authorities. Now, count, you fully comprehend the exasperation of my master, the king; and I hope you will give me the satisfactory explanation which he has commissioned me to request."

*Beitzke's "History of the War of Liberation," vol. 1., p. 162.

"Your excellency," said St. Marsan, greatly surprised, "I really do not comprehend why the king should be so irritated at this trifling deviation from the stipulation of the treaties. You yourself said it would be impossible to find quarters and sustenance for so large a number of troops in the province of Brandenburg. This fact involved the military commanders in difficulties, and explains why they at last thought of sending a detachment to Potsdam, where there are so much room and so many vacant barracks. We could not suppose that the king would object to this, and that the sight of the brave French soldiers would fill the ally of the Emperor of the French with feelings of displeasure and indignation. But, you see, the troops yielded to the will of the king, and left the city."

"But they remained near enough to be able to reoccupy it at the first signal."

"And does your excellency believe that the French authorities might have occasion to call troops to their assistance?" asked Count St. Marsan, casting a quick, searching glance at the chancellor.

But Hardenberg's countenance remained perfectly calm and unchanged; only the faint glimmer of a smile was playing round his thin lips. "I do not know," he said, "what motives might induce the French authorities to call troops to their assistance, as they are not in a hostile country, but in that of an ally, unless it were that they look upon every free expression of the royal will as an unfriendly demonstration, and interpret as an act of hostility, for instance, the king's determination not to reside at Berlin, but at Potsdam, or, according to his pleasure, in any other city of the kingdom."

"The king, then, intends to leave Potsdam and remove to another city?" inquired St. Marsan, quickly.

"I do not say that exactly," replied Hardenberg, smiling and hesitating: "but I should not be greatly surprised if, to avoid the quarrels between the French and Prussian authorities, and not to witness perhaps another violation of the treaties, and a repeated attempt of the French commanders to occupy Potsdam, he should remove to another city, where his majesty would be safe from such annoyances."

"The king intends to leave Potsdam," said St. Marsan to himself. He added aloud: "I do not know, however, of any city in the kingdom of Prussia where, owing to the present cordial relations between Prussia and France, there are no

French authorities and French troops.—Yes, it occurs to me that, according to the treaties concluded last year, there are no French troops in the province of Silesia, except on the military road from Glogau to Dresden, and that they and their auxiliaries are expressly forbidden to pass through Breslau. Breslau, then, would be a city where the king would not run the risk of meeting French troops.”

“You admit, then, that it is dangerous for the king to meet them? In that case it would truly be a very justifiable and wise step for the king to repair to Breslau.”

“It is settled, then, that the king will go to Breslau?” asked St. Marsan. “Your excellency intended to be so kind as to intimate this to me?”

“It is settled, then, that the king is in danger near the French troops?” asked Hardenberg. “Your excellency intended to be so kind as to intimate this to me? Ah, it seems to me we have been playing hide and seek for half an hour, while both of us really ought to be frank and sincere.”

“Well, then, let us be,” exclaimed St. Marsan. “I have likewise reason to complain, and must demand explanations. What does it mean that the Prussian government has suddenly dispatched orders to all provincial authorities to recall the furloughed soldiers and proceed to another draft; that artillery-horses are bought, and a vast quantity of uniforms made?”

“It means simply, your excellency, that the King of Prussia expects to be requested by his ally, the Emperor of the French, to furnish him additional auxiliaries, and that he hastes to make the necessary preparations, to be able to comply at the earliest moment. These preparations, moreover, had to be made in so hasty a manner, because, as soon as the Russians advance farther into the interior of Prussia, of course both a conscription and the recall of the furloughed soldiers would be impossible.”

“But this is not all. The king yesterday authorized the minister of finance to issue ten million dollars in treasury-notes, to be taken at par. What is this enormous sum destined for, M. Chancellor? Why does the king suddenly need so many millions?”

“You ask what the king needs so much money for? Sir, the clause ordering these treasury-notes at par would be a sufficient reply to your question. When a government is unable to procure funds in any other way than by compelling its subjects to take its treasury-notes at par, it proves that it

has no credit to negotiate a loan—no property which it might render available; it proves that not only its treasury, but the resources of the country, are completely exhausted, and that it has reached a point where it must either go into hopeless bankruptcy or endeavor to maintain itself by palliatives. Prussia has come to this. Let us not examine by whose fault or by what accumulation of expenses and obligations, this condition of affairs has been brought about; but the fact remains, and, as the king is unwilling that the state should be declared bankrupt, he resorts to a palliative, and issues ten million dollars in treasury-notes. In this manner he obtains funds, is enabled to relieve the distress of his subjects, and to procure horses and uniforms for the new regiments to join the forces of his ally, the Emperor Napoleon. Does not this account for the issue? Are you satisfied with this explanation, count?”

“I am; for I have no doubt that your excellency is sincere.”

“Have we not yet proved that we are sincere?” exclaimed Hardenberg, in a tone of virtuous indignation. “Notwithstanding all allurements and promises by which Russia is trying to gain us over to her side, we are standing by France—and, please do not forget, at a time when she is overwhelmed with calamities, we give her our soldiers, and, the old ones having perished, recruit and equip new ones for her; we make all possible sacrifices—nay, we even run the risk of making the king lose the sympathies of his own subjects, who, you know, are not very favorable to a continuation of this alliance! And still France doubts the king’s fidelity and my own heartfelt devotion! he entertains such doubts at a moment when I declare it to be my chief object to effect a marriage of the crown prince with an imperial princess; and when I have already succeeded so far that I believe I may almost positively promise that the king will give his consent.”

“What!” exclaimed St. Marsan, surprised. “The king consents to such a marriage?”

“He will,” said Hardenberg, smiling, “provided France make the first overtures, secure him important advantages, and raise the kingdom to a higher rank among the states of Europe.”*

“Oh, the emperor, will grant Prussia all this,” said St. Marsan, joyously. “It is too important to his majesty, when a princess of his family ascends the throne of Prussia, that he

* Beitzke, vol. i., p. 159.

should not willingly comply with all the wishes of his future brother, the King of Prussia."

"Then we are agreed," exclaimed Hardenberg, offering his hand to the count, "and all misunderstandings have been satisfactorily explained. Only confide in us—firmly believe that the system of the king has undergone no alteration—that no overtures, direct or indirect, have been made to Russia, and that he has rejected the offers which she has made to him. The repudiation of General York's course is a sufficient proof of all this. Only believe our protestations, count, and entreat your emperor to dismiss the distrust he still seems to feel, and which alienates the hearts of the greatest emperor and the noblest king."

"I will inform his majesty of the very words your excellency has addressed me, and I have no doubt that the emperor on reading them will have the same gratification with which I have heard them. Thanks, therefore, your excellency! And now I will not detain you longer from enjoying your dinner. Both of us have returned from Potsdam without dining, and it is but natural that we should make up for it now. Therefore, farewell, your excellency!"

Hardenberg gave him his arm, and conducted him with kind and friendly words into the anteroom.

"Does your excellency think," said St. Marsan, on taking leave, "that I may venture to-morrow to go to Potsdam and personally inquire about his majesty's health?"

"Your excellency had better wait two or three days," said Hardenberg, after a moment's reflection. "By that time I shall have succeeded in overcoming the king's displeasure, and if the French troops in the mean time have made no further attempts to occupy Potsdam, but, on the contrary, have withdrawn still farther from the city, it will be easy for me to persuade the king that the whole occurrence was a mere misunderstanding. Have patience, then, for three days, my dear count!"

"Well, then, for three days. But then I shall see the king at Potsdam, shall I not?"

"Ah," exclaimed Hardenberg, smiling, "how can I know where it will please his majesty to be three days hence? The king is his own master, and I should think at liberty to go hither and thither as he pleases, provided he does not go to the Russian camp, and I would be able to prevent that."

"It is certain," muttered Count St. Marsan, when he was

alone in his carriage, "it is certain that the king will no longer be at Potsdam three days hence, but intends to remove secretly, and establish his court at a greater distance. The moment, therefore, has come when we must act energetically. The troops have come for this very purpose, and the emperor's orders instruct us, in case the king should manifest any inclination to renew his former alliance with Russia, and to break with France, immediately to seize the king's person, in order to deprive the Prussian nation, which is hostile to us, of its leader and standard-bearer. Well, then, the orders of the emperor must be carried into execution. We must try to have the king arrested to-day. I shall immediately take the necessary steps, and send couriers to Grénier's troops." The carriage stopped, and Count St. Marsan, forgetful of his dinner, hastened into his cabinet, and sent for his private secretaries. An hour afterward two couriers left the French legation, and shortly after an elegant carriage rolled from the gateway. Two footmen, who did not wear their liveries, were seated on the high box; but no one was able to perceive who sat inside, for the silken window-curtains had been lowered.

Chancellor von Hardenberg, after the French ambassador left him, instead of going to the dining-room, returned to his cabinet. Like Count St. Marsan, he seemed to have forgotten his dinner. With his hands folded behind him, he was slowly pacing his room, and a proud smile was beaming in his face. "I hope," he said to himself, "I have succeeded in reassuring, and yet alarming the count. He believes in me and in the sincerity of my sentiments, and hence in the fidelity of Prussia to France, and this reassures him; but he understood very well the hints I dropped about the possibility of the king leaving Potsdam and going to Breslau, and this alarms him. He may, perhaps, be hot-headed enough to allow himself to be carried away by his uneasiness, and make an attempt to seize the king. If he should, I have won my game, and shall succeed in withdrawing the king from his reach by conveying him to Breslau. Well, fortunately, I have a reliable agent at the count's house, and if any thing should happen, he will take good care to let me know it immediately. I may, therefore, tranquilly wait for further developments." At this moment the door opened, and Conrad, the old valet de chambre, entered, presenting a letter on a silver tray to the chancellor of state.

"From whom?" asked Hardenberg.

"From *her!*" whispered Conrad, anxiously. "Her nurse brought the letter a few minutes ago, and she says it ought to be at once delivered to your excellency."

"Very well," said Hardenberg, beckoning to Conrad to leave the room. But Conrad did not go; he remained at the door, and cast imploring glances on his master.

"Well," inquired Hardenberg, impatiently, "do you want to tell me any thing else?"

"I do," said Conrad, timidly; "I just wished to tell you that her excellency Madame von Hardenberg has condescended again this morning to box my ears, because I refused to tell her whither his excellency the chancellor went every evening."

"Poor Conrad!" said Hardenberg, smiling, "my wife will assuredly put your cheeks until they are insensible. There, take this little golden plaster."

He offered a gold-piece to Conrad, but the faithful servant refused to accept it. "No, your excellency, I do not wish it, for I have as much as I need, and I know that your excellency will take care of me when I am too old and feeble to work. I only intended to take the liberty to caution your excellency, so that you may be a little on your guard. Madame von Hardenberg has told her lady's-maid that she intends to follow the chancellor to-night, in order to find out whither he goes, and that she then would go in the morning to the lady and make such a fuss as to deter her from receiving your excellency any more. The lady's-maid has confided this to me, and ordered me to report it immediately, for you know that we all would willingly die for you, and that even the female servants of her excellency remain with her only because they love and adore you, and because it is a great honor to belong to the household of a master whom all Berlin loves and reveres."

"I thank you and the others for your attachment and fidelity," said Hardenberg, nodding kindly to his old servant. "Tell my wife's maid that I am especially obliged to her, and that I desire her to continue serving me faithfully. For what you all have to suffer by the displeasure of my wife, I shall take pains to indemnify you, particularly if you mention as little as possible to outsiders any thing about the state of affairs prevailing in my family, and the sufferings we all have to undergo in consequence of it. Go, Conrad; be reticent and vigilant! I shall profit by your advice, and my wife will be none the wiser." He nodded once more to Conrad, and, when the servant left the room, Hardenberg turned his eyes

again toward the little note which he still held unopened in his hand. He unfolded it hastily and read. It contained only the following words: "My predictions are producing a good effect. Dear Köckeritz is greatly alarmed for the safety of his beloved king, and even old Kalkreuth was startled by the terrible prophecies of the clairvoyante. I am sure both of them will advise the king to shun the danger, and transfer the seat of government to some other place. Heaven grant that their words may be impressive, and that we may attain our object—for you, the liberty of Prussia; for me, the thralldom of my heart! For what else do I wish than to be your slave, and to lie at your feet, to narrate to you the story of my love? For you I wish to be an humble slave; for all others, Diavolezza Frederica, the watchmaker's daughter—and when shall I become a marquise?"

"It is true," said Hardenberg, smiling, and tearing the paper in small pieces; "it is true, she is a *diavolezza*, but one of the most amiable and charming sort, and perhaps ere long I shall, notwithstanding her deviltry, consider her an angel, and believe her charming comedy to be entirely true and sincere. But this is no time for thinking of such things. The grave affairs of life require our exclusive attention. Köckeritz, then, has been convinced, and even Kalkreuth has been shaken in his stupid belief in the French! Well, may we at length succeed in taking the fortress of this royal heart!—Ah, some one raps again at the door! Come in! What, Conrad, it is you again? Do you come to tell me that my wife has again boxed your ears?"

"No," said Conrad, smiling. "This time I have to announce a French soldier, who insists on seeing your excellency. He says he has found a precious ornament which you have lost, and for which he would himself get his reward."

"Well, let him come in; we shall see what he brings me," said Hardenberg.

A few minutes afterward Conrad opened the door, and a French soldier entered the room. "Now, let us see what you have found, my friend," said Hardenberg, "and what you bring back to me before I have missed it."

"Your excellency, it is a precious ornament," said the soldier; "but I must give it to you in secret."

"Withdraw, Conrad," said Hardenberg, beckoning to the servant, who had remained at the door, and was distrustfully and anxiously watching every motion of the soldier.