

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## THE BALL AT THE CITY HALL OF Breslau.

THE large saloon of the city hall of Breslau presented an exceedingly festive and brilliant spectacle. The walls were tastefully decorated with festoons and flags, exhibiting alternately the Russian and Prussian colors; between them were the Prussian eagle and the double-headed Russian eagle in richly-gilt medallions, surrounded by resplendent tapers. On the ceiling were suspended three enormous chandeliers, each adorned with fifty large wax candles, which shed a flood of light through the whole hall, and reflected themselves a hundred times in their balls and pendants of rock crystal. In the gallery, fixed on the upper half of one of the walls of the hall, and splendidly decorated with garlands and Prussian and Russian flags, sat a band of fifty musicians, who caused soul-stirring greetings to roll down into the hall, where the brilliant and numerous crowd of guests, whom the municipal authorities had invited, were moving up and down; the ladies in the most magnificent toilets, in the gorgeous splendor of diamonds and other precious stones, of flowers and laces; the gentlemen in their gold-embroidered uniforms, their breasts ornamented with orders; but among them were seen also the dark figures of Lützow's riflemen, the plain coats of the citizens, and even some of the peasantry in their becoming rural costumes. All classes were represented at this great ball, which the municipal authorities of Breslau gave in honor of the Emperor of Russia, for these representatives of all classes were to offer to Alexander the homage of the Prussian people, and to return thanks to the noble ally of the king for the assistance that he intended to lend to Prussia.

The emperor and the king, therefore, were received with boundless enthusiasm when they entered the hall arm in arm, each decorated not with his own orders, but with those of his ally. Alexander had acknowledged this flattering reception with the affability and the smiling grace peculiar to him; Frederick William, with the gravity and calmness that never left him. After the first presentations and official addresses were over, Alexander requested the presiding burgomaster to set aside the embarrassing ceremonial, and to allow every one

to yield without restraint to the enjoyment of the festival. In order to give an example to the assembled guests, the emperor suggested to the managers that dancing might begin, and, offering his arm to the wife of the presiding burgomaster, he opened the ball with the *Polonaise*. After the dance he moved about the hall with the most amiable affability, always endeavoring by his kindness and politeness to cause all to forget the gulf separating them from the emperor. The king had, like him, participated in the opening of the ball; but he retired, grave, silent, and cold as ever, into the adjoining apartment which was destined for the private audience-room of the two sovereigns, and which none were permitted to enter but those whom the footmen of the king and the emperor expressly invited. As long as Alexander and Frederick William were in the large hall, they only desired to be the guests of their kind hosts, and affable and unassuming members of the party; no sooner, however, had they crossed the threshold of their audience-room than they were again the king and the emperor, whom no one was allowed to approach without being requested. From this audience-room a door, veiled by heavy velvet curtains, led into another apartment, where a small table, covered with the choicest cold viands, and the most exquisite and rare wines, had been set for the two sovereigns, and this small apartment led to the large supper-room that was again connected by a small room with the vast saloon. One of the long walls of this supper-room was occupied with an enormous buffet, loaded with the most select delicacies in colossal dishes of silver and porcelain, and beside which were large crystal bowls, filled with smoking punch or fragrant cardinal. In the remaining space was a number of small round tables ready for supper, at which those might take seats who desired to refresh themselves after the exhausting pleasures of the festival.

Alexander and Frederick William had retired into the audience-room, and sent for those persons whom they desired to distinguish particularly to-night. There were Majors von Lützow and Petersdorf, who had been invited to the honor of an audience which had been conferred even upon some of the volunteers, among them upon Baron la Motte Fouqué and Theodore Körner; and Alexander told them with charming enthusiasm of his sympathy for the heroic Prussian nation, and of his admiration of its glorious self-denial. He stated to Major von Lützow that, if he did not happen to be em-



peror, he would not allow any one to prevent him from volunteering in his Legion of Vengeance; and to Theodore Körner, in proof of the admiration he felt for his poems, he recited the first verses of his patriotic song, "*Frisch auf, mein Volk, die Flammenzeichen rauchen.*"

Frederick William contented himself with addressing a kind word, a brief salutation, to each of them, and then again moving toward the *portière*, looked at the motley crowd in the ball-room. Suddenly, while the two sovereigns were standing side by side, engaged in a familiar chat, and looking into the hall, an unusual commotion was noticed. All rushed toward the entrance of the hall, through which the two burgomasters had just stepped into the outer reception-room. Undoubtedly some one was expected, and moreover one whom all the guests were anxious to see and to welcome in the most enthusiastic manner.

The large folding-doors opened, and between the two burgomasters appeared the slender, firmly-knit form of General Blucher. Behind him was General Scharnhorst, escorting Madame von Blucher. Blucher advanced, with a winning smile on his fine, good-natured countenance, greeting the assembled guests by pleasantly nodding to the right and left. At first his polite salutations were returned in silence, but gradually there arose murmurs and whispers—the eyes which were fixed upon the hero's form grew more radiant, and soon cheers resounded through the whole hall—deafening shouts of "Long live Blucher!—Long live our hero, brave General Blucher!"

"A flourish!" shouted other voices to the musicians. The presiding burgomaster nodded smilingly, and waved his white handkerchief. The musicians made a loud flourish resound, and more deafening and jubilant became the shouts of "Long live Blucher!—Long live our hero!" Blucher bowed, confused and almost ashamed, and with so charming an expression of surprise and joy that this called forth a new outburst of tumultuous applause and enthusiasm.

The two sovereigns stood in the open door of the audience-room, and witnessed this strange and unexpected scene, Alexander smiling and apparently well pleased, Frederick William grave and with a slight shadow on his brow.

"Ah, sir," said Alexander, in a low and quick voice, "it seems to me the guests intend to make a little demonstration in honor of your general, and to give us a gentle hint whom

they would like to have appointed general-in-chief of the Silesian army."

"Indeed, it seems so," said Frederick William, morosely, "but I do not like such demonstrations, and they have no effect upon myself."

"But let us now greet the hero," exclaimed Alexander, smiling; "people ought to see that we share the general sympathy." He quickly stepped into the ballroom; the king followed him slowly and hesitatingly.

"Welcome, my dear General Blucher," said Alexander, offering his hand to the general, while the king saluted him merely with a nod. The hum and noise which hitherto filled the hall like the roar of the sea, immediately died away. Silence ensued; every one stood still as if riveted to his place; all eyes were turned in eager suspense and with breathless curiosity toward the group that stood in the middle of the hall; all tried to catch a word, a glance, in order to draw therefrom their own conclusions. And, amid this general silence, was heard the melodious voice of Alexander, who said again, "Welcome, my dear General Blucher! I am really glad to greet you, and to meet you again after so long an interval. I did not know, indeed, that you were here in Breslau; otherwise I would have called upon you."

"That would have been very gracious, and in accordance with the character of your majesty," said Blucher, loudly and firmly. "For your majesty is known never to forget those who are worthy of being remembered. All patriots have learned, with feelings of gratitude and enthusiasm, that your majesty, directly after your arrival, called upon that noble and intrepid German, Minister von Stein, who was living solitary, sick, and deserted, in his garret, and who, up to that time, only a few faithful friends and a few cowardly enemies had remembered." \*

These words, uttered in a loud and powerful voice, produced various effects. The Emperor Alexander smiled and bowed his head quickly and repeatedly; King Frederick Will-

\* Minister von Stein had arrived sick at Breslau, and lived, as stated above, in a small garret, which Major von Lützow had surrendered to him. Only his intimate friends visited him there, and this was the reason why Count St. Marsan, whom Field-Marshal Kalkreuth had informed of Stein's arrival at Breslau, did not believe in the truth of this information. Baron von Stein, however, received secretly many proofs of love and sympathy. The king alone took no notice of him, and the members of the court, too, were prohibited from entering into any relations with Stein. There was a change for the better, however, as soon as the Emperor of Russia arrived, and at once called upon Stein. Now all hastened to visit him, and overwhelmed him with protestations of devotion, which he rejected frequently with great asperity.



iam frowned slightly, and this authorized the gentlemen of his suite, who stood behind him, Field-Marshal Kalkreuth and General Knesebeck, to frown too, and cast angry glances at Blucher. Madame von Blucher, who had modestly kept somewhat in the background, turned very pale, and leaned tremblingly upon the arm of General Scharnhorst, who smiled and whispered, "Blucher is grand! He is a true fire-king among the will-o'-the-wisps!" The two burgomasters and the host of courtiers smiled when they glanced at the emperor, and looked grave and gloomy when they turned their eyes to the clouded brow of the king. Blucher, however, did not seem to notice the impression produced by his words, and looked around as composedly as if he had made a mere courtier's reply to the emperor's gracious salutation.

"I am happy to be one of Stein's friends," said Alexander, "but I do not think it requires particular courage to profess friendship for a magnanimous man whom all Germany reveres and admires."

"No, your majesty," said Blucher, calmly, "only a short time ago it required a great deal of courage for a German to profess friendship for Minister von Stein, for the Emperor Napoleon hates and fears him, and for this reason three-fourths of the Germans hate and fear him from humble respect for the Emperor of the French.—Is it not so?" added Blucher, suddenly turning to Field-Marshal Kalkreuth, who stood close behind the king, "is it not as I say? Do you not admit that I am right, Field-Marshal Kalkreuth?"

This question, which was addressed to a by-stander, with utter disregard of etiquette, caused the blood of the courtiers to freeze, and made Field-Marshal Kalkreuth turn purple with anger. The Emperor Alexander, however, burst into loud laughter, and, turning to the king, he whispered to him in a hurried, low voice, "You are right, sire, Blucher is a mad-cap, a genuine hussar, always ready to charge!" The king nodded, and as Alexander laughed, he forced himself also to smile a little. Field-Marshal Kalkreuth responded to Blucher's question only by a quick, angry glance and a gentle bow. "Well," said Alexander, turning again to Blucher, "I am satisfied, however, that you did not belong to the three-fourths of the Germans that hated and loved according to the wishes of the Emperor Napoleon, general?"

"No, your majesty," exclaimed Blucher, "I have always belonged to his most consistent and implacable enemies,

though I really owe him a great deal—nay, almost my life."

"How your life?" asked Alexander, in amazement. "Did the emperor ever save you from peril?"

"Yes, your majesty," said Blucher, casting a quick and fiery glance around the large circle of his audience, "the Emperor Napoleon did save me from a danger menacing my life. For, ever since the disastrous days of Tilsit, I was near dying of grief at the misfortunes of Prussia; and when our noble and august Queen Louisa died—our queen, who was so true and patriotic a German lady, and whose heart had been broken by the calamities that had befallen Prussia—I really thought a dagger had pierced my heart, and I would have to bleed to death. But then I comforted myself by remembering that Napoleon still lived, and that I ought to live, too, in order to see the day when the tyrant would be brought to judgment, and I felt strengthened by the conviction that God had destined me to be the instrument by whom He wanted to destroy Napoleon, and that I was intended to assist in delivering Germany and avenging Queen Louisa; and this thought, sire, kept me alive, invigorating and strengthening me; it rendered me again so young and ardent that I am yearning for the fray like a war-horse that has heard the bugle-call."

A murmur of applause was heard, and only the feeling of awe inspired by the presence of the two sovereigns seemed to restrain a tumultuous outburst of general sympathy. Every one looked with proud and joyful glances now at the aged general, whose noble face was full of courage and determination, and again at the Emperor Alexander, who seemed to contemplate the intrepid soldier with a sort of amazement.

A brief pause ensued, when the king approached Madame von Blucher, standing by the side of Scharnhorst. "Good-evening, madame," said the king, in a loud and somewhat harsh voice; "please tell me how old General Blucher is."

"Your majesty," said Madame von Blucher, making a profound obeisance, "according to his heart and strength, he is a youth; according to his certificate of birth, he is seventy-one years old."

"So old!" said the king; "Blucher so aged a man! But, it is true, his tongue is that of a stripling."

"Your majesty," said Blucher, quickly turning, "may it please the good God and my king to give me an opportunity to refute my certificate of birth, and to prove that I am a



vigorous, courageous lad, who knows how to use his sword as well as his tongue!"

"It is not sufficient, however, to know how to use the sword and the tongue, but one must know, too, how to restrain both," said the king, quickly turning and beckoning Field-Marshal Kalkreuth to his side, with whom he commenced chatting.

The Emperor Alexander laid his hand hastily on Blucher's shoulder, as if to soften and restrain the impending outburst of the general's anger, and, looking with a kind smile into his flushed face, he said: "restraint is not what suits you? Your motto is, 'Always forward!' And you believe it is time that all Germany, myself, and my army, should adopt this motto? Well, perhaps you are right, my dear general. At all events, it will be seen soon who are right, those who wish to procrastinate, or those who are in favor of immediate and decisive action."

He nodded pleasantly to Blucher, and then called General Scharnhorst to his side, turning, like the king, back to the audience-room. The guests who had crowded in breathless silence into the middle of the hall, dispersed again and returned to the adjoining rooms. Blucher escorted his wife to the gallery occupied by ladies, and then followed the burgomasters, who had solicited the honor of conducting him to the supper-room.

Frederick William's brow was gloomy and clouded, and he was even graver and more reticent than usual. He retired into the background of the room, addressing only now and then a few quick words to Field-Marshal Kalkreuth, who stood by his side. Alexander's countenance was serene and pleasant, and a smile played round his lips while he conversed eagerly with General Scharnhorst.

"You say, then, that Stein is of the same opinion?" asked Alexander, thoughtfully. "He thinks, too, that General Blucher should be preferred?"

"Yes, sire," said Scharnhorst, "this is the opinion of Minister von Stein, and, I may add, the opinion of every Prussian who has the happiness and greatness of the fatherland at heart. Sire, those who are in favor of a timid and vacillating policy, who would like to negotiate and compromise, who still believe in the possibility of a reconciliation with France, who still think that the pen should smoothen the rugged path before us, or unravel the knot of our difficul-

ties—those cowardly, grovelling hearts are the real enemies of our cause, and more dangerous than Napoleon with all his armies. For they are weighing down our courage, paralyzing our arms, and stifling our enthusiasm. But for them the king, who, in his modesty, is utterly unaware how fiery a soul, how great a heart he is possessed of, would have long since concluded an alliance with your majesty. But the king is unfortunately so modest that he distrusts himself, and subordinates his own opinion to that of his old and, as he believes, well-trying and faithful advisers. Now, these advisers are to blame for all the misfortunes of Prussia; they inveigled us into the alliance with France; they caused us to adhere to it, and would even now like to force us back into it. They would stifle the fire of patriotism because they are afraid lest it annihilate them and destroy their unworthy efforts. For this reason Blucher, with his heroic soul, is as much an eyesore to them as Stein, with his plans of liberation and his energetic action for constitutional reform. One wishes to create a new Prussia, the other a new state, and both these ideas are utterly distasteful to some, for they cling to the rotten old system, and new things fill them with terror."

Alexander listened to the words of Scharnhorst with the liveliest attention, and looked down musingly.

"Listen, general!" he said, in a low and hurried voice, glancing around the room as if to convince himself that no one could overhear his words, "reply honestly and sincerely to the following question: Is the King of Prussia sufficiently strong to cope with France for any length of time?"

"No," said Scharnhorst, firmly. "The army the king could place in the field would not be able to achieve a single victory over Napoleon. But the Prussian nation is strong, and arming itself for a struggle in which it will triumph, because no army can resist the will of a united people, and because God is an ally of the nations fighting for their liberty and their princes; but he who is audacious enough to endeavor to stifle the flame of this national enthusiasm, instead of bearing it aloft like an oriflamme in the van of the great army of liberation, would render himself guilty of a fearful sin. Prussia will conquer with her whole people, but she will succumb if she relies only on her army."

"It is true," said Alexander, thoughtfully, "the Prussian nation has manifested of late a wonderful enthusiasm, and has risen as one man. It has risen for its king and its honor,



and—do you not believe that it will fight equally well for both, whether Tautentzien, Kalkreuth, or Blucher, be its chieftain?"

"No, sire," said Scharnhorst, quickly; "I know that it will not. The people, with their quick and unerring instinct, know those very well in whom they may confide, and I request your majesty to take graciously into consideration that it is this time the people that must render Prussia victorious. It is true, the regiments of volunteers that have already been organized would not disband, even though Kalkreuth or Tautentzien should be appointed general-in-chief of the Prussian or Silesian army, but the regiments that have not yet been organized and equipped will hesitate and retire, unless they know that a general will command them who has sworn unending hatred to the Emperor Napoleon, and who will die a thousand times on the battle-field rather than conclude peace and a new alliance with him. Now, such a general is Blucher, the youth of seventy, a modern knight 'without fear and without reproach.' If he stands at the head of our army, the Prussian people will rally exultingly round the standards, and the diminished regiments be replaced by new ones that will rush into the field, because they know that there is at their head a hero in whose breast there is room for only two sentiments—love of country and hatred of the French; and who serves, without fear, his God, his king, and his fatherland, impelled by this very hatred and love, without any secondary motives—nay, perhaps, even without personal ambition."

"If Blucher is really such a hero as you depict him," cried Alexander, "it would be a crime not to place him at the head of the Silesian army. Had you told the king all you have told me, he would certainly not have hesitated a moment as to the general who should be appointed commander-in-chief."

"Sire, I did tell him all that my heart and my head prompted me, and to-day at noon I was still convinced that the king would appoint General Blucher as soon as he should have satisfied himself that he thereby would not act contrary to the will and wishes of your majesty. But the little scene at the hall a few minutes ago has unfortunately shaken my conviction, for the king seemed offended at the rough and somewhat impetuous bearing of the hussar general."

"And this very bearing of the hussar general, as you call Blucher, has impressed me very favorably, for he who relies so firmly on his own strength must feel sure of victory. I

like to see, towering above the crowd of the fawning courtiers surrounding us, men who do not bend their backs, nor sink into the dust, before our so-called 'divine rights,' but who stand erect, and fear no one, because they are true to themselves."

"If that is the opinion of your majesty, then I am at liberty to confess that I share it," said a voice behind him; and when the emperor turned, he met the smiling gaze of the king, who had approached during the conversation with Scharnhorst, and, as he did not wish to interrupt it, listened to its conclusion without being noticed by the two speakers.

"What!" asked Alexander, offering his hand to the king. "Your majesty, then, is of my opinion—you like, too, the men who sometimes allow us to see their brow instead of their reverentially-bent back, and who tell us the truth instead of those eternal, perfumed flatteries?"

"Certainly, sire," said the king, gently bowing his head. "It is true, the truth is sometimes a somewhat bitter medicine, but it restores our health, while sweet flatteries spoil our taste and ruin our stomach."

"And we must really have a healthy stomach to digest the hard fare of these times!" exclaimed Alexander, smiling. "Scharnhorst thinks that Blucher would be a good physician for our stomachs. That is your opinion, general, is it not?"

"Sire, he is at least a physician who will not resort to palliatives," said Scharnhorst, "but will immediately try to eradicate the evil by a thorough operation."

"But I have been told that a great many patients have died in consequence of operations, when they might have lived a long time if they had borne their ills with patience and resignation," said the king, growing again gloomy and thoughtful.

The emperor laid his hand on the shoulder of his royal friend. "But who would prefer a life on the sick-bed to the quick and glorious death of a hero on the field of honor?" he said, feelingly. "Not you, my august friend, I know; and even better than to me it is known to the angel who is hovering over you, and whose earthly eyes were closed in grief. But," Alexander interrupted himself, "these are thoughts that are unsuitable for a festival, and I beg your majesty's pardon for having ventured to indulge in them."

"Still, they are the thoughts that always accompany and never leave me, sire," said the king. "True, I have overcome



my grief, but I will never learn to forget. At the present time I am thinking of my Louisa with redoubled longing. How her heart would have rejoiced over the renewal of an alliance which she so fervently desired, and how the noble spirit of the nation would have delighted and inspired her!"

"The noble queen, I believe, was also a warm friend of General Blucher, was she not?" asked the emperor, after a pause. "I believe she belonged to those who expected a great deal from him, and thought him a hero and a powerful enemy of Napoleon? Is it not so, sire?"

"Yes," said the king, thoughtfully, "the queen had a great regard for Blucher, and considered him a brave and faithful patriot."

"And what did she think of Field-Marshal Kalkreuth?" asked Alexander, with seeming carelessness. "Did he belong to those, too, in whom the queen confided, and from whom she expected the salvation of the fatherland?"

The king quickly looked up and met for a moment the searching gaze which the emperor fixed on him. Frederick William smiled, and inclined his head, as if he well understood the emperor's question. "No," he said, "Queen Louisa rarely approved of the views of the field-marshal, and although she felt high esteem for the general who had already shown himself a brave man under the great Frederick, she did not agree with the predilection he manifested for the Emperor Napoleon and his *invincible* armies."

"A predilection," exclaimed Alexander, smiling, "which I believe the field-marshal has not yet got rid of, notwithstanding the experience which Napoleon gained on the battle-fields of Russia."

"On the same battle-fields on which your majesty gathered new laurels," said the king, bowing slightly.

"And now there will spring up real laurel-woods for your majesty here in Germany!" exclaimed the emperor. "The only question for us now is, to find the right sort of gardener who knows how to cultivate them. But, I repeat, our thoughts are not suitable to this festival. Come, sire, permit me to offer you my arm as your cavalier, and to conduct you to the buffet, for how exalted soever our position may be, we must not forget that we are men, and that our stomachs sometimes need food."

He offered his arm to the king, and conducted him to the small supper-hall adjoining the audience-room. The gentle-

men who were present followed them, and the chamberlains hurried to the sideboard to have supper served up to the two sovereigns.

## CHAPTER XXX.

## THE APPOINTMENT.

ALEXANDER took a seat by the king's side at the small table, loaded with a heavy gold service, set for them alone near the door, which was covered with a heavy *portière*, and led into the large supper-hall. The emperor and the king had just put upon their plates some of the appetizing *pâté de foie gras* which the master of ceremonies himself had served up, and were proceeding like other mortals to consume them with great relish. The cavaliers, improving the opportune moment of silence, stood about the room and partook of the viands taken from the sideboard. Suddenly this silence was interrupted by a voice which was not uttered in the room itself, but swept through it like the blast of a trumpet: "If this hesitation and vacillation continue, all is lost; and it would then be better for us to throw ourselves immediately at the feet of Bonaparte, and crave quarter, than unnecessarily spill the precious blood of the people, and at last submit. He who does not advance goes backward without noticing it, and he who is not courageous enough to attack, is vanquished even before his adversary has forced him to battle."

"Why," exclaimed Alexander, smiling, "these are sentences that remind me of General Blucher."

"Your majesty is right, it is his voice," said the king; "he will give vent to his indignation, and, perhaps, at our expense. Let us not listen to him."

"On the contrary, I beg your majesty's kind permission to listen," said Alexander, pleasantly. "There is in the words of the general something that is as refreshing as a pure wind dispelling unhealthy vapors. Ah, hear him, sire; his tones are roaring like a hurricane."

In fact, the voice in the adjoining room had grown more violent, and the Emperor Alexander was seated in such a manner that he could distinctly hear every word uttered:

"What! you really believe it to be possible that they will appoint Field-Marshal Kalkreuth general-in-chief, and intrust