JOSEPH II.

AND HIS COURT.

BY L. MÜHLBACH.

From the German,
BY ADELAIDE De V. CHAUDRON.

VOLUME I.

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MARIA THERESA.

CHAPTER I.

THE CONFERENCE.

In the council-chamber of the Empress Maria Theresa, the six lords, who composed her cabinet-council, awaited the entrance of their imperial mistress to open the sitting.

At this sitting, a great political question was to be discussed; and its gravity seemed to be reflected in the faces of the lords, as in low tones, they whispered together in the dim spacious apartment, whose antiquated furniture of dark velvet tapestry corresponded well with the anxious looks of its occupants.

In the centre of the room stood the Baron Von Bartenstein and the Count Von Uhlefeld, the two powerful statesmen, who for thirteen years had been honored by the confidence of the Empress. Together they stood, their consequence acknowledged by all, while with proud and lofty mien they whispered of state secrets.

Upon the fair, smooth face of Bartenstein appeared an expression of haughty triumph, which he was at no pains to conceal; and over the delicate mouth of Von Uhlefeld fluttered a smile of ineffable complacency.

"I feel perfectly secure," whispered Von Bartenstein. "The Empress will certainly renew the treaties, and continue the policy, which we both have hitherto pursued, with such brilliant results to Austria."

"The Empress is wise," returned Uhlefeld. "She can reckon upon our staunch support, and so long as she pursues this policy, we will sustain her."

While he spoke, there shot from his eyes such a glance of conscious power, that the two lords who from the recess of a neighboring window, were watching the imperial favorites, were completely dazzled.

"See Count," murmured one to the other, "see how Count Uhlefeld

smiles to day. Doubtless he knows already what the decision of the Empress is to be; and that it is in accordance with his wishes, no one can doubt, who looks upon him now."

"It will be well for us," replied Count Colloredo, "to subscribe unconditionally to the opinions of the Lord-Chancellor. I, for my part, will do so all the more readily, that I confess to you my utter ignorance of the question that is to come before us to-day. I was really so preoccupied at our last sitting that I—I failed exactly to comprehend its nature. I think, therefore, that it will be well for us to vote with Count Von Uhlefeld—that is, if the President of the Aulic Council, Count Harrach, does not entertain other opinions."

Count Harrach bowed. "As for me," sighed he, "I must, as usual, vote with Count Bartenstein. His, will be as it ever is, the decisive voice of the day; and its echo will be heard from the lips of the Empress. Let us echo them both, and so be the means of helping to crush the presumption of yonder crafty and arrogant courtier."

As he spoke he glanced towards the massive table of carved oak, around which were arranged the leather arm-chairs of the members of the Aulic Council. Count Colloredo followed the glance of his friend, which with a supercilious expression, rested upon the person to whom he alluded. This person was seated in one of the chairs, deeply absorbed in the perusal of the papers that lay before him upon the table. He was a man of slight and elegant proportions, whose youthful face contrasted singularly with the dark, manly, and weather-beaten countenances of the other members of the council. Not a fault marred the beauty of this fair face: not the shadow of a wrinkle ruffled the polish of the brow; even the lovely mouth itself was free from those lines by which thought and care are wont to mark the passage of man through life. One thing, however, was wanting to this beautiful countenance. It was devoid of expression. Those delicate features were immobile and stony. Not a trace of emotion stirred the compressed lips; no shadow of thought flickered over the high, marble brow; and the glance of those clear, light, blue eyes was as calm, cold, and unfeeling as those of a statue. This young man, with Medusa-like beauty, was Anthony Wenzel Von Kaunitz, whom Maria Theresa had lately recalled from Paris to take his seat in her cabinet-council.

The looks of Harrach and Colloredo were directed towards him, but he appeared not to observe them, and went on quietly with his examination of the state papers.

"You think then, Count," whispered Colloredo, thoughtfully, "that young Kaunitz cherishes the absurd hope of an alliance with France?"

"I am sure of it—I know that a few days ago the French ambassador delivered to him a most affectionate missive, from his friend the Marquise de Pompadour; and I know too, that yesterday he replied to it in similar strain. It is his fixed idea, and that of La Pompadour also, to drive Austria into a new line of policy, by making her the ally of France."

Count Colloredo laughed. "The best cure that I know of for *fixed*

ideas is the madhouse," replied he. "And thither we will send little Kaunitz if——"

He ceased suddenly, for Kaunitz had slowly raised his eyes from the table, and they now rested with such an icy gaze upon the smiling face of Colloredo, that the frightened statesman shivered.

"If he should have heard me!" murmured he. "If he——" but the poor Count had no further time for reflection; for at that moment the folding-doors leading to the private apartments of the Empress were thrown open, and the Lord High Steward announced the approach of her Majesty.

The councilors advanced to the table, and in respectful silence awaited the imperial entrance.

The rustling of silk was heard; and then the quick step of the Countess Fuchs, whose duty it was to accompany the Empress to the threshold of her council-chamber, and to close the door behind her.

And now appeared the majestic figure of the Empress. The lords laid their hands upon their swords, and inclined their heads in reverence before the imperial lady, who with light, elastic step advanced to the table, while the Countess Fuchs noiselessly closed the door, and retired.

The Empress smilingly acknowledged the salutation, though her smile was lost to her respectful subjects, who in obedience to the strict Spanish etiquette which prevailed at the Austrian Court, remained with their heads bent, until the sovereign had taken her seat upon the throne.

One of these subjects had bent his head with the rest, but he had ventured to raise it again, and he at least met the glance of royalty. This bold subject was Kaunitz, the youngest of the councilors.

He gazed at the advancing Empress, and for the first time a smile flitted over his stony features. And well might the sight of his sovereign lady stir the marble heart of Kaunitz, for Maria Theresa was one of the loveliest women of her day. Though thirty-six years of age, and the mother of thirteen children, she was still beautiful, and the Austrians were proud to excess of her beauty. Her high, thoughtful forehead was shaded by a profusion of blond hair, which lightly powdered and gathered up behind in one rich mass, was there confined by a golden net. Her large, starry eyes were of that peculiar grey which changes with every emotion of the soul; at one time seeming to be heavenly blue; at another the darkest and most flashing brown. Her bold profile betokened great pride; but every look of haughtiness was softened away by the enchanting expression of a mouth, in whose exquisite beauty no trace of the so-called "Austrian lip" could be seen. Her figure, loftier than is usual with women, was of faultless symmetry, while her graceful bust would have seemed to the eyes of Praxiteles the waking to life of his own dreams of Juno.

Those who looked upon this beautiful Empress, could well realize the emotions which thirteen years before had stirred the hearts of the Hungarian Nobles, as she stood before them, and had wrought them up to that height of enthusiasm which culminated in the well-known shout of

"MORIAMOR PRO REGI NOSTRA."

"Our King!" cried the Hungarians, and they were right. For Maria Theresa, who with her husband, was the tender wife, towards her children, the loving mother, was in all that related to her empire, her people, and her sovereignty, a man both in the scope of her comprehension and the strength of her will. She was capable of sketching bold lines of policy, and of following them out without reference to personal predilections or prejudices, both of which she was fully competent to stifle, wherever they threatened interference with the good of her realm, or her sense of duty as a sovereign.

The energy and determination of her character were written upon the lofty brow of Maria Theresa, and now as she approached her councilors, these characteristics beamed forth from her countenance with such power and such beauty, that Kaunitz himself was overawed, and for one moment a smile lit up his cold features.

No one saw this smile except the imperial lady that had waked the Memnon into life, and in return for the compliment, she slightly bent her Juno head, as she took her seat upon the throne.

Now with her clear and sonorous voice, she invited her councilors also to be seated; and at once reached out her hand for the memoranda which Count Bartenstein had prepared for her examination.

She glanced quickly over the papers, and laid them aside. "My Lords of the Aulic Council," said she, in tones of deep earnestness, "we have to-day a question of gravest import to discuss. I crave thereunto your attention and advice. We are at this sitting to deliberate upon the future policy of Austria, and deeply significant will be the result of this day's deliberations to Austria's welfare. Some of our old treaties are about to expire. Time, which has somewhat moderated the bitterness of our enemies, seems also to have weakened the amity of our friends. Both are dying away; and the question now before us is, whether we shall extinguish enmity, or rekindle friendship. For seventy years past, England, Holland, and Sardinia have been our allies. For three hundred years, France has been our hereditary enemy. Shall we renew our alliance with the former powers, or seek new relations with the latter? Let me have your views my Lords."

With these concluding words, Maria Theresa waved her hand, and pointed to Count Uhlefeld. The Lord Chancellor arose, and with a dignified inclination of the head, responded to the appeal.

"Since your Majesty permits me to speak, I vote without hesitation for the renewal of our treaty with the Maritime Powers. For seventy years our relations with these powers have been amicable and honorable. In our days of greatest extremity—when Louis XIV took Alsatia and the City of Strasburg, and his ally, the Turkish Sultan, besieged Vienna—when two powerful enemies threatened Austria with destruction, it was this alliance with the Maritime Powers and with Sardinia, which next to the succor of the generous King of Poland, saved the Austrian Empire from ruin. The brave Sobieski saved our capital, and Savoy held Lombardy in check, while England and Holland guarded the Neth-

erlands, which since the days of Philip II have ever been the nest of rebellion and revolt. We owe it therefore to this alliance that your Majesty still reigns over these seditious provinces. To Savoy we are indebted for Lombardy; while France! perfidious France has not only robbed us of our territory, but to this day, asserts her right to its possession. No, your Majesty! So long as France retains that which belongs to Austria, Austria will neither forgive her enmity nor forget it. See, on the contrary, how the Maritime Powers have befriended us. It was *their* gold that enabled us first to withstand France, and afterwards Prussia—*their* gold that filled your Majesty's coffers—*their* gold that sustained and confirmed the prosperity of your Majesty's dominions. This is the alliance that I advocate, and with all my heart I vote for its renewal. It is but just that the Princes and Rulers of Earth should give example to the world of good faith in their dealings, for the integrity of the sovereign is a pledge to all nations of the integrity of his people."

Count Uhlefeld resumed his seat, and after him rose the powerful favorite of the Empress, Count Bartenstein, who in a long and animated address, came vehemently to the support of Uhlefeld.

Then came Counts Colloredo and Harrach, and the Lord High Steward, Count Khevenhüller—all unanimous for a renewal of the old treaty. Not one of these rich and proud nobles would have dared to breathe a sentiment in opposition to the two powerful statesmen that had spoken before them. Bartenstein and Uhlefeld had passed the word. The alliance must continue with those maritime powers, from whose subsidies such unexampled wealth had flowed into the coffers of Austria, and—— those of the Lords of the Exchequer. For up to the times of which we write, it was a fundamental doctrine of court faith, that the task of inquiry into the accounts of the imperial treasury, was one far beneath the dignity of the sovereign. The Lords of the Exchequer, therefore, were responsible to nobody for their administration of the funds arising from the Dutch and English subsidies.

It was natural then, that the majority of the Aulic Council should vote for the old alliance. While they argued and voted, Kaunitz, the least important personage of them all, sat perfectly unconcerned, paying not the slightest attention to the wise deductions of his colleagues. He seemed much occupied in straitening loose papers, mending his pen, and removing with his finger-tips, the tiny specks that flecked the lustre of his velvet coat. Once, while Bartenstein was delivering his long address, Kaunitz carried his indifference so far as to draw out his repeater, (on which was painted a portrait of La Pompadour set in diamonds,) and to strike the hour! The musical ring of the little bell sounded a fairy accompaniment to the deep and earnest tones of Bartenstein's voice; while Kaunitz, seeming to hear nothing else, held the watch up to his ear and counted its strokes.* The Empress, who was accustomed to visit the the least manifestation of such inattention on the part of her councilors with open censure, the Empress, so observant of form, and so exacting

* Vide Kormayr, Austrian Plutarch, 12 vol., page 352.

"Our King!" cried the Hungarians, and they were right. For Maria Theresa, who with her husband, was the tender wife, towards her children, the loving mother, was in all that related to her empire, her people, and her sovereignty, a man both in the scope of her comprehension and the strength of her will. She was capable of sketching bold lines of policy, and of following them out without reference to personal predilections or prejudices, both of which she was fully competent to stifle, wherever they threatened interference with the good of her realm, or her sense of duty as a sovereign.

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*Vide Kormayr, Austrian Plutarch, 12 vol., page 356.

of its observance in others, seemed singularly indulgent to-day; for while Kaunitz was listening to the music of his watch, his imperial mistress looked on with half a smile. At last when the fifth orator had spoken, and it became the turn of Kaunitz to vote, Maria Theresa turned her flashing eyes upon him, with a glance of anxious and appealing expectation.

As her look met his, how had all coldness and unconcern vanished from his face! How glowed his eyes with the lustre of great and world-swaying thoughts, as rising from his chair, he returned the gaze of his sovereign with one that seemed almost to crave forbearance.

But Kaunitz had almost preternatural control over his emotions, and he recovered himself at once.

"I cannot vote for a renewal of our worn-out alliance with the Maritime Powers," said he, in a clear and determined voice. As he uttered these words, looks of astonishment and disapprobation were visible upon the faces of his colleagues. The Lord Chancellor contented himself with a contemptous shrug, and a supercilious smile. Kaunitz perceived it, and met both shrug and smile with undisturbed composure, while calmly and slowly he repeated his offending words. For a moment he paused, as if to give time to his hearers to test the flavor of his new and startling language. Then firm and collected he went on:

"Our alliance with England and Holland has long been a yoke and a humiliation to Austria. If in its earlier days, this alliance ever afforded us protection, dearly have we paid for that protection, and we have been forced to buy it with fearful sacrifices to our national pride. Not for one moment have these two powers allowed us to forget that we have been dependent upon their bounty for money and defence. Jealous of the growing power and affluence of Austria, before whose youthful and vigorous career, lies the glory of future greatness—jealous of our increasing wealth, jealous of the splendor of Maria Theresa's reign; these powers, whose faded laurels are buried in the grave of the past, have compassed sea and land to stop the flow of our prosperity, and sting the pride of our nationality. With their tyrannical commercial edicts, they have dealt injury to friends as well as foes. The closing of the Scheldt and Rhine, the Barrier treaty, and all the other restrictions upon trade devised by those crafty English to damage the traffic of other nations, all these compacts have been made as binding upon Austria as upon every other European power. Unmindful of their alliance with us, the maritime powers have closed their ports against our ships; and while affecting to watch the Netherlands in our behalf, they have been nothing better than spies, seeking to discover whether our flag transcended in the least the limits of our own blockaded frontiers; and whether to any but to themselves, accrued the profits of trade with the Baltic and North Seas. *Vraiment*, such friendship lies heavily upon us, and its weight feels almost like that of enmity. Not long ago, at Aix-la-Chapelle, I had to remiud the English ambassador that his unknightly and arrogant bearing towards Austria was unseemly both to the sex and majesty of

Austria's Empress. And our august sovereign herself, not long since, saw fit to reprove the insolence of this same British envoy, who in her very presence spoke of the Netherlands as though they had been a boon to Austria from England's clemency. Incensed at the tone of this representative of our *friends*, the Empress exclaimed, 'Am I not ruler in the Netherlands as well as in Vienna? Do I hold my right of empire from England and Holland.' "*

"Yes," interrupted Maria Theresa impetuously, "yes, I spoke thus. The arrogance of these royal traders has provoked me beyond all bearing. I will no longer permit them to insinuate of my own imperial rights, that I hold them as favors from the hand of any earthly power. It chafes the pride of an Empress-Queen to be *called* a friend and *treated* as a vassal; and I intend that these proud allies shall feel that I resent their affronts."

It was wonderful to see the effect of these impassioned words upon the auditors of the Empress. They quaked, as they thought how they had voted, and their awe-stricken faces were pallid with fright. Uhlefeld and Bartenstein exchanged glances of amazement and dismay; while the other nobles, like adroit courtiers, fixed their looks, with awakening admiration, upon Kaunitz, in whom their experienced eyes were just discovering the rising luminary of a new political firmament.

He, meanwhile, had inclined his head and smiled, when the Empress had interrupted him. She ceased, and after a short pause, Kaunitz resumed, with unaltered equanimity: "Your Majesty has been graciously pleased to testify, in your own sovereign person, to the tyranny of our two Northern Allies. It remains, therefore, to speak of Sardinia alone; Sardinia who *held Lombardy in check.* No sooner had Victor Amadeus put his royal signature to the treaty made by him with Austria, than he turned to his confidantes and said—loud enough for us to hear him in Vienna: 'Lombardy is mine. I will take it, but I shall eat it up, leaf by leaf, like an artichoke.' And methinks his majesty of Sardinia has proved himself to be a good trencherman. He has already swallowed several leaves of his artichokes, in that he is master of several of the fairest provinces of Lombardy. It is true that this royal gourmand has laid aside his crown; and that in his place reigns Victor Emanuel, of whom Lord Chesterfield, in a burst of enthusiasm, has said, 'That he never did and never will commit an act of injustice.' Concede that Victor Emmanuel is the soul of honor, still," added Kaunitz with a shake of the head, and an incredulous smile, "still—the Italian princes are abominable geographers, and they are inordinately fond of artichokes.† Now their fondness for this vegetable is as dangerous to Austria, as the too-loving grasp of her Northern allies; who with their friendly hands not only close their ports against us, but lay the weight of their favors so heavily upon our heads as to force us down upon our knees before them. What have we from England and Holland but their subsidies? And

* Coxe: History of the house of Austria, vol. 5, p. 51.
† Kaunitz' own words. Kormayr, Austrian Plutarch, 11th vol.

Austria can now afford to relinquish them—Austria is rich, powerful, prosperous enough to be allowed to proffer her friendship where it will be honorably returned. Austria then must be freed from her oppressive alliance with the Maratime Powers. She has youth and vitality enough to shake off this bondage, and strike for the new path that shall lead her to greatness and glory. There is a moral and intangible greatness of whose existence these trading Englishmen have no conception, but which the refined and elevated people of France are fully competent to appreciate. France extends to us her hand, and offers us alliance on terms of equality. Co-operating with France we shall defy the enmity of all Europe. With our two-edged sword we shall turn the scales of futuro European strife, and make peace or war for other nations. France too, is our natural ally, for she is our neighbor. And she is more than this, for she is our ally by the sacred unity of one Faith. The Holy Father at Rome, who blesses the arms of Austria, will no longer look sorrowfully upon Austria's league with heresy. When apostolic France and we are one, the blessings of the Church will descend upon our alliance. Religion therefore, as well as honest statesmanship, call for the treaty with France."

"And I," cried Maria Theresa, rising quickly from her seat, her eyes glowing with enthuasiastic fire, "I vote joyfully with Count Kaunitz. I too, vote for alliance with France. The Count has spoken as it stirs my heart to hear an Austrian speak. He loves his Fatherland, and in his devotion, he casts far from him all thought of worldly profit or advancement. I tender him my warmest thanks, and I will take his words to heart."

Overcome with the excitement of the moment, the Empress reached her hand to Kaunitz, who eagerly seized, and pressed it to his lips.

Count Uhlefeld watched this extraordinary scene with astonishment and consternation. Bartenstein, so long the favorite minister of Maria Theresa, was deadly pale, and his lips were compressed as though he were trying to suppress a burst of rage. Harrach, Colloredo, and Khevenhüller hung their heads, while they turned over in their little minds how best to curry favor with the new minister.

The Empress saw nothing of the dismayed faces around her. Her soul was filled with high emotions, and her countenance beamed gloriously with the fervor of her boundless patriotism.

"Everything for Austria. My heart, my soul, my life, all are for my Fatherland," said Maria Theresa, with her beautiful eyes raised to Heaven. "And now my lords," added she, after a pause, "I must retire to beg light and counsel from the Almighty. I have learned your different views on the great question of this day; and when Heaven shall have taught me what to do, I will decide."

She waved her hand in parting salutation, and with her loftiest imperial bearing, left the room.

Until the doors were closed, the Lords of the Council remained standing with inclined heads. Then they looked from one to another with

faces of wonder and inquiry. Kaunitz alone looked unembarrassed; and gathering up his papers with as much unconcern as if nothing had happened, he slightly bent his head and left the room.

Never before had any member of the Aulic Council dared to leave that room until the Lord Chancellor had given the signal of departure! It was a case of unparalled violation of Court etiquette. Count Uhlefeld was aghast, and Bartenstein seemed crushed. Without exchanging a word, the two friends rose also, and with eyes cast down, and faces pale with the anguish of that hour, together they left the council-chamber, towards which not long before they had repaired with hearts and bearing so triumphant.

Colloredo and Harrach followed silently to the ante-room, and bowed deferentially as their late masters passed through.

But no sooner had the door closed, than the two courtiers exchanged malicious smiles.

"Fallen favorites," laughed Harrach. "Quenched lights, that yesterday shone like suns, and to-day are burnt to ashes. There is to be a soireé to-night at Bartenstein's. For the first time in eleven years I shall stay away from Bartenstein's soirees."

"And I," replied Colloredo, laughing, "had invited Uhlefeld for to-morrow. But as the entertainment was all in his honor, I shall be taken with a suddeu indisposition, and countermand my supper."

"That will be a most summary proceeding," said Harrach. "I see then that you believe the sun of Uhlefeld and Bartenstein has set forever."

"I am convinced of it. They have their death-blow."

"And the rising sun? You think it will be called Kaunitz?"

"*Will* be? It is called Kaunitz, so take my advice. Kaunitz, I know, is not a man to be bribed, but he has two weaknesses—women and horses. You are for the present, the favorite of La Fortina; and yesterday you won from Count Esterhazy, an Arabian, which Kaunitz says, is the finest horse in Vienna. If I were you, I would present to him both my mistress and my horse. Who knows but what these courtesies may induce him to adopt you as a protégé?"

CHAPTER II.

THE LETTER.

From her cabinet council, the Empress passed at once to her private apartments. When business was over for the day, she loved to cast all cares of sovereignty behind, and become a woman—chatting gayly

with her ladies of honor over the *on dits* of the court and city. During the hours devoted to her toilet, Maria Theresa gave herself unreservedly up to irresponsible enjoyment. But she was so impetuous, that her ladies of honor were never quite secure that some little annoyance would not ruffle the serenity of her temper. The young girl whose duty it was to read aloud to the Empress and dress her hair, used to declare that she would sooner wade through three hours worth of Latin despatches from Hungary, than spend one half hour as imperial hair-dresser.

But to-day, as she entered her dressing-room, the eyes of the Empress beamed with pleasure, and her mouth was wreathed with sunny smiles. The little hair-dresser was delighted, and with responsive smile took her place, and prepared for her important duties. Maria Theresa glided into the chair, and with her own hands began to unfasten the golden net that confined her hair. She then leaned forward, and with a pleased expression, contemplated the beautiful face that looked out from the silver-framed Venetian glass before which she sat.

"Make me very charming to-day, Charlotte,"* said she.

"Your majesty needs no help from me to look charming," said the gentle voice of the little tire-woman. "No hair-dresser had lent you her aid on that day when your Magyar Nobles swore to die for you, and yet the world says that never were eyes of loyal subjects dazzled by such beauty and such grace."

"Ah yes, child, but that was thirteen years ago. Thirteen years! How many cares have lain upon my heart since that day. If my face is wrinkled, and my hair grown gray, I may thank that hateful King of Prussia, for he is the cause of it all."

"If he has no greater sins to repent of than those two," replied Charlotte, with an admiring smile, "he may sleep soundly. Your majesty's forehead is unruffled by a wrinkle, and your hair is as glossy and as brown as ever it was."

Brighter still was the smile of the Empress as she turned quickly around and exclaimed, "Then you think that I have still beauty enough to please the Emperor? If you do, make good use of it to-day, for I have something of importance to ask of him, and I long to find favor in his eyes. To work then—Charlotte, and be quick, for——"

At that moment, the silken hangings before the door of the dressing-room were drawn hastily aside, and the Countess Fuchs stepped forward.

"Ah Countess," continued the Empress, "you are just in time for a cabinet toilet council."

But the lady of honor showed no disposition to respond to the gay greeting of her sovereign. With stiffest Spanish ceremonial, she curtsied deeply. "Pardon me, your majesty, if I interrupt you," said she solemnly, "but I have something to communicate to yourself alone."

Oh, Countess!" exclaimed Maria Theresa, anxiously, "you look as if you bore me evil tidings. But speak out—Charlotte knows as many State secrets as you do; you need not be reserved before her."

* Charlotte Von Hieronymus was the mother of Caroline Pichler.

"Pardon me," again said the ceremonious lady, with another deep curtsey, "I bring no news of State, I must speak with your majesty alone."

The eyes of the Empress dilated with fear. "No State secret," murmured she, "oh what can it be then! Go Charlotte—go child, and remain until I recall you."

The door closed behind the tire-woman, and the Empress cried out, "Now we are alone—be quick and speak out what you have to say. You have come to give me pain—I feel it—I feel it!"

"Your majesty ordered me sometime since," began the Countess in her low unsympathising tones, "to watch the imperial household; so that nothing might transpire within it that came not to the knowledge of your majesty. I have lately watched the movements of the Emperor's valet."

"Ah," cried the Empress, clasping her hands convulsively together, "you watched him, and——"

"Yes, your majesty, I watched him, and I was informed this morning that he had left the Emperor's apartments with a sealed note in his hands, and had gone into the city."

"No more—just yet," said the Empress with trembling lip. "Give me air; I cannot breathe." With wild emotion she tore open her velvet boddice, and heaving a deep sigh, she signed to the Countess to go on.

"My spy awaited Gaspardi's return, and stopped him. He was forbidden, in the name of your majesty, to go further."

"Go on."

"He was brought to me, your majesty, and now awaits your orders."

"So that if there is an answer to the note, he has it," said Maria Theresa, sharply. The Countess bowed.

"Where is he?"

"In the anti-chamber, your majesty."

The Empress bounded from her seat, and walked across the room. Her face was flushed with anger, and she trembled in every limb. She seemed undecided what to do; but at last she stopped suddenly and blushing deeply, without looking at the Countess she said in a low voice, "Bring him hither."

The Countess disappeared and returned, followed by Gaspardi.

Maria Theresa strode impetuously forward, and bent her threatening eyes upon the valet. But the shrewd Italian knew better than to meet the lightening glances of an angry Empress. With downcast looks, and reverential obeisance, he awaited her commands.

"Look at me, Gaspardi," said she, in tones that sounded in the valet's ears like distant thunder. "Answer my questions, sir."

Gaspardi raised his eyes.

"To whom was the note addressed that was given you by the Emperor this morning?"

"Your majesty, I did not presume to look at it," replied Gaspardi, quietly. "His imperial majesty was pleased to tell me where to take it, and that sufficed me."

"And whither did you take it?"

"Imperial majesty, I have forgotten the house."

"What street then?"

"Pardon me, imperial majesty; these dreadful German names are too hard for my Italian tongue. As soon as I had obeyed his majesty's commands, I forgot the name of the street."

"So that you are resolved not to tell me where you went with the Emperor's note?"

"Indeed, imperial majesty, I have totally forgotten."

The Empress looked as if she longed to annihilate this menial, who defied her so successfully.

"I see," exclaimed she, "that you are crafty and deceitful, but you shall not escape me. I command you, as your sovereign, to give up the note you bear about you for the Emperor. I, myself, will deliver it to his majesty."

Gaspardi gave a start, and unconsciously his hand sought the place where the note was concealed. He turned very pale and stammered: "Imperial majesty, I have no letter for the Emperor."

"You have it there!" thundered the infuriated Empress, as with threatening hand she pointed to the valet's breast. "Deliver it at once, or I will call my lackeys to search you."

"Your majesty forces me then to betray my Lord and Emperor?" asked Gaspardi, trembling.

"You serve him more faithfully by relinquishing the letter than by retaining it," returned Maria Theresa, hastily. "Once more I command you to give it up."

Gaspardi heaved a sigh of anguish, and looked imploringly at the Empress. But in the trembling lips, the flashing eyes, the flushed cheeks that met his entreating glance, he saw no symptoms of relenting, and he dared the strife no longer. His hand shook as he drew forth the letter and held it towards the Empress.

She uttered a cry, and with the fury of a lioness she snatched the paper and crushed it in her hand.

"Your majesty," whispered the Countess, "dismiss the valet before he learns too much. He might——"

"Woe to him if he breathes a word to one human being," cried the Empress, with menacing gesture. "Woe to him if he dares to breathe one word to his master!"

"Heaven forbid that I should betray the secrets of my sovereign!" cried the affrighted Gaspardi. "But, imperial majesty, what am I to say to my lord, the Emperor?"

"You will tell your lord that you brought no answer, and it will not be the first lie with which you befool his imperial ears," replied Maria Theresa, contemptously, while she waved her hand as a signal of dismissal. The unhappy Mercury retired, and as he disappeared, the pent up anguish of the Empress burst forth.

"Ah Margaretta!" cried she, in accents of wildest grief, "what an un-

fortunate woman I am. In all my life I have loved but one man! My heart, my soul, my every thought are his, and he robs me, the mother of his children, of *his* love, and bestows it upon another!"

"Perhaps the inconstancy is but momentary," replied the Countess, who burned to know the contents of the letter. "Perhaps there is no inconstancy at all. This may be nothing but an effort on the part of some frivolous coquette to draw our handsome Emperor within the net of her guilty attractions. The note would show——"

The Empress scarcely heeded the words of her confidant. She had opened her hand, and with dark stormy looks, she gazed upon the crumpled paper that held her husband's secret.

"Oh!" murmured she, plaintively. "Oh, it seems to me that a thousand daggers have sprung from this little paper, to make my heart's blood flow. Who is the fool-hardy woman that would entice my husband from his loyalty to me? Woe! woe to her when I shall have learned her name! And I WILL learn it!" cried the unhappy wife. "I myself will take this letter to the Emperor, and he shall open it in my presence. Oh I will have justice! Adultery is a fearful crime, and fearful shall be its punishment in my realms. The name! The name! Oh that I knew the name of the execrable woman that has dared to lift her treasonable eyes towards my husband!"

"Nothing is easier than to learn it, your majesty," whispered the Countess, squat like a toad, close to the ear of Eve! "The letter will reveal it."

The Empress frowned. Oh for Ithurial then!

"Dost mean that I shall open a letter which was never intended to be read by me?"

The Countess pointed to the paper. "Your majesty has already broken the seal. You crushed it *unintentionally*. There remains but to unfold the paper, and everything is explained. I will wager that it comes from the beautiful dancer Riccardo, whom the Emperor admired so much last night in the ballet, and whom he declared to be the most bewitching creature he had ever seen."

The eyes of the Empress dropped burning tears, and covering her face with her hands, she sobbed aloud. Then she seemed ashamed of her emotion, and dashing away her tears, she raised her beautiful head again.

"It is contemptible so to mourn for one who is faithless," said she. "It is for me to judge and to punish, and that will I! It is my duty as ruler of Austria to bring all crime to light. I will soon learn who it is that dares to exchange letters with the husband of the reigning Empress. And after all, the speediest, the simplest way to do this, lies before me. I must open the letter for justice sake; but I swear that I will not read one word contained within its pages. I will see the name of the writer alone; and then I can be sure that curiosity and personal interest have not prompted me."

And so Maria Theresa silenced her scruples, and persuaded herself that she was compelled to do as the tempter had suggested. She tore

open the note; but true to her self-imposed vow, she paused on the threshold of dishonor, and read nothing but the writer's name.

"Riccardo!" cried she wildly. "You were right, Margaretta, an intrigue with the Riccardo. The Emperor has written to her, the Emperor, my husband!"

She folded the fatal letter, and oh! how her white hands trembled as she laid it upon the table; and how deadly pale were the cheeks that had flushed with anger when Gaspardi had been by!

The Countess was not deceived by this phasis of the Empress' grief. She knew that the storm would burst, and she thought it better to divide its wrath. She stepped lightly out to call the confessor of her victim.

Maria Theresa was unconscious of being alone. She stood before the table staring at the letter. Gradually her paleness vanished, and the hue of anger once more deepened on her cheeks. Her eyes that had just been drooping with tears, flamed again with indignation; and her expanded nostrils, her bewitching mouth, and her heaving chest, betrayed the fury of the storm that was beginning once more to rage within.

"Oh I will trample her under foot," muttered she between her teeth, while she raised her hand as if she would fain have dealt to her rival a death-stroke. "I will prove to the Court, to the Empire—to the world, how Maria Theresa hates vice, and how she punishes crime, without respect of persons. Both criminals shall feel the lash of justice. If my woman's heart break, the Empress shall do her duty. It shall not be said that lust holds its revels in Vienna, as at the obscene Courts of Versailles and St. Petersburg. No! Nor shall the libertines of Vienna point to the Austrian Emperor as their model, nor shall their weeping wives be taunted with reports of the indulgence of the Austrian Empress. Morality and decorum shall prevail in Vienna. The fire of my royal vengeance shall consume that bold harlot, and then——then for the Emperor!"

"Your majesty will never consent to bring disgrace upon the father of your imperial children," said a gentle voice close by, and turning at the sound, the Empress beheld her confessor.

She advanced hastily towards father Porhammer. "How!" exclaimed she angrily, "how, you venture to plead for the Emperor? You come hither to stay the hand of justice?"

"I do indeed," replied the father, "for her hand, to-day at least, if uplifted against the Emperor, must recoil upon the Empress. The honor of my august sovereigns cannot be divided. Your majesty must throw the shield of your love over the fault of your imperial husband."

"Oh I cannot! I cannot suffer this mortal blow in silence," sobbed the Empress.

"Nay," said the father smiling, "the wife may be severe, though the Empress be element."

"But she, father—must she also be pardoned? She who has enticed my husband from his conjugal faith?"

"As for the Riccardo," replied father Porhammer, "I have heard that

she is a sinful woman, whose beauty has led many men astray. If your majesty deem her dangerous, she can be made to leave Vienna; but let retribution go no further."

"Well, be it so," sighed the Empress, whose heart was already softening. "You are right, reverend father, but La Riccardo shall leave Vienna forever."

So saying she hastened to her *escritoire*, and wrote and signed the order for the banishment of the *danseuse*.

"There," cried she, handing the order to the priest. "I pray you, dear father, to remit this to Count Bartenstein, and let him see that she goes hence this very day. And when I have laid this evil spirit, perchance I shall find peace once more. But no! no!" continued she, her eyes filling with tears, "when she has gone, some other enchantress will come in her place to charm my husband's love away. Oh father! if chastity is not in the heart, sin will always find entrance there!"

"Yes, your majesty; and therefore should the portals of the heart be ever guarded against the enemy. As watchmen are appointed to guard the property, so are the servants of God sent on earth to extend the protection of Heaven to the hearts of your people."

"And why may I not aid them in their holy labors?" exclaimed the Empress, glowing suddenly with a new interest. "Why may not I appoint a committee of good and wise men to watch over the morals of my subjects, and to warn them from temptation, ere it has time to become sin? Come father, you must aid me in this good work. Help me to be the earthly, as the Blessed Virgin is the heavenly mother of the Austrian people. Sketch me some plan whereby I may organise my scheme. I feel sure that your suggestions will be dictated by that Heaven to which you have devoted your whole life."

"May the spirit of counsel and the spirit of wisdom enlighten my understanding," said the father, with solemn fervor, "that I may worthily accomplish the mission with which my Empress has entrusted me!"

"But, your majesty," whispered the Countess Fuchs, "in your magnanimous projects for your people, you are losing sight of yourself. The Riccardo has not yet been banished; and the Emperor seeing that no answer is coming to his note, may seek an interview. Who can guess the consequences of a meeting?"

The Empress shivered as the Countess probed the wounds herself had made in that poor, jealous heart.

"True—true," returned she in an unsteady voice. "Go father, and begin my work of reform, by casting out that wicked woman from among the unhappy wives of Vienna. I myself will announce her departure to the Emperor. And now, dear friends, leave me. You, father, to Count Bartenstein. Countess, will you recall Charlotte, and send me my tire-woman. Let the princes and princesses be regally attired today. I will meet the Emperor in their midst."

The confessor bowed and retired, and the Countess opening the door of the inner dressing-room, beckoned to Charlotte, who in the recess of a deep bay window, sat wearily awaiting the summons to return.

CHAPTER III.

THE TOILET OF THE EMPRESS.

So dark and gloomy was the face of the Empress, that poor Charlotte's heart misgave her, as with a suppressed sigh she resumed her place, and once more took down the rich masses of her sovereign lady's hair. Maria Theresa looked sternly at the reflection of her little maid of honor's face in the glass. She saw how Charlotte's hands trembled, and this increased her ill-humor. Again she raised her eyes to her own image, and she saw plainly that anger was unbecoming to her. The flush on her face was not rosy, but purple; and the scowl upon her brow was fast deepening into a wrinkle. Her bosom heaved with a heavy, heavy sigh.

"Ah!" thought she, "if I am ever again to find favor in his eyes, I must always smile; for smiles are the last glowing tints of beauty's sunset. And yet—how can I smile when my heart is breaking! He said that the Riccardo was the loveliest woman he had ever seen. Alas! I remember the day when he knelt at my feet, and spoke thus of me. Oh my Franz! Am I indeed old and no longer loveable!"

In her anxiety to scrutinize her own features, the Empress bent suddenly forward, and the heavy mass of puffs and braids that formed the coiffure she had selected for the day, gave way. She felt the sharp points of the hair pins in her head, and miserable and nervous as she was, they seemed to wound her cruelly. Starting from her chair, she poured forth a torrent of reproaches upon Charlotte's head, who pale and trembling more than ever, repaired the damage, and placed among the braids, a bouquet of white roses. These white roses deepened the unbecoming redness of the Empress' face. She perceived this at once, and losing all self-control, she tore the flowers from her hair, and dashed them on the floor.

"You are all leagued against me," cried she indignantly. "You are trying your best to disfigure me, and to make me look old before my time. Who ever saw such a ridiculous structure as this head-dress, that makes me look like a perambulating castle on a chess board! Come! another *coiffure*, and let it not be such a ridiculous one as this!"

Charlotte of course did not remind her mistress that the *coiffure* and

roses had been her own selection. She had nothing to do but to obey in silence, and begin her work again.

At last the painful task was at an end. The Empress looked keenly at herself in the glass, and seeming convinced that she really looked well, she called imperatively for her tire-woman. In came the procession, bearing hooped-skirt, rich-embroidered train, golden-flowered petticoat, and boddice, flashing with diamonds. But the Empress, usually so affable at her toilet, surveyed both maids and apparel with gloomy indifference. In moody silence she reached out her feet, while her slippers were exchanged for high-heeled shoes. Not a look had she to bestow upon the magnificent dress which enhanced a thousand fold her mature beauty. Without a word she dismissed the maids of honor, all except Charlotte, whose crowning labor it was to give the last touch to the imperial head, when the rest of the toilet had been declared to be complete.

Again Maria Theresa stood before that high Venetian glass, and certainly it did give back the image of a regal beauty. For a while she examined her costume from head to foot; and at last—at last! her beautiful blue eyes beamed bright with satisfaction, and a smile rippled lightly the corners of her mouth.

"No," said she aloud. "No, it is not so. I am neither old nor ugly. The light of youth has not yet fled from my brow. My beauty's sun has not yet set forever. My Franz will love me still; and however charming younger women may be, he will remember the beloved of his boyhood, and we will yet be happy in reciprocal affection, come what may to us as Emperor and Empress. I do not believe that he said he had never seen so lovely a woman as Riccardo. Poor, dear Franz! He has a tedious life as husband of the reigning sovereign. From sheer ennui, he sometimes wanders from his wife's heart, but oh! he must, he must return to me, for if I were to lose him, earthly splendor would be valueless to me forever!"

Charlotte, who stood behind her mistress with the comb in her hand, was dismayed at all that she had heard; and the plaintive tones of this magnificent Empress, at whose feet lay a world of might, touched her heart's core. But she sickened as she thought that her presence had been unheeded, and that the Empress had fancied herself alone, while the secrets of her heart were thus struggling into words. The ample train completely screened little Charlotte from view, and a deadly paleness overspread her countenance as she awaited discovery.

Suddenly the Empress turned, and putting her hand tenderly on Charlotte's head, she said, in a voice of indiscribable melancholy, "Be warned, Charlotte, and if you marry, never marry a man who has nothing to do. Men will grow inconstant from sheer ennui."*

"I never expect to marry, beloved mistress," said the young girl, deeply touched by this confidence. "I wish to live and die in your majesty's service."

* Maria Theresa's words. See Caroline Pichler: Memoirs of my life.

"Do you? And can you bear for a life-time with my impatience, dear child?" asked the Empress, kissing the little devotee on the forehead. "You know now, my little Charlotte, why I have been so unkind to-day; you know that my heart was bleeding with such anguish, that had I not broken out in anger, I would have stifled with agony. You have seen into the depths of my heart, and why should I not confide in you, who knows every secret of my State-council? No one suspects what misery lies under the regal mantle. And I care not to exhibit myself to the world's pity. When Maria Theresa weeps, let her God and those who love her be the witnesses of her sorrow. Go now, good little Charlotte, and forget everything except your sovereign's love for you. Tell the governess of the arch-Duke Ferdinand, to bring him hither. Let the other imperial children await me in my reception-room; and tell the page in the ante-room to announce to his majesty that I request the honor of a visit from him."

Charlotte, once more happy, left the room, her heart filled with joy for herself, and gentle sorrow for her sovereign.

Meanwhile the Empress thought over the coming interview. "I will try to recall him to me by love," murmured she, softly. "I will not reproach him, and although as his Empress I have a double claim upon his loyalty, I will not appeal to anything but his own dear heart; and when he hears how he has made his poor Theresa suffer, I know——"

Here her voice failed her, and tears filled her eyes. But she dashed them quickly away, for steps approached, and the governess entered, with the infant prince in her arms.

CHAPTER IV.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

A half an hour later, the princes and princesses of Austria were all assembled in their mother's private parlor. They were a beautiful group. The Empress in their midst, held little Ferdinand in her arms. Close peeping through the folds of their mother's rich dress, were three other little ones; and a few steps further were the arch-duchesses Christine and Amelia. Near the open harpsichord stood the graceful form of the Empress' eldest child, the princess Elizabeth, who now and then ran her fingers lightly over the instrument, while she awaited the arrival of her father.

In the pride of her maternity and beauty stood the Empress-Queen; but her heart throbbed painfully, though she smiled upon her children.

The page announced the coming of the Emperor, and then left the room. The Empress made a sign to her eldest daughter, who seated herself before the harpsichord. The door opened, and on the threshold appeared the tall, elegant form of the Emperor Francis.

Elizabeth began a brilliant "Welcome," and all the young voices joined in one loud chorus. "Long live our Emperor, our sovereign, and our father!" sang the children; but clear above them all, were heard the sonorous tones of the mother, exclaiming in the fullness of her love, "Long live my Emperor and my husband!" As if every tender chord of Maria Theresa's heart had been struck, she broke forth into one of those passionate songs of Metastasio; while Elizabeth, catching the inspiration, accompanied her mother with sweetest melody. The Empress, her little babe in her arms, was wrapped up in the ecstacy of the moment—Never had she looked more enchanting than she did as she ceased, and gave one look of love to her admiring husband.

The Emperor for one moment contemplated the lovely group before him, and then full of emotion, he came forward, and bending over his wife, he kissed the round white arm that held the baby, and whispered to the mother a few words of rapture at her surpassing beauty.

"But tell me, gracious Empress," said he aloud, "to what I am indebted for this charming surprise."

The eyes of the Empress shot fire, but in lieu of a reply, she bent down to the little arch-duchess Josepha, who was just old enough to lisp her father's name, and said:

"Josepha, tell the Emperor what festival we celebrate to-day." The little one turning to her father, said, "To-day is imperial mama's wedding-day."

"Our wedding-day!" murmured the Emperor, "and I could forget it!"

"Oh no! my dear husband," said the Empress. "I am sure that you cannot have forgotten this joyous anniversary. Its remembrance only slumbered in your heart, and the presence of your children here, I trust, has awakened that remembrance, and carried you back with me to the happy, happy days of our early love."

The voice of the wife was almost tearful, as she spoke these tender words, and the Emperor, touched and humbled at the thought of his own oversight, sought to change the subject. "But why," asked he, looking around, "why, if all our other children are here to greet their father, is Joseph absent from this happy family gathering?"

"He has been disobedient and obstinate again," said the Empress, with a shrug of her shoulders, "and his preceptor to punish him, kept him away."

The Emperor walked to the door. "Surely," exclaimed he, "on such a day as this, when all my dear children are around me, my son and the future Emperor should be the first to bid me welcome."

"Stay, my husband," cried the Empress, who had no intention of allowing the Emperor to escape so easily from his embarrassment. "You must be content to remain with us, without the *future* Emperor

of Austria, whose reign, I hope I may be allowed to pray, is yet for some years postponed. Or is this a happy device of the future Emperor's father to remind me, on my wedding-day, that I am growing old enough to begin to think of the day of my decease!"

The Emperor was perfectly amazed. Although he was accustomed to such outbursts on the part of his wife, he searched vainly in his heart for the cause of such intense bitterness to-day. He looked his astonishment; and the Empress, mindful of her resolve not to reproach him, tried her best to smile.

The Emperor shook his head thoughtfully as he watched her face, and said half-aloud, "All is not right with thee, Theresa; thou smilest like a lioness, not like a woman."

"Very well, then," said she sharply, "the lioness has called you to look upon her whelps. One day they will be lions and lionesses too, and in that day they will avenge the injuries of their mother."

The Empress, as she spoke, felt that her smothered jealousy was bursting forth. She hastily dismissed her children and going herself to the door, she called for the governess of the baby, and almost threw him in her arms.

"I forsee the coming of a storm," thought the Emperor, as the door being closed, Maria Theresa came quickly back, and stood before him.

"And is it indeed true," said she bitterly, "that you had forgotten your wedding-day? Not a throb of your heart to remind you of the past!"

"My memory does not cling to dates, Theresa," replied the Emperor. "What if to-day be accidentally the anniversary of our marriage? With every beating of my heart, *I* celebrate the hour itself, when I won the proud and beautiful heiress of Austria; and when I remember that she deigned to love *me*, the poor arch-duke of Lorraine, my happiness overwhelmed me. Come then my beautiful, my beloved Theresa; come to my heart that I may thank you for all the blessings that I owe to your love. See, dearest, we are alone; let us forget royalty for to-day, and be happy together in all the fullness of mutual confidence and affection."

So saying, he would have pressed her to his heart, but the Empress drew coldly back, and turned deadly pale. This unembarrassed and confident tenderness irritated her beyond expression. That her faithless spouse should without the slightest remorse, act the part of the devoted lover, outraged her very sense of decency.

"Really, my husband, it becomes you well to prate of confidence and affection, who have ceased to think of your own wife, and have eyes alone for the wife of another!"

"Again jealous," sighed the Emperor, wearily. "Will you never cease to cloud our domestic sky by these absurd and groundless suspicions?"

"Groundless!" cried the Empress, tearing the letter violently from her bosom. "With this proof of your guilt confronting you, you will not dare to say that I am jealous without cause!"

"Allow me to inquire of your majesty, what this letter is to prove?"

"It proves that to-day you have written a letter to a woman, of whom yesterday you said that she was the most beautiful woman in the world."

"I have no recollection of saying such a thing of any woman; and I am surprised that your majesty should encourage your attendants to repeat such contemptible tales," replied the Emperor, with some bitterness. "Were I like you, the reigning sovereign of a great empire, I should really find no time to indulge in gossip and scandal."

"Your majesty will oblige me by refraining from any comment upon affairs which do not concern you. I alone am reigning Empress here, and it is for my people to judge whether I do my duty to them; certainly not for you, who, while I am with my ministers of state, employ your leisure hours in writing love-letters to my subjects."

"I? I write a love letter?" said the Emperor.

"How dare you deny it?" cried the outraged Empress. "Have you also forgotten that this morning you sent Gaspardi out of the palace on an errand?"

"No I have not forgotten it," replied the Emperor, with growing astonishment. But Maria Theresa remarked that he looked confused, and avoided her eye.

"You confess then that you sent the letter, and requested an answer?"

"Yes, but I have received no answer," said the Emperor, with embarrassment.

"There is your answer," thundered the enraged wife. "I took it from Gaspardi myself."

"And is it possible, Theresa, that you have read a letter addressed to me?" asked the Emperor, in a severe voice.

The Empress blushed, and her eyes sought the ground.

"No," said she, "I have not read it, Franz."

"But it is open," persisted he, taking it from his wife's hand. "Who then has dared to break the seal of a letter addressed to me?"

And the Emperor, usually so mild and yielding towards his wife, stood erect, with stormy brow and eyes flashing with anger.

Maria Theresa in her turn was surprised. She looked earnestly at him, and confessed inwardly that never had she seen him look so handsome; and she felt an inexplicable and secret pleasure that her Franz, for once in his life, was really angry with her.

"I broke the seal of the letter, but I swear to you that I did not read one word of it," replied she. "I wished to see the signature only, and that signature was enough to convince me, that I had a faithless husband, who outrages an Empress by giving her a dancer as her rival!"

"The signature convinced you of this?" asked the Emperor.

"It did!"

"And you read nothing else?"

"Nothing, I tell you!"

"Then, madam," returned he, seriously, handing the letter back to her, "do me the favor to read the whole of it. After breaking the seal, you need not hesitate. I exact it of you."

The Empress looked overwhelmed. "You exact of me to read a love-letter addressed to you!"

"I certainly do—You took it from my valet, you broke it open, and now I beg you will be so good as to read it aloud, for I have not yet read it myself."

"I will read it then," cried the Empress, scornfully. "And I promise you that I shall not suppress a word of its contents."

"Read on," said the Emperor, quietly.

The Empress with loud and angry tone began:

To his gracious majesty, the Emperor—

Your majesty has honored me by asking my advice upon a subject of highest importance. But your majesty is much nearer the goal than I. It is true that my gracious master, the Count, led me to the vestibule of the temple of science, but further I have not penetrated. What I know I will joyfully impart to your majesty; and joyfully will I aid you in your search after that which the whole world is seeking. I will come at the appointed hour.

Your majesty's loyal servant,

RICCARDO.

"I do not understand a word," said the mystified Empress.

"But I do," returned the Emperor, with a meaning smile. "Since your majesty has——thrust yourself into the portals of my confidence, I must e'en take you with me into the penetralia; and confess at once that I have a passion, which has cost me many a sleepless night, and has pre-occupied my thoughts, even when I was by your majesty's side."

"But I see nothing of love or passion in this letter," replied Maria Theresa, glancing once more at its singular contents.

"And yet it speaks of nothing else. I may just as well confess, too, that in pursuit of the object of my love, I have spent three hundred thousand guilders, and thrown away at least one hundred thousand guilders worth of diamonds."

"Your mistress must be either very coy, or very grasping," said Maria Theresa, almost convulsed with jealousy.

"She is very coy," said the Emperor. "All my gold and diamonds have won me not a smile—She will not yield up her secret. But I believe that she has responded to the love of one happy mortal, Count Saint-Germain."

"Count Saint-Germain!" exclaimed the Empress, amazed.

"Himself, your majesty. He is one of the fortunate few, to whom the coy beauty has succumbed; and to take his place I would give millions. Now I heard yesterday that the confidant of the Count was in Vienna; and hoping to learn something from him, I invited him hither. Signor Riccardo——"

"*Signor* Riccardo! Was this letter written by a man?"

"By the husband of the dancer."

"And your letter was addressed to him?"

"Even so, madam."

"Then this passion of which you speak, is your old passion—Alchemy"

"Yes it is. I had promised you to give it up, but it proved stronger than I. Not to annoy you, I have ever since worked secretly in my laboratory—I have just conceived a new idea! I am about to try the experiment of consolidating small diamonds into one large one, by means of a burning glass."

The Empress answered this with a hearty, happy laugh, and went up to her husband with outstretched hands.

"Franz," said she, "I am a simpleton; and all that has been fermenting in my heart, is sheer nonsense. My crown does not prevent me from being a silly woman. But my heart's love, forgive my folly for the sake of my love."

Instead of responding to this appeal, the Emperor stood perfectly still, and gazed earnestly and seriously at his wife.

"Your jealousy," said he, after a moment's silence "I freely forgive, for it is a source of more misery to you than to me. But this jealousy has attacked my honor as a man, and that I cannot forgive. As reigning Empress, I render you homage; and am content to occupy the second place in Austria's realms. I will not deny that such a *role* is irksome to me, for I, like you, have lofty dreams of ambition; and I could have wished that in giving me the *title*, you had allowed me sometimes the privileges of a co-regent. But I have seen that my co-regency irritated and annoyed you, I have therefore renounced all thought of governing empires. I have done this not only because I love you, Theresa, but because you are worthy by your intellect to govern your people without my help. In the world, therefore, I am known as the husband of the reigning Empress. But at home, I am lord of my own household; and here I reign supreme. The Emperor may be subordinate to his sovereign, but the man will acknowledge no superior; and the dignity of his manhood shall be respected, even by yourself."

"Heaven forbid that I should ever seek to wound it," exclaimed Maria Theresa, while she gazed with rapture upon her husband's noble countenance, and thought that never had he looked so handsome as at this moment, when for the first time he asserted his authority against herself.

"You *have* wounded it, your majesty," replied the Emperor, with emphasis. "You have dogged my steps with spies; you have suffered my character to be discussed by your attendants. You have gone so far as to compromise me with my own servants; forcing them to disobey me by virtue of your rights as sovereign, exercised in opposition to mine as your husband. *I* gave Gaspardi orders to deliver Riccardo's note to me alone. I forbade him to tell any one whither he went. *You* took my note from him by force and committed the grave wrong of compelling a servant hitherto faithful, to disobey and betray his master."

"I did indeed wrong you, dear Franz," said the Empress, already penitent. "In Gaspardi's presence, I will ask your pardon for my in-

delicate intrusion, and before him I will bear witness to his fidelity. I alone was to blame,—I promise you, too, to sin no more against you, my beloved; for your love is the brightest jewel in my crown. Without it, no happiness would grandeur give to me. Forgive me then, my own Franz, forgive your unhappy Theresa!"

As she spoke, she inclined her head towards her husband, and looked up to him with such eyes of love, that he could but gaze enraptured upon her bewitching beauty.

"Come, Franz, come!" said she tenderly. "Surely, that wicked jest of yours has amply revenged you—Be satisfied with having given me a heart-ache for jealousy of the coy-mistress upon whom you have wasted your diamonds, and be magnanimous."

"And you, Theresa? Will you be magnanimous also? Will you leave my servants and my letters alone, and set no more spies to dog my steps?"

"Indeed, Franz, I will never behave as I have done to-day, while we both live. Now, if you will sign my pardon, I will tell you a piece of news, with which I intend shortly to surprise all Austria."

"Out with it, then, and if it is good news, I sign the pardon," said the Emperor with a smile.

"It is excellent news," cried the Empress; "for it will give new life to Austria. It will bring down revenge upon our enemies, and revenge upon that wicked infidel who took my beautiful Silesia from me, and who boasting of his impiety, calls it enlightenment!"

"Have you not yet forgiven Frederic for that little bit of Silesia that he stole from you?" asked the Emperor laughing.

"No, I have not yet forgiven him, nor do I ever expect to do so. I owe it to him, that, years ago, I came like a beggar before the Magyars to whimper for help and defence. I have never yet forgotten the humiliation of that day, Franz."

"And yet, Theresa, we must confess that Frederic is a great man, and it were well for Austria if we were allies; for such an alliance would secure the blessings of a stable peace to Europe."

"It cannot be," cried the Empress. There is no sympathy between Austria and Prussia, and peace will never come to Europe until one succumbs to the other. No dependence is to be placed upon alliances between incongruous nations. In spite of our allies, the English, the Dutch and the Russians, the King of Prussia has robbed me of my province; and all the help I have ever gotten from them was empty condolence. For this reason I have sought for alliance with another power; a power which will cordially unite with me in crushing that hateful infidel, to whom nothing in life is sacred. This is the news that I promised you. Our treaty with England and Holland is about to expire, and the new ally I have found for Austria, is France."

"An alliance with France is not a natural one for Austria, and can never be enduring," exclaimed the Emperor.*

* The Emperor's own words. Coxe: History of the house of Austria, vol. 5, p. 67.

"It *will* be enduring," cried Maria Theresa proudly, "for it is equally desired by both nations. Not only Louis XV., but the Marquise de Pompadour is impatient to have the treaty signed."

"That means that Kaunitz has been flattering the Marquise, and the Marquise, Kaunitz. But words are not treaties, and the Marquise's promises are of no consequence whatever."

"But, Franz, I tell you that we have gone further than words. Of this, however, no one knows, except the King of France, myself, Kaunitz and the Marquise."

"How in the world did you manage to buy the good-will of the Marquise? How many millions did you pay for the precious boon?"

"Not a cent, my dear husband, only a letter."

"Letter? Letter from whom?"

"A letter from me to the Marquise."

"What!" cried the Emperor laughing. *You* write to La Pompadour, *you* Theresa?"

"With my own hand, I have written to her, and more than once," returned Maria Theresa, joining in the laugh. "And what do you suppose I did, to save my honor in the matter? I pretended to think that she was the wife of the King, and addressed her as '*Madame, ma soeur et cousine!*'"

Here the Emperor laughed immoderately. "Well! well!" exclaimed he. "So the Empress-Queen of Austria and Hungary writes with her own hand to her beloved cousin La Pompadour!"

"And do you know what she calls me?" laughed the Empress in return. "Yesterday I had a letter from her in which she calls me, sportively, '*Ma chére reine.*'"

The Emperor broke out into such a volley of laughter, that he threw himself back upon a chair, which broke under him, and the Empress had to come to his assistance, for he was too convulsed to get up alone.*

"Oh dear! oh dear!" groaned the Emperor, still continuing to laugh. "I shall die of this intelligence. Maria Theresa in correspondence with Madame d'Etioles!"

"Well, what of it, Franz?" asked Maria Theresa. "Did I not write to the Prima donna Farinelli when we were seeking alliance with Spain? And is the Marquise not as good as a soprano singer?"†

The Emperor looked at her with such a droll expression that she gave up all idea of defending herself from ridicule, and laughed as heartily as her husband.

At this moment a page knocked, and announced the arch-duke Joseph and his preceptor.

"Poor lad," said the Emperor. "I suppose he comes as usual, accompanied by an accuser.

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*Historical.

†The Empress' own words. Coxe, vol. 5, page 69.

CHAPTER V.

THE ARCH DUKE JOSEPH.

The Emperor was right. father Francis came in with complaints of his highness. While the father with great pathos set forth the reasons of the arch duke's absence from the family circle, the culprit stood by, apparently indifferent to all that was being said. But to any one observing him closely, his tremulous mouth, and the short convulsive sighs, which he vainly strove to repress, showed the real anxiety of his fast beating heart. He thrust back his rising tears, for the little prince was too proud to crave sympathy; and he had already learned how to hide emotion by a cold and haughty bearing. From his childhood he had borne a secret sorrow in his heart; the sorrow of seeing his young brother Carl preferred to himself. Not only was Carl the darling of his parents, but he was the pet and plaything of the whole palace. True, the poor little arch-duke was not gifted with the grace and charming *naiveté* of his brother. He was awkward, serious, and his countenance wore an expression of discontent, which was thought to betray an evil disposition, but which, in reality, was but the reflection of the heavy sorrow which clouded his young heart No one seemed to understand—no one seemed to love him. Alone in the midst of that gay and splendid court, he was never noticed except to be chided.* The buds of his poor young heart were blighted by the mildew of neglect, so that outwardly he was cold, sarcastic and sullen, while inwardly he glowed with a thousand emotions, which he dared reveal to no one, for no one seemed to dream that he was capable of feeling them.

To day, as usual, he was brought before his parents as a culprit; and without daring to utter a word in his own defence, he stood by, while father Francis told how many times he had yawned over the lives of the Martyrs; and how he had refused to read longer than one hour, a most edifying commentary on the fathers of the Holy Scriptures.

The Empress heard with displeasure of her son's lack of piety; and she looked severely at him while he gazed sullenly at a portrait that hung opposite.

"And can it be my son," exclaimed she, "that you close your heart against the word of God, and refuse to read religious books?"

The boy gave her a glance of defiance. "I do not know," said he, carelessly, "whether the books are religious or not; but I know that they are tiresome, and teach me nothing."

"Gracious heavens," cried the Empress with horror, "hear the impious child!"

*Hubner. Life of Joseph 2d, page 15.

"Rather, your majesty," said father Francis. "let us pray heaven to soften his heart." The Emperor alone said nothing; but he looked at the boy with a friendly and sympathising glance. The child saw the look, and for one moment a flush of pleasure passed over his face. He raised his eyes with an appealing expression towards his father, who could no longer resist the temptation of coming to his relief.

"Perhaps," suggested he, "the books may be dull to a child of Joseph's years."

"No book," returned the Empress, "should be dull that treats of God and of his Holy Church."

"And the work, your majesty, which we were reading, was a most learned and celebrated treatise," said father Francis; "one highly calculated to edify and instruct youth."

Joseph turned away from the father, and spoke to the Emperor.

"We have already gone through five volumes of it, your majesty, and I am tired to death of it. Moreover I don't believe half that I read in his stupid books."

The Empress as she heard this, uttered a cry of pain. She felt an icy coldness benumb her heart, as she remembered that this unbelieving boy was one day to succeed her on the throne of Austria. The Emperor, too, was pained. By the deadly paleness of her face, he guessed the pang that was rending his wife's heart, and he dared say no more in defence of his son.

"Your majesty sees," continued father Francis, "how far is the heart of his highness from God and the church. His instructors are grieved at his precocious unbelief, and they are this day to confer together upon the painful subject. The hour of the conference is at hand, and I crave your majesty's leave to repair thither."

"No," said the Empress, with a deprecating gesture. "No. Remain, good father. Let this conference be held in the presence of the Emperor and myself. It is fitting that we both know the worst in regard to our child."

The Emperor bowed acquiescence, and crossing the room, took a seat by the side of the Empress.

He rang a little golden bell; and the page who came at the summons, was ordered to request the attendance of the preceptors of his highness the crown-prince of Austria.

Maria Theresa leaned her head upon her hand, and with a sad and perplexed countenance watched the open door. The Emperor, with his arm thrown over the richly gilded back of the divan, looked earnestly at the young culprit, who pale, and with a beating heart, was trying his best to suppress his increasing emotion.

"I will not cry," thought he, scarcely able to restrain his tears. "for that would be a triumph for my detestable teachers. I am not going to give them the pleasure of knowing that I am miserable."

And by dint of great exertion, he mastered his agitation. He was so successful that he did not move a muscle, nor turn his head when the solemn procession of his accusers entered the room.

First, at the head, came father Porhammer, who gave him lessons in logic and physics. After him walked the engineer Briguen, professor of mathematics. Then Herr Von Leporini, who instructed him in general history. Herr Von Bartenstein, who expounded the political history of the house of Austria. Baron Von Beck, who was his instructor in judicature; and finally his governor, Count Bathiany, the only one towards whom the young prince felt a grain of good-will.

The Empress greeted them with grave courtesy, and exhorted them to say without reserve before his parents, what they thought of the progress and disposition of the arch-duke.

Count Bathiany, with an encouraging smile directed towards his pupil, assured their majesties that the arch-duke was anxious to do right. Not because he was told so to do by others, but because he followed the dictates of his own conscience. True, his highness would not see through the eyes of any other person; but this, though it might be a defect in a child, would be the reverse in a man, above all, in a sovereign. "In proof of the arch-duke's sincere desire to do right," continued Count Bathiany, "allow me to repeat to your majesties something which he said to me yesterday. We were reading together Bellegarde on knowledge of self and of human nature. The beautiful thoughts of the author so touched the heart of his highness, that stopping suddenly, he exclaimed to me, "We must read this again; for when I come to the throne I shall need to know, not only myself, but other men also."

"Well said, my son!" exclaimed the Emperor.

"I cannot agree with your majesty," said the Empress, coldly. "*I* do not think it praiseworthy for a child of his age to look forward with complacency to the day when his mother's death will confer upon him a throne. To me it would seem more natural if Joseph thought more of his present duties, and less of his future honors."

A breathless silence followed these bitter words. The Emperor, in confusion, withdrew behind the harpsichord. The arch-duke looked perfectly indifferent. While Count Bathiany was repeating his words, his face had slightly flushed; but when he heard the sharp reproof of his mother, he raised his head, and gave her back another defiant look. With the same sullen haughtiness, he stared first at one accuser, and then at another, while each one in his turn, gave judgment against him. First, and most vehement in his denunciations, was Count Bartenstein. He denounced the arch-duke as idle and inattentive. He never would have any political sagacity whatever. Why, even the great work in fifteen folios, which he (Count Bartenstein) had compiled from the imperial archives for the especial instruction of the prince, even *that* failed to interest him!*

Then followed the rest of their professorships. One complained of disrespect; another of carelessness; a third of disobedience; a fourth of irreligion. All concurred in declaring the arch-duke to be obstinate, unfeeling and intractable.

*Hormayer says that this book was heavy and filled with tiresome details. No wonder. In fifteen folios. Trans.

His face meanwhile grew paler and harder, until it seemed almost ready to stiffen into marble. Although every censorious word went like a dagger to his sensitive heart, he still kept on murmuring to himself, "I will not cry, I will not cry."

His mother divined nothing of the agony that, like a wild tornado, was desolating the fair face of her child's whole being. She saw nothing beyond the portals of that cold and sullen aspect, and the sight filled her with sorrow and anger.

"Alas," cried she, bitterly, "you are right. He is a refractory and unfeeling boy."

At this moment, like the voice of a conciliatory angel, were heard the soft tones of the melody with which the Empress had greeted her husband that morning. It was the Emperor, whose hands seemed unconsciously to wander over the keys of the harpsichord, while every head bent entranced to listen.

When the first tones of the heavenly melody fell upon his ear, the young prince began to tremble. His features softened; his lips so scornfully compressed, now parted, as if to drink in every sound; his eyes filled with tears, and every angry feeling of his heart was hushed by the magic of music. With voice of love it seemed to call him, and unable to resist its power and its pathos, he burst into a flood of tears, and with one bound reached his father's arms sobbing.

"Father, dear father, pity me!"

The Emperor drew the poor boy close to his heart. He kissed his blond curls, and whispering, said, "Dear child, I knew that you were not heartless. I was sure that you would come when your father called."

The Empress had started from her seat, and she now stood in the centre of the room, earnestly gazing upon her husband and her child. Her mother's heart beat wildly, and tears of tenderness suffused her eyes. She longed to speak some word of pardon to her son; but before all things, Maria Theresa honored court ceremony. She would not, for the world, that her subjects had seen her otherwise than self possessed and regal in her bearing.

With one great effort she mastered her emotions; and before the strength of her will, the mighty flood rolled back upon her heart. Not a tear that glistened in her eye-lids fell; not a tone of her clear, silvery voice was heard to falter.

"Count Bathiany," said she, "I perceive that in the education of the arch-duke, the humanising influences of music have been overlooked. Music to-day has been more powerful with him than filial love or moral obligation. Select for him then a skilful teacher, who will make use of his art to lead my son back to duty and religion."*

*Maria Theresa's own words. Coxe, House of Austria, vol. 5.

CHAPTER VI.

KAUNITZ.

THREE weeks had elapsed since the memorable sitting at which Maria Theresa had declared in favor of a new line of policy. Three long weeks had gone by, and still no message came for Kaunitz; and still Bartenstein and Uhlefeld held the reigns of power.

With hasty steps, Kaunitz paced the floor of his study. Gone was all coldness and impassibility from his face. His eyes glowed with restless fire, and his features twitched nervously.

His secretary, who sat before the writing-table, had been gazing anxiously at the Count for some time. He shook his head gloomily, as he contemplated the strange sight of Kaunitz, agitated and disturbed.

Kaunitz caught the eye of his confidant, and coming hastily towards the table, he stood for a few moments without speaking a word. Suddenly he burst into a loud, harsh laugh; a laugh so bitter, so sardonic, that Baron Binder turned pale as he heard the sound.

"Why are you so pale, Binder?" asked Kaunitz, still laughing, "why do you start as if you had received an electric shock?"

"Your laugh is like an electric shock to my heart," replied the Baron. "Its sound was enough to make a man pale. Why, for ten years I have lived under your roof, and never have I heard you laugh before."

"Perhaps you are right, Binder, for in sooth my laugh echoes gloomily within the walls of my own heart. But I could not help it. You had such a droll censorious expression on your face."

"No wonder," returned Baron Binder. "It vexes me to see a statesman so irresolute and unmanned."

"Statesman!" exclaimed Kaunitz, bitterly, "who knows whether my *rôle* of statesman is not played out already!"

He resumed his walk in moody silence, while Binder followed him with his eyes. Suddenly Kaunitz stopped again before the table. "Baron," said he, "you have known me intimately for ten years. In all my embassies you have been with me as *attaché*. Since we have lived together, have you ever known me to be faint hearted?"

"Never!" cried the Baron, "never! I have seen you brave the anger of monarchs the hatred of enemies, the treachery of friends and mistressses. I have stood by your side in more than one duel, and never before have I seen you otherwise than calm and resolute."

Judge then, how sickening to me is this suspense, since for the first time in my life, I falter. Oh! I tremble lest——"

"Lest what?" asked the Baron, with interest.

"Binder, I fear that Maria Theresa may prove less an empress than

a woman. I fear that the persuasions of the handsome Francis of Lorraine may outweigh her own convictions of right. What if her husband's caresses, her confessor's counsel, or her own feminine caprice, should blind her to the welfare of her subjects, and the interest of her empire? Oh what a giant structure will fall to the earth, if, at this crisis, the Empress should fail me! Think what a triumph it would be, to dash aside my rivals and seize the helm of state! To gather, upon the deck of one stout ship, all the paltry principalities that call themselves 'Austria;' to band them into one consolidated nation; and then to steer this noble ship into a haven of greatness and glorious peace! Binder, to this end, alone, I live. I have outlived all human illusions. I have no faith in love—it is bought and sold. No faith in the tears of men; none in their smiles. Society, to me, is one vast mad-house. If in its frenzied walls, I show that I am sane, the delirious throng will shout out, 'Seize the lunatic.' Therefore must I seem as mad as they, and therefore it is that outside of this study, I commit a thousand follies.—In such a world I have no faith; but, Binder, I believe in divine Ambition. It is the only passion that has ever stirred my heart; the only passion worthy to fill the soul of a MAN! My only love, then, is Ambition. My only dream is of power. Oh that I might eclipse and outlive the names of my rivals. But alas! alas! I fear that the greatness of Kaunitz will be wrecked upon the shoals of Maria Theresa's shallowness!"

"No, no," said the Baron vehemently. "Fear nothing, Kaunitz; you are the man who is destined to make Austria great, and to disperse the clouds of ignorance that darken the minds of her people."

"You may be sure that if ever I attain power, Binder, nor church, nor churchman shall have a voice in Austria. Kaunitz alone shall reign. But will Maria Theresa consent? Will she ever have strength of mind to burst the shackles with which silly love and silly devotion have bound her! I fear not. Religion——"

Here, the door opened, and the Count's valet handed a card to the Secretary.

"A visit from Count Bartenstein!" exclaimed the Baron triumphantly. "Ah! I knew——"

"Will you receive him here, in the study?"

"I will receive him nowhere," replied Kaunitz coldly. "Say to the Count," added he to the valet, "that I am engaged, and beg to be excused."

"What? You deny yourself to the Prime Minister," cried Binder terrified.

Kaunitz motioned to the servant to withdraw. "Binder, said he exultingly," do you not see from this visit that *my* day is about to dawn, and that Bartenstein is the first lark to greet the rising sun! His visit proves that he feels a presentment of his fall, and my rebuff shall verify it. The whole world will understand that when Bartenstein was turned away from my door, I gave old Austria, as well as himself, a parting kick. Away with anxiety and fear! The deluge is over, and old Bar-

tenstein has brought me the olive branch that announces dry land and safety!"

"My dear Count!"

"Yes, Binder, dry land and safety. Now we will be merry, and lift our head high up into clouds of Olympic revel! Away with your deeds and your parchments! We are no longer book-worms, but butterflies. Let us sport among the roses!"

While Kaunitz spoke he seized a hand-bell from the table, and rang vehemently.

"Make ready for me in my dressing-room," said he to the valet. Let the cook prepare a costly dinner for twenty persons. Let the steward select the rarest wines in the cellar. Tell him to see that the Champagne is not too warm, nor the Johannesberg too cold; the Sillery too dry, nor the Lachryma Christi to acid. Order two carriages, and send one for Signora Ferlina, and the other for Signora Sacco. Send two footmen to Counts Harrach and Colloredo, with my compliments. Stay —here is a list of the other guests. Send a messenger to the apartments of my sister, the Countess. Tell her, with my respects, to oblige me by dining to-day in her own private rooms. I will not need her to preside over my dinner-table, to-day."

"But, my lord," stammered the valet, "the Countess——"

"Well—what of her?"

"The Countess has been de——gone for a week."

"Gone, without taking leave? Where?"

"There, my lord," replied the valet, in a low voice, pointing upwards towards heaven.

"What does he mean, Binder?" asked Kaunitz with a shrug.

Binder shrugged responsive.

"The good Countess," said he, "had been ill for some time; but did not wish to disturb you. You must have been partially prepared for the melancholy event, for the Countess has not appeared at table, for three weeks."

"Me? Not at all. Do you suppose that during these last three weeks, I have had time to think of her! I never remarked her absence. When did the—the——ceremony take place?"

"Day before yesterday. I attended to every thing."

"My dear friend, how I thank you for sparing me the sight of these hideous rites. Your arrangements must have been exquisite; for I never so much as suspected the thing. Fortunately, it is all over, and we can enjoy ourselves as usual. Here, Philip. Let the house look festive. Flowers on the stair-cases and in the entrance-hall. Oranges and roses in the dining-room. Vanillasticks in the coffee-cups instead of tea spoons. Away with you!"

The valet bowed, and when he was out of hearing, Kaunitz renewed his thanks to the Baron.

"Once more, thank you for speeding my sister on her journey, and for saving me all knowledge of this unpleasant affair. How glad the

Signoras will be to hear that the Countess has positively gone, never to return. Whom shall I get to replace her? Well, never mind now—some other time we'll settle that little matter. Now to my toilet."

He bent his head to the Baron, and with light, elastic step, passed into his dressing-room.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TOILET.

When Kaunitz entered his dressing-room, his features had resumed their usual immobility. He walked in, without seeming to be aware of the presence of his attendants, who ranged on either side of the apartment, awaited his commands.

He went up to his large Venitian mirror, and there surveyed himself at full length. With anxious glance, his keen eyes sought out every faint line that told of the four and thirty years of his life. The picture seemed deeply interesting, for he stood a long time before the glass. At last the scrutiny was ended, and he turned slightly towards the hair-dresser.

"Is the perruque ready?"

The hair-dresser fluttered off to a band-box, that lay on the toilet-table, and lifted out a fantastic-looking blond perruque, constructed after "his Excellency's own design." Kaunitz was not aware of it, but this wig of his, with its droll mixture of flowing locks and the prim purse behind, was an exact counterpart of the life and character of its inventor. He had had no intention of being symbolic in his contrivance; it had been solely designed to conceal the little tell-tale lines that were just about to indent the smooth surface of his white forehead. He bent his proud head, while the hair-dresser placed the wonderful wig, and then fell to studying its effect. Here, he drew a curl forward, there he gently removed another; placing each one in its position over his eye-brows, so that no treacherous side-light should reveal anything he chose to hide. Finally the work was done. "Hippolyte," said he to the hair-dresser, who stood breathlessly by, "this is the way in which my wig is to be dressed from this day forward."*

Hippolyte bowed low, and stepped back to give place to the valets, who came in with the Count's costume. One bore a rich habit embroidered with gold, and the other a pair of velvet-shorts, red stockings, and diamond buckled-shoes.

* From this time Kaunitz wore his wig in this eccentric fashion. It was adopted by the Exquisites of Vienna, and called "the Kaunitz-perruque."

"A simpler habit—Spanish, without embroidery, and white stockings."

White stockings! The valets were astounded at such high-treason against the Court-regulations of Vienna. But Kaunitz, with a slight and contemptuous shrug, ordered them a second time to bring him white stockings, and never to presume to bring any other.

Now, go and await me in the *puderkammer*."*

The valets backed out as if in the presence of royalty, and the eccentric statesman was left with his chief valet. The toilet was completed in solemn silence. Then, the Count walked to the mirror to take another look at his adored person. He gave a complacent stroke to his ruff of richest Alençon, smoothed the folds of his habit, carefully arranged the lace frills that fell over his white hands, and then turning to his valet, he said, "Powder-mantle."

The valet unfolded a little package, and with pretor-careful hands, dropped a long white mantle over the shoulders of the ministerial coxcomb. Its light folds closed around him, and with an olympian nod, he turned towards the door, while the valet flew to open it. As soon as the Count appeared, the other valets, who, with the hair-dresser, stood on either side of the room, raised each one, a long brush dipped in hair-powder, and waved it to and fro. Clouds of white dust filled the room; while through the mist, with grave and deliberate gait, walked Kaunitz, every now and then halting, when the brushes all stopped; then giving the word of command, when they all fell vigorously to work again. Four times he went through the farce, and then, grave as a ghost, he walked back to his dressing-room, followed by the hair-dresser.

At the door, the chief valet carefully removed the powder-mantle, and for the third time Kaunitz turned to the mirror. There he carefully wiped the powder from his eyes, and with a smile of extreme satisfaction he turned to the hair-dresser.

"Confess, Hippolyte, that nothing is more beautifying than powder. See how exquisitely it lies on the front ringlets, and how airily it is distributed over the entire perruque. *Vraiment*, I am proud of my invention."

Hippolyte protested that it was worthy of the god-like intellect of his Excellency, and was destined to make an era in the annals of hair-dressing."

"The annals of hair-dressing," replied his Excellency, "are not to be enriched with any account of my method of using powder. If ever I hear a word of this discovery breathed outside of these rooms; I dismiss the whole pack of you. Do you hear?"

Down went the obsequious heads, while Kaunitz continued, with his fine cambric handkerchief, to remove the last specks of powder from his eye-lids. When he had sufficiently caressed and admired himself, he went to the door. It opened, and two valets, who stood outside, presented him one with a jewelled snuff-box, the other with an embroidered handkerchief. A large brown dog that lay couchant in the hall, rose and followed him, and the last act of the daily farce was over.

* Literally, "Powder-room."

The Count passed into his study, and going at once to the table, he turned over the papers. "No message yet from the Empress," said he chagrined. "What if Bartenstein's visit was *not* a politic, but a triumphant one. What a——"

Here the door opened, and Baron Binder entered. "Your Excellency," said he smiling, "I have taken upon myself to bear you a message which your servants declined to bring. It is to announce a visitor. The hour for reception has gone by, but he was so urgent that I really could not refuse his entreaties that you might be told of his presence. Pardon my officiousness, but you know how soft-hearted I am. I could never resist importunity."

"Who is your suppliant friend?"

"Count Bartenstein, my lord."

"Bartenstein. Bartenstein back already!" exclaimed Kaunitz, exultingly. "And he begged—he begged for an interview, you say?"

"Begged! the word is faint to express his supplications."

"Then I am not mistaken!" cried Kaunitz, with loud triumphant voice, "If Bartenstein begs, it is all over with him. Twice in my ante-room in one day! That is equivalent to a message from the Empress." And Kaunitz, not caring to dissimulate with Binder, gave vent to his exceeding joy.

"And you will be magnanimous—you will see him, will you not?" asked Binder, imploringly.

"What for?" asked the heartless statesman. "If he means business, the council-chamber is the place for *that;* if he comes to visit *me*——'I beg to be excused.'"

"But when I beg you, for *my* sake, Count," persisted the good-natured Baron; "the sight of fallen greatness is such a painful one. How can any one add to it a feather's weight of anguish!"

Kaunitz laid his hand upon the broad shoulders of his friend; and in his eye there kindled something like a ray of affection.

"Grown-up child, your heart is as soft as if it had never been breathed upon by the airs of this wicked world—say no more about Bartenstein, and I will reward your interest in his misfortune, by making you his successor. You shall be State-Referendarius yourself. Come along, you chicken-hearted statesman, and let us play a game of billiards."

"First," said Binder, sadly, "I must deliver my painful message to Count Bartenstein."

"Bah! the page can be sent to dismiss him."

"But there is no reason why we should keep the poor man waiting."

"Him, the poor man, say you? I remember the day when I waited in his ante-room, and as I am an honest man, I shall pay him with interest. Come along my dear future State-Referendarius."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RED STOCKINGS.

At Kaunitz's dinner-table on that day, revelry reigned triumphant. No jest was too bold for the lips of the men, and if perchance upon the cheeks of their beautiful companions, there rose the slightest flush of womanly shame, the knights of the revel shouted applause, and pealed forth their praises in wildest dithyrambics. With glowing faces and eyes of flame, they ate their highly-spiced viands and drank their fiery wines, until all restraint was flung aside, and madness ruled the hour.

The lovely Ferlina, whom Kaunitz had placed next to himself, was beautiful as Grecian Phryne; and Sacco, who was between her adorers, Harrach and Colloredo, was bold and bewitching as Lais.

The odor of flowers—the sound of distant music, everything that could intoxicate the senses, was there. It was one of those orgies which Kaunitz alone knew how to devise, and to which all the lesser libertines of Vienna longed to be initiated, for once admitted there, they were graduates in the school of vice.

The guests were excited beyond control, but not so the host. He who had invoked the demon that possessed the rest, sat perfectly collected. With the coolness of a helmsman he steered the flower-laden bark of voluptuousness towards the breakers, while he befooled its passengers with visions of fatal beauty.

The feast was at an end, and as Kaunitz reviewed the faces of the company, and saw that for the day, their passions were weary from indulgence, he said to himself, with diabolical calmness, "Now that they have exhausted every other pleasure, we will sharpen the blunted edge of desire with gambling! When the life of the heart is burnt to ashes, it will still revive at the chink of gold."

"To the gaming-table friends, to the gaming-table!" cried he. And the dull eyes grew bright, while the guests followed him to the green-covered table that stood at the further end of the dining-room.

Kaunitz took from a casket a heap of gold, while La Ferlina gazed upon it with longing sighs. Harrach and Colloredo poured showers from their purses, and Sacco looked from one to the other with her most ineffable smiles. Kaunitz saw it all, and as he threw the dice into the golden dice-box he muttered, "Miserable worms, ye think yourselves gods, and are the slaves of a little fiend, whose name is GOLD!"

As he raised the dice-box, the door opened, and his first valet appeared on the threshold.

"Pardon me, your Excellency, that I presume to enter the room. But there is a messenger from the Empress, and she begs your Excellency's immediate attendance."

With an air of consummate indifference, Kaunitz replaced the dice on the table. "My carriage," was his reply to the valet; and to his guests, with a graceful inclination, he said, "Do not let this interrupt you. Count Harrach will be my banker. In this casket are ten thousand florins—I go halves with the charming Ferlina."

Signora Ferlina could not contain herself for joy, and in the exuberance of her gratitude, she disturbed some of the folds of Kaunitz's lace ruff. Kaunitz was furious; but, without changing a muscle, he went on. "Farewell, my lords—farewell, ladies! I must away to the post of duty."

Another bend of the head, and he disappeared. The valets and hair-dresser were already buzzing around his dressing-room, with court-dress and red-stocking, but Kaunitz waved them all away, and called Hippolyte to arrange a curl of his hair that was displaced.

The chief valet who had been petrified with astonishment, now came to life, and advanced, holding in his hand the rich court-dress.

"Pardon, your Excellency, but my lord, the Count, is about to have an audience with her imperial Majesty?"

"I am," was the curt reply.

"Then, your Excellency must comply with the etiquette of the Empress's court, which requires the full Spanish dress, dagger and red stockings."

"Must," said Kaunitz contemptuously. "Fool! From this day, no one shall say to Count Kaunitz, 'Must.' Bear that in mind. Hand me my muff."

"Muff, my lord?" echoed the valet.

"Yes, fool, my hands are cold."

The valet looked out of the window, where flamed the radiance of a June sun, and with a deep sigh for the waywardness of his master, handed the muff.

Kaunitz thrust in his hands, and slowly left the room, followed by the dog, the valets and the hair-dresser. Every time his Excellency went out, this procession came after as far as the carriage-door, to see that nothing remained imperfect in his toilet. With the muff held close to his mouth, for fear a breath of air should enter it, Kaunitz passed through the lofty corridors of his house to his state-carriage. The dog wished to get in, but he waved her gently back, saying

"No, Phœdra, not to-day. I dare not take you there."

The carriage rolled off and the servants looked after in dumb consternation. At last the first valet, with a malicious smile, said to the others,

"I stick to my opinion—he is crazy. Who but a madman would hope to be admitted to her imperial Majesty's presence without red stockings and a dagger!"

Hippolyte shook his head. "No, no, he is no madman; he is only a singular genius, who knows the world, and snaps his fingers at it."

The valet was not far from right. The simple dress white stockings, and the absence of the dagger, raised a commotion in the palace.

The page in the entrance-hall was afraid to announce the Count, and he rushed into the ante-room to consult the marshal of the imperial household. The latter, with his sweetest smile, hastened to meet the indignant Count.

"Have the goodness, my lord," said Kaunitz imperiously, "not to detain me any longer. The Empress has called me to her presence; say that I am here."

"But, Count," cried the horror-stricken Marshal, "you cannot seriously mean to present yourself in such a garb. Doubtless, you have forgotten, from absence of mind, to array yourself as court-etiquette exacts of her Majesty's servants. If you will do me the favor to accompany me to my own apartments, I will with great pleasure supply the red stockings and dagger."

Count Kaunitz shrugged his shoulders disdainfully. "Her Majesty sent for *me*, not for my red stockings; therefore, please to announce me."

The Marshal retreated in his surprise, several steps. "Never," cried he indignantly, "never would I presume to do so unheard of a thing! Such a transgression of her Majesty's orders is inadmissible."

"Very well," replied Kaunitz coolly, "I shall then have the pleasure of announcing myself."

He passed by the Marshal and dismayed page, and was advancing to the door that led to the imperial apartments.

"Hold! hold!" groaned the Marshal, whose consternation was now at its height. "That were too presuming! Since her Majesty has commanded your attendance, I will do my duty. I leave it to yourself, my lord, to excuse your own boldness, if you can carry it so far as to attempt a justification of your conduct.

He bowed, and passed into the next room; thence into the cabinet of the Empress, whence he returned with word for Count Kaunitz to enter.

CHAPTER IX.

NEW AUSTRIA.

The Empress received the Count with a most gracious smile. "You are late," she said, reaching out her hand for him to kiss.

"I came very near not reaching your Majesty's presence at all, for those two wiseacres in the ante-room refused me entrance, because I had neither red stockings nor a dagger."

The Empress then perceived the omission, and she frowned. "Why did you present yourself here, without them?" asked she.

"Because, your Majesty, I detest red stockings; and I really cannot see why I should be compelled to wear anything that is so distasteful to me."

Maria Theresa was so surprised, that she scarcely knew what reply to make to the argument; so Kaunitz continued:

"And as for the dagger, that is no emblem of my craft. I am not a soldier, but a statesman; my implement is the crow-quill."

"And the tongue," replied the Empress, "for you certainly know how to use it. Let us dismiss the dagger and red stockings then, and speak of your pen and your tongue, for I need them both. I have well-weighed the matters under consideration, and have taken counsel of Heaven and of my own conscience. I hope that my decision will be for the best."

Count Kaunitz, courtier though he was, could not repress a slight shiver, nor could he master the paleness that overspread his anxious face.

The Empress went on: "I have irrevocably decided. I abide by what I said in council. A new day shall dawn upon Austria—God grant that it prove a happy one! Away then with the old alliance; we offer our hand to France, and you shall conduct the negotiations. I appoint you Lord-High-Chancellor in the place of Count Uhlfeld. And you owe me some thanks, for I assure you that to carry out my opposition to my Ministers, I have striven with countless difficulties."

"I thank your Majesty for resolving upon an alliance with France," said Kaunitz earnestly, "for I do believe that it will conduce to Austria's welfare."

"And do you not thank me for making you Prime Minister? Or is the appointment unwelcome?"

"I shall be the happiest of mortals if I can accept; but that question is for your Majesty to decide."

The Empress colored, and looked displeased, while Kaunitz "himself again" stood composed and collected before her.

"Ah," said she quickly, "you wish me to beg you to accept the highest office in Austria! Do you think it a favor you do me to become my Prime Minister, Kaunitz?"

"Your Majesty," replied Kaunitz in his soft, calm tones, "I think not of myself, but of Austria that I love, and of you, my honored Empress, whom I would die to serve. But I must know whether it will be allowed me to serve my Empress and my fatherland as I can and will serve them both."

"What do you mean? Explain yourself."

"If I am to labor in your behalf, my Empress, I must have free hands, without colleagues by my side, to discuss my plans, and plot against them."

—"Ah!" said the Empress smiling, "I understand. You mean Bartenstein, and Counts Harrach and Colloredo. True—they are your rivals."

—"Oh, your Majesty, not my rivals I hope."

"Well, then, your enemies, if you like that better," said the Empress.

"I shall not chain you together then. I will find other places wherewith to compensate them for their past serviees, and you may find other colleagues."

"I desire no colleagues, your Majesty," replied Kaunitz, "I wish to be prime and only Minister. Then together we will wield Austria's many dependencies into one great empire, and unite its governments under one head."

"Yours, Count?" asked Maria Theresa ironically.

—"Yours, my Sovereign! Whatever you may think, up to this moment you have not reigned supreme in Austria. By your side, have Bartenstein and Uhlfeld reigned like lesser Emperors. Is not Lombardy governed by its own princes, and does not the Vieeroy of Hungary make laws and edicts, which every day are brought to you for signature?"

—"Yes, I am truly hemmed in on every side. But I see no remedy for the evil—I cannot govern every where. Hungary and Lombardy have their own constitutions and must have their own separate governments."

"So long as that state of things lasts, neither Hungary nor Lombardy will be portions of the Austrian empire," said Kaunitz.

"There is no remedy, Kaunitz," returned Maria Theresa; "I have thought these difficulties over and over. My arm is too short to reach to the furthest ends of my realms, and I must be content to delegate some of my power. One hand cannot navigate the ship of state."

—"But one head can steer it, your Majesty, and one head can direct the hands that work it."

—"And will the Count be one of my hands?"

—"Yes indeed, your Majesty. But the fingers must be subject to this hand, and the hand will then carry out, in all security, the plans of its august head, the Empress."

"You mean to say that you wish to be alone as my Minister."

"If I am truly to serve your Majesty, it must be so. Let not the sovereignty of Austria be frittered away in multitudinous rivulets; gather it all in one full, fertilizing stream. One head and one hand over Austria's destiny, and then will she grow independent, and all-powerful."

"But, man," cried the Empress, "you cannot sustain the burthen you covet!"

"I will have ample help, your Majesty. I will seek ready hands and willing hearts that believe in me, and will do my behests. These must not be my coadjutors but my subalterns, who think through me, and work for me. If your Majesty will grant me this privilege, then I can serve Austria. I know that I am asking for high prerogatives; but for Austria's sake, Maria Theresa will dare everything; and together we will accomplish the consolidation of her 'disjecta membra' into one great empire. The policy which conducts our financial affairs must emanate from yourself, and our foreign policy must be bold and frank, that friends and foes may both know what we mean. We must coffin and bury old Austria with the dead that sleep on the battle grounds of lost Silesia;

and from her ashes we must build a new empire of which Hungary and Lombardy shall be integral parts. Hand in hand with France, we will be the law-givers of all Europe; and when, thanks to our thrift and the rich tribute of our provinces, we pay our national debt, then we may laugh at English subsidies and Dutch commerce. And lastly, we will cast our eyes once more upon Silesia, and methinks if France and Austria together should demand restitution of King Frederic, he will scarcely be so rash as to say—nay. The ministers of Louis XV. who were adverse to our alliance are about to retire, and the Duke of Choiseul, our firm friend and the favorite of Mme. de Pompadour, will replace Richelieu. Choiseul seeks our friendship and the day of our triumph is dawning. Such, your Majesty, are my dreams for Austria; it rests with you to make them realities!"

The Empress had listened with increasing interest to every word that Kaunitz had spoken. She had risen from her seat, and was pacing the room in a state of high excitement. As he ceased, she stopped in front of him, and her large, sparkling orbs of blue, glowed with an expression of happiness and hope.

"I believe that you are the man for Austria," said she. "I believe that together we can carry out our plans and projects. God grant that they be righteous and just in His sight! You have read my heart, and you know that I can never reconcile myself to the loss of Silesia. You know that between me and Frederic no harmony can ever exist; no treaty can ever be signed to which he is a party.* I will take the hand of France, not so much for love of herself as for her enmity to Prussia. Will you work with me to make war on Frederic if I appoint you sole Minister, Kaunitz! For I tell you that I burn to renew my strife with the King of Prussia, and I would rather give him battle to-day than to-morrow.†

"I comprehend your Majesty's feelings, and fully share them. As soon as France and ourselves understand one another, we will make a league against Frederic, and may easily make him strike the first blow, for even now, he is longing to appropriate another Silesia."

"And I am longing to cross swords with him for the one he has stolen from me. I cannot bear to think of going to my fathers, with a diminished inheritance; I cannot brook the thought that my woman's hands have not been strong enough to preserve my rights, for I feel that if I have the heart of a woman, I have the head of a man. To see Austria great and powerful, to see her men noble and her women virtuous, that is my dream, my hope, my aim in life! You are the one to perfect what I have conceived, Kaunitz; will you give me your hand to this great work?"

—"I will, your Majesty, so help me God."

—"Will you have Austria's good alone in view, in all that you counsel as my Minister?"

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* Maria Theresa's own words.
† Maria Theresa's words. Coxe.

—"I will, so help me God!"

"Will you take counsel with me how we may justly and righteously govern Austria, without prejudice, without self-love, without thought of worldly fame, not from love or fear of man, but for the sake of God from whose hands we hold our empire?"

—"I will, so help me God."

"Then," said Maria Theresa after a pause, "you are my sole Minister, and I empower you to preside over the affairs of state, in the manner you may judge fittest for the welfare of the Austrian people."

Kaunitz was as self-possessed a worldling, as ever sought to hide his emotions; but he could not suppress an exclamation of rapture, nor an expression of triumph that lit up his face, as nothing had ever illumined it before."

"Your Majesty," said he, when he found words, "I accept the trust, and as there is a God above to judge me, I will hold it faithfully. My days and nights, my youth and age, with their thoughts, their will, their every faculty, shall be laid upon the shrine of Austria's greatness, and if for one moment I ever sacrifice your Majesty to any interest of mine, may I die a death of torture and disgrace!"

—"I believe you; your countenance reflects your heart, and Almighty God has heard your words. One thing remember—that Maria Theresa suffers no Minister to dictate to her. She is the reigning Sovereign of her people, and will not suffer a finger to be laid upon her imperial rights. Were he a thousand times Prime Minister, the man that presumed too far with me, I would hurl from his eminence to the lowest depths of disgrace. And now that we understand one another, we will clasp hands like men, who are pledged before God to do their duty."

She extended her hand to Kaunitz, who grasped it in his own. "I swear," said he solemnly, "to do my duty, and never can I forget this hour! I swear to my *Sovereign*, Maria Theresa, loyalty unto death; and before my *Empress*, I bow my knee, and so do homage to the greatest woman of her age."

"The Empress smiled, while Kaunitz knelt, and kissed her fair and jewelled hand." May God grant that you speak truth, Kaunitz, and may my posterity not have to blush for me. 'Everything for Austria,' shall be your motto and mine; and this flaming device shall light us on our way through life. Now go, Lord High Chancellor, and see that the world finds a phœnix in the ashes of the old *regime* which to-day we have consigned to the dust!"*

* From this time, Kaunitz was sole Minister of the Empress; and he kept his promise to Binder, who became State-Referendarius in the place of the once powerful Bartenstein.

ISABELLA.

CHAPTER X.

THE YOUNG SOLDIER.

KAUNITZ's prophecy had been fulfilled. No sooner was it known that Austria and France were allies, than Frederic of Prussia, with all haste, made treaties with England. These opposite alliances were the signal for war. For seven years, this war held its blood-stained lash over Austria, and every nation in Europe, suffered more or less from its effects. Maria Theresa began it with sharp words, to which Frederic had responded with his sharper sword.

The King, through his Ambassador, asked the meaning of her extensive military preparations throughout Austria, to which the Empress, nettled by the arrogance of the demand, had replied that she believed she had a right to mass troops for the protection of herself and her allies, without rendering account of her acts to foreign kings. Upon the receipt of this reply, Frederic marched his troops into Saxony, and so began the "seven years' war;" a war that was prosecuted on both sides with bitter vindictiveness.

Throughout Austria the wildest enthusiasm prevailed. Rich and poor, young and old, all rushed to the fight. The warlike spirit that pervaded her people made its way to the heart of the Empress's eldest son. The Archduke Joseph had for some time been entreating his mother to allow him to join the army; and at last, though much against her will, she had yielded to his urgent desire. On the day when the news of a victory, near Kunersdorf, over Frederic, reached the palace, the Empress had given her consent, and her son was to be allowed to go in search of laurel wreaths wherewith to deck his imperial brow.

This permission to enter the army was the first great joy of Joseph's life. His heart, at last freed from its weight of conventional duties, and forced submission to the requirements of Court etiquette, soared high into regions of exultant happiness. His countenance once so cold and impassible, was now full of joyous changes; his eyes, once so dull and weary, glowed with the fire of awakened enthusiasm, and they looked so brilliant a blue, that it seemed as if some little ray from Heaven had found its way into their clear, bright depths. The poor boy was an altered creature. He was frolicksome with his friends; and as for those whom he considered his enemies, he cared nothing for their likes or dislikes. *He* had nothing to lose or gain from them; he was to leave the

Court, leave Vienna, leave every troublesome remembrance behind, and go far from all tormentors to the Army!

The preparations were at an end; the Archduke had taken formal leave of his mother's Court; this evening he was to spend in the imperial family circle; and early on the next morning his journey would begin He had just written a last note of farewell to a friend. Alone in his room, he stood before a mirror, contemplating with a smile his own image. He was not looking at his own handsome face, though happiness was lending it exquisite beauty; the object of his rapturous admiration was the white uniform which, for the first time, he wore in place of his Court dress. He was no longer the descendant of Charles the Fifth, no longer the son of the Empress, he was a Soldier! A free, self-sustaining man, whose destiny lay in his own hands, and whose future deeds would prove him worthy to be the son of his great ancestor.

As, almost intoxicated with excess of joy, he stood before the glass, the door opened gently, and a youth of about his own age, entered the room.

"Pardon me, your Highness, said the youth, bowing, if I enter without permission. Doubtless your Highness did not hear me knock, and I found no one in your ante-room to announce me."

The Prince turned around and reached out his hand, saying, with a laugh, No! no! you found nobody. I have discharged old dame Etiquette from my service, and you see before you, not his imperial highness, the Archduke Joseph, crown-prince of Austria, but a young soldier brimful of happiness, master of nothing but his own sword, with which he means to carve out his fortunes on the battle-field. Oh! Dominick! I have dropped the rosary, and taken up the sabre, and I mean to twist such a forest of laurels about my head, that it will be impossible for me ever to wear a night-cap again, were it even sent me as a present from the Pope himself."

"Do not talk so loud, your Highness, you will frighten the Proprieties out of their wits."

Joseph laughed. "Dominick Kaunitz," said he, "you are the son of your respected father, no doubt of it; for you behave prettily before the bare walls themselves, for fear they might tell of your indiscretions. But fear not, son of the mighty Prime Minister, *my* walls are dumb, and nobody is near to tell tales. We are alone, for I have dismissed all my attendants; and here I may give loud vent to my hallelujahs, which I now proceed to do by singing you a song which I learned not long ago, from an invalided soldier in the street."

And the Prince began in a sonorous bass voice to sing:

O the young cannon is my bride;
Her orange wreath is twined with bay,
And on the blood-red battle field
We'll celebrate our wedding-day.
Trara! Trara!
No priest is there
To bless the rites,

Here young Kaunitz, all etiquette despising, put his hands before the mouth of the Prince, and while the latter strove, in spite of him, to go on with his song, he said in low, but anxious tones,

"For heaven's sake, your Highness, listen to me. You plunge yourself wantonly into danger. Do you suppose that your powerful voice does not resound through the corridors of the palace?"

"Well, if it *is* heard, Dominick, what of it? I bid farewell to my enemies, and this is my 'Hosanna.' You ought to be ashamed of yourself to stop me. My tormentors you think have heard the beginning of my song; well—the devil take it, but they shall have the end!"

Once more the Archduke began to sing; but Dominick caught his arm. "Do you wish" said he, "to have the Empress revoke her permission?"

The Archduke laughed. "Why, Dominick, you are crazed with grief for my loss, I do believe; the Empress revoke her imperial word, *now*, when all my preparations are made, and I go to-morrow!"

"Empresses do revoke their words, and preparations are often made, to be followed by—nothing," replied Dominick.

The Prince looked in consternation at his young friend. "Are you in earnest, dear Dominick?" asked he. "Do you indeed think it possible that I could be hindered from going to the army, on the very eve of my departure?"

—"I do, your Highness."

The Archduke grew pale, and in a tremulous voice said, "upon what do you found your supposition, my friend?"

"O, my dear Lord, replied Dominick, "it is no supposition, I fear it is a fact; and I fear, too, that it is your own fault, if this disappointment awaits you."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the Prince in tones of anguish, "what can I have done to deserve such fearful chastisement?"

"You have displeased the Empress by neglect of your religious duties. For more than two weeks, you have not entered a place of worship; and yesterday when the Countess Fuchs remonstrated with your Highness, you replied with an unseemly jest. You said, 'dearest Countess, I hope to prove to you that although I neglect my Mass, I can be pious on the battle-field. There on the altar of my country I mean to sacrifice countless enemies, and that will be an offering quite as pleasing in the sight of God.' Were those not your words, Prince?"

"Yes, yes, they were—but I meant no impiety. My heart was so full of joy that it effervesced in wild words, but surely my mother cannot mean, for such a harmless jest, to dash my every hope to the earth!"

—"Oh, your Highness, this is only one offence out of many of which you are accused. I have no time to repeat them now, for my errand here is important and pressing."

"Where learned you all this?" asked the poor Archduke.

—"Bend down your ear, and I will tell you. My father told me every word of it."

—"The Lord High Chancellor! Impossible!"

—"Yes, it would seem impossible that he should repeat anything; and therefore you may know how seriously the matter affects your Highness when I tell you that he sent me to warn you."

A quick, loud knock at the door, interrupted him, and before the Archduke could say, "come in," the Emperor Francis was in the room. His face looked care-worn, and he cast a glance of tender compassion upon his son.

"My child," said he, "I come to speak with you in private, a thing I cannot compass in my own apartments."

Dominick bowed to take leave, but the Emperor withheld him. "Stay," said he, "for you may serve us, Dominick. I know you to be Joseph's best friend, and you will not betray him. But I have no time for words. Tell me quickly, Joseph, is there any secret outlet to these apartments? Do you know of any hidden stair-way by which you could escape from the palace?"

"I, father, I have secret doors in my apartments! Is this some new device of my enemies to injure me in the eyes of the Empress?"

"Hush, hush, Joseph. How like he is in temperament to his mother! Answer me at once; there is no question of enemies, but of yourself."

"What would you have me do with secret doors and stairways?" asked Joseph.

The Emperor came close to his son, and in low, cautious tones, whispered, "I would have you this very hour leave the palace privately, mount your horse, and speed away from Vienna."

"Fly, my dear father," cried Joseph. "Has it come to this, that the son must fly from the face of his own mother! Am I a criminal, who must not be told of what crime I am accused! No, your Majesty; if death or imprisonment for life were here to threaten me, I would not fly."

"Nor would I counsel flight, my son, were you accused of wrong. But this is not a question of crime; of prisoned beaker, or of castle-dungeon—it is simply this. Do you wish to join the army, or are you ready to give up your commission and stay at home?"

"Oh, my father," cried Joseph, "you well know that I have but one desire on earth—and that is, to go."

"Then, hear me. It has been represented to the Empress that your lust for war has made you so reckless, so blood-thirsty, and so impious, that camp-life will prove your ruin. In her excess of maternal love, she has taken the alarm, and has resolved to shield you from danger, by withdrawing her consent to your departure."

The Archduke's eyes filled with tears. The Emperor laid his hand sympathizingly upon his shoulder.

"Do not despair, dear child," said he tenderly, "perhaps all is not lost, and I may be able to assist you. I can comprehend the nature of your sorrow, for I have suffered the same bitter disappointment. If in-

stead of leading a useless life, a mere appanage of the Empress, I had been permitted to follow the dictates of my heart, and command her armies, I might have——but why speak of my waning career? You are young, and I do not wish to see your life darkened by such early disappointment. Therefore listen to me. *You* know nothing of the change in your prospects; you have as yet received no orders to remain. Write to your mother, that preferring to go without the grief of taking leave, you have presumed to start to-night without her knowledge, hoping soon to embrace her again, and lay your first-earned laurels at her feet,"

The Archduke hastened to obey his father, and sat down to write. The Emperor, meanwhile, signed to young Kaunitz, who had kept himself respectfully aloof.

"Have you a courser," asked he, "to sell to Joseph, and two good servants that can accompany him until his own attendants can be sent after him?"

"I came hither, your Majesty, prepared to make the same proposition, with the fleetest horse in my father's stables, and two trusty servants, well-mounted, all of which await his Highness at the postern gate."

—"Your father's best horse? Then *he* knows of this affair?"

—"It was he, who sent me to the Archduke's assistance. He told me, in case of necessity, to propose flight, and to be ready for it."

"The letter is ready," said the Archduke, coming forward.

"I myself will hand it to the Empress," said his father, taking it, "and I will tell her, that I counselled to you to go as you did."

—"But, dear father, the Empress will be angry."

"Well, my son," said the Emperor, with a peculiar smile, "I have survived so many little passing storms, that I will doubtless survive this one. The Empress has the best and noblest heart in the world, and its sunshine is always brightest after a storm. Go then, my child, I will answer for your sin and mine. The Empress had said nothing to me of her change of purpose; she looks upon it as a state affair, and with her state affairs I am never made acquainted. Since accident has betrayed it to me, I have a right to use my knowledge in your behalf, and I undertake to appease your mother. Here is a purse with two thousand louis d'ors; it is enough for a few days of Incognito. Throw your military cloak about you, and away!"

Young Kaunitz laid the cloak upon the shoulders of the Archduke, whose eyes beamed forth the gratitude that filled his heart.

"Oh my father and my sovereign," said he in a voice that trembled with emotion. "My whole life will not be long enough to thank you for what you are doing for me in this critical hour. Till now I have loved you indeed as my father, but henceforth I must look upon you as my benefactor also, as my dearest and best friend. My heart and my soul are yours, dear father; may I be worthy of your love and of the sacrifice you are making for me to-day."

The Emperor folded his son to his heart, and kissed his fair forehead.

"Farewell, dear boy," whispered he, "return to me a victor and a hero. May you earn for your father on the battle-field all the laurels which he has seen in dreams only! God bless you!"

They then left the room, Count Kaunitz leading the way, to see if the passage was clear.

"I will go with you as far as the stair case," continued the Emperor, "and then——"

At that moment Dominick, who had gone forward into the corridor, rushed back into the room pale and trembling, "It is too late!" exclaimed he in a stifled voice, "there comes a messenger from the Empress!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE EMPRESS AND HER SON.

The young Count was not mistaken. It was indeed a message from the Empress. It was the Marshal of the Household, followed by four pages, who came to command the presence of the Archduke, to whom her Majesty wished to impart something of importance.

A deadly paleness overspread the face of the young Prince, and his whole frame shivered. The Emperor felt the shudder, and drew his son's arm closer to his heart. "Courage, my son, courage!" whispered he: then turning towards the imperial embassy, he said aloud, "Announce to her Majesty that I will accompany the Archduke in a few moments." And as the Marshal stood irresolute and confused, the Emperor smiling, said, "Oh, I see that you have been ordered to accompany the Prince yourselves. Come then, my son, we will e'en go along with the messengers."

Maria Theresa was pacing the floor of her apartment in great excitement. Her large, flashing eyes, now and then turned towards the door, and whenever she fancied that footsteps approached, she stopped, and seemed almost to gasp with anxiety.

Suddenly she turned towards Father Porhammer, who with the Countess Fuchs, stood by the side of the sofa from which she had risen. "Father," said she, in a tremulous voice, "I cannot tell why it is that as I await my son's presence here, my heart is overwhelmed with anguish. I feel as if I were about to do him an injustice, and for all the kingdoms of the world I would not do him wrong."

"Nay," replied the Father, "your Majesty is about to rescue that beloved son from destruction; but as your Majesty is a loving mother, it

afflicts you to disappoint your child. Still, our Lord has commanded us the right eye offend to pluck it out; and so is it your Majesty's duty to pluck from your son's heart the evil growing there, even were his heart's blood to follow. The wounds you may inflict upon your dear child for God's sake, will soon be healed by His almighty hand."

"He was *so* happy to become a soldier!" murmured the Empress, who had resumed her agitated walk; "his eyes were so bright, and his bearing was so full of joy and pride! My boy is so handsome, so like his dear father, that my heart throbs, when I see him, as it did in the days when we were young lovers! A laurel wreath would well become his fair brow, and I—how proudly I should have welcomed my young hero to my heart once more! Dear, dear boy, must I then wake you so rudely from your first dream of ambition!—I MUST. He would come to evil, in the lawless life of the Camp; God forgive him, but he is as mad for the fight as Don John of Austria. I should never see him again; he would seek death in his first battle. Oh I could not survive it; my heart would break if I should have to give up my first-born! Four of my children lie in the vaults of St. Stephens—I cannot part with my Joseph! Countess," she said, turning suddenly to her lady of honor, "is it not true that Joseph told you he thought that the altar of the battle-field and the sacrifice of his enemies was——"

"His Majesty, the Emperor, and his imperial Highness, the Archduke Joseph"—said the Marshal of the Household; and the door was flung open for their entrance.

Maria Theresa advanced, and bowed slightly to the Emperor.

"Your Majesty's visit at this unusual hour surprises me," said she with emphasis.

"I am aware," replied the Emperor graciously, "that I was not expected; but as this is the last day of our son's residence under the parental roof, I am sure that my wife will see nothing strange in my visit. I was with the Archduke when your Majesty's message reached him, and knowing that you could have no secrets with the son, which the father might not hear, I followed the impulse of my affection and came with him."

"And what signifies this singular and unseemly dress in which my son presents himself before his Sovereign?" asked Maria Theresa, angrily surveying the uniform which, nevertheless, she acknowledged in her heart was beyond expression becoming to him.

"Pardon me, your Majesty," replied the son, "I had tried on the uniform, and if I was to obey your summons at once, there was no time for a change in my dress."

"And indeed," said the Emperor, "I think the dress becoming. Our boy will make a fine-looking soldier."

The Empress being precisely of that opinion, herself, was so much the more vexed at her husband for giving it expression. She bit her lip and her brow contracted, as was usual with her, when she was growing angry.

"You held it then as a fact, my son, that you were a soldier," said she, catching her breath with anxiety.

Joseph raised his fine eyes, with an imploring expression, to the face of his mother. "Your Majesty had promised me that I should be a soldier," replied he firmly, "and I have never yet known my mother to break her imperial word to the least of her subjects."

"Hear him!" cried the Empress, with a laugh of derision, "he almosts threatens me! This young sir will try to make it a point of honor with me to keep my word."

"Pardon me, your Majesty," replied Joseph calmly, "I have never allowed myself to doubt your imperial word for one moment of my life."

"Well then, your Highness has my *imperial* permission to doubt it now," cried the Empress, severely humiliated by the implied rebuke, "I allow you to doubt whether I will ever hold my promises, when they have been rashly and injudiciously made."

"Why, your Majesty," cried the Emperor, "surely you will not retract your word in the face of the whole world, that knows of Joseph's appointment!"

"What to me is the opinion of the world?" returned the haughty Empress. "To God and my conscience alone I am responsible for my acts, and to them I will answer it, that I take back my promise, and declare that Joseph *shall not* go into the Army!"

Joseph uttered a cry of anguish. "Mother! mother!" sobbed the unhappy boy, "it cannot be!"

"Why can it not be?" said the Empress, haughtily.

"Because it would be a cruel and heartless deed," cried the Archduke, losing all control over himself, "so to make sport of my holiest and purest hopes in life; and because I never, never can believe that my own mother would seek to break my heart."

The Empress was about to return a scathing reply, when the Emperor laid his gentle hand upon her shoulder, and the words died upon her lips.

"I beseech of you, my wife," said he "to remember that we are not alone. Joseph is no child; and it ill becomes any but his parents to witness his humiliation. Have the goodness then to dismiss your attendants, and let us deal with our son, alone."

"Why shall I dismiss them?" cried the Empress, "they are my trusty confidants; and they have a right to hear all that the future Emperor of Austria presumes to say to his mother!"

"Pardon me," replied the Emperor, "I differ with you, and desire that they should not hear our family discussions. In these things, I too have my right; and if your Majesty does not command them to leave the room, I do."

Maria Theresa looked aghast at the countenance of her husband, which was firm and resolved in its expression. In her confusion, she could find no retort. The Emperor waited awhile, and seeing that she did not speak, he turned towards the two followers, who stood, without moving, at their posts.

"I request the Countess Fuchs and Father Porhammer to leave the room," said he, with dignity. "Family concerns are discussed in private."

The pair did not go. Father Porhammer interrogated the face of the Empress, and the Countess, indignant that her curiosity was to be frustrated, looked defiant.

This bold disregard of her husband's command was irritating to the feelings of the Empress. She thought that his orders should have outweighed her mere remonstrance, and she now felt it her duty to signify as much.

"Countess Fuchs" said she, "doubtless the Emperor has not spoken loud enough for you to hear the command he has just given you. You have not understood his words and I will take the trouble to repeat them. The Emperor said, 'I request the Countess Fuchs and Father Porhammer to leave the room. Our family concerns, we will discuss in private.'"

The lady of honor colored, and with deep inclinations, Father Porhammer and herself left the room.

Maria Theresa looked after them until the door was shut, then she smilingly reached her hand to the Emperor, who thanked her with a pressure, and a look of deepest affection. The Archduke had retired to the embrasure of a window, perhaps to seek composure, perhaps to hide his tears.

"Now," said Maria Theresa sternly, while her fiery eyes sought the figure of her son, "now, we are alone, and Joseph is at liberty to speak. I beg him to remember that in the person of his mother, he also sees his Sovereign, and that the Empress will resent every word of disloyalty spoken to the parent. And I hold it to be highly disloyal for my son to accuse me of making sport of his hopes. I have not come to my latest determination from cruelty or caprice; I have made it in the strength of my maternal love to shield my child from sin, and in the rectitude of my imperial responsibility to my people, who have a right to claim from me that I bestow upon them a monarch who is worthy to reign over Austria. Therefore, my son, as Empress and mother, I say that you shall remain. That is now my unalterable will. If this decision grieves you, be humble and submissive; and remember that it is your duty, as son and subject, to obey without demurring. Then shall we be good friends and greet one another heartily, as though you had at this moment returned from the victorious battle-field. There is my hand. Be welcome, my dear, and much beloved child!"

The heart of the Empress had gradually softened, and as she smiled and extended her hand, her beautiful eyes were filled to overflowing, with tears. But Joseph, deathly-pale, crossed his arms, and returned her glances of love with a haughty, defiant look, that almost approached to dislike.

"My son," said the Emperor, "do you not see your dear mother's hand extended to meet yours?"

"I see it, I see it," cried Joseph passionately; "but I cannot take it —I cannot play my part in this mockery of a return. No mother, no, I cannot kiss the hand that has so cruelly dashed my hopes to earth! And you wish to carry your tyranny so far as to exact that I receive it with a smile?—Oh, mother! my heart is breaking, Have pity on me, and take back those cruel words; let me go, let me go. Do not make me a by-word for the world, that hereafter will refuse me its respect. Let me go, if but for a few weeks, and on the day when you command my return, I will come home! Oh, my heart was too small to hold the love I bore you for your consent to my departure! It seemed to me that I had just begun to live; the world was full of beauty, and I forgot all the trials of my childhood! For one week, I have been young, dear mother; hurl me not back again into that dark dungeon of solitude where so much of my short life has been spent! Do not condemn me to live as I have hitherto lived; give me freedom, give me my manhood's rights!"

"No! no! a thousand times no!" cried the exasperated Empress; "I see now that I am right to keep such an unfeeling and ungrateful son at home. He talks of his sufferings forsooth! What has he ever suffered at my hands?"

"What I have suffered!" exclaimed Joseph, whose teeth chattered as if he were having a chill, and who was no longer in a state to suppress the terrible eruption of his heart's agony. "What have I suffered, ask you? I will tell you what, Empress-mother, I have suffered since first I could love, or think, or endure. As a child I have felt that my mother loved another son more than she loved me! When my longing eyes sought hers, they were rivetted upon another face. When my brother and I have sinned together, he has been forgiven, when I have been punished. Sorrow and jealousy were in my heart, and no one cared enough for me to ask why I wept. I was left to suffer without one word of kindness; and you wondered that I was taciturn, and mocked at my slighted longings for love, and called them by hard names. And then you pointed to my caressed and indulged brother, and bade me be gay like him!

"My son, my son!" cried the Emperor, "control yourself, you know not what you say."

"Let him go on, Francis," said the pale mother; "it is well that I should know his heart at last."

"Yes," continued the maddened Archduke, "let me go on, for in my heart is nothing but misery and slighted affection.—Oh, mother, mother," exclaimed he, suddenly changing from defiance to the most pathetic entreaty, "on my knees, I implore you to let me go; have mercy, have mercy upon your wretched son!"

And the young Prince, with outstretched hands, threw himself upon his knees before his mother. The long-suppressed tears gushed forth, the wild tempest of his ungovernable fury was spent, and now he sobbed as if indeed his young heart was breaking.

The Emperor could scarcely restrain the impulse he felt to weep with his son; but he came and laid his hand upon the poor boy's head, and looked with passionate entreaty at the Empress.

"Dear Theresa," said he, "be compassionate and forgiving. Pardon him, beloved, the hard and unjust words which in the bitterness of a first sorrow, he has spoken to the best of mothers. Raise him up from the depths of his despair, and grant the boon for which, I am sure, he will love you beyond bounds."

"I wish that I dared to grant it to yourself, Francis," replied the Empress sadly and tearfully, "but you see that he has made it impossible. I dare not do it; the mother has no right to plead with the Empress for her rebellious son. What he has said, I freely forgive—God grant that I may forget it! Well do I know, how stormy is youth, and I remember that Joseph is my son. It is the wild Spanish blood of my ancestry that boils in his veins—and, therefore, I forgive him with all my heart. But revoke my last sentence, that I cannot do!—To do so, would be to confirm him in wrong;—Rise, my son Joseph, I forgive all your cruel words, but what I have said, I have said. You remain at home!"

Joseph rose slowly from his knees. The tears in his eyes were dried; his lips were compressed, and once more he wore the old look of cold and sullen indifference. He made a profound inclination before his mother. "I have heard the Empress's commands," said he in a hoarse and unnatural voice, "it is my duty to obey. Allow me to go to my prison, that I may doff this manly garb, which no longer is suitable to my blasted career."

Without awaiting the answer, he turned away, and with hasty strides left the room.

The Empress watched him in speechless anxiety. As the door closed upon him, her features assumed an expression of the deepest tenderness, and she said, "Go, quickly, Franz, go after him. Try to comfort and sustain him. I do not know why, but I feel uneasy——"

At that moment, a cry was heard in the ante-room, and the fall of a heavy body to the floor.

"God help me, it is Joseph!" shrieked the Empress, and forgetting all ceremony, she darted from the room, and rushed by her dismayed attendants through the ante-room, out into the corridor. Stretched on the floor, insensible and lifeless, lay her son.

Without a word, the Empress waved off the crowd that was assembled around his body. The might of her love gave her supernatural strength; and folding her arms around her child, she covered his pale face with kisses, and from the very midst of the frightened attendants, she bore him herself to her room, where she softly laid him upon her own bed.

No one except the Emperor had ventured to follow; he stood near, and reached the salts, to which the Empress had silently pointed. She rubbed her son's temples, held the salts to his nostrils, and at last when he gave signs of life, she turned to the Emperor and burst into tears.

"Oh, Franz," said she, "I almost wish that he were sick, that day and night I might watch by his bedside, and his poor heart might feel the full extent of a mother's love for her first-born child."

Perhaps God granted her prayer, that these two noble hearts might no longer be estranged, but that each might at last meet the other in the fullest confidence of mutual love.

A violent attack of fever followed the swoon of the Archduke. The Empress never left his side. He slept in her own room, and she watched over him with gentlest and most affectionate care.

Whenever Joseph awaked from his fever-dreams, and unclosed his eyes, there, close to his bedside, he saw the Empress, who greeted him with loving words, and softest caresses. Whenever, in his fever-thirst, he called for drink, her hand held the cup to his parched lips; and whenever that soft cool hand was laid upon his hot brow, he felt as if its touch chased away all pain, and soothed all sorrow.

When he had recovered enough to sit up, still his mother would not consent for him to leave her room for his own. As long as he was an invalid, he should be hers alone. In her room, and through her loving care, should he find returning health. His sisters and brothers assembled there to cheer him with their childish mirth, and his young friend, Dominick Kaunitz, came daily to entertain him with his lively gossip. Altogether, the Archduke was happy. If he had lost Fame, he had found Love.

One day, when cushioned in his great soft arm-chair, he was chatting with his favorite tutor, Count Bathiany, the Empress entered the room, her face lit up with a happy smile, while in her hands she held an *étui* of red morocco.

"What think you I have in this *étui*, dear?" said she, coming forward and bending over her son to bestow a kiss.

—"I do not know; but I guess it is some new gift of love from my mother's dear hand."

"Yes, rightly guessed. It *is* a genuine gift of love and with God's grace, it may prove the brightest jewel in your future crown. Since I would not let you leave my house, my son, I feel it my duty, at least, to do my best to make your home a happy one. I also wish to show you that in my sight, you are no longer a boy, but a man worthy to govern your own household. Look at the picture in this case, and if it pleases you, my darling son, I give you not only the portrait, but the original also."

She handed him the case, in which lay the minature of a young girl of surpassing beauty, whose large, dark eyes seemed to gaze upon him with a look of melancholy entreaty.

The Archduke contemplated the picture for some time, and gradually over his pale face, then stole a flush of vague delight.

"Well!" asked the Empress, "does the maiden please you?"

"Please me! echoed the Archduke, without withdrawing his eyes from the picture. "Tis the image of an angel! There is something in her

look so beseeching, something in her smile so sad, that I feel as if I would fall at her feet and weep, and yet mother——"

"Hear him, Franz" cried Maria Theresa to the Emperor, who had entered the room unobserved by his son. "Hear our own child! Love in his heart will be a sentiment as holy, as faithful, and as profound as it has been with us for many happy years! Will you have the angel for your wife, Joseph?"

The Archduke raised his expressive eyes to the face of his mother. "If I will have her!" murmured he, sadly. "Dear mother, would she deign to look upon me! Will she not rather turn away from him, to whom the whole world is indifferent!"

"My precious child, she will love and honor you, as the world will do when it comes to know your noble heart." And once more the Empress bent over her son, and imprinted a kiss upon his pale brow. "It is settled then, my son, that you shall offer your hand to this beautiful girl. In one week you will have attained your nineteenth birth-day, and you shall give a good example to your sisters. Do you like the prospect?"

—"Yes, dear mother, I am perfectly satisfied."

—"And you do not ask her name or rank?"

—"You have chosen her for me; and I take her without name or rank from your hand."

"Well, then," cried the delighted Empress, "Count Bathiany, you have ever been the favorite preceptor of the Archduke. Upon you, then, shall this honorable mission devolve. To-morrow, as Ambassador Extraordinary from our Court, you shall go in state to ask of Don Philip of Parma, the hand of his daughter, Isabel, for his imperial Highness, the crown-prince of Austria!"

CHAPTER XII.

AN ITALIAN NIGHT.

THE moon is up, but she is hidden behind heavy masses of clouds—welcome clouds that shelter lovers' secrets. The fountains, whose silvery showers keep such sweet time to the murmurings of love, plash gently on, hushing the sound of lovers' voices; on the bosom of yonder marble-cinctured lake, two snow-white swans are floating silently; and far amid groves of myrtle and olive, the nightingale warbles her notes of love. Not a step echoes through the long avenues of the ducal park, not a light glimmers from the windows of the ducal palace. 'Tis the hour of midnight, and gentle sleep hath come to all.

To all, save two. Stay yet awhile behind the cloud, oh tell-tale moon! for there—there are the lovers. See where fair Juliet leans from the marble balcony, while Romeo below whispers of plighted vows that naught shall cancel save—death.

"To-morrow, beloved, to-morrow, thou wilt be mine forever?"

—"I will be thine in the face of the whole world."

"And wilt thou never repent? Hast thou strength to brave the world's scorn for my sake?"

"Do I need strength to stretch forth my hand for that which is dearer to me than all the world beside! Oh, there is selfishness in my love, Riccardo, for it loses sight of the dangers that threaten thee, on the day when thou callest me wife!"

—"There is but one danger, dearest—that of loving thee! I know no other."

"Still, be cautious for my sake. Remember, we live on Spanish soil, though Italy's skies are over head; and Spanish vengeance is sharp and swift. Betray not thy hopes by smile or glance—In a few days we will be far away in the Paradise where our happiness shall be hidden from all eyes, save those of angels. Be guarded, therefore, dear one, for see! Even now the moon is forth again in all her splendor; and were my father's spies to track thee!—Gracious Heaven, go! Think of Spanish daggers, and let us part for a few short hours."

"Well, I will go, strengthened to turn my eyes from thy beauty, by thoughts of to-morrow's bliss! In the chapel I await thee."

"I will be there. The priest will not betray us?"

—"He was the friend of my childhood—we may trust him, Isabel."

"Then, Heaven bless thee, good night. Hark!—did I not hear something rustle in the thicket?"

—"The wind sighing through the pine-trees, love."

—"Then, adieu, till morning."

—"Adieu, sweet one."

The moon burst forth in full radiance, and revealed the manly form that hurried through the avenue; while clear as in noon-day could be seen the slender white figure on the balcony that watched his retreating steps.

He is hidden now, but she still lingers, listening enraptured to the fountain's murmur and the nightingale's song; looking upward at the moon as she wandered through Heaven's pathless way, and thinking that never had earth or sky seemed so lovely before—

But hark! What sounds are those? A cry, a fearful cry rends the air; and it comes from the thicket where, a moment before, he disappeared from her sight.

She started—then, breathless as a statue, she listened, in deadly suspense. Again that cry, that dreadful cry pierces through the stillness of the night, freezing her young heart with horror!

"His death-wail!" cried the wretched girl; and careless of danger, scarce knowing what she did, heeding nothing but the sound of her lov-

er's voice, she sprang from the balcony, and as though moon-beams had drawn her thither, she swung herself to the ground. For one moment her slight form wavered, then she darted forward and flew through the avenue to the thicket. Away she sped, though the moon shone so bright that she could be distinctly seen, her own shadow following like a dusky phantom behind.

Be friendly, now, fair moon, and light her to her lover, that she may look into his eyes once more, before they close forever!

She has reached the spot, and, with a low cry, she throws herself by the side of the tall figure that lies stretched at its length upon the green sward.

Yes—it is he! He whom she loves; the soul of her soul, the life of her life! And he lies cold and motionless, his eyes staring blindly upon the heavens, his purple lips unclosing to exhale his last sighs, while from two hideous wounds in his side, the blood streams over the white dress of his betrothed. But he is not dead, his blood is still warm.

She bends over, and kisses his cold lips; she tears her lace mantle from her shoulders, and, pressing it to his wounds, tries to staunch the life-blood welling from his side. The mantle grows scarlet with his gore, but the lips are whiter and colder with each kiss. She knows, alas! that there is one nearer to him now than she—Azrael is between her and her lover. He grows colder—stiffer, and oh God—the death-rattle!

"Take me with thee! Take me, take me!" screamed the despairing girl; and her arms clasped frantically around the body, until they seemed as if they were indeed stiffening into one eternal embrace.

"Have pity, Riccardo! My life, my soul, leave me not here without thee! One word—one look, beloved!"

She stared at him in wild despair, and seeing that he made no sign of response to her passionate appeal, she raised her hands to Heaven, and kneeling by his side, she prayed.

"Oh, God, merciful God, take not his fleeting life until he has given me one last word—until he has told me how long we shall be parted!"

Her arms sank heavily down, and she sought the face of the dying man, whispering, oh, how tenderly! "Hear me, my own; tell me when I shall follow thee to Heaven!"

She ceased—for suddenly she felt him tremble—his eyes moved until they met hers, and once more a smile flitted across those blanched lips. He raised his head, and slowly his body moved, until, supported in *her* arms, he sat erect. Enraptured, she laid her cheek to his, and waited: for love had called him back to life, and he would speak.

"We shall meet again in three——"

He fell back, and with a last cry, expired. Love had struggled hard with death; but death had won the victory.

Isabel shed no tears. She closed her lover's eyes; gave him one long last kiss; and, as she bent over him, her hair was soaked in his blood. She took the mantle, wet with gore, and pressed it to her heart. "Precious mantle!" said she, "we need not part—in three days, or—perchance

he said three hours, we shall lie together in the coffin. Until then, Riccardo, farewell!"

Slowly she turned, and left the horrible place. Without faltering, she came up the long moon-lit avenue, her head thrown back, and her large lustrous eyes fixed upon Heaven, as though she sought to find her lover's soul somewhere among the floating clouds.

The moon flung its radiance around her path; and ever, as she walked, it grew brighter, until the poor stricken child of earth looked like a glorified saint. "God grant that it be three hours," murmured she, "three days were an eternity!"

She reached the palace, without having thought that there was no door open by which she could enter, when suddenly a form emerged from the shadowed wall, and a woman's voice whispered:

"Quick, for Heaven's sake, the side-door is open, and all in the palace sleep."

"I too, in three hours, shall sleep," cried Isabel triumphantly, and with these words she fell to the ground in a swoon.*

CHAPTER XIII.

ISABELLA OF PARMA.

The Princess Isabella slept unusually late the next morning. Her little bell, that summoned the ladies of honor, had not yet rung, and the day was far advanced. The first *Cameriera* seemed troubled, and whispered her apprehensions that the Princess was sick; for she had observed, for some days, she said, that her Highness had looked pale.

"But we must go into her room, ladies," added she, "for it is almost time for her Highness to visit the Duke, and he never forgives an omission of ceremonial. Follow me then, *I* will undertake to awaken the Princess."

She opened the door softly, and entered the sleeping-room of the Princess, followed by the other maids of honor.

"She sleeps yet," said the *Cameriera*, but I *must* waken her," murmured she to herself, "it is my duty."

She advanced, and drew aside the heavy folds of the pink silk curtains that hung around the bed.

"Pardon me, your Highness," she whispered, "but"—

She stopped, for to her great surprise, the Princess was awake. She lay in her long white night-dress, with her hands crossed over her breast,

* Caroline Pichler. Memoirs of my Life. Part 1, page 189.

and her head cushioned on the rose-colored pillow that contrasted painfully with the pallor of her marble-white face. Her large eyes were distended, and fixed upon a picture of the blessed Virgin that hung at the foot of the bed. Slowly her looks turned upon her attendants who, breathless and frightened, gazed upon the rosy pillow, and the pallid face that lay in its midst, dazzling their eyes with its whiteness.

"Pardon me," again whispered the *Cameriera*, "it is almost noonday."

"What hour?" murmured the Princess.

"It is ten o'clock, your Highness."

The Princess shivered, and exclaimed, "For three days then!" And turning away she began to pray in a low voice, and none but God knew the meaning of that whispered prayer.

Her prayer over, she passed her little white hand over the dark locks that fell around her face and made an effort to rise.

Her maids of honor saw that she was ill, and hastened to assist her. The hour of the Princess's toilet was to her attendants the most delightful hour of the day. From her bed-chamber, all ceremonial was banished, and there, with her young companions, Isabella was accustomed to laugh, jest, sing, and be as merry and as free from care as the least of her father's subjects.

Philip of Parma was by birth a Spaniard, one of the sons of Philip the Fifth. After the vicissitudes of war which wrested Naples and Parma from the hands of Austria, Don Carlos of Spain became King of Naples, and Don Philip duke of Parma. Isabella, then a child of seven years, had been allowed the privilege of taking with her to Italy, her young playmates who, for form's sake, as she grew older, became her maids of honor. But they were her dear and chosen friends, and with them she was accustomed to speak the Spanish language only.

Her mother, a daughter of Louis Fifteenth, had introduced French customs into the Court of Parma, and during her life the gayety and grace of French manners had rendered that Court one of the most attractive in Europe. But the lovely Duchess of Parma died, and with her died all that made Court life endurable. The French language was forbidden, and French customs were banished. Some said that the Duke had loved his wife so deeply, that in his grief he had excluded from his Court everything suggestive of his past happiness. Others contended that he had made her life so wretched by his jealous and tyrannical conduct, that remorse had driven him to banish, if possible, every reminder of the woman whom he had almost murdered.

In the hearts of her children, the mother's memory was enshrined; and the brother and sister were accustomed for her sake, in their private intercourse, to speak *her* language altogether.

At court, they spoke the language of the country; and Isabella, who with her friends, sang Boleros and danced the Cachuca; with her brother, read Racine and Corneille; was equally happy while she hung enraptured upon the strains of Pergolese's music, or gazed entranced upon

the pictures of Corregio and Veronese. The Princess herself was both a painter and musician, and no one, more than she, loved Italy, and Italian art.

Such, until this wretched morning, had been the life of young Isabella. What was she now? A cold, white image, in whose staring eyes the light was quenched—from whose blanched lips the smile had fled forever!

Her grieved attendants could scarcely suppress their tears, as sadly and silently they arrayed her in her rich robes; while she, not seeming to know what she was, gazed at her own reflected image, with a look of stupid horror. They dressed her beautiful hair, and bound it up in massy braids. They smoothed it over her death-cold forehead, and shuddered to see how like a corpse she looked. At last, the task was at an end, and the Cameriera coming towards her, offered the cup of chocolate, which she was accustomed to drink at that hour. Tenderly she besought the unhappy girl to partake of it, but Isabella waved away the cup, saying,

"Dear friend, offer me no earthly food. I pine for the banquet of angels. Let the chaplain be called to bring the Viaticum. I wish to receive the last Sacraments of the dying."

A cry of horror burst from the lips of the maids of honor.

"The chaplain! The last sacraments! For you, my beloved child?" asked the sobbing Cameriera.

"For me," replied Isabella.

"Heavenly father!" exclaimed the Aja. "Have you then presumed to anticipate the will of God, and to go before his presence, uncalled?"

—"No, no, death will come to me, I will not seek it. I will endure life as long as God wills, but, in three days, he calls me hence."

The young girls crowded around her, weeping, and imploring her not to leave them.

Isabella's white lips parted with a strange smile. "You tell me not to die, dear friends, do you not see that I am already dead? My heart is bleeding by——"

The hand of the Cameriera was laid upon her arm, and she whispered, "My child, be silent, you know not what you say."

Isabella bowed her head, and then looking around tenderly at her kneeling companions, she said, "Rise and sit by me, dear girls, and listen to what I am about to say, for we speak together for the last time on earth."

The maidens arose, and obeyed, while Isabella leaned her head for a few moments upon the bosom of her mother's friend, the Cameriera. There was a pause, during which the poor girl seemed to have received some comfort in those friendly arms; for she finally sighed, and, raising her head again, she spoke solemnly, but not unnaturally.

"I had last night a singular vision," she said. The spirit of my mother appeared to me, and said that in three days I was to die. I believe in this vision. Do not weep, dear sisters; I go to eternal rest. Life is bitter, death is sweet. Pray for me, that my mother's prophetic words be verified; and you, beloved friend of that mother," added she,

kissing the Cameriera's cheek, "you who know the depths of my heart, and its secret, silent agony, pray for your child, and praying, ask of her Heavenly Father—death."

The Aja made no reply; she was weeping with the others.

Isabella contemplated the group for a moment, while a ray of life lit up her eyes, showing that, even now, it was sad to part from her friends forever. But the expression was momentary. Her face returned to its deadly paleness, as gasping for breath, she stammered, "Now—now—for—my father! Estrella, go to the apartments of the Duke, and say that I desire an interview with his royal Highness.

The young girl returned in a few moments with an answer. His royal Highness had that morning gone some distance in the country on a hunting excursion, and would be absent for several days.

Isabella looked at the Cameriera, who still stood beside her, and her pale lips quivered. "Did I not know it?" whispered she; "I told you truly, HE did it! God, forgive him, I cannot.——"

"And, now," continued she aloud, "now to my last earthly affairs." So saying, she called for her caskets of jewels and divided them between the young maids of honor; and cutting from her hair one rich massy lock, she placed it in Estrella's hand, saying, "Share it among you all." To the Cameriera, she gave a sealed packet, and then bade them leave her to herself; for the ringing of the chapel-bell announced the departure of the priest from thence, with the blessed sacrament.——

The sacred rites were ended. On her knees, the Princess Isabella had made her confession, and had revealed to the shuddering priest, the horrible secrets of the preceding night. She had received ablution, and had partaken of the holy communion.

"Now, my child," said the priest, in a voice tremulous with sympathy, "you have received the blessing of God, and you are prepared for his coming. May he be merciful to you, and grant your prayer for release from this earth. I, too, will pray that your martyrdom be short."

"Amen," softly murmured Isabella.

"But the ways of the Lord are inscrutable, and it may be that he willed it otherwise. If in His incomprehensible wisdom, He should declare that your days shall be long on this earth, promise me to endure with resignation your lot, nor seek to hasten what He has deemed it best to delay."

"I promise, holy father."

"Make a vow then to the Lord, that by the memory of your mother you will fulfil every duty that presents itself to you in life, until God has spoken the word that will call you to himself."

"I swear, by the memory of my mother, that I will live a life of resignation and of usefulness until God, in his mercy, shall free me from my prison."

"Right, dear unhappy child," said the Father, smoothing with his trembling hands the soft hair that lay on either side of her forehead, "may God reward thee and in his infinite mercy shorten thy sufferings."

He stooped, and kissing her pale brow, made the sign of the cross above her kneeling figure. Then, with eyes blinded by tears, he slowly retreated to his own room, where he threw himself upon his knees and prayed that God would give strength to them both to bear the cross of that dreadful secret.

Isabella, too, remained alone. In feverish longing for death, she sat neither hearing the voices of her friends who begged for admission, nor the pleadings of her brother, who besought her to see him and give him one last embrace. Through the long night that followed, still kneeling, she prayed. When the sun rose, she murmured "to-morrow!" and through the day her fancy wandered to the verge of madness. Sometimes visions of beckoning angels swarmed around her; then they fled, and in their place stood a hideous skeleton that, with a ghastly smile, held out his fleshless hand, and strove to clasp hers.

Again the night set in, and the next morning, at break of day, Isabella rose from her knees, and, hailing the rising sun, she cried exultingly, "To-day!"

Exhausted from fasting and such long vigils, her head reeled, and she staggered to her couch. A cold shudder crept over her limbs; all was dark as night about her; she tried to clasp her hands in prayer, and could not, for they were numb and powerless. "This is welcome death!" thought she, and her lips parted with a happy smile. Her head fell backward on the pillow, and her senses fled.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY.

The Princess Isabella opened her eyes, and in their dark and lustrous depths, shone returning reason; they glared no more with fever-madness, but were sadder and sweeter than ever.

She gazed at the forms that surrounded her bedside; at the priest, who, with folded hands, was praying at her head; at the Cameriera, who knelt beside him; at the young girls, who gathered in a lovely group at her feet, smiled and wept by turns as she looked upon them; and lastly, she felt a kiss upon her hand, and, looking there, she beheld her brother, who wept with joy.

"Where am I?" asked she feebly.

"You are with those who love you best, darling," said Fernando joyfully, "with us, who have prayed so long, that the good God has heard, and restored you to life."

"I still live, then," said she sadly. "And how long have I lain here, friends?"

The priest advanced, and blessing her, took her by the hand. "For four weeks, daughter, you have been unconscious of every thing that passed around you. You see, therefore, that your Heavenly Father bids you live."

"Four weeks," whispered the poor girl. "Then in three months we shall meet again."

She closed her eyes, and lay silent for a while. At length, the priest bending close to her ear, whispered, "Think, daughter, of the vows you have made to God by the memory of your mother!"

"I will remember them," murmured she, sadly.

And from this day she mended, until life and strength were restored to her, even as before. She thought of her vow, and made no resistance to the will of Heaven, but she hoped for death, and awaited her three months!

Sustained by these hopes, she recovered. But her heart was wounded past all cure; gone were her smiles and her songs. Quietly, sadly, and solemnly, glided away the new life to which she had been born through death.

The first day on which she felt able to leave her room, she sent to crave an audience of her father. She had been told that, during her delirium, he had often visited her chamber; but, since her convalescence, he had not sent so much as an enquiry after her health.

He did not, however, deny the interview she sought. He awaited his daughter, said the messenger, in his own apartments.

The Princess shuddered, and a deadly faintness came over her. "My God! my God! will I ever be able to go through this bitter hour! Must I indeed look upon him who——"

She closed her eyes to shut out the frightful remembrance. Then gathering all her strength for the trial, she rose to seek her father, and make one last request of him.

With her head thrown proudly back, and her dark eyes flashing with resolve, she entered his cabinet.

The Duke was entirely alone. He had dismissed his attendants, and now he stood in the centre of the room awaiting his daughter in gloomy silence. His cold, stern features, had grown more repulsive than ever to the unhappy girl; his piercing eyes more revengeful; his thin, pale lips, more cruel. He seemed to her a pitiless stranger, and she could not advance to meet him. Powerless and faint, she stood at the door, all her strength gone.

A few moments of anguish went by, and then the Duke, extending his hand, said in a tone of command, "come hither, Isabella."

She stepped forward and almost touched his hand when, shuddering, her arm dropped heavily down, and forgetting all caution, she murmured, in tones of deepest agony, "I cannot! I cannot?"

The Duke's eyes shot fire, as he too dropped his extended hand, and deep, angry folds wrinkled his forehead.

"Why have you desired this interview?" asked he.

"I have a request to prefer, my father," replied Isabella.

He bent his head. "Speak," said he—

—"I come to entreat of my father permission to take the veil."

"And wherefore, I should like to know?" said the Duke, carelessly.

—"That I may dedicate my few remaining days to the service of the Lord."

"Girlish folly," said he, with a contemptuous laugh, while he paced up and down the room.

Isabella made no reply, but stood awaiting a more direct answer to her petition. Suddenly, he came up to her and spoke.

"I cannot grant your request," said he. "I have other plans for you. The grandchild of the King of Spain cannot be permitted to die a penitent in a cloister; if she has atonement to make for crime, let her make it, not under the serge of the nun, but under the purple of the Empress."

"I have no ambition," said Isabella, trembling. "Allow me, I entreat you, to enter a Convent."

—"I repeat that I have other plans for you. I too, have no ambition for *you*," said the father, coldly, "but I am ambitious for my house, and through you I shall attain my end. One of the greatest monarchs of Europe has sought your hand for the heir of her throne, and I have resolved that you shall become his wife."

—"Fate will refuse it to him; fate, more merciful than my father. I have but a few weeks to live; before a month has elapsed, I shall be in my grave."

"Go there, if it please you," cried the Duke, "but die with royal robes about you! You shall not die a nun."

"No one on earth, my father, has a right to detain me. If your Highness refuse your consent, I will fly to a convent, without your permission. And princely though you be, you shall not drag from the altar the bride of the Lord."

"Ah, you rebel against my authority!" cried the Duke, with a look that sent a deadly pang to the heart of his daughter. Know that I have power to judge you for such treason, and lay your defiant head upon the block!"

"I do not fear death," replied Isabella, "I await it with impatience."

—"Ah! You are possessed with a love-sick desire to die!—But hear what I have to say, and mark it well. I will relate to you an affair that took place—whilst you were ill. The only son of one of the noblest families in Parma, the pride of his race, and the idol of his parents, conceived a plot against my house, whose treason was equal to parracide. I learned his designs; and with my own eyes, and my own ears, I verified his guilt. He was an arch-traitor, he had deserved to die on the scaffold; but I had pity on his family, and spared them the disgrace of a public execution. I took his life secretly, and his parents are spared the shame of knowing how he died. Shall I tell you the name of this dead traitor?"

— Isabella raised her hand, and parting her blanched lips, she said hoarsely, "No—no—in mercy, no!"

"Very well, then I proceed. This traitor whom I judged, and to whom I dealt his death-stab, had an accomplice. Do you listen?"

Isabella's head sank down, like a broken lily, upon her breast.

"Ah! You listen. The accomplice is placed in a position which makes it—inexpedient for me to punish her in her own person. But should she thwart me, should she not fully and cheerfully comply with my demands upon her loyalty, I will see that she suffers more than death in the family of her accomplice. I will publish the guilt of the dead criminal to the whole world; I will disgrace and dishonor his whole race, and his young sister with her parents, shall be driven penniless from my realms, to beg or starve in a stranger land."

"Father, hold!" cried the wretched girl, while her every limb quivered with the torture he inflicted. "I am ready to do your will. I will marry whom you choose, and so long as God condemns me to earth, I will obey you in all things. But you shall promise me on your princely honor to shield from all shame or harm, the family of—of—— the deceased; to befriend his sister, and if she should ever wish to marry, to honor and favor her choice. Promise me this, and as long as I live I submit to your will."

—"I promise, on my honor, to do all this, and to forget, for their sakes, the crime of their son."

"I promise also, on my sacred honor, to accept the husband you have chosen for me. But I will not suffer long, for my life is almost spent."

The Duke shrugged his shoulders.

"Your Highness," continued his daughter, "will inform me on what day I am to be affianced. I await your commands, and beg your Highness's permission to withdraw to my apartments."

"Have you nothing more to say to your father, Isabella?" asked he in a faltering voice.

"Nothing more to say to your royal Highness." She curtsied deeply, and without a glance at her father, left the room.

The Duke looked after her with an expression of sorrow. "I have lost her forever!" said he. "When I struck him, I pierced her heart also. Well! so let it be! Better a dead child than a dishonored house!"

He then rang a little golden bell, and ordered preparations to be made for another grand hunt on the morrow.

Isabella accepted her destiny nobly. She resolved to fulfill her promises strictly; but she hoped that God would be satisfied with the sacrifice, and release her before the day of her nuptials.

Finally came the day on which, for the third time, she had hoped to die. She felt a solemn joy steal over her heart, and she desired her maids of honor to deck her in bridal white. Her dark hair was wreathed with orange-blossoms, and in her bosom she wore an orange-bud. She was lovely beyond expression, and her attendants whispered among

themselves, though Isabella neither saw nor heard them. She who awaited death, took no heed of what was going on around her in the palace.

And yet her stake in that palace was great. On the day before, the Embassy had arrived which was to change her fate, and open to her a new life at the Court of the Austrian Empress.

The Duke had received his guests with royal courtesy. But he had besought the Count to postpone his interview with the Princess until the morrow; for with cruel mockery of his child's sorrow, Philip of Parma had contrived that the day on which she had hoped to meet her dead lover, should be the day of her betrothal to the Archduke of Austria.

Isabella was the only person in the palace who had not heard of the arrival. She had withdrawn into her private cabinet, and there she counted every pulsation of her heart. She dared not hope to die a natural death; she was looking forward to some accident that was to release her from life; something direct from the hand of God she thought would, on that day, make good the prophecy of her lover.

She hoped, watched, prayed. She was startled from her solitude by a knocking at the door, and her father's voice called for admission.

The Princess, obedient to her promise, rose and opened the door. Her father surveyed her with a smile of derision. "You have done well," said he, "to deck yourself as a bride; not as the bride of Death, but as the affiance wife of the *living* lover who will one day make you Empress of Austria. His Ambassador awaits us now in the great Hall of State. Follow me into the next room, where your maids of honor are assembled to attend you. Mark me, Isabella! When we arrive in the hall, the Ambassador will advance, and in terms befitting the honor conferred, he will request your acceptance of the Archduke's hand. I leave it to your tact and discretion to answer him as becomes the Princess of a great and royal house."

"And will your Highness perform your promise to *me?*" asked Isabella calmly. "Shall his parents live secure in possession of their noble name and estates; and shall his sister be the special object of your Highness's protection and favor?"

"I will do all this, provided you give me satisfaction as relates to your marriage."

Isabella bowed. "Then I am ready to accompany your royal Highness to the hall of state, and to accept with courtesy the offer of the Austrian Ambassador."

Forth went the beautiful martyr and her train through the gorgeous apartments of the palace, until they reached the hall of the throne.

In the centre of the hall, the Duke left his daughter and her attendants, while he mounted the throne and took his seat upon the ducal chair.

And now advanced Count Bathiany. With all the fervor which her matchless beauty inspired, he begged of the Princess her fair hand for his future Sovereign, the Archduke of Austria. As the Count ceased,

every eye turned towards the Infanta. She had listened with calm dignity to the words of the Ambassador, and her large, melancholy eyes had been rivetted upon his face, while he delivered his errand. There was a pause—a few moments were needed by that broken heart to hush its moanings, and bare itself for the sacrifice. The brow of the Duke darkened, and he was about to interpose, when he saw his daughter bow her head. Then she spoke; and every one bent forward to listen to the silvery tones of her voice.

"I feel deeply honored," said she, "by the preference of her Imperial Majesty of Austria; an alliance with her eldest son is above my deserts; but since it is their desire, I accept the great honor conferred upon me. I regret, however, that their Majesties should have directed their choice towards me; for I am convinced that I shall not live long enough to fulfill the destiny to which this marriage calls me."*

When at last the ceremonies of this day of agony were ended; when the Infanta had dismissed her ladies of honor, and was once more alone—alone with God and with the past, she threw herself upon her couch, and, with her hands meekly folded across her breast, she lay, looking up, far beyond the palace-dome to Heaven.

There she prayed until midnight, and when the clock had told the hour, she arose to the new life that awaited her, with its new promises, new expectations, new ties—but no new hopes.

"Heavenly Father," exclaimed she, "it has begun, and I will bear it to the bitter end! I am now the betrothed, and soon will be the wife of another. If I have sinned in my consent to marry one whom I can never love, pardon me, oh Lord! and hear me vow that I will faithfully fulfill my duty towards him. I am the affianced of another! Farewell, my beloved, farewell, FOR THREE LONG YEARS!

CHAPTER XV

THE DREAM OF LOVE.

THE wedding-festival was over, and Vienna was resting from the fatigue of the brilliant entertainments by which the marriage of the Archduke had been followed, both in court and city. And indeed the rejoicings had been conducted with imperial magnificence. For eight days, the people of Vienna, without respect of rank, had been admitted to the palace, to witness the court festivities; while in the city and at Schön-

* The Infanta's own words; as veritably historical as is this whole relation of her death-prophecy and its unhappy fulfillment. See Wraxall, Memoirs of the Courts, &c., and Caroline Pichler.

brunn, nightly balls were given at the expense of the Empress, where the happy Viennese danced and feasted to their heart's content.

They had returned the bounty of their Sovereign by erecting triumphal arches, strewing the ground with flowers, and rending the air with shouts, whenever the young Archduchess had appeared in the streets.

The great maestro Gluck had composed an Opera for the occasion; and when, on the night of its representation, the Empress made her appearance in the imperial *loge*, followed by the Archduke and his bride, the enthusiasm of the people was so great that Gluck waited a quarter of an hour, *báton* in hand, before he could begin his overture.

But now the jubilee was over, the shouts were hushed, the people had returned to their accustomed routine of life, and the exchequer of the Empress was minus—one million of florins!

The Court had withdrawn to the palace of Schönbrunn, there to enjoy in privacy the last golden days of autumn, as well as to afford to the newly-married pair a taste of that retirement so congenial to lovers.

Maria Theresa, always munificent, had devoted one wing of the palace to the exclusive use of her young daughter-in-law; and her apartments were fitted up with the last degree of splendor. Elegant mirrors, *buhl* and gilded furniture, costly turkey carpets and exquisite paintings, adorned this princely home; and as the Princess was known to be skilled both as a painter and musician, one room was fitted up for her as a studio, and another as a music-hall.

From the music-room, a glass door led to a balcony filled with rare and beautiful flowers. This balcony overlooked the park, and beyond was seen the city, made lovely by the soft grey veil of distance, which lends such beauty to a landscape.

On this perfumed balcony sat the youthful pair. Isabella reclined in an arm-chair; and at her feet on a low ottoman sat Joseph, looking up into her face, his eyes beaming with happiness. It was a lovely sight—that of these two young creatures, who, in the sweet, still evening, sat together, unveiling to one another, the secrets of two blameless hearts, and forgetting rank, station and the world, were tasting the pure joys of happily wedded love.

The evening breeze whispered Nature's soft low greeting to them both; and through the myrtle branches that, hanging over the balcony, clustered around Isabella's head, the setting sun flung showers of gold that lit up her face with the glory of an angel. Bright as an angel seemed she to her husband, who sitting at her feet gazed enraptured upon her. How graceful he thought the contour of her oval face; how rich the scarlet of her lovely mouth; what noble thoughts were written on her pale and lofty brow, and how glossy were the masses of her raven black hair. And those wondrous eyes! Dark and light, lustrous and dim, at one moment they flashed with intellect, at another they glittered with unshed tears. Her form, too, was slender and graceful, for nature had denied her nothing; and the charm of her appearance, (above all to an eye weary of splendor,) was made complete by the vapory muslin dress

that fell around her perfect figure like a silver-white cloud. The only ornament that flecked its snow, was a bunch of pink roses, which the Archduke, with his own hand, had culled for his wife that morning. She wore them in her bosom, and they were the crowning beauty of that simple, elegant dress.

Isabella's head rested among the myrtle branches; her eyes were fixed with a look of ineffable sadness upon the heavens, and gradually the smile had died from her lips. Her countenance contrasted singularly with that of the Archduke. Since his marriage he had grown handsomer than ever; and from his bright expressive face beamed the silent eloquence of a young and joyful existence.

In his joy, he did not see the painful shadows that were darkening his wife's pale beauty. For a while, a deep stillness was about them—flooded by the gold of the setting sun, lay the park at their feet; farther off glimmered the domes of St. Stephens, at Vienna, and faint over the evening air came the soothing tones of the vesper-bell.

"How beautiful is the world," said Joseph at length; and at the sound of his voice, breaking suddenly the stillness that had been so congenial to her reveries, Isabella started. A slight shiver ran through her frame, and her eyes unwillingly came back to earth. He did not see it. "Oh how lovely is life, my Isabella, now that the music of thy heart replies to mine. Never has earth seemed to me so full of beauty, as it does now that I call thee wife."

Isabella laid her soft hand upon her husband's head, and looked at him for a while. At length she stifled a sigh, and said, "are you then happy?"

He drew down the little hand that was resting on his blond curls, and kissed it fervently. "A boon, my beloved. When we are alone, let us banish Spanish formality from our intercourse. Be the future Empress before the world, but to me be my wife, and call me 'thou.'"

"I will," replied she, blushing. "And I repeat my question, art thou happy, my husband."

"I will tell thee, dearest. There seems within me such a flood of melody seeking voice, that sometimes, for very ecstacy, I feel as if I must shout aloud all the pent-up joy that other men have frittered away from boyhood, and I have garnered up for this hour. Again I feel intoxicated with happiness and fear that I am dreaming. I tremble lest some rude hand awake me, aud I look around for proof of my sober, waking bliss. I find it, and then breaks forth my soul in hosannas to God. And when mingling among men, I see a face that looks sad or pale, I feel such sympathy for him who is less happy than I, that I make vows, when I am Emperor, to heal all sorrow, and wipe away all tears. Then come great and noble aspirations, and I long to give back to my people the blessings with which they greeted thee, my own Isabella. This is not one feeling, but the meeting of many. Is it happiness, dearest?"

"I cannot tell," replied she. "For happiness is a thing so heavenly

in its nature, that one hardly dares to give it a name, lest it take fright, and soar back to its home above the skies. Let us not press it too closely, lest we seek it, and it be gone."

"We shall do as it pleases thee," said Joseph, snatching her two hands, and pressing them to his heart. "I know that when thou art by, happiness is here, and she cannot go back to Heaven, unless she take thee too." And again he looked at his wife, as if he would fain have blended their dual being into one.

"I wish to make thee a confession, Isabel," resumed he. "It is a great crime, dearest, but thou wilt give me absolution, I know. As I look back, I can scarce believe it myself, but—hear. When the Empress gave me thy miniature, beautiful though it was, I gave my consent to marry, but my heart was untouched. When Count Bathiany departed on his mission, I prayed that every obstacle might encumber his advance; and oh! my beloved one! when I heard that thou wert coming, I almost wished thee buried under Alpine avalanches. When I was told of thine arrival, I longed to fly away from Vienna, from rank and royalty, to some secluded spot, where no reasons of state policy would force me to give my hand to an unknown bride. Was I not a barbarian, sweetest, was I not an arch-traitor?

"No, thou wert only a boy-prince, writhing under the heavy load of thy royalty."

"No, I was a criminal; but oh, how I have expiated my sin! When I saw thee, my heart leaped into life; and now it trembles lest thou love not *me!* But thou wilt love me, wilt thou not? Thou who hast made me so happy that I wish I had a hundred hearts; for one is not enough to contain the love I feel for thee!"*

Isabella was gazing at him with a melancholy smile. "Dreamer!" said she, in a low trembling tone, that sounded to Joseph like heavenly music. "Dreamer! the heart that through God's goodness is filled with love, is of itself supernaturally magnified; for Love is a revelation from Heaven."

"Sweet priestess of Love! How truly thou art the interpretor of our passion! For it is *ours*, my Isabella, is it not? It is *our* love of which we speak, not *mine* alone! I have confessed to thee; now do the same by me. Tell me, my wife, did'st thou hate the man to whom thy passive hand was given, without one thought of thee or of thy heart's predilections!

How little he guessed what torture he inflicted! He looked into her eyes, with such trusting faith, with such calm security of happiness, that her sweet face beamed with tender pity, while her cheeks deepened into scarlet blushes, as she listened to his passionate declarations of love. Poor Isabella!

"No," said she, "no, I never hated thee, Joseph. I had already heard enough to feel esteem for my future husband, and, therefore, I did not hate, I pitied him.

* These are his own words. Caroccioli, Life of Joseph II.

—"Pity him, my own, and wherefore?"

"Because without consulting *his* heart, he was affianced to an unknown girl, unworthy to be the partner of his brilliant destiny. Poor Isabella of Parma was never made to be an Empress, Joseph."

—"She was, she was! She is fit to be Empress of the world, for all poetry, all goodness, all intellect and beauty look out from the depths of her lustrous eyes! O, look upon me, star of my life, and promise to guide me ever with thy holy light!

So saying, he took her in his arms, and pressed her to his tender, manly heart. "Promise me, beloved," whispered he, "promise never to leave me."

"I promise," said the pale wife, "never to forsake thee until God calls me hence to——"

"Oh! interrupted Joseph, "may that hour never strike till I be in Heaven to receive thee; for love is selfish, Isabella; and my daily prayer is now, that thy dear hand may close my eyes!"

"God will not hear that prayer, Joseph," replied Isabella; and as she spoke, her head sank upon his shoulder and her long hair fell from its fastening and like a heavy mourning veil shrouded them both. Her husband held her close to his heart, and as he kissed her she felt his tears drop upon her cheek.

"I do not know," said he, "why it is, but I feel sometimes as if a tempest were gathering above my head. And yet, the heavens are cloudless, the sun has set, and see! the moon rises, looking in her pale beauty, even as thou dost, my love. She has borrowed loveliness from thee to-night, for surely she was never so fair before. But all seems lovely to me when thou art near, and I think that perchance—thou lovest me. Tell me, Isabella, tell me, dearest, that thou dost love me."

She raised her head, and met his passionate gaze with a look so sad that his heart grew cold with apprehension. Then her eyes turned heavenwards, and her lips moved. He knew that she was praying.

But *why*, at such a moment?

"Tell me the truth," cried he vehemently, "tell me the truth!"

"I cannot answer thee in words," murmured Isabella, "but thou shalt have music—love's own interpreter. Come, let us go into the music-room." And light as a fairy, she tripped before, opening herself the door, though he strove to prevent her.

—"No, this is *my* temple, and my hands unclose the doors," said she, once more self-possessed.

Her husband followed her, enchanted. She looked around at the various instruments, and struck a few chords on the piano.

—"No—this is too earthly—my own favorite instrument shall speak for me."

So saying, she opened a case that lay on the table, and took from it a violin. "This," said she to her husband, "is the violin that came with me from Italy."

"How, Isabel," exclaimed he, "dost thou play on my favorite instrument?"

"The violin, to me, is dear above all instruments," replied she; "it alone, has tones that respond to those of the human heart."*

With indescribable grace, she raised the violin to her shoulder, and began to play. At first, her chords were light and airy as the sounds from an Æolian harp; then the melody swelled until it broke into a gush of harmony that vibrated through every chord of the Archduke's beating heart. As he stood breathless and entranced, she seemed to him like that picture, by Fiesole, of the angel that comforts the dying. This picture had always been, above all others, the Archduke's favorite, and now it stood embodied before him, a living, breathing divinity.

The music died away to his ear, though still she played; but now, it seemed to stream from her eyes, that shone like luminous stars, and flow from her softly moving lips, that whispered to the spirits, which now low, now loud, laughed, sighed or sobbed out their responses from the magic violin.

Isabella was no longer a woman and his wife. She was a glorified spirit; and now he trembled lest his angel should vanish, and leave him nothing but the memory of a heavenly vision. His eyes filled with tears; a convulsive sigh broke from his breast, and, burying his face in his hands; he sank down upon the sofa.

A light shudder run through Isabella's frame; her eyes, which had wandered far, far beyond the portals that shut us out from Heaven, looked wildly around. Her husband's sigh had awakened her from a blissful dream, and once more her weary heart sank desolate to the earth. But with an expression of tenderest pity, she turned towards him and smiled. Then her music changed; it pealed out in rich harmony, fit for mortal ears. She saw her complete mastery over the Archduke's soul, his eyes grew bright and joyful once more, and from his countenance beamed the light of perfect contentment.

"Our Epithalamium!" exclaimed he, overjoyed, and no longer able to control his exultation, he darted from his seat, and clasped the dear musician in his arms.

"I thank thee, my Isabella," said he, with a voice that trembled with excess of happiness. "Yes, this is the voice of love; thou hast answered me with our wedding-song. In this melody is drowned every bitter remembrance of my life; the discords of the past have melted into richest harmony,—for thou return'st my love. A thousand times, I thank thee; this hour is sacred to me forever!"

"Thou hast said that thou lovest me," continued the happy husband, "and now I feel the power and strength of a god. I am ready for the battle of life."

—"But I think that I saw the god weep. Poor mortal friend, gods shed no tears; tears are the baptism of humanity."

* The Infanta, who played on several instruments, excelled on the violin. Wraxall, II. page 290.

"Oh, gods must weep for joy, Isabella, else they could not feel its perfection."

"May Heaven grant that thou weep no other tears," said the wife, solemnly. "But hear," continued she, raising her little hand, "the palace-clock strikes eight, and we promised her Majesty to spend this evening with the imperial family-circle. We must be punctual, and I have scarcely time to dress."

"Why, wilt thou change that sweet simple dress? Art thou not always the pride of the Court? Come—thy muslin and roses will shame all the silk and jewels of my sisters. Come!"

She laid her hand gently upon the arm that drew her forward, and curtsied before him with mock ceremony.

"My lord and husband," said she, laughing, "although your imperial Highness has banished Madam Etiquette from our balcony, remember that she stands grimly awaiting us by yonder door, and we must take her with us into the presence of our august Empress. Madam Etiquette would never permit me to pass in this simple dress. She would order me indignantly from her sight, and your Highness also. Go, therefore, and don your richest Spanish habit. In fifteen minutes, I await your Highness here."

She made another deep curtsey. The Archduke taking up the jest, approached her, and kissing her hand replied—

"I obey your imperial Highness, as your loyal husband and loving subject. I shall deck myself with stars and orders; and in princely splendor I shall return, as becomes the spouse of the Archduchess of Austria. Your Highness's obedient servant."

And in true Spanish fashion, he bent his knee and kissed the hem of her robe. Backing out of her presence, he bowed again as he reached the door, but catching her laughing eyes, he suddenly dashed right over Madam Etiquette, and catching his wife in his arms, he gave her a last and a right burgher-like kiss. The Archduke was very happy, and the Archduchess——well! One day God will reward her!

As the door closed, the expression of her face changed. The smile died from her lips, and her eyes were dim with tears.

"Poor boy!" murmured she, he loves me, and I—I suffer him to believe that I return his love, while——

"But I am right," said the devoted girl, and she clasped her hands convulsively together.

"O my Savior!" cried she, "in mercy give me grace, while I live, to be true to the vows that before thine altar I have sworn to the Archduke of Austria! It were cruel in me to wound his noble heart, cruel to awake him from his dream of love! Let him at least, be happy, while I live; and Lord! give me strength that I faint not under my burthen!"

CHAPTER XVI.

GLUCK.

The sun had risen, flooding the earth with light, and the people of Vienna had already begun their labors for the day. But the curtains had not yet been drawn from a richly furnished room, whose walls were lined with books; and in whose centre stood a table covered with papers, whereon the lights not yet extinguished were dropping their waxen tears from two lofty silver candel-abra. At this table sat a man, looking earnestly at a paper, covered with notes of music. He had sat there the whole night long, and his countenance gave no indication of the exhaustion that follows upon night-watching. His large dark, gray eyes flashed, whenever he raised his head thoughtfully, as he frequently did; and when music was born of his thoughts, a smile illuminated his otherwise plain face, and a wonderful light played about his magnificent forehead; the glory of that genius which had made it her dwelling-place.

The form of this man was as striking as his face. Tall and commanding in stature, his wide shoulders seemed proudly to bear the weight of the head that towered above them, and in his lofty bearing, there was a dignity that betokened either rank or genius.

He had both; for this man was Christopher Von Gluck, son of a huntsman of Prince Eugene, who was born 1714 in the village of Weidenwang.

This son of the poor huntsman, was known throughout all Europe; and in Italy, the nobles in their palaces, and the people on the streets sang the melodies of Phedia, Antigone, Semiramede, and Telemacco. In Germany he was less known; and in Vienna alone, was he truly appreciated.

There he sat, unconscious of the daylight. On a chair at his side, lay a violin and flute; near them, a violincello leaned against the wall; and within reach of his hand, stood one of those upright pianos just then coming into fashion.

At one moment he wrote rapidly; at another he hummed a melody; again half-declaiming, half-singing, he read off a *Recitative;* and then bent over and wrote with all his might. The lights began to smoke, and the wax dropped over his music, but he saw none of it; neither saw he the day-light that had replaced his candles. He was so absorbed in his work as not to hear a knock at his door.

But now the knock was repeated; and this time so distinctly that it waked him from his dream of harmony, and he frowned. He rose, and striding to the door, withdrew the bolt.

The door opened, and a tall, elegant woman, in a tasteful morning-dress, came in. Her fine regular features were disturbed, and her eyes were red with weeping or watching. When she saw Gluck looking so fresh and vigorous, she smiled, and said, "Heaven be praised, you are alive and well; I have passed a night of anxious terror on your account."

"And why, Marianne?" asked he, his brow unbent, and his face beaming with tenderness; for Gluck idolised his beautiful wife.

She looked at his quiet, inquiring face, and broke into a merry laugh. "Oh, the barbarian!" cried she, "not to know of what he has been guilty. Why Christopher, look at those burnt-out wax-lights, look at the day-light wondering at you through your curtains. Last night at ten o'clock, I lit these candles, and you promised to work for only two hours more. Look at them now, and see what you have been doing?"

—"Indeed, I do believe that I have been here all night," said Gluck, with naïf astonishment. "But I assure you, Marianne, that I fully intended to go to bed at the end of two hours. Is it my fault, if the night has seemed so short? Twelve hours since we parted! Can it be!"

He went to the window, and drew the curtains. "Day!" cried he, "and the sun so bright!" He looked out with a smile; but suddenly his brow grew thoughtful, and he said in a low voice,

"Oh, may the light of day shine upon me also!"

His wife laid her hand upon his arm. "And upon whom falls the light of day if not upon you?" asked she, reproachfully. "Look back upon your twenty operas, and see each one bearing its laurel-wreath and shouting to the world your fame! And now look into the future, and see their unborn sisters, whose lips one day will open to the harmony of your music, and will teach all nations to love your memory! And I, Christopher, I believe more in your future than in your past successes. If I did not, think you that I would indulge you as I do in your artistic eccentricities, and sit like a love-lorn maiden outside of this door, my ear strained to listen for your breathing: dreaded lest some sudden stroke should have quenched the light of that genius which you overtask; yet daring not to ask entrance, lest my presence should affright your other loves—the Muses?" Yes, my dear husband, I have faith in the power of your genius; and for you has risen this glorious sun to-day. Chase away those clouds from the heaven of your brow. They are ill-timed."

In the height of her enthusiasm she spoke, and now, her two arms around his neck, she rested her head upon Gluck's bosom.

He bent down, and kissed her forehead. "Then, my wife has faith, not in what I have done, but in what I can do. Is it so, love?"

—"It is, Christopher. I believe in the power of your genius."

Gluck's face wore an expression of triumph as she said this, and he smiled. His smile was very beautiful, and ever, when she saw it, his wife felt a thrill of happiness. Never had it seemed to her before so full of heavenly inspiration.

"Since such is your faith in me, my Egeria, you will then have cour-

age to hear what I have to tell. Tear away the laurel-wreaths from my past works, Marianne—burn them to ashes. They are dust, and to dust they will surely return. Their mirth and their melody, their pomp and their pathos are all—lies. They are not the true children of inspiration, they are impostors. They are the offspring of our affected and falsely-sentimental times, and deserve not immortality. Away with them! A new day shall begin for me, or I shall hide my head in bitter solitude, despising my race, who applaud the juggler, and turn away in coldness from the veritable artist."

"What!" exclaimed Marianne, "those far-famed operas that delight the world, are they nothing more than clever deceptions?"

"Nothing more," cried Gluck. "They did not gush from the holy fount of inspiration, they were composed and arranged to suit the taste of the public and the dexterity of the singers, who, if they trill and juggle with their voices, think that they have reached the summit of musical perfection. But this must no longer be. I have written for time, I will now work for immortality. Let me interpret what the angels have whispered, and then you shall hear the language of the soul, which nothing but music can translate. What are the lame efforts of speech by the side of its thrilling tones? Music is a divine revelation, but men have not yet received it in their hearts. *I* have been made its messenger and I will speak the message faithfully.

"Ah Christopher!" interposed Marianne, "I fear you will find no followers. If the message be too lofty for the hearers, the messenger will be driven away in disgrace."

"Hear the coward!" cried Gluck vehemently; "see the woman's nature shrinking from the path of honor because it is beset with danger. I did well, not to let you know the nature of my last labors, for with your sighs and your croakings you would have turned me back again into the highway of falsehood. But you are too late, poltroon. The work is done, and it shall see light." Gluck looked at his wife's face, and the expression he saw there, made him pause. Already he was sorry, and ready to atone. "No! no! I wrong you, my Egeria, not only are you the wife of my love, but the friend of my genius. Come dearest, let us brave the world together; and even if that fail us, let us never doubt the might of truth and the glory of its interpreters."

So saying Gluck reached out his hands; and his wife, with a trusting smile laid both hers upon them. "How can you doubt me, Christopher?" asked she. "Look back into the past, to the days of our courtship, and say who then was faint-hearted and who then declared that his little weight of grief was too heavy for those broad shoulders to bear."

"I! I!" confessed Gluck, "but I was in love, and a man in love is always a craven."

"And I suppose," laughed Marianne, "that I was not in love, which will account for my energy and patience on that occasion. To think that my rich father thought me too good for Gluck!—— Heaven forgive me, but I could not mourn him as I might have done, had his death not left

me free to marry you, you ill-natured grant. Yes! and now that twelve years have gone by, I love you twice as well as I did; and God, who knew there was no room in my heart for other loves, has given me no children, for I long for none. You are to me husband, lover, friend and ——you need not shake your head, sir, you are child, too. Then why have you kept your secrets from me, tell me, traitor, why?"

"Not because you were faint-hearted, my beloved," said Gluck with emotion, "my violent temper wronged us both, when it provoked me to utter a word so false. But genius must labor in secret and in silence; its works are like those enchanted treasures of which we have read; speak of their existence, and lo! they are ashes. Sometimes genius holds an enchanted treasure before the eyes of the artist, who in holy meditation must earn it for himself. One word spoken, breaketh the spell, and therefore, it was, Marianne, that I spoke not the word. But the treasure is mine, I have earned it, and first at my wife's feet I lay it; perchance that she may stand by my side, while the world rejects it as worthless, and heaps obloquy upon my head."

"His will be a bold hand that casts the first stone at the giant," said Marianne, looking proudly upon the tall and stalwart figure of her husband.

"You call me giant, and that recalls to me a fact which bears upon the subject of our conversation now," said Gluck, with a laugh. "It was the fall of my "Giant" that first showed me the precipice towards which I and my works, with all my musical predecessors, were hastening."

—"You mean your '*Caduta de Giganti*,' which you tried to exhibit before those icy English people?"

—"Do not speak against the English, Marianne, they are a good upright nation. It is not their fault if they are better versed in book-keeping than in Music; and I do not know that they are far wrong when they prefer the chink of gold, to the strumming and piping, which until now, the world, turning up the whites of its eyes, has called *music*. I who had been piping and strumming with the rest, suddenly rushed out of the throng and thrusting my master-piece in their faces, told them that it was music. Was it their fault if they turned their backs and would not believe me? I think not."

—"Oh! you need not excuse the English, Christopher. I know the history of the '*Caduta de Giganti*,' although Master Gluck has never told it me. I know that the young Artist met with no favor at English hands; and I know that because his works were not a lame repetition of Italian music and water, the discerning Londoners voted it—worthless. I know too that Master Gluck, in his distress, took counsel with the great Handel, and besought him to point out the opera's defects. Then said Handel——"

—"How, dear prattler, you know what Handel said?"

—"I do, Master Gluck. Handel said: You have given yourself too much trouble, man. To please the English public, you must make a great noise. Give them plenty of brass and sheep-skin."

"So he did," cried Gluck, convulsed with laughter. "I followed his advice. I sprinkled the choirisses with trumpet and drum, and the second time the opera came out, it was a complete success."

Marianne joined in the mirth of her husband.

—"But now, if all this is true, why do you like the English?"

—"Because my failure in England taught me the utter worthlessness of our present school of music, and inspired me with the desire to reform it."

He drew her arm within his and seated her on the divan by his side.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NEW OPERA.

"Now Marianne," said he, putting his arm around her waist, "hear the secret history of my musical career. I will tell you of the misfortunes that my genius has encountered through life. I begin with England. It is of no use to go back to the privations of my boyhood, though they were many; for hunger and thirst are the tribute that man must pay to fate for that capital which genius gives to him, and which he must increase with all his might and all his strength. Even as a boy, I craved less for bread than for fame; and I consecrated my life and soul to Art. I thought that I was in the right way; for I had written eight operas which the Italians lauded to the skies. But the '*Caduta di Giganti*' was a failure, and 'Artamene' likewise. This double *fiasco* enraged me, (you know my bad temper, Marianne.) I could not bear to be so misconceived!—I was determined to show the English that, in spite of them, I was an Artist. I longed to bring them to my feet, as Jupiter did the Titans. So I ordered from one of those poetasties to be found in every land, a sort of *libretto*, called in theatrical parlance, a lyric drama; and to the words of this monstrosity I arranged the very finest airs of my several operas. When I had completed this musical kaleidoscope, I called it Pyramus and Thisbe. I dished up my *olla podrida;* and set it before the hungry English; but they did not relish it. The public remained cold, and—what was far worse—I remained cold, myself. I thought over this singular result, and wondered how it was that music which, as a part of the operas for which it was written, had seemed so full of soul, now faded into insipidity when transplanted to the soil of other dramatic situations. I found the answer in the question. It was *because* I had transplanted my music from its native soil, that its beauty had flown. Then it burst upon my mind that the *Libretto* is the

father of the Opera, the Music, its mother; and so, if the father be not strong and lusty, the mother will bring forth a sickly offspring, which offspring cannot grow up to perfection. Now, my operas are sickly, for they are the children of an unsound father, who is no true poet."

"Still, still, rash man," whispered Marianne, looking around as though she feared listeners. "Do you forget that the father of your operas, is Metastasio?"

"I remember it too well, for many of my works have perished from their union with his weak and sentimental verses. Perished, in *my* estimation, I mean; for to make my operas passable, I have often been obliged to write fiery music to insipid words; and introduce *fiorituras* out of place, that the nightingales might compensate to the world for the shortcomings of the poet. Well, my heart has bled while I wrote such music, and I prayed to God to send me a true poet—one who could write of something else besides Love; one who could rise to the height of my own inspiration, and who could develop a genuine lyric drama, with characters, not personages, and a plot whose interest should increase unto its end."

"And have you found him?" asked Marianne with a meaning smile.

"I have. It is——"

"Calzabigi," interrupted she.

"How!" cried the fiery Gluck, "after promising secresy, has he been unable to curb his tongue?"

—"Nonsense, Christopher, he has not said a word to me. I guessed this long ago."

"And how comes it that you never hinted a word of it to *me?*"

"I waited for the hour when you deemed it best to speak, my love; for I comprehended fully the reasons for your silence. Therefore I waited until Minerva should come forth full-armed, to challenge Jove's opponents to the strife. Meanwhile I had faith in God and thee, Christopher, and I prayed for Heaven's blessing on thy genius."

"Heaven will hear thy prayer, my better self," cried Gluck, drawing his wife close to his heart. Oh, how happy I feel to be permitted to speak with thee of my past labors. How gladly shall I listen to thy criticisms or thine approval; both, more to me than those of all the world beside. Come, Marianne, I will begin now."

He sprang up from the divan, and would have hurried to the piano, but Marianne held him back. "Maestro," said she, "before we sacrifice to Apollo, let us give to life and mortality their rights. Prose awaits us in the dining-room, and we shall give her audience before we open the pages of this nameless opera."

"You shall hear its name, Marianne. It is——"

Marianne put her arms around his neck, and whispered, "Hush, my Orpheus."

"How! You know that also?"

She raised her hand, as if in menace. "Know, Christopher, that little Hymen tolerates no man who has secrets from his wife. You tried to

be silent, but betrayed yourself in your sleep. You do not know how often in the night you called Eurydice in tones of plaintive music. Nor do you know how, as you appealed to the deities of the infernal regions, I shuddered at the power of your weird notes!"

"You have heard, then," cried Gluck enchanted. "And you——"

"My friend, Prose, Prose calls with angry voice. Away to the dining-room! A man who has revelled all night with the Muses, needs refreshment in the morning. Nay—you need not frown like Jupiter Tonans—you must go with me to eat earthly food, before I taste your nectar and ambrosia. Come, and to reward your industry you shall have a glass of Lacrimae Christi from the cellar of the Duke of Bologna."

She drew him from the room, and succeeded in landing him at the breakfast table.

"Now, I will not hear a word about Art," said Marianne, when the servants had brought in the breakfast. "I am the physician, both of body and mind, and I condemn you to a silence of fifteen minutes. Then you may talk."

"Of my opera, *Carissima?*"

"Heaven forbid! of the wind and weather—nothing else. Now hush, and drink your chocolate."

So Gluck, obedient, drank his chocolate, and ate his biscuit and partridge-wing in silence.

All at once, the comfortable stillness was broken by a loud ringing of the door-bell, and a servant announced Signor Calzabigi.

Gluck darted off from the table, but Marianne, laughing, brought him back again. "First, your glass of Lacrimae Christi," said she. Calzabigi will be indulgent and wait for us a moment."

He took the glass, and inclining his head, drank her health.

"Marianne," said he cheerfully, "I have been amiable and tractable as a good child. Enough of Prose, then—give me my freedom now, will you?"

"Yes, Maestro; you are free; your body is refreshed, and can bear the weight of that strong soul that has no infirmities to impede its flight. Fly if you list—to Calzabigi!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

RANIERO VON CALZABIGI.

The door of the drawing-room had scarcely opened before Calzabigi hastened forward to meet Gluck. But, seeing his wife, he stopped, and made a profound inclination.

"Speak out, friend," cried Gluck merrily. "She knows everything,

and think what a treasure of a wife she is. She has known it all along, without betraying herself by a word."

"And does that surprise you," answered Calzabigi. "It does not me, for well I know that the Signora is an angel of prudence as well as of goodness. The Signora will allow me to speak before her? Well then, Maestro, the die is cast! I am just from the house of Count Durazzo, to whom, at your request, I took the opera yesterday. The Count sat up all night to examine it; and this morning, when I was ushered into his room, I found him still in his evening dress, the score on the table, before him."

"Hear, Marianne," exclaimed Gluck triumphantly. "It is not only the composer who forgets to sleep for the sake of this opera! And what said the theatrical director, Raniero?"

"He said that no intrigue and no opposition should prevent him from representing this magnificent opera. He says that he feels proud of the privilege of introducing this *chef-d'œuvre* to the world. He has already sent for the transcribers; he has chosen the performers, and begs of the author to distribute the parts. But everything must be done at once; for the opera comes out in October, to celebrate the birth-day of the young Archduchess Isabella."

"That is impossible," cried Gluck. "We are in July, and such an opera cannot be learned in three months."

"With good-will, it can be done, Christopher," said Marianne, imploringly. "Do not leave your enemies time to cabal against you; snatch the victory from them, before they have time for strategy."

"You do not know what you require at my hands," returned he, passionately. "You do not know how an ill-timed pause or a slighted rest would mar the fair face of my god-like music and travesty its beauty."

"Hear how he defames himself!" laughed Marianne; "as if it were so easy to desecrate Gluck's master-piece!"

"It is precisely because it *is* my master-piece that it is easy to travesty," returned Gluck earnestly. "The lines which distinguish the hand of a Raphael from that of a lesser genius, are so delicate as to be almost imperceptible. Slight deviations of the pencil have no effect upon a caricature; but you well know how completely a beautiful face may be disfigured by a few unskilful touches. I will cite as an example the aria of Orpheus; "Che faro senza Euridice." Change its expression by the smallest discrepancy of time or modulation and you transform it into a tune for a puppet-show. In music of this description, a misplaced piano or forte, an ill-judged *fioriture*, an error of movement, either one, will alter the effect of the whole scene. The opera must, therefore, be rehearsed under my own direction; for the composer is the soul of his opera, and his presence is as necessary to its success as is that of the sun to the creation."*

"Well, I am sure you can manage the whole troop with that Stentor voice of yours," replied Marianne.

* These are Gluck's own words. Anton Schmid, Life of Gluck; page 152.

"If you do not consent, Gluck," interposed Calzabigi, "they will have to rehearse for the birth-day fête an opera of Hasse and Metastasio."

"What!" shrieked Gluck. "Lay aside my Orpheus for one of Hasso's puny operas? Never! My opera is almost complete. It needs but one last aria to stand out before the world in all its fullness of perfection, and I shall suffer it to be laid aside to give place to one of Hasso's tooting, jingling, performances! No, no; my Orpheus shall not retire before Hasse's pitiful Jeremiads. It shall be forthcoming on the birth-day, and I must train the singers by day and by night."

"Right!" exclaimed Marianne, "and we shall crown you with new laurels, Christopher, on that eventful night."

"I am not so sure of that, Marianne. It is easier to criticise than to appreciate; and every thing original, or new, provokes the opposition of the multitude. In our case, they have double provocation; for Calzabigi's poem is as original as my music. We have both striven for simplicity, nature, and truth; we have both discarded clap-trap of every sort. Oh, Calzabigi, my friend, how happy for me that I have found such a poet! If, through his Orpheus, Gluck is to attain fame, he well knows how much of it is due to the inspiration of your noble poem!"

"And never," exclaimed Calzabigi, grasping the extended hand of the composer, "never would the name of poor Calzabigi have been known had Gluck not borne it along upon the pinions of his own fame. If the world calls me Poet, it is because my poem has borrowed beauty from Gluck's celestial music."

"Yes," said Gluck, laughing, "and if your poem fails, you will be equally indebted to Gluck's music. Those half-learned critics, so numerous in the world, who are far more injurious to Art than the ignorant, will rave against our opera. Another class of musical pedants will be for discovering carelessness, and for aught we know, the majority of the world may follow in their wake, and condemn our opera as barberous, discordant, and overstrained."

"We must try to forestall all these prejudices and win the critics to the side of Truth and real Art," said Marianne.

"The Signora is right," said Calzabigi; "it is not so much for our own sake, as for the sake of Art, that we should strive to have a fair hearing before the world. We have the powerful party of Metastasio and Hasse to gain. But I will deal with them myself. You, Maestro, speak a word of encouragement to Hasse, and he will be so overjoyed that he will laud your opera to the skies. And, pray, be a man and among men, and do as other composers have done before; pay a visit to the singers, and ask them to bring all their skill to the representation of your great work; ask them to——"

Here Gluck, boiling over with indignation, broke in upon Calzabigi, so as actually to make the poet start back. "What!" cried he, in a voice of thunder, "shall I visit the ladies' maids also, and make them declarations of love? Shall I present each singer with a golden snuff-box, while I entertain the troop at a supper, where champagne shall flow

like water, and Indian birds' nests shall be served up with diamonds? Shall I present myself in full court dress at the ante-room of the tenor, and slipping a ducat in the hand of his valet, solicit the honor of an interview? Shall I then bribe the maid of the prima donna to let me lay upon her mistress' toilet-table, a poem, a dedication, and a set of jewels! Shame upon you, cravens, that would have genius beg for suffrages from mediocrity! Rather would I throw my Orpheus behind the fire, and let every opera I have ever written follow it to destruction! I would bite out my tongue and spit it in Hasse's face, sooner than go before him with a mouth full of flattering lies, to befool him with praise of that patchwork he has made and calls—AN OPERA! When I was obscure and unknown, I scorned these tricks of trade; and think you that to-day I would stoop to such baseness! Eight years ago, in Rome, a cabal was formed against me to cause the failure of my '*Trionfo de Camillo.*' Cardinal Albini came to assure me that his influence should put down the plots of my enemies. I thanked him, but refused all protection for my opera, and I told his Eminence that my works must depend upon their own worth alone for success.* And you dare, at this time, to come with such proposals to me! You are not worthy of my friendship; I will have nothing further to say to either of you, you cringing puppets!"

So saying, with his dark blue dressing-gown flying out like an angry cloud behind him, Gluck strode across the room, and sailed off to his private study.

Marianne smiling, reached out her hand to the astounded poet.

"Forgive his stormy temper," said she gently. "He can no more bear contradiction than a spoiled child. His wrath looks formidable; but though there is much thunder, there is no lightening about him. Wait a quarter of an hour, kind friend, and he will be back, suing for pardon, and imploring us to take his hand, just like a naughty child that he is. Then he will smile, and look so ashamed that you will never have the heart to feel resentful."

"I have none already," replied Calzabigi, "his thunder has rolled grandly over our heads, and right noble are its sounds; but the lightening has spared us; we are safe, and—unconvinced. For indeed, Signora," continued Raniero with earnestness, "we are right. No reliance is ever to be placed upon the justice or good taste of the world; and since the Maestro refuses to propitiate his judges, I will undertake the task myself. I will go at once to Metastasio: and after that I shall invite the performers to a supper."

* This is true. Anton Schmid, page 68.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BIRTH-DAY.

It was the birthday of the Archduchess Isabella, and all Vienna was alive with festivity. The passionate love of the Archduke for his beautiful young wife was well known, and the people hastened to offer homage to the beloved partner of their future Emperor.

From early morning, the equipages of the nobility were seen hurrying to the palace, where the Archduchess, in state, surrounded by the other members of the imperial family, received the congratulations of the court. In an adjoining room, on a table of white marble, were exhibited the rich gifts by which her new relatives had testified their affection; for Isabella was adored by her husband's family.

The Emperor Francis, usually so simple, had presented her with a set of jewels, worth half a million; and the Empress, whose joy in the happiness of her son's wedded life, knew no bounds, was lavish in her demonstrations of love to the woman who first had awakened his heart to gentle emotions.

Not only had every variety of rich costumes been ordered for Isabella from Paris, but the Empress had gone so far as to present a set of bridal jewels to her little grand daughter, a child scarcely a year old. This magnificent *parure* of diamonds, sapphires and pearls, was the admiration of the whole court. Around it, lay the offerings of the young sisters-in-law, all of whom, with one exception, had presented something. The Princess Christina, the dearest friend of Isabella, had painted her miniature, and this beautiful likeness was intended as a present to the Archduke Joseph.* He received it with delight; and while his large blue eyes wandered from the portrait to the original, he testified his pleasure by every possible expression of rapture and gratitude. "And yet," said he, "there is something in this picture which I have never seen in your countenance, Isabella. Your eyes, which to me have always seemed to borrow their light from Heaven, here look out dark and unfathomable, as if within their melancholy depths there lay a secret full of untold sorrow."

Joseph did not perceive the look of intelligence that passed between his wife and sister, as he spoke these words; he still gazed upon the picture, and at last his face, that had before been lit up with joy, grew full of thought and sorrowful. Suddenly he laid the miniature down, and placing his hands upon Isabella's shoulders, he looked searchingly at her pale countenance.

Wraxall, page 389.

"Look at me, my beloved," whispered he, tenderly, "let me see your bewitching smile, that it may give the lie to yonder strange image. I see there your beautiful features, but instead of my loving and beloved wife, my happy smiling Isabella, I see an angel, but oh! I see a martyr too, dying of some secret sorrow. That is not your face, is it my wife? *You* have never looked so wretched, so heart-broken! Speak Isabella, you are happy, are you not, my own one?"

"Yes, dear husband," whispered she, scarcely moving her blanched lips, "I am happy and contented in your happiness. But see, the Empress beckons to you. She seems about to present some stranger to your notice."

The Archduke left to obey the summons, and Isabella and Christina remained together, looking vacantly upon the birth-day table and the splendid gifts that lay in such rich profusion before their eyes.

"Poor brother!" murmured Christina, "he loves as few have ever loved before. And you, dear sister, can you not kindle one spark from the embers of your heart to warm——"

"Why speak of my dead heart?" said Isabella mournfully. "Did I not long ago confide to you its terrible secret? You my trusted and dearest friend, have you not seen how I pray Heaven for strength to hold before my husband's eyes the faint ray of light which he mistakes for the sunshine of love? Dear Joseph! His heart is so noble and so rich with love that he sees not the poverty of mine. May God be merciful that his delusion last at least as long as my life, then will I die happy; for I shall have done my duty in the face of a sorrow transcending all other sorrows."

Christina bent her head over the glittering heaps before her, that no one might see her tears. But Isabella saw them, as they fell upon the bridal gifts of her little daughter.

She pointed to the jewels. "See Christina, your tears are brighter than our dear mother's diamonds. The Emperor tries in vain to fuse brilliants; but nature has bestowed them unasked upon us women. Now were he here——"

"Heaven forbid," said Christina, as with her gossamer handkerchief she wiped away the fallen tear. "If the Empress were to know this, she would be justly displeased, that, on such a day, my tears should dim the splendor of your little daughter's bridal jewels."

"Give yourself no concern for my daughter's jewels, Christina; she will never see her bridal day."

"How? do you expect her to be an old maid, like my two eldest sisters?" asked Christina, with assumed playfulness.

Isabella laid her hand on Christina's shoulder. "I believe," said she, solemnly, "or rather I know, that my daughter will ere long be an angel."

"Oh, Isabella!" cried Christina, almost impatiently, "is it not enough that you prophecy your own death to make me wretched, without adding to my grief by predicting that of your child, too!"

"I cannot leave her behind, Christina; I should be unhappy without her. She must follow me;—but hush! Here comes the Empress, let us be happy for her sake."

And with a sweet smile, Isabella advanced to greet her mother-in-law.

"My dearest daughter," said the Empress, "I long for this ceremonial to end, that together we may enjoy our happiness *en famille*. To-day we must dine in private, unless you wish it otherwise, for to-day you are empress of all hearts, and your wishes are commands."

Isabella raised the hand of the Empress to her lips. "I have but one wish to-day, your Majesty," said she, "it is that you love me."

"That wish was granted before it was uttered, my beloved child," replied the Empress tenderly, "for indeed I love you more and more each day of my life, and when I see you and my son together, you happiness seems like the old melody of my own happy bridal so many years ago."

"And yet," said Isabella, "your Majesty looks so young——"

"No, child, I am a grand mother," replied the Empress smiling proudly, "but my heart is as young as ever, and it leaps with joy when I look upon my son whom you have made so happy. Why, *his* heart looks out of his great blue eyes with such——But see for yourself, here he comes."

At this moment, the Archduke entered the room and advanced towards his mother, while at the door, apparently awaiting his return, stood the Emperor and the Lord High Chancellor, Kaunitz.

"Pardon me, your Majesty, if I interrupt you," said the Archduke. "I have just learned from the Marshal of the imperial household that your Majesty has declined going to the opera to-night. Can this be possible, when Gluck's new opera has been rehearsing for two months with especial reference to this occasion?"

"It can," replied the Empress, "for I do not interdict the representation, I only absent myself from it."

The Archduke crimsoned, and he was about to make some hasty reply, when he felt the pressure of his wife's hand upon his arm. He smiled and controlled himself at once.

"Forgive me, if I venture to remonstrate with your Majesty," replied he good-humoredly. "This new opera of Gluck is a musical gem, and is well worthy of your Majesty's notice."

—"I have been told, on the contrary, that it is very tiresome," exclaimed the Empress with impatience. "The Libretto is heavy, and the music also. It is highly probable that the opera will fail, and it would certainly be unfortunate if, on this day of rejoicing, we should assemble there to witness the failure."

"But your Majesty may have been misinformed," persisted Joseph. "Let me beg of you, my dear mother, for the sake of the great Maestro, who would take your absence sorely to heart, as well as for the sake of the Director, Count Durazzo, who has taken such pains to produce this new master-piece—let me beg you to reconsider your decision."

"And allow me to add my entreaties to those of Joseph," said the Emperor, entering the room. "All Vienna awaits the new representation as a high artistic gratification. Without your Majesty's presence, the triumph of the Maestro will be incomplete."

"And the Emperor too opposes me?" said Maria Theresa. "Does he too desert the old style, to follow these new-fangled musical eccentricities? Have we not all enjoyed the opera as it exists at present? And if so, why shall this Master Gluck step suddenly forward and announce to us that we know nothing of music, and that what we have hitherto admired as such was nothing more than trumpery. Why does he disdain the poetry of Metastasio, to adopt that of a man whom nobody knows? I will not lend my hand to mortify the old man who for thirty years has been our court poet. I owe it to him, at least, not to appear at this representation, and that is reason enough for me to refuse my presence there."

"But Calzabigi's poem is of surpassing beauty," remonstrated the Emperor; "for Kaunitz himself has seen it, and is in raptures with it."

"Ah, Kaunitz too has given his adherence to the new musical caprice of Master Gluck?" said the Empress, signing to the Count to come forward.

"Yes, your Majesty," said Kaunitz bowing, "I also am for the new and startling, whether in politics or in music. I have learned this lesson from my imperial mistress, whose new line of policy now commands the admiration of all Europe."

The Empress received these flattering words with an emotion of visible pleasure; for it was seldom that Kaunitz paid compliments, even to sovereigns.

"You mean, then, that Gluck has not only produced something new, but something of worth also?"

"Yes, your Majesty, music has cut off her cue, and really, in her new *coiffure*, she is divinely beautiful. Moreover, your Majesty has rewarded the seventy years of Metastasio with a rich pension, proof enough to him of the estimation in which his talents are held. Metastasio belongs to the old *régime* you have pensioned it off; Calzabigi and Gluck are children of our new Austria. Your Majesty's self has created this Austria, and you owe to her children your imperial countenance and favor."

"But I have been told that there will be some strife to-night between the rival parties," said the Empress.

"And since when has your Majesty shunned the battle-field?" asked Kaunitz.

"But the defeat, Count, I fear the defeat. The opera is sure to fail."

"No one knows better than your Majesty how to console the vanquished. Your Majesty was never greater than when after the defeat of Fieldmarshal Daun, you went forth to meet him with all the honors which you would have awarded to a victorious general.* If Gluck fails to-day, he will not be the less a great artist, and your Majesty will sustain him under his reverses."

* After the battle of Torgau which Daun lost.

The Empress laughed. "It is dangerous to contend with Kaunitz, for he slays me with my own weapons. And you, too, my husband, would have me abandon Hasse and Metastasio, who are so pious and so good, for this Gluck, whom I have never met inside of a church? Gluck is not even a christian."

"But he is a genius," cried out Joseph, "and genius is pleasing in the sight of God. Metastasio and Hasse are old, and having nothing better to do, they go to church. If they were young, your Majesty would not meet them so often, I fancy."

The face of the Empress grew scarlet while the Archduke poured forth these thoughtless words, and all present felt that Gluck and his cause were lost.

But Isabella came to the rescue. Approaching the Empress, and kissing her hand, she said: "Your Majesty has been so good as to say that to-day you would refuse me nothing. I have two requests to make. May I speak?"

"Yes, dear child, you may," replied the Empress, already appeased by the gentle voice of her beloved daughter-in-law. "I know so well that you will ask nothing unseemly that I do not fear to grant your requests. What are they?"

"First, your Majesty, I beg that my husband and I be permitted to attend the Mass that is to be celebrated in your private chapel, that by your side we may beg of God to give peace to Austria, and to bless us, your Majesty's own family, with unity and love among ourselves. Will you permit this?"

The Empress, in her animated way, drew the Archduchess towards her, and kissed her tenderly.

"You are an angel, Isabella," said she, "and discord ceases at the very sound of your voice. Yes, dearest child, you shall come with Joseph; and, side by side, we will pray for peace and family concord. For the second boon, I guess it. Is it not that I grant your husband's petition?"

Isabella smiling, bowed her head, and the Empress turned towards the Emperor.

"Well, your Majesty," continued she, "since my presence is indispensable, I bow to your superior judgment in Art, and the Court must attend the opera to-night. Are you satisfied, my son?" asked she of the Archduke. "Are you satisfied now that I have sacrificed my prejudices to give you pleasure? And on some future occasion will you do as much for me, should I require it?"

"With shame I shall remember your Majesty's goodness in pardoning my ungracious behaviour to-day," replied the Archduke, fervently pressing his mother's hands to his lips.

"Let us forget it also, my son," said Maria Theresa, with one of her enchanting smiles; "this is a day of rejoicing, and no clouds shall darken our happiness. Let us now retire to the chapel, for believe me, dear son, it is not well to forget our Heavenly Father until age forces us

to remember our dependence. A great and brilliant destiny is before you, Joseph, and much you need help from Heaven. Watch and pray while you are young, that you may call down the blessing of God upon your career."

CHAPTER XX.

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE.

On that night, all Vienna sped to the Imperial Opera-house. Not lords and ladies alone, but commoners and artisans, with their wives, thronged to hear the wonderful music which for three weeks had divided the Viennese into two bitter factions. On one side stood Metastasio, the venerable court-poet, whose laurels dated from the reign of the Empress's father. Linked with his fame, was that of Hasse, who for forty years had been called "*il caro Sassone.*" Hasse, who had composed so many operas, was often heard to say, that, when it came upon him unawares, he did not know his own music.

All Italy had declared for Hasse and Metastasio, and in scornful security the Italians had predicted the discomfiture of the new school of music.

On the other hand were Gluck and his friend Calzabigi, whose partisans disdained the old style, and lauded the new one to the skies. Gluck was perfectly indifferent to all this strife of party. Not once, since the first day of rehearsal, had his countenance lost its expression of calm and lofty security. Resolved to conquer, he receded before no obstacle. In vain had the *prima donna*, the renowned Gabrielle, complained of hoarseness; Gluck blandly excused her, and volunteered to send for her rival, Tibaldi, to take the role of Eurydice. This threat cured the hoarseness, and Gabrielle attended the rehearsals punctually. In vain had Guadagni attempted, by a few *fioritures*, to give an Italian turn to the severe simplicity of Orpheus' air. At the least deviation from his text, Gluck, with a frown, would recall the ambitious Tenor, and do away with his embellishments. In vain had the chorus-singers complained of the impossibility of learning their parts. Gluck instructed them one by one. He had trained the Orchestra, too, to fullest precision; and finally, every difficulty overcome, the great opera of Orpheus and Eurydice was ready for representation on the birthday of the Archduchess Isabella.

Shortly before the hour of the performance, Gluck entered his drawing-room in a rich court-dress, his coat covered with decorations. His wife met him, also elegantly attired, sparkling with diamonds.

She held out her hand, and smiled a happy smile.

"Look at me, my hero," said she. "I have arrayed myself in my wedding-jewels. I feel to-night as I did on the day when we plighted our faith to one another before the altar. Then, dear Christopher, our hearts were united; to-day—our souls. Is it not so? And are we not one in spirit?"

"Yes, dearest, yes," replied Gluck, folding her in his arms, "never have I so prized and loved you, as in these later days of strife and struggle. Well do I feel what a blessing to man is a noble woman! Often during our rehearsals, when I have encountered the supercilious glances of performers and orchestra, the thought of your dear self has given me strength to confront and defy their scorn. And when weary in mind and body, I have found my way home, the touch of your hand has refreshed and cooled the fever in my heart. And often when others have pronounced my music worthless, I might have despaired, but for the remembrance of your emotion. I thought of your tears and of your rapture, and hope revived in my sick heart. Your applause, dear wife, has sustained me to the end."

"No, dear Christopher," replied Marianne, "not my applause, but the might of your own inspiration. That which is truly great must sooner or later prevail over mediocrity."

—"The world is not so appreciative as you fancy, Marianne! Else had Socrates not drunk of the poisoned beaker, nor Christ, our Lord, been crucified. Mediocrity is popular, because it has the sympathy of the masses. Not only does it come within their comprehension, but it is accommodating;—it does not wound their littleness. I know, dear wife, that my opera is a veritable work of Art, and therefore do I tremble that its verdict is in the hands of mediocrity. Poor Marianne! You have arrayed yourself for a bridal, and it *may* happen that we go to the funeral of my master-piece."

"Well, even so," replied the spirited wife, "I shall not have decked myself in vain; I shall die like the Indian widow, upon the funeral pile of my dear husband's greatness. I will both live and die with you, *Maestro;* whether you are apotheosized or stoned, your worth can be neither magnified nor lessened by the world. My faith in your genius is independent of public opinion; and whether you conquer or die, your opera must live."

"How I wish," said Gluck thoughtfully, "that from above, I might look down a hundred years hence and see whether indeed my works will have value on earth, or be thrown aside as antiquated trumpery! But it is useless—an impenetrable cloud covers the future, and we must e'en content ourselves with the verdict of the day. Let me be strong to meet it!—Come, Marianne, the carriage is coming to the door, and we must go. But is all this splendor to be hidden behind the lattice-work of my little stage-box?"

"Oh, no, Christopher," said his wife gaily, "on such a night as this, I have taken another box, from whence I can be a happy witness of my husband's triumph."

"What intrepid confidence the woman possesses," exclaimed Gluck, catching his wife's gayety. "But how will my brave champion feel, if she has to see as well as hear the hisses that may possibly greet us to-night?"

"I shall feel heartily ashamed of the audience," replied Marianne, "and shall take no pains to conceal my contempt."

"We shall see," answered Gluck, handing her to the carriage, and following her, with a merry laugh. "Now, forward!"

Within the theatre, all was commotion—on one side, the partisans of the old school, who from prejudice or custom adhered to Hasso and Metastasio, predicted failure. This party was composed of Italians, and of all those who had "gone out" with old Austria. New Austria, on the other hand, with all the young *dilletante* of Vienna, were resolved to sustain Gluck, and, if possible, secure to his new opera an unprecedented triumph. The excitement reached even those boxes where sat the *élite* of the Viennese nobility. Even *their* voices were to be heard discussing the merits or demerits of the musical apple of discord. The Gluckites related that Guadagni, who, at first, had been strongly prejudiced against the opera, had finally been moved to tears, by its exquisite harmony; and had said to Gluck that for the first time he was learning to what heights of beauty music might soar. The Hasseites replied that the opera was none the less tedious for Guadagni's word. Moreover, if Hasse and Metastasio had not openly condemned Gluck's musical innovations, it was because they were both satisfied that the opera would damn itself, and they were present to witness the discomfiture of its composer.* Suddenly there was a hush in the theatre. The attention of the disputants was directed towards a small box, in the first tier, the door of which had opened to give entrance to two persons. One was an old man, with silver-white hair which flowed in ringlets on either side of his pale and delicate face. His thin lips were parted with an affable smile, and the glance of his small dark eyes was mild, benevolent, and in keeping with the rest of his countenance. His small, bent figure was clothed in the cassock of an *Abbe;* but the simplicity of his costume was heightened by the order of Theresa which, attached to a silk ribbon, hung around his neck.

The other was a tall gaunt man, in the dress of court *maestro de capello.* His lean face was proud and serious, his large mouth wore an expression of scorn, and his full-orbed light-blue eyes had a glance of power which accorded well with his lofty stature. The two advanced arm in arm towards the railing, and, at their appearance, a storm of applause arose from the parterre, while the partizans of the Italian school cried "Long live Hasse! Long live Metastasio!"

They bowed and took their seats. While this was transpiring, the wife of Gluck entered her box. With a quiet smile she listened to the shouts that greeted her husband's rivals. "He, too," thought she, "will have his greeting and his triumph."

* Anton Schmid: Ritter Von Gluck, page 92.

She was not mistaken. No sooner had Gluck appeared in the orchestra, than, from boxes as well as parterre, a thousand voices pealed forth his welcome. "Long live Gluck! Long live the great Maestro!"

Gluck bowed gracefully, while Marianne, happy but tranquil, unfolded her jewelled fan, and leaned back in supreme satisfaction. Metastasio whispered something to Hasse, who nodded his head and then began to run his fingers through the masses of his bushy gray hair. Suddenly were heard these words:

"Her Majesty, the Empress, and the Imperial Court."

Hushed now was every sound. Every eye was turned towards the box surmounted by the double-headed eagle of Austria. The Marshal of the household appeared with his golden wand, the doors of the box flew asunder, the audience rose, and the Empress, leaning on the arm of the Emperor, entered her box. Magnificently dressed, and sparkling with diamonds, her transcendant beauty seemed still more to dazzle the eyes of her enraptured subjects. She was followed by the Archduke, who, in conversation with his wife, seemed scarcely to heed the greetings of his future subjects. Behind them came a bevy of princes and princesses, all of whom, including little Marie Antoinette and Maximilian, the two youngest, had been permitted to accompany the imperial party. It was a family festival, and Maria Theresa chose on this occasion to appear before her people in the character of a mother.

The Empress and her husband came forward and bowed. The former then glided gracefully into her large gilt arm-chair, while the latter signed to his children to be seated.

This was the signal for the music to begin. The audience resumed their seats, Gluck raised the leader's staff, and signed to the musicians.

The overture began. In breathless silence the audience listened to that short, earnest overture, whose horns, trumpets and hautboys seemed to herald the coming of kings and heroes. The curtain rose, and in a funereal hall, Orpheus poured forth his grief for the loss of his Eurydice. With this pathetic complaint, mingled the voices of the chorus of mourners; then a solo from Orpheus, in which he bewails anew the fate of the noble woman who had died for his sake. The God of Love appears, counselling him to descend, himself, to the infernal regions. Orpheus strengthened and revived by hope, resolves to tempt the dangerous descent, and calls upon his friends to share his fate.

The curtain fell at the end of the first act, amidst the profoundest silence. The Hasseites shrugged their shoulders, and even Gluck's warmest adherents felt undecided what to say of this severe Doric music which disdained all the coquettries of art, and rejected all superfluous embellishment.

"I am glad that Metastasio is here," said the Empress, "for his presence will prove to Calzabigi that he is not a pensioned dotard. And what thinks my daughter of the opera?" asked Maria Theresa of the Infanta. But when she saw Isabella's face, her heart grew faint with fear. The Archduchess was pale as death, and her countenance wore an ex-

pression of grief bordering on despair. Her large dark eyes, distended to their utmost, were fixed upon the ceiling; and she seemed as if she still heard the wailings of Orpheus and the plaintive chorus of his friends. Joseph saw nothing of this. He had taken a seat further back, and was chatting gaily with his little brothers and sisters.

"God help me," murmured the Empress, "she looks as if she were dying. Oh, if she were right with her dismal prophecy of death! What if indeed she is to leave us! Have mercy, Oh God! I know that I love her too well. She will be taken from me; Heaven will claim from me this sacrifice."*

Isabella shuddered, and awakened from her horrid dream. Her eyes fell, her cheeks flushed, and once more her lips parted with a gentle smile. With a tender and appealing look, she turned towards the Empress and kissed her hand.

"Pardon me, your Majesty," whispered she, "the music had entranced and bewildered me. I was in another world, and was lost to the present."

"The music pleases you, then?" asked the Empress.

"Oh, your Majesty," cried Isabella, "this is no music to give pleasure; it is the sublimest language of Truth and Love!"

"Then," said the Empress tenderly, "if you prize it so highly, dearest, I will prove to you how dearly I love you, for your verdict and mine disagree. Our next festive day will be that on which Joseph is to be crowned King of Rome. And we shall do homage to the taste of the Queen of Rome, by ordering that this opera be repeated on the occasion of her coronation."

Isabella shook her head. "I shall not live long enough to be crowned Queen of Rome."†

Maria Theresa was about to murmur a reply, when the curtain rose, and the second act of the opera opened.

The audience, who had been loudly canvassing the music, were silenced, and awaited in breathless expectation the unfolding of the plot. Soon came the wonderful scene between Orpheus and the Furies who guard the gates of Avernus. The beseeching tones of Orpheus, and the inexorable "No!" of the Furies, made every listener tremble. Even Hasse, overcome by the sublimity of the music, bowed his head with the rest; and Metastasio, enraptured with the words, murmured "*Ah, che poesia divina!*" Murmurs of applause were heard from every side of the theatre; they grew with every scene, and at last burst forth in wild shouts. It seemed as if the audience were gradually rising to an appreciation of this new and unknown music; until with one accord its matchless beauty burst upon their hearts and overpowered them.

When the curtain fell a second time, the applause knew no bounds. The Gluckites in triumphant silence hearkened to the voices of the deeply-moved multitude, who gave full vent to their emotions, and noisily

*The Empress's words. Carracioli: Life of Joseph 2d, p. 87.
†Isabella's own words. Wraxall, II. P. 394.

exchanged the thoughts to which the wonderful opera had given birth.

Marianne, supremely happy, listened enraptured, while wreaths fell in showers around the head of her beloved husband. The adherents of Hasse and Metastasio no longer dared to raise their voices in opposition to the public verdict. In this state of excitement, the third act began. With increasing delight, the audience listened. When Eurydice, condemned to return to the infernal regions, sang her plaintive aria, sobs were heard throughout the theatre, and murmurs of applause were audible during the whole scene. But when Orpheus concluded his passionate aria "*Che faro senza Eurydice*," the people could contain their enthusiasm no longer. Exalted, carried away, with beating hearts and tearful eyes, they cried "*da capo!*" and when Guadagni, in compliance with the call, had repeated his solo, the audience shouted out so often the name of Gluck, that he could resist his joy no longer. He turned, and they saw his noble face scarlet with blushes; then arose another storm. Again and again the "*vivas*" and the clappings were renewed, each time more frantic than before.

Hasse, tired of the spectacle of his rival's triumph, had disappeared. Metastasio, more magnanimous, had remained, and had applauded as loudly as any. Marianne, to conceal her tears, had hidden her face behind her open fan; and as the applause of the people grew louder until it resembled the shouts of victory, she murmured "I knew it! I knew it! The beautiful and true must always prevail."

The fire of enthusiasm had spread to the imperial box. The Emperor had more than once been heard to call out "Bravo," and Maria Theresa had several times felt her eyes grow dim. But she brushed away her tears and exclaimed, "It is beautiful, certainly, but it is a heathen opera in which, not God but Gods are invoked!"

Isabella said nothing. She had held up before her face the bouquet which her husband had gathered for her, that her tears might fall unseen among its flowers. Joseph saw those tears shining like dew-drops upon its rose-leaves, and, taking it from her hands, he kissed them away. "Do not weep, my Isabella," whispered he tenderly. "Your tears fall like a weight of sorrow upon my heart. Wipe them away, beloved. The day will come when you also shall be an Empress, and your people will do you homage as I do now; and then you will have it in your power to heal their sorrows, and wipe away their tears; and they will love and bless you as I——"

A final burst of applause drowned the voice of the Archduke. The opera was at an end, and the people were calling again for Gluck, the creator of the lyric drama.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN THREE YEARS, WE MEET AGAIN.

The war was over. All Vienna was rejoicing that the struggle which had cost so much bloodshed was at an end, and that Austria and Prussia had made peace.

Neither of the two had gained anything by this long war, except glorious victories, honorable wounds, and a knowledge of the power and bravery of its enemy. Both had serious burthens to bear, which, for many years to come, would be painful reminders of the past. Austria, to cover the expenses of the war, had invented paper money, and had flooded the empire with millions of coupons. Prussia had coined base money, and all the employees of the state had received notes, which were nickhamed "Beamtenscheine." After the war these notes were exchanged for this base currency, which soon afterwards was withdrawn from circulation as worthless. But Prussia had obtained from Austria full recognition of her rights to Silesia, and she in return had pledged herself to vote for Joseph as candidate for the crown of Rome, and to support the pretensions of the Empress to the reversion of the Duchy of Modena.

We have said that all Vienna was rejoicing, and turned out to receive the returning army with laurel wreaths and oaken boughs. The people breathed freely once more; they shouted and feasted, and prepared themselves to enjoy to their utmost the blessings of peace.

But while the nation shouted for joy, a cloud was gathering over the Imperial palace, and its black shadow darkened the faces of the once happy family.

There wanted now but a few months to complete the third year of the Archduke's marriage, and the young princesses seized every opportunity to make schemes of pleasure for the joyous anniversary. Isabella viewed these projects with a mournful smile. Her countenance became sadder and more serious, except when in the presence of her husband. There she assumed an appearance of gayety; laughing, jesting, and drawing from her violin its sweetest sounds. But with her attendants, or in the company of the other members of the imperial family, she was melancholy, and she made her preparations for death, which she foretold would overtake her very soon.

"You believe this terrible presentiment, my daughter?" said the Empress to her one day. "Will you indeed forsake us who love you so dearly?"

"It is not that I will, but that I *must* go," replied she. "It is God who calls me, and I must obey."

"But why do you think that God has called you?"

Isabella was silent for a moment, then she raised her eyes with a strange, unspeakable look to the face of the Empress. "A dream has announced it to me," said she, "a dream in which I place implicit faith."

"A dream?" said the pious Empress to herself. "It is true that God sometimes speaks to men in dreams; sometimes reveals to us in sleep secrets which He denies to our waking earthly eyes. What was your dream love?"

"What I saw?" whispered she, almost inaudibly. "There are visions which no words can describe. They do not pass as pictures before the eye, but with unquenchable fire they brand themselves upon the heart. What I saw? I saw a beloved and dying face, a breathing corpse. I lay overwhelmed with grief, near the outstretched form of my—my—mother. Oh, believe me, the prayer of despair has power over death itself, and the cry of a broken heart calls back the parting soul. I wept, I implored, I prayed until the dim eyes opened, the icy lips moved, and the stiffening corpse arose and looked at me, at me who knelt in wild anguish by its side—

"Horrible," cried the Empress. "And this awful dream did not awake you?"

"No, I did not awake, and even now it seems to me that all these things were real. I saw the corpse erect, and I heard the words which its hollow and unearthly voice spoke to me. '*We shall meet again in three*——'"

"Say no more, say no more," said the pale Empress, crossing herself. "You speak with such an air of conviction, that for a moment I too seemed to see this dreadful dream. When had you your dream?"

"In the autumn of 1760, your Majesty."

The Empress said nothing. She imprinted a kiss upon the forehead of the Infanta, and hastily withdrew to her own apartments.

"I will pray! I will pray!" sobbed she. "Perhaps God will have mercy upon us."

She ordered her private carriage, and drove to St. Stephens', where prostrate among the tombs of her ancestors, she prayed for more than an hour.

From this day Maria Theresa became sad and silent, watching with anxious eye the countenance of Isabella, to see if it betokened death. But weeks passed by, and the Infanta's prophecy began to be regarded as a delusion only fit to provoke a smile. The Empress alone remained impressed by it. She still gazed with sorrowing love at the pale and melancholy face of her daughter-in-law.

"You have made a convert of my mother," said the Archduchess Christina one day to Isabella, "although," added she, laughing, "you never looked better in your life."

"And you, Christina, you do not believe?" said Isabella, putting her

arm around Christina's neck. "You, my friend, and the confidant of my sorrows, you would wish to prolong the burthen of this life of secret wretchedness and dissimulation?"

"I believe in the goodness of God, and in the excellence of your own heart, dear Isabella. These three years once passed away, so soon as you will have been convinced that this prophecy was indeed nothing but a dream, your heart will re-open to life and love. A new future will loom up before you, and at last you will reward the love of my poor brother, not by noble self-sacrifice, but by veritable affection."

"Would that you spoke the truth," returned Isabella sadly. "Had my heart been capable of loving, I would have loved him long ago—him, whose noble and confiding love is at once my pride and my grief. Believe me when I tell you that in these few years of married life, I have suffered terribly. I have striven with my sorrows, I have tried to overcome the past, I have desired to live and to enjoy life—but in vain. My heart was dead, and could not awake to life—I have only suffered and waited for release."

"Gracious heaven!" cried Christina, unmoved by the confidence with which Isabella spoke, "is there nothing then that can bind you to life! If you are cold to the burning love of your husband, are you indifferent to your child?"

"Do you think that I will leave my child?" said Isabella, looking surprised. "Oh no! She will come to me before she is seven years old."*

"Oh Isabella, Isabella, I cannot believe that you will be taken from us," cried Christina, bursting into tears, and encircling her sister with her arms, as though she fancied that they might shield her from the touch of death. "Stay with us darling, we love you so dearly!"

Her voice choked by emotion, she laid her head upon Isabella's shoulder and wept piteously. The Infanta kissed her, and whispered words of tenderness, and Christina's sobs died away. Both were silent. Together they stood with sad hearts and blanched cheeks, two imperial princesses in the prime of youth, beauty and worldly station, yet both bowed down by grief!

Their lips slightly moved in prayer, but all around was silent. Suddenly the silence was broken by the deep, full sound of a large clock which stood on the mantel-piece. Isabella raised her pale face, and listened with a shudder.

For many months this clock had not struck the hour. The clock-maker who had been sent to repair it, had pronounced the machinery to be so completely destroyed that it would have to be renewed. Isabella could not summon resolution to part with the clock. It was a dear memento of home and of her mother. She had therefore preferred to keep it, although it would never sound again.

And now it struck! Loud, even and full-toned, it pealed the hour, and its clear, metallic voice rang sharply through the room.

*The Infanta's own words. This interview of Isabella with Christina is historical, and the most extraordinary part of it is, that the prophecy of her child's death was fulfilled.

Isabella raised her head and, pointing to the clock, she said, with a shudder: "Christina, it is the signal, I am called."*

She drew back as if in fear, while the clock went on with its relentless strokes. "Come, come, let us away," murmured Christina, with pale and trembling lips.

"Yes, come," sighed Isabella.

She made a step, but her trembling feet refused to support her. She grew dizzy aud sank down upon her knees.

Christina uttered a cry and would have flown for help, but Isabella held her back. "My end approaches," said she. "My senses fail me. Hear my last words. When I am dead, you will find a letter for you. Swear that you will comply with its demands."

"I swear!" said Christina, solemnly.

"I am content. Now call the physician."

Day after day of anguish went by; of such anguish as the human heart may bear, but which human language is inadequate to paint.

The insensible Isabella was borne to her chamber, and the imperial physician was called in. The Empress followed him to the bedside, where sat Joseph pale and motionless, his eyes rivetted upon the beloved wife who, for the first time refused to smile upon him, for the first time was deaf to his words of love and sorrow.

The physician bent over the Princess and took her hand. He felt her head, then her heart, while the Empress, with folded hands, stood praying beside him, and Joseph, whose eyes were now turned upon *him*, looked into his face as if his whole soul lay in one long gaze of entreaty.

Van Swieten spoke not a word, but continued his examination. He bade the weeping attendants uncover the feet of the Princess, and bent over them in close and anxious scrutiny. As he raised his eyes, the Archduke saw that Van Swieten was very pale.

"O doctor," cried he, in tones of agony, "do not say that she will die. You have saved so many lives! Save my wife, my treasured wife, and take all that I possess in the world beside!"

The physician replied not, but went again to the head of the bed, and looked intently at the face of the Princess. It had now turned scarlet, and here and there was flecked with spots of purple. Van Swieten snatched from Joseph one of the burning hands which he held clapsed within his own.

"Let me hold her dear hands," said he, kissing them again and again.

The doctor held up the little hand he had taken which erst as white as falling snow, was now empurpled with disease. He turned it over, looked into the palm, opened the fingers, and examined them closely.

"Doctor, in mercy speak!" said the agonized husband. "Do you not see that I will die before your eyes, unless you promise that she shall live."

The Empress prayed no longer. When she saw how Van Swieten was examining the fingers of the Archduchess, she uttered a stifled cry,

* Historical. Wraxall, p. 387.

and hiding her head with her hands, she wept silently. At the foot of the bed knelt the attendants, all with their tearful eyes lifted to the face of him, who would promise life, or pronounce death.

Van Swieten gently laid down the hand of his patient, and opened her dress over the breast. As though he had seen enough, he closed it quickly and stood erect.

His eyes were now fixed upon Joseph with an expression of deep and painful sympathy. "Speak," said Joseph, with trembling lips, "I have courage to hear."

"It is my duty to speak," replied Van Swieten, "my duty to exact of her Majesty and of your Highness to leave the room. The Archduchess has the small-pox."

Maria Theresa sank insensible to the floor. From the ante-room, where the Emperor was waiting, he heard the fall, and hastening at the sound, he bore his wife away.

Joseph, meanwhile, sat as though he had been struck by a thunderbolt.

"Archduke Joseph," cried Van Swieten, "by the duty you owe to your country and your parents, I implore you to leave this infected spot."

Joseph raised his head, and a smile illumined his pale face. "Oh," cried he, "I am a happy man! I have had the small-pox! I at least can remain with her until she recovers or dies."

"Yes, but you will convey the infection to your relatives."

"I will not leave the room, Doctor," said Joseph resolutely. "No inmate of the palace shall receive the infection through me. I myself will be my Isabella's nurse until——"

He could speak no more; he covered his face with his hands, and his tears fell in showers over the pillow of his unconscious wife.

Van Swieten opposed him no longer. He was suffered to remain, nursing the Archduchess with a love that defied all fatigue.

Of all this, Isabella was ignorant. Her large staring eyes were fixed upon her tender guardian, but she knew him not; she spoke to him in words of burning tenderness, such as never before had fallen from her lips; but while she poured out her love, she called him by another name—she called him Riccardo; and while she told him that he was dearer to her than all the world beside, she warned him to beware of her father. Sometimes, in her delirium, she saw a bloody corpse beside her, and she prayed to die by its side. Then she seemed to listen to another voice, and her little hands were clasped in agony, while, exhausted with the horror of the vision, she murmured, "Three years! three years! Oh, God, what martyrdom! In three years we meet again!"

Her husband heeded not her wild language, he listened to the music of her voice. This voice was all that was left to remind him of his once beautiful Isabella; it was still as sweet as in the days when her beauty had almost maddened him—that beauty which had flown forever, and left its possessor a hideous mass of blood and corruption.

On the sixth day of her illness, Isabella recovered from her delirium,

She opened her eyes and fixed them upon her husband with a look of calm intelligence.

"Farewell, Joseph!" said she softly. "Farewell! It is over now, and I die."

"No, no, darling, you will not die," cried he, bursting into tears. "You would not leave me, beloved, you will live to bless me again."

"Do not sorrow for me," said she. "Forgive and forget me." As Joseph, overcome by his emotion, made no reply, she repeated her words with more emphasis, "Forgive me, Joseph, say that you forgive me, for otherwise I shall not die in peace."

"Forgive thee!" cried he. I forgive thee, who for three years, hast made my life one long sunny day!"

"Thou wert happy then," asked she, "happy through me?"

"I was, I *am* happy, if thou wilt not leave me."

"Then," sighed the wife, "I die in peace. He was happy, I have done my duty, I have atoned——"

Her head fell back. A long fearful silence ensued. Suddenly a shriek —the shriek of a man was heard. When the attendants rushed in, Isabella was dead, and Joseph had fallen insensible upon the body.*

CHAPTER XXII.

CHE FARO SENZA EURYDICE.

THE funeral rites were ended, and Isabella of Parma slept in St. Stephens in the tomb of the Kaisers.

Joseph had refused to attend the funeral. From the hour when his consciousness had returned to him, he had locked himself within his apartments, and night or day he was heard pacing the floor with dull and measured tread. Not even the Empress, who had stood imploring at the door, could obtain a word in answer to her entreaties. For two days and nights he remained within. On the third day, the Emperor knocked at the door, and announced to his son that all was now ready for the funeral, and his presence was indispensable.

Joseph opened the door, and, without a word, leaned upon his father's arm, and traversed the long suite of apartments hung in black, until they

* This extraordinary account of the life and death of the Infanta, Isabella of Parma, is no romance; it rests upon facts which are mentioned by historians of the reign of Maria Theresa. Caroline Pichler, whose mother was tire-woman to the Empress when the Archduchess died, relates the history of the prophecy, wherein Isabella, first in three hours, then in as many days—weeks, months, and years—awaited her death. She also relates the fact of her death at the expiration of three years "in the arms of her despairing husband." (Caroline Pichler: Memoirs of My Life.)

reached the room where lay the body of his wife. There amid burning wax-lights was the hideous coffin that now enclosed his beloved one, that now was about to bear away forever his life, his love, and his happiness. When he saw the coffin, a stifled cry arose from his breast. He darted with open arms towards it, and, bending down, he hid his face upon the lid.

At this moment, the doors of the room were opened and the Empress, attended by her daughters, all in deep mourning, entered. Their faces were wan with weeping, as were those of all who followed the bereaved Sovereign. Meanwhile Joseph neither saw nor heard what passed around him. The ceremonies began, but while the priest performed the funeral rites, the Archduke murmured words which brought tears to the eyes of his father and mother.

Maria Theresa approached her stricken son. She kissed his hair, and laid her hand lovingly upon his shoulder.

"My son," said she with quivering lip, "arise and be a man. Her soul is with God and with us; let us give her body to the earth that bore it."

While the Empress spoke, the bells of the churches began to toll, and from the streets were heard the beating of muffled drums, and the booming of the cannon that announced to Vienna the moving of the funeral procession.

"Come, my son, come," repeated the Empress. "Our time of trial is at hand."

Joseph raised his head from the coffin, and stared wildly around. He saw the priests, the Levites with their smoking censers, the weeping attendants of his wife; he saw the black hangings, the groups of mourners, and his father and mother standing pale and sad beside him. He heard the tolling of the bells and the dull sound of the funeral drum; and now, now indeed he felt the awful reality of his bereavement, and knew that as yet he had suffered nothing. Tears filled his eyes, and he sank upon his father's breast.

Sobs and wailings filled the funeral hall, while without, the inexorable knell went on, the drums still beat, the cannon roared, all calling for the coffin, for whose entrance the imperial vault lay open.

Once more Joseph approached this dreadful coffin. He kissed it, and taking from it one of the roses with which it had been decked, he said, "Farewell, my wife, my treasure; farewell, my adored Isabella!" Then turning towards the Empress, he added, "Thank you, dearest mother, for the courage which bears you through this bitter trial; for me I cannot follow you. Greet my ancestors and say to them that never came a nobler victim to the grave than the one which you bear thither to-day."

"You will not go with us!" said the Empress, astounded.

"No, mother, no. Mingle dust with dust, but do not ask me to look into my Isabella's grave."

He turned, and without a word or another look at the coffin, he left the room.

"Let him go," whispered the Emperor. "I believe that it would kill him to witness the funeral ceremony."

The Empress gave a sign, and the cortege moved with the coffin to the cataphalt, which, drawn by twelve black horses, awaited the body in front of the palace.

Joseph once more retreated to his room, and there, through the stillness of the deserted palace, might be heard his ceaseless tramp, that sounded as though it might be the hammer that was fashioning another coffin to break the hearts of the imperial family. At least it seemed so to the sorrowing Empress, who listened to the dull sound of her son's footsteps with superstitious fear. She had gone to him, on her return from the funeral, to console him with her love and sympathy. But the door was locked, and her affectionate entreaties for admission were unanswered.

She turned to the Emperor. "Something must be done to bend the obstinacy of this solitary grief," said she anxiously. "I know Joseph. His is a passionate and obdurate nature, strong in love as in hate. He had yielded his whole soul to his wife, and now, alas! I fear that she will draw him with her to the grave. What shall we do, Franz, to comfort him? How shall we entice him from this odious room, which he paces like a lion in his cage?"

"Go once more, and command him to open the door. He will not have the courage to defy you," said the Emperor.

Maria Theresa knocked again and cried out, "My son Joseph, I command you, as your Sovereign and mother, to open the door."

No answer. Still the same dull, everlasting tread.

The Empress stood awhile to listen; then, flushing with anger, she exclaimed, "It is in vain. We have lost all control over him. His sorrow has made him cruel and rebellious, even towards his mother."

"But this is unmanly," cried the Emperor with displeasure. "It is a miserable weakness to sink so helpless under grief."

"Think you so?" said the Empress, ready to vent upon the Emperor her vexation at the conduct of her son.

"In your pride of manhood you deem it weak that Joseph grieves for his wife? I dare say that were your Majesty placed in similar circumstances you would know full well how to bear my loss like a man. But your Majesty must remember that Joseph has not your wisdom and experience. He is but a poor, artless youth, who has been weak enough to love his wife without stint. This is a fault for which I crave the Emperor's indulgence."

"Oh, your Majesty," replied the Emperor smiling, "God forbid that he should ever grow less affectionate. I was only vexed that the voice of Maria Theresa should have less power over my son than it has over his father; that silvery voice which bewitched me in youth, and through life has soothed my every pang."

The Empress completely softened, reached out her hand.

"Would you indeed mourn for me, Franz?" said she tenderly.

"Would you refuse to listen to father or mother for my sake? Yes, dearest, you would, I believe. From our childhood we were lovers, we will be lovers in our old age, and when we part the one that is left will mourn as deeply as Joseph. Let us then be lenient with his grief, until our love and forbearance shall have won him to come and weep upon his mother's breast."

"If your Majesty permit," said Christina, stepping forward, "I will try to soften his grief."

"What can you do, dear child?" asked the Empress of her favorite daughter.

"I have a message for him," replied Christina. "I swore to Isabella that no one but myself should reveal it to Joseph. I know that it will prove consolatory, and Isabella also knew it. For this reason she entrusted it to me."

"Try then, my daughter, try if your voice will have more power than mine. Meanwhile I will essay the power of music. It overcame him once when he was a boy. We will try him with the music that Isabella loved best.

She called a page and spoke with him in a low voice. In conclusion she said, "Let the carriage go at once and bring him hither in a quarter of an hour."

The page withdrew, and the imperial family were again alone.

"Now, my daughter," said the Empress, "see if he will speak to you."

Christina approached the door. "My brother Joseph," said she, "I beseech you open the door to me. I come from Isabella; it is she who sends me to you."

The bolt was withdrawn, and for a moment the pale face of Joseph appeared at the door.

"Come in," said he, waving his hand to Christina. She followed him into the room where so many, many tears had been shed. "Now speak," said he, "what did Isabella say to you?"

His sister looked with pity upon his ghastly face and those hollow eyes grown glassy with weeping. "Poor, poor Joseph!" said she softly, "I see that your love for her was beyond all bounds."

He made a motion of impatience. "Do not pity me," said he. "My grief is too sacred for sympathy. I do not need it. Tell me at once, what said Isabella?"

Christina hesitated. She felt as if the balm she was about to bring would prove more painful than the wounds it was intended to heal.

"Speak, I tell you," cried Joseph angrily. "If you have made use of Isabella's name to gain access to my presence, it is a trick for which I will never forgive you. Why did you disturb me? I was with her," continued he, staring at the divan where so often they had sat together. "She wore her white dress and the pink roses, and she smiled with her enchanting smile. I lay at her feet, I looked into her eyes, I heard the melody of her voice."

"Did she ever say that she loved you?" asked Christina.

He looked at her intently and grew thoughtful. "I do not know," said he after a pause, "whether she ever told me so in words. But there needed no words. I saw her love in every glance, in every smile. Her whole life was love, and oh! I have lost it forever!"

"You have not lost it, for you never possessed it," said Christina.

Joseph drew back and frowned. "What is that?" said he hastily.

Christina approached him, and laying her hand upon his shoulder, she looked into his face until her eyes filled with tears.

"I say," whispered she in a tremulous voice, "do not mourn any longer, dear brother. For she for whom you grieve, she whom you call your Isabella, never loved you."

"That is not true," cried Joseph vehemently. "It is a lie, a wicked lie that you have devised to lessen my grief."

"It is nothing but the truth, and I promised Isabella to tell it to you."

Joseph sank almost insensible upon the divan. Christina seated herself near him, and, throwing her arms around him, she sobbed, "My brother, my darling brother, think no more of the dead, but turn your heart towards us; for we love you, and Isabella never did. She merely suffered your love."

"Suffered my love," murmured Joseph, and his head sank powerless upon Christina's bosom. But suddenly he rose, and looking with a beseeching expression at his sister's beautiful face, he said:

"Bethink you, Christina, of what you do. Think that I love Isabella with all the strength and glow of my heart, think that for me she was the embodiment of all beauty, goodness and purity. Do not seek to comfort me by destroying my faith in the truth of the only woman I have ever loved. In whom shall I have faith, if not in her? If *her* love was a lie, is there love in this world! Oh, Christina, in mercy say that you have sought to comfort by deceiving me!"

"I have sought to comfort you, by telling you the truth. If you will not believe me, believe her own words."

She drew a paper from her dress and handed it to Joseph. "It is a letter," said she, "which Isabella gave to me, and she made me swear that I would fulfill its behests. Read and be satisfied."

Joseph unfolded the letter. "It is her handwriting," said he to himself, and he tried to read it, but in vain; his hand trembled, and his eyes filled with tears.

He gave it back to Christina, who read it aloud—

"My Christina—Confidant of my sufferings and sorrow—Hear my dying request. To you I leave the task of consoling my husband. His noble tears shall not be shed over the grave of one who is unworthy of them. Tell him the truth, tell him all you know, show him this letter, and bid him not grieve for one who never loved him. Do this for me, it is my last request. ISABELLA."

Suddenly, from the adjoining room, the sweet tones of music were

heard; the air was tremulous with melody, which at first soft and low, swelled louder and louder until it filled the room with a gush of harmony that stirred the hearts of those who listened, with sweetest and holiest emotions.

Joseph bent eagerly forward. He knew those strains so well! He remembered the night when Isabella's tears had fallen among the rose-leaves, and he had kissed them away. He saw her once more in the pride of her beauty, looking at him from the depths of those glorious dark eyes which he had so madly loved. The music gave life and being to these memories, and its glamour brought back the dead from her grave! He remembered how he had asked her if she loved him, and how, avoiding the words so difficult to speak, she had answered with the witching tones of her violin. Oh, that heavenly evening hour upon the balcony! She had said, "Love has its own language: come and listen." And Christina said *she had not loved!* He could not, would not believe her!

He took the letter from Christina's hand and kissed the paper. "I do not believe you," he said softly. My trust in her is like my sorrow —for eternity!"

This imperturbable faith had the effect of hardening Christina, and making her cruel. "You shall believe me," said she hastily. "You shall see in her own handwriting that she loved another."

"ANOTHER!" cried the wretched husband. "I will kill him!"

"He died before you ever knew her," said Christina, frightened at the effect of her own heartlessness.

A smile overspread his face. "Dead, before I knew her! Then she forgot him when I loved her." He took up the letter and read it again. "Oh," said he, "see how magnanimous was my Isabella. She has been false to her own heart that she might save me from sorrow. She thought it would dry my tears to think that she did not love me. Oh, beloved, I see through thy noble falsehood—in death as in life I know every working of that unselfish heart!"

Christina said nothing, but she grew more inflexible in her purpose. "He *shall* be convinced," said she to herself. "I will give him her letters to me, and then he will know that he never has been loved."

Again pealed forth the sounds of that heavenly music. Now the violin, mingling with the tones of the harpsichord, glided into a melody of divinest beauty; and the full, rich tones of a woman's voice warbled the complaint of Orpheus: *Che faro senza Eurydice!*

Joseph sighed convulsively, and a faint color tinged his pale cheeks. This was Isabella's favorite air; and once more the vision started up before him, once more he saw the tears, he kissed them, and looked into the depths of those starry eyes!

He rose from the divan, and, drawn thither by a power with which he could not contend, he left the room, and followed the music that was calling him from madness back to reason.

At the harpsichord sat Ritter Gluck, and by him stood the Archduch-

ess Elizabeth, whose rich and beautiful voice had exorcised the evil spirit.

The Emperor and Empress, with all their children, came forward to meet the unhappy one, and all with tearful eyes, kissed and welcomed him with tender words of love.

Gluck alone seemed not to have seen the Archduke. He was chiding Elizabeth for singing falsely, and called upon her to repeat her song. Nevertheless, while he corrected his pupil, the big tears were coursing one another down his cheeks, and fell upon his hands, as they wandered over the instrument enrapturing every ear.

Elizabeth began again; and again were heard the heart-breaking tones of *Che faro senza Eurydice.*

All eyes turned upon the bereaved Orpheus. The Empress opened her arms, and completely subdued, he darted to his mother's heart, and cried out, "*Che faro senza Eurydice.*"

Again and again the mother kissed her weeping son. The Emperor folded them both to his loving heart. The brothers and sisters wept for mingled grief and joy. Elizabeth's voice failed her, and she sang no more. But Gluck played on, his hands weaving new strains of harmony such as earth had never heard before. His head thrown back, his eyes upturned towards Heaven, his face beaming with inspiration, he listened to his music, while from Joseph's anguish, he created the wonderful song in Alceste "*No crudel, no posso vivere, tu lo sai, senza de te.*"

The melody went on, the parents caressed their child, and on his mother's bosom Joseph wept the last tears of his great youthful sorrow. The dream of love was over! Grief had made of him a man.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FATHER PORHAMMER AND COUNT KAUNITZ.

The Empress paced her cabinet with hasty steps. Near the large table, covered with papers of state, stood Father Porhammer.

"Are you sure of what you say?" said Maria Theresa with impatience. "Are you sure that the Lord Chancellor so far forgets his honor and his dignity as to spend his hours of leisure in the company of disreputable actresses? Is it true that his house is the scene of shameful orgies and saturnalian feasts?"

"It is even so, your Majesty," replied Porhammer. "It is unhappily true that he whom your Majesty has raised to the first place in the Empire of——"

"The first place!" echoed the Empress angrily. "Know, sir, that

the first place in the Empire is mine. From God I hold my power and my crown, and I depute them to no man—I alone reign in Austria."

"Your Majesty," resumed the Father, "did not allow me to finish. I was about to say that he whom your Majesty has made your most illustrious subject, he who ought to give to all your subjects an example of moral conduct, is a profligate and libertine. That infamous school of Paris, where reigns the wanton Marquise de Pompadour; the debauched Court of Versailles——"

"Hold, father, and remember that France is Austria's dearest ally," interrupted the Empress.

The father bowed. "The school of Parisian gallantry, of which the Lord Chancellor is a graduate, has borne its fruits. Count Kaunitz mocks at religion, chastity and every other virtue. Instead of giving an honorable mistress to his house, it is the home of Foliazzi, the singer, who holds him fast with her rosy chains."

"We must send her away from Vienna."

"Ah, your Majesty, if you send her, Count Kaunitz will go with her. He cannot live without La Foliazzi. Even when he comes hither to your Majesty's august presence, La Foliazzi is in his coach, and she awaits his return at the doors of the Imperial palace."

"Impossible! I will not believe such scandalous reports. Count Kaunitz would never dare to bring his mistresses to my palace doors; he would never have the audacity to treat his official visits to myself as episodes in a life of lasciviousness with an unchaste singer. You shall withdraw your words, Father Porhammer, or you shall prove them."

—"I will prove them, your Majesty."

Just then, the door opened and a page announced the Lord Chancellor, Count Kaunitz.

"Admit Count Kaunitz," said the Empress, "and you Father Porhammer, remain."

The father withdrew within the embrasure of a window, while the Lord Chancellor followed the page into the presence of the Empress. The Count's face was as fair, and his cheeks as rosy as ever; he wore the same fantastic perruque of his own invention, and his figure was as straight and slender as it had ever been. Ten years had gone by since he became Prime Minister, but nothing had altered *him*. So marble-like his face, that age could not wrinkle, nor care trace a line upon its stony surface.

He did not wait for the imperial greeting, but came forward in his careless, unceremonious way, not as though he stood before his sovereign, but as if he had come to visit a lady of his own rank.

"Your Majesty sees," said he, with a courteous inclination of the head, "that I use the permission which has been granted me, of seeking an audience whenever the state demands it. As I come, not to intrude upon your Majesty with idle conversation, but to speak of grave and important matters of state, I do not apologise for coming unbidden."

The easy and unembarassed manner in which Kaunitz announced him-

self had its effect upon the Empress. She who was so accustomed to give vent to the feelings of the moment, overcame her displeasure and received her Minister with her usual affability.

"Your Majesty then will grant an audience to your Minister of State," said Kaunitz, looking sharply at the priest who stood unconcerned at the window.

"Since the Lord Chancellor comes at such an unusual hour," replied the Empress, "I must conclude that his business is of an imperative nature. I am therefore ready to hear him."

Kaunitz bowed, and then turning with an arrogant gesture towards the Empress's confessor, he said, "Do you hear, Father Porhammer, the Empress will hold a council with me."

"I hear it, my Lord," said the priest.

"Then as we are not on the subject of religion, you will have the goodness to leave the room."

"I was ordered by her Majesty to remain," replied Father Porhammer quietly.

Kaunitz turned towards the Empress, who with knit and angry brow, was listening to her Minister.

"If it be the Empress's pleasure," said he, bowing, "I will take the liberty of retiring until her Majesty is at leisure for earthly affairs. Religion and Politics are not to be confounded together; the former being the weightier subject of the two, I give way."

He bowed again, and was about to leave the room, when the Empress recalled him.

"Stay," said she, "and Father Porhammer will leave us for a while."

Without a word the Father bowed and withdrew.

"Now speak, Count Kaunitz," said the Empress, hastily, "and let the affair be important that has led you to drive my confessor from my presence in such an uncourteous fashion."

"Weighty, most weighty is the news that concerns the imperial house of Austria," said Kaunitz, with his unruffled equanimity. "A courier has brought me tidings of the Archduke's election as King of Rome."

"Is that all?" said Maria Theresa. "That is no news. The voice of Prussia decided that matter long ago; and this is the only advantage we have ever reaped from our long and terrible war with Frederick."

"No, your Majesty, no, this is not the only thing we have obtained. This war has yielded us material advantages. It has increased the military strength of the country, it has placed before the eyes of all Europe the inexhaustible nature of Austria's resources, it has brought all the little Germanic principalities under Austria's dominion. It has united Hungary, Sclavonia, Italy, Bohemia, and Lombardy under Austria's flag and Austria's field-marshals. Indeed, your Majesty, this war has given us something of far more value than Prussia's vote. The bloody baptism of the battle-field has made Austrians of all those who bled for Austria's rights."

"That does not prevent that abominable man from clinging to my

fair domains of Silesia. How will my ancestor, the great Charles, greet me, when I go to my grave, bearing the tidings that under my reign Austria has been shorn of a principality."

"No such tidings shall your Majesty bear to your forefathers," replied Kaunitz, fervently. "Leave Frederic alone with his bit of a principality: more trouble than profit may it be to him! 'Long before he will have transformed his Silesian Austrians into loyal Prussians, we shall have repaired the damage he has done us by new and richer acquisitions."

"No, no, no," cried the Empress, "let us have no more war. What we do not possess by just right, I shall never consent to win with the sword."

"But inheritance and alliance bestow rights," persisted the Minister. "Your Majesty has marriageable daughters and sons, and it is time to think of negotiating honorable alliances for them."

The eyes of the Empress sparkled, and her face beamed with happy smiles. The establishment of her children was her constant thought by night and day, and in broaching this subject, Kaunitz was meeting her dearest wishes. Her displeasure against him melted away like snow before the sun, and she gave herself entirely up to the pleasing discussion.

"It will be difficult to find husbands for my daughters," said she. "All the reigning heads of European families are married, and their sons are too young for Elizabeth and Amelia. I cannot marry my grown-up daughters to boys; nor can I bring a set of insignificant sons-in-law to hang about the court. My husband, the Emperor, would never consent to bestow his daughters upon petty princes, who, instead of bringing influence with them, would derive their reflected consequence from an alliance with us. If we cannot find them husbands worthy of their station, my daughters must remain single, or devote their lives to God."

—"If your Majesty's eldest daughters choose that holy vocation, politics need not interfere with their inclinations. The boyish heirs of European kingdoms can await the advent of the younger princesses."

—"Let them wait," said the Empress, "we will train noble queens for them."

"But the Archduke Leopold need not wait," said Kaunitz; "we will begin with him. The Spanish Ambassador has received from his Sovereign, Carlos IV., a letter directing him to offer his daughter Maria Louisa to your Majesty's second son. Knowing that his Highness, the Archduke Joseph, is your Majesty's successor, he supposes that the Emperor Francis will bestow upon his second son the Grand Duchy of Tuscany."

"A very good alliance," returned Maria Theresa, nodding her head. "The women of the house of Bourbon are all estimable. Our lost Isabella was a lovely woman. Well! the grand daughter of the King of Spain, having died, let us renew our connection with him through his daughter; and may God grant to Leopold happier nuptials than were those of my poor Joseph."

"The Archduke Joseph, too, must marry," said Kaunitz.

"Poor Joseph!" sighed the Empress. "His heart is full of sorrow even now, and while he weeps for his dead, we make plans to marry him to another. But you are right Count; he must marry. We cannot listen to his heart, he must sacrifice himself to duty. Austria must have another heir. But let us give him a little respite."

"He will forget his sorrow when he is crowned King of Rome," said Kaunitz. "Ambition is certain to cure love; and the possession of a crown may well console any man for the loss of a woman."

Maria Theresa was displeased. "Do you deem it, then, so light a thing," said she with a frown, "to lose a beloved wife? Do you think it great happiness to wear a crown? You know nothing either of the pains of power or the joys of marriage; but I can tell you that many a time I would have fainted under the burthen of my crown, had my Franz not sustained me with his loving and beloved hand. But what know you of love? Your heart is a market-place wherein you seek slaves for your harem, but no honorable woman would make it her home. I have heard scandalous reports concerning your house, Count Kaunitz; I have——"

A light knock was heard at the door, and as the Empress gave the word, Father Porhammer entered the room.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MATRIMONIAL PLANS.

Father Porhammer came forward, while the Empress looked at him with a glance of astonishment.

—"Forgive me, your Majesty, for this intrusion. It is in accordance with your gracious commands, whose fulfillment I have no right to delay. I was ordered by your Majesty to prove the fact which I asserted."

"Well, have you the proof?" said the Empress impatiently. "I have, your Majesty. It is in the carriage of the Lord Chancellor, at the great door of the palace."

The Empress made an exclamation; and her face grew scarlet with anger. Her stormy looks rested upon Kaunitz, who, perfectly unconcerned, seemed not to have heard what Porhammer had said. This undisturbed serenity on the part of her Minister, gave the Empress time for recollection. She knew from experience that the lightening of her wrath would play harmlessly about the head of this living statue, and she felt more keenly than she had ever done before, that however Kaunitz's private life might shock her own sense of honor and decency, his vast intellect as State-Councillor was indispensable to Austria.

With a quick and haughty gesture, she motioned the priest away, and then began to pace up and down the length of the apartment.

Kaunitz remained tranquil near the table, his cold glances resting now on the papers, now on the pictures that hang opposite to him. He was busily engaged arranging his Alençon ruffles, when the Empress stopped, and fixed her fiery eyes upon him.

"My Lord Chancellor, Count Kaunitz, tell me, who sits in your carriage before the doors of my palace, awaiting your return from this conference?"

—"Who sits in my carriage, your Majesty? I was not aware that any one was there whose name it was necessary for me to announce to your Imperial Majesty."

—"I can well believe that you would not dare to pronounce the name of that person in my presence," cried the Empress indignantly, "but let me tell you, Sir Count, that your behavior is highly displeasing to me, and that I blush to hear the things I do, to the disparagement of your honor and morality."

"Has your Majesty any complaint to make of me as Minister, or as President of Council?" asked Kaunitz almost roughly. "Have I not fulfilled the vows I made to your Majesty ten years ago? Have I discharged my duties carelessly? The ship of state which, in her hour of peril, was confided to my hands, have I not steered her safely through rocks and reefs? Or have I been unfaithful to my trust? If your Majesty can convict me of crime, or even of negligence, then sit in judgment upon the culprit. Tell me, of what state offence am I accused?"

"I do not speak of my Prime Minister," replied the Empress, somewhat embarrassed. "I have no fault to find with *him*. On the contrary, he has nobly kept the pledge he made to me and to my Austria, and he has been a wise, faithful and conscientious servant. But this is not enough, there are also duties to perform towards God, towards society, and towards one's self."

—"For your Majesty as well as for me, it suffices that I am true to my duties as your subject. As to my duty as a man, this is no place to discuss a matter which lies between God and myself. It would be indecorous for me to raise the veil of my private life before the eyes of your Majesty. I came here to speak of Austria's welfare and yours, not of me or mine."

Without giving time to the Empress to make any reply, Kaunitz resumed the subject which had been interrupted by the visit of Father Porhammer.

"Though your Majesty may deem it expedient to postpone the marriage of the Archduke Joseph, still that need not prevent us from taking the steps that will be necessary to secure an advantageous alliance for the heir to the throne. We can grant a respite to the Archduke of Austria, but the King of Rome must stifle his grief, and attend to the calls of duty. He must silence his heart, for the Emperor of Austria must have a successor."

"At least let us choose him a bride worthy to succeed in his affections the angelic wife he has lost," said the Empress, with feeling.

Something like a smile flitted over Kaunitz's sardonic face. "Your Majesty must pardon me, but you view this matter entirely too much as a thing of sentiment, whereas, in effect, it is an affair of policy. The main object of the Archduke's marriage is to find a princess whose family can advance the interests of the state, and who is in a condition to bear children."

"And have you already found such a wife for my poor child?" asked the Empress. "Have you one to propose whom policy will approve, and who will not be distasteful to the eye or the heart?"

"She must be a German princess," said Kaunitz.

—"Why MUST?"

—"Because the house of Hapsburg must court the good-will of all Germany, which, through this long war and from the divided interests of the German people, it is in danger of losing. Prussia, grown morally strong by the war, is about to become the rival of Austria, and even now she seeks to have a voice in German politics. Northern Germany already inclines to Prussia by its sympathies of creed and opinion. If we allow this to go on, Prussia will divide Germany into two halves. The northern half, that which is Protestant, and in my opinion the wiser half, because free from the prejudices of religion, will belong to enlightened Prussia; the southern half, the bigoted Catholic portion, that which believes in the Pope and his Jesuits, may *perhaps* adhere to Austria. Then comes revolution. Prussia will have for her allies, not only Northern Germany, but Sweden, England, Holland, Denmark, even Russia. Every step she takes in advance will drive back Austria; and the day may come when Prussia, our powerful enemy, will seek for the Margrave of Brandenburg, the crown of the Kaisers."

"Never! never!" exclaimed Maria Theresa passionately. "To think of this little Burgrave of Nuremberg, the vassal of Rudolf of Hapsburg, growing to be the rival of the stately house of Austria! No, no! Never shall the day dawn when Austria descends to equality with Prussia! We are natural enemies, we can no more call the Brandenburgs brothers than the eagle can claim kindred with the vulture! You are right, Count, the strife of the battle-field is over, let us gird ourselves for that of diplomacy. Let us be wary and watchful; not only the State, but the Holy Church is in danger. I can no longer allow this prince of infidels to propagate his unbelief or his Protestantism throughout my Catholic fatherland. We are the ally and the daughter of our holy father, the Pope, and we must be up and doing for God and for our country. Now let us think how we are to check this thirst of Prussia for power."

"There are two expedients," said Kaunitz, calmly interrupting the Empress in her torrent of indignation.

—"Let us hear them."

—"The first one is to strengthen our interest with Germany either

by offers of advantages and honors, payment of subsidies, or by matrimonial alliances. For this reason, it is, that the future King of Rome must choose his wife among the princesses of Germany. Through your Majesty's other children we will ally ourselves to the rest of Europe. The Bourbons reign in the South, and they must all be allied to the house of Hapsburg. Through the marriage of Archduke Leopold with the daughter of the King of Spain, we will gain a powerful ally; and the Archduke himself, as Grand Duke of Tuscany, will represent Austria's interests in Italy. If the Crown Prince of Parma and the young King of Naples unite themselves to two of your Majesty's daughters, then all Italy will be leagued with Austria. When this is accomplished, the word 'Italy' will be a geographical designation, but the country will be an Austrian dependency. Now for western Europe, for France, we must confirm our alliance with her also. The son of the Dauphin, the grandson of Louis XV. is now eleven years old; just three years older than the Archduchess Maria Antoinette."

"Truly, Kaunitz, your plans are great," cried the Empress, her face full of smiles and radiant with joy. "The Emperor often calls me a match-maker, but I am an insignificant scheemer by *your* side. I must say that I approve your plans, and will do all that I can to ensure them success."

"The most of them are for the future; before all things we must bestir ourselves about the present. You have seen how later, we will secure the friendship of the South; that of the North must come through the marriage of the King of Rome. His selection of a German princess will incline all Germany towards your Majesty's imperial house. Nearest to Prussia, are the two important Principalities of Bavaria and Saxony."

"And both have unmarried princesses," exclaimed the Empress, joyfully. "I wish we might select the daughter of the Elector of Saxony, for that house has suffered so much from Austria, that I would gladly do it this favor. But I have heard that the Princess Mary Kunigunde has very few charms."

"Perhaps Josepha of Bavaria may be handsomer," said Kaunitz dryly.

—"She is nevertheless the daughter of Carl VII., and he has never been my friend. I have suffered much from this man, and would you have me accept his daughter as mine?"

"There can be no resentment for bygones in politics," said Kaunitz, deliberately.

"But there may be gratitude for past services," exclaimed the Empress, warmly. "I shall never forget how Hungary sustained me when this man would have robbed me of my crown. I would never have worn my imperial diadem but for the help of God, and the sword of St. Stephen, which my brave Magyars drew for me on the battle-field! Without Hungary I would have been dethroned, and shall I now place the crown of St. Stephen's upon the brow of an enemy's daughter! It would be an injustice to my loyal Hungarians. I shall give my voice

to Mary of Saxony, but if Joseph prefers Josepha, I will not oppose his choice. And this matter settled, tell me your other plans for strengthening the power of Austria."

"My second plan is to humanise the Hungarian nobles. These nobles reign in Hungary like so many petty sovereigns. There is no such a thing as nationality among them. The country is divided into nobles and vassals. The nobles are so powerful that the government is completely lost sight of, and the real sovereigns of Hungary are the Magyars."

"That is in some sense, true," answered the Empress. "I have often felt how dangerous to my rights was the arrogance of my Hungarian subjects. They lift their haughty heads too near the regions of royalty."

"And your Majesty's great ancestor, Charles V, once said that nothing had a right to lift its head in the vicinity of a king. The very trees would he lop, that their branches might not grow too near to heaven, how much more the heads of men, when they were raised too high."

—"But such a policy shall never be mine—I will never buy obedience with oppression. Besides, I have already said that I am under obligations to my Hungarian nobles, and I will not injure a hair of their heads."

"There are other ways of conquering besides the sword," said the crafty Kaunitz. "Coercion would but fortify the Magyars in their insolence. These haughty lords must be enticed from their fastnesses to Vienna. They must be greeted with honors, titles and estates. They must be taught to love splendor, to spend money, to accumulate debts, until they become bankrupt, and their possessions in Hungary fall into the hands of the Crown."

"What an infamous policy," cried the Empress.

"Good, nevertheless," said Kaunitz calmly. "Nothing can be done with the Magyars by force. They must be vanquished by pleasure, and also by marriage. They must be made to take home Viennese wives, who will initiate them into the arts of refined life, who will help them to waste their money, and so cut off the wings of their freedom. He who has learned to love pleasure will have no taste for sedition, and he who is in debt is no longer free. Your Majesty must bestow gifts and places at court; the Magyars will grow ambitious,—they will become hangers-on of princes, and——dissipation, ostentation, and extravagance will do the rest."

While Kaunitz was unfolding his Satanic schemes, the Empress walked up and down, in visible agitation. When he ceased, she came and stood before him, and with her searching eyes she tried to look through the mask of his impenetrable countenance.

"What you have said there," said she, "is a mournful leaf from the book of worldly wisdom which guides your actions, and it is enough to make an honest heart ache to think that good can be reached by such foul means. My heart struggles against such a course, but my head approves it, and I dare not listen to my womanly scruples, for I am a Sovereign. May the wiles of the women of Vienna make loyal subjects of

my brave Hungarians. I will bestow honors without end; but for aught else, let it come as it may. Extravagance, debt and sequestration, they must bring about themselves."

—"They will follow, and then sequestered estates must go to Austrian nobles, that our own people may mingle with the Magyars at home, and strengthen the influence of your Majesty's house in Hungary."

"Say no more," said the Empress mournfully. "Bring them hither, if you can, but my heart aches, and my years burn to have heard what you have said. Say no more of Hungary to me—let us speak of our bright plans for my children. It makes me happy to think that so many of them will wear crowns."

"The first will be that of the King of Rome, and I trust that before his coronation, your Majesty will have persuaded him to marry one of the two German princesses of whom we have spoken."

"The Saxon or the Bavarian," said the Empress. "I think he will comply, for he will understand as well as ourselves the urgency of the case. When will the coronation take place?"

"In two weeks, your Majesty."

—"Then poor Joseph has but fourteen days for his grief. When he returns from Frankfort, I will remind him of his duty as a sovereign. But hark! It is twelve o'clock, the hour for Mass. If the Lord Chancellor has nothing more to propose I——"

"Pardon me, your Majesty. I have an insignificant petition to present. It concerns myself."

"It is a pleasure to me," said Maria Theresa, "to think that in any way I can gratify you. Speak then without fear. What can I do to serve you?"

"It is only for the sake of decorum, your Majesty," replied Kaunitz. "You say that I have been useful to the country. I confess that I too think that I deserve something from Austria. If I were another man, and Kaunitz stood by, as I thought of all that he has done and is trying still to do, to make Austria powerful, I would speak thus to your Majesty: 'It is in the power of the Empress to distinguish merit, by elevating it in position above the common herd. Your Majesty has honored Count Kaunitz by calling him your right hand. When the head of a body politic is an Empress, it is not enough for the right hand to be called simply a Count.'"

"Shall I call you Prince?" laughed Maria Theresa.

"It is that which I was about to propose to your Majesty," said Kaunitz, as he made a deeper inclination than usual before the Empress.

"Then it shall be so," said she warmly. "From this moment my esteemed Minister, is Prince Kaunitz, and the letters patent shall be made this very day."

She reached her hand to the new-made Prince, who kissed it fervently. "I take this title, so graciously bestowed, not because it will confer splendor upon my own name, because it will prove to the world that those who serve Maria Theresa with fidelity, she delights to honor,

And now that this trifling matter is arranged, I beg your Majesty's permission to retire."

"Until to-morrow," replied the Empress, with a smile. She waved her hand, but as Kaunitz left the room, he heard her following him into the ante-room. He had already opened the door leading into the hall, but hearing her still advance, he turned again, and made a profound inclination.

"Au Revoir, my dear Prince," said the Empress, loud enough for Father Porhammer, who waited to accompany her to the Chapel, to hear her greeting. The father could not withhold some trace of his displeasure from his countenance, while Kaunitz passed on with a faint, derisive smile.

The Empress at that moment re-opened the door and came out into the hall. Father Porhammer, advancing to her, said, "Did I not prove to your Majesty the truth of my statement concerning the immorality of——"

"The what?" said the Empress with an absent air. "Oh yes! yes! I had forgotten. You wished to prove to me that the Lord Chancellor had some person in his carriage awaiting his return. I believe you, father—doubtless there is some one in the carriage of the Lord Chancellor whom—it would be improper to name in my presence. But listen to what I have to say on this subject. It is better for you and for me not to see what goes on either in the Lord Chancellor's house or in his carriage. Close your eyes, as I shall mine, to whatever is objectionable in his life. I cannot afford to lose his services. So far as I am concerned, he is blameless. His life may be loose, but his loyalty is firm; he is a wise and great statesman, and that, you will allow, is a virtue that may well cover a multitude of sins."

Father Porhammer bowed to the will of his sovereign; Prince Kaunitz went on as before.

"Let us hasten to the Chapel," added the Empress; and a page throwing wide open the doors of another apartment, Maria Theresa joined her lords and ladies in waiting, and the imperial court entered the chapel.

But the thoughts of the Empress were more of earth than heaven, on that morning. Her heart was filled with maternal cares, and when the services were over and she had arrived at the door of her cabinet, she dismissed her attendants and summoned to her presence the Marshal of the Household, Count Dietrichstein.

As soon as he appeared, Maria Theresa said eagerly, "come hither Count; I wish to have a confidential conversation with you. You are an old and faithful servant of my family, and I know that I can depend upon your discretion."

"Your Majesty well knows that I would sooner die than betray a secret of my imperial mistress," exclaimed good, fat old Dietrichstein, fervently.

The Empress looked kindly at his red, good-humored face. "And

you would rather die than tell me an untruth also, is it not so," said she, smiling.

"That," replied Count Dietrichstein, with another smile, "that is an embarassing question; for there are cases, when even your Majesty's self——"

—"Yes, yes; but in this instance, I earnestly desire to hear the unvarnished truth."

"If so, your Majesty's desire is for me a command, and I will answer truthfully whatever you ask."

"Well then, listen to me. You have just returned from a tour in Bavaria and Saxony. Of course you have seen the two princesses, Mary Kunigunde and Josepha."

"I know them both," said Dietrichstein, puffing.

—"Well, tell me what sort of person is the Princess Mary Kunigunde."

"She is slender," replied Dietrichstein, shrugging his shoulders, "slender as a bean pole. If your Majesty will pardon me the expression in favor of its truth, her bones rattle as she walks, and if you should chance to touch her by accident, I pity you."

—"What for?"

—"Because you will retreat from the collision bruised."

"You are a wicked slanderer, Count," replied the Empress. You mean to say that the Princess of Saxony is frail and feminine in her appearance."

—"If your Majesty pleases, so be it; but if you looked into her serene Highness's face, you might mistake her for a man, nevertheless."

"Holy Virgin, what does the man mean?" cried the Empress, astounded.

"I mean," said the Count, with a sort of comic seriousness, "that the frail and feminine princess has a black beard which a Cornet might envy."

—"Nonsense, Count; you saw her at twilight, and mistook a shadow on her face for a beard."

—"Pardon me, your Majesty, you commanded me to tell the truth! I saw the Princess by sunlight as well as by candlelight. Under all circumstances, this black shadow overhung her not very small mouth; and I have strong reason for persisting in my opinion that it was a flourishing beard."

"But Josepha of Bavaria—is she handsomer?"

"Handsomer, your Majesty," cried the old Count. "It is said that she is a good and estimable person; if this be true her soul is very, very different from her body. Indeed her beauty may be said to rival that of the Princess Mary."

"You are a keen critic," sighed the Empress. "But suppose you were obliged to marry either one of the princesses, which one would you choose?"

"Your Majesty!" exclaimed the old Count, horror-stricken. "I never

would have the assurance to raise my eyes to thoughts of marriage with a serene Highness."

"Well then," said the Empress. "Suppose you were a Prince and her equal in birth, which one then would you prefer?"

The Count looked at the floor and was silent.

"The truth, the truth!" cried the Empress. "Speak out and do not fear. Whatever you say shall be sacred with me. Now tell me, which of the two would you take to wife?"

"Well, then," said Count Dietrichstein, with a grimace of excessive disgust, "since your Majesty obliges me to suppose the case, I will tell the truth. If by any artifice I could escape, nothing on earth would induce me to marry either one of them. But if the knife were at my throat, and I had no other way of saving my life, I would take the Princess Josepha, for she——"

"Speak out," said the Empress, amused, though sorely disappointed. "You would marry Josepha of Bavaria because——"

"Because," sighed the fat old Count, "if she *is* horribly ugly, she has, at least, something like a woman's bosom."

Maria Theresa broke out into a hearty laugh. "You are right," said she, "the reason is a very good one, and has its weight. I thank you for your candor, and will turn over in my mind what you have told me."

"But your Majesty has promised not to betray me," protested the Count with imploring look.

"And I will keep my promise faithfully," replied the Empress reaching him her hand. "Nevertheless, I cling to the hope that you have exaggerated the defects of the princesses, and that they are not altogether as ugly as you have pictured them to me.*

CHAPTER XXV.

JOSEPHA OF BAVARIA.

Festivity reigned at the Court and throughout the city of Vienna. The weather was cold, but the streets were thronged with people and hung with garlands. Nothing was thought of but balls, illuminations, and dress. Every one was curious to see the splendid spectacle of the day, the entrance of the bride of the King of Rome into Vienna.

The plans of the Lord Chancellor were beginning to unfold themselves. The Archduke Joseph had been crowned King of Rome at Frankfort,

* This conversation is historical, and the criticism of Count Dietrichstein upon the two princesses, as here related, is almost verbatim. See Wraxall's Memoirs, vol. 2, page 406.

and the Empress, on his return, had prepared him for his second bridal. He had stoutly refused at first, but finally had yielded to the reasonings of his mother and the persuasions of his father. He had been told to choose between Mary Kunigunde and Josepha.

Not far from Teplitz, as if by accident, he had met the Princess Mary out on a hunting party. The Princess was on horseback; but she rode awkwardly, and her demeanor was shy and ungraceful. She well knew the object of this *casual* meeting, and when the King of Rome approached to greet her, she turned pale and trembled as she felt the gaze of his large blue eyes. Her paleness did not increase her beauty, nor did her shyness contribute to make her interesting. Joseph was annoyed at her taciturnity, and disgusted with her ugliness. After a few brief words, he bowed, and galloped off to join his retinue. The Princess looked sadly after him, and returned home with a troubled heart. She knew that she had been disdained, and that the King of Rome would never choose her for his bride.

She was right. Joseph preferred the Princess Josepha whom he had also "met by chance." He, like Count Dietrichstein, having the knife at his throat, selected her for his bride who was minus the flourishing black beard.

It was the 22d of January of the year 1765, and the wedding-day of the King of Rome. From early morning, the Archduchesses at the palace, had been practising a lyric drama from the pen of Metastasio called "*Il Parnasso confuso.*" The music was by Gluck, and his deep bass was heard accompanying the sweet rich voices of the bridegroom's sisters. They had studied their parts diligently, and felt quite confident of success, as they gathered around the *Maestro.* But Gluck was never satisfied, and he kept Apollo and the Muses at their music-lesson until their ladies of honor were obliged to inform them that they must positively retire to their toilets; a courier having arrived to say that the Princess had entered the gates of the city.

While all these preparations went on around him, the King of Rome tarried in his private apartments. He was in the room where he had locked himself after the death of Isabella, the room where day and night he had deplored his lost happiness, until Christina had so rudely awakened him from his dream of love and sorrow.

This miserable consolation has had its effect. Joseph wiped away his tears, and having read Isabella's letters and convinced himself that she never had loved him, he had forborn to murmur at her loss.

On this, his bridal day, he was thinking of the time when alone and heart-broken he had paced this room for three days and nights; and now surrounded by festivity and splendor, he paced the floor again, awaiting the moment when he should have to mount his horse and meet the Princess. He was not with the living bride, but with the dead one, and as he thought of her grace, her smiles, her surpassing beauty, his lip curled with a sneer, and his brow grew dark and stormy.

"And she, too, deceived me," said he; "those smiles, those glances,

that love, all were false. While she lay in my arms and listened to my words of love, her heart was in the grave with her murdered lover! Oh, my God! now that I know that *she* deceived me, in whom on this earth can I place my trust! Even now what am I but a dependent boy, the slave of the Empress and of her all-powerful Minister, who force upon me a woman whom I hate, and bid me make her the mother of my children. O, when will my shackles fall, when shall I be free!"

In the distance was heard the dull sound of a cannon. "Already!" cried the unhappy bridegroom. "It is time for me to meet my bride, and to begin the loathsome farce of a second bridal. Verily if I did not hate this Josepha, I could pity her. She will not find me a loving husband. The Queen of Rome will never be an enviable woman!"

So saying, he threw around his shoulders his velvet cloak edged with ermine, and left the room to join his retinue. They were to meet the Princess and accompany her to the castle of Schönbrunn. It was there that the imperial family awaited the bridal party, and there in the chapel the marriage was to be solemnised.

The streets were thronged with people that shouted for joy; the balconies and windows were filled with elegant women, who smiled and waved their hands in greeting to the royal pair. For all the world, this was a day of rejoicing. Except for the two persons for whose sake the rest rejoiced. These had no part in the universal gayety; and the mirth which was inspired by their presence found no echo in their souls—Joseph's heart was full of dislike and ill-will towards his betrothed, and she was unhappy, fearing the reception that awaited her. She had trembled as she thought of the meeting with Joseph, and then of the proud, powerful and beautiful woman who was his mother. The fame of her intellect, fascinations, and beauty, had reached the Court of Munich, and poor Josepha knew very well that she was neither handsome, cultivated, nor charming. Her education had been neglected, and if she had attained to the honor of being Queen of Rome, and Empress-expectant of Austria, it was not that she had any right to a station so exalted, it was ——that her brother was childless and had promised his inheritance to Austria.

Josepha was sad, as she thought of these things; but she could not suppress an emotion of joy, when she saw the brilliant cortege that was coming from Vienna to meet her. This proud and handsome horseman, whose blue eyes shone like stars, this was her husband, the lord of her destiny! She had seen him once before, and had loved him from that moment. True, he had not chosen her from inclination, but she could not shut her heart to the bliss of being his wife, he who to-day a king, would in future years place an imperial crown upon her brow.

And now the two cavalcades met; the carriage of the Princess drew up, and the King of Rome, dismounting, came towards her with a low inclination of the head. Around them stood the noblemen of his suite, whose splendid uniforms and decorations dazzled the eye with their brilliancy. They sprang from their horses and each one reverentially salu-

ted the bride elect. This done, the King of Rome assisted her to alight, that she might mount the magnificent horse which was now led forward by the Empress's chief master of the horse.

When her betrothed held out his hand to her, Josepha blushing, looked at him with a timid and tender glance, which seemed to implore a return of her love. She could not speak a word, but she pressed his hand.

Joseph, so far from returning the pressure, looked surprised—almost disdainful; and stepping back, he left to the Master of the Horse, and the other lords in waiting, the care of assisting the Princess to mount. She sprang into the saddle with perfect confidence, and grasped her reins with so much skill, that although the beautiful animal reared and pranced until his bridle was covered with foam, his rider was perfectly at ease.

"She is at least a good horsewoman," said Joseph to himself, as he took his place by her side. And now the bells chimed merrily, and the cannon proclaimed to all Vienna that the royal pair were about to enter the city.

Silently they rode through the flower-strewn streets, silently they heard the joyous shouts of the multitude, here and there smiling wearily in return, but both tired of splendor, and both longing for rest. Neither spoke to the other; what had they to say to one another, they whom policy had chained together for life?

At the farther end of the city, the state-coach of the Empress awaited the Princess. With an indifferent and careless air, Joseph handed Josepha to the carriage. This time she dared not press his hand; but as the door closed upon herself and her governess, she threw herself back upon the velvet cushions, and wept bitterly.

"For the love of heaven, what mean these tears, your Highness," cried the governess. "Your Highness's head-dress will be ruined, and your eyes will be swollen."

"'Tis true," murmured Josepha, "I have no right to weep, as other women do at such a time. I am nothing but a puppet, that laughs or weeps as etiquette ordains."

"Your Highness is excited, and does not see your destiny in its true light," replied the lady, with sympathy. "It is one which any woman on earth might envy. You are about to become the wife of the handsomest Prince in all Europe, an Emperor in prospect, and son of the great Maria Theresa, whose beauty and goodness are the theme of the whole world. And then the lovely and accomplished Archduchesses of Austria, they are to be your sisters-in-law."

"Yes," said the Princess, passionately, "and look at me. You have known me since my infancy, dear friend, therefore you need not flatter me because of my station. Look at me and tell me if it is not enough to break my heart that I must appear before this beautiful Empress and her daughters, and that I must try to win the love of this Prince, the glance of whose eye is enough to kindle love in the heart of every woman living—O say, and speak without reserve—tell me if a woman so ob-

scure, so ignorant and so destitute of charms, can ever hope to be loved or cherished by such a family."

"Your Highness is worthy of all affection, and deserves the choicest of the blessings that are in store for you," replied the lady of honor, warmly. "No one that knows your noble heart would dare to say that any station is too exalted for you."

"Oh, who will be troubled with looking into my heart in imperial Vienna," sobbed the disheartened Josepha. "Externals are every thing at Court. And I, unhappy one, who scarcely dare to utter my heart's yearnings to those who encourage me, what will become of me if I meet with cold glances or scornful words! I feel how little I am skilled to win love, and the consciousness of my defects heightens them and renders me still more repulsive."

"Your Highness is unjust towards yourself. No one else would ever dream of speaking in such terms of you. Be happy, dear lady, and you will soon grow comely, too."

"Happy!" sighed the Princess, looking from the window at the elegant and graceful Prince, who, cold and stern as though he had been following the dead, vouchsafed not a look towards the carriage where sat his bride.

With another sigh she turned her head. Her eyes encountered those of the governess fixed upon her in wondering sympathy. With a bitter smile, Josepha laid her hand upon the shoulder of her friend.

"I must tell you something, Lucy," said she, "something terrible and sad. Hear well my words and mark them! I already love my betrothed beyond power of expression, but he will never return my love. I will worship him, and I feel that he will hate me!"

Blushing painfully at the sound of her own words, the Princess hid her face in her hands.

The carriage stopped, and now the confused and self-tortured girl had to go forward to meet the Emperor, who waited at the foot of the great staircase to conduct her to the presence of the Empress.

Maria Theresa came gracefully forward, surrounded by her beautiful daughters and a dazzling train of lords and ladies. Josepha's head reeled when she saw them, and almost fainting, she sank down at the feet of the Empress.

"Mercy, gracious Empress, mercy!" sobbed the poor girl, almost beside herself with terror, while regardless of all courtly decorum, she covered the hand of Maria Theresa with tears and kisses.

A sneer was perceptible on the faces of the courtiers, and the young Archduchesses smiled derisively; but Maria Theresa, whose generous heart beat in sympathetic response to the emotion and fright of the poor young stranger, raised her kindly up, and kissing her forehead, encouraged her with gracious words.

"Be welcome, my daughter," said she in her clear and silvery voice. "May all happiness be yours through life. Come, my children, let us hasten to the chapel."

She made a sign to her husband, and took the arm of the King of Rome. The Emperor followed with the Princess Josepha, and now through the splendid halls, that dazzled the eye with festive magnificence, came the long train of courtiers and ladies that graced the pageant of this royal bridal. In the chapel, before the altar, stood Cardinal Megazzi, surrounded by priests and acolytes all arrayed in the pomp and splendor of a solemn Catholic ceremony.

The Princess had not been wedded by proxy; it was therefore necessary that she should be married with the blessings of the church, before she proceeded in state to the throne-room to receive the homage due to her as a queen. No time had therefore been given her to retire before the ceremony, and she was married in her travelling-dress. At the entrance of the chapel stood the new ladies in waiting of the Queen of Rome. One of them relieved her of her hat, which the Empress replaced by a wreath of myrtle. Then Maria Theresa, placing the hand of Josepha in that of her son, the imperial cortege approached the altar.

As they stood before the chancel, the King of Rome, overcome by the bitterness of the moment, bowed his head to his unfortunate bride and whispered, "Poor Josepha, I pity you."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MARRIAGE NIGHT.

The ceremonial was over. The Empress herself had conducted the young Queen of Rome to her apartments; and she had stood by her side, while her tire-woman exchanged her dress of golden tissue, for a light white *negligée* of finest cambric trimmed with costly lace. With her own hand, Maria Theresa unfastened the myrtle wreath and coronet of diamonds that encircled her daughter-in-law's brow. She then kissed Josepha affectionately, and bidding her good-night, she besought the blessing of God upon both her children.

And now the Princess was alone in this vast apartment. On one side, under a canopy of blue velvet embroidered with gold, was the state-bed of the Queen of Rome. Close by, stood the toilet of gold with its wilderness of jewels and *étuis*, all the gifts of the Empress. On the walls of blue velvet, hung large Venetian mirrors, filling the room with images of that gorgeous bed of state. In the centre, on a marble table, thirty wax-lights in silver candelabra, illumined the splendor of the scene. The heavy velvet window-curtains were closed; but they threw no shadow, for the Park of Schönbrunn was illuminated by two-hundred

thousand lamps, which far and near lit up the Castle on this festive evening, with a flood of fiery splendor.*

The Queen of Rome was alone, her bridesmaids and attendants had left her, and she awaited her husband, who would enter her room through a private door which, close to the bed of state, led to his own apartments.

With beating heart and in feverish suspense, trembling with hope and fear, Josepha paced her magnificent room. Heavy sighs broke from her bosom, hot tears fell from her eyes.

"He will come," cried she, wringing her hands, "he will come and look into my face with his heavenly blue eyes, and I—I will cast down mine like a culprit, and dare not confide my secret to him. Oh God! Oh God! I have sworn to conceal my infirmity, for it is not contagious, it will harm no one—and yet my heart misgives me when I think that—Oh no! no! It will soon be over, and he will never have known it. Were he told of it, it might prejudice him against me, and how could I bear to see those beauteous eyes turned away from me in disgust! I will keep my secret, and after,—my love shall atone to him for this one breach of faith. Oh, my God! teach me how to win him! I have nothing to bring to this splendid court save the gushing fountains of my love for him—Oh, my father, why have I nothing but this to offer—why have I neither beauty nor grace to please my husband's eyes—for I love him, oh, I love him already more than my life!"

She started, for she heard a sound near the side door. Now the key turned in the lock, and in another moment the King walked in. He still wore the magnificent Spanish Court-dress in which he had received the homage of his marriage-guests. The order of the Golden Fleece was on his breast, and also the sparkling diamond cross of the Imperial house of Hapsburg. Josepha blushing, recalled to mind her night negligée, and dared not raise her eyes.

For awhile they stood opposite to one another, Josepha in painful confusion; Joseph, his eyes bent with cold scrutiny upon her person. At length he approached and touched her gently on the arm.

"Why do you tremble so?" asked he kindly. "Raise your head and look at me."

Slowly she lifted her eyes, and looked at him with a gaze of entreaty.

"Now," said he, with a bitter smile, "am I so frightful that you have reason to tremble at my coming?"

"I did not tremble from fear or fright," said she in a voice scarcely audible.

"Ah, you have no confidence in me," said he, "you wish to hide your emotions from me. And yet, madam, let me tell you that nothing but mutual and perfect confidence will help us through this hour, and through life. Come then, Josepha, I will set you the example. I will confide in you without reserve. Give me your hand and let us sit together on yonder divan."

* Hormayer. Reminiscences of Vienna. Vol. 5, p. 31.

She placed her trembling hand within his, and he led her to the sofa. A flood of deep and silent joy overwhelmed her heart, as alone in that royal apartment, which was hers, she sat by the side of this man whom she already loved with passion.

"First madam, let me ask your forgiveness for accepting a hand which was not freely bestowed by yourself, but was plaeed in mine by the inexorable policy of the destiny that rules kings. In obeying the commands of your brother you have not only married one whom you did not know, but perhaps you have been forced to stifle other wishes, other inclinations."

"No," cried she earnestly, "no. I have left nothing to regret, I have made no sacrifice, I——"

"Yes, you have sacrificed your freedom, the most precious boon that Heaven has bestowed man, to become the galley slave of policy and princely station. Poor Josepha, I pity you!"

"Do not pity me," said Josepha, tearfully, "pity yourself whose freedom has been sacrificed to me. You have given your honored hand to a woman whom you do not love, a woman who would be too happy——"

"Had she the power to free herself and me from this compulsory union," interrupted Joseph. "I believe you, for I read in your countenance that your heart is good and noble, and gladly would contribute to the happiness of your fellow creatures. But we must both bear the destiny which the hand of diplomacy has woven for us. The heads that wear the crowns, must also wear the thorns. But we will try to lighten the pain to one another. You have become my *wife* without love, and I, too, have become your *husband*——without love."

Josepha's head fell, she sighed, and murmured something which Joseph could not hear.

He went on: "I do not come to you with the vain pretensions of a man who fancies he has won an honorable woman's heart, because the priest has bid them love one another. I will not take advantage of the rights which either diplomacy or church have given me over you. Here at least there shall be no dissimulation; here we shall both be privileged to avow honestly and honorably, that we are not lovers. Then let us be friends. I come to you in all frankness, offering myself to be to you as a brother. Perhaps it may come to pass that I win your love; perchance your goodness and your worth may win my sad heart back again to life—the day may come when we shall be able to say that we love one another. Let us await this day, and soften the interval by mutual confidence and trust. And should it ever come to us Josepha, we will then seal with heartfelt embrace the bond which the church has made between us to-day. Take me, then, as brother and friend, and be to me a sister and companion. Will you Josepha?"

He reached out his hand, and looked at her with a glance of brotherly kindness. She gave him hers with a mournful smile, and her eyes sought the ground.

"Welcome, then, my friend and sister," said Joseph warmly. "Now for unreserved confidence. You promise me that, do you not?"

"I promise," gasped the poor girl.

—"And you will open your heart that I may read its every page?"

"I will—I promise to keep nothing from you."

—"I promise the same to you, and perhaps this plant of friendship may one day bear the flowers of love. You are inexperienced in the ways of court-life. You will need a pilot to steer you safe amid reefs and breakers. I will be this pilot to you, I will teach you what to suspect and what to avoid. Above all, never venture to have an opinion that does not coincide with that of the Empress. We are all a pious and well brought-up family who see with her eyes, and hear with her ears, and never dare confess that we possess sight or hearing in our own persons. Recollect that you, too, must fall in the line of puppets, and give up your senses to the Empress."

"But in the depths of my own heart, I trust that I may see with the eyes of the King of Rome," replied Josepha with a smile. "For if I am to learn from you I must surely dare to use my senses."

"Yes; but let no one suspect that you learn anything from me. In this court, we tread on flowers; and if one of our flowers chances to wither, we cover it over with a *pater noster*, and that makes all right again."

"But suppose it will not be made right," returned Josepha. "Suppose that prayer should fail?"

"Gracious heaven, what do I hear!" cried Joseph. "What profane doubt are you so bold as to utter! You do not belong to the stupid, pious band, who think that prayer cures all woes? Poor Josepha, let no one but me hear such heresy from your lips—Pray, pray; or make believe to pray; no one will ever ask you whether your heart is in it or not. And if any one seek to know, answer nothing. Pray on, and mistrust every one."

"What! Mistrust the generous friend whom kind Providence has given to me this day!" cried Josepha with feeling. "That I can never do. You have encouraged me to confide in you, and even had you not done so, you would have won my confidence, unsought."

"I am glad that you think so," returned Joseph. "Let us begin at once then. Have you a wish that I have it in my power to gratify? Or have you anything in your heart which you will confide to me as a proof of your faith in my friendship?"

Josepha started, and her cheeks grew white with fear. This question awakened her from her short dream of hope and happiness, and she remembered that she *had* a secret which it was her duty to reveal to her husband. She looked furtively at him. Perhaps he had heard something, and this was a trial of her truth! But no! His face was tranquil and unsuspecting; there was nothing searching in the glance of his deep blue eyes.

No! he knew nothing, and wherefore cloud the brightness of the hour with a confession which might crush its promise of future bliss!

"Well," said Joseph kindly. "Is there nothing on your heart that you would confide to your friend?"

"No," at last said Josepha, resolutely. "My life has been dull and uneventful. It is only to-day that I begin to live; the sun of hope is dawning upon my heart; I feel as if I might——"

"Hark!" said Joseph, "I think I hear some one coming. Yes; there is surely a light tap at the door."

The King rose hastily and crossed the room towards the little side-door.

"Is any one there?" asked he in a loud tone of displeasure.

"Yes, your Majesty," whispered a trembling voice, "and I pray you earnestly to open the door."

"It is my valet, Anselmo," said Joseph to the Princess, while he withdrew the bolt.

It was Anselmo, in truth, who, with mysterious mien, beckoned to his lord to come out.

"Will your Majesty condescend to step into the corridor, that I may deliver the message with which I am entrusted?" said the valet.

—"Is it so weighty, Anselmo, that it cannot lie upon your conscience until morning?"

—"Not one moment can I defer it, your Majesty, for I was told that your Majesty's well-being and health depended upon my speed."

The King stepped outside and closed the door. "Who sent you hither, Anselmo?" asked he.

—"I do not know, sire, but I suspect. It was a female form enveloped in a long black cloak with a hood, which concealed her face. She came from the gallery which leads to the apartments of their imperial highnesses, your Majesty's sisters, and entered your Majesty's own cabinet, which I had left open while I was lighting your Majesty hither."

"And what said she?" asked the King impatiently.

—"She asked if your Majesty had gone into the Queen's apartments. When I told her that you had, she held out this note and said, 'speed to the King, and as you value his health and welfare, give him this note at once.' She disappeared, and here, your Majesty, is the note."

The King took the paper, which by the dim light of the corridor he could not read.

"And who do you think is the mysterious lady, Anselmo?" asked he.

—"Sire, I do not know. Perhaps your Majesty will recognise the handwriting."

"I wish to know, Anselmo, who you think was hidden under that cloak?"

—"Well then, your Majesty," said Anselmo, in a whisper scarcely audible, "I think it was the Archduchess Christine."

"I suspected as much," said the King to himself. "It is some intrigue of hers against the Princess Josepha, whom she hates because I selected

her in preference to the sister of Christine's lover, the Elector of Saxony."*

Anselmo perhaps understood a few words of this soliloquy, for he continued, "A courier arrived from Saxony, and I was told by my sister, the tire-woman of her Highness, that the Archduchess Christine had received a packet of letters."

"Very well, Anselmo," said the King. "If to-morrow you should be asked whether you delivered the note, say that I tore it up without opening it. Do you hear?"

Dismissing the valet with a wave of the hand, he returned to the Princess.

—"Pardon me," said he, "for leaving you, and allow me in your presence to read a note which has just been mysteriously delivered into my hands. I wish to give you a proof of my confidence, by entrusting you at once with my secrets."

So saying, he approached the marble centre-table, and opened the letter.

What was it that blanched Josepha's cheek and made her tremble, as Joseph smiled and looked at her? Why did she stare at him while he read, and why did her heart stand still with fright, as she saw his expression change.

He seemed shocked at the contents of the note, and when he raised his eyes and their glance met that of Josepha, she saw them filled with aversion and scorn.

"Madam," said he, and his voice had grown harsh, "Madam, I asked you in good faith whether you had anything to confide to my honor. I expressed a desire to win your confidence. You answered that you had nothing to tell. Once more I ask have you anything to say. The more humiliating the confession, the more will I appreciate your candor. Speak therefore."

Josepha answered not a word. Her teeth chattered so painfully that she could not articulate; she trembled so violently that she had to grasp the back of an arm-chair for support.

Joseph saw this, and he laughed a hoarse and contemptuous laugh. She did not ask him why he sneered. She threw herself at his feet, and raised her arms imploringly.

"Mercy," cried the unhappy woman, "mercy?"

He laughed again, and held the paper before her eyes.

"Read, madam, read," said he rudely.

"I cannot," sobbed she. "I will not read what has been written of me. I will tell you myself all that I know. I will confide my secret to you, I will indeed."

"You have nothing to confide, madam," cried Joseph. "With a sin-

*The Princess Christine was in love with the Elector of Saxony; but the Emperor Francis was opposed to the marriage. Christine used all her influence to bring about a marriage between her brother and Mary Kunigunde, the sister of her lover, hoping thereby to pave the way for her own union with the handsome Albert. Failing in this, she became the bitter enemy of the unhappy woman to whom Joseph had given the preference.

cere and holy desire to perform my duty, I asked for your friendship and your confidence. I cast them both back, for you have allowed the hour of trust to go by! Now it is too late! You are accused. Do not look to me for protection; vindicate yourself if you can. Read this letter, and tell me if the writer speaks the truth."

Josepha still knelt at his feet; but her arms had fallen in despair. She knew that she had nothing more to hope from her husband; she felt that she was about to be sentenced to a life of utter misery.

"You will not read," said Joseph, as, unnoticed, Josepha lay at his feet. "If so, I must read the letter for you, myself. It warns me not to come too near to your royal person—It——"

"I will spare you, sire," exclaimed she, as with the energy of despair, she rose to her feet. "You will not let me speak, you shall *see* for yourself!"

With a frantic gesture, she tore her dress from her neck and shoulders, and heedless that she stood with arms and bosom exposed, she let it fall to the floor, and bowed her head as if to receive the stroke of the headsman's axe.

"Know my secret," said she, as she folded her hands and stood before her outraged husband. "And now hear me. A few months ago, I had a beloved brother, whom I loved the more that he was unfortunate and afflicted. From his childhood he had suffered from a malady which his physicians called leprosy. The very servants deserted him, for it was said that the disease was contagious. I loved my brother with devotion; I went to him, and nursed him until he died. God shielded me, for I did not take the malady. But on my neck and back there came dark spots which, although they are painful, are not contagious. My physicians told me that my strong constitution had rejected the leprosy, and these spots were a regeneration of my skin, which would soon disappear. This sire, is my fatal secret, and now—judge me. It is in your power to make me the happiest of mortals by granting me a generous pardon: but I will not complain if you condemn and despise me."

"Complain if you choose, it is indifferent to me," cried Joseph with a hoarse laugh. "Never in this world shall you be my wife. If the hateful tie that binds me to you cannot be unloosed, I will make you answerable for every day of disgust and misery that I am forced to pass under the same roof with you. If I am cursed before the world with the name of your husband, I will punish you in secret with my everlasting hate."

As if stricken by lightning, she fell to the floor. Her fallen dress exposed to view her beautiful form. Her arms, which were folded above her head, were round and white as those of a Greek statue; and as she lay with her full, graceful shoulders bared almost to the waist, she looked like Niobe just stricken by the wrath of a god.

Joseph was unmindful of this. He had no sympathy with the noble sacrifice which her loving heart had offered to a dying brother. He saw

neither her youth nor her grace; he saw only those dark spots upon her back, and he shuddered as she raised her arm to clasp his feet.

"Do not touch me," exclaimed he, starting back. "Your touch is pollution. We are forever divorced. To-day the priest joined our hands together, but to-night I part them never more to meet. Farewell."

And hurling at her prostrate form the letter which had betrayed her, he turned and left the room.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN UNHAPPY MARRIAGE.

It was the morning after the wedding. Maria Theresa had just completed her toilet, and was smiling at her own beautiful image reflected in the looking glass. She looked every inch an Empress in her rich crimson velvet dress, with its long and graceful train, and its border of ermine. Her superb blond hair had been exquisitely dressed by her little favorite, Charlotte Von Hieronymus. It was sprinkled with gold powder, and the coiffure was heightened by a little cap of crimson velvet, attached to the hair by arrows of gold set with costly brilliants. The complexion of the Empress was so lovely that she never wore rouge; and surely such eyes as hers needed none of the "adulterers of art" to heighten their brilliancy or beauty. Although she was in her forty-ninth year, and had given birth to sixteen children, Maria Theresa was still beautiful; not only youthful in appearance but youthful in heart, and in the strength and greatness of her intellect. She loved the Emperor as fondly as she had done twenty-eight years before, and each of her ten living children was as dear to her maternal heart as if each had been an only child.

To-day she had arrayed herself with unusual magnificence, to celebrate the entry of the newly married couple into Vienna. The imperial cortege was to stop at the Cathedral of St. Stephen's, there to witness the bridals of twenty-five young couples, all of whom the Empress had dowered in honor of her son's second marriage.

"Surely the prayers of these fifty lovers will bring happiness upon the heads of my son and his wife," said the Empress to herself. "They need prayers indeed, for poor Josepha is very unlike our peerless Isabella, and I fear she will not be attractive enough to cause the dead to be forgotten. Still, she seems mild and kind-hearted, and I have already read in her eyes that she is in love with Joseph. I hope this will lead him to love her in return. Sometimes a man will love a woman through pity, afterwards through habit."

A nervous and impatient knock at her door, interrupted the current of the Empress's thoughts; the door was flung open without further ceremony and the King of Rome entered the room. He was pale and agitated, and to his mother's affectionate welcome he replied by a deep inclination of the head.

The Empress perceived at once that something was wrong, and her heart beat rapidly. "My dear boy," said she, "you do not wear a holiday face, and your young bride——"

"I have no bride," interrupted Joseph angrily. "I have come to beg of your Majesty to discontinue these rejoicings, or at least to excuse *one* from appearing in public at the side of the Princess of Bavaria. She is not my wife, nor ever shall be!"

"What means this?" stammered the Empress, bewildered.

"It means that my marriage is null and void; and that no human power shall force me to be husband of a creature tainted with leprosy."

The Empress uttered a cry of horror. "My son, my son," exclaimed she, "what unheard-of charge is this?"

—"A charge which is a miserable truth, your Majesty. Do you not remember to have heard that the natural son of Carl of Bavaria had died not long ago of leprosy which he had contracted during a journey to the East? Well, his tender and self-sacrificing half-sister volunteered to nurse him, and was with him until he died. Your Majesty, no doubt, will look upon this as something very fine and christian-like. I, on the contrary, would have found it at least more honorable if the Princess had advised us of the legacy she wears upon her back."

"Woe to her and to the house of Bavaria," cried the Empress indignantly, "if you speak the truth, my son!"

—"If your Majesty will send Van Swieten to her, you may convince yourself of the fact."

A few moments later, Van Swieten entered the room. His fame was European; he was well known as a man of great skill and science; added to this, his noble frankness and high moral worth had greatly endeared him to the imperial family. Maria Theresa went hastily forward to meet him.

"Van Swieten," said she, with a voice trembling from agitation, "you have been our friend in many an hour of sorrow, and many a secret of the house of Hapsburg has been faithfully buried in your loyal heart. Help me again, and above all let it be in secresy. The King of Rome says fearful things of his wife. I will not believe them until I hear your verdict. Go at once, I implore you, to the Princess, and command her, in my name, to declare her malady."

—"But, your Majesty, she has not called for my advice," replied Van Swieten with surprise.

"Then she must take it unasked," said the Empress. "The Princess will receive you, and you will know how to win her to reveal her condition. As soon as you leave her, return to me."

Van Swieten bowed and left the room: the Empress and her son remained together. Neither spoke a word. The King of Rome stood in the embrasure of a window, looking sullenly up at the sky. The Empress walked hurriedly to and fro, careless that her violent motions were filling her dress with the gold powder that fell from her head like little showers of stars.

"Christina was right to warn me," said she, after a long pause. "I should never have consented to this alliance with the daughter of my enemy. It is of no use to patch up old enmities. Carl was humbled and defeated by me, and now comes this Josepha to revenge her father's losses and to bring sorrow to my child. Oh, my son, why did you not follow my counsel, and marry the Princess of Saxony! But it is useless to reproach you. The evil is done; let us consult together how best we may bear it."

"Not at all," cried Joseph. "We must consult how we may soonest cast it away from us. Your Majesty will never require of me the sacrifice of remaining bound to that woman. I obeyed your behest, and in spite of my disinclination to a second marriage, I bent my will before the necessities of diplomacy and the command of my Sovereign. But we are now on a ground where the duty of a subject ends, and the honor of a man stands pre-eminent. I never will consent to be the husband of this woman whose person is disgusting to me. Far above all claims of political expediency, I hold my rights as a man."

"And you hold them with unbecoming language," replied the Empress, who did not at all relish the tone of the King of Rome. "And let me tell you, my royal son, that an upright and honorable prince thinks less of his rights as a man than of his duties as a ruler; he strives while a prince to be a man; and while a man to sacrifice his inclinations to the calls of a princely station."

"But not his personal honor," cried Joseph. "Your Majesty's code is that of Machiavelli, who counsels a prince never to let his feelings as a man interfere with his policy as a ruler."

The Empress was about to make an angry rejoinder to this remark, when the door opened and Van Swieten re-appeared.

"Ah!" said the Empress, "did you see her, Van Swieten?"

"Yes, your Majesty," replied Van Swieten with emphasis, "I have seen the Queen of Rome."

"Do you mean to say that she has no disease that unfits her to be the wife of the King of Rome?" asked Maria Theresa.

"Her only malady is a cutaneous one, which in a short time will be completely cured. Some persons are so happily organized that they throw off disease, even when in contact with it. The Princess possesses this sound and healthy organization. The poison which she inhaled by her brother's bedside has settled upon her skin in a harmless eruption; her constitution is untouched. In a few weeks all trace of it will disappear, and nothing will remain to remind us of her noble disregard of self, save the memory of her heroism and magnanimity. For indeed,

your Majesty, it is easier to confront death on the battle-field than to face it in the pestiferous atmosphere of a sick-room."

Maria Theresa turned with a radiant smile towards her son. "You see, my son," said she, "that you have done injustice to your noble wife. Go, then, and entreat her forgiveness."

"No, your Majesty," said a soft voice behind them, "it is for me to implore my husband's forgiveness."

The Empress turned and beheld her daughter-in-law, splendidly attired, but pale and wan with unmistakable grief."

"Josepha, how came you hither?" asked she.

"I followed Herr Van Swieten," replied Josepha. "He told me that your Majesty and the King of Rome were here, awaiting his verdict, and I judged from his manner that it would be in my favor. Therefore I came, and having heard his flattering words, which I do not deserve, I am here to inculpate myself. No, Herr Van Swieten, if there were any merit in suffering for a brother whom I dearly loved, it would all be effaced by the wrong which I have done to the King of Rome. I feel that I was guilty in not confiding my malady to your Majesty, and I bow my head before the justice of my punishment, severe though it may be."

"It shall not be severe, my daughter," said the Empress, whose kind heart was completely overcome by Josepha's humility, "I for my part forgive you; you are already sufficiently punished."

"I thank your Majesty," returned Josepha, kissing her outstretched hand. "It is easy for one so magnanimous, to pardon the guilty; but my husband, will he also forgive me?"

She turned her pale and imploring face towards Joseph, who, with his arms crossed, looked scornfully back.

"No," said she sadly, "No. To obtain his forgiveness, I must make a full confession of my fault."

She approached the window, but her head was cast down so that she did not see with what a look of hate Joseph beheld her advancing towards him.

"To obtain your pardon, sire," said she, "I must say why I deceived you. It was because I preferred perjury to the loss of my earthly happiness—the unspeakable happiness of being your wife. I was afraid of losing my treasure. For I love you beyond all power of expression; from the first moment of our meeting, I have loved you, and this love which, thanks to Almighty God, I have a right to avow before the world—this love it was that misled me. Oh, my husband, have mercy, and forgive the fault that was born of my excessive love for you. A whole life of love and obedience shall atone for my sin. Forgive me, forgive me for the sake of my love!"

And overwhelmed by her grief, the Princess knelt at the feet of her husband, and raised her hands in supplication for pardon.

The Empress looked on with sympathetic heart and tearful eyes; she expected at every moment to see Joseph raise up his wife, and press

her to his heart for her touching avowal of love. She expected to hear *him* implore forgiveness; but she was sadly mistaken.

Joseph stood immovable, his eyes flashing scorn and fury at the kneeling Princess before him.

This outraged all the pride of Maria Theresa's womanhood. Hastily approaching Josepha, and stretching her arms towards her, she said, "If Joseph has no mercy in his obdurate heart, I at least will not witness such humiliation on the part of his wife. Rise, my daughter, and take shelter under my love; I will not suffer you to be oppressed—not even by my own son."

She would have raised Josepha, but the poor girl waved her gently back. "No, dear lady," said she sobbing, "let me remain until he forgives me."

"Let her remain, your Majesty," cried Joseph with a burst of wrath, "she is in her proper place. But if she means to kneel until she has obtained my forgiveness, let her kneel throughout all eternity. I consented to this marriage for expediency's sake, and I would have done my best to make the burthen as light for us both as lay in my power. Your Majesty knows how she has deceived me; you have heard her pitiful lie with its pitiful excuse. I might have forgiven her for marrying me, with her disgusting disease, but for being a liar—never!"

"Enough," cried the Empress, as much excited by her son's obduracy as by Josepha's touching confession. "This scene must end, and so help me God, it shall never be enacted a second time! You are bound to one another for life, and together you shall remain. Each mortal has his weight of grief to bear. Bear yours in silence, and bear it as becomes your dignity and station. Have the manliness to smile before the world, my son, as beseems a prince who has more regard for his princely duties than for his rights as a man to happiness."

And with that imposing grandeur which Maria Theresa knew so well how to assume, she continued: "Rise, Queen of Rome, and never again forget either your own royal station, or the dignity of your womanhood. Give her your hand, my son, if you will not love, you must at least honor and respect your wife. The bells of Vienna even now are pealing your welcome; the people await their Sovereigns, and it does not become us to keep them in suspense on such an occasion as this."

Without looking back to see the effect of her words, the Empress left the room, and called to her pages to fling wide the palace-doors.

"Apprize the court that we are ready to move," said she in a commanding voice, "and let the carriages approach."

The pages threw open the wide-doors; the Emperor and the Archduchesses entered, and following them came the courtiers and ladies of the imperial household in all the splendor of flashing jewels and costly robes.

The Empress advanced to meet them with unruffled serenity. Not once were her eyes cast behind towards the unhappy couple, whom she knew perfectly well had yielded to the force of circumstances, and were

already throwing the veil of etiquette and courtly decorum over their bleeding hearts.

An hour later, the imperial family made its entry into Vienna. In her gilded state-carriage sat the proud and beautiful Empress, and at her side was the pale Queen of Rome. On either side of the carriage rode the two husbands, the Emperor Francis of Lorraine and the King of Rome. The people once more shouted for joy, wishing long life to the imperial pair, and joy to the newly-married couple. From one side to another, the Empress and the Queen bowed and smiled to all, while the King of Rome thanked the enraptured Viennese for their welcome. On this day appeared a new color in Vienna, so called in honor of Joseph's deep blue eyes; it was called "imperial blue."

And the bells chimed, the cannon roared; while in the Cathedral the fifty lovers awaited the King and Queen of Rome, whose marriage filled all hearts with joy, and seemed to realize every dream of happiness on earth!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A STATESMAN'S HOURS OF DALLIANCE.

"Are there many people in the ante-room?" asked Prince Kaunitz of the States-Referendarius, Baron Binder.

"Yes, your Highness," returned Binder, "all waiting impatiently for your appearance."

"Let them wait, the stupid strutting representatives of littleness! The more insignificant the petty masters, the more conceited are the petty ambassadors. I have no time to see them to-day. We are at peace with the whole world, and our only diplomacy regards marrying, and giving in marriage."

"So far you have nothing to boast of in that line," said Binder, laughing. "There are all sorts of stories afloat about the unhappy marriage of the King of Rome. Some go so far as to say that he shows his dislike in public."

—"Bah! what matters it whether a prince is a happy husband or not? When a king sets up pretensions to conjugal felicity, he is either an egotist or a fool. If the King of Rome cannot love his good, stupid, ugly wife, he can least make love to the dowry she brings him. A goodly inheritance comes with her, what matters it, if a woman be thrown in the bargain?"

—"Ah, Prince, a woman is sometimes harder to conquer than a pro-

vince, and I think the King of Rome would much rather have won his Bavaria with the sword."

"Because he is a blockhead full of sublime nonsense, who mistakes his love of novelty for wisdom. He would rather break his head against a wall, this obstinate King of Rome, while I crept safely through a mouse-hole. Walls are not so easily battered down as he supposes, but mouse-holes abound every where, as this sapient King will find out some of these days. It was much easier for us to creep into Bavaria with the help of the lovely Josepha, than to flourish our sword in her brother's face. He has not long to live, and we will come peacefully in possession of his fair province."

—"Or rather, the war for its possession will be waged in the King's private apartments."

"On that silly subject again," exclaimed Kaunitz impatiently. "If your heart bleeds so freely for the sentimental sorrows of the King of Rome, you will have another opportunity for your sensibilities in the marriage of his brother Leopold; for I assure you that his intended is not one whit handsomer or more intelligent than Josepha of Bavaria. So you see that the King of Rome will not be apt to envy his brother."

—"Your Highness is to escort the Infanta of Spain to Inspruck?"

—"Not I, indeed; that honor I do not confer upon insignificant princesses who are nothing but grand-duchesses elect. I go to Inspruck one day sooner than the imperial family, to inspect the preparations for the festivities, and then I shall go as far as the gates of Inspruck—no farther, to receive Donna Maria Louisa."

"That is the reason why your levee is so crowded to day," replied Binder laughing. "The foreign ministers wish to take leave of their master. And now they have waited long enough for you, Prince."

"I shall not see one of them. Austria, thanks to me, is now so powerful, that I need give myself no concern to soothe the anger of a dozen petty envoys, and to-day there are none other in the ante-room."

"The Dutch and Saxon Ministers," urged Binder.

"Little nobodies," said Kaunitz with a shrug. "I will not see them."

"But, indeed, you presume too much upon their littleness. Only yesterday you invited the Hessian Ambassador to dine, and then you sat down to table without him."

—"He was three minutes behind the time. And do you imagine that Prince Kaunitz waits for a poor little Hessian Envoy? I did it on purpose to teach him punctuality."

Here the Prince rang a bell, and ordered a page to dismiss the gentlemen in the ante-room.*

Baron Binder looked after the page, and shook his head. Kaunitz smiled. "Enough of ambassadors for to-day. The ship of Austria lies proudly and safely in the haven of her own greatness; and would you deprive the pilot of a few hours of relaxation? I will have to take the

* Report of the Prussian Ambassador. Baron Furst to Frederick II.

helm again to-morrow, when I go to Inspruck, and do you grumble if for a few hours I enjoy life to-day?"

"I was not aware that dismissing one's visitors was a way to enjoy life," said Binder.

—"I do not mean that, you old pedant. Do you hear that tapping at the door?"

—"Yes, I hear it. It is from the little private door that leads to the corridor."

—"Well, that corridor, as you know, leads to a side entrance of the palace, and if you look out of the window you will see there the equipage of the handsomest, frailest, and most fascinating actress in all Vienna; the equipage of the divine Foliazza. Hear how the knocking grows louder. My charmer becomes impatient?"

"Allow me to retire, then," said Binder, "and leave the field to the prima donna." As he left the room, he muttered, "If Kaunitz were not a great statesman, he would be a ridiculous old fop!"

Kaunitz listened with perfect unconcern to the repeated knocking of his charmer until Binder was out of sight, then he walked up to the looking-glass, smoothed his locks, straightened his ruffles, and drew the bolt of the door. The beautiful Foliazza, in a coquettish and most becoming morning costume, radiant with smiles and beauty, entered the room.

Kaunitz greeted her coldly, and answered her rapturous salutations by a faint nod.

"Your impatience is very annoying, Olympia," said he, "you beat upon my door like a drum-major."

"Your Highness, it is the impatience of a longing heart," said the singer. "Do you know that it seems to me a thousand years since last I was allowed to enter these gates of Paradise! For eight days, I have been plunged in deepest sorrow, watching your carriage as it passed by my house, snatching every note from my footman's hands in the hope that it might be one from you—hoping in vain, and at last yielding myself up to full despair."

"You express yourself warmly," said Kaunitz, unmoved.

"Yes, indeed; for a feeling heart always finds strong expressions," answered the Signora, showing a row of teeth between her rosy lips that looked like precious pearls. "And now my adored reprobate, why have you banished me from your presence for an eternity? Which of my two enemies have prevailed against me, politics or the Countess Clary? Justify yourself, unkind, but beloved Prince; say that you have not deceived me, for my heart yearns to forgive you."

She came very, very near, and with her bewitching smiles, looked up into Kaunitz's face.

Kaunitz bent to receive the caress, and laid his hand fondly upon her raven-black hair. "Is it true that you have longed for me—very true indeed?" said he.

"I never knew how dear you were to me until I had endured the in-

tolerable pangs of your absence," replied Foliazza, leaning her head upon the Prince's shoulder.

—"You love me then, Olympia? Tell me dearest, tell me truly."

"Unjust! you ask me such a question!" cried the Signora, putting her arms around the Prince's neck.

"If I love you? Do you not feel it in every pulsation of my heart, do you not read it in every glance of my eyes? Can you not *feel* that my only thought is of you—my only life, your love?"

"I am really glad to hear it," said Kaunitz, with statue-like tranquility. "And now I will tell you why I have not sent for you this past week. It was that I might not interrupt your tender interviews with Count Palffy, nor frighten away the poor enamored fool from the snares you were laying for him."

The Signora looked perfectly astounded. "But surely," stammered she, "your Highness does not believe——"

—"Oh, no. I believe nothing; I know that the Olympia who loves me so passionately, has been for two days the fair friend of the young, rich and prodigal Count Palffy."

Here the Signora laughed outright. "But your Highness, if you knew this, why did you not stop me in my protestations, and tell me so?"

"I only wanted to see whether, really, you were a finished actress. I congratulate you, Olympia; I could not have done it better myself."

"Prince," said the Signora, seriously, "I learned the whole of this scene from yourself; and in my relations with you I have followed the example you gave me. While you swore eternal love to me, you were making declarations to the Countess Clary. Oh, my lord, I have suffered at your hands, and the whole world sympathises with my disappointment. The whole world knows of your double dealings with women, and calls you a heartless young libertine."

"Does it?" cried Kaunitz, for a moment forgetting his coldness, and showing his satisfaction in his face. "Does it indeed call me a heartless young libertine?"

"Yes," replied the Signora, who seemed not to see his gratification. "And when people see a man who is adored by women, and is false to them all, they say: 'He is a little Kaunitz.'"

When the Signora said this, Kaunitz did what he had not done for years, he broke out into a laugh, repeating triumphantly, "A little Kaunitz." "But mark you," continued he, "other libertines are called *little* Kaunitzes, and I alone am the *great* Kaunitz."

"True," sighed the Signora, "and this great Kaunitz it is, who has abandoned me. While I worshipped the air he breathed, he sat at the feet of the Countess Clary, repeating to her the self-same protestations with which an hour before he had intoxicated my senses. Oh, when I heard this, jealousy and despair took possession of my soul. I was resolved to be revenged, and so I permitted the advances of Count Palffy; ah! while I endured his presence, I felt that my heart was wholly and forever yours! Oh, my adored, my great Kaunitz, say that you love

me, and at your feet I throw all the lesser Kaunitzes in token of my fealty."

The Signora would have flung her arms around him, but Kaunitz, with a commanding gesture, waved her off.

"Very well done, Olympia," said he, nodding his head. "You are as accomplished as you are beautiful; and well I understand how it is that you infatuate with your charms all manner of little Kaunitzes. But now listen to Kaunitz the great. I not only allow, but order you to continue your intrigue with Count Palffy. Take everything he offers; wring his purse dry; and the sooner you ruin him the better."

"That means that I importune you with my love. Farewell, Prince, and may you never repent of your cruelty to poor Olympia."

"Stay," said Kaunitz, cooly. "I have not done with you. Continue your amours with the Hungarian, and love him as much as you choose, provided——"

"Provided," echoed the singer anxiously, as Kaunitz paused.

—"Provided you affect before the world to be still my mistress."

"Oh, my beloved Prince," cried Foliazza, "you will not cast me off!" and in spite of his disinclination, she folded Kaunitz to her heart.

The Prince struggled to get free. "You have disarranged my whole dress," said he, peevishly. "On account of your folly, I shall have to make my toilet again. Hear me, and let me alone."

"I said that you would *affect* to be my mistress. To this end you will drive as usual to the side-door by which you have been accustomed to enter the palace, and while your carriage stands there for one hour, you shall be treated to a costly breakfast in my little boudoir, every morning."

—"By your side, my own Prince?"

—"By yourself, my own Olympia. I have not time to devote an hour to you every day. Your carriage shall stand at my door in the morning. Every evening, mine will be for an hour before yours, and while it remains there I forbid you to be at home to any one whatsoever."

"I shall think of nothing but you until that hour," said the Signora, fondly.

"*Vraiment*, you are very presuming to suppose that I will trouble myself to come in the carriage," replied Kaunitz, contemptuously. "It is enough that the coach being there, the world will suppose that I am there also. A man of fashion must have the name of possessing a mistress; but a statesman cannot waste his valuable time on women. You are my mistress, *ostensibly*, and therefore I give you a year's salary of four thousand guilders."

"You are an angel—a god!" cried La Foliazza, this time with genuine rapture. "You come upon one like Jupiter, in a shower of gold."

"Yes, but I have no wish to fall into the embraces of my Danæ. Now hear my last words. If you ever dare let it transpire that you are not really my mistress, I will punish you severely. I will not only stop

your salary, but I will cite you before the committee of morals, and you will be forced into a marriage with somebody."

The singer shuddered and drew back. "Let me go at once into my boudoir. Is my breakfast ready?"

—"No—Your morning visits there begin to-morrow. Now go home to Count Palffy, and do not forget our contract."

"I will not forget it, Prince," replied the Signora smiling. I await your coach this evening. You may kiss me if you choose." She bent her head to his, and held out her delicate cheek, fresh as a rose.

"Simpleton," said he, slightly tapping her beautiful mouth, "do you suppose that the great Kaunitz would kiss any lips but those, which, like the sensitive Mimosa, shrink from the touch of man! Go away. Count Palffy will feel honored to reap the kisses I have left."

He gave her his hand, and looked after her, as with light and graceful carriage, she left the room.

"She is surpassingly beautiful," said Kaunitz to himself. "Every one envies me; but each one thinks it quite a matter of course that the loveliest woman in Vienna should be glad to be my mistress. Ah! two o'clock. My guests await me. But before I go, I must bring down the Countess Clary from the airy heaven which she has built for herself."

He rang, and a page appeared; for from the time he became a Prince, Kaunitz introduced four pages in his household, and kept open table daily, for twelve persons.

"Tell the Countess Clary," said he, "that I will come in a few moments to conduct her to the dining-room. Then, await me in my powder-room."

CHAPTER XXIX.

PRINCE KAUNITZ AND RITTER GLUCK.

PRINCE KAUNITZ had finished his promenade in the powder-room, and having ascertained, by means of his mirror, that his perruque was in order, he betook himself to the apartments of the Countess Clary, to conduct her to table.

The young Countess, Kaunitz's niece and a widow scarcely thirty years of age, flew to greet her uncle, radiant with smiles and happiness.

"What an unexpected honor you confer upon me, my dear uncle," said she with her sweet low voice. "Coming yourself to conduct me to the table! How I thank you for preparing me a triumph which every woman in Vienna will envy me."

—"I came with no intention whatever of preparing you a triumph or a pleasure. I came solely because I wish to have a few words with you before we go in to dinner."

"I am all ears, your Highness," said the Countess smiling.

Kaunitz looked at his young and lovely niece with uncommon scrutiny. "You have been crying," said he, after a pause.

"No, indeed," said she, blushing.

—"Do you suppose that you can deceive me? I repeat it, you have been crying. Will you presume to contradict me?"

—"No, dear uucle, I will not."

"And wherefore? No prevarication; I must know."

The young Countess raised her soft blue eyes to the face of the haughty Prince. "I will tell the truth," said she again blushing. "I was crying because La Foliazza was so long with you to-day."

"Jealous, too!" said Kaunitz with a sneer. "And, pray, who ever gave to *you* the right of being jealous of me?"

The Countess said nothing, but her eyes filled with tears.

"Allow me to discuss this matter with you. I came for this purpose. Our relations must be distinctly understood, if they are to last. You must have the goodness to remember their origin. When you were left a widow, you turned to me, as your nearest relative, for assistance. You were unprotected, and your husband had left you nothing. I gave you my protection not because I was in any way pleased with you, but because you were my sister's child. I invited you hither to do the honors of my house, to give orders to the cooks and steward, to overlook my household arrangements, and to receive my guests in a manner worthy of their host. To ensure you the appearance and consideration due to you as my niece and as the lady of my house, I gave you a remuneration of two thousand guilders a year. Were not these my terms?"

"Yes, your Highness, they were. They filled me with gratitude and joy; and never will I forget your kindness."

"It seems, however, that you do forget it," replied the heartless uncle. "How does it happen that you take the liberty of being unhappy because La Foliazza is in my room? What business is it of yours, whom I receive or entertain? Have I ever given you the slightest hope that from my niece I would ever raise you to the eminence of being my wife?"

"Never, never, dear uncle," said the Countess, scarlet with shame. "You have never been otherwise to me than my generous benefactor."

"Then oblige me by silencing the absurd rumors that may have led you into the delusion of supposing that I ever intended to make of you a princess. I wish you to know that I have no idea of marrying again; and if ever I should form another matrimonial alliance, it will either be with an imperial or a royal princess. Will you be so good as to remember this and to act accordingly."

"Certainly," replied the Countess, her eyes filling with tears. "I assure your Highness that I have never been so presuming as to regard you otherwise than as my kinsman and guardian. My feelings of ad-

miration for you are indeed enthusiastic; but I have never felt anything towards you but the attachment of a daughter."

"Pray do not trouble yourself to feel anything at all on my account," said Kaunitz ill-humoredly. "I am not under the necessity of playing the part of a tender father towards you; therefore, dry up the tears you took the trouble to shed on La Foliazza's account. But enough of this folly. I hope that we understand one another and that I will not have to repeat this conversation. Be so good as to take my arm. We will go forward to meet our guests."

The young Countess took the arm of the Prince, and they entered the drawing-room. The guests had long been assembled there, but it never occurred to Kaunitz to make any apology for his late appearance. Nevertheless, his guests were all noble; some of them representatives of princely houses or powerful kingdoms. Kaunitz, however, was not only the all-powerful Minister of Maria Theresa; it was well known that his slender, diamond-studded fingers directed the policy of all Europe. No one in that room had the courage to resent his rudeness. All seemed to feel honored as he walked haughtily forward with a slight inclination of his head to the many, and a condescending smile to the few whom it pleased him to distinguish by his notice.*

Prince Kaunitz did not choose to perceive that several distinguished ambassadors, as well as a German Prince, himself a reigning sovereign, were present as his guests. He passed them all by, to accost a small graceful man, who seated in a recess had received no further attention from the high-born company than a condescending nod. Kaunitz gave him his hand, and welcomed him audibly. The honored guest was Noverre, the inventor of the Ballet as it is performed to-day on the stage. Noverre blushed with pleasure at the reception given him, while the other guests scarcely concealed their chagrin.

Just then, the folding-doors were thrown wide open, and the steward announced in a loud voice that the table of his Lord, the Prince, was served. The company rose, and the ladies looked to see which of them was to have the honor of being conducted to the table by the host. Kaunitz feigned neither to see nor to hear. He continued his conversation with Noverre, and when he had quite done, he sauntered carelessly up to his other guests. Suddenly he paused, and his eyes wandered from one to another with a searching glance.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed he, "of what a rudeness we were about to be guilty! I had invited Ritter Gluck to meet us to-day, and he has not yet arrived. It shall not be said of me that I was ever wanting in respect to genius as transcendant as his. I must beg of my distinguished guests to await his arrival before going to dinner."†

Hereupon he resumed his conversation with Neverre. The other guests were indignant; for they all felt the insult. The nobles disapproved altogether of the fashion, which had been introduced by Kaunitz,

* Wraxall Memoirs, vol. 1, page 380.
† Swinburne, vol. 1, page 80.

of mingling artists and *savans* of no birth with the aristocracy of Vienna; and the ambassadors felt it as a personal injury, that Kaunitz, who yesterday had refused to wait for them, to-day called upon them to wait for a musician.

Kaunitz pretended not to see the displeasure which, nevertheless, his guests were at no great pains to conceal, and he went on talking in an animated strain with Noverre. The poor dancer meanwhile gave short and embarrassed answers. He had remarked the discontent of the company, and the Prince's over-politeness oppressed him; the more so that he perceived one of the lords approaching gradually with the intention of addressing the Prince. With the deepest respect, the dancer attempted to withdraw; but the merciless Kaunitz caught him by one of the buttons of his velvet coat, and held him fast.

"Do not stir," said the Prince. "I see the Duke quite as well as you do; but he is a liar and a braggart; I dislike him, and he shall not speak with me. Tell me something about the new ballet that you are arranging for the Emperor's festival. I hear that Gluck has composed the music. But hush! Here comes the Maestro."

Kaunitz walked rapidly forward and met Gluck in the middle of the room. They greeted one another cordially, but proudly, as *two* princes might have done. Around them stood the other guests, frowning to see these two men, both so proud, so conscious of greatness, scarcely seeming aware that others besides themselves were present. Gluck was in full court-dress; at his side, a sword; on his breast, the brilliant order of the Pope. He received with unembarrassed courtesy the greeting of the Prince, and made no apology for his tardy appearance.

"Thank heaven, you have come at last!" exclaimed Kaunitz in an audible voice. "I was afraid that the gods, angels, and spirits, who are the daily associates of the great Maestro, would deprive us poor mortals of the honor of dining with the favorite of the Muses and the Graces."

"The Gods, the Muses, and the Graces, are the associates of Prince Kaunitz," returned Gluck. "If they are not to be found in their temples, we may be sure that they have taken refuge here."

Kaunitz, who never vouchsafed a civil word in return for compliments, bowed his head, and with a gratified smile turned to his assembled guests.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "let us sit down to dinner."

But the company waited for the signal to rise, which would be given when the host offered his arm to the lady whom he complimented by taking her in to dinner.

The Prince looked around, and his eyes rested again on Gluck.

"I beg of the Ritter Gluck," said he, graciously, "the honor of conducting him to the table." And with a courteous bow he offered his arm. "Favorite of the Muses, come with me; I am too true a worshipper of your nine lovely mistresses, to resign you to any one else."

Gluck, with a smile appreciative of the honor conferred upon him, took the arm of the Prince, and was led into the dining-room.

Behind them came the other guests. All wore discontented faces; for this time, the slight had been offered not only to dukes and ambassadors, but to the ladies themselves, who could not help feeling bitterly this utter disregard of all etiquette and good-breeding.

On the day after the dinner, Kaunitz started for Inspruck to superintend the festivities preparing for the marriage of the Archduke Leopold. Count Durazzo, the Director of the Theatres, had preceded the Prince by a week. Noverre, with his ballet-dancers, was to follow. The great opera of Orpheus and Eurydice, whose fame was now European, was being rehearsed at Inspruck, for representation on the first night of the festival.

Although Florian Gassman was a leader of acknowledged skill, Gluck, at the request of the Emperor, had gone to Inspruck to direct and oversee the rehearsals.

The Furies has just concluded their chorus, and Gluck had given the signal for dismissal, when Prince Kaunitz entered the Theatre, and came forward, offering his hand to the Maestro.

"Well Maestro," said he, "are you satisfied with your artists? Shall we have a great musical treat to-morrow?"

Gluck shrugged his shoulders. "My singers are not the angels who taught me this music, but for mortals they sing well. I scarcely think that Donna Maria Louisa has ever heard anything comparable to the music with which we will welcome her to-morrow."

"I am glad to hear it," said Kaunitz, with his usual composure, although he was inwardly annoyed at Gluck's complacency. "But as I promised the Empress to see and hear every thing myself, I must hear and judge of your opera also. Be so good as to have it repeated."

Gluck looked at the Prince in amazement. "What," cried he, "your Highness wishes them to go through the whole opera without an audience!"

Prince Kaunitz raised his lofty head in displeasure, and said:

"Ritter Gluck, quality has always been esteemed before quantity. I alone am an audience. Let the opera begin, the audience is here."*

Gluck did not answer immediately. He frowned and looked down. Suddenly he raised his head, and his face wore its usual expression of energy and power.

"I will gratify your Highness. I myself would like to hear the opera without participating in it. Ladies and gentlemen of the Coulisses, be so kind as to return—Gentlemen of the Orchestra, resume your instruments. Gassman, have the goodness to lead. Do your best, let us have your highest interpretation of Art, for you have an audience such as you may never have again. Prince Kaunitz and Ritter Gluck are your listeners!"

*The Prince's own words. Swinburne, vol. I, p. 362.

CHAPTER XXX.

AN UNFORTUNATE MEETING.

Festival followed festival. The streets of the beautiful capitol of Tyrol were gay with the multitudes who thronged to do honor to the marriage of the Empress's second son.

It was the second day after the wedding. On the first evening, the opera of Orpheus and Eurydice had been triumphantly represented before the *élite* of the city. A second representation had been called for by the delighted audience, although at the imperial palace a magnificent mask ball was to be given, for which two thousand invitations had been issued. It was a splendid confusion of lights, jewels, velvet, satins and flowers. All the nations of the world had met in that imperial ball-room; not only mortals, but Fairies, Sylphides, and heathen gods and goddesses. It was a bewildering scene, that crowd of fantastic revellers, whose faces were every one hidden by velvet masks, through which dark eyes glittered, like stars upon the blackness of the night.

The imperial family alone appeared without masks. Maria Theresa, in a dress of blue velvet, studded with golden embroidery, her fair white forehead encircled by a coronet of diamonds and sapphires, walked among her guests with enchanting smiles and gracious words. She leaned upon the arm of the King of Rome, who looking more cheerful than usual, chatted gaily with his mother or with the crowd around them. Near them were the Grand-Duke Leopold and his bride, so absorbed in one another that it was easy to see that they at least were happy in their affections. Behind them flocked the young Archduchesses, who were enjoying the ball to the utmost. When the Empress approached a group of her guests, they stood in respectful silence while she and her handsome family passed by; but as soon as she had left them, their admiration burst forth in every imaginable form of words. The Empress, who overheard these murmured plaudits, smiled proudly upon her young daughters, who even if they had been much less than Archduchesses, would still have been the handsomest girls in Austria.

While the Empress, in the full splendor of her rank and beauty, was representing the Sovereign of Austria, the Emperor, mingling with the guests, was taking the liberty of amusing himself as ordinary mortals love to do at a masked ball. On his arm hung a mask of most graceful figure, but so completely was she disguised that nothing could be ascertained with regard to her name or rank. Some whispered that it was the Emperor's new favorite, the Countess of Auersperg.

As the pair went by, the Emperor overheard the conjectures of the crowd, and he turned with a smile to the lady who accompanied him.

"Do not fear," said he, "there is no danger of your being recognised. You are mistaken for another lady. I promised you that you should meet Joseph here, and I will keep my promise. Let us try to make our way through the crowd that we may join him as soon as possible; for I feel oppressed this evening, I know not why."

"Oh, then, your Majesty, let me go back into the ante-room," said the veiled lady. "I begin to feel all the rashness of my undertaking, and although it has the sanction of your Majesty and the Empress, I feel like a criminal, every moment dreading discovery. Let us go back."

"No, no," replied the Emperor, "let us remain until the interview with Joseph is over. I shall feel no better in the ante-room than here. I shall never be well until I leave this beautiful, fearful Tyrol. Its mountains weigh heavily upon my head and my breast. But let us sit down awhile. I love to listen to the people talk, when the Court is not by."

"But while your Majesty is present, the Court is here," said the lady.

"Not so, my dear," whispered the Emperor, "the Empress and my children are the Court, I am but a private nobleman. Ah, there they come! See how beautiful and stately the Empress looks! Who would suppose that this grown-up family were her children!—But she, she signs us to approach. Take courage and await me here."

So saying, the Emperor hastened towards his wife, who received him with a loving smile of welcome.

"Now, my son," said she, withdrawing her arm from Joseph, "I give you your freedom. I advise you to mix among the masks, and to go in search of adventures. We have done enough for ceremony, I think we may now enjoy ourselves a little like the rest of mankind. If we were younger, Franzel, we, too, would mix with yonder crowd, and dance awhile. But I suppose we must leave that to our children, and betake ourselves to the card table, or to the opera-house."

"If your Majesty leaves me the choice," said the Emperor, "I vote for the opera."

The Empress took his arm, while she turned to the Countess Lerchenfeld, the governess of the Archduchesses. "To the dancing-room, Countess," said she; "the Archduchesses may dance, but no mask must enter the room. Now, my dear husband, follow me. Adieu, Joseph! To-morrow, I expect to hear what fortune has befallen you to-night."

"Your Majesty forgets that Fortune is a woman," returned Joseph smiling, "and you know that I have no luck with women."

"Or you will not have it," said the Empress laughing, and leaving her son to his thoughts.

"Or you will not have it," repeated a soft voice near, and Joseph turning, saw an elegant looking woman, veiled and masked.

"Fair mask," said he smiling, "although you have the qualities of Echo, you have not yet pined away to invisibility."

"Perhaps, Sire, my body is only the coffin of my heart, and my heart the unfortunate Echo that has grieved herself to death and invisibility. But perhaps your Majesty does not believe in the power of grief, for doubtless you are unacquainted with its pangs."

"And why should you imagine that I am unacquainted with grief?" asked Joseph.

"Because your Majesty's station is exalted above that of other men; because God has blessed you with a noble heart, that is worthy of your destiny—the destiny which gives you the power of making other mortals happy."

—"How do you know all this?"

"I see it," whispered she, "in your eyes; those eyes that reflect the blue of heaven. Oh, Sire, may never a cloud darken that heaven!"

"I thank you for your pious wish," replied the King sadly, but if you are mortal, you know that in this world there is no such thing as cloudless skies. Let us not speak of such serious matters; give me your arm, and let us join in the mirth that is around us."

—"If your Majesty will permit me, I will while away the hour by relating to you a sad story of life."

—"Why a sad story, why not a merry one?"

"Because I came here for no other object than to relate this sad story to yourself. I came to crave your Majesty's sympathy and clemency in behalf of a suffering fellow-creature."

"Can I do anything in the matter?" asked the King.

—"From your Majesty alone do I hope for succor."

—"Very well; if so, let me hear the story. I will listen."

"Sire, my mournful history will ill accord with the merriment of a ball-room. If you will condescend to go with me to one of the boxes in the gallery, there I will confide my secret to your ear, and there I hope to soften your heart. Oh, Sire, do not tarry; it is a case of life or death."

"Well," said Joseph after a pause, "I will go. After all, I am about to have an adventure."

The mask bowed, and made her way through the crowd to a side-door which opened upon the private stair-case leading to the boxes. Joseph looked with interest at the light and elegant form that preceded him, and said to himself, "Truly an adventure! I will follow it to the end."

They were now in the galleries from whence a beautiful view of the ball-room was obtained. The lady entered a box, the King following. The sound of the music, and the gay voices of the dancers, came with softened murmur to the ears of the King. He thought of the past; but rousing himself to the exigencies of the present, he turned to the lady and said, "Now, fair mask, to your narrative."

"Swear first to hear me to the end! Swear it by the memory of Isabella, whom you so passionately loved."

"Isabella!" cried Joseph turning pale. "You are very bold, madam, to call that name, and call it here! But speak. By her loved memory I will listen."

She took his hand and pressed it to her lips. Then she begged the King to be seated, and took her place by his side.

"Sire, I will relate to you the history of a woman whom God has either blessed or cursed; a woman who, if she were not the most unfortunate, would be the happiest of mortals."

"You speak as the Sphinx did before the gates of Thebes. How can one be at the same time blessed and cursed?"

"Sire, it is a blessing to be capable of loving with passion; it is a curse to love and not be loved in return."

"And a greater curse," murmured Joseph, "to feign love and not to feel it. I have been the victim of such hypocrisy, and never will I outlive its bitter memories."

"Sire," began the lady, "the woman of whom I speak would willingly give a year of her life if the man she loves would but vouchsafe to her thirsting heart one single glance of love. Think how wretched she must be, when even the appearance of love would satisfy her. But do not suppose, Sire, that this woman is the victim of a guilty passion which she dare not own. She is a wife, and the man she adores and who loves her not, is her husband."

"Why does he not love her?" asked Joseph quickly.

"Because," said the mask in an agitated voice, "because she has sinned against him. On the day of her marriage, although he nobly invited her confidence, she hid from him a—a—malady—Oh, in mercy, do not go! You *must* hear me," cried she, almost frenzied, "you swore to listen, by the memory of Isabella."

Joseph resumed his seat and said roughly, "Go on, then."

"It was a crime," continued she in a voice of deepest emotion, "but she has paid dearly for her sin. Her husband repulsed her, but her heart was still his; he despised her, and yet she adores him. Her malady has long since disappeared; her heart alone is sick; that heart which will break if her lord refuse to forgive her the offence that was born of her love for him! But oh, Sire! he has no pity. When she meets him with imploring looks, he turns away; her letters he sends to her unopened. Oh, he is severe in his wrath; it is like vengeance from heaven! But still she loves, and still she hopes that one day he will be generous, and forgive her another crime—that of not being blessed with beauty. For months she has longed to tell him that she repents of her faults, that her punishment is just, but oh! oh! she begs for mercy. She was forbidden to follow him to Inspruck, but she could not stay behind. His parents gave their consent, and she is here at your knees, my Lord and King, to plead for mercy. Oh! has there not been enough of cruelty. See me humbled at your feet; reach me your beloved hand, and bid me sit by your side!"

She had sunk to the ground, and now tearing from her face the mask

and veil, the King of Rome beheld the death-like countenance of his despised wife.

Joseph rose from his seat and looked at her with inexorable hate. "Madam," said he, "thanks to the name which you used to force me into compliance, I have heard you out. I married you without affection, and you had been my wife but a few hours when you turned my indifference into undying hate. You come and whine to me for my love; and you inform me that you are love-sick on my account. If so, I dare say that Van Swieten, who cured you of leprosy, can also cure you of your unfortunate attachment. If you never knew it before, allow me to inform you that *your* love gives you no claim upon *mine;* and when a woman has the indelicacy to thrust herself upon a man who has never sought her, she must expect to be despised and humbled to the dust. And now, madam, as I still have the misfortune to be your husband, listen to my commands. You came here in spite of my prohibition; as you pass in the world for my wife, you shall at least be obedient to my will. Go back this night to Vienna, and never again presume to entrap me into another interview like this."

Without vouchsafing a look at the fainting woman who lay at his feet, Joseph left the box, and descended to the ball-room.

But what wail was that, which, coming from the imperial banquetting-hall, hushed every sound of music and mirth, and drove the gay multitude in terror from the ball-room!

The King of Rome was hastily making his way through the terrified crowd, when he was met by one of his own officers.

"I have been seeking your Majesty," said he in a trembling voice. "The Emperor——"

—"In heaven's name, what of the Emperor?"

—"He is very ill, your Majesty. On leaving the theatre, he was struck down by apoplexy."

The King made no reply. He dashed on from room to room until he reached his father's sleeping apartment.

And there on the bed, that white, motionless body, that cold insensible piece of clay, that marble image without breath—that was all that earth now held of the Emperor, Francis of Lorraine.

He was dead, and his wish had been granted. He had gone forever from the "beautiful, fearful Tyrol;" and its mountains lay no longer heavy on his breast.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MOURNING.

The sound of rejoicings was hushed. The people of Inspruck had hastened to remove from the streets every symbol of festivity. The flowers and flags, the triumphal arches and the wreathed Arcades had disappeared. The Epithalanium had been followed by the dirge.

Night had set in—the first night of the Emperor's death. The corpse still lay on the bed where its last breast had been drawn, and no one was with the deceased Sovereign except two night-watches, whose drowsy heads were buried in the arm-chairs where they sat. Death had banished ceremony. In the presence of their dead Emperor, his attendants were seated and slept. In the centre of the room stood the coffin that awaited the imperial remains; for on the morrow, the funeral ceremonies were to begin. But the Empress had ordered that on this night all ceremony should be suspended.

Deep silence reigned throughout Inspruck. The citizens worn out with the excitement of the day, had all retired to rest. Even the children of the deceased had forgotten their sorrow in sleep. Maria Theresa alone sought no rest.

All that day she had been overwhelmed by grief; even prayer seemed to bring no relief to her heart. But now she was tranquil, she had thrust back her tears, and the Empress-widow, all etiquette forgetting, was making her husband's shroud.

As a woman she grieved for the partner of her joys and sorrows; as a woman she wished to pay the last sad honors to the only man whom she had ever loved. She whose hands were accustomed to the sceptre, now held a needle, and to all offers of assistance she made but one reply.

"None of you are worthy to help me in this holy work, for none of you loved him. For you, he was the benificent and honored Sovereign, but for me, he was the joy, the light, the air of my life. I, who loved him, have alone the right to work upon his shroud.

"Oh, your Majesty," cried the Countess Daun, while her eyes filled with sympathizing tears, "would that the world could see with what devotion the great Maria Theresa sits in the stillness of the night, and with her own hands prepares her husband's shroud!"

The Empress quickly raised her head, and with something like her accustomed imperiousness, said, "I forbid any one of you to speak of what you have seen to-night. In the simplicity of my grief, I do what my heart urges me to do; but let not my sorrow become the subject of the world's idle gossip. When the husband dies, his wife, be she

empress or beggar, is nothing but a sorrowing widow. Ah! I am indeed beggared of all my wealth, for I have lost the dearest treasure I possessed on earth. All my joys will die with him."

The Empress's sobs choked her utterance; and burying her face in the shroud, she wept aloud.

"In the name of heaven, your Majesty, do not let your tears fall upon the shroud," cried the Countess Daun, while she tried with gentle force to wrest the cloth from the Empress's hands. "I have heard it said that what is laid in the coffin bedewed with tears draws after it to the grave the one sheds them."

"Would it were true!" exclaimed the Empress, who had already resumed her work. "Would that my Francis could open his arms to receive me, that I might rest by his side from the cares of life! Would that I were with him, who was my lover from earliest childhood; for cold and cheerless will be the life that is no longer lit up by his smile!"

She bent once more over her work, and nothing further was said; but her ladies of honor gazed with tearful eyes upon the high-born mourner, who, in her long black dress, was making a shroud for her lost husband.

At last the task was completed, and she rose from her seat. With a sad smile, she threw the shroud over her head, and it fell around her majestic form like a white veil.

"My veil of eternal widowhood!" said she. "Let me warm it with my love, that it may not lie too cold upon my darling's breast. Now, my friends, go and rest. Pray for the Emperor, and for his heart-broken wife."

"Surely," said the Countess Daun, "your Majesty will not send us away until we have attended to your wants. Let us remain; we will watch by your bedside."

—"No, Countess, I will dispense with your services to-night. Charlotte Von Hieronymus will stay with me."

Turning to her beloved little tire-woman she said, "I want your attendance yet awhile, Charlotte; you are to dress my hair to-night as becomes a widow. Good night, ladies."

The ladies of honor, with deep curtsies, left the room.

As the door closed behind them, she said to Charlotte, "Now, Charlotte, dear child, you shall go with me on my last visit to the Emperor. Take a pair of scissors, and come."

"Scissors, your Majesty!" said Charlotte.

"Yes, my dear," replied she, as she advanced to her work-table from whence she took up a silver candelabrum, and signed to Charlotte to follow.

Wrapping the shroud close about her, the Empress went forward through the long suite of magnificent, but dark and empty rooms, that lay between her and her husband. Her tall white figure, enveloped in the shroud, looked in the gloom of night like a ghost. The light which she carried, as it flashed across her face gave it a weird aspect; and as the two wanderers went flitting by the large mirrors that here and there

ornamented the rooms, they looked like a vision that had started up for a moment, then vanished into utter darkness.

At last they came to a door which stood ajar, through which a light was visible.

"We are here," said the Empress, leaning against the door for support. Step lightly, Charlotte, and make no noise, for the Emperor sleeps."

There on the bed, with its yellow sunken face, was the corpse that had been her husband—the only man she had ever loved! And that hideous black coffin, which looked all the gloomier for the wax-lights that burned around it, was his last resting-place.

Maria Theresa shuddered when she saw all this; but her strong will came to her help, and she went steadily forward until she reached the night-watchers. She awoke them, and said "Go—wait in the next room until I call you." Charlotte was already on her knees, praying.

The Empress stood once more irresolute, then rushing forward with a cry she leaned over the body.

Presently she laid her hand lovingly upon the staring eyes of the corpse, and looked long and tenderly at the face.

"Shut your eyes, my Franz," said she softly, "shut your eyes, for never have they looked so coldly upon me before. Do not forget me in heaven, my beloved; but leave your heart with me; mine has been with you for so many years. First I loved you as a child—then as a maiden—and lastly, I loved you as a wife and the mother of your children. And I will ever love you, my own one. I was true as your wife, and I will be true as your widow. Farewell, my beloved, farewell!"

She bent over and kissed the Emperor's mouth; then for a moment she laid her head upon his cold, still bosom. Then again she drew her hand softly across his eyes, and tried to close them. A proud smile flitted over her wan face, for the eyes of the corpse closed. The loving hand of the wife had prevailed where every other effort had failed. True to her wishes in death as in life, the dead Emperor had shut his eyes to earth forever.

"Come, Charlotte, come," cried the Empress, almost joyfully, "see how my Emperor loves me! He hears me still, and he has granted my last request. I will mourn no more, but will think of the day when I shall go to him again and share his home in heaven. Until then, my Franz, farewell!"

She bent her head, and taking the shroud from her shoulders, she spread it carefully over the coffin, smoothing every wrinkle with her hands, until it lay as perfect as the covering of a couch.

"Call the valets, Charlotte," said she, "and as they entered the room, she motioned them to advance." Help me to lay the Emperor on yonder—bed," said she. "Take the feet and body, and I will bear his head."

With her strong arms, she raised him as a mother would move her sleeping child, and with the help of the valets, she laid her husband in his coffin. This done, she again sent away the attendants, and then

wrapped the body in the shroud as though she had been protecting it from the cold.

"Come hither, Charlotte," said she, "with your scissors." Charlotte approached noiselessly. "Cut off my hair," continued she, taking out her comb, and letting down the rich masses until it fell about her person like another shroud.

"No, your Majesty; no," cried Charlotte bursting into tears. "I never can cut off that magnificent hair."

"Good child," said the Empress, "many a weary hour has that magnificent hair cost you, and do you ask to have it spared? It shall give you no more trouble. Take the scissors, and cut it off!"

"Has your Majesty then forgotten," pleaded Charlotte, "how dearly the Emperor loved this hair?"

"No, Charlotte, and therefore he must have it. 'Tis the last love-token I have to give him. I cannot die with him like an Indian wife; but religion does not forbid me to lay this offering at least, in his coffin. He so often used to pass his hands through it, he was so proud of its beauty, that now he is gone, no one else shall see it. Lay no more, Charlotte, but cut it off."

The Empress bent her head, while Charlotte, with a heartfelt sigh, and trembling hands cut off the long and beautiful blond hair which Maria Theresa laid as a love-token in the coffin of her husband.*

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE IMPERIAL ABBESS.

The funeral rites were over. In the crypt of the church of the Capuchins, under the monument which, twenty years before, the Empress had built for herself and her husband, lay the body of Emperor Francis. In this vault slept all the Imperial dead of the house of Hapsburg. One after another, with closed eyes and folded hands, their marble effigies were stretched across their tombs, stiff and cold as the bones that were buried beneath. The eternal night of death reigned over those couchant images of stone and bronze.

But Maria Theresa and her Emperor had conquered Death. Both rising from the tomb, their eyes were fixed upon each other with an expression of deepest tenderness, while Azrael who stood behind, with a wreath of cypress in his hands, seemed to have transformed himself into an Angel of love that sanctified their union even beyond the tomb—

* Caroline Pichler, Memoirs, Vol. 1, page 28.

All had left the vault save the widowed Empress; she had remained behind to weep and pray. Her prayers ended, she drew her long black cloak around her and strode through the church, unmindful of the monks, who, on either side of the aisle, awaited her appearance in respectful silence. She heeded neither their inclined heads nor their looks of sympathy: stunned by grief, she was unmindful of externals, and scarcely knew that she had left the vault, when her coach stopped before the imperial palace.

Once there, Maria Theresa passed by the splendid apartments which during her husband's life she had inhabited; and ascending the stair-case to the second story of the palace, she entered upon the dwelling which had been prepared for her widowhood. It was simple to coldness. Hung with black, nothing relieved the gloom of these rooms; neither mirror, picture, gilding nor flowers were there. The bed-room looked sad in the extreme. The walls were hung in gray silk; gray velvet curtains were drawn in front of the small widow's bed; the floor was covered with a gray carpet studded with white lilies, and the furniture was like the curtains, of dim, dull gray velvet.*

As the Empress entered this dismal room she saluted her ladies of honor who had followed her, and now stood awaiting her commands at the door.

"Bring all my dresses, shawls, laces, and jewels to me in the reception room, and send a messenger to Prince Kaunitz to say that I await his presence."

The ladies of honor left the room silently, and the Empress, closing the door, again began to weep and pray. Meanwhile her attendants were occupied bringing up the costly wardrobe of their imperial mistress. In a little while the dark rooms were brightened with velvet and silk of every color, with gold and silver, with jewels and flowers.

The ladies looked with eager and admiring eyes at the magnificence which had transformed this funereal apartment into a bazar of elegance and luxury, scarcely daring to speak the hopes and wishes that were filling all their hearts. Suddenly their curious eyes sought the ground, for the Empress appeared, and entered the room. What a contrast between this pale figure, clad in simplest mourning, and the rich costumes which in the days of her happiness had heightened her beauty;—those days which seemed to lie so far, far away from the bitter present!

The Empress laid her hand upon her heart, as if to stifle a cry of anguish; then approaching the black marble table, she took up some of the dresses that lay upon it.

With a voice softer and more pathetic than ever they had heard before, she begged the companions of her happier days to accept and wear these costly things as a legacy from the Emperor. She then divided them as she thought best; assigning to each lady what best became her, and was most appropriate.

Her ladies stood weeping around, while Maria Theresa besought each

* Caroline Pichler. Memoirs: Vol. 1, p. 20.

one to pardon the trouble she had given in her joyous days, for the sake of the misery she now endured. And as she entreated them to forget that she had been imperious and exacting, they knelt weeping at her feet, and earnestly implored her not to leave them.

The Empress sadly shook her head. "I am no longer an Empress," said she, "I am a poor, humbled woman, who needs no more attendance; whose only aim on earth is to serve God, and die in his favor! Pray for the Emperor, dear friends, and pray for me also."

Slowly turning away, she left the room, and entered her cabinet, which opened into the gray bed-room.

"And now to my last worldly task," said she, as ringing a silver hand-bell, she bade a page conduct Prince Kaunitz to her presence.

The page opened the door, and the Prince came in.

The Empress greeted him with a silent bend of her head, and exhausted, sank into an arm-chair that stood before her writing-desk. Kaunitz, without awaiting permission, took a seat opposite.

There was a long pause. At length Kaunitz said: "Your Majesty has honored me by commanding my presence hither."

—"Yes, I sent for you because I have something of great importance to say," replied the Empress.

"I am all attention," replied the Minister. "For it is worthy of your noble self, so soon to stifle your grief and to attend to the duties of your crown. You have sent for me that we may work. And your Majesty has done well, for much business has accumulated on our hands since we last held a cabinet council."

The Empress shook her head. "Business no longer troubles me," replied she; "I have sent for you to say that we will no longer work together."

"Does that mean that your Majesty is about to dismiss me in disgrace? Are you no longer satisfied with your Minister?" asked Kaunitz.

—"No, Prince. It means that I myself must retire from the bustle and vanities of this world. My hands are no longer fit to wield a sceptre; they must be folded in prayer—in prayer for my Emperor, who was called away without receiving the sacraments of the church. My strength has gone from me; my crown oppresses me; I can no longer be an Empress."

"Were you made a Sovereign by any power of yours?" asked Kaunitz. "Had you the choice of becoming an Empress, or remaining an Archduchess? What did your Majesty say to me when the insolent Carl of Bavaria tried to wrest your imperial crown from your head?—'I received my crown from the hands of God, and I must defend my divine right!'—Floods of noble blood were spilled that Maria Theresa might preserve her right; and does she now intend to dim the glory of her crown by sacrificing it to her sorrow as a wife?"

—"I am tired of life and of the world, and I intend to take refuge from their troubles in a cloister. Say no more! I am resolved to go,

and the palace at Inspruck shall be my convent. There, on the spot where he died, will I make my vows; and as an Abbess will I spend my life praying that God may give him eternal rest. My vocation as a Sovereign is at an end; I will resign my sceptre to my son."*

"That means that your Majesty will destroy with your own hands the structure you had commenced; that you have grown faint-hearted and are unfaithful to your duty and to your subjects."

"I will follow the steps of my great ancestor, Charles V," cried the Empress with energy. "I lay down my earthly dignity to humble myself before God."

"And your Majesty will be quite as unhappy as your ancestor. Do you suppose that the poor monk ever was able to forget that he had been a great Prince?"

—"And yet Charles V remained for twenty years in a cloister."

—"But what a life, your Majesty. A life of regret, repentance, and despair. Believe me, it is far better, like Cesar to die pierced by twenty daggers on the steps of a throne, than voluntarily to descend from that throne to enter the miserable walls of a cloister."

"Better perhaps for those who have not renounced the world and its pomps," cried the Empress, raising her beautiful eyes to heaven. "But it is neither saluty nor weariness of grandeur that has driven me to a cloister. It is my love for my Emperor, my yearning to be alone with God and with the past.

"But your Majesty," said Kaunitz with emphasis, "you will not be alone with the past; the maledictions of your people will follow you. Will they hold you guiltless to have broken your faith with them?"

—"I shall not have broken my faith; I shall have left to my people a successor to whom sooner or later they will owe the same allegiance as they now owe to me."

"But a successor who will overturn all that his Mother has done for Austria's welfare. Your Majesty laid the foundations of Austria's greatness. To that end, you called me to the lofty station which I now occupy. Remember that together we pledged our lives and love to Austria. Be not untrue to the covenant. In the name of that people which I then represented, I claim from their *Emperor*, Maria Theresa, the strict fulfillment of her bond. I call upon her to be true to her duty as the Ruler of a great nation, until the hand of God releases her from her crown and her life."

While Kaunitz spoke, Maria Theresa walked up and down the room, with troubled brow and folded arms. As he ceased, she came and stood before him, looking earnestly into his face, which now had cast aside its mask of tranquility, and showed visible signs of agitation.

"You are a bold advocate of my people's claims;" said she, "a brave defender of my Austria. I rejoice to know it, and never will take umbrage at what you have so nobly spoken. But you have not convinced me; my sorrow speaks louder than your arguments. You have termed

* Coxe. History of the House of Austria. Vol. 5, page 188.

me 'your Emperor.' I know why you have once more called me by that flattering title. You wish to remind me that in mounting the throne of my ancestors, I lost the right to grieve as a woman, and pledged myself to gird on the armor of manhood. Hitherto I have made it my pride to plan, to reign, to fight like a man. I have always feared that men might say of me that my hand was too weak to grasp the reins of power. But God, who perhaps gave me the head of a man, while leaving me the heart of a woman, has punished me for my ambition. He has left me to learn that alas! I *am* but a woman—with all the weakness of my sex. It is that womanly heart which, throbbing with an anguish that no words can paint, has vanquished my head: and loud above all thoughts of my duty as an Empress is the wail of my sorrow as a widow! But I will show you, Kaunitz, that I am not stubborn. I will communicate my intentions to no one. For four weeks I will retire to my cloister. Instead of naming Joseph my successor, I will appoint him co-regent. If, after four weeks of probation, I still feel that I can without guilt retire from the world, shall I then be absolved from my oath, and suffered to lay down my crown without reproach from my faithful Minister?"

"If after four weeks of unlimited power delegated to the Emperor Joseph, your Majesty still thinks that you have a right to abdicate," replied Kaunitz, "I shall make no opposition to your Majesty's choice of a private vocation, for I shall feel that after that time, remonstrance with you would be useless."

—"Well then, my novitiate shall begin to-morrow. Apprise the Court and the Foreign representatives that I wish to meet them in the throne-room, where in their presence I will appoint my son Emperor co-regent."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE CO-REGENT.

Maria Theresa had kept her word. She had appointed her son co-regent, investing the young Emperor with full power to reign, to make laws, to punish, to reward, and to govern her people, while she retired to the Palace of Inspruck. There she dwelt in strictest privacy, scarcely seeing her children, and restricting her intercourse to her first lady of honor, her confessor, and a few chosen friends, whom she sometimes admitted to her mournful rooms.

Joseph, the young Emperor of four-and-twenty years, was now monarch of all Austria, Hungary, Lombardy, and the Netherlands. He had

reached the goal of his longings for power, and now he could begin to think about the happiness of his people.

Since the intoxicating moment when Maria Theresa in presence of the whole Court, had named him co-regent, and delivered over to his hands her vast empire, Joseph felt as if he had suddenly been transported to a world of enchantment. He had, together with her ministers, dissuaded the Empress from her resolution of retiring to Inspruck; but even as he joined his voice to theirs, his heart was trembling with fear lest she should yield. He felt that if she revoked the power she had conferred he would almost die with disappointment. But the Empress remained firm, and her son was triumphant.

She had gone from the throne to the solitude of her own apartments, and left him Lord and Emperor of Austria! He would no longer be obliged to conceal his thoughts; they should come out into the broad day as deeds, for he was sovereign there!

A day and night had passed by since his mother had renounced her rights to him. He could not sleep. His head was full of plans, his heart of emotion. He *dared* not sleep, he who was the guardian of millions of his fellow-beings, he who felt ready to shed his heart's blood for their good.

On the first day, Joseph had been in council with the ministers of state. The will of the deceased Emperor had been opened, and his son now learned that while his mother was conferring upon him power, his father had left him boundless wealth. The Emperor Francis had left his eldest son sole heir to his estates in Hungary and Galicia, to his jewels and treasures, and also to the millions of money which he had accumulated through manufactures and trade. He had also left to his eldest son the twenty-two millions of coupons which he had taken for the gold which he had advaneed to the state for the prosecution of the seven years' war. Joseph was therefore the richest prince in all Germany, for his father's vast estates amounted to one hundred and fifty nine millions of guilders.* But he who had been so intoxicated with joy at his mother's gift, seemed scarcely moved at all as he received the tidings of his vast inheritance.

"I wish that my father had bought all the coupons that were issued, and that they were all mine;" said he, with a sigh.

"Your Majesty would be no gainer thereby," replied the Lord Keeper of the Finances, Von Kinsky. "These coupons bear but little interest, and paper money is not gold. Its value is nominal."

"But it has one merit," replied the Emperor smiling, "it can be burned. Oh! what a miserable invention is this paper money which represents value, but possesses none. Suppose that all the holders of these coupons were to come this morning and ask their redemption, could the imperial coffers meet their obligations?"

—"Not if they all came at once, your Majesty."

"But the people have a right to call for them," said the Emperor.

*Hubner. Life of Joseph II. Vol. 1, p. 28.

"In lending their money, they showed their confidence in the government, and this confidence must not be betrayed. Let the twenty-two millions of coupons be put in a package and brought to my private apartments. I wish to dispose of them."

Throughout this day, Joseph was so absorbed by business, both private and official, that he had no opportunity of exhibiting himself in his new character, either to his family or his subjects.

But on the second day of his co-regency, the young Emperor appeared in public. On this day, the Viennese celebrated the deliverance of Vienna from the Turks, by John Tobieski and his brave Polish legions. The mourning of the female members of the imperial family did not permit them to mingle as usual with the people, on this favorite festival; but the Emperor resolved to show himself on this occasion in the character of a Sovereign. All Vienna was eager to see him, as soon as it became rumored that he would certainly attend the mass in honor of the day at the Cathedral of St. Stephens.

Meanwhile the young Emperor was in his palace. The ante-rooms were filled with petitioners of every sort, who, through bribes offered to the members of the imperial household, had penetrated thus far, and were now awaiting the appearance of the Emperor. The ante-rooms of Maria Theresa had always been thronged with these petitioners, and now they jostled each other, without ceremony, each one hoping to be remarked by the Emperor as he passed on to his carriage.

Suddenly the commotion ceased and took the form of a panic, as the door opened and the valets of the Emperor came forward, their hands filled with the petitions which they had just taken in. They had all been refused!

A few moments afterwards, the door opened again, and the Lord-chamberlain, Count Rosenberg, advanced to the centre of the room. There was no necessity for the pages to order silence; for the crowd were breathless with expectation, and the deepest stillness reigned throughout the thronged rooms, while Count Rosenberg read the first greeting of the Emperor to his people.

It was sharp, and to the point. It forbade, in strongest terms, all indirect efforts to obtain promotion or pensions; and it declared once for all that merit alone would be the test of all applications presented to the Emperor Joseph II.

When the Count had done reading the proclamation, the valets laid the petitions upon a table, that each man might select and remove his own paper.

"Your Majesty has made many enemies to-day," said Count Rosenberg, as he re-entered the cabinet of the Emperor. "I saw many a scowl in the ante-room as I passed by the disappointed multitude that thronged my way."

"I do not wish the friendship of intrigues and flatterers," replied the Emperor, with a merry laugh. "If my proclamations make me enemies, I think it will also make me friends. The good shall be satisfied

with my rule; for during my long silence under my mother's reign, I have observed much, and thought much. And now the day has come when the power is mine to reward virtue and punish vice."

"May heaven grant that your Majesty's day draw to a close without clouds or storms," said Rosenberg.

The Emperor laughed again. "What do you fear, my friend?" asked he. "Have you so long shared with me my burthen of dissimulation that you are frightened to see our shackles fall? Are you afraid of the fresh air, because we wear our masks no longer? Patience, Rosenberg, and all will be well with us. Our dreams are about to be fulfilled; what we have whispered together in the twilight of mutual trust, we will now cry out with free and joyous shouts, 'Reform! Reform!' My people have prayed quite enough, they shall now learn to do something better—they shall think; they have been long enough led by faith, like little children. I will give them conformation, and they shall enter upon the responsibilities of manhood. I mean to be a blessing to the virtuous and a terror to the vicious."

"Unhappily there is more evil than good in this world," said Count Rosenberg, sighing, "and a man, though he seldom can count his friends, is never at a loss to count his enemies."

"I do not understand you," said Joseph, smiling. "I intend to draw out the fangs of the wicked, so that they shall have power to injure no one."

"Your Majesty will do this if time should be granted you," said the Count. "If——"

"What do you mean?" cried the Emperor, impatiently, as Rosenberg hesitated. "Speak on. What do you fear?"

"I fear," whispered the Count, "that your day will be darkened by bigots and priests. I fear that the Empress will not leave you freedom to carry out your reformation. I fear that your enemies will dry up her tears, and unclasp her folded hands, to place within their grasp the sceptre to which your manhood gives you the right. I fear the influence of her confessor, Father Porhammer; try to conciliate him. It is far better to win over our opponents by forbearance than to exasperate them by open warfare."

"But open warfare is my right," cried Joseph, "and I am powerful enough to despise all opponents, as well as strong enough to pursue my way without regard to the wickedness of all the bigots in Christendom. Face to face shall we stand, and I defy them all! We have had enough too of Spanish etiquette and Italian mummery here. Now we shall have honest German customs; we shall be Germans in thought, in speech, and in sentiment. This is my dream, my bright and beautiful dream! Austria shall one day be Germanised; the kingdoms and provinces which compose my dominions shall no longer be separate nationalities, but all shall be the branches of one lofty tree. The limbs shall loose their names, and be called by that of the trunk; and the trunk shall bear the name of Germany. High above the boughs of this noble tree, which shall extend from France to Poland, I will place my banner and

my crown, and before their might all Europe shall bow. This is my dream, Rosenberg, my dream of future greatness!"

—"While I hear you speak, and look upon your Majesty's countenance, bright with inspiration, I too bow before the grandeur of your thought, and feel as if this god-like dream must surely become a glorious truth!"

"It will be glorious truth, Rosenberg," exclaimed the Emperor. "Why should Germany be severed into many parts, when France and Spain are each a kingdom in itself? Why is England so powerful? Because Scotland and Ireland have cast their identity into hers! Sweden and Norway, are they not one? And Russia: how many different races own the sway of the mighty Czar? My empire, too, shall become strong through unity, and I shall not only be Emperor of Austria, but in very deed and truth, Emperor of all Germany."

Rosenberg shook his head and sighed. "Ah, your Majesty," said he, "you are so young that you believe in the realization of mortal dreams."

—"I do; and I intend to work out their realization myself. I shall begin by being German myself. I intend to do away with ceremony, priestcraft, and foreign influence. To that intent, my Lord Chamberlain, you will see that all foreigners are dismissed from the palace and their places supplied by Germans. My two Italian valets I make over to Porhammer—nothing but German shall be spoken at Court. I will have neither French nor Italian actors here; Count Durazzo shall dismiss his foreign *troupes* and employ Germans in their stead.* Let him see that the German stage flourishes, and does honor to the metropolis of the German empire."

"This is an ordinance that will enchant the youths of Vienna," replied the Count, gaily.

"Here is another which will equally rejoice their hearts, as well as those of all the pretty women in Vienna," added the Emperor.

"Your Majesty means to revoke the power of the Committee on Morals?"

—"Not quite. I dare not fly so soon in the face of my lady-mother's pet institutions," returned Joseph, laughing, "but I shall suspend them until further notice. Now the pretty sinners may all go to sleep in peace; now the young girls of Vienna may walk the streets without being asked whither they go, or whence they come. Reform! Reform! But hark—there are the church-bells, I go to show myself to my subjects. Come, let us away."

"But your Majesty has not made your toilet. The valets are now waiting with your Spanish court-dress in your dressing-room."

"I make them a present of it," said the Emperor. "The day of Spanish court-dresses is over. The uniform of my regiment shall be my court-dress hereafter, so that you see that I am dressed and ready."

—"Then allow me to order that the carriage of state be prepared for your Majesty."

* Gross—Hoffinger. History of Joseph II. Vol. 1, p. 91.

"Order that the carriage of state be left to rot in the Empress's stables," returned Joseph. The day of etiquette, also, is over. I am a man like other men, and have as much use of my limbs as they. Let cripples and dotards ride: I shall go to church on foot."

"But your Majesty," remonstrated Rosenberg, "what will the people say when they see their Emperor stripped of all the pomp of his high station? They will think that you hold them too cheaply to visit them in state."

"No, no: my people will feel that I come among them, not with the cold splendor of my rank, but with the warmth of human sympathy and human nature; and they will greet me with more enthusiasm than if I came in my carriage of state."

The Emperor was right. The people who had thronged every street through which he was to pass, shouted for joy, when they saw the ruler of all Austria on foot, accompanied by a few of his friends, making his way among them, with as much simplicity as a burgher. At first, astonishment had repressed the enthusiasm of the Viennese; but this momentary reticence overcome, the subjects of Joseph the second, rent the air with their cries of welcome, and pressed around his path, all eager to look into the face of the Sovereign who walked among his people as an equal and a man.

"See him, ! See him!" cried they. "See the German Prince who is not ashamed to be a German! See our Emperor in the uniform of the German infantry! Long live the Emperor. Long live our Fatherland!"

"Long live the Emperor!" Shouted the multitude, while Joseph, his heart overflowing with joy, made his way at last to the Cathedral of St. Stephen.

And now the trumpets sounded, and the mighty organ thundered forth a welcome, while cardinals and priests lifted their voices, and the clergy sang the "*Salvum fac imperatorum nostrum.*" And ever and anon, through the open windows of the Cathedral, the people shouted still, "Long live the Emperor! Long live our Fatherland!"

Overcome by the ovation, Joseph sank down upon his knees, and his heart softened by the scene, the circumstances, and the sublime chants of the Church, he prayed. Clasping his hands he prayed that God might give him strength to do his duty to his subjects, and to make them happy.

The *Salvum fac imperatorum* over, the Mass for the repose of the soul of Sobieski and his twelve thousand Poles, was entoned. The Emperor prayed for them, and thanked the Almighty Ruler of all things for the rescue they had brought to Vienna in her hour of danger from the Infidel.

This was the first public act of Joseph's reign as co-regent.

The Mass over, the people witnessed another public act of the young Emperor's reign. While Joseph, smiling and bending his head to the crowds that pressed around him, was quietly pursuing his way back to the palace, a procession was seen coming through the streets which at-

tracted the attention of the multitude and called forth their wonder. First came a file of soldiers with shouldered carbines, then an open vehicle drawn by horses from the imperial stables, then another file of soldiers. Within the wagon sat several officers of the Emperor's household, with large rolls of paper in their hands, and behind it was a detachment of cavalry with drawn sabres.

"What means this pageant?" asked the people of one another.

For all answer to this question, the multitudes pressed forward and fell in with the mysterious procession.

The train moved on until it arrived at an open market place, where it halted. In the centre of the square was a heap of fagots, near which stood two men with lighted torches in their hands.

"An execution!" cried the terror-stricken multitude. "But what an execution! Who was to be burnt at the stake?"

While the crowd were murmuring within themselves, the officers of the Emperor's household advanced to the pile and laid the rolls of papers which they had brought, upon it. They then signed to the people for silence, and one of the officers addressed the crowd.

"The Emperor Joseph, co-regent with the Empress Maria Theresa, sends greeting to his subjects," cried he in a clear, loud voice. "To-day, the first of his reign, and the festival of John Sobieski the deliver of Vienna, he wishes to prove to his people, how much he loves them. In testimony whereof, he presents to them, twenty-two millions of coupons bequeathed to him by his father, the late Emperor Francis. These papers are the coupons. In the name of the Emperor Joseph, approach, ye torch-bearers, and kindle the pile, that the people of Austria, made richer by twenty-two millions, may recognise in this sacrifice, the love of their Sovereign."

The torches were applied, and high in the air soared the flames that were consuming the Emperor's bequest, while the faces of the multitude around were lit up by the glare of the burning pile.

The bells of the churches began to chime, the flames soared higher and higher, and the people looked on in wondering gratitude at the twenty-two millions of guilders, which were the first offering of Joseph II. to his subjects.*

CHAPTER XXXIV

HAROUN AL RASCHID.

The Emperor was alone in his dressing-cabinet. He stood before a mirror, covering his rich blond curls with a large wig, which fell in long ringlets over his shoulders, and completed the very singular costume in which it had pleased his Majesty to array himself.

* Hormayer. Austrian Plutarch. First Vol., p. 129.

The Emperor surveyed himself with evident satisfaction, and broke out into a hearty laugh. "I think," said he, "that in this dark-haired fop, with his fashionable costume, no one will recognise the Emperor. I suppose that in this disguise I may go undetected in search of adventures. If I am to be of use as a prince, I must see all things, prove all things, and learn all things. It is written: 'Prove all things and hold fast to that which is good.' I am afraid that I will not hold fast to much that comes under my observation."

He drew back from the mirror, threw over his shoulders a little cloak, bordered with fur, set a three-cornered hat upon the top of his wig, took up a small gold-headed cane, and then returned to survey himself a second time.

—"A fop of the latest style, that is to say, a fool of the first water looks out upon himself from this looking-glass," said he, laughing. "It would be an affront to my majesty if any one were to presume to suspect the Emperor under this absurd disguise. I hope I shall be as successful in the way of adventures, as was my predecessor Haroun Al Raschid."

He drew his cloak close around him, and stepped from a little private door that opened from his dressing-room into the corridor which led to the apartments of his wife. Retired and unobserved, the Empress Josepha lived within these rooms, which, from the first night of their marriage, her husband had never re-entered. The corridor was empty. Joseph could therefore pass out unobserved, until he reached a private staircase leading to the lower floor of the palace. Once there, he raised his head, and stepped boldly out into the hall. The porters allowed him to pass without suspicion, and unrecognized, the young adventurer reached the public thoroughfares.

"Now," thought he, with a sensation of childish delight, "now I am free, a man just like other men. I defy any one to see my divine right upon my brow, or to observe any difference between the 'imperial blue' of my eyes, and the ordinary blue of those of my subjects."

"Halt, there!" cried a threatening voice to the careless pedestrian. "Out of the way, young coxcomb; do you suppose that I must give way to you?"

"Not at all, your worship," replied Joseph smiling, as with an active bound he cleared the way for a colossal carman, who covered with sweat and dust, was wheeling a load of bricks in a barrow.

The carman stopped and surveying the Emperor angrily, cried out in a voice of thunder, "What do you mean by calling me 'Your Worship?' Do you mean to insult me because you are wasting your father's money on your pretty person, decked out like a flower-girl on a holiday?"

"Heaven forbid that I should seek to insult you," replied the Emperor. "The size of your fists is enough to inspire any one with respect. For all the world, I would not offend their owner."

"Well, then, go your way, you whippersnapper," muttered the carman, while the Emperor congratulated himself upon having gotten out of the scrape without detection.

"It would have been a pretty anecdote for the history of the Emperor Joseph, had he been discovered in a street-brawl with a carman," said he to himself. "A little more, and my imperial face would have been pounded into jelly by that Hercules of a fellow! It is not such an easy matter, as I had supposed, to mix on equal terms with other men! But I will learn by bitter experience how to behave."

At this moment Joseph heard the sounds of weeping. Turning, he beheld coming towards him, a young girl of about sixteen, whose slight figure, in spite of the cool autumn day, was scarcely covered by a thin, patched dress of dark stuff. An old, faded silk handkerchief was thrown over her shoulders; her sweet, pale face was bedewed with tears, and her lips were murmuring gentle complaints, though no one stopped to listen. On her right arm she carried a bundle, which every now and then she watched, as if afraid that some one might rob her of its treasures.

Suddenly a kind voice whispered, "Why do you weep, my child?"

The young girl started and met the gaze of a young man, whose blue eyes were fixed upon her with an expression of tenderest sympathy.

"I weep," said she, "because I am unhappy," and she quickened her steps that she might leave him behind. But the Emperor kept pace with her.

—"Why do you walk so fast. Are you afraid of me?"

"I fear the Committee of Morals," said she, blushing. "If they should see me with you, I might be mistaken for——"

—"Have you ever been suspected by them?"

"Yes sir, although I have always tried, when I was in the streets, to avoid observation. Go, sir, go. Do not heed my tears. I am accustomed to misfortune."

—"But it is said that the Emperor has suspended the office of that committee."

—"I am glad of it," replied the girl "for good and evil are alike exposed to suspicion, and I would like to walk the streets without fear of being taken for what I am not."

—"Where are you going, child?"

—"I am going," replied she with a fresh burst of tears, "to sell the clothes I carry in this bundle."

"What clothes, child?"

"The last decent covering that my poor mother owns," sobbed the girl.

"You are then very poor?" asked the Emperor softly.

"Very poor. We have often been hungry, and have had no food but our own bitter tears. These are the last clothes we have, but they must go for bread, and then perhaps we will perish of cold."

—"Poor girl, have you no father?"

—"My father died in defence of Austria and the Empress, and as a reward of his devotion to his sovereign, his wife and child have been left to die of want."

"Your father was a soldier?" asked the Emperor, much affected.

—"He was an officer, who served with distinction in the seven years war. But he never was promoted. He died for Maria Theresa, and his widow and child will soon follow him to the grave."

—"Why have you not applied to the Empress for relief? Her purse is always open to the wants of the needy."

"To obtain anything from royalty, Sir, you know that one must have influence," replied the girl, bitterly. We have no influence, nor would we know how to intrigue for favor."

"Why then do you not go to the Emperor. He at least has no fancy for intriguers and flatterers. You should have gone to him."

"To be haughtily repulsed?" said she. "Oh, Sir, the new Emperor is a man whose only love is a love of power, and whose only pleasure is to make that power felt by others. Has he not already refused to listen to any petition whatever? Did he not forbid his people to come to him for favors?"

"He did that," replied Joseph, "because he wished to do justice to all, and for that reason, he has done away with all presentation of petitions through courtiers or other officers of his household. But he has appointed an hour to receive all those who will present their petitions in person."

"So he has said," returned the girl, "but no one believes him. His guards will turn away all those who are not richly dressed, and so the Emperor will have promised to see the people, though the people will never be allowed to come into his presence."

"Have the Austrians so little faith in the sincerity of the Emperor?" asked Joseph. "Do they think that his heart——"

"His heart!" exclaimed the girl. "The Emperor is without a heart. Even towards his mother, he is said to be undutiful and obstinate. He hates his wife, and she is as mild as an angel. He whose pleasure it is to see an Empress at his feet, do you suppose that he will sympathise with the misfortunes of his subjects? No, no; he has already stopped all the pensions which the generous Empress had given from her private purse."

—"Because he will bestow them upon worthier objects."

—"No, no; it is because he is a miser."

"He a miser!" cried Joseph. "Did he not some days ago burn up twenty-two millions of coupons?"

"It was said so; but no one saw them; and it is whispered that the twenty-two millions were nothing but pieces of waste paper."

The Emperor was speechless. He looked at his young traducer with an expression of real horror.

"How?" at length said he in a voice choked by emotion, "the Emperor is suspected of such baseness!"

"He is known to be selfish and miserly," replied his tormentor.

Joseph's eyes flashed with anger; but conquering his bitterness, he constrained himself to smile.

"My child," said he, "you have been deceived. If you knew the

Emperor, you would find that he is generous and ready to do justice to all men. Go home and write your petition; and come to-day at noon, to the imperial palace. You will see that the guards will allow you to pass, and a servant will be there to conduct you to me. I myself will present your petition, and I know that the Emperor will not refuse a pension to the widow and child of a brave Austrian officer."

The girl's eyes filled with tears, as she attempted to thank her unknown benefactor.

But the Emperor who had allowed her to abuse him without interruption, would not listen to her praises.

"Your mother is sick, and needs care," said he. "Go home and do not sell your clothes, for you will need them to visit the Emperor. How much did you expect to get for them?"

—"I expected seven ducats, for a portion of this clothing is my mother's wedding-dress."

"Then, my child, let me beg you to accept twelve," said he, drawing out his purse. "I hope they will suffice for your wants until the Emperor fills them all."

The young girl bent over and kissed Joseph's hand. "Oh, Sir," said she, "you save us from death, and we have nothing to offer in return, but our poor prayers."

"Pray for the Emperor," said he gently. "Pray God that he may win the love of his people. Farewell! I will wait for you to-morrow at noon."

With these words, Joseph quickened his pace, and was soon lost to view.

"My second adventure!" thought he. "I must confess that it is not very flattering to walk incognito about the streets and hear the sentiments of one's own subjects. How often do kings mistake the murmurings of discontent for the outpourings of joy. It is so pleasant to believe in the love of our subjects, and to shut our eyes to all doubts of their loyalty. But I am resolved to see and judge of the people for myself. My path will often be beset with thorns, but Fate has not made me a Monarch for my own good; I am an Emperor for the good of others. That child has revealed some painful truths to me; it would seem as if I were fated, forever to be misjudged."

CHAPTER XXXV

THE DISGUISE REMOVED.

At mid-day the Emperor re-entered the palace gates. This time he came through the principal entrance, feeling quite secure in his disguise.

He proceeded at once to the hall of reception, wondering whether his young protegeé would present herself as he had requested her to do.

The sentries allowed him to pass, supposing him to be one of those about to seek an audience with the Emperor. Unsuspected he reached the hall.

Yes, there was his little accuser. She stood trembling and blushing in one corner of the room, holding in her hand a paper. As she recognised her unknown protector, blushing still more deeply, she hastened to meet him, and timidly gave him her hand.

"Oh, sir," said she, "you have been true to your word. I was so afraid you would forget me that I was several times on the point of leaving this grand place. I feel lonely and ashamed; for you see that no one is here but myself. Nobody trusts the Emperor. And I who am here, will surely be repulsed; he will never be so kind as you have been to a poor, friendless girl. My mother has no hope; and if she has sent me to the palace, it was that I might see *you* again, and once more pour forth my gratitude for your kindness. If you would add another to the generous gift you have already bestowed, tell me your name, that my mother and I may beg God's blessing upon it, and then let me go, for I feel that my visit here will be vain!"

"My dear child," said Joseph laughing, "if all the Emperor's opponents were as headstrong as you, the poor man would have but little hope of ever gaining the good-will of his subjects. But I intend to prove to you that you are unjust. Give me your petition. I myself will present it for you. Wait awhile, and I will send a messenger who will conduct you to the Emperor. Follow him and fear nothing, for I will be there too, and there I will tell you my name. *Au revoir.*"

The young girl looked anxiously after him as he disappeared, and once more betook herself to the window. Gradually the room filled with a sad, humble, and trembling crowd, such as often throngs the anterooms of princes and nobles: a crowd which with tearful eyes and sorrowing hearts, so often returns home without succor and without hope.

But the people who were assembled in this hall of reception seemed more sanguine than is usual with petitioners for imperial favor. They chatted together of their various expectations; they spoke of the Empe-

ror's benevolence; and all seemed to hope that they would be heard with patience, and favorably answered.

A door opened, and an officer entered. He looked sharply around the room, and then went directly to the window where the young girl with a beating heart was listening to the praises of that Emperor whom in her soul she believed to be a tyrant.

"The Emperor will be here presently," said the officer in answer to a storm of enquiries from every side. "But I have been ordered first to conduct this young lady, the daughter of a deceased officer, to his Majesty's presence."

She followed him, silent and anxious. They went through suites of splendid rooms, whose costly decorations struck the child of poverty with new dismay. At last they stopped in a richly gilded *salon*, covered with a carpet of Gobelin, and hung with the same rich tapestry.

"Remain here," said the officer, "while I announce you to his Majesty."

He disappeared behind the velvet *portière*, and the frightened girl remained with a crowd of richly-dressed nobles, whose gold-embroidered court-dresses, and diamond crosses, almost blinded her with their splendor.

Once more the *portière* was drawn aside, and the officer beckoned the girl to advance. She did so with trembling limbs and throbbing heart. The hangings fell, and she was in the dreaded presence of the Emperor. He stood near a window with his back towards her: a tall, graceful man, in a white uniform.

The poor girl felt as if she would cease to breathe, for this was the decisive moment of her young life. The Emperor could either consign her to misery, or he could raise her to comfort, and wipe away the tears of her dear, suffering mother.

He turned and looked at her with a benevolent smile. "Come hither, my child," said he. "You would speak with the Emperor. I am he."

The girl uttered a stifled cry, and falling on her knees, she hid her death-like face in her hands. For she had recognised her unknown protector. Yes, this noble man, who had proffered help, and promised protection, this was the Emperor, and to his face she had called him a miser and a tyrant!

She never for one moment thought whether he would punish her insolence; she had but one feeling, that of unspeakable anguish for having wounded a noble and generous heart. This alone caused her shame and grief.

The Emperor approached, and looked with tenderness at the kneeling maiden, through whose fingers her tears were flowing in streams.

—"I have read your petition, and have found that you spoke the truth. From this day your father's pay falls to your mother; and at her death it will revert to you. I beg you and your mother to forgive the tardiness of this act of justice, for neither the Empress nor I had ever heard that your father had any family. Once more forgive us for all

that you have endured since his death. And now, my child, rise from your knees; for human beings should kneel before God alone. Dry your tears, and hasten to your mother. Tell her that the Emperor is not as heartless as he has been pictured to her by his enemies."

"No, no," cried she, "I cannot rise until my Sovereign has forgiven my presumption and my calumnies."

"They are forgiven; for what could you know of me, you poor child, but what you had been told? But now you know me yourself; and for the future if you hear me traduced, you will defend me, will you not?"*

He reached out his hand, which she kissed and bedewed with her tears.

The Emperor raised her tenderly himself. "Be comforted; for if you cry so bitterly, my courtiers will think that I have been unkind to you. You told me just now that you wished to know the name of your protector that you might pray for him. Well, my child, pray for me—my name is Joseph."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ROSARY AND SCEPTRE.

THE four weeks to which Maria Theresa had limited her novitiate had almost expired. She still secluded herself from the world, and in the deep retirement of her palatial cloister, she would suffer no mention of worldly affairs in her presence.

In vain her confessor and her attendants strove to awaken her interest to the dissatisfaction of the people with the wild projects of reform that threatened the subversion of all social order. From the day of her retirement, Maria Theresa had forbidden the slightest allusion to politics. Her confessor had on one occasion ventured a hint on the subject of the changes which were being made by the Emperor, but the Empress had turned her flashing eyes upon him at once, and had reminded him that as the servant of the Lord, he was there to exhort and to pray, not to concern himself about the trivialities of this world.

On another occasion the Countess Fuchs had presumed to mention the changes in the imperial household. The Empress interrupted her coldly, saying that as she had not lost her relish for the vanities of the court, the Countess must absent herself until further orders.

This severity had put an end to all plans for inducing the Empress to resume the cares of empire. She was now at liberty to weep and pray without distraction. Even her children, who came daily to kiss her

*Historical.

hand, were allowed no conversation but that which turned upon religion. When the morning services were ended, they silently withdrew to their rooms.

For a few days past, the Archduchess Christine had absented herself from this mournful levee. On the first day of her non-appearance the Empress had not appeared to remark her absence. But on the second day, her eyes wandered sadly from her prayer-book to her children, and her lips seemed ready to frame some question. Instead of speaking, she bent her head over her rosary, and strove to pray with more devotion than usual.

Finally came a third day, and still Christine was absent. The Empress could no longer master her maternal anxiety, and as the Archduchess Elizabeth approached to kiss her hand, she spoke.

"Where is Christine? Why is she not with you?"

"My sister is sick, your Majesty," replied the Archduchess; and as though she feared to displease her mother by further speech, she bent her head and withdrew.

The next day when the imperial children entered their mother's apartment, her prayer-book was lying on the table, while she, pale and agitated, was pacing the room with hasty steps. She received her family with a slight motion of the head, and looked anxiously towards the door until it had closed after the entrance of little Marie Antoinette. Then the Empress sighed, and turned away her head lest her children should see the tears that were gushing from her eyes.

But when mass was over, and little Marie Antoinette approached her mother, she took the child up in her arms, and tenderly kissing her cheek, said, "How is Christine, my darling?"

"Sister Christine is very sick, imperial mama," replied the child, "and she cries all day long. But she loves you very dearly, and longs to see you."

The Empress put down her little daughter without a word, and as if she sought to mortify her worldliness, she signed to all present to withdraw, and falling upon her knees, prayed long and fervently ——

An hour or two after, she sent for her confessor. As he left her room and passed through the ante-room, the attendants saw that his countenance looked joyous in the extreme. They flocked to hear if there was any hope of convincing the Empress of the necessity of her return to the world.

"I think there is much," replied the father. "God be thanked, her maternal love has overcome the dangerous lethargy into which sorrow had plunged our beloved Sovereign. For a time she was overcome by her grief as a widow; but she begins to feel that her children have a right to her counsels and care. Later she will recognise the claims of her people, and Austria will be saved from the mad schemes of that unbelieving dreamer, her son."

"Do you really believe that her Majesty will return to the throne?" asked the Countess.

—"I do. She besought me in trembling tones to tell her something

of her beloved child, and I did nothing to tranquilize her; for she has no right to seclude herself from her people. Maria Theresa is a greater sovereign than her son will ever be, and Austria cannot afford to lose her now. She will visit her daughter to-day. Tell the Archduchess not to fear her brother's opposition; for her mother, once resolved to her people, will see that her own daughters are not made wretched by a tyrannical brother. The Princess will marry her lover."

—"I hasten. How soon will the Empress come?"

—"She will surely be there before many hours—Solitude is not congenial to Maria Theresa's heart, her active mind craves occupation, and her grief requires it. Let us appeal to her affections through the illness of her child, and complete reaction will ensue. If once we can persuade her to quit her seclusion, her cloister-dream is over. Let us all work in concert to restore her to the world. It is not the sovereign of a great nation who has a right like Mary, to sit at the feet of Jesus—Go at once, Count Bathiany, and may God bless the efforts we are making to restore our Empress to her sense of duty. Church and state are alike endangered by the fatal step she has taken."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ABBESS AND AN EMPRESS.

It was the hour of dinner. Complete silence reigned throughout the imperial palace, except in the halls and stairways that led from the imperial dining-hall to the kitchens below. Both lay far from the apartments of the Empress-Abbess. She therefore felt that she could visit her sick child without fear of observation. She had just concluded her own solitary dinner, and was trying to collect her thoughts for prayer. In vain! They *would* wander to the sick bed of her daughter, whom fancy pictured dying without the precious cares that a mother's hand alone is gifted to bestow. Maria Theresa felt that her heart was all too storm-tost for prayer. She closed her book with a pang of self-reproach, and rose from her arm-chair.

"It is useless," said she at last. "I must obey the call of my rebellious heart, and tread again the paths of earthly love and earthly cares. I cannot remain here and think that my Christine longs for her mother's presence, and that I may not wipe her tears away with my kisses! It is not only my right, it is my duty to tend my sick child. I am not in the right path, or a merciful God would strenghten me to tread it courageously. I must replace their father to my children. Poor orphans!

They need twice the love I gave before, and God forgive me! I was about to abandon them entirely. It is no injury to the memory of my Francis, for through his children, I will but love him the more. How I long once more to press them to my heart! Yes—I must go, and this is the hour—I will pass by the private corridors, and surprise my Christine in her solitude."

With more activity than she had been able to summon to her help since the Emperor's burial, Maria Theresa hastened to her dressing-room and snatching up her long black cloak, threw it around her person. As she was drawing the hood over her face, she caught a glimpse of herself in a mirror close by. She was shocked at her own image; her face so corpse-like, her cloak so like a hideous pall.

"I look like a ghost," thought the Empress. "And indeed I am dead to all happiness for I have buried my all! But Christine will be shocked at my looks. I must not frighten the poor child."

And actuated partly by maternal love, partly by womanly vanity, Maria Theresa slipped back the ugly hood that hid her white forehead, and opened the black crape collar that encircled her neck, so that some portion of her throat was visible.

"I will always be my Franz's poor widow," said the Empress while she arranged her toilet, "but I will not affright my children by my dress —Now I look more like their mother. Let me hasten to my child."

And having again flung back the hood so that some portions of her beautiful hair could be seen, she left the room. She opened the door softly and looked into the next apartment. She had well calculated her time, for no one was there; her ladies of honor had all gone to dinner.

"That is pleasant," said she. "I am glad not to meet their wondering faces; glad not to be greeted as an Empress, for I am an Empress no longer. I am a poor humble widow fulfilling the only earthly duties now left me to perform."

She bent her head and went softly through the second ante-room to the hall. Again, all was empty and silent; neither page nor sentry nor lackey to be seen. She knew not why, but a feeling of desolation came over her. She had bidden adieu to the etiquette due to her rank, but this, she thought, was carrying the point too far.

"If I had had the misfortune to fall suddenly ill," said she, "I must have called in vain for succor. No one is by to hear my voice. But at least there must be sentries in the other hall."

No! That hall too was empty. No lackeys were there, no guards! For the first time in her life, Maria Theresa was out of hearing of any human being, and she felt a pang of disappointment and humiliation. She started at the sound of her own footsteps, and walked faster, that she might come within sight of some one—any one. Suddenly, to her joy, she heard the sound of voices, and she paused to listen.

The door of the room whence the voices were heard was slightly ajar, and the Empress overheard the following conversation. The speakers were Father Porhammer and the Countess Fuchs.

"Do not despair," said the father, "the Empress is forgiving and magnanimous, and when she shall have admitted you again to her presence, it will be your duty to aid all those who love Austria, in using your influence to recall her Majesty to the throne. Woe to Austria if she persists in elevating her grief above her duty as a sovereign! Woe to the nation if her son, that rebellious child of the Church, reign over this land! His insane love of novelty——"

"For heaven's sake, Father," replied the Countess, "say nothing against the Emperor. His mother's will has placed him on the throne, and we must submit."

The Empress heard no more. With noiseless tread she hurried on, until she turned the corner of a side-hall, and then she relaxed her pace. She pondered over what she had just heard, and it did not contribute to tranquilize her mind.

"What can he be doing?" thought she. "What are those mad schemes of which my friends have tried to apprize me? He was ever self-willed and stubborn; ever inclined to skepticism. Alas! alas! I foresee sad days for my poor Austria!"

At that moment the Empress had gained a small landing which led to a staircase which she had to descend. She was about to proceed on her way when she perceived a man, whose back was turned towards her, seated on the topmost step. He was so quiet that she thought he was asleep. But as her foot touched him, he turned carelessly round, and perceiving the Empress, he rose slowly, and bent his head as though to any lady he might pass.

Maria Theresa was astounded. She knew not what to think of the irreverent bearing of this man, who was no other than Stockel, one of the servants whose duty it had been, for thirty years, to light the fires in her dressing-room.

He had been accustomed every morning to appear before his imperial lady, in winter to see that her fires were burning, in summer to distribute her alms. Stockel was from Tyrol; he had been a favorite servant of the Empress; and being an upright and intelligent man, his word was known to have some weight with her.* Stockel had been the most respectful and loyal of servants; the appearance alone of the Empress had always made his old wrinkled face light up with joy. How did it happen that now, when he had been parted from her for four weeks, he seemed indifferent?

"He is offended because I have never sent for him," thought the kind-hearted Empress; "I must try to appease him."

"I am glad to see you, Stockel," said she, with one of her own bewitching smiles, "it is long since you have visited me in my room. I am such a poor, sorrowing widow, that I have not had heart enough to think of the poverty of others."

Stockel said nothing. He turned and slightly shrugged his shoulders.

* Thiebault. Memoires de vingt ans.

"How?" said Maria Theresa, good-humoredly, "are you offended? Have you the heart to be angry with your Empress."

"Empress?" returned Stockel. "I took your Highness for a pious nun; the whole world knows that Maria Theresa is no longer an Empress, she no longer reigns in Austria."

Maria Theresa felt a pang as she heard these words, and her cheeks flushed—almost with anger. But overcoming the feeling, she smiled sadly and said: "I see that you are really angry, poor Stockel. You do not like to see my palace made a cloister. You think, perhaps, that I have done wrong?"

"I do not pretend to judge of the acts of the rulers of earth," replied he gloomily. "Perhaps the deeds which in ordinary people would be called cowardly, may with them be great and noble. I know nothing about it. But I know what my beloved Empress once said to me. She was then young and energetic; and she had not forgotten the oath she had taken when the Archbishop crowned her at St. Stephen's—the oath which bound her to be a faithful ruler over her people until God released her."

—"What said your Empress then?"

—"I will tell your Highness. I had lost my young wife, the one I loved best on earth, and I came to beg my discharge; for my longing was to go back to my native mountains and live a hermit's life in Tyrol. My Empress would not release me. 'How,' said she, 'are you so weak that you must skulk away from the world because Almighty God has seen fit to bereave you of your wife? He tries your faith, man, and you must be firm, whether you face the storm or bask in the sunshine. Did you not promise, too, to serve me faithfully, and will you now cast away your useful life in vain sorrow? What would you think of me were I so lightly to break my oath to my people? I who must lift my head above every tempest of private sorrow, to fulfill my vow until death!' Thus spoke my Empress; but that was many years ago, and then she was the Sovereign of all Austria."

Maria Theresa looked down, and the tear-drops that had been gathering in her eyes fell upon her black dress where they glistened like diamonds.

"It is true," whispered she, "I was Sovereign of all Austria."

"And what prevents you from being Sovereign to-day?" asked Stockel eagerly. "Have your people released you?"

The Empress waved her hand impatiently. "Enough," said she, "let me go my way."

—"But I have a petition to make, and as it is the last favor I shall ever ask, I hope your Majesty will not deny me."

—"Speak your wish," replied Maria Theresa hastily.

"I beg of your Majesty to allow me to quit your service," replied the man moodily. "I cannot forget the words of Maria Theresa. I will not skulk away from the world while I have strength to work. I am tired of the idle life I lead. It is summer, and there is no fire to kindle.

As for the poor unfortunates whom I used to visit, I can do them no good; their benefactress is no more. I must do something, or life will be a burthen, and if your Majesty will condescend to give me leave, I will seek another place."

"Another place, Stockel!" said the Empress. What other place?"

"A place in the household of the *reigning* Empress," answered Stockel with a low inclination.

Maria Theresa raised her head, and her astonishment was visible in her large, open eyes.

"The reigning Empress?" said she musing. "Who can that be?"

"The wife of the reigning Emperor, your Majesty," said Stockel grimly.

The Empress threw back her proud head and drew her mantle convulsively around her.

"It is well," said she. "Come to me to-morrow and you shall hear my decision."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE REIGNING EMPRESS.

The Empress went slowly down the staircase. This staircase led to the left wing of the palace, where the apartments of the imperial children were situated. From earliest childhood the daughters of Maria Theresa had each her separate *suite*. Each one had her governess, her ladies of honor and her train of servants, and lived as if in a miniature court.

On great festivals, national or domestic, the younger members of the imperial family were invited to the table of the Empress; otherwise they ate in private with their retinue, and each child had a separate table.

It was now the dinner-hour, and Maria Theresa had selected it, because she felt sure that all the attendants of her childern were at table, and no one would know of her visit to Christine. But she was mistaken. As she passed by the ante-room leading to the apartments of her children, she heard the voices of the lords and ladies in waiting, and through the half-opened door, saw them chatting together in groups. They did not seem to observe their ex-sovereign, they went on conversing as if nothing had happened. But as the Empress was passing the aparments of little Maria Antoinette, her governess appeared, and with a cry of joy, threw herself at Maria Theresa's feet, and covered her hand with kisses.

The Empress smiled. A thrill of pleasure ran through her frame, as

she received the homage to which from her birth she had been accustomed.

"Rise, Countess," said she kindly, "and do not let Maria Antoinette know that I am near. But tell me, how comes it that at this hour I find the retinue of my children at leisure, while they are at table?"

"We are at leisure, your Majesty," replied the Countess, "because we are waiting for their Highnesses to rise from table."

"Is it then a festival that my children should be dining at the imperial table?"

—"Please your Majesty, the reigning Emperor has abolished the private tables of their Highnesses, your children. He finds it cheaper and more convenient for all the members of the Imperial family to be served at once and at one table."

—"Where, then, do my children dine?" asked the Empress with asperity.

—"*En famille*, with her imperial Majesty, the reigning Empress."

"The reigning Empress!" echoed Maria Theresa, and her brow grew dark. "But how comes it that my children leave their rooms without their retinue? Have you then already forgotten that I never permit a breach of court-ceremonial on any account?"

—"Please your Majesty, the Emperor dislikes etiquette, and he has strictly forbidden all Spanish customs at court, as laughable and ridiculous. He has forbidden all attendance upon the imperial family, except on New Year's day. He has also forbidden us to kneel before his Majesty, because it is an outlandish Spanish custom, and an homage due to God alone. All the French and Italian servants of the palace are dismissed, and their places are supplied by natives. The Emperor wishes to have every thing at his court essentially German. For that reason, he has ordered the Mass to be translated and celebrated in the German language."

The Empress heaved a sigh, and drew her mantilla over her face, as if to shut out the future which was unrolling itself to her view. She felt sick at heart, for she began to comprehend that her successor was creating a new order of things, and was speaking with contempt of his mother's reign. But she would not contemplate the sad vision; she strove to turn back her thoughts to the present.

"But if you no longer have your private table," continued she, "why not accompany the Princesses?"

"Because the Emperor deems it fitting that the imperial family dine alone. We, ladies in waiting, dine alone in a small room set apart for us, and then return to our apartments to await their Highnesses."

—"But the lords in waiting, do they not dine with you?"

"No, your Majesty, they have received orders at one o'clock to go to their own houses, or to their former lodgings, to dine. The court table is abolished, and the Emperor finds that by so doing he has economised a very considerable sum."

A deep flush of anger passed over the face of Maria Theresa, and her

lip curled contemptuously. Economy was one of the few virtues which the profuse and munificent Empress had never learned to practice. She considered it beneath the dignity of a sovereign to count the cost of any thing.

—"Enough," said she in a constrained voice, "I will go to Christine. Let no one know of my visit. I desire to see my sick daughter alone."

She bent her lofty head, and walked rapidly away. With a beating heart, she opened the door that led to the sleeping-room of the Princess. There on a couch lay a pale, weeping figure, the Empress's darling, her beautiful Christine.

She stopped for a moment on the threshhold, and looked lovingly at the dear child whom for four days she had not seen; then a thrill of unutterable joy pervaded her whole being.

At this moment, Christine raised her eyes languidly; her glance met that of her mother; and with a piercing cry, she sprang from the couch with open arms. But overcome by weakness and emotion, she faltered, grew paler, and sank to the floor.

The Empress darted forward and caught her fainting daughter in her arms. She carried her to the divan, laid her softly down, and with quivering lip surveyed the pale face and closed eyes of the Princess.

She recovered slowly, and at length, heaving a deep sigh, Christine unclosed her eyes. Mother and child contemplated each other with loving glances, and as the Archduchess raised her arms and clasped them around her mother's neck, she whispered feebly: "Oh, now, all is well! I am no longer desolate; my dear, dear mother has returned to me. She has not forsaken us; she will shield us from oppression and misfortune."

Like a frightened dove, Christine clung to the Empress, and burying her face in her mother's breast, she wept tears of relief and joy.

The Empress drew her close to her heart. "Yes, darling," said she with fervor, "I am here to shield you, and I will never forsake you again. No one on earth will dare to oppress you now. Tell me, dear child, what goes wrong with you?"

"Oh, mother," whispered Christine, "there is one in Austria, more powerful than yourself, who will force me to his will. You cannot shield me from the Emperor, for you have given him the power to rule over us, and oh, how cruelly he uses his right!"

"What I have given, I can recall," cried the Empress. "Mine are the power and the crown, and I have not yet relinquished them. Now speak, Christine;—what grieves you, and why are your eyes so red with weeping?"

"Because I am the most unhappy of mortals," cried Christine passionately. "Because I am denied the right which every peasant-girl exercises; the right of refusing a man whom I do not love. Oh, mother! if you can, save me from the detested Duke of Chablais whom my cruel brother forces upon me as a husband."

"Is that your sorrow, my child?" exclaimed the Empress. "Joseph is like his father; he loves wealth. The Emperor had proposed this half-brother of the King of Sardinia for you, Christine, but I refused my consent; and now without my knowledge, Joseph would force him upon you because of his great riches. But patience, patience, my daughter. I will show you that I am not so powerless as you think; I will show you that no one in Austria shall give away my Christine without her mother's approbation."

While the Empress spoke, her cheeks flushed and her eyes glowed with a proud consciousness of might not yet renounced forever. The sorrowing widow was being once more transformed into the stately sovereign, and the eyes, which had been so dimmed by tears, were lit up by the fire of new resolves.

"Oh, mother, my own imperial mother," said Christine, "do not only free me from the man whom I detest, but bless me with the hand of the man I love. You well know how long I have loved Albert of Saxony, you know how dear I am to him. I have sworn never to be the wife of another, and I will keep my oath, or die! Oh, mother, do not make me the sport of policy and ambition! Let me be happy with him whom I love. What are crowns and sceptres and splendor when the heart is without love and hope? I am willing to lead a simple life with Albert —let me be happy in my own way. Oh, mother! I love him so far above all earthly creatures that I would rather be buried with him in a grave than be an Empress without him."

And she fell upon her knees and wept anew. The Empress had listened musingly to her daughter's appeal. While Christine was speaking, the glamour of her own past love was upon her heart. She was a girl again; and once more her life seemed bound up in the love she bore to young Francis of Lorraine. Thus had she spoken, so had she entreated her father, the proud Emperor, until he had relented, and she had become the wife of Christine's own father! Not only maternal love, but womanly sympathy pleaded for her unhappy child.

She bent over her, and with her white hand fondly stroked the rich masses of Christine's golden-brown hair.

"Do not weep, my daughter," said she tenderly. "True, you have spoken words most unseemly for one of your birth; for it is the duty of a Princess to buy her splendor and her rank with many a stifled longing, and many a disappointment of the affections. Kind fate bestowed upon me not only grandeur, but the husband of my love, and daily do I thank the good God who gave me to my best beloved Franz. I do not know why you, too, may not be made a happy exception to the lot of Princes. I have still four beautiful daughters for whom state policy may seek allianees. I will permit one of my children to be happy as I have been. God grant that the rest may find happiness go hand in hand with duty."

The Princess enraptured would have thrown her arms around her mother's neck; but suddenly her face, which had grown rosy with hap-

piness, became pale again, and her countenance wore an expression of deep disappointment.

"Oh, mother," cried she, "we build castles, while we forget that you are no longer the Sovereign of Austria. And while you weep and pray in your dark and silent cell, the Emperor, with undutiful hand overturns the edifice of Austria's greatness—that edifice which you, dearest mother, had reared with your own hands. He is like Heratostratus; his only fame will be to have destroyed a temple which he had not the cunning to build."

"We will wrest the faggots from his sacreligious hands," cried the Empress.

The Archduchess seemed not to have heard her mother's words. She threw her arms around the Empress, and clinging convulsively to her, exclaimed, "Oh do not forsake me, my mother and my Empress. That horrible woman, who was dragged from her obscurity to curse my brother's life; that tiresome, hideous Josepha—do not suffer her to wear your title and your crown. Oh, God! Oh, God! Must I live to see Maria Theresa humbled, while Josepha of Bavaria is the reigning Empress of Austria."

The Empress started. This was the third time she had heard these words, and each time it seemed as if a dagger had pierced her proud heart.

"Josepha of Bavaria, the reigning Empress of Austria!" said she scornfully. "We shall see how long she is to bear my title and wear my crown! But I am weary, my daughter. I must go to my solitude, but fear nothing. Whether I be Empress or Abbess, no man on earth shall oppress my children. The doors of the cloister have not yet closed upon me; I am still, if I choose to be, the reigning Empress of Austria."

She pressed a kiss upon Christine's forehead, and left the room.

On her return, she encountered no one, and she was just about to open the door of her own ante-room, when she caught the sound of voices from within.

"But I tell you, gentlemen," cried an angry voice, "that her Majesty the ex-Empress, receives no one, and has no longer any revenues. She has nothing more to do with the administration of affairs in Austria."

"But I must see the Empress," replied a second and a deprecating voice. "It is my right, for she is our Sovereign, and she cannot so forsake us. Let me see the Empress. My life depends upon her goodness."

"And I," cried a third voice, "I too must see her. Not for myself do I seek this audience, but for her subjects. Oh, for the love of Austria, let me speak with my gracious Sovereign!"

"But I tell you that I dare not," cried the ruffled page. "It would ruin me not only with her Majesty, but with the reigning Emperor. The widowed Empress has no more voice in State affairs, and the Emperor will never suffer her to have any, for he has all the power to himself, and he never means to yield an inch of it."

"Woe then to Austria!" cried the third speaker.

"Why do you cry, 'woe to Austria'!" asked a voice outside; and the tall, majestic form of the Empress appeared at the door.

"Our Empress!" cried the two petitioners, while both fell at her feet, and looked up into her face with unmistakeable joy.

The Empress greeted them kindly, but she added, "Rise, gentlemen. I hear that my son, the Emperor, has forbidden his subjects to kneel to him; they shall not, therefore, kneel to me, for he is right. To God alone belongs such homage. Rise, therefore, Father Aloysius; the brothers of the holy order of Jesus must never kneel to fellow-mortal. And you, Counsellor Bündener, rise also, and stand erect. Your limbs have grown stiff in my service; in your old age you have the right to spare them. You," added she, turning to the page, "return to your post, and attend more faithfully to your duty than you have done to-day. When I left this room, no one guarded the entrance to it."

"Your Majesty," stammered the confused page, "it was the dinner hour, and I had never dreamed of your leaving your apartments. His Majesty, the Emperor, has reduced the pages and sentries to half their number, and there are no longer enough of us to relieve one another as we were accustomed to do under the reign of your Majesty."

"It is well," said the Empress haughtily. "I will restore order to my household before another day has passed. And now, gentlemen, what brings you here? Speak, Father Aloysius."

"My conscience, your Majesty," replied Father Aloysius fervently. "I cannot stand by and see the hailstorm of corruption that devastates our unhappy country. I cannot see Austria flooded with the works of French philosophers and German infidels. What is to become of religion and decency, if Voltaire and Rousseau are to be the teachers of Austrian youth!"

"It rests with yourself, my friend," replied the Empress, to protect the youth of Austria from such contaminating influences. Why do those whom I appointed censors of the press, permit the introduction of these godless works in my realms?"

"Your Majesty's realms!" replied the Father sadly. "Alas, they are no longer yours. Your son is Emperor and Master in Austria, and he has commanded the printing and distribution of every infidel work of modern times. The censors of the press have been silenced, and ordered to discontinue their revision of books."

"Has my son presumed so far?" cried the Empress angrily. "Has he dared to overthrow the barriers which for the good of my subjects I had raised to protect them from the corrupt influences of French infidelity? Has he *ordered* the dissemination of obscene and ungodly books? Oh, my God! How culpable have I been to the trust which thou hast placed in my hands! I feel my guilt; I have sinned in the excess of my grief. But I will conquer my weak heart. Go in peace, Father, I will ponder your words, and to-morrow you shall hear from me."

The Father bowed and retired, while the Empress turned towards Counsellor Bündener, and inquired the cause of his distress.

"Oh, your Majesty," cried the old man, in accents of despair, "unless you help me, I am ruined. If you come not again to my assistance, my children will starve, for I am old and——"

"What!" interrupted the Empress, "your children starve with the pension I gave you from my own private purse!"

"You did indeed give me a generous pension," replied Bündener, "and may God bless your Majesty, for a more bountiful Sovereign never bore the weight of a crown. But desolation and despair sit in the places where once your Majesty's name was mingled each day with the prayers of those whom you had succored. The Emperor has withdrawn every pension bestowed by you. He has received a statement of every annuity paid by your Majesty's orders, and has declared his intention of cleaning out the Augean stables of this wasteful beneficence." *

The Empress could not suppress a cry of indignation. Her face grew scarlet, and her lips parted. But she conquered the angry impulse that would have led her to disparage her son in the presence of his subject, and her mouth closed firmly. With agitated mien, she paced her apartment, her eyes flashing, her breast heaving, her whole frame convulsed with sense of insulted maternity—Then she came towards the Counsellor, and lifting her proud head as though Olympus had owned her sway, she spoke.

"Go home, my friend," said she imperiously, "and believe my royal word, when I assure you that neither you nor any other of my pensioners shall be robbed of your annuities. Princely faith should be sacred above all consideration of thrift; and we shall see who dares to impeach mine!"

So saying, Maria Theresa passed into her dressing-room where her ladies of honor were assembled. They all bent the knee as she entered, and awaited her commands in reverential silence. At that moment the flourish of trumpets and the call of the guards to arms were heard. The Empress looked astounded, and directed an inquiring glance towards the window. She knew full well the meaning of that trumpet signal and that call to arms: they were heard on the departure or the return of one person only in Austria, and that person was herself, the Empress.

For the third time the trumpet sounded. "What means this?" asked she frowning.

"Please your Majesty," answered a lady of the bed-chamber, "it signifies that her imperial Majesty, the reigning Empress, has returned from her walk in the palace gardens."

Maria Theresa answered not a word. She walked quickly past her attendants and laid her hand upon the lock of the door which led into her private study. Her head was thrown back, her eyes were full of flashing resolve, and the tone of her voice was clear, full and majestic. It betokened that Maria Theresa was "herself again."

"Let Prince Kaunitz be summoned," said she. "Send hither the Countess Fuchs and Father Porhammer. Tell the two latter to come to my study when the Prince leaves it."

* Hubner: Life of Joseph II. Vol. 1, page 28.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE CO-REGENT DISMISSED.

SCARCELY a quarter of an hour had elapsed since the Empress's orders had been issued, when a page announced Prince Kaunitz.

Maria Theresa went forward to receive him. Her whole being seemed filled with a feverish excitement which contrasted singularly with the unaltered demeanor of her Prime Minister, who, cold and tranquil as ever, advanced to meet his Sovereign and bowed with his usual phlegm.

"Well," said Maria Theresa after a pause, "every thing has not changed in the four weeks of my retirement from court. You at least are the same in appearance. Let me hope that you are the same in spirit and in mind."

"Please your Majesty," replied Kaunitz, "four weeks have not yet gone by since I had the honor of an interview with you."

"What do you mean by that?" asked the Empress impatiently. "Do you wish to remind me that I had resolved to wait four weeks before I decided upon a permanent course of action?"

"Yes, your Majesty," said Kaunitz. "I am somewhat vain, as everybody knows, and I have already seen my triumph in your Majesty's face. I read there that my noble Empress has proved me a true prophet. She has not yet been away from her subjects for four weeks, and already her head has silenced the weakness of her heart. Three weeks have sufficed to bring Maria Theresa once more to her sense of duty."

"Ah?" said the Empress. "Are you then so sure that my novitiate will not end in a cloister?"

"I am convinced of it; for never will I forget the day on which your Majesty swore to be a faithful ruler over Austria as long as you lived. I am convinced of it, too, because I know that although my Empress has the heart of a woman, she has the head of a man, and in all well-ordered unions, the head rules the household."

The Empress smiled faintly but said nothing. Her arms were crossed over her breast, her head was bent in thought, and she went slowly forth and back from one end of her study to the other. Kaunitz followed her with his large, tranquil eyes, which seemed to penetrate to the remotest regions of her throbbing heart.

Suddenly she stood before him, and for a moment gazed earnestly in his face.

"Kaunitz," said she, "I have not only considered you for many years as a wise and great statesman, but what is better yet, I have esteemed you as a man of honor. I exact of you that you act honorably and openly towards me in this hour. Do you promise?"

—"An honorable man your Majesty need not promise to do that which honor requires of him.

—"True, true; but you might pay unconscious deference to my rank, and to my sex. Courtesy might mislead you. This is precisely what I warn you to avoid. I wish you to speak candidly without thought of consideration for Empress or woman. Remember how you pledged your life to Austria's good; and forgetting all else, answer me truthfully and without fear. Will you Kaunitz?"

—"I will, your Majesty. Ask and you shall be answered truthfully, so help me God."

"Then tell me, which of us is better calculated to reign in Austria Joseph or myself? Which of us will best promote the welfare of the Austrian people?——Do not answer me at once. Take time to reflect upon the subject, for a weighty question lies in the balance of this hour. I cannot trust myself in this decision, for I have wept so many tears that I have not the strength to see wherein my duty lies. I cannot even trust my own misgivings, for pride or vanity may have blinded my eyes to truth. I am not sure that I view things in their proper light. It is useless therefore for me to speak; I desire to hear no one but yourself. I swear to you by the memory of Charles V., that whatever you say shall be sacred, for I have exacted of you candor, and say what you will, your candor shall not offend. Who then is best fitted to reign, Joseph or I?"

"Your Majesty I have had full time to reflect upon this weighty question, for since first you announced your intention to resign the throne, I have thought of nothing else. In politics we know neither predeliction nor prejudice. Necessity and interest decide all things. Your Majesty has so often called me a good politician, that I have ended by believing myself to be one. It follows from thence that in deliberating upon this great question, I have laid aside all personal inclination and sympathy, and have had in view the welfare alone of Austria. But for this, the matter would have required no thought, for the Emperor Joseph and I have nothing in common. He fears me, and I do not love him.* We never could be made to understand one another; for the language of the heart is not to be forced by edicts, as is the language of the court. The Emperor has forbidden all tongues in Germany save one. If he persist in this, he will alienate his subjects and Austria will soon lose her greatness. When a man intends to force his people to forget their mother-tongue, he must do it by degrees, and if he succeed, he will be a skillful teacher. The best reforms are only to be introduced through the by-ways of life. If we trust them on the highway, they shock and terrify the people. The young Emperor, regardless of these considerations, has violently suppressed whatever seemed injudicious to him in your Majesty's administration. Perhaps you had done too much, your son certainly does too little—I hear every where of interdicts, but nowhere of concessions, old things destroyed, but nothing created to replace them.

* Kaunitz's own words. Waxall, Vol. II, p. 490.

What will be the result of this? Austria must soon be reduced to a mass of ruins, and your son will go down to posterity with a fame like that of Attila. Save Austria, save him from the curse that threatens both. We have not yet completed the noble edifice of which eleven years ago we laid the foundations. We must finish the structure, and so solid must be its walls that our thoughtless young reformer shall not batter them down. Your Majesty must remain the reigning Empress of Austria! You cannot resign your Empire to your son. Duty and the welfare of your subjects, forbid it."

The Empress inclined her head approvingly. "I believe that you are right, Kaunitz," replied she. "It is not in the pride, but in the deep humility of my heart that I re-assume the crown which God himself has placed upon my head. I have no right to say that the load is too heavy since He wills me to bear it. Indeed I feel that He will give me strength to accomplish His will in me, and I am now ready to say, 'Behold the hand-maid of the Lord; be it done to me according to His word.' I will never again lift my treasonable hand against that crown which I pray heaven I may wear for the good of my people.—But you, Prince, you must be at my side; together we have planned for Austria, together we must complete the noble structure of her greatness."

—"I remain, your Majesty, and will never cease to labor until the banner of the Hapsburg floats proudly from its battlements. But we must decorate as well as strengthen. We have beautiful young Princesses whose alliances will bring wealth and splendor to our imperial edifice. Within, we shall have solid walls that will ensure the durability of our structure; without, we shall have brilliant alliances that will perfect its beauty."

"You have a marriage to propose?" said the Empress smiling.

—"I have, your Majesty, a marriage with the young King of Naples."

—"For which of my daughters?" asked Maria Theresa uneasily.

—"For the one your Majesty shall select."

—"Then it shall be Johanna. She is very beautiful, and has a proud and ambitious heart which craves less for love than for rank and splendor. But if I give one of my daughters to diplomacy, you must leave me another for domestic happiness. Christine has undertaken to think that she must marry for love, and I think we ought to make her happy in her own modest way. We owe amends to Albert of Saxony for having declined an alliance with his sister; we also owe him something for his fidelity and good faith as an ally. Let the young lovers be united then; we have gold and daughters enough to tolerate *one* marriage of inclination in our imperial house."

"But your Majesty will give up the youngest, Marie Antoinette, to diplomacy, will you not?"

—"You destine her to the throne of France, Prince, is it not so?"

—"Yes, your Majesty. The son of the Dauphin is a noble youth, and although his father was unfriendly to Austria, Choiseuil and La Pompadour are for us. Marie Antoinette, therefore, is to be Queen of

France. This, however, must be a profound secret between ourselves. While her little Highness is being fashioned for her future dignity, we will marry her elder sisters, if not so brilliantly, at least as advantageously as we can. First then upon the list is the Archduchess Christine. We must find some suitable rank for herself and her husband, and your Majesty will of course bestow a dowry worthy of your daughter's birth and station."

"I will present them the Duchy of Teschen as a wedding-gift, and it must be your care, Prince, to find an appointment for the Elector of Saxony that will be worthy of my son-in-law."

"Let us name him Captain-General and Stadt-holder of Hungary. That will be an effectual means of converting the Hungarians into Austrians, and the appointment is in every way suitable to the Elector's rank."

The Empress nodded, smiling acquiescence. "Your head," said she, "is always in the right place; and sometimes I cannot help thinking that your heart is better than the world believes it to be, else how could you so readily divine the hearts of others? How quickly have you devised the best of schemes to promote my daughter's happiness, without compromising her imperial station! Christine shall be Statthalterin of Hungary, and in her name and my own, I thank you for the suggestion. One thing, however, lies heavy on my heart. It is the thought of the blow I am about to inflict upon my poor Joseph. How will he bear to be deprived of his sovereignty?"

"I think your Majesty named him co-regent only," said Kaunitz.

"I did," replied the Empress, "and in very truth I withdraw nothing but a temporary privilege. As Empress I know my right to resume the reins of power, but it grieves my maternal heart to exercise it. I think I see him now, poor boy, with his great blue eyes fixed in despair upon me. I shall never have the courage to announce my return to him."

—"There will be no need to restrict him in his co-regency. He can be removed to the War department, where he may reign unfettered."

"He shall have unlimited power there," exclaimed the Empress, joyfully. "It is the proper province of a man, and Joseph will fill the station far better than I have ever done. I promise not to interfere with him in the field. For other state affairs, I will attend to them myself, and I do not think that I will ever delegate my power a second time. You had best inform Joseph of my resumption of the throne, and let the Frau Josepha also be advised that she is no longer reigning Empress of Austria. For me, I must always remain at heart a sorrowing widow. My sorrows I can never overcome, my widow's weeds I shall never lay aside.* But above the weeds I will wear the mantle of royalty, and since you have so determined for me, Austria shall once more own the sway of Maria Theresa."

* She kept her word. Every month, on the day of her husband's death, she spent the day in solitary prayer, and on every yearly anniversary of her widowhood, she knelt for hours by the side of the Emperor's tomb, praying for the repose of his soul. Her private apartments were ever after hung with gray, and her coaches and liveries were of the same sad hue.—Caroline Pichler: Memoirs.

CHAPTER XL.

MOTHER AND SON.

THE dream was over—the blessed dream of philanthropy and reform! The reins of power had been snatched from his hands, and Joseph was once more consigned to a life of insignificant inactivity. Like a wounded bird, whose broken wing no longer bears him aloft, his heart fluttered and fell—its high hopes dashed to earth. The old influences which he hated were at work again, and he had no recourse but absolute silence. His deep humiliation he was constrained to hide under a mask of serenity, but he knew that his spirit was crushed, and night fell over his stricken soul. Still, he struggled against the chill of his despair, and with all the strength of his being, he strove against misfortune.

"I will not succumb," thought he, "I will not be vanquished by this secret grief. I will not be a cause of sorrow to my friends and of triumph to my enemies,—I will live and overpower misfortune. Since all in Vienna is so dark, let me seek sunshine elsewhere—I will travel—Away from this stifling court to breathe the free air of heaven! Here I am an Emperor without an Empire, there at least I shall be a man to whom the world belongs wherever his steed has strength and speed to bear him. Yes, let me travel, that I may gird up my loins for the day when the sun of royalty shall rise for me—It will come! It will come! And when it dawns, it must find me strong, refreshed, and ready for action."

The Emperor made his preparations to depart, and then, in compliance with the requisitions of court etiquette, he sought his mother, to obtain her consent to his journey. Maria Theresa received her son with that half-mournful tenderness which lent such an indescribable fascination to her appearance and manners. She looked at him with a smile so winning and affectionate, that Joseph, in spite of himself, felt touched and gladdened; and the hand which his mother held out was most fervently pressed to his lips. It was the first time they had met in private, since the Empress had re-ascended her throne, and both felt the embarrassment and significance of the hour.

"I have longed for this moment with anxions and beating heart, my son," said the mother, while she drew him towards her. "I know, my child, that your heart is embittered towards me. You think that I would have been wiser as well as kinder had I never left my widow's cloister. But reflect, my dear son, as I have done, that my sceptre was given me by the hand of God, and that it would be sinful and cowardly in me to

give it into the hands of another, until He, in His wisdom, releases me from durance."

Joseph looked with genuine emotion at the agitated countenance of his mother. He saw the tears gather and fall from her eyes, he saw the quivering lip, the trembling frame; he felt that her integrity was beyond suspicion, her love for him beyond all question. The icy barriers that had closed upon his heart, gave way; he felt the warm and sunny glow of a mother's unspeakable love, and yielding to the impulse of the moment, he flung his arms around the Empress's neck, while he covered her face with kisses. "Mother, my dear mother!" sobbed he; and as if these words had opened the floodgates of all the love which filled his heart, he leaned his head upon her bosom, and was silent.

She smiled fondly upon him as he lay there; she returned his kisses, and stroked his fair, high forehead with her loving hand.

"Have you come back once more to your mother's heart, my darling!" whispered she. "Have you found your way back to the nest from whence you have wandered away so long, you stray birdling! Do you feel, my son, that the mother's bosom is the resting-place for her children? Oh, promise me, my heart's treasure, to trust and love me from this hour. We are human and, therefore, we are sinful and erring. I well know, dear boy, that I have many failings. From my heart I regret them; and if in your short life, as boy or man, I have grieved you, pardon me, dearest, for I have not meant it in unkindness."

"No, mother," said Joseph, "it is I who should sue for pardon. My heart is wild and stubborn; but I believe that it beats with a love as true and warm for my Empress as that of any other man in Austria. Have patience with me, then, my mother, for I am indeed a wandering bird; and in my wild flight, the shafts of this life have wounded and maimed me. But let us not speak of life—mine is a blasted one."

"Yes, my son, let us speak of your life, and of its misfortunes; for I know that Josepha of Bavaria is its chiefest sorrow. I have heard something of your unhappiness as a husband, and I pity you both."

"You pity her!" cried Joseph hastily. "How does *she* deserve my mother's compassion?"

The Empress laid her hand gently upon her son's shoulder. "She loves you Joseph," said she, "and I cannot refuse my sympathy to a woman who loves without hope of return."

"She loves me!" exclaimed Joseph with a laugh of derision. "Yes—and her love is my abhorrence and my shame. Her ogling glances make me shudder with disgust. When she turns upon me her blotched and pimpled face, and calls me by the name of husband, the courtiers sneer, and I——I feel as if I would love to forget my manhood and fell her to the earth."

"She is certainly ugly," said the Empress, shaking her head, "but uglier women than she have inspired love. And remember, Joseph, that you chose her yourself. Besides she has an excellent heart, if you would but take the trouble to explore its unknown regions. Moreover

you will one day be sole Emperor of Austria, and you should seek to give an heir to your throne. If Josepha were the mother of your children, you would no longer think her ugly."

"*She*, the mother of my children!" cried Joseph with such keenness of hate that the Empress shuddered. "Do you think me capable of such a degradation! You have not seen Van Swieten lately, or he would have told you that this woman, in addition to her other attractions, is troubled with a new malady."

—"Van Swieten did not mention it to me."

—"Well, then, your Majesty, I will mention it. This so-called Empress has the scurvy."

"Oh, my son, my poor boy!" cried the Empress, putting her arm around Joseph's neck as though she would have shielded him from infection. "This is a disgusting malady, but Van Swieten's skill will soon conquer it."

"Yes; but neither he nor you will ever conquer my hate for *her*. Not all the world could make me forgive the deception that was practiced upon me when she was allowed to become my wife. *This* woman the mother of my children! No! No one shall ever force me to be the father of anything born of Josepha of Bavaria!"

The Empress turned away and sighed. It was in vain. This was hatred strong as death. "May God comfort you both!" said she mournfully.

"Then he must put us asunder," cried out Joseph almost beside himself. "Believe me, mother," continued he, "death alone can bring us consolation; and may God forgive me when I pray that this atoning angel may come to my relief. She or I! No longer can I bear the ridicule of hearing this leper called an Empress!"

"Travel, then, my dear son," said his mother. "Travel and try to enjoy life away from Vienna. Perchance when you will have seen how little true happiness there is on earth, experience may come to your help, and teach you to be less unhappy."

The Emperor shook his head. "Nothing," replied he moodily, "can ever console me. Wherever I go, I shall hear the rattle of my prisoner's chain. Let us speak of it no more. I thank your Majesty for the permission to leave Vienna, and I thank you for this bright and sacred hour whose memory will bless me as long as I live. You have been to me this day a tender and sympathising mother. May I henceforward be to you a grateful and obedient son."

"You have not yet told me whither you design to travel," said the Empress after a pause.

"With your Majesty's permission, I would wish to travel in Bohemia and Moravia, and then I wish to visit the courts of Dresden and Munich. Both Sovereigns, through their Ambassadors, have sent me urgent invitations."

"It would be uncourteous to refuse," said the Empress earnestly. "It is politic for us, as far as possible, to bind all the German Princes to us by interchange of kindness."

"Since this is your Majesty's opinion, I hope that you will also consent to my acceptance of a third invitation. The King of Prussia has requested to have an interview with me at Torgau.

The brow of the Empress darkened.

"The King of Prussia!" said she almost breathless.

"Yes, your Majesty; and to be frank with you it is of all my invitations the one which I most desire to accept. I long to see face to face the King whom all Europe, friend or foe, unites in calling 'Frederick the Great'—great not only as a hero, but also as a law-giver."

"Yes," cried the Empress with indignation. "The King whom infidels delight to honor. I never supposed that *he* would presume to approach my son and heir as an equal. The Margrave of Brandenburg has a right to hold the wash-basin of the Emperor of Germany, but methinks he forgets his rank when he invites him to an interview."

"Ah, your Majesty," replied Joseph smiling, "the Margrave of Brandenburg has proved himself to be a King to our sorrow and our loss; in more than one battle has he held the wash-basin for Austria's Sovereign, but it was to fill it with Austrian blood."

Maria Theresa grew more and more angry as she heard these bold words. "It ill becomes my son," said she, "to be the panegyrist of the victor whose laurels were snatched from his mother's brow."

"Justice impels me to acknowledge merit, whether I see it in friend or foe," answered the Emperor. "Frederick of Prussia is a great man, and I only hope that I may ever resemble him."

The Empress uttered an exclamation, and her large eyes darted lightening glances.

"And thus speaks my son of the man who has injured and robbed his mother!" exclaimed she indignantly. "My son would press his hand who has spilled such seas of Austrian blood—would worship as a hero the enemy of his race! But so long as I reign in Austria, no Hapsburger shall condescend to give the hand to a Hohenzollern. There is an old feud between our houses; it cannot be healed."

"But if there is feud, your Majesty perceives that it is not the fault of the King of Prussia, since he holds out the right hand of friendship. I think it much more christian-like to bury feuds than to perpetuate them. Your Majesty sees then how Frederic has been calumniated, since he follows the christian precept which commands us to forgive our enemies."

"I wish to have nothing to do with him," said the Empress.

—"But as I had the honor of saying before, the King has sent me a pressing invitation, and you said just now that it would be uncourteous to refuse."

"Not the invitation of Frederic. I will not consent to that."

"Not even, if I beg it as a favor to myself?" asked Joseph fervently. "Not even if I tell you that I have no wish so near at heart as that of knowing the King of Prussia? Think of this day so brightened to me by the sunshine of your tenderness! Let the mother plead for me with

the Sovereign; for it is not to my Empress, it is to my mother that I confide my hopes and wishes. Oh, do not drown the harmony of this hour in discord! Do not interpose a cloud between us now!"

The Empress threw back her head—"You threaten me, Sir, with your displeasure? If there are clouds between us, see that they disperse from your own brow, and show me the face of a loyal subject and a respectful son. I will not consent to this visit to the King of Prussia: the very thought of it is galling to my pride."

—"Is that your Majesty's last word?"

—"It is my last."

"Then I have nothing farther to say, except that, as in duty bound, I will obey the orders of my Sovereign," replied Joseph, turning deathly pale. "I will refuse the invitation of the King of Prussia, and beg leave to retire."

Without awaiting the answer of his mother, he bowed, and hastily left the room.

"Dismissed like a school-boy!" muttered he, while tears of rage flowed down his cheeks. "Two chains on my feet—The chains of this accursed marriage, and the chains of my filial duty impede my every step. When I would advance, they hold me back and eat into my flesh. But it is of no use to complain, I must learn to bear my fate like a man! I will not rebel openly, therefore must I be silent. But my time will come!"——

He raised his head proudly, and with a firm step took the way to his private apartments. He went at once into his study where, on his writing-desk, lay the letter of the King of Prussia.

The Emperor seated himself at the desk, and with a heavy sigh, took up his pen. "Tell the King, your Master," wrote he, "that I am not yet my own master, I am the slave of another will. But I will find means some day to atone for the rudeness which I have been forced to offer him in return for his kindness." *

CHAPTER XLI.

DEATH, THE LIBERATOR.

The cruel enemy which had laid low so many branches of the noble house of Hapsburg, had once more found entrance into the imperial palace at Vienna. This terrific invisible foe, which from generation to generation had hunted the imperial family with such keen ferocity, was

* Hubner: Life of Joseph II. Vol. 1, p. 87.—Gross Hoffinger. Vol. 1, p. 116.

the small-pox. Emperors and Empresses of Austria had been its victims, and almost every one of Maria Theresa's children, bore, sooner or later, its brand upon their faces. This fiend had robbed them of the fair Isabella; and now its envenomed hand was laid upon the affianced bride of the King of Naples. The beautiful young Johanna was borne to the vaults of the Capuchins, while in the palace its inmates were panic-stricken to hear that Josepha of Bavaria, too, had taken the infection.

With such lightening swiftness had the venom darted through the veins of the unhappy Empress, that her attendants had fled in disgust from the pestiferous atmosphere of her chamber.

And there, with one hired nurse, whom the humane Van Swieten had procured from a hospital, lay the wife of the Emperor of Austria.

No loving hand smoothed the pillow beneath her burning head, or held the cooling cup to her blood-stained lips; no friendly voice whispered words of sympathy, or familiar face bent over her with looks of pity and of sorrow.

Alone and forsaken, as she had lived, so must she die! At his first wife's bedside, Joseph had watched day and night; but Josepha, he did not approach. In vain had she sent each day through Van Swieten, a petition to see him, if only once; Joseph returned, for all, answer that his duty to his mother and sisters forbade the risk.

And there lay the woman whose princely station mocked her misery —there she lay, unpitied and unloved. The inmates of the palace hurried past the infected room, stopping their breathing as they ran; the daughters of Maria Theresa never so much as enquired whether their abhorred sister-in-law was living or dead.

But the poor dying Empress was not all alone. Memory was there to haunt her with the mournful histories of her past life; all pale, all tearful, all despairing were these ghosts of an existence unchequered by one ray of happiness. Ah, with what a heart full of trembling hope had she entered the walls of this palace, which to her had proved a prisoner's cell. With what rapture had she heard the approaching step of that high-born Emperor, her husband, on their wedding-night; and oh! how fearful and how swift had fallen the bolt of his vengeance upon her sin! Memory whispered her of this.

She thought of the Emperor Francis, of his tender sympathy with her sorrow; she remembered how he had conspired with her on that fatal night at Inspruck. Then she remembered her husband's scorn, his withering insults, and her loss of consciousness. She thought how she had been found on the floor, and awakened by the terrifying intelligence of the Emperor's sudden death. Her tears, her despair, she remembered all; and her wail of sorrow at the loss of her kindest friend.* Memory whispered her of this.

She thought of her dreary life from that day forward; forever the shrinking victim of Christine's sneers, because she, and not the sister of Albert of Saxony, had become the Emperor's wife. Even the kind-

* Wraxall, vol. 2, page 411.

hearted Maria Theresa had been cold to her; even she, so loving, so affectionate had never loved Josepha. And the wretched woman thought how one day when the imperial family had dined together, and her entrance had been announced as that of "Her Majesty, the reigning Empress," the Archduchesses had sneered, and their mother had smiled in derision. Memory whispered her of this.*

She thought how her poor, martyred heart had never been able to give up all hope of love and happiness—how day by day she had striven through humility and obedience to appease her husband's anger. But he had always repulsed her. One day she had resolved that he *should* see her. She knew that the Emperor was in the daily habit of sitting on the balcony which divided her apartments from his. She watched his coming, and went forward to meet him. But when he saw her, in spite of her tears and supplications, with a gesture of disgust, he left the balcony and closed the window that led to it. The next day when she ventured a second time on the balcony, she found it separated by a high partition, shutting out all hope of seeing her husband more. And she remembered how one day afterwards, when she stepped out upon it, and her husband became aware of her presence, he had, in sight of all the passers-by, started back into his room, and flung down his window with violence.† Memory whispered her of this.

But now that she had expiated her first fault by two years of bitter repentance, now that death was about to free him from her hated presence forever, surely he would have mercy, and forgive her the crime of having darkened his life by their unhappy union.

Oh, that once more she could look into the heaven of those deep blue eyes! That once more before she died, she could hear the music of that voice which to her was like the harmony of angels' tongues!——

In vain!——Ever came Van Swieten with the same cold message—"The Emperor cannot compromise the safety of his relatives."——

At last, in the energy of despair, Josepha sat erect in her bed, and with her livid, bloody hands, she had written a letter which Van Swieten, at her earnest entreaty, delivered to the Emperor.

When, after a short absence, he returned with another denial, Josepha gave such a shriek of anguish that it was heard throughout the palace.

Van Swieten, overwhelmed by pity for the poor martyr, felt that he must make one more effort in her behalf. He could do nothing for her; bodily, she was beyond his power to heal; but he was resolved to be the physician of her broken heart, and, if it lay within the power of man, to soothe and comfort her dying moments.

With the letter which Joseph had returned to him, he hastened to the Empress Maria Theresa. To her he pictured the agony of her dying daughter-in-law, and besought her to soften the Emperor's heart.

The Empress listened to the long-tried friend of her house, with deep emotion. Tears of sympathy gathered in her eyes, and fell over her pale cheeks.

* Hubner: Life of Joseph II., page 27. † Caroline Pichler: Memoirs; vol. 1; page 182.

"Joseph will not grant her request, because he fears the infection for us?" asked she.

—"Yes, your Majesty, that is his pretext."

"He need not fear for me, and he can remain at a distance from the other members of the family," said Maria Theresa. "But I know what are his real sentiments. He hates Josepha, and it is his hatred alone that prevents him from granting her petition. He has a hard, unforgiving heart; he will never pardon his wife, not even when she lies cold in her grave."

"And she will not die until she has seen him," returned Van Swieten sadly. "It seems as if she had power to keep off death until the last aim of her being has been reached. Oh, it is fearful to see a soul of such fire and resolution in a body already decaying!"

The Empress shuddered. "Come, Van Swieten," said she resolutely, "I will know how to force Joseph to the bedside of his poor, dying wife."

She rose and would have gone to the door, but Van Swieten, all ceremony forgetting, held her back.

"I will call the Emperor myself," said he, "whither would your Majesty go?"

"Do not detain me," cried the Empress, "I must go to the Emperor."

"But what then?" asked Van Swieten, alarmed. The Empress, who had already crossed her ante-room, looked back with a countenance beaming with noble energy.

"I will do my duty," replied she. "I will do what christian feeling prompts. I will go to Josepha."

"No, your Majesty, no!" cried Van Swieten, again laying hands upon his Sovereign. "You owe it to your people and your children not to expose yourself to danger."

The Empress smiled sadly. "Doctor where did Isabella and Johanna take the infection? God called them to Himself, and God has shielded me. If it pleases Him that I also shall suffer this fearful scourge it will not be from contagion. It will be from His divine hand."

"No, no, your Majesty, it will be my fault," cried Van Swieten, "on my head will be the sin."

"I free you from all responsibility," replied she, "and say no more, for it is my duty to visit this deserted woman's death-bed. I have been less kind to her than I should have been, and less indulgent than on *my* death-bed I will wish to have been. I have not been a tender mother to her, living—let me comfort her, at least, now that she is dying."

"But she has not asked for your Majesty," persisted Van Swieten. "Wherefore——"

But suddenly he stopped, and a cry of horror was stifled between his lips. He had seen upon the forehead and cheeks of the Empress those small, dark spots which revealed to his experienced eye that it was too late to shield her from infection.

Maria Theresa was too excited to remark the paleness of Van Swieten. She continued:

"Go to Joseph and tell him that I await him at the death-bed of his wife. He will not dare to refuse her now. Go, doctor, we must both do our duty."

Van Swieten stepped aside, for he had blocked the door.

"Go, your Majesty," said he almost inaudibly. "I will not detain you, but will see the Emperor." He turned away, sick at heart. "One Empress dying, and another!——Oh, God grant me help that I may save my beloved Maria Theresa!"

Meanwhile the Empress hurried through the deserted halls of the palace to the room of the unhappy Josepha. As she approached the door, she heard her voice in tones of bitterest anguish. The sound filled the heart of Maria Theresa with deepest sympathy and sorrow. For one moment she stood irresolute, then gathering all her strength, she opened the door and went in. At the foot of the bed knelt two Ursuline nuns; those angels of mercy who are ever present to comfort the dying. The entrance of the Empress did not interrupt their prayers. They knew that no one could rescue the dying woman; they were praying heaven to comfort her departing soul.

But was she comforted? She ceased her lamentations and now lay still. She had heard the door open, and had struggled to rise, but she was too weak, and sank back with a groan. But she had seen the Empress, who, with the courage of a noble spirit, had conquered her disgust, and advancing to the bed, bent over Josepha with a sweet, sad smile. Josepha saw it, and the Empress looked more beautiful to her dying eyes than she had ever looked before.

"God bless you, my poor daughter," whispered she in broken accents. "I come to give you a mother's blessing and to beg of Almighty God to give you peace."

"Peace! peace!" echoed the sufferer, while the Empress, with a shudder, surveyed her black and bloated face. Suddenly she uttered a cry, and opened her arms. "He comes! he comes!" cried she; and her dying eyes opened with a ray of joy.

Yes—he came; he whom she had so longed to see. When Van Swieten told him that his mother had gone to Josepha's room, he started from his seat, and hurried through the corridor with such wild speed that the physician was unable to follow him.

Hastily approaching the bed, he put his arms gently around his mother, and sought to lead her away. "Mother," said he, imploringly, "leave this room; it is my duty to be here, not yours. Bid adieu to the Empress Josepha, and go from hence."

"Oh! oh!" groaned Josepha, falling back upon her pillow, "he does not come for my sake, but for his mother's."

"Yes, Josepha," replied Joseph, "I am here for your sake also, and I will remain with you."

"I also will remain," said Maria Theresa. "This sacred hour shall unite in love those who so long have been severed by error and misapprehension. Life is a succession of strivings to do well and relapses

into wrong. We too, have erred towards you, and we come with overflowing hearts to crave forgiveness. Forgive us, Josepha, as you hope to be forgiven!"

"Forgive me also, Josepha," said Joseph with genuine emotion. "Let us part in peace. Forgive me my obduracy, as from my soul I forgive you. We have both been unhappy——"

"No," interrupted Josepha, "I have not been unhappy, for I—I have loved. I die happy, for he whom I love, no longer turns abhorrent from my presence. I will die by the light of your pardoning smile. Death that comes every moment nearer, death, to me, brings happiness. He comes with his cold kiss, to take my parting breath—the only kiss my lips have ever felt. He brings me love and consolation. He takes from my face the hideous mask which it has worn through life, and my soul's beauty, in another world, shall win me Joseph's love! Oh, death, the comforter! I feel thy kiss. Farewell, Joseph, farewell!"

"Farewell," whispered Joseph and Maria Theresa.

A fearful pause ensued—a slight spasm—a gasp—and all was over.

"She is released!" said Van Swieten. "May her soul rest in peace."

The Ursulines entoned the prayers for the dead, and Maria Theresa, in tears clasped her hands and faltered out the responses. Suddenly she reeled, heaved a sigh, and fell back in the Emperor's arms.

"My mother, my dear mother," cried he, terrified. Van Swieten touched him lightly. "Do not arouse her. Yonder sleeps the one Empress in death—her pains are past; but this one, our beloved Maria Theresa, has yet to suffer. May God be merciful and spare her life!"

"Her life!" cried Joseph, turning pale.

—"Yes, her life," said Van Swieten solemnly. "The Empress has the small-pox."*

CHAPTER XLII.

THE MIRROR.

Six fearful weeks had gone by; six weeks of anxiety, suspense, and care, not only for the imperial family, but for all Austria. Like the lightening's flash, intelligence had gone through the land that the Empress was in danger; and her subjects had lost interest in everything

* The Empress Josepha died May 28, 1767, at the age of twenty-nine years. Her body was so decayed by small-pox that, before her death, the flesh fell from her in pieces. It was so completely decomposed that it was impossible to pay it the customary funeral honors. It was hurriedly wrapped up in a linen cloth, and coffined. From thence a rumor prevailed in Bavaria that she had not died, but had been forced into a cloister by her husband.

except the bulletins issued from the palace, where Van Swieten and Von Störk watched day and night by the bedside of their beloved sovereign. Deputations were sent to Vienna sympathising with the Emperor; and the avenues to the palace were thronged with thousands of anxious faces, each waiting eagerly for the bulletins that came out four times a day.

At last the danger had passed away. Van Swieten slept at home, and the Empress was recovering.——

—She had recovered. Leaning on the arm of the Emperor and surrounded by her happy children, Maria Theresa left her widow's cell to take up her abode in the new and splendid apartments which Joseph during her convalescence, had prepared for her reception.

She thanked her son for his loving attention, so contrary to his usual habits of economy, and therefore so much the more a proof of his earnest desire to give pleasure to his mother. She, in her turn, sought to give strong expression to her gratitude, by admiring with enthusiasm all that had been done for her. She stopped to examine the costly Turkey carpets, the gorgeous Gobelin tapestries on the walls, the tables carved of precious woods, or inlaid with jewels and Florentine mosaic, the rich furniture covered with velvet and gold, the magnificent lustres of sparkling crystal, and the elegant trifles that here and there were tastefully disposed upon *étagères* or *consoles*.

"Indeed, my son," cried the Empress, surveying the beautiful *suite*, "you have decorated these rooms with the taste and prodigality of a woman. It adds much to my enjoyment of their beauty to think that all this is the work of your loving hands. But one thing has my princely son forgotten; and therein he betrays his sex, showing that he is no woman, but in very truth a man."

"Have I forgotten something, your Majesty," asked Joseph.

—"Yes; something, my son, which a woman could never have overlooked. There are no mirrors in my splendid home."

"No mirrors!" exclaimed Joseph, looking confused. "No—yes—indeed your Majesty is right, I had forgotten them. But I beg a thousand pardons for my negligence, and I will see that it is repaired. I shall order the costliest Venitian mirrors to be made for these apartments."

While Joseph spoke, his mother had looked earnestly at his blushing face, and had perfectly divined both his embarrassment and its cause. She turned her eyes upon her daughters, who, with theirs cast down, were sharing their brother's perplexity.

"I must wait then until my mirrors are made," said the Empress after a pause. "You must think that I have less than woman's vanity, my son, if you expect me to remain for weeks without a greeting from my looking-glass. Of course the small-pox has not dared to disfigure the face of an Empress; I feel secure against its sacrilegeous touch. Is it not so, my little Marie Antoinette, has it not respected your mother's comeliness?"

The little Archduchess looked frightened at her mother's question, and

raised her large eyes timidly. "My imperial mama is as handsome as ever she was," said the child, in a trembling voice.

"And she will always be handsome to us, should she live until old age shall have wrinkled her face and paled her cheeks," cried Joseph warmly. "The picture of her youthful grace and beauty is engraved upon our hearts, and nothing can ever remove it thence. A noble and beloved mother, to the eyes of her children, is always beautiful."

The Empress said nothing in reply. She smiled affectionately upon her son, and inclining her head kindly to the others, she retired to her sitting-room. She walked several times up and down, and finally approached her mirror. In accordance with an old superstition, which pronounces it ill-luck to allow a looking-glass in the room of a sick person, this large mirror had been covered with a heavy silk curtain. The Empress drew it back, but instead of her looking-glass, she was confronted by a portrait of her late husband, the Emperor. She uttered an exclamation of surprise and joy, and contemplated the picture with a happy smile. "God bless thee, my Franz, my noble Emperor," whispered she. "Thou art ever the same; thy dear smile is unaltered, although I am no longer thy handsome bride, but a hideous and disfigured being; from whom my children deem it fit to conceal a looking-glass. Look at me with thy dear eyes, Franz; thou wert ever my mirror, and in thy light have I seen my brightest days of earthly joy. My departed beauty leaves me not one pang of regret, since thou art gone for whom alone I prized it. Maria Theresa has ceased to be a woman—she is nothing more than a Sovereign, and what to her are the scars of the small-pox? —But I must see what I look like," said she dropping the curtain. I will show them that I am not as foolish as they imagine."

She took up her little golden bell and rang. The door of the next room opened, and Charlotte Von Hieronymus entered. The Empress smiled and said, "It is time to make my toilet. I will dine to-day *en famille* with the Emperor, and I must be dressed. Let us go then into my dressing-room."

The maid of honor curtsied and opened the door. Every thing there was ready for the Empress. The tire-women, the mistress of the wardrobe, the maids of honor were all at their posts; and Charlotte hastened to take her place behind the large arm-chair in which the Empress was accustomed to have her hair dressed.

Maria Theresa saw that she had not been expected quite so soon in her dressing-room, for her cheval-glass was encumbered with shawls, dresses, and cloaks. She took her seat, smilingly saying to herself, "I shall see myself now, face to face."

Charlotte passed the comb through the short hair of the Empress, and sighed as she thought of the offering that had been laid in the Emperor's coffin; while the other maids of honor stood silent around. Maria Theresa, usually so familiar and talkative, at this hour, spoke not a word. She looked sharply at the cheval-glass, and began carelessly, and as if by chance, to remove with her foot the dresses that encumbered it; then,

as if ashamed of her artifice, she suddenly rose from her chair and with an energetic gesture, unbarred the mirror.

No mirror was there!——Nothing greeted the Empress's eyes save the empty frame. She turned a reproachful glance upon the little *coiffeuse.*

Charlotte fell upon her knees, and looked imploringly at the Empress. "It is my fault, your Majesty," said she, blushing and trembling, "I alone am the culprit. Pardon my maladroitness, I pray you."

"What do you mean, child?" asked the Empress.

"I—I broke the looking-glass, your Majesty. I stumbled over it in the dark and shivered the glass in pieces. I am very, very awkward—I am very sorry."

"What! You overturned this heavy mirror!" said Maria Theresa. "If so, there must have been a fearful crash. How comes it that I never heard any thing, I who for six weeks have been ill in the adjoining room?"

—"It happened just at the time when your Majesty was delirious with fever, and——"

—"And this mirror has been broken for three weeks!" said Maria Theresa, raising her eyebrows and looking intently at Charlotte's blushing face. "Three weeks ago! I think you might have had it replaced, Charlotte, by this time; hey, child?"

Charlotte's eyes sought the floor. At length she stammered, in a voice scarcely audible, "Please your Majesty, I could not suppose that you would miss the glass so soon. You have made so little use of mirrors since——"

"Enough of this nonsense," interrupted the Empress. "You have been well-drilled, and have played your part with some talent, but don't imagine that I am the dupe of all this pretty acting. Get up, child, don't make a fool of yourself, but put on my crape cap for me, and then go as quickly as you can for a looking glass."

—"A looking-glass, your Majesty!" cried Charlotte in a frightened voice.

"A looking-glass," repeated the Empress emphatically.

—"I have none, your Majesty."

—"Well, then," said Maria Theresa, her patience sorely tried by all this, "let some one with better eyes than yours look for one. Go, Sophie, and bid one of the pages bring me a mirror from my old apartments below—I do not suppose that there has been a general crashing of all the mirrors in the palace. In a quarter of an hour I shall be in my sitting-room. At the end of that time the mirror must be there—Be quick, Sophie, and you, Charlotte, finish the combing of my hair. There is but little to do to it now, so dry your tears."

"Ah!" whispered Charlotte, "I would there were more to do. I cannot help crying, your Majesty, when I see the ruins of that beautiful hair."

"And yet, poor child, you have spent so many weary hours over it," replied the Empress. "You ought to be glad that your delicate little

hands are no longer obliged to bear its weight." "Charlotte," said she suddenly, "you have several times asked for your dismissal. Now, you shall have it, and you shall marry your lover, Counsellor Greiner. I myself will give you away, and bestow the dowry."

The grateful girl pressed the hand of the Empress to her lips, while she whispered words of love and thanks.

Maria Theresa smiled, and took her seat, while Charlotte completed her toilet. Match-making was the Empress's great weakness, and she was in high spirits over the prospect of marrying Charlotte.

The simple, mourning costume was soon donned, and the Empress rose to leave her dressing room. As she passed the empty frame of the Psyche, she turned laughing towards her maid of honor.

"I give you this mirror, Charlotte," said she. "If the glass is really broken, it shall be replaced by the costliest one that Venice can produce. It will be to you a souvenir of your successful *début* as an actress on this day. You have really done admirably. But let me tell you one thing my child," continued Maria Theresa, taking Charlotte's hand in hers. "Never be an actress with your husband; but let your heart be reflected in all your words and deeds, as yonder mirror will give back the truthful picture of your face. Let all be clear and bright in your married intercourse; and see that no breath of deception ever cloud its surface. Take this wedding-gift, and cherish it as a faithful monitor. Truth is a light that comes to us from heaven; let us look steadily at it, for evil as well as for good. This is the hour of *my* trial—no great one—but still a trial. Let me now look at Truth, and learn to bear the revelation it is about to make."

She opened the door, and entered her sitting-room. Her commands had been obeyed, the mirror was in its place. She advanced with resolute step, but as she approached the glass, her eyes were instinctively cast down until she stood directly before it. The decisive moment had arrived—she was to see——what?

Slowly her eyes were raised, and she looked. She uttered a low cry, and started back in horror. She had seen a strange, scarred, empurpled face, whose colourless lips and hard features had filled her soul with loathing.

But with all the strength of her brave and noble heart, Maria Theresa overcame the shock, and looked again. She forced her eyes to contemplate the fearful image that confronted her once beautiful face, and long and earnestly she gazed upon it.

"Well!" said she, at last, with a sigh, "I must make acquaintance with this caricature of my former self. I must accustom myself to the mortifying fact that this is Maria Theresa, or I might some of these days call for a page to drive out that hideous old crone!—I must learn, too, to be resigned, for it is the hand of my heavenly Father that has covered my face with this grotesque mask. Since He has thought fit to deprive me of my beauty, let His divine will be done."

She remained for some moments silent; still gazing intently at the

mirror. Finally a smile overspread her entire countenance, and she nodded at the image in the glass.

"Well! You ugly old woman," said she aloud, "we have begun our acquaintance. Let us be good friends. I do not intend to make one effort to lesson your ugliness by womanly art; I must seek to win its pardon from the world by noble deeds and a well-spent life. Perhaps, in future days, when my subjects lament my homeliness, they may add that nevertheless I was a *good*, and——well! in this hour of humiliation we may praise one another, I think——perchance a *great* sovereign."

Here the Empress turned from the mirror and crossing over to the spot where the Emperor's portrait hung, she continued her soliloquy. "But Franz, dear Franz, you at least are spared the sight of your Theresa's transformation. I could not have borne this as I do, if you had been here to witness it. Now! what matters it? My people will not remind me of it, and my children have already promised to love me, and forgive my deformity. Sleep then, my beloved, until I rejoin you in heaven. There, the mask will fall for me, as for poor Josepha, and there we shall be glorified and happy."

The Empress then returned to the dressing-room where her attendants, anxious and unhappy, awaited her re-appearance. What was their astonishment to see her tranquil and smiling, not a trace of discontent upon her countenance!

"Let the steward of the household be apprized that I will have mirrors in all my apartments. They can be hung at once, and may be replaced by those which the Emperor has ordered, whenever they arrive from Venice. Let my page Gustavus repair to Cardinal Migazzi and inform him that to-morrow I will make my public thanksgiving in the Cathedral of St. Stephens. I shall go on foot and in the midst of my people, that they may see me and know that I am not ashamed of the judgments of God. Let Prince Kaunitz be advised that on to-morrow, after the holy sacrifice, I will receive him here—Open my doors and windows, and let us breathe the free air of heaven. I am no longer an invalid, my friends; I am strong, and ready to begin life anew."

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE INTERVIEW WITH KAUNITZ.

From earliest morning the streets of Vienna had been thronged by a joyous multitude, eagerly awaiting the sight of their restored Sovereign. All Vienna had mourned when the Empress lay ill; all Vienna now re-

joiced that she had recovered. Maria Theresa's road to the church was one long triumph—the outpouring of the sincere love which filled the hearts of her subjects. The Empress had done nothing to court this homage; for the notice given to the Cardinal had been as short as it possibly could be; but the news of the thanksgiving had flown from one end of Vienna to the other; and every corporation and society, the students of every college, and every citizen that was at liberty to leave home, flocked to congratulate the well-beloved Sovereign. The streets through which she had to pass, were lined with people bearing flags, banners and emblems, while near them stood the children of the educational and orphan asylums, which had been endowed by the munificence of the Empress. Lofty and lowly, rich and poor, stood in friendly contact with each other; even the nobles, imitating Maria Theresa's affability, mixed smiling and free among the people. All sense of rank and station seemed lost in the universal joy of the hour.

The bells chimed, and the people rent the air with shouts; for this was the signal of the Empress's *sortie* from the palace, and her people knew that she was coming to meet them. At last they saw her;—leaning on the arm of the Emperor, and followed by her other children she came, proud and resolute as ever. It was a beautiful sight, this Empress with her ten lovely sons and daughters, all joyful and smiling, as like simple subjects they walked through the streets towards the church to thank God for her recovery.

Inexpressible joy beamed from Maria Theresa's eyes—those superb eyes whose light the small-pox could not quench. Her great and noble soul looked out from their azure depths, and her head seemed encircled by a glory. In this hour she was no "ugly old crone," she was the happy, proud triumphant Empress, who in the eyes of her people was both beautiful and beloved. For the moment her widow's sorrows were forgotten; and when surrounded by so many loyal hearts, she sank on her knees before the altar of St. Stephens, she thanked God for the joy of this hour, and made a vow that her whole life should be devoted to the welfare of the people who on this day had given her so touching a welcome.

Exhausted not only by emotion, but by the heat of the July sun which shone on her head as she returned, the Empress at last reached her own rooms. Her tire-women hastened to relieve her of her coverings and to dry her moistened hair and face. But she waved them back.

"No, no, my friends, let me refresh myself in my own way. The air is more skillful than your hands, and is softer than your napkins. Open the doors and the windows, and place my arm-chair in the middle of the room."

"But, your Majesty," remonstrated one of the maids of honor, "you forget your condition. The draught will do you injury."

"I do not know what such fastidious people mean by a draught," replied the Empress, laughing and taking her seat, "but I know that the good God has sent this air from heaven for man's enjoyment, and when

I feel its cool kiss upon my cheek, I think that God is nigh. I have always loved to feel the breath of my Creator, and therefore it is that I have always been strong and healthy. See! See! how it blows away my mantle! You are right, sweet summer wind, I will throw the burthen away."

She let fall her mantle, and gave her bare shoulders to the wind, enjoying the breeze, and frightening her maids of honor out of their propriety.

"Now let me have some refreshment," cried she. Away sped two or three of the ladies, each one anxious to escape from the gust that was driving every thing before it in the Empress's rooms.

A page brought in a tray, and there, in the centre of the room, the Empress, although yet overheated, ate a plate of strawberries and drank a glass of lemonade cooled in ice.*

She was interrupted in the midst of all this comfort by another page, who announced Prince Kaunitz. Maria Theresa rose hastily from her seat. "Shut all the doors and windows," exclaimed she, "do not let him scent the draught."†

While her orders were being obeyed, she looked around to convince herself that every avenue was closed through which the wind might penetrate, and that done, she ordered the door to be thrown open, and the Prince admitted.

Prince Kaunitz approached with his usual serious and tranquil demeanor. He bowed low and said, "I congratulate your Majesty and the Austrian empire upon your happy recovery. I, who have no fear of any other enemy, have trembled before this deadly foe of your imperial house. For all other dangers, we have craft and valor, but against this one, no bravery or statesmanship can avail."

"But skill has availed; and to Van Swieten, under Providence, I am indebted for my life," cried the Empress, warmly. "I know Kaunitz that you have but little faith in heavenly or earthly physicians; and I pray God that you may never acquire it through the bitter experience of such suffering as I have but lately endured. Often during my sleepless nights I have longed for a sight of your grave face, and it grieved me to think that perchance we might never meet again to talk of Austria, and plan for Austria's welfare."

"But I knew that your Majesty would recover," said Kaunitz, with unusual warmth, "I knew it, for Austria cannot spare you, and so long as there is work for you here below, your strong mind will bid defiance to death."

Maria Theresa colored with pleasure. It was so seldom that Kaunitz gave utterance to such sentiments, that his praise was really worth having.

"You think then that Austria needs me," said she.

* Caroline Pichler; Memoirs, vol. 1, page 18, 19. Maria Theresa supported without pain extreme degrees of heat and cold. Summer and winter her windows stood open, and often the snow-flakes have been seen to fall upon her *escritoir* while she wrote. The Emperor Joseph, in winter, always came into his mother's rooms wrapped up in furs.

† Wraxall, vol. 2, page 380.

—"I do indeed, your Majesty."

—"But if God had called me to himself, what would you have done?"

—"I would still have labored as in duty bound to my country, but I would have owed a life-long grudge to Providence, for its want of wisdom."

"You are a scoffer, Kaunitz," said the Empress. "Your Creator is very merciful to allow you time to utter the unchristian sentiments which are forever falling from your lips. But God sees the heart of man, and He knows that yours is better than your words. Since the loving, all-suffering Lord forgives you, so will I. But tell me, how has my empire fared during these six long weeks?"

"Well, your Majesty. Throughout the day, I worked for myself, throughout the night for you, and nothing is behind hand. Each day adds to our internal strength, that gives us consideration abroad, and soon we shall hold our own as one of the four great European powers, mightier than in the days when the sun never set upon Austrian realms. The empire of Charles Fifth was grand, but it was not solid. It resembled a reversed pyramid, in danger of being crushed by its own weight. The pyramid to-day is less in size, but greater in base, and therefore firmer in foundation.* Strength does not depend so much upon size as upon proportion; and Austria, although her territory has been vaster, has never been so truly powerful as she is in this, the reign of your Majesty."

—"If Silesia were but ours again! As for Naples and Alsatia, they were never more than *disjecta membra* of our empire; and they were always less profit than trouble. But Silesia is ours—ours by a common ancestry, a common language, and the strong tie of affection. I shall never recover from the blow that I received when I lost Silesia."

"We shall have restitution some of these days, your Majesty," said Kaunitz.

"Do you mean to say that I shall ever recover Silesia?" asked the Empress, eagerly.

—"From the King of Prussia? No—never. He holds fast to his possessions, and his sharp sword would be unsheathed to-morrow, were we to lay the weight of a finger upon his right to Silesia. But we shall be otherwise revenged, in the day when we shall feel that we have attained the noon-tide of our power and strength."

"You do not intend to propose to me a war of aggression!" said the Empress, shocked.

"No, your Majesty, but if we should see two eagles tearing to pieces a lamb which is beyond hope of rescue, our two-headed eagle must swoop down upon the robbers, and demand his share of the booty. I foresee evil doings among our neighbors. Catharine of Russia is bold and unscrupulous: Frederic of Prussia knows it, and he already seeks the friendship of Russia, that he may gain an accomplice as well as an ally."

* Letters of a French Traveller. Vol. 1, p. 421.

"God forbid that I should follow in the wake of the King of Prussia!" cried Maria Theresa. "Never will I accept, much less seek to know this cruel woman, whose throne is blood-stained, and whose heart is dead to every sentiment of womanly virtue and honor!"

"Your Majesty need have no intercourse with the *woman*, you have only to confer with the sovereign of a powerful neighboring empire."

"Russia is not a neighbouring empire," exclaimed the Empress. "I wrote on one occasion to the Empress Elizabeth, 'I will always be your friend, but with my consent you shall never be my neighbor.'* Poland lies between Russia and Austria."

"Yes," said Kaunitz, with one of his meaning smiles, "but how long will Poland divide us from Russia?"

"Man!" exclaimed Maria Theresa with horror, "you do not surely insinuate that we would dare to lay a hand upon Poland!"

—"Not we, but the Empress of Russia will——"

—"Impossible! impossible! She dare not do it——"

Kaunitz shrugged his shoulders. "*Dare*, your Majesty? Some things we dare not attempt because they are difficult; others are difficult because we dare not attempt them.† The Empress of Russia dares do anything; for she knows how to take matters easily, and believes in her own foresight. Despots are grasping, and Catharine is a great despot. We must make haste to secure her good-will, that when the time comes we may all understand one another."

"I!" exclaimed the Empress, "I should stoop so low as to seek the good-will of this wicked Empress, who mounted her throne upon the dead body of her husband, while her lovers stood by, their hands reeking with the blood of the murdered Emperor! Oh, Kaunitz! You would never ask of me to do this thing!"

—"Your Majesty is great enough to sacrifice your personal antipathies to the good of your country. Your Majesty once condescended to write to Farinelli, and *this* act won us the friendship of the King of Spain and of his sons; *this* letter will be the means of placing an Archduchess of Austria on the throne of Naples."

"Would have been," said Maria Theresa, heaving a sigh. "The bride of the King of Naples is no more! My poor Joanna! My beautiful child!"

—"But the Archduchess Josepha lives, and I had intended to propose to your Majesty to accept the hand of the King of Naples for her Highness."

—"Is the House of Naples then so desirous of our alliance that it has already offered its heir to another one of my daughters? I am sorry that we should be obliged to accept, for I have heard of late that the King is an illiterate and trifling fellow, scarcely better than the Lazzaroni who are his chosen associates. Josepha will not be happy with such a man."

—"Your Majesty, her Highness does not marry the young ignoramus

* Historical. † Kaunitz's own words. Hormayr Plutarch; vol. 12, page 271.

who to be sure knows neither how to read nor write; she marries the King of Naples, and surely if anything can gracefully conceal a man's faults, it is the purple mantle of royalty."

"I will give my child to this representative of royalty," said Maria Theresa sadly, "but I look upon her as a victim of expediency. If she is true to her God and to her spouse, I must be content, even though, as a woman, Josepha's life will be a blank."

"And this alliance," said Kaunitz, still pursuing the object for which he was contending, "this marriage is the result of one letter to Farinelli. Your Majesty once condescended to write to La Pompadour. *That* letter won the friendship of France, and its fruits will be the marriage of the Archduchess Marie Antoinette, and her elevation to the throne of France. Your Majesty sees then what important results have sprung from two friendly letters which my honored Sovereign has not disdained to write. Surely when wise statesmanship prompts your Majesty to indite a third letter to the Empress of Russia, you will not refuse its counsels and suggestions. The two first letters were worth to us two thrones; the third may chance to be worth a new province."

"A new province!" exclaimed the Empress, coming closer to Kaunitz, and in her eagerness laying her hand upon his shoulder. "Tell me—what wise and wicked stratagem do you hatch within your brain to-day?"

"My plans, so please your Majesty," said the Prince, raising his eyes so as to meet those of the Empress, "my plans are not of to-day. They——"

But suddenly he grew dumb, and gazed horror-stricken at the face of Maria Theresa. Kaunitz was short-sighted, and up to this moment he had remained in ignorance of the fearful change that had forever transformed the Empress's beauty into ugliness. The discovery had left him speechless.

"Well?" cried the Empress, not suspecting the cause of his sudden silence. "You have not the courage to confide your plans to me! They must be dishonorable. If not, in the name of heaven, speak."

The Prince answered not a word. The shock had been too great; and as he gazed upon that scarred and blotched face, once so smooth, fair and beautiful, his presence of mind forsook him, and his diplomacy came to naught.

"Forgive me, your Majesty," said he, as pale and staggering he retreated towards the door. "A sudden faintness has come over me, and every thing swims before my vision. Let me entreat your permission to retire."

Without awaiting the Empress's reply, he made a hasty bow, and fled from the room.

The Empress looked after him in utter astonishment. "What has come over the man?" said she to herself. "He looks as if he had seen a ghost! Well—I suppose it is nothing more than a fit of eccentricity."

And she flung back her head with a half-disdainful smile. But as she

did so, her eyes lit accidentally upon the mirror, and she saw her own image reflected in its bright depths.

She started; for she had already forgotten the "ugly old woman" whom she had apostrophised on the day previous. Suddenly she burst into a peal of laughter, and cried out, "No wonder poor Kaunitz looked as if he had seen something horrible! HE SAW ME—and I am the Medusa that turned him into stone. Poor, short-sighted man! He had been in blissful ignorance of my altered looks until I laid my hand upon his shoulder. I must do something to heal the wound I have inflicted. I owe him more than I can well repay. I will give him a brilliant decoration, and that will be a cure-all; for Kaunitz is very vain and very fond of show."

While the Empress was writing the note which was to accompany her gift, Kaunitz, with his handkerchief over his mouth, was dashing through the palace corridors to his carriage. With an impatient gesture he motioned to his coachman to drive home with all speed.

Not with his usual stateliness, but panting, almost running, did Kaunitz traverse the gilded halls of his own palace, which were open to-day in honor of the Empress's recovery, and were already festive with the sound of the guests assembling to a magnificent dinner which was to celebrate the event. Without a word to the Countess Clary, who came forward elegantly attired for the occasion, Kaunitz flew into his study, and sinking into an arm chair, he covered his face with his hands. He felt as if he had been face to face with death! That was not his beautiful, majestic, superb Maria Theresa; it was a frightful vision, a messenger from the grave, that forced upon his unwilling mind the dreadful futurity that awaits all who are born of woman!

"Could it be! Was this indeed the Empress, whose beauty had intoxicated her subjects, as drawing from its sheath the sword of St. Stephen, she held it flashing in the sun, and called upon them to defend her rights! Oh, could it be that this woman, once beautiful as Olympian Juno, had been transformed into such a caricature!"

A thrill of pain darted through the whole frame of the Prince, and he did what, since his mother's death, he had never done—he wept.

But gradually he overcame his grief, the scanty fountain of his tears dried up, and he resumed his cold and habitual demeanor. For a long time he sat motionless in his chair, staring at the wall that was opposite. Finally he moved towards his *escritoire* and took up a pen.

He began to write instructions for the use of his secretaries. They were never to pronounce in his presence the two words, DEATH and SMALL POX. If those words ever occurred in any correspondence or official paper that was to come before his notice, they were to be erased. Those who presented themselves before the Prince were to be warned that these fearful words must never pass their lips in his presence. A secretary was to go at once to the Countess Clary, that she might prepare the guests of the Prince, and caution them against the use of the offensive words.*

* Hormayr. Austrian Plutarch. Vol. 12, p. 274.

When Kaunitz had completed these singular instructions, he rang, and gave the paper to a page. As he did so, a servant entered with a letter and a package from her Majesty, the Empress.

The package contained the Grand Cross of the order of St. Stephen, but instead of the usual symbol, the cross was composed of costly brilliants. The letter was in the Empress's own hand—a worthy answer to the "Instructions" which Kaunitz was in the act of sending to his secretaries.

The Empress wrote as follows: "I send you the Grand Cross of St. Stephen; but as a mark of distinction you must wear it in brilliants. You have done so much to dignify it, that I seize with eagerness the opportunity which presents itself to offer you a tribute of that gratitude which I feel for your services, and shall continue to feel until the day of my death.* MARIA THERESA."

CHAPTER XLIV

THE ARCHDUCHESS JOSEPHA.

THE plans of the Empress and her Prime Minister approached their fulfillment; Austria was about to contract ties of kindred with her powerful neighbors.

Maria Theresa had again consented to receive the King of Naples as her son-in-law, and he was the affianced husband of the Archduchess Josepha. The palace of Lichtenstein, the residence of the Neapolitan Ambassador was, in consequence of the betrothal, the scene of splendid festivities, and in the imperial palace preparations were making for the approaching nuptials. They were to be solemnised on the fifteenth of October, and immediately after the ceremony the young bride was to leave Vienna for Naples.

Everything was gayety and bustle; all were deep in consultation over dress and jewels; and the great topic of court conversation was the *parure* of brilliants sent by the King of Spain, whose surpassing magnificence had called forth an expression of astonishment from the lips of the Empress herself.

The *trousseau* of the Archduchess was exposed in the apartments which had once been occupied by the Empress and her husband; and now Maria Theresa, followed by a bevy of wondering young Archduchesses, was examining her daughter's princely wardrobe, that with her own eyes she might be sure that nothing was wanting to render it worthy of a Queen-elect.

* Wraxall II: 479.

The young girls burst into exclamations of rapture when they approached the table where, in its snowy purity, lay the bridal dress of white velvet, embroidered with pearls and diamonds.

"Oh!" cried little Marie Antoinette, while she stroked it with her pretty, rosy hand, "Oh, my beautiful Josepha, you will look like an angel, when you wear this lovely white dress."

"Say rather, like a queen," returned Josepha, smiling. "When a woman is a queen, she is sure to look like an angel in the eyes of the world."

"It does not follow, however, that because she is a queen, she shall be as happy as an angel," remarked the Archduchess Maria Amelia, who was betrothed to the Duke of Parma.

"Nevertheless, I would rather be the unhappy queen of an important kingdom than the happy wife of a poor little prince," replied Josepha, hastily, as raising her superb diadem of brilliants, she advanced to a mirror and placed it upon her brow. "Do you think," asked she proudly, "that I can be very miserable while I wear these starry gems upon my forehead? Oh no! If it were set with thorns that drew my blood, I would rather wear this royal diadem than the light coronet of an insignificant duchess."

"And I," exclaimed Amelia, indignantly, "would rather wear the ring of a beggar than be the wife of a king who neither reads nor writes, and throughout all Europe is known by the name of a Lazzarone."

"Before whom millions of subjects must, nevertheless, bend the knee, and who, despite of all, is a powerful and wealthy monarch," returned Josepha, angrily.

"That is, if his master, the Marquis Tannucci allows it," cried the Archduchess Caroline, laughing. "For you know very well, Josepha, that Tannucci is the king of your Lazzaroni-king, and when he behaves amiss, puts him on his knees for punishment. Now when you are his wife, you can go and comfort him in his disgrace, and kneel down in the corner by his side. How interesting it will be!"

Upon this the Archduchess Amelia began to laugh, while her sisters joined in—all except Marie Antoinette, who with an expression of sympathy, turned to Josepha.

"Do not mind them, my Josepha," said she, "if your king cannot read, you will teach him, and he will love you all the better, and in spite of everything, you will be a happy Queen in the end."

"I do not mind them, Antoinette," returned Josepha, her eyes flashing with anger, "for I well know that they are envious of my prosperity, and would willingly supplant me. But my day of retaliation will come. It will be that on which my sisters shall be forced to acknowledge the rank of the Queen of Naples, and to yield her precedence!"

A burst of indignation would have been the reply to these haughty words, had the Archduchess Caroline not felt a hand upon her shoulder, and heard a voice which commanded silence.

The Empress, who at the beginning of this spicy dialogue, had been

absent on her survey in a neighboring apartment, had returned, and had heard Josepha's last words. Shocked and grieved, she came forward, and stood in the midst of her daughters.

"Peace!" exclaimed the imperial mother. "I have heard such words of arrogance fall from your lips as must be expiated by humble petition to your Creator. Sinful creatures are we all, whether we be princesses or peasants; and if we dare to lift our poor heads in pride of birth or station, God will surely punish us. With a breath He overturns the sceptres of kings—with a breath He hurls our crowns to earth, until cowering at His feet, we acknowledge our unworthiness. It becomes a queen to remember that she is a mortal, powerless without the grace of God to do one good action, and wearing under the purple of royalty the tattered raiment of humanity. But it is these absurd vanities that have stirred up the demon of pride in your hearts," continued the Empress, giving a disdainful toss to the velvet wedding-dress; "let us leave these wretched gewgaws and betake ourselves to the purer air of our own rooms."

She waved her hand, and motioning to her daughters, they followed her, silent and ashamed. All had their eyes cast down, and none saw the tears that now fell like rain from Josepha's eyes. She was thoroughly mortified and longed to escape to her room; but as she bent her head to take leave of the Empress, the latter motioned her to remain.

"I have as yet a few words to speak with you, my daughter," said Maria Theresa, as she closed the door of her dressing-room. "Your haughty conduct of this day has reminded me that you have a sacred duty to perform. The vanities of the world will have less weight with you when you return from the graves of your ancestors. Go to the imperial vault, and learn from the ashes of the Emperors and Empresses who sleep there, the nothingness of all worldly splendor. Kneel down beside your dear father's tomb, and pray for humility. Tell him to pray for me, Josepha, for my crown weighs heavily upon my brow, and I fain would be at rest."

Josepha made no answer. She stared at her mother with an expression of horror and incredulity, as though she meant to ask if she had heard her words aright.

"Well my daughter!" cried Maria Theresa, surprised at Josepha's silence. "Why do you linger? Go—go child, and recalling the sins of your life, beg pardon of God, and the blessing of your deceased father."

"Give me that blessing yourself, dear mother," faltered the Princess, clasping her hands, and looking imploringly at the Empress. My father's spirit is here, it is not in that fearful vault."

The Empress started. "I cannot believe," said she, with severity, "that my daughter has cause to tremble before the ashes of her father. The guilty alone fear death; innocence is never afraid!"

"Oh mother! mother, I have no sin upon my soul and yet I——

"And yet," echoed the Empress as Josepha paused.

"And yet I shiver at the very thought of going thither," said the Archduchess. "Yes, your Majesty, I shiver at the thought of encountering the black coffins and mouldering skeletons of my forefathers. Oh, mother, have pity on my youth and cowardice! Do not force me to that horrid place!"

"I have no right to exempt you from the performance of this sacred duty, Josepha," replied the Empress firmly. "It is a time-honored custom of our family, that the Princesses of Austria, who marry kings, should take leave of the graves of their ancestors. I cannot release the Queen of Naples from her duty. She will wear the crown, she must bear the cross."

"But I dread it! I dread it so!" murmured Josepha. "I shudder at the thought of Josepha's corpse. I never loved her, and she died without forgiving me. Oh, do not force me to go alone in the presence of the dead!"

"I command you to go into the vault where repose the holy ashes of your fathers," repeated the Empress sternly. "Bend your lofty head, my daughter, and throw yourself with humility upon the graves of your ancestors, there to learn the vanity of all human greatness and human power."

"Mercy, mercy!" cried the terrified girl. "I cannot, I cannot obey your dreadful behest."

"Who dares say 'I cannot' when duty is in question?" exclaimed the Empress indignantly. "You are my daughter and my subject still, and I will see whether you intend to defy my authority."

So saying the Empress rose and rang her little golden bell. "The carriage of the Archduchess Josepha," said she to the page who answered the summons. "Let a courier be despatched to the Capuchin fathers to inform them that in a quarter of an hour the Princess will visit the imperial vault. Now Princess," continued the Empress as the page left the room, "you will not surely have the hardihood to say again 'I cannot.'"

"No," faltered Josepha, "I will obey. But one thing I must ask. Does your Majesty wish to kill me?"

"What do you mean, child?"

"I mean that I will die, if you force me to this vault," replied Josepha, pale as death. "I feel it in the icy chill that seizes my heart even now. I tell you, mother, that I will die, if you send me to the fearful place where Josepha's corpse infects the air with its death-mould. Do you still desire that I shall go?"

"You need not seek to frighten me, Josepha; stratagem will avail you nothing," replied the Empress coldly. "It is not given to mortals to know the hour of their death, and I cannot allow myself to be influenced by such folly. Go, my child, there is nothing to fear; the spirits of your forefathers will shield you from harm," added she kindly.

"I go," replied Josepha; "but I repeat it. My mother has sentenced me to death."

She bent her head and left the room. The Empress looked after her daughter as she went, and a sudden pang shot through her heart. She felt as though she could not let her go—she felt as if she *must* call her back, and pressing her to her heart, release her from the ordeal which tried her young soul so fearfully.

Just then the Princess, who had reached the door, turned her large dark eyes with another look of entreaty. This was enough to restore the Empress to her self-possession.

She would not call her back. She saw, rather than heard the trembling lips that strove to form a last appeal for mercy, and the graceful figure vanished.

When she was out of sight, all the tenderness, all the anxiety of the Empress returned. She rushed forwards, then suddenly stood still, and shaking her head she murmured, "No! no! It would be unpardonable weakness. I cannot yield. She must go to the grave of her fathers."

CHAPTER XLV

THE DEPARTURE.

The messenger has returned, the carriage waited, and Josepha had no longer a pretext for delaying her visit to the vault. She *must* obey her mother's behest—she *must* perform the horrible pilgrimage! Pale and speechless she suffered her attendants to throw her mantle around her, and then, as if in obedience to some invisible phantom that beckoned her on, she rose from her seat, and advanced rigidly to the door. Suddenly she paused and, turning to her maid of honor, she said, "Be so kind as to call my sister Antoinette, I must bid her farewell."

A few moments elapsed, when the door opened and the Archduchess Maria Antoinette flew into her sister's arms. Josepha pressed her closely to her heart.

"I could not go, my darling," whispered she, "without once more seeing you. Let me look, for the last time, upon that sweet face, and those bright eyes that are lit up with the blue of heaven. Kiss me, dear, and promise not to forget me."

"I can never forget, never cease to love you, sister," replied the child, returning Josepha's caresses. "But why do you say farewell? Why are you crying? Are you going to leave us already for that young King who is to take you away from us? Oh, Josepha, how can you love a man whom you have never seen!"

"I do not love the King of Naples, dear child," said Josepha sadly. "Oh, Antoinette! would you could understand my sorrows!"

"Speak, dear sister," replied Antoinette tenderly. "Am I not twelve years old, and does not the Countess Lerchenfeld tell me, every time I do wrong, that I am no longer a child? Tell me, then, what grieves you. I will keep your secret, I promise you."

"I weep," said Josepha, "because it is so sad to die before one has known the happiness of living."

"Die!" exclaimed Antoinette, turning pale. "Why do you speak of dying, you who are about to become a queen?"

—"I shall never live to be a queen, my sister. The Empress has commanded me to descend into the imperial vault. I *go* thither to-day —in a few days I shall be *carried* thither never to return.* Farewell, Antoinette—I leave you to-day, but I leave you for the grave."

"No, no, no!" screamed the child. "You shall not go. I will throw myself at the feet of the Empress, and never rise until she has released you, dear sister."

—"Have you yet to learn that the Empress never retracts her words! It is useless. I must go, and my death-warrant is signed."

"It shall not be!" cried Antoinette, beside herself with grief. "Wait, dear Josepha, until I return. I go to obtain your release."

—"What can you say to the Empress, my poor little one?"

—"I will beg for mercy, and if she will not listen, I shall rise and tell her fearlessly. Your Majesty, Josepha says that you have sentenced her to death. No mortal has power over the life of an imperial Prineess; God alone has that power. My sister must not go into the vault, for if she does, she dies, and that by *your* hand."

And as the child spoke these words, she threw back her head, and her eyes darted fire. She looked like her mother.

"I see, Antoinette," said Josepha with a smile, "that you would not submit tamely to death. You have a brave soul, my little sister, and will know how to struggle against misfortune. But I—I have no spirit, I can only suffer and obey; and before I die I must open my heart to you—you shall receive my last thoughts."

Marie Antoinette looked with tearful eyes at her sister, and sank, white as a lily, on her knees.

"I am ready," said she, folding her hands, while Josepha bent forward and laid her hand as with a blessing upon her soft blond hair.

"When I am dead," said Josepha, "go to my sisters and beg them to forgive my unkind words. Tell them that I loved them all, dearly. Say to Marie Amelia that she must pardon my unsisterly conduct. It arose, not from haughtiness, but from despair. For, Antoinette, I hated the King of Naples, and well I knew what a miserable fate awaited me as his Queen. But there was no rescue for me, that I knew, so I tried to hide my grief under the semblance of exultation. Tell her to forgive me for the sake of the tears I have shed in secret over this hated betrothal. How often have I called upon death to liberate me; and yet,

* The Princess's own words. See Memoires sur la vie privee de Maria Antoinette, par Madame Campan; vol. 1, page 88.

now that the dark shadow of Azrael's icy wing is upon me—I fear to die."

"Let me die for you sister!" exclaimed Antoinette resolutely. "Give me the hood and mantle. I will cover my face, and no one will know that it is I, for I am almost as tall as you. If I never return from the vault alive, the Empress will pardon you for my sake. Oh, I should die happy, if my death would rescue you, Josepha."

And Antoinette attempted to draw off her sister's mantle, and put it around her own shoulders. But Josepha withheld her.

"Dear child," said she, kissing her, "is it possible that you are willing to die for me, you who are so young and happy?"

"For that very reason, Josepha," said Antoinette, "it might be well to die. Who knows what sorrows the world may have in reserve for me! Let me die to-day, dear sister, let me——"

At that moment the door opened and the maid of honor of the Archduchess Josepha appeared.

"Pardon me, your Highness," said she depreeatingly. "A page of her Majesty is here to know if you have gone to the imperial vaults."

"Apprize her Majesty that I am about to leave," replied Josepha with dignity. Taking Antoinette in her arms she said in a whisper: "You see, it is I who must die. Farewell, dearest, may you live and be happy."

So saying, she tore herself away from the weeping child and hastened to her carriage. Antoinette with a shriek rushed forward to follow, but Josepha had fastened the door. The poor child sank on her knees and began to pray. But prayer brought no consolation. She thought of her sister dying from terror and she wrung her hands while she cried aloud.

Suddenly she ceased, started to her feet, and the blood mounted to her pale face.

"The secret door!" exclaimed she. "I had forgotten it." She crossed the room towards a picture that hung on the wall opposite, and touching a spring in its frame, it flew back and revealed a communication with one of the state-apartments. She sprang through the opening, her golden hair flying out in showers behind her, her cheeks glowing, her eyes flashing and her heart beating wildly as she sped through the palace to the Empress's apartments. The sentry would have stopped her, but throwing him off with an imperious gesture, she darted through the door, and all ceremony forgetting, flew to the sitting-room of the Empress, and threw herself at her mother's feet.

CHAPTER XLVI.

INNOCULATION.

MARIA THERESA was standing in the embrasure of a window, and she scarcely turned her head as she heard the rustling behind her. She took no notice of the breach of etiquette of which Antoinette was guilty, in rushing unannounced upon her solitude. Her eyes were fixed upon the Chapel of the Capuchins in whose vaults lay so many whom she had loved. Her heart and thoughts were within those gray walls, now with her husband and her dead children, now with Josepha, for whom she felt pang after pang of anxiety. In an absent tone she turned and said:

"What brings you hither, little Antoinette?"

"Josepha, dear mother! Have pity on Josepha!"

The Empress, with a thrill of joy at her heart, replied, "she did not go then!"

"Yes, yes, she went because you forced her to go, but she went with a broken heart. Oh mama! Josepha says that the dead are waiting to take her with them. May I not order my carriage and fly to bring her back?"

Maria Theresa said nothing. Her eyes turned first upon the beautiful little suppliant at her feet, then they wandered out through the evening haze, and rested on the dark towers of the Capuchin Chapel.

"Oh, dear mama," continued Antoinette, "if I may not bring her back, at least let me share her danger. Be good to your poor little Antoinette. You promised if I behaved well to do something for me, mama, and now I deserve a reward, for Count Brandeis says that I have been a good girl of late. Do not shake your head, it would make me better if I went to pray with Josepha. You do not know how vain and worldly I am. When I saw Josepha's beautiful jewels I was quite envious of her, and indeed, mama, no one needs solitude and prayer more than I. Let me go and pray for grace by the grave of my father."

The Empress laid her hand upon her daughter's head, and looked at her beautiful countenance with an expression of deepest tenderness.

"You are a noble-hearted child, my Antoinette," said she. "With such sensibility as yours, you are likely to suffer from the faults and misconceptions of the world; for magnanimity is so rare that it is often misunderstood. You would share your sister's danger, while believing in its reality! No, no, darling, I cannot accept your generous sacrifice: It would be useless, for Josepha's terror will shorten her prayers. Before you could reach the Chapel, she will have left it——"

Maria Theresa paused and again looked out from the window. The

rolling of carriage wheels was distinctly heard coming towards the palace. Now it ceased, and the sentry's voice was heard at the gates.

"Ah!" cried the Empress, joyfully, "I was right. It is Josepha. Her devotions have not been long; but—I will confess to you, Antoinette. that—a weight is lifted from my heart. I have not breathed freely since she left my presence. Oh! I will forgive her for her short prayers, for they have shortened my miserable suspense!"

"Let me go and bring her to you, mama," cried Antoinette, clapping her hands, and darting towards the door. But the Empress held her back.

—"No, dear, remain with me. Josepha's heart will reveal to her that her mother longs to welcome her back."

At that moment a page announced the Countess Lerchenfeld.

"It is not my child," cried the Empress, turning pale.

The Countess, too, was very pale, and she trembled as she approached the imperial mother.

"She is dead!" murmured Marie Antoinette, sinking almost fainting to the floor.

But the Empress called out, "Where is my child? In mercy tell me why you are here without her?"

"Please your Majesty," replied the Countess, "I come to beg that you will excuse her Highness. She has been suddenly taken sick. She was lifted insensible to the carriage, and has not yet recovered her consciousness."

Maria Theresa reeled, and a deathly paleness overspread her countenance. "Sick!" murmured she, with quivering lip. "What—what happened?"

"I do not know, your Majesty. According to your imperial command I accompanied her Highness to the Chapel. I went as far as the stairway that leads to the crypts. Her Highness was strangely agitated. I tried to soothe her, but as she looked below, and saw the open door, she shuddered, and clinging to me, whispered: 'Countess—I scent the loathsome corpse that even now stirs in its coffin at my approach.' Again I strove to comfort her, but all in vain. Scarcely able to support herself, she bade me farewell, and commended herself to your Majesty. Then, clinging to the damp walls, she tottered below, and disappeared."

"And you did not hold her back!" cried Marie Antoinette. "You had the cruelty to leave her——"

"Still, Antoinette," said the Empress, raising her hand imploringly. "What else?" asked she hoarsely.

"I stood at the head of the stairway, your Majesty, awaiting her Highness's return. For a while all was silent; then I heard a piercing shriek and I hastened to the vault——"

"Was it my child?" asked the Empress, now as rigid as a marble statue.

—"Yes, your Majesty. I found her Highness kneeling with her head resting upon the tomb of the Emperor."

—"Insensible?"

—"No, your Majesty. I approached and found her icy cold, her eyes dilated, and her face covered with drops of cold sweat. She was scarcely able to speak, but in broken accents she related to me that as she was making her way towards the altar at the head of the Emperor's tomb, she suddenly became sensible that something was holding her back. Horror-stricken, she strove to fly, but could not; when as she turned her head she beheld the coffin of the Empress Josepha, and saw that from thence came the power that held her back. With a shriek, she bounded forward and fell at the foot of the Emperor's tomb. I supported her until we reached the chapel-door, when she fainted, and I had to call for help to bear her to her carriage."

"And now?" asked the Empress, who was weeping bitterly.

"She is still unconscious, your Majesty. Herr Van Swieten and the Emperor are at her bedside."

"And I," cried the unhappy Empress, "I, too, must be with my poor martyred child." Marie Antoinette would have followed, but her mother bade her remain, and hastening from the room, Maria Theresa ran breathless through the corridors until she reached her daughter's apartments.

There, like a crushed lily, lay the fair bride of Naples, while near her stood her brother in speechless grief. At the foot of the bed, Van Swieten, and one of the maids of honor, were rubbing her white feet with stimulants.

The Empress laid her hand upon Josepha's cold brow, and turning to Van Swieten as though in his hands lay the fate of her child, she asked, "Will she die?"

"Life and death," replied the physician, "are in the hands of the Lord. As long as there is life, there is hope."

Maria Theresa shook her head. "I have no hope," said she with the calmness of despair. 'Tis the enemy of our house, is it not, Van Swieten? Has she not the small-pox?"

—"I fear so, your Majesty."

—"She must die, then, and it is I who have murdered her," shrieked the Empress wildly, and she fell fainting to the floor.

On the fifteenth of October, the day on which Josepha was to have given her hand to the King of Naples, the bells of Vienna tolled her funeral knell. Not in her gilded carriage, rode the fair young bride, but cold and lifeless she lay under the black and silver pall, on which were placed a myrtle wreath and a royal crown of gold. Another spouse had claimed her hand, and the marriage-rites were solemnised in the still vaults of the chapel of the Capuchins.

The Empress had not left her daughter's room since the fatal day of her return from the chapel. With all the tenderness of her affectionate nature, she had been the nurse of her suffering child. Not a tear was in her eye nor a murmur on her lips. Silent, vigilant and sleepless, she

had struggled with the foe that was wresting yet another loved one from her house.

Day by day Josepha grew worse, until she lay dying. Still the Empress shed no tear. Bending over her daughter's bed, she received her last sigh, and now she watched the corpse and would not be moved, though the Emperor and Van Swieten implored her to seek rest. When the body was removed, the poor, tearless mourner followed it from the room, through the halls and gates of the palace until it was laid in the grave.

Then she returned home, and without a word retired to her own apartments. There on a table, lay heaps of papers and letters with unbroken seals, but the Empress heeded nothing of all this. Maternity reigned supreme in her heart, there was room in it for grief and remorse alone. She strode to the window, and there, as she had done not many days before, she looked out upon the gray towers of the Chapel, and thought how she had driven her own precious child into the dismal depths of its loathsome vaults.

The door was softly opened and the Emperor and Van Swieten were seen with anxious looks directed towards the window where the Empress was standing.

"What is to be done?" said Joseph. "How is she to be awakened from that fearful torpor?"

"We must bring about some crisis," replied Van Swieten thoughtfully. "We must awake both the Empress and the mother. The one must have work—the other, tears. This frozen sea of grief must thaw or her Majesty will die."

"Doctor," cried Joseph, "save her, I implore you. Do something to humanise this marble grief."

—"I will try, your Majesty. With your permission, I will assemble the imperial family here, and we will ask to be admitted to the presence of the Empress. The Archduchess Marie Antoinette and the Archduke Maximilian I shall not summon."

Not long after, the door was onee more softly opened and the Emperor Joseph, followed by his sisters and the doctor, entered the Empress's sitting-room.

Maria Theresa was still erect before the window, staring at the dark towers of the chapel.

"Your Majesty," said Joseph approaching, "your children are here to mourn with you."

"It is well," replied Maria Theresa, without stirring from her position. "I thank you all. But leave me, my children. I would mourn alone."

"But before we go, will not your Majesty vouchsafe one look of kindness?" entreated the Emperor. "May we not kiss your hand?—Oh, my beloved mother, your living children, too, have a right to your love! Do not turn away so coldly from us—let your children comfort their sad hearts with the sight of your dear and honored countenance!"

There was so much genuine feeling in Joseph's voice, as he uttered these words that his mother could not resist him. She turned and gave him her hand.

"God bless you, my son," said she, "for your loving words. They fall like balsam upon my sore and wounded heart. God bless you all, my children, who have come hither to comfort your poor, sorrowing mother."

The Archduchesses flocked weeping to her side, and smiled through their tears as they met her glance of love. But suddenly she started, and looked searchingly around the room.

"Where are my little ones?" said she anxiously.

No one spoke, but the group all turned their eyes upon Van Swieten, whose presence, until now, had been unobserved by the Empress.

Like an angry lioness, she sprang forward to the threshhold and laid her hand upon Van Swieten's shoulder.

"What means your presence here, Van Swieten?" cried she loudly. "What fearful message do you bear me now? My children! my children! where are they?"

"In their rooms, your Majesty, replied Van Swieten seriously. "I came hither expressly to apologize for their absence. It was I, who prevented them from coming."

"Why so?" exclaimed the Empress.

"Because, your Majesty, they have never had the small-pox; and contact with you would be dangerous for them. For some weeks they must absent themselves from your Majesty's presence."

"You are not telling me the truth, Van Swieten!" cried Maria Theresa hastily. "My children are sick, and I must go to them."

"Your Majesty may banish me forever from the palace," said he, "but as long as I remain, you cannot approach your children. It is my duty to shield them from the infection which still clings to your Majesty's person. Would you be the probable cause of their death?"

The earnest tone with which Van Swieten put this question, so overcame the Empress, that she raised both her arms and cried out in a voice of piercing anguish: "Ah! it is I who caused Josepha's death!—I who murdered my unhappy child!"

These words once uttered, the icy bonds that had frozen her heart gave way, and Maria Theresa wept.

"She is saved!" whispered Van Swieten to the Emperor. Will your Majesty now request the Archduchesses to retire? The Empress does not like to be seen in tears; and this paroxism once over, the presence of her daughters will embarrass her."

The Emperor communicated Van Swieten's wish, and the Princesses silently and noiselessly withdrew.

The Empress was on her knees, while showers of healing tears were refreshing her seethed heart.

"Let us try to induce her to rise," whispered Van Swieten. "This hour, if it please God, may prove a signal blessing to all Austria."

The Emperor approached, and tenderly strove to lift his mother while he lavished words of love and comfort upon her. She allowed him to lead her to a divan, where gradually the tempest of her grief gave place to deep-drawn sighs, and finally, to peace. The crisis, however, was long and terrible, for the affections of Maria Theresa were as strong as her will; and fierce had been the conflict between the two.

For some time, a deep silence reigned throughout the room. Finally, the Empress raised her eyes and said, "You will speak the truth, both of you, will you not?"

"We will, your Majesty," replied the Emperor and Van Swieten.

"Then, Joseph, say are my children well and safe?"

"They are, my dearest mother, and but for the doctor's prohibition, both would have accompanied us thither."

Maria Theresa then turned to the physician. "Van Swieten," said she, "you, too, must swear to speak the truth. I have something to ask of you also."

"I swear, your Majesty," replied Van Swieten.

"Then say if I am the cause of my daughter's death. Do not answer me at once. Take time for reflection, and as Almighty God hears us, answer me conscientiously."

There was a pause. Nothing was heard save the heavy breathing of the Empress, and the ticking of the golden clock that stood upon the mantel. Maria Theresa sat with her head bowed down upon her hands; before her stood Joseph, his pale and noble face turned towards the physician, and his eyes fixed upon him with an expression of deepest entreaty. Van Swieten saw the look, and answered it by a scarcely perceptible motion of his head.

"Now speak, Van Swieten," said the Empress, raising her head, and looking him full in the face. "Was Josepha's visit to the chapel-vault the cause of her death?"

"No, your Majesty," said the physician gravely. "In *this sense* you were not guilty of her Highness's death; for the body, in small-pox, is infected long before it shows itself on the surface. Had her Highness received the infection in the crypts of the chapel, she would be still living. Her terror and presentiment of death were merely symptoms of the disease."

The Empress reached out both her hands to Van Swieten and said, "Thank you, my friend. You surely would not deceive me with false comfort; I can, therefore, even in the face of this great sorrow, find courage to live and do my duty. I may weep for my lost child, but while weeping I may feel that Heaven's will, and not my guilt, compassed her death. Thank you, my dear son, for your sympathy and tenderness. You will never know what comfort your love has been to me this day."

So saying, she drew the Emperor close to her, and putting both her arms around his neck, kissed him tenderly.

"Van Swieten," said she then, "what did you mean by saying that 'in this sense' I was not guilty of Josepha's death?"

"I think, your Majesty," replied the Emperor, "that I can explain those words. He means to say that had you yielded to his frequent petitions to make use of innoculation as a safeguard against the violence of the small-pox, our dear Josepha might have survived her attack. Is it not so, Van Swieten?"

—"It is, your Majesty. If the Empress would consent to allow the introduction in Austria of innoculation for the small-pox, she would not only shield her own family from danger, butwould confer a great blessing on her subjects."

—"Indeed, Van Swieten," replied the Empress, after pause, "what you propose seems sinful to me. Besides, I have heard that many who were innoculated for small-pox have died of its effects. These people, but for this, might have lived for many years. How can I reconcile it to my conscience to assume such an awful responsibility?"

"But," urged Van Swieten, "thousands have been rescued, where two or three have perished. I do not say that the remedy is infallible; but I can safely say that out of one hundred cases, ninety, by its use, are rendered innoxuous. Oh, your Majesty! When you remember that within ten years, five members of your family have been victims to this terrific scourge—when you remember how for weeks Austria was in extremest sorrow while your Majesty lay so ill, how can you refuse such a boon for yourself and your people?"

"It is hard for me to refuse any thing to the one whose skillful hand restored me to life," replied the Empress, while she reached her hand to Van Swieten.

"My dear, dear mother," exclaimed Joseph, "do not refuse him! he asks you to save the lives of thousands. Think how different life would have been for me, had my Isabella lived! Think of my sisters—think of Antoinette and Maximilian, who long to be with you and cannot."

"Doctor," said the Empress, "if my children were innoculated, how long would it be before I could see them?"

—"In two hours, your Majesty; for in that time the poison would have permeated their systems."

By this time the Empress had resumed her habit of walking to and fro when she was debating anything in her mind. She went on for some time, while Van Swieten and the Emperor followed her movements with anxious looks.

Finally she spoke. "Well, my son," said she, coming close to Joseph, and smiling fondly upon him, "I yield to you as co-regent of Austria. You, too, have some right to speak in this matter, and your wishes shall decide mine. To you, also, Van Swieten, I yield in gratitude for all that you have done for me and mine. Let Austria profit by this new discovery, and may it prove a blessing to us all! Are you satisfied, Joseph?"

—"More than satisfied," exclaimed he, kissing his mother's hand.

"Now Van Swieten," continued Maria Theresa, "hasten to innocu-

late my children. I long to fold them to my poor aching heart. Remember! You have promised that I shall see them in two hours."

—"In two hours they shall be here, your Majesty," said Van Swieten, as he hurried away.

"Stop a moment," cried Maria Theresa. "As you have been the instigator of this thing, upon your shoulders shall fall the work that will arise from it. I exact of you therefore to superintend the innoculation of my subjects, and your pay as Chief Medical Inspector shall be five thousand florins. I also give my palace at Hetzendorf as a model hospital for the reception of the children of fifty families, who shall there be innoculated and cared for at my expense. This shall be the monument I will erect to my beloved Josepha, and when the little ones who there are rescued from death thank God for their recovery, they will pray for my poor child's departed soul. Does this please you, my son?"

The Emperor did not answer.—His heart was too full for speech. The Empress saw his agitation, and opening her arms to clasp him in her embrace, she faltered out, "Come, dear child, and together let us mourn for our beloved dead." *

CHAPTER XLVII.

AN ADVENTURE.

It was a lovely day in June; one of those glorious days when field and wood are like a lofty cathedral, where the birds are the choir, and the wind stirring the censers of the forest perfume, is the organ; while man, in ecstacy with nature's beauty, glances enraptured from heaven to earth—from earth again to heaven.

But pleasantest of all on such a day, are the reveries that come and go over the heart, under the shade of a noble oak that lifts its crowned head to the clouds, while birds twitter love-songs among its branches, and lovers lie dreaming on the green sward below.

So thought a young man as he reclined under the shadow of a tall beech tree that skirted the green border of a meadow, somewhere near the woods around Schönbrunn. He had fastened his horse to a tree not far off, and while the steed cropped the fresh grass, his owner revelled in the luxury of sylvan solitude. With an expression of quiet enjoy-

* The Institution founded on that day by the Empress went very soon into operation. Every spring the children of fifty families among the nobles and gentry were received at the hospital of Hetzendorf. The Empress was accustomed to visit the institution frequently; and at the end of each season, she gave to its little inmates a splendid ball, which was always attended by herself and her daughters. The festivities closed with concerts, lotteries, and a present to each child.—[Caroline Pichler's Memoirs; vol. 1, page 63. Coxe's History of the House of Austria; vol. 5, page 188.

ment he glanced now upon the soft green meadow, now at the dim, shady woods, and then at the blue and silver sky that parted him from heaven.

"Oh! how delightful it is," thought he, "to drop the shackles of royalty, and to be a man! Oh, beautiful sky, with livery of 'Kaiserblue,' change thy hue, and hide me in a dark cloud that I may be safe from the homage of courtiers and sycophants! If they knew that I was here, how soon would they pursue and imprison me again in my gilded cage of imperial grandeur!"

Just then, in the distance, was heard the sound of a hunting-horn, and the Emperor's soliloquy was cut short. An expression of annoyance was visible on his features, as he listened. But instead of advancing, the sounds receded until finally they were lost in the sighing of the wind among the forest trees.

"They have passed by," exclaimed he joyfully. "This day is mine, and I am free. What a charm is in that word *freedom!* I feel it now; no Emperor am I, but a man, to whom the animals will turn their backs, without suspecting that they refuse to look upon an annointed sovereign——But still—what is that? A doe—a timid doe—perhaps an enchanted princess who can only resume her shape at the bidding of a prince. Here am I sweet princess—ready, as soon as you become a woman, to leap into your arms."

The Emperor grasped his fowling-piece that was leaning against the beech. But the doe caught the sound, raised her graceful head, and her mild eye sought the enemy that threatened her. She saw him and as he raised the gun to take aim, she cleared the road with one wild bound, and in a few moments was lost in a thicket.

The Emperor leaped on his horse exclaiming: "I must catch my enchanted princess"—and giving his steed the rein, away they flew on the track of the doe; away they flew over fallen trunks and through briar and copse until the panting steed would have recoiled before a wide hedge—but the Emperor cried, "Over it! over it! The princess is beyond!" and the foaming horse gathered up his fore-legs for the leap. He made a spring, but missed, and with a loud crash, horse and rider fell into the ditch on the farther side of the hedge.

The Emperor fell under the horse, who in his efforts to rise, inflicted dreadful suffering upon his master. He felt that his senses were leaving him, and thought that he was being crushed to death. The load upon his breast was insufferable, and in his ears there came a sound like the roaring of the ocean. He uttered one cry for help, commended himself to heaven, and fainted.

How long he lay there, he never knew. When he opened his weary eyes again he lay on the sward near the hedge, with his head resting upon the lap of a beautiful girl, who was contemplating him with looks of tenderest pity. By her side knelt another young girl and who was bathing his temples with water.

"Look, Marianne," exclaimed she joyfully, "he begins to move. Oh, dear sister, we have saved his life."

"Still Kathi," whispered the other. "He has not yet his senses. He looks as if he were dreaming of angels. But he will soon awake."

"I don't wonder that he dreams of angels, Marianne, when he looks at you," said Kathi contemplating her beautiful sister. "But now that he is safe, I will go and look after his horse. Poor animal! he trembles yet with fright, and I think he has lamed his leg. I will lead him to the spring where he can drink and cool his foot. You know the curate says that water is a great doctor for man and beast."

So saying she took up the bridle, and coaxing the horse gently, he followed her, although he shuddered with the pain of his limb.

She disappeared behind a little grove of trees, while her sister contemplated her handsome patient. He lay perfectly quiet, his eyes open, but feeling too weary for speech. He felt uncertain whether he waked or dreamed, nor did he care; for the present moment was unutterably sweet. His pain was slight, and with his head pillowed upon the lap of the lovely girl whose face was beautiful as that of Eve in the groves of Eden, the Emperor gazed on in rapture.

Marianne became gradually aware that his glances spoke admiration, for her color slowly deepened until it glowed like the petals of a newly-opened rose. The Emperor smiled as he watched her blushes. "Do angels then blush?" asked he softly.

"He still dreams," said Marianne, shaking her head. "I thought just now that his senses were returning."

"No, child," replied Joseph, "I do not dream. I see before me the loveliest vision that ever blessed the eyes of man, or else——I have overtaken the enchanced princess. Oh, princess! it was cruel of you to lure one over that treacherous hedge!"

Marianne looked alarmed. "Poor, poor young man!" murmured she in a low voice, "he is delirious. I must moisten his head again."

She extended her hand to the little pail that held the water, but Joseph caught it and pressed it warmly to his lips.

Marianne blushed still more, with painful embarrassment, and sought to withdraw her hand.

The Emperor would not yield it. "Let me kiss the hand of the angel that has rescued me from death," said he. "For 'tis you, Marianne, is it not, who saved my life?"

"My sister and I, sir, were coming through the wood," replied Marianne, "when we saw your horse galloping directly toward the hedge. We knew what must happen and ran with all our might towards you, but before we reached you, the horse had made the leap. Oh, I shudder when I think of it?"

And her face grew white again, while her lustrous eyes were dimmed with tears.

"Go on, go on, my ——. No, I will not call you princess lest you

should think me delirious. I am not delirious, beautiful Marianne! but I dream. I dream of my boyhood and almost believe that I have come upon enchanted ground. Your sweet voice—your lovely face—this delicious wood——it all seems like fairy land! But speak on: where did you find me?"

"Under the horse, sir; and the first thing we did was to free you from his weight. We took the rein, and after some efforts we got him to his feet. Kathi led him away, and I—I——"

—"You, Marianne, tell me, what did you do?"

"I," said she, looking down, "I bore you as well as I was able to this spot. I do not know how I did it, but fright gives one very great strength."

—"Go on, go on."

"We had been gathering mushrooms in the woods, when we saw you. As soon as Kathi had tied the horse, she ran for her little pail, poured out the mushrooms, and filling it with water, we bathed your head until you revived. This, sir, is the whole history, and now that you have recovered, I will help you to rise."

—"Not yet, not yet, enchantress. I cannot raise my head from its delicious pillow. Let me dream for a few moments longer. Fairyland is almost like heaven."

Marianne said no more, but her eyes sought the ground and her face grew scarlet. The Emperor still gazed upon her wonderful beauty, and he thought that nothing he had ever seen in gilded halls could approach this peasant girl, whose red dress and black boddice were more dazzling to his eyes than the laces and diamonds of all Vienna assembled.

"Where?" asked he, observing that her snowy shoulders were bare, "where did you get a kerchief to bathe my head?"

Marianne started and laid her hands upon her neck. "Good heavens!" murmured she to herself, "it was the kerchief from my own bosom!" Unconsciously she reached her hand to take it from the pail.

—"What," said Joseph, stopping her, "would you wear that dripping kerchief? No, no—let the sky, the birds and the wood-nymphs look at those graceful shoulders, and if *I* may not look, I will shut my eyes."

"Oh, do not shut your eyes, they are blue as the sky itself," replied Marianne. But as she spoke she drew forward the long braids that trailed behind her on the ground, and quickly entwisting them, her hair fell in showers around her neck and shoulders, so that they were effectually concealed.

"You are right," said the Emperor. "Your hair is as beautiful as the rest of your person. It surpasses the sables of a Russian princess. You know perfectly well how to adorn yourself, you bewitching child."

"I did not mean to adorn myself, sir," said Marianne.

—"Why then did you cover yourself with that superb mantle?"

—"Because, sir, I—I was cold."

—"Are you so icy then that you freeze in midsummer?"

She said nothing, but bent her head in confusion. Luckily at that moment, Kathi came in sight with the horse.

"Now, sir," exclaimed Marianne, "you can rise, can you not?"

—"Not unless you help me, for my head is yet very light."

—"Well sir, if that be so, then stay where you are, and try to sleep, while I pray to the Blessed Virgin to protect you,"

Meanwhile Kathi came forward, and when she saw the Emperor, nodded her head.

"God be praised, sir," cried she, "you have your senses once more. You have gotten off cheaply with only a black eye.—But, bless me! how quiet you are Marianne! Who would think that while the gentleman was out of his senses you were crying as if he had been your sweetheart. Why, sir, her tears fell upon your face and waked you."

"Pardon me," whispered Marianne, "I wiped them away with the kerchief."

"Why did you deprive me of those sweet tears?" whispered the Emperor. But Kathi was talking all the while.

"Now," continued she, "try to get up. Put one arm around me, and the other around Marianne, and we will set you upon your legs to find out whether they are sound. Come—one—two—three—now!"

With the help of the strong peasant-girl, the Emperor arose and stood erect. But he complained of dizziness, and would have Marianne to sustain him.

She approached with a smile and he drew her gently to his side, and looked into her eyes. The poor girl trembled, she knew not why, for assuredly she was not afraid.

Kathi, who had gone back for the horse, now came up, leading him to his master. "Now," said she, "we are all ready to go. Your horse is a little lame, and not yet able to bear you. Whither shall we lead you, sir? Where is your home?"

"My home!" exclaimed the Emperor, with troubled mien. "I had forgotten that I had a home." This question had awakened him from his Idyl.

"Where is my home?" echoed he sadly. "It is in Vienna. Can you put me on my road thither?"

"That can we, sir; but it is a long way for such a gentleman as you to travel on foot."

"Let us go then to the highway, and perhaps I will there find some conveyance."

"Well then," cried the gleeful Kathi, "forward, march!"

—"Not yet, Kathi. Not until I have thanked you for the great service you have rendered me. Let me give you some testimony of my gratitude. Before we part, let me gratify some wish of yours. Speak first, Kathi."

"H'm," said Kathi, "I have many wishes. It is not so easy to say what I want."

—"Well—take time, and think for a moment, child."

Kathi looked as if she were making a bold resolve.

—"That ring upon your finger—it is the prettiest thing I ever saw. Will you give it to me?"

"Kathi!" exclaimed Marianne, "how can you ask such a thing?"

"Why not?" returned Kathi, reddening, "did he not tell me to say what I wanted?"

"Yes," said Marianne, in a low voice, "but it may be a gift—perhaps it is from his sweetheart!"

"No, Marianne," replied the Emperor, sadly, "I have no sweetheart. No one cares whether I give or keep the ring. Take it, Kathi."

Kathi held out her hand, and when it had been placed upon her finger she turned it around to see it glisten, and laughed for joy.

"And you, Marianne," said Joseph, changing his tone, as head dressed the beautiful creature who stood at his side, "tell me your wish. Let it be something hard to perform, for then I shall be all the happier to grant it."

But Marianne spoke not a word.

"Why, Marianne," cried Kathi impatiently, "do you not see that he is a rich and great lord, who will give you anything you ask? Why do you stand so dumb?"

"Come, dear Marianne," whispered the Emperor, "have you no wish that I can gratify?"

"Yes, sir," replied Marianne, in a voice scarcely audible.

—"Speak it then, sweet one, and it shall be granted."

"Then, sir," said Marianne, her cheeks glowing, though her eyes were still cast down, "my father's house is hard by. Come and rest awhile under his roof, and let me give you a glass of milk, and to your horse 'some fresh hay.'"

The Emperor seemed to grow very weak while Marianne spoke, for he clung to her as though he had been afraid to fall.

"Yes, Marianne," replied he, "and God bless you for the kind suggestion. Let me for once forget the world and imagine that I, too, am a peasant with no thought of earth beyond these enchanted woods. Take me to the cottage where your father lives, and let me eat of his bread. I am hungry."

And the Emperor, with his strange suite, set off for the cottage of Conrad, the peasant.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON.

Old Conrad stood in his door-way, shading his old eyes from the sunbeams, while he looked anxiously down the road that led to the village. It was noon-day, and yet the hearth of the kitchen was empty and cold. No kettle was on the hob, no platter upon the table. And yet, his daughters had started early for the woods, and surely they must have gathered their mushrooms hours ago.

The old peasant began to be anxious. If it had been Kathi alone, it would have been easy enough to guess at the delay. She was gossiping with Valentine, and forgetting that she had father or sister, home or dinner. But, Marianne, was along, and she never flirted or loitered. What could be the matter?—But—what was that coming up the road? Marianne!—Yes, truly, Marianne with a fine lord at her side, who seemed closer to her than propriety seemed to allow.

"Gracious heaven!" thought the old man, "what has come over my bashful Marianne? What would the villagers say if they should see her now?—And what comes behind? Kathi, with a horse.—Are the maidens bewitched?"

They came nearer; and now Kathi, from the top of her voice, bade him good-day.

"Are we not fine, father," cried she with a loud laugh. But Marianne, coming forward with the Emperor, bent gracefully before her old father.

"See, dear father," said she in her soft, musical tones, "we bring you a guest who to-day will share our humble dinner with us."

"A guest whose life has been saved by your daughters," added Joseph, extending his hand.

"And a very rich somebody he must be, father," cried Kathi, "for see how he has paid us for our help. Look at this brave ring how it glistens! It is mine; and Marianne might have had as much if she had chosen. But what do you think she asked him!—to come home and get a glass of milk."

"That was well done of my Marianne," said the father proudly. "It would have been a pity not to let me see the brave gentleman, if indeed you have been so happy as to save his life. Come in, my lord, come in. You are welcome. What we have, we give cordially."

"And, therefore, what you give, will be gratefully received," replied the Emperor, entering and seating himself.

"Now, sir," said Marianne, "I will go and prepare the dinner." So saying, she passed into the cottage kitchen.

"That is a beautiful maiden," said Joseph looking wistfully after the graceful figure as it disappeared.

"They are my heart's joy, both of them," replied Conrad. "They are brisk as fawns and industrious as bees. And yet I am often sad as I look at them."

—"Why so?"

"Because I am old and poor. I have nothing to leave them, and when I die, they will have to go to service. That frets me. It is because I love the maidens so dearly that I am troubled about them."

—"Let their poverty trouble you no longer, my friend. I will provide for them. I have it in my power to make them both comfortable, and that they shall be, I promise you."

The old man spoke his thanks, and presently came Marianne to announce the dinner. It was served in an arbor covered with honeysuckles and red beans, and the Emperor thought that he had never had a better dinner in his imperial palace. The shackles of his greatness had fallen from him, and he drank deeply of the present hour, without a thought for the morrow. Marianne was at his side, and as he looked into the lustrous depths of her dark eyes, he wished himself a peasant that he might look into them forever.

Meanwhile Kathi and her father walked together in the garden. They were both examining the diamond ring, and the hearts of both were filled with ambitious thoughts and hopes.

"He must be very rich," said Kathi in a low voice. "He has fallen in love with Marianne, 'tis plain, and she has only to ask and have anything she likes. Look father, he is kissing her! But don't let them see you. The more he loves her, the more he will give us. But you must speak to Marianne, father. She is as silly as a sheep, and does'nt care whether we are poor or rich. Call her here, and tell her that she *must* ask for a great sum of money—enough for us to buy a fine farm. Then Valentine will marry me at once, and I shall be able to give a wedding-dress to all the other maidens in the village.

"But suppose that the lord should want Marianne?" asked Conrad turning pale.

Kathi still held up her ring, and she turned towards the sun until it seemed to be in a blaze. "Look, father," said she in a low tone, "look."

The eyes of the old man were fixed upon the jewel and strange hopes, with which until now, he had been unacquainted, stirred his heart. The serpent had found its way to Eden, and it spoke to both, in the glitter of this unhappy ring.

"Father," said Kathi at length, "if Marianne had such a ring as this on her finger she would find many hundred wooers who would forgive her for having had *one* before them."

"Silence," cried the old man. "If your mother were alive to hear these guilty words, she would think that you were no longer innocent yourself. How I wish she was here in this trying hour! But since you have no parent but me, I must protect you from shame."

With these words the old man walked resolutely to the arbor, followed by Kathi, who implored him not to ruin their fortunes.

"My lord," said Conrad, "the day wanes. If you intend to reach Vienna to-night, you have no time to lose."

"Alas," thought Joseph, "my dream is over."

"You are right," said he to the peasant, "unless you will shelter me to night."

"I have but one bed in my house, sir," replied Conrad, and that is in the little room of my daughters."

"Then let me sleep there," said Joseph with the arrogance of one accustomed to command.

"Oh," faltered Marianne, springing to her father's side, as though she would seek protection from these ensnaring words.

But Kathi shook her sister's arm, and surveying her blushing face, with a loud laugh, she exclaimed, "You are a fool. What harm will it do us, if the gentleman sleeps in our room? We can make ourselves a bed of hay on the floor, and give him the bedstead. No one will ever think any the less of us."

"I think so, too," said Joseph, who was now resolved to see of what stuff the peasant was made. "Do not hesitate so. Let me sleep in your daughter's room and I will give you a handful of gold for my lodging."

Kathi gave a cry of delight, and going close to her father, she whispered, "Father, you will not refuse! Think—a handful of gold! We will be the richest farmers in the village! There are two of us—there can be no danger."

"Well!" asked Joseph impatiently, "have you decided? Did you not tell me that you were poor, and is this not an opportunity I offer you to enrich your daughters?"

"Sir," replied the old man solemnly, "I do not know whether this opportunity may not be for evil, instead of good. I am a poor and simple farmer, and cannot decide for myself whether the mere fact of your sleeping in the same room with my daughters is right or not. Our curate is a very holy man; I will apply to him for advice."

"Very well," said Joseph, "go and fetch him; he shall decide."

Old Conrad left the garden, followed again by Kathi, who was resolved to leave the great lord alone with her sister. Marianne, who before had been so happy and unembarrassed, now started forwards with the intention of going with her father. But the Emperor would not allow it. He caught her by both hands and held her fast. "Stay, frightened doe," said he softly. "You are right, dear child, to tremble before men, for they are full of deceit; but do not be afraid of me; I will not harm you."

Marianne raised her dark tearful eyes to his face and gradually a smile lit up her lovely features."

"I believe you, my lord," said she. "You have, perhaps, already seen that I would do anything on earth for you, were it even to give up

my life; but for no one would I do that which my mother would blame if she were living—on no account would I do that which I might not tell in prayer to my Heavenly Father."

The Emperor looked once more at her lovely face. "Oh, Marianne! why are you a peasant!" exclaimed he. Then raising his eyes to heaven, "Almighty God," continued he, "shield her from harm. In Thy presence I swear to protect her honor, even from myself."

At that moment, old Conrad appeared in the road. At his side was a little old man in a faded cassock, whose spare white hair scarcely covered his bald head. Joseph came forward, holding Marianne by the hand. Kathi darted from the house, laughing vociferously. The priest advanced, his eyes fixed upon the face of the stranger. All at once, pointing with his finger to Joseph, he cried out, "Conrad, a great honor has befallen your house. Your guest is the Emperor!"

"The Emperor!" exclaimed three voices. Two in joyous tones, the third, with the cry of despair. Conrad and Kathi were on their knees, Marianne leaned deathly pale against the arbor.

"Yes, father," replied Joseph, mastering his annoyance at the revelation. "Yes, I am the Emperor; but, my friends, do not offer me such homage as belongs to God alone. Rise, Conrad, old men should not kneel before young ones. Rise, Kathi—men should kneel before pretty maidens—no matter whether they be princesses or peasants. And now, father, hear my petition—I am tired and suffering—I have had a fall from my horse, and I do not wish to go to-night to Vienna. I have offered this old man a handful of gold to give me his only bed—the one in his daughter's room. But he will not give his consent without your approval. Decide between us, and remember who it is that asks for lodging here."

The head of the old priest sank upon his breast.

"Oh!" thought Kathi, "I hope he will say yes!"

Marianne made not a movement, while her father looked anxiously towards the priest.

"Well, father, well!" cried Joseph. "You say nothing; and yet I have told you that the Emperor craves a night's lodging in the room of these young girls. You see that I ask, where I might command. I should think that the lord of the whole land is also lord of the little room of two peasant-girls!"

"Yes, your Majesty, you are lord of the room, but not of the honor of these peasant-girls," replied the curate, raising his eyes and steadily meeting those of Joseph.*

"Nobly answered, father," replied the Emperor, taking the old priest's hand and pressing it between his own. "Had you decided otherwise, I would not have forgiven you. Before the servant of the Lord, the claims of the sovereign are on an equality with those of his subject. Pardon me, Conrad, for testing your honor as I did, and accept my horse as a token of my respect. If you should ever wish to sell him, bring him to

* Life of Joseph II., Emperor of Austria; vol. 3, page 49.

the imperial stables and he will be ransomed by me for a thousand florins."

"Oh, your Majesty," said the happy old man, "I shall die content, for my children are provided for."

"Now we are rich," aried Kathi, "the best match in the village will be proud to marry either one of us."

The Emperor meanwhile took out his pocket-book and tearing out a leaf, wrote some words upon it.

Folding the paper, he advanced to Marianne, and handing it to her said, "My dear child, when your father presents this paper to the Marshal of my household, Count Rosenberg, he will give him in return for you, five hundred florins."

"Five hundred florins!" exclaimed Kathi, with envious looks.

"Take the paper, Marianne," pleaded the Emperor. "It is your dowry."

Marianne raised her tearful eyes, but her hands did not move to take the gift. She reflected for a moment, and then spoke.

"Five hundred florins," echoed she, "is not that a large sum?"

"It is, my child," replied Joseph.

"More than the value of the ring you gave my sister, is it not?" asked she.

The Emperor looked disappointed. "Yes, Marianne," replied he with a sigh "you have no reason to envy your sister. Kathi's ring is not worth more than a hundred florins."

He still held the paper in his hands. Suddenly Marianne took it from him, and crossed over to her sister.

"You hear, Kathi," said she, "you hear what the Emperor says. "This paper is worth five times as much as your ring. Let us exchange."

So saying she held out the paper, while Kathi with a scream of delight, snatched it from her hand and as quick as thought, drew the ring from her own finger.

"If you repent your bargain, Marianne," said she, "so much the worse for you. The dowry is mine, and mine, it shall remain."

Marianne did not listen. She placed the ring upon her own hand, and contemplated it with a smile of satisfaction. Then going up to the priest, she addressed him with a grace that would have been winning in a countess. "Father," said she, "you have heard the exchange that Kathi and I have made. The dowry is hers—the ring is mine. As long as I live, I shall wear this token of my Emperor's condescending goodness. And when I die, Father, promise me that my ring shall go with me to the grave."

The Emperor, all etiquette forgetting, made a step forward, with his arms extended; but recovering himself, he stopped, his arms dropped heavily to his side, and he heaved a deep, deep sigh.

Instead of approaching Marianne, he drew near to the priest. "Father," said he, "my mother will perhaps feel some anxiety on my ac-

count. Will you be so kind as to accompany me to the post-house where I will perhaps be able to procure some vehicle for Vienna."

"I am ready, your Majesty," replied the curate, "and if it please you, we will set out at once."

"So be it," sighed Joseph. "Farewell, Conrad," continued he, "hearken to the counsels of your excellent pastor, for he is a faithful servant of God.—Farewell Kathi; now that you have a dower, you will speedily find a husband. Let me be godfather to the first baby."

Kathi blushed and laughed, while the Emperor turned to the pale Marianne. He took her hand, and pressing it to his lips, he said to the priest, who was looking on with anxious eyes,

"A man has the right to kiss the hand of a lovely and innocent girl like this, even though he have the misfortune to be born an Emperor. Has he not, Father?"

Without waiting for an answer, Joseph dropped the poor little cold hand, and turned away.

The old priest followed, while Conrad and his daughters looked on, scarcely crediting the evidence of their senses.

The Emperor had reached the cottage-gate, when suddenly he turned and spoke again.

"Marianne, one last request. Will you give me the kerchief with which you were bathing my head, to-day? The evening air is cool about my throat. I am subject to hoarseness."

Marianne was trembling so that she could not answer. But Kathi came forward, and taking the kerchief from a rose-bush where it had been hung to dry, she ran forward and gave it into the Emperor's hands.

He bowed, and continued his way.

Marianne gazed wistfully down the road at the tall and noble form that was disappearing from her sight, perhaps, forever.

CHAPTER XLIX.

TWO AFFIANCED QUEENS.

There was great activity in the private apartments of the Empress, Maria Theresa, whose forenoons were usually dedicated to business of State, was now engaged in giving audience to jewellers, milliners, and mantuamakers.

For whom were these preparations? No one knew although every one desired to know. The secret seemed especially to interest the two

young Archduchesses, Caroline and Marie Antoinette. These silks, satins, laces and jewels signified—marriage. Of that, there could be no doubt, but who was to be the bride?—The Archduchess Elizabeth was past thirty. Could it be that there was any truth in the rumor of a projected marriage between herself and the old King of France? She was tired of life at the Court of Austria, and would have welcomed the change, had the negotiations which were pending on that subject ever come to anything. But they did not. *

Caroline and Maria Antoinette were very incredulous when it was hinted that their mother's preparations were intended for their eldest sister. They laughed at the absurdity of Elizabeth's faded pretensions.

"It must be I that am about to be married," said Caroline, as she entered her little sister's room one morning in full dress. "The Empress has commanded my presence in her cabinet to-day, and that betokens something unusual and important.—But bless me! You too are in full dress!"

"Yes," said Marie Antoinette laughing, and echoing her sister's words. "It must certainly be myself that is about to be married; for the Empress has commanded *my* presence in her cabinet, and of course she has something of great importance to communicate."

"How? You also?" exclaimed Caroline. "At what hour."

"At twelve exactly, your Highness," answered Marie Antoinette with a deep curtsey.

—"The same hour. Then we must go together. I suppose that the Empress intends to propose a husband for me, and a new tutor for you, Antoinette."

"Pray, why not a husband?" laughed Marie Antoinette. "Because, you saucy child," replied her sister, "husbands are not dolls for little girls to play with."

Marie Antoinette tossed her pretty head, saying, "Let me tell you Caroline, that little girls are sometimes as wise as their elders, and I shall give you a proof of my superior wisdom, by not returning irony for irony. Perhaps it may be you, who is to be married—perhaps it may be both of us. There are more crowns in Europe than one. But hark! there sounds the clock. The Empress expects us."

She gave her hand to her sister, and the two Princesses went laughing together, to their mother's room.

The Empress received them with an affectionate smile, and although her daughters were accustomed to stand in her presence, to-day she told them to sit on either side of her.

They were both beautiful, and their mother surveyed them with pride and pleasure. "Come, dear children," said she, "we will banish etiquette for awhile. To-day, I am no Empress, I am but a mother.—But why

* They were frustrated by the Countess Dubarry, who never forgave the Duke of Choiseul for entertaining the project. Dubarry prevailed upon the King to say that he was too old to marry, and she revenged herself on Choiseul by bringing about his disgrace. Alex. Dumas's History of Louis 15th.

do you both smile so significantly at one another? Are you guessing at what is to be the subject of our interview?"

"What can it be, your Majesty, said Caroline gaily, "but the explanation of the riddle that has been puzzling all the brains in the palace for a month past?"

"You have guessed," answered Maria Theresa, laughing, "It is of your own marriage that I would speak. I have accepted a crown for you, my Caroline, and the Ambassador who will conduct you to your kingdom is already on his way. Your *trousseau* is magnificent and worthy of a queen. Your fair brow was made for a royal diadem, and in yonder room lies one that is made up of a constellation of diamonds."

"But the king—the man—who is he?" asked Caroline anxiously. "Tell me, your Majesty, to whom I am affianced?"

The Empress brow grew ruffled.

"My daughter," said she, "a princess marries not a king, but a kingdom. It is given to few mortals wearing crowns, to add to their royalty, domestic happiness. It becomes you more to ask whether you are to be a great and powerful queen, than what man is to place his crown upon your head."

The Princess was silent, but she said to herself, "If she means to hand me over to the horrid old king of France, I shall say emphatically —No!"

The Empress went on. "Diplomacy is the wooer of royal maidens, and diplomacy has chosen you both. For you, too, my little Antoinette, are promised to the heir of a crown."

Marie Antoinette nodded to Caroline. "I told you so," said she. "Mama did not call me hither to propose a new tutor."

"Yes, my dear," said the Empress laughing. "I did call you hither for that object also. A little girl who is destined to reign over one of the greatest nations in the world, must prepare herself conscientiously, to fill her station worthily. You have s noble mission, my child; through your marriage the enmity so long subsisting between Austria and France, shall be converted into amity and concord."

"France!" screamed Antoinette. "Your Majesty would surely not marry me to the horrid old Louis XV.!"

"Oh no!" replied the Empress, heartily amused. "You are affianced to his grandson, who one of these days will be called Louis XVI."

Marie Antoinette uttered a cry and started from her seat. "Oh, my God!" exclaimed she.

"What—what is the matter?" cried Maria Theresa. "Speak my child, what ails you?"

"Nothing," murmured Antoinette shaking her head sadly. "Your Majesty would only laugh."

—"What is it? I insist upon knowing why it is that you shudder at the name of Louis XVI.? Have you heard aught to his disadvantage? Has your brother, the Emperor——"

"No, no," interrupted Marie Antoinette quickly, "the Emperor has

never mentioned his name to me—No one has ever spoken disparagingly of the Dauphin in my presence. What made me shudder at the mention of his title, is the recollection of a fearful prophecy which was related to me yesterday, by my French teacher, as we were reading the history of Catherine de Medicis."

—"Tell it to me, then my daughter."

"Since your Majesty commands me, I obey," said the young girl, gracefully inclining her head. "Catharine de Medicis, though she was very learned, was a very superstitious woman. One of her astrologers owned a magic looking-glass. He brought it before the Queen, and she commanded him to show her in the mirror, the destiny of her royal house. He obeyed, and drew back the curtain that covered the face of the looking-glass."

"And what did she see there?" asked the Empress, with interest.

Marie Antoinette continued. "She saw the lily-decked throne of France, and upon it appeared, one after another, her sons, Henry, Francis and Charles. Then came her hated son-in-law, Henry of Navarre; after him, Louis XIII.—then his grandson, Louis XIV.—then Louis XV."

"And what then?"

"Then she saw nothing. She waited a few moments after Louis XV. had disappeared, and then she saw a figure with a crown upon his head, but this figure soon was hidden by a cloud, and in his place, the throne was filled with snakes and cats, who were tearing each other to pieces."

"Fearful sight!" said Maria Theresa, rising from her seat and walking about the room.

"It was fearful to Catharine de Medicis, your Majesty, for she fainted. Now you know why I dread to be the bride of the one who is to be called, Louis XVI."

The Empress said nothing. For a while, she went to and fro through the room, then she resumed her seat, and threw back her proud head with a forced smile.

"These are silly fables," said she, "tales with which nurses might frighten little children, but only fit to provoke laughter from rational beings."

"Pardon me, your Majesty," interposed Antoinette," but Louis XV. is not too rational to be affected by them."

"How do you know that, child?"

"I know it, your Majesty, because Monsieur Le Maître, who published this prophecy in his journal '*L'espion Turc*,' was imprisoned for fifteen years in the Bastile, on account of it. He is still there, although he has powerful friends who have interceded for him in vain.*

—"And Aufresne told you all this?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

—"He ought to go to the Bastile with LeMaître, then. But I hope that my little Antoinette has too much sense to be affected by Aufresne's nonsense, and that she will hold herself in readiness to accept

*Swinburne. P. 60.

the husband whom her sovereign and mother has chosen for her. It is a bright destiny, that of a Queen of France; and if snakes and cats should come near your throne, you must tread them under foot. Look up, my child, and have courage. In two years you will be the bride of the Dauphin. Prepare yourself meanwhile to be a worthy representative of your native Austria. The Queen of France must, as far as she is able, assimilate herself to the customs and language of her people. With that intention, Prince Kaunitz has commissioned the Duke of Choiseul to select you a new teacher. He will be accompanied by two French ladies of honor. These people, my dear, are to form your manners according to the requirements of court etiquette in France; but in your heart, my child, I trust that you will always be an Austrian. That you may not be *too* French, Gluck will continue to give you music lessons. I flatter myself that the French cannot compete with us in music: Study well, and try to deserve the brilliant destiny in store for you."

She drew Antoinette close to her, and kissed her fondly.

"I will obey your Majesty in all things," whispered the child, and sadly she resumed her seat.

"Now, Caroline," continued the Empress, "a word with you. You see with what modesty and submission your sisters has accepted her destiny. Follow her example, and prepare yourself to receive your affianced husband, Ferdinand of Naples."

It was Caroline, now, who turned pale and shuddered. She uttered a cry of horror, and raised her hands in abhorence. "Never. Never, your Majesty," cried she, "I cannot do it. You would not be so unnatural as to——"

—"And why not?" asked the Empress, coldly.

—"Because God himself has declared against our alliance with the King of Naples. He it is who interposed to save my sisters from this marriage. In mercy, my mother, do not sentence *me* also, to death!"

The Empress grew pale, and her lip quivered. But Maria Theresa was forever warring with her own emotions, so that nothing was gained for Caroline by this appeal to her maternal love.

"What!" exclaimed she, recovering her self-possession, "do *you* also seek to frighten me! I am not the cowardly simpleton for which you mistake me. As if the King of Naples were a vampire to murder his wives at dead of night! No, Caroline, no! If it has pleased the Almighty to afflict me, by taking to himself the two dear children who were to have been the Queens of Naples, it is a sad coincidence—nothing more-"

"But I cannot marry him!" cried Caroline, wringing her hands, "I should be forever seeing at his side, the spectral figures of my dead sisters. Mother, dear, mother, have pity on me!"

"Have pity on her!" echoed Antoinette, kneeling at the Empress's feet.

"Enough!" exclaimed Maria Theresa, in a commanding voice. "I have spoken, it is for you to obey; for my word has been given, and I

cannot retract. If as your mother, I feel my heart grow weak with sympathy for *your* weakness, as your Empress I spurn its cowardly promptings; for my imperial word shall be held sacred, if it cost me my life. Rise, both of you—It ill becomes the Queens of France and Naples to bow their knees like beggars. Obedience is more praiseworthy than humiliation—Go to your apartments, pray for courage to bear your crosses, and God's blessing will shield you from all evil."

"I will pray God to give me grace to die in His favor," faltered Caroline.

"I will pray Him to take my life at once, rather than I should live to share the destiny of Louis XVI!" whispered Antoinette, while the two imperial martyrs bowed low before their mother, and retired each to her room.

Maria Theresa looked after their sweet, childish figures, and when the door had closed upon them, she buried her face in the cushions of the sofa where they had been sitting together, and wept.

"My children! my children! Each a Queen, and both in tears! Oh, Heavenly Father, grant that I may not have erred, in forcing this weight of royalty upon their tender heads. Mother of God, thou hast loved a child! By that holy love, pray for those who would faint if their crowns should be of thorns!"

END OF VOL. I.

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