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**JOSEPH II.**  
**AND HIS COURT.**

BY L. MÜHLBACH.

From the German,  
BY ADELAIDE De V. CHAUDRON.

VOLUME III.

MOBILE:  
S. H. GOETZEL, PUBLISHER.

1864

Farrow & Dennett, Printers, Mobile.



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# JOSEPH II. AND HIS COURT.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE GODFATHER.

“WE accept with pleasure,” said the strangers, and they followed the host into the house. The door of the room where the guests were assembled was open, and the strangers, with a self-possession, which proved them to be of the aristocracy, walked in and mingled at once in the conversation.

“Allow me, gentlemen,” said the host, when he had greeted the remainder of his guests, “allow me to present you to Madame Etienne. She will be proud to receive two such distinguished strangers in her house to-day.”

Madame Etienne, with a woman’s practiced eye, saw at once that these strange guests, who were so perfectly unembarrassed and yet so courteous, must belong to the very first ranks of society; and she was happy to be able to show off her *savoir vivre* before the rest of the company.

She received the two strangers with much grace and affability, and whereas the two curates were to have been placed beside her at table, she assigned them to her husband, and invited the strangers to the seats instead. She informed them of the names and station of every person present, and then related to them how the winter previous at the ball of the sous-prefect, she had danced the whole evening, while some of the prettiest girls in the room, had wanted partners.

The strangers listened with obliging courtesy and appeared deeply interested. The blue-eyed stranger, however, mingled somewhat in the general conversation. He spoke with the Burgomaster from Solanges of the condition of his town, with the curates of their congregations, and seemed much interested in the prosperity of French manufactures, about which much was said at table.

All were enchanted with the tact and affability of the strangers. Monsieur Etienne was highly elated, and as for Madame, her paleness had been superseded by a becoming flush, and she never once complained of over-exertion.

The breakfast over, the company assembled for the baptism. It was to take place in the parlor, where a table covered with a fine white cloth, a wax candle, some flowers, a crucifix, and an improvised font, had been arranged for the occasion.

The noble stranger gave his arm to Madame Etienne. "Madame," said he, "may I ask of you the favor of standing godfather to your son?"

Madame Etienne blushed with pleasure, and replied that she would be most grateful for the honor.

"In this way," thought she, "we shall find out his name and rank."

The ceremony began. The curate spoke a few impressive words as to the nature of the sacrament, and then proceeded to baptise the infant. The water was poured over its head, and at last came the significant question. "What is the name of the godfather?" All eyes were turned upon him, and Madame Etienne's heart beat hard, for she expected to hear the word "Count" at the very least.

"My name?" said he. "Joseph."

"Joseph," repeated the priest. "Joseph—and the surname?"

"I thought Joseph would be enough," said the stranger, with some impatience.

"No, sir," replied the priest. "The surname, too, must be registered in the baptismal records."

"Very well, then, Joseph the Second."

"The Second?" echoed the curate with a look of mistrust.

"*The Second!* Is that your surname?"

"Yes, my name is 'The Second.'"

"Well, be it so," returned the curate with a shrug. "Joseph—The—Second. Now what is your profession—excuse me, sir, but I ask the customary questions."

The stranger looked down and seemed almost confused.

The curate mildly repeated his question. "What is your profession or your station, sir?"

"Emperor of Austria," replied Joseph smiling.

A cry of astonishment followed this announcement. The pencil with which the priest was about to record the "profession" of the godfather, fell from his hands. Madame Etienne in her ecstasy fell almost fainting into an arm-chair, and Monsieur Etienne, taking the child from the arms of the nurse, came and knelt with it at the Emperor's feet.

This was the signal for a renewal of life and movement in the room. All followed the example of the host, and in one moment, old and young, men and women, were on their knees.

"Your Majesty," said Etienne in a voice choked with tears, "you have made my child famous. For a hundred years, the honor you have conferred upon him will be the wonder of our neighborhood, and never will the people of Vitry forget the condescension of your Majesty, in sitting among us as an equal and a guest. My son is a Frenchman, but at heart he shall also be a German, like our own beautiful Queen, who is both Austrian and French. God bless and preserve you both! Long

live our Queen, Marie Antoinette, and long live her noble brother, the Emperor of Austria!"

The company echoed the cry, and their shouts aroused Madame Etienne, who rose and advanced towards her imperial visitor. He hastened to replace her gently in her arm-chair.

"Where people are bound together by the ties of parent and godfather," said he, "there must be no unnecessary ceremony. Will you do me one favor, Madame?"

"Sire, my life is at your Majesty's disposal."

"Preserve and treasure it, then, for the sake of my god-son. And since you are willing to do me the favor," continued he, drawing from his bosom a snuff-box richly set with diamonds, "accept this as a remembrance of my pleasant visit to you to-day. My portrait is upon the lid, and as I am told that all the lovely women in France take snuff, perhaps you will take your snuff from a box which I hope will remind you of the giver."

"And now," continued the Emperor to the happy Monsieur Etienne, "as I have been admitted to the christening, perhaps you will accommodate me with a pair of horses with which I may proceed to the next stage."

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE ARRIVAL AT VERSAILLES.

THE French Court was at Versailles; it having been decided by the King and Queen that there they would receive the Emperor's visit. A magnificent suite of apartments had been fitted up for his occupation, and distinguished courtiers appointed as his attendants. He was anxiously expected; for already, many an anecdote of his affability and generosity had reached Paris.

A courier had arrived to say that the Emperor had reached the last station, and would shortly be in Versailles. The Queen received this intelligence with tears of joy, and gathered all her ladies around her in the room where she expected to meet her brother. The King merely nodded, and a shade of dissatisfaction passed over his face. He turned to his confidential adviser, Count Maurepas, who was alone with him in his Cabinet.

"Tell me frankly, what do you think of this visit?"

The old Count raised his shoulders *à la Française*. "Sire, the Queen has so often invited the Emperor, that I presume he has come to gratify her longings."

"Ah, bah!" said Louis, impatiently. "He is not so soft hearted as to shape his actions to suit the longings of his family. Speak more candidly."

"Your Majesty commands me to be perfectly sincere?"

"I entreat you, be truthful, and tell me what you think."

"Then I confess that the Emperor's visit has been a subject of much mystery to your Majesty's ministers. You are right in saying that he is not the man to trouble himself about the state of his relatives' affections. He comes to Paris for something nearer to his heart than any royal sister. Perhaps his hope is that he may succeed in removing me, and procuring the appointment of de Choiseul in my stead."

"Never!—Austria cannot indulge such vain hopes, for her watchful spies must ere this have convinced the Hapsburgs that my dislike towards this Duke, so precious in the eyes of Maria Theresa, is unconquerable. My father's shade banished him to Chanteloup, and I will follow this shade whithersoever it leads. If my father had lived (and perchance Choiseul had a hand in his death) there would have been no alliance of France with Austria. I am forced to maintain it, since my wife is the daughter of Maria Theresa, so that neither the Austrian, nor the anti-Austrian party in France, can ever hope to rule in France. Marie Antoinette is the wife of my heart, and no human being shall ever dislodge her from thence. But my love for her can never influence my policy, which is steadfast to the principles of my father. If Joseph has come hither for political purposes, he might have spared his pains.

"He may have other views besides those we have alluded to. He may come to gain your Majesty's sanction to his ambitious plans of territorial aggrandizement. The Emperor is inordinately ambitious, and is true to the policy of his house."

"Which nevertheless was obliged to yield Silesia," said Louis derisively.

"That is the open wound for which Austria seeks balsam from Turkey. If your Majesty does not stop him, the Emperor will light the torch of war and kindle a conflagration that may embrace all Europe."

"If I can prevent war, it is my duty to do so; for peace is the sacred right of my people, and nothing but imperative necessity would drive me to invade that right."

"But the Emperor is not of your Majesty's mind. He hopes for war, in expectation of winning glory."

"And I for peace, with the same expectation. I, too, would win glory—the glory of reigning over a happy and prosperous people. The fame of the conqueror is the scourge of mankind; that of the legislator, its blessing. The last shall be my portion—I have no object in view but the welfare of the French nation."

"The Emperor may endeavor to cajole your Majesty through your very love for France. He may propose to you an extension of French territory to reconcile you to his acquisitions in Turkey. He may suggest the Netherlands as an equivalent for Bosnia and Servia."



"I will not accept the bribe," cried Louis hastily. "France needs no aggrandizement. If her boundaries were extended, she would lose in strength what she gained in size; so that Joseph will waste his time if he seeks to awaken in me a lust of dominion. I thirst for conquest, it is true—the conquest of my people's hearts. May my father's blessing and my own sincere efforts enable me to accomplish the one purpose of my life!"

"You have accomplished it, sire," replied de Maurepas with enthusiasm. "You are the absolute master of your subjects' hearts and affections."

"If so, I desire to divide my domains with the Queen," said Louis with a searching look at de Maurepas. The Minister cast down his eyes. The King went on: "You have something against her Majesty, what is it?"

"The Queen has something against me, sire. I am an eye-sore to her Majesty. She thinks I am in the way of de Choiseul, and will try every means to have me removed."

"You know that she would try in vain. I have already told you so. As a husband, I forget that Marie Antoinette is an Archduchess of Austria, but as my father's son—never! It is the same with her brother. I may find him agreeable as a relative, but as Emperor of Austria, he will know me as King of France alone. Be his virtues what they may, he never can wring the smallest concession from me. But hark!—I hear the sound of wheels. You know my sentiments—communicate them to the other Ministers. I go to welcome my kinsman."

When the King entered the Queen's reception room, she was standing in the midst of her ladies. Her cheeks were pale, but her large, expressive eyes were fixed with a loving gaze upon the door through which her brother was to enter. When she saw the King, she started forward and laying both her hands in his, smiled affectionately.

"Oh, sire," said she, "the Emperor has arrived, and my heart flutters so, that I can scarcely wait for him here. It seems to me so cold that we do not go to meet him. Oh, come, dear husband, let us hasten to embrace our brother. Good heavens! It is not forbidden a Queen to have a heart, is it?"

"On the contrary, it is a grace that well becomes her royalty," said Louis with a smile. "But your brother does not wish us to go forward to meet him. That would be an acknowledgment of his imperial station, and you know that he visits us as Count of Falkenstein."

"Oh etiquette, forever etiquette!" whispered the Queen, while she opened her huge fan and began to fan herself. "There is no escape from its fangs. We are rid of Madame de Noailles, but Madame Etiquette has staid behind to watch our every look, to forbid us every joy——"

Just then the door opened and a tall, manly form was seen upon the threshold. His large blue eyes sought the Queen, and recognising her, his face brightened with a bewitching smile. Marie Antoinette heedless of etiquette, uttered a cry of joy and flew into his arms. "Brother,

beloved brother!" murmured she, in accents of heartfelt tenderness.

"My sister, my own dear Antoinette," was the loving reply, and Joseph drew her head upon his breast and kissed her again and again. The Queen, overcome by joy, burst into tears, and in broken accents welcomed the Emperor to France.

The bystanders were deeply affected, all except the King—he alone was unmoved by the touching scene. He alone had remarked with displeasure that Marie Antoinette had greeted her brother in their native tongue, and that Joseph had responded. It was a German Emperor and a German Archduchess who were locked in each other's arms—and near them stood the King of France, for the moment, forgotten. The position was embarrassing, and Louis had not tact enough to extricate himself gracefully. With ruffled brow and downcast eyes he stood, until no longer able to restrain his chagrin, he turned on his heel to leave the room.

At this moment a light hand was laid upon his arm, and the clear, sonorous voice of the Queen was heard.

"My dear husband, where are you going?"

"I am here too soon," replied he sharply. "I had been told that the Count of Falkenstein had arrived, and I came to greet him. It appears that it was a mistake, and I retire until he presents himself."

"The Count of Falkenstein is here, sire, and asks a thousand pardons for having allowed his foolish heart to get the better of his courtesy," said Joseph with the superiority of better breeding. "Forgive me for taking such selfish possession of my sister's heart. It was a momentary concession from the Queen of France to the memories of her childhood; but I lay it at your Majesty's feet, and entreat you to accept it as your well-won trophy."

He looked at the King with such an expression of cordiality, that Louis could not withstand him. A smile which he could not control, rippled the gloomy surface of the King's face, and he came forward, offering both hands.

"I welcome you with my whole heart, my brother," said he in reply. "Your presence in Versailles is a source of happiness both to the Queen and to myself. Let me accompany you to your apartments that you may take possession at once, and refresh yourself from the fatigues of travelling."

"Sire," replied Joseph, "I will follow your Majesty wherever you please; but I cannot allow you to be inconvenienced by my visit. I am a soldier, unaccustomed to magnificence, and not worthy of such royal accommodation as you offer."

"How!" cried the Queen. "You will not be our guest?"

"I will gladly be your guest at table if you allow it," replied the Emperor, "but I can dine with you without lodging at Versailles. When I travel, I do not go to castles but to inns."

The King looked astounded. "To inns?" repeated he with emphasis.

"Count Falkenstein means hotels, your Majesty," cried the Queen,

laughing. "My brother is not quite accustomed to our French terms, and we will have to teach him the difference between a hotel and an inn. But to do this, dear brother, you must remain with us. Your apartments are as retired as you could possibly desire them."

"I know that Versailles is as vast as it is magnificent," said Joseph, "but I have already sent my valet to take rooms for me in Paris. Let us then say no more on the subject.\* I am very grateful to you for your hospitality, but I have come to France to hear, to see, and to learn. I must be out early and late, and that would not suit the royal etiquette of Versailles."

"I thought you had come to Paris to visit the King and myself," said Marie Antoinette looking disappointed.

"You were right, dear sister, but I am not so agreeable that you should wish to have me constantly at your side. I wish to become acquainted with your beautiful Paris. It is so full of treasures of art and wonders of industry, that a man has only to use his eyes, and he grows accomplished. I am much in need of such advantages, sire, for you will find me a barbarian for whose lapses you will have to be indulgent."

"I must crave then a reciprocity of indulgence," replied Louis. "But come, Count—give your arm to the Queen and let her show you the way to dinner. We dine to-day *en famille*, and my brothers and sisters are impatient to welcome Count Falkenstein to Versailles."

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## CHAPTER III.

### COUNT FALKENSTEIN IN PARIS.

A modest hackney-coach stood before the door of the little hotel de Turenne, in the Rue Vivienne. The occupant, who had just alighted was about to enter the hotel when the host, who was standing before the door, with his hands plunged to the very bottom of his breeches pockets, stopped the way, and not very politely inquired what he wanted.

"I want what every body else wants here, and what your sign offers to everybody—lodgings," replied the stranger.

"That is precisely what you cannot have," said mine host pompously. "I am not at liberty to receive any one, not even a gentleman of your distinguished appearance."

"Then take in your sign, my friend. When a man inveigles travellers with a sign, he ought to be ready to satisfy their claims upon his hospitality. I, therefore, demand a room."

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\* *Memoirs de M<sup>me</sup> de Camran*. Vol. 1, P. 172.

"I tell you, sir, that you cannot have it. The hotel de Turenne has been too highly honored to entertain ordinary guests. The Emperor of Austria, brother of the beautiful Queen, has taken lodgings here."

The stranger laughed. "If the Emperor were to hear you, he would take lodgings with some one more discreet than yourself. He travels *incognito* in France."

"But everybody is in the secret, sir, and all Paris is longing for a sight of Count Falkenstein, of whom all sorts of delightful anecdotes are circulated. He is affability itself, and speaks with men generally as if they were his equals."

"And pray," said the stranger laughing, "is he made differently from other men?"

The host eyed his interrogator with anger and contempt. "This is very presuming language," said he, "and as his Majesty is my guest, I cannot suffer it. The French think the world of him, and no wonder, for he is the most condescending sovereign in Europe. He refused to remain at the palace, and comes to take up his abode here. Is not that magnanimous?"

"I find it merely a matter of convenience. He wishes to be in a central situation. Has he arrived?"

"No, not yet. His valet is here, and has set up his camp-bed. I am waiting to receive the Emperor and his suite now."

"Is the valet Gunther here?"

"Ah, you know this gentleman's name! Then perhaps you belong to the Emperor's suite."

"Yes," said the stranger laughing, "I shave him occasionally. Now call Gunther."

There was something rather imperious in the tone of the gentleman who occasionally shaved the Emperor; and the landlord felt impelled to obey.

"Of course," said he respectfully, "if you shave the Emperor, you are entitled to a room here."

The stranger followed him up the broad staircase that led to the first story of the hotel. As they reached the landing, a door opened, and the Emperor's valet stepped out into the hall.

"His Majesty!" exclaimed he, quickly moving aside and standing stiff as a sentry by the door.

"His Majesty!" echoed the landlord. "This gentleman—this—Your Majesty—have I——"

"I am Count Falkenstein," replied the Emperor amused. "You see now that you were wrong to refuse me, for the man whom you took for an ordinary mortal, was neither more nor less than the Emperor himself."

The landlord bent the knee and began to apologize, but Joseph stopped him short. "Never mind," said he, "follow me, I wish to speak with you."

The valet opened the door and the Emperor entered the room, the frightened landlord following.

"These are my apartments?" continued Joseph, looking around.

"Yes, your Majesty."

"I retain four of them. An ante-room, a sitting-room, a bed-room, and a room for my valet. I will keep them for six weeks on one condition."

"Your Majesty has only to command here."

"Well, then, I command you to forget what I am in Austria. In France, I am Count Falkenstein, and if ever I hear myself spoken of by any other name, I leave your house on the spot."

"I will obey your instructions, Count."

"You understand then that I desire to be received and regarded as an ordinary traveller. From whence it follows that you will take in whatever other guests apply to you for lodging. You have proved to me to-day how unpleasant it is to be turned away, and I desire to spare other applicants the same inconvenience."

"But suppose the Parisians should wish to see Count Falkenstein?"

"They will have to submit to a disappointment."

"Should any one seek an audience of—the Count?"

"The Count receives visitors, but gives audience to no one. His visitors will be announced by his valet, therefore you need give yourself no trouble on that head. Should any unfortunate or needy persons present themselves, you are at liberty to admit them."

"Oh," cried the host, with tears in his eyes, "how the Parisians will appreciate such generosity!"

"They will not have the opportunity of doing so, for they shall not hear a word of it. Now go and send me a barber, and take all the custom that presents itself to you whether it comes in a chariot or a hackney coach."

The host retired, and as the door was closing, Count Rosenberg appeared. The Emperor took his hand and bade him welcome.

"I have just been to the embassy," said Rosenberg, "and Count Von Mercy says——"

"That I told him I would take rooms at the hotel of the Ambassadors; but I also reserve to myself this nice little bachelor-establishment to which I may retreat when I feel inclined to do so. The advantage of these double quarters is, that nobody will know exactly where to find me, and I shall enjoy some freedom from parade. At the hotel of the Ambassadors I shall be continually bored with imperial honors. Here on the contrary I am free as air, and can study Paris at my leisure."

"And you intend to pursue these studies alone, Count? Is no one to accompany you to spare you inconvenience, perchance to assist you in possible peril?"

"Oh, my friend, as to peril, you know that I am not easily frightened, and the Paris police is too well organised to lose sight of me. Monsieur de Sartines doubtless thinks that I need as much watching as a house-breaker; for it is presumed at Court that I have come to steal the whole country and carry it to Austria in my pocket."

"They know that to Count Falkenstein nothing is impossible," replied Rosenberg. "To carry away France would not be a very hard matter to a man who has robbed the French people of their hearts."

"Ah bah!—The French people have no hearts; they have nothing but imagination. There is but one man in France who has genuine sensibility, and that one is their poor timid young King. Louis has a heart, but that heart I shall never win. Heaven grant that the Queen have power to make it hers!"

"The Queen!—If Louis has a heart, it surely cannot be insensible to the charms of that lovely young Queen!"

"It ought not to be, for she deserves the love of the best of men, but things are not as they should be here. I have learned *that* in the few hours of my visit to Versailles. The Queen has bitter enemies, and you and I, Rosenberg, must try to disarm them."

"What can I do, Count, in this matter?"

"You can watch and report to me. Swear to me, as an honest man, that you will conceal nothing you hear to the Queen's detriment or to mine."

"I swear it, Count."

"Thank you, my friend. Let us suppose that our mission is to free my sister from the power of a dragon, and restore her to her lover. You are my trusty squire, and together we shall prevail over the monster, and deliver the Princess.

At that moment a knocking was heard at the door. It was opened, and an elegant cavalier, with hat and sword, entered the room with a sweeping bow. The Emperor stepped politely forward, and inquired his business.

The magnificent cavalier waved his hat, and with an air of proud consciousness, replied, "I was requested to give my advice regarding the arrangement of a gentleman's hair."

"Ah, the barber," said the Emperor. "Then be so good, sir, as to give your advice and dress my hair."

"Pardon me, sir, that is not my profession," replied the cavalier haughtily. "I am a physiognomist. Allow me to call in my subordinate."

"Certainly," said the Emperor, ready to burst with laughter as he surveyed the solemn demeanor of the artist. The latter walked majestically to the door and opened it.

"Jean," cried he, with the voice of a field-marshal; and a youth fluttered in, laden with powder-purses, combs, curling-tongs, ribbons, pomatum and the other appurtenances of a first-rate hair-dresser.

"Now, sir, said the physiognomist gravely, "be so good as to take a seat."

Joseph obeyed the polite command, upon which the physiognomist retired several paces, folded his arms, and contemplated the Emperor in solemn silence.

"Be so kind as to turn your head to the left—a little more—so—that is it—I wish to see your profile," said he after a while.

"My dear sir, pray inform me whether in France it is customary to take a man's portrait before you dress his hair," asked the Emperor, scarcely able to restrain his increasing mirth; while Rosenberg, choking with laughter, retired to the window, where Joseph could see him shaking with his handkerchief before his mouth.

"It is not customary, sir," replied the physiognomist with grave earnestness, "I study your face that I may decide which style becomes you best."

Behind the chair stood the hair-dresser in a fashionable suit of nankeen with lace cuffs and ruffles, hovering like a large yellow butterfly over the Emperor, and ready at the signal to alight upon the imperial head with brush and comb.

The physiognomist continued his study. He contemplated the head of the Emperor from every point of view, walking slowly around him, and returning to take a last survey of the front.

Finally his eye rested majestically upon the butterfly which fluttered with expectation.

"Physiognomy of a free-negro," said he with pathos. "Give the gentleman the Moorish *coiffure*,"\* and with a courtly salute, he left the room.

The Emperor now burst into shouts of laughter, in which he was heartily joined by Rosenberg.

Meanwhile the butterfly had set to work, and was frizzing with all his might.

"How will you manage to give me the Moorish coiffure?" asked the Emperor, when he had recovered his speech.

"I shall divide your hair into a multitude of single locks, curl, frizz them, and they will stand out from your head in exact imitation of the negro's wool," answered the butterfly triumphantly.

"I have no doubt that it would accord charmingly with my physiognomy," said the Emperor, once more indulging in a peal of laughter, "but to-day I must content myself with the usual European style. Dress my hair as you see it, and be diligent, for I am pressed for time."

The hair-dresser reluctantly obeyed, and in a few minutes the work was completed and the artists gone.

"Now," said Joseph to Count Rosenberg, "I am about to pay some visits. My first one shall be to Monsieur de Maurepas. He is one of our most active opponents, and I long to become acquainted with my enemies. Come, then—let us go to the Hotel of the Keeper of the great seal."

"Your Majesty's carriages are not here," replied Rosenberg.

"Dear friend, my equipages are always in readiness. Look on the opposite side of the street at those hackney-coaches. They are my carriages, for the present. Now let us cross over and select one of the neatest."

Perfect silence reigned in the ante-room of Monsieur de Maurepas.

\* *Memoires d'un voyageur qui se repose.* V. 3. P. 42.

A liveried servant with important mien walked forth and back before the closed door of the reception-room, like a bull-dog guarding his master's sacred premises. The door of the first ante-room was heard to open, and the servant turned an angry look towards two gentlemen who made their appearance.

"Ah," said he, "the two gentlemen who just now alighted from the hackney-coach?"

"The same," said the Emperor. "Is Monsieur le Comte at home?"

"He is," said the servant pompously.

"Then be so good as to announce to him Count Falkenstein."

The man shrugged his shoulders. "I am sorry that I cannot oblige you sir. Monsieur de Taboureau is with the Count, and until their conference is at an end, I can announce nobody."

"Very well then, I shall wait," replied Joseph taking a seat and pointing out another to Count Rosenberg.

The servant resumed his walk, and the two visitors in silence awaited the end of the conference.

"Do you know, Rosenberg," said Joseph after a pause, "that I am grateful to Count de Maurepas for this detention in his ante-room? It is said that experience is the mother of Wisdom.

Now my experience of to-day teaches me that it is excessively tiresome to wait in an ante-room. I think I shall be careful for the future, when I have promised to receive a man, not to make him wait. Ah! here comes another visitor. We are about to have companions in ennui."

The person who entered the room was received with more courtesy than "the gentleman who had come in the hackney-coach." The servant came forward with eagerness, and humbly craved his pardon while informing him that his Excellency was not yet visible.

"I shall wait," replied the Prince de Harrai; advancing to a seat. Suddenly he stopped, and looked in astonishment at Count Falkenstein, who was sitting perfectly unconcerned in a corner of the room.

"Great Heavens, his Majesty, the Emperor!" cried he, shocked, but recovering himself sufficiently to make a deep inclination.

"Can your Majesty pardon this unheard of oversight?"

"Still, Prince," replied the Emperor, smiling, "you will disturb the Ministers at their conference."

"Why, man, how is it that his Excellency is not apprised of his Majesty's presence here?" said the Prince de Harrai to the lackey.

"His Excellency never spoke to me of an Emperor," stammered the terrified lackey. "He desired me to admit no one except a foreign Count whose name, your Highness, I have been so unlucky as to forget."

"Except Count Falkenstein."

"Yes, your Highness, I believe—that is, I think it——"

"And you leave the Count to wait here in the ante-room!"

"I beg Monsieur le Comte a thousand pardons. I will at once repair my error."



"Stay," said the Emperor imperatively. Then turning to the Prince de Harrai he continued good humoredly, "If your Highness is made to wait in the ante-room, there is no reason why the Count of Falkenstein should not bear you company. Let us then wait together."

The ministerial conference lasted full half an hour longer, but at last the door opened, and Monsieur de Maurepas appeared. He was coming forward with ineffable courtesy to receive his guests, when perceiving the Emperor, his self-possession forsook him at once. Pale, hurried, and confused, he stammered a few inaudible words of apology, when Joseph interrupted and relieved him.

He offered his hand with a smile, saying, "Do not apologize; it is unnecessary. It is nothing but right that business of state should have precedence over private visitors."\*

"But your Majesty is no private individual!" cried the Minister with astonishment.

"Pardon me," said the Emperor gravely. "As long as I remain here, I am nothing more. I left the Emperor of Austria at Vienna; he has no concern with the Count of Falkenstein who is on a visit to Paris, and who has come hither, not to parade his rank, but to see and to learn where there is so much to be learned. May I hope that you will aid Count Falkenstein in his search after knowledge."

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE QUEEN AND THE "DAMES DE LA HALLE."

A brilliant crowd thronged the apartments of the Princess d'Artois. The royal family, the Court, and the lords and ladies of high rank were assembled in her reception-rooms, for close by, an event of highest importance to France was about to transpire. The Princess was giving birth to a scion of royalty. The longings of France were about to be fulfilled—the House of Bourbon was to have an heir to its greatness.

The *accouchement* of a royal Princess was in those days an event that concerned all Paris, and all the authorities and corporations of the great capital had representatives in those reception-rooms. It being only a Princess who was in labor, and not a Queen, none but the royal family and the Ministers were admitted into her bed-chamber. The aristocracy waited in the reception-rooms, the people in the corridors and galleries. Had it been Marie Antoinette, all the doors would have been thrown open to her subjects. The fishwives of Paris, the laborers,

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\* The Emperor's own words. Hubner's Life of Joseph II, page 141.

the *gamins*, even the beggars had as much right to see the Queen of France delivered, as the highest dignitary of the land. The people then who thronged both palace and gardens, were awaiting the moment when the physician should appear upon the balcony and announce to the enraptured populace that a Prince or Princess had been vouchsafed to France.

From time to time one of the royal physicians came out to report the progress of affairs, until finally the voice of the *accoucheur* proclaimed that the Princess d'Artois had given birth to a Prince!

A cry of joy followed this announcement. It was that of the young mother. Raising her head from her pillow, she cried out in ecstasy, "Oh, how happy, how happy I am."\*

The Queen bent over her and kissed her forehead, whispering words of affectionate sympathy in her ear; but no one saw the tears that fell from Marie Antoinette's eyes upon the lace-covered pillow of her fortunate kinswoman.

She kissed the Princess again, as though to atone for those tears, and with tender congratulations took her leave. She passed through the reception-rooms, greeting the company with smiling composure, and then went out into the corridors which led to her own apartments. Here the scene changed. Instead of the respectful silence which had saluted her passage through the rooms, she encountered a hum of voices and an eager multitude, all pressing forward to do her homage after their own rough fashion.

Every one felt bound to speak a word of love or of admiration, and it was only by dint of great exertion that the two footmen who preceded the Queen, were able to open a small space through which she could pass. She felt annoyed—even alarmed—and for the first time in her life regretted the etiquette which once had required that the Queen of France should not traverse the galleries of Versailles without the escort of her ladies of honor.

Marie Antoinette had chosen to dispense with their attendance, and now she was obliged to endure the contact of those terrible "dames de la Halle," who for hundreds of years had claimed the privilege of speaking face to face with royalty, and who now pressed around her, with jokes that crimsoned *her* cheeks while they were rapturously received by the *canaille*.

Marie Antoinette felt the burning, while with downcast eyes and trembling steps, she tried to hurry past the odious crowd of *poissardes*.

"Look, look," cried one, peering in her face, "look at the Queen and see her blushing like a rose-bud."

But indeed, pretty Queen, you should remember that you are not a rose-bud, but a full blown rose, and it is time you were putting forth rose-buds yourself."

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\* Madame de Campan, vol. 1, page 216. The Prince whose advent was a source of such triumph to his mother was the Duke de Berry, father of the present Count de Chambord. He it was who in 1827 was stabbed as he was about to enter the theatre, and died in the arms of Louis XVIII, former Count de Provence.

“So it is, so it is,” shouted the multitude. “The Queen owes us a rose-bud, and we must have it.”

“See here, pretty Queen,” cried another fishwife, “it is your fault if we stand here on the staircases and out in the hot sun to-day. If you had done your duty to France instead of leaving it to the Princess in yonder, the lackeys would have been obliged to open the doors to us as well as to the great folks, and we would have jostled the dukes and princes, and taken our ease on your velvet sofas. The next time we come here, we must have a tramp into the Queen’s room, and she must let us see herself and a brave Dauphin, too.”

“Yes, yes,” cried the fishwives in chorus, “when we come back we must see the young Dauphin.”

The Queen tried to look as though she heard none of this. Not once had she raised her eyes or turned her head. Now she was coming to the end of her painful walk through the corridors, for heaven be praised! just before her was the door of her own ante-room. Once across that threshold she was safe from the coarse ribaldry that was making her heart throb and her cheeks tingle; for there the rights of the people ended, and those of the Sovereign began.

But the “dames de la Halle” were perfectly aware of this, and they were determined that she should not escape so easily.

“Promise us,” cried a loud, shrill voice, “promise us that we shall have a young Dauphin as handsome as his mother and as good as his father.”

“Yes, promise, promise,” clamored the odious throng, and men and women pressed close upon the Queen to see her face and hear her answer.

Marie Antoinette had almost reached her door. She gave a sigh of relief, and for the first time raised her eyes with a sad, reproachful look towards her tormentors.

Just then a strapping wide-shouldered huckster pushed her heavy body between the Queen and the door, and barring the entrance with her great brown arms, cried out vociferously “You do not pass until you promise. We love you and love the King: we will none of the Count of Provence for our King; we must have a Dauphin.”

The Queen still pretended not to hear. She tried to evade the *poisarde* and to slip into her room, but the woman perceived the motion, and confronted her again.

“Be so kind, Madam,” said Marie Antoinette mildly, “as to allow me to pass.”

“Give us the promise, then,” said the fishwife putting her arms a kimbo.

The other women echoed the words, “Give us the promise, give us the promise!”

Poor Marie Antoinette! She felt her courage leaving her—she must be rid of this fearful band of viragos at whatever price. She would faint if she stood there much longer.

Again the loud cry. "Promise us a Dauphin, a Dauphin, a Dauphin."

"I promise," at last replied the Queen. "Now, madam, in mercy, let me have entrance to my own rooms."

The woman stepped back, the Queen passed away, and behind her the people shouted out in every conceivable tone of voice, "She has promised. The Queen has promised a Dauphin."

Marie Antoinette walked hurriedly forward through the first ante-room where her footmen waited, to the second wherein her ladies of honor were assembled.

Without a word to any of them she darted across the room and opening the door of her cabinet, threw herself into an arm-chair and sobbed aloud. No one was there excepting Madame de Campan.

"Campan," said she, while tears were streaming down her cheeks, "shut the door, close the *portiere*. Let no one witness the sorrow of the Queen of France!"

With a passionate gesture, she buried her face in her hands and wept aloud.

After a while she raised her tearful eyes and they rested upon Madame de Campan, who was kneeling before her with an expression of sincerest sympathy.

"Oh Campan, what humiliation I have endured to-day!"

The poorest woman on the street is more fortunate than I; and if she bears a child upon her arm, she can look down with compassion upon the lonely Queen of France,—that Queen upon whose marriage the blessing of God does not rest, for she has neither husband nor child."

"Say not so, your Majesty, for God has smitten your enemies, and with His own tender hand, He is kindling the fire of love in the heart of the King, your husband."

Marie Antoinette shook her head sadly. "No—the King does not love me. His heart does not respond to mine—He loves me, perhaps, as a sister, but no more—no more!"

"He loves your Majesty with the passion and enthusiasm of a lover, but he is very timid, and waits for some token of reciprocity before he dares to avow his love."

"No, he does not love me," repeated Marie Antoinette with a sigh. "I have tried every means to win his heart. He is indulgent towards my failings, and kindly anticipates my wishes; sometimes he seems to enjoy my society, but it is with the calm, collateral affection of a brother for his sister. And I!—Oh, my God! my whole heart is his, and craves for that ardent, joy-bestowing love of which poets sing, and which noble women prize above every earthly blessing. Such love as my father gave to my happy mother, I would that the King felt for me."

"The King does not know the extent of his love for your Majesty," said de Campan soothingly. "Some fortunate accident or dream of jealousy will reveal it to him before long."

"God speed the accident or the dream!" sighed the Queen; and forthwith her tears began to flow anew, while her hands lay idly upon her lap.

Those burning tears at last awakened her from the apathy of grief. Suddenly she gave a start and threw back her head. Then she rose from her seat, and like Maria Theresa began to pace the apartment. Gradually her face resumed its usual expression, and her demeanor became as it was wont to be, dignified and graceful.

Coming directly up to Madame de Campan, she smiled and gave her hand. "Good Campan," said she, "you have seen me in a moment of weakness of which I am truly ashamed. Try to forget it, dear friend, and I promise that it shall never be repeated. And now, call my tire-women and order my carriage. Leonard is coming with a new *coiffure* and Bertin has left me several beautiful hats. Let us choose the very prettiest of them all, for I must go and show myself to the people. Order an open carriage that every one may see my face, and no one may say that the Queen envies the maternal joys of the Countess d'Artois. To-night we are to have the opera of Iphigenia—it is one of my magnificent teacher's *chefs d'œuvre*. The Emperor and I are to go together to listen to our divine Gluck's music, and Paris must believe that Marie Antoinette is happy, too happy to envy any woman!—Come, Campan and dress me becomingly."

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## CHAPTER V

### THE ADOPTED SON OF THE QUEEN.

An hour later, the Queen entered her carriage in all the splendor of full-dress. Leonard had altered her *coiffure*. Instead of the three-story tower, her hair was low, and she wore a most becoming hat, chiefly made up of flowers and feathers. She also wore rouge, for she was very pale; and to conceal the traces of weeping she had drawn a faint dark line below her lower lashes which greatly increased the brilliancy of her eyes.

She ordered her coachman to drive through the town. Wherever the royal outsiders announced her coming, the people gathered on either side of the streets to wave their hats, and handkerchiefs, and greet her with every demonstration of enthusiasm and love.

Marie Antoinette greatly enjoyed her popularity. She bowed her head, and smiled and waved her hand in return, calling upon the ladies who accompanied her to sympathise with her happiness.

"Indeed," said she to the Princess de Lamballe,\* "the people love

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\* The Princess de Lamballe was subsequently beheaded, and her head was carried through the streets of Paris on a pike.—[Trans.

me, I do believe. They seem glad to see me, and I, too, like to see them."

"Your Majesty sees that in Versailles, as in Paris, you have thousands of lovers," replied the Princess.

"Ah," said the Queen, "my lovers are there to be seen; but my enemies who lie concealed are more active than my friends. And how do I know that they are not now among the crowd that welcomes me! How dreadful it is to wear a mask through life!—They, perhaps, who shout 'long live the Queen,' are plotting against her peace, and I who smile in return, dare not trust them!"

The royal equipage had now reached the gates, and was passing into the country. Marie Antoinette felt a sense of relief at the change. She gazed with rapture, upon the rich foliage of the trees, and then looking pensively above, for a few moments, she watched the floating clouds of blue and silver, and then followed the flight of the birds that were soaring in such freedom through the air.

"How I wish that I could fly," said she, sighing. "We mortals are less privileged than the little birds—we must creep along the earth with the reptiles that we loathe!—Faster, tell the coachman to drive faster!" cried she eagerly, "I would like to move rapidly just now—Faster, still faster!"

The command went forward, and the outriders dashed ahead at full speed. The carriage whirled past the cottages on the wayside, while the Queen leaning back upon her satin cushions gave herself up to the dreamy enjoyment which steals over the senses during a rapid drive.

Suddenly there was an exclamation and the horses were reined in. The Queen started from her reverie and leaned forward.

"What has happened?" cried she of the equerry, who at that moment sprang to the side of the *calèche*.

"Your Majesty, a child has just run across the road, and has been snatched from under the horses' feet."

"A child!" exclaimed the Queen, starting from her seat. "Is it killed?" "No, your Majesty, it is luckily unhurt. The coachman reined up his horses in time for one of the outriders to save it. It is unhurt—nothing but frightened. Your Majesty can see him now in the arms of the old peasant-woman there."

"She is about to return to the cottage with it," said the Queen. Then stretching her arms towards the old woman, she cried out in an imploring voice: "Give me the child—bring it here! Heaven has sent it to me as a comfort! Give it to me—I entreat you."

Meanwhile the old woman recalled by the equerry, was approaching the carriage. "See," exclaimed the Queen to her ladies, "see what a lovely boy!" And indeed he was a beautiful child in spite of his little tattered red jacket, and his bare brown legs, as dark with dirt as with sun-burn.

"Where is his mother?" asked Marie Antoinette, looking compassionately at the child.

"My daughter is dead, Madame," said the peasant. "She died last winter and left me the burden of five young children to feed."

"They shall burthen you no longer," exclaimed the Queen kindly: "I will maintain them all, and this little angel you must give to me. Will you not?"

"Ah Madame, the child is only too lucky! But my little Jacob is so wilful that he will not stay with you."

"I will teach him to love me," returned the Queen. "Give him to me now."

She leaned forward and received the child from his grand-mother's arms. It was so astounded, that it uttered not a cry: it only opened its great, blue eyes to their utmost, while the Queen settled it upon her lap.

"See," exclaimed the delighted Marie Antoinette, "he is not at all afraid of me. Oh we are going to be excellent friends! Adieu, my poor old grand-mother. I will send you something for your children as soon as I reach home. And now Monsieur de Vieugne, let us return to Versailles. Tell your grand-mama good-bye little Jacob. You are going to ride with me."

"Adieu my little one," said the grand-mother. "Don't forget your —"

Her words were drowned in the whirr of the carriage which disappeared from her wondering eyes in a cloud of dust.

The motion, the noise, and the air brushing his curls into his face, awakened the boy from his stupor. He started from the Queen's arms, and looking wildly around, began to yell with all his might. Never had such unharmonious sounds assailed the ears of the Queen before. But she seemed to be quite amused with it. The louder little Jacob screamed and kicked, the closer she pressed him to her heart, nor did she seem to observe that his dirty little feet were leaving unsightly marks upon her rich silk dress.

The *calèche* arrived at Versailles and drew up before the doors of the palace. With her newly acquired treasure in her arms, the Queen attempted to leave the carriage, but the shrieks and kicks became so vigorous that she was obliged to put the child down. The pages, gentlemen, and ladies in waiting, stared in astonishment as her Majesty went by, holding the refractory little peasant by the hand, his rosy cheeks covered with many an arabesque, the joint production of tears and dirt. Little cared Jacob for the splendor around him, still less for the caresses of his royal protectress.

"I want to go to my grandmother," shrieked he, "I want my brother Louis and sister Marianne!"

"Oh, dear little one!" cried the Queen, "what an affectionate heart he has! He loves his relatives better than all our luxury, and the Queen of France is less to him than his poor old grand-mother!—Never mind, darling, you shall be loved as well and better than you ever were at home, and all the more that you have not learned to flatter!"

She bent down to caress him, but he wiped off her kisses with indig-

nation. Marie Antoinette laughed heartily, and led the child into her cabinet where she placed him on the very spot where she had been weeping a few hours earlier.

"Campan," said she, "see how good God has been to me to-day! He has sent me a child upon whom I can lavish all the love which is consuming my poor, lonely heart. Yes my little one, I will be a mother to you, and may God and your own mother hear my vow! Now, Campan, let us take counsel together as to what is to be done. First, we must have a nurse, and then his face must be washed and he must be dressed as becomes my pretty little adopted son."

The child who had ceased his cries for a moment, now broke out into fresh shrieks. "I want to go home! I won't stay here in this big house! Take me to my grand-mother!"

"Hush, you unconscionable little savage!" said Madame de Campan.

"Oh Campan," cried the Queen deprecatingly, "how can you chide the little fellow! His cries are so many proofs of the honesty of his heart which is not to be bribed of its love by all that royalty can bestow!"\*

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## CHAPTER VI.

### "CHANTONS, CELEBRONS NOTRE REINE."

The opera-house was full to overflowing. In the lowest tier were the ladies of the aristocracy, their heads surmounted by those abominable towers of Leonard's invention. Above them sat the less distinguished spectators, and the parquet was thronged by poets, learned men, students and civil officers of various grades. Almost every class found some representatives in that brilliant assemblage, and each one felt keenly the privilege he enjoyed in being present on that particular occasion. But it was not altogether for the sake of the music that all Paris had flocked to the opera. The Parisians were less desirous to hear Iphigenia than to see the Emperor who was to be there in company with his sister.

Since his arrival in the capital Joseph had been the theme of every conversation. Every one had something to relate of his affability, his condescension, or his goodness. His *bon mots*, too, were in every mouth;

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\* The Queen kept her word. The boy was brought up as her own child. He always breakfasted and dined by her side, and she never called him by any other name save that of "my child." When Jacques grew up, he displayed a taste for painting, and of course he had every advantage which royal protection could afford him. He was privileged to approach the Queen unannounced. But when the Revolution broke out, this miserable wretch, to avoid unpopularity, joined the Jacobins, and was one of the Queen's bitterest enemies and most frenzied accusers.



and the Parisians who at every epoch have been so addicted to wit, were so much the more enraptured with the impromptu good things which fell from Joseph's lips, that the Bourbons were entirely deficient in sprightliness.

Every man had an anecdote to relate that concerned Joseph. Yesterday he had visited the Hotel-Dieu. He had even asked for admission to the apartments of the lying-in women, and upon being refused entrance by the sisters, he had said "Do let me see the first scene of human misery." The sisters struck by the words as well as by the noble bearing of the stranger, had admitted him, upon taking leave he had remarked to the Nun who accompanied him, "the sufferings which you witness in this room, reconcile you without doubt to the vows you have made." It was only after his departure that his rank was discovered, and this by means of the gift he left in the hands of the prioress—a draft upon the imperial exchequer of forty-eight thousand livres.

A few days previous, he had sought entrance to the "Jardin des Plantes;" but the porter had refused to open the gates until a larger number of visitors should arrive. So the Emperor, instead of discovering himself, took a seat under the trees and waited quietly until the people had assembled. On his return, he had given eight louis d'ors to the porter, and thus the latter had learned his Majesty's rank.

Again—the Emperor had called upon Buffon, announcing himself simply as a traveller. Buffon, who was indisposed, had gone forward to receive his guest in a dressing-gown. His embarrassment, as he recognised his imperial visitor had been very great. But Joseph laughing, said, "when the scholar comes to visit his teacher, do you suppose that he troubles himself about the professor's costume?"

That was not all—He was equally affable with artists. He talked daily with the painters in the Louvre; and having paid a visit to the great actor Le Kain, whom he had seen the night before in the character of a Roman Emperor, he found him like Buffon in a dressing-gown.

"When Le Kain would have apologised, the Emperor had said "Surely Emperors need not be so fastidious one towards the other!"

"The Emperor goes every where," cried a voice in the crowd.

"Yesterday he paid a visit to one of the tribunals and remained during the sitting. He was recognised, and the President would have assigned him a seat among the council, but the Emperor declined and remained in a trellised-box with the other spectators."

"How," cried another voice, "the Emperor sat in a little common trellised-box?"

"Yes," replied the first speaker, "he was in one of those boxes called lanterns. Even Marsorio and Pasquin had something to say on the subject."\*

"What did they say? Tell us what said our good friends, Marsorio and Pasquin."

\* Marsorio and Pasquin were the anonymous wits of the people, the authors of all the epigrams and pasquinades which were pasted about the streets and originated with—nobody. Marsorio and Pasquin still exist in Rome.

"Here it is. I found it pasted on a corner of the Palais Royal and I tore it down and put it in my pocket. Shall I read it?"

"Yes, yes," cried the multitude; and it was whispered among them that this was Riquelmont, the author of the satires that were sung on the Pont-Neuf, and were attributed to Marsorio and Pasquin.

"Now gentlemen listen!"

And with a loud voice, Riquelmont began to read:

MARSORIO.—"Grand miracle, Pasquin,  
Le soleil dans une lanterne!

PASQUIN.—Allons donc, tu me bernes!

MARSORIO.—Pour te dire le vrai, tiens: Diogène en vain  
Cherchait jades un homme, une lanterne à la main,  
Eh bien à Paris ce matin  
Il l'eût trouvé dans la lanterne."

"Good, good!" cried the listeners, "the Emperor is indeed a wonderful——"

Just then the bell for the raising of the curtain was heard, and the crowd pressed into the parterre. Amid the profoundest stillness the opera began. Before the first scene had ended, a slight rustling of chairs was heard in the King's box, and all eyes were turned thither. The whole royal family, with the exception of the King, were there; and in their midst, loveliest of all, appeared the young Queen, brilliant with youth, grace, and beauty, she bent her head, and with bewitching smiles, returned the greetings of her subjects.

The audience broke out into a storm of rapturous applause, and Marie Antoinette, kissing her fair hand, took her seat and prepared to listen to the music.

But the spectators were less interested in Iphigenia than in the imperial box. Their eyes were continually seeking the Emperor, who, concealed behind the heavy velvet draperies, was absorbed in the performance. At one stage of the representation, Iphigenia is led in triumph through the Greek camp, while a chorus of Thessalians sing,

"Que d'attraits, que de majesté  
Que de graces! que de beauté!  
Chantons, célébrons notre reine!"

The audience took the cue and transformed themselves into actors. Every eye and every head turned to the royal box, and for the second time every hand was raised to applaud. From boxes, galleries and parquet, the cry was "Da capo, da capo! Again that chorus!"

The singer who represented Achilles comprehended that the enthusiasm of the spectators was not for the music.

Enchanted with the idea of being the mouth-piece of the people, he stepped to the front of the stage, and raising his arm in the direction of the royal box, he repeated the line,

Chantons, célébrons notre reine!"

The heart of the young Queen overflowed with excess of joy. She leaned towards the Emperor and gently drawing him forward, the brother and sister both acknowledged the graceful compliment. The Emperor was saluted with shouts, and the singers began for the second time, "Chantons, célébrons notre reine!" The people with one accord rose from their seats and now on every side, even from the stage, were heard the cries of "Long live our Queen! Long live the Emperor!"

Marie Antoinette, leaning on her brother's arm bent forward again; and for the third time, the singers, and with them the people sang "Chantons, célébrons notre reine!"

This time, every occupant of the imperial box rose to return acknowledgements, and the audience began for the fourth time,

"Chantons, célébrons notre reine!"

The Queen was so overcome that she could no longer restrain her tears. She tried to incline her head, but her emotion overpowered her, and covering her face with her handkerchief, she leaned upon the shoulder of her brother and wept.

The applause ceased. The emotion of Marie Antoinette had communicated itself to her worshippers, and many an eye was dimmed with sympathetic tears. Suddenly in the parterre, a tall, manly form arose from his seat, and pointing to the Queen recited the following couplet:

"Si le peuple peut espérer  
Qu'il lui sera permis de rire  
Ce n'est que sous l'heureux empire  
Des princes qui savent pleurer."

This happy impromptu was enthusiastically received. Marie Antoinette had dried her tears to listen, and as she prepared to leave the theatre she turned to her brother and said,

"Oh that I could die now! Death would be welcome, for in this proud moment, I have emptied my cup of earthly joy!"\*

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE HOTEL TURENNE.

The host of the Hotel Turenne had punctually obeyed the orders of Count Falkenstein; he had taken every applicant for rooms, whether he came in an ignominious hackney-coach or in a magnificent carriage.

\* *Memoires de Weber*, vol. 1, P. 48.—*Memoires de Mme de Campan*, vol. 1, P. 127.—*Hubner, Life of Joseph II*, P. 142.

But now every room was taken, and the host, fearful of consequences, was waiting for the Emperor to appear, that he might be informed of the important fact. In ten or fifteen minutes his imperial Majesty was seen coming down the staircase, and Monsieur Louis approached with a low bow.

“May I have the honor of speaking with Count Falkenstein?”

“Certainly,” said the Count. “What is it?”

“I wished to inform Monsieur le Comte that my hotel is full to the garret. Should Monsieur le Comte then see a traveller leaving my door he will know that I am not infringing his imp—his orders, I mean. I have not a single room left.”

“Your hotel is popular; I congratulate you, but I am not at all surprised, for you make your visitors exceedingly comfortable.”

“A thousand thanks, Monsieur le Comte, but that is not the reason. I have never been so thronged before. It is all owing to the honor conferred upon me by your—, I mean by Monsieur le Comte. It will be a heavy disappointment to all who apply to hear that I have no room.”

“Monsieur Louis,” said the Emperor, “you are mistaken. There are two empty rooms opening into mine.”

“But Monsieur le Comte, it is impossible for me to let those rooms, for not only every word spoken in your own room can be overheard there, but yourself will be disturbed by hearing all that is said by the occupants. You see that these rooms cannot be occupied, Monsieur le Comte.”

“I see nothing of the sort,” said Joseph, laughing. “Not only are you welcome to let those two rooms, but I request you to do so. Let no man be incommoded on my account. I shall know how to submit to the inconvenience which may be entailed upon me.”

“Well, he certainly is the most condescending and humane prince that I ever heard of,” thought Monsieur Louis, as the Emperor’s carriage drove off, “and one thing is certain—I shall be careful whom I give him for neighbors. I do not believe a word of what the Count of Provence’s valet says, that he wants to take Alsatia and Lorraine, and has come to France to change the ministry. The King’s brothers are not over-fond of the Queen nor of the Emperor, but the people love them, and everybody in Paris envies me, now that I have the great Emperor as my guest.”

And Monsieur Louis, with head erect and hands folded behind him, went up and down his entrance-hall enjoying the sunshine of his favor with princes.

“I do wish nobody else would come here,” thought he, in an ecstasy of disinterestedness. “Suppose that the enemies of his Majesty should introduce a murderer in my house, and the Emperor should lose his life! I should be eternally disgraced. I am really responsible to his Majesty’s subjects for his safety. I am resolved, since he has commanded me to let these rooms, to allow none but ladies to occupy them.”

Filled with enthusiasm at this fortunate idea, the host walked to the

door and shook his fist at mankind in general—above all to that segregate of the male species who might happen to be entertaining thoughts of lodging at the Hotel Turenne.

Presently a travelling-chariot came thundering to the door. Monsieur Louis peered with his keen black eyes into the vehicle, and to his great relief saw two ladies.

The gentleman who accompanied them asked to be accommodated with two rooms; and the host, in his joy, not only opened the coach-door himself, but took the huge silver candelabrum from the butler's hand, and lighted the company himself to their apartments.

As they reached the landing, a carriage stopped before the door, and a manly voice was heard in the vestibule below.

"How lucky for me that these happened to be women," thought Monsieur Louis, "for there is the Emperor already returned from the theatre!"

He opened the door of the ante-room and his guests followed him in silence. Not a word had been spoken by either of the ladies, and nothing was to be seen of their faces for the thick veils which covered them.

"Do the ladies require supper?" inquired the host.

"Certainly," replied the gentleman, whom Monsieur Louis took to be the husband of the lady who had seated herself. "The best you can provide; and let it be ready in quarter of an hour."

"Will Madame be served in this room?"

"Yes, and see that we have plenty of light. Above all, be quick."

"This gentleman is very curt," thought the host as he left the room. "What if he should entertain evil designs?—I must be on my guard." Then returning, he added, "Pardon, Monsieur, for how many will supper be served?"

The stranger cast a singular glance at the lady in the arm-chair, and said in a loud and somewhat startling voice, "For two only."

"Right," thought the host, "the other one is a lady's maid. So much the worse. They are people of quality, and all that tribe hate the Emperor. I must be on my guard."

So Monsieur Louis determined to warn the Emperor, but first he attended to his professional duties. "Supper for the guests just arrived!" cried he to the chief butler. "Plenty of light for the chandeliers and candelabra! Let the cook be apprised that he must be ready before fifteen minutes," &c. &c.

Having delivered himself of these orders, the host hastened to inform the Emperor's valet, Gunther, of his uneasiness and suspicions.

Meanwhile, the *garçons* were going hither and thither preparing supper for the strangers. Scarcely ten minutes had elapsed before the first course was upon the table, and the butler with a bow announced the supper, "*Madame est servie.*"

The singular pair for whom the costly preparations had been made, spoke not a word to each other. The lady, motionless, kept within the

privacy of her veil, and the gentleman, who was watching the waiters with an ugly frown, looked vexed and impatient.

"Retire, all of you," said he imperiously. "I shall have the honor of waiting on Madame, myself."

The butler bowed and with his well-bred subordinates left the room.

"Now, Madam," said the stranger, with a glance of dislike to the lady's maid, "do *you* leave the room also. Go and attend to your own wants. Good-night."

The maid made no reply, but remained standing in the window as though nothing had been said.

"You seem not to hear," said the stranger. "I order you to leave this room, and furthermore I order you to return to your place as a servant, and not to show yourself here in any other capacity. Go, and heed my words!"

The lady's maid smiled derisively and replied, "Count, I await my lady's orders."

The veiled lady then spoke. "Gratify the Count, my good Dupont," said she kindly. "I do not need you to-night. Let the host provide you with a comfortable room, and go to rest. You must be exhausted."

"At last, at last we are alone," exclaimed the Count as the door closed upon his enemy, the lady's maid.

"Yes, we are alone," repeated the lady, and throwing off her wrappings, the tall and elegant form of the Countess Esterhazy was disclosed to view.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DENOUEMENT.

FOR a moment they confronted one another; then Count Schulenberg with open arms, advanced towards the Countess.

"Now, Margaret," cried he, "you are mine. I have earned this victory by my super-human patience. It is achieved—I am awarded—come to my longing heart!"

He would have clasped her in his arms, but she stepped back, and again, as in her dressing-room at Vienna, her hands were raised to ward him off. "Do not dare to touch me," said she with a look of supreme aversion. "Come no nearer, Count Schulenberg, for your breath is poison, and the atmosphere of your proximity is stifling me."

The Count laughed. "My beautiful Margaret, you seek in vain to discourage me by your charming sarcasm. O, my lovely, untamed

angel, away with your coldness! it enflames my passion so much the more. I would not give up the triumph of this hour for a kingdom!"

"It will yield you nothing nevertheless, save my contempt. You must renounce your dream of happiness, for I assure you that it has been but a dream."

"You jest still, my Margaret," replied the Count with a forced laugh. "But I tell you that I intend to tame my wild doe into a submissive woman, who loves her master and obeys his call. Away with this mask of reluctance! You love me, for you have given me the proof of your love by leaving kindred and honor to follow me."

"Nay, Count. I have given you a proof of my contempt, for I have deliberately used you as a tool. You, the handsome and admired Count Schulenberg—you who fancied you were throwing me the handkerchief of your favor, you are nothing to me but the convenient implement of my revenge. You came hither as my valet, and as I no longer need a valet, I discharge you. You have served me well, and I thank you. You have done admirably, for Dupont told me to-day that you had not yet exhausted the money I gave you for the expenses of our journey. I am, therefore, highly satisfied with you, and will recommend you to any other woman desirous of bringing disgrace upon her husband."

The Count stared at her in perfect wonder. He smiled too—but the smile was sinister and threatened evil.

"How!" said the Countess. "You are not yet gone! True—true—I forgot—a lady has no right to discharge her valet without paying him."

With these words she drew a purse from her pocket and threw it at his feet.

A loud grating laugh was the reply. He set his foot upon the purse, and folding his arms, contemplated the Countess with a look that boded no good to his tormentor.

"You do not go, Count Schulenberg?" said she.

"No—and what is more I do not intend to go."

"Ah!" cried Margaret, her eyes glowing like coals, "you are dishonorable enough to persist, when I have told you that I despise you!"

"My charming Margaret, this is a way that women have of betraying their love. You all swear that you despise us; all the while, loving us to distraction. You and I have gone too far to recede. You, because you allowed me to take you from your husband's house; I, because I gave in to your rather exacting whims, and came to Paris as your valet. But you promised to reward me, and I must receive my wages."

"I promised when we should reach Paris to speak the truth, Count Schulenberg; and as you are not satisfied with as much as I have vouchsafed, hear the whole truth. You say that in consenting to accompany you, I gave a proof of love. Think better of me, sir! Had I loved you, I might have died for you, but never would I have allowed you to be the partner of my disgrace. You have shared it with me precisely because I despise you, precisely because there was no man on earth whom I was less likely to love. As the partner of my flight, you have

freed me from the shackles of a detested union, to rupture which, I underwent the farce of a ravishment. The tyranny of Maria Theresa had compelled me to marriage with a wretch who succeeded in beguiling me to the altar by a lie. I swore to revenge myself, and you have been the instrument of my revenge. The woman who could condescend to leave her home with *you*, is so doubly-dyed in disgrace that Count Esterhazy can no longer refuse to grant her a divorce. And now Count that I have concealed nothing, oblige me by leaving me—I need repose.”

“No, my bewitching Margaret, a thousand times no!” replied the Count. “But since you have been so candid, I shall imitate your charming frankness. Your beauty, certainly, is quite enough to madden a man and embolden him to woo you, since all Vienna knows how the Countess Esterhazy hates her husband. But you seemed colder to me than you were to other men, all of whom complained that you had no heart to win. I swore not to be foiled by your severity, and thereupon my friends staked a large wager upon the result. Fired by these united considerations, I entered upon my suit and was successful. You gave me very little trouble, I must say *that* for you, Countess. Thanks to your clemency, I have won my bet, and on my return to Vienna, I am to receive one thousand louis d’ors.”

“I am delighted to hear it, and I advise you to go after them with all speed,” replied the Countess quietly.

“Pardon me if I reject the advice—for, as I told you before, I really love you. You have thrown yourself into my arms, and I would be a fool not to keep you there. No, my enchantress, no! Give up all hope of escaping from the fate you have chosen for yourself. For my sake you have branded your fair fame forever, and you shall be rewarded for the sacrifice.”

“Wretch,” cried she, drawing herself proudly up to her full height, “you well know that you had no share in the motives of my flight! Its shame is mine alone, and alone will I bear it. To you I leave the ridicule of our adventure, for if you do not quit my room, I shall take care that all Vienna hears how I took you to Paris as my valet.”

“And I, Countess Esterhazy, shall entertain all Vienna with the contents of your Album, which I have not only taken the liberty to read, but to appropriate.”

The Countess gave a start. “True,” murmured she, “I have missed it since yesterday.”

“Yes, and I have it. I think a lover has a right to his mistress’s secrets, and I have made use of my right. I have been reading your heavenly verses to the object of your unhappy attachment, and all Vienna shall hear them. What delicious scandal it will be to tell how desperately in love is the Countess Esterhazy with the son of her gracious and imperial godmother.”

“Tell it then,” cried Margaret, “tell it if you will, for I do love the Emperor! My heart bows down before him in idolatrous admiration, and if he loved *me*, I would not envy the angels their heaven! He does



not return my love—nor do I need that return to make me cherish and foster my passion for him. No scorn of the world can lessen it, for it is my pride, my religion, my life! And now go and repeat my words, but beware of me, Count Schulenberg, for I will have revenge!”

“From such fair hands, revenge would fall quite harmless,” exclaimed the Count, dazzled by the splendor of Margaret’s transcendent beauty, for never in her life had she looked lovelier than at that moment. “Revenge yourself if you will, enchantress, but mine you are doomed to be. Come, then, come!”

Once more he approached, when the door was flung violently open, and a loud, commanding voice was heard.

“I forbid you to lay a finger upon the Countess Esterhazy,” exclaimed the Emperor.

Margaret uttered a loud cry, the color forsook her cheeks, and closing her eyes, she fell back upon the sofa.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PARTING.

THE Emperor hastened to her assistance, but finding her totally insensible, he laid her gently down again.

“She is unconscious,” said he; “kind nature has lulled her to insensibility—she will recover.” Then taking the veil from the Countess’s hat, he covered her face, and turned towards the terrified Count who, trembling in every limb, was powerless to save himself by flight.

“Give me the Countess’s Album!” said the Emperor sternly. Count Schulenberg drew it mechanically forth, and with tottering steps advanced and fell at the Emperor’s feet.

Joseph tore the book from his hands and laid it on the sofa by the Countess. Then returning, he cried out in a tone of indignation, “Rise! You have behaved towards this woman like a dishonorable wretch, and you are unworthy the name of nobleman. You shall be punished for your crimes.”

“Mercy, sire, mercy,” faltered the Count. “Mercy for a fault which

“Peace!” interrupted Joseph. “The Empress has already sent a courier to order your arrest. Do you know what is the punishment in Austria for a man who flies with a married woman from the house of her husband?”

“The punishment of death,” murmured the Count inaudibly. “Yes,

for it is a crime that equals murder," returned the Emperor, "indeed it transcends murder, for it loses the soul of the unhappy woman, and brands her husband with infamy."

"Mercy, mercy," prayed the wretch.

"No," said Joseph sternly, "you deserve no mercy. Follow me!"

The Emperor returned to his own room, and opening the door that led to the ante-room he called Günther.

When the valet appeared, Joseph pointed to the Count, who was advancing slowly, and now stopped without daring to raise his head.

"Günther," said the Emperor, "I give this man in charge to you. I might require him on his honor not to leave this room until I return, but no man can pledge that which he does not possess; I must therefore leave him to you. See that he does not make his escape."

The Emperor then re-crossed his own room, and closing the door behind him, entered the apartment of the Countess. She had revived; and was looking around with an absent dreamy expression.

"I have been sleeping," murmured she. "I saw the Emperor, I felt his arm around me, I dreamed that he was bending over me——"

"It was no dream, Countess Esterhazy," said Joseph softly.

She started, and rose from the sofa, her whole frame tremulous with emotion. Her large, glowing eyes seemed to be searching for the object of her terror, and then her glance rested with inexpressible fear upon the door which led into the Emperor's room.

"You were there, sire, and heard all—all?" Stammered she, pointing with her hand.

"Yes—God be praised I was there, and I am now acquainted with the motives which prompted your flight from Count Esterhazy. I undertake your defence, Countess; my voice shall silence your accusers in Vienna, and if it become necessary to your justification, I will relate what I have overheard. I cannot blame you, for I know the unspeakable misery of a marriage without love, and I comprehend that to break its fetters, you were ready to brave disgrace, and to wear upon your spotless brow the badge of dishonor. The Empress must know what you have undergone, and she shall re-instate you in the world's estimation, for she it is who has caused your unhappiness. My mother is too magnanimous to refuse reparation where she has erred."

"Sire," whispered the Countess while a deep blush overspread her face, "do you mean to confide all—all to the Empress?"

"All that concerns your relations with your husband and with Count Schulenberg. Pardon me that I overheard the sweet confession which was wrung from you by despair! Never will I betray it to living mortal; it shall be treasured in the depths of my heart, and sometimes at midnight hour I may be permitted to remember it!—Come back to Vienna, Countess, and let us seek to console each other for the agony of the past!"

"No, Sire," said she mournfully, "I shall never return to Vienna; I should be ashamed to meet your Majesty's eye."

"Have you grown so faint-hearted?" said the Emperor gently. "Are you suddenly ashamed of a feeling which you so nobly avowed but a few moments since? Or am I the only man on earth who is unworthy to know it?"

"Sire, the judgment of the world is nothing to me, it is from *your* contempt that I would fly and be forgotten. Let other men judge me as they will—I care not. But oh! I know that you despise me and that knowledge is breaking my heart. Farewell then, forever."

The Emperor contemplated her with mournful sympathy, and took both her hands in his. She pressed them to her lips, and when she raised her head, her timidity had given place to strong resolution.

"I shall never see your Majesty again," said she, "but your image will be with me wherever I go. I hope for great deeds from you, and I know that you will not deceive me, sire. When all Europe shall resound with your fame, then will I be happy, for my being is merged in yours. At this moment, when we part to meet no more, I say again with joyful courage, I love you. May the blessing of that love rest upon your noble head. Give me your hand once more and then leave me."

"Farewell, Margaret," faltered the Emperor, intoxicated by her tender avowal, and opening his arms, he added in passionate tones, "come to my heart, and let me, for one blissful moment, feel the beatings of yours! Come, oh come!"

Margaret leaned her head upon his shoulder and wept, while the Emperor besought her to relent and return to Vienna with him.

"No, sire," replied she firmly. "Farewell!"

He echoed "farewell," and hastily left the room.

When the door had closed upon him, the Countess covered her face with her hands and sobbed aloud. But this was for a moment only. Her pale face resumed its haughty expression as she rose from her seat and hastily pulled the bell-rope. A few minutes later, she unbolting the door, and Madame Dupont entered the room.

"My good friend," said the Countess, "we leave Paris to-night."

"Alone?" asked the maid, looking around.

"Yes, rejoice with me, we are rid of him forever. But we must leave this place at once. Go and order post-horses."

"But, dear lady, whither do we journey?"

"Whither?" echoed Margaret, thoughtfully. "Let the will of God decide. Who can say from whence we come, or whither we go?"

The faithful servant hastened to her mistress, and taking the hand of the Countess in hers, pressed it to her lips. "Oh, my lady," said she, "shake off this lethargy—be your own brave self again."

"You are right, Dupont," returned Margaret, shaking back her long black hair, which had become unfastened and fell almost to her feet, "I must control my grief that I may act for myself. From this day I am without protector, kindred or home. Let us journey to the Holy Land, Dupont. Perchance I may find consolation by the grave of the Saviour."

One hour later the Emperor, sitting at his window, heard a carriage leave the Hotel Turenne. He followed the sound until it was lost in the distance; for well he knew that the occupant of that coach was the beautiful and unfortunate Countess Esterhazy.

Early on the following morning, another carriage with blinds drawn up, left the hotel. It stopped before the Austrian Embassy, and the valet of the Emperor sprang out. He signified to the porter that he was to keep a strict watch over the gentlemen within, and then sought the presence of Count Von Mercy.

A quarter of an hour went by, during which the porter had been peering curiously at the pale face which was staring at the windows of the hotel. Presently a secretary and a servant of the ambassador came out equipped for a journey. The secretary entered the carriage; the servant mounted the box, and Count Schulenberg was transported a prisoner to Vienna.\*

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## CHAPTER X.

### JOSEPH AND LOUIS.

THE Emperor was right when he said that his sister would derive little pleasure from his visit to Paris. Her happiness in his society had been of short duration, for she could not but be sensible of the growing dislike of the King for his imperial brother-in-law. Joseph's easy and graceful manners were in humiliating contrast to the stiff and awkward bearing of Louis; and finally Marie Antoinette felt many a pang as she watched the glances of aversion which her husband cast upon her brother, at such times as the latter made light of the thousand and one ceremonies which were held so sacred by the royal family in France.

The King, who in his heart had been sorely galled by the fetters of French etiquette, now that the Emperor ridiculed it, became its warmest partisan, and went so far as to reprove his wife for following her brother's example, and sacrificing her royal dignity to an absurd longing for popularity.

The truth was that Louis was envious of the enthusiasm which Joseph excited among the Parisians; and his brothers, the other members of the royal family, and his ministers, took every opportunity of feeding his envy by representing that the Emperor was doing his utmost to alienate the affections of the French from their rightful sovereign; that

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\* Count Schulenberg was sentenced to death, and Maria Theresa, who was inexorable where a breach of morals was concerned, approved the sentence. But Count Esterhazy hastened to intercede for his rival, acknowledging at last that Schulenberg had freed him from a tie which was a curse to him.

he was meditating the seizure of Alsatia and Lorraine; that he was seeking to re-instate de Choiseul, and convert France into a mere dependency upon Austria.

Louis, who had begun to regard his wife with passionate admiration, became cold and sarcastic in his demeanor towards her. The hours which, until the Emperor's arrival in Paris, he had spent with Marie Antoinette, were now dedicated to his Ministers, to Madame Adelaide, and even to the Count de Provence—that brother whose enmity to the Queen was not even concealed under a veil of courtly dissimulation.

Not satisfied with filling the King's ears with calumnies of his poor young wife, the Count of Provence was the instigator of all those scandalous songs in which the Emperor and the Queen were daily ridiculed on the Pont-Neuf, and of the multifarious caricatures which, hour by hour, were rendering Marie Antoinette odious in the eyes of her subjects. The Count of Provence, who afterwards wore his murdered brother's crown, was the first to teach the French nation that odious epithet of "*l'Autrichienne*," with which they hooted the Queen of France to an ignominious death upon the scaffold.

The momentary joy which the visit of the Emperor had caused to his sister had vanished, and given place to embarrassment and anxiety of heart. Even *she* felt vexed not only that her subjects preferred a foreign prince to their own rightful sovereign, but that Joseph was so unrestrained in his sarcasms upon royal customs in France. Finally she was obliged to confess in the silence of her own heart, that her brother's departure would be a relief to her, and that these dinners *en famille* to which he came daily as a guest, were inexpressibly tedious and heavy.

One day the Emperor came earlier than usual to dinner; so early in fact that the King was still occupied holding his daily levee.

Joseph seated himself quietly in the ante-room to await his turn. At first no one had remarked his entrance, but presently he was recognized by one of the Marshals of the household, who hastened to his side, and apologising, offered to inform the King at once of Count Falkenstein's presence there.

"By no means," returned the Emperor, "I am quite accustomed to this sort of thing. I do it every morning in my mother's ante-room at Vienna."\*

Just then the door opened, and the King, who had been apprised of the Emperor's arrival, came forward to greet him.

"We were not aware that we had so distinguished a guest in our ante-room," said Louis, bowing. "But come, my brother," continued he cordially, "the weather is beautiful. Let us stroll together in the gardens. Give me your arm."

But Joseph pointing to the crowd, replied, "pardon me your Majesty, it is not yet my turn, and I should be sorry to interrupt you in your duties as a sovereign."

Louis frowned, and all traces of cordiality vanished from his face. "I

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\*Memoires de Weber. Vol 1. P. 46.

will receive these gentlemen to-morrow," said he with a slight nod to his courtiers, and they, comprehending that they were dismissed, took their leave.

"Now Count," pursued the King, trying to smile, but scarcely succeeding in doing so, "we are at liberty."

So saying, he bowed, but did not repeat the offer of his arm; he walked by the Emperor's side. The usher threw open the doors, crying out in a loud voice,

"The King is about to take a walk!"

"The King is about to take a walk," was echoed from point to point; and now from every side of the palace came courtiers and gentlemen in waiting, to attend their sovereign, while outside on the terrace the blast of trumpets was heard, so that everybody in Versailles was made aware that the King was about to take a turn in his gardens, and his anxious subjects, if so disposed, might pray for his safe return.

The Emperor looked on and listened with an amused smile, highly diverted at the avalanche of courtiers that came rushing upon them from corridor and staircase. Meanwhile the Sovereigns pursued their way in solemn silence until the brilliant throng had descended the marble stairs that led from the terrace to the gardens. Then came another flourish of trumpets, one hundred Swiss saluted the King, and twelve *gardes de corps* advanced to take their places close to the royal promenaders.

"Sire," asked Joseph, stopping, "are all these people to accompany us?"

"Certainly, Count," replied Louis, "this attendance upon me when I walk is prescribed by court-etiquette."

"My dear brother, allow me to say that it gives us much more the appearance of State-prisoners than of free Sovereigns enjoying the fresh air. In presence of God let us be simple men—our hearts will be more apt to be elevated by the sight of the beauties of nature, than if we go surrounded by all this 'pomp and circumstance' of royalty."

"You wish to go without attendants?" asked Louis.

"I ask of your Majesty as a favor to let me act as body-guard to the King of France to-day. I promise to serve you faithfully in that capacity—moreover have we not this brilliant suite of noblemen to defend us in case of danger?"

The King made no reply. He merely turned to the Captain of the Swiss guard to inform him that their Majesties would dispense with military escort. The officer was so astounded that he actually forgot to make his salute.

At the gate of the park the King also dismissed the *gardes de corps*. These were quite as astonished as the Swiss had been before them, for never until that day had a King of France taken a walk in his gardens without one hundred Swiss and twelve body-guards.\*

\*Hubner. I. P. 148.

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE PROMENADE AND THE EPIGRAM.

THE royal brothers-in-law then were allowed to promenade alone; that is to say, they were attended by twenty courtiers, whose inestimable privilege it was to follow the King wherever he went.

"It is not then the custom in Austria for princes to appear in public with their escort?" asked the King after a long pause.

"Oh, yes, we have our body-guards but they are the people themselves, and we feel perfectly secure in their escort. You should try this body-guard, sire; it is more economical than yours, for its service is rendered for pure love."

"Certainly," replied the King carelessly, "it is a very cheap way of courting popularity, but the price would be too dear for a King of France to pay—he cannot afford to sell his dignity for such small return."

The Emperor raised his large blue eyes and looked full in the King's face. "Do you really think," he said "that a King compromises his dignity by contact with his subjects? Do you think that to be honored by your people you must be forever reminding them of your 'right divine?' I, on the contrary believe that the sovereign who shows himself to be a man, is the one who will be most sincerely loved by the men whom he governs. We are apt to become dazzled by the glare of flattery, sire, and it is well for us sometimes to throw off our grandeur and mix among our fellows. There we will soon find out that Majesty is not written upon the face of Kings, but resides in the purple, which is the work of the tailor and the crown which is that of the goldsmith. I learned this not long ago from a shoemaker's apprentice."

"From a shoemaker's apprentice!" exclaimed Louis with a supercilious smile. "It would be highly edifying to hear from the Count of Falkenstein how it happened that the Emperor of Austria was taught the nothingness of royalty by a shoemaker's lad!"

"It came quite naturally, sire. I was out driving in a plain *cabriolet* when I remarked the boy, who was singing, and otherwise exercising his animal spirits by hopping, dancing and running along the road by the side of my vehicle. I was much diverted by his drollery, and finally invited him to take a drive with me. He jumped in without awaiting a second invitation, stared wonderfully at me with his great brown eyes, and in high satisfaction kicked his feet against the dash-board, and watched the motion of the wheels. Now and then he vented his delight by a broad smile, in which I could detect no trace of a suspicion as to my rank or majesty. Finally I resolved to find out what place I occupied

in the estimation of an unfledged shoemaker, so I questioned him on the subject. He contemplated me for a moment and then said, "Perhaps you might be an equerry. 'Guess higher,' replied I. 'Well, a Count?'—I shook my head. 'Still higher'—'A Prince?'—'Higher yet;—' 'Well then you must be the Emperor.'—'You have guessed,' said I. Instead of being overcome by the communication, the boy sprang from the *cabriolet*, and pointing at me with a little finger that was full of scorn and dirt, he cried out to the passers by, 'only look at him, he is trying to pass himself off for the Emperor!'"\*

Louis had listened to this recital with grave composure, and as his face had not once relaxed from its solemnity, the faces of his courtiers all wore a similar expression. As Joseph looked around he saw a row of blank countenances.

There was an awkward pause. Finally the King observed that he could not see anything diverting in the insolence of the boy.

"I assure your Majesty," replied the Emperor, "that it was far more pleasing to me than the subserviance of a multitude of fawning courtiers." He glanced sharply at the gentlemen of their suite, who knit their brows in return.

"Let us quicken our pace if it be agreeable to you, Count," said Louis, with some embarrassment. The attendants fell back and the two monarchs walked on for some moments in silence. The King was wondering how he should manage to renew the conversation, when suddenly, his voice tremulous with emotion, Joseph addressed him.

"My brother," said he, "accident at last has favored me, and I may speak to you for once, without witnesses. Tell me then; why do you hate me?"

"My brother," exclaimed Louis, "who has dared——"

"No one has intimated such a thing," returned Joseph vehemently, "but I see it, I feel it in every look of your Majesty's eyes, every word that falls from your lips. Again I ask, why do you hate me? I who came hither to visit you as friend and brother!—Or do you believe the idle rumors of your courtiers, that I came to rob aught besides the heart of the King of France?—I know that I have been represented as unscrupulous in my ambition, but I entreat of you, dear brother, think better of me. I will be frank with you and confess that I *do* seek for aggrandizement, but not at the expense of my allies or friends. I strive to enlarge my territory, but I shall claim nothing that is not righteously my own. There are provinces in Germany which are mine by right of inheritance, others by the right which Frederic used when he took Silesia from the crown of Austria."

"Or that which Joseph used when he took Galicia from the King of Poland," interrupted Louis, significantly.

"Sire, we did not take Galicia. It fell to us through the weakness of Poland, and by reason of exigencies arising from an alliance between the three powers. My claim to Bavaria however, is of another nature. It

\* Characteristics and Anecdotes of Joseph II, and his times. P. 105.



is mine by inheritance—the more so that the Elector of Zweybrücken, the successor of the Elector of Bavaria, is willing to concede me my right to that province. The Bavarians themselves long for annexation to Austria, for they know that it is their only road to prosperity. They look with hope and confidence to Maria Theresa, whose goodness and greatness may compensate them for all that they have endured at the hands of their pusillanimous little rulers. The only man in Germany who will oppose the succession of Austria to Bavaria, is Frederic who is as ready to enlarge his own domains as to cry ‘Stop Thief!’ when he sees others doing likewise. But he will not raise his single voice unless he receive encouragement from other powers. If my visit to France has any political significance, it is to obtain your Majesty’s recognition of my right to Bavaria. Yes, sire, I *do* wish to convince you of the justice of my claim, and to obtain from you the promise of neutrality when I shall be ready to assert it. You see that I speak without reserve, and confide to you plans which heretofore have been discussed in secret council at Vienna alone.”

“And I pledge my royal word never to betray your Majesty’s confidence to living mortal,” replied Louis, with undisguised embarrassment and anxiety. “Believe me when I say that every thing you have spoken is as though I had never heard it. I shall bury it within the recesses of my own heart, and there it shall remain.”

The Emperor surveyed his brother-in-law with a glance of mistrust. He thought that the assurance of his secrecy was given in singular language. He was not altogether satisfied to hear that what he had been saying was to be treated as though it had never been said at all.

“Will your Majesty then sustain me?” asked he of Louis. This direct question staggered his Majesty of France. He scarcely knew what he was saying. “You ask this question,” replied he with a forced smile, “as if the Elector were dead, and our decision were imperative. Fortunately his Highness of Bavaria is in excellent health and the discussion may be—deferred. Let us think of the present. You were wise, my dear brother, when you remarked that the beauties of nature were calculated to elevate our minds. What royalty can be compared to hers!”

The Emperor made no reply. He felt the full significance of the King’s ungracious words, and more than ever he was convinced that Louis regarded him with dislike and ill-will. Again there was painful silence between the two, and every moment it weighed more heavily upon both.

At last Louis, awaking to a sense of what was due from host to guest, made a desperate resolution and spoke.

“Have you made any plans for this evening, my brother?” asked he timidly.

“No!” was the curt reply.

“You would be very amiable, if, instead of visiting the theatres, you would join the Queen in a game of cards.”

"I never play," returned Joseph. "A monarch who loses money at cards, loses the property of his subjects."\*

"Since you do not like cards, we have other recreations at hand. How would you relish a hunt in the woods of Meudon?"

"Not at all," said Joseph. "Hunting is no recreation for a monarch. His time is too precious to be frittered away in such idle sport."

"Ah," said Louis, whose patience was exhausted, "you imitate your old enemy, the King of Prussia, who for twenty years has been crying out against the sins of hunting and gambling."

The Emperor's face grew scarlet, and his eyes flashed. "Sire," replied he, "allow me to observe to you that I imitate nobody, and that I am resolved now as ever to conduct myself as I see fit."

To this, the King bowed in silence. He was so weary of his walk that he led the way to a road by which a short cut might be made to the palace. This road was crossed by an avenue of trees which bordered a large iron gate leading to the front entrance of the palace. Here the people were accustomed to assemble to obtain a view of their sovereigns, and to-day the throng was greater than usual, for they had learned from the Swiss Guard that the two monarchs were out together, and thousands of eager eyes were watching for the glittering uniforms of the *gardes de corps*.

Great was their astonishment to see two individuals alone, apparently independent of the courtiers at some distance behind them.

"Who could they be—these two gentlemen advancing together? Certainly not the Emperor and the King, for the latter never took a step without his life-guards."

"But it is the Emperor!" cried a voice in the crowd. "I know his handsome face, and his dark blue eyes."

"And the other is the King!" exclaimed another voice.

"It cannot be," said a third. "The King of France never moves in his own palace without a wall of guards around him—how much less in the open parks where he is exposed to the danger of meeting his subjects!"

"I suppose we are indebted to the Emperor for this bold act of his Majesty to-day," said another critic.

"Yes, yes, he it is who has persuaded the King to trust us," cried the multitude, "let us thank him by a hearty welcome."

The two Princes were now quite near, and the crowd took off their hats. The Emperor greeted them with an affable smile, the King with several nods but without a shadow of cordiality. Suddenly the air was rent with shouts, and a thousand voices cried out, "Long live the Emperor!"

The King reddened, but dared not give vent to his displeasure. His eyes sought the ground, while Joseph, gently shaking his head, looked at the people and pointed furtively at their sovereign.

They understood him at once, and eager to repair the inadvertence,

\* Joseph's own words. Hubner, part 1, page 151.

they shouted, "Long live the Emperor! Long live our King, the father of his people!"

The Emperor now smiled and waved his hand, while the King, still displeased, bowed gravely and turned towards Joseph.

"You are quite right," said he, in sharp, cutting accents, "popularity is a cheap commodity. A king has only to ride about in hackney-coaches, and put on the people's garb, to become the idol of the lower classes. The question, however, is, how long will a popularity of this sort last?"

"If it be called forth by a hackney-coach and an ordinary dress, sire, it may be of short duration, but if it is to last, it must be accorded to real worth," replied Joseph, sympathising with the discontent of the King.

"Which no one would presume to deny in your Majesty's case," rejoined Louis with a constrained and awkward bow.

"Oh," exclaimed Joseph blushing, "I had not understood that your Majesty's irony was intended for me, else I should not have answered as I did. I do not strive after popularity. My actions flow naturally from my convictions. These teach me that my natural condition is not that of an emperor but of a man, and I conduct myself accordingly."\*

So saying, the Emperor turned once more to salute the people, and then ascended the wide marble steps that led to the terrace of the palace. The two monarchs and the glittering courtiers disappeared amid the "*vivas*" of the multitude, and now they became suddenly silent.

In the midst of this silence, the same voice which has so sharply criticised the King, was heard. Again it spoke as follows:

"Marsorio has made another epigram, and mistaking me for Pasquin, has just whispered it in my ear!"

"What did he say? Tell us what our good Marsorio says! Repeat the epigram!" saluted the speaker on every side.

"Here it is," returned the voice.

"A nos yeux étonnés de sa simplicité  
Falkenstein a montré la majesté sans faste,  
Chez nous par un honteux contraste  
Qu'a-t'il trouvé? Faste sans majesté."†

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\* The Emperor's own words. Ramshorn's Joseph II, page 146.

† Ramshorn, page 146.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE DINNER EN FAMILY.

THE King and the Emperor had meanwhile reached the apartment which opened into the private dining-room of the royal family. The Princes with their wives were already there; but Marie Antoinette always came at the last moment. She dreaded the sarcasm of the Count de Provence and the sullen or contemptuous glances of the King. She would have given much to return to the old stiff, public ceremonial which she had banished, but that she could not do. It would have been too great a concession to the Court. Her only refuge was to stay away as long as decorum allowed, and since the Emperor's arrival she never entered the room until he had been announced.

To-day she was even later than usual, and the King, who like other mortals, was hungry after his walk, began to grow sulky at the delay. When at last she entered the room, he scarcely vouchsafed her an inclination of the head as he rose to conduct her to the table. The Queen seemed not to perceive the omission. She gave him her hand with a sweet smile, and despite his ill-humor, Louis could not suppress a throb as he saw how brilliantly beautiful she was.

"You have made us wait, Madame," said he, "but your appearance to-day repays us for your tardiness."

The Queen smiled again, for well she knew that she was bewitchingly dressed, and that the new coiffure which Leonard had contrived, was really becoming, and would heighten her charms by contrast with the hideous towers that were heaped, like Pelion upon Ossa, over the heads of the princesses.

"I hope that your Majesty will forgive me for being late," said she, secure in the power of her fascinations.

"My little Jacques is to blame. He is sick to-day, and would have no one to put him to sleep but myself."

"Your Majesty should feel flattered," cried the Count of Provence. "You are expected to put off your dinner until a little peasant is pleased to go to sleep."

"Pardon me, your Highness," said the Queen, coloring, "Jacques is no longer a peasant—he is my child."

"The Dauphin, perchance, which your Majesty promised not long since to the *dames de la halle*?" sneered the king's brother.

The Queen blushed so deeply that the flush of her shame overspread her whole face and neck, but instead of retorting, she turned to address her brother.

"You have not a word of greeting for me, Joseph?"

"My dear sister," said the Emperor, "I am speechless with admiration at your *coiffure*. Where did you get such a wilderness of flowers and feathers?"

"They are the work of Leonard."

"Who is Leonard?"

"What!" interrupted the Countess d'Artois, "your Majesty does not know who Leonard is—Leonard the Queen's hair-dresser—Leonard the autocrat of fashion? He it is who has imagined our lovely sister's *coiffure*, and certainly these feathers are superb!"

"Beautiful indeed!" cried the Countess of Provence, with an appearance of ecstasy.

"Are these the costly feathers which I heard your Majesty admiring in the hat of the duc de Lauzun?" asked the Count de Provence, pointedly.

"That is a curious question," remarked the King. "How should the feathers of the duc de Lauzun be transported to the head of the Queen?"

"Sire, I was by, when de Guéménée, on the part of de Lauzun, requested the Queen's acceptance of the feathers."

"And the Queen?" asked Louis, with irritation.

"I accepted the gift, sire," replied Marie Antoinette, calmly. "The offer was not altogether in accordance with Court-etiquette, but no disrespect was intended, and I could not inflict upon Monsieur de Lauzun the humiliation of a refusal. The Count de Provence, however, can spare himself further anxiety in the matter, as the feathers that I wear to-day are those which were lately presented to me by my sister, the Queen of Naples."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Emperor, "I was not aware that Caroline gave presents, although I know that she frequently accepts them from her courtiers."

"The etiquette at Naples, differs then from that of Paris," remarked the King. "No subject has the right to offer a gift to the Queen of France."

"Heaven be praised!" cried the Count de Provence, "nobody here pays any attention to Court-customs! Since Madame de Noailles gave in her resignation we have been free to do all things. This inestimable freedom we owe to our lovely sister-in-law, who in defiance of all prejudice, has had boldness enough to burst the fetters which for so many hundred years had impeded the actions of the Queens of France."

At that moment the first lady of honor, on bended knee, presented the Queen her soup, and this relieved Marie Antoinette from the painful embarrassment which this equivocal compliment occasioned. But the Emperor interposed.

"You have reason to be thankful to my sister that she has had the independence to attack these absurdities," said Joseph, warmly. "But pardon me if I ask if etiquette at Versailles approves of the conversion of the corridors, galleries and staircases of the palace into booths for

the accommodation of shopkeepers and tradesmen.”\*

“It is an old privilege which custom has sanctioned,” returned the King, smiling.

“And which violates the sanctity of the King’s residence,” objected the Emperor. “The Saviour who drove the money-changers from the temple, would certainly expel these traders, were he to appear on earth to-day.”

This observation was received in sullen silence. The royal family looked annoyed, but busied themselves with their knives and forks. A most unpleasant pause ensued, which was broken by the Queen, who turning to her brother, asked him what he had seen to interest him since his arrival in Paris.

“You well know,” said he, “that Paris abounds in interesting institutions. Yesterday I was filled with enthusiasm with what I saw in the course of my morning ramble.”

“Where did you go, Count?” asked Louis, appeased and flattered by the Emperor’s words.

“To the *Invalides*, and I confess to you that the sight of this noble asylum filled me with as much envy as admiration. I have nothing in Vienna that will bear comparison with this magnificent offering of France to her valiant defenders. You must feel your heart stir with pride whenever you visit those crippled heroes, sire.”

“I have never visited the *Invalides*,” said the King, coloring.

“What!” cried Joseph, raising his hands in astonishment, “the King of France has never visited the men who have suffered in his behalf! Sire, if you have neglected this sacred duty, you should hasten to repair the omission.”

“What else did you see?” asked the Queen, striving to cover the King’s displeasure, and the contemptuous by-play of the Count de Provence.

“I visited the Foundling Hospital. To you, Antoinette, this hospital must possess especial interest.”

“Oh yes. I subscribe yearly to it from my private purse,” said the Queen.

“But surely you sometimes visit the pious sisters upon whom devolves the real burthen of this charity, to reward them by your sympathy for their disinterested labors?”

“No, I have never been there,” replied the Queen, confused. “It is not allowed to the Queens of France to visit public benevolent institutions.”

“And yet it is allowable for them to attend public balls at the Opera house!”

Marie Antoinette blushed and looked displeased. This sally of the Emperor was followed by another blank pause which finally was broken by himself.

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\*This custom was subsequently abolished by Marie Antoinette, and the lower classes never forgave her for withdrawing this extraordinary privilege from the hucksters of Paris.

"I also visited another noble institution," continued he, that of the deaf mutes. The Abbé de l'Epée deserves the homage of the world for this monument of individual charity; for I have been told that his institution has never yet received assistance from the crown. My dear sister I venture to ask alms of you for his unfortunate *protégés*. With what strength of love has he explored the dark recesses of their minds, to bear within the light of intelligence and cultivation! Think how he has rescued them from a joyless stupor, to place them by the side of thinking, reasoning and happy human beings! As soon as I return to Vienna, I shall found an institution for the deaf and dumb; I have already arranged with the Abbé to impart his system to a person who shall be sent to conduct the asylum I propose to endow."

"I am happy to think that you meet with so many things in France worthy of your approval, Count," remarked the King.

"Paris, sire," said Joseph, "is rich in treasures of whose existence you are scarcely aware."

"What are these treasures then? Enlighten me, Count."

"They are the magnificent works of art, sire, which are lying like rubbish in your royal storehouses in Paris. Luckily, as I have been told, etiquette requires that the pictures in your palaces should, from time to time, be exchanged, and thus these masterpieces are sometimes brought to view. In this matter, I acknowledge that Etiquette is wisdom."<sup>\*</sup>

"Etiquette," replied Louis, "is often the only defence which kings can place between themselves and importunate wisdom."

"Wisdom is so hard to find that I should think it impossible for her to be importunate," returned Joseph. "I met with her yesterday, however, in another one of your noble institutions—I mean the military school. I spent three hours there, and I envy you the privilege of visiting it as often as you feel disposed."

"Your envy is quite inappropriate," replied Louis, sharply, "for I have never visited the institute at all."

"Impossible!" cried the Emperor, warmly. "You are unacquainted with all that is noblest and greatest in your own capital, sire! It is your duty as a King to know every thing that concerns the welfare of your subjects not only here in Paris but throughout all France."<sup>†</sup>

"I disagree with you, and I am of opinion that wisdom is often exceedingly offensive," replied the King frowning, as with a stiff bow, he rose from the table.

Marie Antoinette looked anxiously at Joseph to see the effects of her husband's impoliteness, but the Emperor looked perfectly unconscious, and began to discuss the subject of painting with the Count d'Artois.

The Queen retired to her cabinet, heartily rejoicing that the *dinner en famille* had come to an end, and almost ready to order that the royal meals should be served in the state dining-room, and the people of Pa-

\* The Emperor's words. Campan, Vol. 1, p. 178.

† The Emperor's words. Campan, Vol. 1, p. 79.

ris invited to resume their old custom of coming to stare at the royal family!

She sat down to her *escritoire* to work with her Treasurer and private Secretary, that is to say to sign all the papers which he placed before her for that purpose.

The door opened and the Emperor entered the room. The Queen would have risen, but he prevented her and begged that he might not feel himself to be an intruder.

"I came, dear sister," said he, "to ask you to accompany me to the Theatre to-night. Meanwhile it will give me great pleasure to see you usefully employed."

So the Queen went on signing papers, not one of which she examined. The Emperor watched for a time in astonished silence; finally he came up to the *escritoire*.

"My sister," said he, "I think it very strange that you put your name to so many documents without ever looking at their contents."

"Why strange, brother?" asked the Queen, opening her large eyes in wonder.

"Because it is a culpable omission, Antoinette. You should not so lightly throw away your royal signature. The name of a sovereign should never be signed without deliberation—much less blindly, as you are signing yours at present."\*

Marie Antoinette colored with vexation at this reproof in presence of one of her own subjects. "My brother," replied she hastily, "I admire the facility with which you generalize on the subject of other people's derelictions. But unhappily your homilies are sometimes misapplied. My Secretary, Monsieur d'Augeard, has my full confidence, and these papers are merely the quarterly accounts of my household expenditures. They have already been approved by the auditor, and you perceive that I risk nothing by affixing my signature."

"I perceive farther," replied Joseph smiling, "that you are of one mind with your husband, and find wisdom sometimes very offensive. Forgive me if in my over-anxiety I have hurt you, dear sister. Let us be friends, for indeed, my poor Antoinette, you are sorely in need of friends at this Court."

The Queen dismissed her Secretary, and then came forward and took her brother's hand. "You have discovered then," said she, "that I am surrounded by enemies?"

"I have indeed, and I tremble for your safety. Your foes are powerful and you—you are not sufficiently cautious, Antoinette."

"What is it in me that they find to blame!" exclaimed she, her beautiful eyes filling with tears.

"Some other day, we must talk of this together. I see that you are threatened, but as yet, I neither understand the cause of your danger nor its remedy. As soon as I shall have unravelled the mystery of your position I will seek an interview with you, and then dear sister, we must

\* The Emperor's own words.



forget that we are sovereigns and remember but one thing—the ties that have bound us together since first we loved each other as the children of one father and mother.”

Marie Antoinette laid her head upon her brother's bosom and wept. “Oh that we were children again in the gardens of Schönbrunn!” sobbed she, “for there at least we were innocent and happy!”

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### A VISIT TO JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU.

BEFORE the door of a small, mean house in the village of Montmorency stood a hackney-coach from which a man, plainly dressed, but distinguished in appearance, had just alighted. He was contemplated with sharp scrutiny by a woman, who with arms a-kimbo, blocked up the door of the cottage.

“Does Monsieur Rousseau live here?” asked the stranger touching his hat.

“Yes, my husband lives here,” said the woman sharply.

“Ah, you are then Therese Levasseur, the companion of the great philosopher?”

“Yes I am, and the Lord knows that I lead a pitiful life with the philosopher.”

“You complain Madam, and yet you are the chosen friend of a great man!”

“People do not live on greatness, sir, nor on goodness either. Jean Jacques is too good to be of any use in this world. He gives away everything he has, and leaves nothing for himself and me.”

The stranger grew sad as he looked at this great, strapping woman, whose red face was the very representative of coarseness and meanness.

“Be so good as to conduct me to Monsieur Rousseau's presence, madam,” said he in rather a commanding tone.

“I shall do no such thing,” cried Therese Levasseur, in a loud, rough voice. “People who visit in hackney-coaches should not take airs. Monsieur Rousseau is not to be seen by everybody.”

“A curious doctrine that, to be propounded before a philosopher's door!” said the stranger, laughing. “But pray, madam, excuse me and my hackney-coach and allow me to pass.”

“You shall first tell your business. Do you bring music to copy?”

“No, madam, I come merely to visit monsieur.”

“Then you can go as you came,” exclaimed the virago. “My hus-

band is not a wild animal on exhibition, and I am not going to let in every idle stranger that interferes with his work and cuts off my bread. God knows he gives me little enough, without lessening the pittance by wasting his time talking to you or the like of you."

The stranger put his hand in his pocket, and drawing it out again, laid something in the palm of Therese's broad, dirty hand. He repeated his request.

She looked at the gold, and her avaricious face brightened. "Yes, yes," said she, contemplating it with a greedy smile, "you shall see Jean Jacques. But first you must promise not to tell him of the louis d'or. He would growl and wish me to give it back. He is such a fool! He would rather starve than let his friends assist him."

"Be at ease—I shall not say a word to him."

"Then, sir, go in and mount the stairs, but take care not to stumble, for the railing is down. Knock at the door above, and there you will find Jean Jacques. While you talk to him, I will go out and spend this money all for his comfort. Let me see—he needs a pair of shoes and a cravat—and—Well," continued she nodding her head, "farewell, don't break your neck."

"Yes," muttered she as she went back to the street, "he wants shoes and cravats, and coats too for that matter, but I am not the fool to waste my money upon him. I shall spend it on myself for a new neck-handkerchief, and if there is anything left, I shall treat myself to a couple of bottles of wine and some fish."

While Therese stalked through the streets to spend her money, the stranger had obtained entrance into the little dark room, where sat Jean Jacques Rousseau.

It was close and mouldy like the rest of the house, and a few straw chairs with one deal table were the only furniture there. On the wall hung several bird-cages, whose inmates were twittering, and warbling one to another. Before the small window, which looked out upon a noble walnut tree, stood several glass globes in which various worms and fishes were leading an uneasy existence.

Rousseau himself was seated at the table, writing. He wore a coat of coarse gray cloth, like that of a laborer, the collar of his rough linen shirt was turned down over a bright cotton scarf, which was carelessly tied around his neck. His face was pale, sad, and weary; and his scant gray hairs, as well as the deep wrinkles upon his forehead wore the scroll whereon time had written sixty years of strife and struggle with life. Imagination however still looked out from the depths of his dark eyes, and the corners of his mouth were still graceful with the pencillings of many a good-humored smile.

"Pardon me, sir," said the stranger, "that I enter unannounced. I found no one to precede me hither."

"We are too poor to keep a servant, sir," replied Rousseau, "and I presume that my good Therese has gone out on some errand. How can I serve you?"

"I came to visit Jean Jacques Rousseau, the poet and philosopher."

"I am the one, but scarcely the others. Life has gone so roughly with me that poetry has vanished long ago from my domicile, and men have deceived me so often that I have fled from the world in disgust. You see, then, that I have no claim to the title of philosopher."

"And thus speaks Jean Jacques Rousseau, who once taught that mankind were naturally good?"

"I still believe in my own teachings, sir," cried Rousseau warmly. "Man is the vinculum that connects the Creator with His creation, and light from heaven illumines his birth and infancy. But the world, sir, is evil, and is swayed by two demops—selfishness and falsehood.\* These demons poison the heart of man, and influence him to actions whose sole object is to advance himself and prejudice his neighbor."

"I fear that your two demons were coeval with the creation of the world," said the stranger, with a smile.

"No, no; they were not in Paradise. And what is Paradise but the primitive condition of man—that happy state when in sweet harmony with nature, he lay upon the bosom of his mother-earth and inhaled health and peace from her life-giving breath? Let us return to a state of nature, and we shall find that the gates of Paradise have re-opened.

"Never! We have tasted of the tree of knowledge and are forever exiled from Eden."

"Woe to us all, if what you say is true; for then the world is but a vale of misery, and the wise man has but one resource—self-destruction! But pardon me, I have not offered you a chair."

The stranger accepted a seat and glanced at the heaps of paper that covered the rickety old table.

"You were writing?" asked he. "Are we soon to receive another great work from Rousseau's hands?"

"No sir," replied Rousseau sadly, "I am too unhappy to write."

"But surely this is writing," and the stranger pointed to the papers around.

"Yes, sir, but I copy music, and God knows that in the notes I write, there is little or no thought. I have written books that I might give occasion to the French to think, but they never profited by the opportunity. They are more complaisant now that I copy music. I give them a chance to sing and they sing.†

"It seems to me that there is great discord in their music, sir. You who are as great a musician as a philosopher can tell me whether I judge correctly."

"You are right," replied Rousseau. "The dissonance increases with every hour. The voice which you hear is that of the people, and the day will come when, claiming their rights, they will rend the air with a song of such hatred and revenge as the world has never heard before."

\* This is not very philosophical. If the fraction man, be intrinsically good, how is it that the whole (the world which is made up of nothing but men) is so evil? Is there a demiurge responsible for the introduction of these two demons?

† This is Rousseau's own language. Ramshorn, P. 140.

"But who denies their rights to the people?"

"The property-holders, the priests, the nobles, and the King."

"The King! what has he done?"

"He is the grand-son of that Louis Fifteenth, whose life of infamy is a foul blot upon the fame of France; and nothing can ever wash away the disgrace save an ocean of royal blood."

"Terrible!" exclaimed the visitor with a shudder. "Are you a prophet that you allow yourself such anticipations of evil?"

"No sir, I predict what is to come, from my knowledge of that which has gone by."

"What do you mean?"

Rousseau slowly shook his head. "Fate has threatened this unhappy King from the day of his birth. Warning after warning has been sent and disregarded. Truly the man was a wise one, who said 'whom the Gods destroy, they first blind.'"

"I implore you, speak further. What evil omens have you seen that lead you to apprehend misfortune to Louis Sixteenth?"

"Have you never heard of them? They are generally known."

"No, indeed—I beseech you, enlighten me, for I have good reason for my curiosity."

"Louis was not born like his predecessors, and it is generally believed that he will not die a natural death. Not a single member of the royal family was present at his birth. His mother by accident found herself alone in the palace of Versailles, when she was overtaken by the pains of childbirth, and some insignificant stranger received the heir of France upon his entrance to life. The courier who was sent to announce his birth, fell from his horse and was killed on the spot. The abbé de Saujon, who was called in to christen the infant, was struck by apoplexy while entering the chapel-door, and his arm and tongue were paralysed.\* From hundreds of healthy women, the physician of the Dauphiness chose three nurses for the Prince. At the end of a week, two of them were dead, and the third one, Madame Guillotine, after nursing him for six weeks, was carried off by small-pox. Even the frivolous grandfather was terrified by such an accumulation of evil omens, and he was heard to regret that he had given to his grandson the title of Duke of Berry, 'for' said he, 'the name has always brought ill-luck to its possessors.†

"But the King has long since outlived the name, and has triumphed over all the uncomfortable circumstances attending his birth, for he is now King of France."

"And do you know what he said when the crown was placed upon his head?"

"No—I have never heard."

"He was crowned at Rheims. When the hand of the Archbishop was withdrawn from the crown, the King moaned, and turning deathly pale, murmured, 'OH HOW IT PAINS ME!‡ Once before him, a King of France

\* *Memoires de Mme de Creque*, Vol. 3, P. 179.

† *Creque*, Vol. 3, P. 180.

‡ *Campan*, Vol. 1, P. 115.

had made the same exclamation, and that King was Henry Third."

"Strange," said the visitor. "All this seems very absurd and yet it fills me with horror. Have you anything more of the same sort to point out?"

"Remember all that occurred when the Dauphin was married to the Archduchess Marie Antoinette. When she put her foot upon French ground, a tent had been erected according to custom, where she was to lay aside her clothing, and be attired in garments of French manufacture. The walls of the tent were hung with costly Gobelin tapestry, all of which represented scenes of bloodshed. On one side was the massacre of the Innocents, on the other the execution of the Maccabees. The Archduchess herself was horror-stricken at the omen. On that night, two of the ladies in waiting, who had assisted the Queen in her toilet, died suddenly. Think of the dreadful storm that raged on the Dauphin's wedding-night, and of the fearful accident which accompanied his entrance into Paris, and then tell me whether death is not around, perchance before this unhappy King?"

"But to what end are these omens, since they cannot help us to avert evil?"

"To what end?" asked Rousseau as with a smile he contemplated the agitated countenance of his guest. "To this end—that the Emperor Joseph may warn his brother and sister of the fate which threatens, and which will surely engulf them, if they do not heed the signs of the coming tempest."

"How, Rousseau, you know me?"

"If I had not known you sire, I would not have spoken so freely of the King. I saw you in Paris at the theatre and I am rejoiced to be able to speak to your Majesty as man to man, and friend to friend."

"Then let me be as frank as my friend has been to me," said Joseph extending his hand. "You are not situated as becomes a man of your genius and fame. What can I do to better your condition?"

"Better my condition?" repeated Rousseau absently. "Nothing—I am an old man whose every illusion has fled. My only wants are a ray of sunshine to warm my old limbs and a crust of bread to appease my hunger."

At this moment a shrill voice was heard without. "Put down the money and I will fetch the music, for we are sadly pressed for every thing."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Rousseau, anxiously. "I am not ready, and I had promised the music to Therese for this very hour. How shall I excuse myself?"—Here the unhappy philosopher turned to the Emperor. "Sire you asked what you could do for me, I implore you, leave this room before Therese enters it. She will be justly displeased, if she finds you here, and when my dear, good Therese is angry, she speaks so loud that my nerves are discomposed for hours afterwards. Here, sire, through this other door. It leads to my bed-room and thence by a staircase to the street."

Trembling with excitement, Rousseau hurried the Emperor into the next room. The latter waved his hand and the door was closed upon him. As he reached the street, Joseph heard the sharp discordant tones of Therese Levasseur's voice, heaping abuse upon the head of her philosopher, because he had not completed his task and they would have not a cent wherewith to buy dinner.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE PARTING.

THE visit of the Emperor was drawing to a close. He had tasted to its utmost of the enjoyments of the peerless city. He had become acquainted with its great national institutions, its industrial resources, its treasures of art and of science. The Parisians were enthusiastic in his praise; from the nobleman to the artisan, every man had something to say in favor of the gracious and affable brother of the Queen. Even the fish-wives, those formidable *dames de la halle*, had walked in procession to pay their respects, and present him a bouquet of gigantic proportions.\*

The Emperor was popular everywhere except at Court. His candor was unacceptable, and his occasional sarcasms had stung the pride of the royal family. The King never pardoned him the unpalatable advice he had bestowed relative to the hospitals, the *Invalides*, and the military schools. The Queen, too, was irritated to see that whereas her brother might have expressed his disapprobation of her acts in private, he never failed to do so in presence of the Court. The consequence was, that like the King and the rest of the royal family, Marie Antoinette was relieved when this long wished-for visit of the Emperor was over. This did not prevent her from clinging to his neck, and shedding abundant tears as she felt his warm and loving embrace.

The Emperor drew her close to his heart, whispering meanwhile, "remember that we must see each other in private. Send some one to me to conduct me to the room in the palace which you call your 'asylum.'"

"How!" said the Queen with surprise, "you have heard of my asylum! Who told you of it?"

"Hush, Antoinette, you will awaken the King's suspicions, for all eyes are upon us! Will you admit me?"

"Yes, I will send Louis to conduct you this afternoon," and withdrawing herself from her brother's arms, the Queen and the royal family took leave of Count Falkenstein.

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\* On this occasion Madame Trigodin, one of the most prominent of the *poissardes* made an address on behalf of the sisterhood. Hubner I, P. 151.

His carriages and his *suite* had all left Paris, and Joseph, too, was supposed to have gone long before the hour when he was conducted to the Queen's "asylum" by her faithful servant Louis. This "asylum" was in an obscure corner of the Tuilleries, and to reach it, the Emperor was introduced into the Palace by a side-door. He was led through dark passages and up narrow stair-cases until they reached a small door which Louis opened with a key which he took from his pocket. He clapped his hand three times, and the signal being answered, he made a profound inclination to the Emperor.

"Your Majesty can enter. The Queen is there."

Joseph found himself in a small, simple apartment of which the furniture was of white wood covered with chintz. On the wall was a hanging *etagère* with books; opposite, an open harpsichord, and in the recess of the window a table covered with papers. The Emperor hastily surveyed this room, and no one coming forward, he passed into another.

Here he found his sister,—no longer the magnificent Queen whose rich toilettes were as proverbial as her beauty; but a lovely, unpretending woman, without rouge, without jewels, clad in a dress of India muslin, which was confined at the waist by a simple sash of pale lilac ribbon.

Marie Antoinette came forward with both hands outstretched. "I am dressed as is my custom," said she, "when the few friends I possess, come to visit me here—here in my asylum, where sometimes I am able to forget that I am Queen of France."

"You have no right ever to forget it, Antoinette, and it was expressly to remind you of this, that I asked for a private interview with my sister."

"You wished to see this asylum of which you had heard, did you not?" asked the Queen with a shade of bitterness. "I have been calumniated to you as I have been to the King and to the French people. Oh! I know how my enemies are trying to make my subjects hate me! I know that about these very rooms, lewd songs are sung on the Pont-neuf, which make the Count de Provence hold his sides with laughter!"

"Yes Antoinette, I have heard these things, and I came hither expressly to visit this 'asylum'."

"Well, Joseph, it is before you. The room through which you passed and this one form my *suite*. The door yonder, leads to the apartments of the Princess de Lamballe, and I have never opened it to enter my retreat except in her company."

"You had never the right to enter it at all. A retreat of this kind is improper for you, and woe to you Antoinette if ever another man beside myself should cross its threshold! It would give a coloring of truth to the evil reports of your powerful enemies."

"Gracious God of Heaven!" cried the Queen, pale with horror, "what do they say of me!"

"It would avail you nothing to repeat their calumnies, poor child. I have come hither to warn you that some dark cloud hangs over the des-

tiny of France. You must seek means to disperse it, or it will burst and destroy both you and your husband."

"I have already felt a presentiment of evil, dear brother, and for that very reason I come to these little simple rooms that I may for a few hours forget the destiny that awaits me—the court which hates and vilifies me—and in short—my supremest sorrow—the indifference of my husband."

"Dear sister, you are wrong. You should never have sought to forget these things. You have too lightly broken down the barriers which etiquette, hundreds of years ago, had built around the Queens of France."

"This from *you*, Joseph; you who despise all etiquette!"

"Nay, Antoinette, I am a man, and that justifies me in many an indiscretion. I have a right to attend an opera-ball unmasked, but you have not."

"I had the King's permission, and was attended by my ladies of honor, and the princes of the royal family."

"An Emperor may ride in a hackney-coach, if the whim strike him, but not a Queen, Antoinette."

"That was an accident, Joseph. I was returning from a ball with the Duchess de Duras, when our carriage broke, and Louis was obliged to seek a hackney-coach or we would have returned to the palace on foot."

"Let it pass then. An Emperor or a King, were he very young, might indulge himself in a game of blind man's buff without impropriety, but when a Queen ventures to do as much, she loses her dignity. Nevertheless, you have been known to romp with the other ladies of the court, when your husband had gone to his room and was sound asleep."

"But who ever went to bed as early as the King?" said Marie Antoinette, deprecatingly.

"Does he go to bed too early, Antoinette? Then it is strange that on one evening when you were waiting for him to retire so that you and your ladies might visit the Duchess de Duras, you should have advanced the clock by half an hour, and sent your husband to bed at half-past ten, when of course he found no one in his apartments to wait upon him.\* All Paris has laughed at this mischievous prank of the Queen. Can you deny this, my thoughtless sister?"

"I never tell an untruth, Joseph, but I confess that I am astounded to see with what police-like dexterity you have ferretted out every little occurrence of my private life."

"A queen has no private life. She is doomed to live in public, and woe to her if she cannot account to the world for every hour of her existence! If she undertake to have secrets, her very lackeys may misrepresent her innocence and make it crime."

"Good heavens, Joseph," cried the Queen, "you talk as if I were a criminal before my accusers."

\* Campau. 199.



“You *are* a criminal; my poor young sister. Public opinion has accused you, and accusation there is synonymous with guilt. But I—who give you so much pain, come as your friend and brother, speaking hard truths to you, dearest, by virtue of the tie which binds us to our mother. In the name of that incomparable mother, I implore you to be discreet, and to give no cause to your enemies for misconstruction of your youthful follies! Take up the load of your royalty with fortitude, and when it weighs heavily upon your poor young heart, remember that you were not made a Queen to pursue your own happiness, but to strive for that of your subjects, whose hearts are still with you in spite of all that your enemies have done or said. Give up all egotism, Antoinette—set aside your personal hopes, live for the good of the French nation, and one of these days you will believe with me that we may be happy without individual happiness.”

The Queen shook her head and tears rolled down her cheeks. “No, no, dear Joseph, a woman cannot be happy when she is unloved. My heart is sick with solitude, brother. I love my husband and he does not return my love. If I am frivolous, it is because I am unhappy. Believe me when I tell you that all would be well if the King would but love me.”

“Then, Antoinette, all shall be well,” said a voice behind them, and starting with a cry of surprise and shame, the Queen beheld the King.

“I have heard all,” said Louis, closing the door and advancing towards Joseph. “With a bright, affectionate smile, he held out his hand—saying as he did, “Pardon me, my brother, if I am here without your consent, and let me have a share in this sacred and happy hour.”

“Brother!” repeated Joseph sternly. “You say that you have overheard us. If so, you know that my sister is solitary and unhappy. Since you have no love for her, you are no brother to me, for she, poor child—is the tie that unites us. Look at her, sire, look at her sweet, innocent, tear-stricken face! What has she done that you should thrust her from your heart, and doom her to confront alone the sneers and hatred of your cruel relatives! She is pure, and her heart is without a stain. I tell you so—I, who in unspeakable anxiety have watched her through hired spies. Had I found her guilty I would have been the first to condemn her—but Antoinette is good, pure, virtuous, and she has but one defect—want of thought. It was your duty to guide her, for you received her from her mother’s hands, a child—a young, harmless, unsuspecting child. What has she ever done that you should refuse her your love?”

“Ask, rather, what have I done, that my relatives should have kept us so far asunder?” replied Louis with emotion. “Ask those who have poisoned my ears with calumnies of my wife, why they should have sought to deny me the only compensation which life can offer to my royal station—the inestimable blessing of loving and being loved.—But away with gloomy retrospection! I will say but one word more of the past. Your Majesty has been watched and your visit here discovered,

I was told that you were seeking to identify the Queen with her mother's empire—using your influence to make her forget France and plot dishonor to her husband's crown. I resolved to prove the truth or falsehood of these accusations myself. I thank heaven that I did so, for from this hour I shall honor and regard you as a brother."

"I shall reciprocate, sire, if you will promise to be kind to my sister."

The King looked at Marie Antoinette, who, seated on the sofa whence her brother had risen, was weeping bitterly. Louis went towards her, and taking both her hands in his, he pressed them passionately to his lips. "Antoinette," said he tenderly, "you say that I do not love you. You have not then read my heart—which filled to bursting with love for my beautiful wife, dared not ask for response, because I had been told that you—you—But no—I will not pain you with repetition of the calumny. Enough that I am blessed with your love, and may at last be permitted to pour out the torrent of mine!—Antoinette will you be my wife?"

He held open his arms and looked—as lovers alone can look. The Queen well knew the meaning of that glance, and with a cry of joy, she rose and was pressed to his heart. He held her for some moments there, and then for the first time in their lives, the lips of husband and wife met in one long, burning kiss of love.

"My beloved, my own," whispered Louis. "Mine forever—Nothing on earth shall part us now."

Marie Antoinette was speechless with happiness. She leaned her head upon her husband's breast and wept for joy, while he fondly stroked and kissed her shining hair, and left the trace of a tear with every kiss.

Presently he turned an imploring look upon the Emperor, who stood by contemplating the lovers with an ecstasy to which he had long been a stranger.

"My brother," said Louis, "for I may call you so now,—seven years ago, our hands were joined together by the priest, but the policy that would have wounded Austria through me, has kept us asunder. This is our wedding-day, this is the union of love with love. Be you the priest to bless the rites that make us one till death."

The Emperor came forward, and solemnly laying his hands upon the heads of the King and Queen, spoke in broken accents:

"God bless you, beloved brother and sister,—God give you grace to be true to each other through good and evil report. Be gentle and indulgent one towards the other, that, from this day forward, your two hearts may become as one. Farewell! I shall take with me to Austria the joyful news of your happiness. Oh, how Maria Theresa will rejoice to know it, and how often will the thought of this day brighten my own desolate hearth at Vienna! Farewell!—"

## CHAPTER XV

## DEATH OF THE ELECTOR OF BAVARIA.

A large and brilliant assemblage thronged the state apartments of the imperial palace at Vienna. The aristocracy not only of the capital, but of all Austria had gathered there to congratulate the Emperor upon his safe return. It was the first of January, 1778, and as New Year's day was the only festival which Joseph's new ordinance allowed, the court took occasion to celebrate it with all the pomp of embroidery, orders, stars, and blazing jewels.

The Empress had never thrown off her mourning, so that her dark gray dress with its long train, was in striking contrast with the rich, elegant costumes, the flowers and diamonds of the other ladies present. Still, there was something in this tall, noble form which distinguished it above the rest, and spoke to all beholders of the sovereign will that resided there. Maria Theresa was still the Majestic Empress—but she was now an old woman.

Time as well as disease had marred her beauty, and the cares, anxieties and afflictions of sixty years had written their inexorable record upon the tablet of her once fair brow. Not only these, but accident also had destroyed the last lingering traces of Maria Theresa's youthful comeliness. Returning from Presburg, she had been thrown from her carriage and dashed with such force against the stones on the road, that she had been taken up bloody and to all appearances lifeless. Her face had suffered severely, and to her death she bore the deep red scars which had been left by her wounds. Her figure, too, had lost its grace, and was now so corpulent, that she moved slowly and heavily through the rooms, where in former years, she had stood by the side of her "Francis," the most beautiful woman of her own or of any other European Court.

Her magnificent eyes, however, had defied time—they were large, flashing, expressive as ever—as quick to interpret anger, enthusiasm, or tenderness as in the days of her youth. On the evening of which we speak, the Empress was at the card-table; but those great, glowing eyes were roving from one side of the room to the other in restless anxiety. Sometimes for a moment they rested upon the Emperor who was standing near the table in conversation with some provincial noblemen. The cheerful and unconcerned demeanor of her son seemed to reassure the Empress, who turned to her cards, and tried to become interested in the game. Not far off, the Archduchesses, too, were at cards, and the hum of conversation subsided almost to a whisper that the imperial party might not be disturbed. Gradually the Empress became absorbed in

her cards, so that she was unobservant of the entrance of one of the Emperor's lords in waiting, who whispered something in Joseph's ear, whereupon the latter left the room in haste.

Not very long after, the Emperor returned pale and excited, and approached the card-tables. Maria Theresa at that moment had just requested Count Dietrichstein to deal for her, and she was leaning back in her chair awaiting the end of the deal. The Emperor bent over and whispered something in her ear, when she started, and the cards which she was just gathering, fell from her hands. With unusual agility she rose, and taking the Emperor's arm, turned away without a word of apology, and left the room.

The Archduchesses had not yet perceived their mother's absence, when Count Dietrichstein, on the part of the Emperor, came forward and whispered a few words to each one of them. Precisely as their mother had done, the Princesses rose, and without apology, retired together. The company started and whispered and wondered what could have happened to discompose the imperial family, but no one present was competent to solve the mystery.

Meanwhile, Maria Theresa had retired to her cabinet where she met Prince Kaunitz, furred like a polar bear, by way of protection from the temperature of the palace, which was always many degrees below zero, as indicated by the thermometer of his thin, bloodless veins. The Minister was shaking with cold, although he had buried his face in a muff large enough to have been one of his own cubs.

The Empress returned his greeting with an agitated wave of her hand, and seated herself in an arm chair at the large round table that always stood there. Exhausted by the unusual haste with which she had walked, as well as by the excitement, which, in her old age, she was physically inadequate to bear, she leaned back to recover her breath. Opposite stood the Emperor, who, with a wave of his hand, motioned to Kaunitz to enter also.

Maria Theresa's large eyes were fixed upon him at once. "Is it true," said she, "that the Elector of Bavaria is dead?"

"Yes, your Majesty," said Kaunitz, "Maximilian reigns no longer in Bavaria. Here are the dispatches from our Ambassador at Munich."

He held them out, but the Empress put them back saying, "I am not sufficiently composed to read them. Give them to my son and have the goodness to communicate their contents to me, verbally."

The face of Kaunitz grew pale as he turned with the dispatches to the Emperor. The latter at once comprehended the Prince's agitation, and smiled.

"I beg of your Majesty," said he, "to excuse the Prince and to allow me to read to you the particulars of Maximilian's demise. His Highness must be fatigued, and doubtless your Majesty will allow him to retire within the embrasure of yonder window until I have concluded the perusal of the dispatches."

Kaunitz brightened at once as the Empress gave her consent, and he

gladly withdrew to the window which was far enough from the table to be out of reach of the Emperor's voice. Joseph could not restrain another smile as he watched the tall, stiff form of the old Prince, and saw how carefully he drew the window-curtains around him, lest a word of what was going on should reach his ears.

"Pardon me, your Majesty," said Joseph in a low voice, "but you know what a horror Kaunitz has of death and the small-pox. As both these words form the subject of our dispatches, I was glad to relieve the Prince from the necessity of repeating their contents."

"That you should have remembered his weakness, does honor to your heart, my son," replied Maria Theresa. "In my agitation I had forgotten it. Maximilian, then, must have died of small-pox."

"He did, your Majesty, like his sister, my unhappy wife."

"Strange!" said Maria Theresa, thoughtfully. "Josepha has often spoken to me of the presentiment which her brother had, that he would die of the small-pox."

"It proves to us that man cannot fly from his destiny. The Elector foresaw that he would die of small-pox, and took every precaution to avert his fate. Nevertheless, it overtook him."

The Empress sighed and slowly shook her head. "Where did he take the infection?" asked she.

"From the daughter of the marshal of his household, who lived at the palace and took the small-pox there. Every attempt was made to conceal the fact from the Elector, and indeed he remained in total ignorance of it. One day while he was playing billiards, the marshal who had just left his daughter's bedside, entered the room. The Elector shuddering, laid down his cue, and turning deathly pale, murmured these words, 'Some one here has the small-pox. I feel it.' He then fell insensible to the floor. He recovered his consciousness, but died a few days afterwards.\* This is the substance of the dispatches. Shall I now read them?"

"No, no, my son," said the Empress gloomily. "Enough that the son of my enemy is dead, and his house without an heir."

"Yes, he is dead," replied Joseph sternly. "The brother of my enemy—of that wife with whom for two years I lived the martyrdom of an abhorred union! He has gone to his sister, gone to his father, both our bitter, bitter foes: I hated Josepha for the humiliation I endured—as the husband of such a repulsive woman—but to-day I forgive her, for 'tis she, who from the grave holds out to me the rich inheritance which is the fruit of our marriage."

The Empress raised her eyes with an expression of alarm.

"What!" exclaimed she, "another robbery! Lies not the weight of one injustice upon my conscience, that you would seek to burthen my soul with another! Think you that I have forgotten Poland!—No! The remembrance of our common crime will follow me to the bitter end, and it shall not be aggravated by repetition. I am Empress of Austria.

\* Waxall: *Memoires of the Courts of Berlin, Vienna, etc.* Vol. 1, P. 306.

and while I live, Joseph, you must restrain your ambition within the bounds of justice and princely honor."

The Emperor bowed. "Your Majesty must confess that I have never struggled against your imperial will. I have bowed before it, sorely though it has humiliated me. But as there is no longer any question of death before us, allow me to recall Prince Kaunitz that he may take part in our discussion."

Maria Theresa bowed in silence, and the Emperor drew the Minister from his retreat behind the curtains.

"Come, your Highness," whispered Joseph. "Come and convince the Empress that Bavaria must be ours. We are about to have a struggle."

"But I shall come out victor," replied Kaunitz, as he rose and returned to the table.

Maria Theresa surveyed them both with looks of disapprobation and apprehension. "I see," said she in a tremulous voice, "that you are two against one. I do not think it honorable in Kaunitz to uphold my son against his sovereign. Tell me, Prince, do you come hither to break your faith, and overthrow your Empress?"

"There lives not man or woman in the world, who can accuse Kaunitz of bad faith," replied the Prince. "I swore years ago to dedicate myself to Austria, and I shall keep my word until your Majesty releases me."

"I suppose that is one of your numerous threats to resign," said the Empress with irritation. "If there is difference of opinion between us, I must yield, or you will not remain my Minister. But be sure that to the last day of my life, I shall retain my sovereignty, nor share it with you or minister; and this conceded, we may confer together. Let the Emperor sit by my side, and you, Prince, be opposite to us, for I wish to look into your face that I may judge how far your tongue expresses the convictions of your conscience. And now I desire the Emperor to explain his words and tell me how it is that the succession of Bavaria concerns the House of Hapsburg."

"Frankly then," cried Joseph with some asperity, "I mean that our troops must be marched into Bavaria at once; for by the extinction of the male line of Wittelsbach, the Electorate is open to us as an imperial fief and——"

"Austria then has pretensions to the Electorate of Bavaria," interrupted Maria Theresa with constrained calmness.

The Emperor in his turn looked at his mother with astonishment. "Has your Majesty then not read the documents which were drawn up for your inspection by the court historiographer?"

"I have seen them all," replied the Empress sadly. "I have read all the documents by which you have sought to prove that Austria has claims upon Lower Bavaria, because, in 1410, the Emperor Sigismund enfeoffed his son-in-law, Albert of Austria, with this province. I have read further that in 1614 the Emperor Matthias gave to the Archducal

House the reversion of the Suabian estate of Mindelheim, which subsequently, in 1706, when the Elector of Bavaria fell under the ban of the Empire, was actually claimed by the Emperor of Austria. I have also learned that the Upper Palatinate with all its counties, by the extinction of the Wittelsbach dynasty, becomes an open feoff, to which the Emperor of Austria thinks that he may assert his claims."

"And your Majesty is not convinced of the validity of my claims?" exclaimed the Emperor.

Marja Theresa shook her head. "I cannot believe that we are justified in annexing to Austria an Electorate, which not being ours by *indisputable* right of inheritance, may be the cause of involving us in a bloody war."

"But which, nevertheless, is the finest province in all Germany," cried Joseph impatiently, "and its acquisition the first step towards consolidation of all the German principalities into one great empire. When the Palatinate Suabia and Lower Bavaria are ours, the Danube will flow through Austrian territory alone; the trade of the Levant becomes ours; our ships cover the Black Sea, and finally Constantinople will be compelled to open its harbor to Austrian shipping and become a mart for the disposal of Austrian merchandize. Once possessed of Bavaria, South Germany, too, lies open to Austria, which like a magnet will draw towards one centre, all its petty provinces and counties. After that, we approach Prussia and ask whether she alone will stand apart from the great Federation, or whether she has patriotism and magnanimity enough to merge her name and nationality in ours. Oh, your Majesty, I implore you do not hesitate to pluck the golden fruit, for it is ours! Think, too, how anxiously the Bavarians look to us for protection against the pretensions of Charles Theodore, the only heir of the deceased Elector. The people of Bavaria well know what is to be their fate if they fall into the hands of the Elector Palatine. Surrounded by mistresses with swarms of natural children, his sole object in life will be to plunder his subjects that he may enrich a progeny to whom he can leave neither name nor crown. Oh, your Majesty, be generous, and rescue the Bavarians from a war of succession, for the Elector Palatine has no heir, and his death will be the signal for new strife."

"Nay it seems to me that the duke of Zweibrücken\* is the natural heir of Charles Theodore, and I suppose he will be found as willing to possess his inheritance as you, or I, or any other pretender," replied Maria Theresa. "But if, as you say, the Bavarians are sighing to become Austrian subjects, it seems to me that they might have character enough to give us some indication of their predilections, for I declare to you both that I will not imitate the treachery of Frederic—I will not bring up mouldy documents from our imperial archives to prove that I have a right to lands which for hundreds of years have been the property of another race; nor will I, for mad ambition's sake, spill one drop of honest Austrian blood."

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\* Called in English History, Duke of Deux-ponts. [Trans.]

“And so shall Austria lose her birthright,” returned Joseph angrily. “And so shall I be doomed to idle insignificance while History ignores the only man who really loves Germany, and who has spirit to defy the malice of his cotemporaries and in the face of their disapproval to do that which is best for Germany’s welfare. Is it possible that your Majesty will put upon me this new humiliation? Do you really bid me renounce the brightest dream of my life?”

“My dear son,” said the Empress, “I cannot view this undertaking with your eyes—I am old and timid, and I shudder with apprehension of the demon that follows in the wake of ambition. I would not descend to my grave amid the wails and curses of my people—I would not be depicted in history as an ambitious and unscrupulous sovereign.—Let me go to my Franz blessed by the tears and regrets of my subjects—let me appear before posterity as an upright and peace-loving Empress.—But I have said that I am old—so old that I mistrust my own judgment. It may be that I mistake pusillanimity for disinterestedness. Speak Kaunitz—so far you have been silent. What says *your* conscience to this claim? Is it consistent with justice and honor?”

“Your Majesty knows that I will speak my honest convictions even though they might be unacceptable to the ear of any Sovereign,” replied Kaunitz.

“I understand,” said the Empress disconsolately. “You are of one mind with the Emperor.”

“Yes,” replied Kaunitz, “I am. It is the duty of Austria to assert her right to an inheritance which her ancestors foresaw hundreds of years ago, would be indispensable to her future stability. Not only your Majesty’s forefathers, but the force of circumstances signify to us that the acquisition is natural and easy. It would be a great political error to overlook it; and believe me that in no science is an error so fatal to him who commits it, as in the science of government. Bavaria is necessary to Austria, and your Majesty may become its ruler without so much as one stroke of the sword.”

“Without a stroke of the sword!” exclaimed Maria Theresa impetuously. “Does your Highness suppose that such a stupendous acquisition as that, is not to provoke the opposition of our enemies?”

“Who is to oppose us?” asked Kaunitz. “Not France, certainly; she is too closely our relative and ally.”

“I do not rely much upon the friendship of France,” interrupted the Empress. “Marie Antoinette is mistress of the King’s affections, but his ministers guide his policy, and they would gladly see our friendly relations ruptured.”

“But France is not in a condition to oppose us,” continued Kaunitz. “Her finances are disordered, and at this very moment she is equipping an army to aid the American rebellion. We have nothing to fear from Russia, provided we overlook her doings in Turkey, and look away while she absorbs the little that remains of Poland. England is too far away to be interested in the matter, and Frederic knows by dear-



bought experience that her alliance, in case of war, is perfectly worthless. Besides, George has quite enough on his hands with his troubles in North America. Who then is to prevent us from marching to Bavaria and taking peaceable possession of our lawful inheritance?"

"Who?" exclaimed the Empress. "Our greatest and bitterest enemy—the wicked and unprincipled *parvenu* who has cost me so many tears, my people so many lives, and who has robbed me of one of the fairest jewels in my imperial crown."

Kaunitz shrugged his shoulders. "Your Majesty is very magnanimous to speak of the Margrave of Brandenburg as a dangerous foe."

"And if he were a dangerous foe," cried Joseph vehemently, "so much the more glory to me if I vanquish him in battle and pluck the laurels from his head!"

Kaunitz looked at the Emperor and slightly raised his finger by way of warning. "The King of Prussia," said he, "is no longer the hero that he was in years gone by; he dare not risk his fame by giving battle to the Emperor. He rests upon his laurels, plays on the flute, writes bad verses, and listens to the adulation of his fawning philosophical friends. Then why should he molest us in Bavaria?—We have documents to prove that the heritage is ours, and if we recognise his right to Bayreuth and Anspach, he will admit ours to whatever we choose to claim."

Maria Theresa was unconvinced. "You make light of Frederic, Prince, but he is as dangerous as ever, and after all I think it much safer to fear our enemies than to despise them."

"Frederic of Prussia is a hero, a philosopher and a legislator," cried Joseph. "Let me give him battle your Majesty, that I may win honor by vanquishing the victor."

"Never will I give my consent to such measures, unless we are forced to adopt them in defence of right."

"Our right here is indisputable," interposed Kaunitz. "Copies of our documents have already been circulated throughout Germany, and I have received from Herr Von Ritter, the commissioner of Charles Theodore, the assurance that the latter is ready to resign his pretensions in consideration of the advantages we offer."

"What are these advantages?" asked Maria Theresa.

"We offer him our provinces in the Netherlands, and the privilege of establishing a kingdom in Burgundy," replied Joseph. "We also bestow upon his multitudinous children titles, orders and a million of florins."

"And shame all virtue and decency!" cried the Empress, coloring violently.

"The Elector loves his progeny and cares little or nothing for Bavaria," continued Joseph. "We shall win him over, and Bavaria will certainly be ours."

"Without the shedding of one drop of blood," added Kaunitz, drawing from his coat pocket a paper which he unfolded and laid upon the table.

“Here is a map of Bavaria, your Majesty,” said Kaunitz, “and here is that portion of the Electorate which we claim through its cession to Albert of Austria by the Emperor Sigismund.”

“We must take possession of it at once,” cried Joseph, “at once before any other claimant has time to interpose.”

The Empress heaved a sigh. “Yes,” said she, as if communing with herself, “it all looks smooth and fair upon paper. It is very easy to draw boundary lines with your finger, Prince. You have traced out mountains and rivers, but you have not won the hearts of the Bavarians, and without their hearts it is worse than useless to occupy their country.”

“We shall win their hearts by kindness,” exclaimed the Emperor. “True, we take their insignificant Fatherland, but we give them instead, the rich inheritance of our own nationality; and future history will record it to their honor that theirs was the initiatory step which subsequently made one nation of all the little nationalities of Germany.”

The Empress answered with another sigh and looked absently at the outspread map, across which Kaunitz was drawing his finger in another direction.

“Here,” said he, “are the estates which the extinct house held in fief from the German Emperor.”

“And which I, as Emperor of Germany have a right to re-annex to my empire,” cried Joseph.

“And here finally,” pursued Kaunitz still tracing with his finger, “here is the Lordship of Mindelheim, of which the reversion was not only ceded to Austria by the Emperor Matthias, but actually fell to us and was relinquished to the Elector of Bavaria by the too great magnanimity of an Austrian sovereign.—Surely your Majesty is not willing to abandon your inheritance to the first comer?”

Maria Theresa’s head was bent so low that it rested upon the map whereon her Minister had been drawing lines of such significance to Austria. Close by, stood the Emperor in breathless anxiety, while opposite sat Kaunitz, impassible as ever.

Again a deep sigh betokened the anguish that was rending the honest heart of the Empress, and she raised her head.

“Alas for me and my declining energies,” said she bitterly. “Two against one and that one a woman advanced in years!—I am not convinced, but my spirit is unequal to strife. Should we fail, we will be made to feel the odium of our proceedings, should we triumph, I suppose that the justice of our pretensions will never be questioned. Perhaps as the world has never blamed Frederic for the robbery of Silesia, it may forgive us the acquisition of Bavaria. In the name of God, then, do both of you what you deem it right to do; but in mercy, take nothing that is not ours. We shall be involved in war; I feel it, and I would so gladly have ended my life in the calm moon-like radiance of gentle peace.\*

“Your Majesty shall end your life in peace and prosperity, but far in the future be the day of your departure!” cried Joseph, kissing the hand

\* The Empress’s own sentiments. Wrathall, 1, P. 311.

of the Empress. "May you live to see Austria expand into a great empire, and Germany rescued from the misrule of its legions of feeble princes!—The first impulse has been given to-day. Bavaria is rescued from its miserable fate; and becomes an integral portion of one of the most powerful nations in Europe."

"May God be merciful and bless the union," sighed the Empress. "I shall be wretched until I know how it is to terminate, and day and night I shall pray to the Lord that He preserve my people from the horrors of war."

"Meanwhile Kaunitz and I will seek a blessing on our enterprise by taking earthly precautions to secure its success. You, Prince, will use the quill of diplomacy, and I shall make ready to defend my right with a hundred thousand trusty Austrians to back me. To-night I march a portion of my men into Lower Bavaria."

"Oh," murmured the unhappy Empress, "there will be war and bloodshed."

"Before your Majesty marches to Bavaria," said Kaunitz, inclining his head, "her Majesty, the Empress, must sign the edict which shall apprise her subjects and the world of the step we meditate. I have drawn it up, and it awaits her Majesty's approbation and signature."

The Prince then drew from his muff a paper which he presented to the Empress. Maria Theresa perused it with sorrowful eyes.

"It is nothing but a *résumé* of our just claims to Bavaria," said Joseph hastily.

"It is very easy to prove the justice of a thing on paper," replied Maria Theresa, "may God grant that it prove to be so in deed as well as in word. I will do your bidding and sign your edict, but upon your head be the blood that follows my act!"

She wrote her name, and Joseph, in an outburst of triumph, shouted, "Bavaria is ours!"

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### A PAGE FROM HISTORY.

MARIA THERESA'S worst apprehensions were realised, and the marching of the Austrian troops into Bavaria, was the signal for war. While all the petty sovereigns of Germany clamored over the usurpation of Austria, pamphlet upon pamphlet issued from the hands of Austrian jurists to justify the act. These were replied to by the advocates of every other German state, who proved conclusively that Austria was rapa-

cious and unscrupulous, and had not a shadow of right to the Bavarian succession. A terrible paper war ensued, during which three hundred books were launched by the belligerents at each other's heads.\* This strife was productive of one good result; it warmed up the frozen patriotism of all the German races. Bavarians, Hessians, Wurtembergers and Hanoverians, forgot their bickerings to join the outcry against Austria; and the Church, to which Joseph was such an implacable enemy, encouraged them in their resistance to the "innovator," as he was called by his enemies.

Of all the malcontents, the noisiest were the Bavarians. The Elector Palatine, whose advent all had dreaded, was greeted upon his entrance into Munich with glowing enthusiasm; and the people forgot his extravagance and profligacy to remember that upon him devolved the preservation of their independence as a nation.

But Charles Theodore was very little edified by the sentiments which were attributed to him by the Bavarians. He longed for nothing better than to relieve himself of Bavaria and the weight of Austrian displeasure, to return to the Palatinate and come into possession of the fleshpots that awaited his children in the form of titles, orders and florins. He lent a willing ear to Joseph's propositions, and a few days after his triumphant entrance into Munich, he signed a contract relinquishing in favor of Austria two thirds of his Bavarian inheritance. Maria Theresa, in the joy of her heart, bestowed upon him the order of the golden fleece, and on the third of January of 1778, entered into possession of her newly acquired territory.

Meanwhile in Bavaria arose a voice which, with the fire of genuine patriotism, protested against the cowardly compliance of the Elector Palatine. It was that of the Duchess Clemens of Bavaria. She hastened to give information of his pussillanimity to the next heir, the Duke of Zweibrücken, and dispatched a courier to Berlin asking succor and protection from the crown of Prussia.

The energy of this Bavarian patriot decided the fate of the Austrian claim. The Duke of Zweibrücken protested against the cession of the smallest portion of his future inheritance, and declared that he would never relinquish it to any power on earth. Frederic pronounced himself ready to sustain the Duke, and threatened a declaration of war unless the Austrian troops were removed. In vain, Maria Theresa sought to indemnify the Duke by offers of orders, florins and titles, which had been so successful with Charles Theodore—in vain she offered to make him King of Burgundy—he remained incorruptible. He coveted nothing she could bestow, but was firm in his purpose to preserve the integrity of Bavaria, and called loudly for Frederic to come to the rescue.

Frederic responded. "He was ready to defend the rights of the Elector Palatine against the unjust pretensions of the Court of Vienna,"† and removed his troops from Upper Silesia to the confines of Bohemia

\* Schlosser's History of the Eighteenth Century. Vol. 4. page 368.

† Bohm's Memoirs, vol. 1. page 7.

and Saxony. That was the signal for the advance of the Austrian army, and despite her repugnance to the act, Maria Theresa was compelled to suffer it. She was also forced to allow Joseph to take command in person. This time her representations and entreaties had been vain; Joseph was thirsting for military glory, and he bounded like a war-horse to the trumpet's call. The Empress felt that her hands were now powerless to restrain him, and she was so much the feebler, that Kaunitz openly espoused the side of the ambitious Emperor.

With convulsive weeping Maria Theresa saw her son assume his command, and when Joseph bade her farewell, she sank insensible from his arms to the floor.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE EMPEROR AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

THE Emperor Joseph was pacing the floor of his cabinet. Sometimes he paused before a window and with absent looks surveyed the plain where his troops were encamped, and their stacked arms glistened to the sun; then he returned to the table where Field-marshal Lacy was deep in plans and charts.

Occasionally the silence was broken by the blast of a trumpet or the shouts of the soldiery who were arriving at head quarters.

"Lacy," said the Emperor after a long, dreary, pause, "put by your charts, and give me a word of consolation."

The Field-marshal laid aside his papers and rose from the table. "Your Majesty had ordered me to specify upon the chart the exact spot which Frederic occupies by Welsdorf, and Prince Henry by Nienberg."

"I know, I know," answered Joseph impatiently. "But what avails their encampment to-day when to-morrow they are sure to advance?"

"Your Majesty thinks that he will make an attack?"

"I am sure of it."

"And I doubt it. It is my opinion that he will avoid a collision."

"Why then should he have commenced hostilities?" cried Joseph angrily. "Have you forgotten that although the Elector Palatine is ready to renounce Bavaria, Frederic opposes our claims in the name of Germany and of the next heir?"

"No, sire, but Frederic has spies in Vienna, who have taken care to inform him that Maria Theresa is disinclined to war. He has therefore declared against us because he hopes that the blast of his coming will suffice to scatter the armies of Austria to the winds."

"The time has gone by when the terror of his name could appal us," cried Joseph, proudly throwing back his head. "I hope to convince him ere long that I am more than willing to confront him in battle. Oh, how weary is the inactivity to which my mother's womanish fears condemn me! Why did I heed her tears, and promise that I would not make the attack? Now I must wait, nor dare to strike a blow, while my whole soul yearns for the fight, and I long either to lead my troops to victory, or perish on the field of battle."

"And yet, sire, it is fortunate that you have been forced to inactivity. To us time is everything, for Frederic's army outnumbers ours. He has seventy thousand men with him near the Elbe, and fifty thousand under Prince Henry near Nienberg."

"Yes, but I shall oppose his hundred and twenty thousand men with twice their number," cried Joseph impatiently.

"Provided we have time to assemble our men. But we must have several days to accomplish this. At the end of a week, our army will be complete in numbers and we can then await the enemy behind our entrenchments and the natural defences afforded us by the steep banks of the Elbe."

"Await—nothing but await," said Joseph scornfully. "Forever condemned to delay."

"In war, delay is often the best strategy, sire. The great Maurice of Saxony has said that fighting is an expedient by which incompetent commanders are accustomed to draw themselves out of difficult positions. When they are perplexed as to their next move, they are apt to stumble into a battle. I coincide with the great Captain, although I well know that I shall incur your Majesty's displeasure thereby. Our policy is to remain upon the defensive and await an attack. Frederic has been accustomed to win his laurels by bold and rapid moves, but we have now for us an ally who will do better service in the field against him than our expertest generalship."

"Who is that?" asked Joseph, who was listening in no amiable mood to Lacy's dissertation on strategy.

"It is old age, sire, which hourly reminds Frederic that his hand is too feeble to wield a sword or pluck new laurels. Frederic accompanied his army in a close carriage, and yesterday, as he attempted to mount his horse, he was so weak that he had to be helped into the saddle, in consequence of which he reviewed his troops in an ill-humor, cursed the war, and wished Austria to the devil."

"And this is the end of a great military chieftain," said Joseph sadly,—"the close of a magnificent career! May God preserve me from such a fate! Sooner would I pass from exuberant life to sudden death, than drag my effete manhood through years of weariness to gradual and ignominious extinction!"

"But," continued the Emperor, after a pause, "these are idle musings, Lacy. Your picture of the great Frederic has made me melancholy; I cannot but hope that it is overdrawn. It cannot be that such a

warrior has grown vacillating; he will surely awake, and then the old lion will shake his mane, and his roar——”

At this moment a horseman at full speed was seen coming towards the house. He stopped immediately before the window. A little behind came another, and both dismounting, spoke several words to the soldiery around, which evidently produced a sensation.

“Lacy,” said Joseph, something has happened, and from the countenances of the men, I fear that these messengers have brought evil tidings. Let us go out and see what has occurred.”

As the Emperor was about to lay his hand upon the door, it opened and one of his Adjutants appeared.

“Sire,” said he, almost breathless, “a courier has arrived from the borders of Bohemia and he brings startling intelligence.”

“Tell us at once what it is,” said the Emperor.

“The King of Prussia has left the county of Glatz and has marched into Bohemia.”

The Emperor’s face brightened instantaneously. “That is glorious news!” cried he.

“Glorious news, sire?” exclaimed the astounded Adjutant. “The courier who brings the intelligence has no words strong enough to depict the terror of the inhabitants. They were gathering their effects and flying to the interior, while the Prussian troops occupied the villages without opposition.”

“The Count is correct,” said Lacy, who just then re-entered the room. “I have spoken with the man who brought the tidings. He is the Mayor of his village, and he fled as the Staff of the Emperor entered the place.”

“I must speak with him myself,” cried Joseph quickly, and the Adjutant opening the door, the villager was introduced into the room.”

“Did you see the King of Prussia?” asked the Emperor.

“Yes, sire, I saw him,” replied the man, gloomily. “I heard him order his men to forage their horses from our barns, and to strip our gardens of their fruit and vegetables. I heard him give orders to spare nothing, for, said he, ‘the people must be made to feel that the enemy is in their midst.’”\*

“I shall remember the King’s words,” said Joseph, while his eyes flashed with anger. “How did he look?”

“Like the devil in the likeness of an old man,” said the peasant. “His voice is as soft as that of a bride-groom; but his words are the words of a hangman, and his eyes dart fire like those of an evil spirit. Even his own men have nothing good to say of him. His Generals call him a selfish old man, who wants to do every thing and knows nothing. He has not even appointed a general staff, and has no one to attend to the wants of his army.”†

“Further, further,” cried Joseph, as the man paused.

\* Frederic’s own words. Dohm’s Memoirs. Vol. 1, P. 180.

† Historical—See Dohm, Vol. 1, P. 188.

"I have nothing further to tell, sire. As the King and his people left my house, it was growing dark, so I slipped out. The curates were in the churches with the women and children, and we men ran to the next village, where the people gave us horses, and I have come to entreat the Emperor not to let the King of Prussia take us, as he did Silesia."

"I give you my word that you shall not be given over to Prussia. Remain true to your country, and oppose the enemy whenever and wherever you can. Go back to your village, greet your friends for me and promise them my protection——Count, be so good as to see that these men get some refreshment before they start."

The Adjutant bowed, and followed by the villager, left the room.

"Lacy," cried the Emperor, "the time for deliberation has gone by. The hour for decision has struck and I am free to give battle. It is Frederic who has thrown down the glove, and I too shall emerge from obscurity and prove to the world that others besides the King of Prussia are worthy to lead their men to victory. It would be dishonorable to refuse the challenge, he has sent through his invasion of Bohemia. Let orders be given to march to Jaromirs. We shall await the enemy there, and there at last I shall measure swords with the greatest captain of his age!"

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### SECRET NEGOTIATIONS FOR PEACE.

SINCE the departure of the Emperor for the seat of war, the Court of Vienna had been supremely dull. All the state apartments were closed, the gentlemen and ladies in waiting went about silent as ghosts, the Archduchesses were pale and sad, and the Empress disconsolate, spent all her days in the solitude of her own apartments.

Not only at Court, but in the city, were all sounds of joy hushed into speechless anxiety. Above all, since it had become known that Frederic had invaded Bohemia, the Viennese were in a state of painful excitement, convinced as they were that the warlike King would never stop his marches until they brought him to the gates of Vienna.

Finally the panic reached the palace. The rich were conveying their treasures to places of security, and the Archduchesses and ladies of honor were importuning the Empress to leave Vienna and remove the Court to Presburg.\*

Maria Theresa turned a deaf ear to these entreaties. Her eyes which

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\* Dohm's Memoirs, Vol. 1, P. 187.



had grown dull through weeping, flashed with defiant courage as she replied.

"I remain here in Vienna, and if the King of Prussia lays siege to my capital, I shall die like an Empress in imperial panoply, and not like a fugitive who basely abandons her crown, for the sake of the few short days that remain to her on earth!—I have never known what it was to fear for my life, and if now my heart throbs with uneasiness, 'tis for my people, 'tis not for myself. I mourn for the fate of my subjects, should Heaven in its wrath permit Frederic to prevail. For this it is that my life is spent in seclusion and prayer. Come, my daughters, come ladies, all, let us betake ourselves to the house of God."

And leaning upon the arms of the Archduchesses Elizabeth and Christina, the Empress proceeded to the chapel. Behind them with downcast eyes and reluctant steps, came the ladies of the Court, all of one mind as to the weariness of too much godliness and too much praying.

"When will the Empress's private chapel be completed?" whispered one of the ladies to another. "When will this daily martyrdom cease? Is it not too bad to be forced to church five times a day?"

"You may thank fortune for your headache yesterday. It was my turn to accompany the Empress to the chapel, and we stayed so long that the Archduchess Elizabeth told me that towards the end her senses began to fail her, and she was scarcely able to utter the responses. How is the Archduchess Mariana to-day?"

"Her Highness," whispered the first lady, "is too sensible to recover in a hurry. The wound in her cheek has re-opened, and she really suffers a great deal at present. But she bears her pain with great fortitude. Yesterday the English Ambassador was paying her a visit of condolence, and as he was expressing his sympathy, the Archduchess interrupted him with a laugh. 'Believe me,' said she, 'for a princess of forty who is an old maid, even a hole in her own cheek is a godsend. Nothing that varies the dull uniformity of my life, comes amiss.'"<sup>\*</sup>

Both ladies tittered, but perceiving that the Empress was turning her head, they resumed their sanctimonious faces and folded their hands.

"Was it you, ladies," said Maria Theresa with severity, "who were interrupting our solemn silence by frivolous whisperings?"

"Yes, your Majesty," replied the first lady of honor. "We were preparing ourselves for prayer by edifying conversation."

The Empress smiled kindly upon the speaker. "I know that you are inclined to religion," said she, "and I am glad that you have had so good an influence over the Countess Julia; for she is not wont to be too zealous at prayer. I will remember you both for your piety, dear children, and will see that you are both well married. There is the young Baron of Palmöden and Count——"

But the Empress, who, in her darling schemes of marriage, had forgotten for a moment whither they were going, suddenly crossed herself, saying, "Forgive me ladies; let us hasten our steps."

<sup>\*</sup>The Archduchess's own words. See *Courts of Europe at the close of the last century*. By Henry Swinburne, Vol. 1, P. 842.

On this day, the Empress remained for three hours in the chapel, and while her attendants, worn out by ennui, were some sleeping, or others whispering to keep themselves awake, Maria Theresa, before the altar, was on her knees, praying with all the fervor of her honest and believing soul. As she prayed, she heaved many a sigh, and many a tear fell unheeded from her eyes upon her tightly clasped hands.

Certainly her prayers proved consolatory, for when they were ended, she rose from her knees, calm and resolved. As she reached the door of her own room, she turned to her favorite daughter.

"Is your heart still disconsolate, Christina?" said she with a look of supreme tenderness.

"How can it be otherwise, my mother," said Christine sobbing. "Has not my cruel and avaricious brother forced my husband into this wicked war? Oh, dearest mother, if you would but speak the word. Albert might be relieved from the disgraceful contingency of appearing in arms against his native land! He has no alternative—he must either become a traitor to his own country, or perjure himself by deserting his colors. Oh, your Majesty, have mercy upon your subjects, and force the rapacious Emperor to forego his unjust claims, and obey your imperial commands."

"Dry your tears," my daughter, replied the Empress kissing her tenderly, "I have prayed so fervently for wisdom in this matter that I feel as if my prayers had been answered. What He has commanded, I will do, and may His grace strengthen and guide me! Hope for the best my child, and do not speak so unkindly of your brother. He is not as cruel as you represent him, he has always been a dear, obedient son, and I trust I may find him so to the end. Go now, Christina, and remember that God directs all things."

The Empress dismissed her daughters and entered her room, passing rapidly to the place where hung the portrait of the Emperor Francis. For a long, long while she looked at it without anything but a vague yearning to be united to her adored husband. Finally, as was her custom, she began to speak to it.

"Franz, I have prayed from my soul for light. It seems to me that God has spoken, but oh, my darling, if what I am about to do is unwise, whisper me one word of warning and I shall be passive. Sometimes I think that you visit me, beloved, and whisper words of angelic sweetness in my ear. Speak now, my Franz, speak if I am wrong—I will obey your voice."

She clasped her hands and looked imploringly at the picture. Finally she sighed. "Your dear face still smiles upon me," murmured she, "and I must believe that I have decided for the best. I will act."

So saying, she rang her bell, and a page answered the summons.

"Send hither my private Secretary, and let a carriage be dispatched for Baron Thugut. I wish to see him immediately."

A few moments afterwards, Koch made his appearance, and a half an hour after a page announced Baron Thugut.

“Baron,” said the Empress, “I wish to put a serious question to you—Remember that God hears you, and answer me without reservation.”

“Your Majesty has forgotten,” replied Thugut, “that I have been so long in the Kingdom of unbelief that I am an unbeliever myself. I do not know whether God hears me or not, but as I know that your Majesty exacts of me to be candid, I shall obey your commands.”

“Then tell me what is your opinion of the war of the Bavarian succession. Do you think it an equitable one?”

The Baron’s small, black eyes turned from the Empress to the Secretary. Maria Theresa understood the glance.

“Speak without reserve, Baron Koch is loyal, and knows all my secrets. Do you think then that our claims to Bavaria are just?”

“Just, your Majesty?” repeated Thugut in his sharp, cutting tones. “Their success or their failure must decide that question. He who wins, will have proved his right. If we succeed in holding Bavaria, Germany will uphold us; for Germany never raises her voice against a *fait accompli*. Should Frederic unhappily defeat us, not only Germany but all Europe will cry out against the greed and injustice of ambitious Austria.”

“I do not wish to expose myself to this contingency,” replied the Empress. “I must have peace with God, the world, and my conscience, and you must come to my assistance, Thugut.”

An ironical smile played over Thugut’s face. “With God and your Majesty’s conscience, I would be a poor mediator,” said he, “but towards the world I am ready to serve your Majesty in any shape or form.”

“Then you shall mediate between myself and Frederic.”

“Between your Majesty and the King of Prussia,” said Thugut, astonished.

The Empress nodded her head, and just then the door opened, admitting a page who handed two letters on a golden plate.

“The answer of Prince Gallitzin,” said he bowing and retiring.

Maria Theresa opened the letters which were unsealed, saying, “Now we have everything requisite. Here is a passport for you as private Secretary to the Russian Ambassador; and here is a letter which you are to bear from Gallitzin to the King. This is the pretext of your visit to Frederic.”

“And the real motive is——”

“You will find it in the letter which I shall entrust to you for him. Read my letter aloud, Koch.”

The Secretary read as follows :

“From the recall of Baron Von Reidsel and the marching of your Majesty’s troops into Bohemia, I perceive with profoundest sorrow, that we are on the eve of another war. My age and sincere love of peace, are known to all the world, and I can give no greater proof of this love, than I do by writing to your Majesty. My maternal heart, too, is sore-

ly grieved with the thought that I have two sons and a beloved son-in-law in the army. I have taken this step without the knowledge of the Emperor, and whatever its result, I exact that it shall remain a secret between us. It is my desire to resume the negotiations which were broken off by my son. Baron Thugut who will deliver this into your Majesty's hands, has received my instructions and is empowered to treat with you. While I trust that your Majesty may deem it consistent with our common dignity to meet my wishes in this matter, I hope that you also correspond to the earnest desire which I cherish for a continuation of friendly relations with your Majesty, and with this hope I remain,

Your Majesty's affectionate sister and cousin,

MARIA THERESA.\*

"Your Majesty wishes me to bring about a peace. But what sort of peace, asked Thugut. A conditional one, or peace at any price?"

Maria Theresa's eyes flashed fire. "Is Austria so weak that she should crave peace at any price?" cried she proudly.

"No, indeed, your Majesty, she seems on the contrary so powerful that she undertakes war at any price. But Bavaria is well worth a war with Prussia. Allow me one more question. What is the Emperor to do with his army while we negotiate?"

"They must await the result. I have written to Leopold to use all his influence to reconcile Joseph, for he will be indignant when he hears what I have done. But until it becomes evident that we cannot treat with Frederic, the Emperor and his generals must remain passive. Should I fail, my son may then give battle, while his mother intercedes for him. If the medicine of diplomacy fails this time, we shall have to resort to the knife to heal our political wounds."

"Your Majesty is right, said Thugut with a heartless laugh." When medicine fails, we use the cold steel, and if that is not enough, fire is the last resort. What are your Majesty's conditions with Prussia, medicine, iron, or fire?"†

"Balsam, I trust," replied the Empress. "Koch has drawn out my propositions; and now go and make your preparations to depart, for I long for peace with the whole world."

\* This letter was written in the French language and is to be found in Gross-Hoffinger's *Life and History of the reign of Joseph 2d*, Vol. 4, P. 39.

† Thugut's own application of the old-fashioned method of cure. See Hormayer's *Contributions to the History of my Fatherland*.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## FRATERNAL DISCORD.

VERY different were the preparations making by the Empress's war-like son. In company with Lacy and his staff, he had reviewed his troops for the last time, and had ridden from one end of their encampment to the other, that he might personally inspect the condition of his army. He had found it cheerful, spirited and eager for the fray, the officers assuring him that their men were impatient to meet the enemy and end the campaign by one decisive blow.

Even Lacy himself ceased to preach caution. He saw in the triumphant smile and flashing eyes of Joseph that counsel would be worse than useless, and warning would only drive him to some deed of mad daring which might peril his life, or the safety of his army. The Emperor himself had planned the attack, and his generals had approved his strategy.

On the other side of the Elbe was the King of Prussia afraid to cross, lest the Austrian army, from their secure heights on the opposite shore, should annihilate his troops as they attempted the passage. But what Frederic hesitated to undertake, Joseph was resolved to accomplish. He had determined to cross the Elbe and force the King to give him battle. His columns were to move under cover of night, to ford the river below, and by rapid marches to reach the Prussian army at break of day.

"We shall be victorious, I feel it," said the Emperor to Lacy on their return from the encampment. "I have a joy within my heart that is the forerunner either of victory or of death."

"Of death!" echoed Lacy with surprise. "Does your Majesty mean to say that man can encounter death joyfully?"

"Why not?" said the Emperor. "When a man dies, has he not won the long and bloody battle of life?"

"These are disconsolate words to fall from *your* lips, sire. To you, life must present a bright array of hopes and useful deeds; none but an old and decrepid man should take such gloomy views of the world."

"I have suffered as much as older men, Lacy," returned the Emperor, laying his hand upon his friend's shoulder. "But all my sufferings are forgotten in the anticipated joy of the morrow. Let the dead past bury its dead, the birth of my happiness is at hand. I shall no more rest my title to the world's homage upon the station to which I was born. It shall know at last that I am worthy to be the friend of Lacy and of London. All the years that have intervened, have never yet sufficed to

blot out the remembrance of that fearful day on which the Empress recalled the consent she had given for me to meet Frederic in the field. I have never looked upon my mother since without feeling the wound re-open. But to-day I can forgive her; I can even forgive the hated priests who were the cause of my misfortune!—Lacy I love the whole world, I——”

The Emperor interrupted himself to stare with astonishment at the figure of a man who just then had opened the door.

“The Grand Duke of Tuscany!” exclaimed Lacy.

“My brother Leopold!” murmured Joseph in a low, tremulous voice, but without rising from his seat, or offering his hand.

A cloud passed over the pale, sickly face of the Grand Duke, and the smile vanished from his lips.

“Your Majesty does not invite me to enter?” asked he reproachfully. “You do not bid me welcome?”

The Emperor gazed upon his brother in silence, and Leopold shrank from the keen and searching glance of Joseph’s inquiring eyes.

“My brother,” cried the Emperor suddenly, “you have come hither to bring me some evil tidings.”

“I have come to greet your Majesty and to enjoy a few hours of family intercourse with you,” replied the Grand Duke, while without awaiting the courtesy which Joseph would not extend, he closed the door and advanced into the room.

“No, no,” cried the Emperor, “that is false. We are not such a pair of loving brothers that you should seek me for affection’s sake.” And approaching Leopold as he spoke, he stopped just before him and continued,

“I implore of you, be generous and tell me what you want. You have letters from the Empress, have you not?”

“I have. I have not only letters from our imperial mother to deliver to your Majesty, but I am also the bearer of verbal messages but——”

“But what?” cried Joseph as Leopold paused.

“But I must request of your Majesty to grant me a private interview.”

“With his Majesty’s permission, I shall withdraw,” said Lacy.

Joseph inclined his head and as Lacy disappeared, he turned his eyes once more upon the pale, embarrassed countenance of his unwelcome relative.

“Now we are alone,” said he, breathing fast—“now—but no! Give me one moment to collect my strength. My God, what evil has the Empress in store for me now, that she should select *you* as the messenger of her cruelty! Peace—I do not wish to hear your voice, until I am ready to hear its discordant sounds!”

“I await your commands,” replied Leopold with a respectful inclination.

The Emperor crossed the room several times forth and back.

His cheeks were blanched, his mouth quivered, while quick and gasping came the breath from his heaving chest.

“Air, air!” said he in a stifled voice. “I shall suffocate!” He approached the window, and leaning far out, inhaled the cold winter blast, whose icy breath was welcome to his hot and fevered head. After a while, he closed the window and turned to his brother who with folded arms still stood near the door.

“Now,” said Joseph gloomily, “I am ready to hear. Speak out your infernal errand.”

“I must first beg pardon of your Majesty if the intelligence which I am compelled to communicate, is unwelcome,” began Leopold in a deprecating voice.

Joseph cast a rapid searching look athwart the perplexed face of his brother. “You are forgiven,” replied he contemptuously. “Your message seems to be punishment enough of itself, if I judge by your countenance. Let us be quick then, and be done with one another. Give me the letter, and say at once what you have to say.”

The Grand Duke took from his coat-pocket a sealed dispatch which he delivered to the Emperor.

“Here are the letters of the Empress, but she ordered me to accompany them with a few words explanatory of her motives. She commissioned me to tell what she found it difficult to write.”

“She was afraid,” muttered Joseph.

“Yes, she was afraid to commit an injustice,” returned Leopold. “She was afraid to offend her Maker by continuing a war whose object was to break one of His holy commandments——”

“Oh, my brother,” interrupted Joseph sarcastically, “you are yourself again—I recognise the dutiful son of the priests who denounce me because I would disturb them in their comfortable Bavarian nest. I see plainly that if I should be so unfortunate as to fall to-morrow on the battle-field, you will throw yourself into the arms of Frederic and of that frantic Amazon, the Duchess Clemens, beg pardon for my sins, and hand over the fairest portion of Germany to Pope and Jesuits. Oh what a favorite you would become with the black-coats! Doubtless they would give you absolution for all the sins you are accustomed to commit against your wife.—But, my virtuous brother, I shall outlive the morrow, that I promise you, and shall gain such a victory over Frederic as will astound you and the whole Popedom.”

“You were about to give battle to Frederic?”

“I am about to do so,” replied Joseph defiantly.

“Then it was time for me to come!” exclaimed Leopold solemnly. “The mercy of God has sent me to stop the carnage!—My brother, the Empress earnestly entreats you, by the tears she has shed for your sake, to desist from fighting!—As your Empress she commands you to sheathe your sword until you hear the result of the negotiations now pending between herself and the King of Prussia.”

The Emperor uttered a cry of rage and the angry blood darted to his very brow. “The Empress has opened negotiations without my consent!” cried he in a voice of mingled indignation and incredulity.

"The Empress requires the consent of no one to regulate her state-policy. In the supremacy of her own power, she has re-opened negotiations with the King of Prussia and hopes to terminate the war honorably without blood-shed."

"It is false, I will not believe it!" again cried Joseph. "My mother would not offer me such indignity, when she herself placed in my hand the sword with which I seek to defend my rights. It is a priest's lie, and you have been commissioned to be its interpreter. But this time your pious frauds shall come to naught. Take back your packet. It is not the Empress's handwriting."

"It is that of her private Secretary."

"I am not bound to respect his writing and I have no time to listen to your stupid remonstrances. Wait until day after to-morrow. When a man is flushed with victory, he is generous and ready to pardon. When I have beaten Frederic I shall have leisure to inquire into the authenticity of your papers. Remain with me, not as the emissary of Priests and Jesuits, but as the brother of the Emperor, who to-morrow is to win his first victory and his first budding laurels. Give me your hand. On the eve of a battle, I am willing to remember that we are brothers."

"But this is not the eve of a battle, your Majesty. The Empress commands you to await the result of her efforts to end the war."

"I have already told you that I see through your intrigues."

"But I have the proofs of my veracity in these papers. You will not read them?"

"No, I will not!"

"Then I shall read them myself," returned Leopold, breaking the seal. "The Empress commands you, and it is your duty as her subject to obey."

"I shall obey when I am convinced that the Empress commands. But in this case I am convinced that it is not my mother, the high-spirited Maria Theresa, who entrusts you with such an abject commission."

"You surely will not deny her hand-writing," returned Leopold, extending an open letter to his brother.

Joseph looked imploringly at his brother's calm face.

"You are resolved to show me no mercy?" said he. "You will not understand my refusal to believe? Listen to me, Leopold. Show that you love me for once in your life. Think of my joyless youth, my sorrowing manhood, my life of perpetual humiliation, and give me one day of independent action!"

"What does your Majesty mean?" asked the Grand Duke.

The Emperor came up to him and putting both his hands upon Leopold's shoulder, he said in a voice of deep emotion, "Majesty asks nothing of you, but your brother entreats you to serve him this day. See, Leopold, it is too late, I cannot retract upon the very eve of battle. The army knows that we are about to engage the enemy, and my men are wild with enthusiasm. The presence of Frederic upon Austrian soil is an indignity which I am pledged as a man to avenge. If I allow him to



retreat from his present disadvantageous position my name is gone forever, and all Europe will cry out upon my incapacity to command. Remember, Leopold, that it concerns not my honor alone, but the honor of Austria that this battle should be fought. Rescue us both by a magnanimous falsehood. Go back to the Empress. Tell her that you lost her letters and that I would not take your word. Meanwhile I shall have humiliated the enemy, and Maria Theresa will have been forced to submit to an event which she cannot recall. Let us burn these papers, Leopold," continued Joseph, passionately clasping his hands, "and God will forgive you the innocent deception by which your brother shall have won fame and glory."

"God will never pardon me for sinning so deeply against my conscience," replied Leopold, quite unmoved by his brother's appeal and representations. "You require of me to burn those papers and consign thousands of your own subjects to death and worse than death—the lingering agonies of the battle-field? Never! Oh, my dear brother, have pity on yourself, and bethink you that you peril your own salvation by such thirst of blood——"

"Peace!—and answer my question," cried Joseph stamping his foot. "Will you do what I ask of you?"

"No, Joseph, I will not do it. The Empress desires to spare the blood of her people, and we must obey her just demands."

"I *will* not obey!" cried Joseph with such violence that his face was empurpled with passion. "I am co-regent, and as a man and a commander, it is my right to defend the honor of the crown. I will not read those letters, and I choose to assert the superiority of my manhood by doing that which they forbid. In your eyes and those of the Empress, I may be a rebel, but the world will acquit me, and I shall be honored for my just resistance. You will not destroy the papers as I implored you to do, then give them to me, and so satisfy your tender conscience."

"No," replied Leopold, who had replaced the dispatches in his pocket, "for I see that you intend to destroy them."

"That need not concern you. Give me the letters!"

"No, Joseph, I will not give them."

The Emperor uttered a hoarse cry and darted towards his brother with uplifted arm.

"Give me the papers," said he, with his teeth set.

"What! you would strike me!" said Leopold retreating.

"Give me the papers!" thundered the Emperor, "or I fell you to the earth as I would a beast!" and he came yet nearer.

Pale and panting, their eyes flashing with anger, the brothers stood for a moment confronting each other.

"Refuse me once again," hissed Joseph in a low, unnatural voice, "refuse me once again, and my hand shall smite your cowardly face and disgrace you forever; for, as God hears me, you shall never have satisfaction for the affront."

Leopold was silent, but, with his eyes fixed upon Joseph, he retreated, farther and still farther, followed by the Emperor, who, still with uplifted hand, threatened his brother's face. Suddenly Leopold reached the door and, bursting it open, rushed into the ante-room. With a tiger-bound he sprang forward to Lacy who had remained there in obedience to the Emperor's orders.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### THE DEFEAT.

"FIELD-MARSHAL LACY," said the Grand Duke, "I claim your protection—the protection of a man whom the Empress has honored, and who has sworn to obey her as his lawful Sovereign."

"Even unto death," added Lacy solemnly.

The Emperor groaned aloud, and his upraised arm fell powerless to his side. A triumphant smile flickered over the pale features of Leopold. He thrust his hand into his bosom and drew forth the dispatches of the Empress.

"The Empress charged me," said he, "in case the Emperor refused to read these letters, to deliver them to you, Marshal Lacy, and to bid you, in my presence, read them to him. Come, then, your Excellency, let us obey the commands of our Sovereign."

Lacy bowed, and followed the Grand Duke in silence. The Emperor retreated to his cabinet and sinking upon a sofa, buried his face in his hands. Nothing interrupted the stillness save the measured footsteps of Lacy and the Grand Duke, who entered and closed the door behind them. A long pause ensued. The Grand Duke retired to a window where, with his arms folded, he awaited the development of affairs with recovered composure. Joseph still sat with his face hidden by his hands, while Lacy with military decorum stood at the door with his letters, silent, until the Emperor should signify that he might read. Finding that Joseph would not speak, Lacy took a few steps forward. "Does your Majesty allow me to read the letters which, in the name of the Empress, his imperial Highness, the Grand Duke, has delivered to me?"

"Read," said Joseph hoarsely, but without removing his hands. Lacy approached the table, and from the various documents which he unfolded and examined, selected the letter which was in the Empress's own hand.

“ My dearest Emperor and son. As co-regent and heir to my throne, I hasten to advise you of the negotiations which have just been renewed between the King of Prussia and myself. I have every hope that they will terminate to our satisfaction, and thus not only save the lives of many of our subjects, but relieve my heart of the pangs it has endured during the absence of my beloved son. The King of Prussia has promised that, pending our diplomatic correspondence, he will not attack our armies. I therefore hope that you, my son, will concede as much, and scrupulously avoid all collision that might interrupt our negotiations. I send you copies of our correspondence and will continue to do so regularly. Hoping that God in his goodness will restore to me my imperial son, I remain now as ever, Your affectionate mother and Empress,  
 MARIA THERESA.

A deep sigh that was almost a sob was heaved by the Emperor. Slowly his hands fell from his face, while with tearful eyes he turned to Lacy, and said, “ Is it really so? Are my hopes of glory all frustrated ?”

Lacy answered with another sigh and a slight raising of the shoulder. “ Read on Lacy,” continued the Emperor mildly, “ my eyes are dim and I cannot see.”

Lacy continued reading the correspondence. First the letter of the Empress—then the reply of the King in which he promised that Maria Theresa should have nothing to fear for the life of her beloved son.

When the Emperor heard this he started; the color mounted to his face, then faded away and left it pale as before. His lips moved, but, with a convulsive twitch, he closed them again, and listened in silence. Two more letters followed, full of mutual and distinguished consideration, then came the propositions of the Empress and the comments of the King.

Maria Theresa pledged herself, from that portion of Bavaria of which Austria had possession, to retain only so much as would yield a revenue of one million, offering to cede the remainder to the Elector Palatine, or to exchange with him for territory situated elsewhere.

Then followed Frederic's conditions. He stipulated that Austria should renounce all pretensions to Bavaria, contenting herself with a small portion of Upper Bavaria, and recognising and upholding the claims of Charles Theodore, as well as those of his heir, the Duke of Zweibrücken.

“ Further, further !” exclaimed Joseph, as Lacy paused.

“ There is nothing further, sire; the correspondence ceases there.”

“ And to these disgraceful propositions we are not permitted to make the only answer of which they are deserving,—that is, to wipe them out with blood! Oh Lacy, Lacy, is it not fearful to be compelled like a school-boy to submit to the punishment which my tormentor judges fit to inflict !”

“ It is a painful duty, sire; but it is a duty, and your Majesty must submit.”

"I must submit!" exclaimed Joseph in bitter anguish while he sprang from the sofa. But suddenly his eager, fluttering glances were turned towards the window where stood the Grand Duke quietly surveying his movements.

"Have you not gone?" asked the Emperor. "I thought that your mission being fulfilled, your imperial Highness had nothing more to do here."

"I await your Majesty's answer," replied the Grand Duke.

"Oh you wish to mock me, do you," cried Joseph, trembling with passion, "for well you know there is but one answer to the Empress's commands, and that is—obedience. But since you are anxious to take a message, here is one and mark it well. Say to the Empress that I submit as becomes her subject, and so long as it suits her without my knowledge and behind my back to hold conferences with the enemy, I will abstain from engaging him in battle, although by so doing I shall ruin my reputation forever. Tell her furthermore that should she accept the dishonorable proposals made by Frederic and conclude a peace upon the basis of his conditions, she need never expect to see me again in Vienna. I shall never go near her so long as I live, but take up my abode in Aix la Chapelle, or in some other free city, as it was once the custom of the Emperors of Germany to do."\*

"Oh sire!" exclaimed Lacy, shocked, "retract those words I implore of you!"

"I will not retract them," replied Joseph imperatively, "I order the envoy of the Empress to repeat them faithfully."

"I shall obey your Majesty, the co-regent of the Empress," said the Grand Duke of Tuscany. "Has your Majesty any other commands?"

"Yes!" shouted the Emperor fiercely. "When you shall have accomplished your mission in Vienna, go home to your Priests in Tuscany, and bid them say a mass for the repose of your brother's soul, for from this day you have lost him who was called Joseph. He is dead to you forever."

The Grand Duke returned his brother's look with one of equal hatred. "I can scarcely lose that which I have never possessed," replied he with composure. "Had the affront which your Majesty has put upon me to-day come from a brother, we should have measured swords together before the sun had set upon the insult. But he who stands before me is my Emperor, and of him I am prohibited from demanding satisfaction."

"Our paths in life lie apart, and I trust that we shall never be forced to look upon each other again," said Joseph in reply.

"I am compelled to echo the wish since we can never meet as brothers," returned Leopold. "Farewell!"

"Farewell—and let it be farewell forever!"

The Grand Duke crossed the room and opened the door, while Joseph watched his disappearance with glaring eyes and stormy brow, and Lacy in anguish of heart looked first at one brother, then at the other. The

\* Joseph's own words. See Dohm's *Memoirs*, vol 1, p. 148.

door closed, and the jar it made caused Lacy to start. He recovered himself and hastened to the Emperor's side.

"Call him back, sire," implored he. "Call him back. He is your brother and the son of your mother. He is also the hope of those who tremble with apprehension of your Majesty's reign."

"Oh, yes—he is the leader of my enemies, the head of the pious conspirators who have cursed my life by their diabolical opposition. But a day will come when I shall crush the whole brood in their owl's nest, and put my house in order. In that day I shall remember this interview with the Grand Duke of Tuscany."\*

"Sire," insisted Lacy, "I entreat of you, recall him—if not as your brother, as the envoy of your Sovereign. Before it is too late, retract those fearful words, which in a moment of——"

"Lacy!" interrupted the Emperor in a loud, angry voice, "I have this day lost a brother and a battle. Am I also to lose a friend?"

The tears rose to Lacy's eyes. "Sire," said he in a voice of emotion, "forgive your truest friend if he has presumed to oppose you. I have no kindred to love; my heart is bound to you, and if I lose your regard, I am desolate and alone in the world!"

"You shall not lose it, my dear, dear friend," exclaimed Joseph, throwing his arms around Lacy's neck. "Oh, God, you do not know how I suffer! I feel as if I had lost some beloved friend. And is it not so? Have I not buried to-day the hopes of a whole life? The hopes which from my youth I had cherished of winning glory and fame through Frederic's humiliation!—I would give years of my life to have measured swords with him, for—let me tell you a secret, Lacy—I hate that man as much as I once fancied that I loved him. He is the cause of every misfortune that has befallen our house for forty years past; his fame is our shame, his splendor, our obscuracion. I might forgive him his robbery of Silesia, but that he has reduced me to the rôle of an imitator, I can never forgive! Everything on earth that I imagine, he executes before me. If I desire to free my people from the dominion of the clergy, he has already liberated his; if I seek to advance art, literature, or manufactures, he has just afforded them protection in Prussia; if I recommend toleration, lo! he has removed the disabilities of the Jews, and has pronounced all sects equal before the law. Would I excel in music, or yearn for military glory? The world has long since pronounced him a hero, and his flute was heard before I learned the violincello. Oh, I hate him, I hate him, for his greatness is the rock upon which my originality is fated to split; and his shadow projects forever before me and my unborn deeds. He forces me to pass for a counterfeit of his true coin, and yet I feel that my individuality is as marked as his! He is the evil genius of my destiny, vanquishing me even in all that I

\*The two brothers never met again. Although Leopold was next heir to the crown, Joseph would not allow him to receive the title of King of Rome, but bestowed it upon Leopold's son and heir, Francis. Even upon his death-bed, the Emperor refused to see his brother. By his explicit commands, it was only when his death had taken place that a courier was sent to inform Leopold of his accession to the throne.

would have done for the good of my subjects and the advancement of the world!"

"Your Majesty goes too far," said Lacy smiling. "There is one thing which Frederic has never dreamed of doing, and it is precisely there that you are destined to eclipse him. He has never sought to do anything for Germany. A German Prince, the ruler of a German people, he is the patron of foreign industry, literature and art. The most insignificant writing in France is better known to him than Lessing or Winkelmann; and while he is perfectly familiar with the composers of Italy, he has blundered into depreciation of Gluck's inspired music. That is the great and glorious contrast which your Majesty presents to Frederic of Prussia, and the German people whom he has despised will look up to you, sire, as to the Messiah of their decaying greatness."

"He will foil me there as in all else," replied Joseph disconsolately. "Has he not already guessed my plans for Germany, and has he not torn my banner from my hand to flaunt it above his own head, as the defender of German liberties! And Maria Theresa, too, is deceived by his infernal logic! Oh, Lacy, I hate him beyond expression. I hate him for the letter wherein he promises to spare her son, a man whom he loves, although he differs with him on the subject of German nationality.\* The cowardly remnant of a warrior! He takes refuge under the rosaries and scapulars that lie beneath my mother's hooped petticoat, and whispers in her credulous ear that this war is a great sin!—Do you really think that I am bound to sheathe my sword at the *ipse dixit* of my mother?"

Your mother is the reigning Empress, sire, and it is for you to give to her other subjects an example of loyalty and obedience."

"Ah," sighed Joseph, "I must still the throbbings of my bursting heart, and suffer in silence."

For a while he paced the room with hasty, uncertain steps, murmuring inaudible words, and darting despairing looks towards the window, whence gay throngs of soldiery were to be seen preparing to leave the encampment, while they sang their martial songs, and speculated together upon the events of the morrow. Suddenly the Emperor turned his head towards Lacy and said,

"Field-marshal, I withdraw my plans of battle. The Empress-queen has spoken, it is for us to obey. Apprise the army of the change. We remain where we are."

"Sire," exclaimed Lacy enthusiastically, "your victory has been won to-day. A victory over self!"

The Emperor raised his eyes with a sad, weary expression, and shook his head. "It was harder to win than would have been that which I contemplated for to-morrow. Go, Lacy, go, we must still hope and pray—pray God to grant that at some future day we may be revenged."

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\* Gross-Hoffinger, Records of the life of Joseph Second. P. 41.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## THE REVENGE.

LACY had assembled the generals and the staff-officers to communicate the decision of the Emperor, while the latter, overcome by this supreme disappointment, was pacing his cabinet with heavy and measured step. Then he stood at the window and watched the movements of his soldiers.

"They have heard it now," thought he, "and the word has gone forth, 'The Emperor is afraid to meet the old hero.' Yes, my brave soldiers, I know full well that you despise me! Your songs have ceased—your spirit is crushed and ah!—mine also. This unfought battle is worth a victory to Frederic; for the army will think that my courage failed me, and the King of Prussia will still remain in their estimation, the invincible foe of Austria! Oh, when will the hour of retribution sound!"

At this moment a knock was heard at the door and an Adjutant announced to the Emperor that a huzzar belonging to a Gallician regiment stationed directly opposite to the Prussian encampment, wished to communicate something of importance.

"Admit him," said Joseph, wearily.

The Adjutant bowed and returned, accompanied by a stalwart figure attired in the fanciful and becoming costume of a Gallician huzzar. The Emperor returned his salute with a slight bend of the head and motioned him to approach. The Adjutant withdrew, and Joseph was alone with the huzzar.

"Now speak," said Joseph, "and if you have important tidings let me hear them."

The soldier raised his head and spoke. "I have come to do your Majesty a service, but first you must promise to reward me as becomes an Emperor."

"If your service is great, your reward shall be in proportion."

The soldier bowed. "I am on picket duty immediately on the banks of the Elbe. As I have lain among the bushes, I have more than once seen the King of Prussia just opposite to me taking a survey of our strength. Little thinks he as he reins in his horse that a sharpshooter's ball is not too far off to bring him down. But I have thought of it."

"You have thought of WHAT?" exclaimed Joseph, shocked.

"I have thought that my ball has never yet missed its man, and what a rich man I might become if I were to free Austria from its worst enemy. I was turning this over in my mind yesterday, when here comes the King on his gray horse and halts directly in front of me. He held

a cane in his hand, and pointed with it towards our encampment and beat the air with it, as though he were showing his officers how he was going to thrash the Austrian army. When I saw this, my blood began to boil, and I rose half up and cocked my gun. Many a Bosnian have I brought down with it."

"Go on," said the Emperor, as the soldier paused and threw an admiring glance upon his musket.

"Yes sire, I raised my gun and took aim, when I began to reflect that

"That what?" exclaimed Joseph, upon whose forehead great drops of sweat had begun to gather.

"That it would be better first to ask the Emperor's permission and get the promise of a reward," said the huzzar with a salute.

"Ah," cried the Emperor, breathing freely, "that was a lucky thought of yours!"

The soldier bowed low. "I put down my musket, and when the hour came around for me to be relieved, I asked leave of my Captain to come here to see an old acquaintance. And indeed your Majesty I was not telling a lie, for you once slept under my father's roof, and paid him so well for the night's lodging that he was able to buy some land, to settle me upon it, and thereupon I married my sweetheart. So that I *did* come to see an old acquaintance, and now your Majesty, I have a firm hand and a sharp eye, and if you say so, Frederic shall bite the dust before this day week."

"What said your Captain to such a proposal?"

"Does your Majesty suppose that I am such a fool as to give another man the chance of stepping in my shoes?"

"It follows thence that I am the only person in your confidence," said Joseph, much relieved.

"The only one, sire, and I believe that you will not misuse it."

"No, I will not, and as a reward for your trust in me, here are two gold pieces."

At first the soldier smiled as he received the gold, but presently his brow darkened, and casting a dissatisfied look at the Emperor from behind his bushy eye-brows, he said, "Is the life of the King of Prussia, worth but two ducats?"

"It is worth more than all the gold in my imperial treasury," replied the Emperor with energy, "and no man on earth is rich enough to pay for it." I gave you these ducats to repay what you spent in coming from your camp hither. But I shall reward you still further if you will promise not to divulge what you have confided to me. Not only that, but I will also give you your discharge from the army, send you home and give you a situation as imperial huntsman. If you break your promise, I punish you with death."

"Sire, I promise, and I shall never break my word."

"Swear it in the name of God and of the Blessed Virgin."

"I swear," said the soldier, raising his right hand to heaven. "And



now, your Majesty, that no one is to know it except us two, when shall I shoot the King of Prussia and return to my home?"

The Emperor looked sternly upon the unconscious huzzar. "Soldier," said he, in loud and solemn tones, "keep the gold I have given you in remembrance of the warning which your good angel whispered when you forbore to murder the King of Prussia. I hope and believe that every man among you would risk his life in battle to take him prisoner, but God forbid that any one of you should stoop so low as to become his murderer!"

The huzzar stared at the Emperor in utter bewilderment, and not a word of reply was he able to make to this incomprehensible harangue.

The Emperor continued. "I pardon your evil thought because it did not germinate into an evil deed, but had you followed your impulse to murder the King, I would have hung you without giving you time to see a priest. Thank God for your escape, and let us dismiss the disgraceful subject forever. You can remain here for the night."

"But I have only six hours leave of absence, sire."

The Emperor looked distrustfully at the soldier. "I have discharged you from the service, and will see that you are not molested."

"And I am really to go home?" cried the man overjoyed, "and the Emperor really means to fulfil his promise in spite of the dreadful reprimand I have received!"

"Yes, I mean to fulfil my promise; but you also must swear to live a peaceful life and never try to kill another man save in open fight, were he even a Bosnian."

"From my heart I swear," replied the soldier, solemnly.

"Now you can go." The Emperor then rang his bell, when the door opened, and Günther entered the room. "Günther," said he, "give this man his supper and a bed in your room, and while he remains here, see that his wants are attended to."

Günther bowed, and retired with the huzzar. The Emperor followed the gigantic figure of the soldier until the door closed upon him, then he raised his eyes to heaven with a look of unspeakable gratitude.

"Lord," said he, "I have suffered cruelly since the sun rose to-day, but oh how I thank Thee that Thou hast preserved my name from eternal infamy! How would the world have spurned me, if, refusing to give him battle, I had taken the life of my enemy through the hands of an Austrian soldier! My God, my God, the life of Frederic has become more precious to me than my own, for his life is one with my honor!"

"But what if another should execute what this Gallacian has conceived?" continued the Emperor, shuddering. "What if in his ignorance, another one of these wild huntsmen should deem it his duty to take the life of Frederic!" The Emperor grew pale with the thought, and his hand was lifted as if to protest against the crime. "I must find means to shield myself from such disgrace, for his safety and my honor are cast on the same die!"

Far into the night, Günther heard the tread of his imperial master,

and he waited in vain to be called in to attend him. He watched until the dawn of day, and when at last, unable to contain his anxiety, he opened the door of the cabinet, he saw the Emperor asleep in an arm-chair. He was in full uniform, and the rays of the rising sun lit up his pale face, which even in sleep wore an anxious and painful expression.

Günther approached and touched him lightly. "Sire," said he in a voice of tender entreaty, "let me assist you to undress. This is the fourth night that your Majesty has slept in your uniform. You must lie down, indeed you must."

Joseph opened his eyes and looked at Günther. "Ah!" sighed he, "during three of these nights, I might just as well have slept in my bed as any respectable burgher who has nothing to trouble him but his growing corpulence. But last night I dared not undress, for I have much to do this morning. Good heavens, Günther," continued the Emperor, suddenly remembering the huzzar, "what has become of the man whom I gave into your custody last evening?"

"Your Majesty's second valet is in the same bed with him and they are both asleep. The door between our sleeping-room and the ante-room has been open all night, so that while I sat there awaiting your Majesty's call, I had the huzzar directly under my eyes. He seems to have pleasant dreams, if I judge by his smiles and snatches of songs."

"Let him sleep, Günther, and when he awakes, allow no one to hold any conversation with him. Now give me a glass of fresh water for my breakfast."

Günther hastened to obey, and returned in a very few minutes. The Emperor emptied the glass at a draught. "Oh," exclaimed he, refreshed, "how delightful it is! I have not a cook in my palaces capable of brewing me such a beverage!"

"And yet the meanest of your subjects, sire, would grumble if he had nothing better than a glass of water for breakfast."

"No doubt of it, Günther. Men set no value upon that which is easily obtained. If I were to close up the fountains and forbid them to drink water for breakfast, they would raise a howl, and protest that they could drink nothing else; and if I desired to give them a taste for *assa-fœtida*, I would have nothing to do but forbid its use. Once forbidden to the multitude, the multitude would go mad for it. But see! The sun has sent a ray through the window to bid us good morning, and to warn me that it is time to depart. Order my horse to be saddled, tell some of the staff to prepare to accompany me, and then go to Field Marshal Lacy and request him to go with me this morning on a tour of inspection."

"Lacy," said the Emperor, as they galloped off together, "you must prepare yourself for a long ride. We had anticipated an early start to-day, and we are punctual. To be sure we are minus an army, and neither our hearts nor our trumpets are sounding triumphant blasts of victory. Ah, friend! what miserable puppets we are in the hands of Almighty God! Yesterday I was gazing exultingly upon the heaven of

the future, so clear, so blue, so silver-bright—when lo! the rustling of a woman's dress is heard, and the sky of my destiny grows black as night. Yesterday I fancied myself a man, to-day I am a school boy in disgrace upon my knees. Oh, Lacy! those weary knees ache me so that I could sob for pain, were it not laughable for a commander-in-chief to put his handkerchief to his eyes.—Good God, Lacy," shouted the Emperor, suddenly, while he reined in his horse until the animal almost fell upon his haunches, "why do you not laugh! You see that I am doing my best to divert you!"

"I cannot laugh, sire, when you yourself are suffering almost to madness!"

The Emperor made no reply, but rode on, relaxing his speed until his horse ambled gently over the road. "Lacy," said he finally, "I am unreasonable when I murmur against destiny, for yesterday Providence was most benign towards me. Some other time, you shall hear in what manner.—Let us quicken our pace, for to-day I must visit all the outposts. I have an order to promulgate to the pickets, of which I shall explain to you the reason when we return."

Shortly after the Emperor had spoken, they reached the front. Joseph sprang forward to the very edge of the river-bank, and looked earnestly towards the opposite shore. Nothing was to be seen save far away on the horizon a few black specks which showed the outposts of the enemy. The Emperor signed to the officer on duty to approach.

"Do the Prussians ever venture any nearer?" asked he.

"Yes, sire. They seem to be officers of high rank making a reconnoissance probably with a view to finding a crossing for their army. They sometimes approach so close that the sharpshooters, who have eyes like telescopes, recognise the King of Prussia in the group."

"It is quite possible that in the excitement of a survey, the King may approach the shore. In the event of such an accident, I have a command to give to your men. As soon as they recognise the King, they shall present arms and remain thus until he is entirely out of sight. I desire, through this courtesy, to express the respect due to a crowned head, a great general, and a personal friend of my own. This order must be strictly enforced by the officer of the day."\*

The Emperor then inclined his head and rode off with his staff. At each outpost the order for presenting arms to Frederic was repeated, and the officers charged with its execution to the letter.

Late in the day Joseph returned from his long and tiresome visit of inspection. But so far from suffering fatigue, he sprang from his horse with a light bound, and his countenance was as free from gloom as it had been before the arrival of the Grand Duke of Tuscany.

"Lacy," said he, taking the arm of the Field Marshal, "I am about to explain to you the cause of my over-politeness to my abhorred enemy. You must have been astounded at the orders I have been giving to-day."

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\*The Emperor's own words. See Gross-Hoflinger I, p. 481.

“To tell the truth, I was surprised. But I thought that in the nobleness of your heart, sire, you were proving to me that you had relinquished all thoughts of revenge.”

“Nevertheless, Lacy, my hate is unappeased and I have kept my word. I have already had my revenge. I have saved the King of Prussia from the bullet of an assassin.”\*

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### A LETTER TO THE EMPRESS OF RUSSIA.

WITH flushed face and panting bosom Maria Theresa paced her cabinet, sometimes glancing with angry eyes at the heaps of papers that covered her *escritoire*, then wandering hastily to and fro, perfectly insensible to the fatigue which in her advancing years generally overwhelmed her whenever she attempted to move otherwise than leisurely. The Empress had received bad news from every quarter, but worst of all were the tidings that came from Bohemia. For more than a year the Austrian and Prussian armies had threatened one another; and yet nothing had been accomplished towards the settlement of the Bavarian succession.

Maria Theresa, shocked by the threat which Joseph had made to her through the Grand Duke of Tuscany, had broken off her negotiations with Frederic, and had sacrificed the dearest wishes of her heart to appease the fury of her imperial son. Notwithstanding this, no battle had been fought, for Frederic was quite as desirous as the Empress could be, to avoid an engagement. He had declared war against his old adversary with the greatest alacrity; but when it became necessary to manœuvre his army, the hero of so many fights was obliged to confess in the secrecy of his own heart that his gouty hand was impotent to draw the sword, and his tottering limbs were fitter to sink into an arm chair than to bestride a war-horse.

Irritable, crabbed, and low-spirited, his campaign had proved a disastrous failure; instead of planning battles he had planned pillaging and foraging expeditions, and his hungry and disaffected army had converted the rich fields of Bohemia into a gloomy and desolate waste. At last succoring winter came to the help of the oppressed Bohemians, and both armies went into winter quarters.

Maria Theresa had employed the season which forced her ambitious

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\* This whole chapter is historical. See Riedler's archives for 1331, and Gross-Hoffinger I, p. 427.

son to inactivity in new negotiations for peace. Count Von Mercy had sought for intervention on the part of France, and Baron Thugut had made new proposals to Prussia. Until to-day the Empress had indulged the hope of terminating this unhappy and ridiculous war; but her hopes had been frustrated by the dispatches she had just received from France and Bohemia. Count Von Mercy wrote that so far from accepting the rôle of mediator, the French King, expostulated with him upon the injustice of the claims of Austria, and earnestly recommended their total relinquishment as the only road to peace.

Another courier from Joseph announced that the winter season having almost closed, he hoped that he might now be permitted to prosecute the war with firmness and vigor. Circumstances were favorable to Austria, for General Wurmser had succeeded in surprising the Prince of Philipsthal, and in driving the Prussian garrison from their stronghold. The Emperor therefore declared his intention of giving battle to Frederic that he might at one stroke free Bohemia from the presence of a tyrannical and merciless enemy.

These were the tidings which had flooded the heart of the Empress with anguish.

"I must have peace," thought she, as perfectly unconscious of the fact, she still paced the floor of her cabinet. "I cannot go to my grave burdened with the crime of an unrighteous war. Peace! Peace! Heavenly father, send us peace! Something I must do, and that at once; and if my son still vituperates his unhappy mother, I know that my subjects, the people of Germany and of all Europe will sustain me by their approbation."

Filled with the idea, she approached her *escritoire* and again her eyes rested upon the papers and pamphlets that lay there. Her cheeks flushed and her eyes flashed fire, as lifting from the desk a heavy package, she threw it down with violence, exclaiming,

"Has that Schrötter been printing another absurd pamphlet, braying to the world of our rights to Bavaria? I must stop that man's mouth, and teach him discretion!"

Here the Empress rang and gave two messages to the page who answered the summons. "Let Prince Kaunitz be informed that I would be happy to see his Highness as soon as possible.—Send a messenger to Counsellor Von Schrötter, and let him be here in an hour."

So saying, the Empress, at last feeling that she was exercising her limbs beyond all power of endurance, sank into an arm-chair and continued her reflections. They were anything but consolatory. She could not humble herself to make any more proposals to Frederic. He was so arrogant that he might answer in such a way as to make war the only alternative for Austria. But where to go for a mediator? France had refused, and Marie Antoinette had with difficulty obtained from her husband a promise not to sustain Prussia.

"I have a most disobliging son-in-law in Louis," thought the Empress, "and if Marie Antoinette were not in a condition where anxiety

of mind might be fatal to her life, I should very soon speak plainly to the King, and let him understand distinctly how little I care for his approval or disapproval!—But I must be patient for my daughter's sake; and if she gives birth to a Dauphin, I shall be too happy to quarrel with her stubborn King.—I had reckoned upon France, however, and I am disappointed and grieved.”

So saying the Empress bent her head once more among her papers, and this time she opened a dispatch from her Ambassador at St. Petersburg. She began to read.

“The King of Prussia is asking succor from Russia. The Empress is quite ready to grant it, and has already marched an auxiliary force into Galicia. But she exacts that her troops shall act independently of Frederic, and requires of him for the prosecution of her war with Turkey, a subsidy of two million of thalers. The King is indignant at her exactions, so that the opportunity now offers to dissolve this dangerous alliance. If the Empress-queen could bring herself to pen a letter to Catharine requesting her intervention——”

“No,” exclaimed Maria Theresa, interrupting herself, “to such degradation I cannot stoop! It would be too base!” She threw down the letter and frowning leaned her head upon her hand. “How,” thought she, “could a virtuous woman write to that abandoned wretch who degrades the divine birthright of royalty by a dissolute life! How could Maria Theresa so humiliate herself as to ask succor of such a Messalina!”

The entrance of a page interrupted the Empress's meditations. His Highness, Prince Kaunitz, regretted that he was unable to obey her Majesty's commands, as he was sick and not able to leave his room.

The Empress dismissed the page and frowned anew.

“I know perfectly well the nature of his malady,” thought she. “Whenever he desires to consult with the Emperor before seeing me, he falls sick. Whenever danger is ahead and affairs look stormy, he retreats to his hole like a discreet fox. I wish to heaven that I too could take to my bed and shut my eyes to all that is transpiring around us!—But no—” continued the Empress with a pang of self-reproach, “I have no right to retire from the post of danger. I must act, and act quickly, or Joseph will be before me. Oh, my God, help me in my great need?”

She re-read the dispatches from her different Ambassadors, and each one breathed the same spirit. From every court in Europe came disapprobation and blame. Every one of the great powers counselled peace—speedy peace, lest all should be drawn into the strife, and Austria left to the humiliation of struggling single-handed against every other nation in Europe.

The tears of the Empress flowed fast. She could see no help on earth, and how could she feel otherwise than resentful towards the Minister and the son who had brought her into this mortifying position? Suddenly she dried her tears and once more took up the dispatch from St. Petersburg. The silence in that little room was broken only by her

sighs, and the rustling of the papers which she held in her hand. She paused, and those trembling hands fell into her lap. She threw back her head as if trying to make a difficult resolve.

"There is one way—but oh, how disgraceful!" murmured she. Again the gathering tears were dashed from her eyes, and she tried to read.

"It must be," sighed she, as she replaced the paper on the desk, "and if so, it must be done quickly. Oh, my Creator! Thou alone knowest how fearful to my heart is this sacrifice of womanly pride; but thou willest my humiliation, and I submit!—Let me drink the chalice!"

She took up her pen and began to write. Often she hesitated—threw aside her sheet and took another. Sometimes she read aloud what she had written; then starting at the sound of the words, resumed her writing in silence. At last the task was accomplished and her eyes scanned the concluding paragraph.

With the conviction that my honor could be entrusted to no abler hands, I leave it to your Majesty, in conjunction with France, to make such propositions as you may esteem best calculated to promote peace. In this trust I remain,

Your Majesty's true and devoted sister,

MARIA THERESA.\*

As she read these words, the cheeks of the Empress crimsoned with shame, and burying her face in her hands, she sobbed aloud. When the paroxysm of her grief was over, her face was very pale and her eyes dim and swollen.

"I must complete the humiliation," thought she; then folding the letter, it was directed "To her Majesty the Empress of Russia."

She took up a tiny gold bell, and ringing it so that it gave out but a few strokes, a *portière* was raised, and Koch entered the room.

"Take a copy of this letter, and send a courier with it to St. Petersburg. I have at last yielded to the wishes of my counsellors and have written to the Empress of Russia. Still Koch—not a word!—My heart is not yet strong enough to bear the grief and shame of this hour."

The private Secretary had scarcely left the room when the page re-entered announcing Counsellor Von Schrötter.

"Ah," said the Empress, "he comes at the right moment. I am just in the mood to castigate those who have displeased me."

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\* This letter of the Empress is yet in the archives of St. Petersburg. Coxe, who copies it word for word, saw it there himself. See Coxe's History of the House of Austria. Vol. 4, page 392.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## THE GRATITUDE OF PRINCES.

THE message of the Empress had been received by Counsellor Von Schrötter with rapture. His heart throbbed so joyfully that its every beat sent the quick blood bounding through his veins. The hour for acknowledgement of his long tried services had arrived. For years he had lived a life of labor, research, and patient investigation. Among the deeds, parchments and dusty green tables of the Chancery, his youth had faded to middle age; and of its early hopes had retained but one single earthly ambition; it was that of taking a place among learned men and becoming an authority of some weight in the judicial world. His pamphlets on the Bavarian succession had lifted him to fame, and now among his countrymen his name was beginning to be quoted as that of a great and accomplished jurist. Nothing was needed to complete the measure of his simple joys, save the approbation of the Court and some acknowledgement on the part of his Sovereign of the fidelity with which he had labored for so many years in her behalf.

This precious tribute he was called upon to receive! He was to speak himself with the Empress of Austria! So excited was he by the thought that the strong man trembled from head to foot; he was even more agitated than he had been twenty years before, when he had received his diploma as doctor of laws. Pale, but inexpressibly happy, he stood upon the threshold of the Empress's cabinet, and awaited her permission to approach and kiss her beloved and honored hand.

Maria Theresa saw him and spoke not a word. She sat immovable in her arm-chair, darting lightning glances upon the unconscious Counsellor, and growing every moment more enraged at the thought of his impertinent researches, until the storm burst with all its fury upon his head. The Empress clutched the pamphlets which lay near her upon the table, and rising from her chair, strode through the room to the door where the unhappy author stood.

"Did you write these *brochures*?" asked she.

"Yes, your Majesty," said Von Schrötter with a happy smile.

"Read the title-page."

Von Schrötter read: "The rights and measures of her imperial, royal and apostolic Majesty in reference to the Bavarian succession."

"Now read the title of your first pamphlet."

"Impartial thoughts on the various questions arising from the succession of Maximilian Joseph."

"You acknowledge the authorship of these two *brochures*?"



"I am proud to acknowledge them, your Majesty."

"Whence it follows that you are proud to be the cause of the unholy war which now rages throughout Germany," said the Empress in a voice of indignation. "It is you, then, whose pen has metamorphosed itself into a sword wherewith to take the lives of thousands of good and honest men! What right had you to publish 'impartial thoughts upon the Bavarian succession?' I suppose you had an idea that in so doing you were proving to the world what an important part you play in the affairs of the nation!"

"Your Majesty," stammered Von Schrötter, utterly at a loss to understand his crime, "Your Majesty through Prince Kaunitz conveyed to me your entire satisfaction with my researches into the imperial archives, and the Emperor himself requested me to write the second pamphlet."

"I am in no wise indebted to you for your complaisance," replied the Empress, "for your ink has changed itself into blood and your stupid vagaries, hatched in the comfortable quiet of your own room, have driven my poor soldiers from their homes out into the pitiless storm of hardship, danger, and death. What right had you to meddle with the difficulties of the succession? Did you expect that, in gratitude for your valuable services to the crown, I would reward you with a title and an estate in Bavaria?"

"No, your Majesty," replied Von Schrötter blushing, "I was but doing my duty as a jurist and a civil officer of the crown."

"And do you suppose that you have succeeded in proving anything with your rubbish?" asked the Empress scornfully. "Do you imagine that any one would take the trouble to read your balderdash?"

"In defending the claims of the crown, I was performing an act of sacred duty towards my country," replied Von Schrötter, emboldened to reply by a just sense of the indignity offered him.

"Oh, yes, I know something of the vanity of authors," said the Empress. "They imagine themselves to be Atlas, each one with the world upon his shoulders, which must certainly fall, if they are not there to uphold it. I, however, take the liberty of judging that if they were all to be blown to atoms, nobody would be the worse for their disappearance. What has come of your writings? A paper war of such dimensions that I think the foul fiend must have plucked all the geese in Avernus, and have thrown their quills at your heads. What with your imbecile pens, nobody knows who is right!"

"But your Majesty," remonstrated Von Schrötter, "discussion is indispensable to the discovery of truth, and as I am sure that I have contributed to this discovery, I cannot regret what I have done."

"Ah indeed!" exclaimed the enraged Empress. "You think you have contributed to the discovery of truth!—I will tell you to what you have contributed, sir. You are the cause that the Emperor became so headstrong on the subject, that sooner than give up Bavaria, he has involved me in war—you are the cause that the whole world has had something to say on the subject of our claims, whereas had you held your tongue,

they might have passed for what they are not—just. You are the cause that my days are spent in sorrow, and my nights are sleepless; that in the despair of my heart, I have been reduced to write to a woman whom I despise! Yes, of all this, you are the cause, and more than this—you will be guilty of my death, for I repeat to you that this war has broken my heart, and will be the last nail in my coffin.\* When my people then mourn for my death, (and I hope that they will regret me,) you may boast of having compassed it yourself, and from my grave I shall arise to——”

“No more, your Majesty, no more. Spare me, in mercy, sobbed he, “if you would not see me die at your feet.”

“And I presume you would consider it a great misfortune for Austria if you were no longer able to unsheath your goose-quill in her defence. There is no danger of your dying from the wounds inflicted by my tongue, but I am resolved that you shall carry their marks to the grave with you. This is all I had to say to you, you are dismissed.”

“But, your Majesty,” replied Von Schrötter, “I have some thing to say—I must defend myself.”

“You must defend yourself!” cried Maria Theresa surveying him with a look of ineffable disdain. “Defend yourself to God—I am not disposed to listen to your defence.”

“But your Majesty——”

“Peace!” thundered the Empress. “Who dares speak when I have ordered him from my presence? Go home and ponder my words.”

So saying she walked back to her seat. But seeing that Von Schrötter’s lips were parted as if in an attempt to say something, she snatched her bell and rang it so loud that in its clang, his words were lost.

“Counsellor Von Schrötter is dismissed,” said she to the page. “Open the doors that he may pass.”

Von Schrötter gasped out a convulsive sigh, and scarcely knowing what he did, turned one last sad look upon his cruel Sovereign, and bowing his head, left the room.

When his tall, majestic form had disappeared from her sight, the Empress said,

“Ah!—That outburst has done me good. And now that I have driven away humiliation by anger, I shall go and pray to God to bless the sacrifice I have made to-day for the good of my people.”

She rang the bell, assembled her ladies of honor, and with them entered the private chapel which had lately been added to her own apartments. She knelt before the first *prie-Dieu* that presented itself, and her attendants knelt around her.

Whilst the Empress was praying, Von Schrötter returned to the home which an hour sooner he had left with a heart so full of hope and ecstasy. He had not a word for his old housekeeper, who opened the door to admit him, and motioning away the servant who would have shown him into the dining-room, he ascended the stair-case with slow, uncertain

\* Maria Theresa’s own words.

steps, his hands clinging to the balustrade, his head so heavy that he scarce could bear its weight. The servants stood below in sorrowful amazement. They had never seen their master so agitated in his life before; they could scarcely believe that this ghastly being was the dignified and stately man who had left them but an hour before. Suddenly they started, for surely they heard a loud laugh from the study, but what a laugh!—so wild, so unearthly that it sounded like the dreadful mirth of a madman!—Then all was silent. Presently there came the sound of a heavy fall.

“That is our master! Some misfortune has befallen him,” cried the servants, hurrying up the stairs and bursting into the room.

On the floor, surrounded by the books which had been the pride and solace of a harmless life, lay the Counsellor weltering in his blood.

“He has broken a blood-vessel!” cried the housekeeper with a sob, while the other servant ran for a physician. The old woman raised her dear master’s head and his bloody lips parted with a ghastly smile.

“This is the gratitude of princes!” murmured he almost inaudibly. “Such is the reward of him who loves his country!”

“What is it, my dear, dear, master?” faltered the faithful servant, in vain seeking to penetrate the meaning of his words. “Why do you stare at me so horribly? What has distressed you?”

He moved as though he would have raised his head. “This is Austria’s gratitude,” cried he in a loud voice; then forth from his lips gurgled the purple stream of life, and his words died into hoarse, inaudible mutterings.

The physician came in, followed by the valet, and together they raised the sufferer and placed him upon his bed. The doctor then felt his pulse and his chest, and bent down to catch his breathings. He shook his head mournfully and called to the weeping servants.

“He is dying,” said he. “Some fearful shock that he has received has induced a hemorrhage, which in a few hours will end his life.”

Maria Theresa rose from her prayers, comforted and light of heart. And as she left the chapel, the man whom she had crushed to the earth by her unjust anger, drew his last sigh.\*

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### FREDERIC THE GREAT.

KING FREDERIC and his Prussians were still encamped at Wildschütz. His army was weary of inactivity, and every morning the longing eyes of his soldiers turned towards the little gray house at the end of the vil-

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\* This whole chapter is historical. Hornayr, Austrian Plutarch, vol. 6.

lage where the King and his staff were quartered, vainly hoping to see their Fritz in the saddle, eager, bold and daring as he had ever been until now. The men were destitute of every thing. Not only their food was exhausted, but their forage also. Bohemia had been plundered until nothing remained for man or beast. The inhabitants had fled to the interior, their villages and farms were a waste, and still the King of Prussia insisted that his army should subsist upon the enemy.

The men were in despair, and the officers began to apprehend a mutiny, for the former were surly, and no amount of conciliatory words could appease their hunger or feed their horses.

"We must see the King, we must speak to old Fritz!" cried the malcontents, and with this cry a crowd of artillerymen made their way to head-quarters.

"We must see the King! Where is old Fritz? Has he ceased to care for his soldiers?" repeated the crowd.

"No friends, I am ready to listen," said a soft voice, which nevertheless was heard above the din, and the King, clad in his well-known uniform, appeared at the window.

The soldiers received him with a cheer, and at sight of the well-beloved countenance, they forgot their need and shouted for joy.

"What is it?" said Frederic, when the tumult had died away.

One of the men, as spokesman, stepped forward. "We wanted to see our old Fritz once more; we can scarcely believe that he sees our wants and will do nothing to relieve them."

"You see *mine*," said Frederic, smiling, "and, as you perceive, I am scarcely better off than yourselves. Do you think this a fit residence for a King?"

"It is a dog-kennel!" cried the soldiers.

"And is that all you have to say to me?"

"No, sire, it is not. If our King can do nothing for us, at least let him rescue our horses from starvation. We are men, and our reason helps us to bear privations, but it is a sin to keep our horses here without food. We beseech your Majesty, give us forage for our horses!" And the others repeated in chorus: "Forage, forage, give us forage for our horses!"

Meanwhile, the King had closed his window and had retired to the other end of his house. This made the soldiers frantic, and they screamed and shouted louder than ever,

"Give us forage for our horses!"

Suddenly the voice which had so often led them to victory, was heard at the door,

"Peace, you noisy rebels, peace, I say!"

And on the steps before his wretched cabin, stood Frederic, surrounded by the principal officers of his army.

"Sire," said one of the King's staff, "shall we disperse them?"

"Why so?" replied Frederic curtly. "Have my poor soldiers not the right to appeal to me for help. Speak, my children, speak without fear."

"Forage, sire, forage—our horses are dying like flies!"

"You, see," said the King to his officers, these poor fellows ask nothing for themselves. Why is it that they have no forage for their horses?"

"Sire," replied the officers deprecatingly, "as long as there remained a hay-stack, or a store-house, in this part of Bohemia, your Majesty's army was fed by the enemy. But the country is stripped of everything. The inhabitants themselves have been obliged to fly from starvation."

"Starvation!" echoed the King. "I will warrant that while the horses of the privates are suffering for food, those of the officers are well provided."

"Your Majesty!"

"Do not interrupt me, but let all the forage belonging to the chief officers of the army, be brought at once and placed before these men. They can wait here until it comes, and then divide it between them. Are you satisfied, my children?"

"Yes, yes," cried the men shouting for joy at the prospect of the abundance about to be vouchsafed to them.

The officers on the contrary were deeply humiliated, and beheld the proceedings with gloomy discontent.

Frederic pretended not to perceive their dissatisfaction. He stood with his hat drawn down over his brows, leaning for support upon the crutch-cane which of late had been his inseparable companion. Occasionally when a soldier came up with his bundle of hay, the King glanced quickly around, and then looked down again. The artillerymen gradually ceased their noisy demonstrations, and now with anxious expectant faces, they looked at the King, the officers, and then at the very small amount of forage which was being placed before them. Just then an Adjutant bowed to the King and announced that the last bundle of hay had been set before his Majesty.

Frederic raised his eyes and sadly contemplated the miserable little heap of forage which betokened with so much significance the destitution of his brave army. "Is this all?" said he.

"Yes, sire, all——"

"It is well—Now," continued he to the artillerymen, "divide this between you. Had my officers been more selfish, your horses would have fared better. But you see that my Generals and adjutants are as noble and self-sacrificing as yourselves; and unless you manage to forage for us all, we shall all starve together. I have called for this hay to prove to you that your officers were not reveling in plenty while you were suffering for want. Take it, and do not ask for that which I cannot give you."

The artillerymen looked almost ashamed of their clamor, while the faces of the officers brightened, and their eyes turned with love and admiration upon the man whose tact had so entirely justified them to their men.

The King pretended to see their delight, as little as he had feigned to

see their mortification. He seemed wholly absorbed watching the soldiers, who were now striving together as to who was to have the remnants of forage that was far from being enough to allow each man a bundle.\*

Finally Frederic withdrew to his cabin, and once alone, he fell into the leathern arm-chair which was the only piece of furniture in the room besides a bed and a table.

"This will never do," thought he, sorrowfully. "We must either retreat or advance. This war is a miserable failure—the impotent effort of a shattered old man whose head is powerless to plan and his hand to execute. How often since I entered upon this farcical campaign, have I repeated those words of Boileau,

'Malheureux, laisse en paix ton cheval vieillissant  
De peur que tout à coup essouffé, sans haleine,  
Il ne laisse en tombant, sou maitre sur l'arène.'†

Why did I undertake this war? Why had I not discretion enough to remain at home, and secure the happiness of my own people?"

The King sighed, and his head sank upon his breast. He sat thus for some time in deep discouragement; but presently he repeated to himself, "why did I undertake this war?"

"Why?" echoed he aloud. "For the honor and safety of Germany. How sorely soever war may press upon my age and infirmities, it is my duty to check the ambition of a house whose greed has no bounds save those which are made for it by the resistance of another power as resolute as itself."

"I am, therefore, the champion of German liberties, and I cannot—must not sheathe my sword. But this inactivity is demoralising my army, and it must come to an end. We must retreat or advance—then let us advance!"

Here the King rang his bell. A valet entered, whom he ordered to go at once to the Generals and staff-officers and bid them assemble at head-quarters in fifteen minutes from that time.—

"Gentlemen," said the King, "we cross the Elbe to-morrow."

At these words every countenance there grew bright, and every voice was raised in one long shout. "Long live the King! Long live Frederic the great!"

The King tried his best to look unmoved. "Peace, you silly old fellows," said he. "What do you suppose the boys will do out there, if you raise such a clamor in doors? Do you approve of the move? Speak, General Keller."

"Sire, while out on a reconnoissance yesterday, I discovered a crossing where we may go safely over without danger from the enemy's bullets."

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\* Dohm's Memoirs, Vol. 1, P. 158.

† Frederic's own words.

“Good. Are you all of one mind?”

A long shout was the answer, and when it had subsided, the King nodded his head. “We are all of one mind, then. To-morrow, we engage the enemy. And now, to horse! We must reconnoitre the position which General Keller has chosen, and part of our troops must cross to-night.”

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## CHAPTER XXV.

“THE DARKEST HOUR IS BEFORE DAY.”

A few moments later, the officers were mounted, and the King's horse stood before his door. Frederic, coming forward with something of his youthful elasticity, tried to raise himself into the saddle; but he stopped, and with an expression of great suffering, withdrew his foot from the stirrup. The old hero had forgotten that the gout was holding him prisoner. His face flushed with disappointment, as he called his lackeys to his help. But once in the saddle, the King struck his spurs with such violence into his horse's flanks, that the animal leaped into the air, and bounded off in a swift gallop.

Whether Frederic had intended to prove to his officers that he was as bold a horseman as ever, or whether he had yielded to a momentary impulse of anger, he suffered keenly for his bravado; for at every bound of the horse, his agony increased. Finally he could endure no more: he came to a complete stand, and requested his *suite* to slacken their pace. They rode on in perfect silence, the officers casting stolen glances at the King, whose lips quivered, while his face grew every moment paler with suppressed anguish. But he bore it all without a sigh until they had reached the point for which they started. Having accurately surveyed it, Frederic turned his horse's head and rode back to his quarters.

This time he had not only to be lifted from his horse, but to be carried to his room. Once there, he signed to his attendants to leave him. He felt the imperious necessity of being alone with his afflicted mind and body. He leaned his head back and murmured

“*Malheureux, laisse en paix ton cheval vieillissant!*”—Then closing his eyes, he quoted the sacred scriptures for the first time in his life without irreverent intention, “The spirit is willing,” sighed the wretched unbeliever, “but the flesh is weak.” He remained pondering over those truthful words for several moments; then casting his eyes over the various objects that lay upon his table, they lit upon the little leather-cov-

ered box which contained his flute. For some time past, his perplexities had been so great that he had held no intercourse with this object of his life-long affection; but now he felt as if its tones would be consolatory, and with trembling, eager hands, he unfastened the case, and raised the instrument to his lips. But alas! the flute, like its adorer, was superannuated. Wearily came its feeble notes upon the air, each one hoarse as the wind whistling through a ruined Abbey.\* Frederic had played but a few bars of his *Adagio* when his hands fell slowly, and the flute rolled upon the table. He contemplated it for a while; then his eyes filled with tears which fell rapidly down his cheeks.

A mournful smile flickered over his countenance. "Well," said he in a low voice, "I suppose there is nothing disgraceful in the tears of an old man over the last, faithful friend of his youth." With these words, he replaced the flute in the case and locked it, murmuring,

"Farewell forever, my life-long solace!"

Just then a thousand voices shouted, "Long live the King! Long live old Fritz!"

They are rejoicing over the approaching battle," thought Frederic. "But their hopes, like mine, are destined to be crushed. Instead of crossing the Elbe, we must retire to Silesia—Old age has vanquished me, and from such a defeat, no man can ever rally."

"Well, well! We must take the world as it comes, and if I can neither fight nor play on the flute, I can still talk and write. My eulogy on Voltaire is not yet completed; I must finish it to-day that it may be read before the Academy at Berlin on the anniversary of his death."†

Selecting from among his papers the manuscript he wanted, Frederic took up his pen and began to write. Gradually the songs and shouts of the soldiers ceased, and the King was consoling himself for the loss of music by flinging himself into the arms of poetry, when a knock was heard at his door, and his valet announced the Secretary of Count Galitzin.

Frederic's heart throbbed with joy, and his great, eagle eyes were so strangely lit up, that the valet could not imagine what had caused such an illumination of his royal master's features.

"Thugut," cried the King, "is Thugut here again? Admit him immediately."

By the time that Baron Thugut had appeared at the door, Frederic had forced down his joy so that he received the Envoy of the Empress-Queen with creditable indifference.

"Well, Baron," said he, with a careless nod, "you come again! When the foul fiend comes for the third time, he must either bag a man's soul, or give it up forever."

"I feel flattered, sire, by the comparison your Majesty makes of me to so great and powerful a potentate," replied the Baron, laughing.

\* It was during the war of the Bavarian succession that Frederic found himself compelled to give up the flute. His *embouchure* had been destroyed by the loss of his front teeth, and his hands trembled so that he could scarcely hold his instrument.

† Voltaire died in May, 1798, and Frederic wrote a poem on his death while in camp in Bohemia.



“You believe in the devil, then, although you deny the Lord.”

“Certainly, sire, for I have never yet seen a trace of the one, and the other I meet everywhere.”

“For an Ambassador of Maria Theresa, your opinions are tolerable heterodox,” said Frederic. “But tell me what brings you hither? You must not expect me to continue our interrupted negotiations. If the Empress-queen sends you to claim ever so small a portion of Bavaria, I tell you beforehand that it is useless to say a word. Austria must renounce her pretensions, or continue the war.”

“Sire, I come with new propositions. Here are my credentials, if your Majesty is at leisure to examine them, and here is a letter from the hand of my revered Sovereign.”

“And what is that?” asked Frederic, pointing to a roll of papers tied up with twine.

“Those are my documents, together with the papers relating to the past negotiations.”

“I think that I have already refused to go over those negotiations,” said Frederic, sharply; and without further ceremony, he broke the seal of the Empress’s letter. While the King read, Thugut busied himself untying his roll and spreading his papers out upon the table.

“This is nothing but a letter of credentials,” observed the King, putting it down. “The Empress refers me to you for verbal explanations. I am ready to hear them.”

“Sire, the Empress-queen, animated by a heartfelt desire to restore peace to Germany, has called upon France and Russia to settle the difficulties which, to her sincere regret, have arisen between herself and your Majesty. These two powers having responded favorably to my Sovereign’s request——”

“Say, rather,” interrupted Frederic, “that these two powers having given to her Majesty of Austria, the somewhat peremptory advice to relinquish her pretensions to Bavaria——”

Baron Thugut, bowed and resumed: “That the two powers may have the opportunity of conducting their negotiations without any new complications from military movements, her Majesty, the Empress, proposes an armistice to begin from to-day.”

Up to this moment, the King’s eyes had been fixed upon Thugut; but as he heard these few last words, he dropped them suddenly. He was so overjoyed that he was afraid to betray his raptures to the diplomatist. He recovered himself in time. “Did you come through my camp?” asked he of the Baron.

“Yes, sire.”

“You heard the shouts and songs of my Prussians. Were you told that I shall cross the Elbe, and offer battle to your Emperor to-morrow?”

“Yes, sire, I was told so.”

“And at the very moment when I am prepared to fight, you come to me with proposals of armistice!—You perceive that I could only be brought to consent to a truce through my consideration for the Empress,

provided she offered sound guarantees for the conclusion of an honorable peace. Let us hear your proposals."

The interview between the King and the secret envoy of the Empress was long and animated. When the latter was about to take leave, Frederic nodded condescending, saying,

"Well—I consent to make this sacrifice to the wishes of the Empress. You can inform her, that instead of giving battle to the Emperor, as I had hoped to do on the morrow, I shall retreat to Silesia, and retire into winter quarters."

"And your Majesty, promises equitable conditions, and will consult with the Russian Ambassador?"

"I promise;—and the Empress-queen may rely upon me. Farewell." The envoy turned to depart, but before he reached the door, the King called him back.

"Baron," said he with a significant smile, "you have forgotten something." Here he pointed to the twine which had fallen on the floor and lay near the Baron's chair. "Take what belongs to you, I never enrich myself with the possession of others."

When the door had closed, the King raised his eyes to heaven. "Is it chance, or Providence, that has succored me to-day?" thought he. "Which of the two has vouchsafed me such honorable deliverance from my extremity!"

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE EMPEROR AND HIS MOTHER.

It was a day of double rejoicing in Vienna, at once the celebration of peace, and of Maria Theresa's sixty-second birth-day. For three months the seven envoys of Austria, Prussia, Russia, France, Bavaria, Zweibrücken, and Saxony, had been disentangling the threads of the Bavarian succession. For three months Joseph had hoped and prayed that the debates of the peace congress might come to naught, and its deliberations engender a veritable war. But he was destined to new disappointment. The love of peace had prevailed. Austria had renounced all her inheritance in Bavaria, save the Innviertel, and had declared her treaty with Charles Theodore to be null and void.

The people of Vienna were overjoyed. They, like their Empress, preferred peace to increase of domain; and they hastened to offer her their sincerest congratulations. All the European Ambassadors were in full uniform, and Maria Theresa was seated on a throne in all her imperial regalia.

She was radiant with smiles, and happiness flashed from her still bright eyes; but on this day of rejoicing there was one void that pained the Empress—it was the absence of her eldest son, since his return to Vienna, three months before, there had never yet been a word of explanation between Joseph and his mother. He had studiously avoided being alone with her, had never made his appearance in council, and when documents had been presented to him for signature, he had no sooner perceived the sign-manual of the Empress, than he had added his own without examination, or comment.

It was this cold submission which tortured the heart of Maria Theresa. She would have preferred recrimination to such compliance as this—it seemed so like aversion, so like despair!

When the ceremonies of the day were over, the Empress sent a messenger to request the presence of her son, in her own private apartments. The messenger returned, and a few moments after, was followed by the Emperor.

He entered the room, and his mother came eagerly forward, her two hands outstretched to greet him. "Thank you, my dearest son," said she, affectionately, "for coming so promptly at my request. My heart has been yearning for my son, and I have longed all day to see my co-regent and Emperor at my side!"

She still held out her hands, but Joseph affecting not to see them, bowed with grave ceremony. "I am neither Emperor nor Co-regent," replied he, "I am but the son and subject of the Empress, and as such, I have already congratulated your Majesty with the rest."

"Were your congratulations for my birth-day, or for the restoration of peace, my son?"

"The birth-day of my Empress is above all others, a day of gratulation for me," replied Joseph evasively.

"Then peace is not agreeable to you?"

"Pardon me, I have every reason to be satisfied. Have we not exchanged compliments with all the powers of Europe, and have not the people of Vienna sung ninety-nine thousand *Te Deums* in honor of the peace of Teschen?"\*

"I see that you do not approve of it, Joseph," said the Empress, who was anxious to come to an understanding on the subject.

"I was under the impression that I had signed all your Majesty's acts without giving any trouble whatever," was the cold reply.

"But you did it unwillingly, I fear, and thought of your mother as a weak and timid old woman. Is it not so, my son?"

"When I signed the treaty I thought of my ancestor, Charles V. After a disastrous campaign in Africa, he was obliged to return with his fleet to Spain. He sailed, it is true, but he was the last man to go on board. So with me—I signed the articles of peace, but was the last one who signed."\*

"Have you nothing more to say on the subject? Are you not glad

\* Joseph's own words.

that there is to be no bloodshed?"

"A son and subject has no right to sit in judgment upon the actions of his mother and Empress."

"But you are more than a subject, you are an Emperor."

"No, your Majesty, I am like the Venetian generals. In war, they commanded the armies, and received their salaries from the Republic. When their campaigns were over, their pensions were paid, and they sank back into obscurity."

"Oh, my son, these are hard and bitter words," exclaimed the Empress, pressing her hands upon her heart. "I see plainly that you are displeased because I have exchanged a doubtful war for an honorable peace."

"I am not so presuming as to be displeased with your Majesty's acts, and if you have obtained an honorable peace, I wish you joy of it."

Maria Theresa sighed heavily. "I perceive," said she disconsolately, "that you are resolved not to let me see into your heart."

"Oh, your Majesty," cried Joseph with a bitter smile, "I have no heart. Where my heart once was, there stands an open grave, and one by one, my hopes have all been buried there."

"I think it strange that the future Emperor of Austria should speak of buried hopes."

"I said nothing of an Emperor, your Majesty, I spoke of poor Joseph of Hapsburg and of his personal wishes. As regards the future Emperor, he of course has many hopes for Austria. First among them is the wish that the epoch of his reign may be very far off! Second, is his desire to serve his country. As we are now to enjoy the blessings of peace, and I am on the list of your Majesty's pensioned officers, I should like, if it do not conflict with your views, to receive an appointment as Minister to some foreign power."

"Oh," exclaimed Maria Theresa sorrowfully, "would you leave me so soon again?"

"Yes, your Majesty, I desire a long leave of absence."

"Whither would you journey, my dear child?"

"I desire to visit the Empress Catherine."

"The Empress Catharine!" echoed Maria Theresa, starting and coloring violently. "You would visit that woman?"

"Yes, your Majesty. I would visit that woman as Baron Thugut did the King of Prussia; with this exception, that I do not go secretly—I first consult your Majesty."

Maria Theresa would not notice this thrust of her son. She contented herself with replying, "What object can you have in going on a mission to Russia?"

"I propose to win the friendship of the Empress."

"The friendship of that degraded woman! I do not covet it."

"And yet your Majesty was the first to request her mediation in our affairs with Germany. As you have raised the foul fiend, and he has come at your call, you must abide the consequences, and accept him as

a friend. Since Russia is to have a voice in German politics it is better that she speak for us, than be allowed to sustain our enemy, Prussia."

"But she has long been the ally of Prussia," objected the Empress.

"So much the more incumbent is it upon us to disturb the alliance. To do this, is the purpose of my journey to Russia. I repeat my request for your Majesty's consent."

For some moments Maria Theresa contemplated her son with inexpressible tenderness. At length she said with a sigh, "You really desire then to go to Russia."

"Such is my wish, your Majesty."

"Well, my child, since you desire it, I consent, but I do it unwillingly. I wish to prove to my son how gladly I gratify him, when I can do so without conflicting with my duties as a sovereign."

The Emperor bowed, but spoke not a word. Maria Theresa sighed again, and an expression of deep pain crossed her face.

"When do you expect to start?" said she, sadly.

"As soon as possible; for if I am not mistaken, the time now is propitious for stepping in between Prussia and her beloved ally."

"Then I am to lose my dear son at once?" asked the mother with tearful eyes. "I fear that he leaves me without a pang, and will seldom bestow a thought upon the mother whose anxious heart follows his every movement with love."

"I shall bestow my thoughts upon my sovereign, and remember that I am pledged to obtain for her a powerful ally. But I have much to do before I start. Above all things I must see Prince Kaunitz. I beg therefore of your Majesty the permission to retire."

"As the Emperor pleases," said Maria Theresa with quivering lip.

Joseph bowed, and without a word or look at his mother's sorrowing countenance, turned towards the door. Up to this moment, the Empress had controlled her distress, but she could master her grief no longer. She looked at the Emperor with dimmed eyes and throbbing heart, and in the extremity of her maternal anguish, she cried out,

"Oh, my son, my precious boy!"

The Emperor who was opening the door, turned around. He saw his mother, her tears falling like rain, standing close by with outstretched arms. But he did not respond to the appeal. With another ceremonious bow, he said, "I take leave of your Majesty," and closed the door behind him.

Maria Theresa uttered a loud cry and sank to the floor. "Oh," sobbed she, "I am a poor desolate mother. My child loves me no longer!"

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## PRINCE POTESKIN.

PRINCE POTESKIN was just out of bed. In front of him, two pages, richly dressed, bowed down to the floor as they opened the door for him to pass into his cabinet. Behind him, two more pages held up the train of his velvet dressing gown which all bedecked with jewels came trailing behind his tall, graceful figure. Behind the pages were four valets with breakfast and Turkish pipes.

And in this wise, Prince Poteskin entered his cabinet. He threw himself upon an ottoman covered with India cashmere shawls, and received from a kneeling page a cup of chocolate, which was handed to his Highness upon a gold waiter set with pearls. Then, as if the cup had been too troublesome to hold, he replaced it on the waiter and ordered the page to pour the chocolate down.

The page apparently was accustomed to the order, for he rose briskly from his knees, and approaching the cup to Poteskin's lips, allowed the chocolate to trickle slowly down his princely throat. Meanwhile the three pages, four valets and six officers, who had been awaiting him in his cabinet, stood around in stiff, military attitudes, each one uncomfortably conscious that he was momentarily exposed to the possible displeasure of the mighty favorite of the mighty Czarina.

Poteskin, meanwhile, vouchsafed not a look at any one of them. After he had sipped his chocolate, and the page had dried his mouth with an embroidered napkin, he opened his lips. The valet whose duty it was to present it, stepped forward with the Turkish pipe, and depositing its magnificent golden bowl upon the Persian carpet by the ottoman, placed the amber mouth-piece between the lips of his master.

Again, a dead silence—and again, those stiff forms stood reverentially around, while Poteskin, with an air of *ennui* and satiety, watched the blue wreaths that rose from his pipe to the ceiling.

“What o'clock is it?” asked he moodily.

“Mid-day, your Highness,” was the prompt reply.

“How many people in the ante-room?”

“A multitude of nobles, generals, and lesser petitioners, all awaiting your Highness's appearance.”

“How long have they been there?”

“Three hours, your Highness.”

His Highness went on smoking, impelled probably by the reflection that three hours was too short a time for the court of Russia to wait for the ineffable blessing of his presence.

After a while he became weary of the pipe, and raised his head. Three valets rushed forward, each with an embroidered suit, to inquire whether his Highness would wear the uniform of a Field-marshal, that of a Lord Chamberlain, or the magnificent costume of a Russian Prince. Potemkin waved them off, and rose from the ottoman. His long brown hair, which flowed like the mane of a lion around his handsome face, bore here and there the traces of the down pillow upon which he had slept; his open dressing-gown exposed to view his slovenly undergarments; and his pearl-embroidered slippers were worn over a pair of soiled stockings which hanging loosely around his legs, revealed his powerful and well-shaped calves.

In this *négligé*, Potemkin approached the door of his ante-room. As soon as he had been announced, a hundred weary faces grew bright with expectation, and princes, dukes, and nobles, bowed before the haughty man who was even mightier than the Empress; for *he* bent before no mortal, while she was the slave of one will—of Potemkin's.

Silent and disdainful, Potemkin walked through the lines of obsequious courtiers that fell back as he passed, here and there condescending to greet some nobleman of wealth, or influence. As for the others who raised their imploring eyes to his, he affected not to know of their insignificant presence, and returned to his cabinet without having vouchsafed a word to anybody.

"Is the jeweller there?" asked he, of the officer at the door, and as the latter bowed his head, Potemkin added, "Admit him, and after him, the Minister of Police."

With these words he passed into his cabinet, and his valets began to dress him. While his long mane was being combed into order, Potemkin amused himself playing like a juggler with three little golden balls, while the pale and trembling jeweller stood wondering what new robbery awaited him now.

"Ah, Artankopf, you are there?" said the Prince, when his toilet had been completed. "I have an order for you."

The jeweller made a salaam, and muttered some unintelligible words of which Potemkin took no notice.

"I saw a magnificent service of gold yesterday in your show-case."

"It is an order, your Highness," said Artankopf, quickly.

"Then, I cannot buy it?"

"Impossible, your Highness."

"Then, I order one exactly like it, above all, in weight. The statuettes that ornament that service, are exquisitely moulded. How much gold is there in it?"

"Sixty thousand rubles, your Highness."

Potemkin's eyes sparkled. "A considerable sum," said he, stroking his mane. "I order two services of the same value. Do you hear? They must be ready on this day week."

"And the payment?" Artankopf ventured to inquire.

"I shall pay you in advance," replied Potemkin, with a laugh. "I appoint you first court-jeweller to the Empress."

The jeweller did not appear to appreciate the mode of payment; he seemed terrified.

"Oh, your Highness," said he, trembling, "I implore you not to make such fearful jests! I am the father of a large family, and if you exact of me to furnish you a service worth a fortune, the outlay for the gold alone will ruin me."

"You will be irretrievably ruined if you do *not* furnish it," laughed Potemkin, while he went on throwing his balls and catching them. "If those two services are not here on the day, you take a journey to Siberia, friend Artankopf."

"I will be punctual, your Highness," sighed the jeweller. "But the payment—I must buy the gold."

"The payment! What, the devil—you are not paid by the appointment I give you? Go, and if you venture to murmur, think of Siberia, and that will cure your grief."

With a wave of his hand, Potemkin dismissed the unhappy jeweller, who left that princely den of extortion a broken-hearted, ruined man.

The robber, meanwhile, was counting his gains and donning his field-marshal's uniform. "One hundred and twenty-thousand rubles worth of gold," said he to himself. "I'll have the things melted into coin—it is more portable than plate."

The door opened and Narischkin, the Minister of Police, entered.

"Out!—the whole gang of you!" cried Potemkin; and there was a simultaneous exodus of officers, pages and valets. When the heavy, gold-bordered silken *portière* had fallen, the tyrant spoke.

"Now let us hear your report," said he, seating himself before his toilet-mirror, where first he cleaned his dazzling white teeth, and then pared his nails.

The Minister of Police, in an attitude of profound respect, began to go over the occurrences of the past two days in St. Petersburg.

Potemkin listened with an occasional yawn, and finally interrupted him. "You are an old fool. What do I care for your burglars and bankrupts?—you have not so much as a murder to relate to me. Can you not guess that there are other things of which I wish to hear?"

"Doubtless, your Highness wishes me to report the doings of the Emperor of Austria."

"You are not quite such a dunce then as you seem to be. Well—what has the Emperor been about these two days past?"

"He leads the same life as he did in Moscow," said Narischkin. "He goes about as Count Falkenstein."

"He comes as his own ambassador," cried Potemkin, laughing, "and he could not have chosen a worse one than Count Falkenstein.\* What a wretched country Austria must be when its Emperor travels about like an ordinary Russian gentleman!"

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\* Potemkin's own words.



"He arrived in St. Petersburg with one servant carrying his portmanteau, and engaged two rooms at a hotel."

"Oh, yes, I have heard of his passion for living at hotels. It all proceeds from avarice. Were he the guest of the Empress he would be obliged to make some imperial presents here and there. When our great Czarina invited him to Sarskoe-Selo, he accepted, on condition that he should be allowed to lodge at an inn. Now there happens to be no inn at Sarskoe-Selo, so the imperial gardener has hung out a sign and the little Count of Falkenstein is to take up his lodging with him. He will be never the wiser, and will fancy himself at an inn. So that in trifles, as in matters of state, the Czarina shall befool Austria, and lead him by the nose. Tell me something more of his eccentricities. Have you dazzled him with a sight of our wealth?"

"He is not to be dazzled, your Highness. Even the homage he has received, seems to give him no pleasure."

"Ah! Has he then been the object of so much consideration?"

"Her Majesty ordered it, and she has even devised some delicate compliments wherewith to surprise him."

"Ah!—She seems to be inclined towards this little Emperor," muttered Potemkin. "She indulges in fanciful projects of aggrandisement with him, and forgets——. Well—what were the surprise which the Czarina prepared for his Countship?"

"Day before yesterday, he visited the Academy of Sciences. An atlas was presented to him, and when he opened it, he found a map of his own journey from Vienna to St. Petersburg, with engravings illustrating the various details of the journey."\*

"Pretty good," sneered Potemkin, "but unfortunately not original, for the little Count received a similar compliment in Paris. Go on."

"Then the Emperor visited the Academy of Arts, and there he found a portfolio of engravings, among which was an excellent portrait of himself with this inscription: "*Multorum providus urbes et mores hominum inspexit.*"

"Who wrote the inscription?" asked Potemkin, hastily.

"Her Majesty's self," replied Narischkin, with a deep inclination at the name. "But the Emperor greets everything with a quiet smile. When he visited the Mint and saw the enormous piles of bullion there, he merely said: "Have you always as much silver in the Mint as there is to-day?"

Potemkin laughed aloud. "That was a sly question, and shows that little Falkenstein has been peeping behind the scenes and has discovered that we were prepared for his coming."

"Yes, your Highness. It would appear that Count Falkenstein does not quite believe in our enormous wealth, for after seeing the Mint, he put on that mocking smile of his and asked whether the Imperial Bank was in a condition to redeem its issue."

"What was the answer?"

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\*Theodore Mundt. Conflicts for the Black Sea. P. 141.

"Yes, of course, your Highness."

"It was a masterpiece of effrontery then, and I shall take the opportunity of testing its truth. Go to the bank, Narischkin, and say that I need one hundred thousand rubles for an entertainment I propose to give to the Czarina. I must have it in coin. Quick—begone."

"I fly, your Highness, but first be so kind as to give me the imperial order. You well know that no coin can leave the Bank without the signature of the Empress."

"I should like to see whether they will dare to return *my* signature," cried Potemkin fiercely.

He wrote the order, and handing it to Narischkin, said: "Take this to the Bank directors, and if they ask for the signature of the Empress, tell them she will send it to-morrow, but I must have the money to-day."

Narischkin bowed lower than he had ever been seen to do towards the son of the Empress himself, and left the room on reverential tiptoes.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE PRUSSIAN AMBASSADOR.

WHEN Potemkin felt himself quite alone, he leaned back in his arm-chair with an ugly frown.

"Something is going on to my disadvantage here," muttered he. "I saw it yesterday in Panin's exulting countenance. How I hate that man! Almost as much as I do Orloff! It is a blessing for me that both are not here to plot together. Singly, I do not fear them, but together—Orloff is the loaded cannon, and Panin, the lighted match, and if I am not wary——"

Here, as though he had felt the shock of the ball, Potemkin sprang from his seat, and swung his hands above his head. But presently he sank back into the chair, and continued his meditations. "I must spike Orloff before he destroys me. But to spike a cannon, one must be able to reach it, and Orloff is far away on his estates, like a spider in her wicked web. Oh, if I could but reach it, I would soon tear it to pieces. But where are its threads? How shall I find them?—Panin, too, is getting intimate with the Grand Duke, and so, is currying favor with the Empress. Yesterday when I entered the parlor without saluting him, Paul called after me with an oath, and turned to his mother with a complaint of my insolence. And the Empress did not utter one word of reproof, although she saw me near enough to hear. That is significant—it means that Catharine fears me no longer. But, by the eternal

God! she shall learn that she has a master, and that her master is Potemkin!"

"How dare she take Panin into her confidence? He it is, who inclines her to the King of Prussia. This fancy for Prussia, is the only thing she has in common with the Grand Duke. Love of Frederic, is the bridge which Panin has built to unite them. I must try to lead her into another road of policy, and so remove Orloff and Panin. Orloff hates Austria, and if—Pshaw! Why is that Joseph so niggardly that one cannot feel the slightest interest in him? If after refusing all other invitations, he had paid me the compliment of accepting mine—But, no!—This haughty Austrian treats me with as little consideration as he does the rest of the world, and forces me, in spite of myself, to the side of Frederic. But there I find Orloff and Panin, and we cannot work together. They must be disgraced, and Catharine made to follow me. How shall I commence? What shall I do?"

A knock at the door put an end to his communings.

"His Excellency, the Count Von Görtz, Ambassador of his Majesty, the King of Prussia," said the officer, who announced the visitors of Potemkin.

"Show his Excellency into the little parlor," said the latter carelessly, "and tell him that I will receive him there."

"Ah!—Count Von Görtz," thought Potemkin. "That signifies that my enemies have not yet triumphed, and that the King of Prussia thinks me powerful enough to conciliate. Well—I must have time for reflection."

And without the slightest regard to the station of his visitor, Potemkin sat for half an hour, revolving in his mind what sort of reception he should give to Frederic's overtures. In spite of the slight, Count Von Görtz came forward with a gracious smile, as Potemkin, slightly nodding, passed on to a seat, and waved his hand for the Count to take another.

"I am commissioned by my Sovereign, the King of Prussia, to request an interview of your Highness," began Von Görtz.

Potemkin nodded, but said nothing.

"His Majesty has entrusted me with a most flattering commission," continued the Ambassador.

"Let us hear it," replied Potemkin, with indifference.

Count Von Görtz bowed, rose, and drew from his bosom a rich velvet *étui* which he handed to the Prince.

"His Majesty, my august Sovereign, in acknowledgement of your Highness's great and glorious deeds, wishes to convey to you a token of his admiration and friendship," said Count Von Görtz, solemnly. "He has bestowed upon your Highness the order of the Black Eagle, and I have the honor to present you with the insignia."

Potemkin took the *étui* and without opening it laid it on the table beside him. "Ah," said he, with a shrug, "his Majesty sends me the Black Eagle. I am much obliged to him, but really I have so many

orders that I scarcely know where to wear them, and how to dispose of this new one, I scarcely know: See for yourself," continued he smiling, and pointing to his breast, which indeed was covered with crosses, "do I not look like a vender of orders, carrying about his samples?"\*

"If I may be allowed to use your Excellency's words, you carry about samples, not only of your treasures, but of your heroism and statesmanship. It would be a pity if among them, you should not wear a decoration of my august Sovereign."

"Very well, then, to oblige the King of Prussia, I shall wear the cross, and I beg you to return him my thanks. Have you any thing more to say, Count?"

Count Von Görtz cast a searching glance around the apartment, especially upon the heavy velvet window-curtains.

"Get up and look for yourself, if you suspect the presence of anybody," said the Prince.

Your Highness's word is sufficient. Allow me then to speak openly and confidentially.

"In the name of your Sovereign?"

"Yes, your Highness. You know that the treaty, which for eight years has allied Russia to Prussia, is about to expire."

"Is it?" said Potemkin carelessly. "I was not aware of it, for I take no interest in minor politics."

"Your Highness has in view the great whole only, of the field of diplomacy," replied the complaisant minister. "But for Prussia this alliance is a most important one, and my sovereign has nothing more at heart than the renewal of his alliance with Russia. He knows how much his interests here are threatened by the visit of the Emperor Joseph, and he desired me to ask of your Highness whether it would be advisable for him to send Prince Henry to counteract it."

Potemkin replied to this question by a loud laugh. "What a set of timid people you are!" said he. "What formalities about nothing! When the Emperor was about to visit us, the Czarina must know whether it was agreeable to the King of Prussia; now the King wishes to know from *me* whether the visit of Prince Henry is expedient."

"Yes. His Majesty wishes advice from your Highness alone, although there are others who would gladly be consulted by him."

"Others? you mean Panin—have you then asked counsel of no one Count?"

"Of no one. My sovereign wishes to consult with no one excepting your Highness."

For the first time Potemkin betrayed his satisfaction by a triumphant smile. "If your King comes to me exclusively,—mark me well, *exclusively*,—for advice, I am willing to serve him."

"Your Highness may see that my sovereign addresses himself to you alone," replied the Minister, handing him a letter in Frederic's own handwriting.

\* All Potemkin's own words. Dohm's Memoirs. Vol. 1, P. 413.

Potemkin, without any appearance of surprise, took it and broke the seal. The King began by saying that he had every reason to believe that the object of Joseph's visit to Russia was to alienate Russia from her old ally. Then he went into ecstasies over the genius and statesmanship of Potemkin, and besought him to uphold the interests of Prussia. Furthermore he promised his interest and influence to the Prince, not only for the present, but for the future, when it was probable that he (Frederic) could serve Potemkin substantially.\*

A long pause ensued after the reading of this letter. Potemkin threw himself back, and in an attitude of thoughtfulness raised his eyes to the rich, pictured ceiling above him.

"I do not entirely understand the King," said he, after some time of reflection. "What does he mean by saying that he will try to make that possible which seems impossible?"

"His Majesty has learned that your Highness is desirous of being created Duke of Courland. He will use all his interest with Stanislaus to this effect, and indemnify the Duke de Biron, who would lose Courland, by augmenting his possessions in Silesia. The King also means that he is ready to find a bride for the future Duke of Courland among the Princesses of Germany."

"Really," said Potemkin, laughing, "the mysterious phrase is significant. But the King lays too much stress upon that little Duchy of Courland; if I wanted it, I could make it mine without troubling his Majesty in the least. As to the bride, I doubt whether it would be agreeable to the Czarina for me to marry, and this matter I leave to herself. What does the King mean by a proffer of friendship for the future?"

Count Görtz leaned forward and spoke scarcely above his breath. "His Majesty means to promise his influence with the Grand Duke, so that in the event of his mother's death, your Highness would be secure of your person and property."†

This time the Prince was unable to suppress his real feelings; he started, and a deep flush overspread his face.

"How?" said he, in a whisper, "has the King the power to read my thoughts——"

He did not conclude his sentence, but sprang from his seat and paced the room in hurried excitement. Count Von Görtz also had risen and contemplated him in anxious silence.

"Did the courier from Berlin bring any letters to the Czarina?" asked Potemkin, as he ceased walking and stood before Von Görtz.

"Yes, your Highness, and I shall deliver them, as soon as I receive the assurance of your influence with the Empress."

"Very well, you have it. I will go at once to her. Meanwhile go to Count Panin, to whose department this affair belongs, and induce him to lay before the Czarina a proposition for the renewal of the Prussian alliance. Then ask an audience of the Empress, and present your creden-

\* This letter is historical, and is to be found in Dohm's *Memoirs*. Vol. 1, p. 412.

† Baumer's *Contributions*, &c. Vol. 5, p. 485.

tials. You see that I am in earnest, for I work in conjunction with my enemy; but before I make one step, you must write out the King's last promise to me, adding that you are empowered to do so, by his Majesty of Prussia, and having signed the promise, you must deliver me the paper."

"May I inquire the object of these papers?"

Potemkin approached the Count, and whispered in his ear. "It is a matter of life and death. If the Grand Duke should come to the throne, from the unbounded regard which he has for the King of Prussia, I know that this paper will protect me from his vengeance."

"Your Highness shall have it."

"At once? For you understand that I must have some guarantee before I act. Your King's words are not explicit."

"I shall draw up the paper, and send it to your Highness before I ask an audience of the Czarina."

"Then the King of Prussia may reckon upon me, and I shall serve him to-day, as I hope that in future he will serve me. Go now and return with the paper as soon as it is ready."

"I believe that Prussia means fairly," said Potemkin, when he found himself on the more alone. "But that only means that Prussia needs me, and that," cried he exultingly, "means that I am mightier than Panin, mightier than the Grand Duke—But 'am I mightier than Orloff?—Oh, this Orloff is the spectre that forever threatens my repose! He, or I, must fall, for Russia is too small to hold us both. But which one?"

Not I—By the Eternal—not I!"

Just then there was a knock at the door, and Potemkin, who was standing with his fist clenched, and his teeth set, fell back into his seat.

"How dare you disturb me?" cried he savagely.

"Pardon me, your Highness, but this is your day for receiving the foreign Ambassadors, and his Excellency of Austria craves an audience."

"Cobenzl? Is he alone?"

"Yes, your Highness."

"In ten minutes, admit him here."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE AUSTRIAN AMBASSADOR.

Ten minutes later the door was opened, and Count Cobenzl, on the point of his toes, tipped into the room. Potemkin, on the sofa, was looking the picture of indifference; his eyes half-shut, and his tall form

stretched out at full length, he seemed just to have awakened from sleep. But during those ten minutes he had been doing anything but sleeping. He had been decorating himself with the cross of the Black Eagle, and had allowed the broad riband to which it was attached to trail upon the carpet.

"It is well, Count Cobenzl," said Potemkin, greeting the Minister, "that you did not come five minutes later, for you would not have met me at all."

"Pardon me, I should then have had but five minutes to wait in your ante-room, replied Cobenzl. "I detest ante-rooms, and wish that I had come ten minutes later, that I might have been introduced to your presence at once."

"You would not have seen me at all, I tell you; for I am about to have an audience of the Empress."

"Ah, indeed!" cried Cobenzl. "That accounts for all these brilliant decorations then."

"You certainly did not suppose that I was wearing them in honor of your visit, did you?" asked Potemkin, with quiet insolence.

"Oh, no, I thought it a mere *mise en scène*."

"Ah, Count Cobenzl, is still mad on the subject of the drama," replied Potemkin, laughing. "What new comedy are you about to get up at the Austrian Embassy, heh?"

"A very pretty thing just from Paris, your Highness. It is called, 'The disgraced Favorite, or the Whims of Fortune.'"

Potemkin's eyes flashed fire, but he controlled himself and said, "Where is the scene of the drama laid?"

"I do not precisely remember. In Tartary, or Mongolia, or——"

"Or in the moon," interrupted Potemkin, laughing. "But come—be seated and let us be serious." So saying, Potemkin threw himself back again upon the divan, and pointed to an arm-chair which Cobenzl quietly accepted. The chair happened to be close to the spot where the riband of the Black Eagle was lying. Cobenzl seeing that it was under his feet, picked it up and presented it to the Prince.

"You know not what you do, Count. You raise your enemy when you raise that riband. It has just been sent to me by the King of Prussia. I am quite in despair at being obliged to wear it, for it takes up so much room. The star of the Black Eagle is very large. Do you not think so?"

"Yes, your Highness, and I congratulate you upon its possession, for the close King of Prussia does not often give away his diamonds."

"It would appear that diamonds do not abound in Prussia," replied Potemkin, with a gesture of slight towards the cross on his breast. "These brilliants are rather yellow."

"Do you prefer Austrian diamonds?" asked Cobenzl significantly.

"I have never seen any," answered Potemkin with a yawn.

"Then I am happy to be the first to introduce them to your notice," said Cobenzl rising and taking from his pocket a Turkey-morocco case.

"My august Emperor has commissioned me to present you this little casket."

"Another order!" cried Potemkin with affected horror.

"No, your Highness. Orders are toys for grown-up children. But you are a great man, and a toy for you must have some scientific significance. My Emperor has heard that your Highness has a costly collection of minerals and precious stones. His Majesty has therefore with his own hand selected the specimens which I have the honor to present in his name."

Potemkin, whose indifference had all vanished as he listened, opened the casket with some eagerness, and an exclamation of rapture fell from his lips, as he surveyed its costly contents. There were Indian diamonds of unusual size and brilliancy; Turkish Rubies of fiery crimson; magnificent sapphires, turquoises of purest tint; large specimens of lapes-lazuli all veined with gold, and translucent chrysoprase of bright metallic green.

"This is indeed a princely gift," cried the covetous Potemkin, perfectly dazzled by the magnificence, and intoxicated by the possession of all these riches. "Never have I seen such jewels. They blaze like the stars of heaven!"

Cobenzl bowed. "And this sapphire!" continued the Prince, "the Empress herself has nothing to compare to it!"

"The Czarina looks upon your Highness as the brightest jewel in her crown—as her incomparable sapphire.—But observe this turquoise—it is one of that greenish hue so prized by connoisseurs, and its like is not to be purchased with money——"

Suddenly Potemkin, ashamed of his raptures, closed the casket with a click and pushed it aside.

"You can tell your Emperor," said he, "that you were an eye-witness of the gratification I have received from this superb addition to my scientific collections. And now, Count, without circumlocution, how can I serve you, and what does the Emperor desire of me? Such gifts as these indicate a request."

"Frankly, then, the Emperor seeks your Highness's friendship and wishes you to further his Majesty's plans."

"What are these plans?"

"Oh, your Highness is too shrewd a statesman not to have guessed them, and not to understand that we merely shift the scene of the war. We pitch our tents at St. Petersburg with the object of winning Russia to our side."

"But here Prussia holds the battle-field; you will have to fight against superior numbers."

"Not if Prince Potemkin be our ally," replied Cobenzl courteously. "True, Prussia has Orloff, Panin, and the Grand Duke——"

"And who tells you that Prussia has not Potemkin also?" cried the Prince laughing. "Do you not see that I wear the Black Eagle?"

"Yes—but your Highness is too wise to be the ally of Prussia. You



are too great a statesman to commit such a *bévue*. Orloff who has never forgiven you for succeeding him in Catharine's favor, Orloff asks no greater triumph than that of harnessing your Highness to the car of his political proclivities."

"He shall never enjoy that triumph," muttered Potemkin.

"Not if the Emperor can prevent it, and therefore his Majesty hopes that your Highness will sustain Austria."

"But what are Austria's plans?"

"Austria wishes to occupy the place which Prussia now enjoys as the ally of Russia. Prussia, while wooing the Czarina, ogles the Grand Duke, and it is her interest to bring them together. I know that the matter was thoroughly discussed yesterday between Count Panin and the Prussian Ambassador."

"The Prussian Ambassador was yesterday in conference with Panin!"

"Not only yesterday but to-day, I met him coming from Panin's with his order of the Black Eagle, and a letter for your Highness from the King."

"Truly your spies are great detectives," cried Potemkin.

"They are well paid," was the significant reply.

"And what, for example, were the proposals of Von Görtz?"

"Von Görtz stated that as Panin, the Grand Duke and himself were not a match for the Emperor and your Highness, you were to be won over by flattery, orders and promises."

"True!" cried Potemkin. "Your spies are right. What else?"

"Another powerful friend of Prussia has been recalled from his estates and summoned to Petersburg."

Potemkin sprang from the sofa with a howl of rage.

"What! Orloff summoned by Von Görtz; he who——"

"Who was enticing your Highness with vain promises, had suggested to the Czarina the imperative necessity of recalling Orloff with the express intencion of holding you in check."

"What an infernal plot! But it bears the stamp of Panin's treachery upon its face," muttered Potemkin, while with hasty strides he walked up and down the room.

Cobenzl watched him with a half smile, and taking up the riband of the Black Eagle, he passed it through his hands by way of pastime.

After much going to and fro, Potemkin stopped, and his countenance was expressive of courage and resolve.

"Count Cobenzl, I know what are the plans of Austria, and they shall be sustained. Your interests are mine, for it is no longer a question of Austria or Prussia, but of Potemkin or Orloff! You see, therefore, that I am sincere; but Austria must sustain me, and we must tread our political path together."

"Austria will go hand and heart with your Highness."

"Austria must sustain me, I say, and our password shall be, 'THE CONQUEST OF TURKEY.' That is the spell by which I rule the Czarina. My enemies often fill her mind with distrust of me; but that great pro-

ject shields me from their weapons. Still I am in danger; for here in Russia, we look neither to the past nor to the future; the excitement of the hour reigns absolute. A good subject never knows how to regulate his conduct. If I were sure of blame for doing evil, or of approbation for doing good, I might know what to expect from the Czarina. But when a Sovereign is the slave of her passions, all ordinary modes of deducting effect from cause fall to the ground.\* I live in a whirlpool from which I can devise no means of escape, but—by the grave of my mother, this life shall cease. I shall resume my power over the Empress, and I shall trample my enemies under foot, were they to take shelter under the throne itself!"

While Potemkin spoke thus, he clinched his fist, and his herculean arm was raised as if to fell his invisible enemies.

"Austria will be at your side, whosoever be the foe," said Cobenzl.

"I believe you," replied Potemkin with returning calmness, "for it is your interest to be there. I know what you desire. First you supplant Prussia with Russia, and that entails a coolness with France, Prussia's dearest friend. Then you also dissolve with France, and we both court the alliance of England, so as to isolate France and Prussia from European politics. The plan is good, and will succeed if you are discreet."

"How discreet?"

"You must weigh well your behaviour towards the Czarina. I dare not advise the Emperor, but let me advise you. You have often occasion to see the Empress. Before you see her, consult with me as to the topics of your discourse with her, and so we shall always be enabled to act in concert. Avoid all dissimulation; let her perceive that you leave craft to the lovers of Prussia. Flatter as often as you see fit; flatter Catharine, however, not for what she is, but for what she ought to be.† Convince her that Austria is willing to further her ambition, not to restrain it, as Prussia has always done. Do this, and in a few months Austria will have changed rôles with Prussia, and your enemies and mine shall be overthrown together."

A knock was heard at the door and an officer entered.

"How dare you interrupt me?" cried Potemkin, stamping his foot.

"Pardon, your Highness. The private Secretary of the Emperor of Austria has orders from his Sovereign to hand a note to Count Cobenzl in your Highness's presence."

"A very singular order. But we will gratify the Emperor. Admit his Majesty's messenger."

Günther was introduced, who bowing low to Potemkin, passed on and delivered his note.

"From his Majesty's hand," said he. "Your Excellency is to read it at once. It requires no answer." Then bowing deeply, the Secretary backed out of the room, and the discreet *portière* fell, preventing the transmission of the slightest sound.

\* Potemkin's own words. Raumer. Vol. 5, p. 578.

† Potemkin's own words. Raumer.

“Read,” said Potemkin, “for doubtless the Emperor has good reason for his haste.”

Count Cobenzl broke the seal, but instead of a note for himself, a sealed dispatch within bore the address of the Prince. The Count presented it at once, and Potemkin eagerly tore it open. He seemed electrified by its contents; so much so that Cobenzl started forward to his assistance, exclaiming, “Gracious Heaven, what has happened? Your Highness is ill!”

“No, no,” said Potemkin, “but read this, that I may be sure I do not dream.”

Cobenzl took the letter and read: “My dear Prince. To win your friendship, I have neither flattery, decorations, duchies, princesses, nor promises for the future; convinced as I am that your Highness is able to reach the summit of your desires without help from other mortals. But I have something to impart which will prove the sincerity of my intentions towards you. An hour ago, Count Orloff arrived in St. Petersburg, and he is now in secret conference with the Czarina.—Joseph.”

“I was, right; it was not my secret apprehensions which conjured those spectral letters,” cried Potemkin, “they are really the writing of the Emperor, and Gregor Orloff is here.”

He sprang forward like a bull rushing to the attack.

“Gregor Orloff is with Catharine, and I cannot slay him at her feet! But stay,” exclaimed he exultingly, and then his words resolved themselves back into thought. “My key—my key—I will force her to hear me. Count,” continued he aloud, “I beg of you to excuse me, for I must go at once to the Empress. Tell the Emperor that if I weather the storm which is bursting over my head, I will prove to him my eternal gratitude for the service he has rendered me this day. Farewell! Pray for me, or if you like better, go home and get up a fine drama for the day of my burial.”

“Nothing less than Voltaire’s ‘Death of Julius Cæsar,’ would suit such an occasion, but God forbid that your Highness should come to harm. I hasten to do your bidding.”

Potemkin, trembling with impatience, stood watching Count Cobenzl, as with his mincing gait he tripped out of the room, and turned again at the door to make his last bow. Scarcely had the *portière* fallen when he sprang across the room, and darted towards his sleeping-chamber. Near his bed stood an *escritoire*. He flung it open and taking thence a casket filled with gold chains, diamonds, and other jewels, he turned out the contents with such violence that they flew over the room in every direction. He found what he sought; it was a little secret compartment. He pressed the spring and it opened, revealing nothing but a key! But Potemkin snatched it up, and unheeding the treasures worth a million that lay scattered about the room, he passed into a little dark ante-room, thence into a corridor, up and down stair-cases, forward, forward, rapidly forward!

Finally he reached the end of a long narrow corridor. Nothing here

was to be seen save a blank, white wall, which separated Potemkin's dwelling from the Palace of the Czarina. But in the corner of this wall was a scarcely perceptible recess. He pressed it with his finger, when the wall parted, revealing a door, the door which led to Catherine's own private apartments. Potemkin's key unlocked it, and he darted through the opening—on, on until he reached another door, which also yielded to his key, and then breathing freely he looked around the cabinet of the Czarina and exclaimed, "I am saved!"

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## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE EMPRESS CATHARINE.

THE magnificent state-apartments of the Empress were silent and empty, for she had given out that as she needed solitude to work, she would hold no levee to-day. But she was not alone; she was in a cabinet which led to her bed-chamber, and with her was Count Orloff, her former lover, and the murderer of her husband.

The Empress lay half buried in the depths of a crimson velvet couch, and her large, blue eyes were fixed with an expression of tenderness upon Orloff who sat opposite to her. In spite of her fifty years, Catharine was a very handsome woman; age had respected her fair, imperial brow and the fingers of Time had relented as they passed over it. Her eyes were as bright and beautiful as ever, her lips as red and their smile as fascinating as in the days of her youth; and in her bosom beat the passionate, craving, restless heart of a maiden of seventeen. This heart was as capable of love as of hate, and her graceful person as fitted to inspire love as it had ever been. Just now Catharine was anxious to please—she thought over the golden hours of her youthful passion, and tried to win a smile from Orloff's stern face. She forgot in him the man who had placed a bloody crown upon her head; she saw but the paramour who had wreathed her brow with the myrtles, and roses of requited love.

They had spoken of indifferent things, but Catharine had grown silent, and the silence becoming embarrassing to Orloff,

"Your Majesty commanded my presence,"—began he.

Catharine raised her beautiful white arm from the cushion where it lay, and motioned him to approach.

"Hush, Orloff," said she in a low voice. "No one hears us, do not call me Majesty."

"My revered Sovereign," stammered Orloff, "I——"

"Sovereign!" Do I look as if I were your Sovereign, Orloff?—No, no, I am here as the woman who is not ashamed of the love we once cherished for one another.—The world says that I am not pious, and verily I believe that Voltaire has corrupted me; but I have one steadfast faith, and I cling to it as fanatics do to Christianity. My religion is the religion of memory, Gregor, and you were its first hierophant."

Orloff muttered some unintelligible words, for truth to tell, he did not quite comprehend the vagaries of his imperial mistress. He was a man of deeds, fit for action and strife, but there was neither imagination nor poetry in his nature. He saw however that Catharine smiled and beckoned. He hastened forward, and bending the knee, kissed her hand.

"Gregor," said she tenderly, "I sent for you to talk of the prospects of your son."

"Your Majesty speaks of Basil Bobinsky?" asked Orloff with a smile.

"Yes," replied Catharine, "of your son, or rather, if you prefer it, of our son."

"Your Majesty acknowledges him, and yet you have thrust his father from your heart. You sacrificed me to a man whom I hate—not because he is my successful rival, but because he does not deserve the love of my Empress, because he is a heartless spendthrift, and a wretch who is ready to sell his Sovereign's honor at any moment, provided the price offered him be worth the treachery. Oh! it maddens me when I think that Gregor Orloff was displaced for a Potemkin!"

Catharine laid her jewelled hand upon Orloff's lips. "Hush Orloff, do not vituperate. I have called for you to-day to give me peace. I do not wish the two men who share my heart to stand forever glaring at one another in implacable hatred. I wish to unite you through the sweet influences of a young couple's love. I beseech you, Gregor, do not refuse me the boon I crave. Give your consent for Basil to marry the Countess Alexandra, Potemkin's niece."

"Never," thundered Orloff, starting to his feet, and retreating like an animal at bay. "Never will I consent for my bastard to marry the wench of such a contemptible fool as Potemkin!"\*

Catharine rose from her couch with a look of tender reproach. "You will not grant my heart's dearest wish?" said she.

"I cannot do it, Catharine," cried Orloff wildly. "My blood boils at the very thought of being connected to Potemkin. No, indeed! "No tie shall ever bind me to him that hinders my hand should you one day ask of me to sever his head from his body."

Catharine again put her hand before Orloff's mouth. "Hush, you fulminating Jove!" said she. "Must you be forever forging thunderbolts, or waging war with Titans. But you know too well that in your godlike moods you are irresistible. What a triumph it is to win a boon from such a man!—Invest me with this glory, Orloff, and I give up my plan for a marriage between Basil and Potemkin's niece."

\* Orloff's own words. Raumer's Contributions, &c., Vol. 5, P. 412.

"Niece," echoed Orloff, "say his mistress."

"Not so," exclaimed Catharine. "So treacherous, I will not believe Potemkin to be!"

"Nevertheless, Alexandra is his mistress, and the whole court knows it."

"If I find it so, Potemkin shall feel the weight of my vengeance, and nothing shall save him!" cried Catharine, her eyes darting fire. "But I tell you it is not so. He has his faults, but this is not one of them."

"Then you confess that the great Potemkin *has* faults, do you?"

"It was precisely because of his faults that I sent for you?"

"*Me!*"

"You—Gregor Orloff, the truest of the true! You have done me good service in your life; to you I am indebted for my crown, and you are its brightest jewel. But I have a favor now to ask of you which concerns my happiness more than anything you have ever done for me before, my Gregor."

"Speak my Empress, speak, and I will die to serve you," replied Orloff inspired by Catharine's earnestness.

She laid her white hand upon his shoulder, and said in her most enticing tones: "Be the friend of Potemkin. Let him learn by your example to be more careful of the great trusts which he holds from me, more conciliating, and more grateful. For indeed in return for all the favors I bestow upon him, he makes my life one long martyrdom. For God's sake, Orloff, be friendly with Potemkin, and try to rescue me from the tempests which daily and hourly burst over my devoted head."\* She leaned her head upon his bosom, and looked imploringly into his face.

"Your Majesty," said Orloff warmly, "you know that I am your slave. If Potemkin is obnoxious to you, speak the word and I annihilate him—But my reputation will not permit me to consort with a man whom I despise, and whom I should be forced nevertheless to regard as the first subject of the Empire. Pardon me if I cannot grant your Majesty's petition."

"Go then, cruel man, and leave me to my fate," said Catharine in tears.

"Since your Majesty desires it, I retire." And Orloff bowing, turned to leave the room, but Catharine threw herself upon the sofa with a sob, and he returned.

"Do you weep for Potemkin?" said he. "Spare your tears—He loves no one but himself, and his only aim in life is to enervate and weaken *your* mind, that he may reign in your stead."

"Oh, Orloff, be merciful," said Catharine, clasping her hands.

But Orloff continued: "Potemkin has essentially damaged your fleet, he has ruined your army, and what is worse, he has lowered you in the estimation of your subjects, and of the world. If you are willing to be rid of so dangerous a man, my life is at your disposal, but if you must

\* Catharine's own words.

temporise with him, I can do nothing to further measures which are to be carried out by flattery and hypocrisy."

"I believe you, unhappily I believe you," said Catharine weeping: "Potemkin deserves all that you say of him, but I have not the heart to punish him as he deserves. I cannot bid you destroy the giant whose shadow darkens my throne. You see, Orloff, that I am a poor weak woman, and have not the strength to punish the guilty."

"I see that your Majesty prizes the oppressor of my country far more than that country's self, and since it is so, I have nothing more to do here. Farewell, Catharine, I must return to Gatzchina."

He kissed the hand of the Empress, and passed into the adjoining apartment. He went slowly through the magnificent state-rooms through which he had to pass to the corridor, and with weeping eyes, Catharine followed his tall form from door to door. She would have leaned for support upon that strong man, but he refused to shelter her, and she felt a sense of desolation which seemed to her a presentiment of evil.

"Orloff, Orloff," cried she imploringly; and she hastened after him. He was passing out into the corridor when he heard her voice, and saw her coming fleet as a doe towards him.

"Orloff," said she panting for breath, "do not leave St. Petersburg to-day. Remain for three days, and perhaps in that time, I may gather courage to accept your help, and rid myself of this man."

"I will await your Majesty's decision," replied Orloff, "and if then my sword is not required in your service, I shall leave St. Petersburg forever."

He bowed and the heavy *portière* fell behind him as he passed from the Czarina's sight. Slowly she returned to her cabinet murmuring, "Three days he will wait to know if——"

But suddenly she started, appalled at the sight of an apparition that occupied the divan, on which she was about to repose her weary limbs. She uttered a wild scream of terror, for on this divan sat——Potemkin.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE CZARINA AND HER MASTER.

WITH flashing eyes, folded arms, and pale, stern face sat Potemkin, and his glance seemed about to annihilate the terrified woman, who had neither strength to call for help, nor self-possession to greet her unwelcome visitor. He rose, however, and came forward. Catharine trembled and shuddered as he passed her by, locked the door and put the key in his pocket.

The Empress looked around and in deadly fear saw that there was no hope of rescue. She was alone with Potemkin, entirely alone!

Not a word had yet been spoken, but this fearful silence affrighted her more than a tempest of angry words would have done.

At last Potemkin stood directly before her and spoke. "If Potemkin is obnoxious to you, speak the word and I annihilate him."

"Oh!" screamed Catharine, "he knows all!"

"Yes, I know all, I heard Orloff offer to be my executioner. Pray why did you not accept the offer at once?"

He had come so near, that Catharine felt his hot breath upon her brow, like the blast from a furnace.

"I ask you again," said he stamping his foot with fury, "why do you not let the axe of your executioner fall upon my neck? Answer me!"

Catharine was speechless with fright, and Potemkin, exasperated at her silence, raised his clenched hand and looked so fierce that the Czarina fell backwards almost upon her knees, murmuring,

"Potemkin, would you kill me!"

"And if I did," cried he, grinding his teeth, "would death not be the just punishment of your treachery? Your treachery to me who have given you my heart, my soul, my life—while you—betray and accuse me, not face to face, as would an honorable woman, but behind my back as becomes a coward and a hypocrite! Look at me and answer my question, I command you!"

Again he raised his hand, and his deep voice rolled like angry thunder in her ear. Catharine, against her will, obeyed his voice and raised her eyes to his. She saw his lofty brow, like that of an angry demi-god, his dark, dangerous, fiery eyes, his glistening teeth, his magnificent frame, lithe, athletic, and graceful as that of

"The statue that enchants the world,"

and a sensation of shuddering ecstasy flooded her whole being. Forgotten were her fears, her terror, her dream of vengeance—and regardless of the hand which was still raised to threaten her, she cried out in tones of mingled love and anguish,

"Oh, Alexandrowitsch, how preter-human is your beauty! You stand like an avenging god before me, and I—I can only worship and tremble!"

With faltering steps she approached, and folding her arms around his stalwart form, she laid her head upon his breast, and wept. "See," murmured she, "I am here to receive the stroke. Let me die by your hand, Gregor Alexandrowitsch, for since you love me no longer, I am weary of life!"

Potemkin heaved a sigh and freeing himself from Catharine's arms, fell back upon the sofa, buried his face in his hands, and sobbed convulsively.

"Why do you weep, Potemkin?" said Catharine, hastening to his side.



"Why I weep!" exclaimed he. "I weep because of my own crime. Despair had well nigh made of me a traitor. Why does not this hand wither, which was uplifted to touch the appointed of the Lord! Why does not heaven smite the wretch whose misery had tempted him to such irreverence of his Sovereign!"

And Potemkin flung himself at Catharine's feet crying out: "Kill me, Catharine, that I may not go mad for remorse of my treason!"

Catharine smiled and tried to raise him up. "No," said she tenderly, "live, and live for me."

But Potemkin still clung to her feet. "No, let me lie here as the sinner lies before the altar of the Most High! I am a traitor, but despair has made me criminal. As I stood behind the tapestry and heard how my Empress accused me, I felt that the spectral hand of madness was hovering above my brain! Oh, Catharine, it is you whom I adore, you who have made of me a lunatic!"

Again he buried his face in Catharine's robes, and wept. She, perfectly disarmed, leaned over him, caressing him with her hands, and exploring him to be comforted.

"Let me lie here and weep," continued her Alexandrowitsch, "not for me, but for my Catharine—the star of my life! She whom my enemies would deceive, that deceiving they might ruin her, when her only friend is lost to her forever!"

"Of whom do you speak?" asked the Czarina, frightened.

"I speak of those who hate me because I will not join them in their treachery towards my Empress—of those who hold out to me gold and diamonds, and who hate me because I will not sell my loyalty for pelf. Oh, I was flattered with orders and honors, promises and presents! But I would not listen. What cared I for future security, what mattered it to me that I was to be the victim of Paul's vengeance—I thought of you alone, and more to me was the safety of your crown than that of my worthless life!—I was loyal and incorruptible!"

Catharine had listened with distended eyes, and lips parted in suspense. When Potemkin named her son, her whole bearing changed. From the love-stricken woman, she leaped at once into the magnificent Czarina.

"Potemkin," said she imperiously, "I command you to rise and answer my questions."

Potemkin rose with the promptness of a well-trained slave, and said humbly: "Imperial mistress, speak, and by the grave of my mother, I will answer truthfully."

"What means your allusion to the Grand Duke, Paul? Who are the enemies that sought to corrupt you? What are their aims?"

"The Grand Duke is weary of his subordinate position, and yearns for the crown which he thinks it is his right to wear."

Catharine's two hands clutched at her head as though to defend her crown. "He shall not have it!" she screamed. "He will not dare to raise his impious hands to snatch his mother's rights away!"

"He will find other hands to do it, for you well know, Catharine, that the crime from which we recoil ourselves, we transfer to other hands, while we accept its fruits."

Catharine shuddered, and grew pale. "Yes—yes," murmured she to herself, "yes, I know it—well I know it, for it has murdered sleep for me!"

"And the Grand Duke has accomplices, Catharine. Not one—nor two, but half of your subjects mutter within themselves that the crown you wear has been Paul's since his majority. Russia is one grand conspiracy against you, and your enemies have pitched their tents at the foot of your throne. They may well hate the only man who stands between you and destruction. Their arrows have glanced harmlessly from the adamant shield of his loyalty, and there remained but the alternative of calumniating him to his Empress. Oh, Catharine, my angel, beware of Paul, who has never forgotten how his father lost his life! Beware of Orloff, who has never forgiven you for loving me! Both these traitors, with Panin to truckle to them, are in league with Von Görtz to force you into a league destructive of Russian aggrandisement. Oh, my beloved! Sun of my existence, mount into the heaven of your own greatness, and let not the cloud of intrigue obscure your light! And when safe in the noon-day of your splendor, you think of this day, let one warm ray of memory stream upon the grave of the man who died because his Empress had ceased to love him!"

At the conclusion of his peroration, Potemkin knelt down and passionately kissed the hem of Catharine's robe. Then springing up, he clasped his hands and turned away. But the Empress darted after him like an enraged lioness, and catching his arm, gasped, "What! You would leave me, Alexandrowitsch?"

"Yes—I go to Orloff to receive my death. The Empress has willed it, and she shall find me obedient even unto my latest breath."

"No, Gregor," said Catharine, weeping profusely, "you shall remain to shield me from my enemies." So saying, she put her arms around his neck, but he drew them away.

"No, Catharine—No! After what I have heard to-day, I do not desire to live. Let me die, let me die!"

"No, Potemkin, no," cried she, struggling to detain him, "I shall never, never mistrust you again, and I promise you that Gregor Orloff shall never pass this threshold again."

"How? Do you promise to sacrifice Orloff to me?" cried Potemkin eagerly, cured in a trice of his desire for death.

"I do, Gregor, I do. There shall be but one Gregor to reign over my Court and my heart, and he shall be Gregor Potemkin!"

"You swear it, Catharine?"

"My imperial word thereupon. Now will you remain and protect me?"

"Yes—I remain to confound your enemies! It shall not be said that I have flown in the hour when your noble head is endangered! I shall remain for your sake, for the peril is very great, Catharine!"

"Gracious heaven, Gregor, what danger threatens me?"

"You ask me such a question while Paul lives, and has Orloff and Panin for his accomplices, and Frederic for his friend?"

"Oh, no, dear Gregor, your anxiety leads you into error. I know that Paul hates me, but I do not believe that Prussia is his ally, for it is clearly the interest of Prussia to conciliate me, and he is too wise to entangle himself in such conspiracies just at the expiration of our treaty."

"Oh, you noble, unsuspecting woman!" cried Potemkin ardently, "you know nothing of the egotism of the world. You believe in the honesty of Frederic, while he speculates upon the consequences of your death!"

The Empress grew pale and her eyes flashed with anger. "Prove it to me," said she imperiously.

Potemkin drew from his bosom the letter he had that morning received from Frederic. Catharine read it and then said, "Much flattery, and many mysterious promises. What do they mean?"

"Count Von Görtz was so good as to explain. The King offered to make me Duke of Courland, to give me a German princess in marriage, and to secure me the favor of your successor."

"That is not possible," exclaimed Catharine, "those were idle words."

"Oh, no, your Majesty, I will prove to you that they are not, as soon as Von Görtz is announced."

The Empress looked at the clock which pointed to two.

"It is exactly the hour I appointed to receive him," said she. "He must be in the ante-room."

"Have I your permission to go to him?"

The Empress nodded and Potemkin, drawing the key from his pocket unlocked the door and disappeared. Catharine looked after him and heaving a bitter sigh, said, "No more hope of rescue! He rules over me like irresistible destiny!"

In a few moments, Potemkin returned with the paper. Catharine having looked over it, returned it with a smile.

"I thank the King of Prussia for this," said she gently, "for my last hours will no longer be embittered by anxiety for your safety, Alexandrowitch. Preserve this paper with care."

Potemkin took it from her hand and tore it to pieces.

"Are you mad?" cried Catharine, "that you tear this promise of protection from Paul?"

"When Catharine dies, I no longer desire to live, and I hope that Paul may release me of life at once—I shall die rejoicing."

"Oh, Gregor," exclaimed Catharine, again moved to tears, "I shall never forget these words! You have sacrificed much for me, and you shall have princely reward, on my word, you shall! Let the Grand Duke be careful to utter no inconsiderate words, for the steppes of Siberia are as accessible to the Prince as to the peasant, and every traitor, were he the heir of the crown itself, is amenable to justice before me!"

And Panin with his eternal pratings of honesty and frankness, let him too, beware, for he wavers on the edge of a precipice !”

“ And Prussia ?” asked Potemkin with a smile.

Catharine smiled in return. “ I cannot chide *him*, Potemkin, for he would have befriended *you*.”

“ And the treaty ? Do you intend to renew it with this wise, far-seeing Prince ?”

“ I cannot say. It depends upon the offers he makes. Stay in this room, Gregor, and I will receive Von Görtz in the next one, where you can here what passes between us.”

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

### A DIPLOMATIC DEFEAT.

THE Empress entered the small audience-chamber adjoining her cabinet, and ringing a bell, gave orders that Count Von Görtz and Count Panin should be admitted. Then she glided to an arm-chair, the only one in the room, and awaited her visitors, who conformable to the etiquette of the Russian Court bowed three times before the all-powerful Czarina. Panin's salutation was that of a serf who is accustomed to kiss the dust from his tyrant's feet ; Von Görtz, on the contrary, had the bearing of a man of the world, accustomed to concede homage and to exact it.

“ Well, Count,” said the Empress graciously, “ what pleasant news do you bring from Sans-Souci ? Has your accomplished Sovereign recovered from his indisposition ?”

“ The King has recovered, and will be overjoyed to learn that your Majesty takes so much interest in his health.”

“ Oh,” exclaimed Catharine, “ the great Frederic knows how much interest I feel in his life—perhaps as much as he has in my death.”

Count Von Görtz looked in astonishment at the smiling face of the Empress. “ What ! Your Majesty says that my Sovereign has an interest in your Majesty's death !”

“ Did I say so ?” said Catharine carelessly. “ It was a slip of the tongue, my dear Count. I should have said *takes*, not *has* ; for many people fancy they have what they would like to take. I should have said then, that the King cannot *take* more interest in my death, than I do in his life.”

“ The King, your Majesty, is much older than you, and war has added to his years.”

“If war adds to our years,” replied Catharine laughing, “then I certainly must be superannuated.”

“May the time have arrived when their Majesties of Russia and Prussia may sheathe the sword and enjoy the unspeakable blessings of permanent peace,” said Von Görtz with emphasis.

“Are you of the same mind, Panin?” asked Catharine quickly.

“I know from my Sovereign’s noble heart that she would gladly bestow peace upon the world, and I believe that the time has come when this is possible,” replied Panin evasively.

“It is true, we have for the moment no pretext for war. The troubles between the Porte and myself were settled at the last peace convention, and he will take good care not to provoke a renewal of hostilities. We have no reason to apprehend any breach of peace in Poland, and our relations with the other European powers are equally friendly. England, Holland and France seek our good-will, Prussia is our firm ally, and Austria by sending her Emperor himself has given the most flattering proof of her consideration for Russia. It would appear that we enter upon an epoch of universal concord.”

“And to give stability to this great blessing,” replied Von Görtz, “it is the duty of all Sovereigns to fuse their separate interests into one great alliance, whose watch-word shall be ‘Peace!’ In presence of those who are bound together by the tie of one common policy, no ambitious enemy will venture to disturb the great international rest.”

“I think we are already able to present the scare-crow of such an alliance to covetous princes, for we have a firm ally in Prussia, have we not?” said Catharine smiling.

“Our treaty was but for eight years, your Majesty,” interposed Panin, “and the eight years have expired.”

“Have they, indeed?” exclaimed Catharine, surprised. “Well—certainly years do fly, and before we have time to think of death, our graves open to receive us. I feel that I am growing old, and the King of Prussia would be wise if he were to direct his new negotiations towards my successor, and make him the partner of his magnanimous schemes for universal peace.”

“Your Majesty is pleased to jest,” said Von Görtz, reverentially. “But to show you how heartily my Sovereign desires to cement his friendship with the mighty Empress of Russia, I am empowered by him to make new proposals for a renewal of the eight years’ treaty.”

“Are you acquainted with these proposals, Panin?” asked Catharine.

“No, your Majesty. I only know from Count Von Görtz that his proposals are merely preliminary, and not until they obtain your Majesty’s approbation will the King present them formally.”

“Very well, Count, let us hear your preliminaries,” said Catharine.

“My Sovereign desires nothing so much as a permanent alliance with Russia, which shall give peace to Europe, and deter over ambitious Princes from trenching upon the possessions of other crowns. To secure this end, my Sovereign thinks that nothing would be so favorable

as an offensive and defensive alliance, with a guarantee of permanent boundary-lines between Russia, Prussia, Poland and Turkey. Such an alliance, in the opinion of my Sovereign, would give durable peace to Western Europe. If the conditions be acceptable to your Majesty, my Sovereign will make like propositions to Poland and Turkey, and the treaty can be signed at once; for it has been ascertained that France approves, and as for Austria, the very nature of the alliance and its strength, will force her to respect the rights of nations, and give up her pretensions to territorial aggrandizement."

The Czarina had listened to this harangue with growing displeasure. Her impatience had not escaped the eyes of Panin, and he saw that the scheme would be unsuccessful. He had promised to second the proposals of the Prussian Minister, but the stormy brow of the Empress was mightier than his promise, and he boldly determined to change his front.

When Count Von Görtz ceased, a silence ensued; for the Czarina was too incensed to speak. She looked first at the Prussian Ambassador, then at her Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was turning over in his mind what he should say.

"And these are the proposals of the King of Prussia!" cried she, when she found breath to vent her indignation. "Instead of a simple renewal of our mutual obligations, you wish to entangle us into alliances with Turkey!—Count Panin, you are my Minister, I therefore leave it to you to answer the Prussian Ambassador as beseems the dignity and interest of my crown."

She leaned back in her arm-chair, and bent a piercing glance upon the face of her Minister. But he bore the test without change of feature, and turning with perfect composure to his ex-confederate, he said:

"As my Sovereign has commanded me to deliver her reply, I must express my surprise at the extraordinary preliminaries presented by your Excellency. His Majesty of Prussia proposes an alliance of Russia with Turkey. The thing is so preposterous that I cannot conceive how so wise a Prince as your Sovereign could ever have entertained the idea!"\*

"Good, Panin," said Catharine, nodding her head.

Panin, encouraged by the applause, went on: "Peace between Russia and Turkey can never be anything but an armistice; an alliance with the Porte; therefore, is incompatible either with our policy or with the sentiments of my revered sovereign."\*

"In this case," replied Von Görtz, bowing, "my Sovereign withdraws the proposal, which was merely thrown out as an idea upon which he was desirous of hearing the opinion of his august ally, the Empress."

"Then you know my opinion upon this 'idea,'" cried Catharine, rising from her seat, and darting fiery glances at the Ambassador. "Count Panin has expressed it distinctly, and I desire you to repeat his words to the King of Prussia. And that the great Frederic may see that I make no secret of my policy, he shall hear it. Know, then, that my last

\* Panin's own words. Dohm's Memoirs. Vol. 1, pages 400 and 401.

treaty of peace with Turkey was but a hollow truce, whereby I hoped to gain time and strength to carry out the plans which I shall never abandon while I live. The King has guessed them, and therefore he sent me these unworthy proposals. Russia has not reached the limit of her boundaries; her ambition is co-extensive with the world; and she means to grow and prosper, nor yet be content when Poland bows her neck to the yoke, and the Crescent has given place to the Greek Cross!"

So saying, the Czarina bowed her head, and haughtily left the room. When she raised the *portière*, there sat Potemkin in the fullness of his satisfaction, ready to greet her with his most beaming smiles. Catharine motioned him to follow, and they returned to the cabinet. Once there, the Czarina threw herself upon the divan and sighed.

"Shut the door, Potemkin, close the *portière*, for in good sooth I know not whether I am about to laugh or cry. I feel as if I had been hearing a fable in which all my schemes were transformed into card-houses, and were blown away by the wind! But indeed I must laugh! The good King of Prussia! Only think, Gregor, an offensive and defensive alliance with Turkey! Is it not enough to make you laugh until you cry?"

"I cannot laugh at such a disregard for the sacred rights of man," replied Potemkin. "This proposal of Prussia is an outrage to the faith of the whole Russian nation, and a challenge to you, my noble Sovereign, whose bold hand is destined to tear down the symbol of the Moslem and replace it with that of the Christian!"

"And believe me, dearest friend, I am ever mindful of that destiny," replied Catharine.

"And the treaty between Russia and Prussia——"

"Will not be renewed."

"Check to the King then," cried Potemkin, "and check-mate will soon follow."

"Yes—the King is old, and would gladly end his days in a myrtle-grove; while I long to continue my flight, higher and higher, till I reach the sun! But who will go with me to these dizzy heights of power——"

"His Majesty the Emperor of Austria," said the loud voice of a gentleman in waiting, who knocked at the door of the cabinet.

"The Emperor," exclaimed Catharine. "You know I granted his request to come to me unannounced; but I have given orders to the sentries to send the word forward, nevertheless, so that I always know when he is about to appear."

"Farewell, Catharine," said Potemkin. "The crow must give place to the imperial falcon. Why am I not an Emperor to offer you my hand, and be your only protector!"

"Could I love you more if you were an Emperor, Gregor? But hush! He comes, and as soon as his visit is ended return to me, for I must see you."

Potemkin kissed her hand again and again, and vanished through the tapestry by a secret door which led to a small corridor connected with the Czarina's private apartments. But instead of crossing this corridor,

he turned into a little boudoir, through which the Emperor would have to pass, and there awaited his appearance. He came, and seeing Potemkin, looked surprised, but bowed with a gracious smile.

Potemkin laid his finger upon his lip, and pointed to the cabinet. "Sire," said he in a whisper, "I have anticipated you. Prussia has received an important check, and the treaty will not be renewed. It rests with your Majesty now to improve the opportunity and supplant the King of Prussia. Be sympathetic and genial with the Czarina—*above all things* flatter her ambition and the game is yours. Depend upon my hearty co-operation."

"A thousand thanks," whispered Joseph in return. Potemkin made a deep and respectful salutation, and left the room. As he closed the door noiselessly behind him, the Emperor crossed the threshold of the imperial cabinet.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE CZARINA AND THE EMPEROR.

WHEN Joseph entered, he found the Empress reclining with careless grace upon the divan, perfectly unconscious that he was anywhere within her palace-walls. But when she saw him, she sprang up from the cushion on which she lay, and with protestations of delighted surprise, gave him both her hands. He bent over those soft white hands, and kissed them fervently.

"I come to your Majesty because I am anxious and unhappy, and my heart yearned for your presence. I have bad news from Vienna. My mother is ill and implores me to return home."

"Bad news, indeed!" exclaimed Catharine sadly. "The noblest and greatest woman that ever adorned a throne is suffering, and you threaten to leave me. But you must not go, now that the barriers which have so long divided Austria from Russia have fallen."

"Your Majesty may well speak of barriers," laughed Joseph, "for we were parted by a high Spanish wall, and the King of Prussia walked the ramparts that we might never get a glimpse of each other. Well! I have leaped the walls, and I consider it the brightest act of my life that I should have journeyed thither to see the greatest Sovereign of the age, the woman before whom a world is destined to succumb!"

"Do not give me such praise, sire," replied Catharine with a sigh; "the son of Maria Theresa should not bestow such eulogium upon me. It is the Empress of Austria who unites the wisdom of a law-giver and



the bravery of a warrior with the virtues of a pure and sinless woman! Oh, my friend, I am not of that privileged band who have preserved themselves spotless from the sins of the world! I have bought my imperial destiny with the priceless gem of womanly innocence!—Do not interrupt me—we are alone, and I feel that before no human being can I bow my guilty head with such a sense of just humiliation as before the son of the peerless Empress of Austria!”

“The Empress of Austria is still a woman, reigning through the promptings of her heart, while Catharine wears the crown with the vigor of a man.—And who ever thought of requiring from an Emperor, the primeval innocence of an Arcadian shepherdess? He who would be great, must make acquaintance with sin, for obscurity is the condition of innocence—Had you remained innocent, you had never become Catharine the great. There are unhappily so many men who resemble women, that we must render thanks to God for vouchsafing to our age, a woman who equals all, and surpasses many men?”

“You have initiated a new mode of flattery, sire,” said Catharine blushing with gratification, “but if this is your fashion of praising women, you must be a woman hater. Is it so?”

“I would worship them if they resembled Catharine; but I have suffered through their failings and I despise them. You know not how many of my bold schemes and bright hopes have been brought to naught by women!—I am no longer the Joseph of earlier days—I have been shorn of my strength by petticoats and cassocks.”

“How can you so bely yourself?” said Catharine. “It is but a few months since we had good proof that the ambition of the Emperor Joseph was far from being quenched forever.”

“Ah! your Majesty would remind me of that ridiculous affair with Bavaria. It was my last Quixotism, the dying struggle of a patriotism which would have made of Germany one powerful and prosperous nation! And it was *you* who opposed me—*you* who of all the potentates in Europe, are the one who should have understood and sustained me! Believe me when I say that had Catharine befriended me there, she would have won the truest knight that ever broke a lance in defence of fair ladye. But for the sake of a dotard who is forever trembling lest I rob him of some of his withered bays, the bold Athené of the age forgot her godlike origin and mission, and turned away from him whom she should have countenanced and conciliated. Well!—It was the error of a noble heart, unsuspecting of fair words. And fair words enough had Frederic for the occasion. To think of such a man as *he* flaunting the banner of Germany in my face—he who not many years ago was under the ban of the Empire as an ambitious upstart!—He thought to scare me with the rustling of his dead laurel-leaves, and when he found that I laughed at such Chinese warfare, lo! he ran and hid himself under my mother’s petticoats; and the two old crowns fell foul of one another, and their palsied old wearers, plotted together, until the great war upon which I had staked my fame was juggled into a shower of carnival

*confetti!* Oh, you laugh at me, and well may you laugh!—I am a fool to waste so much enthusiasm upon such a fool's holiday!"

"No, I do not laugh at you," replied Catharine laying her arm upon his, "I laugh for joy, to see how lustily you hate. A man who hates fiercely, loves ardently, and my whole heart glows with sympathy for such a being. So then you hate him soundly, this King of Prussia?"

"Hate him," cried Joseph clenching his hand, "aye indeed, I hate him! He has instigated Germany to oppose me; he wrested Bavaria from me, which was mine by right of two-fold inheritance; and I detest him the more that he is so old, so gouty, and so contemptible, that to defeat him now, would not add one hair's breadth to my reputation as a general!"

"It is true," said Catharine thoughtfully, "Frederic is growing very old. Nothing remains of the former hero, but a dotard who is incapable of comprehending the march of events."

"And yet, is ambitious to legislate. Oh, Catharine, beware of this old King, who clings to you to support his own tottering royalty, and to obstruct your schemes of conquest. But he will not succeed with you as he has done by me. You have no mother to thrust you aside while she barter away your rights for a mess of potage!—I see your eagle glance—it turns towards the South, where roll the stormy waves of the Black Sea! I see this fair white hand as it points to the Mosques of Constantinople, where the Crescent is being lowered and the cross is being planted——"

Catharine uttered a cry of ecstasy, and putting her arms around Joseph's neck, she imprinted a kiss upon his brow.

"Oh, I thank you, Joseph!" exclaimed she enthusiastically. "You have comprehended the ambitious projects which identified as they are with my existence as a Sovereign, I have never yet dared to speak above my breath!"

"I have guessed and I approve," said Joseph earnestly. "Fate has assigned you this mission and you must fulfil it."

"Oh, my God," ejaculated Catharine, "I have found a friend who has read into my heart."

"And who will aid you, when you call him to your side."

"I accept the offer, and here is my hand. And so, hand in hand we shall conquer the world. God be praised, there is room enough for us both, and we must divide it between us. Away with all little thrones and their little potentates! Oh, friend, what joy it must be to dwell among the heights of Olympus and feel that all below is ours! I am intoxicated with the dream! Two thrones,—the throne of the Greek and the throne of the Roman Emperors; two people so mighty that they dare not war with one another; while, side by side, their giant swords forever sheathed, they shed peace and happiness upon the furthest ends of the earth! Will you realise with me this god like dream?"

"That will I, my august friend, and may God grant us life and opportunity to march on to victory together!"

"To victory," echoed Catharine, "and to the fulfillment of the will of Peter the Great. He enjoined it upon his successors to purge Europe of the Infidel, and to open the Black Sea to Christendom. In Stamboul I shall erect the throne of my grandson, Constantine, while in Petersburg, Alexander extends the domains of Russia in Europe and in Asia. You do not know all that I have already done for classic Greece. From his birth, I have destined Constantine to the Greek throne. His nurses, his playfellows, and his very dress, are Greek, so that his native tongue is that of his future subjects. Even now, two hundred boys are on their way from Greece, who are to be the future guards of the Emperor Constantine! As the medal which was struck on the day of his birth prefigured his destiny, so shall his surroundings of every kind, animate him to its glorious fulfillment. Look—I have already a chart on which Constantine is to study the geography which my hand is to verify for him and for his brother."

The Empress had risen and approached her *escritoire*. From a secret drawer within another drawer, she took a roll of parchment which, after beckoning to the Emperor, she placed upon the table. They unrolled it, and both bent over it with beating hearts.

"Observe first the marginal illustrations," said Catharine. Here stands the Genius of Russia leaning upon the Russian shield. To the left you see arrows, horses' tails, Turkish banners and other trophies—here at the top, you see the Black Sea, where a Russian ship is in the act of sinking a Turk."

"Here in the centre, is the empire of Greece and the Archipeligo. Take notice of the colors on the map, for they show the boundaries. The yellow is the boundary-line of the Greek empire. It begins in the north-west by Ragusa, takes in Skopia, Sophia Phillippolis and Adrianople as far as the Black Sea. It then descends and includes the Ionian islands, the Archipeligo, Mytelene and Samos. That is the Empire of Constantine, whose capital is to be Constantinople. The red lines show the future boundaries of Russia. They pass through Natolia, beginning in the north by Pendavaschi, and end with the Gulf of Syria."

The Emperor who had been following Catharine's jewelled hand with anxious scrutiny, now looked up with a significant smile.

"Your Majesty's map reminds me of an incident among my travels. In the beginning of my unhappy Regency, I was inspecting the boundaries of my own empire. In Moravia I ascended a steep mountain whence I had a view of the surrounding country. 'To whom belongs that pretty village?' said I. 'To the Jesuits,' was the reply. 'And this tract with the chapels?' 'To the Benedictines.' 'And that Abbey?' 'To the Clarissarines.' 'But where then are my possessions?' said I."

"And your Majesty would put the same question to me," interrupted the Czarina. "Look at the colors of the map. We have appropriated the yellow and the red, but there is another color to be accounted for."

"I see a boundary of green, which includes Naples and Sicily," said Joseph, looking down upon the map with new interest.

"Those are the boundary lines of new Austria," said the Empress with a triumphant smile. "As I hope for the re-establishment of empire in Greece, so must your Majesty accomplish that of Rome. Since you have no objection to give me the Black Sea, I shall make no opposition to the extension of your empire to the shores of the Mediterranean. Italy, like Germany, is a prey to petty Princes. Rescue the Italians from their national insignificance, sire, and throw the ægis of your protection over the site of the old Roman empire. Do you not bear the title of King of Rome? Give to that title meaning and substance. Yours is the south and west, mine is the east, and together we shall govern the world."

Joseph had listened with breathless attention. At first he grew pale, then a flush of triumph suffused his face, and he took the hand of the Czarina and drew it to his heart.

"Catharine!" cried he, deeply moved, "from my soul I thank you for this inspiration! Oh, my heart's interpreter, you have read my secret yearnings to be in deed, as well as in word, 'King of Rome!' Yes—I would free Italy from the oppression of the Church, and lead her on to greatness that shall rival her glorious past! God is my witness, I would have done as much for Germany; but Germany has rejected me, and I leave her to her fate. For the future I remain Emperor of Austria; and my empire shall be so vast, so prosperous, and so powerful, that Catharine of Russia shall esteem me an ally worthy of the greatest woman of modern times."

"Two faithful allies," exclaimed Catharine, "allies bound by one common policy, whose watchword shall be 'Constantinople and Rome!'"

"Aye," returned Joseph with a laugh, "though while *you* raise the standard of the cross in Constantinople, *I* shall overturn it in Rome. As soon as my shackles fall, I shall set to work!"

"I see that you have faith in my plans," cried Catharine, joyfully.

"Such faith that I would aid them from my heart, were they even to require the co-operation of Frederic."\*

"I shall have no co-operation but yours," was the reply. "Besides I know that you owe a grudge to Turkey."

"I do, for she has taken Belgrade, and I must re-take it. The Danube is my birthright as the Black Sea is yours. I give up Germany to concentrate my forces upon Turkey and Italy."

"Let us await the proper time, and when I see it, I shall call upon you to come with me and crush the intrusive Moslem."

"Look upon me as your general, and upon my army as yours," replied Joseph, kissing the hand which the Czarina extended. "And now," continued he, "I must say farewell, and I fear it is for a long separation."

"Indeed!" cried Catharine. "Must I lose you so soon?"

"My mother is sick, and yearns for my presence," said Joseph. "The Emperor parted from her in displeasure; but the son must not slight the call of a mother, who perchance is on her death-bed. I start for

\* Baumer. Contributions, &c. Vol 5, p 444.

Vienna to-day, and before I leave, at the risk of being accused of flattery, I must express to your Majesty the admiration, respect and love which I feel for the noblest woman I have ever known.”\*

The Empress, overcome, put her arms around Joseph's neck and folded him to her heart.

“Oh, were you my son,” whispered she, “I might thank heaven for the gift of a noble child who was soul of my soul! Were you mine, I should not be the victim of courtiers' intrigues, but with my proud arm within yours I might defy the world!”

As she spoke these words, Catharine raised the Emperor's hand to her lips.

Joseph uttered a cry, and sinking on his knees, kissed the hem of her robe. Then rising, as if reluctant to break the solemnity of their parting by a sound, he turned and left the room.

Catharine looked after him with tearful eyes. “Oh God he has left me! I have found a noble heart only to grieve that it can never be mine. I am alone—alone—it is so dreadful to be——”

Suddenly she ceased, for a deep, melodious voice began to sing. Catharine knew that the voice was Potemkin's, and that he was calling her to the secret apartments which she had fitted up for her lover.

The song awakened bitter memories. Potemkin had written it in former years, and she had shed tears of emotion when she heard it—tears which at that time were as precious to him as were his finest diamonds to-day.

The music ceased, and two tears which had gathered in the Czarina's eyes, stole down her cheeks. As if drawn by an invisible hand she crossed the room, and, stooping down, pressed a tiny golden button which was fastened to the floor. A whirr was heard, the floor opened and revealed a winding staircase which led from her cabinet to the room of her favorite.

As her foot touched the first step, she raised her eyes with a look of despair to heaven, and her trembling lips murmured these words, “Catharine once more in chains!”

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\*The Emperor's own words. Raumer. Vol. 5, p. 552.





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