

A Conspiracy of the Carbonari eBook

A Conspiracy of the Carbonari

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Page 1

A CONSPIRACY OF THE CARBONARI.

CHAPTER I.

After Esslingen.

It was the evening of the 22d of May, 1809, the fatal day inscribed in blood-stained letters upon the pages of history, the day which brought to Napoleon the first dimming of his star of good fortune, to Germany, and especially to Austria, the first ray of dawn after the long and gloomy night.

After so many victories and triumphs; after the battles of Tilsit, Austerlitz, and Jena, the humiliation of all Germany, the triumphal days of Erfurt, when the great imperial actor saw before him a whole "parterre of kings;" after a career of victory which endured ten years, Napoleon on the 22d of May, 1809, had sustained his first defeat, lost his first battle. True, he had made this victory cost dearly enough. There had been two days of blood and carnage ere the conflict was decided, but now, at the close of these two terrible days, the fact could no longer be denied: the Austrians, under the command of the Archduke Charles, had vanquished the French at Aspern, though they were led by Napoleon himself.

Terrible indeed had been those two days of the battle of Aspern or Esslingen. The infuriated foes hurled death to and fro from the mouths of more than four hundred cannon. The earth shook with the thunder of their artillery, the stamping of their steeds; the air resounded with the shouts of the combatants, who assailed each other with the fury of rage and hate, fearing not death, but defeat; scorning life if it must be owed to the conqueror's mercy, neither giving nor taking quarter, and in dying, praying not for their own souls, but for the defeat and humiliation of the enemy!

Never since those years of battle between France and Austria has the fighting been characterized by such animosity, such fierce fury on both sides. Austria was struggling to avenge Austerlitz, France not to permit the renown of that day to be darkened.

"We will conquer or die!" was the shout with which the Austrians, for the twenty-first time, had begun the battle against the enemy, who pressed forward across three bridges from the island of Lobau in the middle of the Danube, and whom the Austrians hated doubly that day, because another painful wound had been dealt by the occupation of their capital—beautiful, beloved Vienna—the expulsion of the emperor and his family, and the possession of the German city.

Thus conquest to the Austrians meant also the release of Vienna from the mastery of the foe, the opening the way to his capital to the Emperor Francis, who had fled to Hungary.



If the French were vanquished, it meant the confession to the world that the star of Napoleon's good fortune was paling; that he, too, was merely a mortal who must bow to the will of a higher power; it meant destroying the faith of the proud, victorious French army in its own invincibility.



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These were the reasons which rendered the battle so furious, so bloodthirsty on both sides; which led the combatants to rend each other with actual pleasure, with exulting rage. Each yawning wound was hailed with a shout of joy by the person who inflicted it; each man who fell dying heard, instead of the gentle lament of pity, the sigh of sympathy, the jeering laugh, the glad, victorious shout of the pitiless foe.

Then Austrian generals, eagerly encouraging their men by their own example of bravery, pressed forward at the head of their troops. The Archduke Charles, though ill and suffering, had himself lifted upon his horse, and, in the enthusiasm of the struggle, so completely forgot his sickness that he grasped the standard of a wavering battalion, dashed forward with it, and thereby induced the soldiers to rush once more, with eager shouts of joy, upon the foe.

More than ten times the village of Aspern was taken by the French, more than ten times it was recaptured by the Austrians; every step forward was marked by both sides with heaps of corpses, rivers of blood. Every foot of ground, every position conquered, however small, was the scene of furious strife. For the church in Aspern, the churchyard, single houses, nay, even single trees, bore evidence of the furious assault of the enemies upon each other; whole battalions went with exulting shouts to death.

On account of this intense animosity on both sides, this mutual desire for battle thus stimulated to the highest pitch, the victory on the first day remained undecided and the gathering darkness found the foes almost in the same position which they had occupied at the beginning of the conflict. The Austrians were still in dense masses on the shore of the Danube; the French still occupied the island of Lobau, and their three bridges conveyed them across to the left bank of the Danube to meet the enemy.

But the second day, after the most terrible butchery, the most desperate struggle, was to see the victory determined.

It belonged to the Austrians, to the Archduke Charles. He had decided it by a terrible expedient—the order to let burning vessels drift down the Danube against the bridges which connected the island of Lobau with the left shore. The wind and the foaming waves of the river seemed on this day to be allies of the Austrians; the wind swept the ships directly upon the bridges, densely crowded with dead bodies, wounded men, soldiers, horses, and artillery; the quivering tongues of flame seized the piles and blazed brightly up till everything upon them plunged in terrible, inextricable confusion down to the surging watery grave below.

At the awful spectacle the whole French army uttered cries of anguish, the Austrians shouts of joy.

Vainly did Napoleon himself ride through the ranks, calling in the beloved voice that usually kindled enthusiasm so promptly: “I myself ordered the destruction of the

bridges, that you might have no choice between glorious victory or inevitable destruction.”



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For the first time his soldiers doubted the truth of his words and did not answer with the exultant cheer, "*Vive l'Empereur.*"

But they fought on bravely, furiously, desperately! And Napoleon, with his pallid iron countenance, remained with his troops, to watch everything, direct every movement, encourage his men, and give the necessary orders. His generals and aids surrounded him, listening respectfully though with gloomy faces to every word which fell, weighty and momentous as a sentence of death, from the white, compressed lips. But a higher power than Napoleon was sending its decrees of death even into the group of generals gathered around the master of the world; cannon balls had no reverence for the Caesar's presence; they tore from his side his dearest friend, his faithful follower, Marshal Lannes; they killed Generals St. Hilaire, Albuquerque and d'Espagne, the leaders of his brave troops, the curassiers, three thousand of whom remained that day on the battlefield; they wounded Marshal Massena, Marshal Bessieres, and six other valiant generals.

When evening came the battle was decided. Archduke Charles was the victor; the French army was forced back to the island of Lobau, whose bridges had been severed by the burning ships; the triumphant Austrians were encamped around Esslingen and Aspern, whose unknown names have been illumined since that day with eternal renown.

The island of Lobau presented a terrible chaos of troops, horses, wounded men, artillery, corpses and luggage; the wounded and dying wailed and moaned, the uninjured fairly shrieked and roared with fury. And, as if Nature wished to add her bold alarum to the mournful dirge of men, the storm-lashed waves of the Danube thundered around the island, dashed their foam-crested surges on the shore, and, in many places, created crimson lakes where, instead of boats, blood-stained bodies floated with yawning wounds. It seemed as if the Styx had flowed to Lobau to spare the ferryman Charon the arduous task of conveying so many corpses to the nether world, and for the purpose transformed itself into a single vast funeral barge.

Napoleon, the victor of so many battles, the man before whom all Europe trembled, all the kings of the world bowed in reverence and admiration; he who, with a wave of his hand, had overturned and founded dynasties, was now forced to witness all this—compelled to suffer and endure like any ordinary mortal!

He sat on a log near the shore, both elbows propped on his knees, and his pale iron face supported by his small white hands, glittering with diamonds, gazing at the roaring waves of the Danube and the throng of human beings who surrounded him.

Behind him, in gloomy silence, stood his generals—he did not notice them. His soldiers marched before him—he did not heed them. But they saw him, and turned from him to the mountains of corpses, to the moaning wounded men, the pools of blood which

everywhere surrounded them, then gazed once more at him whom they were wont to hail exultingly as their hero, their earthly god, and whom to-day, for the first time, they execrated; whom in the fury of their grief they even ventured to accuse and to scorn.

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But he did not hear. He heard naught save the voices in his own breast, to whose gloomy words the wails and groans of the wounded formed a horrible chorus.

Suddenly he rose slowly, and turning toward Marshal Bessieres, who, with his wounded arm in a sling, stood nearest to him, Napoleon pointed to the river.

“To Ebersdorf!” he said, in his firm, imperious voice. “You will accompany me, marshal. You too, gentlemen,” he added, turning to the captured Austrian General Weber, and the Russian General Czernitschef, who had arrived at Napoleon’s headquarters the day before the battle on a special mission from the Czar Alexander, and been a very inopportune witness of his defeat.

The two generals bowed silently and followed the emperor, who went hastily down to the shore. A boat with four oarsmen lay waiting for him, and his two valets, Constant and Roustan, stood beside the skiff to help the emperor enter.

He thrust back their hands with a swift gesture of repulse, and stepped slowly and proudly down into the swaying, rocking boat which was to bear the Caesar and his first misfortune to his headquarters, Castle Ebersdorf. He darted a long angry glance at the foaming waves roaring around the skiff, a glance before which the bravest of his marshals would have trembled, but which the insensible waters, tossing and surging below, swallowed as they had swallowed that day so many of his soldiers. Then, sinking slowly down upon the seat which Roustan had prepared for him of cushions and coverlets, he again propped his arms on his knees, rested his face in his hands, and gazed into vacancy. The companions whom he had ordered to attend him, and his two valets followed, and the boat put off from the shore, and danced, whirling hither and thither, over the foam-crested waves.

But amid the roar of the river, the plash of the dipping oars, was heard the piteous wailing of the wounded, the loud oaths and jeers of the soldiers who had rushed down to the shore, and, with clenched fists, hurled execrations after the emperor, accusing him, with angry scorn, of perfidy because he left them in this hour of misfortune.

Napoleon did not hear the infuriated shouts of his soldiery; he was listening to the tempest, the waves, and the menacing voices in his own breast.

Once only he raised himself from his bowed posture and again darted an angry glance at the foaming water as if he wished to lash the hated element with the look, as Xerxes had done with iron chains.

“The Danube, with its furious surges, and the storm with its mad power, have conquered me,” he cried in a loud, angry voice. “Ay, all Nature must rise in rebellion and wrath to wrest a victory from me. Nature, not Archduke Charles, has vanquished me!”



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The waves roared and danced recklessly on, wholly unmindful of the emperor's wrathful exclamation; they sang and thundered a poem of their might, jeering him: "Beware of offending us, for we can avenge ourselves; we hold your fate in our power. Beware of offending us, for we are bearing you on our backs in a fragile boat, and the Caesar and his empire weigh no more than the lightest fisherman with his nets. Beware of offending us, for you are nothing but an ordinary man; mortal as the poorest beggar, and, if we choose, we will drag you down to our cold, damp grave. Beware of offending us!" Did he understand the song of the mocking waves? Was that why so deep a frown of wrath rested on his brow?

He again sank into his gloomy reverie, which no one ventured to disturb—no one save the jeering surges.

Yet he seemed to think that some one addressed him, that some one whom he must answer had spoken.

"Why, yes," he cried, shrugging his shoulders, "yes, it is true, I have lost a battle! But when one has gained forty victories, it really is not anything extraordinary if he *loses* one engagement." [A]

No one ventured to answer this exclamation. The emperor did not seem to expect it; perhaps he did not even know that any one had heard what he answered the menacing voice in his own soul.

Now the boat touched the shore, where carriages were ready to convey the emperor and his suite to Ebersdorf.

His whole staff, all his marshals and generals, were waiting for him before the door of the castle. With bared heads, in stiff military attitude, they received their lord and master, the august emperor, expecting a gracious greeting. But he passed on without looking at them, without even saluting them by a wave of his hand. They looked after him with wondering, angry eyes, and, like the glittering tail of a comet, followed him into the castle, up the steps, and into the hall.

But as they entered the reception-room where he usually talked with them, Napoleon had already vanished in his private office, whose door swiftly closed behind him.

The marshals and generals, aids and staff officers, still waited. The emperor would surely return, they thought. He still had to give them his commands for the next day, his orders concerning what was to be done on the island of Lobau, what provision should be made for the care of the wounded, the sustenance of the uninjured, the rescue of the remains of his army.



But they waited in vain; Napoleon did not return to them, gave them no orders. After half an hour's futile expectation, Roustan glided through the little door of the private room into the hall, and, with a very important air, whispered to the listening officers that the emperor had gone to bed immediately, and had scarcely touched the pillows ere he sunk into a deep sleep.

Yes, the Emperor Napoleon was sleeping, and his generals glided on tiptoe out of the hall and discussed outside the measures which they must now adopt on their own account to rescue the luckless fragment of the army from the island of Lobau, and make arrangements for building new bridges.



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Yes, the Emperor Napoleon was sleeping! He slept all through the night, through the broad light of the next day—slept when his whole staff had gone to Lobau—slept when bodies of his infuriated guards rushed into the castle and, unheeding the emperor's presence, plundered the cellars and storerooms[B]—slept when, in the afternoon of that day, his marshals and generals returned to Castle Ebersdorf, in order at last to receive the emperor's commands.

They would not, could not believe that the commander-in-chief was still sleeping. It seemed perfectly impossible that he, the illustrious strong-brained Caesar, could permit himself to be subjugated by the common petty need of human nature in these hours when every second's delay might decide the destiny of many thousands. This sleep could be no natural one; perhaps the emperor, exhausted by fatigue and mental excitement, had fallen into a stupor; perhaps he was sleeping never to wake again. They must see him, they must convince themselves. They called Roustan and asked him to take them to the emperor's couch.

He did not refuse, he only entreated them to step lightly, to hold their breath, in order not to wake the emperor; then gliding before them to the room, he drew back the *portieres* of the chamber. The officers followed, stealing along on tiptoe, and gazed curiously, anxiously, into the quiet, curtained room. Yes, there on the low camp-bed, lay the emperor. He had not even undressed, but lay as if on parade in full uniform, with his military cloak flung lightly across his feet. He had sunk down in this attitude twenty-two hours before, and still lay motionless and rigid.

But he was sleeping! It was not stupor, it was not death, it was only sleep which held him captive. His breath came slowly, regularly; his face was slightly flushed, his eyes were calmly closed. The emperor was sleeping! His generals need feel no anxiety; they might return to the drawing-room with relieved hearts. They did so, stealing noiselessly again through the private office into the hall, whose door had been left ajar that the noise might not rouse the sleeper.

Yet, once within the hall, they looked at each other with wondering eyes, astonished faces.

He was really asleep; he could sleep.

He was untroubled, free from care. Yet if the Archduke Charles desired it, the whole army was lost. He need only remain encamped with his troops on the bank of the Danube to expose the entire force to hunger, to destruction.

As they talked angrily, with gloomy faces, they again gazed at each other with questioning eyes, and looked watchfully around the drawing-room. No one was present except the group of marshals, generals and colonels. No one could overhear them, no

one could see how one, Colonel Oudet, raised his right hand and made a few strange, mysterious gestures in the air.

Instantly every head bowed reverently, every voice whispered a single word: "Master."



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“My brothers,” replied Colonel Oudet in a low tone, “important things are being planned, and we must be ready to see them appear in tangible form at any moment.”

“We are prepared,” murmured all who were present. “We await the commands of our master.”

“I have nothing more to say, except that you are to hold yourselves ready; for the great hour of vengeance and deliverance is approaching. The great Society of the Carbonari, whose devoted members you are—”

“Whose great and venerated head you are,” replied General Massena, with a low bow.

“The Society of the Carbonari,” Colonel Oudet continued, without heeding Massena’s words, “the Society of the Carbonari watches its faithless member, the renegade son of the Revolution, the Emperor Napoleon, and will soon have an opportunity to avenge his perfidy. Keep your hands on your swords and be watchful; strive to spread the spirit of our order more and more through the army; initiate more and more soldiers into our league as brothers; be mindful of the great object: we will free France from the Caesarism forced upon her. Look around you in your circles and seek the hand which will be ready to make the renegade son of the society vanish from the world.”

“He is the scourge of our native land,” said one of the generals. “His restless ambition constantly plunges us into new wars, rouses the hatred of all Europe against France, and this hatred will one day burst into bright flames and plunge France into destruction.”

“He is destroying the prosperity of the country for generations,” said another; he is robbing wives of their husbands, fathers of their sons, labor of sturdy arms. The fields lie untilled, the workshops are deserted, trade is prostrate, and all this to gratify a single man’s desire for war.”

“Therefore it is necessary to make this one man harmless,” said a third. “If no hand is found to slay him, there are arms strong enough to seize him, bind him, and deliver him to those whose prison doors are always open to receive the hated foe who blockades their harbors denies their goods admittance to France and all the countries he has conquered and everywhere confronts them as their bitter enemy.”

“Yes, England is ready and watchful,” whispered another. “She promises those who have the courage to dare the great deed, a brilliant reward; she offers a million florins and perpetual concealment of their names, as soon as the Emperor Napoleon is delivered to her.”

“Then let us seek men who are bold, ambitious, resolute, and money-loving enough to venture such a deed,” said Colonel Oudet. “Form connections with those who hate him; be cautious, deliberate and beware of traitors.”

“We will be cautious and deliberate,” they all replied submissively; “we will beware of traitors.”



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“But while determining to free France from the ambitious conqueror who is leading her to destruction,” said Colonel Oudet, “we must consider what is to be done when the great work is accomplished, when the tyrant is removed. It is evident to you all that the present condition of affairs ought not to last. France now depends upon a single life; a single person forms her dynasty, and when he sinks into the grave, France will be exposed to caprice, to chance; every door to intrigue will be opened. We must secure France from every peril. We have now seen, for the first time, that the proud emperor is only a mere mortal. Had the bullet which wounded his foot at Regensburg struck his head, France would probably be, at the present moment, in the midst of civil war, and the Legitimists, the Republicans, and the adherents of Napoleon would dispute the victory with each other. We must try to avert the most terrible of all misfortunes, civil war; the emperor is not merely mortal; we do not merely have to consider his death, but we must also know what is to happen in case our plan succeeds and he is placed in captivity. We must have ready the successor, the successor who will at once render the Republic and the return of the Bourbons alike impossible. Do any of you know a successor thus qualified?”

“I know one,” replied General Marmont.

“And I! And I! And I!”

“General Marmont,” said Oudet, “you spoke first. Will you tell us the name of the person who seems to you worthy to be Napoleon’s successor?”

“I do not venture to speak until the head of the Carbonari has named the man whom *he* has chosen.”

“Then you did not hear me request you to speak,” said Oudet, in a tone of stern rebuke. “Speak, Marmont, but it will be better to exercise caution and not let the walls themselves hear what we determine. So form a circle around me, and let one after another put his lips to my ear and whisper the name of him who should be Napoleon’s successor.”

Marshals and generals obeyed the command and formed a close circle around Oudet, whose tall, slender figure towered above them all, and whose handsome pale face, with its enthusiastic blue eyes, formed a strange contrast to the grave, defiant countenances which encircled him.

“Marmont, do you begin!” said Oudet, in his gentle, solemn tones.

The general bent close to Oudet and whispered something into his ear, then he stepped back and made way for another, who was followed by a third, and a fourth.



“My brothers,” said Oudet, after all had spoken, “my brothers, I see with pleasure that the same spirit, the same conviction rules among you. You have all uttered the same name; you have all said that Eugene Beauharnais, the Viceroy of Italy, would be the fitting and desired successor of Napoleon. I rejoice in this unanimity, and, in my position as one of the heads of the great society, I give your choice my approval. The invisible ones—the

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heads who are above us all, and from whom I, like the other three chiefs of the league, receive my orders—the invisible ones have also chosen Eugene Beauharnais for the future emperor of France. Thereby the succession would be secured, and as soon as, by the emperor's death or imprisonment, the throne of France is free, we will summon Eugene de Beauharnais to be emperor of the French. May God grant His blessing upon our work and permit us soon to find the hands we need to rid France of her tyrant.”

At that moment the door opening into the emperor's study, which had remained ajar, was flung open and Napoleon stood on the threshold. His iron face, which his officers had just seen in the repose of sleep, was now again instinct with power and energy; his large eyes were fixed upon his generals with an expression of strange anger, and seemed striving to read the very depths of their hearts; his thin lips were firmly compressed as if to force back an outburst of indignation which the gloomy frown on his brow nevertheless revealed.

But the wrathful, threatening expression soon vanished from the emperor's countenance, and his features resumed their cold, impenetrable expression.

He moved swiftly forward several steps and greeted with a hasty nod the officers who had all bowed respectfully before him, and stood motionless in absolute silence.

“General Bertrand,” said the emperor, in his sonorous, musical voice, “you will proceed at once to the island of Lobau to make preparations for the great bridge-building which must be commenced at once and completed within a week. The restoration and strengthening of the bridges which connect the island of Lobau and the other little islands with the right bank of the Danube is our principal task for the moment. Be mindful of that, general, and act accordingly. General Massena, you will undertake with me the principal direction of this bridge-building, and accompany me daily to the island of Lobau. Bertrand will direct the building of the four firm bridges which will connect Lobau with the shore of the Danube. We will select the places for six bridges of boats which must also be thrown across. To prevent interruption, the Austrians must be occupied, and Generals Fouchet and Roguet will therefore post batteries of fifty cannon and bomb-proof storehouses for ammunition, in order not only to keep the enemy from the left bank, but also to drive him out of all the islands in the Danube. You will all take care to execute my orders with the utmost rapidity and punctiliousness. The Austrians disputed the victory with us at Esslingen; in their arrogance they will perhaps even go so far as to assert that *they* obtained it; so I will give them a battle in which the victory will be on my side so undoubtedly that the Austrians must bow without resistance beneath its heavy, imperious hand. The bridge-building is the first and most necessary condition of this conquest. It must be carried on swiftly, cautiously,



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secretly—the enemy must not suspect where the bridges will be erected; all the portions of the structures must be made on the island of Lobau, then the bridges must appear out of nothingness, like a miracle before the astonished eyes of the foe. These bridges, gentlemen, will be the road for us all to gain new laurels, win fresh victories, and surround the immortal fame of our eagles with new glory. I went to Germany to chastise and force into submission and obedience the insolent German princes who wished to oppose me. I know that they are conspiring, that their treacherous designs are directed toward robbing France of her sovereign, who was summoned to his authority by the will of the French nation. But they, like all who venture to rebel against me, must learn that God has placed in my hand the sword of retribution and of vengeance, and that it will crush those who blasphemously seek to conspire against me and dispute my power. Austria has done this, Prussia would fain attempt it, but I will deter Prussia by chastising Austria. To work, gentlemen! In six weeks, at latest, we must give Austria a decisive battle which will make it depend solely on my will whether I permit the house of Hapsburg to reign longer or bury it in the nonentity of inglorious oblivion!”

After the emperor, standing among his silent generals, had spoken in a voice which rose louder and louder till it finally echoed like menacing thunder through the hall, he nodded a farewell, by a haughty bend of the head, and returned to his office, whose door he now not merely left ajar, but closed with a loud bang.

With his hands behind his back, an angry expression upon his face, and a frowning brow, the emperor paced up and down his room, absorbed in gloomy thought. Sometimes a flash of indignation illumined his face, and he raised his arm with a threatening gesture, as if, like a second Jupiter, to hurl back into the depths the Titans who dared to rise to his throne.

“To appoint a successor,” he muttered in a fierce, threatening tone, “they dare to think, to busy themselves with that. The ingrates! It is I who gave them fame, honor, titles, wealth; they are already cogitating about my death—my successor! It is a conspiracy which extends throughout the whole army. I know it. I was warned in Spain against the plots of the Carbonari, and the caution has been repeated here. And I must keep silence. I cannot punish the traitors, for that would consign the majority of my generals to the ax of the executioner. But I will give them all a warning example. I will intimidate them, let them have an intimation that I am aware of their treacherous plans.”

He sank down into the armchair which stood before his writing-desk, took a pen-knife and began to mark and cut the arm of the chair with as much zeal and perseverance as if the object in view was to accomplish some useful and urgent task. Then, when the floor was covered with tiny chips, and the black, delicately carved wood of the old-fashioned armchair was marked with white streaks and spots, the emperor hurled the knife down and rose hastily from his seat.



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"This Colonel Oudet must die," he said, each word falling slowly and impressively from his lips. "I cannot crush all the limbs, but I will make the head fall, and that will paralyze them. Yes, this Colonel Oudet must die!"

Then, as if the sentence of death which he had just uttered had relieved his soul of an oppressive burden, and lightened his heart, the gloomy expression vanished from his face, which was now almost brightened by a ray of joy.

Seizing the silver hand-bell, he rang it violently twice. Instantly the door leading into his sleeping-room opened and Roustan, gliding in, stood humbly and silently awaiting the emperor's orders.

Napoleon, with a slight nod, beckoned to him to approach, and when Roustan, like a tiger-cat, noiselessly reached his side with two swift bounds, the emperor gazed with a long, searching look into the crafty, smiling face of his Mameluke.

"So you listened to the conversation between the generals?" asked the emperor.

"I don't know, sire," said Roustan, shaking his head eagerly. "I probably did not understand everything, for they spoke in low tones, and sometimes I lost the connection. But I heard them talking about my illustrious emperor and master, so, as your majesty meanwhile had awaked, I thought it advisable to inform you that the generals were having a conversation in the drawing-room, because your majesty might perhaps desire to take part in it."

"You did right, Roustan," said the emperor, with the pleasant smile that won every heart; "yes, you did right, and I will reward you for it. You can go to Bourrienne and have him pay you a hundred gold pieces."

"Oh, sire," cried Roustan, "then I shall be very happy, for I shall have a hundred portraits of my worshiped emperor."

"Which you will doubtless scatter to the four winds quickly enough, you spendthrift," exclaimed Napoleon. "But listen, you rogue: besides my hundred gold portraits, I'll give you a bit of advice which is worth more than the gold coins. Forget everything that you have heard to-day, beware of treasuring in your memory even a single word of the generals, or recollecting that you have called my attention to it."

"Sire," replied Roustan, with an expression of astonishment, "Sire, I really do not know what your majesty is talking about, and what I could have said or heard. I only know that my gracious emperor and master has given me a hundred gold napoleons, and present happiness has so overpowered me, so bewildered my senses that I have lost my memory."



The emperor laughed, and as a special proof of his favor pinched the Mameluke's ear so hard that the latter with difficulty concealed his suffering under a smile of delight.

CHAPTER II.

Leonore de Simonie.

Napoleon's word was fulfilled! Scarcely two months had passed when he avenged the battle of Aspern on Austria, and twined fresh laurels of victory around his brow. On the 6th of July a conflict occurred which completed Austria's misfortunes and wrested from her all the advantages which the victory of Aspern had scarcely won.



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The fight of Wagram gave Austria completely into the hands of the victor, made Napoleon again master of the German empire, compelled the Emperor Francis and his whole family to seek refuge in Hungary, and yielded Vienna and its environs to the conqueror's will. The French imperial army, amid the clash of military music, again entered Vienna, whose inhabitants were forced to bow their heads to necessity in gloomy silence, and submit to receiving and entertaining their victorious foes as guests in their homes. The Emperor Napoleon selected Schoenbrunn for his residence, and seemed inclined to rest comfortably there after the fresh victory won at Wagram. It had indeed been a victory, but it had cost great and bloody sacrifices. Thrice a hundred thousand men had confronted each other on this memorable 6th of July, 1809; eight hundred cannon had shaken the earth all day incessantly with their terrible thunder, and the course of their balls was marked on both sides with heaps of corpses. Both armies had fought with tremendous fury and animosity, for the Austrians wished to add fresh laurels to the fame just won at Aspern, the French to regain what the days of Esslingen at least rendered doubtful: the infallibility of success, the conviction that victory would ever be associated with their banners.

It was the fury of the conflict which made the victory uncertain. The Austrians showed themselves heroes on the day of Wagram, and for a long time it seemed as if victory would fall to them. But Napoleon, who seemed to be indefatigable and tireless, who all day long did not leave his horse, directing and planning everything himself, perceived in time the danger of his troops and brought speedy and effective reinforcements to the already yielding left wing of the army. But more than twenty thousand men on both sides had fallen victims on this terrible field. Though Napoleon, in his bulletins of victory, exultingly announced to the world another magnificent triumph, France did not join enthusiastically as usual in the rejoicing of the commander-in-chief, for she had been obliged to pay for the new laurels with the corpses of too many thousands of her sons, and the paeans of victory were drowned by the sighs and lamentations of so many thousand orphaned children, widowed wives, and betrothed maidens.

Napoleon seemed to pay little heed to this; he was enjoying at Schoenbrunn his victory and his triumph; he gathered his brilliant staff around him, gave superb entertainments, and by parades and reviews lured the Viennese to Schoenbrunn to witness the brilliant spectacle.

In Vienna, also, the conquerors arranged magnificent festivals, seeking to win the favor of the conquered people by the amusements offered them. The French governor-general of Vienna, Count Andreossy, zealously endeavored to collect around him the remains of the Austrian aristocracy, attract the society of the capital by elegant dinners, balls, and receptions, and since the armistice of Znaim, which occurred soon after the battle of Wagram had put an end to hostilities the Viennese appeared disposed to accept the truce and attend the brilliant entertainments and pleasant amusements offered by Count Andreossy.

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The latter was not the only person who opened his drawing-rooms to the Viennese; others soon followed; fashionable Parisian society seemed for the time to have transferred its gay circle from Paris to Vienna; to make in the German imperial capital propaganda for the gay, intellectual, and brilliant circle of the imperial capital of France.

Beautiful women, distinguished by illustrious names, by wealth and charm, suddenly appeared in Vienna, opened their drawing-rooms, and seemed to make it their object to reconcile the hostile elements of French and German society, smooth away contrasts and bring them together.

Among these ladies whom the victory brought to Vienna, the beautiful Madame de Simonie was conspicuous as a brilliant and unusual person. She was young, lovely, endowed with rare intellectual gifts, understood how to do the honors of her drawing-room with the most subtle tact, and was better suited than any one to act as mediator between the Viennese and the French, since she herself belonged to both nations. A German by birth, she had married a Frenchman, lived several years in Paris with her husband, one of the richest bankers in the capital, and now, being widowed, had come to Vienna in order, as she said, to divert the minds of her countrymen from the great grief which the loss of their beloved capital caused them.

Beautiful Leonore de Simonie certainly appeared to be thoroughly in earnest in her purpose to divert their minds from their great grief. Every evening her drawing-rooms were thrown open for the reception of guests; every evening all the generals, French courtiers, and people who belonged to good society in France were present; every evening more and more Germans and Viennese went to Madame de Simonie's, until it seemed as if she afforded Viennese and Parisian society a place of meeting where, forgetting mutual aversion and hatred, they associated in love and harmony.

To be a visitor at Madame de Simonie's therefore soon became a synonym of aristocracy in the new fashionable society of Vienna, which was composed of so many different elements. The foreigners who had come to the Austrian capital, attracted by the renown of the French emperor, or led by selfishness, strove with special earnestness to obtain the *entree* to Madame de Simonie's drawing-room, for there they were sure of meeting those whose acquaintance was profitable; by whose meditation they might hope to obtain access to the presence of the French emperor.

The day before Baroness Leonore had given a brilliant entertainment. Until a late hour of the night all the windows of the story which she occupied in one of the palaces on the Graben were brightly lighted; the curious, characterless poor people had gathered in the street to watch the carriages roll up and away, and gaze at the windows whence the candles blazing in the chandeliers shone down upon them, and behind whose panes they saw in swift alternation so many gold-embroidered uniforms, so many showy ball dresses.



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As has been said, it was a brilliant entertainment and the Baroness de Simonie might well be content with it; for though the hostess she had also been its queen. Every one, French as well as Austrians, Russians and Italians, Hungarians and Poles, had offered her enthusiastic homage; had expressed in glowing encomiums their grateful thanks for the magnificent festival she had given.

She had been radiant, too, in grace and beauty yesterday evening. The gayest jests were throned upon her scarlet lips, the proudest light had sparkled in her large black eyes, the most radiant roses of youth had bloomed on her delicate cheeks, and the long black tresses which, with wonderful luxuriance, encircled her high white brow, had been to many the Armida nets in which their hearts were prisoned.

But to-day, on the morning after this festival, all that was left of the brilliant queen of the ball was a pale, exhausted young woman, who lay on the divan with a sorrowful expression in her eyes, while ever and anon deep sighs of pain escaped from her breast.

She was in her boudoir, whose equipments displayed French luxury and taste. Everything about her bore the appearance of wealth, happiness, and pleasure, yet her face was sad—yet Leonore de Simonie sighed—yet her lips sometimes murmured words of lamentation, satiety, even bitter suffering. But suddenly a ray of delight flitted over her face; a happy smile brightened her pale features; and this was when, among the many letters the servant had just brought to her, she discovered the little note which she had just read and then, with passionate impetuosity, pressed to her lips.

“He will come, oh, he will come; he will be with me in an hour!” she whispered, again glancing over the note with beaming, happy eyes, and then thrusting it into her bosom.

“This is mine,” she said softly; “my property; no one shall dispute it with me, and—”

A tremor ran through every limb, a burning blush crimsoned her cheeks, then yielded to a deep pallor—she had heard steps approaching in the drawing-room outside, recognized the voice which called her name.

“He is coming!” she murmured. “It is he! My executioner is approaching to begin the tortures of the rack afresh.”

At that moment the door which led into the apartment really did open, and a little gentleman, daintily and fashionably attired, entered.

“May I venture to pay my respects to Baroness de Simonie?” he asked, pausing at the door and bowing low, with a smiling face.



Leonore did not answer. She lay motionless on the divan, her beautiful figure outstretched at full length, her face calm and indifferent, her large eyes uplifted with a dreamy expression to the ceiling.

“Madame la Baronne does not seem to have heard me,” said the gentleman, shrugging his shoulders. “I ventured to ask the question whether I could pay my respects to you.”



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Still she did not move, did not turn her eyes toward him, but said in a loud, distinct voice: "You see. We are alone! What is the use of playing this farce?"

"Well," he cried, laughing, "your answer shows that we are really alone and need no mask. Good-day, then, Leonore, or rather good-morning, for, as I see, you are still in your dressing-gown and probably have just risen from your couch."

"It was four o'clock in the morning when the guests departed and I could go to rest," she said, still retaining her recumbent attitude.

"It is true, the entertainment lasted a very long time," he cried, dropping unceremoniously into the armchair which stood beside the divan. "Moreover, it is true that you were an admirable hostess and understood how to do the honors of your house most perfectly. The gentlemen were all completely bewitched by you, and, in my character of your uncle and social guide, I received more clasps of the hand and embraces than ever before in my whole life."

"I can imagine how much it amused you," she said coldly and indifferently.

"Yes," he cried, laughing, "I admit that it amused me, especially when I thought what horror and amazement would fill these haughty aristocrats who yesterday offered me their friendship, if they knew who and what we both really were."

"I wish they did know," she said quietly.

"Heaven forbid!" he cried, starting up. "What put such a mad, preposterous wish into your head?"

"I am bored," she replied. "I am weary of perpetually playing a farce."

"But how are we playing a farce?" he asked in astonishment. "We are trying to make our fortune, or as the French more correctly express it, *Nous corrigous notre fortune*. Why do you call it playing a farce?"

"Because we pretend to be what we are not, honest aristocrats."

"My dear, you are combining what is rarely put together in life; for you see aristocratic people are rarely honest, and honest folk are seldom aristocrats."

"But we are neither," she said quietly.

"The more renown for us that we appear to be both," he cried, laughing, "and that no one suspects us. My dear Leonore seems to have an attack of melancholy to-day, which I have never witnessed in her before, and which renders me suspicious."



“Suspicious?” she asked, and, for the first time, turned her head slightly, fixing her eyes with a questioning glance upon the old man who sat beside her, nodding and smiling. “Suspicious! I don’t know what you mean.”

“Well, I really did not intend to say anything definite,” he replied, smiling. “I only meant that it is strange to see you suddenly so depressed by your position, which hitherto so greatly amused you. And, because this seemed strange, I sought—searching you know is a trait of human nature—I sought the cause of this new mood.”

“Do you think you have found it?” she asked carelessly.



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"Perhaps so," he said, smiling. "The most clever and experienced woman may be deluded by love, and suffer her reason to be clouded by sweet, alluring visions."

"You mean that I have done so?"

"Yes, that is what I mean; but it gives me no further anxiety, for I have confidence that your reason will soon conquer your heart. So I do not grudge you the rare satisfaction of enjoying the bliss of being loved. Only I warn you not to take the matter seriously and strive to make the dream a reality."

"And if that should happen, what would you do?"

"I would be inexorable," he answered sternly. "I would tell who and what you are."

She lay motionless; her face still retained its calm, indifferent expression, only for a moment an angry flash darted from her eyes at the old gentleman, but she lowered her lids over them, as if they must not betray the secrets of her soul.

A pause followed, interrupted only by the slow, regular ticking of the great Rococo clock which stood on the marble mantelpiece.

"You will not find it necessary to make such disclosures," Leonore said at last, slowly and wearily, "for you are perfectly right, I shall never grant love the mastery over my future. I know who I am, and that says everything. It will never be requisite to communicate it to others."

"I am sure of it," he said kindly. "And now, my dear Leonore, let us say nothing about our private affairs and pass on to business."

"Yes, let us do so," she answered quietly. "I am waiting for your questions."

"Then first: what did Count Andreossy want, when he begged for an interview so urgently yesterday evening?"

"You were listening?" she asked calmly.

"I heard it. I would gladly have listened to your conversation, but you were malicious enough to grant him the interview in the little corner drawing-room, which has but a single entrance. So it was impossible to enter it unnoticed. Well, what did the count want?"

"He wanted to tell me that he loved me unutterably. He wanted to implore the favor of accepting from him the *coupe* with the two dapple-grays, in which he drove me yesterday, and which I had praised."



“I hope that you granted the favor.”

“I did. The equipage will be sent to-day.”

“The dapple-grays are remarkably beautiful,” said the old gentleman, rubbing his hands contentedly. “They are worth at least a thousand florins, and the *coupe* is a model of elegance and beauty. The count received it from Paris a fortnight ago. But how did you repay Andreossy for his regal gift?”

“I told him that I detested him, and that he need never hope for my love.”

“Yet you accepted his gift?” he asked, smiling.

“Yes. I accepted it because he entreated it as the first and greatest favor, and because, after the deep sorrow I had caused him, I could not help granting so small a boon.”



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“Magnificent!” he cried, laughing; “you talk like a reigning queen, accepting gifts from her vassal. Then the count loves you passionately, does he not?”

“He loves nothing except himself and his ambition. He would like to obtain the title of prince from Napoleon.”

“And he believes that you could aid him?”

“Indirectly, yes. If I help him to discover an affair which is of great importance to the emperor, and for whose disclosure he could not fail to reward Count Andreossy.”

“What kind of an affair?”

“A conspiracy,” she said quietly.

“A conspiracy? Against whom?”

“Against the Emperor Napoleon. Andreossy naturally believes me to be an enthusiastic admirer of his emperor, and therefore he imparted to me his fears and conjectures. The point in question is a widespread conspiracy, which is said to exist in the French army and have assistants among the Austrians.”

“And *you*? Do you believe in this conspiracy?”

“I am on the track and perhaps shall soon be able to give the particulars. Only it requires time and great caution and secrecy. Let me say no more now, but I promise that I will be active and watchful. Only I make one condition.”

“What is that?”

“If I succeed in discovering this conspiracy, delivering the leaders into your hands, giving the emperor undeniable proofs of the existence of this plot, perhaps even saving his life by the disclosure; if I succeed, as I said, in doing all this, then you will release me and permit me to leave Vienna.”

“To go where?”

“Wherever I wish, only alone, only not—”

“Only not with you, you wanted to say,” he added, completing the sentence. “My child, you see that I was right in remarking that a change had taken place in you. Formerly you were glad to be with me; you never felt a wish to leave me; formerly it was your ardent desire to occupy a brilliant position in society, to be rich, aristocratic, brilliant, influential; and now, when you have attained all this, now you are still unsatisfied, now you long to resign all this again. But you will reflect, Leonore; you will listen to reason.



You will consider what we have suffered from the pettiness, the pitifulness, the arrogance, and the selfishness of men. You will remember how often you vowed, with angry tears, to avenge yourself some day for all that we have suffered. Remember, child, remember! Have you forgotten how we starved and pined, when your mother died, because we were so poor that, in her illness, we could not give her the necessary nursing, could not pay a doctor. Have you forgotten how we both knelt beside her corpse and, with tears of grief and anger, swore to avenge the death of the poor sufferer upon cruel men, base society?"

"I know it, father, yes, I know it," she answered, panting for breath, as she slowly raised her hands and pressed them on her bosom as if to force down the anguish within. "Ah, yes, I shall never forget it! That was the hour when we both sold ourselves to hell."



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“Until that time I had been an honest man,” he continued. “I had toiled in honest ways to obtain support for my family and myself. I had earnestly endeavored to make my knowledge profitable—humble enough to be willing to teach for the lowest price, to offer my services everywhere. But I could get no employment; people wanted no teacher of music; everywhere I was pitilessly turned away. During the mournful years of war which had closed in upon us, no one wanted to spend his money for a useless art, which perhaps could be used only for dirges. A music-teacher was the most unnecessary and useless of mortals, and the music-teacher felt this, and was ready to become wood-cutter, laborer, street-sweeper, anything to procure food for his sick wife, his only child, to brighten their impoverished, sorrowful lives with a ray of comfort. But it was all in vain; the poor music-teacher found employment nowhere; he might have starved in the midst of the great city, surrounded by wealthy people who, with arrogant bearing, daily drove in brilliant equipages past him and his misery. For his part, he would gladly have died, for what value could his wretched, pitiful life have to him! But he had a daughter, the only creature whom he loved; she was his happiness, his hope, and his joy. His daughter must not starve; must not suffer from the wretched needs of existence; must not crawl in the dust, while others, less beautiful, less good, less gifted, enjoyed life in luxury and splendor. Chance betrayed an important secret to the poor musician. He knew that on the one side a large sum would be paid for his silence, on the other for his speech. He went and sold himself! He went to warn some, to save others if it were possible.”

“I know,” she said, panting for breath. “You are speaking of the assassination of the ambassadors in Rastadt.”

“Yes, Count Lehrbach’s valet, in a drunken spree, betrayed his master’s secret, so I learned the fine business, and could warn the envoys, could warn Lehrbach to take stronger precautions. It was my first trial, and it was well paid.”

“The poor envoys paid for it with their lives,” she cried, shuddering.

“That was their own fault. Why didn’t they listen to my warning? Why didn’t they delay their departure until the following morning? I knew that in the evening a whole detachment of Hussars was stationed on the highway which they must pass. I told them so, and warned them. But they did not believe me; they were reckless enough to set out, and I only succeeded in persuading them to burn their important papers and arm themselves. True, this was useless. They were butchered by the Hussars. One alone, Jean Dubarry, escaped, and I may say that I saved him; for I discovered him in the tree up which he had climbed in his mortal terror, took him to a safe hiding-place, and informed the French authorities in Rastadt. Yes, I saved his life, and therefore I can say that I began my new life with a good deed,



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and did not entirely sell myself to the devil. Since that time I have led a changeful, stirring existence, often in danger of getting a bullet in my head, or a rope around my neck. But what has given me courage to deride, defy all these perils? The thought of my child, my beautiful, beloved daughter Leonore. I had taken her to Paris, and placed her in one of the most fashionable boarding schools. I wished to have her trained to be an aristocratic lady. I had told her all my plans for the future, and as, like me, she despised the world and human beings, she had approved those plans and solemnly vowed by the memory of her mother, murdered by want, famine, and grief, to avenge herself with me upon society—wrest from it what formerly it had so cruelly denied: wealth, honor, and distinction.”

“And I think I have kept my oath,” she said earnestly. “I have entered into all your plans; I have accepted the part which you imposed upon me, and for three years have played it with success. Baroness von Vernon was as useful to you in Berlin the last two years, as Baroness de Simonie is now in Vienna. She aided you in all your plans, entered into your designs, pitilessly betrayed all who trusted her and whose secrets she stole by craft, falsehood, and hypocrisy.”

“Why did they allow them to be stolen?” he said, shrugging his shoulders. “Why were they so reckless as to trust a beautiful woman, when experience teaches that all women lie, deceive, and are incapable of keeping a secret? They must bear the consequences of their own folly; we need not reproach ourselves for it.”

“I do not reproach myself,” she said, “only life bores me. I long for rest, for peace, for solitude around me, that I may not be so unutterably lonely within.”

“You wish to conceal the truth from me, Leonore,” he cried, shrugging his shoulders, “but I know it. You are in love, my child, and since, as I suppose, this is your first love, it cannot fail to be very passionate and transfigure all humanity with a roseate glow. But wait! that will pass away and you will soon be disenchanted. Hush! do not answer; do not try to contradict me; lovers’ reasons have no convincing power. We will leave everything to time and say no more about it. Let us rather talk about the great affair, which you just mentioned, and which certainly might greatly promote our prosperity. Then you really believe in a conspiracy?”

“I do. I know some of the accomplices and shall succeed in discovering others. But I repeat, I will do nothing in regard to this matter until you have granted my condition.”



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“Are you serious, Leonore?” he asked sorrowfully. “You would leave me, your father? You wish to abandon the task which we imposed upon ourselves? For you know that we had set ourselves the purpose of becoming rich in order to trample under our feet those who scorned and ill-treated us when we were poor. But there is still much to be done ere we attain our goal. It is true that I am well paid; for I am always paid for my life, which is risked in every one of my enterprises. You, too, are well paid; for a magnificently furnished home with a monthly income of six thousand francs is a liberal compensation. But my proud, aristocratic Leonore knows little about economy, and she has arranged her housekeeping on so regal a scale that I shall scarcely succeed in putting a trifle aside for her every month. Besides, consider that the engagement is liable to be cancelled at any moment, and that the least error, the most trivial suspicion of your trustworthiness will suffice to hurl you back into oblivion. No, Leonore, I must not enter into your ecstasy, and I will not. You must remain with me; you must fulfill the vow you made and, holding my hand, pursue the path into which despair and contempt for mankind has led us.”

“And if I will not?” she asked, sitting erect, and, for the first time during this whole conversation, permitting the passionate agitation of her soul to be mirrored in her face. “If I will not? If I have resolved to fly from this life of shameful splendor, gilded falsehood, whitewashed crime?”

“Then I shall hold you in it by force,” he cried, grasping her arm violently. “And do you know how? I will inform the man you love who you are, and, believe me, he will turn from you with contempt and loathing; he will not follow you into the paradise of solitude into which you would fain escape with him. Listen, Leonore, and weigh my words. We have gone too far for return ever to be possible, therefore we must press forward, steadily forward! Whoever has once sold himself to the devil can never hope to transform himself once more into an angel. Therefore he must be on his guard against nothing so rigidly as repentance, moods of virtuous atonement! You are now suffering from such a mood; it is my duty to cure you of it, and I know the medicine which can heal. So listen. If you do not swear, solemnly, swear, to continue, without wavering or delay, to play the part which you perform with so much talent and success, I will await Baron Kolbielsky here and tell him who you are.”

“You will not do that,” she shrieked, throwing herself from the divan upon her knees; “no, father, you will not. You will have pity on me, for I will confess it to you: I love him. He is my first, my only love, and for his sake, oh! solely for his sake, I would fain again be good, pure, virtuous. So have pity on me, do not betray me.”

“Will you swear to remain Madame de Simonie? To make no change in your present mode of life? To fulfill the duties which you have undertaken, and pursue your task with zeal and cleverness?”



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"If I do, will you then promise not to betray me?"

"If you do, I will devote all my craft, cunning, and boldness to the one purpose of making us rich; will put all means in motion, in order, when we are wealthy, to give you the happiness of living with your lover in some secluded corner of the world."

"You do not say that you will not betray me. Swear it."

"I swear that I will betray to no human being who and what you are, as soon as you swear to remain what you are and to fulfill your duties."

"Well then," she groaned faintly, "I swear it: I will remain what I am; I will make no attempt to fly from this life of disgrace and crime."

"My dear Leonore," he said kindly, "now we have taken our mutual vows and understand each other. All differences are settled, and we are once more sure of each other."

"Yes, we are sure of each other," she repeated with a melancholy smile, slowly rising from her knees and drawing her figure proudly to its full height. "I will take up my part again and you shall hear no more complaints from me, father. Have you any further questions to ask?"

"Really," he exclaimed, gazing at her with sparkling eyes, "really, you are an admirable woman. Just now a despairing, penitent Magdalen, and once more a Judith ready for battle or a Delilah who is joyfully ready to cut Samson's locks and deliver him to the Philistines. Tell me, is there a Samson whom you will deliver to us?"

"More than one," she cried; "for I tell you that there is a conspiracy, and I already know three of the members. The object is to discover the others. So give me time and trust me."

"May I speak of it to the emperor now?"

"You may warn him, throw out hints, fix your price. For as you have said, we must be rich to be free and happy. Demand a high price of blood, that we may be rich."

"Blood-money! Then it is a very serious matter. Blood will be shed! Ay, blood will be shed! Heads will fall!" she cried with flashing eyes. "But what do we care for that? We shall be paid for betraying the traitors, and, when we have gained wealth, no one will ask from what bloody source it came. Wealth reconciles, equalizes everything. So we will be rich, rich. And now, uncle, listen. Baroness de Simonie will give another entertainment to-morrow. She will invite all her friends and acquaintances, but especially Count Andreossy's aids, Colonel Mariage, Captain de Guesniard, Lieutenant-colonel Schweitzer, the two Counts von Poldring, and moreover a number of French



and Austrian officers, magistrates and ladies. It must be a brilliant fete—all the rooms crowded with people, that some, without attracting attention, may be able to retire and hold a familiar conversation.”

“Of course, of course, my beautiful Leonore, and as your uncle and major-domo, I will do everything in my power for your honor! And now, my child, farewell! I will go to Schoenbrunn, to report to the emperor. Farewell, and be brave, happy, and joyous. Believe me, men do not deserve to be pitied, far less to be loved. The day will soon come when my Leonore will perceive this and strip the enthusiasm of love from her heart as calmly as the glove from her fair hand. Farewell, you lovely Baroness de Simonie!”



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CHAPTER III.

BARON VON KOLBIELSKY.

Leonore had accompanied her father into the anteroom and listened in breathless silence to his departing footsteps.

Then, rushing to the window, she threw it open and gazed down into the street. Yes, she saw him enter a carriage and drive off in it, turning once to nod to her.

With a sigh of relief she went back to her boudoir. Her whole being seemed transformed. Her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkled, and a happy smile hovered around her lips as she glanced at the clock.

"Twelve!" she cried joyously, "twelve! He will come! I shall see him again. Ah, there he is! There he is!"

She darted to the door to open it. She had not been mistaken. *He* was there, the man whom she expected. With a cry of joy he opened his arms, and she threw herself into them, clasping her arms around his neck, and laid her head upon his breast.

"Welcome, my beloved one, welcome! Oh, how delightful it is to rest upon your breast!"

"And what happiness to clasp you in my arms, Leonore! Raise your head, my sweet love; let me see your beautiful face and sun myself in your eyes."

She lifted her face to his, gazing at him with a happy smile. "I see myself in your eyes, dearest."

"And you would see yourself in my heart also, if you could look into it, Leonore. But come, my queen, sit down and let me rest at your feet and look up to you as I always do in spirit."

He accompanied her to the divan and pressed her down upon the silken cushions. Then, reclining at her feet, he laid his clasped hands in her lap and resting his chin upon them, gazed up at her.

"Do you really love me, Leonore? Can you, the proud, petted, much courted Baroness de Simonie, really love the poor adventurer, who has nothing, is nothing, calls nothing his own, not even his heart, for that belongs to you."

"I love you, because you are what you are," she said, smiling, stroking his black hair lightly with her little white hand.



“I love you because you are different from every one else; because what attracts others does not charm you; what terrifies others does not intimidate you; I love you precisely because you are the poor adventurer you call yourself. Thank heaven that you are no sensible, prudent, deliberate gentleman, who longs for titles and orders, for money and position, but the clever adventurer who calls nothing his own save his honor, seeks nothing save peril, loves nothing save—”

“Loves nothing save Leonore,” he ardently interrupted. “Believe me, it is so! I love nothing save you, and, until I knew you, I did not know even love, only hate.”

“Hate?” she asked, smiling. “And whom did you hate, my loved one?”

“The foes of my native land,” he cried, while a dark, angry flush swept over his handsome, expressive face, and his dark eyes flashed more brightly.



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“The foes of your native land?” she repeated, smiling. “And who are these hated foes?”

“The Prussians and the Emperor Napoleon. It was the Prussians who first dismembered my hapless country. Oh, I was but a little boy when the Empress Catharine and King Frederick stole the fairest portions of hapless Poland. I did not understand my mother’s tears, my father’s execrations, but as my father commanded me, I laid my hand upon the Bible and vowed eternal, inextinguishable hatred of the Prussians. And the boy’s vow has been kept by the man. I have struggled ceaselessly against these ambitious land-greedy, avaricious Prussians; fought with my tongue, my sword, and my pen. And when at last, at Jena, they were vanquished and forced to bow to the very dust, I exulted, for their defeat was Poland’s vengeance. God was requiting the wrong they had done to Poland. Since then I have no longer hated the Prussians, but I despise them.”

“And whom do you hate now?” she asked, gazing lovingly at him with her large, dreamy eyes.

“Him, the traitor, the actor, and liar, the Emperor Napoleon!” he cried, starting up and pacing excitedly to and fro. “Ah, Leonore, why did you lay your hand upon the great, ever-aching wound in my heart? Why did you ask about my hate when I wished to speak to you only of my love? Why do you wish to see that my heart is bleeding when you ought only to know that it exults in love? Yet perhaps it is better so; better that you should behold it wholly without disguise; that you should know it not only loves, but hates. Leonore, all my love is yours, all my hate Napoleon’s. I came to Vienna by the behest of my hate, and for the first time, I found here what I had never known—love. Hitherto my heart had belonged to my native land, now it is yours, Leonore. The poor adventurer, who, under manifold forms, in manifold disguises, under many names, had wandered through the world, always in the service of his native land and vengeance, has now found a home at your feet, and it sometimes happens that he forgets grief for his country in the joy of his love. And yet, Leonore, yet there are bitter, sorrowful hours, in which I execrate my love itself; in which I feel that I will rend it from my heart; that I must escape from it into the hate which hitherto has guided and fixed my whole existence.”

“If you feel and think thus, you do not love me,” she said mournfully.

“Yes, I love you, Leonore; love you with rapture, with anguish, with despair, with joy. Yet I ask myself what will be the goal and end of this love? I ask myself when this sun, which has shone upon me through one beautiful, splendid day, will set?”

“It will never set, unless by your desire,” she cried, putting her arms around his neck and bending to imprint a kiss upon his brow.



“It will set, for I am not created to live in sunshine and enjoy happiness. My life belongs to my native land! I have sworn to consecrate it to my country, and I must keep my oath. I dare not give myself up to love until I have done enough for hate; I dare not enjoy happiness ere I have fulfilled vengeance.”



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“Vengeance, my dearest? On whom do you wish to take vengeance?”

“On him who stole my native land; who deluded us for years with false hopes, with lying promises; who promised us liberty and in return gave us bondage. I seek to avenge my country on Napoleon—”

“Hush! for God’s sake, hush!” she cried, trembling violently, as she pressed her hand upon his lips. “Do not utter such words; do not venture even to think them; for even thoughts bring danger, and speech will bring you death.”

“Ah,” he cried, laughing, “does my proud, royal Leonore fear? Does she fear in her own house, in her boudoir, where love alone can hear?”

“And hate,” she said anxiously. “For you say that not only love, but hate, dwells in your heart.”

“But not in yours, Leonore. No, in your heart dwells only love, and I will trust it. Yes, you beautiful, glorious woman, I will give you a proof of my infinite love and confidence. You shall know my secrets and I will tell you what I have yet betrayed to no woman on earth.”

“No, no,” she cried vehemently; “no, I will hear nothing. I do not wish to know your secrets; for I might reveal them in my sleep. They might fill my soul with such anguish and terror, that they would occupy it even in slumber, and I might tell in my dreams what I certainly would not disclose in waking, though I were exposed to the tortures of the rack. Oh, love, I fear your secrets, and I fear that they threaten you with peril! Give them up. If my love has any power over you, I entreat you: renounce them. Resign all your plans of hate and vengeance! Cast thoughts of anger from you! You have lived and labored for your native land long enough. Now, my love, dismiss hatred from your heart, and yield it to love! Renounce vengeance and allow yourself happiness! You say that you love me—give me a proof of it, a divine, beautiful proof! Let us fly, my beloved one, fly from this world of falsehood, treachery, hate, and anger, to conceal ourselves in a quiet corner of the earth, where no one knows us, where the noise of the world does not penetrate, where we shall learn nothing more of its dissensions and wars, where only love and peace will dwell with us; where, clasped in each other’s embrace, we can rest on Nature’s bosom and receive from her healing for all our wounds, comfort for all our losses. Oh, let us fly, for I know well that, so long as you are here—here in this world of strife and intrigue—you will not be mine; you cannot wrench yourself away from the numerous relations which hold and bind you, draw you into their perilous circle. Give them up. Let us rend these bonds which fetter you and will drag you to destruction. Let us go to America; far, far away to some quiet, unknown valley, where there are no human beings, and therefore there will be no falsehood and no treachery, no battles and strife. There let us dwell in the divine peace of creation; live as Adam and Eve lived in Paradise, quietly and at rest in the precincts of pure human happiness.”



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“And you would, you could, do this for me?” he asked, gazing with admiring eyes at her glowing face, radiant with enthusiasm. “You, the petted queen of society, the spoiled, delicate daughter of luxury and wealth, you could resolve to lead a quiet, simple, unknown life, far from the world and men?”

“Oh,” she exclaimed, “such an existence would be my happiness, my ecstasy, my bliss. I would greet it exultingly. I long for it with all the powers of my soul, all the fervor of my heart. Give it to me, my beloved; give us both this life of solitude and divine peace. Speak one word—say that you are ready to fly with me—I will arrange everything for our escape; will guide us both to liberty, to happiness. Speak this one word, and I will sever every tie that binds me to the world; my future and my life will belong to you alone. We will strip off all the luxury that surrounds us as the glittering snake-skin with which we have concealed our real natures, and escape into the solitude as free, happy children of God. If such a life of peace and rest does not satisfy you; if you wish to labor and create, be useful to mankind, we can find the opportunity. We will buy a tract of land in America, gather around us people to cultivate it, create a little state whose prince you will be, which you will render free and happy and content. Say that you will, my loved one; tell me that you will make my golden dreams of the future a reality—oh, tell me so and you will render me the proudest and happiest of women. My dearest, you have so long devoted your life to hate, consecrate it now to love; let yourself be borne away by it. It will move mountains and fly on the wings of the morning through every realm. Hitherto you have called Poland your native land—now let love be your country, and you shall find it on my breast. Come, my darling, come! My arms are opened to embrace you; they are ready to bear you away, far away from this battle-rent, blood-soaked Europe. Save yourself, my beloved, save me! Come to my arms, let us fly to America!”

She held out her arms, gazing at him with a happy, loving smile. But he did not rise from his knees to fall upon her breast; he only bowed his head lower and kissed the hem of her dress—kissed her feet, which he pressed to his bosom.

“Alas!” he sighed sadly, “this little foot, in its white satin shoe, is not created for the rough paths of life; it would be torn and blood-stained by their thorns, and the fault would be mine. No, my sweet love, you shall not for my sake renounce the world of pleasure and splendor whose queen you are, even though you wish it, and perhaps even long for the peace and quiet of solitude. I must not accompany you thither, must not be faithless to myself. For the most terrible and inconsolable thing which can befall a man is to be faithless to himself and turn from the way which he himself has chosen, and from the goals which he himself has appointed.



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But I should do this, Leonore, if I renounced the goals and efforts of my whole past life, and turned from what I have hitherto regarded as the most sacred purpose of my existence. You yourself, Leonore, cannot wish it, for then how could you trust my fidelity, my love, if, for your sake, I could be untrue to my native land, my sacred duty. No, Leonore, my heart is yours, but my brain and life belong to my country. I came to Vienna to serve it. The great patriots of Poland sent me here. 'Go to Austria, they said, and serve there the sacred cause of freedom and human dignity.' And I went, and am here to serve it. Many are in the league with me, struggling with me toward the same goal. No one knows the others, but in the decisive hour we shall all work together for the one great object. And this hour will soon come; all the preparations are made, all the plans are matured. It is approaching. The great hour of sacred vengeance is approaching. You do not wish me to initiate you into my secrets, Leonore, and I now feel that you are right, for every sharer in these secrets is imperiled by them, and I will not draw you, my beloved one, into the dangerous circle, where I am bound. But if a gracious destiny grants our plans success, if the great venture which we have determined upon succeeds, then, Leonore, I will come to you, hold out my hand, and exultingly repeat the question which to-day I dare only to whisper timorously: Leonore, will you be my wife?"

She did not answer immediately, but covered her glowing face with her hands, while her whole frame trembled with emotion. "Oh," she groaned sorrowfully, "you will never repeat the question, for you will perish in the dangers which you are preparing for yourself."

"No," he cried joyously, "I shall not perish in them, and I shall come to repeat my question. Believe me, love, and be glad and strong. Do not fear for me, and forgive me if, during the next few days, I keep away from you. The last preparations for our great enterprise are to be made; all my strength of mind, all the courage of my soul must be summoned, and perhaps I might be cowardly and weak if I should see you, gaze into your beloved face, and think of the possibility that I was beholding it for the last time; that death might clasp me in his arms ere I again pressed you to my heart. So I will bid you farewell, my dearest, farewell for a week. During this time, remember me, pray for me, and love me. A week, my dear one, then I will return to you; and then, oh, then may I be permitted never to leave you again; then perhaps we shall make the dream of your heart a reality, and in some valley of the New World seek for ourselves a new world of happiness."

He again pressed her closely in his arms and imprinted a long, ardent kiss upon her lips. "Farewell, beloved, farewell for a week, an eternity."

"Do not say that; do not talk so!" she cried, trembling, as she threw her arms around his neck and clung closely to him. "Oh, do not speak of an eternity of separation, as you



bid me farewell, or my arms will hold you to draw you by force from the dangers that threaten you; my lips will betray you by calling for help and accusing you of a conspiracy, merely to save you—compel you to renounce your perilous plans.”



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“If you should do that, Leonore; if even for love of me you could become a traitress, I would kill myself, but ere I died I would curse you and invoke heaven’s vengeance upon you! But why conjure up such terrible pictures! I know that my Leonore would be incapable of treachery, and that, during this week of separation, no word, no look, no hint, will betray that her mind is anxious and that some care oppresses her.”

“I swear to you that by no word, no look, no hint will I betray anything,” she said solemnly. “I swear that I will not even attempt to guess your secrets, in order not to be disturbed by them. But one question more, dearest. I shall give an entertainment to-morrow. Count Andreossy, Colonels Mariage and Schweitzer, Captain de Guesniard, and the two Counts von Poldring will be present, as well as Generals Berthier and Massena, and several men who are prominent in aristocratic Austrian society. Will you not attend my reception? Will you not come to-morrow?”

“No,” he replied, “no, I cannot attend gay entertainments now. My week of exile begins from this hour, and the first festival for me will be when I again clasp you in my arms. And now, dearest, let me go. This last kiss on your eyes—do not open them until I have left you; for your eyes exert a magic power, and if they are gazing at me I shall not have courage to go. Farewell, my beloved star, farewell, and when you rise for me once more, may it be for the radiant hour of a reunion, unshadowed by fresh pangs of parting.”

He pressed a last lingering kiss upon her eyes. She submitted and sat quietly with closed lids and clasped hands until the door had closed behind him and the sound of his steps died away in the anteroom.

Then she slipped from the divan upon her knees, and, raising her hands to heaven, cried: “I thank Thee, oh God, I thank Thee. He is not one of the conspirators; he has no share in these plans; for he is not coming to the entertainment to-morrow, and therefore does not belong to those who have their secret appointment with me. Oh, God be praised for it, and may He guard and protect him in all his enterprises! I do not wish to know them; I will not investigate them. Thou, oh God, canst shield and defend him. Thou alone!”

CHAPTER IV.

BARON VON MOUDENFELS.

Colonel Mariage, alone in his room, was pacing restlessly up and down, with his eyes fixed intently, almost anxiously, upon the door.

“The appointed hour has come and he is not here,” he murmured in a low tone. “Has suspicion been roused, and have they arrested him? Oh, God forbid! then we should all



be lost, for we are all compromised, and letters from me, also, would be found among his papers.”

At this moment the door was softly opened and the servant announced “Baron von Moudenfels.”



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“He is welcome, heartily welcome!” cried the colonel joyfully, swiftly advancing toward the door, through which the person announced had just entered the room. It was an old man with a long white beard, his head covered with a large wig, whose stiff, powdered locks adorned the temples on both sides of his pale, emaciated face. Thick, bushy brows shaded a pair of large dark eyes, whose youthful fire formed a strange contrast to the bowed frame and the white hair. His figure, which must once have been stately and vigorous, was attired in the latest fashion, and the elegance of his dress showed that Baron von Moudenfels, though a man perhaps seventy, had not yet done with the vanities of this world, but was ready to pay them homage. In his right hand, over which fell a broad lace cuff, he held an artistically carved cane, on whose gold handle he leaned, as he moved wearily forward, and a pin with beautiful diamonds glittered in the huge lace jabot on his breast.

Colonel Mariage held out both hands to the old man, but the baron contented himself with placing the finger-tips of the little hand adorned with glittering rings in the colonel’s right hand a moment, and then sank into the armchair, panting for breath.

“Pardon me,” he gasped, “but the exertion of climbing your two long flights of stairs has exhausted my strength, and I must rest. You probably see that I am a poor, fragile old man, who has but a few steps to take to his grave.”

“But who will probably carefully avoid them,” replied the colonel, smiling. “You are, as you say, an old man, but in this aged form dwells a fiery, youthful soul, whose strength of will will support the body so long as it needs the aid.”

“So long as it is necessary to the native land, yes,” cried the baron eagerly; “so long as there are foes to fight, friends to aid. Yes, the last years of my life belong to my native land and the foes who oppress it, and I know that I shall not die until I have attained the object of my life, until I have helped to overthrow the tyrant who has not only rendered my native land, Germany, wretched, but is also hurling his own country, France, into ruin.”

Colonel Mariage glanced around the room with a hasty, anxious look. “For heaven’s sake,” he whispered, “don’t speak so loud, baron; who knows whether my valet is not a paid spy; whether he is not standing at the door listening to betray me at once to Count Andreossy, or even to the emperor.”

“My dear colonel,” said the baron, smiling, “that is why it is quite time that we should secure you against such treason, and remove those who threaten you.”

“What do you mean by that, baron?” asked the colonel timidly. “What are you saying?”



“I am saying that the great hour of decision is approaching,” replied the baron solemnly. “I mean that ere a week has passed, the world will be released from the yoke which oppresses it—released from the evil demon, Napoleon.”

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The colonel, without answering even by a word, crossed the large apartment, and with a swift jerk opened the door leading into the anteroom. Then, after convincing himself that no one was near, he closed it, and made a tour of the spacious room, carefully examining every *portiere*, every article of furniture, and at last approached the baron, who had been watching him with a quiet, scornful smile.

“Now, my dear baron, speak,” he said, taking his seat in an armchair opposite to him. “We are really alone and without listeners, so I am ready to hear you. Do you bring news from our friends? News from France, especially?”

“Yes, news from France. I mean news from the Minister of Police, Fouche. Do you know, my dear sir, that Fouche is very much dissatisfied with his beloved fellow conspirators; that he thinks they have not acted so resolutely and energetically as might have been expected from the brave generals and colonels of the French army?”

“Why should he be dissatisfied?” asked the colonel. “What ought we to have done? When and where could we have acted more energetically?”

“At Castle Ebersdorf, my dear colonel. Surely you know that, after the battle of Aspern, when Napoleon left his exhausted and conquered army on the island of Lobau, and went to Castle Ebersdorf himself to enjoy a refreshing sleep after his first great defeat.”

“Yes, that sleep was really singular enough,” said Mariage thoughtfully. “The emperor slept soundly twenty-two hours; slept so soundly, in so motionless a posture, breathing so softly, that he might have been believed to be dead, and did not even hear his drunken soldiers force their way into the castle garden, and, with furious shouts, plunder and destroy everything until our representations and entreaties forced them to retire.”

“Yes, the emperor fell into a deathlike slumber and would have been unable to resist or to defend himself had he been bound and gagged and quietly carried away. Yet what did the generals and colonels who had assembled in the large reception-hall close beside the sleeping emperor’s private office? What did the gentlemen who all belonged to the secret league which has existed in the French army four years, and whose object is to overthrow the hated tyrant and oppressor? Did they avail themselves of the opportunity to attain this desired goal with a single bold stroke? No, they stood whispering and irresolute, asking one another what should be done if Napoleon did not wake from his deathlike slumber—who should then be his heir to the throne of France? Whether they should make Bernadotte, the Prince of Ponte Corvo, or Eugene, the Viceroy of Italy, or the Count of Provence, who styles himself Louis XVIII., king of France, or again restore the great and glorious republic? And since they could not agree upon these questions, they did nothing at all, but contented themselves with sending a secret envoy to Paris to ask Fouche what should be done, how they should act in such a case, and what counsel he had to give.”



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“But how do you know all this so accurately?” asked the colonel in surprise. “One would really suppose you had been present, yet I distinctly remember that this was not the case.”

“No, I was not; but you probably know that a certain Commissioner Kraus was there. Bernadotte had made the acquaintance of this Herr Kraus at Colonel Oudet’s, who, as is well-known, is the head of the secret society, which existed in the French army, and to whose laws all members, or, if you choose, all fellow-conspirators, were compelled to submit. Oudet had recommended Kraus to the Prince of Ponte Corvo as a faithful and reliable man, a skillful negotiator, who was qualified to maintain and to promote the agreements and alliances between the French conspirators and the German patriots, and who could be employed without fear or reserve. Well, this Commissioner Kraus, as you probably know, had come to Ebersdorf to negotiate in behalf of myself and my German friends, and to ask whether the time had not now come to accomplish the great work and rid Germany of the scourge which God had sent in punishment of all her sins. Commissioner Kraus described that scene in the great hall of Castle Ebersdorf. He returned as your messenger, and brought us the news that we must keep quiet and wait for further tidings, and, after bringing this message, he went to Paris to Fouche, the minister of police, to deliver the letter and inquiry of the conspirators.”

“And he has not yet returned,” said Mariage, sighing. “Some misfortune has befallen him; the emperor’s spies have doubtless tracked him, and he has atoned for his reckless enterprise with his life.”

“No, Kraus is too clever and too bold to let himself be discovered by Napoleon’s spies,” said the baron with a subtle smile, “and, since Monsieur Bonaparte must fare like the worthy citizens of Nuremberg who hang no one until they have caught him, Commissioner Kraus has not been compelled to atone for his bold enterprise with his life, but has returned successful and unharmed.”

“What? He has returned?”

“Four days ago.”

“Four days ago, and I, we all, know nothing of it?”

“Yes, I knew it. Surely you are aware that Fouche was not to direct his reply directly to any one of you, to a subject of the emperor, in order, in case of discovery, to compromise no one. So Fouche addressed his reply to me; for if the letter had actually been opened, it could have done Baron von Moudenfels no harm, since fortunately I am not one of the emperor’s subjects, and what he could punish in you as high-treason, he must recognize in us Germans as patriotism.”



“But the letter, Fouche’s answer!” said Mariage impatiently. “Pray do not keep me on the rack any longer. What does Fouche write?”

“Why, his letter is tolerably laconic, and one must understand how to read between the lines to interpret the meaning correctly. Here it is. You see that it is directed to me—Baron von Moudenfels—and contains nothing but the following words: ‘Why ask me anything, when you ought already to have accomplished everything yourselves? Put him in a sack, drown him in the Danube—then all will be easily arranged everywhere.’”[C]



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“For heaven’s sake,” cried the colonel, pale and horror-stricken, “what does Fouche mean? Of whom is he speaking?”

“Why, of whom except Bonaparte, or, as he likes to call himself, the Emperor Napoleon!” said the baron coolly. “And you will admit that Fouche is right. If, at Ebersdorf, the sleeping Bonaparte had been thrust into a sack and flung into the Danube, the whole affair would have been ended in the most successful and shortest way, instead of our now being obliged to rack our brains and plunge into dangers of every kind to attain the same goal which we were then so near without peril or trouble. But it is useless to complain; we must rather be mindful to seize the best means of repairing the omission.”

“Has Fouche given no counsel, suggested no plan?”

“Yes, he sent verbally, by Commissioner Kraus, counsels and plans to be communicated by me to the conspirators, and this communication has occupied me during these last few days. The point was to discover, among those who were in close attendance upon the emperor, certain individuals who could be won over to our plans.”

“And have you succeeded?”

“Yes, I have succeeded. Do not ask the persons and names. I have sworn to mention none, and just as I would communicate your name to no one, I may not impart the names of the others to you. Secrecy and silence must envelop the whole conspiracy like a veil that bestows invisibility, if we are to hope for success. No one will know of the others until the day of decision, and even the necessary arrangements which the conspirators have to make must be done under a mask. I am the mediator, who conveys the messages to and fro, and I know very well that I risk my life in doing it. But I am ready to sacrifice it for my native land, and death is a matter of indifference, if my suffering serves my country. Now listen! Within a week Napoleon must be removed; for every day beyond endangers us the more. He has a suspicion of our plans; he has a whole legion of spies in the army, in Vienna, acting in concert with friends and foes, to watch the designs of the conspirators. For he is perfectly conscious that a conspiracy exists, and some inkling even of the conversation of his generals at Castle Ebersdorf has reached his ears. It caused such an outburst of fury that he was attacked with convulsions, and for three days ate nothing until Roustan had tasted it, because he was afraid of being poisoned. The Emperor Napoleon also learned that Colonel Oudet was head of the secret society, and his most dangerous enemy, because he was extremely popular in the army and possessed rare powers of persuasion. So Oudet must be removed, and he has been.”

“Then you think that—”

“That the bullet which struck Colonel Oudet at the battle of Wagram was not a chance shot, sent by the enemy? Certainly I think so, and the proof of it is that the wound was



in the back of the head. So he was struck from behind, and his murderer was in the ranks of his fellow-combatants. So you see that the emperor had sentenced him to death and he had his executioners ready to fulfill his commands. We must let this serve as a warning to us. We must kill him, that he may not discover us and order his executioners to kill us.”



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“It is true, we are all lost if he discovers the conspiracy. As I said, the work must be accomplished within a week, or you and all your companions, all the members of the society, will be imperiled. The emperor has his suspicions; if he becomes certain, your death-sentence will be signed. You hate Bonaparte. You are an adherent of the Count de Lille. You desire to replace the legitimate King Louis XVIII. upon the throne of his ancestors. Well, to accomplish this, Bonaparte must fall. Help to overthrow him, help to rid the world of this monster, who feeds upon the blood of all the youth of Europe, and you will be sure of the gratitude of your king. He has a general’s commission ready for you, promises orders and a title, and he will keep his royal word.”

“And what is asked of me? What part have I to perform?”

“The part of a man who is blind and deaf, colonel. You are commander of the military police, and your officials will perhaps spy out the conspiracy and make reports to you. You will be deaf to these reports, and order your subordinates to be the same. You are on the staff of the present Governor-general of Vienna, Count Andreossy, and it is your task not merely to hear, but also to see what is occurring in the capital. But, during the next few days, you will have the kindness to be blind and see nothing that is passing around you, not to notice the preparations that attract the attention of the suspicious. You will give the same directions to your confidant, our fellow-conspirator, Captain de Guesniard, and if our enterprise is endangered, you will warn us through him, as we will communicate to you, by the same person, what other aid we expect from you. Are you ready to fulfill these demands?”

“Yes, baron, I am ready. I hate Napoleon and I love the legitimate king of France. So I have no choice. I will risk my life to serve the king, for the kings of France have been kind and gracious lords to my family for centuries, and we owe them all that we are. I am ready to prove my gratitude by deeds, and I hope that, if I fall in the service of the king, he will have pity on my wife and my two children as soon as he himself returns to France. I will fulfill your commands. I will play the part of one who is blind and deaf. I will see and hear nothing, warn no one, unless I am forced to warn the conspirators.”

“In that case you will have the kindness to send your friend, Captain de Guesniard, to St. Stephens. One of our emissaries will be waiting night and day at the entrance of the main door of the cathedral, and every message he receives will be faithfully brought to us.”

“But who will it be? How is De Guesniard to recognize your confidant?”

“Who will it be? To-day our messenger at the door of St. Stephens will be a beggar-woman, to-morrow perhaps a blind cripple, the day after a priest, a lady, or some other person who would not rouse suspicion. The token by which to recognize the envoy will be a strip of blue paper, held in the left hand.”



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“Well, that will suffice. You have nothing more to say, baron?”

“No, colonel. So you will have the kindness to see and hear nothing for the space of a week, but if, at the end of that time, you learn the news that the Emperor Napoleon has disappeared, you will hear it with the joy of a true patriot. It will be reserved for you to set off at once with post horses to bear to the Count de Lille in England this message of the rescue and purification of his throne.”

“Ah, that is indeed a delightful and honorable task,” cried the colonel joyously. “Heaven grant that it may be executed.”

“It will be, for our arrangements are well made, and we are all anxious to do our utmost to regain the greatest of blessings, over liberty. Farewell, Colonel Mariage, in a week we shall see each other again.”

“In a week or never,” sighed Colonel Mariage, pressing the baron’s proffered hand in his own.

CHAPTER V.

COMMISSIONER KRAUS.

After taking leave of Colonel Mariage, old Baron von Moudenfels passed through the antechamber, where he found the valet, with slow and weary steps. Panting and resting on every stair, he descended the staircase, coughing, and moved slowly past the houses to the nearest carriage, into which he climbed with difficulty and sank with a groan upon the cushions.

“Where shall I drive, your lordship?” asked the hackman, lifting his whip to rouse the weary nags from their half slumber.

“Where? I don’t know myself, my friend,” replied the old man, sighing. “I only want to ride about a little while to rest my poor old limbs and get some fresh air. So take me through the busiest streets in Vienna, that I may see them. I am a stranger who has seen little of your capital, because his weary limbs will not carry him far. So drive very slowly, at a walk, that I may see and admire everything—so slowly that if I liked anything especially, and wanted to get out, I could do so without stopping the vehicle.”

“Then your lordship does not want to drive by the trip, but by the hour?”

“Yes, my friend, by the hour, and here are four florins in prepayment for two hours. You’ll have no occasion to trouble yourself now, but drive as slowly as possible and your horses will be able to rest. So go on through the busiest streets, and at a walk.”



“Well, that will suit my poor beasts,” said the driver, laughing, “they have already been standing for six hours, and stiff enough from it.”

He touched his horses’ backs with the are whip, and the animals started.

The carriage now rolled on slowly, like a hearse, at the pace drivers usually take when they wish to notify pedestrians that they have no occupant in their vehicles and can receive a passenger. So no one noticed the slow progress of the carriage; no one in the crowded streets through which it passed heeded it. Yet many a person might have been interested if he could have cast a glance within.



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Something strange and unusual was certainly occurring inside the hack. No sooner had it started than Baron von Moudenfels hastily raised both the side windows and pulled down the little curtains of dark red silk. No curious eyes could now look in at him, and he could fearlessly devote himself to his occupations, which he did with perfect composure and unconcern. First, he drew from the back pocket of his coat a package wrapped in paper, which he unrolled, placing its contents on the back seat. These consisted of a wig of short fair hair, a mustache of the same color, and two little boxes containing red, white, and black paints. Then the baron took from his breast-pocket another package, which he unwrapped and produced a mirror, brushes and combs.

After hanging the mirror by a small hook on the cushion of the back seat, the baron began to make his toilet, that is, to transform himself from an old man into a young one. First, he removed his powdered wig and exchanged it for the blonde one, doing it so quickly that the most watchful eye would have had no time to see the color of his own hair concealed beneath. With the same speed he fastened over his hitherto beardless lips a pointed mustache of reddish-fair hair and, after removing from his face the skillfully painted wrinkles and the powder, he hastened to add red cheeks to the fair curls on his head, and to tinge the tip of his nose with the rosy hue which suggests a convivial nature. After this was accomplished, and the baron had convinced himself by a careful examination in the mirror that he was transformed into a charming, gay, young fellow, he began a similar metamorphosis of his costume. Taking the diamond pin from his lace jabot he hid it under his vest, which he buttoned to the necktie. Then removing the light silk long-skirted dress-coat, he turned it completely on the other side and, by taking out some pins which held them, let the tails fall back. The dress-coat was now changed into an overcoat, a blue cloth overcoat, whose color harmonized very pleasantly with his fair hair.

Now the metamorphosis was complete, and, from the skill and speed with which the baron had performed it, one might suppose that he was not practising such arts of disguise for the first time, but was well-trained in them. With perfect calmness and deliberation he now put the cast-off articles into the parcels, hid them in the pockets of his clothes, and, after unscrewing the gold crutch-handle from his cane and replacing it by a plain ivory head, he drew up the little curtains and looked out with a keen, watchful gaze. The carriage was just passing down the crowded and busy Grabenstrasse moving behind a long row of equipages following a funeral procession, and the driver was of course compelled to proceed slowly.

The baron now cautiously opened the carriage door, and as it was just in the act of turning a corner, he took advantage of the opportunity offered to spring with a swift leap into the street.



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He now hurried rapidly along the opposite side; his bearing was as vigorous and energetic as it had just been bowed and feeble; and with the wrinkles and gray hair every trace of age had also vanished he was now a young man, but the large black eyes, with their bold, fiery gaze, suited the rosy cheeks and fair hair as little as they had formerly harmonized with the old man's pallid countenance. But at any rate the present youthfulness was no disguise, and the swift, vigorous movements were no assumption; that was evident from the ease and speed with which the baron, after entering one of the handsomest houses in the Grabenstrasse, ran up the stairs, never pausing until he had mounted the third flight. Beside the bell of a glass door, on a shining brass plate, was engraved the name of Count von Kotte. Baron von Moudenfels pulled this bell so violently that it echoed loudly, and at the door, which instantly opened, appeared a liveried servant with an angry face, muttering with tolerable distinctness something about unseemly noise and rude manners.

"Is Count von Kotte at home?" asked the baron hastily.

"No," muttered the lackey, "the count isn't at home, and it wasn't necessary to ring so horribly loud to ask the question."

He stepped back and was about to close the door again, but the baron thrust his foot between it and the frame and seized the man's sleeve.

"My good fellow, I *must* see the count," he said imperiously.

"But when I tell you that the count isn't—"

He stopped suddenly in the middle of his sentence and cast a stolen glance at the florin which the baron had pressed into his hand.

"Announce me to Count von Kotte," said the baron pleasantly. "He will certainly receive me."

"Your name, sir?" asked the lackey respectfully.

"Commissioner Kraus," was the reply. The man withdrew, and, a few minutes after, returned with a smiling face.

"The count is at home and begs the gentleman to come in," he said, throwing the door wide open and standing respectfully beside it.

Commissioner Kraus, smiling, stepped past him into the anteroom. A door on the opposite side opened, and the tall figure of a man attired in the Austrian uniform appeared.



“Is it really you, my dear Kraus!” he cried. “So you have returned already. Come, come, I have longed to see you.”

Holding out his hand to the visitor, he drew him hastily into the next room.

“You have longed to see me, my dear count,” said Kraus, laughing, “and yet I was within an ace of being turned from your door. Since when have you lived in a barricaded apartment, count?”

“Since the spies of the French governor of Vienna, Count Andreossy, have watched my door and pursued my every step,” replied the count, smiling. “But now speak, my dear Kraus. You went to Totis? You talked with the Emperor Francis?”

“I went to Totis and talked with the Emperor Francis.”



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“Good heavens! you say it with such a gloomy, solemn expression. Has the emperor become irresolute?”

“Yes, that is it. The emperor is surrounded by adherents of the Napoleonic party; they have succeeded in thrusting back the real patriots, the Anti-Bonapartists, and would have rendered them wholly inactive had not the Empress Ludovica tried to support them with all her influence. All is not yet lost, but unless we soon succeed in making a decisive step, our foes will completely gain the ear of the emperor, persuade him to accept the ignoble, humiliating peace which Napoleon offered, and, from his enemy, become his ally.”

“It would be horrible if that could be done,” cried the count sadly. “It is not possible that the Emperor Francis could resolve upon such humiliation.”

“They have alarmed the emperor, intimidated him; told him that his crown, his life, were at stake; that unless he would make himself Napoleon’s ally and accept the proffered peace, the Emperor Napoleon would say of him what he said of the Bourbons in Spain: ‘The Hapsburg dynasty has ceased to exist.’ If something does not now happen, if we do not force a decision, everything is lost. Austria will conclude a humiliating peace and, instead of being delivered from the French tyrant’s yoke, we shall be obliged to see Austria sink into a French province, and the Emperor Francis, in spite of his high-sounding title, become nothing more than the viceroy of the Emperor Napoleon.”

“It must not, it shall not come to that!” exclaimed the count wildly. “We must risk everything to prevent this. We must stake our blood, our lives, to save Austria and Germany!”

“Ah, if you speak and think *thus*, count, you are one of us; you will wish to have a share in our work of liberation.”

“Yes, I demand my share, and the greater and more perilous it is, the more welcome it will be.”

“We all risk our lives,” said Kraus solemnly, “and if we are defeated, we shall all be lost; for the Emperor Francis will not protect us—he will abandon us to Napoleon’s wrath, in order to prove that he had no part in our plans. With this conviction, we must begin our work and arrange our affairs as if we were going into a battle.”

“My affairs are arranged, and I am ready,” replied the count solemnly.

“Hush! listen! All our friends, like you, are ready, and the conspiracy winds like a great chain through all the countries of Europe. Every one who loves his native land, and therefore hates Napoleon, has laid his brave hand on this chain and will add the link of his manly strength. In France, in England, in Spain and Italy, in Sweden, in Russia and

Turkey, everywhere, our friends are waiting for the decisive act which must take place here. In England they have bought arms and ammunition and sent them to Heligoland Thence members of our league have brought them here and distributed them among the brothers.



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In the harbor of Genoa a Swedish and an English ship lie ready for our service; the English one to aid our escape and convey us to England, if our enterprise fails; the Swedish one to serve as a transport vessel, if we succeed. Everywhere our friends are working, everywhere they are preparing the insurrection; Tyrol is like a well-filled bomb which needs only the application of a spark to burst and scatter confusion around it, and in the minds of individuals patriotism has increased to a fanaticism which deems even murder a justifiable means to rid Europe from the shameful yoke of the tyrant. If we cannot execute our plan, if we do not succeed in abducting Napoleon, perhaps the dagger of an assassin will be raised against him—an assassin who does not regard his deed as a crime, but as a sacred duty.”

“And why are we content with an abduction?” asked the count fiercely. “Why should not the blood of the man who has shed so many torrents of blood, be shed also?”

“Because that would be too light a punishment,” said Kraus, with an expression of gloomy hate. “Because it would be an atonement for all his crimes, if he fell beneath the daggers of murderers. Such daggers rendered the tyrant Julius Caesar a hero, a martyr, and they would also transform Napoleon into a demi-god. No, we will not grant him such a triumph, such a glorious end—we will not allow him a speedy death. He shall ignominiously disappear; he shall die slowly on some barren island in the ocean; die amid the tortures of solitude, of weariness, of powerless rage. This must be the vengeance of Europe; this must be the end of the vampire who has drunk her heart’s blood.”

“You are right? it shall, it must be so,” cried the count, with sparkling eyes. “Now tell me, what have *I* to do? What part is assigned to *me*?”

“You will go to Genoa, count. Here is a letter from General Nugent to the captain of the Swedish ship Proserpina, now lying in the harbor.”

“But it is not sealed?” asked the count, taking the paper offered.

“Open it, and you will find that it does not contain a single word. I received it so from our messenger, who brought it directly from Count Nugent in Heligoland to me. It is your letter of recommendation, that is all! Written words might compromise, spoken ones die away upon the wind. If you deliver this, addressed in General Nugent’s hand, to the captain of the Proserpina, he will recognize you as the right messenger, and you will then tell him verbally what you have to say.”

“What shall I tell him?”



“Tell him to take in his freight, have his ballast on board, and keep everything in readiness for departure. From the day that you reach him the Proserpina must be ready for sea, and a boat must lie in the harbor night and day to receive the members of our league who will come if the plan succeeds.”

“But I hope this is not all that I have to do? I shall not be denied a more active part in the great cause?”



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“If you wish, no! One of us will accompany Bonaparte to Genoa as his jailer. You can relieve him there, and attend him to his prison.”

“I will do so. But where will the prison be?”

“You will put him on some barren island in the ocean, which will serve as his dungeon. Then you will return. But you must name the place to which you conveyed him to no one except the heads of the society: that is, to General Nugent and myself. We will guard it as the most sacred secret of our lives, that no one may learn it—no one can make the attempt to rescue him.”

“I thank you,” cried the count joyously. “You assign me an honorable task, which proves that the heads of the society trust me. What else have I to do? Will not a meeting of the conspirators take place? Will you not summon one?”

“No, for I shall go at once to Totis to make the most necessary additional arrangements with General Bubna, and through him with the Empress Ludovica, that, if the plot succeeds, the advantage will be ours and cannot be claimed by the French party. But you, count, must manage to summon such an assembly of our friends in some unsuspected place. I learn that Baroness de Simonie is to give an entertainment to which, without knowing it, she has invited a number of our friends. You will recognize them by the black enamel ring which every member of our band must wear upon the little finger of his left hand. You will name to each a place of meeting.

“Oh, I already know one,” cried the count, “it is—”

“Mention no names,” Kraus interrupted quickly. “I shall not be present, so it is not necessary for me to know. Every secret is imperiled by needless communication, and we must compromise no one without cause. Here, count, are some necessary papers in which you will find further instructions. Make your preparations accordingly, and when you have read them and informed the persons concerned, burn them.”

“But you tell me nothing about the principal matter,” said the count. “Who will accomplish the actual deed? Who will have the heroic daring to take Napoleon captive?”

“Many will be active in that, count. The names are not to be mentioned, but if you lay stress upon it, I will tell you that of the person who has undertaken to lie in ambush for Napoleon, gag him, and carry him away. It is Baron von Moudenfels.”

“Von Moudenfels? I don’t know him, but I have heard of him. Was it not Baron von Moudenfels who arranged the secret connection with the conspirators in the French army, and negotiated with Oudet?”



“Yes, the same man. He is a great patriot and a daring fellow. He hates Napoleon, and if he once has him in his grasp, he will die rather than suffer him to escape, though Napoleon should offer a kingdom as a ransom. Now farewell, count, and may God grant that we see each other again successful! May the guardian angel of our native land protect us in the perils which we must bravely meet.”



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“So be it,” said the count, cordially pressing in his own Kraus’ extended hand. “Go to Totis: I will go to Genoa, to await my prisoner there.”

With the same hasty steps as he had come, Commissioner Kraus again hastened down the steps, and once more plunged into the tumult of the street. After a short walk, he again entered a house and ascended the stairs to a door in the fourth story beside which, in a rush-bottomed chair, sat a servant, with his head bowed on his breast, sleeping peacefully.

Baron von Moudenfels or Commissioner Kraus tapped the slumberer lightly on the shoulder.

“Wake up and open the door, Peter!” he said.

The man started up and stared at the person standing before him with dilated eyes.

“Who are you, sir, and what do you want of me?” he exclaimed sulkily.

“Then you don’t know me?” asked Kraus, smiling. “Must I tell you that I am your master?”

“Herr Baron! Is it you? Is it possible that it’s you; that anybody can disguise himself so—and—”

“Hush! you know that you are not to wonder at anything, and must always be prepared to see me in any disguise. True, I should have expected that you would recognize your master’s voice.”

“I beg your pardon, sir; I was so very sound asleep. I didn’t sleep all night because I was expecting you, and I’ve been on the watch all day.”

“Have many spies been here?” asked the baron as, followed by his servant, he entered his sitting-room.

“Yes, sir, they fairly besieged the door of the house and patrolled the opposite side of the street all day long. Three times, too, gentlemen called to ask for you. They said that they were visitors, but I think they were only spies who wanted to find out whether you were at home.”

“Well, now they can come and assure themselves that I’m here,” replied his master, stretching himself comfortably upon the sofa. “True, it won’t last long—we start in an hour. Order post-horses, Peter, two post-horses and a light carriage, and pack the baggage.”



“Yes, sir!” sighed Peter. “What clothes will you take? Do we travel this time again as Baron von Moudenfels, and must I pack the old gentleman’s baggage as I did for the journey to Frankfort?”

“No, not as Baron von Moudenfels. This time I shall go in my own person and under my own name. We shall go to Totis to the camp of his majesty the emperor. So take the court dress and everything necessary for a gentleman. Thank heaven, I shall be rid of the tiresome wig for a few days.”

Removing the blonde wig he passed his hand through the black locks which appeared under it.

“Hurry, Peter, order post-horses and pack our clothing; we must start in an hour.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONSPIRACY DISCOVERED.

The festival was over, the last guests had taken leave of Baroness de Simonie, and the servants and lackeys were gliding noiselessly through the empty rooms to extinguish the lights in the chandeliers and candelabra, and here and there push the scattered pieces of furniture into place.



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Baroness de Simonie had gone to her boudoir, but though it was late at night she seemed to feel no disposition to retire to rest, nor was there the slightest expression of weariness on her beautiful face; her eyes sparkled as brightly as they had just flashed upon her guests, and there was no change in the proud carriage of her head, or of the tall, slender figure, still robed in white satin veiled with silver-embroidered white crepe. The diadem of diamonds still glittered in her hair, and clasps of the same brilliant gems adorned her neck and her bare white arms.

Madame de Simonie was pacing up and down her boudoir with hasty, impetuous steps; her whole being seemed intensely agitated. Sometimes she paused at the door to listen, then with panting breath resumed her restless movement to and fro, while her scarlet lips murmured: "He does not come yet. Something extraordinary must have happened. But what? What? Can he be in danger? Oh, my God, if this terrible week were once over, that—But hush! I hear footsteps; it is he."

Springing to the door with a single bound like a lioness, she tore it open.

"Is it you, father?"

"Yes, it is I," he answered, entering the room and cautiously locking the door behind him.

"Thank heaven that you are here, father!" she sighed, with an air of relief.

"What?" he asked, smiling, "has my Leonore again become so affectionate a daughter that she is anxious about her father if he is suddenly called away at night? For you have been anxious about me—about me and no one else—have you not?"

"No, not for you," she cried impetuously, "for him, for him alone. Tell me that he is not in danger, that he has nothing to do with the matter on whose account you were so suddenly called away!"

"I swear it, Leonore. But, my child, the impetuosity of your passion is beginning to make me uneasy. How will you keep your head clear, if your heart is burning with such impetuous fire that the rising smoke must becloud your brain? I have allowed you to give yourself the amusement of love, but you must not make a serious life question of it."

"Yet I shall either perish of this love or be new-born by it," she murmured. "But let us not talk about it. Tell me first why you left the ball so suddenly?"

"Urgent business, my child. The emperor sent for me to come to Schoenbrunn."

"The emperor! What did he want of you?"



“There is something to be discovered, Leonore—a murderer who seeks the emperor’s life.”

“A murderer!” she said, shuddering; “my God, suppose it should be he!”

“The emperor has received an anonymous letter from Hungary, in which he is informed that, during the course of the next week, a young man will come to Schoenbrunn to murder him.[D] I suppose that this comes directly from the Emperor Francis’ court at Totis. Some fanatic has told the Emperor Francis that he will go there to murder his hated foe, and the kind-hearted emperor, in his magnanimity has sent this warning to Napoleon.”



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“And *he* was in Totis,” said Leonore, trembling, under her breath, “and he told me that in a week something decisive would happen.”

“You are silent, Leonore?” asked her father. “Have you nothing to tell me?”

She started from her sorrowful reverie; a bold, resolute fire again flashed in her eyes. “I have many things to tell you, many important things,” she replied. “But I will not utter a single word unless you first take an oath.”

“What oath?”

“The oath that, if it is Kolbielsky who comes to murder Napoleon, you will warn him and let him escape.”

“But how am I to warn him in advance, since the probability is that, if I really catch him, it will be at the moment of the deed.”

“Well, then, you will let him escape at that moment, if it is Kolbielsky.”

“But that is impossible, Leonore! You will understand yourself that it is impossible.”

“Well, then, do as you choose, but do not ask me to communicate my discoveries. Good-night, father; I feel tired, I will go to sleep.”

Passing her father, she approached the door. But just as she was about to open it, he laid his hand on her arm and stopped her.

“Stubborn girl,” he said, smiling, “I see that your will must be obeyed to induce you to speak. Well, then, I swear that, if the person who comes to murder Napoleon is Baron von Kolbielsky, I will let him escape if he falls into my hands.”

“Swear it by my mother’s spirit and memory.”

“I swear it by your mother’s spirit and memory. But now, Leonore, speak. Have you really discovered a conspiracy?”

“Yes, I have discovered a conspiracy, and, thank heaven, I can tell you everything—the names of all the conspirators; for *he* is not among them—he has nothing to do with this crazy, reckless affair. Father, you can tell Napoleon that a widespread conspiracy exists, and that it even has numerous adherents in his own army. The most aristocratic members of it were present at my entertainment and held a consultation here. Colonel Mariage, as you know, had begged me to give him and his friends a room where they could talk undisturbed.”

“And you gave him the little red drawing-room didn’t you?”



“Yes. I gave them the little red drawing-room, which is reached from this boudoir. I was in the niche and heard all.”

“So it is really an actual conspiracy?” asked her father, with a happy smile.

“Really an actual conspiracy,” she repeated gravely, “and unless you warn the Emperor Napoleon, unless you save him, he will be a lost man within a week, even if that murderer’s dagger should not strike him.”

“That is splendid, that is marvelous,” cried her father. “Leonore, this time we shall really attain our goal. We shall be rich. The emperor is generous; he loves life. I will set a high price upon it. By heaven, the Caesar’s head is well worth four hundred thousand francs! I will ask them, and I shall receive. We shall be rich enough to do without and be independent of men.”



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“And I shall be free,” murmured Leonore, with a flash of enthusiasm upon her beautiful face. “You will not forget, father, that you promised to give me my liberty if I helped you to become rich. You will not forget that you are to permit me to escape, with the man I love, from this false, pitiful world, and fly with him to some remote, secluded nook, where no one knows me—no one can betray to him the shame and sin of my past life. And above all, father, you will not forget that you have solemnly sworn to reveal nothing of my former existence, not to let him suspect who I am, and—”

“Who and what your father is, you wanted to say,” he interrupted. “Yes, I will remember and not disclose our little secrets to him. The virtuous Baron von Kolbielsky would certainly be very much astonished if he made the discovery that your major-domo has the honor of being your father, and that the father of the proud baroness is no other than the well-known spy Schulmeister, who has rendered the Emperor Napoleon so many useful services, and whose name Kolbielsky has so often mentioned in my presence with scornful execration. No, he must not learn all this. We will conceal our past, we will begin a new life, and since we shall then be rich enough, it will not be difficult for us to remain noble and virtuous. But now, my Leonore, tell me exactly and in detail everything you know. Come, let us sit down on this divan and allow me to note at once the most important points in your story, and especially the names.”

“Then listen, father! Thursday next the emperor is to be carried away by force.”

“Carried away—where?” asked Schulmeister, smiling.

“To some desolate island in the ocean. But do not interrupt me; don’t let me anticipate, but relate everything in regular order. So listen and note what is necessary. There is a conspiracy which has its members in the French army, in the garrison now in Vienna, nay, even among those who are in the closest attendance upon the emperor, and which unites all the malcontents in France with the foes of Napoleon throughout all Europe. Heligoland is the meeting-place for the envoys of the conspirators throughout Europe; there the central committee always assembles at certain times, and from there by confidential messengers and fellow conspirators issues its commands and directions to the members in all places; there is the depot of the arms, ammunition, and other military stores. Thither England has sent General Bathurst; Spain, General Bandari, for consultation and agreement with the Austrian General Nugent, the Russian General Demidoff, and a certain Baron von Moudenfels, who has apparently played a prominent part in all these negotiations, and in whose hands all the single threads of this many-branched conspiracy meet. There was devised and arranged the plan which is now to be executed and in which Baron von Moudenfels plays the most important part.”

“Do you know this Baron von Moudenfels?” asked Schulmeister. “Was he at your entertainment this evening? I saw several gentlemen who were strangers to me, and whose names I was going to ask you, when I was called away. Was Baron von Moudenfels among them?”



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“No, father, he was not among them, and I do not know Baron von Moudenfels at all. According to the descriptions which I heard of him this evening, he is a man already advanced in years, but whose youthful vigor and energy were extravagantly praised and admired. Baron von Moudenfels has been the originator and director of the whole plan, and has been engaged for months in making preparations for its execution. Listen to the rest of my story! On Thursday the plot must be put into action. On that day the emperor will take a ride in the afternoon, as he always does. If, by chance, he should show no disposition to do so, they will induce him by some means, and will persuade him to go to the woods near Schoenbrunn. The emperor likes to dismount there and stroll along the lovely, shady paths, talking with his generals. To his surprise he will find a most charming little hut which he has not seen before—for the very good reason that it was erected only the previous day. The emperor, as is well-known, is curious, and he will go to it. The conspirators—and his entire suite is composed of them—the conspirators will propose going in. A French song, the signal that everything is ready, will be heard within. The emperor will enter, his companions will follow. Inside the hut armed conspirators will be stationed, who, as soon as the emperor enters, will seize and gag him, bind him hand and foot, and thus render him harmless. Then one of the party who entered with the emperor, Colonel Lejeune, whose figure is exactly like his, will put on a suit of clothes made precisely like the emperor’s, and, donning Napoleon’s three-cornered hat, will leave the hut. Meanwhile twilight will have gathered, and the conspirators, with the emperor—that is Colonel Lejeune—at their head, will return to Schoenbrunn. The guards will salute as soon as they see the emperor dash into the courtyard. The chief equerry will hold his stirrup, and help him to dismount. The emperor, followed by his suite, will enter the castle, and silently, according to his custom, ascend the stairs and go to the hall where he receives his marshals; there, as he so frequently does, he will dismiss all who are present with a wave of his hand and pass on into his study, which adjoins his sleeping-room.”

“Well, it must be admitted that so far the affair has a glimmer of feasibility and probability,” said her father, smiling. “But I should be very anxious about the continuation. Would Roustan, who undresses the emperor every evening, also be deceived by the masquerade, or would the conspirators attempt to abduct him also? And then—has it been forgotten that before going to rest the emperor now works an hour every evening with his private secretary, Bourrienne?”

“Bourrienne is one of the conspirators. He will enter the room with his portfolio and remain there an hour, after first bringing to the anteroom the order, in the emperor’s name, to make no further reports to him that evening, as he was wearied and therefore wished to go to rest early. The Mameluke Roustan could not be bribed, and therefore the attempt was relinquished. But the day before, through a dose of arsenic which will be administered to him, Roustan will be so dangerously ill that he cannot attend upon the emperor, and Constant will take his place.”

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“And is the valet Constant one of the conspirators?”

“He is, and he will be on duty during the night in the anteroom of the bedchamber. In this way the emperor’s disappearance will be concealed until the next morning, and the matter will not become known until the following day at nine o’clock, when the generals arrive. What will happen then, whether Eugene is declared emperor or the Bourbons are again summoned to the throne, will depend upon what occurs in France, and what effect the emperor’s disappearance has upon the minds of the people there. We need not trouble ourselves about it for the present; it does not belong to the business which occupies our attention.”

“No, no, we have to deal only with the emperor,” cried Schulmeister, laughing, “and I can tell you that I am as anxious about the progress of this matter as if it were the development of a drama, and that I am extremely curious to know what more is to be done with the gagged emperor. We have left him in the hut.”

“Yes, and he will remain there until the night has closed in. Then Baron von Moudenfels and two other conspirators, disguised as workmen, will convey him in a basket standing ready in the hut, such as are used in the transportation of the sick to the place in the woods where a carriage will be waiting for the basket and its companions. They will ride all night long, relays will be ready everywhere at the appointed spots, and, when morning dawns, they will have reached the house of a conspirator near Gratz, and spend the day there. At nightfall the journey will be continued in the same way, and so, constantly traveling by night and resting by day in the house of a conspirator, until Trieste is reached. To be prepared for all casualties, a French passport for the transportation of an invalid to Trieste has been obtained. Count Andreossy issued it at the request of Colonel Mariage, and for greater security, Captain de Guesniard, in full uniform and provided with the necessary legal documents, will accompany the party to Trieste.”

“Who are to be the other companions of the captive emperor?”

“Three more persons will accompany him. First, Baron Moudenfels, the originator and instigator of the whole plan. Then there are two subaltern officers in the French army, for whom Captain de Guesniard answers, but whose names were not mentioned.”

“Oh, I will discover them,” cried Schulmeister, “be assured I will discover them; and I am glad that there is some special work for me in this affair. Go on now, go on, my Leonore.”

“There is but little more to say. A ship, laden with grain, lies in the harbor of Trieste with papers ready to set sail at once for Genoa. The Baron von Moudenfels, with the prisoner and the two French lieutenants, will take passage in her for Genoa, where another vessel, furnished by the Swedish members of the league, is ready to convey



the party further. Count von Kotte has already been sent from here to Genoa by Baron von Moudenfels to give directions to the captain of the ship, who from that port will relieve Baron von Moudenfels from the charge of the prisoner.”



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“And what is the goal of his journey?”

“As I told you, some desolate island in the ocean, where no ships touch. There the emperor will be put ashore and left to support life like a second Robinson Crusoe, or in his despair seek death.”

“Well, the plan really is not impracticable, and has been devised with equal boldness and calculation. Only I should like to know why so much ado is made, instead of adopting the shorter process, that is, murdering the emperor.”

“For two reasons! The conspirators consider their task too sacred to profane it by assassination. They wish to rid Europe of the unhallowed yoke which weighs upon it in the person of the Emperor Napoleon. They are convinced that they are summoned to the work; that they shall thereby render the world and mankind a service full of blessing; but they will not anticipate fate; they will leave it to God to end a life which they merely desire to render harmless to God and men. This is the first motive for not killing the emperor, the second is that they believe a speedy death would be no fit punishment for the crime which Napoleon has perpetrated on humanity, while a perpetual, hopeless captivity, embittered by the omnipresent, ever alert consciousness of ruined greatness, of fame buried in dust and silence, would be a lasting penance more terrible to an ambitious land-robber than death could ever be.”

“They are right, by the eternal God, they are right!” cried Schulmeister; “I believe that the emperor would prefer a speedy death a hundred times to such slow torture; and to you, Leonore, to you and to me will now fall the vast, the priceless happiness of preserving the emperor from such martyrdom. I say the priceless happiness, but I shall take good care that the emperor pays me for it as dearly as possible, and—so far as it can be done—balances the immense weight of our service by its compensation. By heaven, half a million francs really seems a trivial reward, and I don’t know whether we can be satisfied with it.”

“I shall be satisfied,” cried Leonore, with an enthusiastic glance, “only when you fulfill the vow which you made; when, after I have made you rich, you make me free and permit me to go with the man whom I love wherever I desire, taking care that you do not betray by a word, a hint, who I am, and what I was.”

“I will fulfill my oath to you,” said Schulmeister earnestly, “for you have performed yours. You have discovered a conspiracy, and through this discovery saved the emperor from a terrible misfortune, and given me the right to demand a high price. You will make me rich; you will drive the demon of poverty from my head; I will repay you—I will guard yours from the demons of disgrace and shame; you shall have no cause to blush in the presence of the man whom you love. On the day that I bring from the emperor half a million as my property and yours, your past and mine will both be effaced, and we will enter upon a new life, in a new world!”



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Let the spy, Schulmeister, the adventuress Leonore de Simonie; be buried, and new people, new names, rise from the budding seeds of the half million. But now farewell, my daughter, my beautiful Leonie. I must begin the work, must summon all my assistants and subordinates, and assign their tasks, for the next few days will bring much work. It is not enough for me to inform the emperor of the existence of a conspiracy, and the plan of the accomplices, but I must be able to give him convincing and irrefutable proofs of this plot, that he may not deem it a mere invention which I have devised in order to be able to claim a large reward. No, the emperor must see that I am telling him the truth, so I must not let the affair explode too soon. I must first know the names and residences of all the conspirators, investigate the details of the whole enterprise, and hold in my hand the threads of the entire web in order to be sure that all the spiders who have labored at it will be caught in their own net.”

“Do so, father,” cried Leonore joyously. “I will leave them all to you—all these poor spiders of the conspiracy. I feel no pity for them. Let them die, let them suffer, what do I care! I, too, have suffered, oh, and what mortal anguish! Yes, let them die and rot; I shall at last be happy, free, and beloved. Oh, God be praised that the man whom I love is not entangled in this conspiracy, that I could disclose the whole plot, mention the names of all the conspirators, without fear of compromising him. Yes, I thank Thee, my God, that Kolbielsky has no share in this scheme.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE REVELATION.

The fatal Thursday had passed, Wednesday had come, yet Leonore had received no tidings from her father. For three days she had not seen him, had had no message from him.

But it was not this alone that disturbed and tortured Leonore. She had also had no news from Kolbielsky, though the week which he had named as the necessary duration of their parting had expired the day before. He had said:

“My week of exile will begin from this hour, and the first festival will be when I again clasp you in my arms.”

This week had expired yesterday, and Kolbielsky had not come to clasp his loved one in his arms again. She had expected him all through the day, all through the night, and the cause of her present deep anxiety was not solicitude about her father, the desire to learn the result of the conspiracy discovered; no, it was only the longing for *him*, the terrible dread that some accident might have befallen Kolbielsky.



Why did he not come, since he had so positively promised to return at the end of a week? Was it really only a coincidence that the day which he had fixed for his return was the selfsame one on which the conspiracy formed by Napoleon's foes was to break forth?



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What if he had had a share in the conspiracy? If he had deceived her, if—But no, no, that was wholly impossible—that could not be! She knew the names of the conspirators, especially those of the heads and leaders; she knew that Kolbielsky's name had not once been mentioned during the whole discussion between them. So away with anxieties, away with cowardly fears. Some accident might have detained him, might have caused a day's delay.

To-day, yes, to-day he would come at last! To-day she would see him again, would rush into his arms, rest on his heart, never, oh! never to part from him again! Hark, a carriage was stopping before the door! Steps echoed in the corridor.

They approached, stopped at her door! It is he, oh, surely it is he!

Darting to the door, she tore it open.

No! It was her father, only her father!

With a troubled cry, she sank into the chair beside the door. Her father went to her; she did not see the sorrowful, almost pitying look he fixed upon her. She had covered her face with her hands and groaned aloud. Schulmeister stood before her with a gloomy brow, silent and motionless.

At last, after a long pause, Leonore slowly removed her hands from her face and raised her head.

"Are we rich now?" she asked in a whisper, as though she feared lest even the walls should hear her question.

"Yes," he exclaimed joyfully, "yes, we are rich."

Drawing his pocketbook from his coat, he opened it and poured out its contents, shaking the various papers with their array of high numbers into Leonore's lap.

"Look, my daughter, my beloved child! Look at these wonderful papers. Ten banknotes, each one fifty thousand francs. That is half a million, my Leonore! Look at these papers. Yet no, they are no papers, each is a magic spell, with which you can make a palace rise out of nothing. See this thin scrap of paper; a spark would suffice to transform it to ashes, yet you need only carry it to the nearest banker's to see it changed into a heap of gold, or glitter as a *parure* of the costliest diamonds. If you desire it, these papers will transmute themselves into a magnificent castle, into liveried servants, into superb carriages. Oh, I already see you standing as the proud mistress of a stately castle, in your ancestral hall, with vassals bowing before you, and counts and princes suing for your hand. For these magic papers will give you everything, everything; not luxury alone, but honor, rank, and dignity, the love and esteem of men. Take them, for the whole ten papers shall be yours. I wish to see you rich and happy,



therefore I defied disgrace and mortal peril. Come, my child, let us set out this very hour to buy with these papers, far away from here, in an Eden-like region, a castle which shall be adorned with all that luxury and art can offer. Come, my Leonore, come. We have accomplished our work of darkness, now day is dawning, now our star is rising. Come, come! Alas, the days are so short, let us hasten, hasten to enjoy them!"



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Leonore slowly shook her head. “*He* must return,” she said solemnly. “First I must see him again, have him tell me that he will go with me to that distant region. What would all the treasures of the earth avail, if I did not have him! What would I care for castles, diamonds, and carriages if he were not with me! I am expecting him—he may be here at any moment. So tell me, father—describe quickly how everything has happened. I have not seen you for three days; I do not know what has occurred, for, strangely, nothing has reached the public.”

“The emperor enjoined the most inviolable silence upon us all,” said Schulmeister gloomily. “The whole affair has been treated and concealed as the most profound secret. The emperor does not wish to have anything known about it; no one must deem it possible that people have dared to seek to take his life, to attempt to capture him. I never saw him in such a fury as when I first told him the plan of the conspirators. His eyes flashed lightnings, he stamped his feet, clenched his little hands into fists, and stretched them threateningly toward the invisible conspirators. He vowed to kill them all, to take vengeance on them all for the unprecedented crime.”

“And has he fulfilled the vow?”

“He has. He has punished the conspirators, so far as lay in his power. But some of them, for instance Baron von Moudenfels, do not belong to the number of his subjects, but are Austrians. The emperor did not have the sentence which he pronounced upon his own subjects executed upon them; he could not at this time, for you know that negotiations for peace have been opened, and the treaty will be signed immediately. So the emperor did not wish to constitute himself a judge of Austrian subjects; it is a delicate attention to the Austrian emperor, and the latter will know how to thank him for it and to punish the criminals with all the rigor of the law. Therefore Baron von Moudenfels and Count von Kotte have merely been held as prisoners, and were compelled to witness the execution to-day.”

“What execution?” asked Leonore in horror.

“Colonel Lejeune, Captain de Guesniard, and two sous-lieutenants were shot this morning on the meadow at Schoenbrunn,”[E] said Schulmeister in a low tone.

Leonore shuddered, and a deathlike pallor overspread her face. “And I delivered them to death!” she moaned.

“And if you had spared them, you would have delivered the Emperor Napoleon, the greatest man of the age, to death, to the most terrible torture of imprisonment!” cried her father, shrugging his shoulders. “These men wished to commit a crime against their sovereign, their commander. You have no reason to reproach yourself for having delivered the criminals to the law.”

“And Mariage? What has become of Mariage?”



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“Apparently he received a warning; he has fled. But we found all the others yesterday at their posts; for we had made all our arrangements so secretly that even the conspirators who surrounded the emperor were not aware of it. The emperor at first intended to act strictly according to the programme of the conspirators; take the ride with his suite, and not permit me to come to his assistance, with a few trustworthy assistants, until after he had entered the hut and been captured. But he rejected this plan, because he would have been compelled to arrest his most distinguished generals and subject the greater number of his staff officers to a rigid investigation. The whole army would then have heard of this bold conspiracy, and conspiracies are like contagious diseases, they always have successors. So the emperor rejected this plan, and, at the moment that his suite were mounting to attend him on his ride, he dismissed them all, saying that he wished to go into the woods alone, accompanied only by Colonel Lejeune, the Mameluke, and myself. You can imagine the mute horror, the deathlike pallor of the generals. The emperor did not vouchsafe any of them a glance, but dashed away. When we had ridden into the woods, the emperor checked his horse and turned to Colonel Lejeune, who, white as a corpse, rode beside him.

“Your sword, colonel!” he exclaimed, in tones of thunder. “You will not play the part of emperor to-day, but merely the character of an arch-traitor and assassin.”

At the same instant Roustan and I rode to Lejeune’s side, and each seized an arm. A moment later he was disarmed and deprived of the papers which we found in his breast pocket, and the tender farewell letters to his wife and his mother, in case that the enterprise should fail.

“I will have these sent at once to their addresses the morning after your execution,” the emperor said, with a withering glance from his large flashing eyes. Then he rode on, and we followed, each holding an arm of Lejeune, who rode between us. At last we reached the hut and the emperor checked his horse again. Roustan uttered a low whistle and, at the same instant, six gray-bearded giants of the imperial guard stood beside us as if they had sprung from the earth. As soon as the conspirators entered the hut, they had cautiously approached it and, concealed behind the trees, awaited the preconcerted signal.

The emperor greeted them with the smile which bewitched his old soldiers, because it reminded them of the days of their great victory.

“I know that you are faithful,” he said, “but I should also like to know whether you are silent.”

“Silent as the grave, if the Little Corporal commands it,” said old Conradin, the emperor’s favorite.



“Well, I believe you, and you shall give me a proof of it to-day. Clear out the nest you see there, and catch the birds for me!”

“He pointed with uplifted arm and menacing gesture to the hut; the soldiers rushed to it and broke in the door. Shouts of rage were heard, several shots rang out, then all was still, and the old grenadiers dragged out five men. Three were wounded, but they had avenged themselves, for three of the soldiers were also injured.”



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“Was Baron von Moudenfels among the prisoners?” asked Leonore quickly.

“Yes,” replied Schulmeister, “yes, he was among them.”

“Then you saw him?”

“Yes, I saw him.”

The slow, solemn tone with which her father answered made Leonore tremble. She looked up questioningly into his face, their eyes met, and were fixed steadily on each other.

“Why do you gaze at me so sadly and compassionately?” asked Leonore suddenly, cowering as though in fright.

“I did not know that I was doing so,” he answered gently.

“You were, you are still,” she cried anxiously. “Father, I read misfortune in your face. You are concealing something from me! You—oh, heaven, you have news of Kolbielsky.”

She started up, letting the bank-notes fall unheeded to the floor, seized her father’s arm with both hands, and gazed silently at him with panting breath.

He avoided her eyes, released himself almost violently from her grasp, stooped, picked up the bills and divided them into halves, putting five into his breast pocket, and giving his daughter the other five.

“Take it, my Leonore; take the magic key which will open Paradise to you!”

She took the bank-notes and, with a contemptuous gesture, flung them on the floor.

“You know something of Kolbielsky,” she repeated. “Where is he? Answer me, father, if you don’t wish me to fall dead at your feet.”

“Yet if I do answer, poor child, what will it avail you? He is lost, you cannot save him.”

She neither shrieked nor wept, she only grasped her father’s arm more firmly and looked him steadily in the face.

“Where is Kolbielsky?” she asked. “Answer, or I will kill myself.”

“Well, Leonore, I will give you a proof of my infinite love. I will tell you the truth, the whole truth. When the prisoners were dragged out of the hut, one of them suddenly



made an attempt to escape. The soldier tried to hold him, they struggled—in the scuffle the conspirator’s wig fell off. Hitherto he had had white hair—”

“It was Baron von Moudenfels?” asked Leonore breathlessly.

“Yes, Leonore, it was Baron von Moudenfels. But when the wig was torn from his head, we saw no old man, no Baron von Moudenfels, but—”

“Kolbielsky!” she shrieked with a loud cry of anguish.

Her father nodded, and let his head sink upon his breast.

“And he, too, was shot this morning?” she asked in a low, strange whisper.

“No, Leonore. I told you that the emperor, out of regard for his future ally, the Emperor Francis, did not have him executed. He simply imprisoned him and punished him only by compelling him to witness the execution. He will leave it to the Emperor Francis to pronounce sentence of death upon the assassin.”

“He lives? You will swear that he lives?” she asked breathlessly.

“I will swear that he lives, and that he will live until the return of the courier whom Count Bubna, who is in Schoenbrunn attending to the peace negotiations—has sent to Totis to the Emperor Francis.”



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The Baroness de Simonie bounded like a tigress through the room, tearing at the bell till it sounded like a tocsin and the servants came rushing in terror from the anteroom.

“My carriage—it must be ready in five minutes!” she cried. The servants ran out and Leonore darted across the room, tore open the door of the adjoining chamber, opened a wardrobe in frantic haste, and dragged out a cloak, which she flung over her shoulders.

“In heaven’s name, Leonore, are you out of your senses?” asked her father, who had hurried after her and now seized her arm. “What do you mean to do? Where are you going?”

“To the Emperor Napoleon!” she cried loudly. “To the Emperor Napoleon, to save the life of the man I love. Give me the money, father!”

“What money, Leonore?”

“The bank-notes! The blood-money which I have earned!”

Her father had carefully gathered up the bank-bills which she had thrown about the room, and gave them to her. Leonore shuddered as she clenched them in her trembling hands. “I have sold him,” she shrieked, raising the hand that held the papers toward heaven. “His blood clings to this money. But I will hurl it at the emperor’s feet. I want no pay; I will beg his life for my recompense. Pray father, pray that he may hear me, may grant me mercy, for I swear by all that is sacred, if Kolbielsky must die, I will kill his murderers. And his murderers are—you and I!”

“The carriage is at the door,” said a servant, entering.

She sprang forward. “I am coming. Pray, father, pray for mercy upon my loved one’s murderers!”

CHAPTER VIII.

PARDON.

Four days had elapsed since the execution at Schoenbrunn. Baron von Kolbielsky had been forced to attend it and was then conveyed to Vienna to spend dreary, lonely days at the police station in the Krebsgasse.

He had vainly asked at least to be led before his judges to receive his sentence. The jailer, to whom Kolbielsky uttered these requests whenever he entered, always replied merely with a silent shrug of the shoulders, and went away as mute as he had come.



But yesterday, late in the evening, he had entered, accompanied by the Chief Commissioner Goehausen, two magistrates, and a clergyman. With a solemn, immovable official countenance Commissioner Goehausen opened the document which his subordinate handed to him, and, in a loud voice, read its contents. It was a sentence of death. The death-sentence of Baron Friedrich Carl Glare von Kolbielsky “on account of sympathy and complicity in a murderous assault upon the sacred life of his annointed imperial ally and friend, Napoleon, emperor of the French.”[F] Early the following morning, at dawn, Baron Friedrich Carl Glare von Kolbielsky must be shot at Schoenbrunn.

Kolbielsky had listened to this death-warrant with immovable composure—no word, no entreaty for pardon escaped his lips. But he requested the priest, who desired to remain to pray with him and receive his confession, to leave him.



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“What I have to confess, only God must know,” he said, smiling proudly. “In our corrupt times even the secrets of the confessional are no longer sacred, and if I confessed the truth to you, it would mean the betrayal of my friends. God sees my heart; He knows its secrets and will have mercy on me. I wish to be alone, that is the last favor I request.”

So he was left alone—alone during this long bitter night before his doom! Yet he was not solitary! His thoughts were with him, and his love—his love for Leonore!

Never had he so ardently worshipped her as on this night of anguish. Never had he recalled with such rapture her beauty, her indescribable charm, as on this night when, with the deepest yearning of his heart, he took leave of her. Ah, how often, how often, carried away by the fervor of his feelings, he had stretched out his arms to the empty air, whispering her dear, beloved name, and not ashamed of the tears which streamed from his eyes. He had sacrificed his life to hate, to his native land, but his last thoughts, his last greetings, might now be given to the woman whom he loved. All his desires turned to her. Oh, to see her once more! What rapture thrilled him at the thought! And he knew that she would come if he sent to her; she would have the daring courage to visit his prison to bring him her last love-greeting. He need only call the jailer and say to him:

“Hasten to Baroness de Simonie in Schottengasse. Tell her that I beg her to come here; tell her that I must die and wish to bid her farewell. She is my betrothed bride; she has a right to take leave of me.”

He only needed to say this and his request would have been fulfilled, for the last wishes of the dying and of those condemned to death are sacred, and will never be denied, if it is possible to grant them.

But he had the strength to repress this most sacred, deepest desire of his heart, for such a message would have compromised *her*. Perhaps she, too, might have been dragged into the investigation, punished as a criminal, though she was innocent.

No, he dared not send to her! His Leonore, the beloved, worshipped idol of his heart, should not suffer a moment's anxiety through him. He loved her so fervently that for her sake he joyfully sacrificed even his longing for her. Let her think of him as one who had vanished! Let her never learn that Baron von Moudenfels, the man who would be shot in a few hours, was the man whom she loved. He would meet death calmly and joyfully, for he would leave her hope! Hope of a meeting—not yonder, but here on earth! She would expect him, she would watch for him daily in love and loyalty, and gradually, gently and easily, she would become accustomed to the thought of seeing him no more. Yet, while doing so, she would not deem him faithless, would not suppose that he had abandoned her, but would know that it was destiny which severed them—that if he did not return to her, he had gone to the place whence there is no return.



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“Oh, Leonore, dearly loved one! Never to see you again, never again to hear from your lips those sweet, sacred revelations of love; never again to look into your eyes, those eyes which shine more brightly than all the stars in heaven.”

It was already growing lighter. Dawn was approaching. Yonder, in the dark night sky a dull golden streak appeared, the harbinger of day. The sun was rising, bringing to the world and all its creatures, life; but to him, the condemned man, death.

Still he would die for his native land, for liberty! That was consolation, support. He had sought to rid the world of the tyrant who had crushed all nations into the dust, destroyed all liberty. Fate had not favored him; it shielded the tyrant. So Kolbielsky was dying. Not as a criminal, but as the martyr of a great and noble cause would he front death. And though fate had not favored him now, some day it would avenge him, avenge him on the tyrant Napoleon. It would hurl him from his height, crush him into the dust, trample him under foot, as he now trampled under his feet the rights and the liberties of the nations.

There was comfort, genuine consolation in this thought. It made death easy. The dawn grew brighter. Crimson clouds floated from all directions across the sky! Perhaps he would be summoned in half an hour.

No, not even half an hour's delay. His executioners were punctual. The bolts on the outer door were already rattling.

“Come, Kolbielsky, be brave, proud, and strong. Meet them with a joyous face; let no look betray that you are suffering! They are coming, they are coming! Farewell, sweet, radiant life! Farewell, Leonore! Love of my heart, farewell!”

The inner door was opened—Kolbielsky advanced to meet his executioners with proud composure and a smiling face. But what did this mean? Neither executioner, priest, nor judge appeared, but a young man, wrapped in a cloak, with his head covered by a broad-brimmed hat that shaded his face.

Who was it? Who could it be? Kolbielsky stood staring at him, without the strength to ask a question. The young man also leaned for a moment, utterly crushed and powerless, against the wall beside the door. Then rousing himself by a violent effort, he bent toward the gray-bearded jailer who stood in the doorway with his huge bunch of keys in his hand, and whispered a few words. The jailer nodded, stepped back into the corridor, closed the door behind him and locked it.

The young man flung aside the cloak which shrouded his figure. What did this mean? He wore Kolbielsky's livery; from his dress he appeared to be his servant, yet he was not the man whom he had had in his service for years.



Kolbielsky had the strength to go a few steps forward.

“Who are you?” he asked in a low tone. “Good heavens, who are you?”

The youth flung off his hat and rushed toward Kolbielsky. “Who am I? I?” he cried exultingly. “Look at me and say who I am.”



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A cry, a single cry escaped Kolbielsky's lips, then seizing the youth's slender figure in his arms, he bore it to the window.

The first rays of the rising sun were shining in and fell upon the young man's face.

Oh, blessed be thou, radiant sun, for thou bringest eternal life, thou bringest love.

"It is she! It is my Leonore! My love, my—"

He could say no more. Pressing her tenderly in his arms, he bowed his head upon her shoulder and wept—wept bitterly. But they were tears of delight, of ecstasy—tears such as mortals weep when they have no words to express their joy. Tears such as are rarely shed on earth.

Yet no. He would not weep, for tears will dim her image. He wished to see her, imprint her face deep, deep upon his heart that it might still live there while he died.

He took the beautiful, beloved head between his hands and gazed at it with a happy smile.

"Have you risen upon me again, my heavenly stars? Do you shine on me once more, ere I enter eternal night?"

Bending lower he kissed her eyes and again gazed at her, smiling.

"Why do your lips quiver? Why do they utter no word of love? Oh, let me break the seal of silence which closes them."

Bending again to the beloved face which rested in his hands, he kissed the lips.

"Speak, my Leonore, speak! Bid me a last farewell; tell me that you will always love me, that you will never forget me, though I must leave you."

"No, no," she cried exultingly, "no, you will not leave me, you will stay with me."

Releasing herself and gazing at him with her large flashing eyes she repeated:

"You will stay with me."

"Oh, my sweet love, I cannot! They have sentenced me to death. They will soon come to summon me."

"No, no, my dear one, they will not come to lead you to death. They will not kill you. I bring you life! I bring you pardon!"

"Pardon!" he cried, almost shrieked. "Pardon! But from whom?"



“Pardon from your sovereign and master, from the Emperor Francis!”

“God be praised. I can accept it from *him*,” cried Kolbielsky jubilantly. “So I am free? Speak, dearest, I am free?”

She shook her head slowly and sadly. “I have been able only to save you from death,” she said mournfully. “I have been able only to obtain your life, but alas! not your liberty.”

“Then I remain a prisoner?”

“Yes, a prisoner.”

“For how long?”

“For life,” she murmured in a voice barely audible.

But Kolbielsky—laughed.

“For life! That means—so long as Napoleon lives and is powerful. But he will die; he will fall, and then my emperor will release me; then I shall belong to life, to the world; then I shall again be yours! I will accept my emperor’s pardon, for it is you who bring it to me—you have obtained it. You say so, and I know it. You hastened to Totis, you threw yourself at the emperor’s feet, pleaded for mercy, and he could not resist your fiery zeal, your bewitching personality. But how did you know that I was arrested? Who told you that I was Baron von Moudenfels?”



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“My uncle,” she replied with downcast eyes, “my uncle brought me the tidings; he told me that Napoleon, through Count Bubna, had sent a courier to Totis, to the Emperor Francis, and asked your condemnation. I hastened to Schoenbrunn; I succeeded in overcoming all obstacles and reaching the emperor. I threw myself at his feet, confessed amid my tears that I loved you, begged for your life. And he granted it; he became your intercessor to the Emperor Francis. He wrote a few lines, which I was to convey to Totis myself. I did so, hastening thither with post-horses. I spoke to the emperor. He was deeply moved, but he had not the courage to take any decisive step; he still dreaded offending his new ally. The Emperor Napoleon begs me to grant Kolbielsky’s life, he said. ‘I will do so, but can do nothing more for the present. I will grant him life, but I cannot give him liberty. He must be taken to the Hungarian fortress Leopoldstadt. There he must remain so long as he lives.’”

“To Leopoldstadt! In an open grave,” cried Kolbielsky gloomily. “Cut off from the world, in joyless solitude, far from you. Oh, death, speedy death would be better and—”

“No,” she interrupted, “not far from me! I will remain with you. The emperor at my fervent entreaty, permitted your servant, your faithful servant, to accompany you, share your imprisonment. Now look at me, beloved, look at me. I wear your livery, I am the faithful servant who has the right to go with you. Oh! no, no, we will be parted no longer. I shall stay with you.”

Clasping both arms around his neck, she pressed a glowing kiss upon his lips.

But Kolbielsky released himself from the sweet embrace and gently pushed her back. “That can never be—never will I accept such a sacrifice from you. No, you shall not bury your beauty, your youthful bloom in a living tomb. Your tender foot is not made to tread the rough paths of life. The proud Baroness de Simonie, accustomed to the splendor, luxury, and comfort of existence must not drag out her life in unworthy humiliation. I thank you, love, for the sacrifice you wish to make, but nothing will induce me to accept it. Return to the world, my worshipped one! Keep your love, your fidelity! Wait for me. Even though years may pass, the hour of liberty will at last strike and then I will return to you!”

“No, no!” she impetuously exclaimed. “I will not leave you; I will cling to you. You must not repulse me. The emperor has given your servant the right to stay with you. I am your servant. I shall stay!”

“Leonore, I entreat you, do not ask what is impossible. There are sacrifices which a man can never accept from the woman he loves—which humiliate him as they ennoble her. I should blush before your nobility; it would bow me into the dust. Leonore de Simonie must not leave the pure, proud sphere in which she lives; she must remain what she is, the queen of the drawing-room.”



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“Is this your final answer?” she asked, turning deadly pale.

“My final one.”

“Well, then, hear me! You shall know who I am; you shall at least learn that you might accept every sacrifice from me without ever being obliged to blush in my presence. You thrust me from you, that is, you thrust me into death! Yes, I will die, I wish to die, but first you shall hear from my lips the truth, that you may not grieve, may not shed a single tear for me. So hear me, Carl, hear me! I am not what you believe. My foot is not accustomed to the soft paths of life—the world of splendor and honor is not mine. From my earliest childhood I have walked in obscurity and humiliation, in disgrace and shame, a dishonored, ignominious creature.”

As if crushed by her own words she sank down at his feet, and raised her clasped hands beseechingly, while her head drooped low on her breast.

Kolbielsky gazed at her with an expression of unspeakable horror, then a smile flitted over his face.

“You are speaking falsely,” he cried, “you are speaking falsely out of generosity.”

“Oh, would to heaven it were so!” she lamented. “No, believe me, I am telling the truth; I am not what I seem; I am not the Baroness de Simonie.”

“Not Baroness de Simonie? Then who are you?” he shrieked frantically.

“I am a paid spy of the Emperor Napoleon, and the spy Schulmeister is my father.”

Kolbielsky uttered a cry of fury and raised his clenched fist as if he intended to let it fall upon her head. But he repressed his rage and turned away. Despair and grief now overpowered him. He tottered to a chair and, sinking into it, covered his face and wept aloud.

Leonore was still kneeling, but when she heard him sob she started up, rushed to him, and again throwing herself at his feet, she embraced his knees.

“Do not weep—curse me! Thrust me from you, but do not weep. Alas! yet I have deserved your tears. I am a poor, lost creature. Yes, do not weep. I have suffered much, sinned much, but also atoned heavily. Yes, weep for me! My life lies bare as a torn wreath of roses in the dust—not a blossom remains, nothing save the pathway of thorns, grief, and torture. Yes, weep for me—weep for a lost existence. I was innocent and pure, but I was poor—that was my misfortune. Poverty drove my father to despair, drove us both to disgrace and crime. Oh, God! I was so young, and I wanted to live; I did not wish to die of starvation, and the tempter came to me in my father’s form, whispering, ‘Have money and you will have honor! Help yourself, for men and women



will not aid you. They turn contemptuously away because you are poor. To-morrow, if you are rich, they will pay court to you, honor, and love you. I offer you the means to become rich. Give me your hand, Leonore, despise the people who leave us to die, and follow me.' I gave him my hand, I followed him, I became Napoleon's



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spy. I had money, I had a name, I saw people throng around me, I learned to despise them, and therefore I could betray them. But, in the midst of my brilliant life, I was unhappy, for the consciousness of my shame constantly haunted me, constantly cast its shadow upon me. And one day, one day I saw and loved you! From that day I was the victim of anguish and despair. On my knees I besought my father to release me, to permit me to escape from the world. He threatened to betray my past, my disgrace to you. And I—oh, God, I loved you—I yielded, I remained. My father vowed that, if I made him rich, he would set me free. I discovered a conspiracy. You were not among the accomplices—I betrayed it. I wanted to serve *you* by the treachery and I plunged you into ruin.”

Tears gushed from her eyes; the sobs so long repressed burst forth and stifled the words on her lips. Kolbielsky no longer wept. He had let his hands fall from his face, and was listening to her in deep thought, in breathless suspense. Now, when she paused sobbing, he stretched out his hand as if he wished to raise Leonore, then he seemed to hesitate and withdrew it.

She did not see it; she did not venture to look at him; she gazed only into her tortured heart. “I have betrayed you,” she continued, after an anxious, sorrowful pause. “Oh, when I learned it, a sword pierced my soul and severed it from every joy of life. I knew, in that hour, that I had fallen a prey to despair, but I wished at least to rescue you. I have saved you, that is the sole merit of my life. Napoleon could not resist my despair, my tears, my wrath—he pitied me. He gave your life to me. All the blood-money which I had gained, all the splendor which surrounded me, I flung at my father’s feet. I released myself from him forever, and, that my penance might be complete, I called all my servants and revealed my ignominy to them. Then I left the palace where I had lived so long in gilded shame. I took nothing with me. I call nothing mine except these clothes and the name of Leonore. Now you know all, and you will no longer be able to say that I can make a sacrifice for you. Decide whether I must die, or whether you will pardon me. Let me atone; let me live—live as your slave, your thrall. I desire nothing save to see you, serve you, live for you. You need never speak to me, never deem me worthy of a word. I will divine your orders without them. I will sleep on your threshold like a faithful dog, that loves you though you thrust him from you—who caresses the hand that strikes him. I have deserved the blows; I will not murmur, only let me, let me live.”

She gazed imploringly at him, with a face beaming with enthusiasm and love.

And he?

A ray of enthusiasm illumined his face also. He bent over the kneeling figure, laid his hands on her shoulders, and gazed into her face while something akin to a divine smile illumined his features.



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“When I bade you farewell,” he said softly, “I said that if I returned, I would ask you a momentous question. Do you know what it was?”

She shrank and a burning blush crimsoned her cheeks, but she did not venture to reply, only gazed breathlessly at him with fixed eyes.

He bent close to her and, smiling, whispered:

“Leonore, will you be my wife?”

With a cry of joy she sprang into his arms, laughing and weeping in her ecstasy.

Kolbielsky pressed her closely to his heart and laid his hand upon her head as if in benediction.

“You have atoned,” he said solemnly. “You shall be forgiven, for you have suffered heavily! You have come to me homeless. Henceforth my heart shall be your home. You have cast aside your name—I offer you mine in exchange. Will you be my wife?”

She whispered a low, happy “yes.”

An hour later an officer of justice arrived to announce to Kolbielsky his change of sentence to perpetual imprisonment and inform him that the carriage was waiting to convey him to Leopoldstadt.

Kolbielsky now desired to see the priest whose ministrations he had formerly refused, and when, half an hour later, he entered the carriage, Leonore was his wife. She accompanied him, disguised as his servant, for the permission to attend the prisoner to Leopoldstadt was given in that name. But the priest promised to go to the emperor himself and obtain for the wife the favor which had been granted to the servant.

He kept his word, and, a few weeks later, the governor of Leopoldstadt received the imperial command to allow the wife of the imprisoned Baron von Kolbielsky to share his captivity.

But Kolbielsky’s hope of a speedy release was not to be fulfilled. Napoleon had become the emperor of Austria’s son-in-law, and thereby Kolbielsky’s position was aggravated. He knew too many of the Emperor Francis’ secrets, could betray too much concerning the emperor’s hate, and secret intrigues of which Francis himself had been aware. He was dangerous and therefore must be kept in captivity.

In his wrath he wrote vehement, insulting letters to the Emperor Francis, made himself guilty of high-treason. So they were well satisfied to find him worthy of punishment, and render the troublesome fault-finder forever harmless.



So he remained a prisoner long after Napoleon had been overthrown. His wife died many years before him, leaving one daughter, who, when a girl of eighteen, married a distinguished Austrian officer. Her entreaties and her husband's influence finally succeeded in securing Kolbielsky's liberation. In the year 1829 he was permitted to leave Leopoldstadt, to live with his daughter at Ofen, where he died in 1831.

THE END.

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FOOTNOTES:

[A] Napoleon's own words. See Hormayr, "Universal History of Modern Times," part III., p. 136.

[B] Historical. See Hormayr's "Universal History."

[C] Historical. "Anemones from the Diary of an Old Pilgrim," Part II., p. 99.

[D] Historical. See "Anemones," Part II., p. 90.

[E] Historical. See "Anemones," Part II., p. 90.

[F] "Anemones," Part II., p. 93.