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AN EXILED KING



Gustaf. Adolf IV
at the age of 20

AN EXILED KING

GUSTAF ADOLF IV OF SWEDEN

BY SOPHIE ELKAN

EDITED AND TRANSLATED
BY M. EUGÉNIE KOCH

*With 26 Illustrations
Including 2 Photogravure Frontispieces*

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PREFACE

SOPHIE ELKAN (*née* Salomon) was born at Gothenburg (Sweden), January 3rd, 1853; in 1872 she married N. Elkan, who died in 1879, when she began her literary career, translating many learned and technical works edited by her brother. Later she produced several charming novels and stories under the (Flemish) pseudonym, "Rust, Roest" (literally, "If I rest, I rust"). The climax of her fame was reached when her novel, *John Hall, the Millionaire-Pauper: A Tale of Old Gothenburg*, was published under her own name.

Sophie Elkan has been a great traveller and a keen observer of men and passing events; her writings are full of pathos and true to life.

She possesses the rare gift of investing even commonplace facts with a halo of romance, more especially in the sad and tragic story of that most unfortunate and eccentric of monarchs, the dethroned and subsequently "Exiled King," Gustaf Adolf IV of Sweden, which is replete with thrilling interest from first to last, and reads more like a delightful novel than genuine history.

E. Kocer.

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AN EXILED KING

CHAPTER I

THE SWEDISH CROWN-PRINCE

ON July 12th in the year 1781, Gustav Mauritz Baron Armfelt, Lieutenant in the Guards, entered upon his duties as Groom-of-the-Chamber to His Royal Highness Gustavus Adolphus, Crown-Prince of Sweden. With a view to learning more fully the nature of these new duties, the young man had sought an early morning interview with Baron Frederick Sparre, the Prince's Governor, and had been received by that gentleman at the Palace of Drottningholm, in a room immediately adjoining the Prince's bed-chamber. The windows looked upon the garden, and it was an unusually lovely morning, yet Baron Sparre paid but little heed to the beauty of the view; he was intently watching the changes of expression which flitted over the handsome features of the young lieutenant as his manifold duties were explained to him . . . not all of them palatable or edifying, nay, some even of a base and contemptible nature and on a par with some of his small Royal Highness' peculiar whims and habits.

Baron Sparre stopped for a moment. Armfelt, who had been considerably taken aback, queried as to whether some of the duties mentioned really came within the scope of the obligations of a Groom-in-Waiting; they appeared to him *infra dig.* and derogatory to his position.

Baron Sparre took a snuff-box, magnificently set with

diamonds, from his breeches' pocket and offered it to Armfelt before replying : " It is the wish of our gracious Sovereign that, from this time forward, His Royal Highness shall have none but male attendants ; for this reason his women-nurses have been dismissed and he has been entrusted entirely to *our* care ; unfortunately, as I told you before, the duties of a man appointed Groom-in-Waiting to a Prince not quite three years of age, will naturally entail many offices fit only to be discharged by women-folk, and possibly *you*, at the age of four-and-twenty, might . . ." but instead of continuing and saying what Baron Armfelt might or might not be inclined to do, Baron Sparre slightly shrugged his shoulders and said impressively : " On the other hand, this position for a young man of your age promises a brilliant career for the future."

A sudden light came into the young man's blue eyes, and a bright smile hovered round his lips as he answered :

" I beg to assure you, Baron, that I am deeply grateful for the special favour His Majesty is pleased to show me in appointing me to attend upon the Crown-Prince, and as far as lies in my power, I shall do all I can to please and humour His little Highness."

The infant Prince's Governor merely shook his huge, massive head.

" You mustn't ' humour ' him too much, my dear boy. Providence has most generously endowed the Prince with wit and intelligence, but if he is some day to become a good ruler and to make his people happy, it is absolutely necessary that his hot temper, his angry passions, his obstinacy, should *not* be humoured. In your leisure hours you might with profit peruse Formey's *Treatise on Education*," and taking an open book from the window-ledge, Baron Sparre handed it to Armfelt ; the latter bowed as he took it and carelessly turned over a few leaves, whilst Baron Sparre continued : " As you are, no doubt, aware, His Royal Highness will have two other Gentlemen-in-Waiting besides yourself : Count Stachelberg and Count Wachtmeister, the King's own first and second Bedchamber attendants. Rémy and Wachlin have also been attached to the Prince's service ; one of the King's pages of

honour takes his turn in sleeping in the Prince's apartment, like myself, and one of the valets in the antechamber."

Baron Armfelt restored the book to its place on the window-ledge; its contents did not seem very attractive to him. Meanwhile the Governor continued his theme:

"One of the King's gentlemen and pages has always to be present during the Prince's meals, and every morning a corporal of the dragoons has to present himself at my quarters to take orders for watching over and guarding His Royal Highness' person. It is only on levée days, and when there are many people about and the Prince is playing in the gardens, that he is protected by a corporal and two dragoons; on other days His Royal Highness goes for a drive with me and the gentleman on duty. Further details I shall explain to you when opportunity offers."

At this moment a sound of violent weeping was heard through the door.

"There's always a fuss getting up in the morning," said the Governor, with an involuntary grimace. Then he rose and went into the Prince's bedchamber to see what really was the matter. At the door he turned to Armfelt, and said: "You had better wait here until the Prince has come to his senses again."

Through the half-open door Armfelt could hear how the Baron was remonstrating with His Royal Highness who, nevertheless, continued crying, answering all his Governor's expostulations with an obstinate, "No, no, no!"

"Your new Gentleman-in-Waiting, Baron Armfelt, is waiting outside and prays to be admitted, but I could not think of letting him come in before you promise to behave as a Prince should behave," said Baron Sparre, in serious tones.

The weeping ceased at once.

A few minutes later the page on duty announced, "Baron Armfelt, Lieutenant in the Guards."

In the Prince's apartment, where the large, magnificent four-poster with blue silk hangings, surmounted by the golden crown, occupied the chief place, the blinds were still down, and a bright fire burned in the grate, notwithstanding the warm summer weather. Close beside the Prince's bed stood the little camp-bed

for the page, which had not yet been removed ; the page knelt in front of the grate, blowing the flames to make them leap yet higher, whilst the valet Wachlin stood warming a tiny shirt by the fire.

The Governor presented Baron Armfelt, who bowed profoundly to his Royal Highness, who was sitting up in bed, supported by several large pillows, richly trimmed with lace and the royal monogram and crown. The Prince was a small-made child, with soft, fair hair which fell in thick curls over his brow, not having as yet been dressed and powdered for the day, his eyes were red with weeping, and tears still hung in the long lashes as he held out his tiny hand to be kissed. As Armfelt bent to perform this stereotyped ceremony, the Prince regarded his gigantic frame with the utmost gravity. He seemed very well satisfied with his inspection ; a happier expression lighted up his eyes, and in another second he was standing up in bed in his trailing nightdress, stretching out both little arms towards Armfelt. "Carry me, take me up in your arms," was the first command the newly-appointed Gentleman-in-Waiting received from his little Royal Master's lips !

Armfelt was delighted with this gracious reception, and did as he was commanded ; he took the Prince in his arms, wrapped the long night-garment gently round the little bare feet, and carried him round the room before delivering him into the hands of the valet to be bathed and dressed.

But nothing would induce the Prince to allow anyone to proceed with his toilet, nothing would content him but being carried about by Armfelt.

"Carry me . . . carry me !" was his continual cry, whilst hitting at Wachlin with his small hand.

The Governor expostulated with him in vain ; in vain Wachlin sent up bubbles, which glowed in the light of the fire and showed all the colours of the rainbow from the soap-dish by the bath, a game which generally pacified His Royal Highness ; in vain did Armfelt endeavour to keep out of his sight. The kicking and struggling Princelet held out his arms and cried unceasingly : "Carry me . . . carry me !"

So Armfelt was obliged once more to take his little Royal

Master up in his arms and carry him several times round the room ; the Prince at once left off crying, smiled contentedly, and graciously patted Armfelt on the shoulder. By this time, however, Armfelt did not feel so particularly flattered by these condescending marks of favour, and at a sign from the Governor he hastily set the Prince down on the valet's knee and hurriedly withdrew to the ante-room, so as not to distract the Prince's attention during the process of dressing by his alluring presence. The toilet took a longer time than usual that morning, as the Prince kicked and screamed the whole time with all his might.

Meanwhile Armfelt stood by the window in the antechamber drumming impatiently with his fingers upon the panes. He rather wished that the sunshine of the Prince's favour, which beamed so radiantly upon him, had taken some other form than constantly wishing to be in his arms. He himself thought he had been too yielding, too like an "unwise nurse," as Sparre expressed it, and he was afraid of being made the subject of sarcasm and ridicule by the ladies of the Court should the Prince's favour be manifested in a similar manner on less private occasions. He took up Formey, and attentively perused several pages concerning the bringing-up of children, but failed to meet with anything bearing upon his present dilemma. He yawned wearily over the book, and drummed many a tune on the window-pane before the Prince's toilet was finally accomplished and he was once more summoned to his presence.

Now the child did, in truth, look every inch a little Prince, for across his little breast he wore the broad blue ribbon of the Order of the Seraphim, and the Orders of the Northern Star and the Sword ; his hair also was well dressed and powdered. He lay on a rug, nibbling a biscuit, whilst Wachlin played all sorts of antics to keep him amused. The boy was so taken up with Wachlin's imitations of cows, birds (especially the cuckoo), pigs, goats, cocks and hens, and with his biscuit, that at first he had not noticed Armfelt's approach ; no sooner, however, did he do so, than the same old story recommenced, the child insisting on being carried about by him.

"If Armfelt will be kind enough," said Baron Sparre ; "but then it must only be just *once* round the room, because then

your Royal Highness will have to go to your august parents and wish them 'Good morning.'" He spoke gently but firmly, trying to bring the refractory child to reason.

Armfelt, much against his inclination, stooped down and lifted the boy in his arms, but as soon as he made any attempt to put him down, the Prince began crying and screaming, so that Armfelt was forced to carry him not *once*, but many times round the room.

Baron Sparre glanced at the clock on the mantelshelf.

"It is time for His Royal Highness to go; first to His Majesty the King, then to Her Majesty the Queen, to offer them his morning greeting."

The little Prince yelled and screamed more loudly than before; his cry was always the same, "Carry me, Armfelt, carry me! Take me up in your arms!"

"But you are much too big a boy to be carried past the soldiers like a baby—don't you think so yourself?" said Baron Sparre, whose short experience as the boy's "Governor" (he could scarcely be called "tutor") had taught him that the only way to coerce the child into obedience was to appeal to his pride or wound it.

The effect of this speech was instantaneous; the Prince ceased crying, and even patiently submitted to have his little nose and eyes wiped, and to be made generally tidy for the solemn morning visit to his parents. Then he put his small hand into the huge one of his Governor, and, preceded by his Gentlemen-in-Waiting, was led past the guard who, of course, presented arms to him, to the apartments of his Royal parents. His first visit was to the King.

Gustavus Adolphus III sat at his writing-table in the spacious audience-chamber, signing various letters, as the Prince entered. Instructed by the Governor, the boy waited quietly until the King had finished writing, then he ran up and kissed his father's hand. The King took him on his knee and imprinted a kiss on the child's forehead, then continued in conversation with one of his equerries. Presently he turned to the little Prince, and asked: "Have you been a good little boy this morning, eh?"

Without a moment's hesitation the boy humbly replied, "No, I was naughty; and I screamed because I wanted Armfelt to carry me—to . . . carry . . . me."

With an ill-concealed smile, though wishing to appear serious and frowning, the King listened to the Crown-Prince's self-accusation; but the poor little penitent was sadly tried once more, alas! The first utterance of the word "carry" had been with downcast eyes and quivering lips; the repetition of the word the second time had not been quite so painful, but at the third the Prince turned from the King to Armfelt, who was at that moment bending over his Sovereign's hand and deferentially listening to his gracious words; these words, eagerly waited for by all present in the chamber, were suddenly drowned by loud cries: "I want to be carried! . . . I want to be carried!"

The King set the child down and continued his conversation with Armfelt, without showing any sign of displeasure.

The Governor found himself in a dilemma. He could not rebuke the Prince in the Royal presence . . . neither could he allow the screaming to continue.

Therefore he had no resource but to try to divert the attention of the small delinquent. He pointed to different royal portraits adorning the walls, and asked the boy whether he could remember who that king was with the large periwig, or that lady with the pretty crown of gold. But neither Charles XI nor the Empress Catherine of Russia just then had the very least interest for the Prince, who began to scream afresh, and continued his fatal request to be carried to Armfelt, who did not rightly know whether to entirely ignore the Prince's appeal, which he certainly was in no mood to accede to in his present entourage, or not.

For a considerable time the King pretended not to notice what was going on, but as the Prince continued naughty, he went over to where the latter was sitting on Baron Sparre's knee, and gently but impressively remonstrated with him on his unbecoming conduct and temper. But as the Prince went on screaming and kind words seemed to have no effect upon him, His Majesty became angry, and threatened him with a

whipping. At the same time, he gave Sparre a sign to take him away, and told Armfelt to order the guard not to present arms when the Prince passed, as he had shown himself undeserving of any such marks of respect. He reminded the boy that he was to receive the Spanish Ambassador in audience that day, and that he must behave so that no unfavourable reports of him should reach the Court of Spain.

The child looked grave and thoughtful, and whispered to himself, as it were, "I am going to be quite good; Papa can be quite happy again now; don't want a whipping, not going to scream any more, not going to be naughty again."

"Now go to the Queen, your mother, and mind you are good with her," said the King, putting the child's little hand into that of his Governor. "Remember that you promised Papa to be a good boy, and don't forget Nurse Manderström's saying, 'A true man will keep to his word.'"

"And a churl to his churlishness," replied the Prince gravely, to the *utter* amazement of his Governor and the intense amusement of the King.

The Prince's conduct in the presence of the Queen does not seem to have been altogether exemplary, for not long after his entrance into her bedchamber, whither Sparre and Armfelt had, naturally, not accompanied him, but who were waiting without, ominous sounds of wailing and sobbing were heard; nor was it long before one of the Queen's ladies came hurriedly from the room carrying the Prince whom, without saying a word, she put into the arms of Armfelt, who turned purple in the face and bit his lip.

"Why were you naughty in Her Majesty's presence?" asked Armfelt in no very friendly tone, as he carried the boy down the stairs, past the stolid guard, whom the Prince eyed furtively as they failed to present arms.

"I was naughty because I didn't like being in there, and wanted you to carry me," replied the child at once.

The Governor remarked to Armfelt in French, which the Prince did not understand: "His one great virtue is that he never tries to make excuses, nor to conceal any naughtiness he has been guilty of. Young as he is, he *loves* truth."

“Undoubtedly that *is* a great quality,” replied Armfelt in rather lame French. Then he turned to another topic, more interesting to him, and said: “Is it not rather odd that a boy nearly three years old should always want to be carried . . . more especially a boy who, in every other respect, likes to be thought quite grown-up?”

Baron Sparre again replied in French:

“What is more odd still to *my* mind is that he is alive at all. Doctor Dahlberg’s experiment, in trying to harden him, seems to me to have had a detrimental effect on his mental condition. Since he was six months old he has been having icy-cold baths, and ice laid on his head and his stomach; *that* is no longer done now, but my firm belief is that the Prince’s rooted dislike to any kind of exertion may be ascribed solely to this severe treatment in his infancy. Both indoors and out his greatest delight is to lie perfectly still, but by degrees we shall have to get him to use his legs. I am going to ask you, Armfelt, to be good enough to begin this very day to do a little drilling with him, in play, in the Lofö meadows. It will do him good physically, and give him a little nerve and pluck.”

Meanwhile, the little Prince’s head had gradually sunk down on Armfelt’s shoulder, and when they reached his apartments they saw that he had fallen fast asleep. So he was carefully undressed and laid in his little bed for his customary noon-day slumber; but as he lay there peacefully breathing, like a little cherub, the time came round for him to be dressed for the audience to be given to the newly accredited Ambassador from Spain, Count Guemes, so he had to be awakened; but during the process of his dressing his heavy eyelids often closed, and Baron Armfelt heard him sleepily muttering to himself, “I promised papa to be good, to . . . be . . . good.”

It was a sad little child, struggling with all his might against sleepiness and discomfort, that sat in the richly gilded armchair on the dais in the audience-chamber, and held out his small hand to be kissed, whilst his Governor conversed in French with the envoy.

The audience had scarcely come to an end to the satisfaction of all concerned, and the little Prince was watching the

Ambassador's carriage, and crying "gee-gee" to the four magnificent Spanish horses harnessed thereto, when all of a sudden he was again seized by an irrepressible desire to be carried by Armfelt. His gentlemen endeavoured to dissuade him by telling him of all the good things he was going to have for dinner. "There will be roast chicken, tiny round lamb-cutlets, rissoles of veal and tongue with nice brown gravy and currant jelly," said Armfelt, having previously made minute inquiries of the butler.

"Don't want them! Don't want anything! Only want to be carried," cried the Prince pettishly.

"And then you shall have some nice big French plums," continued Sparre.

"Don't want any plums; only want to be carried!"

Finally, of course, the Prince got his way, but Armfelt was sharp enough to carry him into the dining-room, where he deposited him on his high chair at the solitary board. Two lackeys stood behind the chair and waited upon him, whilst Sparre and Armfelt took their seats on either side.

The Prince was still discussing his French plums, when his carriage was heard driving up; so he slid down from his chair, folded his little hands, and said his long grace reverently with bowed head.

Not many minutes later the Crown-Prince, with his Governor, went out driving in his own luxurious French landau, accompanied by the usual escort.

The weather was all that could be desired, and the Prince's little face beamed with delight at Armfelt's promise to drill with him in the Lofö meadows, and a tiny gun and paper helmet had been put into the carriage. He wanted to drive direct to the meadows, but that could not be allowed, for he had been commanded to "China,"* where their Majesties, with the Court, were going to take their afternoon coffee that day; but Armfelt promised the Prince that he would try to get him away as soon as he could, and that they would have some fine fun in the meadows.

When the carriage was going up the avenue which led direct to "China," the Governor ordered the coachman to stop, as he

* Part of the Park at Drottningholm fantastically laid out.

thought it advisable for the Prince to walk a little way ; but when the carriage drew up and the Prince divined the Governor's intention, he leant over to Armfelt and whispered, " Carry me ! Take me up in your arms ! *Do ! do !* "

Armfelt shook his head, put his finger on his lips, and pointed up the avenue. The boy sagely nodded his little head, and saying *sotto voce* to himself, " I promised to be a good boy," he put his hand into Armfelt's and trotted contentedly by his side up the drive, trying hard to keep in step with him with his small, tottering feet. Sparre walked on his other side.

Presently some curious looking red buildings with lofty green roofs became visible through the trees. The rays of the sun shone brightly on the gilded cupolas and emerald Chinese dragons on the roofs.

" There, that's ' China,' " said the little Prince to Armfelt in explanatory tones, " and I'll show you all the funny figures ; and then I want to drive on *at once* to the meadows, and you must teach me how to carry a gun."

Armfelt explained with lively gestures and tempting words what the " drill " was going to be like, and the little Prince's cheeks and eyes glowed with excitement ; but all at once he stopped short, half-dazed with fear. He had suddenly caught sight of three small white poodles which the ladies Manderström, Sinclair, and Wrangel, who were also on their way to " China " to join the Royal party, had brought with them. Whilst these ladies were standing still in order to make their curtsies to the Crown-Prince, the small dogs, having evidently had a difference of opinion among themselves, began to snarl, bark, and fight. The boy was simply terrified, and all he could say was : " I want to go home ! I want to go home ! Take me up in your arms, Armfelt, and carry me home ! "

But Armfelt was sternly determined not to lower or make himself ridiculous before any woman. He addressed a hasty question in French to the Governor, and, having received a reply in the affirmative, bent down and began to upbraid the Prince for his cowardice, and for showing himself such a baby in public, especially before ladies ; he told him that he must pull himself together, control his feelings, and

look at the little dogs, and that there could be no question of his going home yet, or being carried.

The Prince was so taken aback by Armfelt's stern admonition that he was unable to utter a word, and straightway endeavoured to do as he had been bidden, though the fighting of the dogs nearly frightened him out of his wits. He turned and twisted his little body and tried to wriggle his hand out of Armfelt's grasp and run back to the carriage, but Armfelt held the small hand in an iron grip and dragged him on towards the Pavilion, whilst the poodles continued fighting to the great discomfiture of their respective owners. The ladies begged the Governor to make their excuses for this scene to the Prince ; generally, they said, the behaviour of their pets was exemplary, and they could not conceive what had led to this contretemps. If Armfelt had only given them time to entice the dogs away, instead of insisting so unkindly that the Prince should look at them, all would have ended well.

But the Governor took Armfelt's part against them.

"My dear ladies," he said, "I should be only too thankful to Baron Armfelt if he *could* instil a little more courage into the Prince, because he is very nervous, and mortally afraid of many things which, in his position, he will have to face boldly some day. As the Prince was once recently greatly startled by an unexpected salvo of artillery at Ladugårdsgarde and by vociferous cheering, it is no wonder that all kinds of noises frighten him ; he is also much afraid of animals and strange objects, and he must be taught to conquer his nervousness and timidity."

The Lady Manderström shrugged her shoulders and gave Sparre a forbidding look as she lowered her green parasol so that her face should not be exposed to the scorching rays of the sun. Like many others, she, too, thought it was a pity that the little Prince, at his tender age, should have been deprived of the gentle ministrations of women and given over to the strict and not always judicious discipline of men. What *could* Sparre or Armfelt know about such infants ? Surely the care of a highly-strung, delicate baby-boy was more within the province of a woman than theirs, in any case. But then His Majesty Gustavus Adolphus III was ever wont to take pattern

by the Court of Versailles and, latterly, by that of Saint Petersburg also.

Presently the sound of merry voices was heard from the "Marble Saloon" in "China."

The King was standing at one of the windows, Countess Meyerfelt was gracefully handing him a handsome china cup, whilst Countess Löwenhjelm offered him sugar, and her sister, Countess Höpken, stood by with an ewer of cream, in the pose of Hebe which suited her marvellously well, as she, no doubt, knew. The three beautiful young Countesses were clad in robes of soft silk, with a design of wreaths of roses and posies on white, pink, and blue ground; their straw hats coquettishly set on one side of their well-powdered and elaborately curled and delicately scented coiffures, and snowy kerchiefs, richly trimmed with fine lace, tied in graceful knots across their bosoms. The skirts were short, and well showed-off the small black shoes, with the narrow, high heels and paste buckles; in fact, the trio looked like shepherdesses of the finest Dresden china, which the King was not slow in telling them either, in many fine words, interlarded with subtle compliments befitting each.

The Queen sat in the "Mirror Saloon" with her ladies. She reclined on one of the small sofas, upholstered in damask of Chinese design, which stood under one of the black and gold enrusted panels, whilst one of the ladies presided over the coffee at a table opposite. Queen Sophia Magdalena, however, looked like anything but a "shepherdess." She loved costly, heavy draperies, and always wore her hair in stiff, set rolls, from which ungraceful ringlets fell over her neck. She liked always to be *en grande tenue*, even on occasions when the Court took coffee and nibbled sweetmeats in the rural surroundings and funny Chinese summerhouse at Drottningholm. This day her tall, stately figure was enveloped in an overdress opening on an embroidered skirt trimmed with silver, the bodice stiffly laced across her ample breast. Her very prominent light blue eyes, hook-nose, and somewhat full, thick lips gave the impression of a cold, unimpassioned woman of few words. Her entourage ascribed the Queen's unusual reserve and silent.

manner to a certain lack of intelligence, but those who were more intimately acquainted with her were wont to maintain that the Queen's apparent apathy was the outcome of extreme shyness, and that the King's habitual liveliness and sprightliness made the Queen appear even more reserved and listless than she really was. They made the most of her kind-heartedness, her patience, and her admirable self-control, and affirmed that her understanding was certainly clear, and that her intellect, if not of the first order, was at any rate sound and up to the average.

The Crown-Prince, his little heart still beating violently from his recent fright, rushed in at one of the doors opening on to the park ; the Queen beckoned him to her, but he pretended not to see, and ran into the " Marble Saloon " where the King was, jumped on to his knee, and kissed his hand. The three young Countesses immediately began to make a fuss with him ; they twirled and suddenly sat down to make " cheesecakes " for him, played " hide-and-seek," and petted and caressed him. Countess Wrede-Sparre gave him a bit of sugar which Countess Löwenhjelm had dipped into the cream, in a silver teaspoon. So pleased was the little Prince with these delicate attentions that the Governor had to remind him several times that he ought now to go and pay his respects to the Queen. But it was not a very happy meeting between mother and son ; the Queen spoke to him in soft, gentle tones, and asked him various questions, to which he only replied with a curt, " No, no," as was his custom when out of temper. All the time his eyes sought the King, who was standing at the top of the stairs watching Baron Armfelt and Baron Essen playing battledore and shuttlecock with Countess Höpken and Miss Cederström, in the blazing sun on the lawn.

Near the Queen sat the Crown-Prince's former " Nursery Superintendent," named Stauden, who, noticing the boy's impatience and evident desire to get away, and the Queen's regret at it, took him on her lap in order to keep him a little longer near his august mother.

This arrangement in no wise suited the Prince, who, sliding down from Madame Stauden's knees, said with the indescribable

hauteur he could at times assume: "No; I, the Crown-Prince, will *not* sit on a woman's knee." With that he made off as fast as he could in the direction of the King, who had just entered.

The King tried hard to conceal his amusement at the Prince's speech, which he had overheard, but not very successfully. However, he said in a slightly reproachful tone:

"You must not talk like that . . . you should be glad if any of the ladies of the Court are kind enough to wish to take you on their knee."

But the child knew very well that his father was not really displeased, and so, without asking his leave, he accompanied him up the stairs. For a short time he sat very still, watching the shuttlecocks flying in the air, the ladies catching them and sending them back with laughter and pertinent exclamations, the King and his gentlemen looking on and encouraging them with clapping of hands and merry jests.

Ere long the game had to be stopped, for the King had to go to superintend a rehearsal of "Roland," in his theatre. He desired the Prince to accompany him, in order that he might get accustomed to a crowd and the noise of the stage, for both of which the boy had evinced the greatest repugnance and fear. When he saw what was expected of him, he suddenly remembered the promised "drill" in the Lofö meadows, and called to Armfelt, who, for the time being, had entirely forgotten his little charge. The burden of the child's cry was ever the same, "Carry me, Armfelt; take me in your arms to the carriage. . . . I want to go and drill in the Lofö meadows."

Having said which, the Prince ran down the steps, clung fast to Armfelt's legs, and shrieked and yelled.

The ladies and gentlemen had to cease playing at once for fear of hitting the boy, who pursued Armfelt wherever he went.

"What is all that noise about?" the King inquired sternly, coming on the scene. "You are to come to the theatre; if that is the way you order people about, you will never get anything."

"But if I don't order them?" sobbed the Prince.

"Anyhow, you are not going to have your way. I *command* you to be present at the rehearsal this evening."

The King turned on his heel, followed by his suite and some of the ladies; he entered the carriage waiting for him.

“I want to drill with Armfelt! I was promised and I *shall*,” cried the Prince, weeping aloud.

The Queen’s ladies gathered round him, trying to comfort him, but he hit at these with his little hand and would not be quieted.

Then the Governor took his hand and said gravely: “Did you not hear that His Majesty *commanded* the Crown-Prince’s presence at the theatre?”

The Prince heeded not, but cried more loudly, “Take me in your arms, Armfelt; I want to go with you to drill. You *promised* me!”

Thereupon Baron Sparre beckoned to Wachlin to come up.

“Carry His Royal Highness to his carriage,” he said.

But the irate Prince administered a kick to Wachlin, and screamed as loud as he could, “Armfelt is to carry me.”

Armfelt, of course, made as though he heard not.

The small theatre at Drottningholm was still all in darkness when the Prince was carried in and set down in the Royal box. The King at once took him on his knee and talked kindly and soothingly to him. The boy tried hard to restrain himself before his father, but occasionally a sob broke from him, and his whole little body quivered and shook when the actors appeared on the brilliantly lighted stage and began to sing and shout.

It was in vain that the King tried to amuse and interest him, telling him all he was going to see if only he would sit still and control himself. But the Prince could do neither; he shook and trembled with nervousness, and put his little hands up to his ears not to hear what was going on; and as the King was anxious to lose nothing of the rehearsal, the boy’s presence began to worry him, so that he was obliged to send him back to his own apartments.

There a dire catastrophe happened. As soon as the little Prince was safely back in his own room he gave Armfelt a sudden box on the ear, and this was what led up to it. Armfelt, who was a man of his word and rather soft-hearted, felt somewhat guilty at not having been able to keep his promise, and

tried to make the Prince forget his disappointment by telling him about the last great review on the Ladugård Plain. They were sitting on the grass side by side, the tiny boy and the giant Armfelt, the latter telling most delightful stories, to which the Prince seemed listening very attentively, every now and then regarding the teller with wistful eyes and wrinkled brow.

Suddenly, and as though he had all the time been thinking of nothing else (which, probably, *had* been the case), he exclaimed, "Carry me, Armfelt; take me in your big arms."

Armfelt pretended not to hear and went on with his stories. The Prince, he was determined, should *not* indulge in such whims, at least not with *him*. He, Baron Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt, Lieutenant in His Majesty's Guards, had no intention of being laughed at for walking about the park around "China," or the rooms in the palace at Drottningholm, like a common nurse-girl carrying about a fractious baby. As the Prince would *not* be quiet, Armfelt said rather sharply and crossly to him, "That won't do—I will on *no* account carry you about any longer."

Hardly had he uttered the words than the Prince, in a towering rage, gave him a blow on the cheek. Consternation followed. Sparre was waiting for the end of the rehearsal, and as the King was about to go up to the spacious reading-room the Baron intercepted him, and reported the Prince's conduct.

The King at once turned back with the Governor and sent the Prince into a corner. . . . There he stood, half-asleep, and occasionally sobbing, too obstinate to beg Armfelt's pardon, which would have released him at once. The King showed unusual patience and forbearance, conversing lightly with Baron Sparre and some of the other gentlemen whilst awaiting the Prince's repentance. At last a small, piping voice was heard from the corner: "I want to go to bed and to sleep now," it said.

"You have to apologise to Baron Armfelt first," said the King severely, continuing his conversation with his gentlemen.

Apparently a fierce struggle between pride, obstinacy, and some other better feeling, was going on in the little Prince's

breast. The latter at last gained the victory ; the boy went up to Armfelt and said :

“ Don’t be angry with me any more, please, Armfelt ; I am really awfully good now ” ; and as he said this, he held out a small hand for a kiss of forgiveness.

The Governor gave the Prince a hurried sign which was hardly needed, for the child had already run up to the King, flung his arms round his neck, and whispered penitently into his ear, “ Forgive me, papa ; I am quite a good boy again ; the nasty black dog has gone quite away.”

Before the King could frame a reply, the pleading, wailing voice burst forth again : “ I want to go to bed ; want to go to sleep.”

“ Well, then, leave off crying, and say good night,” said the King.

The Prince bade a hasty good night all round, kissed his father’s hand, and himself led Wachlin, his valet, into the dressing-room.

“ I am going to bed now. Make haste, quick, quick ; put me into my bed this very minute ! ”

It would have been contrary to etiquette to begin undressing the Prince whilst the King was still in his (the Prince’s) apartments ; but at last he went up to the writing-room, and the Prince was undressed with all possible speed.

“ Whatever has come over him ? ” said Armfelt to Baron Sparre, when at last the baby Prince had been comfortably tuckered up in the huge four-poster with the gilded crown, the gorgeous blue silk curtains carefully drawn, and Jernfelt, the youngervalet, had taken his place on a stool at the foot of the bed.

At the same moment the dull sound of the firing of a gun was heard.

“ He was anxious to be in bed and asleep before the evening gun went off from the *Amphion*. It is the same every evening ; the noise of it nearly frightens him to death. See how he has pulled the sheet over his head and put his hands over his ears so that he shouldn’t hear it. To-night he has mercifully fallen asleep in time, but I verily believe he goes in fear and trembling of the sound of that gun all day long.”

“It is a thousand pities for the poor child, and I am heartily sorry for him,” said Armfelt feelingly.

Baron Sparre looked thoughtful. “If only he could be made to overcome his pride and obstinacy, he would be all right; but, baby as he is, no one rebukes him when he shows his worst side. Only the King’s threat of a whipping has any effect upon him, and that not for long.”

“I have heard it said that the Prince is terribly afraid of his father, but to me it seems quite the reverse, he seems to worship him,” said Armfelt in a low voice.

“When he was under petticoat government he was devoted to the Queen, as was, perhaps, only natural; now he has transferred his affections to the King. You are quite right, Armfelt, the Prince *does* adore his father. But we had better not stop here talking and whispering. He is moving and *may* wake up. . . .”

“Which God forbid,” said Armfelt fervently, and both gentlemen withdrew in haste.

CHAPTER II

A BIRTHDAY

“**W**E desire to have the honour of wishing Your Royal Highness many happy returns of the day,” said Baron Sparre, as he and Baron Wachtmeister (who entered upon his duties that day) stood before the Prince when he awoke one morning. It was the 1st of November when he attained his third year.

“I will take this occasion,” continued Sparre, looking earnestly at the boy, who was staring solemnly at him with great wide-open eyes, “to remind our beloved Crown-Prince that as he grows in years and knowledge, so he must grow in gentleness and goodness, in order that all may perceive that he is no longer a baby, but a big, sensible boy.”

The Prince looked exceedingly thoughtful and puzzled at this somewhat pompous harangue, but he held out his little hand to be kissed, and said very prettily, “I thank you, gentlemen.”

Then he cast furtive glances at the birthday-table set out near the bed . . . he was not quite sure in his own mind whether a “big, sensible boy” ought to take any pleasure in the toys piled up thereon. However, the temptation was too great to be resisted long, and somewhat shamefacedly the little Prince turned to Baron Wachtmeister, and asked, “What is all that?”

“There is an officer’s cocked hat with plumes,” replied the Baron evasively.

“Put it on my head,” commanded the Prince. And sitting up in bed with the cocked hat on his head, he entirely forgot that he was no longer a *baby*, but a *big, sensible boy*, and . . .



GUSTAF ADOLF IV AS A CHILD

just three years old ! One by one the things he thought most desirable had to be transferred from the table on to his bed ; thirty tin hussars, two companies of guards with their commanding officers, ladies and gentlemen in fine Court dress, knights in wonderful armour, and curious figures carved in ivory ; one with a tea-tray, another clad in feathers. Baron Wachtmeister was also requested to put some tapers into the tin candlesticks by the Prince's side, so as to illuminate the festive table . . . a whole pound of coloured wax tapers had been among the presents. It was some time before he could be prevailed upon to get up. Alas ! the valet by his bedside was not his old Wachlin, of whom he was fond, but a total stranger, a Frenchman, whom the child had never seen before. The Prince eyed him suspiciously, but he knew that it was no use to weep and make a fuss about these constant changes . . . he was used to changes as regards his entourage. First there had been Armfelt, then Stachelberg, now Wachtmeister, and as soon as he had become accustomed to Wachtmeister, he knew it would be Armfelt's turn again. Only Baron Sparre and Wachlin had been *always* with him, and the Prince had imagined that they, at least, would always remain. But behold ! an entire stranger had come upon the scene to replace Wachlin, and attend to and dress the Prince as Wachlin had been used to do. And, worse than all, the Prince would not even be able to talk to him ; he had only, as yet, learnt a few easy sentences in French, and this man, Robert, only understood French apparently. The Prince was so taken aback when he saw this strange man, that the corners of his mouth went down, and he was on the verge of tears, but he whispered to himself, loud enough, however, for both Sparre and Wachtmeister to catch the words : "The Prince is a big, sensible boy now," then he submitted quietly to his toilet.

The process of dressing, nevertheless, took up a long time ; it was no easy task for the new-comer to dress the Prince, who would not let go of his toys, but shifted them from one hand to the other as convenience demanded ; when it came to powdering and dressing his hair, the cocked hat had to be on and off between every stroke of the brush ! The new valet, who was

anxious to do his very best on this, his first day, and to show off his skill as a *coiffeur*, was nearly driven frantic.

The change of attendant was, however, not the only untoward event with which the Prince had to contend on this, his birthday ; something else happened just as his toilet was completed. Baron Wrangel, equerry to the King's brother, the Duke of Östergötland, was announced, and entered with both hands in a huge black satin muff, the sight of which terrified the little Prince. Whilst Baron Wrangel was delivering all sorts of complimentary and congratulatory messages from his uncle, the boy kept his eyes immovably fixed on the muff. He turned deadly pale, his whole body trembled, the corners of his mouth twitched spasmodically, the big blue eyes were full of tears, and he was on the point of bursting out crying ; but once again, almost inaudibly, the quivering lips uttered the words, "A big, big boy" . . . and not a tear was allowed to fall.

Baron Wachtmeister, who understood children, having little ones of his own, tried his best to help this "big, big boy" over his trouble.

"Look here, Your Royal Highness," he said, "shall we ask Baron Wrangel to lend us his muff, and then we'll have a little game and pretend that *you* are an Ambassador from abroad, and have come to see Baron Sparre, with both your hands well stuck into the muff, because it is such a cold winter's day ?"

"But it isn't a muff, it's a dog," cried the child, still trembling.

"No, no. You're quite mistaken ; it is a muff to put your hands into to keep them warm."

"But it *is* a dog," reiterated the Prince.

"No, most assuredly it is *not* ; look here now."

And so well did Wachtmeister demonstrate the fact to the Prince that in the end he was induced to take the muff, though rather reluctantly ; he put his small hands into it, and strutted up and down the room, making a deep bow to the Governor each time he passed, in the same way as the foreign envoys whose homage he was accustomed to receive . . . but the little hands in the muff were cold as ice, and shook with fear.

After this act of heroism the Prince was prepared to go to the King's chamber and tell him all about it. The King was not yet fully dressed ; in fact, his valet was adjusting his braces as the child entered ; but he took him on his knee, congratulated him, and made him a little serious speech of much the same import as that of Baron Sparre earlier in the day. He added something which he bade the Prince to constantly bear in mind, namely, to be kind and considerate to all who ministered to his comfort and did his behest ; having now grown in years (!) and intelligence, he would, no doubt, understand what the King meant to convey.

The Prince had entered the King's room full of excitement and eagerness to show his father some of the toys he had contrived to smuggle into that sanctum, and to tell him of his adventure with the muff ; but at the King's speech his little face relapsed into its usual pensive and perplexed expression—there was much for the little mind to puzzle over ! Was he *really* so old now that he must cast away all his cherished playthings, and must the rest of his days be spent in granting audiences, receiving foreign envoys, and going to the theatre ? And what did Father mean by saying that he must not give needless *trouble*, when Wachlin had always said it was a great *honour* to wait upon the Prince ? He knew that it *was*, and most gladly would he have escaped that honour ; it was certainly not for his own pleasure that he had to be dressed and undressed four or five times a day. And to-day was his birthday, and he had been so good and patient—why, then, these solemn exhortations ? Was it because he was the Crown-Prince and not just an ordinary boy ? Of course, it *was* a grand thing to *be* the Crown-Prince, and *not* just a common boy, and he would sooner be admonished as a Prince than ignored *as* an ordinary boy. The little man had listened so attentively, with anxious, wrinkled brow to the King's speech, and looked so sad and solemn, that his father was afraid he had not been good, and asked him.

“ Oh yes, I have,” replied the boy in a tone of self-defence. “ I never cried for Wachlin, and I carried Baron Wrangel's great big dog ; I did.”

But the King was in a hurry to go on with his toilet, and had no time to listen to any further revelations ; only when he had finished, and had gone round the room addressing a few remarks to the gentlemen now admitted into his presence, did he perceive that his son still stood on the same spot, with the same thoughtful, far-off look on his face, and no change of attitude. As the King passed he gave him a little pat on the head, and an idea seemed suddenly to occur to him. He beckoned to one of the pages to bring him a little walking-stick with a large gold crook, on which was engraved the Prince's monogram, surmounted by a crown. The boy dropped the doll he had been holding, and took the little cane from the King's hand, which he kissed at a sign from his Governor. After taking the gift, however, he looked even more serious and pensive. He had got it into his little head that, by this present, the King meant him to understand that he really was a big *man* now—only real, grown-up men used walking-sticks, *that* the Prince knew ; he had also observed how *old* men were accustomed to *lean* on their sticks . . . so *he* tried to lean on his with the air of a very, very old man ! But the King paid no further attention to him ; he had stepped on to the daïs to hold his usual morning reception.

The Prince lay full-length on a rug, staring at the monogram "G.A." which he had been taught to know, and at the royal crown above it, about which no one had taught him anything, but which had been the first object to attract his attention as he lay in the historic cradle of his great ancestor Charles XII, and his baby eyes saw the symbol which held together the silken curtains.

The little Prince had much to ponder over, and it was with some difficulty that he could be persuaded to rise from the rug and go to the Queen. Since his women attendants had been withdrawn, he intensely disliked these morning visits to his mother, as neither his Governor, nor any other male being, could accompany him. At last the King himself had to pick him up, and *command* him to go ; no sooner had he been set on his little legs when the King seemed to remember something. He made a sign to the Governor to wait a minute ; then he took

the little Prince aside, and talked very gently to him. The boy paid great attention, and solemnly repeated the French words the King was teaching him.

“Do you understand now? You are to say these words, exactly as Papa says them, to the Russian Ambassador, when he calls to offer his congratulations.”

The Prince nodded his head and, with some curiosity, watched the King unlocking a cupboard in the wall and taking therefrom a small silver drum, bearing a relief portrait of the Prince, in gold, on one side. The drumsticks were of ivory, with large gold knobs, inlaid with mother-o'-pearl. The King beat a tattoo on the tightly-strung skin, and then handed the drum over to Baron Wachtmeister, whom he had called up to the daïs; what passed there was concealed by the heavy draperies.

“Go over it with him two or three times,” said the King.

The Prince eyed the drum wistfully, but refrained from touching it.

Next the King took, from the same mysterious cupboard, a flag of most costly cloth of silver on a small pole, richly set with precious stones. This also he handed to Wachtmeister; then, pointing to both drum and flag, the King made the boy repeat once more the French words he had taught him.

With quivering lips the Prince said: “The drum is for my cousin Alexander, the flag for my cousin Constantine.”

“You are not to say that in Swedish, nor in such a melancholy, lachrymose tone; but in French, and cheerfully and quickly . . . now then.”

This time the Prince repeated the words prescribed in broken French and the most cheerful tones he could muster at the moment. The King corrected his pronunciation, and made him say the words over and over again as smartly as possible; then he told him he might go to his mother.

The Queen was dressing when the Prince entered. Her Majesty was in the habit of spending nearly half the day over her toilet, and he could never remember a single morning that he did not find his mother sitting in front of the huge cheval-glass, which could be tilted to an angle that the Queen

could see (*and admire*) her smart, high-heeled shoes and unusually small and shapely feet.

In the glass she saw her young son coming into the room, and the wonderful likeness between him and herself struck her forcibly; the resemblance, indeed, was most remarkable, especially when Gustaf Adolf wore his serious mien.

The Queen waited, expecting the Prince to come up to kiss her hand; instead of which he made straight for the window and looked out.

“Why aren’t the soldiers in full dress to-day, as they were on mother’s birthday?” he said, pointing to the guard under the window.

“Who told you that soldiers were always in full dress on birthdays?” asked the Queen in drawling tones and a strong lisp.

“Nobody did; I remember my own self how they looked on mother’s birthday.”

The Queen noticed the boy’s look of disappointment as he turned from the window.

She called him to her side, and as he drew near, he caught sight of his mother’s reflection in the glass.

The Queen’s cheeks had just been rubbed with some kind of unguent to improve her complexion; they shone with the greasy compound, and as she stooped to kiss her son, he involuntarily drew back, and bent over her large white hand, on which he imprinted a kiss instead.

Probably the Queen had intended to say a few loving words to the Prince on the occasion of his birthday, but this little act on his part hurt her feelings, and she could not think of anything to say except (and that in a low voice), “I have the pleasure of wishing my boy many happy returns of the day.”

“I have the honour to thank you,” was his prompt reply.

The Queen took a small parcel from her dressing-table and handed it to him; it contained a beautiful gold purse, in which were a number of bright new coins.

Again the Prince kissed her hand, and said, “Thank you.” It was the first money he had ever had, and he was pleased accordingly.

Mistress Ehrengut, the Queen's favourite Woman-of-the-Bedchamber, was sitting at the window, and beckoned to the Prince to come to her.

"Come here, my little man, and I will help you count your pennies," she said.

But the Prince, whose pride had already suffered much through the guard not being in gala get-up for his birthday, was intensely annoyed at the favourite's familiarity, and replied angrily :

"I am not a little man."

"Well, what are you, then ?" inquired Mistress Ehrengut in tantalising tone.

"I am *Gustaf Adolf*."

"Well then, come here, *Gustaf*," again said the lady, laughing and nodding her head to him.

"You need not laugh and wag your head ; I am the Crown-Prince," said the boy haughtily, as he went to another window and looked out.

Mistress Manderström followed him, and as she stood behind him she watched him laying his coins in a row, one by one, on the window-sill.

"May I tell Your Royal Highness how much money there is there ?" she asked.

The Prince nodded.

"There are twenty-four pieces, which make two riksdaler, which all belong to the Prince," said Mistress Manderström insinuatingly.

"Am I very rich, then ?" asked the boy, looking up at the clouds and not at the coins.

"Of course you are rich," she answered, smiling, "quite rich."

For a long while the Prince continued gravely gazing at the clouds ; then he carefully took up the coins and put them back into the purse, after which he bade the Queen and her ladies adieu, saying he must go back now, because Baron Wachtmeister was waiting for him in the antechamber. He took his stick, upon which he leaned heavily (!), and holding the purse containing all his wealth tightly clasped in his hand, took

the way to his own apartments. There, whilst having his dinner, he held a great reception of all who had come to offer their congratulations on this auspicious day.

Dinner and reception were scarcely over when the Russian Ambassador was announced. When he was ushered in, the Prince was standing, grave and erect, in the Audience-chamber. Baron Sparre had lightly passed the gold cord, on which hung the silver drum, over the Prince's shoulder, where it sparkled brightly on the blue riband of the Order of the Seraphim on his breast. As the Ambassador approached, with profound bows, to offer his congratulations, the Prince beat a few sounds on the silver drum, without waiting for the Envoy's ceremonious speech, and asked whether the drum had not a sweet tone ?

The Ambassador opined he had never heard a sweeter.

"I think so too," the Governor heard the Prince remark to himself in an undertone, as the little hands made an awkward attempt to get the cord over his head. Not many minutes later he handed the beautiful drum to the Ambassador, and said in his baby French, but with a charming manner : "Penez ce tambou et donnez à mon cousin Alexandre de ma part." With a bow the Ambassador took the handsome gift from the hands of the Crown-Prince, who forthwith dived into the corner of the room and rummaged about among his toys, till he found the flag, which he held out to the Ambassador : "Penez, si vous pait, aussi d'apeau et donnez à mon cou-cousin Constantin," he said.

Once more the Ambassador bowed and uttered a charming compliment anent the splendour of the Prince's gifts. "No doubt," said he, "the Empress Catherine would be greatly touched by the kindly feeling manifested by His Royal Highness the Crown-Prince of Sweden towards her grandsons, the youthful Grand Dukes."

As all this was said in French, the Prince naturally understood not one word of it, and could only bow his acknowledgments and look gratified—he did both as well as he could.

With a bow more profound even than any of the preceding, the Ambassador left the chamber, bearing the precious gifts with him.

With longing eyes the Prince saw them disappearing ; the corners of his mouth quivered, but he did not cry ; he only said a few words in an undertone, as was his custom, but when the door closed on the Ambassador his face turned fiery red.

Some time after, meeting the boy by chance on the grand staircase, the King praised him for his good behaviour and, as a reward, told him that when he returned from his daily walk, he might come to the King's apartments and have little Manderström and the little Höpkens to play with him. This pleased him greatly, as he could command and order these little playfellows about as he liked.

Meanwhile it had grown dark, and the small Prince, sitting up in bed talking to Baron Sparre, was very tired and almost overcome with sleep ; but there were several things which burdened his conscience, and he could not rest until they had all been satisfactorily settled. So he took them in order one by one, asking Sparre various questions at the same time.

“ You said to Baron Wachtmeister, ‘ Has there been any news from Swartsjö to-day ? ’ Well, I didn't hear what Baron Wachtmeister answered.”

He also wondered why his paternal grandmother had not sent him any message on his birthday.

The Governor merely answered : “ You must go to sleep now.”

“ Everybody wished me many happy returns of the day. The Duke of Södermanland came himself, and the Duke of Östergötland was sick, so he sent some one else, and the Princess and Duchess both sent me presents, and so did Papa and Mamma ; but why was there nothing from Swartsjö ? . . . why did Grandmamma not send, that's what I want to know ? ”

The Prince sat up in bed with a puzzled look on his face.

“ You must say your prayers now. Come, fold your hands.”

The Prince took no notice, but said : “ Do you know, Baron Sparre, now I can't say the prayers I used to say any more ; they'll have to be altered and amended.”

The Governor, who was slowly drawing the curtains round the bed and waiting to hear the Prince say his prayers, turned round in amazement, and said :

“ Whatever *do* you mean ? ”

“ Well, do you see I can't say as I used to do, ‘ Pray God bless father, mother, and also me, *poor* little child,’ *now* I must say, ‘ and also me, *rich* child,’ ” replied the Prince very gravely ; “ because, you know, to-day the Queen made me a present of a gold purse with a lot of money in it, and so I am very rich, and can't be ‘ *poor* child ’ any more.”

“ Was that the alteration you meant ? ” asked Sparre, scarcely able to repress a smile.

“ Yes, it was,” said the Prince ; then, with such evident constraint that Baron Sparre could quite understand what an effort it cost him, he added : “ I suppose God won't be angry, though, if I still say in my prayers, ‘ child,’ and not ‘ big boy,’ will He ? ”

“ No, God will certainly not be angry,” said Sparre, with increasing amazement at his quaint little master's odd ideas.

“ Then I'll say, ‘ bless me also, rich child.’ If you'll just stoop down here a minute, I'll whisper something in your ear.”

Baron Sparre bent down to the child, but his whisper was so low that the Baron had to repeat aloud what he *thought* the Prince had said.

“ Are you asking that, because it is your birthday, the sunset gun should not be fired from the *Amphion* ? But you can't *really* mean that, for you know, generally, *extra* salutes are fired in honour of a royal personage's birthday.”

The Prince hastily pulled the bedelotbes over his head, put his fingers in his ears, and said, half sobbing :

“ I *did* say all you heard, Baron Sparre, but I suppose I really *meant* quite the contrary ; because I *am* a great, a very great person, am I not ? ”

And, before Sparre could frame a fitting reply, came the loud report of the much-dreaded gun.

CHAPTER III

CONVERSE WITH THE DEAD

IN his study in the Palace at Stockholm we next see the young Prince, now eight years old, sitting alone with his tutor, Chancellor Nils von Rosenstein. Being so thin and slender, he does not look his age ; the tutor, by way of contrast, already looks like an old man though only just past thirty, his build heavy and awkward, much inclined to obesity. The Prince, physically so much younger than his age, is mentally far in advance of his years ; his features bear a haggard, anxious impress, and give him a quaint, precocious look, whereas the tutor's homely, but kindly good-natured face is in direct contrast to his thickset, clumsy body.

The Prince is sitting in a gilt armchair, comfortably leaning back, his arms folded, his feet resting on a high footstool. He wore the national Swedish dress of black and red, the broad blue riband and Star of his Order, a turndown collar and cuffs of the finest lacc. There was an immense contrast between the fragile, delicate boy in the easy chair and the ponderous, red-faced pedagogue perched on a high, uncomfortable stool opposite him.

The tutor takes up a book in a blue paper cover from among a heap of others scattered about the table, and reads : “ We have now come to the close of the reign of King Charles IX, and shall pass on to the reign of Gustavus Adolphus II.” Then he said : “ As I am acting as teacher and guide to a Prince who bears the same name, I implore Heaven to grant that he may grow up to resemble that hero in courage, wisdom, greatness of soul, and firmness of purpose ; that he may cherish the same exalted principles, be fitted with the like ardour for work, and

be imbued with the same love for his country and its honoured name."

The young Prince fixed a pair of eager eyes on his big, burly instructor, and said, by way of correcting him: "You forgot to mention his love and fear of God."

Then he gave a sign with his hand for the tutor to continue. In a classic and academic manner, Rosenstein then proceeded to give a sketch of the childhood of the great Gustavus Adolphus, and of his early youth, uninterrupted by the little Gustaf Adolf until he came to a paragraph which the boy could not let pass without comment; it ran thus: "There was only one flaw in the character of this Prince, and that was his uncontrollable hot temper, which occasionally broke forth; not only Gustavus Adolphus, but many other descendants of the House of Wasa suffered from the same mental defect."

Here the Crown-Prince interrupted his tutor to say: "Listen, Rosenstein; is there *any* one without a blemish, since even Gustavus Adolphus seems not to have been altogether perfect?"

"No man, Your Royal Highness, can be called *perfect*. Perfection belongs to God only," he replied, with appropriate solemnity.

The Crown-Prince sat silent for a while, fiddling with his riband, which would not sit to his liking, and as he did not ask Rosenstein to go on, the latter, too, was silent.

However, suddenly the Prince said: "Talking of defects and failings, I wish you would honestly and truly tell me mine, Rosenstein."

The Chancellor was considerably taken aback. What odd new phase was this? At the same time he thought it advisable not to let so opportune an occasion slip; so, after some hesitation, he said:

"Your Royal Highness' temper also is apt to be exceedingly hot and violent at times, like that of the great Gustavus Adolphus."

"That is a failing of which I have long been perfectly aware," snapped the Crown-Prince with some sharpness.

"Would Your Royal Highness really desire . . . ?"

"To tell the truth, Rosenstein, I should have liked you to say

that I *had* no faults or failings ; but as you don't seem to think that you *can* say that truthfully, it would, perhaps, be best that I should be told all my shortcomings in a ' lump,' so to say. Therefore, be kind enough to tell me what you think of me."

Thus admonished, the tutor replied without hesitation :

" Your Royal Highness is disposed to be somewhat obstinate and opinionated."

" Well, I can't see that, Rosenstein. When I am right I must stick to it, or people might think me vacillating and weak. You often say yourself, ' a king should know his own mind, and should not be influenced by favourites.' Well then, I always *do* know my own mind, and what I want."

" But what about those occasions when Your Royal Highness wants what it is not right to want ? " said Rosenstein gently.

" Well, as no one is quite free from faults, you must, henceforth, always tell me when I am *really* in the wrong, and I will try to see it too. . . . Have I any other failings ? You may speak out boldly. I want to hear them all at one time, and then I can think them well over afterwards. That I *mean* to get what I want, if I *can*, can't be helped."

Rosenstein remained silent.

The Crown-Prince also for a while ; the colour in his cheeks came and went ; at last he said, " Did I not bid you speak out honestly about my other faults, if I *have* any others ? "

Rosenstein reflected a minute or two as to what he should say.

" Your Royal Highness is sometimes inclined to be haughty and overbearing towards those whose office it is to minister to and serve Your Royal Highness. I have heard rumours of a scene between yourself, Mistress Hellström, and Jernfelt, and all for no better reason than a button on your breeches which had nearly, but not quite come off, and which, you persisted, could never have been properly sewn on."

" That was true," said the Prince. " I rated them both soundly, as also I did Papillon when my lamp wouldn't burn as I wanted it to ; but I must also tell you, Rosenstein, that I made it up to Jernfelt, Mistress Hellström, and Papillon quite of my own accord. I know, too, what else is in your mind at

this moment . . . you are thinking of the way I spoke to Wachtmeister the other day, when he didn't give me the clock directly I wanted it."

Rosenstein nodded assent.

"Yes, I did tell Wachtmeister that he was too hard, and he *was* too hard on me, and that I can't stand . . . and won't; and as to that affair with young Aminoff, I . . ."

Rosenstein slightly shrugged his shoulders and held up his hands deprecatingly, as much as to say, it is not *I*, but Your Royal Highness who are bringing up all these accusations against yourself.

The Prince continued eagerly :

"I was perfectly right, though, when I scolded Aminoff for not having put on his bandolier when he stood behind my chair at the banquet yesterday. It was an act of negligence and disrespect to come in to wait upon me without it. You must candidly admit that I *had* right on *my* side in that case."

Rosenstein replied :

"Right or wrong, one does not gain respect or affection by publicly upbraiding one's servitors, even when one knows one is right. . . . One should rebuke them with gentleness and . . . in private. Least of all does it become Your Royal Highness to speak as you did to your holiday tutor, and a man of such undeniable merit as Baron Wachtmeister to boot."

"Yes, Rosenstein; but I *was* right both as regards Wachtmeister *and* Aminoff."

Silence once more pervaded the room, but not for long; presently the Prince said pettishly: "Well, what other faults are there? I can see by your face that there are many!"

Rosenstein coughed and cleared his throat.

"There are some faults," he said, "which are bad for both of us, for Your Royal Highness *and* myself. For instance, I have often had to complain about the lack of interest shown in your studies. Not as regards Scripture or Swedish history, Latin or mathematics, but with regard to other branches. Your Royal Highness knows well enough which they are, and with which you do not care to take any pains."

The Crown-Prince reflected for a moment, then he let both

arms drop on the arms of his chair, as if a light had suddenly dawned upon him, and said :

“ What *are* you saying, Rosenstein ? Are you displeased with me because of that ? Have you forgotten how much struck the examiners were with my general knowledge last summer ? Must I remind you that the Professors, each according to his province, talked about ‘ the Crown - Prince’s astonishing capacities and marvellous intelligence ’ considering my age, and that few of those present had been able to listen without emotion to my answers to the questions put to me ? My father himself repeated this to both of us, especially as an encouragement to *you*, Rosenstein, who were more anxious about the exam. than I ; and I drummed all their fine speeches into my head so that I might cheer you up and comfort you, if you should happen to be disappointed,” concluded the Prince in his little old-fashioned way.

Rosenstein had some difficulty in keeping his countenance during this lengthy and solemn oration ; he was obliged to turn to a side-table, under pretext of searching for some missing papers, in order to regain his gravity. Then he said :

“ At any rate, I must beg Your Royal Highness to consider that, without a certain amount of learning and trouble, no worthy object can be attained . . . ”

Before he could say any more, the Prince began to speak.

“ Do you know, Rosenstein, I am not the least little bit afraid of that. For one thing, it remains to be seen which of us two will become Colonel of the Guards first ! ”

The tutor once more tried to suppress a smile, but he found it difficult not to fall in with the Prince’s present mood. When the boy *did* (on rare occasions) indulge in a laugh, it was such a happy, hearty one. The idea of his ungainly tutor in a colonel’s smart uniform seemed to tickle him immensely, and his boisterous mirth was so infectious that the solemn Chancellor was obliged to laugh too, as he remarked :

“ As far as that goes, I must certainly admit that *you* are right in your surmises, but . . . ”

The Prince raised his hand to prevent Rosenstein’s saying

anything further. Resuming his usual serious tone, he said: "Now, please, let us go on with Gustavus Adolphus II."

He went back to his chair, crossed his arms, and put his feet on the stool as before.

Rosenstein was about to begin, when the Prince said: "Is there not something about Gustavus Adolphus II in that book called 'Dialogues of the Dead'? I think it is so interesting; please read me something out of it about him."

It cannot be denied that Rosenstein had certain misgivings as to the advisability of being directed, in his choice of reading, by his pupil, but as he himself had compiled the book in question, and partly for the Prince's use, he could not well refuse; so he closed the book he had intended to read, and took up a volume bound in black, and began:

"Dialogue of the Dead. . . . *Dramatis Personæ*: Cheops, King of Egypt. . . . Nibias, King of Assyria. . . . Thierry III, King of France. . . . Other Royal Personages.

"Enter on the Elysian Fields, Gustavus Adolphus II, King of Sweden, in the suit of armour worn by him at the Battle of Lützen where he fell.

"Cheops: 'Who is that man in armour just come into our presence? His breastplate, helmet, and sword proclaim him a man of war . . . but I know not his nationality. I will forthwith inquire of him. . . . Soldier, who and whence art thou?'

"Gustavus Adolphus: 'I have lived and died a soldier, though I have worn a crown. I am Gustavus Adolphus, Ruler of the Swedish people.'

Again the Prince interrupted Rosenstein:

"I like that," he said—"like it immensely; those are proud, grand words: 'I am Gustavus Adolphus, King of the Swedish people! . . . Gustavus . . . Adolphus . . . King of . . . the Swedish people!'" he repeated slowly and impressively.

After a short silence the Prince said condescendingly:

"You can go on now, Rosenstein."

CHAPTER IV

THE GOOD CAUSE

A FEARFUL storm was raging over Stockholm that Midsummer Eve of 1788. The lightning was incessant, the thunder deafening, and hail and rain fell in torrents, whilst huge, seething waves ruffled the surface of the usually calmly-flowing Strömmen.* The tempest had been as sudden and unexpected as it was unwelcome ; the superstitious regarded it in the light of a bad omen occurring just when the troops from Djurgården and Skeppsbro were embarking on board the galleys *en route* for Finland. Without intermission it continued late into the night ; the storm drove the rain so hard against the windows that it sounded like salvos of artillery.

Within the Palace were gathered the foreign Ambassadors with their wives, and the ladies and gentlemen of the Court, for the King was holding his last *levée* previous to his departure. As he passed from one group to another, saying a kindly word of farewell to each, his voice was frequently drowned by the noise of the tempest, and the nervous and terrified ladies had all the trouble in the world not to swoon or scream as they made their curtsies to the King, and endeavoured to acknowledge his gracious words with a forced smile.

Now and again he, too, cast anxious glances at the window to see if there were any chance of improvement in the weather, for he had no mind to have himself conveyed on board the good ship *Amphion*, which was lying at anchor by the Palace steps, under present conditions. The *levée* lasted longer than had been intended, and the King was not disposed to hurry his farewells. At intervals he addressed a few remarks to his

* A narrow branch of the Mular Lake at Stockholm.

Consort, the Queen-Mother, and his sister-in-law, the Duchess of Södermanland, who were unanimous in expressing their sincere hope that the King's sister, the Princess Sophia Albertina, might arrive in time to see her brother before he left. The fact was, that as soon as that Princess had heard the news of the projected voyage to Finland, she had set off from Quedlinburg, where she was then on a visit to relations, and travelled night and day with all haste, in order to wish the King and the Duke of Östergötland "God-speed." As yet there were no tidings of her, and both the Queen and the Duchess insisted upon the King's departure being deferred until the next morning. But Gustavus Adolphus shook his head, and explained that it was absolutely imperative he should embark that night before the clock struck the hour of midnight; that was still a long way off, and the King hoped that long before then the fury of the elements would have exhausted itself, and that wind and tide would not play him false.

Neither did they. The storm abated as suddenly as it had sprung up. It began to get light over Djurgården, where the clouds had been blackest; ere long the sun burst forth, and there was every promise of a glorious night.

The King was the first to notice the change; he took his young son by the hand, led him to the window, and pointed to the shifting clouds.

Prince Frederick and the suite who were to accompany the King to Finland, now began their farewells to the weeping ladies.

The King remained for some time at the window in conversation with the Crown-Prince, who never took his eyes off his father's face; the nine-year-old boy looked grave and solemn.

"This is Midsummer Eve, my boy," said the King, affectionately pressing the small hand he held in his. "Of course, you know, my son, what an eventful anniversary this is in our glorious Swedish history. On one Midsummer Eve Gustavus Wasa made his entry into Stockholm; on another, Gustavus Adolphus II first set foot on German soil, there to engage in a glorious campaign; and this Midsummer Eve may, in time to come, also be proudly remembered in the annals of our country. If there should be open war, Gus, I have told you before who

is the cause of it. I have explained to you the part taken by Russia within the last few years, both in Finland and Sweden, at the last meeting of the Chambers, and on other occasions."

The Crown-Prince made no reply, but stood staring at the King with wide-open eyes.

"Then, in case there should be war, Gus, my boy . . ."

The King did not positively say that there *would* be war, but he was anxious that the Crown-Prince's mind should not, during his absence, be poisoned by all sorts of rumours and insinuations, which he well knew would be exactly contrary to what he wished his son to believe. If there *were* to be war the Prince would know that Russia, and not the King, had been the aggressor, and he knew by the expression of the boy's face that nothing in the world would persuade him that this was not so.

The King stooped and kissed the lad, who tried hard to keep back his tears, and to look at his father, whom he had seldom seen so cheerful and happy as on this day.

The King turned back into the Hall and gave the signal for breaking up. He went up to the Queen, and with a stately bow took her hand; Prince Frederick walked on her left, and the Crown-Prince followed with the Duchess of Södermanland. The gentlemen walked in front of the Royalties, the ladies brought up the rear.

The sun was sinking slowly behind a bank of crimson clouds as the brilliant cortège wound its way along Logården to the water-side, where an immense concourse of people had assembled. The King's sloop, which was to take him to the ship *Amphion*, was moored at "the King's Stairs." The night was beautifully clear and bright, and at the sight of the lovely landscape unrolled before his eyes, the King let the Queen's hand drop, and his gaze wandered lovingly along the tender green on the banks, until it rested on the gaily-decked ship *Amphion*, surrounded by small row-boats, garlanded with green, which had ventured thither as soon as the storm had ceased. Smart sailing-boats, their masts wreathed with flowers, darted to and fro at short intervals, between Skeppsbro and Djurgård, the decks swarming with soldiers waving farewells to friends, wives, and sweethearts standing on the banks or sitting in some of

the small boats. There seemed no end to the waving and cheering.

The King and his suite stopped a few minutes looking on the bright picture, then he once more took the Queen's hand, and the procession descended the steps.

The Guards remaining behind in the town formed in line from Logård to the King's Bridge; there the latter took his final leave of the Queen, kissing her hand. Next he turned to the Duchess of Södermanland, and promised to give a tender message from her to her husband, Duke Charles, who, as Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet, had already sailed; he kissed the Duchess' small hand also. Lastly, he embraced the Crown-Prince, who clung to him sobbing: "Take me with you, Papa; let me come too; oh, *do!*"

"That is impossible, my boy," answered the King, gently loosening the boy's grasp.

When the Crown-Prince raised his eyes a few minutes later, it was to see the King on board the sloop, which was slowly gliding along the quay, where a mass of people of all ages and ranks had congregated to wish him a prosperous journey, and send him off with a fervent "God bless you." He stood smiling and erect on deck, waving a last farewell to his family with his hat; then he bowed in all directions to the people, as a dozen well-trained oarsmen rowed him to his ship.

There was incessant firing from Skeppsbro, but there was now so little wind that it was not even sufficient to disperse the smoke which lay like a white sheet over the Strömmen, and hid the fort of Kastellholm from view.

The Queen, the Duchess, and their ladies slowly wended their way back to the Palace; the Crown-Prince, however, lingered behind, violently excited by the roar of the cannon, and crying with trembling lips, "Let me come too, let me come too!"

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Two months had now elapsed since the King's departure. The Crown-Prince, with Her Majesty Queen Sophia Magdalena, had spent the greater part of that time in the country at Ulriksdal, but never had the young Prince gone through such

a summer. First the contrary winds, which were all against the King and his fleet, had caused grave anxiety, as *his* life and the lives of his brave sailors were in constant danger; nor could this anxiety be allayed until a special courier should arrive from Finland with reassuring tidings. Then there was the suspense as to whether there would be war or not, and flying reports reached Stockholm and Ulriksdal that Baron Hastfehr had been set upon by a party of Russian Cossacks, that he had driven them back, that he had already crossed the frontier, and was then on the march to Nyslott, and that the King considered the Russians had begun the war in earnest.

From that moment the Crown-Prince seemed entirely changed. His shyness and depression quite vanished in a most virulent attack of "war-fever." He took to reading his Bible more frequently, and both morning and evening he most earnestly prayed for the success of the Swedish arms, and victory and glory for the King and his brave army. When with his tutor, Rosenstein, he was constantly changing his lesson-books for works by Pufendorff and Nordberg, and his talk was of nothing but Narva, Narva!

It was marvellous to see the transformation in the nature of the Prince. Generally thoughtful, reserved, and silent, he had, during that summer at Ulriksdal, become quite a chatter-box (!); and when, on the evening of July 27th a courier arrived with news of Duke Charles' victory over the Russian fleet, he became so frantically excited that very strong measures had to be resorted to to calm him down a little. He promptly informed Rosenstein that the Swedes had never before had such a splendid victory, and that never had there existed braver men than those who, for the love of their country, had steeped their shirts in the blood of the enemy at Hogland.

Such, too, were his thoughts on the day following, when, with fast-beating heart, he led the Queen in the procession to the Chapel Royal, and the bells of every church far and near rang joyous peals, whilst in the chapel itself a solemn Te Deum was being sung in thanksgiving for the victory off Hogland. The Guards had lined up, and blue cloth, plentifully interwoven with small gold crowns, had been laid down all along the route

of procession. The Royal Family were preceded by dragoons, pages, members of the Houses, and various other important functionaries ; then followed the Prince, leading his mother ; he walked along proudly erect, for, with his intensely vivid powers of imagination, it seemed to him as though *he* had himself been the victor, and that *he*, and not his Uncle, had sat on deck, calmly smoking a pipe, while countless bullets from the shore had whizzed round him in all directions. So it came that he held his youthful head very high, and endeavoured with all his might to conceal how he started with fright at each one of the two hundred and fifty guns fired from the Arsenal as soon as the Royal Party entered the Chapel and the " Song of Praise " began.

When, after the Thanksgiving Service, the Prince once more sat comfortably ensconced in a corner of his carriage on the road to Ulriksdal, he was of opinion that this had been the grandest day of his life ! Other high days, feasts, and ceremonies of all kinds he had been accustomed to from his cradle, but this day of days, when the Royal Family, the Court, the whole country, and the entire Swedish nation had, with one accord, burst into songs of triumph and thanksgiving for victory over an enemy, that, indeed, was unique.

Another almost equally happy day was in store for him ; namely, the day on which he was taken to Stockholm to inspect the trophies captured at the battle of Hogland, and sent home by the King with orders that all who desired to do so should be allowed to see them. When the Crown-Prince's carriage drove over the bridge near the Palace, the first sight that met his eyes were the three flags, the three pennons, and the three wimples which had been set up on the balcony over the entrance ; it made such an impression upon him that his eyes filled with tears, and it was all he could do not to jump up, clap his hands, and shout with pride and pleasure.

He drove at a foot's pace through the crowd which thronged the approach to the Palace, and received the young Prince with prolonged and vociferous cheers. At the right-hand portal he caused the carriage to stop, and got out. With slow and solemn steps he entered, and the Russian flags overhead inspired him

with much the same feelings as the Te Deum had done. He felt exactly as though, by a stroke of good luck, combined with unusual personal prowess, *he* had taken those flags from the enemy, and as he sat by the open window and watched them fluttering in the breeze, he frequently passed his hands through his hair, in order to make it stand up straight over his forehead which, he knew, made his resemblance to the hero (Gustavus Wasa) who, once upon a time, had been the terror of the Muscovite, even more striking.

The Prince neither spoke nor moved from the window as long as the Russian flags were exposed to view, but when they were taken down and set up as trophies in a richly-draped cart drawn by six horses, to be taken to the Castle of Frederikshof, with a band and an escort of cavalry, the young Prince followed the cortège with his eyes until it disappeared from view; only then he seemed to wake as from a trance, ran his hands through his long, straight hair, and said to his Gentleman-in-Attendance: "Order my carriage, please; I am tired, and want to return to Ulriksdal." Indeed, it was no wonder the boy was worn out; during the two long hours he had spent sitting by the window and never taking his eyes off the Russian flags, his imagination had been very busy . . . at the head of his trusty soldiers he had taken Saint Petersburg by assault, and made the Empress Catherine his prisoner!

In this feverish excitement of victory the Prince spent the rest of the summer.

Before his departure, the King had impressed upon Rosenstein his wish that no ill-tidings of reverses, should any such have to be chronicled, should be communicated to the Prince, and cause him to be depressed.

As the first flush of victory, alas! *was* succeeded by a series of reverses, Rosenstein hardly knew how to act. He was unwilling to go against the wishes of the King except *in extremis*; on the other hand, he could not tolerate the thought of allowing the future Sovereign of the realm, his visionary pupil, to continue to live in a fool's paradise, seeing events through rose-coloured glasses, when in reality the horizon was black with lowering clouds, and ill-fortune was pursuing the King and

harassing the country. He bore it as long as he could, but one day, in the beginning of August, he felt obliged to speak, and told the Prince, as considerately and gently as he could, that certain reverses *had* befallen both the army and the fleet. With much anxiety of mind he watched what impression this information would make on the highly-strung, ambitious boy. Curiously enough, it seemed to make but *very* little; the Prince's mind was so entirely taken up with visions of victory and success that his brain seemed incapable of grasping anything else.

His only reply was that his father would ere long venture on another sally, in which he would certainly be victorious, and then would follow the hasty march on Saint Petersburg itself.

Rosenstein forbore to contradict him; but before that week came to a close, he felt that he *must* let the Crown-Prince know of the fresh misfortunes which had overtaken the Swedish troops.

"You may be sure, Rosenstein," said the Prince, "that the hero of Hogland would not suffer his brave men to be surrounded; besides that, did he not destroy the Russian fleet entirely? I am sure you would not tell me these things, if you knew that it would be against my father's wishes."

Had the young Prince but preserved the silence so habitual to him, Rosenstein's task would have been far easier, and his desire to make the boy rightly understand the situation would not have been nearly so great. . . . As it was, the lad's mind was so full of visions of conquest, that he could talk of nothing but the King, his father, at the head of his faithful followers; he said that his only wish was to see him so, for once.

Though the tutor could certainly not be accused of lack of patriotism, this constant bumptious talk irritated him to such a degree, that he felt more than half inclined to take his pupil to the Capital and let him see for himself the caricatures of the King which were being hawked about in the streets, and hear the anything but loyal and patriotic rhymes which accompanied them. One of these scurrilous posters represented the King as he actually was now in Finland . . . mounted on a charger, in silken-slashed trunk hose, shoes, and buckles, and a huge

sash of the time of Charles XII tied at the side ; the doggerel underneath ran somewhat as follows :

Buckles, shoes and silken hose . . .
Wherefore is he wearing those ? . . .
Gustaf Adolf's sash, heigho ! . . .
And his high, red heels also. . . .

However, Rosenstein thought better of it, and did *not* take him. The boy's childlike trust and confidence in his father touched him deeply, and for that reason he let a considerable time elapse ere he again made an attempt to explain matters to him.

One morning, when the Prince, as usual, broke off in the middle of a lesson to rhapsodise about the King and his brave soldiers, Rosenstein though his heart at the time ached for the boy, felt constrained to stop him, and tell him that only that very morning disquieting news had come that some of the highest officers in the Finnish Army had been guilty of treasonable dealings with the Russian Empress, in order to put an end to the war.

"Do you mean to say, Rosenstein, that *you* can really believe such silly tales?" interrupted the Prince excitedly. "You hate fighting, and that is why you take such a gloomy view of things. My father prepared me for this, and I gave him my word that I would not lose courage, whatever reports I might hear, and my word I mean to keep."

Rosenstein could only shrug his shoulders at the boy's speech ; he gave a deep sigh, and then continued the interrupted lesson, but his august pupil proved very inattentive and absent-minded.

A few days later, Rosenstein was again forced to speak to him, and he began very gently : "It is my most painful duty to inform Your Royal Highness that the Danes are making inroads across the Swedish frontiers in the North."

He had hardly proceeded thus far before the Prince jumped up from his chair in great excitement, clapped his hands, and cried : "Just as in the days of Charles XII. Russians *and* Danes both. There is only one thing I am really sorry for, and do

you know what that is, Rosenstein ? I am sorry the Poles can't rise and make the third enemy, because then it would be quite a repetition of that stirring time ! ”

“ Your Royal Highness need scarcely regret that fact ; the foes we have to fight against at present are amply sufficient,” replied Rosenstein, with unwonted irritation in his tone ; the lad's unconquerable obstinacy and want of comprehension were really enough to provoke a saint, and Rosenstein did not pose as such.

However, he was of opinion that he had now sufficiently prepared the ground, and proceeded to inform his pupil in plain, unvarnished language, that the Danes had forced their way across the border to the great danger both of King and country, and that neither could be saved but by a miracle. To Rosenstein's consternation the Prince's small, wan face beamed with *delight* at this piece of news !

“ You may be quite sure, Rosenstein,” said he, “ that a miracle *will* happen . . . for you know that God never forsakes those who put their trust in Him.”

At these words, Rosenstein, in despair, passed his hand across his eyes ; then he said :

“ I am thinking there may be better courses than blindly trusting to a miracle. Miracles do not happen often nowadays, let me tell Your Royal Highness, although *you* would rather believe in *them* and the intervention of the supernatural than in man's own power and ability. Take care how you indulge in such a creed, lest some day it precipitate Your Royal Highness and your country into dire distress. Once more, I must repeat what I have often had occasion to say before, and that is that Your Royal Highness expects far too much from all and sundry, and will, in the same ratio, meet with bitter disappointment and disillusion.”

In spite of these prophecies, the Crown-Prince proved to be right, *this time*. In less than a week the King was back at Haga, and sent word that he intended to go on to Ulriksdal without delay.

The next morning was one of the finest on record ; the sun shone brightly, the water was of a clear, deep blue, and not

a ripple troubled its surface. The Royal Standard on the Palace and the flags and pennons on the ships hung limply down ; even the trees in the noble avenues of Ulriksdal stood motionless, like giant sentinels, whilst the thick forests at the back sent forth faint odours of fir and pine which mingled gratefully with the perfume of roses and sweet-scented flowers in the borders round the Palace. The fountains played high and made a soft, soothing noise as the water came plashing into the huge reservoirs, containing gold-fish and carp, lazily swimming about. All breathed quiet and repose on that exquisite summer morning at Ulriksdal. In the saloon of the Garden Pavilion, the Queen and the Crown-Prince, with their Court, were impatiently awaiting the King's arrival. Presently sounds of wheels were heard in the distance ; nearer and nearer they come, a carriage stops at the gates, and the King hurriedly jumps out.

Wife and child are sore affrighted, well-nigh scared to death, when they see the King . . . pale, thin, with deep furrows on his brow ; his complexion and his eyes red, feverish, and inflamed . . . he has aged ten years in the short space of seven days ! Without a word he threw himself into the Queen's arms, completely unnerved and sobbing hysterically. Nothing in the world could have more astonished the boy than this unexpected collapse on the part of the King ; he saw clearly *then* that something *very* dreadful indeed must have taken place. Never before had he seen his father embrace the Queen thus ; never before had he seen *her* weep, or heard the King sob. The lad was almost beside himself with fear ; he thought the end of all things must have come, and he, too, began to cry bitterly. At this most unusual and touching spectacle the ladies and gentlemen of the suite respectfully and discreetly withdrew.

When, after a time, they were recalled, the King had resumed his habitual serenity, the Queen sat cold and silent, slowly fanning herself, and the Prince stood bolt upright at one of the windows and looked out into the garden.

After dinner the King returned to Haga. When he left that residence a few days later the Prince was no longer inclined to

believe that the end of the world was at hand, for the King was quite his usual self again, if not entirely so physically, at any rate as regarded his sanguine hopefulness. Before his departure he took the Prince aside and said to him : “ I am sure I shall be able to save the country. You must ever think of that and nothing else, mind. With the help of God, the King shall surely save the land.”

Subsequently, when the Prince was informed that the King had gone to Dalarne, he talked freely of his own accord to Rosenstein, with a sweet seriousness which sat well upon him, saying that now his father really *was* treading in the footsteps of the great Gustavus Wasa, in that he was appealing to one and all to rise in defence of their country. Then he added, with supreme confidence, “ And with the help of God, my father *will* save the country, just as Wasa did.”

Still Rosenstein would not believe in miracles ! Yet once again the Crown-Prince was right ; the King saved Gothenburg, and the Danes had to beat a retreat from the towns they had occupied.

Winter now came on apace, a harder winter by far than usual, which prevented the Russian fleet from making further attacks for the time being ; thus Finland was secure for the moment.

On the day that Rosenstein, with great emotion, told his pupil that all danger was over for the present, the poor little man burst into tears, the reaction from the agony of suspense in which he had been living until he knew for certain that the hero of Hogland was uninjured, and had successfully brought the Swedish fleet back to Carlscrona.

“ Do you see now, Rosenstein,” he said one day, whilst hot tears coursed down his thin, pale cheek and dropped on his clasped hands, “ do you see now, God *can* do miracles, and He always helps those who fight in a righteous cause, and ours *was* a righteous one, my father said so long before the war with Russia broke out, and I *believed* what the King said, and I trusted in God, therefore I was not deceived . . . do you understand now, Rosenstein ? ”

CHAPTER V

CONCERNING THE HOUSE OF BOURBON

FROM his earliest days the Crown-Prince had heard much about Versailles, the Royal Family of France, and the French Court, both from his father and other people with whom he had come in contact. He pictured Versailles as being an ideal palace of purest gold, where the King and Queen, Princes and Princesses, occasionally exhibited themselves to an admiring crowd and, surrounded by all that was magnificent, sometimes graciously condescended to receive sovereigns and princes from other lands. The Boy-Prince had also heard that, outside the gates of Versailles, thousands upon thousands, if not, indeed, the whole nation, were ever patiently waiting to catch a glimpse, if so might be, of the monarch they idolised through the gilt railing of those marvellous gardens, with their splendid fountains and statues. In fact, all who were not privileged to enter within the walls were more than content to stand without . . . to gaze and wonder.

The Crown-Prince remembered that one day, when he was quite a little boy, he had asked his father whether Drottningholm were at all like Versailles, and the reply had been that, in comparison with Versailles, Drottningholm was but as a poor little cottage ! He had been quite dumbfounded at this answer ; for he had always been under the impression that Drottningholm was the largest and finest palace in the world. At first he had been sorry, but the more he heard about Versailles the more wonderful and mysterious it appeared to him ; he felt much as a hungry little beggar might feel when looking at a well-set-out confectioner's shop-window ! Everyone spoke of Versailles as though it had not its equal in the universe ; it

was taken as a model for everything, and the King never wearied of speaking of the kindness and attention shown to him when, as a boy, he had paid a visit to the Bourbon Court, and spent several days in the enchanted palace. Over and over again the Prince had read the letter the King had written to him on the occasion of his last visit to France, and thus it came that the lad not only knew all the Royal Family of Versailles by name, but seemed to have quite an intimate acquaintance with several of them, having heard various stories and anecdotes in connection with them from the King ; to these he had listened as if they had been the most delightful fairy-tales.

But it was not only the splendour and magnificence of the entertainments at Versailles which the King told him about ; these the young Prince could easily picture to himself, for he had been accustomed to such from his infancy. As long as he could remember he had been obliged to take part in receptions, festivities, and gala performances at the theatre, and to *his* mind these things were not altogether pleasurable ; on the contrary, he often found them irksome and monotonous, but his eyes glistened with excitement when his father told him that the good King Louis XVI was as clever a locksmith and carpenter as his own grandfather (Adolf Frederick) had been a weaver, and the boy was never tired of hearing descriptions of Little Trianon, where the beautiful Queen, Marie Antoinette, had her own estate, with farms, cottages, fields, and woods, through which picturesque brooks and streams threaded their way, spanned by many a rustic bridge.

He liked, too, to hear about the little mill where the Duke of Artois, clad as a miller, ground the corn which the gentlemen of the Court afterwards carried in huge white sacks on their backs to the storehouse. He also knew the name of the Queen's favourite cow, which she milked herself, whilst her merry ladies, in the garb of shepherdesses, formed a circle round her, each one milking her own particular cow or goat, afterwards going in procession, with the Queen at their head, to take the gleaming pails filled with frothy white liquid into the tiniest of tiny model dairies, there to be made into butter by small, dainty

hands. The King also related that the Princess Henriette, who was the same age as the Crown-Prince, had a little pet lamb, as white as snow, which she led about the gardens of Trianon by a blue silk ribbon, and how the little French Crown-Prince fed the fluffy yellow ducklings in the pond by the mill ; further, how the Queen and her ladies manufactured the flour ground by the Duke of Artois into loaves and cakes, which they baked in miniature ovens in the summer pavilion. The King had tasted both cakes and butter, and pronounced them delicious ; it made the young Prince's mouth water to hear of the savoury pasties made by the Queen, the pats of golden butter moulded by her hands, and he liked to hear every detail of the simple country life at the gigantic fairy-palace, so much more wonderful even than Drottningholm ! The boy thought his father's tales of this paradise of kings and queens were much like the accounts of Paradise in the Garden of Eden in the Bible. What could be more perfect than to have thousands at one's beck and call, and to be able to rest in the sweet solitude of nature when worn out and tired with the strain and boredom of life in town ?

In later times, when one black cloud after another broke over Versailles, and the sun of prosperity and gladness ceased to shine on Little Trianon, when storm and tempest swept over beautiful France, so that their terror reached far beyond her borders, the Crown-Prince marvelled ; he had been so fully convinced that the nation worshipped the King and Queen ; he could not understand that it could be otherwise, but he knew that the people were in the wrong, and had gravely sinned against God by rebelling against their sovereign. Did not the Bible distinctly say that *all* power was of God, and that He gave the people a king in His wrath, and that He commanded obedience even to the rude and froward ?

It greatly troubled the Prince that the French nation should rush so blindly to its destruction.

He had heard the King remark that it was the French philosophers who were at the bottom of all the misery and mischief, and he compared them in his mind to the serpent which tempted Eve to taste of the Tree of Knowledge of good

and evil. Sometimes he would liken the people to the wicked giants in fairy-tales, whose only pleasure it was to kill and injure. The masses rebelled against every ordinance of God and man : the *rabble*, as the King called them, rose from every nook and corner ; they upset the Queen's shining pails with the frothy milk, they destroyed the good King's cities ; they stormed the golden palaces, killed the guards, and took the King, the Queen, and the little Dauphin and his two sisters away to prison, and with them all the beautiful and joyous ladies of the Court whom King Gustaf had known and liked so well.

But the wicked giants had not been able to seize all. There were many who had saved themselves by flying to other countries ; Princes and Princesses of the House of Bourbon, men and women of exalted rank who were only waiting for a leader to go back to their beautiful native land, drive out the wicked giants, and set their King and Queen free again.

But who was there to help them break those prison doors, to save them from danger and adversity, and restore them to their former power and grandeur ? Only *he* whom God had so lately delivered out of the hand of traitors and rebels, the brave knight who once had sat at their board, who had the same affection for them which they had for him, and whose interests were theirs as theirs were his ? Whom else could God have elected to be the champion and deliverer of the French King and the leader of the Bourbon exiles, than the Prince's own father, Gustavus Adolphus III ?

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The Crown-Prince had a sort of premonition that it would be so ; in fact, it had haunted him all night in his dreams ; so that one fine day in the spring of 1791, when he was summoned to the King's presence, he entered his father's room pale and trembling with excitement, and a strong foreboding that the King was about to inform him of his plans for the deliverance of the Bourbons.

The King was sitting at his writing-table in the recess of a window overlooking Lugård. No one else was present, so the



GUSTAVUS
KING of



THE THIRD
SWEDEN

Prince knew that matters of grave import were to be discussed between them.

“Sit down, my son,” said the King, continuing his writing and pointing to a stool drawn close up to his table. The Prince waited, his heart beating fast, but the King only remarked in his most off-hand manner: “I suppose you have heard that the doctors have ordered me to try the warm baths at Aix-la-Chapelle this summer?”

“Yes,” replied the Prince.

True, he *had* heard rumours of this projected “cure,” and he thought he could guess why the doctors had prescribed it just now.

But he said no more. He knew it became him to listen respectfully to what the King might have to say, and to keep his opinions to himself until asked.

Without looking at his son, being too much taken up with some sketches before him, the King presently said: “They don’t seem particularly pleased about this proposed journey; people grudge the necessary funds which they think the country cannot afford, crippled as its resources have been by the war; they have put that before me in order to prevent my going, but I do not attach much value to such pretexts, neither must *you*. The state of my health, of which, surely, I myself am the best judge, necessitates this journey . . . and I am going, *quand même*. . . .”

Maybe there was no covert meaning in the King’s words, but the Prince interpreted them as though the King had said, “I *am* going and, for the sake of satisfying my conscience, I *must* go and see what I can do for the King of France.”

And the Boy-Prince was seized with a certain feeling of compassion for the people who were too dull to understand that the King was not going to Aix-la-Chapelle merely for *pleasure*, and that his “health” was only a shallow pretext, but that he was going because the Almighty had *ordered* that *he* should put himself at the head of a movement which should force the French back into the right way and re-establish the authority of the Bourbon Dynasty.

If the people could only be brought to understand *that*,

thought the Crown-Prince, they would not grumble; they would see that the King *must* act as his conscience bade him, and acknowledge that *he* (a King) must know a nation's needs better than anyone else. But as the people *would* not understand, the King was naturally not bound to take much notice of their complaints . . . neither *did* he, nor did the Crown-Prince, convinced as he was that the people must come to their senses again some day, and admit that their King had done what was right. It had been so after the war, and the last meeting of the Houses, and it must, of necessity, be so again.

After a time the Prince's continued silence attracted the King's attention; he turned his head and looked with wide-open, twinkling eyes at the serious, pensive face of his son.

"You are now twelve and a half years old, my boy," said the King, gently patting him on the shoulder; then he took up his favourite attitude, his elbow resting on the back of a chair, his head on his hand, and his legs slightly crossed.

The Crown-Prince rose at the same moment, but no careless, graceful pose was *his*; stiffly erect, he stood before the King, and answered: "Yes, Papa, I shall be thirteen next November."

"I have something to say to you, Gus," continued the King, fixing his eyes upon him.

The lad turned pale, and his hands began to shake.

"It is nothing dreadful, my boy, rather something which, I believe, will please you, as it will prove how much confidence I place in you and the good sense and judgment, seldom found in one of your age. I have decided to put you at the head of the Regency which will, during my absence, be composed of the Earl Marshal Count Oxenstjerna, Chief Councillor of the Realm; President Count Ruuth, General Baron Armfelt, and Frank, Secretary of State, besides Håkanson, our faithful legal adviser.

Whilst the King spoke the nervous boy's eyes had filled with tears; he understood that these appointments would not have been made if the King had not anticipated *serious* results from the visit to Aix-la-Chapelle. He had not thought otherwise than that his uncle, the Duke of Södermanland, would have

been chosen head of the Regency ; big tears rolled down his cheeks.

The Prince's emotion in a measure infected the King. However, in gentle but impressive tones he went on : " My son, I wish to make you acquainted with the responsibilities of a ruler, in case any catastrophe should befall me."

The corners of the Prince's mouth again began to twitch, and he had to set his lips hard so as not to burst into loud sobs. The King, perceiving his trouble, added in his lightest and most cheery tone : " I want you to give your opinions, to speak out your thoughts in this coming Council of the Regency ; if at any time votes on both sides should be equal, which rarely happens, *you* are to give the casting vote."

The bright colour rushed into the boy's face, his voice trembled with excitement as he answered gravely : " I shall act to the best of my convictions and principles whilst I am Regent of Sweden, during the absence of my most gracious father."

The King could not forbear a smile at the expression, " Regent of Sweden " ; he often had difficulty in keeping his countenance at his son's solemn and singularly pompous and old-fashioned manner of expressing himself ; he added with a smile : " As I know you like being in the country so much better than being in Stockholm, I have decided that you shall stay at Old Haga. You understand that I want you to take up your residence in the castle at Haga whilst I am away, don't you ? "

The King spoke lightly, trying to make the Prince smile ; but young Gustaf Adolf *will not* see a joke where his own dignity is concerned . . . therefore he does *not* smile. Instead, he bent and kissed his father's hand, thanking him for his confidence and condescension. When he drew himself up to his full height after this ceremony not a trace of emotion remained on his face, which, however, was more grave and solemn than ever, and as on a sign from the King he left the apartment with a low bow, he again drew up his spare little figure to its fullest height, and walked away stiffly and majestically.

The King shrugged his shoulders, and remarked to himself

in his favourite French tongue : “ It flatters his pride to consider himself ‘ Regent ’ not only in name, but in deed ; he is exceedingly ambitious, his imagination is easily stirred and apt to run riot with him, and he is decidedly obstinate. What sort of a ruler will that odd conglomeration make, I wonder, when the time comes ? ”

Then he touched a silver bell which stood on the writing-table by his side.

“ Tell the Prime Minister to come to me here,” he said to the page who answered the summons.

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The representatives of the Regency had never before had a President so solemn, serious, so self-important as the young Crown-Prince, who persuaded himself that the entire responsibility of the Swedish administration rested upon his youthful shoulders, and that he must acquit himself of the task imposed upon him in the most conscientious and punctilious manner.

He borrowed books bearing on the subject and studied them deeply, and as he did not think it right to trust Rosenstein with any commission regarding the Government and which should not be made public, he lay night after night wide awake in his well-lighted room at Haga, solemnly turning over in his mind every detail as to what would be the most correct way for him to act, supposing he should be obliged to give the casting vote.

But as most articles had been carefully gone through and settled before the departure of the King, there was not much to fear with regard to the ballot ; Gustaf Adolf was spared the perplexity of giving *his* vote, but in order to please and encourage the boy and flatter his dignity, the sedate members of the Regency occasionally *did* request him to state his opinions, to which they listened with the greatest respect and decorum, but which, as a matter of course, exercised not the slightest influence on their resolutions.

That the boy, naturally, did not know. He almost boiled over with pride and self-importance when he saw the rapt (?)

attention with which his utterances were received, and enjoyed the long discussions in the Council chamber on a broiling summer evening as much as an ordinary boy of his age would have enjoyed a good, healthy outdoor game.

Never was this youthful Princee seen to yawn, stealthily or openly, as Armfelt often did ; nor did he for a single moment allow his thoughts to wander from the subject under consideration, as Councillor Oxenstjerna had a habit of doing when he went off into one of his irrelevant poetical digressions. No, he sat bolt upright, not so much as blinking an eyelid, however sleepy he might feel, but following every word that was said with the greatest attention, gravely weighing its import. When asked to give his own opinion, he did so solemnly, with a keen idea as to the immense importance of all he might say.

It was Gustaf Adolf's one cherished ambition that his father, on his return, should be able to say that the kingdom had been well and wisely ruled during his absence. He knew well what cruel disappointments and heartfelt sorrows the King had experienced during his stay at Aix-la-Chapelle. Had not the Crown-Princee himself wept bitter tears at the terrible story of the Royal Family's unsuccessful attempt at flight, and their being cruelly brought back from Varennes to Paris ? The sad news had arrived at Haga one morning when the Crown-Princee-Regent was, as usual, reading with his tutor, Rosenstein. It had upset him to such a degree that he could not stop crying, and Rosenstein was at his wit's end to know how to comfort his emotional pupil. At last his own eyes grew moist, seeing which, the Princee was so astonished that he quickly pulled himself together. But their studies were over for that day.

The Princee locked himself in his room and refused to speak to anyone ; in the solitude of his chamber he was puzzling his brain in the attempt to discover what his father would do now, and wondering how much longer it would be before the King would be back in Sweden. Would he, perhaps, return unexpectedly for a few days as he had done after the incursions of the Danes, and then go off again to settle the troubles and difficulties in France ; and would he then again

leave the Regency in the hands of the Crown-Prince? In his own mind he was fully convinced that it would be so.

The first part of his surmisings *did* actually come true. On August 3rd the King came back quite unexpectedly from Aix-la-Chapelle, without having sent a courier in advance to announce his impending arrival. He was rather in the habit of taking such flying journeys; he had only left Aix-la-Chapelle on July 25th, and within nine days (!) he found himself once more at Stockholm.

The Crown-Prince, all the same, was not prepared for such a sudden surprise, and was so taken aback when he heard of his father's return that he became deadly pale, and his whole frame shook nervously. Before he had time to collect himself the Regency was virtually at an end, and the Crown-Prince's rulership over!

The King, however, manifested no intention of again leaving Sweden, or attempting to help the Royal Family of France; what is more, soon after his coming home, he, with his family and the entire Court, moved to Drottningholm.

That the King should so unmistakably show he meant to have a rest, whilst wrong was triumphant and innocence trampled under foot in a neighbouring kingdom, quite baffled the Prince, nor was he less surprised when his father simply dissolved the "Council of Regency" in the usual manner, without bestowing upon him one word of praise or commendation for the very able way in which he had fulfilled his duties as its Head! It was all so different from what the Prince had expected, that he was quite confused and upset. Moreover, the men who but lately had listened so gravely to his utterances were also destined to shock his sensitiveness; they seemed one and all to set *him* aside altogether, and to think of no one but the King! Again he spent many sleepless nights, but not because the cares of government weighed heavy upon him now; that was over, and government did very well without him, apparently; but he could not rest because he was hurt, because he felt himself ignored and badly treated. During these wakeful, feverish nights his thoughts continually reverted to the unfortunate little Dauphin . . . he hardly knew which

to bemoan most . . . his own sudden fall or that of the French Crown-Prince !

In the daytime, at this period, he was generally in the worst and most aggravating of tempers ; snubbing and chiding those who waited upon him ; morose and suspicious of all who approached him.

“ Go to the King,” he would say snappishly, “ *I* have nothing more to say here *now*.”

Those who had anything at all to do with the Prince were greatly exercised in their minds at the untoward change in his demeanour. He utterly refused to pay his customary ceremonious morning visit to the Queen, his mother. The King was not long in perceiving that something must be very much amiss, and went to look up his son and have an explanation. He found him sitting alone in his room, sullenly looking out of the window over the apparently endless avenues of giant trees in Drottningholm’s extensive park.

As the King entered the boy rose slowly and seemingly with some difficulty, and remained standing whilst the King kindly and gently inquired what the grievance was. But to all the King’s questions the Prince would give no answer but the one he had always resorted to in the days of his infancy, “ Nothing, nothing ! ”

The King looked hard at him and said : “ Are you sorry, Gustaf, that I have come back ? ”

The boy met that piercing look with his truthful blue eyes, and replied eagerly, and without a moment’s hesitation, “ No ! oh *no* ! ”

“ Well, then, what is it ? Your conduct grieves me deeply ; you are not like yourself now, not like *my* boy. Perhaps it was too much for you to have to act as Regent of Sweden ? ”

The Crown-Prince was silent, but the King kept his penetrating gaze fixed upon him.

“ No,” the Prince replied once more, but a whole world of reproach and injured pride lay in that one short word.

“ Ah, I see,” said the King quickly, for well *he* knew how injured pride and repressed ambition can wound and hurt.

The boy had hidden his flushed face in both hands, and trembled as he waited for what the King would say next.

But that monarch himself felt nervous and depressed just then.

“ I will tell you what it is : you are a little out of sorts, my boy,” he said. Presently he added, with a somewhat bitter smile, “ Your time to rule will come soon enough, poor child.”

The Crown-Prince looked sorrowfully up at his father. It was not only what his father had *said* which had vexed and made him “ out of sorts ” ; it was the disillusion and disappointment his father had caused him over which the Boy-Prince fretted. Why, oh why had not the King put down the revolution in France, and gone to the rescue of its Royal House, trusting in the help of Heaven ? Was not the King the great Hero, the Champion destined to stand up for God and Right ?

The Prince dare not pursue his thoughts farther ; he sighed deeply as he passed his hand over his brow.

CHAPTER VI

THE IDES OF MARCH, 1792

THERE certainly *was* something odd in the way the Crown-Prince passed the hours of the night. Either he was oppressed by feelings of unaccountable dread or phantoms of his extraordinarily vivid imagination, and was restless and unable to close his eyes, or he would sleep so heavily and soundly that no noise, no commotion, in fact nothing would wake him. Sometimes when the time came for him to rise, he would be so dead asleep that his attendants had, with all due respect, to resort to severe measures, such as shaking him, applying a wet sponge, and so forth, in order to rouse him ; this kind of sleep, indeed, was more like coma than ordinary healthy rest.

Since December 1st, when the Court moved from Drottningholm to Stockholm, the Crown-Prince slept too soundly night after night ; thus he had slept at Gefle, whither he had accompanied the King for the short meeting of the Riksdag, and on the return to Stockholm, towards the end of February, his nights had been equally untroubled and undisturbed, so that it was generally supposed that the Prince had regained his equanimity of temper and peace of mind. The supposition was correct in the main.

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It was now about the middle of March. In Stockholm the greater part of the winter had been bright and clear, but on March 5th heavy snow had fallen all day, accompanied by a piercing wind ; since then there had been a few intervals of calm with occasional glimpses of sunshine ; but on this par-

ticular Friday the sky was overcast, and it was dark and misty. The Crown-Prince could stand the cold well enough, but not the fog and drizzle, and he was rather pleased that he had not been obliged to accompany the King, who, since his return from Gefle, paid frequent visits to New Haga; when resident in Stockholm, indeed, he went nearly every day. On this particular Friday, then, the King had spent the whole of the day at Haga, and was not expected to return before eight o'clock, just in time to witness a French comedy at the theatre, and afterwards to attend one of the fancy-dress balls which took place every Friday during the winter at the Royal Opera House.

The Prince thanked his stars that he was exempt from attendance at these balls—he knew he would have been scared to death at the black dominoes and masks which completely concealed the faces of visitors appearing in costumes more or less consistent with decency and beauty . . . generally *less*. The noise and confusion would have got upon his nerves, and he would have felt mortally offended had any stranger under cover of his disguise ventured to address him. Altogether, he was quite aware that he was not fit for such scenes, and was glad that the King was of the same way of thinking.

On this Friday, March 16th, the Prince was sitting in his own well-lighted boudoir, yawning over a book of Berquin's; he had indulged a latent kind of hope that he might see the King for a few minutes on his return from Haga, but when he heard that His Majesty intended going straight from the French theatre to the Opera House, he reluctantly went back to his reading, telling his attendants that he was sleepy and would retire to bed early. He seemed very drowsy while at supper, and yawned long and often. His valet had scarcely finished helping His Royal Highness to undress, put out the lamps and lighted the night-light, before the boy was in a sound sleep, as was usual with him when his mind was free from trouble and disquietude. The Prince slept . . . no evil foreboding, no harassing dreams disturbed his rest . . . all around him was peace and quiet.

Had he been awake he would have seen a mass of torches

moving through the darkness of the night, across the market square in the direction of the bridge leading to the Palae.

He might also have noticed that these torches were centred round a Royal carriage, which was coming slowly . . . very slowly towards the Palae.

But the Crown-Prince saw it not, his sleep was sound and deep.

Had it been otherwise he would have heard the tramp of many feet in the corridor outside his door, the feet of men bearing a loved burden . . . he might have heard the feeble voice of the wounded King, saying with forced cheerfulness: " I am like the Holy Father, being borne in procession."

But the Crown-Prince hears not nor heeds . . . he sleeps a sound, untroubled sleep.

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Thus that whole fatal night through; perhaps it was merciful that the trouble and commotion going on in the corridors and on the staircase did not disturb him. Some one carefully opened the door just a little to see whether His Royal Highness *had* been disturbed, but he was so calmly asleep that it was easy to see that he had heard nothing; and the doctors upstairs in the King's bedchamber are agreed that there is no immediate danger for the King's life . . . so sleep on, poor boy, sleep on!

He did so, and much longer than usual. His attendant, overwhelmed by the news which greeted him on leaving the Prince's room, forgot the time, and was stopped by some one just as he was going back again. On every stair, in every corridor, little knots of people were standing, whispering and gesticulating, and he could not help listening to some of them. Some who recognised him and supposed he knew, begged and prayed him to tell them more particulars of the night's ghastly occurrence whilst others were eager to give *him* the most harrowing details, so that on the short way to the Crown-Prince's apartment twenty different names at least had been mentioned to him as that of the man who, on the night of the

fancy-dress ball, had been dastardly enough to get behind the King, fire at him, and wound him sorely.

But Kundel, the valet, had had strict orders not to say anything of what had happened to the Crown-Prince, and he was, therefore, obliged to retire for a few moments to the dressing-room to compose his countenance before he could venture to enter the Prince's room and wake his royal master. He was also obliged to use a little rouge, so as to conceal the deadly pallor of his cheeks, and to sit down awhile to stop the shaking of his knees. At last he was able to resume his usual stiff and correct bearing; then he noiselessly opened and as noiselessly closed the door of the Prince's sleeping apartment, went up to the bed, bent down and shouted into the Prince's ear: "May it please Your Royal Highness to wake up now; the clock has already struck eight."

The Prince lay on his side with the bedclothes pulled up to his chin . . . by his position and the unruffled condition of the sheets, the valet knew that the Prince had never stirred since falling asleep the previous evening; he did not move now. Again the valet spoke: "May it please Your Royal Highness to wake up now; the clock has already struck eight."

No use . . . the Prince did not stir.

The valet looked at the boy's head lying on the pillow. The profile was clearly cut, the nose rather long, the upper lip protruding a little, the forehead high and noble, the beautiful fair hair pushed off the temples making it appear even higher.

So the valet stood, wondering whether the thirteen-year-old *Prince* would, perhaps, ere the close of that day, have become his *King*. . . . This thought made him hesitate to use stronger measures to wake the sleeper; therefore he only touched him gently, too gently to have any effect. Presently a clock on the mantelpiece struck solemnly . . . one stroke; the valet cast a hurried glance at it, and found to his dismay that it was already half-past nine; high time that the Prince should wake, so he went to the bedside once more, and cried in a stentorian voice: "May it please Your Royal Highness to wake up now; the clock has already struck eight."

But the Prince never moved.

Then the valet firmly but respectfully took hold of the sleeper, and gently shook him. The Prince turned on his other side, but never woke! In despair Kundel resorted to the last means, never employed but in extreme cases; he dipped the tips of his fingers into the silver ewer on the washhand-stand and spurted a few drops into the Prince's face, at the same time drawing back the coverings.

Thereupon the Prince started up, gave a deep sigh, and sat up in bed, still half asleep, whilst the valet, having retired some paces, repeated in respectful tones, as though it were for the first time: "May it please Your Royal Highness to wake up now; the clock has already struck eight."

The Prince rubbed his eyes, looked at the clock, and said severely:

"What are you jesting for, Kundel; it is half-past nine. Of course, you spoke the truth when you said the clock had struck *eight*, but that's a good while ago. Why have I not been called before?"

"Your Royal Highness slept rather soundly this morning," stammered the valet.

The Prince fixed his blue eyes on the man who was helping him to dress.

"Are you quite certain, Kundel, that you've really been trying to wake me for more than an hour and a half?" he asked sternly.

The valet indistinctly muttered something, whereupon the Prince turned and said: "You must look at the time more carefully in future. Draw back the curtains from the window now."

The heavy blue silk draperies were drawn aside; the Prince went to the window and looked out upon the landscape. He was not fully dressed yet, but he had donned his black breeches with the red rosettes at the knee and his shoes and stockings; the valet held the black jacket with the red border ready for him to slip into, and the red sash which finished the toilet which so well became the slight, graceful figure.

It was a grey, dull morning, and the Prince searched the firmament in vain for some little streak of blue; there was

none. Then he turned his eyes to the bridge and the market square. There he noticed a crowd of people going to and fro, sometimes congregating at a corner where the boy's sharp eyes discovered a huge placard which the people seemed to read with anxiety and to discuss eagerly.

"Has anything unusual happened, Kundel?" he asked quickly, turning to the valet who was helping him on with his coat and tying his sash, and who was, fortunately, on his guard.

"Nothing, Your Royal Highness."

"There seems an unusual number of people about this morning, and the placard is stuck on the Princess's house, and I believe there is another on the Palace gates," went on the Prince in the same tone. "Kundel, you must go and see what it is all about, and then come and tell me."

The colour had come to the Prince's checks as he spoke. His thoughts had wandered to France, to the storming of the Bastille, the flight of the Royal Family, and a thousand other awe-inspiring objects. With one hand, which he tried hard to prevent shaking, he pointed to the door, and in a haughty tone of command said, "Go at once, Kundel, and come back immediately."

At the door Kundel ran up against the Chancellor Rosenstein. Seeing by his face that something had happened, the Prince jumped up from his seat with alacrity. Rosenstein's eyes were red and swollen with weeping, the usually good-humoured, genial features were drawn with pain. He was no adept in the art of dissimulation; he had come to break sad tidings to the Prince.

"Is there going to be a revolution?" the latter asked, pointing to the crowd under the window.

"No, Your Royal Highness, there is not going to be a revolution; on the contrary, never before have the people shown such love and devotion for their King . . . the crowds are gathered there now to give expression to their affection and their . . . sorrow . . . yes, Your Royal Highness, they . . ."

The Prince had gripped the back of a chair, so firmly that his knuckles stood out white and hard. He was very pale; he asked no questions, he could not speak.



ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

ROYAL PALACE

PRINCESS SOPHIA
ALBERTINA'S PALACE

STOCKHOLM

“His Majesty, our most gracious King, met with a grave accident at the ball at the Opera House last night ; his life is in serious danger,” said Rosenstein gently.

Not a sound could the boy utter, though his lips moved. Rosenstein thought they framed the words, “Is my father dead ?”

So he replied quickly : “No, Your Royal Highness, our beloved Sovereign is still alive, but very seriously ill. And as prayers for his recovery are shortly to be offered up in the Chapel Royal, I came to tell you, feeling sure that Your Royal Highness would desire to be present with the other members of the Royal Household.”

The Prince’s lips had turned so white that Rosenstein felt quite unable to proceed and tell him the worst, before he had poured out a glass of water and given it to him.

“I beg Your Royal Highness to drink that ; remember that you must try to appear calm and collected if in the course of the day His Majesty should command Your Royal Highness’ presence.”

Gustaf Adolf raised his hand to his throat as if to stop the choking sensation he felt there ; then he hurriedly swallowed a few drops of water and said in a trembling, indistinct tone : “I *am* calm and collected now, Rosenstein, only I don’t feel as if I *could* sit still.”

He had risen from his seat and was walking up and down the room as one who sees not, knocking up against chairs and tables without noticing it. His features twitched convulsively. With all his might he tried to control the terror and grief which threatened to overpower him ; he asked no questions for fear of losing that (at least *outward*) calmness without which Rosenstein had intimated he would not be allowed to see the King. But his brain was in a perfect whirl . . . his heart felt like a huge lump in his throat and thumped as though it would burst ; every nerve in his frail body was strained to the uttermost.

Mechanically he gulped down one glass of water after another and continued walking up and down, his hands so tightly clasped behind his back that the joints almost cracked. He

thought that his strained nerves and his loudly beating heart would kill him ; but what of the thoughts that so unmercifully chased each other through his brain ? Hitherto when anything dreadful had come in his way he had been, as it were, paralysed, turned to stone, unable to think ; it was not so now. Never had his mind been so keenly alive, his brain so active. One dreadful picture followed another as though he were looking into a gruesome, ever-changing kaleidoscope, and this state of mind alarmed and frightened him. However hard he tried, and he knew he struggled hard, he could not master those thoughts and visions ; the only *outward* sign of the *inward* fight, however, was this intense pallor and the feverish energy with which he took long strides up and down the room ; stiff and straight as a dart, his hands clasped behind his back.

Rosenstein followed his every movement with troubled, anxious eyes, debating within himself how to reply truthfully but kindly and considerately to the question which was sure to be asked sooner or later, namely, the nature of the King's "accident" and illness.

Suddenly the Prince stopped short in front of his tutor, no longer able to restrain his desire for an answer to, at least, one of the many problems harrowing his thoughts.

"Who is head of affairs this time whilst the King is indisposed ?" he said.

Rosenstein looked disapprovingly at him, and answered coldly : "The Duke of Södermanland."

The words had scarcely been spoken when it suddenly flashed upon the Prince that Rosenstein would remember this his first question, and put it down to want of heart which would be an ineradicable stain on his character. In his own mind he called himself a monster for being able even to *think* of such a thing at such a moment ; but no one can be held responsible for the thoughts that flit across his mind. God, who alone searches the hearts of men—*knows*.

The strain was more than the boy could bear, and in an agony of despair he threw himself on the bed where, only a few short hours since, he had slept so peacefully and soundly. This violent outbreak following so close upon the ill-timed question,

caused a feeling of genuine pity for his young pupil in Rosenstein's kindly heart. He had thought to prepare the boy for the worst gently and by slow degrees, but his patience had been sorely tried and was well-nigh exhausted; so he went up to the bed and said in a hard, constrained voice :

“ I have to inform Your Royal Highness with deep sorrow that at a quarter to twelve o'clock last night our beloved Sovereign was the victim of a dastardly, murderous attack, being shot from behind, the bullet striking him on the left side, a little above the ribs.”

In a minute the Crown-Prince was on his feet, but shaking all over with excitement. He took fast hold of Rosenstein's arm to keep himself from falling, and cried wildly :

“ He has not been murdered ? Oh, *say* he has not been murdered, Rosenstein. I am so afraid—so afraid—is there a murderer in this room ? Are we all to be murdered ? But they shan't touch *him*. Who is with him now ? I must go to him ; perhaps there are only low assassins round his couch at this very moment. Oh, Rosenstein, Rosenstein, who has dared to raise his hand against the King ? ”

Rosenstein's tender heart was not proof against this outburst of grief ; he took the icy, boyish hand in his own podgy ones, patting it gently. Then he said softly :

“ That is not known at present, Your Royal Highness. Two pistols were found in the ball-room—one discharged, the other not. They are making all necessary inquiries ; every gunsmith in the city has been severely cross-examined as to whom the pistols were sold.”

Thoughts come and go with lightning speed, and looking straight in front of him, but with eyes fixed like one in a dream, the Prince presently said :

“ Rosenstein, it cannot have been a *Swede* who would raise a weapon and shoot at his King from behind. If I thought it *could* have been, I should never dream of wishing one day to reign over Sweden ; but it *can't*, it simply *couldn't* be. It is some Jacobite conspiracy, some assassin sent over by the French revolutionists to murder the King . . . no *Swede*, Rosenstein, no *Swede* . . . oh, say it was not a *Swede* ! ”

“ Let us hope it was *not*, Your Royal Highness ; let us also hope and pray that the gracious life of our beloved King may be spared. Public prayers are about to be offered in the Chapel. Does Your Royal Highness feel strong enough to attend ? ”

The Prince had ceased walking up and down ; he had taken a seat and buried his face in his hands. In a feeble voice he replied : “ I will try. My father would wish it. But I must be left alone for a little while to pull myself together. . . . Would you mind going into the next room, Rosenstein, and waiting for me there ? ”

The Chancellor left the room with slow steps and deep in thought, closing the door noiselessly after him.

In the Audience-chamber he found Arnfelt waiting for him—the Baron looked white and scared.

Rosenstein’s bulky frame shook as he stammered : “ How is it upstairs ? I trust you are not here to . . . ”

“ No . . . as yet there is no change. The surgeons have probed the wound, and both they and the doctors repeat what they said before, that there is no *immediate* danger, but that we must bide our time. I have just been up there with Her Majesty the Queen, and was present at the meeting between her and the King.”

“ Well, how did it go off, and how does she take it ? ” asked Rosenstein.

“ The Queen seemed much moved ; she took the King’s hand in hers and asked him several times whether he had much pain. I have never seen her so ‘ human ’ or display so much feeling. And what about *your* boy, our gracious Crown-Prince ? Give me news of him ; they will be glad to hear about him up there,” pointing in the direction of the King’s chamber. “ I have neither time nor inclination to sit down now, thank you. I must hurry back to the King ; but I hope to be present at the Intercessions in the Chapel. The King’s friends *must* be there—his enemies and murderers may profit by the occasion also.”

“ Has the King made any inquiries about the Prince ? ” asked Rosenstein.

“ Yes, he has ; almost the first words he addressed to the

Queen referred to him. 'Have you seen our boy?' he asked; and then added: 'I am rather anxious to know what impression this is likely to make upon him. But it may, perhaps, be best that he should hear nothing about it.'

"Was that the wish expressed by His Majesty?" questioned Rosenstein, abashed; "because, if so, I . . ."

"You have done quite right, my dear sir, if you *have* told the Prince," replied Armfelt.

"I felt that it was impossible to keep it from him any longer, and that it would be safer and more prudent to tell him myself than to let him question other people, who in an excess of zeal or from some base motive might have sprung it upon him with want of thought and delicacy."

"That he *was* told gently and considerately there can be no manner of doubt, since it was you yourself, sir, who told him," said Armfelt courteously.

"The Prince's Governor, Count Gyldenstolpe, thought I had better do so."

"And how did the Prince take it?"

Rosenstein held up a warning finger, and Armfelt's whispering ceased at once.

From within the adjoining room came sounds of half-choked sobs and bitter weeping.

"Tell Her Majesty that the Crown-Prince is greatly upset, but that he intends to be present in the Chapel."

"What is your own *private* opinion regarding the Prince?" asked Armfelt.

"What is *yours* with regard to the Queen? Can anyone ever tell how much she feels or what she thinks? And it is the same with the son. You know well enough, Baron Armfelt, that he never *was* like other boys."

"Did he ask about the Regency?"

"Yes, it was the very first thing he *did* ask about, but you had better not mention that fact to the King. Poor boy, I still put that down to his serious illness in the summer, though his pride and ambition are past belief. By the by, I *did* wonder rather why the Crown-Prince was *not* made Regent as he was when His Majesty was away at Aix-la-Chapelle. He did

splendidly then, and he is nearly a twelvemonth older now. Do *you* know the reason ? ”

“ I can only repeat what the King himself was pleased to say on the subject ; you will be the best judge of how much it is needful to tell the Prince. These were the King’s own words : ‘ I cannot consent to let my son take part in your debates and discussions until all—at any rate, all that concerns myself—shall have been brought to a satisfactory issue. The things he would have to hear and see and learn with regard to this inhuman and bloody deed are unsuitable to his tender age. Unfortunately for him, when once the reins of government *are* in his hands, he will have to grow familiar with such things, however much against his inclination ; but to hear them minutely and calmly discussed in all their harassing and revolting details might finally lead to callousness and indifference, most undesirable when a fellow-creature’s life is at stake.’ ”

Rosenstein furtively wiped the moisture from his eyes.

“ So that was what our beloved King said ? He is right. Little by little I shall let the Prince know what the King said ; it will take away, in a great measure, his feeling of humiliation and bitterness of spirit. His only hope now is that the would-be assassin may not turn out to have been a *Swede*. I believe he would come to *hate* the nation he will one day be called upon to rule, perhaps only too soon, alas ! For this and certain other equally cogent reasons, I almost dread to ask you, Baron Armfelt, whether anything definite has been ascertained ? I presume the Crown-Prince’s supposition that the assassin was one of the French actors has not been confirmed ? ”

Strange to say, the King was under a similar impression.

“ Quite the reverse ; the man they suspected was discovered lying quietly asleep in his own bed, where he was proved to have been the whole night. The assassin *was* a Swede, Rosenstein, and others, Swedes likewise, are behind him. How many or how few we shall never know. The miserable coward who fired the shot was none other than Captain John James Ankarström, retired. But now I must go. Give my respectful duty to His Royal Highness, and inform him that I came down to tell you that the King had inquired for him, and that he will

very likely be able to receive him when the service is over. . . . With regard to the assassin . . . well . . .”

“ I shall not dare say a word about *him* until the prayers are over and the Prince has had his interview with his father. It would be perfectly impossible to tell him just now, when he needs all the self-control he is capable of for the sake of both King and people. He is calling me.”

Before Rosenstein could open the door leading to the Prince's room, Armfelt beat a hasty retreat from the Audience chamber.

There stood the Crown-Prince, with his cloak on and hat in hand, perfectly motionless.

“ I am ready to go to the Chapel now and intercede with the Almighty for my Father's life,” was all he said.

His voice was calm and clear, but his eyes were inflamed with recently shed tears, and the hand Rosenstein, in deferential sympathy, lifted to his lips was cold as ice.

The members of the Royal House were already assembled in the Chapel, and the chaplain only awaited the arrival of the Crown-Prince to begin the service. The Queen was there with her habitual calm demeanour and upright carriage, occasionally drying her eyes with a fine lace handkerchief. On her left sat the Duke of Södermanland, who, whenever he saw the Queen wipe her tears, remembered that it was expedient to dry his own eyes. There were unmistakable signs of fatigue, sleepless nights, and overstrung nerves in his finely cut features, and he had found it difficult to keep still whilst waiting for the Prince. His wife, the Duchess, wept unrestrainedly, as did the King's sister, the Princess Sophia Albertina, who sat next her with her brother, the Duke of Östergötland on the other side. Duke Frederick looked very sorrowful, and wept more copiously than either his sister or sister-in-law.

Behind the Royal Family sat the Ladies and Gentlemen-in-Attendance, and the Chapel was filled to overflowing with others attached to the Court. The only seat unoccupied was that next the Queen, reserved for the Crown-Prince.

The sobs which were audible on all sides increased with every moment of waiting, till at last the Duke of Södermanland said a few words in a whisper to his Aide-de-Camp, whereupon the

Chaplain prepared to ascend the steps of the pulpit. But half-way up he stopped; the Crown-Prince, with his gentlemen, his Governor, and his tutor, was seen approaching. Slowly but firmly he made his way through the sorrowing throng, looking neither to the right nor to the left, but mechanically inclining his head to both sides as he went along. He dared not look, he dared not listen for fear of breaking down himself. The Court and many of the foreign Ambassadors simply marvelled at the Prince's power of self-restraint; but it grieved the King's friends that his son should show so little feeling, and that, after greeting his august relations, he should sit throughout the service rigid and apathetic and without shedding a single tear!

Now the Chaplain mounts the steps of the pulpit. Sobs grow louder or fainter in unison with the voice of the Chaplain. He begins:

“Oh, Lord God, be gracious and merciful unto us, Thy people. Leave us not comfortless when we kneel at Thy feet! Our lord and king, adored by a nation ever grateful to him, ruling in that security which the Christian religion in our land ever promises those to whom Thou Thyself hast given authority and power, that sovereign for whose preservation and prosperity we have so often lifted our hearts and voices in earnest supplication which Thou hast deigned to hear, that beloved Monarch has been foully shot by the hand of a wretched miscreant and lies even now on a bed of pain and anguish, and the life so precious to us, so needful for our welfare and protection, is trembling in the balance. Led safely home, by Thy gracious favour, from a war in which death in a thousand forms hovered constantly around him, peacemaker among a people at war with itself, this Hero met with a ghastly and hidden attack, whilst striving to enjoy the peace and quietude he had worked so hard to secure to the nation; an attack in his own capital, his own country, among the people who had sworn to be loyal and law-abiding subjects. There he lies low and suffering, his life and the future of his people in gravest danger.”

At this point the Queen and the Duke of Södermanland ostentatiously applied their handkerchiefs to their eyes. The

Duchess, the Princess, and the ladies of the Court sobbed audibly whilst the Chaplain continued the prayer, regulating his voice according to strict, rhetorical rules. As he neared the conclusion his tones, which had been sad and subdued, rose in solemn cadences, as he said: "Lord God, be gracious unto Thy people, forsake us not when we call upon Thee. If it *be* possible, and with Thee nothing is *impossible*, we would ask of Thy goodness and compassion that the blood which the assassin sought to shed be not laid to the charge of our country, where none is so base and vile and wicked but that he utterly abhors and deplores the hateful deed. Be with us, O Lord God, as Thou wast with our fathers. Leave us not, and take not Thy hand from us. We ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

With the Chaplain's last words the sobbing seemed to cease also; but the Crown-Prince remained in his place with his hand over his eyes. When he rose, offering his arm to the Queen to conduct her back to her apartment, his eyes were dry and tearless, although his hands shook nervously. He spoke not a word to her or anyone else, but walked as though in a dream. When he had escorted her to her rooms, he went straight to his own, locked himself in, and was not seen again for several hours. But when about three o'clock in the afternoon one of the King's equerries knocked at his door and said that His Majesty was asking for him, the Prince stepped forth to all outward appearance with the same calm and self-control as before. He had been quiet and composed during the trying service in the Chapel; he must be so during the even more trying ordeal of meeting his wounded father in the State bed-chamber overhead. He had promised Rosenstein that it should be so, and the Prince never broke a promise. He was thankful Rosenstein had not urged him to make any further promises which he felt he could *not* have kept. After this last terrible trial there surely could be no more for him on this ill-fated day.

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The King had not been taken to his own bedroom, but to the spacious State bedchamber which had never been occupied

since his marriage. Armfelt met the Prince in the Audience-chamber, and whispered instructions to him not to touch upon the late unhappy event, but to restrain his feelings as much as possible on seeing his father; to simply ask him how he was, and not to remain too long by his bedside.

The Prince did not speak, but gave a nod of assent. He knew very well he should not let himself go in the presence of his father, but fervently hoped he should have strength given him to say the few words that were expected of him, for all at once his heart seemed to stop beating, and he could not have uttered a sound to save his life.

The folding doors of the bedchamber were thrown open. A tall screen had been drawn close round the bed, but the Prince could see his father wrapt in a grey silk dressing-gown and sitting up in a huge armchair. The room felt uncomfortably chilly and cold; perhaps that might have been the reason it was so seldom used, or it might be that the doctors thought it advisable for the King under present circumstances.

The Prince noticed at once that he was extremely pale, and that his head valet, Robert, stood by the chair supporting the King's arm on the wounded side. The King's eyes rested scrutinisingly on the boy's figure as, with hasty steps, he advanced into the room. He saw that the Prince was very white, but wonderfully tranquil and self-possessed.

And yet the lad had hard work to keep up as he came nearer to the King. In his heart of hearts he longed to throw himself at the feet of the father he adored, to lay his head on his knee and sob out his sorrow, his anxieties, his perplexities. For one moment, indeed, he all but gave way; but the King's searching look brought him back to reason, and bracing himself, he bent low over his hand, and asked, as he usually did, and in a steady voice which sounded hard and cold to the ears of the sensitive monarch: "How does my gracious Father feel to-day?"

"I am very well—and you? Did you go to bed early last night, and did you sleep well?"

"Very well, thank you," replied the Prince in the same steady tone.

He had not a notion what he should say, since he was not

to touch on the ghastly subject uppermost in his mind, and was not to stay long !

But the King talked instead, and said : “ What is the time, Gustaf ? ”

“ It is just three,” answered the Prince, casting a questioning look at Armfelt. He was not sure whether he had done right in volunteering this information, and if his doing so could by any possibility hurt his father.

“ Who is out there in the Audience-chamber ? ” asked the King, shifting his position slightly. The Prince had taken no notice, so Armfelt replied in his place.

Meanwhile the boy had sunk down upon the chair which stood by the King’s side. To judge from the rapid change of colour in the King’s face from yellow to crimson and back again, he must have had a sudden violent attack of pain. He seized the boy’s two hands and pressed them hard in his own. The Prince sat quite still, not daring to move and unable to say a single word. But when the paroxysm of pain was over, and he let go of the Prince’s hands, the latter could bear it no longer, but rose awkwardly and said hesitatingly :

“ I trust you will soon be better . . . quite well ” ; then he kissed the King’s hand and precipitately left the apartment.

When the Prince was gone the King turned to Armfelt, and said :

“ What do you think of my son ? ”

“ I believe he has much more feeling than one gives him credit for,” Armfelt answered. The King shook his head deprecatingly, and said : “ Poor lad ! poor lad ! ”

The Crown-Prince crossed the Audience-chamber in such haste that those waiting there had hardly time to make their bows as he passed, nor he to return them.

Rosenstein was in his room to receive him ; the Prince did not notice him until he barred his way, and said :

“ It is my painful duty to inform Your Royal Highness that the man who fired the shot has been arrested and has confessed. Our worst suspicions have been confirmed. Moreover, the would-be assassin is a . . . ”

The Prince put his hands to his head and exclaimed hur-

riedly : “ No, Rosenstein ; no, not now, I can bear no more ; for God’s sake leave me to myself just for a little while. You can come in again this evening and tell me the name of the malefactor, or names, if there are more than one. God help us ! ”

He double-locked the door after Rosenstein. The latter gave orders that no one was to go in and disturb the Prince, as he desired to be alone.

CHAPTER VII

THE FATAL WOUND

THE Crown-Prince knows now. He knows who has been accused, arrested, and incriminated in the attempt on the King. Many of them are personally well known to him. From the windows of his room he heard the yells and commotion when General Horn's house was surrounded; he saw the funeral cortège of Baron Bjelke wend its way across the bridge; Baron Bjelke had committed suicide.

The boy was appalled at what he heard and saw and was told, and still more so at what his imagination suggested.

Whatever *can* be concealed from him *is* concealed, and he has asked no questions since the eventful evening when Rosenstein first told him that Anckarström had confessed, and that they were on the traces of a widespread conspiracy; but no one could guess what were the Prince's reflections or presentiments as he paced restlessly up and down in the solitude of his own room.

In the first place he thought . . . no, he could not think really; whenever he tried he could only see the scene of the attempted assassination, and that so clearly as if he had himself been present; in fact, it was ever before him. In his imagination he saw the King walking about the Opera House, leaning on the arm of Baron von Essen; he saw innumerable black masks swarming around him, saw Anckarström stealthily draw the pistol from underneath his black domino and fire at the King from behind. He wondered which of these disguises was Liljeholm, which Horn, which Ribbing. Thinking of Liljeholm, he wondered why the King did not take warning from the anonymous letter handed to him during dinner on that fatal day; why had Essen been so apathetic and inert, when he

should have fallen on his knees and besought his sovereign not to go to the ball ?

The Prince lived over and over again that fateful night when, for the last time, he had a good, sound sleep. Had he been awake he would have saved his father with God's miraculous aid. He knew so well how *he* would have acted had he been present at that ball. He was almost inclined to laugh when he thought of how the conspirators would have looked if he, the Crown-Prince, had suddenly appeared and wrenched the pistol from Anekarström's murderous hand, and so saved the King. Such were the Prince's chief thoughts as he paced his room.

Every morning he and his two uncles go to inquire after the King's condition, and the short space of time the Prince is allowed to spend alone with him, and can see for himself that his idolised father still lives and does not appear any weaker than on the previous day, is the only happy period he has in the twenty-four hours. Even then, when he leaves his father and passes through the Audience-chamber, his soul is filled with loathing and disgust, fear and distrust of all mankind, especially of those, whether he knows them or not, who bow and cringe to him as he goes by.

The Audience-chamber is crowded with persons of all ranks and conditions, some attached to the Court, some belonging to the lesser nobility, some to the Church, as well as burghers and peasants. The Prince simply fears and hates them all. He is obliged to acknowledge their homage, but he does it without so much as venturing to look at them, for fear of seeing some one who, in a few hours' time he may be told, is one of the conspirators and a would-be regicide.

On his return from the ceremonious morning visit, the Prince generally shuts himself up in his own room. His attendants can hear him constantly moving about, apparently incapable of resting, even for a moment ; they occasionally hear him sob or laugh aloud ; there is so little difference between the two that it is difficult to tell which is which. But the tramp is unceasing.

The Prince has his meals served in his room ; it is his special wish, and whilst they are being brought in he generally stands

by the window and looks out, with his back turned to the room. He would like to remain in that position, but as soon as the footmen come in and busy themselves about the table, he instinctively turns and keeps his eyes upon them . . . for may not even some of *them* be in the pay of the conspirators waiting to assassinate *him*? Often he leaves his food untouched, suspecting it may have been poisoned.

At night-time, when it is dark, the Prince is fond of watching the lights flitting across the bridge over Norrström, and about the Market-square, for the Regent has issued orders that all who have any business which necessitates their being out after dark shall be provided with a lantern. A rumour has come to the ears of the Prince that it is intended to set fire to the capital simultaneously in each of its four quarters, one of these nights, and he solemnly wonders whether the Chief of the Police really knows where all these lantern-bearers are bound to, and what is their business abroad at this hour; he thinks it part of *his* duty also to watch them; he thinks that even if a few of them are lost to sight, the flames of the burning city will soon divulge their whereabouts. And so he looks and looks until his eyes smart with the effort of following some lights which seem to him more dangerous and suspicious than the rest. His heart grows cold with fear when he sees any of those he distrusts, taking the way that leads up to the Palace, and he is almost inclined to call for help . . . but desists, as his *greatest* fear is the dread of being suspected of fear, and of the discovery being maliciously recorded in history against him, poor lad!

Therefore he will not even admit Rosenstein, who is, probably, the only one in whose faithfulness and integrity the Prince's confidence has not been shaken. Classes and lectures have been abandoned for the present, the Prince having declared his utter inability to concentrate his thoughts upon any given subject whatsoever, and as his Governor, Count Gyldenstolpe, can see that the boy has spoken the truth, as he does in everything, he allows it to be so. In the morning, when his valet comes to call him, the Prince is always wide-awake and, apparently, has either not had any sleep at all or at best very little. On the silver salver, by the side of his early morning cup of

chocolate, lies the latest report as to the state of the King's health, and the Prince eagerly scans it before touching his chocolate. Up to now the bulletin has always been satisfactory and couched in simple words, but one morning it happened to be otherwise. As the Prince read it the gilt-edged paper trembled in his hand. It was as follows :

“Monday, March 26th. 7 a.m.

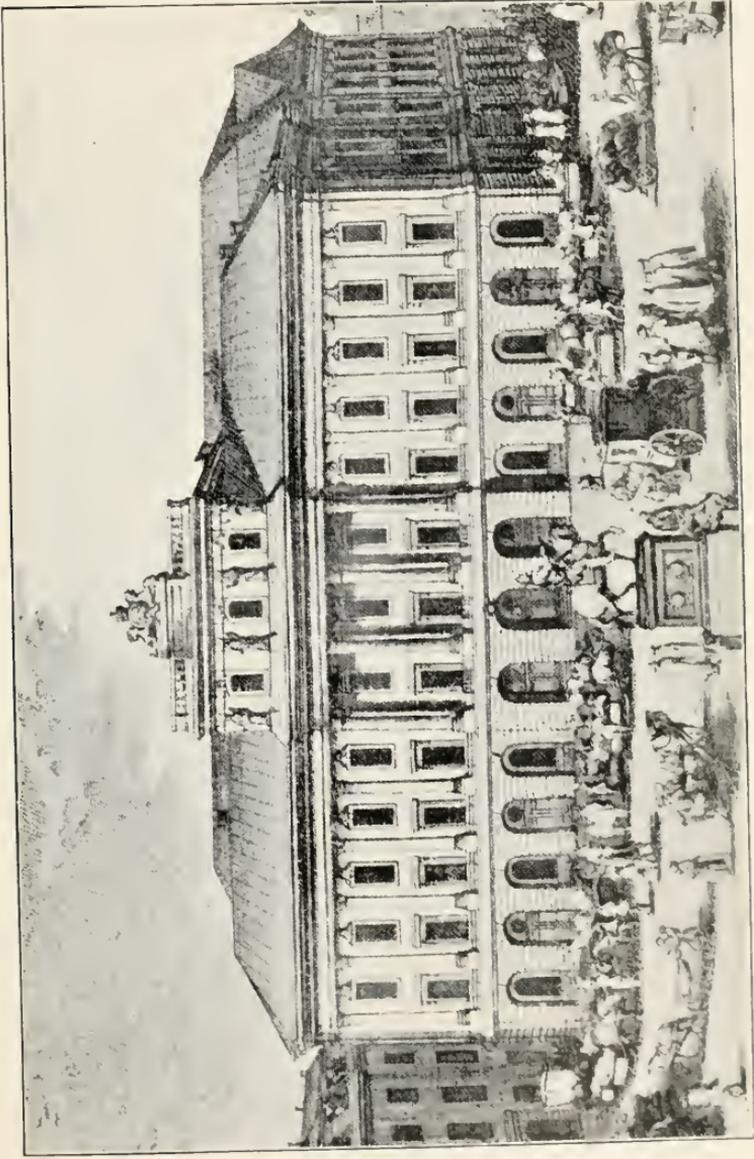
“Last night the King began to suffer from pressure on the chest, especially the right side, with intermittent pulse, for which reason a Spanish-Fly was at once applied, and at five o'clock His Majesty was bled, the which diminished and relieved the fever, then he rested comfortably until seven.”

The Prince made no remark to his valet whilst he was dressing, but the latter knew very well that the King had grown considerably worse since then, and out of pity for his young master he tried to read the Prince's slightest desire in his face, and to fulfil it on the spot. But the Prince was sharp enough to suspect that these delicate attentions on the part of Kundel implied that he thought the King was like to die. He humoured Kundel, but his heart sank within him, heavy as lead.

That day and one other the Prince was allowed to pay his usual visit to his father, but he might only stay a few minutes, as the King's strength was at a very low ebb, though not so low as the boy had expected, for he still talked cheerfully, and seemed to take an interest in what the Prince said . . . these visits were still the happiest moments in the day for him. But the third day after the first change for the worse a message was brought to the Prince to the effect that the King would not be able to receive him as usual, but would send for him as soon as he felt a little better. When Count Piper had delivered this message to the Prince and was about to take his leave, the boy stopped him and said :

“Be so good as to let Chancellor Rosenstein be informed that I desire his presence here.”

When Rosenstein arrived, out of breath and greatly astonished at the summons, full of grief in his heart at the non-improvement in the King's condition, the Prince gave him a sign to take the seat he usually occupied when lecturing. He



THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE.
SCENE OF THE MURDER OF GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS III
MARCH 16, 1792

had received him in his study, and Rosenstein could not help wondering what odd fancy could have induced him to want to listen to a lecture just on that particular day.

“Sit down, Rosenstein,” said the boy; “I have something I want to talk over with you, and it may take rather a long time.”

He himself took his accustomed seat; he did not cross his arms over his breast as usual, but folded his hands as he had a habit of doing when receiving religious instruction from Doctor Flodin. Rosenstein never remembered having seen the Prince so nervous and pale, and wondered in his own heart how long it would be before the boy really went quite out of his mind, as he was surely bound to do some day. The corners of the Prince’s mouth twitched nervously, and he fidgeted with his feet on the footstool before him as though it were burning hot.

“I can see by your face, Rosenstein, that you have read the latest bulletin,” he said in a low voice. “Truly it is sorrowful enough, is it not? I wanted to talk it over with you. Ever since you told me that they were Swedes who had plotted against the King, and that it had been a Swede who fired the shot, and not a Frenchman, as I believed, I have thought of nothing else.”

Rosenstein began to move uneasily in his chair.

“Would not Your Royal Highness prefer to discuss the subject with your Governor, Count Gyldenstolpe?” he said.

“That is what I *have* done, Rosenstein; but Gyldenstolpe does not understand what I mean, nor could I ever talk so openly and confidentially to the Count as I know I can to *you*; neither do I trust *his* judgment as I do *yours*. I confide in *you* because I believe you really *are* my friend, and care for me.”

The words, spoken by a mere boy and on such an occasion, touched the tutor deeply, so that he was obliged to wipe a little moisture from the corner of his eye; the Prince saw it, and was also moved. With some effort he continued:

“Only one request I would make: don’t take down in writing what I am going to say now, and don’t let Adlerbeth,* or anyone

* Contemporary Swedish historian.

else do so either ; above all, don't mention a word to the King in case he should quite recover, which God grant he may ! Will you promise, Rosenstein ? ”

“ Whatever Your Royal Highness shall choose to confide to me shall for ever remain deeply buried in my breast. But why should you fear the comment of a writer on history on anything you say or do, since Your Royal Highness would never contemplate any act inconsistent with your duty to your country ? ”

The Prince clasped his hands more tightly together, and bit his lips to prevent their quivering.

“ That is precisely what I want to discuss with you. You know, Rosenstein, lying awake at night, so many thoughts come into one's mind ; they are confusing, and I want you to set them right. You always see things so clearly. ”

The tutor, abashed, looked at the Prince. The clearness of mental vision and judgment to which the Prince referred was one of the qualities which he himself prized ; never for a moment had he suspected that the Prince should set so much store by them or him.

“ That which has just happened to the King has altered my opinion on a most important subject, ” continued the Prince, and, in order not to break down, he drummed on the table as he spoke.

“ When I was a little boy, yes, even up to last week, I thought nothing could be more brilliant and grander than some day to mount the throne so honourably occupied once by Gustavus Vasa, Gustaf Adolf, and Charles the Twelfth. ”

He paused a minute and took a deep breath ; then he continued, still drumming on the table : “ But now, Rosenstein, I want altogether to get off ever having to be King ; I wanted to tell you that, so that it might not come to you as a surprise some day. If the King *should* die of the wound dealt him by a Swede, the Swedes will have to find some one else to rule over them and be their king—not *me*. I will *not* reign over such a disloyal, faithless, wicked people. I want to be set free from having to fill a position which would never suit me. ”

“ Your Royal Highness was not so minded immediately after the attempt ; for your *first* inquiry was about the Regency. ”

The Prince said nothing for a while. His cheeks flushed ominously, and Rosenstein was prepared for an angry retort, for this was how the Prince generally looked when he was angered and his hot temper got the better of him.

But it was neither in a tone of resentment nor anger that the boy replied :

“ We will not discuss that ; that is a matter which is only between God and myself. If for a moment I *did* have ambitious thoughts for myself at the time of the attempt on my father’s life, God has already given me my punishment. . . . So much, at least, I can tell you, Rosenstein.”

Whilst he was speaking, he had risen from his chair and gone to the window. His back was turned to the room, and to Rosenstein, but the latter could see by the shaking of the boy’s shoulders that he was weeping, and he thought the moment propitious for saying in a persuasive tone :

“ I can hardly imagine that Your Royal Highness would let an entire nation suffer for a crime committed by a few misguided fanatics. I pray and beseech Your Royal Highness to reconsider your hasty resolve, which can only bring unhappiness to all, to repudiate the throne in the event of our beloved King’s dying. Consider what misery, confusion, and disorder such an act at such a time would entail on the country and the people.”

“ And if there should be misery, confusion, and disorder, it would only be a just judgment of God for the blood spilt. The people have laid hands on the Lord’s Anointed, and retribution must ever follow in the wake of sin. Whatever *I* may decide to do, you may be sure that the wrath of God will fall upon the Swedish nation for this wicked deed. God punishes sinful thoughts, how much more, then, sinful actions, and He will not let crime go unavenged.”

The Prince spoke with much empressement, and after a pause he continued :

“ And in order that the righteous shall not perish with the wicked, the righteous must not have anything to do with them.”

“ Then it must be lack of courage which has induced Your Royal Highness to make up your mind not to rule over the Swedish people ? I should never have believed it of you.”

“Do you call it ‘lack of courage’ or ‘cowardice’ when one makes up one’s mind to renounce all one desired most in the world?” asked the Prince, quite gently. “I call it the *height* of courage. . . . Is that not plain to you, Rosenstein?”

“One thing is quite plain to me, Your Royal Highness, and that is that only those who do their duty as well as they possibly can, and those who honourably fulfil the obligations of their calling, even under the greatest difficulties, can be said to possess *true* courage.”

“I am wondering whether you would say that, Rosenstein, if they had murdered *your* father and *you* were to take his place. I can only see that it is a cruel and wicked people that would murder their King, and a wicked son who would be willing to mount a throne stained with the blood of his father. I despise the people that could do such a deed, and the people would be right in despising *me* were I to do what you are trying so hard to talk me over into doing.”

“Now, who has been putting that idea into your head?” asked the tutor.

“I suffer no one to ‘put ideas’ into my head,” answered the Prince hotly, turning away; “it is not the will of God that I should be King over an unfaithful and wicked nation like the Swedes.”

“How does Your Royal Highness come to know that?” questioned Rosenstein.

The Prince’s cheeks were hot and flushed, his eyelids swollen with want of sleep, but the clear blue eyes, so beautiful at all times, perfectly beamed as he replied :

“As you can ask such a question, Rosenstein, I suppose you have never heard the voice of God in *your* heart?”

Rosenstein was silent, so was the Prince now. The Chancellor was at his wit’s end as to what he *could* say to make the opiniated, obstinate boy change his mind. As soon as he had uttered the first words, the tutor had guessed what it was his pupil wished to discuss with him, but he had secretly indulged in the hope that pride and ambition would conquer the misanthropic feelings the attempted assassination of the King had inspired, and that not unnaturally, in the boy. He knew not

what to think. He was grieved to think that if the King *were* to die, his beloved Fatherland might be exposed to the same fate as that which had overtaken Poland, if different and opposing parties came into power, and his pupil's many sterling and solid qualities had promised well for the happiness and prosperity of the land Rosenstein was so fond and proud of. Besides that, and almost against his will, he had conceived a genuine and deep-rooted affection for the lad, whose peculiarities interested him, though he often wished that his disposition were other than it was. He had toiled so hard to mould his pupil so that he might prove a good and noble ruler of his country, that he felt intensely mortified to think he should never see the results of his labours. He was wondering what speech he could frame to encourage and rouse the boy in the struggle now going on ; but he could think of nothing.

At last the Prince himself broke the silence.

" Now, I suppose, you will admit that, in this instance, my vision is clearer than yours, Rosenstein ? "

" No, Your Royal Highness, I cannot admit anything of the kind. Your present feelings are, perhaps, only too natural, and rather to your credit than otherwise ; but they should not lead you to condemn an entire and noble nation wrongfully, or to judge it with so much hardness and severity. I cannot commend Your Royal Highness' discernment, and I feel bound to stand up for and vindicate the people. Suppose we let this subject rest for a while and turn to another, on which we most certainly are of one mind, as it nearly concerns us both . . . the condition of our well-beloved . . . "

" Stop a moment, Rosenstein," interrupted the Prince. " There is one thing I must know first " . . . the boy seemed not quite to know how to put the question into words. At last he said : " From the observations you made just now, I trust you did not mean to insinuate that the King, my father, ever acted unjustly towards his people, gave wrong judgment, or ever broke his word . . . and that *this* is God's punishment to him . . . you could not possibly have meant *that* ? "

The Prince had convulsively grasped the back of the chair, and looked pale and haggard.

“How could Your Royal Highness, who know my feelings so well, for an instant imagine that I should think that this terrible deed should have been allowed by Providence as a punishment or retribution, or that I should dream of taking the part of any slayer of men, least of all a regicide, the would-be assassin of my much-loved King,” cried Rosenstein, appalled at the way in which the Prince had misinterpreted his words.

He saw that he must take some other tack with his wayward pupil, who seemed tired out, and hung his head, holding his hand over his eyes; so he said in his most kindly and persuasive manner :

“If it were I who had to ascend the throne under the present most deplorable conditions, I can swear to Your Royal Highness that I should consider it my solemn duty to do so, and I should endeavour daily to call to mind certain mottoes and maxims which I should strive to act up to, to the best of my ability.”

“I should like to hear some of them,” said the Prince in a low voice. “Would that they might help me !”

“First of all, I should say to myself every morning, ‘Honesty is the best policy.’”

The Prince nodded approvingly. “Yes, *that’s* all right,” he said. “What more ?”

“Next I should say to myself : ‘Remember to make no promise if you are not quite sure of being able to carry it out . . . and to keep it.’”

Again the boy nodded, and made a sign to Rosenstein to proceed.

“My third maxim would be, ‘Have no favourites.’”

Rosenstein all the time kept close watch on the Prince. He could tell by the look on his face what sort of impression his words were making, and when he saw the colour suddenly suffusing the boy’s temples, he stopped short, somewhat disquieted at the way his last utterance had been taken. Then the Prince said :

“I know you were referring to some of the old Kings of France, of whose failings and foibles you have often told me. . . . Were you not alluding to Louis XIV and Louis XV ?”

Rosenstein bowed in assent.

"I thought so," said the Prince quickly. Then he added, thoughtfully and very deliberately :

"Supposing you acted strictly on all you said, Rosenstein, do you think you would really *be* a *good* king, and make for the welfare and happiness of the country ?"

"Yes, I believe I should, God helping me," answered Rosenstein warmly.

He was so excited that he made use of this somewhat antiquated expression, almost obsolete even in those days.

"Always presuming, of course, that in all other respects you acted only according to the Will of God," said the Prince in admonitory tone.

Rosenstein, in his excitement, all but interrupted his royal pupil.

"The one thing I should guard against most would be thinking ill of my Swedish people. I should not look upon them as faithless and wicked, but as a people great and noble, as they have proved themselves over and over again, in adversity as in prosperity. And with my heart filled with love to my country and my people, and an unwavering determination to be a righteous and honest ruler, I should cast all other troubles aside."

"Would you really ?" said the Prince, looking up and running his fingers through his hair . . . which little trick was a good sign, as it meant that he wanted to copy his great ancestor, Charles XII of blessed memory.

"I can't promise all that . . . but I shall try ; and I *can* promise that I will not forget your sayings and maxims, Rosenstein."

The Prince rose to go, and Rosenstein bent deferentially to kiss the hand held out to him. To his astonishment the Prince did not immediately withdraw it again, but seized his tutor's, and pressed it hard between his own. When Rosenstein looked up, he saw the boy's eyes were moist, and when he came to think of the cause of this emotion the Chancellor's own were not quite dry.

"I am in despair, Rosenstein," said the Prince with a catch in his voice ; "if the King *does* die, I'm sure I don't want to

live—I shall never know an hour's happiness again—I can *not* and never shall forget these miserable days. I . . . I . . .”

The Prince made a hasty motion with his hand that Rosenstein should leave him, which he did at once.

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Towards evening the King's condition showed some improvement, which good news was conveyed to Her Majesty the Queen by Baron Armfelt and to His Royal Highness Gustaf Adolf by Count Gyldenstolpe.

The Prince rather regretted having confided his views to Rosenstein ; if he had only waited another day he need not have done so. He had spoken in the agony of grief, thinking the King was really dying.

Now, expecting the King would live, he rather wondered whether Rosenstein *would* keep their recent interview secret, and not let it be mentioned in history !

The Prince had retired to bed with the prospect of another sleepless night ; though rather repenting his confidences, he felt a sort of pleasant relief in having opened his heart to his old tutor, and he thanked God for the improvement of the King's state. He would be pleased one day to wear the crown himself, but not as a minor, nor under such circumstances as the present. He was full of hope that with God's blessing the King might eventually quite recover and live a long, long time yet, until he should depart this life full of years and honour, when the Prince himself should be a man ripe in years and experience, with no “ Regent ” over him.

And as the King seemed decidedly better, the Prince looked forward to being allowed to see him again on the morrow. He repeated Rosenstein's wise axioms to himself in due order : “ Honesty is the best policy.” . . . “ No promises.” . . . “ No favourites. . . .” And so worn out and tired was he with excitement and the various harassing events of the day, that his head sank wearily on to his pillow, and he was soon wrapt in the calm, sound sleep of happier days. On his dressing-table stood a Venetian glass, exquisitely engraved with his monogram, half filled with water, half with some sweet oil, with a

tiny wick in silver cross-bars floating on the top; this little nightlight burnt slowly and steadily whilst the boy slept.

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The valet had as much trouble in rousing the Prince the next morning as he had had on that fatal seventeenth of March. When at last he *did* succeed the boy sat up in bed, and as on that other morning turned his half-closed eyes towards the clock on the mantelpiece, and said peevishly: "It is only just seven, not eight! What do you mean by waking me so early? Eight is my time."

And his sleepy head sank down once more on the pillow. But he was not destined to rest . . . the valet shook him as gently and respectfully as he could, and said: "May it please Your Royal Highness to pardon my boldness, but Count Gyldenstolpe gave me orders to call Your Royal Highness immediately."

The Crown-Prince was wide awake on the instant, and on the alert.

"What has happened? The King . . .? Say," he added in a hoarse whisper.

It was not the valet, but Count Piper, the Gentleman-in-Waiting, who replied:

"Yes, alas! Your Royal Highness. The King suddenly became so much worse in the night, that his former Court Physieian, Dahlberg, had to be summoned."

"Thank God; it was Dahlberg who saved his life once before at Damgarten. What does he say? Where is Count Gyldenstolpe?"

"Count Gyldenstolpe, Count Oxenstjerna, Baron Armfelt, and Baron Taube, with the Secretary of State, Schröderheim, have been in the King's apartment since four o'clock this morning. Count Gyldenstolpe wished *me* to inform Your Royal Highness."

"I know, I know . . . the King is dying."

"Your Royal Highness will be good enough to rise and dress at once, for you may at any moment be called to the King's deathbed. Her Majesty the Queen and the other members of

the Royal Family are ready. Count Gyldenstolpe will let you know as soon as His Majesty expresses the wish to say a last farewell to his family."

The Prince could not speak — he motioned to Piper to go.

The valet proceeded to help him to dress. As Kundel was tying the red sash it suddenly occurred to the boy that he might as well don the sombre garments of mourning which he must wear when the King died, *now*. Why should his usual clothes with the red facings and the red sash be handed to him, when he ought to wear black only? The Prince put his hand to his head, and reflected that when the King sent for him he could certainly not appear before him in mourning; if he should come to him arrayed in trappings of woe, the King might ask him whom he mourned. . . .

Then a most strange thing happened. . . . All at once the Prince burst into a loud, hysterical laugh, to the utter amazement of his attendant who had noticed how intently his young master listened to every sound, and how his whole body quivered when he thought he heard anything, though he had not opened his lips during the whole of the thirty minutes occupied with his toilet. When at last it was completed, he said to Kundel: "Go and get me the latest accounts."

Kundel returned after a few minutes, and said to the Prince, who, as usual, was standing by the window: "His Majesty is sitting propped up in his own chair, supported by Robert. Doctor Dahlberg, the other doctors, and the gentlemen already mentioned are there also, as well as Secretary Schröderheim, who is writing something. His Majesty is perfectly conscious and takes the medicines ordered, but they no longer seem to have any effect."

"Is there no special message from Count Gyldenstolpe?" asked the Prince without turning round, and in such low tones that Kundel could scarcely catch what he said.

"No, none, Your Royal Highness."

"Come again in a little while, and bring me word . . . but if there is any *special* message, come at once."

The boy remained at the window, but he saw neither the lovely landscape nor the multitude of faces assembled near the palace, gazing anxiously up at the windows of the chamber where their King lay a-dying ; instead, his imagination led him to see the most weird, ghastly pictures—visions of the recent gruesome events in France ; visions of that fatal night's doings in the Opera House—he saw them all as plainly as if he had himself been there and taken part in them ; but he could not quite make out which of these things had happened in France, and which in Stockholm ; it was all so confused and blurred. He tried hard to remember, but *could* not.

Hark ! There was some one at the door now. The Prince started, but did not shift his position nor turn to look ; he waited with burning cheeks and throbbing pulse for what news he might have to hear.

“ His Reverence the Bishop of Wexiö has been summoned to administer the Holy Communion to His Majesty,” said the voice of Count Piper, for it was he and not Kundel who had entered.

The Prince took no notice of the speaker, but only said hoarsely : “ Go again at once, and ask Count Gyldenstolpe if I may not come up soon, and come back and tell me immediately.”

It seemed an age before Count Piper returned. The Prince stood transfixed in the middle of the room ; he fancied he had been called, and he meant to go to his father without waiting for the summons.

“ Not yet ; it will, however, not be long before Your Royal Highness will be called up. Bishop Wallquist, to whom I have just spoken, told me that he heard Baron Armfelt ask His Majesty whether he wished the Royal Family and Your Royal Highness to be sent for, and His Majesty answered that he would prefer to rest a little while after partaking of the Sacrament, and that he felt rather sleepy.”

The Prince sighed deeply, and gave Piper a sign to go.

He stood with his hand ready on the handle of the door ; there was a singing in his ears, and a buzzing as of insects'

wings. . . . In spite of all he listened intently for the message which should summon him to his father's deathbed.

There was some one, surely, coming through the Audience-chamber now. The Prince took his hand from the door, and at the same instant his Governor, Count Gyldenstolpe, advanced into the room.

"May I come now?" asked the boy, pushing past him.

His Excellency, holding him back, said gravely:

"No, *Your Majesty*."

The buzzing in the Prince's ears ceased so suddenly that he was quite dazed. True, he heard his Governor speak, but the voice sounded a long way off sometimes, and sometimes strangely near and loud; he would have liked to stop his ears so as to hear nothing.

"Our beloved Sovereign, His Majesty Gustavus the Third, passed peacefully away a few minutes ago. His Royal Highness, the Duke of Södermanland (the King's brother), bid me in all haste inform Your Majesty that he would be here in person as soon as possible, to take the oaths as Regent and guardian to Your Majesty, in accordance with the wishes of His late Majesty Gustavus III, as expressed in his last Will and Testament. May it please Your Majesty now to change your dress for the customary mourning."

The Prince had turned deadly pale; he staggered, and put his hands up to his head.

"I cannot . . . I will not . . . I will not," he stammered.

His Excellency pretended to believe that the young *King* had spoken in reference to his dress, therefore he continued in mellifluous but impressive tones (which greatly irritated Gustaf Adolf IV, who was not slow to perceive that the Governor's voice was more unctuous than of yore): "But it is quite imperative that Your Majesty *should* put on mourning. Take a seat and rest for a few moments. Would you like a glass of cold water? . . . For Heaven's sake . . . Your Majesty . . ."

Count Gyldenstolpe rushed across the room and pulled the bell violently.

An attendant had evidently been in readiness in the ante-

chamber, and answered the summons at once. He was already clad in the customary mourning, with bands, crape rosettes, and a crape bow on the left arm.

“Quick, quick! Bring water and smelling salts, the young King is in a dead swoon.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE YOUNG MONARCH

THE youthful King seemed vexed and depressed. He had mostly been so during the four long years that had elapsed since the assassination of the late King.

First of all he was greatly annoyed at being spoken of as the "young" or "little King," and inquired with much irritation who, then, was the "big" King; next his anger was kindled at the unexpected clemency shown to the regicides. The "little" King had looked with wondering eyes at his uncle, Duke Charles of Södermanland, when, *pro forma*, the latter had asked him whether the sentence on Anekarström might not be reduced, and he had answered sternly that, in *his* opinion, it ought to be doubled, trebled. And when interrogated as to what were his intentions with regard to the others implicated, he had replied very sharply :

"I consider no punishment hard enough for *them*."

It had never occurred to him otherwise than that they should pay the penalty with their lives, and the Duke of Södermanland found it quite impossible to make him comprehend any reason why they should *not* forfeit them, and why they should only suffer imprisonment in a fortress or exile from their country. Had not theirs been the most wicked, most heinous crime that could be imagined? If they were let off the death-penalty, would not the people conclude that any sovereign might be murdered with impunity? When he thought these things over in the silent hours of the night, he wept, and his indignation waxed greater day by day. He chafed and fretted at being the "little" King, a minor, under tutelage, with no power to punish his adored father's murderers as he would wish, and as

they deserved. This continued state of ill-humour and but half-suppressed wrath ended in estranging from him in one way or another many of those who had loyally served the late King, and when it came to Armfelt's sending in his resignation, the King's grief was intense. Armfelt's defection convinced him that there was no reliance to be placed on any one since his father's enemies had come into power, his father's murderers all but pardoned, his father's friends alienated from him. And yet Mauritz Armfelt had promised Gustavus III on his deathbed that, present or absent, he would watch over the Boy-King, and he had confirmed that promise to the "little" King himself when he left.

After the final interview, when Armfelt had closed the door after him, the young King's heart beat fast with fear and apprehension. It was late in the evening that Armfelt had said a sorrowful farewell to him. . . . Armfelt, his father's trusted friend, once his own Gentleman-Attendant, so kind, so high-spirited, and . . . *now he* had left him, forsaken him, and the boy saw nothing but foes and assassins round his couch. He once again bitterly bewailed that he was only the "little" King, with no power to keep his father's friends and his own near him.

This and similar causes also made the King dissatisfied with the Regency, not with Duke Charles individually, for he had looked up to and admired him ever since the victory of Hogland, but he was seriously displeased with the Duke's favourite, Baron Reuterholm, who gave himself airs, and aggregated to himself power which did not become him.

Sometimes, however, the Duke himself incurred Gustaf Adolf's dire displeasure, as, for instance, when, a few weeks after the late King's death, he had taken the boy to task for his apathy and sullenness, and not long after had given him a scolding for his *over-amiability* and friendliness towards the Russian General whom the Empress Catherine had sent with messages of condolence to the Swedish Court. Such proceedings offended Gustaf Adolf deeply; he could not tolerate injustice and inconsistency.

By degrees his feelings towards the Duke grew less bitter,

especially when he noticed that he (the Duke) showed him all possible deference in public *as* his Sovereign, and never addressed him save hat in hand.

With his mother, the Queen, he was exceedingly annoyed. Ought she not to have known that if she desired additions made to her residences at Logård and Ulriksdal *he* (though a minor) was the proper person to whom she should have applied? But no, she had applied to the Duke, and the latter in his, the King's presence, had granted her requests with such kindly alacrity that the Queen had been moved to tears, and said that it was the first time since she had come into the country that she *had* been able to get anything she wanted, and the Duke's kindness had touched her deeply.

The Queen's excess of gratitude had moved the Duke too, but the King had been greatly displeased, seeing that the Queen's utterances cast aspersions on the late King; he was even more furious when he saw the widowed Queen in so much more cheerful mood. The climax, however, was reached one day in the autumn when he went to Ulriksdal to see her. He had gone in the deepest mourning, his hair unpowdered, a black muffler round his throat, and no white cuffs to his sleeves; his black cloak, a crape sash and hat with the badge smothered in crape. Halfway through the park he had met the Queen, dressed in white and colours. The blood had mounted to his temples, and he had turned and gone another way, pretending he had not seen her. When he met her afterwards with the Duke, and she asked him why he had not spoken to her before, he had given vent to his displeasure, and had said:

"I *could* not, whilst Your Majesty was arrayed so."

He could have struck her then and there because she was not clad in fustian and crape, with long weepers, etc., and he had a hard struggle not to cry aloud for very anguish of heart to think that *he* was the *only* one of them all who genuinely mourned the King, and who would willingly have given his life to bring him back again.

Nor was he much better pleased with his Governor, Count Gyldenstolpe. His sharp eyes had detected certain oddities and discrepancies in the conduct and general behaviour of this



QUEEN SOPHIA MAGDALENA
MOTHER OF GUSTAF ADOLF IV

gentleman, and one day when, totally oblivious of all decorum, he had appeared at the Royal dinner-table unmistakably the worse for what he had imbibed, so that he could neither speak intelligibly nor walk straight, the King's displeasure had turned to contempt and disgust.

Not often could Gustaf Adolf give vent to his annoyance; he tried his best to master his apathy and his hot temper, and to be affable and kind to all. He had not been blessed with the late King's sanguine and cheerful temperament; he was by nature too emotional, too sensitive, especially when anything touched his pride and ambition, and his haughtiness and self-consciousness led him to wish to appear perfect in every respect in the eyes of others. When not provoked he was calm, sensible, gentle and courteous in manner, and intent on exhibiting those good qualities which are supposed to be the heritage of kings. His greatest difficulty lay in coping with that all too vivid imagination of his, which was calculated so often to destroy the calm which is so essential, outwardly at least, to regal dignity.

The "little" King's life was a busy one. His studies with Rosenstein had to be continued as heretofore; in his leisure hours he flew to his piano, for the King loved music, which often brought him comfort and consolation in hours of sorrow and depression, and these, alas! were many.

He also had to drill with a company of soldiers especially made for him. They were wooden soldiers, skilfully manufactured by the Court cabinet-maker. These he set up on a large oaken table, and an Adjutant stood by and instructed him in executing the most difficult and intricate manœuvres with them. But not long was he destined to war with toy soldiers. And now began lessons in genuine warfare under the tuition of the exiled French Captain of Artillery, Suremains. These lessons, however, were no pleasure to either pupil or teacher. Suremains himself took but little interest in uniforms or tactics; he had no glowing tales of warriors and heroes, no racy anecdotes wherewith to animate the King. It bored the latter to be forever hearing about the technical rules of march for an army, the precautions to be taken for its safety, the topographical

knowledge to be acquired, and the lines and possible bases of operation. Often the King was scarcely able to repress his yawns during those weary hours. But when Suremains occasionally stopped to ask him to repeat what he had said, Gustaf Adolf would look at him with his big, serious blue eyes, and say :

“ *My* idea, Captain Suremains, is this : if you want to gain a victory in war, it is *you* who must always be the aggressor.”

“ How would you gain the victory—what would your tactics be, did Your Majesty say ? ”

And when the King would not vouchsafe an answer, Suremains would once more launch out upon the measures to be taken and advantages to be followed up by the would-be conqueror. Gustaf Adolf let him prose on as long as he liked ; he was too courteous to interrupt his teacher, and only spoke when requested to recapitulate the lesson. Then he would say :

“ *You* should know all about that much better than I, Captain Suremains ; but *I* maintain that to gain a victory, *you* must be the aggressor.”

And the King would impatiently run his fingers through his hair. Should Suremains venture in despair to offer any contradictory remark, he was sure to incur the King’s displeasure.

How much had happened in the course of the last four years ! The ineffaceable, deep impression which the assassination of the late King had made upon the boy increased, when, in the beginning of the year following, he heard of the shameful execution on the guillotine of the King of France by his own people, until it amounted to positive terror. His thoughts dwelt continually and with nervous apprehension on the monarch, once so powerful, and his own father’s friend, now cruelly beheaded by his own subjects. That scene in Paris and that other in Stockholm were constantly before him. The world to him seemed out of gear since the best and most noble sovereigns were allowed to become the victims of mad, wicked, and bloodthirsty rebels and conspirators. His feverish imagination drew weird pictures of the state the world would be in if all its rulers were to combine to avenge their brethren and

chastise the people. He saw himself at the head of the band, leading them on; he considered it as a heritage left to him by his father. Gustaf III could not avenge himself, but Gustaf IV could and should avenge both martyr-kings.

He thought so much about it that it brought on one of his curious fits. They usually began with spasmodic twitchings of the muscles of the face, and ended with alternate paroxysms of uncanny laughter and floods of tears. These attacks troubled him greatly, and it was palpable to all what almost superhuman efforts he made to combat or conceal them; but he was not always successful, and the failure made him angry with himself.

In the autumn news came to Stockholm that the beautiful Queen, Marie Antoinette, and King Louis' sister, Madame Elisabeth, had likewise suffered on the scaffold. The victims of the people's frenzy were increasing daily, and so were Gustaf Adolf's fears and dread. This last news not only prostrated him physically, but seemed also to fill his mind with strange and lugubrious ideas. He suddenly expressed a desire that all who were about his person should pretend (in play) to rebel against him, and the game should culminate in *his* pretending to run a dagger through his heart and to give up the ghost. This tragic-comic performance had to be repeated many times, always concluding with the King's pretending to take his own life. He would often have liked to do it in reality, had he not known that self-murder is a grievous sin. The young King's temperament was a curious mixture indeed, beyond the power of any mortal man to understand. Gyldenstolpe and Rosenstein had the greatest difficulty in preventing him from laying down the crown. At the same time he had the utmost horror of being deposed. His fear of regicides had become chronic.

Not long after the news of Marie Antoinette's execution had spread consternation over Stockholm, trouble was ready to break out in Sweden. A plot had been discovered against the Duke of Södermanland and the Regency, with Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt at its head! It was a great blow to the King, who had an instinctive feeling that somehow or another it might be suspected that *he*, too, was implicated in it. He reflected

on all he had done or left undone, and could find nothing with regard to which he had failed to exercise the most scrupulous care. He reviewed the past, and comforted himself with the thought of his firmness in steadily refusing any intercourse whatever with a certain damsel of the name of Malina Rudenskjöld, who had often put herself in his way that summer, trying to deliver messages or secret letters to him from Armfelt, and he had told her in very plain language that he received neither messages nor letters from anyone without his guardian's knowledge. This he had promised the Duke, and nothing would induce Gustaf Adolf to break a promise.

It had been a work of considerable difficulty for the shy, quiet boy to defend himself against the insidious wiles and bewitching overtures of this damsel, and to steel himself against the fearful dangers and conspiracies which, she was not slow to tell him, threatened both him and the country, as well as the late King's faithful adherents, so long as the Regency remained in the hands of perfidious favourites. To emphasise her stories, she painted in brilliant colours the prosperity of the kingdom and the happiness of the King himself which would ensue if Armfelt were recalled from Naples, and with the help of the Empress of Russia, Gustaf Adolf were to proclaim his independence. All this could so speedily and easily be accomplished if His Majesty would only receive and copy with his own hand the draft of a letter to the Empress Catherine, (carefully conceived by Armfelt), and which Malina Rudenskjöld made many fruitless attempts to pass on to the young King.

The boy often repeated to himself Rosenstein's maxim, "Honesty is the best policy," and his unwavering reply to Malina had always been, "I neither receive nor despatch letters without my uncle's knowledge and approval. Once for all, I gave my word to the Duke, and that word is sacred; I neither *can* nor *shall* break it"; which caused Malina to write off in a fury to Armfelt that the "boy" was as obstinate as a mule, and that there was no chance of making any way with *him*. Armfelt, equally exasperated, replied in an angry letter in which he referred to Gustaf Adolf as "Sophia Magdalena's

own brat," which was the worst term of opprobrium he could think of at the time.

Whatever alarm he felt at Armfelt's conspiracy, Gustaf Adolf at least had the solace of knowing his conscience innocent of any participation in it, but his heart was full of misgivings, as it had been after the late King's death. Indeed, whom *could* he trust? how could he tell who would be true to him or who would bring misfortune and disgrace upon him? He saw Armfelt's name on the list as a traitor to his King and country, and heard much talk about Malina Rudenskjöld's manœuvrings. . . . And Armfelt had been one of the late King's most trusted friends, and much had been expected of him when the young King came to the throne. Now he was branded as a traitor, and Malina Rudenskjöld had been sentenced to hard labour. Was Gustaf Adolf not bound, in a certain measure, to stand up for Armfelt, who was to be tried and punished even more severely than Anckarström the regicide? On the other hand, he could find no excuse for one conspiring against those in authority, and setting at naught the will of his Sovereign. His mind was sorely troubled, being torn both ways.

One thing certainly did not in the least disturb or worry him, and that was the dismissal of Count Gyldenstolpe, his Governor, who had been found to have been implicated in Armfelt's plot; but he was intensely annoyed when he thought that the Duke and Reuterholm might take it into their heads to dismiss Rosenstein, and he could *not* get on without "his Rosenstein."

This worthy, having taken warning by the fate meted out to Gyldenstolpe, had become more circumspect and reticent than ever, so that the poor young King had not even that refuge when evil forebodings and apprehensions seized him. If ever, during their hours of study, he tried to talk of events that *had* happened or *might* possibly happen, Rosenstein only shook his big head and laid his finger on his lips; so it came that the King certainly believed in Rosenstein as an honest man, probably the *only* one in the realm; but on the whole he cherished the sad conviction that he could only rely upon God and himself. He lay awake many hours during the night, fancying that he heard the voice of the Almighty telling him

what to do and what not to do, and that voice he strove to obey in the course of the day ; and, listening to its promptings, he became more silent and reserved each hour that passed.

That same spring he took to rising early and taking long walks, accompanied by only one of his gentlemen and his white spaniel, which kept close to his heels and seemed to understand his varying moods better than did his companion, with whom Gustaf Adolf exchanged but few words. His excursions were chiefly beyond the quarries away to the Carlberg road, and though he met plenty of people on the way, it was not till long after he had passed that it dawned upon them that this thin, slender lad, with the white face and somewhat prominent blue eyes, in the dark blue reefer, really was the King.

The Guard would naturally not be expected to present arms when the King thus went out incognito, but sometimes, after a wakeful, harrowed night, he would be in such a state of irritability as to greatly resent their not doing so, and he would insist upon it that, incognito or not, the Guard at any rate ought to know him, and do him the usual honours.

Yet Gustaf Adolf was not always irritable, sullen, or depressed, not always so shy and tongue-tied. In the intervals between his attacks, and when there was no special cause for annoyance, he *could* be just like other lads of his age, though, perhaps, a trifle more serious and haughty ; but even then there was an irresistible charm and winsomeness in his manner. Generally, it was not easy to discover whom he liked or disliked, for he treated all alike with an assumption of coldness and condescension ; but at this time he met with a companion of his own age, Count Claes Adolf Fleming, who was appointed his Page-of-Honour.

He liked young Fleming, who was as silent and uncommunicative as Gustaf Adolf himself. By nature Claes Fleming was the more good-tempered and merry of the two, but when the King was pleased Fleming was so too.

Once, during one of his morning walks, the King went into a baker's shop and bought some buns. . . . He was so affable and pleasant that the customers who were in the shop at the time, as well as the baker and his wife, were enchanted with

his gracious manner. Another time he met a peasant bringing a slaughtered pig to the market ; he bought it forthwith, and sent it as a present to the barracks which the Guards were occupying just then.

When he was in these happier moods he could condescend to more trifling pastimes, such as playing with his pet monkey, a most impudent little creature, whose chief pleasure it was to suddenly pounce upon and make havoc of the wigs of any elderly gentlemen present ; attracted thereto, no doubt, by the alluring perfume of the various unguents with which they were impregnated.

But even in his lightest vein Gustaf Adolf never forgot what was due to rank and age, and would hasten to apologise and to deliver the grave seignors from the undesirable attentions of his saucy little favourite. Very lovable was King Gustaf Adolf when in a sunny temper, and those who knew him best were of opinion that the assumption of dignity and haughtiness, though sometimes exaggerated, and inherited probably from his mother, might one day stand him in good stead.

The younger ladies of his aunt's (the Duchess of Södermanland's) Court, found the young King fascinating and delightful, though it cannot be said that any of them lost their frivolous little hearts to him ; he was too simple, and at the same time too shy and stiff for them. He himself had fallen desperately in love with one of them, but he paid her no special attentions, and kept his feelings hidden in his own breast, for he had frequently perused his father's Will and knew the paragraph concerning his matrimonial prospects pretty well by heart.

This paragraph was worded thus : " We desire and command our beloved brother Charles, Duke of Södermanland, to choose a suitable bride for our son, so soon as he shall have attained the age of seventeen. The marriage to be consummated without delay. The bride-elect must be of Royal or Princely birth."

The young King was quite aware that the destined bride had long ago been fixed upon, and that negotiations were under discussion. He knew also that the chosen one was the youthful Grand Duchess Alexandra of Russia, daughter of the Grand Duke Paul, and granddaughter of the Empress Catherine.

He knew how anxious the latter was to see the Grand Duchess on the throne of Sweden, and that (in secret) the Grand Duchess Alexandra was already being instructed in the Swedish tongue. The King tried his best to accustom himself to think of her as his future Consort, and resolutely to drive out of his mind all thoughts of the lovely young Mlle. Modée; he was too honourable, too pure-minded to entertain any liaison which could not end in a *bona fide* marriage.

Therefore it came rather like a thunderbolt upon him one day when he was told that all negotiations with the Russian Court had been broken off, and that his guardian was looking about for a bride in some other quarter. The only apparently available Princess, however, belonged to the not very important House of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. The King was greatly averse to such an union, and strenuously opposed it as far as he was able.

He had looked forward to his marriage as to the period when he should no longer be so terribly lonely, and had been greatly attracted by a picture he had seen of the young Russian Grand Duchess, whilst he was far from having been smitten with a miniature, painted by herself, of the prospective Mecklenburg bride. The expression of her face was certainly amiable and good-natured, and she had a very equable temper; but she did not seem to possess a trace of real charm or queenly dignity, and Gustaf Adolf could not think how he should ever get himself to *love* that podgy little German. He prayed fervently that this projected union might also come to naught . . . but it was not destined to do so; on the contrary, negotiations were being carried on and concluded with all haste, and on his seventeenth birthday, November 1st, 1795, the King's betrothal was to be publicly announced at the Summer Palace of Ludwigslust, in the Duchy of Schwerin, in the presence of the Swedish Ambassador.

That year, however, the first of November happened to fall on a Sunday, and it was the King's express wish that the news of the betrothal should not be made public in Sweden until the following day. Simultaneously with the announcement of his forthcoming marriage he was to be declared as having attained

his majority, and, further, the consequent resignation and retirement of those who had acted as his guardians and advisers during his minority.

The eventful Sunday had come. The young King had taken leave of Rosenstein, and had thanked him warmly for all his care and kindness during so many years, expressing a hope that in future he might see him sometimes, and be able to have a chat with him. Giving him his hand to kiss, Gustaf Adolf added with much feeling :

“ I shall miss you very much, Rosenstein.”

Rosenstein also had been deeply moved ; he had expressed *his* gratitude for the past, and his heartiest wishes for the time when the King should welcome his bride, the future Queen of Sweden. The King had looked vacantly in front of him, and had said :

“ Thank you, Rosenstein, I thank you. For myself, I am not in such a hurry for the marriage ; as long as I still have a guardian over me, I do not think I can expect the Princess to be willing to share my life.”

“ They say that the Princess of Mecklemburg-Schwerin is of a most amiable, yielding, and gentle disposition,” said Rosenstein soothingly.

“ I hope to God it may be so ; she will stand in need of those good qualities.”

The King stood at the window looking over Lejonbacken (the Lion's Hill) looming grey and misty ; then he scanned the clouds overhead, from which the rain was descending in torrents.

“ Do you see what a dull, gloomy Sunday this is, Rosenstein ? ” he said.

“ Yes, Your Majesty ; it must be confessed that the day is bad indeed.”

“ All Sundays are gloomy, Rosenstein. Did I ever tell you that, when quite a boy, I used to associate the days of the week with certain colours ? ”

“ I do not quite catch Your Majesty's meaning,” replied Rosenstein, who could never cease wondering at his pupil's quaint fancies.

“ Well, Rosenstein, now look here. *White* is for Monday, *red* for Tuesday, *pink* for Wednesday, *green* for Thursday, and *black* for Friday.”

“ Yes, surely since that blackest of Fridays, March 16th, 1792,” assented Rosenstein.

“ Yes, that *was* a black Friday . . . but long before then, I used to associate that mournful hue with the day because of ‘ *Good Friday* ’—do you see ? ”

“ I do, Your Majesty.”

“ *Yellow* or *gold* is for Saturday and *grey* for Sunday.”

“ Why *grey* ? ” asked Rosenstein. “ Can Your Majesty explain that idea ? ”

“ No, I can *not*, though I feel that it *is* just so. But that is not what I really meant to talk to you about, Rosenstein. I had something very different in my mind. Now that you are no longer my ‘ Preceptor,’ I wanted to consult you.”

The King was sitting in his study at the time ; he rose, and went over to where a bust of Charles XII stood on a pedestal ; he looked up at it and not at Rosenstein, as he said :

“ I wonder whether you have ever noticed that *I* am never in luck with the weather as my dear late father was. Whenever *I* have any important function to fulfil it pours with rain if it does not snow ; when *I* am on the sea there is sure to be a storm or tempest. I wonder what Providence means to teach me by that ? ”

“ There is no special meaning, I think ; it just happens so, and Your Majesty has as yet had so few opportunities of really proving your ‘ weather-luck,’ that you can hardly pronounce judgment upon it.”

“ That may be ; but to-day I could not help dwelling upon it. There was something else that came into my mind, too, just now, as I was looking across to the Norrmalmstorg. I was thinking of what occurred on the day my coming into this world was celebrated. I was thinking of the shocking accident in front of the temporary ball-room built there, when so many met with an untimely death. My coming to the throne was also the outcome of a bloody deed.”

The King had remained standing in front of the bust, his back

turned to Rosenstein, and added in sad, subdued tones : “ Do you think I was born under an unlucky star, Rosenstein ? Answer me honestly.”

And Rosenstein replied at once in his clear, solemn voice : “ Your Majesty must not indulge in such lugubrious reflections, especially not on such a day as this. *I* cannot think that *any* man is born under an ‘ unlucky star,’ or destined to experience nothing but ill-fortune. I consider that every man should be and is intended to be the fashioner or framer, so to say, of his own life. I think there does not seem to be much that savours of ‘ ill-luck ’ in being seventeen, a King, and a prospective bridegroom to boot. Oh ! whatever puts such melancholy thoughts into Your Majesty’s head ? ”

“ Something I cannot even tell *you*, Rosenstein,” replied the King hurriedly, and as if scared.

Rosenstein looked at him with a look that was meant to convey nothing particular ; then he said, in would-be indifferent tones :

“ Was it anything like Your Majesty’s fancy about the colours and the days ? ”

“ I am sometimes inclined to think so, only I *know* it is *not* ; nor have I dreamt it either. It is something indefinable, and something too awful, which I overheard by accident . . . or, perhaps, it may have been meant for me to hear. . . . I cannot rightly say ; but I can’t believe it is true, Rosenstein, not for a minute . . . *not for a second.*”

The King was evidently intensely excited. He had now turned away from the bust of Charles XII, and gone to the window, looking over the landscape with unseeing eyes.

The rain was still streaming in torrents down the steep Castle hill, and gathering in great pools on the uneven stone pavement in the square. In honour of the King’s birthday there was to be a grand dinner at the Royal Exchange, and the invited guests could be seen hurrying along under their green umbrellas with giant strides, the collars of their big cloaks carefully turned up, picking their steps cautiously among streams of water and miniature lakes !

Rosenstein, meanwhile, was on tenterhooks, wondering what

the King's *next* utterance might be. Could anyone have been so base and fiendishly heartless as to let rumours of bastardy birth come to the proud King's ears? Could he, by any distortion of the imagination in his own brain, have evolved an idea that the late King had not really been his father, and that that accounted for his having been born under an "unlucky star"?

Presently a quick, impatient voice came from the window: "Have you any idea, Rosenstein, to what I am referring? There is such a singing in my ears that I cannot hear what you are saying."

"No, Your Majesty," Rosenstein firmly replied.

"Then I *must* have dreamt it. Swear by all that is most sacred to you, Rosenstein, that you will never reveal what I said just now."

"I swear it, and I have no scruples in doing so, since Your Majesty never said anything at all. But I should consider it a sacred mark of confidence if Your Majesty would tell me the purport of your dreams or faney. It might relieve Your Majesty's mind to speak."

"No, oh no, Rosenstein. What I was thinking of I cannot tell anyone upon earth. I would try to if I *could*, to the only one to whom, since my earliest days, I always felt I could unburden my conscience, and now he is going to leave me! But never mind, Rosenstein, I know I could not get the words over my lips. I only asked because I wanted to find out whether *you* had heard anything of the vile scandal that reached *my* ears; but as you have not . . ."

Rosenstein repeatedly shook his head. The King held out his hand to him to kiss. He said: "Once more, Rosenstein, I would thank you, thank you . . . and may God bless you."

CHAPTER IX

THE JOURNEY TO RUSSIA (I)

THE first time Gustaf Adolf remembered to have heard the name of the Empress Catherine of Russia had been at the age of three, when Baron Frederiek Sparre had been appointed one of his Governors.

The Empress' name was associated in his mind with his first pair of knickerboekers, which had been a present from that august Sovereign, together with a little suit made after the pattern of those worn by her own small grandson, the Grand Duke Alexander.

Whenever he heard her name mentioned, he remembered these garments, the first time he put them on, and the pride he had felt when his father remarked that now he looked quite a man; he also recollected hearing the King express his gratification at the motherly interest the Empress had shown in his little son in sending him such a useful and pretty present, and had spoken of her with great admiration.

Then had come an unexpected rupture. Much to the young Prince's perplexity, very unpleasant reports concerning the good lady who had presented him with his first knickers had come to the ears of Gustavus Adolphus even before the war actually broke out.

The King himself had expatiated upon her shameless intrigues in Finland, and her double dealings in the Riksdag, and had expressed his keen desire to humble the great Empress to the dust. The Prince had then, of course, taken the same view as his father, and when he heard of the victory of Hogland, he had believed then and there that the report of the Swedish cannon, which was said to have been heard at St. Petersburg, would

immediately cause the walls of that city to fall to the ground, even as the walls of Jericho were supposed to have collapsed. That event, however, did not take place ; instead, the dangerous and iniquitous conspiracy of Anjala had been formed.

Curiously enough, on the conclusion of peace the intriguing and bloodthirsty Empress Catherine became once more the grand and much-admired woman, in a great measure because the astute autocrat of " All the Russias " sided with the King of Sweden when one unhappy event followed upon another in France in rapid succession.

Had Anckarström's attempt on the King's life not proved fatal on that March 16th, there is little doubt but that Gustavus Adolphus III would have gone at the head of the united armies of Sweden and Russia to fight the French, and force them to restore the Bourbons to their throne. This, at least, had been Gustaf Adolf's (IV) conviction. He quickly regained his child-like faith in the good fairy, the Empress Catherine, who had once shown such motherly interest in him. Now she wrote him most affectionate epistles, in which she constantly urged him to assert himself, and to be independent.

When the prospective match between her granddaughter the Grand Duchess Alexandra and the youthful King of Sweden was first mooted, Russia's interest in that kingdom naturally daily became more intense, and the Boy-King felt gratified to think the match should be so earnestly desired by the Empress Catherine. He himself was not averse to it, provided he should take a liking to the Grand Duchess when he saw her, also provided matters could be so arranged that she should renounce the Greek Church and adopt the Lutheran faith. Whilst these questions were pending, Gustaf Adolf thought of the Empress as a sort of kindly, dignified, grandmotherly person ; but when negotiations with Russia suddenly came to an end, and the Mecklemburg marriage appeared on the *tapis*, a change also came o'er the spirit of the young King's dream, and the kindly grandam was as suddenly transformed into a powerful, revengeful foe.

Yet there remained a certain subtle bond of sympathy between the young King and the aged Empress, in that both

earnestly desired the proposed Mecklemburg marriage should not be consummated. When, after a time, the alliance between Gustaf Adolf and Louisa Charlotta of Mecklemburg-Schwerin was indefinitely postponed, the King felt a sneaking kind of gratitude towards his former good old fairy godmother on the other side of the water, who, directly or indirectly, must have had a hand in delivering him, for the present at least, from undesired matrimonial chains. It was long since the King had felt so light-hearted and happy, for he augured that all machinations for entangling him into a marriage must be in abeyance for the next six months, i.e. until November 1st, 1796, when he would be eighteen, and would attain his majority and independence. Being now freed from the matrimonial incubus, he looked forward to his coming-of-age, and taking the reins of government into his own hands with very different feelings. He was anxious to experience the sensation of being ruler and sovereign, independent, and responsible to no one but his Maker, as became a King.

First and foremost, he would get rid of the Duke's favourite, Reuterholm, and with God's help put things on a very different footing, not only in Sweden, but throughout the Universe!

He would place himself entirely in the hands of the Almighty, who would frustrate the evil plots and designs of anarchists and traitors, avenge the Royal Family of France, and restore the Bourbon dynasty. Whether all these things would happen at once, or only in the course of time, Heaven alone knew; but, meanwhile, Gustaf Adolf would rule his country in a very different fashion to the Regency of the last four years. Order, integrity, and honourable dealing should obtain throughout the realm, and there should be no favourites. Nor would he single out any one in particular as his *friend*. At the same time, he comforted himself by the reflection that if he could not escape many hours of loneliness, silence, and depression in his solitary state, he would at least be able, when the time should come, to choose a wife after his own heart, and that the simple pleasures and duties of family life would, in a great measure, lighten the heavy weight of the Crown, and impart some warmth to the cold atmosphere of the Court. Once happily married,

he looked forward to being the proud father of a numerous progeny—sons and daughters! Yea, the more the merrier; and the firstborn should be a boy—not melancholy, nervous, and timid as he himself had been, but a sturdy, healthy little lad, full of life and spirits, whom he would bring up entirely with his own hand; a boy who one day would be his confidential friend and companion, and to whom he could entrust the care of his prosperous country, when he himself should desire, after a long and glorious reign, to give up the cares of government and enjoy, for a few years, the quiet and sweetness of a simple life.

These were some of the pleasant day-dreams the young monarch indulged in during that delightful summer at Haga. His good old fairy godmother, the Empress Catherine, took care, however, that he should not give himself up to such dreams too long; she launched, as it were, a thunderbolt to wake him.

A letter from her arrived, inviting the Duke Regent and the young King to pay her a visit at St. Petersburg the following summer. Gustaf Adolf was wideawake and alert on the instant; he could very well see what that invitation meant. He was beside himself with anger, and stamped and raved like a young bear. Unhesitatingly he declared that he was not going to undertake any such journey at the Empress Catherine's bidding; and he would *not* have a bride, whom he had never seen, forced upon him by *her*. There should be no engagement between himself and the Grand Duchess Alexandra before he *had* seen her and knew that he could feel some degree of affection for her. How could the Empress presume to think that an alliance with her granddaughter would conduce to his happiness? She need not concern herself as to his future welfare; he would see to that himself so soon as he should be of age and his own master. No Sovereign in the world should force him to be happy against his will!

In fairy tales it is all very well. The good fairy is bidden to the wedding and to the feasts, whilst the bad fairy seeks some way of avenging herself for having been left out. In the case of the young King it proved otherwise; the good fairy would be transformed into a very bad one indeed should *her* invitation

to feast and wedding be ignored or refused ; for the invitation of an Empress is not an everyday occurrence, to be lightly refused. By the wording of the letter and other tokens every one was 'cute enough to see that it meant either friendship and alliance, or . . . enmity and war, and for many months past ominous clouds had been floating across the eastern horizon, and had gathered thicker and blacker, now threatening at any moment to break into a disastrous storm.

Couriers from St. Petersburg and Finland reported that Russian troops were consolidating on the frontier, and that warships, and others belonging to the fleet, were being got in readiness. In the very midst of the oppressive wave of arming and counter-arming fell the thunderbolt of that enigmatical invitation to St. Petersburg. Suspicion and perplexity were rife at Stockholm, and neither Reuterholm, the Duke-Regent, nor the Boy-King was inclined to consider it for a moment.

But before letting herself be drawn into any alliance, or continuing negotiations, the Empress Catherine insisted on this visit being paid. She said so in clear and forcible language ; but there was something behind which she did *not* say.

Her object was that the young King should see the Grand Duchess Alexandra and . . . fall in love with her. Catherine was ambitiously desirous that her granddaughter should occupy the throne of Sweden during her (the Empress') lifetime, and intended that the gratitude of her obedient grandchildren should secure her some influence in the adjoining peninsula, and that the young King should be only too pleased to let his good ships sail in the wake of the Russian fleet. Now the Empress' behests *must* be obeyed ; was not *her* will *law* at all times and in all places ?

First, then, Reuterholm was won over, partly by threats, partly by flattery, and the tempting prospect of retaining his position by the aid of Russian influence, even when the King attained his majority. Reuterholm was to persuade the Duke to accept the invitation, and the two of them were to talk over the King. In the usual course of things it was extremely difficult to persuade the Duke to do anything he did not particularly wish to do ; he reminded Reuterholm that, according

to the Will of the late King, he could not leave the kingdom during his nephew's minority; neither could he let the Boy-King out of his sight. This was, indeed, a serious dilemma.

"But on the other hand," added the Duke thoughtfully, knocking the ashes out of his long pipe, "on the other hand, I quite see the complications which may arise from a refusal to do the Empress' bidding; again, I cannot deceive myself as to what the consequences may be if I *do* consent to go. We shall be laughed at, and our enemies will think that the King and I have gone to beg for peace and pardon at the feet of the all-powerful lady whom, *entre nous*, I most cordially detest."

The Duke had left his seat and paced up and down the room, blowing wreaths of blue smoke into the air, but ere the pipe was again finished Reuterholm had won the day!

The most difficult task still remained—that of talking over the King.

He absolutely refused to hear anything about the humiliating journey; he would sooner even have war. Every leisure moment he had employed in poring over the history of Charles XII and *his* feuds with Russia, and with the resolutions already formed in his own mind, he asked himself how that hero would have acted under similar conditions in his place. As he felt quite sure that Charles XII would never have suffered himself to be persuaded into a forced alliance with a Russian Princess, so neither would Gustaf Adolf IV be coerced.

The young King had more reasons than one for remembering Charles XII that summer. A camp was set up at Ladugårds-gårde, and the regiment "Charles XII's Own" fell to him; he himself manœuvred it, and was extremely strict and particular. On one occasion, even, he was so much provoked that he entirely lost his temper, and gave a soldier (of the Upland Regiment) who was standing near him, a sounding box on the ear, because the guns had not been fired with the precision he exacted! But the real cause of his irritability and loss of temper at this period was nothing more or less than that apparently courteous invitation of the Empress Catherine's. The young King had not given way yet, and for his reluctantly doing so in the end Charles XII also was to blame.

One day the King was out riding with Baron von Essen, Baron Rålamb, and other gentlemen of his suite. Gustaf Adolf was a first-rate rider, and looked exceedingly well on horse-back. Anon they came to a steep hill, and the King, brooding as usual over peace and war, thought he would put spurs to his horse and take the rocky height at a flying gallop. If he got to the top safe and sound he would look upon it as a token of Providence that he would be victorious in the war which would be the inevitable consequence of his refusal to go to Russia. Pale with excitement, and firmly setting his teeth, he put spurs to his horse; but Baron Essen, who also was an accomplished horseman, cried out to him:

“For Heaven’s sake, Your Majesty, have a care! An accident may so easily happen the way you are riding now.”

The King turned fiercely round to Essen, and said: “Ta-ta, Baron Essen; Charles XII used often to ride much more recklessly than I am doing now—and nothing ever happened to *him*.”

“That may be,” replied Essen; “but Your Majesty must bear in mind that all men are not so lucky.”

These words made Gustaf Adolf shudder, and just then his horse stumbled, and he was thrown headlong into the road. His frightened companions hastened to pick him up. He had injured one of his knees; nevertheless he insisted on remounting. He spoke not a word, but his face was livid.

Baron Essen, anxious to soften down a little the unfortunate remark he had made, resumed: “Probably Charles XII also turned impromptu somersaults as Your Majesty did just now.”

The King answered never a word, but he cast a disdainful sideway glance at the Baron.

Next morning he said to the Duke Regent: “I have made up my mind with regard to the journey to St. Petersburg, Uncle. It seems to be the will of God that I *should* go.”

Meanwhile a young Princess was sitting in a room in one of the mighty fairy’s palaces with fast-beating heart, awaiting the arrival of Gustaf Adolf. All her life she had been waiting

for and expecting this fairy prince. Had not her grandmother, the great Empress, told her that he would come, and was not her grandmother almighty, and her wishes supreme? Not only did the Princess (the Grand Duchess Alexandra) think no one so powerful and so wise, but she was sure no one was so good and kind as her grandmother.

The Empress Catherine was devoted to all her grandchildren, especially to those of the Grand Duke Alexander and most of all to his daughter, Alexandra, whose welfare and happiness she was anxious to promote. As far back as the Grand Duchess Alexandra could remember, the Empress had been lavish in her praises of the little Crown-Prince of Sweden, the beauty of his character, and his unusually developed intellect; and when he became King, the Empress, in private and with a smile which was full of meaning, always called the Grand Duchess her "Bonnie little Queen." One day Alexandra remembered being summoned to her grandmother's room, and finding her sitting there with an open album on her knees.

"Come here, little one," she said. "Look well at the portraits of all these Princes, and tell me which of them you would like best to have for a husband."

One by one she took them from the album and laid them on the table. With a deep blush suffusing her cheeks the then ten-year-old girl pointed at once to the first one, and then bashfully tried to run away. But she felt some one holding her back, and a soft hand tenderly stroking her fair curls, and heard the Empress say in triumphant tones: "There, I knew it; these two children were meant for each other. Do you know who that little Prince is? It is Gustaf Adolf, the future King of Sweden."

The artful little Grand Duchess knew that very well, as she had read the name printed below before she pointed to that particular picture; but *that* she did not say, and the usually shrewd Empress never suspected the child could read! In any matter concerning an *affaire de cœur* the Empress was easily deceived, and therefore thought it not at all unlikely that her beloved granddaughter had felt herself so mysteriously drawn to the young King of Sweden that, not only among a

score of portraits such as were lying on the table now, but that amongst a thousand she would have picked out the right one!

This incident inspired the Empress with a bright idea. She requested the Swedish Ambassador, Count Stedingk, to teach the Grand Duchess a few words and sentences in Swedish; these she had frequently to repeat to her august grandmother, which she *did* with becoming confusion and in subdued, ingratiating tones.

In the midst of this delightful idyll the aggravating rumour of the Mecklemburg-Schwerin betrothal suddenly took shape. The Empress immediately resolved to take good care that it *should* be a "rumour" only, and nothing more. She was firmly convinced that the King had been overruled, yea, forced into this ill-assorted union by his guardian, whom the Empress greatly mistrusted, or by that all-powerful favourite of the Duke's, Reuterholm, to whom Catherine was inclined to attribute all that was bad.

It was a very bitter potion to her to think that anyone should *dare* to put an obstacle in the way of her cherished plan, but not for a moment did she intend that plan to be frustrated. For this reason she refused an audience to Count Schwerin, who had been sent to her Court to announce the Mecklemburg betrothal. For the like reason also she encouraged the report, which rapidly spread, that the planks which, by her command, had been laid across the River Neva, were really intended to facilitate the transport of artillery to Finland. Without the least reticence these and other preparations for hostilities against Sweden were everywhere spoken of, and for a similar reason her pressing invitation to come to St. Petersburg without delay was forthwith despatched to the young King and his guardian.

Many weeks the Empress waited for an answer—it came at last.

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The ship *Seraphim*, in which the young King was to sail for Russia, lay at anchor at the Skeppsholm quay in Stockholm, but the preparations had taken longer than had been expected,

because, for some unaccountable reason, the King had refused at the last moment to be rowed out to the ship, and had given orders that the *Seraphim* should be brought up alongside the quay, which difficult proceeding took up a considerable amount of time.

The King was in such a state of excitement that he could scarcely keep still a moment. Sometimes he would appear on deck and look at the innumerable crowds assembled on the slopes and along the banks, or his eyes would wander over the Strömmen where numberless yachts, cutters, and small boats were darting hither and thither in fantastic circles. He never remained many minutes in one place. Now he would go and exchange a few words with the Russian Ambassador, Budberg ; then he would go up to Fleming, who was to accompany him, and stand by his side for a while without uttering a word. Suddenly it seemed to occur to him that he ought to say something to the Queen-Mother, the Duchess, and the Princess. He did so, but his thoughts were so far away that he but half heard or took in what *they* said to *him* ; consequently, some of his replies were rather wide of the mark ! He fidgeted with his collar as though it were choking him ; he put down his cup of tea, then hastily took it up again, remembering he had not even tasted it. But when he became aware that his relatives were beginning to notice his nervousness, he exercised what restraint he was capable of over himself, and said to the ladies, in his most courteous manner : “ I am very grateful to my kind Aunts for having expressed their intention of accompanying me as far as Blocksudden (an island near Stockholm). Then, with deep emotion and tears in his eyes, he added : “ And you will come and meet me when, by the grace of God, I return safely, will you not ? ”

Then he once more deposited his cup, the contents of which had remained untasted, on a small table by his side, beckoned Fleming to him, and said in a low voice :

“ Look round, Fleming ; it all looks just as it did when my father set off for the Russian war. I have been thinking of that ever since we started. . . . It was on just such a heavenly evening as this . . . the same crowd to see *him* off. Only now

we are not taking troops on the *Amadis*, *Esplendian*, or *Token* ; on board the *Seraphim* we have only men of peace—lackeys and servnats ; neither will the Duke nor I be in martial array when we step off the *Seraphim*. . . . And yet, somehow, it *does* seem like that other time, and it is a voyage to Russia too . . . but the King had himself rowed out from the bridge at Logård, whereas *I* went on board direct—there is *that* difference, Fleming.”

“ Yes, there is. Shall I get a glass of water for Your Majesty ? ” said Fleming, distressed.

“ No, thank you ; I am all right, Fleming ; only, as usual, I am bad at waiting—in fact, I cannot stand it at all. All sorts of dreadful things come into my mind when I am waiting. . . . But I really think everything is ready now, so let us go on, and may God be with us.”

The King wiped his brow with his lace handkerchief before he put on his hat ; he drew himself up to his full height and raised his head, which had almost sunk upon his breast ; he even tried to smile as he walked by the side of the Duke, followed by the distinguished suite which was to accompany him, besides sundry other Court functionaries.

A loud cheer had gone up as soon as the King appeared. He was so touched by this burst of loyalty that it almost unmanned him ; his smile vanished and his eyes grew moist. In order that no one might perceive this emotion, he hurriedly walked up the gangway, which had been draped with the usual blue cloth on which shone the little crowns of gold in groups of three, and shortly afterwards he was seen standing on the captain's bridge on board the *Seraphim*. He bowed graciously in all directions, and the Duke-Regent, standing by his side, did likewise. The ship weighed anchor and glided majestically down the clear, rippling Strømmen, closely followed by yachts and sailing-boats conveying distinguished persons, besides hundreds of larger and smaller craft of all kinds, whilst endless cheers and cries of “ God bless our King ! ” rose in the air from the thousands of spectators, and the cannon on Kastell Island thundered out a parting salute of a hundred and twenty guns.

All eyes were riveted on the person of the youthful King, still on the captain's bridge, still affably bowing. Only those in immediate proximity to him noticed how his colour came and went, and the nervous shaking of the hand lifted in salute.

Thus the voyage began with fine, calm weather, and was continued until about midnight, when a few hours' stop was made to enable the rowers to rest awhile. The fortified island of Waxholm was passed about 4 a.m. and a salute was fired from the fort.

The King had been very quiet and silent all the way to Finland; the greater part of the time he had paced the deck or reposed in a deck-chair, looking fixedly out on the water, apparently lost in deep and anxious reflections. When the squadron came into Finnish waters, the King observed to Fleming:

"This time I am most signally favoured by the weather. What do you think it is meant to portend?"

"Good luck to Your Majesty," promptly replied Fleming.

"Could that be so?" remarked the King gravely. "But however that may be, one thing I have firmly resolved, and that is that, God helping me, I will teach both the Empress and her people due respect to the King of Sweden."

Fleming bowed. He did not know what reply to make. He found it by no means easy even to imagine how it would be possible to make the Empress Catherine show respect for the Boy-King of Sweden who, at *her* bidding, had had to come to her Court, and would have to espouse her granddaughter in obedience to *her* will also; but of this Fleming naturally said nothing. He understood only too well that the King's self-love and pride had been deeply wounded and humbled to the dust by this journey to Russia, and that his offended dignity was at the bottom of his fits of irritability and depression.

Duke Charles also seemed somewhat ill at ease. He did nothing but walk from one end of the deck to the other, consuming any number of pipes in moody silence. Once or twice, indeed, he *had* attempted to give the King a few hints as to his conduct at St. Petersburg, and a closer insight into the character of the Empress and some of her not always commend-

able practices. But the young King utterly refused to listen to a word, and whenever he saw indications that his uncle was about to relate some choice bit of the many scandals that at this period were afloat about the Empress, the King would begin to fidget, grow crimson with confusion, and would say to him: "I wish, my dear Uncle, you would be good enough to spare me such tales, which I cannot consider as anything but mean and vulgar gossip about people in high places. I never *have* liked frivolous stories—they disgust and bore me intensely—and, all things considering, it might be wiser for us to think of the Empress Catherine only as the great lady who has invited us as her guests, and for that reason is entitled to all the deference and courtesy we can show her, consistent with our own dignity. Besides, you are aware, no doubt, that I can accept no one person's judgment of another, whether it concerns the Empress or anyone else. I must first see her, and then form my own opinion."

"As you please," replied the Duke, shrugging his shoulders; "only mind you keep your eyes wide open."

When the Duke left him the King resumed his seat, and looked long and silently towards the horizon; but what his thoughts were he revealed to no one.

After a voyage lasting three days and three nights the Royal party landed safe and sound at Åbo; thence the journey was continued by land through Helsingfors and the smaller townships of Bergå and Lovisa, the travellers inspecting the fortress of Sveaborg, near Helsingfors, on their way.

At Lovisa they were met by a messenger, despatched by the Empress Catherine, with a present of fruit for the King, which delicate attention was greatly appreciated by him.

The next halt was made at Abborrfors, on the frontier; thence the journey was fairly comfortable and quick, for all the Russian roads in Finland had been put in thorough repair. The young King travelled incognito as "Count of Haga," the Duke-Regent as "Count Wasa." The King's servants also changed their Royal liveries for more simple ones, especially made for this occasion. They consisted of straw-coloured breeches, and dark blue coats with scarlet collars and facings;

a few were red, profusely ornamented with silver braid. The pages wore dark blue and red velvet with gold trimmings. They all sported tricorne hats, with plumes of white, and Spanish lace trimming. Although the servants and attendants were costumed after the French fashion, the two "Counts" and their Gentlemen-in-Attendance wore the national Swedish dress which, from its peculiarity and strongly contrasting colours of raven black and fiery red, and its curious cut, the short jacket and round hat, created quite a sensation.

Shortly before reaching St. Petersburg, i.e. twelve days after their departure from Stockholm, the Royal travellers and suite came to a halt in one of the most beautiful tracts of the country.

Here the carriages the Empress had sent to convey the two "Counts" to the city were waiting for them; but Gustaf Adolf declined to make use of the Russian equipage, and continued the journey in his own. Presently it stopped on the top of an eminence, in order that the august travellers might get a good view of St. Petersburg from a distance. At their feet lay a large lake surrounded by woods; through the trees were visible now and again the gilded cupolas of the various Greek churches; farther away the silver turrets and copper domes of St. Petersburg gleamed brightly in the sun.

The King, who by this time had completely regained his composure, was loud in his admiration of the exquisite view, and received the gentlemen of the Court, sent by the Empress to meet her guests, with the most charming affability. In their company the journey was continued through avenues of tall, lofty trees which seemed endless, until the city was reached. There every street and thoroughfare teemed with carriages and people, the crowd being naturally densest in the vicinity of Count Stedingk's residence, where the illustrious visitors were to alight. Ladies of highest rank thought nothing of standing up in their carriages and making use of opera-glasses the better to see the young King, who made a most favourable impression as he sat in his open carriage dignified and erect, bowing graciously in all directions.

The Empress Catherine was exceedingly gratified at the

golden opinions and flattering remarks expressed about him by the emissaries she had sent to greet him, and she immediately summoned her granddaughter to impart to her the pleasant comments she had heard. The visit of the King to the Empress at the Hermitage Palace had been fixed for the next day but one.

The young Grand Duchess looked very charming as she stood before the Empress, who imprinted a warm kiss on her lips and forehead. First she had looked rather like a scared bird, as if she did not know why she had been sent for; then the timid expression changed into one of eager attention and beaming happiness as she drank in the words which described the young King's person, his bearing, and his manner. First she had listened with hands clasped, head bent, and eyes cast down; but presently the large eyes looked up to the beloved grandmother full of hope and joyous anticipation.

The Empress, arrayed in white and with a little cap of the same coquettishly set on her beautiful hair of silvery grey, was seated in a crimson armchair; her former elegant figure, it must be admitted, had become very stout and ungainly, but her features had lost none of their attraction, especially when she was in a good temper, gentle and kind, as at this moment, when she really *did* look like some beneficent fairy godmother. No one knew better how to get on with young people than she; she knew intuitively what would wake their interest and rouse their curiosity, and what manner of speech would make the most impression. She used that knowledge most assiduously in her conversations about Gustaf Adolf with the Grand Duchess Alexandra. Her eyes rested approvingly on the elegant figure of the girl, in which unusual grace and charm united with truly regal carriage. Lovingly the Empress scanned the regular, refined features framed in clouds of fair hair, light and fluffy as if dressed by fairy fingers; the clear, open brow, the dazzling white skin just now tinged with a delicate colour called up by the happy dreams caused by her grandmother's words. The Empress herself thought that the seventeen-year-old King had been uncommonly lucky in drawing such a prize in the matrimonial lottery as that charming fourteen-year-old

Princess, whose qualities of head, heart, and intellect were on a par with her physical attributes.

The day after the arrival of the Royal party happened to be a great fast and saint's day in the Greek Church; hence their reception by the Empress had been postponed until the day following. The King and the Duke spent that Friday driving about and seeing some of the sights of St. Petersburg under the guidance of the Ambassador, Count Stedingk.

The drive lasted several hours, and whilst passing the Tauris Palace they had to halt for a few minutes to allow several ladies to cross from a summerhouse on the opposite side. The Duke inquired of Stedingk as to who these fair young demoiselles might be. Stedingk looked round and replied with a smile: "They are the young Grand Duchesses, Your Majesty."

"Look at them, my boy; it is quite worth your while," said the Duke in a great state of excitement to the King.

But the young King flushed up to his eyes, and leaning back in the carriage as far as he could, he said: "No, Uncle; I do not wish to show any unbecoming curiosity."

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The Duke could not get over his surprise at the calm assurance of bearing of the young King as, on the evening of August 26th, they together ascended the magnificent staircase at the Hermitage Palace, preceded by the Lord Marshal, Prince Bariatinsky and the Empress' favourite Zouboff, who had received them at the entrance, and followed by their suite. The Duke seemed more excited and impressed than his nephew as they entered the splendid hall where the officers of the Russian Court in their superb uniforms were waiting to greet the Royal guests. The gentlemen of Gustaf Adolf's suite wore the Swedish Court dress of red and black.

A few moments passed ere Count Osterman threw open the doors to the Empress' boudoir, where she sat alone in state to welcome the two Princes. The King took advantage of these odd moments to arrange the broad riband of the Order of the Seraphim across his breast as it should be.

As the doors swung open the Empress cast a hasty glance with her steel-grey eyes at the young King, who entered first, followed by the Duke. Before she had time to rise and with a gracious smile to meet her guests, her keen eyes had taken in every trait and movement of the King's, and as she advanced slowly and with much dignity she summed him up in her mind something after this fashion: "A nice-looking lad, spare but well-proportioned—kingly, but rather too stiff; tries to look like his ancestor Charles XII by wearing his hair in a similar way, and the resemblance certainly *is* striking, with his Danish mouth and upright bearing. . . . His nose would be the handsomer by not being quite so prominent, perhaps." Then she and the King stood facing one another.

With a bewitching smile the Empress held out her hand for him to kiss—then with a coquettish movement withdrew it, saying: "Oh, no; I must not forget that *Count Haga* is in reality a *King!*"

Gustaf Adolf had an answer ready on the spot; this interview having been already previously rehearsed:

"If Your Majesty will not allow me that privilege as *Empress*, you must at least do so as the *Lady* deserving my greatest deference and admiration," he said as he bent low and kissed the beautiful hand again so graciously held out, and at that moment the King really felt the deference and admiration of which he had spoken.

The Empress Catherine's majestic bearing greatly impressed him; at the same time the expression of her face told him that he had found favour in her eyes and in a great measure drove away his shyness and awkwardness and gave him a certain amount of assurance, inasmuch as the Empress' amiability flattered his pride. He thought her very attractive, although there was a trifling undefinable something which marred the harmony of the features and which the King only perceived (to his great disappointment) when she turned away from him to speak to the Duke . . . alas! she was toothless! But when she again looked at Gustaf Adolf with her clear, kindly grey eyes, he quite forgot that she was an old woman of sixty-seven, and only thought he could well understand why

people called her the "Semiramis of the North," her eyes and smile were strangely fascinating.

She asked about the journey, and appeared to take great interest in every word the young King spoke. Oddly enough, she seemed to have more power of drawing him out than anyone else; he felt this himself, and consequently was more at ease in her company. There were some people to whom he could never talk at all; his thoughts went back to his own mother, who always infected him with her taciturnity—others too . . . and this talking freely with the Empress was such a relief!

Their *tête-à-tête* lasted some time; then she rose, not without some difficulty, and herself opened the door to the adjoining apartment, where the rest of the Imperial family were assembled. A smile of glad surprise lit up the face of the Grand Duchess Alexandra when she beheld the King, so greatly did his appearance surpass her most sanguine expectations. But she only took one (good) look at him; then she looked down and blushed, whilst the Empress made the round, introducing the Royal guests to each one of her family separately.

The first to be presented to the King was the Empress' elder son, the Grand Duke Paul Petrovitch, and his Consort the Grand Duchess Marie. There was not the slightest trace of resemblance between this Grand Duke and his mother; he was unusually plain; bald, with a face full of wrinkles and a nose like a Kalmuck—altogether he looked exceedingly common. *He* could never have said a pleasant word to any one or cheered them by his presence. Whilst making his introductory bow he disdainfully eyed the hats which the King and Duke had doffed; if there was one thing in the world which the Grand Duke Paul abominated more than another it was this kind of head-gear!

By his side stood his beautiful Consort the Grand Duchess Marie; with a scared glance at her severe mother-in-law, she curtsied low to both King and Duke.

The Grand Duke Paul and his wife lived in almost constant banishment from the Court, either at Gatschina or Paulowsky,

because the Empress Catherine hated her son and treated him with the greatest unkindness and injustice; but on this occasion she considered the presence of the King's "parents-in-law" (to be) was a necessary evil, and so had commanded them to be there as she commanded the Grand Duchess Marie to be ready to come from Gatschina to St. Petersburg at a minute's notice whenever required to do so.

With glowing cheeks the Empress next introduced her beloved grandson, the Grand Duke Alexander—a handsome lad, well set-up, and only one year older than Gustaf Adolf, with charming, courteous manners. By *his* side stood his fair young bride, Elisabeth Alexievna (*née* Princess of Baden), greeting "Count Haga" with the prettiest of smiles; then came the Grand Duke Constantine, who, though but seventeen years of age, was married already! He was the exact opposite of his brother Alexander. Plain, with strongly marked, coarse features and noisy, uncouth manners; even the presence of the Empress could not subdue him. *His* spouse was Anna Feodorowna (*née* Princess of Coburg), a lively little brunette, who greeted the King simply and without affectation. He scarcely noticed her; his bow was stiff and cold—for by her side he had caught sight of a girlish figure in white, a broad blue sash encircling her waist, a young girl who blushed and trembled nervously as the Empress, with her Royal guests, stopped in front of her.

"And this is my dear granddaughter, Alexandra Paulowna," said the Empress gently.

Both the young people were aware that all eyes were upon them, and both felt correspondingly awkward and uncomfortable. Gustaf Adolf's colour rose, but he managed to stammer a few words; what they were he could not for the life of him have told, but he believed they were what he had been instructed to say to the Grand Duchess Alexandra. The latter hung her head as if afraid to lift her eyes and look at the King, and her confusion served but to increase his own. He thought the Empress lingered longer by the little Grand Duchess than she had done by any of the other members of the Imperial family, though that might only have been his

fancy, as he could not find anything to say to the Grand Duchess apparently, nor she to him. When this embarrassing silence threatened to become too oppressive, the King moved on, and before Catherine had time to formally introduce him he was bowing to the Grand Duchess Alexandra's younger sister, the Grand Duchess Helena Paulowna, who stood next to her. As soon, however, as the former perceived that the King no longer stood silent before her, she quickly recovered from the confusion his proximity had caused her. She raised her beaming eyes and met his; he seemed dazzled, unable to stir. Thus the two stood gazing at one another, apparently unconsciously, for several minutes. The Empress knew very well what such "gazing" generally led to, so she bided her time until the King should recover himself, that she might finish the introductions to the younger Grand Duchesses. Suddenly the Grand Duchess Alexandra became aware that the Empress was waiting, and saw her meaning smile, which once more caused the girl to hang her head and blush. But Gustaf Adolf did not move, spell-bound by the ray of sunshine which had shone from those eyes straight into his heart and warmed and comforted it; it almost moved him to tears to think how well he should be able to love his future spouse. Poor lad! he was so unused to any kind of happiness that even a small foretaste of such was enough to unnerve him. His heart beat violently.

The Empress' gratification at his emotion knew no bounds. At last! at last! when every individual member of the Imperial family had been formally introduced to the two Royal visitors, Reuterholm, Essen, Stedingk, and the other gentlemen of the suite were invited to enter. Bariatinsky and Zouboff appeared together, also Osterman and several other functionaries of the Russian Court. All eyes eagerly sought the young King and the Grand Duchess Alexandra, which, when she noticed it, so distressed her that she turned away and began to talk in an undertone to her sister Helena; but she said nothing in particular—in fact, she only asked what "*she*" had said to "*him*!"

The Grand Duchess Helena shook her head. "You did not say anything to him at all," she said.

“ Surely, I bade him ‘ welcome ’ in Swedish, as I was to do— did I not ? ”

“ Not one word did you utter, and not one word spoke he ! ” retorted the Grand Duchess Helena somewhat flippantly.

“ I thought that he *did* say something and I answered ; how very odd.”

After the entrance of the suite Gustaf Adolf regained his mental equilibrium ; he told himself that he must not forget the presence of his gentlemen, for their presentation to the Empress would be a great event in their lives. So successfully did he “ pull himself together ” that he introduced them all, one after another, to Catherine, with a few suitable words spoken firmly and distinctly. She was surprised at the self-control and coolness shown by the King ; the Swedish courtiers also wondered, but were proud of their youthful Sovereign when they saw the impression he had evidently made on her ; they thought him far more of a man than the Grand Duke Alexander, and in every respect superior to the Grand Duke Constantine.

Presently the doors of the adjacent magnificent ballroom, from which there came strains of lively music, were thrown open. “ Count Haga ” opened the ball in a *Menuet* with the Grand Duchess Elisabeth Alexievna ; “ Count Wasa ” led out the Grand Duchess Anna Feodorowna. After the *Menuet* the two Grand Duchesses asked their Excellencies Reuterholm and Stedingk (as Court etiquette demanded) for the next dance.

The Empress, looking on, beckoned the Grand Duchess Alexandra to her side, and whispered in her ear : “ I am going to tell you a great secret, my child, and that is, that I am almost in love myself with your young King ! ”

Ere long Gustaf Adolf made his way to the Grand Duchess Alexandra, who was standing by her grandmother’s chair, bowed, and took her hand for the next *Menuet*.

The great Empress was in brilliant humour ; she sent for her lover, Zouboff, and had a long and animated conversation with him. Then she had all the members of the Swedish suite up, and to each in turn she expressed her unqualified admiration of their youthful Monarch. To Baron Stedingk

she remarked: "I had made up my mind to receive our young Count Haga in such a manner as would dispel the shyness and awkwardness which would have been quite natural to any youth under present circumstances; but he met me with so much dignity and assurance, that to my amazement *I* was the one who felt shy and embarrassed. What do you say to that, my dear Stedingk?"

Baron Stedingk could not find words to express his gratification at the impression his young Sovereign seemed to have made on the all-powerful Russian autocrat.

On the day following this very successful introduction, the King went to pay his respects to the Grand Duke Paul, and accepted his invitation to dinner—quite a family affair, covers being laid for eight only.

Then followed a series of fêtes and dances given by the Empress, her family, and the *haute noblesse*, in honour of the Counts Haga and Wasa.

At the Vice-Chancellor's, Count Osterman's, ball, the Royal guests were placed at the principal table among the Grand Duchesses; at the same board sat the Grand Duke Paul, his wife, his sons, and several ladies of the Court.

Gustaf Adolf had never before been among young people of his own age and his equals in rank, but none of the young Grand Dukes were at all to his liking; the Grand Duke Alexander was much too haughty and assuming, the Grand Duke Constantine much too patronising and "free-and-easy."

The Empress had deputed the Grand Duke Alexander to do the honours to the young King of Sweden, and he did them with aggravating punctiliousness. Gustaf Adolf, who invariably based his opinions upon first impressions and clung to them with his usual tenacity, was not at all attracted by his plausible manner and exaggerated attentions; in fact, he would have preferred the Grand Duke Constantine's brusquerie, if the latter had not had such shocking manners and used words and expressions such as could only be excused on the supposition that he himself did not fully understand their import and coarseness. Naturally French only was spoken, and as Gustaf Adolf was quite unfamiliar with many of the expressions

used by the Grand Duke Constantine, he subsequently looked them up in the dictionary, and was horrified and disgusted at their meaning.

With the Grand Duchesses Elisabeth Alexievna and Anna Feodorowna he got on splendidly. Next day, when he paid his formal visit to the Grand Duchess Elisabeth, she showed him a miniature she had just received from Baden, of her sister Frederica.* The King looked long at it, and then said in a tone which clearly betrayed to the Grand Duchess that he could find nothing better to say : " There is a strong likeness to yourself, Madame."

He found more difficulty in making conversation with the Grand Duchess Alexandra, which was, perhaps, not to be wondered at. During the first few days both were shy and seemed to have very little to say when they met ; but gradually this wore off, especially after the Empress had expressed her wish, or rather command, that these two young people should no longer be subjected to tactless observation, meaning looks, or cynical smiles.

Every morning the King and his uncle took long walks in and about St. Petersburg, and in the evenings, when he met the Grand Duchess Alexandra, who was never long absent from his thoughts, he used to tell her what he had seen, and ask her about a variety of things which were very different here to what they were in his own land ; and she would cheerfully and clearly explain what had been strange and unintelligible to him with regard to manners and customs in Russia ; then, *par contre*, she would ask all sorts of questions about Stockholm and Sweden, coyly and with some slight hesitation at first, but gathering courage in the process. The King never wearied of telling her about Drottningholm, its seductive situation on the grand Mälars Lake, its beautiful park, and about the ancient Castle of Gripsholm with its many historic associations. " But Your Majesty, I suppose, likes Haga better than either, since you call yourself Count ' Haga ' ? "

Yes, the King had to admit that, although he liked *all* his country residences, he preferred Haga ; also that he was not

* Afterwards Queen Frederika of Sweden.

very fond of Stockholm, and he began to be curiously eager to discover whether the Grand Duchess preferred life in town or in the country.

Well, like himself, she seemed to love Nature above all things, and could imagine nothing more delightful than to pass the rest of her days in some beautiful rural spot. When she said this, Gustaf Adolf kissed her hand, and both were silent for a while. This conversation took place at a magnificent entertainment given by Count Besborodkos.

The Grand Duchess also questioned the King as to what he thought of the various military spectacles he had witnessed during the last few days, and he spoke with undisguised admiration of the skilful manœuvres of the artillery cadets under the command of the Grand Duke Alexander, and the brilliant skirmishes carried out under General Melissino, and inquired whether the Duchess took pleasure in military reviews too. She replied in the affirmative, and told him that she remembered (and this was one of her earliest recollections) some manœuvres she had witnessed under her father's command at Gatschina, when on a visit to her parents there. She called to mind how the Grand Duke Paul had made her mother stand on the rickety balcony of a tumble-down old wooden castle, which he was to defend with his men while the others made the attack. This lasted four hours, and the rain came down incessantly the whole time, but she had been forbidden to leave her place, or even to sit down; she was to remain in full view of the combatants as being the object fought for! She had been drenched and ready to faint with fatigue whilst one set of men were led to the attack and repulsed by the Grand Duke in accordance with a preconcerted plan. The account of this episode of Alexandra's childhood greatly interested the King, but there were certain details connected with it not pleasant to dwell upon; therefore the Grand Duchess suddenly broke off, and begged him to tell *her* something about the previous summer's bivouac at Ladugårdsgärde. She said this name so prettily that the King asked her whether Stedingk had taught her the correct pronunciation (Lah-dü-gords-yairdé) of that very difficult word, and when she confessed he *had*, Gustaf

Adolf requested her to repeat all the Swedish words and sentences she knew. She did so, the King mercilessly correcting her, so that she playfully remarked that *he* was far more strict with her than her governess, Mademoiselle Willamow, had ever been, whereupon the King courteously retorted that all who had the privilege and pleasure of knowing the Grand Duchess Alexandra owed that good lady a debt of gratitude, for she must have been an excellent instructress !

On the afternoon of September 7th the two Counts repaired to the Tauris Palace to a concert, which the Empress also honoured with her presence. The Grand Duchess Elisabeth, who really sang extremely well, opened it with a sweet, pathetic song ; next the Grand Duchess Alexandra played an Overture on the harp with much feeling. She looked charming, and was greatly admired. When she had finished, before she had time to put aside her harp, the King rose and complimented her. Then the Grand Duchess Elisabeth sang another song, which was followed by a solo on the harp by the Grand Duchess Helena ; the other Grand Duchesses gave a performance on the piano, and even the youngest of them took part in the concert. It had been *most* enjoyable, but that night the King could not sleep. The sound of harp-strings, sweetly fingered, was ever in his ears, and when he closed his eyes it was but to see an angelic figure in soft white garments flitting hither and thither !

At the entertainment given by the Empress' Master of the Horse, Count Karisin, and honoured by the presence of the Imperial Family, not only at dinner, but also during the evening, the King had frequent opportunities of conversing with the Grand Duchess Alexandra. They constantly sought each other's society, but when they saw they were being observed they, of course, went off at once in opposite directions. That evening, after the festivities were over, and the King had returned to the residence of the Ambassador, he requested an interview with the Duke.

The Empress was to give a sumptuous dinner the next day, and the Duke proposed to profit by the occasion to formally ask the Empress for the hand of the Grand Duchess in his

Royal nephew's name. The King replied that he would speak to the Empress himself on the subject, but that he must first have clear and decided information as to her change of religion ; He considered that as the German Protestant Princesses who had married into the Imperial Family of Russia had been compelled to adopt the Greek-Catholic faith, it was only just and fair that he should wish the Grand Duchess, as future Queen of Sweden, to change from the "Orthodox" to the Lutheran creed. What Russia demanded, Sweden had an equal right to exact.

"But supposing such a concession should be deemed impossible?" said the Duke.

"Then . . ." (the King was evidently gravely listening to the dictates of his conscience) . . . "then everything is at an end."

"What? . . . The proposed alliance *at an end?*" asked the Duke, dumbfounded.

Gustaf Adolf bit his lip, and remained a few minutes lost in thought.

"According to the law, I believe no King of Sweden is justified in wedding a Princess of a different creed, notwithstanding the 'Act of Toleration,' passed in '79, which does not do away with the Canon of Norrköping of 1604 concerning the marriage of reigning sovereigns," said the King slowly and solemnly. "I know that His Excellency, Count Reuterholm, has a different opinion on this point from mine."

"So have I, and Essen, and Stedingk too," answered the Duke.

"That, however, makes no difference to *my* views, and for this reason I most sincerely hope that the Empress will put no obstacles in the way of the Grand Duchess's change of creed," said the King. Then, with heightened colour, he added: "I think it right to tell you, Uncle, that I have built all my hopes for future happiness upon my union with the Grand Duchess Alexandra Paulowna; she is endowed with all the qualities which fascinate and attract me. She is full of good sense and natural humour, has much intellect, and that innocence and magnetic power which is the adjunct of noble

souls. Our tastes are similar ; in short, she possesses all the attributes so dear to my heart, which I should wish my future wife to have. Only the difference in our creeds distresses and worries me. I have already mentioned this to the Empress and parents of the Grand Duchess ; but I must also talk it over with herself, and that without delay . . .”

“ My dear boy, the Grand Duchess Alexandra has no voice in the matter ; it depends wholly and solely on the caprice of the Empress.”

“ That I am well aware of, Uncle ; I know that it depends entirely upon the Empress whether the Grand Duchess will adopt the Lutheran faith before her marriage ; but I want to make sure that I may count upon being able, after it, to convince my wife of the saving superiority of the Lutheran doctrine over the Greek. Then, I think, she would of her own free will gladly share my faith. *If* I can be *sure* of that, the alliance will take place, even if the Empress does not consent to the conversion *before* the wedding, which, of course, I should prefer,” said the King.

“ Of course,” replied the Duke. “ Therefore negotiations may be continued as at present, the only difficulty in the way being the Grand Duchess’ ‘ religion,’ on which subject you seem to have such strict views.”

The King looked reproachfully at the Duke.

The latter continued : “ Yes, views which at any other time I should greatly respect, but which are rather out of place in this case, since peace and a good understanding with Russia are absolutely essential to the welfare and prosperity of Sweden. You are quite right, the Grand Duchess is charming ; for, besides her pretty face, she has a sylph-like figure, and in her every pose and movement there is such infinite grace that an old man is smitten even more than a young one. Surely she must be a darling of the gods, and would suit us right well in Sweden, methinks.”

Again in this last observation of the Duke’s there was something which irritated the King.

“ *That* is all right, Uncle,” he remarked curtly. “ As far as I am concerned there is only this subtle question of creed. All

other settlements for my own benefit and that of my country I leave in *your* hands. Of course, I must put off any signing of agreements, etc., for the next six weeks—that is, until I come of age. But that *most* important question must be settled clearly and definitely, *at once*. I was never one to fold my hands and wait patiently. Good night, Uncle, sleep well.”

The next day the Duke imparted to his nephew the conditions made by the Empress through her Ministers.

“And the change of creed?” inquired the King, much agitated.

“No, my boy; the Empress refuses her consent to that. She makes it one of *her* conditions that in her private apartments at Stockholm the Grand Duchess Alexandra shall have a Chapel fitted up where, without offence to anyone, she can quietly observe the rites prescribed by the Greek Church. On the other hand, when custom and circumstances require it, the Queen shall always accompany the King and take part in the ceremonies of the Lutheran Church. I presume that will meet your wishes,” added the Duke.

The King remained a long time deep in thought before he replied. “I know that I cannot force the Grand Duchess’ conscience,” he said at last, “nor would I desire to do so. I suppose it cannot be otherwise. I must think it over.” Without another word he retired to his room.

There was to be a State Dinner on that day at the Tauris Palace, and as the King did not appear, Fleming was obliged to send one of his lackeys to inform him that it was high time to get ready for that function. When, at last, he *did* leave his room, he seemed feverish and depressed. Fleming wondered how it would fare with him that evening, as both the Russian and Swedish Courts were anxiously awaiting a final decision.

In the Tauris Palace, and separated from the magnificent Throne-room by a cloistered corridor only, was the far-famed Winter Garden, a veritable enchanted and enchanting “Garden of Armida.” It was exceptionally large, the roof supported by floriated pillars; trees and plants from every country on the globe filled every nook. Fishes of rarest sorts swam about in crystal basins, half-hidden among the greenery, the water

taking hues of darkest blue, yellow, purple, gold, or red, according as it was viewed through the various prismatic balls adorning a huge obelisk of finest glass at the entrance. At the bottom of this Winter Garden there was a kind of fairy grotto, with insets of mirrors in which the trees, flowers, crystal tanks, ancient sculpture, and thick creepers were reflected a hundred-fold. In the middle stood a majestic statue, in Parian marble, of Catherine II. A soft air and dulcet perfume pervaded the whole, and a soothing quiet. Conversation could only, by some subtle unwritten law, be carried on in whispers attuned to the surroundings—sweet and low.

After dinner the Empress requested the youthful King to take her into this Winter Garden, and they sat down on a couch half-concealed by a thick growth of palms and blossoming rose-bushes.

Thus the Duke Regent and Zouboff found them as, later, they entered the enchanted ground. When they rose from the festive board the Duke had followed Zouboff, and had requested him to acquaint the Empress with the King's views, so that she might be prepared, and help him on in case he should be nervous, and Zouboff had promised to do his best. But when the two men entered the garden they perceived that the august pair were already deep in confidential talk, the King sitting close to the Empress. The Duke was taken aback, and said to Zouboff: "I see with much regret that we have come too late."

Zouboff, too, was rather alarmed, but after watching the Empress awhile out of the corner of his eye, he comforted the Duke with the assurance that he could see all would go well.

With a smile, Zouboff said: "My Sovereign Lady seems rather pleased, and you may take it that *I* am a fairly good judge of her moods."

Catherine had ceased speaking, and the King was silent likewise. Thus they sat for some time inhaling the pleasant perfume of newly turned-up rich mould, strongly-scented flowers and aromatic herbs. The silence was at last broken by the King's renewed request for the hand of the Grand Duchess Alexandra.

He was still so nervous and upset by the sleepless night he had passed and the struggles of his conscience within the last

few hours, that he could only find the few strictly necessary words which the Empress had seemed to be waiting for. Hardly had they passed his lips than she tenderly embraced him, calling him her "Dear Son," to which demonstrations of affection he replied solemnly, as if registering a vow, which, indeed, he was doing, not only to the Empress but also to himself. He said: "I will take this present opportunity of swearing to Your Majesty on my honour, that I will do all Your Majesty desires of me regarding the liberty of conscience of the future Queen."

The Empress patted the King approvingly on the back, and answered in a friendly tone, as if it were a matter of little importance: "Of course you will."

The Grand Duchess Alexandra had left the other Grand Duchesses, who, with Count Wasa and the Grand Dukes, had wandered to a different part of the garden. She more than half suspected what the topic of conversation between her grandmother and the King had been, and she felt giddy and faint with suspense, lest all should not turn out as she wished and hoped.

The Empress rose with difficulty and made her way into the Winter-Garden. Zouboff hastened to meet her and offer his arm. Whispering confidentially to each other, they approached the Grand Duchess Alexandra. The Empress disengaged her hand from Zouboff's arm, and took that of her granddaughter. She said something to her in a low voice, which brought a deep rosy blush to the girl's cheeks; then she led her to a hidden nook in the garden where the King sat, resting his head on his hands. He had not expected the Empress back so soon, but when he looked up he saw her standing in front of him, the Grand Duchess by her side.

He rose at once. He said nothing, but under the Empress' meaning glances both young people coloured up and stood silent. The Empress had placed herself in such a position that her voluminous person completely concealed the young couple from the eyes of inquisitive outsiders.

At last she said, in mildly commanding tone: "Now you may kiss, my dear children."

These words recalled the young people to the present, and taking both her hands in his, the King bent down and kissed the Grand Duchess.

The Empress looked on with much approval.

“ I am going to let you have just fifteen minutes for a little uninterrupted chat, which you may like,” she said. “ In the meantime, I shall send a special messenger to the parents of the Grand Duchess at Gatschina, to inform them of the course of events. I shall indite an epistle with my own hand to the Grand Duke Paul, so enjoy each other’s company as much as you can whilst I am away.”

The King offered his arm to the Empress and courteously conducted her to the door of the Throne-room, where Zouboff stood waiting ; then he kissed her hand and returned to the Winter-Garden and . . . the Grand Duchess. He took a seat by her side and, emboldened by the manner in which she had taken the kiss bestowed upon her in the Empress’ presence, he put his arm round her, and gently drew her towards him. In a transport of happiness she laid her head on his shoulder and looked up into his eyes. The King looked down into her shining orbs, passed his hand caressingly over her fair, wavy hair, kissed her hand, and then gave vent to a . . . deep, deep sigh.

“ Say something to me,” he whispered in her ear.

But she seemed too happy to speak. After a while she said softly : “ I am so happy, because I know how much I love you.”

Gustaf Adolf smiled, and whispered : “ And *I* love *you*.”

“ And does that make *you* happy ? ” she queried.

Hurriedly and almost irritably he replied : “ I am as happy as one like me *can* be ” ; then he repeated in a low voice : “ I *do* love you.”

More he could not say, but her head rested against his shoulder, her hand in his.

Suddenly Gustaf Adolf roused himself and the Grand Duchess with the rather inappropriate remark : “ I must really see whether the Empress’ fifteen minutes are over. We promised, you know, to rejoin her in a quarter of an hour, and a promise must never be broken.”

An Exiled King

He drew out his watch, looked at it, and found that the stipulated quarter of an hour had been exceeded by two minutes !

"I am sorry," he said; "we had a delightful, only too swiftly fleeting time; but you know, Alexandra, we *promised*."

She was radiant as for the first time he called her by her Christian name, and used the pronoun "we."

He still held her hand, but gently dropped it as they stepped out of their hiding-place. Then she took *his* hand, lifted it to her lips, and imprinted one long, fervent kiss upon it; "My Lord and my King," she whispered.

Before Gustaf Adolf could recover from his surprise at her words, she was gone; she had returned to the rest of the Imperial Family, who were preparing to go into the Throne-room, where the ball was to take place. Gustaf Adolf, who was to open it with the Empress, went round to another entrance.

The smile with which Catherine greeted the young King and the Grand Duchess Alexandra's nervous shyness, as well as his own, at once betrayed to the Duke Regent, Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses, how matters stood.

The orchestra now struck up from the gallery, and the Imperial Family, with their Royal visitors, proceeded to take their seats on the daïs, where a brilliant procession, smiling and bowing, passed before them.

Later in the evening supper was served in the Winter Garden. So sumptuously, and with such admirable skill were the arrangements carried out, that the orange and lemon trees seemed literally to be growing *on* the tables !

The King sat on the Empress' right, the Duke Regent on her left.

During supper it was agreed that the official announcement of the young couple's betrothal should be made in the Throne-room of the Tauris Palace on the evening of September 22nd.

CHAPTER X

THE VISIT TO RUSSIA (II)

EARLY on the morning after the ball the King was up and taking his usual constitutional, accompanied by Fleming. He looked so genuinely happy that Fleming could easily guess what had transpired, though he had not yet been told. Slightly touching his arm, the King presently said :

“ You may congratulate me, Fleming.”

Fleming did so heartily, adding : “ The unusually fine weather we had when we started meant ‘ Good Luck,’ as I hoped it would.”

The King nodded. By his manner and looks Fleming could see how happy he was, how deeply in love.

Their walk on this day extended to the great “ Summer Promenade.” In front of them marched a Russian soldier.

“ What do you think of that funny figure, Fleming ? ” asked the King, smiling. “ Those wide red cloth trousers stuck into the top-boots, the bright green and red coat with the broad belt and the hair clipped all round under the small cap, look to me a very odd sort of outfit. If it were *my* people I’d soon change that for something smarter and more military-looking ; but Her Majesty won’t hear a word about any change ; she seems to consider the Russian uniform practical and picturesque.”

“ I must say that I rather agree with Her Majesty in that particular,” said Fleming in his usual outspoken way ; “ it *is* practical and picturesque.”

“ You think so, Fleming ? I agree with the Grand Duke Paul. Where soldiers are concerned I much prefer military smartness

to the picturesque. But what is the man doing? Let us go and see."

The soldier had stopped before an unoccupied seat and taken a little image of some saint out of one of his pockets; they saw him spit upon the frame, then rub it hard with his hand by way of polishing it. When sufficiently bright he set it upon the seat and suddenly prostrated himself on the ground in front of it, and with many groans and innumerable crossings of his person he repeated, "Gospodi, pomiloï," about forty times running.

"What on earth does he mean by that?" asked the King, much puzzled.

"The man is performing his devotions to his patron saint, most probably Saint Nicholas. I have already seen that sort of thing more than once in St. Petersburg; it is rather a disgusting and revolting spectacle. The words he is saying mean, Lord, have mercy upon me!"

The King stood looking until the soldier had come to an end of his prayers, had risen from the ground, kissed the image, and again put it into the pocket of his voluminous trousers, after which he went his way. The King seemed rooted to the spot.

"I suppose that it is only the soldiers and lowest class of the peasantry who carry about their images and worship them in that fashion, Fleming. Such a thing would surely never be dreamt of among the educated and higher classes?" said he, breaking the silence at last.

"Well, Your Majesty, superstition is rife among all classes here in Russia. I have heard that the highest in the land take images of their saints, their 'Eikons,' with them when they travel, set them up in their bedchambers and prostrate themselves before them in much the same way that soldier did just now. Not long ago I heard of a Russian Princess whose Patron Saint (so to say) is a large Crucifix of silver which she always takes with her in a special carriage and sets up in her bedroom. If anything pleases her or makes her very happy in the course of the day, she has beautiful tapers set up all round it, and says in the most familiar way to the figure on the cross: 'There, as Thou hast treated me well this day, Thou shalt be treated well

also ; these beautiful lights shall burn before Thee all the night. I shall adore Thee, pray to Thee, Thou shalt be my own loved God.' But should anything in the course of the day *displease* or put her out, she . . ."

The King interrupted Fleming. "That will do," he said ; "I don't want to hear any more. Let us go back now."

And as they turned to go Fleming noticed that the King was completely changed ; the happy look had quite vanished from his face ; it had its accustomed melancholy and depressed expression, mingled with some undefinable dread. Ever and anon he stopped short and laid a hand on Fleming's arm as if about to tell him something ; then he would repent and start off again as suddenly without uttering a word. When they came to the end of the Promenade, Fleming asked the King whether he would like to go on or to return.

The King replied abruptly, "Return."

The two men turned their faces cityward, but the younger of the two, who had been wont to evince such lively interest in all he saw, and had done so only that very morning when they had started for their walk, now took no notice of anything. Arrived at his apartments, he locked himself in.

What the King had just seen first opened his eyes to the fact that he had agreed to allow his wife to practise superstition and idolatry in his own Palace. Both are abhorrent to God and strictly forbidden, and he had given a solemn promise that both should be allowed on condition that his future consort should hypocritically *outwardly* profess to acknowledge the sacred rites of the Lutheran faith. These thoughts took such exaggerated hold on him that he was utterly incapable of turning them to any other subject.

Eckerman's latest treatise lay open beside Charles XII's Bible on the King's writing-table. He turned over its pages, and when he found what he wanted he began to read half aloud to himself as follows : "Sermon on a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man." He thought it must have been written on purpose for *him* as he read the words : "God have mercy upon thee, for, alas ! there is nothing so holy but thou must trample under thy feet, thou art bent to do the

evil, come what may and at all costs, even though it should plunge thee into misery, lead thee to perdition, and cause thee to pay the pleasure of a moment with everlasting torments. And this it is that gives thee discomfort and frets and chafes thee, hence the fears and unrest which follow thee so closely wherever thou mayest be, hence the troubles that thou complainest of, the avenging witness who hath taken up his abode within thy soul and of whom thou canst in no wise rid thyself. Thou mayest say it is an evil humour upon thee, a poisoning of the blood, an affection of the spleen, call it what thou wilt . . . but know thou, that it is neither more nor less than the pricks of thine own conscience, the avenger within thee fighting for the rights due to God, plaguing and punishing thee for thy sins."

As the King read he was almost beside himself. "It is true, true, true. Did I not foresee it before I left Sweden, and had I not resolved that this visit should only be as a complimentary one in case the Empress should refuse her consent to her granddaughter's change of creed? But when I beheld the Grand Duchess, and seeing her, loved her, my good resolutions were scattered to the winds. *That* was the one moment of pleasure spoken of by the preacher."

The King paced up and down the room and turned over again in his mind what *he* had said, what the Empress had said, and the words of the Duke Regent . . . whose was the sin . . . whose the blame?

His alone . . . *his*, who had loved a woman more than his God.

He tried to banish from his mind the vision of the Grand Duchess as he had seen her but last night, lovingly kissing his hand. The hand that . . . he looked at his hand, then brought it down fiercely on the table on which lay his books of devotion. It might all have ended so happily had not the Empress insisted on such hard conditions, and, for once, his qualms of conscience turned into anger against her. He worked himself up to frenzy when he thought that the refusal to let the Grand Duchess adopt his faith amounted to a gross insult to the King of Sweden, who had an undeniable right to claim that which

the Russian Empress exacted for her sons and grandsons, namely, that the foreign Princesses whom they espoused must conform to the religion of the land. It was all the fault of the Empress, her pride, her selfish obstinacy.

But it was too late now to mend matters. Gustaf Adolf knew but too well that he had given his word, and his word he must keep, and the Grand Duchess pleased him so, that it was next to impossible for him to give up the hope of finally winning her. That evening, when he met Alexandra at a party given by Count Stroganof, he thought her so bewitching that he straightway forgot his trouble, especially when he saw how her beaming eyes followed all his movements; indeed, so inexpressibly fascinating was she, that on leaving he kissed her hand before the whole company as he kissed the hands of the Empress and the other Grand Duchesses.

But in the darkness of a sleepless night, remorse, sorrow, and inquietude returned. He tossed about restlessly and thought and thought. Every time he tried to close his eyes he seemed to see before him a soldier spitting on the image of the saint and tucking it away in his dirty pocket . . . it made him shiver with disgust and anger. Thus passed several days and nights. The King meant to speak of it to the Grand Duchess, but he was half afraid of being tempted to break his promise of giving her her freedom of conscience if his speaking should influence her against it. In any case *her* inclination was of no moment. Everything depended upon the Empress, and in the agonies of his conscience he resolved that he would speak to *her*.

Having come to that decision he felt more resigned, remembering how easy he had always found it to talk to her, and he felt assured that God would inspire him with words which would convince her that it would be wisest to yield in this particular and allow the Grand Duchess to change her creed before the marriage. Perhaps—and his heart beat fast in joyful expectation—perhaps he might succeed in converting the Empress herself, an even more important matter belonging to her own eternal welfare, for Gustaf Adolf loved the Empress and only wished for her good.

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A few days previous to the official announcement of the betrothal there was to be a grand ball at the Procurator General Count Samailow's. A curious incident happened as the Empress was leaving her carriage; a shining star shot from the clouds over her head and appeared to fall into the Neva; it was such a wonderful phenomenon that every one noticed it. The Suite were somewhat alarmed, so was the Empress, who seemed unable to move from the spot. At last some one, bolder than the rest, ventured to remark loud enough for the Empress to hear, that "it was intended to symbolise the young Queen's pleasant journey to her new home"—the star travelled from East to West. Others, pale and trembling, whispered: "The shining star fell just behind the Citadel where the Royal sepulchres are . . . it portends the speedy decease of our great Empress"; these words the Empress heard not, and proceeded on her way.

In the course of the evening Gustaf Adolf requested a private interview with her. She had just been conversing with him about the favourable reports in the papers, which had but now arrived, from the seat of war in Italy, and had said: "I am more pleased than I could say about the Austrian successes. The cleverness of that young Corsiean General, Buonaparte, was really too alarming, and till now his good luck has been equal to his venturesomeness."

"He has had a short spell of good luck, Your Majesty," replied Gustaf Adolf curtly, "but now it is at an end. Since the Archduke Charles gained such a brilliant victory at Theiningen, Buonaparte will be forced to evacuate the Tyrol. Never, for a moment, did I believe that God's blessing could be with him for any length of time; his was an unrighteous cause, seeing he put himself at the head of the nation which deposed its lawful Sovereign. Buonaparte's evil deeds caused his emerging from that obscurity in which he was born and lived till then."

The Empress could not suppress a smile at the young King's childlike simplicity. The youthful ardour with which he expressed his views when under excitement, and the obstinacy with which he held to them, were rather refreshing to the blasée Empress and amused her; it was such a contrast to the

flattery, kow-towing, and deference to which she was accustomed; she was much entertained by the miraculous fact that this young, rather frail King of Sweden should talk more freely and unrestrainedly to *her* than to anyone else. He never seemed to feel constraint or awe in her presence as most people did, and she was rather mystified as to what could be in the wind when he suddenly requested a *private* interview. She consented with a smile, and allowed him to lead her to an adjoining boudoir, the door of which he carefully locked. The Empress took a seat on a gilt couch and invited him to a place by her side. But the King did not take it until he had fetched a footstool, which he deferentially put at her feet.

“Is Your Majesty quite comfortable now?” he asked. Being answered in the affirmative, he took a chair which he drew up to the table on which the Empress was resting her elbow, her hand supporting her head as she watched the King, who looked grave and thoughtful. Her bright, penetrating eyes were fixed upon him with their usual kindly expression, and the King plunged fearlessly into *medias re*.

“Your Majesty,” said he, “I was brought up in the Lutheran faith . . .”

The Empress nodded encouragingly; this was no new revelation to her, as (especially during the last few weeks) the tenets of the Lutheran faith had been the subject of conversation much more frequently than she had deemed either suitable or pleasant. She was not fond of discussing religion, orthodox or otherwise, and she considered the subject had been more than sufficiently thrashed out; she resolved to give the boy a hint that she would prefer a more interesting topic. So at length she said, still in a kindly, motherly way:

“I presume Count Haga desired this interview that he and I might privately talk over a little matter I had confided to Count Wasa . . . that is, about fixing the date for the wedding. I am sure that must have been the object of the very eager conversation you had with the Grand Duchess when dancing the last *Menuet* the other night. Ah, well; I told Count Wasa that I thought nine months from now was rather a long time to wait, and that I, as well as other relations and friends, was of

opinion that it would be better and more politic to somewhat abridge the time of waiting. For that reason I suggested that one of your first acts, when you should be of age and begin your independent rule, should be to choose an Ambassador who should come to Russia the autumn following to fetch the Grand Duchess. Immediately after his arrival the Ambassador, by proxy and in the King's name, should go through the formal ceremony of marriage with my granddaughter, and that the Queen-to-be should then at once start for Abo, where Admiral Stedingk should be under written orders to make all further arrangements for the continuance of the journey." Here the Empress stopped that the King might give *his* opinion. But if the Empress were bent upon talking nothing but *marriage*, the King was equally bent upon talking nothing but *religion*. He did not even appear to have heard what she had been speaking of all this time, for to Catherine's intense amazement he replied in the manner of one walking in his sleep, and with a pathos she had never remarked in him before; she had been so accustomed to Gustaf Adolf's straightforward, simple way of speaking, which she thought he had taken pains to acquire in imitation of Charles XII, that she was completely taken aback when he began with the unction and solemnity which he, no doubt, thought necessary for such a subject.

"The reason why the Lutheran Reformation was begun and introduced into Sweden by our great King Gustaf I, and why it must continue there for all time, is contained in the words of Christ: 'That branch that beareth fruit shall be cleansed and pruned that it may bring forth more fruit, and every branch which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up and cast into the fire.' Wherefore it is plain that the hearts of men are all alike in desiring to blend some other man's wisdom or their own with their striving for salvation, it is clear that man's doctrine needs continual pruning and cleansing according to the Word of God."

The King meant to continue when he had breath, but the Empress looked up and said with the most amused, patronising air imaginable:

"I suppose, my dear Count, you did not ask for this

interview with the intention of converting *me* to Lutheranism, did you ? ”

The King turned very red and answered eagerly :

“ I should have no greater desire.”

The Empress burst into a laugh ; its mocking tone irritated the King ; without reflecting he burst forth :

“ Yes, Your Majesty, it is imperatively necessary that the Grand Duchess should change her creed before setting a foot in Sweden. The Edict of Norrköping, 1604, declares that the heir to the throne of Sweden forfeits his crown if he weds a Princess of any other confession than the Lutheran, and Your Majesty cannot fail to see that if the people rise up because I commit an act contrary to the law, I could not say otherwise but that they were in the right and myself in the wrong.”

The Empress no longer laughed. In that moment she had been, as it were, transformed from the kind, motherly woman into the cold, stern, and autocratic Sovereign. Fixing her sharp eyes upon the King, she said with a tone purposely chill and disdainful :

“ No, I *don't* understand that, and what I understand still *less* is, that the young King who professes to attach so much value to a promise should be ready to break his sacred word pledged for such a trifling cause. Your Ministers have confirmed that promise, and your people will well enough understand the advantage of an alliance and good understanding with Russia ; they would not be foolish or unwise enough to let their Sovereign forfeit his crown for the sake of a clause in an old-fashioned and obsolete law. Whereas, if the oath sworn to me is *not* kept . . .”

The King hid his face in his hands like a child that has had a scolding, and the Empress heard him groan as if in agony.

Surely this was an impossible young man . . . quite impossible, for the Empress, who had had plenty of experience in affairs of the heart herself, had not the least doubt but that he was deeply in love with the Grand Duchess Alexandra. Whatever *did* he want ? To convert *her*, Catherine II ? Or did he want to force her into agreeing to the perversion of the Grand

Duchess, which, to tell the truth, had hitherto been a matter of indifference to the Empress, but which had assumed vast importance after this foolish scene. Never so long as she lived would she consent; and she suddenly remembered, too, that the Grand Duchess' change of creed would most likely prevent any interference in Swedish affairs on the part of Russia . . . or did the "silly little boy" think he would like to pit *his* will against *hers*? If so, she would let him see his mistake.

So she waited to hear what he would say next. She thought the silence had lasted quite long enough. To wake him from his dreams, she gave him a sharp tap on the knuckles with her fan, so sharp a tap, indeed, that its delicately carved ivory stems seemed in danger of being broken. But the King seemed not even to have heard or felt the hard blow, and the Empress was still waiting; he did not know how much time had elapsed between the questions and his reply: "Never in my life have I broken my pledged word, nor *shall* I ever. I am aware that I promised that when the Grand Duchess Alexandra should become Queen of Sweden, she should be left to follow her religious bent without hindrance; I also promised that in her apartments in the Palace at Stockholm and our other residences a Chapel should be fitted up in which she could worship according to the rites of her Church. What I have promised I shall keep to, God helping me. Your Majesty has no need to mistrust me. I cannot endure the idea that Your Majesty or any other man (!) on earth should think me capable of trying to evade my sacredly pledged word. But I *did* cherish a hope that Your Majesty would have given me freedom by a certain compromise; in short, by allowing the Grand Duchess to conform to the Lutheran faith before our marriage." He said this in a tone of deeply wounded pride and with much dignity; then he added in a beseeching and humble voice: "Oh, *do* let it be so."

"No, my dear Count, I could not possibly give way, on account of my subjects . . . they are very well satisfied with the truths of *their* creed," she said ironically, but the King was too much in earnest either to understand or resent her irony; he could only cast a beseeching look at the Empress.

“Is it *quite* impossible, then?” he asked in a low, trembling voice.

“Quite,” she replied.

The King once more covered his eyes with his hand and sat for a few minutes as if turned into stone.

Then the Empress thought it politic to alter her manner, and said in her former benevolent tone: “But now, my dear Count, I think we ought really to be going back to our hosts. I daresay they have already been making comments on our prolonged absence. The Grand Duchess will be becoming jealous. That is right, dear Count, before we go back we must try to get up a smiling countenance. By way of changing your thoughts a little, shall I tell you what reply I made to Count Wasa to his inquiries concerning the hastening on of the wedding? I said that in spite of the lateness of the season, hundreds and thousands of people crossed the ocean and arrived in safety on the other side; and as for the intense cold, there would be rugs and furs galore to keep that off.”

“That is certainly true,” said the King, his face becoming a trifle less gloomy.

“There is only the question as to the apartments, which do not seem quite ready; but as long as two rooms are available there need be no difficulty.”

“There are more than two ready,” replied the King, reddening under the Empress’ gaze.

“I said further,” continued Catherine, “that the Queen would take with her all the furniture necessary for her rooms, or in case of need that it might be sent on before her.”

“There is no necessity for that,” said the King gravely; “plenty of suitable furniture can be got together in the meantime.”

“I also stipulated that immediately after her arrival the future Queen should make her public entry into the city with the pomp and splendour usual on such occasions at the Swedish Court . . .”

“It has been a pleasure to me to order all these details and ceremonies *long ago*,” replied the King, in an injured tone.

“By the way, my dear Count, the other evening, when I was

stepping out of my carriage at the gates of the Palace, I saw a brilliant star shooting across the sky from east to west. I took it to mean my beloved Alexandra's voyage over the waters to Sweden."

"Was it not said to be an omen, a token?" put in the King, his eyes sparkling. "I was waiting for one," he added in a low key.

The Empress noticed the impression her words had made, and continued: "With regard to the State-entry into Stockholm, if there should not happen to be a suitable State-coach, the Grand Duchess could easily take one with her."

The King bowed his thanks, and Catherine went on: "On the day of her arrival in the capital, she should go through the ceremony of marriage with you according to the formula of the Lutheran Church."

"Of course, of course," exclaimed the King.

During the last few moments the Empress had, almost affectionately, laid her hand on his arm.

He deferentially took her beautiful hand and pressed his lips upon it.

"There now, my dear Count, now you are beginning to look as a happy bridegroom *should* look . . . now you may offer me your arm. But . . . perhaps it might be as well to unlock the door first, an it please you."

The King did so, and the Empress rose with much rustling of the heavy silk brocade which enveloped her huge person. She took the King's arm, and as the two rulers, the one old and of gigantic proportions, the other young and unusually slender, entered the festive hall, the Empress smiled graciously, and Count Haga's eager eyes sought the Grand Duchess, who shyly acknowledged his greeting.

Memorable days were in store for the princely young couple. The sixteenth of that month was the name-day of the Grand Duchess Elisabeth, to be kept with much magnificence. She invited all the members of the Imperial Family as well as the King of Sweden and the Duke Regent to a grand banquet, to be followed by a fancy-dress ball at the residence of the younger Grand Dukes; the interval the King and the Duke

Regent were invited to spend at the Palace of the Grand Duchess Alexandra's parents, *en famille*.

It was the first time that Gustaf Adolf and Alexandra had met, as it were, in private, and while her mother, the Duke Regent, the Grand Duchess Helena, and Countess Lieven, Lady-in-Waiting, were sitting talking at one of the large tables, the two young people sat in a niche apart, discussing their future prospects. At first they had been somewhat shy, thinking themselves under observation; but that soon wore off, and they drew their chairs a little nearer to each other and talked naturally, without constraint.

The eighteenth of the month bid fair to be another great day. The Grand Duchess' Mother had come up from the country on purpose to invite the King, the Duke Regent, and the Swedish Ambassador, Count Stedingk, to supper.

The two Counts arrived soon after six, but the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess Alexandra with Count Stedingk only made their appearance just before that meal was about to be served.

In the interim Gustaf Adolf and his fiancée had been sitting cosily together in an adjoining boudoir, and the Grand Duchess' Mother had begged her other guests to take no notice of the young couple, but to let them enjoy their liberty.

Towards the close of the evening the Grand Duchess' Mother remarked to the Duke Regent :

“ It seems that our young people in there are getting on very well ; if you will come and sit in my place for a minute you will see what is going on in the mirror over there.”

The Duke did so, and in the tell-tale mirror he saw the Grand Duchess' Mother enter the boudoir, take the King's hand, and lay it in that of her daughter ; then she gave them her blessing and bade them embrace. The Duke was much moved ; still more so when the scene, begun in the boudoir, continued in the corridor, where under tears of genuine or feigned emotion everybody seemed to be embracing everybody else.

The supper passed off merrily, and the evening was delightful. Close upon midnight the Duke had to remind the King that it was time to go ; but Gustaf Adolf delayed as long as he could.

He appeared to dread the sleepless night and the torments of mind, reproaches of conscience and agonies of remorse which were sure to follow such a heavenly evening.

On the nineteenth there were to be grand illuminations and a ball at the Tauris Palace.

On the twentieth the King and the Duke were bidden to the Grand Duke Paul's, at Gatschina, for the final settlement of preliminaries regarding the official betrothal which was to take place on the day following. The meeting went off most successfully and amicably, but in consideration of the excitement and fatigue the proceedings of the next day would involve, it had been decided that the King and Duke should return early to St. Petersburg. Before they took their leave the Grand Duchess had a charming surprise in store for them. She led the way to a room they had never seen before, and with her own hands flung open the doors. The walls and ceiling were draped with some thin rose-coloured material, caught up with exquisite wreaths of natural roses. Golden hearts and arrows held wreaths and draperies in place, and the room was brilliantly lighted by burning torches. In the middle an altar had been erected, almost smothered in flowers, on it stood two beautiful children in white, with their arms tenderly encircling one another.

"This room is the Temple of Love and Hymen," said the Grand Duchess' Mother to Gustaf Adolf, who stood dazed on the threshold.

Servants brought round champagne sparkling in golden goblets, and the Grand Duke Paul, who was in rather pleasanter humour than usual, exclaimed excitedly :

"This hour is the forecast of to-morrow's festivities ; let us drink a toast for good luck for to-morrow."

And then he clinked glasses with the King.

"Drink to the dregs, drink to the dregs, my dear Count Haga ; no just touching it with your lips ; empty your glass, man !"

CHAPTER XI

IN RUSSIA (III)

TWO of the Ladies-of-the-Bedchamber were setting the crown on the head of the Empress ; it was in the form of a tiara, fitting close to the silver-grey hair, which had been dressed in classical fashion. The jewels of wonderful size set in the crown were brilliantly reflected by the light of numerous wax-tapers in the silver-framed mirror, in front of which the Empress sat complacently surveying herself. Most of her toilet had to be done sitting, as she found it difficult to stand for any length of time, owing to the abnormal swelling of her legs and feet. Next a necklace, consisting of several rows of priceless pearls, was fastened round her neck, costly bracelets round her wrists, and other precious gems attached to the white, silver-broidered robe. Even the buckles on her white satin shoes were resplendent with sparkling stones, and the robe was lifted high in front that they might be seen. The Empress had always worn her dresses short in front ; she was proud of her small, well-shaped feet, with the high-arched instep, and liked to show them. The smallness of them was still remarkable, as at this period they were swollen almost out of all shape.

But Catherine had at last to rise so that the purple ermine-bordered cloak might be fastened round her shoulders. She had to lean heavily on her dressing-table, for she got to her feet only with much difficulty, and not without a certain amount of pain ; as she did so, the precious stones in her crown seemed to emit rays of flame and sparks of fire.

The Empress contemplated herself in the mirror with apparent satisfaction, whilst the women bustled about to get her

mantle adjusted in the shortest possible space of time, seeing she was unequal to standing long. Presently she sank back heavily in her chair and asked for her fan, a specimen of exquisitely-painted silk oversewn with gems, and inquired whether it were six o'clock yet, and whether the Court had yet assembled.

One of the pages was sent to see, and came back with the answer that the Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses and the Court were already in the Throne-room, as well as the Archbishop.

"Has the King of Sweden arrived?" asked the Empress.

"No, Your Majesty; neither the King nor the Duke nor any of the Swedish Court have arrived as yet; but they are expected any moment."

Catherine rose. "The King must have been hindered at the last moment. . . . I think I know the reason. . . ."

The four pages took up her train; her ladies, in full Court dress, took their places behind her, and her gentlemen brought up the rear. It was a splendid procession which slowly wound its way along the vast corridor, brilliantly lighted from above, and with a gallery for music at the other end. The entrance to the Throne-room was through a double row of pillars.

The betrothal of the King of Sweden and the Grand Duchess Alexandra Paulowna was to take place there. There were lofty pillars all round this imposing room, the spaces between filled in with boxes reaching halfway up, ornamented with festoons of richly-sculptured flowers, and fitted up within with costly silk brocades. On this day these boxes were untenanted, the members of the Court being assembled at the foot of the raised *daïs* where the Imperial Family had their seats. The walls were mostly huge mirrors, which reflected a hundredfold the innumerable wax candles in the crystal candelabra. There was no furniture in the Throne-room, save the gilt chairs for the Imperial Family, the King, and the Duke, nor were there any ornaments, except a few large and beautiful vases of Carrara marble, placed at intervals round the walls.

The brilliant assembly bowed low as the Empress entered.



CATHERINE II, EMPRESS OF RUSSIA

She advanced slowly and majestically, her head held high and her eyes taking in the splendour of the scene; she bowed slightly all round with a little set smile.

Slowly and deliberately she ascended the steps of the daïs, and when she had taken her seat on the richly-carved arm-chair, the Grand Duke Paul and, after him, his Consort and the other Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses in order of age, advanced to kiss her hand.

The toilets were most magnificent; the Grand Duchess Alexandra appeared in bridal array. As she bent to kiss her grandmother's hand, the latter slightly drew aside the bridal veil and tenderly patted her cheek. The young Grand Duchess looked lovely indeed in her white apparel, and with a becoming blush took a place on the Empress' left, an empty chair having been reserved on her right for the King of Sweden, who had not yet arrived. In front of the Archbishop Gabriel's seat had been placed a crimson *prie-Dieu*, kneeling on which, the young Grand Duchess was to receive his blessing, according to the formula of the Greek Church on such occasions.

"I presume the King of Sweden has unavoidably been detained," said the Empress in a low voice to Alexandra. "I sent him a paper which he was to sign, by Markow. The Grand Duchess had started at an unusual movement near the entrance, and replied :

"Thank you; but I feel rather anxious at his not coming."

And the King still tarried . . . longer than the Empress herself was prepared for. She turned, and said something *sotto voce* to Zouboff, who was standing behind her chair. Zouboff left the room immediately.

The Empress' eyes swept the hall; all the Court stood in correct attitude, silent, expectant. None dare whisper to his neighbour or utter a word. All eyes were turned upon the Empress sitting in majestic solemnity on the throne, gently using her fan. But Alexandra's graceful form began to tremble under her bridal veil, and she grew whiter and paler with every fleeting minute.

Zouboff presently returned and whispered something into the ear of the Empress, whercupon she shook her head, and with

a very forced smile answered the anxious query in the Grand Duchess Alexandra's eyes :

"He is coming presently, my dear ; only *do* try to look happy, so that the Court may not suspect that anything is wrong. There is nothing wrong, and he may be here at any moment. You, Zouboff, go and tell Markow to . . ."

The constraint in the circle assembled grew increasingly painful. . . . All were dumb . . . all expectant.

The young King of Sweden was noted for his unswerving punctuality ; never had he been known to be one minute behind time on any single occasion. On that particular evening he had been ready long before the hour, and had done nothing but look at the clock to see whether it were not time to set out for the Tauris Palace. The members of the Russian Court were to assemble in the Throne-room at half-past five ; the King, the Duke, and their Suite were not expected until a few minutes before six, whilst the Empress was to make her appearance on the stroke of the clock.

The King paced impatiently up and down the room, occasionally looking out of the window ; his carriage was waiting at the gate. Fleming was in the room, trying to beguile the time with a little desultory conversation, but the King was much too excited, and kept looking at the clock. He had his engagement ring on his hand, and every time he caught sight of it his impatience increased. He compared his watch with Fleming's, then went into the dining-room to look at the timepiece there. In a soothing voice Fleming said : "*We* are not late, Your Majesty, and the Duke will, no doubt, be here directly."

At that very moment the Duke, Reuterholm, Essen, Stedingk, and Fabian Fersen entered.

"It is time we started," said the King, with ill-concealed annoyance.

"Wooer's haste," cried the Duke laughing, and looking at his watch. "Oh, well . . ."

The party then went into the next room where the Suite were assembled, drinking tea. When they heard the doors open

they hastily set down their cups and stood hat in hand. The Duke was in the highest good humour, and said jauntily :

“ So you are indulging in tea ; upon my word, I should like a cup myself, I’m thinking.”

The King replied : “ You will surely get a cup of tea at the Palace, Uncle. . . . We must hurry now. . . . Let us start.”

“ Oh, there’s time enough and to spare,” answered the Duke, who had already taken his cup from a page.

“ There are quite five minutes before we need start. I should advise all of you, gentlemen, to have a cup too ; we have a lengthy ceremonial to go through, I believe. Won’t Your Majesty take one ? ”

“ No, thank you,” replied the King with irritation.

He took up a position near the door and waited ostentatiously for the Duke. Presently the sound of wheels coming rapidly up the drive was heard.

“ I do believe our vehicles are setting off without us, which would be a very disagreeable surprise,” cried the Duke, joking.

One of the gentlemen standing near the window remarked :

“ It was a landau, and His Excellency Count Markow got out.”

The Duke set down his cup noisily.

“ What can be the meaning of that ? ”

“ I trust Her Majesty the Empress has not been taken ill suddenly,” said the King, hurriedly retreating to his private room, followed by the Duke. A few minutes later Stedingk entered, bearing a paper in his hand. His look of extreme consternation was reflected in the faces of both the King and the Duke as they caught sight of the paper. The King advanced towards Stedingk and held out his hand for it.

“ Markow brought this paper from the Empress with a request that Your Majesty should sign it,” said Stedingk.

“ What might be its contents ? ” asked the King.

He perused it hurriedly, and a deep red mantled his cheeks as he did so.

“ The Empress demands a written promise that the Princess shall be at liberty to worship and exercise her religion according to the tenets of the Greek Church,” read the King aloud to the

Duke and Stedingk, in a voice which shook with ill-suppressed anger. Then he cast the paper from him.

After a few minutes' reflection, during which he tried hard to control his temper, he said to Stedingk, distinctly emphasising every syllable, and pausing between the words :

"You shall take my answer to Count Markow, and this it is : say that I, the King, have so often assured Her Majesty, the Grand Duchess, and her parents, that I will in no way compel her or interfere with her liberty of conscience, and have given my word of honour to that effect, that I should have thought the Empress could not have entertained the smallest doubt ; now I once more promise that this matter shall be settled entirely to the satisfaction of Her Majesty. That is my answer ; be good enough to transmit it."

"What about the paper ?" asked Stedingk.

The King stooped down, picked up the obnoxious paper, and tore it up into little bits.

"That is my answer ; give it him," he said again.

When Stedingk had gone, the Duke said to the King :

"You are playing a ticklish game, my friend—a game in which, one way or another, you will be sure to be the loser ; the Empress is not a person to be trifled with."

"I am not trifling with the Empress, Unele ; but she seems to be inclined to play with me as a cat does with a mouse. And I cannot allow that, either for my own honour or that of my country."

Stedingk now re-entered.

"I gave Your Majesty's message," he said to the King, who stood by the window with his back to the room, looking down the drive where the carriages were waiting, and the lackeys in gala liveries stood ready to open the carriage doors ; coachmen in three-cornered hats and powdered wigs sat motionless on their seats, and impatient steeds were champing their bits and pawing the ground.

"And what did Markow say ?" inquired the King, turning.

Stedingk replied : "He shrugged his shoulders and said he would deliver Your Majesty's message to the Empress word for

word, but that he could well foresee she would be anything but pleased with it."

"I can see that very plainly too," said the Duke. "It was an unlucky *quid pro quo* just at the last moment. You should have put your signature to the paper, my boy. It was nothing more than what you had agreed to before."

"It implied a doubt as to the validity of my solemn promise and pledged word," said the King, his face crimson with anger. "I will never sign anything which might imply that anyone might have reason to doubt my word, once given." Then he turned again to the window, still in a rage.

The Duke and Stedingk were considering, and spoke in subdued tones; the King paid no attention to them. He was awaiting Markow's return, and his colour came and went. He was wondering what Providence could mean by putting such a stumbling-block as this in his way. Was God intending to save him from committing a sin? But *what* sin? The sin of breaking his word or the sin of conniving at and permitting idolatry? If only God would give him some sign to let him know which of the two would be least abhorrent to Him . . .

And he folded his hands and prayed: "Oh God, send me a token of Thy Will, so that I may understand clearly what Thou wouldest have me to do . . . now, when my counsellors and my own frail heart have plunged me into so hard a perplexity. Only vouchsafe to me some sign, and I will obey, cost what it may. Oh, God, help me! Help me, and send me some sign." And he lifted his eyes up to Heaven as if expecting to see a miracle then and there. But the sky was light and clear with the rosy afterglow of sunset, and there was no miracle on that lovely September evening.

The big clock chimed the half-hour after six. The chimes roused the King from his abstraction, and recalled him to the stern realities of the present moment. He looked at his watch and found it agree with the clock.

Half an hour already *after* the appointed time!

"If the Duke had only not been so insistent on that cup of tea, we should have been on the way to the Tauris Palace before Markow got here, and all this trouble and vexation

would have been spared me," thought the King with wrathful indignation. He was boiling over inwardly when he thought of that, and of how the Grand Duchess' faith in his punctuality would be shaken.

The Duke and Stedingk had stationed themselves at the other window. . . . They, too, were awaiting Markow's return with the greatest suspense. All was silence in the room, but from below the stamping of horses and grinding of wheels on the gravel could be distinctly heard. One of the lackeys spotted the King standing by the window, and whispered to the other lackeys and coachmen, who took a covert look at the window now and again. They could all see the King and the Duke and the Ambassador at the farther window, also Reuterholm, Essen, and the rest . . . waiting.

Coachmen and lackeys began to wonder what could have happened ; they had been ordered up more than an hour ago, and though King, Duke, Ambassador, Equerries and all the rest seemed ready . . . no movements towards starting appeared to be made.

At last the same landau in which Markow had arrived before drove up. He jumped out and hurried up the stairs. When the lackeys looked up no one was visible at the windows. The coachmen drew the reins tighter and held their whips at salute, the lackeys laid their hands on the carriage doors and prepared to let down the steps ; they had waited so long, surely the King *must* be coming now . . . but no King came.

He had left his post at the window and now stood motionless in the middle of the room, having sent Stedingk to inquire what message Markow had brought. The Duke stood leaning against a pillar ; he had made some remarks when Stedingk left the room, but from the vacant expression of the King's face he inferred that not one word of what he had said had been heard or understood.

The King stood looking at nothing in particular, and his thoughts were so far away that he did not even notice Stedingk's return. When at last he *did* become aware of his presence, he was so overcome that for a while he could not speak. At length he said :

“What message has Markow brought?”

Stedingk turned strangely white as he answered:

“The Empress had already taken her seat on the dais in the Throne-room, surrounded by the members of her family and her Court, waiting for Your Majesty, when Markow arrived.”

The King turned very red. “I am sorry they should have had to wait for me. . . . It is the first time it has ever happened, but it was the Empress’ own fault . . . certainly not *mine*. What did she say?”

“Markow could not get speech of her, but Zouboff brought him word that the Empress insisted upon having an affirmation of what Your Majesty but so recently promised, in writing, in Your Majesty’s own hand; and that the Grand Duchess should have liberty to exercise her worship in public also.”

“What did you say, Stedingk? In public? That is quite a new condition, and means not only a Chapel in her own private apartments within the Palace, but a Greek-Catholic Chapel erected in Stockholm; it means ostentation and extravagance, patriarehs, priests, incense, and all the rest of it. It is a trap the Empress is setting for us in the words ‘free exercise of religion.’ I will never, *never* consent to that.”

The King was almost mad with fury. The Duke came forward and gently laid his hand on his shoulder.

“You must remember that the Empress has been waiting in the Throne-room for nearly two hours, and that being thus kept waiting is an unheard-of insult both to Her Majesty and the Grand Duchess Alexandra. I beg of you, my boy, not to carry matters too far.”

“The Empress’ demand is a far greater insult to *me*,” replied the King haughtily.

“You are young, and she is old and very powerful.”

“I fear God more than I do the Empress,” answered the King. “By her perfidious dealing with me at this moment, God wishes to show me that He will not permit me to act in defiance of the laws of my country. You know we must not forget, Uncle, that the Edict of Norrköping of 1604 has never been revoked.”

“Your Majesty has referred to that before,” answered

Stedingk, "and we have always, with all due respect and submissiveness, called Your Majesty's attention to the fact that that was a long-forgotten clause which no one regards now. Neither the people nor even the clergy would in any way desire to prevent the Grand Duchess from retaining her creed. The Act of Toleration, passed in '79, should also be considered."

"You told me so, and that was the reason I gave my consent to her following her own rites; but it is the utmost I dare concede for conscience' sake. I even consider that *that* is going beyond; but having once promised, I am bound to keep my word. . . . But I shall not yield one inch more, nor go one step farther."

"I am sure there is not one among all the Church's prelates in Stockholm who would have such scruples of conscience on this point as Your Majesty is pleased to have," said Stedingk.

"Let us call Reuterholm and Essen," said the Duke, advancing to the door, "and let us hear what *they* think about it."

But the King said: "I know the mind of God. I will not have Reuterholm here. What were you going to say, Stedingk?"

"The Grand Duchess, in her wedding garments, is waiting, and the Empress has sent word to say she flatters herself Your Majesty would not wish to cause a scandal which would be an unwarrantable insult to her, the Grand Duchess, as well as the whole Russian Empire. To judge from these words, it would seem that if Your Majesty should provoke and humiliate the Empress, she might be led to interfere with your personal liberty, which, of course, is entirely in her hands. Even should she allow Your Majesty to depart from St. Petersburg, a breach of the peace would inevitably follow: thus Your Majesty is sacrificing the best interests of the country to very secondary scruples."

"They are not secondary, they are the very highest. The Empress wanted to hustle me and to hurry me into giving more than was agreed upon. She should have considered that 'Honesty is the best policy.'"

"The people will dislike Your Majesty if you make them a laughing-stock through your whims."

“ I am willing to bear anything sooner than act against my conscience.”

“ But supposing it should cost Your Majesty your crown ? ”

“ Ah, well ; then let the crown be taken from my head ; even *then*, I will do nothing that goes against my conscience.”

The King was so violently agitated that tears came into his eyes.

“ Let me have a word with you,” said the Duke, trying to quiet him.

At that minute a carriage was heard coming up the drive.

A page announced that Count Besborodkos had arrived from the Tauris Palace with a message from the Empress.

Stedingk presently entered and said the message was : “ The Empress is waiting.”

The Duke linked his arm in that of the King and took two or three turns up and down the room, talking in low, cajoling tones.

“ I can but repeat Stedingk’s warning,” he said. “ Consider the misery to yourself and the country if this refusal of yours should lead to a war, and your attaining your majority and taking over the supreme power should be marked by so untoward an event. Like Stedingk, I am of opinion that under such circumstances as the present, you ought not to mind about conceding a point more or less to what you have conceded already ; you ought rather to endeavour to evade a controversy which leads both sides to imagine that personal insult is intended.”

“ No, I *cannot* and I *will* not,” cried the King. “ I am not going to put my signature to anything in which the words ‘ free exercise of religious rites ’ occur.”

“ But, my dear boy,” continued the Duke, in the same conciliating tone, “ I thought and hoped that in some of your private conversations with the Grand Duchess Alexandra you would have discovered her genuine inclination and desire to submit to her husband’s wishes with regard to religious, as well as other things ; therefore you need not have feared any ill consequences.”

The King made no reply, but grew almost purple in the face

as the Duke continued : “ As matters had already gone so far that the Empress and Grand Duchess Mother had laid your hand in that of the young Grand Duchess with manifold blessings and tears of affection ; moreover that in their presence also you embraced and kissed her more than once . . . ”—(the King shuddered)—“ I consider that you cannot now draw back without creating a shameful scandal only to be wiped off with shedding of blood.”

“ No, no ; I *cannot*, I *will* not. Oh, do not worry me to death, I beseech you.”

Greatly touched by the King’s grief, Stedingk now intervened.

“ The message brought by Besborodkos to Your Majesty was : ‘ The Empress is waiting.’ Your Majesty must remember that she has been waiting nigh upon two hours. Even if Your Majesty cares nothing for your own safety or the security of those who accompanied Your Majesty hither, it would be well to reflect that should war break out in consequence of Your Majesty’s present decision, the Queen and all members of the Royal Family in Sweden will be exposed to the fury and opprobrium of the populace in Stockholm. Remember what dreadful times we have passed through of late ; remember the terrible fate of the Royal Family of France, and that Sweden might become the scene of the same anarchism and revolution which devastated that country.”

“ It is hardly likely that my refusal should have such sinister consequences as that,” burst out the King, as he sank utterly exhausted into a chair. “ The horrors of revolution . . . the fate of the House of Bourbon . . . Sweden . . . France . . . nay, Stedingk, that is impossible.”

“ On the contrary, very *possible*, not to say *probable*, unless Your Majesty be wary. But why persist in this refusal ? Your Majesty could very well consult a Council of the Clergy on that point.”

“ I shall summon a clerical meeting, and Flodin shall preside and state his views,” said the King, as though in a measure relieved by the prospect.

“ But a meeting of the Clergy will take some months to

convene ; in the meantime, a great deal may happen," said the Duke. "We had better consult the Bishops and let them . . ."

"I have taken counsel with God," answered the King calmly.

"Your Majesty, time flies, and Markow is waiting without. I *must* give him an answer," cried the Ambassador.

"I know what I will do. Give me my writing materials. I must do all I can to save Sweden from the fate of France. Gentlemen," the King's hand shook as he took up his pen, "Gentlemen, I am most deeply attached to the Grand Duchess Alexandra, and I firmly believe in a happy future with her at my side . . . need I say more ? and that it is impossible for me to act otherwise than I am doing." The King furtively wiped his eyes with the back of his hand, and scratched a few lines on the paper with his quill . . . he sanded it carefully with gold sand before giving it to Stedingk.

"My Ambassador will give this to Count Markow to take to the Empress . . . it remains for her to say whether she considers it sufficient and satisfactory. Say that the King of Sweden awaits the Empress' reply. Look what I have said. It tallies exactly with the verbal promise I so recently gave."

"As I gave my word of honour to the Empress that the Grand Duchess Alexandra should in no wise and at no time be molested in the exercise of her religion, and as Your Majesty seemed satisfied with that promise, I feel sure that Your Majesty can have no doubt as to my being fully cognisant of the responsibility that promise laid upon me ; therefore I deem it unnecessary to ratify the same in writing.

"GUSTAF ADOLF."

The Duke and Stedingk exchanged meaning looks ; the former shrugged his shoulders, but neither spoke. They knew it would be utterly useless. Stedingk already had his hand on the door-handle when the King spoke, in so weary a tone that his words were scarcely audible : "Let me know when Markow returns, Stedingk. I can't wait here any longer ; I

am going to my room for the present." He went, double-locking the door after him.

Down below the carriages were still waiting. The drivers sat erect on their boxes, but the lackeys in their white silk stockings and knee-breeches no longer stood at attention.

Once more the Russian Minister drove away. How much time would elapse before his return, and would they then at last be ordered to start for the Palace? The clock chimed the hour of nine. Since before six they had stood there waiting, and . . . they were waiting still.

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The Empress Catherine's steely grey eyes wandered searchingly over the Throne-room, as they had done more than once that evening. The assembly were still waiting in their ranks with exemplary patience. . . . Those farthest from the throne indulged in low whispering which instantly ceased when the eyes of the Empress were turned in the direction of the culprits. The Empress' fan moved more quickly than before, and those in her immediate neighbourhood were sick of gazing at the dazzling splendour of her jewels. Looking upward to her face it was noticeable that the deep furrows on each side of her nose were more marked, as they were wont to be when she was annoyed, and it made her look ten years older.

Her cheeks were suffused with a deep red, but her lips were white and set. The Grand Duke Paul occupied a seat behind his mother and his daughter Alexandra. His ugly, uncouth features assumed a more evil expression as quarter after quarter struck loudly and clearly on the big clock on the malachite pedestal in the corridor. The sounds penetrated into the silent, vast Throne-room with painful distinctness, and at every stroke those assembled started and looked inquiringly at his or her neighbour, whereas the Empress' colour only deepened, and the young Grand Duchess trembled more perceptibly. As the sound died away the Empress' fan moved more rapidly still. She heard the Grand Duchess Anna Feodorowna, who sat behind her, say something in a low whisper; she turned and uttered a severe "Hush!" which not only nearly

frightened the thoughtless Grand Duchess to death, but also had the effect of reducing the rest of the Imperial Family to even more solemn silence than before.

Once again the Empress looked round the room. The ladies of the company seemed ready to faint with fatigue; the men began to look weary and limp, but when they felt the sharp eye of Catherine upon them they hastily pulled themselves together and resumed their correct attitudes. As long as it pleased Her Majesty, the "Autoerat of All the Russias," to sit there and wait, so long must her faithful and loyal subjects be content to wait also, without a murmur, even if the arrival of the Swedish King should be delayed until doomsday . . . of which there seemed every prospect.

The silvery tones of the big cloek again chimed a quarter; so carefully had the quarters been counted all along that the strokes of the full hour scarcely needed counting; yet every one, from the Empress down to the youngest page, took note of each sound. . . . Solemnly one stroke followed upon another . . . nine in all. As the last died away a rustle of fatigue, impatience, and discontent seemed to rise in the room. The Grand Duchess Alexandra had got up from her seat, casting a despairing, beseeching look at the Empress, but the latter whispered, "Sit still," and with burning cheeks and head bent low the poor little Grand Duchess resumed her seat. The Empress' fan ceased to move, and when its precious gems were no longer reflected in the light of the numberless tapers from above, it seemed as if life in the Throne-room had come to a standstill altogether. . . . When the motion of that fan left off it always did.

Presently Zouboff hastily mounted the daïs and whispered something into the Empress' ear.

Those present strove to look unconcerned at what was passing, but all eyes were riveted on the face of the Empress, for something very unusual was happening. She yawned, actually *yawned* several times running, without seeking to conceal it either; her lips expanded as though she meant to smile or to say something . . . but both smile and words were far from her. . . . She rose and tottered. Zouboff rushed to

her assistance, supported her, and led her down the steps of the daïs, and through a door at the back into her own apartments.

The whole scene had taken place so suddenly, and those nearest to her chair had moved so quickly out of the way of her enormous person, that the assembly really hardly knew of her going. However, when they saw her chair vacant, and no sign of her presence anywhere, excitement became rife, and a flutter of apprehension and curiosity pervaded the room.

The Master of the Ceremonies then mounted the daïs and announced in stentorian voice that, owing to the sudden indisposition of the King of Sweden, that day's festivities and ceremonial would have to be postponed until further notice.

The Grand Duke Paul offered his arm to his consort and, followed by the other members of the Imperial Family, led the way through the bowing and curtsying guests to another wing of the Palace. The Grand Duchess Alexandra was not of this party, having been conducted to the Empress' apartments by her attendant lady. She was weeping so bitterly that it would have been cruel to make her pass the ordeal of the inquisitive looks of the crowd.

Not long after, a message arrived at the Swedish Ambassador's to the effect that the Empress had been taken ill, and would therefore not be able to receive the King that evening.

CHAPTER XII

EXPEDITION TO RUSSIA

“IT is becoming quite a tragedy,” Reuterholm remarked to the Duke a few days later.

“Don’t you see, Reuterholm, that *he*” (indicating the room where the King then was, with a movement of his thumb) “means it to be? He believes in the transmigration of souls, and is fully persuaded that the soul of Charles XII has chosen *his* curiously formed clay for its abode; that is how this tragedy comes to be enacted at St. Petersburg. Probably he is half wild because the Empress will not let him see the Grand Duchess Alexandra, pretending she is too ill. The tenacity and self-will of the days of his childhood have developed into a most dangerous form of obstinacy and foolhardiness . . . what else makes him stay here, *à tout prix*, in direct opposition to the will of the Empress? So far she has only forbidden any Russian subject, on any pretext whatever, to visit the Swedish Embassy, and has a cordon of police drawn round the house . . . but how long is it to go on like this, in case we continue defying her and consent neither to yield nor to depart?”

“I fully agree with you, milord. Every morning when I wake I wonder whether you, the King, and all of us will be taking our next night’s rest in the dungeons of the Castle.”

“That thought has also passed through my mind, especially when I accompanied the King to the Empress’ boudoir, and heard him, with the most obstinate expression of countenance, reply ‘No, *no*,’ to every suggestion put by her regarding the insertion of the words ‘religious freedom to worship.’ But, no doubt, negotiations will be renewed, and we shall go scot-free, for many things go to point that the Empress does not give

up all hopes of seeing her granddaughter Queen of Sweden before her death, and if so, it will have to be settled soon, for it is my belief that the old lady has not many years to live."

"Yes, I thought Her Majesty very much altered when I saw her at the ball on the occasion of the Grand Duchess Anna Feodorowna's birthday. Impossible to comprehend why the King insisted on going there. After the recent unfortunate ructions one would have supposed he would have found it most derogatory, nay, impossible to show himself at the Court again. One cannot but marvel that he should have had the assurance to ask any of the Grand Duchesses to dance, maintaining his coolness of demeanour all the time he stayed there," said Reuterholm.

The Duke only shrugged his shoulders by way of answer.

"Is not everything which concerns *him* and which he *does* incomprehensible? We none of us can tell what *his* feelings may have been; we could only tell how embarrassing and awkward it was for *ourselves* to *have* to be there; but it had to be; we could not leave him to go by himself. Truly, I was never at a more funereal entertainment. The Empress showed herself for a few minutes only, and vouchsafed not a word to the King. The Grand Duchess Alexandra was absent through illness . . . to say nothing of the general feeling of *gêne* and constraint between us and our Russian confrères. It was most lugubrious. And all this uncomfortableness just because the King stuck to it that, having accepted an invitation, one was bound to go; let any one make head or tail of that if they *can*. And simply because before the estrangement the first of October had been fixed for our return, we have to remain here until that date, at the risk of our lives and liberty. I only trust we may not have to appear at Court again except for the final leave-taking."

"Unless our joint representations at last make an impression and friendly relations are renewed. It is a great thing that the Empress should feel inclined to recommence, and if the King should yield . . ."

"I have very little hope of *that*. . . We, that is you and I, gentlemen, have said all there *was* to say and talked till we

were sick of it ; it all fell on deaf ears . . . we might as well have talked to a post. What grieves me most is that one cannot but perceive that the King has won for himself a certain prestige here for being bold enough to defy the Empress Catherine. They look upon him as a marvel of strength, of character and courage . . . whereas he is only a marvel of obstinacy and pig-headedness."

"And won't he be praised up to the clouds if this daring act of his ends well, if there is no war and we get home with our skins whole ? The Swedes rather admire foolhardiness and moral daring."

"Really," said Reuterholm, "the young King would seem to have a particular gift for preparing the most appalling surprises for himself and others."

The Duke interrupted him. "Anyhow, I do not know how to interpret the Empress' patience. It can hardly only be that she desires to see her granddaughter on the throne of Sweden. Had this happened a few years ago, we should all have been clapped into prison, if not murdered outright. Russian troops would have been sent to occupy Finland, and Stockholm would have been menaced by a Russian fleet."

"What you say is perfectly correct, sir. *Now*, happily, it is not as it was years ago, and Catherine of Russia has aged visibly since Thursday evening. It may sound odd, gentleman, and I should have laughed myself and thought it incredible if anyone had told me five weeks ago when we left Stockholm . . . but I have a shrewd sort of suspicion that the great Empress Catherine has a sneaking kind of respect, not to say admiration, for our young monarch. He is the only one who has ever dared to oppose her will, and has got the best of it by showing that he is just as firm and obstinate as she is herself, if anything even more so, and that when he is, so to say, in her power and under most adverse circumstances, one of which I take to be that unfortunately, Gustaf Adolf is really head over ears in love with the Grand Duchess Alexandra, and earnestly desires to make her his wife. The Empress has found that out as well as we, and one must confess that it is not to be wondered at."

“I am inclined to think that, though rather late in the day, our friend Reuterholm is beginning to believe in our young King,” remarked the Duke sarcastically. He had not been able to shut his eyes to the fact that ever since their arrival in Russia, Reuterholm had followed the King about like his shadow and paid but little attention to the Duke. “It is high time, let us hope, that when the King attains his majority Reuterholm will be able to divest his pig-headed brain of the fixed delusion that it was he, Reuterholm, who conveyed the idea (through Markow) to the Empress that it was very easy to talk the King over, and that it was Reuterholm who meant to play the game for the King, the Empress, and most of all for his *own* advantage. I have failed altogether; to my sorrow I must admit it.”

Reuterholm gave a sardonic laugh. He said: “I think it will be all right when once we get back. There are not many weeks before the coming of age, and I fancy I sit tight enough not to run the risk of being shoved aside at the first caprice of a wild young colt.”

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The first of October, the day fixed for the departure from St. Petersburg, an awful storm was raging; such a blizzard that it had to be seriously considered whether the travelling carriages could be allowed to start at all if the storm and drift continued. Yet no one seriously talked of postponing the journey, knowing that the King would not have allowed it, and indeed they were all glad enough to leave the Russian capital and the country. In the first carriage was the King with Fleming; he would have no one except Fleming. This Russian expedition had made him vastly independent and self-assertive . . . everything was settled by himself, and his orders and wishes were deferred to as never before, except that time when the late King had been at Aix-la-Chapelle and Gustaf Adolf had been Prince Regent *pro tem*.

During the last few weeks the King and the Duke Regent had frequently been at loggerheads. One day this culminated in an open quarrel which the King ended by retiring to his room

at four o'clock in the afternoon, saying he wished to be alone and undisturbed. Since that rupture the King had enjoyed sound, untroubled sleep at night; the fact that this was so, in spite of love troubles and other worries, he interpreted as a proof that God was on his side and that he had acted rightly. The qualms of conscience he had experienced since the hour when he had pledged his word to the Empress at the Tauris Palace also no longer oppressed him. He felt himself strong enough for anything, except rebellion against God; strong enough to face all odds with the Almighty on his side; the feeling of God's presence and approval had carried him bravely through the dreadful ordeal of that last week in Russia.

Storm and snow continued, and the low, leaden skies gave no promise of any improvement in the weather. The departure took place without any of the usual formalities. The carriages with their lovely occupants and the cheering crowd which had welcomed the King on his arrival were blatantly conspicuous by their absence . . . no guard of honour . . . no Court emissaries to wish him "God-speed."

The leave-taking of the Empress had been cold, ceremonious, and constrained. She had stood in an inner room divided by a curtain, and had merely held out her hand for the customary farewell kiss, first to the King, then to the Duke, then to each gentleman of the suite according to rank and order; when the last of them had performed this duty, she had drawn the curtains together with her own hands.

Gustaf Adolf could not help meditating on that scene. When he remembered that aged face so deeply furrowed, which he had last seen half hidden by that curtain, oh! how he missed the kindly, benevolent expression with which the fairy godmother had greeted him on his arrival only one short month before. No one except his dead father had ever attracted him as the Empress Catherine had done, and now *she* was dead to him, too. He heaved a deep sigh; it grieved him that she should no longer be his friend . . . it grieved him still more to have found her false and dishonourable.

With genuine sorrow his thoughts reverted to the Grand Duchess' Mother, whom he had loved as though she had been

his own, and whom, indeed, of late he had affectionately addressed as "Mother." He thought of the Grand Duchess Elisabeth, who up to the last had been good to him and stood his friend.

As to the Grand Duchess Alexandra, he dared not think of her even, and in order not to do so, he plunged into conversation with Fleming. He lightly touched that courtier's arm, pointed up to the snow-laden clouds and then to the closed windows rattling in the storm.

"The lucky fine weather did not last long, Fleming," he said.

"No, Your Majesty, but it may come back again."

The King shook his head sadly. "It was the first and probably the last time the weather favoured me, Fleming," he said. Then followed a long silence. They had by this time reached the bleak country-side, and the snow-drifts made the high-road all but impassable. The carriage swayed and jolted dreadfully.

At length the King said: "I will profit by the occasion now that we are alone together to thank you, Fleming, for the kind words you spoke when we received the Empress' message. I had no one to stand by me, no one who understood *why* I had to act as I did; but when I talked to *you*, you answered loud enough for everyone to hear: 'I cannot advise the King of Sweden to go against the law of Sweden.' It was spoken like a man and a courtier, and from my heart I thank you, Fleming. I have often thought about you since, and were I an ordinary, private person, *you* should be my trusted friend for life . . . but you understand that that cannot be, don't you?"

"Does not a Sovereign need a trusty friend as other men do, even more so, perhaps?" asked Fleming.

The King replied: "I expect so. It is beautiful to have a friend one can at all times rely upon; one who understands when others *misunderstand*. I wanted to tell you before we get back to Stockholm, that you are the only one, Fleming, who has come out of this Russian business with a stainless character."

“ I thank Your Majesty for those gracious words. I but spoke my unbiased mind honestly.”

“ I know that. You think that ‘ honesty is the best policy,’ even as I do, Fleming. As I always mean to act up to that maxim, I should not dare to have you as my own particular friend, I must tell you, Fleming.”

The latter looked exceedingly puzzled and perturbed, as well he might.

“ Because,” said the King, patting him on the arm, “ because it would be so difficult not to make a ‘ favourite ’ of such a friend as *you* would be . . . and I must have no favourites . . . do you see, Fleming ? ”

With that the King turned away and looked through the window. When he again turned to Fleming his eyes were moist . . . so were Fleming’s.

“ But don’t let us talk any more about that. In one month from this date, ah . . . let us choose some other topic of conversation. I wanted to ask you, Fleming, whether you were not also rather taken aback by the sudden, unexpected zeal of the Empress for the Greek Church ? I was, I can tell you.”

“ Not altogether, Your Majesty. You remember that morning when we saw the Russian soldier draw his amulet from his pocket and then prostrate himself before it ? ”

“ I recall the incident but too well,” replied the King. “ It happened scarcely a fortnight ago ; then it was *midsummer*, now it is *midwinter*.”

“ I had heard various tales, but as some of them had reference to the Empress herself, I did not think it would become me to repeat them to Your Majesty. Would it interest you to hear them now ? ”

The King nodded. “ Yes, in so far as they do not relate to the scandalous reports spread about her. I don’t want to listen to any of those . . . nor any idle gossip of that kind.”

“ No, they only refer to the Empress’s participation in, and connivance at, the idolatrous worship of her subjects. I presume she does it so as to stand well with the priests, and I fully believe that her obstinate adherence to that unfortunate clause was prompted by the same motive. Of course, Your

Majesty, having been taken over the Empress' private Chapel, could not have failed to notice a statue of the Virgin clad in the most costly stuffs and bedizened with precious jewels . . . it stood over the High Altar."

The King answered: "I went over that Chapel with the Grand Duchess Alexandra."

"Ah, well, Your Majesty, I have heard that if you are lucky enough, you can sometimes see the Empress prostrate on the ground before that figure, gathering up the dust and dirt in front of it, and strewing it among the jewels of the crown she is wearing. What does Your Majesty think of that?"

"I don't quite think she does that to please the priests or her people, Fleming. King David used to strew ashes on *his* head when he had sinned," said the King slowly. "You can't understand that, of course, but if you were a great and powerful ruler yourself, you would understand that a poor sinful creature full of repentance and remorse may feel strongly inclined to strew dust and ashes on his crown. But what *I* cannot understand is that anyone should be allowed to see it," he added in a low tone.

Meanwhile snow and sleet continued to fall.

CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUDING DAYS OF THE KING'S MINORITY

THE loyal city of Stockholm turned out to a man to welcome back its youthful Sovereign so soon as the thunder of cannon from Skeppsholm announced that the flotilla was in sight. The winds had been cruelly adverse, and the people had long waited in vain, and begun to grow anxious.

But now the Royal salute was unmistakable, and from every street and thoroughfare people were streaming down to Logård, where the Royal travellers were to land. The bridge across the Norrström was black with people; crowds were swarming all over the place. A rumour had been circulated that something greatly to the honour of the young King, and very satisfactory to the Swedish people, had passed at St. Petersburg. Nobody could exactly say what it was, but all were agreed that the young King had borne himself like a man and had firmly adhered to his high principles. The Empress was reported to have said: "I am much astonished that a youth of eighteen should have the audacity to defy *me*, who have ruled the destinies of Europe for over thirty years."

Some one in the crowd exclaimed: "Charles XII, too, defied Russia in *his* time; it is only right and fitting that a young King of Sweden should show her his teeth once more."

Then others of the multitude lifted up their voices and cried: "Well said . . . we have licked her boots long enough . . . no Swede need crouch before the Russian."

Presently the good ship *Seraphim* and others came sailing up the Norrström. The young King stood on the upper deck bowing.

“God save Gustaf Adolf! God bless our young King! Long live the King!”

“The *Seraphim* is turning,” said one.

“As the King would not go out to her in a pinnace, he will not want to leave her in one,” cried another.

“We shall see him all the better then.”

“Long live Gustaf Adolf!” The hearty shout went up from a thousand throats.

“Cheer louder, so that you can be heard in spite of the roar of the cannon.”

Louder and louder grew the cheering. Men waved their hats, women their handkerchiefs. Some one was heard to observe that it was said that the principles to which the King had clung so tenaciously at St. Petersburg had something to do with certain articles of the Evangelical Lutheran doctrine. These words spread like wildfire.

“He has always been a good and God-fearing lad.”

“He will make us a good King.”

“And a thrifty one . . . why this very spring he sent his boots to a cobbler to be half-soled,” said another.

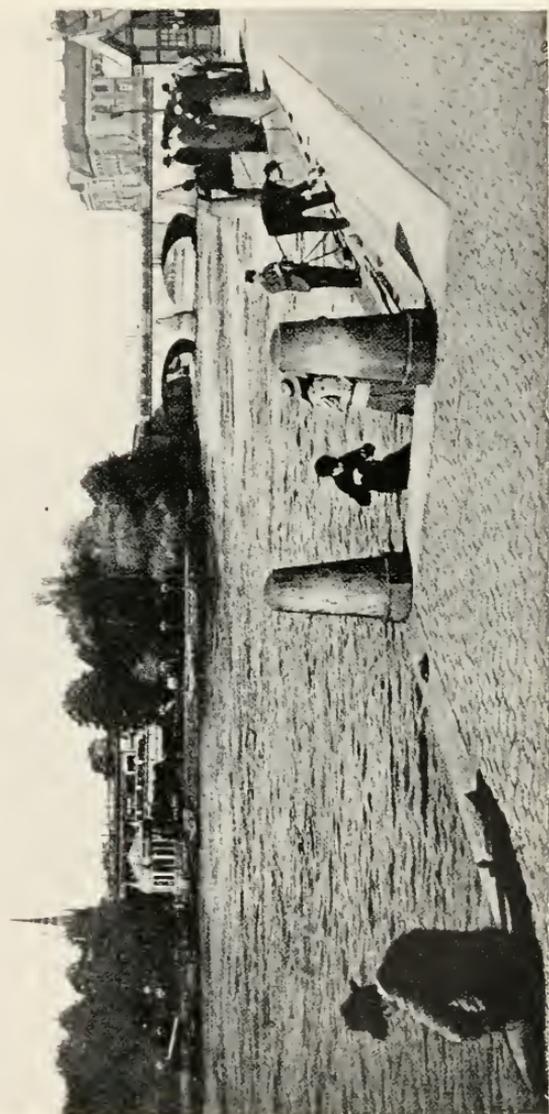
“He’ll teach the Russians to beware.”

“Long life to Gustaf Adolf! God save the King! Hurrah! God bless the dear lad as he stands there! God bless Gustaf Adolf! . . . God save our King!”

On Logård’s bridge the King was received by the great officers of State, the Royal Family, his mother at their head, the first to meet him on the Castle terrace.

The people were beside themselves with joy, and their cheers were deafening as he entered the Queen’s carriage and took a seat by her side.

To Gustaf Adolf it seemed as if his return were indeed the real beginning of his reign. The enthusiastic reception gratified his self-consciousness and pride . . . he was pleased that Reuterholm and the Duke should see how gladly the people yielded him what was his due. “God is on my side, and the people are certainly so,” he thought. “God will be with me in the future in all I do, in all I leave undone, then all *must* go well,” he said to himself as his heart beat with exultation.



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The carriage started on its way, surrounded by an escort of Guards and followed by a seething, cheering crowd of lads waving their caps and yelling loudly : " Long live the King ! "

" Oh, I say, they are going to Ulriksdal and not to Drottningholm."

" He is going with his mother, to dinner, I expect."

" He has got much thinner and whiter these few weeks."

" Well, one can understand that ; it must have taken a lot out of him to stand up against the Empress in her own capital. They say that is what he did. The Duke and Reuterholm were on the Empress' side, against him."

" Oh, lor ! did they want to do away with Lutheranism in Sweden, then, altogether ? "

The bridge over Norrström was packed with people, and the windows of the houses along the road were filled with ladies waving their handkerchiefs to the occupants of the Royal carriage.

" He holds himself more dignified and erect than when he left," volunteered some, as the King graciously returned their greeting.

" He looks every inch a man."

" He has shown himself one."

" God save the King ! Long life to the King ! "

That night, when he drove to Drottningholm, there was a torchlight procession. At Drottningholm itself there were great festivities and tableaux in the Opera Hall to celebrate the King's home-coming. Princess Sophia Albertina posed as " Svea " (Sweden), receiving the most beautiful gifts . . . the Duchess of Södermanland took part in a *Menuet*.

Nothing of what had passed in St. Petersburg was to be mentioned until the conclusion of these rejoicings. When they were over and events at St. Petersburg discussed, it dawned upon many that the oft-reiterated praises of and flattering allusions to that visit were not, on the whole, quite so appropriate as had been expected.

The young King's expression of countenance during the evening had been more or less weary and sad ; but the ladies put that down to a fit of shyness, though, if the report of

what he had done at St. Petersburg were correct, he ought certainly to have got over that failing. But his gentlemen, too, were in the very lowest of spirits.

All tales relating to the King, what he had done or not done, were of the liveliest interest to the Court at Drottningholm, which was preparing for the new star which, in a few weeks' time, was to shed its silvery radiance over their land. They were, however, not slow to perceive that a great and marked coolness had arisen between the Duke and his ward.

The young King was supposed to have observed that the whole costly expedition need not have been undertaken at all; it was also rumoured that he had saved a thousand riksdaler out of the moneys he had taken with him, i.e. his private purse. This led the Court to augur that a certain amount of stinginess might be expected in the future reign. . . .

It was a deadly dull week at Drottningholm; like living in a house from which one may be evicted at any moment, and where one feels it impossible to settle down with any degree of comfort or pleasure. Even the gossips had nothing to enlarge upon, for the King confided in no one. He took solitary walks, flicking his boots as he went with a light cane he carried in his hand. He sought out the most secluded paths in the vast park surrounding Drottningholm, much to the discomfiture of the gardeners, who had to see that all broken branches, withered leaves, and such-like rubbish were swept away betimes in the morning before the King started for his promenade. Not only had the principal walks to be kept in good order as in the time of the late King or the Queen-Mother, but the most distant and unfrequented ones had to be scrupulously tidy, for the King would not tolerate any disorder, and no one could tell what particular path he would choose.

It was his wont to go out very early and unaccompanied. He could not sleep, his mind was too pre-occupied. The trees in the park wore their grandest autumn tints of ruddy gold, and when the rays of the morning sun fell full upon them and their glory shone reflected in the clear waters of the Mälar Lake, the country seemed more beautiful at this season than in the height of summer. The cool air and refresh-

ing autumn breezes also suited his constitution better than the heat.

But it must not be supposed that the King was only bent on wandering aimlessly about the grounds, especially at that time of the year ; his pride and dignity were never laid aside even in his solitary hours. He had much to occupy his mind, and in a hot room or within four walls his head began to throb and he could not pursue any train of thought ; but in the park, in the keen fresh air, and resting on the trunk of some fallen tree, he could let his thoughts take their flight unmolested to the Grand Duchess Alexandra. On the whole, he was satisfied with the course events had taken since his return from St. Petersburg. The very fact that negotiations were still pending seemed to indicate that the Grand Duchess' affection was so genuine that she felt she could not live without him. There was no mistake about the way the people had received him on his return, and the approbation and admiration his firmness in dealing with the Empress Catherine had evoked all over Europe. Even Rosenstein had warmly expressed his approval of the King's attitude, and Doctor Flodin, with others of the Swedish clergy, had been unanimous in declaring it impossible to allow a Queen of Sweden the free exercise of her worship according to Greek-Catholic rites.

The King, therefore, was not a little elated at the notice and admiration he had won in foreign lands and the approval shown by his own subjects ; and when his love trouble threatened to become too strong for him, he thought of his triumph and kept on ejaculating, " God is with me, God is on my side." Sometimes the King shifted his position . . . he would sit with one elbow on his knee and his hand supporting his chin, flicking his boots with his cane in rhythmical accompaniment to the words he was mumbling with his teeth set : " On no other condition save that of adopting the Lutheran creed, wholly and entirely. If the Empress will consent to that, well and good."

He had half risen to go, but sat down again . . . not to think, but dream ; it was so peaceful, so still in the big park, where no sound, save the gentle rustle of the breeze and the

occasional falling of a leaf, broke his reverie. After a while he hurriedly left his seat, shook off the dead leaves that had fallen on his coat, and walked briskly to the Palace, where all was life and stir by this time. As he approached he slackened his pace and clasped his hands behind his back. He was deep in meditation of the speech he would have to make when taking over the Regency; he was not going to eulogise the Duke Regent overmuch; he would just say what etiquette required and what was consistent with the truth.

He would courteously express his thanks to the Duke for his trouble and watchfulness . . . yes, that was a good word to use . . . his "watchfulness"; he stopped to make a note of it on some ivory tablets he had with him. Then he had to search for suitable terms with which to dismiss Reuterholm . . . those he also jotted down.

Fleming came down the great avenue to meet the King.

"A messenger has arrived with tidings from St. Petersburg, Your Majesty, and with . . . this letter," he said softly.

"From Russia?" cried the King excitedly, the colour mounting to his face.

"Yes, Your Majesty; the courier has brought sorrowful news indeed. The Empress Catherine expired on the seventeenth in consequence of an apoplectic seizure she had a few days before."

The King turned very white; with trembling fingers he broke the seal of the letter sent by Stedingk.

"She had that stroke, Fleming, in the very room in which I had my last interview with her . . . I cannot help seeing the finger of God in this. She ought to have yielded . . . I am sure God willed her to give in," exclaimed the King as he read the letter.

He stopped and gazed vacantly before him for a time; then his eyes grew dim with tears, and he said in a feeble voice: "I loved her as a mother . . . before this disagreement she was so kind to me. All I love either die or have to be as though they *were* dead to me. My young days have not been happy ones, and I have no great hopes for the future since I cannot have the Grand Duchess."

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He had dropped his cane and was wringing his hands in an agony of grief; he leant against a tree and groaned inwardly. Fleming endeavoured to comfort him.

"Your Majesty must not speak like that; we, who are Your Majesty's loving subjects, believe that a very happy future awaits you. Would you not condescend to remember . . ."

But the King had started to walk to the Palace. He sighed frequently. Fleming walked by his side.

"I beseech Your Majesty not to grieve so much over what is past. Might not this unexpected tragedy perhaps be the dawn of brighter days? I beg of Your Majesty not to . . ." Fleming had spoken eagerly, and as he walked by the side of his Royal master his only thought was how best to console and comfort him.

Presently the King stopped short and cast a disapproving look at Fleming which the latter was utterly at a loss to understand. The King no longer sighed, and his eyes were dry, but he looked fixedly at Fleming as though displeased; and the latter continued: "I would beg and pray Your Majesty to try and find a little comfort in the thought of the loyalty and devotion of Your Majesty's obedient subjects . . ."

The King could stand no more. He interrupted Fleming, and in sharp, reproachful tones commanded him to take the path to the right.

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A few days later the Court moved from Drottningholm into the capital. For four and a half years the King had been looking forward to the time when he should take the government into his own hands as *the* one great event of his life; so much had he dwelt upon it, that now when it was so near he could hardly realise it.

At nine o'clock in the morning he took his way to the Council Chamber, accompanied by his uncle and the gentlemen of the Court. He was arrayed in regal garments, but wore only the Crown-Prince's crown, for Gustaf Adolf was not formally crowned "King" as yet. Many of the officials and the Suite

followed in the procession, clergy, magistrates, and civil functionaries had already assembled in the great hall.

The Queen-Mother and other members of the Royal Family were seated on a daïs at one end ; a platform at the other side was reserved for the Russian Ambassador and the Diplomatic Corps. As soon as the King had taken his place on the throne, the Master of the Ceremonies, Hauswolff, gave the sign for perfect silence. Gustaf Adolf had previously gone most minutely into every detail of the impending ceremony in the Coronation Hall, because the least hitch or hesitation in *any* ceremony of *any* kind irritated him intensely.

As far as the King was concerned all went as if by clockwork. In due time he had made his speech from the throne. Conceived in serious but simple phraseology, it made a deep impression ; he had composed it himself, and Rosenstein had read it through. The Secretary of State next proceeded to read a report of the Duke's administration of various funds ; this, of course, took the form of a grandiloquent tribute to the Duke, but the King was prepared for it, and listened with the greatest patience and a becoming show of interest to the lengthy rigmarole which occupied no less than two hours. Then the Secretary delivered the report to the King, who handed him a receipt with the Royal seal appended, and a paper to the effect that no further inquiries need be made into the details of the Duke's administration, and containing the King's thanks for the Duke's "righteous" and skilful management during his (the King's) minority.

After this document also had been read aloud by the Secretary, the King himself handed it to the Duke, who ascended the steps of the daïs to receive it. This scene between uncle and nephew might have been very touching had not both exhibited such very palpable coolness and indifference ; there was not the slightest sign of emotion on the face of either.

On returning to his seat, the Duke in a loud voice called upon the King to take the oath of accession in the presence of his subjects. A crimson hassock and a Bible were placed at the foot of the throne. The King rose to take the oath, but at

that moment it was discovered that the two documents upon which he was to take it were nowhere to be found. There ensued whispering and searching and running to and fro, up and down. There was nothing for it but for Gustaf Adolf to return to his seat on the throne. He had certainly not been prepared for such a contingency, and it was as much as he could do to preserve an outward appearance of calm during the sixty minutes which elapsed before the document containing the Coronation oath was unearthed from the Royal Archives. The one containing the oath to the people was *pro tem.* lost or mislaid.

“It is a dreadful omen that that should not be forthcoming, just on the present occasion,” thought the King.

Endless conjectures as to what Providence might intend by this chased each other through his brain. Moreover, it was borne in upon him that such carelessness could not be purely accidental, that there must be some sinister object in the background, and he tried hard to find out who *could* be at the bottom of it. Was it the doing of some Jacobite conspiracy some intrigue on the part of Russia, or—but God forbid!—some treachery of those wretched people, the murderers of his father?

The perspiration broke out on his forehead, the hot blood mounted to his head, and he found it almost impossible to restrain his wrath and nervous agitation.

“Cannot *anything* I have to take part in go off without *some* hitch, and is it always to be so?” he thought, with a great wave of pity for himself. His breath came convulsively, and he was on the verge of a collapse; but he knew he must be strong and not give way in the sight of this great assembly.

If a rumour of this misadventure (if it really *were* accident) should reach the people, it behoved their Sovereign to appear to treat it lightly and not to attach too much importance to it, or they too might interpret it as an unfavourable omen, a token of Divine displeasure . . . which God forbid, thought the King.

But how was he to divert his thoughts, to put on a calmness

he could not feel? It suddenly recurred to his mind how another monarch had once had a like long and weary wait . . . the Empress Catherine at the Tauris Palace. Up to this time he had only thought of the great wrong *she* had done *him* that night when she put such a disastrous stumbling-block in the way of his future happiness; now he realised what *her* feelings must have been during those long hours she had sat there, waiting for him and surrounded by *her* Court; he felt that God was requiting him for the annoyance he had caused then; and if Providence intended to teach him a lesson there was nothing for it but humble submission. As long as he could see what the dealings of God with regard to him meant, he would submit to anything. These reflections acted like magic upon him, and he became once more calm and dignified, ready more patiently to wait until the important document should be found. It was discovered at last; then in a clear and steady voice he took the Coronation oath.

Next came the speech which was to relieve the Duke Regent of his cares and responsibilities. The King's heart beat violently as the Duke said: "And herewith I do lay all responsibilities and offices I have exercised and held during Your Majesty's minority, as well as all authority in matters concerning the Fleet, at Your Majesty's feet."

Here he paused in order to heighten the effect of his words. "And now that I have relinquished all affairs of State, I shall retire into private life as the first and most loyal of Your Majesty's subjects."

A prolonged solemn silence ensued. The King sat like a statue; only his lips moved, almost inaudibly repeating the words of the oath he had just taken. "I have taken for my motto 'God and my people'; that motto shall ever remind me of my responsibilities and duties and the God in whose support I must trust." And then there recurred to his mind words he had often longed to be able to say, namely, these: "I am of age, I am now truly King. They had indeed a pleasant sound. *King*, not in words only, but in fact; no Duke-Regent's authority over him any more, no more favourites, carelessness, or indolence! Now *I* am King! henceforth all

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shall be well ordered in Sweden . . . in the universe ! Praise and thanks be to God for ever. Amen."

He rose from the chair, and with beaming eyes and head held high, he walked with youthful grace and majesty out of the Throne-room.

CHAPTER XIV

AIM AND OBJECT

THE young King loved Haga; it was so beautiful. Moreover, it was his own private property, which enhanced its value in his eyes. His father had, so to say, "created" it, and Gustaf Adolf had grown up with it. He remembered his father building the summer-house, to which he was wont occasionally to invite two or three of his more intimate friends from among the gay throng which gathered so often in the three vast reception rooms of that palace. The large French windows of these were mostly mirrors, in which the trees, flower-beds, well-kept lawns, and the little Brunns-Bay were reflected many times over, almost giving an impression of forming part of the interior, vying in beauty and effect with Masreliezska's finest paintings. The same enchanting effect was produced when Nature put on her spring garb of tender green, and the surface of the bay was ruffled by a gentle breeze, or when on a midsummer's eve small garland- and flower-decked boats moved quickly hither and thither on its calm bosom, or autumn turned the foliage into glorious shades of bronze and gold, and the bay threw up troubled waves crested with foam. . . . Beautiful, too, in winter, when snow covered the ground, and the bay lay bound in fetters of ice, and skaters were many, and sleighs with nets and bells skirted the banks.

In the lower reception rooms the late King had placed a valuable collection of handsome furniture and veritable gems of art. Every object, even the smallest, he had himself chosen, and appointed the place where it should rest. Indeed, everything at Haga recalled the late King to his memory.



THE PALACE OF HAGA

That was partly the reason why the young King loved the place, and resolved, if possible, to pass the first winter after his accession within its precincts. Haga suited him, too, insomuch as its limited accommodation precluded the keeping-up of a numerous Suite or the frequent festivities which only wearied and bored the King, who had more serious things to occupy his mind, and who, remembering the sorry state of his Exchequer, was anxious to save and not to spend. It would have pleased him so well to have remained at Haga for the winter, but thinking this might, perhaps, lead him to neglect some of his duties in the capital, he decided on a compromise—that is, to be in residence at Stockholm the first half of the week, and to spend the latter half at Haga. Thus every Thursday evening he drove out to Haga, and went to bed with the pleasant feeling that he was going to sleep there, and awoke with the still pleasanter consciousness that he was *not* at Stockholm. So he rose up early and took his morning walk, no matter how uninviting the weather. He was not one of those fussy people who take such extraordinary care of themselves. He had hardened himself so that in the *most* bitter cold he never wore a great-coat nor furs of any kind, and his hands and feet were *always* icy, even in the height of summer.

Friday was the chief business or working day at Haga, and so conscientious was the King, that having once fixed that day for serious work, he stuck to it without intermission from morning till night, giving neither himself nor his gentlemen any rest. On the other hand, no work at all was to be done on Saturday, which day he devoted wholly to outdoor exercise, taking long rides or walks in all weathers.

But invitations to Haga in Gustaf Adolf IV's time were not nearly so much appreciated as they had been in the time of his father. The informal and delightful evenings the guests had then so greatly enjoyed were quite a thing of the past; the young King was so grave and silent that animated conversation or hearty laughter jarred upon him. Sundays were dreaded by the Court most of all. On those days the most painful and oppressive Sabbath silence reigned over Haga; the religious services were long and wearisome, and none might

be absent. In certain other respects, too, the King was very strict and particular, and his friends were strongly of opinion that the disasters which had happened in his own country and the untoward events in France had embittered his mind, and that it would be greatly to the advantage of his character and temper if the Russian wooing should end in a matrimonial alliance. Hopes that this might eventually be so had not altogether been abandoned; negotiations were still going on, and the Emperor Paul appeared most anxious to have the King of Sweden for a son-in-law; so anxious indeed, that he offered him the crown of Norway as a wedding gift if he would only consent to a compromise on the vexed question of free religious worship for the Grand Duchess. No one quite knew whether the King would yield or not, but it was evident that he was irritable and worried. Certainly no one, save himself, regretted leaving Haga on Sunday evenings for Stockholm, where dissipation and amusement were to be had, and which was, of course, more alluring than the rural charms of Haga. So, in monotonous regularity, the winter passed, and spring was approaching. A thaw supervened, and the road to Haga was like a quagmire of dirty, slushy snow, but still serviceable enough for sleighs and sledges.

One Sunday evening towards the middle of March the King started for Stockholm as usual in a big sleigh and pair which he drove himself, an equerry by his side, a servant on the seat behind, and preceded by a groom bearing a torch.

Gustaf Adolf was silent all the way to the capital, but on arriving at the Palace he gave orders that, after the Session on the morrow, Robsalm,* accompanied by skilful and experienced workmen, should come up to the Palace to unpack a huge chest from St. Petersburg. Among other costly gifts which the King had received from the Empress Catherine and the Imperial Family during his stay at St. Petersburg, had been a mirror of enormous dimensions, the largest ever made or seen. The other presents had long ago been put in suitable places, but the King had never yet had that great chest opened; now he thought it was about time, and after the Session on the

* Court cabinet-maker.

Monday morning he went into the large hall where the mirror was to be put up, to personally superintend its unpacking.

As he entered he said not a word to the workmen assembled round the tightly screwed-up chest; he only gave a sign of command to begin their work; but when they set to to unscrew it with the utmost care and attention, he turned away as if he could not bear to look on. When the grating and rasping of tools ceased, and everything was quiet, he left his place in the window and drew nearer.

"I will uncover it myself," he said, stooping down; and, quickly tossing aside the thick layer of finest sawdust on the top, he proceeded to remove the innumerable sheets of soft tissue paper with which the glass was covered; last of all came a voluminous swathing of Japanese silk; with trembling hand the King withdrew this also. Beneath lay the great, costly mirror . . . shivered into a thousand atoms.

Usually, if anything went wrong the King was exceedingly angry, and gave vent to his displeasure. . . . In this instance, he neither lost his temper nor upbraided anyone for the accident.

He turned deadly pale, and seemed petrified for a few moments; then he silently took the way to his own apartments and locked himself in, as his custom was. When he again showed himself, later in the day, his eyes were red and inflamed. A few days afterwards a courier was despatched to Russia.

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Early spring had melted into summer, and about midsummer it began to be mooted abroad in Stockholm that the King was meditating a journey. Nobody knew where to, but it was conjectured that his absence might be of some duration, because he was working unusually hard and settling various matters, apparently that he might afterwards have the more time at his disposal.

The Queen-Mother had taken up her residence in the capital, as had also the Duke and Duchess of Södermanland, for as the Duke had been ill and his consort far from well, they had not as usual gone to their summer residence, Rosersberg.

One day towards the end of June the young King paid a visit to the Duchess ; he looked so white, so thin, and so overwrought as he entered, that she, rising to meet him, exclaimed with her usual impulsiveness : “ Good Heavens, dear boy, how are you ? I bet Your Majesty goes to bed very late, gets not a wink of sleep all night, and gets up early.”

“ How do you know that, Aunt ? ” asked the King, with just the ghost of a smile.

“ I have eyes, and can see it for myself. You need more rest and sleep than other people, and you look as if you never got any. But there, it has always been the same from your babyhood.”

“ People need a good many things they never get,” replied the King with a deep sigh. “ You are right, though ; I *am* terribly tired ; ” and with that he sank down on a seat beside the Duchess on her pretty little pearl-grey sofa.

“ What can you have been doing to tire yourself so ? ” asked she, dying with curiosity to find out if anything of importance were going to happen ; it would not have done for her to put a direct question, the King being such a stickler for etiquette. So she had to beat about the bush. He was so long in making a reply that she fixed her eyes upon him at last, and, as if by chance, she took her vinaigrette out of her pocket, put it to her nose, and then laid it down on the table in front of the King. Gustaf Adolf raised the tiny jewelled casket in his hand, smelled it, and took a deep breath.

“ I have had a great deal to think about,” he answered ; then he closed his eyes, changed colour, and the Duchess perceived that he was on the verge of fainting.

“ Good Lord ! what is it ? What can I do for Your Majesty ? May I offer you a cup of tea ? It seems that there is no one to look after you, my friend, and see that you take a little care of yourself. You want some one to fuss about you a little, indeed you do.”

The Duchess paused an instant, hoping the King would discuss his projects with her ; in her excitement she added, “ You are not fit to take care of yourself.” No sooner had she uttered these words than she became aware of the mistake

she had made. She saw the King was offended, and remembered with horror how touchy he had been not so very long ago with Rosenstein, because it had somehow come to his ears that it was said he was still under the influence of his former preceptor. Of course, the Duchess had meant no offence; she was only burning to hear whether the King was really going to seek a wife; so she tried to put matters right by saying, "I mean that Your Majesty injures your health by so much over-exertion."

"I thank you for your solicitude on my behalf," he replied, plucking the petals one by one from a rose he had taken from a *jardinière* on the table. Then he sat silent, gathering up the rose-leaves in his hand; the stalk he put into the button-hole of his coat, and a thorn pricking his finger recalled him to himself, and he rose to go.

When he had impressed the customary "adieu-kiss" on his aunt's hand, he at last remembered to inquire after the health of his uncle. "That was the real object of my call, besides paying *you* a visit. . . . And you were near having me ill here . . . another patient."

"I sincerely hope that that 'other patient' is all right now. But, seriously, does Your Majesty think to be really well and strong enough to undertake a long journey?" said the Duchess, bent on finding out the King's aim and object.

"How do you know that I *am* intending to go a long journey, Aunt?"

"Report says Your Majesty intends going to Reval to meet the Emperor of Russia, who intends travelling thither by sea."

"I know that such a report *has* got abroad," he replied, again smelling the Duchess's handsome vinaigrette.

"They say you are going for *pleasure*," hazarded the Duchess, with particular emphasis on the last word.

The King caught her meaning, and gravely shook his head.

"No, Aunt, it is not quite as you think. . . . I am not going to Reval to have an interview with the Emperor of Russia; the same obstacle to my union with the Grand Duchess Alexandra that existed then, exists at this present

moment. Besides, who told you I was going to journey to foreign lands? I am sure *I did not.*"

The King spoke rather irritably; therefore she replied in haste: "People are always so much interested in anything which concerns Your Majesty."

"Then you may tell any one who is anxious to know that I am simply going to Karlserona, that is the truth."

The King was showing his worst side just now; he took up his hat and went.

When he was well out of the way, the Duchess hurried to her glass, and mockingly put her finger to her nose, saying aloud to herself: "There, that was all you *got* for your pains."

A few days after the King's departure from Stockholm, the Queen-Mother called upon the Duchess of Södermanland, who was still indisposed.

Sophia Magdalena, with much rustling of silken garments, took her seat in a comfortable armchair by the bedside of the Duchess. After a few conventional inquiries after each other's and the Duke's health, the conversation of the two august sisters-in-law naturally reverted to topics of the day, notably to the most interesting subject of the King's journey, the Queen herself leading up to the Grand Duchess Alexandra. She said: "I should really much like to know what your Duke thought of that young Princess, and whether she is indeed as irresistibly attractive as people say."

The Duchess thereupon enlarged with much *empressement* on what the Duke *had* said.

"It seems to me that my son was really deeply smitten with the Grand Duchess," said the Queen; then added, in a voice lower than usual: "He ought to have thought it a piece of great good fortune if she had come here."

"Oh, no doubt; it would have been *most* fortunate," exclaimed the Duchess.

The Queen deliberately shook her head.

"Does my dear sister really think so? I am not quite so sure that *I* do. I expect at the age of fourteen the Empress

Catherine may herself have been quite as lovable, good, and gentle; still, we know that she was implicated in the plot against her husband, and consented to his assassination. I cannot say that her late Russian Majesty's manner of life, in later years especially, was at all calculated to make me eager for this union; I apprehend that the pretty little chip may turn out to be one of the old block in time." This she said with the peculiar little lisp that made even sharp and sarcastic words sound harmless and mild from her lips. Then she said, with reference to their former surmisings: "Do *you*, perhaps, know where the King has gone?"

"My dear sister," said the Duchess, feeling rather humiliated that she could not truthfully say she *did*, and quivering with curiosity, "I do not know, but I am not so silly as to believe that *you* do not."

The Queen gave a forced smile with the conscious look of one who has been "caught."

"If *any* one *does* know anything about his journey or its object, I am sure it is *yourself*." Her tone invited further confidence. The Queen made no reply, but fidgeted with her white silk mittens.

The Duchess continued: "I have often wondered how it could be that after the recent fiasco in his love-affairs, His Majesty should already be looking round for another consort, for I do not for a moment doubt that that *is* the object of his pilgrimage; and would you like to know the conclusion I have come to?"

Sophia Magdalena again shook her head.

"Well, my opinion is that the young King, whose scruples of conscience and notions of honour are so exaggerated, considers it his filial duty to get married when he is eighteen, as he was prevented from doing so at seventeen, which really was the age fixed by the late King. Do you not think that my supposition may very likely be right?"

"I would not say it may not," replied the Queen faintly.

"Further, I think that the King may very likely extend his travels to Vienna, and there pay his court to the French Princes. . . . Is not that possible too?"

“Oh, everything is possible,” answered the Queen. “My son favours me with so few letters ; days and weeks pass that I do not hear from him,” she added plaintively.

And that was all the information the Duchess got out of the Queen, who, having said all she had to say, rose and bade her sister-in-law farewell.

When the stately Queen had gone, and the little Duchess came to reflect on their conversation, she was much annoyed to think *she* had learnt nothing new, and that the Queen’s visit had merely been a sly pretext to find out how much she (the Duchess) knew of the King’s intentions ; and she had got what she wanted, whereas *she*, the Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte, was just as wise as she had been before. This enraged her.

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Never had a Royal journey been wrapped in so much mystery as this one. All that was publicly known was that the King, with a few gentlemen of his suite and his physician, Doctor Rung, had passed Ystad harbour in his yacht. It was not known until the yacht returned to Ystad that, immediately after going on board, he had reversed his orders and commanded the captain to make for Lübeck. But as the winds were very adverse, the King inquired which would be the nearest convenient port into which the yacht could put. Rostock was mentioned as being fairly accessible, but it was suggested that Stralsund would even be better ; the King accordingly gave orders to steer for the latter. As soon as the yacht entered that port the two Royal carriages were landed first ; the King and suite remained on board until they were ready, as he did not wish to be recognised ; but as several hours elapsed before everything was in order, there was every likelihood of the King’s incognito being betrayed.

There was also much difficulty in deciding which road to take . . . the King not considering it courteous to drive through Prussian territory without paying his respects to the King of Prussia at Berlin, which he did not feel inclined to do then. Equally distasteful was it to him to pass through the

Duchy of Mecklemburg, his being, in a manner of speaking, betrothed to the Duke's daughter ; it might even be that the Swedish King might meet with insult from the inhabitants . . . no one could answer for that. In order to be able to pursue his journey unmolested he took another name at every place where they changed horses ; he had even done the distance between two such halting places on foot. It was known that His Majesty had passed through the Duchy of Mecklemburg without any difficulty, but nothing more had transpired.

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A message had been received from the King at Rosersberg that he intended paying his uncle, the Duke of Södermanland, a visit one afternoon on his way back to Stockholm. A comfortable couch had been wheeled out into the garden for the Duke, who was now convalescent after his sharp attack of rheumatism and gout. There he lay, calmly resting, smoking his beloved pipe and watching the gardener and his men raking the paths and weeding in the hothouses, when suddenly the Duchess came flying from the Castle and, panting for breath, told him of the impending visit.

"Oho, he condescends to announce his visit," muttered the Duke. "You'll just see what sort of a reception *I* shall give him . . . it will be a little retribution for the charming manner in which he makes it a point always to act in direct opposition to my advice. He never would have any of it, and has now added the grave insult and humiliation of not giving me the slightest clue to the object of his journey. *You* may receive him. . . . *I* shall certainly *not*."

"But," exclaimed the Duchess, "what do you mean to do ?"

"I mean that I do not intend to see him ; as long as he remains at Rosersberg I shall keep in bed, and pretend to be asleep ; I mean some day to revenge myself on the ungrateful rascal."

The Duchess went into fits of laughter at this speech.

"Ugh ! my good friend ! Just reflect how very unbecoming and undignified such conduct on your part would be ; and you

can't go to bed in broad daylight without some good reason. If you *are* vexed with the King you will have to do your very best to conceal your feelings before the public; consider how very odd it would look if you really did as you say."

The Duke rose from his couch and came and stood in front of the Duchess, his arms akimbo.

"Odd? Odd indeed? And yet you don't seem to think the way he has behaved 'odd' at all. He owes his life to me, yea, his very existence. Are you not aware that I might considerably have curtailed and undermined his power during the long years I was his guardian? But out of friendship and affection I did all I could for him. I sacrificed sleep and health to his interests. I wanted him to be happy . . . and *he* does all he can to injure me."

"Oh no, don't say that," cried the Duchess.

"But I *do* say it, and it *is* so. Has he not on two occasions made me break my word with regard to his matrimonial affairs? First he refused to ratify the promise I made in his name to the Princess of Mecklenburg, and then he broke off the alliance with the Grand Duchess Alexandra. Altogether, he has exhibited the most flagrant ingratitude. Has he shown me the least consideration since he took the government into his own hands? Has he not deprived me of the revenues to which I was entitled under the Regency, and only left me the bare income I had before that time, and which is not nearly sufficient for the needs of our establishment and my own private requirements. You know that as well as I do."

"Yes, I know all that; at the same time I consider that that is no excuse for your saying that you mean to revenge yourself on the poor lad."

The Duke having been able to give free vent to his wrath had grown calmer, and began to be rather ashamed of the words he had spoken in his haste.

"I am not going to revenge myself upon him; I would not, even if I had the chance," he said; "neither shall I take to my bed nor sleep whilst he is staying at Rosersberg. But you had better see him alone first; I shall come in later . . . quite soon enough for *my* pleasure." The Duke had lain down again



CHARLES, DUKE OF SÖDERMANLAND (UNCLE OF GUSTAF ADOLF IV)
AFTERWARDS KING CARL XIII

and resumed his pipe, whilst the Duchess carefully wrapped the silk rug about his feet.

“But it won't do for me to be lying here and dozing. . . . In an hour or two he will be down upon us, and you must go and dress, my dear. . . . Recollect he is mighty particular in all details.”

“Oh yes; I will put on and stick on everything he can possibly desire. Ugh!”

When the Royal carriage stopped at the terrace at Rosersberg, the Duchess only was there to receive the King, who looked searchingly round for the Duke. He tried not to appear vexed, and said: “I fear I have arrived at an inopportune moment; is my uncle not at home?”

“Oh yes, fortunately he is at home, and will be here directly; but he has scarcely recovered from his illness, and has frequent relapses. I am extremely sorry he should just have had one on the day Your Majesty had fixed for your visit here,” said the Duchess.

“Yes, it is much to be regretted,” replied the King stiffly. Then he offered his arm to the Duchess, and led her into the hall; he did not linger there, but straightway took her into the blue boudoir close at hand, and shut the doors leading to the reception-room in which the suite were assembled.

“Now you shall hear from my own lips, dear Aunt, the aim and object of my travels,” he said, as he took a seat opposite the Duchess.

“My purpose was to seek a bride. For reasons of difference of faith I could not have her I loved, consequently I have plighted my troth to the Princess Frederica Dorothea Wilhelmina of Baden.”

The Duchess could hardly repress a smile at his curious use of the word “consequently.”

She rose and said: “Be pleased to accept my heartiest congratulations, and be assured that I shall always take the warmest interest in Your Majesty's happiness.”

The King's eyes were moist as he answered: “I never doubted your interest, *ma tante*, in all that concerns me, and I

would take this opportunity to assure you that I reciprocate your kind feeling and affection from my heart."

The Duchess, who had already been overdone by her recent skirmish with the Duke and the bustle of preparations for the reception of the King, quite broke down when she saw his emotion, and embraced him tearfully.

"I daresay I shall be happy enough with the Princess, who is gentle, kind, and pretty, but her shyness is almost past belief, and she will have need of much good advice."

"Your Majesty need not trouble about that," said the Duchess, who, at a sign from the King, had taken her seat again on the sofa. "Her shyness will appeal to and interest most people."

The King looked thoughtful. Then he said: "The Princess is certainly extremely shy, I never saw anyone so much so," and he shook his head dubiously. "Can you fancy, *ma tante*, we were in each other's company for three whole days, and she never once raised her eyes when I spoke to her. On the third day, just before I was leaving, I said to her, 'Madam, during the days I have had the pleasure of being in your presence you have not once condescended to look at me. I have not had even a chance of seeing the colour of your eyes.' Then she *did*, at last, lift them."

"Yes, and what colour were they then?" queried the Duchess, smiling.

"The most beautiful dark blue, but the lashes were wet with tears," answered the King gravely; and turning away his head he fell into a profound reverie, from which the Duchess roused him by saying: "May I make so bold as to inquire how Your Majesty has settled affairs with Russia?"

"As yet, neither quite satisfactorily nor quite the reverse. Naturally, I have done all I could to bring my union with the Grand Duchess to a happy conclusion; but as I, in my capacity as ruler, could not let my rights be trampled upon, and as *I could not give way*, and the Emperor Paul *would not*, I had to commence negotiations with another Court. I wrote to the Emperor Paul to inform him of my intentions, but promised at the same time that if he were willing to give me the hand of

the Grand Duchess without insisting on the condition of 'free exercise of religion,' I would not continue negotiations in another quarter. Nevertheless he insisted on that clause, and would *not* compromise, nor could I, of course," added the King hotly, and turned away. "After that I communicated to the Emperor my intention of choosing a consort closely allied to the Court of Russia, which was true; you will remember, *ma tante*, that this Princess of Baden is sister to the Grand Duke Alexander's wife."

The Duchess was not quite ready with an answer, so the King went on: "It should therefore be a foregone conclusion that I wish to maintain amicable relations with Russia, and I wrote to the Emperor to that effect whilst in camp at Ladugårdsgård, but not having received any reply, I have rather hastened matters with regard to the marriage, and trust the Princess will be here before the end of next month."

All this while the King had sat quietly opposite the Duchess. Now he rose from his seat, and excitedly paced up and down the room. Judging by the convulsive twitching of the muscles of his face, the Duchess knew he was thinking of something which deeply affected him, and she anxiously waited to hear what he would say next.

"I have continued the same courteous behaviour towards Russia as before, although they have not shown much consideration for me. Of that I can give you a very tangible instance, *ma tante*, as you are in some sort of way mixed up with it, and I should like to hear your opinion, I will tell you."

The King had stopped short in front of the Duchess, and stood with his eyes fixed upon her face as he spoke. Her curiosity was intense, but she tried to conceal it, inasmuch as she felt that it was a matter of some importance the King was about to communicate to her, and she was afraid of frightening him into not telling her anything at all, should she appear too eager to want to hear. Therefore she was the more amazed when he began:

"You know when I was in Russia the Grand Duchess Paul, now Empress of Russia, told me how much she liked our Swedish gloves."

"Your Majesty did tell me . . . and that was the reason I . . ."

"Of course, of course ; and when I had told you, you kindly sent her some by Count Galowkin. Well, I sent her a present of gloves about the same time."

"And then ?" asked the Duchess, bursting with curiosity.

"Yes, fancy, *ma tante*, those *I* sent were rejected. The Empress refused them on the plea that she only accepted presents from relations, not from strangers like me."

The Duchess felt cold shivers down her back, and pretended she had dropped her lace handkerchief. She stooped to pick it up, by way of collecting herself, as she thought of the double meaning of the Empress' words. They certainly pointed to the fact that as he would not marry her daughter, he could not be looked upon in the light of a relative. . . . But they might equally well have been interpreted as referring covertly to the rumours as to the King's legitimate birth. She quaked at the idea that he might suspect the latter was *her* interpretation.

He got up, but kept his steely blue eyes glued to her face.

"Well, *ma tante*, what say you to that ?" he asked, biting his lip.

The Duchess replied boldly : "I cannot quite grasp what the Empress meant. It was a very foolish remark, anyhow, for you are related to her just as much as I am, perhaps one degree more remotely, but that is nothing."

The King's troubled expression changed into a smile ; he once more sat down by the Duchess' side, and gently stroked the hand she had laid on his knee with his own icy one.

"Yes, it was a most stupid thing to say, was it not ?" he said with a loud laugh ; "and you see, *ma tante* . . ."

The Duchess moved a little nearer to him ; she thought he was going to be very confidential. . . . But, as ill-luck would have it, at that moment the door opened, and in came Duke Charles. The King rose from his seat on the sofa and advanced towards him.

"I came to Rosersberg," he said stiffly, "that I might announce to you with my own lips my engagement to the daughter of the Hereditary Grand Duke of Baden, the Princess

Frederica Dorothea Wilhelmina." He spoke as if rehearsing a part, or repeating a lesson, and as the Duke only bowed and said nothing, the King added in an even colder tone if possible : " I know I cannot count on *your* approval, Unele, because I know how strongly you advocated my union with the Russian Grand Duchess ; but you understand, of course, that having once refused to give way on the question of religion it would not have been consistent with my principles to do so later."

Thereupon the Duke replied as calmly and coldly : " You are right, my dear nephew, in your supposition that I was anxious for your marriage with the Grand Duchess Alexandra, not only because I considered it might be for the happiness and welfare of Your Majesty, but also for the good of the country."

The King answered angrily : " That was not always your opinion, my dear Unele. I have not forgotten that at one epoch of your guardianship a *breach* with Russia was thought advisable and commendable for the ' good of Sweden.' It was about the time when the Mecklemburg alliance was to the fore."

The Duke was on the point of making an angry retort to this reproach of the King's, for his changeable policy, but a warning glance from the Duchess restrained him, and he continued : " I thought I might have been wrong, and therefore I altered my views ; then, as now, I feared the danger Your Majesty and the country might be exposed to from Russia, but as Your Majesty seems reassured on that point, I can only offer my congratulations . . . especially as it is Your Majesty's individual happiness which is at stake, and no one else's ; it would be unbecoming in me or any other man to find fault with the choice Your Majesty has made."

" I thank you for your good wishes," said the King bowing. The colour had mounted to his temples during the Duke's speech, but he strove hard to master his feelings, and said : " I think I should very much like to have a look round Rosersberg before I leave."

" I am sorry I cannot offer to be your guide, but the state of my health precludes my taking any exercise."

" Perhaps my aunt will be good enough to bear me company,"

said the King, offering his arm to the Duchess; and so these two wended their way along the avenues of Rosersberg, but the King seemed absent and pre-occupied and scarcely uttered a word. When the Duchess was tired (the King was never tired!) they took tea in an arbour overgrown with honeysuckle. Here they were joined by the Duke, and he and the King conversed just so much as was needful to prevent the suite from suspecting that any but the most cordial relations obtained between the two.

At length the King rose to take his leave, saying that he wished to be back in Stockholm before night, and was going to pay a flying visit to his mother at Ulriksdal, *en route*. He stepped into his carriage and drove off, waving a gracious farewell to the Duke and Duchess, who stood on the steps, watching the carriage out of sight. . . . Then the Duke, rubbing his hands, remarked to his spouse: "Now that piece of hypocrisy is done with, ugh! Let me have my pipe back now. Such coldness in this heat, ugh!"

CHAPTER XV

THE PRINCESS

HIS MAJESTY, the Royal Family, and the Court were at Drottningholm waiting for the arrival of the sloop with the King's bride-elect on board from Fittja, whither the Princess had travelled by road from Grips-holm. On the landing-stage were, besides the King, the Duchess of Södermanland, Princess Sophia Albertina, and Duke Frederic Adolf. Duke Charles was absent from illness; the Queen-Mother stood on the steps of the terrace. The Royal marriage had been hurried on so much that no one, least of all the young Princess herself, had had time to collect themselves. In the first place she had been confirmed at Karlsruhe in all haste, for at all costs the King insisted on the preliminaries for the wedding being completed before November 1st that same year, and the Princess had not been confirmed, nor, indeed, was her general education in any way finished.

The Princess' mother had wished to postpone the marriage, but His Majesty the King of Sweden insisted on its consummation before November 1st, and there was no gainsaying his will.

Immediately after her confirmation the Princess started for Stralsund, accompanied by her mother and a younger sister. On the day of the marriage by proxy, in which Baron Taube represented the King, the Princess embarked on board the frigate *Manlighet*, which brought her over to Sweden with more speed than had been calculated upon; the passage to Karlsrona, where the King had gone to meet her, had occupied twenty-four hours only. The stay there, the journey thence in company with the King, the halts at Wexiö and Jönköping,

appeared like some unaccountable dream to the youthful Princess, who had a feeling as if she were going through it all in her sleep; then she proceeded to Stockholm, leaving the King *en route*. The Queen-Elect was to take a few days' rest at Gripsholm before being presented to the Royal Family at Drottningholm, where she was to take up her residence until her state-entry and the nuptials in Stockholm, on October 31st.

But the young Princess had hardly time to recover from the shock of parting from her beloved relatives at Karlsruhe, and the more cruel leave-taking from mother and sister at Stralsund, and she never ceased longing to get back to her own family and country. As she drove over the drawbridge and under the big archway into the castle at Gripsholm she thought she had never beheld a more gloomy and dismal place. She suspected secret doors behind the Gobelin hangings and pictures. From the walls weird portraits looked down upon the Child-Princess, who lay wide awake in her bed, terrified of the ghosts, and expecting every moment that the portraits would step out of their frames and come and strangle her.

The lake in front of her windows was the Mälär Lake, of which she had heard as being like a smiling silvery mirror dotted with beauteous islets; but Mälär in the continuous storm and rain was as dull and grey as the sky itself, and the Princess wondered whether Drottningholm, which she knew looked out upon the same waters, were as ancient and uneanny a fortified castle as Gripsholm, with prison turrets and dark, damp dungeons. She fretted and worried about the approaching introduction to the Royal Family, none of whom she had ever seen, with the exception of the King, and he had done nothing but give her instructions as to what she was and was not to do, both during their stay at Karlserona and their subsequent journey together, until the poor girl felt convinced that never, in all her life, would she be able to learn how she ought to sit or to stand, leave alone how she ought to bow or to talk in this new country of her adoption.

With the exception of one single maid, the entire German suite had returned to Baden with her mother, and from the



PRINCE FREDERIK ADOLF, DUKE OF ÖSTERGOTLAND
BROTHER OF GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS III

minute she had embarked on board the *Manlighet* she had been surrounded completely by strangers and, worse than all, her chief Lady-of-the-Bedchamber, Countess Piper (*née* Ekeblad) was a haughty, stupid person, whose only talent apparently lay in provoking and irritating all she came in contact with, and especially the Princess, who was somewhat hot-tempered by nature. Of the six Ladies-in-Waiting, some had joined her at Stralsund, some at Karlsrona. But they were all very young, and had never seen much of life in the great world, so that the poor little Princess really had no one near her who could be any comfort or help in prompting her as to her behaviour in these new and strange surroundings. That, perhaps, had been the reason the King himself had taken so much trouble with her, and she fancied that he had, in consequence, already tired of her.

However, the two days' rest at Gripsholm was at an end now, and she was to journey to Drottningholm to meet the Royal Family, who were to replace the dearly-loved mother who had understood and advised her, the good-natured loving father, the bright, merry sister, and the one and only brother. No, the young Princess had found neither calm nor consolation, and was scared and ready to sink into the earth with fright and nervousness when she beheld the stately white Palace of Drottningholm in the beautiful light of a magnificent sunset on this most lovely of October days.

A large crowd had collected in front of the Palace and on the roads leading to it. Flags and banners waved gaily in the breeze, and countless richly-decked little boats lined the shores. Numerous carriages, some stationary, some hurrying down in full gallop, were also to be seen, and many people had clambered up trees near, the better to see the lady who was then approaching in the sloop gay with festive bunting.

The thunder of cannon vibrated in the air, and loud cheers rose. The sloop glided nearer and nearer to shore, and with beating heart the Princess was now able to pick out her slender young bridegroom, tallest of a group . . . the new family. Behind him the Court, and behind the Court the people, packed together by thousands.

An Exiled King

When the King, looking grave and very worried, came to offer her his hand and help her disembark, the Princess was on the verge of fainting. She could not help thinking how good-looking the King would be if he had not that cold, proud look and straight, stiff carriage. Now, as they caught sight of her, she felt herself the cynosure of thousands of inquisitive and criticising eyes. She was as yet childlike and undeveloped, and appeared extremely young for her age . . . sixteen. She was not beautiful, but she had the most lovely complexion, a very pretty mouth, and looked exceedingly interesting. Her eyes were shaded by long lashes ; they and the shape of her eyebrows gave her face a rather melancholy expression. Her hair, of a rich chestnut brown and not powdered, was thick and wavy, and fell in short curls and ringlets over her neck and forehead.

The King gave his arm to his bride, and led her up to his two aunts and his uncle, and introductions followed. So nervous was the Princess, so shy and awkward, that she could not utter a word. Then the young couple went up the terrace to greet the Queen-Mother. The Princess advanced stooping and her eyes fixed on the ground, but now and again she cast a furtive look round or at the King. When they reached the spot where the Queen-Mother was standing the Princess was going to kneel to kiss her hand, but Sophia Magdalena seemed to have taken a fancy to her son's bride, and would not permit it, but gave her a hearty embrace and a kiss on her fair forehead. With amazement the King noticed that his haughty, stately mother appeared quite affable and kind to his pale, seared bride. Majestic and every inch a Queen the elder woman would always look . . . but what sort of a Queen was this little shy girl ever likely to be ?

After this introduction the Royal party went to the King's apartments, where he himself presented the Equerries and Captains of the Guard to his bride. That over, the Queen-Mother took the Princess to her own rooms to rest a while.

When Sophia Magdalena fastened the magnificent sparkling necklace, which was her wedding gift to the bride, round her

neck, the Princess kissed her hand, and cast a covert glance at herself in the looking-glass. *She* was quite satisfied with her dress, as, indeed, she was with everything her mother had chosen and done for her, but the Queen-Mother thought within herself that the future Queen's get up was remarkably dowdy and shabby.

There was not much rest for the Princess, for she had to receive many members of the Court, after which she and the Royal Family again returned to the King's apartments, where they remained until it was time for the gala performance in the theatre. The play was to be "Iphigenia in Aulis."

Gustaf Adolf was so weary of having to think both for himself and the Princess that he sat lost in a brown study, and entirely forgot to join in the applause after the aria, "Sing people, sing, in honour of your Queen," the play having been selected partly for that air. The bride felt very nervous when the clapping of the Royalties was taken up frantically by the audience, yet she was in some degree flattered and surprised, and at a sign from the King graciously bowed her acknowledgments all round.

On leaving the theatre for the Palace a superb sight met their eyes. The whole of Drottningholm was brilliantly illuminated, as were all the islets in the lake, and the boats; the evening was so mild and still that they could enjoy its beauty to their hearts' content.

After supper the King and other members of the Royal Family returned to Stockholm; the Princess and her suite remained at Drottningholm. The King drove over to see her every day during the week following, and as he had been rather annoyed at the Princess' not being able to take part in the national dances at Karlserona, he desired that she should have some practice and instruction, it being imperative for her to take part in the fancy-dress ball to be given at the wedding festivities. Thus every evening there was a dance at Drottningholm.

But the poor little homesick Princess had not the very least inclination to dance; she was ready to cry her heart out with nervousness at the impending State-entry into Stockholm and

the wedding ceremonies ; above all, she was so desperately homesick ; moreover, she always felt tired, and had she had no other cause for tears, she could have wept for sheer physical weariness. If only she did not get ill during these festive days . . . how angry the King would be should such a contretemps happen. She thought that nearly everything in life seemed to displease the King, and she felt so depressed, so unhappy, that she often wondered how at home, at Baden, people could have called her merry and bright ; she could hardly imagine that she was the same girl who had had such jolly romps with her sisters and brother at Karlsruhe, and in the park at Schwetzingen. When she remembered that, and thought of her loved ones so far away, tears would bedew her long lashes in the midst of her attempts to master some intricate step of the dance.

At last the eventful day dawned. As early as seven o'clock in the morning two Equerries and other members of the Court arrived at Drottningholm to fetch the Princess who, escorted by a company of hussars and the usual outriders, was to make her solemn entry into the capital.

The route to be taken lay through Kungsholm,* the red village, where boards had been laid on either side of the road so as to make it a little wider, and at the corner of the School of Designers a triumphal arch *à la Romaine* had been erected, bearing on one side the legend, "*Porta et Pectora patent,*" and on the other, which was turned towards the city, "*Frederica Dorothea Wilhelmina, Queen of Sweden ; welcomed by the Nation with affection and respect, and with joy and good wishes from young and old, rich and poor.*"

No doubt these expressions of loyalty and welcome would have gladdened the heart of the object of them had she been able to understand them ; but the young Princess had not learnt any Swedish, therefore she grasped as little of this welcome as she had done of the Sheriff's speech delivered in her honour (but naturally also in Swedish) when she had stopped at the gate of the capital.

The young Princess sat and shivered in her *décolletée* finery. She had been told she must on no account hide its splendour

* A suburb of Stockholm.

by either cloak or shawl . . . the journey seemed endless to her. She tried to remember that she was expected to smile and bow graciously right and left when the crowd cheered, but alas! she often forgot. She felt so bitterly cold, and was so tired with the long drive; it had extended over more than four hours when they reached the triumphal arch! The procession passed through Fredsgatan and Norrmalmstorg, which had been roughly paved for the occasion, on the side where the Princess sat, and so over the new bridge, Skeppsbron, Stora Nygatan, Riddarehustorget, and Kyrkobrinken up to the Palace.

On the steps the bride was received by the King, the Ladies and Gentlemen-in-Waiting, and the heads of the different orders, and proceeded at once to the presence of the Queen-Mother, where the rest of the Court were assembled. Then, when the Princess had spent a short time with the Royal Family only, she was taken to the King's apartments where it had been arranged that she should hold a sort of Court. But she was so shy, so nervous, and so utterly overcome with fatigue, that she could not say a word to any of those present. They were obliged to let her rest a few hours before she could be arrayed in her bridal robes of snowy white, and the myrtle wreath and crown, sparkling with precious gems, set on the short white lace veil. The cortège moved across the inner court of the Palace to the Chapel Royal. The King looked splendid in uniform of cloth of silver and black hat with plumes sparkling with jewels.

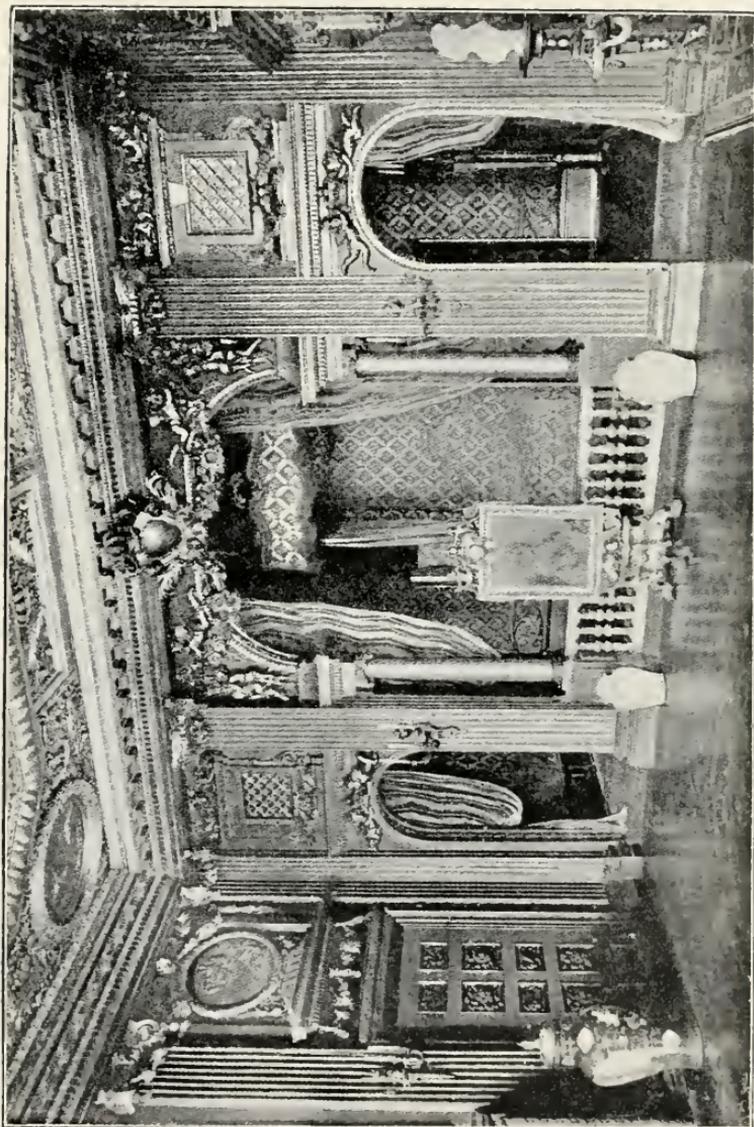
When the Princess entered the Chapel, profusely decorated with choice plants and flowers, and already filled with ladies in festive array, and men in superb uniforms, their breasts covered with decorations and orders, and when, after a few minutes' waiting, the interminably long marriage service began, she felt as if in a dream; it seemed to her as though she were doing everything in her sleep. After the ceremony the procession wended its way to the banqueting hall, where she mechanically took her part in the gala dinner and the subsequent wearisome torchlight dance, which she was obliged to open with the King in three turns round the huge hall. After

that, etiquette obliged the King to dance with his mother, and his two aunts, the Duchess of Södermanland, and the Princess Sophia Albertina; the Queen had to dance with the Dukes of Södermanland and Östergötland. But even the loud and discordant music of the drums and trumpets was powerless to rouse Frederica from her dream. She could only grasp that *she* must take three turns round that immense hall with the King . . . three with the Duke Charles, and the same number with the Duke Frederic Adolf.

When the cortège which was to escort the august couple to their nuptial chamber was ready to start, the poor Queen was so thoroughly exhausted that she almost dropped. She saw the flare of the torches and the shimmer of the wax-tapers as through a mist, and the music which headed the procession sounded a long, long way off.

In the State Bedchamber adjoining the main gallery the King and Queen, surrounded by their Court, stood to receive the good wishes and congratulatory messages from the various Societies and Provincies. This 1st of November was, so to say, a double anniversary, and the influx of visitors therefore correspondingly greater. All were anxious to obtain a closer view of the young Queen, and to express to the King their wishes for his future happiness. But he did not look half as pleased as one would have supposed on this day of double fête; indeed, he looked much displeased, and the Queen was restless and nervous. Now and then he gave her a look as she stood by his side, but instead of his face lighting up as he did so, his frown seemed to deepen. He was disgusted to see that the Queen made a little bob-curtsy, like some farmer's wife might have done, to each one presented to her, and he was only waiting for a break in the procession to tell her she must not do so. The opportunity did not present itself, however, for as the last gentleman presented was leaving the presence backwards, the young Queen fell in a dead faint upon the floor.

The King was aghast, and knew not what to do. He endeavoured to lift her and carry her into the adjoining chamber, because the Court was to be continued in a few minutes. But, slight and childish as was her form, he was unable to raise her,



BEDROOM OF GUSTAVUS III
DROTTNINGHOLM PALACE.

having been completely unnerved by her sudden indisposition, and he would not allow any of his Equerries to touch her; the Court Physician must be sent for at once, but meanwhile, and pending his arrival, the Queen could not be left lying on the floor, so he made another attempt to lift her on to a couch, but could not even manage that without the assistance of some of the Maids of Honour. In due time the medico arrived, and soon brought the Queen round; he gave her a reviving powder, and ordered her an hour's complete rest.

She cast a frightened, supplicating look at the King, and whispered, "I can't rest; I must go on and finish the Court." She tried to raise herself, but failed, and fell back on to the cushions, where she sank into a deep sleep of exhaustion. When the King saw her lying there so white and motionless, he became very anxious and troubled, and said to the doctor, "The Queen is not dead, is she?"

"God forbid, Your Majesty," replied the doctor gravely; "I think this indisposition is the result of a chill, probably caught yesterday in the procession, or contracted on the journey hither."

The King looked greatly upset. "Will she be able to continue the Court; and what about the public dinner?" he asked; "because it would be advisable to adhere to the programme and make no change, lest the people should be alarmed."

"It would be wisest to wait till Her Majesty wakes up, and to see how she feels then," replied the doctor with decision.

The King advanced to the couch and gazed anxiously at the young Queen, who looked more as if she were in a trance than simply asleep.

"She certainly is very delicate," he said to himself; "and why should I expect her to be strong and healthy like other Princesses?" He gave a deep sigh, turned, and went to his own apartments to express his thanks for good wishes and make known what honours he had bestowed.

When at length the Queen awoke, she begged and prayed to be allowed to take her part in the programme as had been decided.

“ I could not help fainting, I was so tired,” she sobbed ; “ but now I have had a good rest and can go on again.”

But the physician, who suspected that nervousness and fear were the real cause of the Queen’s collapse, beside the chill, strongly advised the King not to allow her to hold the second Court, but that she might take her place at the banquet. Whilst that was in course the King was very nervous, every moment fearing the Queen might have another fainting-fit in the presence of the people, who would very likely interpret it as a bad omen. But she bore herself bravely, even going to the Opera, “ Gustaf Wasa,” afterwards. During the performance her strength again failed, and at the supper, which, fortunately, was taken privately and quite *en famille*, she felt so ill that she was forced to retire, and needed attention throughout the whole night. The illuminations prepared for the following night had to be postponed, for the Queen lay ill with fever, and had occasional fainting-fits, and this indisposition lasted the whole week, during which the King gave no audiences, and took all his meals with his Consort, though it could not be said that this attention on his part was calculated to further the Queen’s convalescence. In the intervals of her attacks the Queen was fairly cheerful and merry with her ladies, especially with Fröken Friesendorff, a young person full of fun and mischief ; but when the time drew near that the King might be expected, the Queen became silent and depressed, with the air of a frightened child, whose only thought is of how to behave so as to escape censure. Consequently, she sat grave and silent during meals, and the King was very unhappy and at a loss what to do, and as he himself always looked exceedingly cross and ill-tempered when he was *unhappy*, those attached to the Court did not wonder the young Queen felt miserable and homesick.

By the King’s command the illuminations in honour of the nuptials were put off from one day to another (ostensibly because of the full moon), that the people should not be alarmed at the Queen’s illness. At length it was settled that they should come off on November 11th, but that same morning orders were given countermanding them ; it was said the King did

not desire them on that particular day. The public failed to fathom his motive, but then the public did not know how disturbed the King was at the news of the conditions of the Peace concluded between the Emperor of Russia and the French Republic.

In Vienna they had been hailed with much satisfaction, which satisfaction certainly was not shared by the King of Sweden. He was half-wild at the hard conditions imposed by the Emissary of the French Republic, Buonaparte, and which the Emperor had accepted instead of replying, as Gustaf Adolf would have done in his place, that he would neither lay down his arms nor consent to any peace until the Republic had been conquered and annihilated, and the Bourbons reinstated on the throne of their fathers.

The King paced his room in a rage. He held the crumpled report in his hand, and when he wanted to read it over again, with a view to discovering why it should be called the "Peace of Campo Formio" and not the Peace of "Udine," he found the document so hopelessly crumpled that it took him some time to straighten out before he could decipher it. What he then read was nothing more nor less than this: "Buonaparte required the Imperial Envoys to come to him to Passeriano to sign the Peace; Count Cobenzl, who would not abate one jot of the dignity of the Imperial Court even in matters of less importance, on his side required General Buonaparte to come to Udine to sign it. As neither of them would give way, a compromise was finally arrived at for the signing of the Peace at Campo Formio, a little hamlet halfway between Udine and Passeriano, and consisting of sixteen miserable workmen's hovels and one lordly mansion."

"So General Buonaparte made the terms, and the Emperor's Envoys assented to them. Well, let them call that most humiliating treaty 'Peace of Campo Formio' if they like; *I* shall never, *never* call it other than the Peace of Udine," the King hissed between his set teeth. He looked at the clock; it was time for him to go and inquire personally after the Queen's health, and hear what sort of a night she had had. He was in a most deplorable frame of mind, but fought against it as much

as he could, for he could not speak of that which lay like a dead weight on his heart to the Queen, who never seemed to understand anything.

He ascended the few steps which led to her dressing-room ; half-way he stopped short, sounds of merriment and laughter came from within, and he heard the Queen's voice in lively and eager chatter. Never before had he heard any life in her tone.

"I suppose *she* is merry because *I* am sad," thought he, gently opening the door. The merriment in the Queen's chamber was at its height, and no one noticed the King's entrance. There was noise and laughter enough for a whole roomful of people, but there were only two in it—the Queen and Fröken Friesendorff. The latter was sitting half-dressed in front of the Queen's golden mirror, her hair flowing over her bare shoulders, and the very youthful Queen and equally youthful Maid of Honour talked and laughed like two big children. The Queen was already dressed in her dark grey everyday garb, but as she felt cold she had put on a costly fur coat she had received from the Empress Catherine when she and her sister visited Russia. It was of crimson velvet lined with ermine, bound and trimmed with gold cord and tassels, and suited the girl-queen uncommonly well. But that was lost upon the King. He was exceedingly annoyed that the Lady-in-Waiting had not completed her toilet, and that she allowed the Queen to help her in dressing her hair, if indeed it *were* a help, for the Queen twisted and pulled the beautiful long tresses so unmercifully that Fröken Friesendorff's screams and exclamations could not be said to be without reasonable cause, although, maybe, out of place in the sanctum of her Royal mistress.

"Wait a minute, wait ; just sit still one minute longer ; it is almost done, only one more touch with the comb." The Queen gave a laugh, and passed the gold comb roughly through her friend's thick hair.

"Oh, oh !" yelled Fröken Friesendorff, and laughingly caught hold of the Queen's small hand to prevent her inflicting further tortures.

At that moment she saw a reflection in the glass and started up with a loud cry. At first the Queen quite thought it was some new comedy of Fröken Friesendorff's, and continued to laugh, but when the former stood as if suddenly turned to stone, the Queen felt that something must be amiss, and turned to look; in her surprise she dropped the comb. The King was standing in the room. His face had flushed dark red, and the thin hand which pointed by way of command to the door, shook perceptibly.

"Go, go!" he roared. "How dare you show yourself but half-dressed in Her Majesty's apartments? . . . it is unpardonable. Leave the room this instant." And as the girl, sobbing, took flight, the King cast an angry look at his Consort. He was very vexed, but sought to restrain his temper when he saw how the Queen stood before him, pale and trembling; he was loath to bring on another fainting-fit. He motioned her to a couch.

"You must never again behave as you did just now," said the King. "It is not fitting for a Queen to assist at her ladies' toilet, nor to call her her 'best friend,' or her 'sweet maid.' Sit down." The Queen sobbed and hid her terrified face in the cushions.

"What are you crying for?" the King asked at last, in a voice which he tried to make gentle.

"I am crying because the 'King of Sweden' in Stockholm is so very unlike the 'Count Haga' in Erfurt," replied she, still sobbing. The King started. His thoughts wandered back to the Grand Duchess Alexandra, when he heard the Queen speak of him as "Count Haga," which she had never done before; he turned his back upon her, bit his lips, and went to the window.

"I am not used to such unkindness; no, I am not!" cried the Queen, weeping, but so low that the King did not hear her. He stood silent for some time, and the Queen's sobs gradually ceased. When all was quiet he advanced towards her, and said:

"I really came to inquire after the state of your health this morning."

An Exiled King

“ I am ill, very ill,” again sobbed the Queen.

“ Upon my word, it did not sound as if you were very bad when I stood outside the door, and no doubt you will feel all right again when I am gone,” said the King with aerimony. Then he left her.

CHAPTER XVI

THE YOUNG QUEEN

HER MAJESTY QUEEN FREDERICA DOROTHEA WILHELMINA

THE King was very far from being happy. In times gone by, when Rosenstein or Fleming had tried to comfort him in his hours of depression, they had always held up to him the delights of the matrimonial estate as *the* turning-point in his life when everything would come right, when he would no longer feel lonely and friendless, and when the joys of happy family life would compensate him for all other troubles and vicissitudes. With the arrival of a Queen, peace and prosperity would reign in the land, and the King himself would feel rejuvenated; *young* he had *never* been, not even in the earliest days of his childhood.

And now there *had* come a young Queen who made the King most *unhappy*, both by the qualities she had and the qualities she had *not*. To his great annoyance she neither seemed grateful for nor overwhelmed by the grandeur and ceremonies during her journey through Sweden or her stay at Gripsholm and Drottningholm. She had expressed no pleasurable surprise at the magnificence of the festivities in celebration of her coming and her entry into Stockholm, and she *had* every reason for appearing pleased and appreciative, for the King, who was usually so parsimonious and economical, had spared nothing to do her honour, so that her lack of gratitude sorely wounded him. The Queen admired nothing, she only longed to be back in her own Baden; she could only weep and indulge in tiresome fainting-fits; nor did she exhibit any sign of affection for her husband,

of whom she stood in deadly awe. Altogether, her conduct was a most disastrous combination of infectious embarrassment, home-sickness, ill-timed spasmodic mirth and sulkiness. The Royal marriage, which ought to have stood out as a shining example of harmony and affection, was calculated to have the very opposite effect on the Swedish nation, for at the grand ball in the Palace, the day after that scene with Fröken Friesendorff, it was noticed that the King and Queen exchanged not a single word, though the ball began at six and lasted until half-past ten. This apathy and coldness excited considerable astonishment among the numerous guests. But the King's pride and dignity would naturally not permit him to take the first step towards a reconciliation, whilst it never seemed to occur to the Queen that it was her place to beg pardon.

In honour of the wedding, one fête succeeded another. First there were the splendid illuminations, which finally came off on the thirteenth of that month. The weather was beautiful, calm and serene ; not so the King's temper, and he put all the blame for his ill-humour on the Queen.

One day when Their Majesties were passing under the archway to take their seats in the carriage waiting in the quadrangle, the Queen quite unceremoniously stopped in front of one of the Captains of the Guard, who was passing, and began a lively conversation with him.

" Did I not see you at Karlsruhe last autumn ? " she asked, her face beaming with pleasure.

The officer thus addressed made a profound bow, and replied that it had not been at Karlsruhe that he had had the honour of being presented to the then Princess of Baden, but at Schwetzingen.

" But why should I have such an irresistible inclination to laugh, now I see you ? " asked the Queen, with more *naïveté* than dignity or courtesy.

The Captain replied : " Perhaps because, when I had the honour of being presented, Your Majesty was laughing very merrily with the two younger Princesses and the governess, Fräulein von Arnay. Your Majesty was descending the steps from the terrace, and was going to . . . "

“ Oh yes, yes, I remember,” interrupted the Queen ; “ we were all laughing about something when you first saw us, were we not ? ”

“ Well, Your Majesty, I cannot deny that I . . . ”

“ Oh, I recollect now what it was, and I feel inclined to laugh whenever I think of it. Oh, my beloved Schwetzingen, and my dear, dear Fräulein von Arnay.” And the Queen laughed with big tears in her eyes.

The King had stood impatiently by her side whilst she was keeping him waiting in this manner ; now, as she shyly looked up into his face, he said to her in low and reproachful tones, which were meant for her ear only : “ One does not converse with one’s attendants here.”

This rebuke made the Queen very angry, and she only saw the glorious illuminations through a mist of tears.

At last the King, who really was not so very displeased, but who, naturally, would not let the Queen’s breach of etiquette and familiar conduct pass in silence, said in a tone meant to be conciliatory : “ Are not the illuminations beautiful ? And how effective the tar barrels on Norrmalmstorg and in front of the Princess’ Palace are ; and what grand set-pieces and mottoes they have contrived. Do you know what that is up there ?

Four big tapers, all in a row,
For our Princess from Baden, oh !

A funny idea, most original.”

“ The streets are frightfully muddy, and badly paved, and our illuminations at Karlsruhe are often much grander,” replied the Queen impetuously.

This outburst offended the King greatly, and both he and the Queen preserved a sullen silence during that long, wearisome drive.

In one of the windows on the route hung a picture representing the King leading his Consort up to the throne ; an allegorical figure, symbolising Sweden, knelt in front of it, holding out a laurel wreath to the august couple. Beneath the picture was the following inscription :

Hail, happy pair with blessings from above,
Thine is the throne and thine the Nation’s love.

An Exiled King

The Queen was dying to know what the inscription meant but . . . she would not ask. She gave the King an appealing look, but he was not in the mood to translate the patriotic lines to her into French or German, so she had to be content with seeing her name and the King's entwined in various designs on the triumphal arches, flags, and wreaths on many public and private buildings. Not that that was of much interest to her; but when she suddenly desiered a banner worked with the arms of Baden, a glad cry of surprise escaped her, which drew a look of astonishment and disapproval from the King.

A few days later the Queen-Mother gave a supper party in honour of the occasion, but it was marred by the fact that the young Queen seemed depressed, not to say in a very bad temper, for the reason that on that day the King had peremptorily dismissed Fröken Friesendorff from the Court, and had sent her back into the country to her people. It had caused rather a sensation in Court cireles, as the King had assigned no reason for this step. Neither had he vouchsafed any explanation to the Queen, presuming she would very well understand whose fault it was, for did she not know that only that very morning the King had surprised Fröken Friesendorff and herself under much the same conditions as before. When he had unexpectedly and unannounced entered the Queen's dressing-room, Fröken Friesendorf had hurriedly cast a rose-coloured dressing-cape over her bare shoulders, and had fled through the opposite door; and the Queen had stood there with the same gold comb in her hand, looking sullen and defiant, and the King had just caught the words, "*Chasse-plaisir*" ("Kill-joy"), uttered half-aloud. He had turned on his heels without one word to the Queen, and ordered Fröken Friesendorff forthwith to pack her boxes and return to her family; and thus it was that the Queen was so out of temper at the feast given solely in her honour. She strove not in the very least to hide the fact, which, out of regard to her august mother-in-law, she ought certainly to have done; for with the King looking like a thunder-cloud, and his Consort with angry, unshed tears in her eyes, the fête was bound to be a fiasco. The Queen-



PRINCESS SOPHIA ALBERTINA
SISTER OF GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS III

Mother had an affection for her young daughter-in-law, and was genuinely sorry for her, but as she dare not meddle in any concern of her son's, she was unable to give the poor girl the comfort and advice she so sorely stood in need of. Alas ! there were yet more fêtes to be gone through !

On the nineteenth of the month the Duke and Duchess of Södermanland were to give a ball, and the town had planned huge fireworks and illuminations in honour of the young couple for the twenty-first. Two days later there was to be a "Grand Soupe" at the Palace, given by the Duke Adolf Frederic (the King's brother), and the concluding celebration was to be a banquet at the Princess Sophia's, at her residence on the Norrmalmstorg.

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When that not very delightful honeymoon of feasting and dissipation at last came to an end, the King was tired and bored to death. But it was not the banqueting and frivolity which had taken so much out of him ; it was the terrible conviction which had forced itself upon him of how utterly unsuited he and his Consort were to each other, and that their union boded anything but happiness to either, whilst their marriage as an ensample to the nation would not be any better than Royal marriages were wont to be in the aggregate ; it was far from what he had intended. But he knew full well that now was not the time to brood over his disappointment. On the contrary he must brace himself to think of the future ; having put his hand to the plough there must be no looking back regretfully, for now, for the first time after his accession, Sweden was to take her proper place on the world's stage, and with the help of Providence she was to lay order, right, and integrity into the scales which were to balance the welfare and fate of the whole of Europe. The King was quite aware, too, that Count Axel Fersen, with his message, would be an unbidden and not very welcome guest from Sweden at the Congress now assembled at Rastadt. Still, as he had sent him, not as his personal ambassador or representative as Duke of Pomerania, but as a guarantor of the peace of Westphalia

on the part of Sweden, he knew that many would look upon Count Fersen as a messenger sent by God. The German Empire which, by the help of God, one Swedish Gustaf Adolf had raised to its present power, by God's help must also be upheld and shielded by another Swedish Gustaf Adolf. This thought gave the King courage and strength to look forward and hope for success in public life to compensate him for the ever-recurring contretemps and trials of his private life. The King's action at St. Petersburg which had won him such flattering and almost universal notoriety, had been the first step in the right direction for the fulfilment of the sacred mission which he considered had been laid upon him. By taking part in the interests of the world beyond Sweden, he would at last succeed in restoring the Bourbons to the throne of France. Sweden's participation (as sponsor for the peace of Westphalia) in the German Congress at Rastadt was the first gigantic step. With grave and solemn eagerness the King awaited the first report from Count Fersen. As usual when his nerves were on the strain he had need of much exercise. Besides his habitual early morning walk, he would frequently take another in the afternoon, when he would sometimes meet the Queen driving in her sleigh. On those occasions he would stand still and salute her as he did any other passer-by. Sometimes she would see him, sometimes not, for she always endeavoured to be deeply engaged in conversation with the Lady-in-attendance, so that she might escape his greeting, which made her feel so uncomfortable and awkward. The very sight of him always brought the colour to her cheeks, and he could not help seeing how charmingly pretty his young wife looked in her English beaver hat, with gold cord and light blue feathers.

And there were days when the young pair got on very well together, and came to exchange a few friendly words at table. At first the King had sat silent and morose during meals; when he and the Queen indulged in conversation the suite were also no longer obliged to be silent, and the change was a source of great satisfaction all round. But the *entente cordiale* was not, alas! to be of long duration, and just before Christmas the young couple again fell out.

The King was in a very irritable mood, especially as he was getting sick of waiting for news from Rastadt, and the Queen was much too childish to understand his tension, and hit upon the most ridiculous ideas to pass the dreary, long winter days. In her opinion there was no need for her to be stiff and dignified and "queenlike," when her lord and master sometimes went about the whole day grumbling, but never saying a word to her, she never knowing what she might have done to deserve it; she only knew that she never *could* do *anything* right in the eyes of her crochety spouse. The King himself would certainly have been a much pleasanter individual had he not always been so "kingly"; that was the reason the Queen liked occasionally to drop the "Queen." When he was present she could be stiff and starched enough, for she was afraid of him; but when he was not there, and she was not in public, she thought she would be stifled if she could not sometimes relax a little and let herself "go"; she thought she might as well enjoy herself in her youth when she could, as she had shed more tears than enough already, to spoil her pretty eyes, when feeling homesick and depressed.

The King, moreover, did not like to hear her talk about Baden and about her relations, and she had nothing else to talk about. She thought Sweden such a dull and ugly land; she was nearly perished with the cold without and within, and all but frozen in those great rooms in the Palace, which never would get properly warm. Worse still, she had got chilblains on her arms from sitting in her favourite position, her bare arms resting on the marble window-sills, her chin supported on her hand, looking out over Stockholm, which has such an unique position. The soreness and irritation of the fine skin were hard to bear, and when the King inquired how she was, her unvarying reply was: "Bad, oh bad!" And she *did* feel bad, partly because it was so dreadful to be always shivering and freezing; and as the King could not be angry with her when she was sick and sorry, he used to get low and depressed and go away. But as soon as she was better and merry he seemed vexed and annoyed. He was more like a cantankerous old man than like a youth of barely nineteen, and when he

paid a visit anywhere people had to exercise the greatest care and circumspection to avoid saying or doing anything which by any chance might put him out ; and if anyone laboured under the impression that the King had not noticed this or that because he had made no remark, they were egregiously mistaken.

Now why should the King have gone into residence at Haga close upon Christmas, leaving the Queen at the Palace at Stockholm to enjoy herself as best she could, except to punish her ?

The day before his sudden departure thither she and some of her ladies had been indulging in merry games in her private apartments. She had been driving her ladies, so to say, six-in-hand ; for bits they had silken cords in their mouths, and the Queen drove them through the Royal suite of rooms with blue silk reins. But when Her Majesty had had enough of that (and her horses too !) she and the ladies took it in turns to jump off a large oak table which they had pulled into the middle of the room. There was loud laughter and noise, of course . . . but suddenly some one cried, "The King is coming." In a moment the table was restored to its proper place, and half a dozen chairs were speedily set in a semicircle by the sofa on which the Queen had already taken her seat, bolt upright, starched, and dignified. The Maids of Honour, like a bevy of frightened doves, had also sat down with their hands demurely folded in their laps, grave and subdued. As the King lingered some time in the antechamber, the Queen and her companions began twiddling their thumbs to see who could twirl fastest ; but when he entered, the Queen's pretty, small hands lay idly in her lap, and the ladies rose and stood in a row like so many wax figures, whilst he went up to the Queen and inquired after her welfare. She replied in languishing tones that the state of her health was not much to boast of, and that she felt very tired and done up this morning. The King looked so concerned and troubled when he heard this depressing answer that the Queen's ladies had the greatest difficulty to refrain from laughing. He next asked whether she thought of walking or driving that afternoon, to which she replied in the

same drawling tone, "Yes, if my strength permit, and I feel able."

As there was nothing further for the King to inquire about, or to suggest, the Queen and her ladies were very anxious for him to go. There was a long silence, neither of the two uttering a syllable; but presently the Queen rose and lightly tripped across the room to where the piano stood, opened it, and fixing her gaze upon the beautifully inlaid top, she began to play a plaintive air. She had no idea that Gustaf Adolf loved music, and thought how sweet it was of her to play to him. He remained standing by the piano for some time, with his hand over his eyes and a solemn expression on his face, as if he were at church.

It was the first time he had heard her play, and he enjoyed it. But to give him pleasure was just about the last thing the Queen had had any intention of doing; she had sat down to play thinking that if she did so the King would hasten his departure; but as he still lingered she had an inspiration.

She stopped abruptly, and when the King, roused from his *rêverie* by the sudden silence, took his hand from his eyes and looked round, he was not a little alarmed to see that the Queen's head had sunk upon the arms of the chair, that her eyes were closed, and her arms hanging limply by her side.

"Her Majesty has fainted," he said to one of the ladies. "Be so good as to help me carry her to her bed."

The ladies, however, were not in the least alarmed at the Queen's indisposition, their only trouble was how to keep their countenances, for before she fainted the Queen had given them a wink that this catastrophe was only the merest ruse for getting rid of the King. He supported her head whilst the ladies held her feet. They had not gone many steps with their burden when Fröken Kockull suddenly let go, because Her unconscious (?) Majesty had pinched her in the leg; and Fröken Kaulbars called out in affright when the Queen also nipped *her*. Happily the King did not notice anything; he was too intensely sorry for the Queen's sudden illness. When the august sufferer was at last safely deposited, the six ladies ran about like so many wild geese, tumbling over each other

in their haste to find Eau-de-Cologne, vinaigrettes, salts, and reviving drops. The King stood at the head of the bed, and sighed deeply when he saw how long the Queen was in coming round. Poor Gustaf Adolf, always dogged by ill-fortune ! . . . Just now he had enjoyed a brief, quiet time, and behold, it was all over again ; his voice shook as he besought her ladies to come to the Queen's assistance.

They did, indeed, all they could, but whilst Fröken Minette Piper was holding the vinaigrette to the Queen's nose, she felt a nip in her arm ; and as Fröken Frederica Ehrenbill was bathing the Queen's temples with Eau-de-Cologne, the patient tickled her surreptitiously in the side ; and when, at the King's request, Fröken de Geer gave the Queen a few drops of camphor on a piece of sugar, she playfully bit her finger. They were one and all bursting with a desire to laugh the whole time this comedy was going on. At length the Queen came to, and whispered faintly, and with eyes closed : " Perhaps it would be better if I could be undressed and put into bed."

In anxious tones the King replied : " That would certainly be best."

He stayed a few minutes longer, waiting for the Queen to say some little word of comfort to him before he left ; but she lay quite still and shut her eyes.

Then the King said gently : " I hope you will soon be better," and with a bow to the ladies departed, not wishing to hinder the preparations for the Queen's comfort. Their cheeks puffed out with suppressed laughter, the Queen and her maidens waited until the last sound of the King's footsteps had died away, then their mirth had free course. With one bound the Queen leapt out of bed, the oak table was once more put out, and their game continued just as it had been before the King had come as a *chasse-plaisir*.

There can be no doubt that he had suspected something, though he did not show it, or why should he have gone off to spend Christmas at Haga with only a few of his gentlemen, and without vouchsafing a word of explanation to anyone ? The Queen was very nervous and frightened ; she would have

endured any amount of scolding and reproaches sooner than be left in that way.

In reality the King had not seen through that comedy in the Queen's apartments, and his only reason for going to Haga was that he always felt better there than in Stockholm, and that he had an idea that fortune smiled more kindly upon him in those rural surroundings. He wanted to be there when the news should arrive that Count Fersen had been well received at Rastadt as the Envoy from Sweden. And as he felt that his being here or there was a matter of perfect indifference to the Queen, he preferred Haga, where he could take long, solitary rambles, to walk off his impatience whilst waiting.

Should Count Fersen once be accredited there would be plenty of work for the King, whose mind had been diverted from the most important events in Europe by the uncertain state of health of the Queen. Her fainting-fit of the previous day had greatly depressed him, but when he had been informed that she was better, and had slept well, there was no reason why he should not go to his favourite country-residence.

When the anxiously expected message did at last arrive the news was the reverse of pleasant. Neither France nor Austria were inclined to receive Count Fersen's credentials, or to recognise the right of Sweden to take any part whatsoever in the Congress. Terrible disappointment! The King could hardly read to the end. He opened the doors of the red damask room, for his sleeping apartment was far too small to allow of the perambulations of one anxious to get back his clearness of judgment and reasoning.

The room, of course, was empty, and the King paced restlessly up and down, crumpling the despatches in his hand the while, yet ever and anon casting a glance at the thick roll of papers. The sentry posted under the window paced up and down outside with the same regularity with which the King was taking his strides in his drawing-room.

Presently the sentinel became aware of a curious noise in the room, and looking in he saw a bracket on which stood a gold clock lying broken on the floor, and the King violently ringing a silver bell which stood on a table near, to summon an attend-

ant. As the man did not immediately appear, the King continued ringing as if all the four corners of Haga were ablaze. The sentinel saw no more, for the servant came to pick up the bracket and take away the débris. The King had gone to the window, and was stolidly watching the sentry ; his appearance presenting nothing either very remarkable or attractive, the King turned his gaze towards the clouds. It had begun to snow. From force of old habit, and to calm his mind, the King apostrophised the flakes : " Slow, slow ; quick, quick," as they fell, as he had been used to do in his childhood's days from his nursery window, when he believed that they were obedient and fell according to his command. Now it seemed to him that they did exactly the contrary, falling fast when he said " slow " and slowly when he said " quick." The longer he watched their apparent contrariness the more it irritated him, and he turned from the window and resumed his everlasting promenade up and down the room, his hands clasped behind his back.

When, after several hours of this unnecessary exercise, he at last grew tired, he turned into his bedchamber, which he locked, refusing to see or speak to anyone. He gave as a reason that he was feeling ill, but everyone knew that that was merely the result of anxiety and worry.

The following day the King ordered his carriage and drove to Stockholm, where he wanted to do a few hours' serious work with some of his Ministers, whom he now no longer invited to Haga. Before starting, he paid a short visit to his mother. He inquired after her health, and having heard that it was satisfactory, he lingered a few minutes in silence, then went down and took his seat in his chaise, too miserable and depressed to pay any other calls *en route*. It happened to be the day before Christmas Eve. The Queen, ignorant of the heavy blow which had fallen on the King from foreign parts, imagined that his irritability and depression, and the temper he had shown at Haga, were caused by displeasure with *her*, and had concluded in her own mind that that prevented his coming to town. When she heard that he *had* come, she waited several hours, expecting him, and was fully resolved to conduct herself to his entire satisfaction. She had been in very low spirits after his

departure for Haga, and took it as a great slight to be thus left alone in her first "Yule-tide" in Sweden. What would the people in Baden say when they heard of it? But he *had* come, so everything would be made right. When he should come to see her she would try her best to persuade him either to remain in Stockholm over the holidays at least, or to take her back with him to Haga; if only she could summon up courage enough to proffer her request . . . she was always so afraid. He *might* answer something which would put her out of temper . . . what then? However, she would endeavour to make him understand how unhappy his odd behaviour made her. So, by way of making the time pass more quickly, she began to play with her pet dog and her parrot; tired of that, she opened her piano, and sat down to play. It had been very ill-done of her to leave off so abruptly the last time, when the King had seemed so thoroughly to enjoy her music . . . but the temptation to be "contrairy" had been too strong for her that day; to-day she felt gentle and submissive as a lamb, and if she had not been so afraid of him she would have been genuinely glad to see him; but he delayed his coming. The Queen knew that he was in the Queen-Mother's apartments, and she felt hurt that his first visit should not have been to herself. Nevertheless, she resolved to show no resentment; rather would she show a little extra deference and pleasure when he *did* come. Still he lingered.

She went to her dressing-room window and looked out. The King's sleigh, richly decorated with snow-nets, was drawn up in the quadrangle. Presently she saw the sentry present arms . . . a sure sign that the King must be coming out.

The lackey lifted the bear-rug, the King got in and took the reins, and the Equerry took his seat by the King's side. A sharp crack of the whip and the sleigh disappeared under the archway. The King had not paid a visit to his Consort, nay, he had not even so much as glanced up at her window, where she stood, pale and trembling.

When the sleigh was quite lost to sight she covered her face with her hands and wept and sobbed unrestrainedly.

CHAPTER XVII

THE EVER-CHANGING KALEIDOSCOPE

THE dismal, tedious Christmas and New Year's holidays were over, but during the whole of January and February the King remained at Haga, only coming to Stockholm at long intervals. When at last he took up his residence in the capital he drove daily to Haga, and spent nearly as much time there as though he had never left it. The King's humour was indeed incomprehensible; he and his Queen seemed for ever at cross-purposes, and there appeared no prospect of their living together in peace and harmony. But at this time the King was obliged to attend seriously to affairs connected with the Government; it mattered little whether he were happy or the reverse, these things *had* to be done, and being by nature scrupulously honourable and conscientious he could not shirk them, though after the grave rebuffs he had met with, both in public and private, he felt no very keen interest in anything.

The young Queen was entirely at loose ends. Sometimes, but not very often, she sought solace at her piano, and once every mail-day she wrote to one or another of her family. But she had not much to write about . . . everything in Sweden was so intolerably dull.

In order to throw dust into the eyes of the people, the King and Queen not unfrequently showed themselves together in the Royal box at the playhouse; but they were not very encouraging to look upon . . . both had fretted themselves white and thin, so that it was pitiable to see them. The Queen yawned fit to dislocate her jaws, and was always bored; it was the same whether the opera were "Gustaf Wasa" or the

comedy "Cora and Alonzo." The King sat absently looking straight in front of him, usually with a scowl upon his face. He could never be at ease in the Opera House where his father had been so foully murdered.

Nothing could equal the dullness and depression reigning at the supper-table after the performances at the Opera House, both as regarded the august host and hostess, the guests invited, and the Court in general. When the banqueting-room was reached (which was about 8.30) the King, of course, had to make the round and address a few gracious words to each guest, but the Queen sat in solemn silence at one of the tables. Both she and the King felt embarrassed, and exchanged never a word, though sitting side by side. Their bored and miserable faces naturally had a most dispiriting effect on those present, and it was with an intense feeling of relief that, when supper was at last ended, they saw the Royal couple depart for the Palace with outriders and torchbearers. The King and Queen were really like two children who cannot agree. He was too inexperienced and ignorant to know how a woman should be treated; *she* was not clever enough to delude the King into believing that she had any affection for him; even if she had none, it would have been better policy, and made life less burdensome for both, especially for herself . . . for the King's conduct would not then have hurt her so much. But somehow she always failed in his presence, and now she began to behave in a way which must have led the King to think that it was a matter of the most perfect indifference to her whether he were pleased or not; this, of course, wounded his self-love and pride beyond measure, and he felt that he could not endure this life much longer. Some alteration *must* be made, and he had already settled in his mind the form it should take.

The month of April was drawing to a close, and the Queen was in her wildest, most exuberant spirits, after having wept from morning till evening the previous day. On this day, and when several people were present, she had for a joke pulled the wig from off the head of one of her gentlemen in attendance, and had emptied a cup of chocolate into it; upon another she had squirted water with her spray-diffuser. It goes without

saying that the King had not been present on the occasion, but some mischievously-inclined person had reported the whole story to him in detail, and now he was on his way to the Queen's apartments to read her a lecture.

It was quite late in the evening, and the King presumed that he should find his Consort in her room, and alone ; but as he drew nearer to Her Majesty's quarters he heard shouts of uncontrolled laughter proceeding therefrom, showing that the unconventional after-supper circle was still in full swing. Now the King was more than half-inclined to prove for himself the truth of the reports he had heard, so he entered the Queen's pretty boudoir without having been announced. From it he could see into the grey drawing-room, and what he saw there filled him with consternation. With one foot on either of the two inlaid chests which had belonged to the late King, stood Count Ruuth, Equerry and Court Entertainer ; tied on his breast with a light blue ribbon was a huge label bearing the inscription " Colossus of Rhodes," in large letters. The Queen and her ladies pretended to be the ships passing under the arch made by Ruuth's abnormally long legs. It was such a ludicrous sight altogether that the King himself might have been tempted to smile, had it not been so shockingly out of place, to say nothing of its vulgarity. As it was, the blood mounted to his face, and he frowned severely as he stood by the door watching the game, which still went on with much merriment and laughter. All at once the ladies broke into a cry of terror, and the " Colossus " flew down like an arrow from his exalted position ; one and all were seeking safety in flight. But one look of the King's sufficed to keep the Queen in her place, and prevent her following their example. Still out of breath from the game she sank into an armchair, and took fast hold of the arms ; drawing her head well down between her shoulders she waited for the bursting of the storm. The King was far too angry to speak. He could only stand motionless and stare ; then he bit his lip, and turned as if to go. The Queen was in her most defiant and exasperating mood, and as he said nothing, she stamped her daintily-shod little foot passionately on the floor, and said : " Well ? . . . Well ? "

The King turned fiercely, and said: "To whom are you speaking in that manner?"

"To you, of course; I suppose I am going to have a scolding for that. . . . Well, begin at once then. It is better to have a thorough good blowing-up than to see you go about for days and weeks looking so cross;" and again the little black satin slipper stamped violently. Then she went on: "Well? . . . I am perfectly aware that I mustn't play, nor be merry; no, I ought to sit motionless with a gold crown on my head, and a sceptre in my hand, and nod mechanically like a Chinese mandarin, until I drop and break into a hundred pieces with fatigue and grief; that would please you. Oh, why did you not tell me or ever I set a foot into this dreadful land, that one must never laugh there? Why did you not leave me alone, and let me stay in Baden, where I was so happy and gay? I never hankered after being Queen of Sweden . . . much less honour would have satisfied *me* if I could only have had a little sunshine . . . a little love." Here the Queen wept and sobbed. The King never moved, but his lips quivered. At last he said in tones so icy that the Queen promptly stopped crying:

"As Your Majesty seems to find the surroundings so depressing, and as I myself have not gained an atom of happiness by this marriage, I consider it advisable and best for both parties that you should return to your beloved Fatherland as soon as may be convenient."

The Queen's eyes almost came out of her head with fear and amazement, and she sat as if turned to stone, with her lips parted, but unable to utter a syllable. The King continued in the same chilling tone: "And as Your Majesty has no desire to acquire the language of my country, and find everything so objectionable and repulsive, this seems the best way of remedying a most unfortunate mistake. To-morrow I will inform Your Majesty's august parents of the proposed separation and Your Majesty's speedy return, and no doubt Your Majesty will be received with open arms."

During this somewhat pompous and callous speech the Queen sat looking like a poor little fluttering bird, half-dead with fright; but when the King was about to go, she cried, almost

beside herself : " Am I to be sent back to Baden, then ? Oh no ! *No !* "

" It is impossible that things should remain as they are now," answered the King ; " my patience and indulgence are at an end, and as you do not in any way wish to conform to my wishes, and are unwilling to learn the language of the land in which you are so unhappy, or to conduct yourself with the dignity and decorum befitting a Queen, I consider *that* the best solution of the difficulty, not only with regard to yourself, but also with regard to the welfare of the country."

As he spoke he looked fixedly at the Queen, and the hard, cold look of the prominent, steely blue eyes so terrified her that she fell sobbing on her knees before him. . . . All her defiance seemed to have been swept away in a moment.

" Oh, don't do that, don't send me back in that degrading manner ; for your reputation's sake, I beseech Your Majesty not to insist. What would the world say if it should be known that Your Majesty drove me away ? All Europe would cry ' shame ' upon you. Your Majesty would lose all the prestige which has hitherto been yours as King of Sweden, if you act so."

She knew that he was listening to her words, and weighing them carefully in his mind, so she continued trying to soften him : " Think of my brother and sisters, and my parents ; they would never get over the disgrace. For God's sake do not send me back ; it would be a deed unworthy of you."

Looking at the ruffled curly head before him, the King said :

" It is not *I* who have behaved in such an objectionable, unseemly manner, it is *you*, my wife. . . . It is not *I* who roll my bread at table into shapes of small hearts and throw them at my Equerries."

" Is that why Count Ruuth is going to be dismissed ? " asked the Queen, rising from her knees in much perturbation ; " It was only fun ; and how did Your Majesty know ? "

" I know things and I see things," replied the King sternly ; " and had I not decided before to relieve him of his post at Court, Your Majesty has keen sense enough to conclude that his dismissal could not but follow as a consequence of the

edifying scene of which I so recently was an unwilling spectator."

"He speaks German so well, and is so witty and clever," burst out the Queen. "That is the *only* reason I like him so much."

"By advising Your Majesty's return to Baden I am affording you every chance for meeting with men who are clever and witty, and speak German well. You will find plenty of them on your journey home," said the King sarcastically.

The Queen wept and wrung her small hands, and altogether looked miserable and unhappy enough to melt a heart of stone.

"Oh, Your Majesty, pray consider. I am neither ill nor wicked. At home I was always said to be good and gentle, and I vow to Your Majesty that I will be the most dutiful and loving wife, and strive to please you in every way, if only you will not send me away. I will promise to do my best to learn Swedish, and will try hard to make myself love this country; but oh, Your Majesty, do not put this insult upon me, for *your* sake as well as *mine*."

When she again referred to the false light in which he would put himself by sending her away, it suddenly flashed upon him that God Himself must have inspired her with those words. The saviour of Europe from oppression, the champion of right, the restorer of the Bourbons to their lawful throne, must not allow the slightest blemish or slur on the name of Gustaf Adolf; that name must be pure and free from aspersion when its bearer should be called upon to stand up and fight against tyranny, injustice, and wrong. The fiasco at Rastadt showed that the hour was not yet, but it was surely coming, and in view of that glorious time, Gustaf Adolf must keep up his prestige. The King was gazing fixedly and vacantly into space, and did not seem to see his agitated young Consort. When she perceived that her words made an impression on him, she mastered her fear, shyly took his icy-cold hand, and imprinted a warm kiss upon it. The touch of her lips roused the King from his dreams. . . . He looked down on her in some confusion; it was always hard for him to get anything out of his head which had once got into it. Moreover, the process was

exceedingly slow, for he had already begun to think it might be a relief to be rid of the Queen ; but then he had also to consider the stir such an action would create all over Europe, to say nothing of his own country ; and she, standing there with head bent, awaiting her doom, was certainly a very fascinating picture. He no longer looked so unassailably stern, and said at last : “ Perhaps a short stay at Gripsholm might be advisable till we see in how far Your Majesty intends moulding your conduct according to my wishes.”

A cry of anguish involuntarily escaped the Queen.

“ For God’s mercy’s sake do not banish me to Gripsholm. The cold and the loneliness there would be the death of me ; and it is haunted, Your Majesty ; I saw a terrible apparition there myself. It was . . .”

The King turned very white. “ No, no ; do not say what you saw,” he said ; “ I don’t want to know. . . . Still, Gripsholm is a very comfortable and charming residence.”

“ No, no ; I *will not* go there. I was so dreadfully frightened there before, and, Your Majesty, I have committed no crime. I promise not to be foolish or flighty any more. . . . I will do all that the most devoted wife *can* do.”

The two kingly children (for in truth they were little more) looked awkwardly at each other.

“ You certainly have not fulfilled any of your wifely duties up to now,” said the King frowning ; then he added briskly, “ I am a man with the feelings of a man, who wishes to make his wife happy, but who also requires a corresponding feeling on the part of that wife, without which no union can ever be really happy.”

The Queen’s face was suffused with blushes, and she hung her head lower than before, as she meekly replied : “ I shall try to improve . . . only keep me with you, and do not always be angry with me, I pray, Your Majesty.”

A hard struggle was going on within the King’s breast.

“ I am often harassed or in pain when people think I am angry, and if I *appear* vexed it does not always follow that I really *am*,” he said in a low voice.

He stood with the Queen’s hand in his, and his voice was not

quite steady as he spoke, but he neither kissed her lips nor her brow; then he said: "I think I can swear to it that there is not another man upon this earth who cares so much for simple, domestic happiness as I do; else how should I come to wish to dissolve the sacred tie of marriage, unless I had been robbed and deprived of its joys?"

The Queen stood with eyes downcast, but she looked so lovely in her distress, that the King himself was struck by it, and said, a deep flush mounting to his face: "If you mean to keep your vow, and in all things to conform to my will and commands, I will neither send you back to Baden nor yet to Gripsholm." Then, with a sudden impulse, he put his arms round her, and pressed her to his heart, showering kisses on her brow, her lips, and even her pretty curly hair.

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A few days later, May 1st, and one of the loveliest days of that beautiful month, the people rejoiced to see the King himself driving the Queen to Djurgården in an open carriage. Gustaf Adolf looked better than usual, happier and less careworn; the Queen looked charming, as she always did when pleased, and they could be seen frequently exchanging remarks. Apparently the Royal couple were on good terms, and the people, who loved the King, were glad to see it. The road to Djurgården was swarming with people, driving, riding, and on foot, and everywhere rose loud cheers of "Long life to the King! Long live the Queen! Hurrah! for Gustaf Adolf! Hurrah for Frederica!" The Queen blushed and sought refuge behind the King; but he did not think her shyness befitting, so she tried to conquer it, and bowed right and left as he did.

After that terrible scene and the subsequent reconciliation, the situation between King and Queen seemed to be, to all appearances, just such as he wished. His leisure hours were spent in her apartments, and she no longer wept when anyone was there to see her tears. Day by day her demeanour became more circumspect and steady. The King, it is true, still constantly exhorted her to be solemn, stiff, and dignified, all of which sat so badly on the bright, childlike face and figure,

though the ill-assumed haughtiness was in every way preferable to the former levity and frivolity, with its alternate fits of weeping and wailing.

It is not to be supposed that the Queen was quite as happy as she strove to look. The fear of being sent back to Baden or banished to Gripsholm had frightened her into submission, and in private with the King she felt as a kitten might do in the presence of a huge watchdog. She realised that it would fare ill with her if she were too playful and merry, and she was only safe when she (metaphorically) was grovelling at her master's feet, and suffering herself to be caressed by his icy hand, and whatever temper he might be in, she dare not shake him off or go away. She was not only afraid of the King, but the tender, warm little heart could not help feeling a certain amount of pity for him also. Sometimes, when he had sat silent and abstracted, his harassing thoughts would drive him to pace up and down like a caged lion. She would sit and look at him, wondering what could be in the wind now. Occasionally she could make a shrewd guess at what was troubling him, for her mother and sisters frequently told her what was happening abroad in their letters. She tried to take in what was going on in the world beyond Sweden, not because foreign politics interested her, but because she was anxious to find out to what cause to assign the King's vexation, and so to be certain that it was nothing on *her* part which had provoked it, and that she need fear no threat of being sent home or banished. The young Queen's astute mother had once observed that events in Europe at that time changed as quickly and were as diversified as the patterns in a kaleidoscope ; she always remembered the simile, and felt as if she were indeed looking through a kaleidoscope. It was the French who put in the bits of coloured glass, and that Corsican, General Buonaparte, was shaking them up in dire confusion. Hardly had she grasped one picture when it was already blurred and replaced by another. She wondered whether this gigantic kaleidoscope set the King's brain in a whirl as it did hers when she tried to understand the world's doings. In the winter and early spring of that year she had seen how the people of Rome had rebelled against the

authority of the Pope, and had proclaimed Rome a Republic under the protection of France, and how the French troops had escorted the aged Pope across the frontiers. From Baden, that much-loved land, which is, so to say, in the midst of all that takes place in the big world, her attention had been directed to the conversion of the Swiss Federation into the Helvetian Republic, modelled on the plan of the present sorry French Republic; also to the warlike preparations of France against England, and she was exhorted to keep her eyes fixed on the shores of England, where the French, under General Buonaparte, might be expected to land at any moment. Whilst her own and everyone else's attention was unwaveringly fixed upon England, lo! with the swiftness of a flash of lightning the picture changed; General Buonaparte, at the head of a large French fleet, was leaving Toulon to sail eastwards. No one could tell what combination would next appear in the kaleidoscope, for no one could guess what Buonaparte's next move was likely to be. So erratic, indeed, were his plans, that he might at any moment decide to go to Egypt, Ireland, Scotland, London, Naples, or Jamaica! Who could tell? It was a generally expressed hope that the next picture would be that of the total annihilation of the French fleet by the English; but instead of that, it represented the safe arrival of the French fleet at Alexandria, in Egypt, the storming and taking of that city and of Rosetta, for that same Buonaparte was a wary general, not given to rashly undertaking any campaign without reasonable certainty of ultimate success. It was feared that the next picture might even show him on his way to the East Indies, there to attack the British possessions and humiliate England.

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One rainy day in August, after his return from Medevi, where he had been to take the waters, we once more see the King pacing up and down in the Queen's apartments in deep thought; his Consort looked at him with anxious eyes every time he passed her; but she was not grieved on her own account, for by the way the King now conducted himself with regard to

her, she understood that his annoyance had nothing whatever to do with *her*, but was caused by the harassing and undesirable combinations of the various incongruous atoms in the world's kaleidoseope. The King's restless and ceaseless tramping often got on the young Queen's nerves, and she would have given much could he have sat still in one place for a time, like other men. But seeing that in no one particular he *was*, or *could* be like others, nor ever *could* sit quiet, she had to be patient and put up with it. As it seemed an utter impossibility for him to rest, even for sixty seconds, the young Queen argued there must be much to cause him inquietude, and that the present happenings in the world, which were so contrary to all desires and expectations, must be a source of continual anxiety to him as to the other monarchs concerned. She was genuinely sorry for him, and would have liked to be able to cheer him in his depression, had she only known how ; but when he was in these dark moods, she dared not speak uninvited, she scarcely dared to move a finger. In his tramp he would occasionally meet her eye, but it was accidentally, and she knew that his thoughts were far, far away . . . perchance in the East Indies ! Gustaf Adolf certainly had a wonderful gift for frightening people into absolute silence when he wished them to be silent. Suddenly he stopped short in front of his young wife, and asked : " Are you sitting there thinking of Baden ? "

" No, no ! " cried the Queen in affright. " I do not do that now ; I was thinking about *you*."

" That was kind of you," said the King, patting her cheek ; " but I *was* thinking about Baden. I was thinking you should really go there some time, as you have been longing to do so often."

" Oh, Your Majesty," cried the Queen, jumping up from her chair, her eyes sparkling with pleasure ; but the next minute she sat down again, remembering that the King's speech might imply her being " sent " home. Then she shook her head, and said, " No, *no* ; I shall not go to Baden."

" That's a pity," said the King gravely ; " because I had just been thinking that *I* should rather like to go on a visit there myself. I have always had a wish to be for a time in the

midst of things, as I suppose I *shall* have to be ere very long, whether I wish it or not ; and I *have* heard people say that Baden is a lovely spot. . . . I like travelling, and delight in the beauties of nature. May I not hope for my wife's company when I go there ? ”

“ Baden is the most beautiful place in all the world,” burst out the Queen with burning cheeks, and her voice shaking with excitement. Then she added softly, “ I mean, of course, next to Sweden.”

The King again smiled. “ I am glad you are beginning to like *it*,” he said, and then resumed his endless, aimless tramp through the apartment.

“ I, too, feel better by a long way out in the country than in Stockholm,” he said, stopping in front of the Queen. “ I like the old houses in the country, because they remain as they were in the good old times, untouched by the whirl of ages and the fanaticism of liberty (so-called) and anarchism.”

The Queen would have liked to ask the King what he thought of her people having compared the events of the world to pictures in a kaleidoscope, but her courage failed her. Moreover, she wished to turn his thoughts from disturbing objects, so she asked shyly : “ Is it not provoking when time seems to stand still ? ”

“ No, quite the contrary,” answered the King, and once more began his perambulations. After a while he said : “ In my dominions, and also in my own private life, I like law and order, and I shall know how to manage to get both.”

He remembered how well he had succeeded in bending the Queen to his will. It was the best omen for his success in suppressing any tendency to resistance in his subjects, should any such temptation assail them. The Queen dared not look at him, but she was only too well aware that he *could* get both order and quiet when he wished . . . also in his country.

“ There shall be law, order, and quiet even throughout the universe in good time,” added the King. “ The Sovereigns of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus II and Charles XII, have shown Europe that Sweden *will* have a voice in the affairs of the world, and that she does not mean to be trifled with. I shall

do the same. I have entered into direct communication with the King of England respecting the unlawful taking of a Swedish trading vessel not harbouring anything contraband, and have informed him of the unheard-of treatment to which my subjects have been exposed. If he is a noble and righteous ruler he can but deplore the conduct of his people, even as I should be the first to censure and punish any of *my* people who dared to infringe the rights of any other Power, or to violate the treaty of neutrality by exporting firearms. By this England will be given to understand that Sweden is an independent kingdom, ruled by a Sovereign who considers it his first duty, at all costs, to defend the rights of his people."

Though she did not understand one word of this long tirade, the Queen nodded approval, and looked admiringly at her young Consort as he spoke thus in proud and haughty tones, drawing his slender figure up to its full height. She thought of the episode at St. Petersburg, and at what incalculable cost he had stood strong and firm in his principles there, and she felt sure that whatever he willed he would carry through to the bitter end. But presently he nearly frightened her out of her wits by stamping his foot violently on the floor, and crying in a loud, angry voice: "And if it be true that some one has been bold enough to say that Sweden has sunk into a kingdom of the third order, I swear that that slanderer shall take back his words in the dust at my feet."

"But who *did* say that? I am sure it was not I," cried the Queen in fear; "and I do not know who could have said such a thing."

"But *I* know who is supposed to have said it, and that is sufficient," answered the King. "It is a thing I can neither forget nor forgive, and if some bloated upstart is the culprit, he shall learn to his sorrow that such utterances are not allowed to pass unpunished, as sure as there is a God above."

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The King's mind at this time was far too much occupied with General Buonaparte and his doings. The General was a veritable rock of offence to Gustaf Adolf, and there was no

man existing whom he wished so much out of his way, for had not Buonaparte aggregated to himself the very rôle Gustaf Adolf had meant to play on the world's stage? Was not *he* (Buonaparte) the hero who surprised and dazzled the universe with his victories, who removed his neighbour's landmarks and ordered the destinies of men, and whose success and good luck were so unnaturally brilliant that people could only look on and wonder? . . . That man, surely, must be a special favourite and protégé of the gods! If Buonaparte had not been in the pay of the French Republic, and if his victories had helped to restore the Bourbons to their throne, Gustaf Adolf would not for one moment have doubted but that the Higher Power which assisted and protected Buonaparte was making use of his talents as an instrument to pave the way for a still greater hero, one of Royal blood, whom God, in His own good time, would call forth to be His champion. As it was, Buonaparte's successes irritated the King beyond endurance. He could not fathom the dealings of Providence with a man whom he admired and loathed at the same time, and at every fresh success reported of Buonaparte, he, in the solitude of his chamber, was wont to cry, "Lord, how long, how long wilt Thou pass *me* over?"

However, late that summer tidings came from the seat of war in The Levant, bringing the gratifying and consolatory information that the French fleet had suffered a signal defeat in a three-days' encounter on the shores of Egypt, with the English Admiral Nelson. This news lifted a heavy weight from the King's mind, delivered him from a perpetual nightmare, and considerably improved his temper, as he imagined that the hour had come at last when fortune would no longer favour the Republic.

As Buonaparte was cut off from all communication with France through the annihilation of his fleet, the King felt assured that this Egyptian expedition was altogether doomed to destruction, that General Buonaparte would lose his life, and that a stop would thus be put to his future victorious career.

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That same autumn the Court were enjoying simple and inexpensive pleasures at Drottningholm. The King would not hear of money being uselessly spent on amusement, but impressed upon the Queen that he and she must both set the nation an example of strict economy, seeing the times were so bad.

The war in Egypt between France and England had already done considerable harm to trade in Sweden; moreover, the country was threatened with a famine, because the most abnormal heat and drought had obtained throughout the months of May, June, and July.

So the Court indulged in no extravagances, but contented itself with rides on improvised roundabouts in the park, and suchlike mild dissipation. Prizes were given to the winners, but even these were of the most simple, often consisting only of a rosette or favour, fashioned by the prize-giver's own deft fingers, and in her colours. The King had never condescended to participate in these amusements, but after the last news from Egypt his spirits had improved so much that, at the Queen's request, he joined in, especially as he had a strong desire to let her see how he could distinguish himself in those knightly games, which were such good preparation for the serious fighting he might have to engage in at any moment. The King was very ambitious to be victor in some of these tournaments, and one fine day he had his wish. As his success was a foregone conclusion the ladies had made preparations, and had asked the great poet, Leopold, to write some verses as a surprise for the King when he should receive the prize. There was general rejoicing that fine September morning when he tilted the greater number of rings and cut off the "Turk's" head. The prize-giving was to take place on the "Rondel," round which stools and chairs had been placed for the ladies, the Queen in their midst. Countess Rålamb (*née* Duben) had been deputed to distribute the prizes, and she rose from her seat for that purpose. It was the custom for the prize-winner to kneel at the feet of the prize-giver when receiving the favour from the lady's hand, and curiosity was rife as to whether the King would conform to the rule or not; bets were even made

upon it in whispers. The King did *not* conform. He did not find it consistent with his dignity to bend the knee to a subject, however beautiful that subject might be ; therefore he merely stood at attention whilst the Countess, with well-simulated nervousness, pinned the favour on his breast, and recited the verses composed by Leopold.

The King looked surprised and pleased ; he smiled and bowed, and there was a blowing of trumpets and clapping of hands, but none clapped so vigorously as the young Queen, nor so long.

Her husband went up to her and asked whether she had understood the flattering remarks addressed to her in those verses ? She shook her head, and said : “ No, I don’t quite understand Swedish poetry yet.” Then the King actually took the trouble to ask Countess Rålamb to give him a copy of the verses, which he translated into French to the Queen. She smiled with pleasure when the King got to the lines, “ And beauteous looks such as are yours.” There were surreptitious bets as to whether the King would condescend to kneel to the Queen to make up for his late unchivalrous conduct to the Countess. He did *not*, so those who had *thought* he would, lost their bets !

CHAPTER XVIII

THE EXPECTED HEIR

THE King at this time brooded silently and much as to what the closing year of the century would bring with it. He tried to look forward to a very joyful event, but that would not be until the end of the year, and he would have given much to know whether the desire of the nation and his own was going to be granted. We know he was ever impatient of waiting. In the meantime he was most kind and considerate to the Queen, who was charmed with his unwonted attention, and thought life would be perfect if only he could have been more calm, and not worry himself and her with speculations and signs and tokens of the most weird kind in order to see whether the child they both so eagerly desired would bring happiness or woe. The King's most fervent wish was for an heir to the throne, so much so, that he never ceased saying, "I am sure it will be a girl," distressing himself and the Queen.

One fine morning in July, 1799, the King and Queen were taking a stroll arm in arm in the beautiful park at Drottningholm. They were unattended, and had walked for some time in silence, when the King suddenly stopped short and said: "If I only knew whether it is going to be a Prince or a Princess! I should consider a boy an omen for good, but then, of course, it is *bound* to be a girl—and why should it *not* be a girl?"

"And I should just like to know why it should not be a Prince, all the same," replied the Queen. "Those who expect disappointment generally meet with disappointment, and those who try to believe in good luck mostly have good luck; we shall very likely have the very best proof of that."

"Is Your Majesty referring to General Buonaparte?" asked the King coldly.

The Queen nodded assent. "Yes, just him," she said. "He persuades the people that fortune smiles on him, even when he is *unfortunate*, and they like people who believe in good luck, so at least my mother used to say. But do not let us talk about anything disagreeable just now. It is so lovely here, and there is a whole clump of ox-eyed daisies over there; please get me a very big one. There, that one will do, thank you. Now, will Your Majesty start, or shall I?"

"Not I; it is nonsense."

"Oh, please begin, for my sake, when I ask you so nicely, too. 'Yes' will be for a boy; 'No' for a girl."

The King went on slowly, with the Queen clinging closely to him, and watching that he fairly plucked off the petals one by one from the white daisy in his hand. In spite of himself he became interested in the game. He turned quite pale with excitement and suspense when he began, "Yes, no; yes, no."

"Stop a minute," said the Queen, when but few petals remained; "I am getting so nervous! What shall you give me if it is 'Yes'?"

"If it is a boy you shall have the most beautiful set of jewellery I can buy, I promise you. 'Yes, no; yes, no.'"

"Wait a minute. Shall you and your people be very angry with me if it should be a . . . girl?"

The King thought for a moment; then he said: "No, *I* shall certainly not be angry with you; that would be unjust, for *you* are not answerable for what will be. As for the people . . . well, I cannot answer for them."

The Queen stopped abruptly. The King, with the half-despoiled flower in his hand, stood and gazed at her.

"Why are you hesitating?" he said.

"There are only a few petals left, and I dare not look how they will end."

"Yes, no; yes, no . . . it is No," said the King crossly, and fiercely flinging away the denuded stalk on which only the yellow calyx remained. "Did I not tell you it would be a girl?"

“ Give me that other daisy over there,” cried the Queen, and as he did not immediately fulfil her behest, she stamped her foot impatiently, crying, “ Give it me, give it me ! ”

The King did not move from the spot, but looked at his Consort with an ominous frown on his countenance. She put her head on one side, half closed her eyes, and laughed so that her small white teeth gleamed like pearls between the red young lips.

“ I beg a thousand pardons ! Would Your Majesty perhaps be so very kind as to give me that flower ? ”

The King at once picked it and gave it her, saying : “ What will be the good of it ? . . . it is bound to be a girl.”

“ I must see that first : ‘ Yes, no ; yes, no.’ ”

“ You see it *is* ‘ No.’ ”

“ Oh, do be quiet ! Forgive me, I did not mean to say that, of course. I ought to have said, ‘ Will Your Majesty kindly have a minute’s patience ? ’ ”

The Queen puckered up her sweet little mouth as with every petal she plucked she said : ‘ Yes, no ; yes, no ; YES.’ ”

“ Ah, that time you took off two petals,” said the King, who had been watching intently.

“ No, I did not, it was quite fair : ‘ No, yes, yes, yes ; you see it *was* ‘ Yes.’ ”

“ Your Majesty plucked off two petals instead of one that time,” reiterated the King. “ That was not fair.”

She shrugged her shoulders, and said : “ Let us do it all over again. Shall I propose something ? We will take it in turn to pluck off one petal each, then it *must* be fair ; there is another daisy, give it me . . . I mean, will you be so good as to give it to me ? ”

She had sat down on a seat, and when the King had gathered the daisy he came and sat by her side, gently putting his arm round her. She held the flower in her left hand and plucked off the first petal, saying as she did so, with an assumption of certainty, “ ‘ Yes.’ ”

“ ‘ No,’ said the King, plucking off the next, and so on, turn and turn about, until the snowy petals strewed the ground in front of them, and the Queen cried, “ ‘ Yes, yes, yes ! ’ Long



THE PALACE OF DROTNINGHOLM, 1790
(MÄLAR LAKE)

live His Royal Highness the Crown-Prince !” And with that she took off her fluffy white hat and swung it high up in the air by its rose-coloured strings.

“For Heaven’s sake, I entreat Your Majesty. Some one might hear you; and supposing anyone were to see us,” and the King looked carefully all round, “they would take us for a couple of silly children.”

“Well, *are* we really anything else ?” said the Queen playfully. “I am eighteen, and you are not quite one-and-twenty.”

“I, at least, am not a child,” replied the King gruffly. “Had we not better return to the house ?”

“Oh, Your Majesty, I should like to go a good way farther, if I might lean with all my weight on your arm.”

“Pray do so,” he answered, drawing up his slim figure; “I am very strong.”

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The Court had been in residence at Drottningholm since the 1st of July, and the King had only been away for a few days in September, to be present at the launching of a battleship at Karlscrona. Early in October the Court returned to the capital by the doctor’s orders, as the accouchement of the Queen might now be expected any day after the fifteenth. It proved an unfortunate remark of the doctor’s, for on and after that date the methodical King hourly expected the birth of his heir, and would have worried the Queen out of her life had she not, fortunately for her, had a keen sense of humour, and taken his impatience in lighter vein. When she was alone with him, she used solemnly to point to the clock in the drawing-room, or take out her pretty little watch set with pearls; holding it up before the King, and gravely shaking her head, she would remark: “The Crown-Prince has no notion of punctuality; from whom has he got that ?”

“Not from *me*,” the King would promptly reply; then he would add, “I am always precise to a *second*.”

“I have learnt to be so to a *minute*,” answered the Queen, “and if I judge Your Majesty aright, *he* will have to do the same,” she added laughing.

But as the days went on the Queen began to be alarmed at keeping the King waiting so long, and she felt sorry that not only she and he, but the Court and the nation should be so long kept in suspense.

To pass the time during the long tedious winter evenings she asked to be allowed to sit with the King in his study. She promised to be useful and as quiet as a mouse, if he would only let her be near him. So each evening found them together until nigh upon midnight. The King sat attentively and conscientiously reading through every sheet of correspondence handed him by her, signing it in his large, bold hand, "Gustaf Adolf," then handing it back to the Queen, who strewed golden sand over the wet signature, and placed the sheets in immaculate order on the writing-table before her, the King looking on critically the while to see that no one sheet projected a hair's-breadth beyond the other.

But his growing impatience at the long delay distressed the Queen more and more, although she fully appreciated his consideration and kindly forbearance in not heaping reproaches upon her. October had merged into November, and still nothing happened. Fortunately papers from Paris diverted the King's attention in some measure from the Queen's incomprehensible "unpunctuality." Unfortunately, however, the news was of an irritating nature, and turned his temper into the greatest anger, whereas before he had only been impatient.

The news, dated from Paris, October 14th, was as follows :

"It is officially reported, and that with certainty, that General Buonaparte has returned to Europe and to France ; he is said to have landed from Egypt at Fréjus, in the South of France, halfway between Toulon and Nice, on October 9th, accompanied by Generals Berthier, Lannes, Marmont, Murat, Andrewszy, and Citizens Monge and Berthollet. He was received by an enormous concourse of people, cheering and shouting, "Long live the Republic!" He left the army in Egypt under very favourable conditions, and his unexpected return to France is interpreted as a signal success."

Having read this, the King sat motionless and lost in thought.

Then he said aloud to himself: "If only the Queen had hurried up before *him*. . . Now I *know* it will be a girl." The King reasoned well enough that there could not be the slightest connection in reality between any of the late events in France, and the anxiously expected event in Sweden, but he had so long been accustomed to look upon Buonaparte as a bugbear and a stumbling-block in the way of his welfare and happiness in this world, and his eyes had been all but blinded by the light of this ill-boding comet which seemed to cross his path so often, that he had at last come to believe that *Buonaparte's* luck spelt misfortune to *him*. He had hoped and prayed with ever-growing anxiety that his firstborn might open his eyes upon the world in an interval of peace and quiet, when neither he himself nor the world at large were taken up with the doings of that hateful Buonaparte. . . . But no, it was not to be.

The King went into the chamber where the Queen was, and by the expression on his face she knew that something unusual had occurred to disturb him. She dared not put any question, but his obstinate silence roused her fears and curiosity. He stood still in the middle of the room because the doctor had expressed a wish that just now he should desist from tramping up and down in the Queen's presence, as it so often got on her nerves, but his unwonted quietness was equally irritating, and she cried passionately: "What has happened? Tell me, for God's sake, what it is!"

The King turned and said: "Buonaparte has returned to Europe."

The Queen uttered a low "Oh!" She had fancied that ill-news from her people at Baden had reached him.

"I am sure it is going to be a girl," added the King, in his most obstinate, querulous tone.

"How can Your Majesty be so positive about it?" asked the Queen anxiously.

"I know, because Buonaparte has returned to Europe."

"Oh!" cried she again, for she really could not think of anything else to say.

A few days later came the poor young Queen's hour of trial, and it was a long, troublous one ; all day and all night she suffered, but at two o'clock on the morning of November 9th a little son was born to the King.

When Gustaf Adolf was informed that a little heir to the throne had made his appearance, he stood for a long time with hands clasped, unable to utter a word, whilst outside the thunder of cannon announced to the nation the joyful news that a Crown-Prince had been born. When the baby was brought to him, the King stared at it as though he could not believe it was really there. He tried to realize that his prayers had been granted, that his sinister premonitions had been ignominiously brought to nought, and that it was a fact that he *had* a son. He covered his eyes with his hand and his lips moved inaudibly. Before he was ready to receive the congratulations of the Court, he arranged with trembling hand the blue ribbon tied round the tiny Prince's person. The same evening, accompanied by the Queen-Mother and the Duchess of Södermanland and numerous torch-bearers, he went to the Church, where a "Te Deum" was sung, and a Thanksgiving Service conducted by the Bishop, Dr. Flodin.

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The little Crown-Prince's cradle was put into a closely covered sleigh, and he was to accompany his parents to Norrköping for the sitting of the Riksdag and the Coronation. He was but a few months old, and on the day fixed for the journey it was intensely cold, and people were of opinion that it would have been far wiser to leave the little one comfortable at Stockholm instead of taking him to Norrköping. It was the King who had insisted on having the Crown-Prince Gustaf with him. It was an important and perplexing epoch, and the young King thought his little presence would, perchance, bring him good luck. Not that his happiness since the Prince's birth had been untroubled ; on the contrary, the happy event had been celebrated by riots in Gothenburg, Malmö, Norrköping, and Linköping. At Upsala, too, there had been regrettable excesses and disgraceful scenes, which the King maintained were the

outcome of a rapidly-spreading spirit of rebellion and Jacobinism, although his courtiers essayed to attribute them to other causes. This had happened in his own land, whilst beyond, in France, General Buonaparte was arrogating to himself the most supreme power under the modest title of "First Consul." As yet he had not had the audacity to openly appropriate the *throne* of the Bourbons, but it would be only a question of time before that profanation would take place, and there was none to hinder him, unless the Sovereigns of Europe united against him at the last moment.

But this Riksdag was to settle the finances of the country, and the subsequent Coronation would have to be well over before Gustaf Adolf and the Swedish people could take up the rôle Providence meant to apportion to them in the affairs of the world.

Gustaf Adolf was in hopes that the anointing oil poured on his head at the Coronation would be also a sign of dedication to the high calling he had to follow as Defender of Law and Order in the Universe ! The little Princee was to be his Mascot.

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When His Majesty returned to Stockholm (about the middle of June, after the Coronation and the Riksdag) he became somewhat doubtful as to whether the Baby Princee *had* been as good a Mascot as he ought to have been. It was true that the King had finally carried through his will at the Riksdag, but it had been with much clamour and arguing and violent speeches on the part of excited youths with revolutionary tendencies. The Coronation also was a *fait accompli*, but it had not come off without many obstacles : first, the Queen had been taken ill, so that there had been a talk of postponing the ceremony ; then the weather had been unusually capricious, and storms of snow and hail had come down on the procession to the church ; the King's charger had become restive and could by no means whatever be induced to pass a certain point, so that he had been obliged to dismount and mount another not well broken-in steed. Then the Crown, which was much too

large for him and threatened every moment to fall off, had made a sore place on his forehead, and the pole supporting the Standard had snapped in two !

However, it was well he had taken the Crown-Prince with him ; things might have been even worse if he had not !

CHAPTER XIX

BY LAND AND SEA

THE King loved travelling. When on a journey his temper was always beyond reproach ; his Equerries thought that that was only what it ought to be, seeing that no Swedish monarch had ever travelled so much before, nor had such exceeding bad luck as regarded the weather. If journeying by land with Gustaf Adolf, they had to be prepared to face thunder, hail, and deluges of rain ; if by water, sudden and fearful tempests had to be encountered. Moreover, the King seemed always to choose the worst time of the year for his expeditions, and it was in November that he started, by way of Ålandshaf, returning the second week in January, which was really tempting Providence. But the King felt compelled to go to St. Petersburg, although it was so late in the year, to pay a visit to the Emperor Paul. The journey was supposed to be for the purpose of promoting a coalition between Sweden and Russia, and the greatest anxiety was felt as to whether the King intended to involve Sweden in a war with France ; but when it leaked out that the alliance was to be formed against the arrogant English, who in time of war behaved as if they were sole lords of the ocean, and who had an unpleasant habit of taking the ships of other nations as if theirs by right, everyone was pleased. This naval convention among the northern Powers against England saved Sweden from the entire loss of her commerce. Of course, great anxiety was felt lest England should meanwhile blockade the Scandinavian shores, and the King was impatiently expected back from Russia. It was, in truth, a blessing that he *could* be fairly good-tempered on a journey, though one could not have

wondered if he had been the reverse under existing circumstances; for the weather was abominable—stormy, blowy, and exceedingly cold. An icy north wind sighed and groaned in the tackle, the tempest howled and whistled in the sails which flapped helplessly in every direction; there was a heavy sea running, and the rolling and pitching were truly awful.

The King's temper as he sat on deck was not ruffled in the least; he was pleased with his journey. He and the Emperor Paul had met and parted as friends, and the King was proud of this friendship, for there was no one he admired more than the Emperor Paul; he was Gustaf Adolf's ideal of an absolute, all-powerful Sovereign, dictating his will in things both great and small, and knowing how to make himself obeyed by high and low; having, moreover, plans and ideas totally unlike other men, and such as only a monarch could conceive and a monarch could understand.

General Toll, Admiral Cronstedt, and a few others of the King's gentlemen whom *mal de mer* had not forced to seek their cabins, tried to get warm by pacing the deck; now and again they would slink round to where they could catch a glimpse of the King, hoping that the icy blast might compel him to go below or to put on a fur coat at least, for etiquette forbade their putting on theirs, or using any kind of wrap to protect themselves from the cold, so long as the King sat on deck with nothing more than his customary uniform.

At last Count Nils Gyldenstolpe observed to General Toll:

"Do *you* go and talk to him, and try to get him to put on *some-thing*. We shall perish with cold; my marrow is already frozen."

"I wonder whose would *not* be," cried Marshal de Besche. "You must save our lives, General Toll, at any cost; the only one he will listen to must be spokesman now, and that is *you*."

The General at once went off in the direction of the King, who was evidently in a brown study.

"Does Your Majesty not feel the cold wind?" he said, considering it unnecessary to beat about the bush as he saw the King shivering inwardly.

"Not particularly," the latter replied. "But tell me one

thing, General: did you happen to hear a rumour at St. Petersburg that the Grand Duchess Alexandra was so unhappy with her husband, the Count Palatine?"

"Yes, Your Majesty; I did hear something of the sort. . . . Might I be permitted to fetch Your Majesty's fur coat; it is as cold as in the Arctic regions here."

"No, thank you, I don't want any furs," replied the King.

When the General had gone the King sighed deeply; he was thinking: "Would she have been happier, perhaps, if we had never met?"

There was nothing left for the General but to return to his companions, and in his driest tones he said: "Won't have his coat; would rather starve to death with cold."

"I know that schoolboys of ten and twelve think it beneath them to put on an overcoat, and would rather shiver, but it passes my comprehension how a young man of two-and-twenty can be so childish."

The Lord Marshal took up the word: "Childish! Yes, that is just what he *is*, and in more important matters than this, too. The late King *would* have him a grown-up man when he was but a baby, he was never allowed to be a child, and sooner or later nature *will* assert her rights; she is doing it now. That is why he *is* so like a child; he is like a hot-house plant which has shot up too fast."

"And therefore not properly developed, eh?" said the Marshal.

"Goodness, no, my dear Count; I meant that he was like a hot-house plant which has been put out too early and has suffered from frost."

"To continue the simile, which is particularly applicable in this case, General, you might add that he can bear as little as a hot-house plant that has only seen the outside world through hot-house glass, and that not pure white glass, but glass of all the colours of the rainbow; sky-blue, sea-green, rose-pink, and blood-red."

"I only wish he *were* sitting in his hot-house and ourselves along with him. Good General Toll, out of pity for our wives who will be widows, and our children who will be fatherless,

don't give up, but try your luck just *once* more. If anyone in the universe *can* make the King do anything, it's *you*; no one can look after him like *you*, General."

"I *will* have one more try," replied the General, rubbing his half-frozen hands hard to get back a little feeling into them; "but I dare not go at him straight, as I did before; it would be the worse for us if I made him angry. Let us at least be thankful that he cannot order us to appear stark naked, though *that* couldn't be much worse than it is at present."

The General went a little way forward, but the boat rocked so that he could only stagger from side to side; when at last he managed to get a little nearer to the King, the latter called to him: "General Toll, can you guess what I am thinking about?"

"I cannot, Your Majesty," replied the General, his chief interest being centred on something he shrewdly guessed the King was *not* thinking of, viz. that he should put on his fur overcoat. In his own mind he was convinced that the King's thoughts were principally occupied with the Grand Duchess Alexandra.

"I was thinking," said the King, "that I shall at once adopt the Russian mode in the Army; I mean that officers should wear their caps straight over their eyes, and carry their gloves and cane in their hands. What do *you* think about it, General?"

"A splendid idea! But à propos of clothes, does not Your Majesty think it would be advisable to put on an overcoat in this bitter weather?"

"I never heard that Charles XII wrapt himself up in furs," returned the King gravely; "but if you feel the cold, General, why don't you walk about to get warm?"

The General felt snubbed and went; as he passed, his companions called out: "Well, what success?"

"It is impossible," said Toll; "Charles XII is not reported to have indulged in a fur coat!"

"I'll be hanged if he won't *have* to wear one crossing Ålands-haf," burst out De Besche, so loud that Admiral Cronstedt gave him a warning look. He thought he noticed the King turning sharply that way. General Toll winked his eye.

“A bright idea that, milord,” he said; “we shall have to work that; but it will be the last attempt, gentlemen.”

With much unnecessary stamping and tramping General Toll once more approached that part of the deck where the King still sat, stiff and livid with cold. When he caught sight of him the King gave him a friendly nod, and said: “I am also thinking of having our whips made about an inch shorter, and the brush at the end of the handle I shall have made to protrude an eighth of an inch beyond the leather, so as to show better.”

Toll merely bowed, as was expected of him. After a while he said: “Just now Your Majesty referred to Charles XII, and mentioned that he never wore a great coat; curiously enough, it just occurred to my remembrance that he had, nevertheless, been known to do so on *one* occasion, at least, during his life.”

“Indeed,” said the King, with some show of interest; “and when might that have been?” Even as he spoke he had all the trouble in the world to conceal from the General how his teeth were chattering with cold.

“Oddly enough, it was on just such a journey over Ålandshaf that Charles XII wore the said fur coat.”

“Are you quite certain about it?” asked the King, fixing a searching gaze on the General.

“Perfectly certain, Your Majesty. Charles XII was so overcome with the cold on the waters of Ålandshaf, that he was unable to resist or bear it any longer, and therefore came to the conclusion that he *must* put on something; the late Count Horn told me all about it.”

The King bent to look over the side of the vessel where the sea was raging with huge black, angry waves. At last he remarked: “I wonder if that day was much colder than this.”

“If I remember right, it was much the same, Your Majesty,” said the General with conviction.

“Well, you are right, I think, General; it *is* awfully cold, and the storm is increasing. I had better have my coat.”

As Toll passed his companions in misfortune, he gave a nod and said under his breath: “That bait took; in five minutes

you will be able to wrap yourselves up to your ears in your furs, gentlemen."

"God bless you, General!" cried De Besche fervently; "it began to be a matter of life or death."

The boat pitched and rolled so unmercifully that Toll had the greatest difficulty in reaching the King's cabin.

"Go and help His Majesty on with his overcoat at once," he said to the valet; "at once, do you hear. His Majesty is wellnigh frozen to death."

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Behold, now, the King, up on the highest tower of the fortress of Landscrona, looking over the Sound that 2nd of April, which happened also to be Holy Thursday. He had gone up with the commander, the aged Major-General Lundberg, and two of his adjutants, just as the heavy firing between the English and Danish fleets in the Roads off Kopenhagen had begun. He had mounted the highest point with the feelings of a leader who, from a height, watches the victory of his fleet; the English, of course, *being* the enemy must suffer signal defeat, the right being on the *other* side, that is, on the side of the Swedes and Danes; so it was but natural that they should win the battle as soon as the Swedish fleet came to the rescue of the beleaguered Danes.

Gustaf Adolf had chosen a position where the whole of the Sound lay open to his view, and stood so near to the loophole in the tower that the sea-breeze blew right into his face, setting his hat slightly awry on his powdered head, and shaking some of the powder on to the gold-embroidered collar of his uniform. He stood with his hand resting on the brickwork, his left arm on a protruding stone; and in his hand he held a pair of field-glasses, which he constantly raised to his eyes, watching the movements of his fleet. It was not quite visible just then, but with God's help it soon would be. With his usual impatience, the King found it irksome to wait or to keep still, so he picked some small stones out of the wall and threw them down into the moat below. The crackling of the mortar when the King loosened

a stone startled a swallow, which in its fright flew straight in at the loophole where the King was standing, and out again where the commander and his adjutants stood, with their field-glasses spying in the direction of Kopenhagen.

The King had been awed by the fluttering of the terrified bird, and he gave a sigh of relief when the poor little thing flew away again. He listened afresh to the roar of the cannon, which every moment grew louder. One quarter of an hour passed after another, and still no sign of the Swedish squadron, and the King's anxiety increased accordingly. He knew the Danes would misinterpret his motives if the Swedish fleet did not soon come to the help of her allies. In Denmark and Europe generally Gustaf Adolf would be looked upon as faithless and wavering. What was keeping Admiral Palmquist? Why, in the name of Heaven, did the Swedish fleet fail to put in an appearance?

The King could bear the suspense no longer. He left his peephole and endeavoured to soothe his agitation by tramping up and down the uneven pavement of the tower, but naturally the space was very circumscribed, and as the King had to be continually turning, he appeared to the Commander like an angry tiger in his cage. There was dead silence within the tower, whilst the cannon roared ceaselessly without.

The King ruminated on all he had gone through that month; his anxiety lest the fleet should not be ready in time to defend his own country, if that should be the first to be attacked, or to help the threatened allies if Denmark should be the first. He had secretly hoped the enemy would attack Sweden first; that would have been preferable to failing his ally in the hour of need.

These thoughts once more brought the King to his look-out. The smoke of the powder lay like a heavy pall over Denmark, and the wind sent thick columns of it right into the teeth of the Swedish fleet. The King looked as little as he could towards the side where the flashes of fire lost themselves in the clouds; his aching eyes in vain scanned the Sound for the Swedish ships.

He could keep still no longer, and as he resumed his tramp

within the narrow limits of the watch-tower, he passed in review in his mind the various events which had happened since his return from Russia. The work of getting the fleet ready had gone on steadily day and night, and had the winter only been as severe as the previous year, it would have been ready in ample time. But the mild weather and the unusually early breaking of the ice had upset all calculations. Everything was against him! everything! Even the English had appeared in northern waters quite a fortnight sooner than could reasonably have been expected. . . . And the Swedish fleet? . . . where was *it*? Not to be seen yet? If it did not arrive very soon it would be too late. The King stopped at the look-out, and not seeing the faintest sign of the long-expected squadron, he stamped violently on the ground with his foot, whilst the cannonade at Copenhagen seemed to be going on with redoubled fury.

The King's brain was in a whirl.

"What more could I have done than order Admiral Wachtmeister to have the work continued without intermission, and myself take the journey to Gothenburg and Skåne? When the first English ships were sighted in the Kattegat I had not the least doubt but that Gothenburg would be bombarded, and a landing effected on the west coast. When I come to recapitulate all I have gone through, I felt relieved to think that Sweden would be the first to be assailed. I was so confident that we should come out all right. No burden is so hard to bear as the feeling of being unable to stand by an ally, and of being deemed faithless. Righteous Lord, oh! let it come in time; let not disgrace fall upon and overwhelm me!"

His thoughts kept pace with his steps.

"As long as the English ships were *en évidence*, my men were ready for battle, but when they sailed away in a southerly direction, I knew that they were making for Denmark. I at once sent orders to Wachtmeister to despatch the fleet into the Sound without delay. I informed him, by letter, that I should be exceedingly grieved not to see the fleet take part in the impending hostilities, and that nothing must be allowed to stand in the way of helping our allies.

Again the King put up his glasses and looked searchingly round.

Deep silence in the tower, and smoke growing thicker and thicker along the Danish coast.

“Perhaps I feel it the more because I was never particularly fond of the Danes, and with pain and agony I search out my reins and my heart to discover whether I have failed or left undone anything with regard to the obligations and duties I have taken upon myself. Three days ago, when I stood on the bridge at Helsingfors and watched the English ships sailing through the Sound on their way to Kopenhagen, and not one single shot of the Danes from Kronoberg hitting them, the firing seemed to me more like a salute than real earnest. If only my fleet had *then* been ready to trap the English between two fires! But there . . . it was *not*. All I could do was to send off a messenger in the middle of the night with orders to Wachtmeister to let it start at once, and to inform the Crown-Prince of Denmark that, at the latest, the Swedish ships would be at Kopenhagen on April 2nd. . . . But they are *not*. . . . To-day is the second, and the Danes have for hours been fighting the stronger and more numerous English alone.”

Again the King stopped and put up his glasses, and when a little bird suddenly flew past him, he uttered a cry from sheer nervousness; the blood rushed to his temples, his whole body trembled, so much had the strain and excitement taken it out of him. One of his gentlemen finally succeeded in driving the bird away; the King felt as if he could distinguish every single shot he heard in the distance, and which fell like a heavy weight upon his heart, and increased his fears. The clouds of smoke seemed to settle on his brain and obscure his reason.

The cannonade ceased about five o'clock in the afternoon. That hour always seems the most weird when the noise of firing gradually dies down, and then ceases altogether. The King said not a word, but he lingered awhile before descending the winding stairs of the tower, accompanied by his exhausted followers.

At the bottom he was met by a despatch from Wachtmeister,

stating that Vice-Admiral Palmquist had been utterly unable to take the Swedish fleet out of Karlserona, owing to violent, contrary winds. "There are always contrary winds somehow," muttered the King between his closed teeth. "But I shall teach them to sail when I command it, no matter what winds may be blowing."

And he straightway wrote an order where he stood to Wachtmeister for the instant dismissal from the command of the fleet of Vice-Admiral Palmquist.

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"So the Emperor Paul is dead ; he died suddenly from an attack of apoplexy." These words Gustaf Adolf repeated over and over again, without seeming to grasp their import. "He has died just now when he was most wanted. The Emperor Paul ! And it is barely three months since I last saw him. In his best years, in the prime of life . . . and now he is dead. It is too great a blow to be true ! How can one bear it ? I am often told that I fret and worry needlessly—but *do* I ? Is not this enough sorrow ? The Emperor Paul is no more, and the English are besieging Kopenhagen, and soon it will have to be decided whether Sweden shall take up arms or not. But whatever the end may be, I shall not submit to a disgraceful truce, as the Danes have done ; with life and limb I will defend the rights of my Kingdom, if need be . . . but the Emperor Paul is dead . . . from an apoplectic stroke !"

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In the great hall of the Palace at Karlserona stood Gustaf Adolf. The Russian Count von Pahlen, who had arrived to notify the King of the demise of the Emperor Paul and the accession of the Emperor Alexander, was to be received in special audience that evening.

The King carried himself more erect and stiffly than usual, but his face was drawn with grief, for he knew now what the "stroke" had been that had caused that death. He knew now that the Emperor Paul had been treacherously assassinated,

and by whom, and he took it as an insult, never to be forgotten or forgiven, that his brother-in-law, the new Emperor, should have had the audacity to send this von Pahlen, the son of one of the regicides, as Envoy to his Court. It had cost a good deal to persuade the King to receive him at all, and Gustaf Adolf himself feared that he might lose his self-control and show his anger and aversion, and forget himself.

He gulped down one glass of water after another whilst waiting, but instead of cooling his wrath that only seemed to make it burn more fiercely.

Presently the huge folding-doors were thrown open, and the Chamberlain announced the Russian Envoy.

With his hand on the hilt of his sword, the King listened to the Envoy's harangue.

When the Count had concluded he waited in vain for the words and compliments, which were *de rigueur* on such occasions, from the lips of the Swedish monarch.

Absolute silence pervaded the hall.

Several times the King's lips were observed to move, as though he were about to say something, but it was only to get his breath and a little air. He frequently changed colour, but his face was set and stern, and he held himself stiff and straight. At last, with a tremendous effort, he managed to say :

"I have been informed that the Emperor Paul died of an apoplectic seizure."

"Yes, Your Majesty; his end was indeed caused by a stroke," Pahlen replied, without a trace of hesitation.

The King grasped the hilt of his sword fiercely. He looked von Pahlen straight in the face and advanced a few steps towards him with an expression of countenance which caused the Emperor Alexander's Envoy to shrink back in alarm.

That night, before retiring to rest, the King placed two loaded pistols on the table by his bedside.

"Another Sovereign assassinated, foully, and by his own people, too! Nine years ago it was my father, this time it is my friend and ally. . . . Who may be the next . . . ?"

CHAPTER XX

VISITORS FROM BADEN

THE young Queen Frederica was anticipating a great pleasure—a joy she had never even dared hope for. In a very short time she was to have the felicity of having her much-loved parents, her only brother, and her youngest sister on a visit; they were to come direct from St. Petersburg from visiting the Empress Elisabeth, and were even now on their way from the capital of one daughter's dominions to that of another.

The Queen looked forward with great pride and delight to exhibiting to her parents and relations her two beautiful children, the Crown-Prince Gustaf and the infant Princess Sophia, who had been born soon after the King's return from Karlserona, and was now nearly five months old. The Queen's happiness would have been complete if the King had not all through that summer been so intensely irritable and hypochondriacal. Frederica sometimes wondered whether it was grief for the death of the Grand Duchess Alexandra, which had occurred in the spring, that was at the bottom of the King's variable humour and depression, and as she had always been more or less jealous of the Grand Duchess, she did not like to think so. Whatever might have been the cause, one thing was certain, and that was that the King had very frequently been angry with his Consort during their journey to Skåne, also during their stay at Beckaskog, an estate belonging to Count Toll, where they had spent part of the summer. They had returned to Stockholm by way of Gothenburg and Trollhättan, and the King maintained that the Queen seemed to become daily more indifferent and less disposed to try to gain the love of his people

and their loyalty ; he reproached her for her shyness and coldness, and when in self-defence she retorted that he had forbidden her all cheerfulness and affability in intercourse with his subjects, he answered that he had no recollection of ever having forbidden her bowing graciously to the crowd when they happened to drive through a small provincial town, or to say a few pleasant words to those who were presented to her at the receptions.

It was, therefore, no wonder that the Queen was apprehensive as to what the King's mood might chance to be during the visit of her beloved relatives, neither did Gustaf Adolf himself appear to be quite sure, because on the day when he heard that the august travellers had landed at Furusund and might be expected at Stockholm in the course of the following day, he said to the Queen in a tone of vexation, and apparently without reference to anything in particular : " I have not the gift of making myself agreeable to people that my father had, and yet I *mean* well all the same."

She gave him a gentle, almost loving answer, for there was something indescribably touching and pathetic about the King as he said it.

" Oh yes— you *have* the gift when you like to use it, but you so rarely like."

" Yet I crave for affection," said the King warmly, as he turned to go.

The Queen shrugged her shoulders. He was certainly odd, but she was not going to meet trouble half-way, and tried to look forward to the morrow when she would welcome her dear ones.

It was a day of perfect happiness, darkened by not one single cloud. When the Royal couple went to meet the Grand Ducal family of Baden in a pinnace at Långholm the King, as son-in-law, paid the most exemplary deference and attention to the parents of his Consort, which was highly appreciated by them, and led them to infer that a perfect understanding now obtained between the young people. On their entry into Stockholm they were struck with admiration of the King's smart and soldierly bearing, and could not help noticing how stiff and haughty,

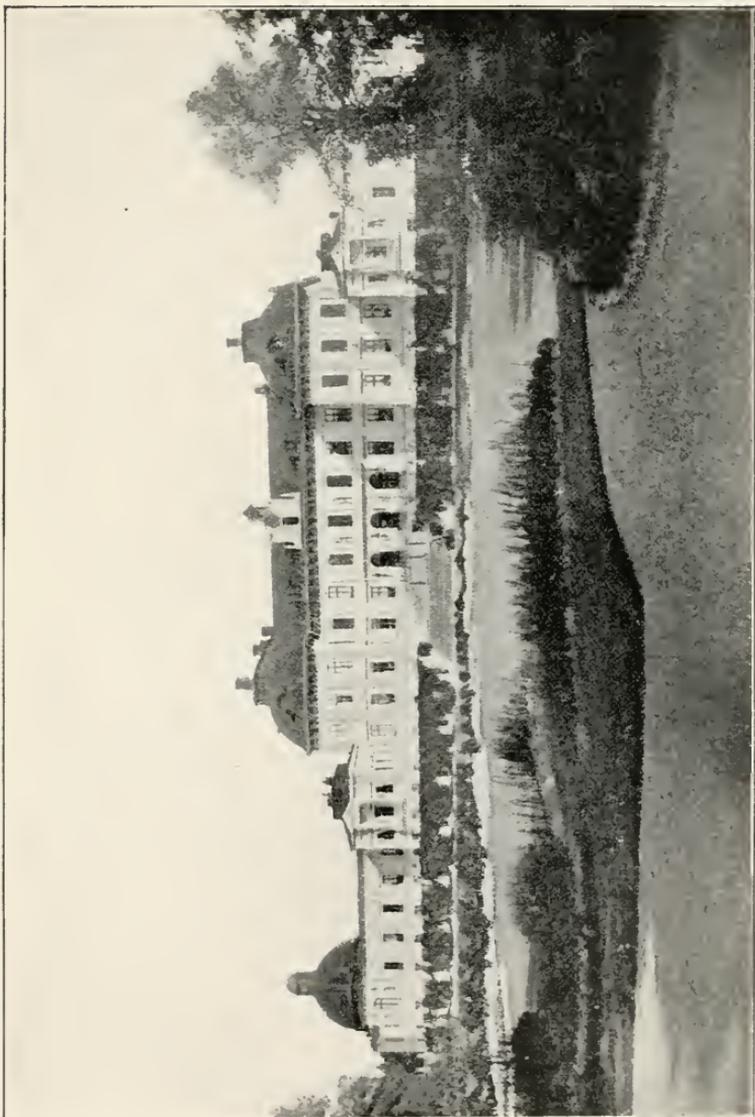
nay, almost uncouth, their own daughter's behaviour was when the crowd so heartily cheered.

The Queen was in hopes that the King would find her mother as fascinating and attractive as did all who met her, and that first afternoon she mostly sat with her father's or mother's hand in hers, listening with beaming eyes to the conversation which her mother was carrying on with the King about the affairs of Europe; he and she quite agreed in their opinion of the First Consul, whom the Grand Duchess called an "usurper" and the King an "upstart." The King was all interest and animation so long as Buonaparte formed the subject of conversation. The Queen's mother was a woman of keen perceptions, and saw more with her one eye (the other was sightless) than the majority of folk did with two; and although a good deal of territory had been ceded to Baden by the First Consul, she was sharp enough to see that the disadvantages would more than counterbalance any advantages gained from the addition. She had no liking for Buonaparte, and felt not the least spark of gratitude towards the French Republic or the man at its wheel.

The Queen had been rather perturbed as to how her peculiar Consort and her mother would get on together, both being always positive in their own opinion, and disinclined to yield.

With her father it was different, and she was almost certain the King would fall out with *him*. The Hereditary Prince of Baden, Karl Ludwig, was one of the most inconsistent and vacillating of men; he could never assert himself nor command obedience or respect.

However, everything went off marvellously well at Stockholm during the visit of the guests from Baden; they made a most favourable impression on the people, and the festivities given in their honour brought a welcome change into the usually dreary and monotonous routine of life at Court. But as the King insisted upon the visit to Sweden not being in any way behind that which they had just paid to Russia, he planned a stay at some country residence and a progress through the Provinces, instead of a continued residence in the capital.



DROTTNINGHOLM PALACE
PRESENT DAY

This was much against Queen Frederica's inclination, as Stockholm, at this season of the year, was far more agreeable than any other place.

Nevertheless, it was decided that the last week in October should be spent at Drottningholm ; and it might have been a most enjoyable time had the King's temper remained as serene as it had been at Stockholm. Alas ! it did not ; he was in a most unfortunate mood. The very morning after the arrival at Drottningholm the valet Wachlin got into disgrace with him over his toilet. Though, even as a wee child, Gustaf Adolf had always been exceedingly tiresome, Wachlin could not remember any time when he had been so impossible to please as on this day. The King also remembered his childish fretfulness, and wondered whether the nervous strain of his boyhood, or the adversities of later years, were the cause of his being so easily upset, some days by the merest trifles, which rendered it next to impossible for him to keep his temper or to preserve the dignity which he was so genuinely grieved to lose on those occasions.

The immediate cause of the King's displeasure this time had been as follows : the last few days he had taken it into his head that the Queen neglected him for her parents and relations, and he imagined that she no longer cared for him now she had her own people with her. Did he not deserve her first consideration, and to *be* first, as before ? Evidently the Queen did not seem to think so, and she offended him frequently by her remarks, such as : " I wonder if my mother would like this or that," or " I hope it will not be too much for my father," or " I trust my brother and sister are enjoying themselves," etc.

The King thought that he had never felt so " lonely." These people all seemed to *love* each other, but who was there who . . . loved *him* ?

These reflections kept him awake, consequently he was very cross and irritable the next morning.

" Tie my sash properly," he gruffly commanded Wachlin.

The valet did so ; he knew a storm was brewing, both by the King's voice and his impatience and continual fidgeting.

“How you do fumble about, and how clumsy you are this morning, Wachlin,” he suddenly burst out.

“If Your Majesty would but have one minute’s patience.”

“I have had patience enough, but you are so awkward; what do you mean by it? I am not going to show myself with a sash tied like a bit of string,” and with that the King, although his hands shook, undid the sash and flung it on the floor. Wachlin made another attempt, but he knew that his master had made up his mind that it *shouldn’t* be right, and so, of course, it again proved a failure.

“It is much too loose,” snapped the King; “it rides up when I turn—look at it! A nice way you are doing your duty.”

“To-day must be an unlucky day for me, since it appears I am unable to do anything to Your Majesty’s satisfaction,” said Wachlin, in injured tone.

The King was wild when he heard that, for the idea that it was going to be an unlucky day had obsessed his own mind. How many unlucky days had this year in store for him? he wondered, and what particular piece of ill-luck was going to befall him on this day?

It suddenly occurred to him that it would probably be something connected with the Queen. His first fiancée, the Princess of Mecklenburg, had died in January and the Grand Duchess Alexandra in March. . . . Was the Queen to be the third?

Once in a fit of depression he had actually discussed it with her, and she had replied that both Princesses had died in child-bed, and that that was a thing of frequent occurrence among women who were constantly having children.

The King had thought it unbecoming and indelicate in the Queen to say that. He could nevertheless not help thinking . . . “*Is she going to be the third?*”

If he had not been vexed with her that thought would never have crossed his mind, and he knew he was wrong to be annoyed with anyone so near to him. He was aware that his fits of temper spelt misfortune to the people concerned, and in spite of her shortcomings and many (according to *his* standard) imperfections, he was as fond of his wife as it was his nature to be of anyone, and if anything were to happen to her, he

would be beside himself with grief. This *idée fixe* so worked upon his mind that he finally lost the last small remnant of self-restraint. He rushed upon the unfortunate valet, took him by the throat, and flung him against the wall.

“How dare you talk about ‘unlucky’ days; how dare you answer me when I find fault with you?” he cried.

He was in such a passion that Waehlin involuntarily put up his hand to shield his face from the blow which he felt might be coming. His master misinterpreted the action.

“You dare to threaten me, you wretched coward? You would lift your hand against your King? . . . From this hour I dispense with your services. Your wages shall be paid, but never dare come near me again. Leave the room this minute. Do you hear? This minute, I say, or . . .”

It proved a disastrous day at Drottningholm, and when dinner-time came and the Grand Duchess of Baden was a minute or two behind time, the King looked like a thunder-cloud. He stood in the middle of the room and waited in such a state of irritability that every second seemed like a minute and every minute like twenty to those in his presence. He never took his eyes off the clock on the mantelpiece, and when his father-in-law tried to divert his attention by some casual remark on the squally weather, which seemed inclined to continue, Gustaf Adolf made no reply, but ostentatiously took out his watch and compared it with the clock.

The Queen, supremely happy to be with her own people once more, did not notice that the King was in one of his tempers, or that anything unusual was the matter. She was in one corner of the room, laughing and joking with her brother and sister.

“What was that, Marie? You ate up all the old hens in the hen-house?” the Queen asked her sister, in a low voice, but laughing heartily.

The laugh startled the King, who made a movement of impatience, but kept his eyes fixed on the clock.

“What do you mean, Frika?” Princess Marie asked, somewhat puzzled. She also spoke in low tones, so as not to be overheard by the King.

“Have you never heard the story about our fowls, Marie? nor you, either, Karl? Well, then, you shall hear it now. First I must tell you that when we were quite young, my sister and I nearly always had chicken for supper—*chicken*, did I say?—they were the oldest, toughest fowls you can imagine; we nearly broke our teeth over them, and I must confess I *tore* off the flesh. You will, of course, remember that our rooms looked on to the poultry yard, and one evening I saw two old women hovering round it with the evident intention of catching some of the fowls. I very gently opened my window so that they should not hear me, and then I heard them say . . .”

“Oh, Frika, what *did* they say?” asked Prince Karl eagerly, as the Queen had to stop a minute for laughing. It was such a hearty, merry laugh that the King slowly turned his head in the direction whence it came.

“Well, listen! One of the old women said, ‘Let’s catch the oldest; it’s good enough for the Princesses!’ You may believe I went to our parents and complained, and said I wasn’t going to eat all the old hens in Baden, not I. So if *you* get nice, tender chickens now, you have to thank *me* for it.”

The King looked at the Queen disapprovingly. Why should the Queen laugh like an ordinary peasant wench? It was certainly no laughing matter that the King should be kept waiting through some one coming down late for dinner. . . .

“But I will not be angry, I will try not to mind,” thought Gustaf Adolf still standing silent.

If the Queen took the King’s displeasure lightly because she did not perceive it, her father took it the more seriously to heart; he was in a great dilemma. He could not openly rebuke his Consort, who, when he went to hurry her, had answered: “I am coming as soon as I am ready,” and he was much afraid of his son-in-law’s growing ill-humour. From time to time he cast a furtive glance at him, much as a frightened chick might look at a turkey-cock gobbling and scraping his feathers along the ground. He also gave the Queen a warning look, and his two other children, that they should desist from laughing and talking during this awful wait, for he had noticed that the King

grew redder in the face every time the Queen's silvery laugh broke the silence.

"As long as *she* is happy she cares little for what *my* feelings may be. She thinks that everything she and her people say or do must be right ; but it is an insult I do not intend to put up with, and if the Grand Duchess does not appear within two minutes, I shall take my seat at the table ; that will teach her to pay proper regard to time," said Gustaf Adolf to himself with increasing wrath.

He conscientiously watched the minute-hand of the clock, but luckily, before the two minutes were ended, the Grand Duchess entered with a sweet smile and went up to where he stood awaiting his mother-in-law's abject apologies for keeping him waiting. But she did not think that such a trifling incident as being a few minutes late for a meal was worth wasting words over ; so she said nothing when the King made a stiff, formal bow, and offered his arm to take her in to dinner.

The Grand Duke took in his elder daughter, and on the way to the dining-room he whispered to her :

"The King is vexed because your mother kept him waiting."

"*Did* he have to wait ? Then, of course, he would be vexed, Väterchen ; he can't bear to be kept waiting a second, and I suppose it was several ?"

"It was exactly ten minutes," sighed the Grand Duke.

"Oh dear, oh DEAR !" said the Queen with increased emphasis on each repetition of her ejaculation, "then he *would* be annoyed indeed."

"Yes ; and what in Heaven's name can one do ? Your mother will never learn to be punctual ; she can't bear being bustled."

Then the King gave the sign that all might be seated, and when the flunkies had duly pushed in the chairs, the Grand Duchess began to converse with her son-in-law in her usual taking and entertaining manner, but he was simply impossible ; he scarcely condescended to answer "yes" or "no," and let one course after another pass untouched. The Grand Duchess did not let that affect her ; she pretended not to notice it, but talked on most amiably to all assembled round the table.

Meanwhile, it was all Queen Frederica could do to keep her father quiet.

“Your husband,” he said, “may be very nice when he likes, but I never in all my life came across a man who can be so morose and so depressing when he is displeased.” (This was, of course, in a whisper.)

“We won’t let his temper spoil our being together,” said the Queen in the same low, guarded tone, lovingly pressing her father’s hand under the table.

“For goodness’ sake, don’t let us be caught whispering ; he is looking this way.”

By the King’s orders the large centre-piece which hid the Queen and the Grand Duke from his view was removed to a side-table.

With a sort of fascination the latter sat staring at his son-in-law whilst the Grand Duchess continued talking, rigidly ignoring curt answers and sour looks. No son-in-law in the world could have put *her* out of countenance.

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At the expiration of the time appointed for the visit to Drottningholm the Royal party returned to Stockholm. Gustaf Adolf’s mother-in-law constantly irritated him by the way she disregarded his annoyance at her frequent want of punctuality ; his father-in-law equally irritated him by his evident terror and undisguised fear of him. The highly nervous and sensitive ruler of Baden went in constant dread of saying or doing something that might rouse the King’s displeasure ; but this fear was needless, for Gustaf Adolf struggled hard to overcome his irritability with regard to his guests. He took pains to fulfil the duties and responsibilities incumbent on a host of royal rank, but secretly he was thankful for every day that passed, inasmuch as it brought the time nearer when they would depart, and he felt that the restraint he had to lay upon himself would in the long run militate against his physical welfare and his wishes. His chief obligation, he considered, was not to be vexed with these people with whom he was so



FREDERICA DOROTHEA WILHELMINA OF BADEN
WIFE OF GUSTAF ADOLF IV

closely connected, so it may be surmised his satisfaction was great when it was decided that they should accompany their Royal hosts on a few weeks' visit to Gripsholm, and continue their journey back to Baden somewhere about the middle of December.

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There was such a gathering at Gripsholm that every room was occupied, even those rooms which had an evil repute and were supposed to be haunted, and which usually remained untenanted for that reason ; moreover, they were exceedingly uncomfortable, especially the turret-room over King Eric XIV's prison cell. But, as a sort of compensation for the uncanniness, the men who were lodged there had the satisfaction every morning of being able to regale the ladies with tales of what they had seen and heard the previous night, and to enlist their interest as to what the coming night might bring, and speculations as to who was the next to be visited by the ghosts, and conjectures were rife as to what the Gripsholm Ghost, which all agreed must be the wraith of the unfortunate King Eric XIV, was like. Some said it was a huge figure, quite black, which swiftly glided past them, but Count Fröhlich had seen it as a human body without a head, which vision had nearly scared him out of his wits. Of course, some of the occupants of those rooms had not actually beheld the ghastly apparition, but they had heard weird sounds of clanging chains. The Grand Duke of Baden was so terrified that the Grand Duchess requested, as a particular favour, that ghosts, visions, and mysterious sounds should not be mentioned in his presence. The Queen, too, was greatly disturbed, and said that she could never sleep nor pass a quiet night at Gripsholm. It was a matter of conjecture to the Court as to whether the King himself could sleep ; if he did, why that solemn, gloomy mien in the midst of the universal merriment around him ? For life at Gripsholm just now was more as it had been in the time of the late King. Every other day there was a dance, and in the interim many of the ladies and gentlemen of the suite gave

amateur performances on the charming little stage of the theatre in the Palace, or witnessed the plays acted by a French company. This delightful state of things was put down to the amiability and affability of the visitors from Baden, for the King's temper, if possible, was even more capricious than it had been at Drottningholm, and the Queen grew daily less light-hearted, and became more and more sad at the impending separation from her people. The Grand Duchess could well understand that, but she could neither understand nor approve the Queen's persistence in refusing to take part in the dancing at Gripsholm, though the King desired her to do so, and her persistency only increased his ill-temper.

To all arguments put forward by the Grand Duchess the Queen's reply was always the same : " No, I am most certainly not going to dance. When I first came over here the King said I was not to waltz, and as I may not waltz I do not care to join stiff and tedious square dances. I am not going to waltz, of course, but he is not going to make me dance anything else." Naturally, as the King had once forbidden her to waltz, he could not now go against his principles and rescind the prohibition, but it hurt and wounded him that the Queen did not see in what a bad light she put him in the eyes of her parents, by refusing to join the dance at all ; they must think him a hard-hearted tyrant in denying her such an innocent pleasure, whereas most people would agree that it would be inconsistent with the dignity of a Queen to dance round dances. For this reason the King strove hard to persuade her to take part in the *Polonaises* and *Menuets*, but occasionally her self-will could match his, and she was not to be talked over ; not until her wise mother coaxed her to consent to only one square dance did she allow herself (much against her will) to be led forth to a minuet. When the King in his delight came up to thank her for so gracefully yielding, she replied, with tears of mortification in her eyes, " I only did it for my dear mother's sake."

How much the King appreciated his mother-in-law's superior powers of persuasion history sayeth not, but early the following morning he went to Stockholm without informing anyone of

his intention, neither had he announced his coming in the capital.

The company were dumbfounded, and the Queen was greatly put out on account of her relations, who, in their turn, were disturbed on account of the Queen. The Grand Duke especially was worried, because he thought that their presence was distasteful to the King, and irritated him against his Consort.

“If we stay much longer we shall make trouble for our daughter,” he observed sadly to his Duchess. “I have a kind of feeling that it is *my* presence which displeases the King; he likes *you*, but he can’t stand *me*. As soon as he returns we will say ‘good-bye,’ and start; I cannot bear the thought of being a source of ill-feeling between him and our daughter.”

“That you are certainly *not*, my dear,” replied the Grand Duchess, who was sitting in her room in *négligé*, toasting her august toes in front of a huge fire, where the logs were sending forth merry sparks on that cold winter morning. “I cannot say that I am so sure that my son-in-law has any particular affection for me, as you seem to think. It is enough to drive one frantic to see those two young folk, who both have the best qualities and loving hearts, and seem to have been made to please, do everything possible to repulse each other, and to alienate the people’s loyalty and forfeit their respect. As far as our daughter is concerned, I am constantly telling her that she must show herself more gracious, more affable towards the people. It is the only way to win their affection, and I tell her, too, that some day she may be glad of it, for, in spite of all his splendid attributes, nay, perhaps even *because* of them, the King is more than likely to make enemies of the ambitious and time-serving courtiers by whom he is surrounded. His unheard-of and exaggerated idea of the ‘Rights of Kings’ is also much against him in these days when upstarts take it upon themselves to dictate laws to the universe. And though my daughter loves me dearly, and would do anything in the world to please me, she says it is impossible to conquer her shyness and awkwardness, as, if she *were* to be affable and condescending, the King would probably be angry with her, as he

was in the beginning. She says that he insists on her modelling her conduct on his in every particular, and that therefore she tries to be as stiff as he is, and copy him in manner and bearing, and if *that* does not please him . . . well, she can't help it, and there is nothing more to be said."

"But I know he is displeased with her now, because of *me*," said the Grand Duke sorrowfully. "Sometimes when he fixes his gaze upon me in these dull, cheerless rooms, it makes me feel as though one of those old portraits on the wall had suddenly come to life and stepped out of its frame, and was looking at me with threatening eyes. I have a kind of feeling that he cannot bear me."

"How can you possibly feel so, *you*, who never in your life had even the ghost of an enemy; but I do think that his going away like that without notice or saying 'good-bye' was very strange, and the reverse of courteous. It is to be hoped he will return with as much haste as he left, and, as soon as ever he *does*, we go. However, we need not think that it was only because of us that he left Gripsholm; it may just as well have been some whim or caprice of his," said the Grand Duchess, giving the fire a vigorous poke to make it blaze.

"Ah, no; I know it was because of us. Sometimes he stares at me till the cold sweat runs down my back."

"If I can't persuade you, my dear, that I am right in saying that he never is so well in this gloomy place, I will just repeat a conversation which I had only the day before with our son-in-law, which may convince you that his going had nothing whatever to do with us. It was that time he offered to be my guide over the castle. As he had neither asked you nor Frederica nor anyone else to accompany us, we were only our two selves for an hour or longer. He then entertained me most kindly, telling me incidents in connection with the different rooms through which we went, and giving me interesting details about the originals of the portraits of Swedish celebrities adorning the walls. At last he took me up a worm-eaten and awkward turret staircase, and unlocked an outer iron door, through which we went to a second door of wood and iron, which led us into a semicircular chamber. Our good son-in-

law carefully closed both doors, then he struck fire on a flint and lighted a wax taper, which lighted up the bare brick walls and the closely barred window. 'And what room is this?' I asked.

" 'This was King Eric XIV's prison cell,' he replied solemnly. As it was bitterly cold there, and I was beginning to shiver, I asked if there was anything more to see beyond.

" 'Oh, yes,' he answered; 'I brought you here to show you the marks of his feet on the floor. These footprints were made by his constant tramping up and down during his captivity.' Then he took the candle, and put it where the light fell full on the floor, bending down, and following the marks one by one, he suddenly looked up and asked, 'Do you believe in the transmigration of souls?'

" 'No, my friend,' I replied, 'I am not so foolish.'

" 'For my own part I most firmly believe in it,' he continued in a solemn tone, as if he were repeating the Creed. 'For example, the souls of Eric XIV, of the great Gustaf Adolf II and Charles XII, are united in my own soul. The soul of Eric XIV predominates, and one day, I believe, *his* fate will be my own here.'

" I am not easily startled, but for the life of me I could not find a single word in reply; I could only stand motionless and stare at the thin hand which held the taper, and which was all one could distinguish in the darkness. We *have* heard all sorts of tales respecting our son-in-law's origin, I know, but we should never have suspected him of thus being of threefold extraction, so to say."

"Our poor little girl," cried the Grand Duke, sinking down on a chair by his spouse.

"Oh, what is the matter?" exclaimed she in alarm.

"I am half dazed; everything seems black before my eyes," he said. "I want to get away from here; I *must*."

"Oh, yes; we'll go," said the Grand Duchess, who had hastily risen and fetched a glass of water and smelling-salts for her husband. The truth was that she had added fuel to the flame; instead of soothing, as she had meant to do, she had terrified him; and all fright or excitement was very bad for

the Grand Duke, even dangerous, for he was very stout, and had a very short neck.

“That last remark of the King’s was probably meant in jest,” said the Grand Duchess, trying to calm him.

“If it *was* I can only say it was a sorry jest,” replied the Grand Duke, whose face had resumed its natural hue; “but I never observed before that the King of Sweden *could* condescend to a jest.”

“I have,” retorted the Grand Duchess; “he *has* done so, though not often. He has a keen appreciation of sarcasm, and of the ridiculous, as long as it does not touch him or his kingly dignity in any way.”

“Really?” asked the Grand Duke faintly. “Well, as *you* say so, I suppose it *is* so.”

The King returned from Stockholm, and the departure from Gripsholm was fixed for December 15th. The last few days were filled up with various entertainments. On one of these days the King and Queen, with their guests and suite, made an expedition to Strängnäs, but it was not a very successful one; there were deep ruts in the roads, and though the carriages were well enough hung they swayed much, to the great discomfiture of the Queen, who was secretly fretting at the approaching departure of her kith and kin. If it had not involved too much expense the King, after that drive, would gladly have asked them to stay over Christmas, but he knew not how he should appease his conscience if he should be guilty of such extravagance, and increase his own and the country’s expenses on account of his wife’s relations. So no suggestions were made that their journey should be postponed by reason of the bad state of the roads, but the King took all possible trouble to ensure the comfort and safety of the travellers *en route*. When he heard that the coach the Grand Duke had brought with him from Germany was very high, and the springs not of the best, he begged him to take one of his (the King’s) in exchange; but the Grand Duke would not be persuaded, thinking he would be more comfortable in his own. The King

commanded his Master-of-the-Horse, Count Rålamb, to have the visitors' conveyances well overhauled and put in order.

As long as the guests from Baden remained at Gripsholm festivities of all sorts were the order of the day. The Queen gave a grand reception on the occasion of Hoffröken Minette Piper's (one of her Maids of Honour) marriage to Baron Stjernkrona, and, subsequently, a farewell banquet to her own relatives. As the intending travellers would have to retire betimes, so as to have a good rest before starting on their long journey through a land in which all winter travel was fraught with inevitable hardships, discomfort, and inconvenience, the King had given orders that the feast should end at an early hour, and by half-past ten all lights had been extinguished, and silence reigned that all might enjoy undisturbed repose. The turret clock sent forth twelve heavy, sonorous strokes, and the clock in the reception room simultaneously announced the midnight hour with silvery tones. That same moment, in spite of the King's prohibition, lights appeared in every bedchamber in the Palace, as well as in the more distant wing inhabited by the King's retinue, for no one had nerve enough to stand the infernal noises, which had begun immediately after the clocks had struck twelve, in the dark. There was whistling, groaning, sighing, and howling, a rushing among the tiles on the roof, as though they were being loosened and noisily thrown down anyhow, in a heap; there was whining above ceilings, as if a swarm of wild animals had been suddenly let loose; sounds of creaking and crashing, and Heaven alone knows what besides!

The corridor was soon filled with a motley crowd of terrified people—ladies in powder-hoods, gentlemen in dressing-gowns carrying nightlights, half-dressed women servants who had slept in their mistress's dressing-rooms, and startled lackeys with candles and lanterns—all in momentary expectation of seeing the Castle ghost rush by, but none beheld the spectre, though they heard the awful noises it made. A few were so completely frightened out of their wits that they ran down the stairs and out into the open, and when the turret clock boomed the half-hour after midnight and the noises ceased as suddenly

as they had begun, numerous shifting lights could be perceived on the ramparts and in the grounds. Lackeys, valets, and ladies' maids had to come to the rescue of screaming ladies and pages, and help them as best they might out of heaps of refuse, ash-heaps, cesspools, and snow-drifts! Nothing had been heard or seen of the Royal Family or their guests in the confusion, and no one could conjecture how *they* had taken these frightful and mysterious noises; no mention of them was made the next morning, when the Court assembled to take a touching farewell of the Queen's relatives. The King was grave and silent, but that was nothing unusual; the Queen looked as if she had shed tears, which was only to be expected on this occasion. The Grand Duke said he had not slept all night, and complained of giddiness, but the Grand Duchess comforted him by saying that that would soon go off in the fresh morning air. The King, Queen, and suite accompanied the parting guests to the inner quadrangle, where their conveyances were waiting. The Grand Duchess, with her son and daughter and her Lady-in-Waiting took their seats in the first carriage, the Grand Duke, with Colonel Borgenstjerna and his German equerry, mounted the second. At the last moment the Master-of-the-Horse pointed out to Count Hamilton that they had been unable to do anything to the Grand Duke's carriage. The Queen, in tears, went from one to the other, first to give a last kiss to her mother, brother, and sister, and then to embrace her father once more. The King kissed his mother-in-law's hand, and suffered the Grand Duke to kiss him on either cheek. He was much relieved that the parting had come at last; no contretemps had occurred to delay it again.

The turret clock struck nine, and the King gave the signal for starting. The young officers who had asked permission to accompany, or rather escort, the Baden couple to the first halt where horses were to be changed, swung themselves lightly into the saddle, and the carriages were driven slowly and carefully across the slippery square. When they were finally out of sight the King offered his arm to the weeping Queen and led her indoors for a much-needed rest. Conversation was carried on in subdued tones, and a strain seemed to lie upon the Court—

an unspoken presentiment that last night's devilry might be the precursor of some serious misfortune.

Much relief was felt by all and sundry at Gripsholm when a courier arrived from Tjula, the first halting-place, where the travellers had dined, with the news that everything had gone well so far.

“Thank God that it is so!” exclaimed the King fervently.

But the same night one of the pages who had accompanied the travellers returned, bringing ill news to the King. They had met with an accident; the Grand Duke's carriage had been overturned into a ditch. The Duke had not received any injury, but the shock had brought on a stroke. Alive, but unconscious, he had been taken on a litter to Arboga, where the Grand Duchess, her son and daughter, had safely arrived a short time before. This news came like a bolt from the blue upon the King, who, much upset, broke it to the Queen.

“Alas! I was born to be unlucky and to bring ill-luck to others! Is it not true that after my visit to Russia, and within three months, the Empress Catharine, King Frederiek of Prussia, and the Emperor Paul met their death; and it seems that my father-in-law came to this country only to meet his on his way home. I have nothing but sorrow and misfortune. When I try my utmost to do right it always seems bound to turn out wrong.”

The Grand Duke died. The sorrowing Grand Duchess had made up her mind to continue the journey to Baden, but when the Queen, with the King, reached Arboga next morning, he would not hear of it. He besought her with tears to spend the winter with him and the Queen at Haga, and wait until the ice had melted on the water; her son and daughter were to accompany her. The Grand Duke's funeral should take place with all due honour and solemnity in the Church of the Seraphim; no expense should be spared.

Next to the widowed Grand Duchess, the blow seemed to have fallen heaviest upon the King; the recollection of the lack of accommodation at Haga increased his depression, for space

being so circumscribed at that pleasant summer residence the Royal and Princely Families would have to content themselves with a very limited suite. Christmas at Haga, and the whole winter there, would be dismal indeed. The only thing that at all roused the King during those first days after the demise of the Grand Duke was the ordering of the funeral, anent which he held long and frequent consultations with the Master of the Ceremonies. It was to take place on January 17th; the cortège was to assemble in the King's apartments, and move thence through the Chamber of Assembly to the house of the Stadtholder to fetch the coffin. They were timed to arrive at the Church of the Seraphim at half-past five. The sacred edifice was to be profusely decorated, with a catafalque in the form of a circular temple erected in the chancel. The decorations, of course, to be black and silver; the service to be conducted by Bishop Flodin; the final interment to take place by torchlight.

The King himself was most kind and attentive to the widow, and did his duty to her in a manner becoming an affectionate and devoted son. He could not do enough for her, and it was not that his goodwill and endeavours were at fault if he could not succeed in comforting her for the loss of her angelic husband or her position as *reigning* Grand Duchess, of which this sad calamity deprived her.

Ere the funeral took place the King tried to induce her to go for a little change to some small, pretty place in the immediate vicinity of Haga, but the Grand Duchess only replied to his suggestion with a flood of tears and hurriedly left the room.

Greatly taken aback, Gustaf Adolf questioned the Queen as to the reason her mother seemed to have taken his kindly meant proposal in such bad part? To which the Queen, deeply touched by his kindness and forethought, though at the same time his inconceivable want of tact vexed her, replied:

“You must remember that you are dealing with a woman who but fourteen short days ago lost her husband through a deplorable accident, and who continually reproaches herself as being the cause of the calamity by not asking him to ride in *her* carriage when leaving Gripsholm.”

The King replied: "I am exceedingly grieved she should so reproach herself."

"Believe me, I am most grateful for your goodness and attention to my mother," said the Queen, "but I pray and beseech you do not again propose any journey, however short. At present she cannot even be induced to enter a carriage for a little gentle exercise; she begins to tremble all over directly I ask her."

"It is a pity she will not go about a little in the neighbourhood; nothing is so calming and soothing to grief as to have a change from place to place," said the King with a deep sigh.

When the mild excitement of superintending preparations for the funeral came to an end, it was imperative that the King should seriously pull himself together and attend to business connected with the Government; so he drove to Stockholm in the morning and returned late at night to Haga, having worked hard all day and dined in town. The Queen also went to Stockholm occasionally, but only in the afternoon, in order to see her children who, through lack of accommodation at Haga, had been left in Stockholm. During these absences the Grand Duchess and her younger daughter were left alone with their suite, bored to death.

The King pondered much as to what could be done to cheer his mother-in-law. Being a woman of literary tastes, he thought it might help to divert her sad thoughts if some one were to read an interesting book aloud in the Mirror Saloon after his return in the evening.

The King's taste in literature was, it must be admitted, somewhat bizarre, and the books read were by no means calculated to interest the Duchess. It will easily be conjectured that such tales as *Don Quixote* and the like were little calculated to comfort a sensible person steeped in the depths of woe. She had no desire to listen to such, and felt more inclined to live through again her life of that winter and be alone with her sorrow, until at length the ice began to melt and she could start once more upon her return to Baden.

CHAPTER XXI

THE JOURNEY TO GERMANY

HAD there not been such strict supervision of everything appearing in print which might be in any way offensive to the King, the Swedish nation would not have felt such an irresistible craving for gossip about what the "Upper Ten" did or left undone. But they had to have an outlet of some sort to ease their minds.

Of all things, that which the people found most fault with was the King's inordinate love of travel. It was supposed that having accompanied his Baden connections as far as Skåne, he might have had enough for once, and need not have begun preparations for another expedition immediately after his return.

This time he was bound for Finland and the Queen accompanied him, though it would have been wiser for her to remain quietly at home, seeing she was again in a delicate state of health.

The object the Queen had in view and for which she had consented to accompany her husband, was that she might spend a few days with her sister, the Empress of Russia; and as the Swedes were in hopes that this visit might be of practical advantage to the country, they rather advocated her going than otherwise. One thing was sure, and that was that the Queen had bad luck with her relatives, for the much-desired meeting at Abborrfors very nearly led to hostilities with Russia, and for the very unexpected reason that Gustaf Adolf wanted the bridge over the River Kymene, the frontier between Finland and Russia, painted in the Swedish colours, which the Russians were not inclined to allow.

The foolish obstinacy of the King on this point created much anxiety and discontent in Sweden, especially as there was every reason to suppose that his irritation against the Emperor of Russia chiefly arose from the fact that the latter had given more liberty to his subjects than they had been accustomed to have ; in this action Gustaf Adolf seemed to detect hidden Jacobite tendencies. He was exceedingly annoyed.

The choice of the title " Grand Duke of Finland," which the King had bestowed upon his second son, born early in December, was also considered likely to make bad blood in Russia and to set the Emperor Alexander against Sweden. Fortunately, the " Ruler of All the Russias " was too wise to disturb the peace (which for the first time in ten years seemed to pervade the greater part of Europe) by an attack upon Sweden, and it was earnestly hoped that its young, irate Sovereign would calm down, and not embark himself and his people upon adventures which the Swedish forces would be unable to face.

However, it seemed impossible for him to keep quiet, and though preparations were made with the utmost secrecy, it soon leaked out that their Majesties purposed to take a long journey to the Continent in the summer of 1803. It was well known that the Queen was not happy in Sweden, and therefore it was a foregone conclusion that they were going to visit her relations at Baden, and whilst some were of opinion that the King had thought this journey impracticable, and was only undertaking it to please the Queen, others maintained that it had wholly and solely been prompted by his love of change and to please *himself*.

The Queen took her little daughter, who was only two and a half years old, but fortunately the little Crown-Prince and the baby " Grand Duke of Finland " were left behind.

The frigate *Camilla*, with the Royal party on board, left Dalarö on June 27th, and the people most sincerely hoped it would return in the course of the autumn.

Through relations and friends at Stralsund news reached Sweden that when setting foot on German territory the King and Queen had won golden opinions in Pomerania by

their condescension and affability, and this greatly pleased the Swedes.

Only scanty news, at irregular intervals of their Majesties' journey from Stralsund through Germany, reached Sweden. The Queen-Dowager of Prussia, aunt of the Queen of Sweden, had met them at Wittstock, and they had paid a visit to the Princess Sofia Albertina at Quedlinburg. Another aunt of the Queen's resided at Weimar,*and the King had met many learned and famous persons there. Amongst others, he had had an interesting conversation with one, Schiller, celebrated for his history of Gustavus Adolphus II and his treatise on the Thirty Years' War, for which the King had presented him with a gold snuff-box.

If report spoke true, this journey to Germany was quite a triumph for the young King, who heard himself on more than one occasion openly compared to his great namesake, Gustaf Adolf II, which flattered his pride immensely.

The French Government also paid him attention and deference, for on arriving at Mannheim the French Minister to the Court of the Prince Palatine of Baden had been deputed to pay Buonaparte's (now " Consul for Life ") respects to the King, and tender his excuses for his (Buonaparte's) inability to take a journey to the neighbouring province during the King's stay, because of his being much engaged just then with the affairs of the Republic, besides having other plans, which would prevent his having the honour of making the King's acquaintance ! It was also rumoured that the King had frequent conversations with the French Envoy at Karlsruhe, which led to the conjecture that Buonaparte was desirous of persuading him (the King) to visit Paris.

No further details reached Sweden, but hopes were entertained that the King would return before the autumn was over.

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The aged Prince Palatine of Baden, a charming old man, and the Queen's paternal grandfather, was beginning rather to wonder at Swedish manners and customs. He was aware that

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that country had the reputation of being one of the most hospitable in the world, but surely even *there* there must be some limit, and the King of Sweden had now been two months at Baden, and there were no indications that he contemplated returning home. It was gratifying to know that his guests were so comfortable, but as they had come with a numerous Suite, and as the King was so gracious (!) as to invite some of his Ministers to come and see him at Karlsruhe (such as that most delectable of men, Baron Mauritz Armfelt), and as they were *all* entertained at the expense of the Prince Palatine, he, in spite of his generous impulses and love of hospitality, could not help wondering how *long* a Swedish "visit" was supposed to last.

Swedish manners also somewhat perplexed him in various ways. It appeared that "visitors" gave orders in the house and made their arrangements, and that the host was *entirely* ignored; the amiable old man could not think otherwise when he saw the King decide and order everything just as it pleased *him*, and the Prince sincerely pitied his courtiers, who were forced to stand till they were ready to drop, for the King himself seldom sat down during the evening gathering, but stood in the middle of the room by the hour, and suffered no one, save those engaged in a game of cards, to take a seat. Naturally, cards were eagerly sought after as a pastime on these evenings, as doing away with the continuous standing. Card-evenings alternated with brilliant banquets, gala performances at the theatre, receptions, and other ceremonies and entertainments *de rigueur* during a Royal visit.

The aged Prince was much too much of a gentleman to let it appear how intensely weary he was of the fuss and excitement, but it did occasionally occur to him that it was very foolish, not to say utterly tactless and uncalled for, for his stepdaughter, the Margravine (*in his hearing*) to assure the Swedish Ambassador, Baron Armfelt, that it was nothing to the Prince Palatine to entertain the King and Queen and their Suite, as long as those "dear creatures" were inclined to accept his hospitality! The Margravine, with whom the kind Palatine was not always of one mind, was a go-ahead woman, and forthwith invited her daughters, who were married in Germany,

to come and see their Swedish relatives at Karlsruhe, and to bring their husbands and children with them, so that presently the aged Palatine found himself in the company of his granddaughter and her husband the Prince Palatine of Bavaria, his granddaughter the Duchess of Brunswick and *her* husband, and his granddaughter Marie and her fiancé, the Hereditary Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt! Besides these, the exceedingly hospitable Margravine invited a number of French immigrants, settled in the Province of Baden, to meet the King, her son-in-law. The Margravine was easily taken in by any one calling himself a French immigrant, whereas the Prince Palatine had to exercise the utmost care and discretion in his dealings with them, on Buonaparte's account, and found it a most delicate matter. His Swedish grandson, generally so chary of his words, was now much too talkative, not only in the immediate and intimate circle of his German relatives from Baden, Hesse, or Bavaria! who sought to observe the greatest circumspection, but even in conversation with the immigrants themselves, who swarmed round him. So, at least, it was reported to the Prince Palatine; he (Gustaf Adolf) would not believe that one could be surrounded by spies, in the pay of the First Consul, here at Karlsruhe. Taken altogether, it was not a very pleasant set of visitors which had taken the palace of the aged Palatine by storm.

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¶ One day, Gustaf Adolf and his Envoy to Vienna, Baron Armfelt, were taking a long ride together in the environs of Karlsruhe.

At the beginning of their ride the King had cast sundry sidelong glances at his companion, with whose equestrian get-up he was anything but pleased, for it was more like a fancy-dress costume, and an accoutrement little fit for a man who had the honour of being permitted to ride by the side of the *King of Sweden*; indeed, it seemed to have been concocted for the sole purpose of accentuating the good-looking cavalier's splendid colouring, his bewitching blue eyes and chestnut hair! Baron Armfelt's legs were encased in blue trousers tucked into riding-

boots edged with gold braid, and having gold tassels, and he wore a white waistcoat, blue tie and blue tail-coat with gilt buttons, and a soft Spanish hat rakishly set on one side, a costume which looked negligent and untidy, especially by the side of the King's smart, well-fitting uniform.

Several times before the King had intimated to Armfelt that the costume he was in the habit of wearing when invited to ride with him was to the last degree unbecoming; but Armfelt had turned a deaf ear, and continued to appear in the same get-up, and now, when the King looked at his Ambassador, so attractive even in middle age, he could only gently shake his head, and did not trouble to make any further comment, so glad was he to have Armfelt with him once more, and he must be diplomatically dealt with, for he had honestly told the King that he *could* not get on at Karlsruhe, and the King felt that he must put up with it as long as he (Armfelt) appeared in full uniform, spurs and sword on official occasions, and indoors.

They had not gone far before the King forgot all about the clothes listening to Armfelt's interesting and animated talk about the late King and his (Gustaf Adolf's) own childhood, when Armfelt had nursed him, which brought up many reminiscences and touching recollections of incidents which had happened then, and which caused the King to smile or sigh.

"No one has such a wonderful gift of talking as Armfelt," thought the King as he rode on in silence, listening to all Armfelt had to tell, merry and sad, whilst the horses broke into a gallop side by side, over field and plain and dusty high road. There was no snow on the ground, although it was nearly the middle of November, and the landscape was bathed in brilliant sunshine.

"When would Your Majesty wish me to return to Vienna?" asked Armfelt suddenly, when he thought the King's silence had lasted long enough.

"You must be patient and wait a little longer," answered the King.

"Has Your Majesty decided yet upon Your Majesty's return to Sweden?" asked Armfelt, patting the neck of his beautiful black steed.

“No, I have not, and every day the Queen reminds me how happy she is here with her own people, especially now that her sister is here also.”

“Yes, the Princess Palatine of Bavaria is certainly sweet and charming, like an angel,” burst out Armfelt excitedly. In his heart of hearts he *thought*, but did not say aloud: “How very different she is to your *Queen*, who is so rude, and acts comedies about Sodom and Gomorrah, and scarcely does as much as look at us poor Swedes.” As the King still remained silent, Armfelt continued: “The Princess of Brunswick is as beautiful as her sisters, and Princess Marie is most fascinating.”

“I perceive you are praising up my sisters-in-law,” said the King very coldly.

“Also Your Majesty’s brothers-in-law,” continued Armfelt, not one whit abashed, “especially the Palatine of Bavaria, my old chum and brother-in-arms two-and-twenty years ago.”

“I was just wondering whether you are not a little too much ‘at home’ with the Palatine, and whether he does not rather resent it,” said the King.

“Nay, Your Majesty,” retorted Armfelt, “the more familiar the better he likes it.”

“Oh, that is all right then. We are going to pay a visit to my brother-in-law at Munich early in December, and I wish you to accompany me, Armfelt.”

The latter bowed deferentially, but presently turned his head and made a sorry grimace.

“Is it Your Majesty’s intention to return to Sweden direct from Munich?” he asked, as he opined that the King needed frequent reminders that he *had* a home and country.

The King ignored the question, and only said: “What were you looking at just now, Armfelt?”

“A pretty peasant wench standing by that gate, Your Majesty.”

“Oh—well, no. From Munich I shall go back to Karlsruhe,” answered the King; then he fell into some serious train of thought, whilst his white steed and Armfelt’s black one galloped on side by side. After a time they both slackened their pace, and the King, turning to Armfelt, said: “You

must know that I have much to do here. Sweden is such a long way off, but *here* I am in the midst of all that goes on. You know as well as I do, Armfelt, that my father died before he could accomplish the great work, the fulfilment of which he left to me as a sacred legacy, namely, the restoration of the Bourbons to the throne of their ancestors. When God gives me a token that I should be ready to accomplish his design, I *shall* be ready. I mean to drive Buonaparte from the throne of France and reinstate the Bourbons, and until that is done I shall have neither rest nor peace."

"I entirely agree with Your Majesty there, and could not desire anything better than that a successful war among the Great Powers of Europe should free Europe from the galling yoke of the Corsican usurper. Above all things, I should like to go against him with the Russians, as I should have no compunction in sacrificing *their* men and *their* powder, whilst with regard to the Swedes . . ."

"I will bring my Swedes and Germans against him," said the King, in a fit of excitement which brought the colour to his white face and tears to his eyes; "just, *en passant*, I will also drive the King of Prussia out of Germany. I am more than convinced that, in His own good time, God will give me a tangible and unmistakable sign, which will be plain not only to myself, but to the universe at large . . . even to *you*, Armfelt," added the King with a melancholy smile; whereupon Armfelt replied in courtier-like tone: "I shall be on the watch for these signs."

Then the King resumed in a grave and solemn voice: "You see, Armfelt, that is *my* mission in life, and as soon as it is accomplished I shall renounce the Crown in favour of my son, the Crown-Prince. I thoroughly dislike the cares and anxieties of government, and as I now have two sons, I believe I should be justified in retiring into private life so soon as my work is done. I will tell you in confidence, Armfelt, that I wrote my Act of Renunciation before leaving Sweden; in it I have given the reasons which dictated it, viz. those awful, gruesome days which preceded my accession—no doubt you remember them. I have said that the dastardly murder of my father was at the

bottom of the private and public anxiety which consumes my heart, and that it is my fervent desire to be relieved of a part which I feel every day less capable and less fitted to fill worthily, because of the grievous state of mind to which I have been reduced through sorrow, adversity, and perplexity, and which I can find no words to describe." At this point the King's emotion completely overcame him, and it was some time before he could go on. Then he said: "As soon as ever my task is done, this, my act of abdication, will be made public, and I shall be freed from the burdens of State and able to live as a private individual."

"May I be permitted to tell Your Majesty what *I* think?" said Armfelt.

"Certainly you may . . . speak!"

"Then I would say that, in my humble but honest opinion, time, patience, and clever diplomacy would do wonders for Sweden, but if Your Majesty rushes headlong into any other sort of undertaking—then——"

"You and I are probably not referring to the same subject, Armfelt, but I think I grasp your meaning. You think that if circumstances went against me I could easily have my wish of living as a private individual, without the necessity of signing a formal act of abdication—I see."

"It is an incontrovertible fact, Your Majesty, that we live in times when all thrones are shaky, and when crowns sit but loosely on a monarch's head."

"No, no, Armfelt, it is not going to be like that. I have no intention of letting myself be deposed; no one will be able to depose *me*; God will make me His champion and leader in a righteous cause. I have suffered many reverses, but in *that* case surely all must go well, and my mission well accomplished, I shall be free. Do you believe in the fulfilment of prophecy, Armfelt?"

"No, Your Majesty, most decidedly I do not."

"But one ought to believe in it; and everything I have read of late confirms the solemn prophecy which declares that the time has come and now is, when the 'Beast' shall be cast down, and the Man on the white horse, whose name is Steadfast

and True, and whose war is a righteous war, shall be exalted."

"I am but little versed in knightly romance, Your Majesty."

The King drew in his rein so abruptly that it nearly brought his steed on its haunches.

"Merciful God! Do you, Armfelt, call the Revelation of Saint John a 'knightly romance'? But we will not discuss a matter over which neither of us has any control any further; it *must* be since it is God's will and command. Let us rather talk about bygone days, and the time when you were first attached to my person, that summer at Drottningholm. First, however, you must read me what your good lady says about my son, the Crown-Prince, in her last letter; he is under her care as I was under yours. I hope and pray he may grow up a happier man than I," continued the King; "the first impressions of childhood exert their influence for good or ill through life; that is *my* experience at least."

"First of all, my wife says that the whole country is longing for Your Majesty's speedy return."

"You may skip that, Armfelt. I presume she also says that Stockholm in particular is dying to have me back—I am used to hearing that sort of thing, and I only put it down as a consequence of their unusual change of opinion; but I am not disposed to trust their marvellous outburst of feeling, which will pass away almost in its birth. Instead, I would much rather you told me what the Countess says about my boys, the Crown-Prince and the Grand Duke; after which we will gallop back to the Castle."

.

In the King's chamber in the Castle sat an old man with a white periwig and clad in peculiar, old-fashioned black garments, knee-breeches, and buckled shoes. His face was of no ordinary type, his features sharp, but full of dignity withal: in person he was short and thin, almost shrivelled, but his movements were courtly and gentle, and the expression in his eyes somewhat sad and dreamy. He sat there calm and at ease, in conversation with the King, who appeared to be listening

attentively to his every word, for once not finding it odd that the old man should be sitting, whilst he, *Gustaf Adolf*, himself was standing. The old man spoke in gentle, persuasive tones, but there was no trace of weakness in his voice, and when he warmed to his subject it grew strong and full, as if addressing a large audience, and not only one single individual. The King was so fascinated by his manner that he could not take his eyes off him ; now and then he nodded assent. In a loud voice the old man was saying : “ Now it must be remarked that the striving for universal dominion over the whole of Christendom and, so to say, the whole of mankind with its rulers, not only in what concerns religion but also in worldly matters—in short, the desire to rule the world in the Creator’s stead, is the work of the Beast and the fruit of the spirit of the Dragon.”

The King nodded, and the speaker continued : “ We find that that spirit predominated largely at the Roman Court in the past, and that every successive Pope, not by reason of his spiritual position, but by reason of his desire for temporal power over mankind, may in that particular be likened to the BEAST rising from the sea ; and if any other individual should arrogate the same desire to himself the simile would equally apply to him ; he would stand as that same BEAST, though he might ‘ arise in another place.’ In the Book of Revelation, chapter XI. verse 7, we read of ‘ the BEAST that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit,’ and in chapter XVII. verse 8, it is written that the Angel said to Saint John that ‘ the BEAST should ascend out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition.’ I say this, that no one should be led to think that the description of the BEAST must of necessity refer to the Papal Court of Rome, because the Beast is likely enough to arise in another place or places.”

“ I took your meaning to be such,” said the King, the blood mounting to his temples.

“ Turning to the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Thesalonians, chapter II. verses 3–12, we find that the term ‘ BEAST ’ seems there to refer to one particular person.”

The old man opened a German Bible lying close at hand and found the place he wanted. He handed it to the King, and

said : " Read that curious passage attentively . . . it chiefly concerns ourselves, because many of this generation will witness its appearance ; the BEAST is here spoken of under the simile of ' Man of Sin, Son of Perdition, that Wicked One.' "

" Yes, yes," said the King ; " surely he is amongst us already ! "

" In the book of the Prophet Daniel, Antiochus Epiphanes is spoken of as being his (the BEAST'S) antetype." The old man turned to Daniel VIII. verse 12, and sat silent whilst the King read . . . then he resumed : " So, then, it is self-evident that the BEAST is meant to symbolise one particular individual, one who has made himself a great ruler of men. I know not quite what title to apply to him . . . Pope, King, Emperor, or General ; in any case, he is Antiehrst, the very opposite of the meek and gentle Nazarene. He will command forces which have already long been steeped in the spirit, politics, and practices of Antiehrst ; with these forces, in the course of time, he will do his best to obtain the object of the Dragon, to gain universal dominion over mankind, then suddenly and unexpectedly will come the King of kings and Lord of lords, and cast the Dragon and his followers into the pit of Destruction."

The old man rose from the richly-carved arm-chair in which he had been sitting, and stood in front of the King, fixing his fine, honest eyes upon him, and said very gravely : " And this great and evil genius will be lauded and admired by those whose names have not been written in the Book of Life from the beginning of the world . . . I would say by those who despise the Truth as it is in Christ Jesus, finding it lacking in worldly philosophy. But beware of being led astray ; Satan oft takes upon him the garb of an Angel of Light, and hath seductive ways . . . but have a care ! have a care ! . . . I must be going now, but will come again—if wanted."

The King gave him his hand and, strangely enough, took no umbrage when the old man heartily pressed it in his instead of stooping respectfully to kiss it ; on the contrary, in his most pleasant voice, though it trembled with emotion, he said :

" Professor Jung-Stilling, you have given me untold comfort

and consolation. When I read your writings, which my mother-in-law the Margravine of Baden lent me, in Sweden, I derived much benefit from them ; how much more now that I have seen you, and spoken with you face to face. Next time my mother-in-law invites you, I shall reckon on a visit on your way from Marburg or Heidelberg to Karlsruhe. There is so, so much you can tell me. Those who do not find the Truth satisfy their philosophy call you a mystic and an idealist ; those terms I consider heathenish, but you, Professor, are a man after my own heart. I understand and thank you." And the proud and haughty King of Sweden, with a deferential bow, actually escorted the old man in the shabby, old-fashioned, rusty black clothes to the door, which he unlocked and held open for him ! "

It had been far easier for the Prince Palatine of Bavaria to invite his brother-in-law, Gustaf Adolf of Sweden, than it was to make that bumptious young man understand that according to every conceivable rule of etiquette even the most friendly visit must *some* time come to an end, and when week after week passed and Gustaf Adolf made no sign of breaking up, the Palatine of Bavaria began to wonder at Swedish manners and customs, even as the worthy aged Kurfürst of Baden had wondered before. It was evident that the King and Queen were enjoying themselves as much at Munich as they had done at Karlsruhe ; they were like a couple of children who, as long as they get all they want and enjoy themselves, never give a thought to the trouble they may be giving other people.

One day towards the end of January there might have been seen stuck up on one of the corner houses in Munich, which the King had to pass every morning in his customary early walk, a huge poster in verse, beginning thus : " Pack up and go, Gustaf ! Pack up and go ! " At this time, also one of the suite received a letter from home in which it said that placards

had been posted on the Palace at Stockholm in the course of the last few days : " Rooms to let, owing to the frequent and prolonged absence of the owner." The Governor had, of course, taken prompt measures to have these placards summarily removed, as had also been done with the posters at Munich ; but the coincidence had been humiliating enough, and though the King knew nothing about the impudent and impertinent placards at Stockholm, he had seen the one at Munich with his own eyes, and had felt its purport, so that he at last began to talk about leaving Munich and returning to Karlsruhe, which he did on the twenty-ninth of the same month.

From that date Her Majesty Queen Frederica's grandfather, the aged Kurfürst of Baden, again began to wonder whether it were the custom in Sweden to prolong visits to relatives *ad infinitum*, and to consult the convenience of the visitor only.

It was now the beginning of March, and the young couple from Sweden continued to find themselves very comfortable and happy at Karlsruhe, and not a word was breathed anent their return to Sweden.

The poor old Kurfürst was so worn out with the visit that he really began to wish something might happen to make the King go ; otherwise he feared the Royal visitors might take root at Karlsruhe for good and all !

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Now, in the territory newly acquired by the Kurfürst, in a small village called Ettenheim, there lived in privacy and retirement a certain Prince of the House of Bourbon, the ill-fated Duke of Enghien. This personage naturally excited the liveliest interest on the part of the Swedish King, who had more than once expressed his pleasure and gratification to the aged Kurfürst that the Prince should have found such a trusty friend in the Province of Baden. As the exiled Duc d'Enghien had never caused the old Ruler the slightest annoyance by his residence in his dominions, he (the Kurfürst) most sincerely hoped that Gustaf Adolf's vehement and outspoken sympathy with the French exile would not turn the attention of the

Republic in his direction ; moreover, just at this time, when the report of a widely disseminated conspiracy against the life of the First Consul had reached Germany and made any dealings with French loyalists doubly dangerous and difficult.

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The King of Sweden was raving. He could not simulate a calm he did not feel ; his face was purple, he fought the air with his clenched fists, and uttered unintelligible and incoherent words. So completely upset his adjutant, Lieutenant-Colonel Tawast, had never seen him before. The latter stood stiff and motionless near the door, awaiting orders, but the King could not master his voice sufficiently to give any ; he struggled for breath as if he were choking, and suddenly advanced to one of the windows overlooking the park and tore it open. A current of cool, damp air streamed in. It was the 16th of March, and the rain had been incessant the last few days at Karlsruhe. The King drew a deep breath and said at last, with trembling voice which he strove in vain to steady, " Repeat what you said just now, Tawast." The officer did so, and whilst he was speaking Gustaf Adolf stood with his back to him, breathing hard.

Tawast was saying : " As soon as Your Majesty received news that French troops had successfully crossed the Rhine in the night between the 11th and 12th instant, Your Majesty sent for me, and were pleased to say that Your Majesty's first thought had been for the safety of the Duke of Enghien, and that I was to proceed without delay to Ettenheim, bearing an autograph letter from Your Majesty warning the Prince of an attack, and begging him to seek a place of safety."

" Don't repeat my orders," said the King impatiently, without turning round ; " keep to facts, and go on . . . go on."

" I started at once, Your Majesty, for Ettenheim, where I arrived about noon yesterday, and was met with the appalling news that I had come eight hours too late, as the Duke of Enghien, about five o'clock that very morning, had been taken in the direction of Strassburg by emissaries from the First Consul."

The King stamped angrily on the ground with his foot.

“ You have already told me that much, Tawast ! I know that that wretched usurper humiliated the Kurfürst by violating the rights of his dominion and shaking the sense of security of the inhabitants, drawing upon himself the odium of all Sovereigns by his unlawful and unwarrantable abduction of the Duke of Enghien. But I do not know *how* it was done ; so give me the details, quick ! quick ! ”

“ Well, Your Majesty, I had some conversation with one of the Duke’s servants who had been lucky enough to escape. At five o’clock in the morning, when it was hardly light, the house had been surrounded . . . Your Majesty’s pardon, I did not hear what Your Majesty desired.”

“ I did not say anything. I was not talking to you, Tawast ; but go on . . . go on ! ”

“ When the Duke heard the noise he started up in bed. His confidential man, who slept in the adjoining chamber, woke at the same time, and went with him to the window. They had each seized a rifle, and stood ready to fire. ‘ Who commands here ? ’ the Duke called out through the open window, and a voice replied : ‘ We have no account to give to *you*.’ Thereupon the Duke aimed his rifle at the speaker ; but one of his suite who had hurried to the spot (my informant could not tell me who it was) held up his arm, and entreated him not to fire ; any resistance was useless, for they were not highwaymen, but experienced troops of the line who surrounded the house ; a number of soldiers had already scaled the garden wall and filled and barred the approach.”

“ Horrible ! ” exclaimed the King. “ But go on . . . quick, quick ! ”

“ It was proposed to the Duke that he should fly through one of the windows in the servants’ quarters, but he refused. ‘ We must defend ourselves to the last,’ he said, and again went to the window, intending to fire, but at that moment the door was burst open, soldiers and police streamed in, some with bayonets fixed, some with swords unsheathed, some with pistols. Two of the Duke’s adjutants and two of his valets threw themselves in front of him to protect him with their own lives.

In the *mêlée* my informant made good his escape through a window."

"The coward, to forsake and leave his master in the hour of danger!" cried the King.

"He was the only one who fled, Your Majesty, the others accompanied . . ."

"Not a single one should have abandoned his master," cried the King in great wrath.

"Those who remained were led away captive with the Duke. I spoke to some of the villagers, who told me how they saw the procession pass. Every road was patrolled by infantry, and many of the people stood at their windows weeping, for the inhabitants of Ettenheim simply adored the Duke. He had a cloak wrapped round him, but no boots on his feet, neither stockings."

The King turned round abruptly.

"You can go now, Tawast; I wish to be alone; but hold yourself in readiness in case I should desire to send you to Paris. I will intercede for the Duke, and protest against his forcible abduction, and I will crush any one who dares to hurt a hair of his head, to atoms in the dust."

.

It was a terrible ordeal for the aged, respected Kurfürst. The youthful King of Sweden, his guest, overwhelmed him with abuse for not having sent troops to Ettenheim for the protection of the Duke when the French Government had instructed the Kurfürst to eject all immigrants from his domains—he ought to have known who was chiefly meant. Now it was too late; the Duke had been taken away, and there remained nothing for him (the Kurfürst) to do but to protest most strenuously against this inroad into his territory.

The old man shook his head and shrugged his shoulders.

"The first thing you must do is to send the French Ambassador away from Karlsruhe. His (Massia's) presence here is an insuperable insult after what has taken place," cried Gustaf Adolf, spasmodically clenching his hands.

Again the Kurfürst shook his head; he could not get in a

word to his Swedish guest, who was mercilessly heaping reproaches upon him. Never in the course of his long life had the highly-honoured and esteemed old man had such torrents of abuse showered upon him—but the Swedes had strange ways with them, to judge by their King!

“If you, sir, will not take the trouble to protest, *I will*, and in such a manner that it shall be proclaimed in every quarter of Europe. God will not suffer me to stand by with hands folded and look on at such tyranny. I shall send my adjutant to Paris with a message to my Ambassador, Count Ehrensvärd, to send a letter from me to Buonaparte, in which I shall tell him my opinion of himself and his followers plainly.”

“My first and most sacred duty is to consider the welfare of my country—do you the same, my son. Think of the welfare and happiness of your own land, and do not break with France. You will surely live to repent it if you do,” said the Kurfürst gently.

“Never . . . never so long as I live should *I* repent it. *I* must first and foremost think of the good of my soul, and of my own salvation.”

“I entreat of you, my son, that you take no precipitate steps whilst you are a guest under *my* roof. Think in what an awkward position my people and myself would be placed if you took violent and aggressive measures against France and the First Consul from this place.”

The King vouchsafed no reply; in fact, he had left the room before the Kurfürst had had time to look round.

Not many minutes later the King was sitting in his boudoir, dictating a rough sketch of his intended letter to the First Consul to his private secretary, Baron Lagerbjelke, which Tawast was to take to Paris. The King sat at the table dictating, but his language was so grossly insulting and offensive that Lagerbjelke took his courage in both hands, and mildly suggested an amendment in some of the King's modes of expression.

“Would Your Majesty not think well to substitute the words, ‘that most deplorable action’ for ‘act of cowardly tyranny’ for example?”

The King brought down his fist violently upon the table ; he was purple in the face with anger, and his lips twitched spasmodically.

“ Silence ! obey and write what I say, neither more nor less,” he almost shrieked, as he held a threatening hand right before the secretary’s face.

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The members of the Kurfürst’s family, the Court, and several of the members of the Diplomatic Corps who had received invitations, were just about to go in to dinner. Gustaf Adolf had offered his arm to his mother-in-law, and was conversing with her, when he turned suddenly to the French Ambassador, and said, in a voice loud enough for all to hear : “ You had bad news yesterday, Monsieur de Massias ? ”

The Minister looked gravely at the King, and pretended not to understand.

“ Yes, very bad news,” continued the King, louder still, and looking coldly at Monsieur de Massias ; “ bad because your Government has had the audacity to infringe the rights of the people. Now let us go in, my dear mother.”

Surely the aged Kurfürst’s patience could not be expected to hold out any longer. This inscrutable guest was not only intensely irritating, nay, he was becoming positively dangerous.

“ I wish to goodness the First Consul had taken it into his head to abduct *him* by force from *my* territory,” regretfully thought the Kurfürst in his heart.

.

Appalling and astounding news had reached Karlsruhe that the Duke of Enghien had been shot in a ditch at the Castle of Vincennes by Buonaparte’s orders on the night of March 21st. The King was in the Queen’s apartments when he heard of it. He turned deadly pale, and rose from the couch on which he had been sitting with her to leave the room ; the Queen also rose, and was going with him, but he said severely, “ I wish to be perfectly alone . . . but there . . . you must change that

dress," he added, pointing to the gown of Indian shawl pattern the Queen was wearing; "put on mourning. I shall order the deepest Court mourning for the Duc d'Enghien."

"But suppose there should be no Court mourning at Karlsruhe?" the Queen ventured to remark.

"What others do is a matter of perfect indifference to me—I and my house *shall* go into mourning for the Duke of Enghien."

When at last he rang for his valet, the latter had to take a few minutes to collect himself, for he feared lest the excitement and irritability the King had manifested during the whole of that week might culminate in that white heat of passion which all who had anything to do with him had but too much reason to dread, and when Kundel at length opened the door and stood bowing on the threshold he was shaking all over. But to his amazement he found his master calm and collected; only the red lines round his eyes betrayed that he had been weeping.

"Get out my black suit, Kundel, the deepest mourning."

The man bowed, and was about to leave the room when the King stopped him. "Wait a minute, Kundel," he said, "I want to have my hair cut all round."

"All round, Your Majesty?"

"Yes, cut short, and cut all round. I suppose you have seen a portrait of King Charles XII, Kundel?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. Does Your Majesty wish your hair cut like that?"

"Precisely; you can return in half an hour and help me to dress. I am going to write now, and do not wish to be disturbed."

He got up and locked the door after Kundel, then sat down to indite an epistle to his Chancellor, Ehrenheim. His handwriting was large, clear, and firm. First the date:

"KARLSRUHE, *March 28, 1804.*"

There he stopped, took up a broader quill from the table by his side, and then wrote rapidly.

"Herewith I have to inform you, that to fill up the measure of his iniquities and injustice, the First Consul of France has

authorised a 'Commission Militaire' to sentence the Duke of Enghien to be shot, which sentence has been duly carried out within the space of twenty-four hours. After such an act of injustice, which must cause every right-minded person to look with contempt and loathing upon the French Government, which has from the commencement disregarded law and equity as well as the rights of Princes and people, I can no longer accredit an Envoy to that evil Government. If by the unfortunate system of policy at present prevailing among us, I should become blinded to the fact that I have to rule an independent Kingdom, my eyes would, at any rate, be open to see what I owe to myself. I have given instructions to Baron Lagerbjelke to convey my decision to you more in detail, and I shall only add that I have commanded Baron Ehrensvärd to report himself to me without delay; he will not return to Paris, but join the Embassy at Berlin instead. I trust I shall not be the only Sovereign who in this manner will manifest his disapproval and indignation at such shameful proceedings; but if *they* should forget what they owe to themselves and their country, I shall look upon it as an honour to be the only one who always bears in mind the exalted position to which he has been called.

“Your sincere well-wisher,

“GUSTAF ADOLF.”

The King folded, sealed, and addressed this missive; then he touched the bell which stood in front of him.

Kundel immediately answered the summons, and entered, bearing the King's black clothes, helped him to undress, and put a *peignoir* round him, ready to have his hair cut; the King sat down in front of his glass.

“I crave Your Majesty's pardon,” said Kundel, “but Professor Jung-Stilling, who is now with the Margravine, wished me to inquire whether it would please Your Majesty to see him later.”

The King rose immediately.

“Certainly; he can come as if *I* had sent for him. Help me dress, and let the Professor be told at once that I am waiting for him. You can cut my hair some other time.”

Whilst the process of dressing was gone through, the King was unusually quiet and patient, and when Kundel had left him he went to the glass and surveyed himself in his mourning array from top to toe. Always pale, his black clothes made him look ghastly.

“Come in,” he said, in answer to a knock at his door, and there entered forthwith the old man in the old-fashioned coat and faded periwig. Gustaf Adolf advanced to meet him, and with his thin hand in that of the aged Professor he said, quietly and solemnly: “These last deeds of horror leave us no doubt as to whom the Book of Revelation refers as the BEAST; all the world must see that. But I shall fight for the right—to the bitter end. Please take a seat, Professor. . . .”

CHAPTER XXII

GOD SAVE THE KING!

THROUGHOUT the whole of that winter and spring the Swedish papers announced that the courier continued to bring satisfactory news from Karlsruhe, that the King, Queen, and little Princess were in the best of health and spirits. At last came also the longed-for information that the King purposed leaving Baden on the 14th of July. There was universal rejoicing in Sweden, where the people were eager for their Sovereign's return after his prolonged absence; but their exuberance received a rude check when the papers enumerated the various cities and towns in the eastern part of Germany which the King intended visiting *en route* to Stralsund, and that he would not reach that port until September 12th. Much would be gained when they had the King once more safe in his own country, for if the crossing from Stralsund were not undertaken soon, winter would once more be upon the land, and the Queen's delicate health would have to be considered, so that the return journey would probably have to be postponed again—until the spring.

The King duly arrived at Stralsund, but not a word was said about the crossing to Sweden; all his time was taken up with trying to induce foreign Powers to join in an alliance against France and strengthening the fortifications of Stralsund.

Alas! Where the King *wants* to stay there he stays, and when he wants to go, he goes—not before; but at last, on November 23rd, he, the Queen, the little Princess, and suite *did* actually go on board the Royal yachts *Amadis* and *Esplendian* and start for Ystad. Meanwhile there was ice in the harbour and drifts on the ocean, and a whole week went by ere

the Royal yachts could be "cut out" of the ice at Stralsund and make for Barhöft, on account of the adverse winds. At length (December 1st), at eight o'clock in the morning, they could cast anchor in Swedish waters. A strong wind was blowing, still it was not fierce enough to prevent the hope that the yachts would be able to land that afternoon.

The King spent his time pacing the deck or sitting looking vacantly over the water. On his deck promenades he was closely followed by a cur, very irregularly marked, and when he sat down the hideous but faithful creature lay at his feet. Admiral Lagerbjelke, commander of the *Amadis*, and his officers knew what a very peculiar dog it was, and what fright and terror it had inspired during the last few months of its master's residence at Karlsruhe, and also during the short visits paid to minor German Courts. The King had had the dog brought from Ettenheim, and had had his collar engraved in large letters: "Duc d'Enghien fut mon maître."

When the sailors on board the *Amadis* caught sight of the creature they were terrified, and swore that it would bring them bad luck, for they had already heard at Stralsund that the King possessed a dog which had belonged to a man, a Prince, whom the new Emperor of the French had ordered to be shot, and they could not understand how he could bear to have such a wretched cur always at his heels, and think him worth bringing over to Sweden.

Her Majesty the Queen was far too great a sufferer from *mal de mer* to venture on deck. The storm increased to a gale in the afternoon, and though the coast was plainly visible it was deemed imprudent to make for land in the dark, and the *Amadis* had to wait out at sea until daybreak.

The Queen lay below in the Royal cabin of the *Amadis*, sick and miserable; she was obliged to cling fast with both hands to the bedposts, for the heavy lurching of the boat threatened any moment to fling her out of her narrow bed; her Ladies in Waiting were unable to move a finger for her comfort. Countess Oxenstjerna lay prostrate on the floor at the door of the Queen's cabin and was not able to stir. Countess Gyldenstolpe had been lashed tightly to the bench on which she was

sitting. From the little Princess's cabin uninterrupted wailings and constant groans were to be heard. The wind howled and whistled, the sea roared like thunder as it dashed against the sides of the yacht ; there was creaking of spars and in the rigging, and the sailors tramped clumsily over the heads of the affrighted women. Presently the tramping ceased, and in the intervals of the roaring of wind and waves could be heard the singing of psalms on deck.

"It must be seven, and they are having prayers ; just like the King," remarked the Queen, in a tone more irritated than devotional. The singing ceased after a few minutes, and the King appeared at the door of the Royal cabin, keeping fast hold on either side lest a fateful lurch should send him in head foremost. He was quite at ease.

"How does Your Majesty feel now ?" he asked in the same deliberate tone he was in the habit of using when making that inquiry in the Queen's dressing-room in the Palace at Stockholm. Whilst the King was speaking, Countess Oxenstjerna essayed to raise herself from the floor, but fell back with a groan.

"How can anyone feel when one is dying ?" whimpered the Queen.

"No one is going to die," remonstrated the King in his most aggressively positive manner. "Calm yourself. I have much to accomplish in the world before God will allow *me* to perish. Admiral Lagerbjelke was against having prayers, and did not know whether he could allow it, for he said that all hands were urgently wanted to look after the boat ; but I commanded that they should be drawn up for prayers as usual, and told him God would steer the vessel Himself."

An impatient groan came from the Queen's berth.

"I suppose you, too, felt that the storm was not quite so violent as . . ."

Before the King could finish what he was saying, the yacht lurched so heavily that the Queen was flung out of bed on to the floor, and Countess Oxenstjerna came rolling to the King's feet. He stepped over her, and went to help the Queen back into bed, and as she lay there whimpering, deadly white, and

with eyes closed, the King observed in the same cool manner : " Whilst we were having prayers the tempest certainly abated. It is considerably calmer now."

" Oh God ! Oh God ! " groaned the poor Queen as the boat gave another lurch which threatened to throw her on to the floor once more, " we are certainly going down."

" We are *not* going down," was the King's reply.

" I have hurt my side," said the Queen, " and I am sure I shall die if we do not reach land soon."

The gale increased with every moment, and Admiral Lagerbjelke could not remember ever having encountered such heavy seas and such terrible weather before in his life ; since one o'clock that night the wind had veered round to north-east. At daybreak the German coast was sighted, and fears were entertained that the *Amadis* might be dashed against the rocks. But she righted herself marvellously, and by noon Barhöft was in sight. All of a sudden there was a shock, and the yacht stopped and scraped the bottom. A cry of anguish came from the cabin below ; on deck the men were working for all they were worth to get the *Amadis* afloat. Lagerbjelke was issuing orders in a stentorian voice, and the King stood by his side. Presently he asked : " Will it be long, think you, before we reach Barhöft ? "

Lagerbjelke turned and looked at him in utter amazement.

" In case we succeed in getting off——" he said.

" We *shall* succeed," answered the King curtly.

" Under the most favourable circumstances it will take some hours, Your Majesty."

" The Queen must be put ashore as soon as possible," said the King.

Admiral Lagerbjelke simply bowed, he had no answer to make.

The King remained on deck staring into the waves, which boiled and seethed round the coast of the Isle of Rügen. The short winter's day was nearing its close, and darkness was fast coming on. Suddenly he gripped Lagerbjelke's arm, and said almost breathlessly : " Do you see, there is a boat coming ; I knew we should have help."

And in truth a tiny fishing-boat with riven sails was trying to work its way towards the Royal yacht ; the small craft sank and rose on the crest of the waves, and was presently altogether lost to sight.

“ It has gone down,” said Lagerbjelke sadly.

“ It has *not* ; look, there it is ; let a rope be thrown to the fisherman as soon as he is near enough. I shall get into the boat with the Queen and the Princess, and go ashore.” This the King said for all the world as coolly as if it were only a question of going up the landing-steps at Stockholm.

The little boat had managed to get near, but danced furiously up and down by the side of the *Amadis* ; it was all the boatman could do to hold tight to the rope thrown him from the yacht.

“ Let the Queen and Princess be brought up ; my adjutant, General Cardell, is to accompany us ; more the boat will not hold. Did I not tell you, Lagerbjelke, the little craft would come up all right ? ”

“ But, Your Majesty, is it advisable to embark on that little nutshell of a boat, and try to get ashore in the increasing darkness ? Your Majesty’s life is in grave danger on such a boat as that ; you would be much safer on board the *Amadis*. I hope to reach Barhöft in the course of a few hours, when a landing can be effected in safety and comfort.”

“ We shall be as safe in that little nutshell there as on the *Amadis*, or any other boat,” replied the King.

The Queen wept for fear as General Cardell carried her down the rope ladder ; the King stood in the bow and held out his arms for the little Princess, but she would not let him touch her. She fought and kicked and screamed : “ I won’t go in that little boat ; I won’t, I won’t ! ”

“ You take care of Her Royal Highness and push us off, Lagerbjelke,” said the King.

The white setter, which had been standing whining and howling at the top of the ladder, now took one flying leap into the fishing-boat, and crouched down beside the King, trembling in every limb.

It was an awful voyage on a raging sea and in the dark.

“ We are going down ! ” shrieked the Queen, when the foam

washed over her face, and the boat dipped in the trough of the waves.

“Calm yourself, calm yourself,” cried the King; “we are *not* going down.”

The Queen opened her eyes; when she saw the wild sea surging round her, and the white froth on the waves gleaming in the darkness, and felt the boat sinking under her, she was so terrified that she fell into a fit.

The King took off his cloak and handed it over to Cardell.

“Lay Her Majesty down flat in the bottom of the boat, and cover her with that,” he said. Whilst Cardell was doing his best for the Queen, a huge wave came and washed the fisherman overboard. Swift as lightning Cardell bent over the railing, and with giant strength pulled up the man on whom depended the lives of them all.

Not a word had escaped the lips of the King all this time; he was very white, but perfectly calm. When the fisherman was once more seated in his place the King said, in his usual tone of self-assurance, which was so unbecoming the conditions then obtaining, “It is going splendidly; I will bale out the water here, it is over the tops of my boots; have you got anything here to ladle it out with? If so, set to; the Queen must not be allowed to get wet (!)”

The King and Cardell baled out the water without a moment’s intermission.

At last they reached terra firma. The King and Cardell carrying the Queen between them had to wade through the surf to the cottage of a coastguard, the only refuge in sight.

Once safely deposited inside the Queen recovered consciousness, but she was drenched and shivered with cold. Fortunately, the coastguard’s wife had her best Sunday clothes in a chest; she put them on the Queen, and then helped the poor shipwrecked lady, whose deplorable condition could not but inspire genuine sympathy, to bed, tucked a feather-bed well round her, and begged her to try to sleep.

After an hour or two the Queen again opened her eyes. She had had a good sleep, and could not make out where she was. On a little table by the bedside a tallow candle stuck in a tin

candlestick was burning feebly. The Queen looked up and beheld a low ceiling black with smoke ; then she fell to examining the flowery pattern of the print with which the pillows and the feather-bed were covered. Her delicate hands pushed the bedclothes aside, and felt the coarse material of the skirt she had on.

A little way off, by the open grate on which spluttered great squares of turf, sat the King in his shirt-sleeves, staring into the fire. His uniform and the Queen's clothes hung over a pole near for the purpose of drying.

The hideous dog lay stretched at full length on the stone floor near the King snoring lustily.

"What is Your Majesty doing out there ?" asked the Queen ; "come and look at your wife in a fishwoman's dress. I have got on red worsted stockings and black leather shoes with steel buckles, a black skirt, bodice, and jersey ; only the fishwife's cap is lacking."

"I am getting my clothes dried," answered the King ; "and I would rather not see you in a fishwife's get-up."

"I do not believe it *is* altogether unbecoming, though the skirt is a trifle short, maybe. Shall I get up and show myself to you ?"

"No, no ; don't do that, lie still and rest ; I am sure you need it."

The Queen lay silent for a time, looking at the King's cropped head bending over the fire.

"Why does not Your Majesty borrow our host's Sunday best, as I have his wife's ? You will get chilled through letting your clothes dry *on* your person."

"I mean to put on my Swedish uniform again to-day. I do not consider it fitting to appear in any clothes except my own."

"To-day, did Your Majesty say ? Why to-day ? Is it any particular day ?"

The King vouchsafed no reply, but drew his stool a little nearer to the fire.

"Oh," cried the Queen, sitting up on the side of the bed, "it is the second of December—now I remember. On this

day the Pope is to set the Imperial Crown of France on the head of Napoleon Buonaparte in the Church of Our Lady in Paris."

Again the King made no reply.

After a while the Queen said : " Had Your Majesty remembered it also ? "

" I have not been able to think of anything else, day and night," answered the King in a low voice.

" What a curious coincidence that we should be shipwrecked, just on that day, too," remarked the Queen after a pause.

" That had nothing whatever to do with it," cried the King angrily. " We are alive this day. *I still live !* "

After another long interval of silence the Queen ventured to ask : " Does Your Majesty feel to have caught cold ? "

" No, I am only shivering. I got my feet so wet wading through the surf, and it is very cold here, too." With that he took down the wet cloak which was hanging over the back of a broken rocking-chair to dry, and wrapped it round him.

" Would Your Majesty kindly snuff the candle for me presently ? " said the Queen ; " there's a big ' thief '* in the flame."

The King got out of his chair, and with much trouble in moving went up to the bed and lifted the clumsy candlestick from the brass tray on which it stood. The Queen took hold of the King's unoccupied right hand, and tried to warm the icy fingers between her own ; but he never even looked at her ; he was busy trying to snuff the candle with his numbed hand, but did it so awkwardly that the whole of the burning wick remained in the snuffers ; then the room lay in blackest darkness.

The King was much provoked and stamped angrily on the floor with his foot.

The Queen heard him muttering in the dark, " God will punish him for his wicked deeds."

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The Swedish public were awaiting news of the *Amadis* with the greatest anxiety, when one day it was announced in the papers that the crossing to Sweden had been attended with

* i.e. flaring wick.

some misfortune, and that His Majesty the King, Her Majesty the Queen, and Her Royal Highness Princess Sophia had been obliged to put back to Stralsund on December 3rd.

Pessimists among the nation repeated for the hundredth time their conviction that the King was fated never to return to Sweden any more. Optimists were agreed that the Royal couple could not reasonably be expected to come back in the winter, but were confident they would do so as soon as it was spring. However, the King had no mind to wait until the spring; he insisted on returning now; so a fresh attempt was made, and the route taken through Denmark and across the Great Belt, at the end of the first week in January. This plan was entirely successful. The Little Belt was crossed on the fourteenth of the month, the Great Belt on the sixteenth, and on the twenty-first their Majesties crossed the Sound to Helsingborg, where the horses were taken out of the shafts, and the carriage drawn by the populace through the town; a week's rest had to be taken there on the Queen's account, then the journey to Stockholm was continued, by shorter or longer stages, via Jönköping, Vadstena, Örebro, and Vesterås; all along the route the people manifested the most touching joy and delight at their Sovereigns' safe return.

The last night of the journey was spent at Stäket, the property of Count Ugglå, and as that happened to be the day of St. Dorothea, and the Queen's "name's-day," her health was drunk amid salvos of cannon and vociferous cheering from the people.

At length the King once more arrived in his capital. It had been arranged that the Chief Magistrate of the City and the fifty Elders should meet their Majesties at Norrtull; that there also the horses should be unharnessed from the sleighs, and that these should be dragged up to the Palace by the loyal, rejoicing people; but, contrary to all expectations, the King and Queen elected to go to Stockholm direct, not even breaking the journey at Haga to see their two small sons; so the carefully planned official reception came to naught. It was abnormally cold that day, more than thirty degrees of frost (Celsius), and the closed Royal sledges were driven so fast



CASTLE OF ULRIKSDAL

through the town as to pass almost unnoticed ; the sentries on duty in the Norrmalmstorg had not even time to present arms !

The Queen-Mother was sitting at dinner, not expecting her children for several hours yet, when quite unexpectedly the door was thrown open and Count Fabian Fersen entered leading by the hand the little Princess who was to greet her grandmother first and to tell her of the arrival of her parents. Naturally the Queen-Mother was only too delighted to welcome back her son and daughter-in-law after an absence of nineteen months ! At the same time she was so completely surprised that she gave vent to her pleasure in somewhat unusual terms : “ How shall I be able to receive them ? I am not properly dressed ! ”

At Haga they met the little Crown-Prince, who was not the least afraid of his father and whose behaviour on this occasion did his tutor the greatest credit. The Infant Grand Duke of Finland was a charming, chubby little fellow, beaming with health and good temper. He hugged and kissed his mother as if he had never been parted from her, but had seen her every day. The little Princess was a most welcome playfellow for her two young brothers, but as she mostly spoke German and her Swedish was very bad, they often found it difficult to understand her.

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By way of showing *their* appreciation of the King's return, the officers of the garrison at Stockholm had most respectfully prayed for the King's permission to give a ball in the great hall of the Exchange, and had humbly requested that their Majesties would honour it with their presence. Gustaf Adolf had graciously given his permission, for he wished to be on the best of terms with his officers, especially now, when he meant to make preparations for a great war, and he impressed upon the Queen that he was most anxious for her presence at the entertainment also, and that it was her positive duty to overcome her shyness and antipathy to appearing in public.

The Queen thought that this time she might well have

been excused, but as she knew that it was impossible to say "no" to anything the King had set his mind upon, she was fain to say "yes." The ball was fixed for February 12th. The Queen-Mother was prevented by illness from being present, and the youthful Crown-Prince, his sister, Princess Sophia Wilhelmina, the Duke and Duchess of Södermanland, and the Princess Sophia Albertina arrived at the Exchange Hall just before their Majesties at seven of the clock.

The Colonel and officers of the five regiments stationed at Stockholm received the King and Queen at the entrance, and conducted them through two lines of men from their regiments into the great hall.

The King, in the uniform of his Dragoons, led in the Queen. She had grown during their absence, and was now nearly as tall as the King. His Majesty certainly looked better and stronger in health than he had done of late—that and his closely-cropped hair made his resemblance to Charles XII even more striking. It was well known that the King had been very pleased to hear that he was considered to have grown stouter, but those who were not bent on flattering him and who were honest thought he was just as thin and willowy as before his visit to Germany.

There was a great crush in the ballroom, but the whole effect was exceedingly brilliant, the splendid uniforms of the men making a vivid contrast to the black and white ball-dresses of the ladies. As the King and Queen entered the profusely decorated hall, loud cheers went up, and a new anthem taken from the popular and well-known German and English one, was sung to the accompaniment of drums and trumpets :

God save our gracious King,
 Prosper our noble King,
 Long live our King.
 Bound to his people's love,
 Faithful they'll ever prove,
 And pray to Him above :

 "God save our King."

Chorus : Long live our King !

CHAPTER XXIII

THE WAR IN POMERANIA

ONE day early in January, 1806, in one of the most notable houses at Lüneburg, where the King had taken up his temporary quarters, Baron Frederic Boye, on General Wachtmeister's staff, and Colonel Count Hampus Mörner, of the Cavalry Brigade, accidentally met on the stairs.

"Going to the King?" asked Boye.

Mörner nodded. "But I am in no particular hurry; I can very well stop for a little chat, and wait till I'm called; have *you* just come from his presence, Baron?"

"Yes."

"Well, what is he doing, and what sort of a temper is he in?"

"When I was with him he was busy designing new uniforms for the Västgöta Cavalry, with caps and plumes. He showed his designs to me and other officers; and his temper—well, it was fairly good and amenable, as it has been ever since the beginning of the war—if it can be called 'war.' I can hardly even say 'beginning' of the war when, as yet, not a single shot has been fired on either side; so we will say, ever since he came back from Stralsund and hostilities *were* to begin."

Just then a detachment, with a band at their head, passed the house.

"We'll have to wait till we can hear our own voices again, before we go on talking," said Mörner.

They both watched the men go by from the staircase window, and when at last the sounds of drums and trumpets had sufficiently died away, Mörner said, laughing, "Our allies are not far wrong; we *do* look rather like popinjays, especially those fellows over there in light blue coats, with red collars,

yellow facings and cuffs, black and red belts, white trousers, felt hats with a white border and dark green drooping plumes ! Powdered hair or periwigs, forsooth ! There are no smarter soldiers in the world ! Of course, as far as colours are concerned, *that* is our finest corps ; not that the others are very far behind. But what were we talking about ? Oh, I know ; it was about the King's temper, which you said was as bright as those uniforms, Baron. Neither his relative and ally the Emperor of Russia, nor the King of Prussia can compete with our King's piety or affability. If we had not been angry with Russia just now, or sought a mock quarrel with the King of Prussia, we might have been able to do something for the common cause before the Emperor Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz settled affairs on the Continent for some time to come at least. As things are now, well——”

All the while Mörner had been talking he had been ostentatiously scrutinising his uniform, to be sure that it was unimpeachably correct and according to rule in every detail, that the buttons which *should* be buttoned *were* buttoned, and that the hanging cords hung exactly as they *should* hang. Boye laughed heartily at Mörner's boy-like manœuvres, squinting at himself with his head on one side, his expression alternately severe, searching, and disapproving ; he really was not *unlike* the King at that moment.

“Amenable ? Hm ! Did not His Majesty's neck-feathers stand stiff and erect with rage, when on arriving at Stralsund neither a Russian Minister nor any of the Russian Generals were there to meet him, though his brother-in-law had himself appointed him Generalissimo of the Russian Army ? And oh ! how ‘WE’ hate the King of Prussia, and ‘we’ have let both him and the world know it ; that *that* has been the cause of our embroglio is very patent. There can be no doubt also that the fault was entirely on our side ; that was more than evident from what the Emperor Alexander remarked to Löwenhjielm, that ‘If the King of Sweden would only go one quarter of the way, the King of Prussia would be prepared to do the rest.’ That would certainly have been chivalrous and generous on the part of the King of Prussia, seeing the treatment he had met with.

Since the creation of the world, I mean, of course, since kings and potentates came into existence, I do not think there ever was a case that one monarch refused the highest decoration offered to him by another in such circumstances as our King did, when he sent back the Order of the Black Eagle of Prussia with a message that he did not covet that distinction in common with Napoleon and others like him ! ”

“ Yes, it was rather clever of our King to kill two such big birds with one stone, and as the Colonel said, it was generous of the King of Prussia to be willing to meet him more than half-way, especially if he were as friendly with Napoleon now as he was when he bestowed the Black Eagle on *him*, and thanked him for his Legion of Honour. If only our King would be even with him now, and go *his* part of the way, things would settle themselves all right.”

“ You think so ? ” The speaker was an unusually tall, fine man, who, in company with several others, was just coming down the stairs. “ The King of Sweden will go his quarter of the way when he feels so inclined, not a moment sooner, and *then* he will do it his own way, which won't tally with any one else's—and *his* road will be one which leads direct to the throne of France, and we, with our poor weak arms, will be expected to hoist that grossly obese old rascal of a Louis on to the ' throne of his ancestors. ’

“ Has Henning Wrangel been eavesdropping, think you ? ” inquired Mörner, frowning, and in his least harmonious tone of voice ; his wrinkled brow gave him an even more comical expression ; he was very funny when, with an assumption of wrath, he stretched his fine figure up to its full height.

“ If people are careless enough to talk as loud as *we* did just now, a certain individual who has sharp ears, and is at the present time only one flight of stairs higher up, can assuredly not help hearing ; but if I may be permitted to voice *my* opinion in the matter, I cannot help thinking that it is rather beneath our King to be obliged to ally himself with the Emperor of Russia, whom he honestly cannot bear.”

“ Obliged ? Qu'avait mon fils à faire dans cette galère ? ” whispered Mörner as low as he could.

"How can you ask, my brother?—and what about the BEAST, then?"

"Yes, that BEAST! That is the greatest grievance of all. Here we have been two blessed months holding out our red rag into the air, and we have not been able to get the BEAST to so much as look at it; and as Armfelt humorously put it the other day, 'neither our Russian nor our English allies would miss us the least in the world if we turned tail and slunk back home at once, for, to tell the truth, neither of them want to have anything to do with us. We make too much fuss and bother to be of any real use.' People like our King, with such very pronounced antipathies to both friend *and* foe, should not go to war if they mean to gain the victory. This last remark, by the way, is, however, not Armfelt's, but my—Hussar Hampus's—own! But now I must be off! I had orders from the King to report myself immediately after my return from Hamburg, and to tell him how the expedition went off."

"Well, that escapade to Hamburg did not prove as unpromising as we had expected from the old saw, which says: "Experience is the best teacher."

"Goodness, no! Unpromising? Ha! ha! No, the King had given his gracious consent for eleven officers to go to Hamburg together to enjoy themselves and visit the theatres under *my* command!"

Hampus Mörner turned to go up the long flight of stairs two steps at a time.

He had to pass through three separate rooms before the Adjutant on duty ushered him into the King's presence.

As usual, Gustaf Adolf was pacing up and down, and General Wachtmeister was with him. As Mörner entered, and stood at respectful attention by the door, the King stopped in his conversation with the General and said: "What foolish pranks have you been up to these days, Mörner?"

"I dare not put Your Majesty's patience to the test by relating in detail——"

"Tell me exactly what you did, man," said the King, taking his seat at a table littered with maps and sketches.

General Wachtmeister, stiff and starched, and with correct

military bearing, retired to one of the recesses of the window, and had much difficulty in keeping his countenance whilst the greatest wag in the Army told his tale with the utmost sang-froid, though he kept his eye on his master, and carefully noted the impression his recital was making upon him.

“ In obedience to Your Majesty’s most gracious wish, I took the command over the eleven giddy young men who were to have a good time in Hamburg. But before we went on board it was proposed that we should throw all the ready cash we had with us into Colonel Danfelt’s hat and enjoy ourselves as long as the funds lasted.”

“ I suppose *you* were the one who proposed *that*, eh, Mörner ?”

“ Yes, Your Majesty, it *was* my idea ! But I also proposed that we should set aside the sum necessary for the hire of the boat and food and shelter for the man and horses before we started.”

“ What did you do that for ? ” asked the King.

“ Well, Your Majesty, because it was only natural that, after our leave was over, we should come back totally cleared out—which we did, too, this morning.”

The King gave a deep sigh. “ It passes my comprehension how people can enjoy themselves as *you* do, Mörner, and many others seem to do too. *I* never enjoy anything. Go on, Mörner.”

“ We took numbers, Your Majesty, like the soldiers,” continued Mörner, “ I was Number One, and Number Twelve was the regimental Quarter-Master-General Danfelt, on whom fell the arduous duty of seeing that we *had* a real ‘ good time ’ so long as there was cash available. The other ten drew their numbers by lot, irrespective of the amount each had contributed to the general fund.”

“ And so you all had plenty of fun ? ” asked the King, in the same serious voice as before.

“ Oh, awful fun, Your Majesty. Every morning Danfelt gave an account of the state of our finances and took votes as to what should be done during the day. The Hamburgers received us exceedingly well, we had agreed that no private invitation was to be accepted which did not include the whole

dozen of us ; but we had plenty of tickets for balls and theatres sent us."

"And was that all ?" asked the King, looking at Mörner out of the corner of his eye.

"I know not whether I have Your Majesty's permission to relate a particular incident which may reach Your Majesty's ears, and which I can only consider did honour to the Swedish Army."

"You can tell me all about it, Mörner," said the King, who sat at the table with his hand over his mouth to hide a smile, which, however, his eyes disclosed.

"Well, then—if such is Your Majesty's wish—one day, when we were going to dine *à la carte* at the Chinese Pavilion in Hamburg, one of our party had the brilliant idea to count up the various dishes on the lengthy menu."

"Which one of your party, Mörner ?" asked the King, looking suspiciously at him.

Mörner bowed : "I counted up the dishes ; there were exactly one hundred and forty-four of them, and as we were twelve, it made just a dozen apiece."

The King reckoned it up in silence, and inclined his head.

"Yes," he said, "if you really *were* obliged to eat of each separate one, it would just make twelve per head."

"Well, Your Majesty, that was exactly what we meant to do—to eat through the menu. The landlord, the cook, and many of the Hamburgers said it would be impossible, but we *did* it, Your Majesty, we *did* it !"

"You did what, Mörner ?"

"Every single man of us polished off his twelve dishes as per menu, Your Majesty."

"What do you mean by that, Mörner ?"

"I mean in correct order, as they were numbered in the menu ; no choice was allowed, so one ate cakes and jam whilst another was gulping down greens ; and he who had begun with cakes and jam had to go on with, say, salt pork or boar's head, and the one who had begun with greens had to continue with sturgeon or caviare. But we managed to carry it all off, to the everlasting credit of the Swedish Army be it said."

The King bestowed a searching glance upon Mörner, who kept profoundly serious under the scrutiny. With an effort Gustaf Adolf suppressed a smile : “ You must not do that sort of thing again, though, Mörner,” he said in a would-be tone of reproof.

Wachtmeister was obliged to turn away, or he would have gone into fits of laughter at Hampus Mörner’s absurd expression of countenance.

“ And what were the plays at the theatre ? ” asked the King, in the same tone of kindly cross-examination he had maintained throughout.

“ Amongst other things, we witnessed the performance of a satirical piece entitled, ‘ The Cells of the Brain ’ ; Gall and Kotzebue, the author of the play, were sitting together, both laughing loud.”

“ Is the famous Doctor Gall in Hamburg ? ” asked the King with a great show of interest.

“ He is, Your Majesty.”

“ I should like to ask him to come here or to Boitzenburg, where Armfelt’s headquarters are, and where I shall have mine when we cross the Elbe again. I am much interested in the science which tells from the shape of the head what qualities predominate in the character and disposition of different individuals.”

The King was lost in thought, but only for a few minutes, then, giving a sign that the audience was at an end, he said : “ I really ought to reprimand you severely, Mörner, but as you so honestly and straightforwardly told me about your foolish tricks, I can only repeat you must not do that sort of thing again.”

“ No, Your Majesty, certainly not,” answered Mörner, bowing himself out of the room.

As soon as the door was closed after him, the King said in his habitual sad and weary tone : “ Now we must return to serious and important matters, Wachtmeister. I have decided to let my troops cross the Elbe again, and I shall take up my quarters at Boitzenburg.”

Wachtmeister bowed, and waited to hear what more his Royal

Master had to say, but the latter sat a long time silent, his head resting on his hand. Then he said : “ You heard how much Mörner had enjoyed himself, did you not, Wachtmeister ? It is curious to think that any man can enjoy life——”

Could any onlooker have taken a peep into one of the spacious rooms at Headquarters at Boitzenburg, where the King of Sweden with several of his officers then was, and did he not know better, he might have been led to believe that Gustaf Adolf was a savage who ruthlessly cut off the heads of his fallen enemies, and presented their scalps to his men in order to make them more bloodthirsty than they had shown themselves to be by nature. The King sat at one end of the room with his officers grouped in a semicircle behind him, each holding a small skull in his hand, and by a small table, on which was placed a larger skull, stood a man in a long coat and spectacles, holding forth eloquently about these gruesome objects. The man's manner was somewhat mysterious ; he pointed to the skull with a ruler he held in his hand as he enumerated this or that peculiar quality of which the defunct owner of a similar skull might have been in possession ; both King and officers at once proceeded to locate that same attribute on the skull in their own hands.

But the onlooker, better informed, knows that no sanguinary encounter with the Swedes had taken place, and that the long-coated, bald-headed man, to whose every word the King listened with unfeigned interest and rapt attention, is neither an executioner nor an emissary from the lower regions, but the famous Doctor Gall, expounding his new theories on phrenology ; closer inspection also reveals that the said skulls are only models in plaster, each ticketed with a name and number.

The lectures held on several evenings often lasted for hours at a time, and the officers seemed to take as much interest in them as did the King, who never tired. Sometimes his hand would almost unconsciously go up to his own head to feel for bumps, either of good or bad qualities, whichever Doctor Gall might have under discussion at the moment.

A few of the more frivolous among the company, such as Armfelt and Mörner for instance, found these lengthy séances rather irksome, but so long as the King sat there with his dreamy, attentive mien, sometimes bending his head in approval, or shaking it in dissent, according as the doctor's utterances were agreeable or the reverse, none of his entourage dared to move or to exhibit the least sign of impatience.

At last the King asked the scientist whether he would not like to demonstrate any of his theses on the heads of some of those present, and point out the preponderating characteristics of the person chosen.

With a deferential bow, Doctor Gall replied: "I most humbly beg Your Majesty's pardon; but that is the one thing I am not in the habit of doing, even with my colleagues, and Your Majesty expressly stipulated that I should give these lectures in my accustomed way."

The King rose. "You must come with me to my own rooms," he said, passing in front of his officers, closely followed by the famous doctor, who bowed courteously to those present before leaving. The audience preserved the strictest decorum until the doors shut behind the King and the doctor, but as soon as they *were* shut there was a general buzz and talking. Captain Engelhardt and Captain Boye had a game of ball with their skulls, and indulged in small bets as to who could throw highest; Armfelt rose, stretched, and yawned so loud that he could be heard at the other end of the room. Mörner rumped his hair and felt about his wig, pretending to find bumps of the most charming qualities, and every minute uttering loud exclamations of joyful surprise. Finally, he called out: "Fröhlich, what can that bump here on my head be? Could it be the bump of veneration? Consult your plaster skull and tell me."

Count Fröhlich, the Queen's Master-of-the-Horse, and the least gifted of any of those there, put on a very important air, and entered into an explanation of the bump discovered by Mörner, *demonstrating*, to the great diversion of the company, that delightful officer to be in possession of qualities no one would have dreamt of attributing to him.

Once again Armfelt gave an audible yawn, and then said,

laughing : “ Yes, my esteemed companions in misfortune, the King has no doubt seen a good deal on *your* worthy heads this evening ; I think he would have done better to tap them and listen to the sound, then he might have been sure whether we should get on harmoniously in our quarters or not.”

“ I wish Gall would let himself be talked over into feeling the King’s head to find the crooked places in it. If he did, I’d like to hear whether he would speak in his own interests or according to his scientific learning.”

“ I think I could say quite as much about the King’s skull as Gall ; it is a wooden head stuffed with iron,” Armfelt remarked to Mörner as they left the room arm in arm.

“ Was that you, General, who dubbed the King the ‘ Legitimists’ Don Quixote ? ’ It was a good hit, and I should be grateful to you if you would tell me what on earth we are stopping in quarters here for, instead of returning to Stralsund ? ”

“ Ah, I have my own opinion about that, and I’ll tell you ; I believe the reason for our being rooted here to be that the King of Prussia may be scared out of his wits ! But it is rather a pity that our warlike proceedings are kept so very secret from the enemy. The windmills attacked by Don Quixote were more likely to have guessed his intentions, than the King of Prussia is likely to guess that our marching and counter-marching is intended to intimidate *him* ! ”

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Within the King’s apartments it was pitch dark save for a couple of wax tapers in silver candlesticks burning there. He had extinguished the other lights, and sat by the window where, in the light of a bright full moon, the beams of which fell upon his pale, grave features, he conversed with upturned face with the doctor, who stood opposite to him. But if the King’s officers and soldiers were grand and gaudy, the simplicity of his own attire made up for it ; he wore the neat, dark blue uniform, cut after the pattern of that worn by Charles XII, with high riding-boots and spurs and gauntlet gloves, a dress which Pro-

fessor Gall thought most becoming to the slender, boyish figure.

“So you will not tell me, Doctor Gall, whether the bumps on my head indicate the qualities I need, and which I hope are most freely developed?” said the King, after a pause.

“If I *could* make an exception, Your Majesty, I would most certainly do so in your case; but my theories are still too new and liable to misinterpretation; therefore I could not try an experiment with them on living, exalted individuals. But I have no objection to tell Your Majesty some of your predominating characteristics and qualities without touching Your Majesty’s head.”

“Well, then, do so and let me see whether you are right.”

“If I should attribute the quality of ‘Courage’ to Your Majesty, for instance, it would not be merely supposition or guess-work on my part. The Sovereign who could remain in Baden for four whole months after the abduction of the Duke of Enghien, and under the circumstances connected with it, must, I take it, be a man of most unusual courage.”

“I stayed longer than I really intended, simply to show that wretch and murderer (Buonaparte) that I was not afraid of him,” said the King, stooping to pat the dog which lay curled up at his feet in the moonlight.

“Then there is the quality of ‘firmness’ or ‘independence,’ which I should say Your Majesty possessed in a marked degree.”

“I have *had* to be firm,” said the King, “since all my life has been full of personal troubles. They began with the assassination of my father, and have continued without intermission until a few months ago. On the eve of starting for this campaign I lost a beloved son, His Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Finland, whom I mourn still; he was a most lovable child,” added the King with a deep sigh. “I will tell you something curious that baby-boy once said. It was one day as he was driving past the Church of the Seraphim with his mother, Her Majesty the Queen; he took off his hat and waved his little hand to the people, and as they passed the church he remained bareheaded, holding his hat in his hand. The Queen asked him why he paid this respect to this church in particular,

and not to any other. His answer was : " Because the Kings who are with God now are sleeping there."

The King's eyes filled with tears, and he covered them with his hand ; meanwhile, Doctor Gall had come up to him, and touching his head with his forefinger, he said : " Here are the bumps of ' justice,' ' fairness,' and ' honour,' and there is ' truthfulness ' ; I never knew a head on which those attributes were developed in such a remarkable degree as on Your Majesty's ; I am not surprised, but it gives me pleasure to say so."

" Yes, I know that I love truth and honour and justice—they are what I have cherished most from my earliest days, besides an unbounded fear of God—also my maxim has always been : ' Honesty is the best policy.' Have you examined the heads of the Emperor Alexander of Russia or the King of Prussia, Frederic William III ? "

" Nay, Your Majesty."

" That is rather a pity," said the King thoughtfully, " a great pity. It would be somewhat of a satisfaction if, through others or oneself, one could ascertain the moral worth of those with whom one's fate is so closely connected. Have you, perchance, found any of these qualities on the head of Buonaparte, Doctor Gall ? "

" Oh, Your Majesty ! "

" I understand ; well, it does not matter to me. Without having held his head in my hands, I know well enough that *he* has no sense of justice, fairness, or honour, whatever other qualities he may possess ; if he lacks these he is bound to perish, and to be lost for time and eternity. It is a lovely moonlight night and you will have a pleasant journey back to Hamburg, sir." As he spoke, the King took Doctor Gall's hand, and laid it gently on his head.

" Is there not a very pronounced bump of ' order,' too ? "

" Certainly there is, Your Majesty."

" And of ' stubbornness ' or ' obstinacy,' as I think you called it ? "

" I cannot deny that, your Majesty."

" It would be no good your denying it ; I perceived long ago

that that seemed the quality most fully developed in my character ; I am not ashamed to own that I consider it an invaluable asset. I know what I want, and I never yield a hair's-breadth until, by some means or other, I have got it. What you have said about my qualities entirely bears out the prophecies I have heard and in which I fully believe."

The King had left his seat and gone to a cabinet on which stood a casket, which he unlocked and whence he took several rolls of silver, which he pressed on his guest and instructor.

"It is the fee that was agreed upon for your lectures, Doctor, and this is a little token to show my appreciation of your visit and your good opinion ; and this (taking a very valuable watch from the casket) is a souvenir from the King in whom you found so many splendid qualities united. You have, so far, said nothing of less meritorious attributes—mention those to me before you go."

"But I had the honour of telling Your Majesty before, that I have made it a standing rule to make no experiments with living persons in high places——"

"I respect your scruples, and will say no more," replied the King gravely ; "so now, farewell, Doctor, and a pleasant journey to you ; what a beautiful moonlight night !"

The doctor bowed himself out of the room, and as he looked back he beheld the King in the full light of the moon, standing at the open window with his hands clasped and his eyes fixed on the stars.

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With part of the army the King had returned to Pomerania, and moved his headquarters to Greifswald. There he had convened the first Pomeranian Riksdag after the pattern of the Swedish Riksdag. Now, as the German States had been dismembered, and Pomerania was no longer under German supremacy, the King could do what he liked with that province.

He could retain the Protectorate and oppress the nobility if he were so minded, which, however, he was not. He could proclaim himself absolute ruler if he chose, but he did not choose. He was at liberty to sell it to Russia, and it was averred

that he intended to do so, as an act of revenge upon the King of Prussia, who, according to Gustaf Adolf, was waiting for a favourable opportunity to snatch at Pomerania, but he did not. Instead, he tried to make that little province prosperous and happy, and he himself was happier that summer when he built up defences against misery and injustice, and when he acted upon the dictates of his conscience in the certainty that by so doing God would be with him, and would let him reap the harvest of the blessings he had sown.

Yet Gustaf Adolf was really *most* peculiar. When his country was at peace, he would do nothing but think of war, and when in the midst of the land where war was so near at hand, his mind continually dwelt on the blessings of peace for that land, and he worked like a most loving and devoted father for its welfare. Sceptics among the Pomeranians and detractors among the Swedes who had attended the Riksdag were inclined to say that all these projects about new laws, new canals, harbours, wharves, and other improvements, were as houses built upon the sand, the tide coming nearer and nearer which would ere long engulf and sweep away the precious playthings; nevertheless the King felt that God favoured him and so was happy. He also had the satisfaction of seeing the King of Prussia evacuate Lauenburg, which had been a bone of contention the whole time. When this contention finally ended as Gustaf Adolf had predicted, he considered that his firmness had won for him a greater victory than any mere force of arms could have done, and that this happy consummation would enable him to carry out his long-cherished wish to see his Consort the Queen, his little son the Crown-Prince, and the two small Princesses, who had been expecting him in Skåne since July, once more; it was now already September.

The journey should have been undertaken some days sooner, and the King was only waiting until the contrary winds which were blowing so fiercely should subside and make the crossing of the water possible. He was still at Greifswald, where the officers who were quartered at Stralsund could come to see him when so desired. The Governor-General, Baron von Essen,

and Armfelt, to whom had been entrusted the command of the troops stationed there, came over almost every day, and His Majesty frequently invited them and some others to a small tea in his diggings. On those occasions he had been in a more genial temper than usual, and had actually been seen to indulge in a rare smile ! The gentlemen of his suite, who had hitherto always grumbled at the solemnity of the King's gatherings, really dared to make a few jokes, and those who had tried to be merry before, were simply driven beyond bounds by this unaccustomed good temper of his. However, this pleasant state of things could not last long, for the King was certainly very eccentric and most difficult to deal with, and they soon had to repent their levity.

Armfelt, especially, had reason for regret that last evening at His Majesty's tea-table just before his departure.

Gustaf Adolf was standing, teacup in hand, conversing with Count de la Gardie and Armfelt, whilst the Governor-General Von Essen, the Auditor-General Count Gyllenborg, Lieutenant-Colonel Count Piper, and von Wetterstedt, Private Secretary, were standing in a group apart talking among themselves.

"He is not at all like his father," the King observed all at once and in such an extremely loud voice that the gentlemen immediately stopped their conversation.

"Like which father, Your Majesty ?" asked Armfelt, with a careless laugh, "the real or the official parent ?" It was no secret that the young Count's beautiful wife *had* once had a very dear "friend" of the opposite sex, to whom the young man bore a striking resemblance ; "as both the 'friend' and the son are out here, or rather at Stralsund, Your Majesty will be able to judge whether the likeness really is so striking."

The King's face assumed a stony expression, and he answered gravely and in a tone of stern rebuke : "Such things should never be repeated. No one knows the exact truth, and such gossip is calculated to give rise to evil and unfounded rumours."

Armfelt bit his lips at the implied reproof. It was an awkward moment ; even the King reddened. His lips twitched, and he added in an unsteady voice : "There is a report, I am told,

that even *I* am a bastard and not the son of my late father of blessed memory.”

A distressing silence followed this speech ; the men present felt embarrassed and knew not what best to do. Whatever the difference in their views they were all agreed upon one point—they were very vexed with Armfelt and very sorry for the King. Could Armfelt indeed have been tactless enough to wish to hurt his Sovereign’s feelings with his story, or had he merely spoken thoughtlessly ? Surely it must have been the latter, for neither he nor any one else could suspect that the King should have heard the report or that he should have taken it to himself before so many guests.

It was probably the first time in his life that Armfelt had been silenced by any reply—and this one had been a real snub ! But he had been addressed, and as the others stood silent, hardly venturing to breathe, Armfelt was obliged to answer, and said : “ *I*, for one, have never heard such a report either from high or low, and *I* am beyond measure astonished that any one should have dared to breathe such a thing into Your Majesty’s ear.”

The King hesitated a minute as if he rather wished to drop the subject ; but he could not bring himself to do so, and said :

“ It may well be that no one told *you*, Armfelt, because you were my late father’s trusted friend ; nevertheless *I* have been told that the report is pretty general.”

Now it was Von Essen’s turn to wake from his reverie, and he drew up his well-knit supple figure as if he had only just heard what was passing and feared that it might be supposed that *he*, with his accustomed outspokenness, might have told the King of that report with a view to taking down that individual’s self-conceit and pride. *That* suspicion he must remove at all costs ; so he burst out in vehement tones with an angry fire in his eyes : “ *I* assure you, *I* too, have never heard such a tale, and *I* would not advise any one to come near me with any such—if any one *had* the audacity they might be sure of summary punishment. *I*, also, was reckoned among the friends of the late King.”

The rest of those present joined in the disclaimer and cried :
“ None of us has heard such a rumour ! ”

“ Now, then, my dear Essen, do not over-excite yourself ; I can see how it affects you,” answered the King. “ I have not worried about it, neither need *you* ; such evil and unsavoury reports——”

The King broke off abruptly ; the colour had left his cheeks, and left him ghastly white. He put down the half-empty cup, and his hand shook so that the spoon rattled against the saucer. The soft, mild autumn air streamed into the room, where an oppressive silence reigned.

The sound of whistling and cheerful bustle came up from below, and Armfelt went to the window to see what was going on—only a few straggling officers passing by ; with the fiery rays of the setting sun shining upon them they looked, indeed, like huge, gaudy birds as they disappeared round the corner. Fortunately one of them unconsciously inspired Armfelt with a fresh topic of conversation. He turned from the window and said, in his usual cheerful way, though this time the cheerfulness was a little forced : “ I must tell Your Majesty that Platen von Silens, when drilling his awkward squad not long ago, hit upon a brilliant idea as to how to treat the French if they should come here. He was instructing his yokels how to conceal their rifles in the wheat-sheaves in the fields and fire them off from there ! ”

The King's guests greeted the story with a good deal more applause than it was worth, but the King could not laugh ; his thoughts were elsewhere.

At the usual hour the officers retired, and left Gustaf Adolf to pursue his meditations in solitude and silence.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE WAR IN POMERANIA

(CONTINUED)

AT last the French seemed to have a little leisure to turn their attention to us (Swedes), and inaugurated the siege of Stralsund. We were anything but sorry, for not only had it been most mortifying for us here in Germany, but also for those at home in Sweden, that so little notice had been taken of us, and it could not be denied but that it was a dire misfortune that a detachment of ours, in retreat from Lauenburg, should just have come between French and Prussian fire and been obliged to surrender to the former. Hostilities between France and Prussia had broken out immediately after the King's departure for Sweden, and the encounter between them had been so violent that after a few days' fighting and skirmishing the Prussian monarchy had practically been annihilated, and the Emperor Napoleon had made his triumphal entry into Berlin.

But the Emperor Napoleon, whom Gustaf Adolf had forbidden to be referred to in the Swedish papers even as "*Mons. Buonaparte*," and who, therefore, was styled simply "*N. Buonaparte*," did not seem inclined to seriously go to war with *us*. When his armies swarmed all over Northern Germany, after the defeat of Prussia, Pomerania was left quite untouched, as though it had never formed a part of the enemy's possessions. Buonaparte had nothing to avenge; he merely wanted us to remain neutral and not to insist upon making an alliance with the Prussians because they had got the worst of it. If we kept quiet he promised to release the Swedish prisoners taken at Lübeck and give us an increase of territory; it was even said that he would be large-minded enough to promise to take no notice of our King's opinion of him nor to mind whether Gustaf Adolf acknowledged him as Emperor of the French or not!

But keeping aloof and quiet or observing a strict neutrality

was the very last thing our King *meant* to do. On no account would he make peace with the man whose very name offended his ear; so the French had no choice but to invade our Pomeranian frontier and lay siege to Stralsund. The King's earnest desire was to return at once with thirty thousand men, but there was no money in the exchequer at home and none forthcoming from England. Whilst he was looking about for pecuniary assistance, the French surrounded Stralsund, and Essen and Armfelt were left to defend it as best they might.

Essen was wary and careful and would not needlessly risk the lives of his men, but Armfelt was hot-headed and impulsive, and had been at loose ends so long that he was apt to act rashly. He liked to indulge in small sallies to "keep the French at a distance," and at times, when his youthful spirits ran away with his judgment and discretion, he would send out one or another of his subordinate young officers to prove their pluck and let them "smell powder," as he put it. He made them ride singly up to the French defences to make the enemy come out and pursue him until he was once more safe within the Swedish fort. The more danger the better, and the test to which he exposed his own son, young Clairfelt, very nearly cost that youth his life. But Clairfelt came unscathed and with honour out of the affray, and related with glowing cheeks how he had ridden into a little hamlet full of French soldiers, just outside the Kneiper gate, and how he had put a couple of bullets clean through a pair of breeches hanging on the door of a barn, in the presence of their owner! When Armfelt heard that, he cried: "Bravo! Well done!" clapped the youth on the back and said proudly: "For this brave deed I dub thee a knight!"

To our intense vexation we could not but see that the Emperor of the French had sent only very few soldiers of experience, under Mortier, to surround us in Stralsund. Their besieging army was composed mostly of raw young recruits, whose boyishness and inexperience struck us rather as an insult when we happened to take any of them prisoners.

The situation might have been serious even for Armfelt's love of adventure, if it had been true that the Emperor had such a mean opinion of us that he would send none of his

best and proved men to chastise us for our insolence and obstinacy. As it was, we were in daily fear lest the French should abandon this siege of their own accord and not even give us the satisfaction of driving them away. They plainly showed their inclination that way when at last, at the beginning of March, reinforcements arrived from Sweden. The troops surrounding us were required to go against the Prussians, and the Emperor sent orders to Mortier to march to Colberg; but as we were now strong enough to attack the French outposts from the rear, to take some of them prisoners and to occupy Anklam and Demmin and destroy the defences vacated by the French, we had every right to boast that *we had* driven them out of Pomerania! In consequence the King, who was in residence at Malmö, commanded a solemn Te Deum to be sung in every church throughout Sweden!

The last notes of the grateful thanksgiving to Him who had given us the "victory" had scarcely died away, when the ill news was brought that General Armfelt, in direct opposition to orders issued by General von Essen, had in a fit of defiance and foolhardiness ventured out too far and too aggressively, which had forced General Mortier to raise the siege of Colberg and march against us, with the humiliating result that we had to capitulate, after having lost more than eight hundred of our men, dead and prisoners. Armfelt himself had been wounded in the leg, and it was assumed that he would be relieved of his post as Commander as a punishment for having acted against orders.

What had happened to us was only what generally happens to a small, impudent cur, who ventures to snarl and growl at a big Newfoundland! The big dog does not, at first, condescend to take much notice of the impertinent little beggar, who therefore becomes more impudent and sniffs and frisks around; but in an unexpected moment the big dog turns and seizes the little one by the scruff of the neck and he is lucky if he is let off with a fright and a good shaking. The French frightened and shook us so violently that General von Essen could only propose a truce for an indefinite time to General Mortier; there was nothing else to be done.

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Then the King himself came over from Sweden to Stralsund. In a most risky and peculiar way he had scraped money together to carry on this "sacred" war. He had taken money from his Russian allies by laying hands on part of the subsidies paid by England to Russia in their transit through Gothenburg. It goes without saying that Gustaf Adolf had no right to touch one penny of those subsidies, which were destined to fight a common foe, but he thought this form of repayment was justified by the compact of Drottningholm (1791), according to which Russia still owed Sweden certain moneys. The King had caused the amount to be added up, and found that it totalled up to 375,000 Swedish riksdaler. He conscientiously went through the account himself, found it correct, and annexed the exact sum on its way from England. When he wrote to inform the Emperor Alexander of what he had done, he concluded his simple explanation with the following sentence: "The manner in which I have endeavoured to settle this matter with Your Majesty will in itself speak for the confidence I have in Your Majesty's good intentions, and the value *I* set upon sacred compacts entered into between reigning sovereigns."

When the King's procedure became known it roused the greatest alarm and indignation among the people, and those to whom he had done the honour of showing his letter to the Emperor Alexander, were astonished beyond measure to think he could dream of anything so unlikely as that the Sovereign of "All the Russias" would overlook or forgive such an act of indignity. Much to everyone's surprise, the Emperor did and said nothing, because just then he had pressing affairs in another quarter. But woe to us and our King when Alexander's differences should be finally settled!

The King was a dreamer. He had dreamt many a dream that winter, each one more fantastic than the last. In one of those dreams he saw himself the Restorer of the French throne to the Bourbons (!) with the aid of the French themselves. In order to attain his object, he had, before he left Sweden, created a French regiment of the prisoners taken in the war. Numerically it could not be said to be important. There were but *nineteen* men all told when it landed at Altfehr

on Rügen, with the Duke of Pienne at its head ; but the King "dreamt" that this "regiment," to which he had given the high-flown appellation of "The King of France's Own," would only be the forerunner of others likewise to be composed of French prisoners of war, and of the *stupendous* number of soldiers which the King foolishly imagined might be won over by bribery from the huge French army. As soon, therefore, as he arrived at Stralsund, he endeavoured to realize his dreams by himself concocting and causing to be printed several proclamations for secret distribution in the French camp. The appeal to the French soldiers was couched in the following words : "Men and Soldiers ! The white flag has once more been hoisted under the protection of the honourable Ruler of the Kingdom of Sweden. Honour bids you serve under that flag ; there fatherly care and discipline await you, and your pay will be more than double what you are receiving now. To promote peace in Europe is the only thing you are asked to do in the French ranks ; loyalty to Louis XVIII, your lawful Sovereign, the only pledge you are asked to take ; it is kindled already in your hearts. Long live the King !"

Every loyal Frenchman able to bring the troops under his command under the white flag was to have a rise in rank, according to a decree framed by Louis XVIII, King of France and of Navarre, dated October 2nd, 1804. After deserting, these men were to inquire for the "King of France's Own" regiment, under the command of the Duke of Pienne, and every man was to receive wages amounting to nine and a quarter Pomeranian shillings without rations, or six and a quarter shillings with two quarters of rations. Their uniforms were to be white, blue collars, facings, and cuffs, with gold braid, and blue trousers with gold stripes !

The proclamation to *German* soldiers serving under the *French* flag was couched in much more pathetic language, so much so, that every time the King himself read it through it brought tears to his eyes ! When at last these proclamations had been surreptitiously distributed among the French soldiers, the King lived in eager expectation of the multitudes who would desert and flock to the Swedish colours and inquire

for the "King of France's Own." He felt so thoroughly convinced that his appeal had been inspired by the same spirit which had put prophetic words into the mouths of prophets and seers of old. But the multitude tarried !

The King had now resumed the supreme command, and this time there was no playing with young, inexperienced troops before Stralsund. French forces, under General Brune, were massed on the Pomeranian frontier, and it was reported that they were to be reinforced and brought up to a strength of eighty thousand men ; the Emperor Napoleon was preparing for hostilities against the English, whom he expected to land in Pomerania and join forces with the Swedes.

But as the King's Russian and Prussian allies were only selfishly fighting for their own countries' benefit, and *not* for the "righteous cause" which Gustaf Adolf had at heart, they could not expect the Almighty to be on their side !

Their united armies suffered one defeat after another, in Poland and in East Prussia, and after the appalling slaughter at Friedland the Russians and Prussians had to beat a hasty retreat, and Russia concluded an armistice with France preparatory to the truce which was to follow. When the news came that Russia had made a truce with France, and that, judging from various signs, Prussia shortly intended to do the same, we were amazed to hear that our King was bent upon *terminating* our own truce with France. To all remonstrances and expostulations his only reply was : "I cannot wait. . . . I hate suspense, as I have always done, and must have a prompt decision" ; and when Essen, in his straightforward, soldierly way, said, "But Your Majesty's crown is at stake . . ."

"How so ?" interrupted the King.

"If Russia should turn against us."

"Sweden need have no fear of Russia," replied the King, in a tone of deepest conviction.

It was simply impossible to dissuade him from his purpose, and now that there appeared to be some sort of certainty, not only about the continuance of the war but in his private affairs also, the King seemed in much better mood. With the news from Poland and East Prussia came tidings from Stockholm that

the Queen had borne him a little Princess. The King had earnestly desired a son in place of the little Grand Duke of Finland, whom he had so sorely mourned, and it was reported that the Queen had done nothing but weep before and after for fear the babe *should* prove to be a girl, and wondered whether the King would be very angry that it *was* a Princess. However, he had been so anxious about *her*, that he did not much mind the disappointment. It had been agreed some time before that if the disappointment *were* to come in the shape of another daughter, she should be called "Cecilia," after the daughter of King Gustaf Vasa, who had married a Margrave of Baden. As sponsors to the new little Princess the King chose two unfortunate monarchs, King Louis XVIII of France and King Frederick William III of Prussia.

But on the very day the christening was taking place at Stockholm, Frederick William III was having an interview with Napoleon in the same pavilion on the pontoon-bridge over the Niemen in which the Emperor Alexander had had a similar interview on the previous day, during which, no doubt, he thought of his English subsidies with which the King of Sweden was carrying on his "holy" war. Those in the know asserted that during that interview frequent mention was made of Finland.

Gustaf Adolf's two allies and their common enemy, the Emperor of the French, adjourned to Tilsit, where they foregathered on very friendly terms. Our "Don Quixote" would not give in, though. At all hazards he was bent upon continuing the war against "*him*," whose name might not be breathed in his presence. Gustaf Adolf would sooner abdicate altogether than make peace with *him*. He did not care to reign over a nation which would be base enough to entertain any negotiations with such a man. He felt that in making any sort of compact with the BEAST, he would not only be lowering the principles which every honest man should hold sacred, but he would be compromising both his earthly happiness and his salvation hereafter.

It was no marvel that the King would do neither.



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