

DUMAS
ALEXANDRE

THE PRUSSIAN
TERROR

Александр Дюма
The Prussian Terror

«Public Domain»

Дюма А.

The Prussian Terror / А. Дюма — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	8
CHAPTER III	12
CHAPTER IV	15
CHAPTER V	21
CHAPTER VI	25
CHAPTER VII	30
CHAPTER VIII	33
CHAPTER IX	36
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	40

Alexandre Dumas

The Prussian Terror

CHAPTER I

BERLIN

The architect of Berlin appears to have carefully designed his plan according to line and rule in order to produce a capital of dullness as far removed from the picturesque as his ingenuity could accomplish. Seen from the cathedral, which is the loftiest point attainable, the place suggests an enormous chess-board on which the Royal Palace, the Museum, Cathedral, and other important buildings fairly represent kings, queens, and castles. And, much as Paris is intersected by the Seine, so is Berlin divided by the Spree, except that instead of surrounding one island, as does the former river, two artificial canals branch out right and left like the handles of a vase, and form two islands of unequal size in the centre of the town. Berlin being the capital of Privilege, one of these islands is distinguished by possessing the Royal Palace, the Cathedral, the Museum, the Bourse, most other public buildings, and a score of houses which in Turin, the Berlin of Italy, would certainly be called palaces; the other contains nothing remarkable, corresponding to the Parisian Rue Saint-Jacques and the quarter Saint-André-des-Arts.

The aristocratic, the smart Berlin lies to the right and left of the Friedrich Strasse, which extends from the Place de La Belle Alliance by which one enters Berlin to that of Oranienburg by which one leaves it, and which is crossed nearly in the middle by the Unter den Linden. This famous promenade traverses the fashionable quarter and extends from the Royal Palace to the Place d'Armes. It owes its name to two rows of magnificent lime trees which form a charming promenade on each side of the broad carriage-way. Both sides abound in cafés and restaurants, whose crowds of customers, overflowing in summer on to the public road, cause a considerable amount of lively motion. This, however, never rises into noisy horse-play or clamour, for the Prussian prefers to amuse himself *sub rosa*, and keeps his gaiety within doors.

But on June 7th, 1866, as beautiful a day as Prussia can produce, Unter den Linden, at about six in the evening, presented a scene of most unusual commotion. The excitement was caused in the first place by the increasingly hostile attitude assumed by Prussia towards Austria, in refusing to allow the States of Holstein to proceed to the election of the Duke of Augustenburg, also by the general arming on all sides, by reports concerning the immediate calling up of the Landwehr and the dissolution of the Chamber, and finally by rumours of telegrams from France containing threats against Prussia, said to have been made by Louis Napoleon himself.

It is necessary to travel in Prussia before one can in the least comprehend the sort of hatred therein cherished against the French. It is a species of monomania which distorts even the very clearest vision. No minister can be popular, no orator will gain a hearing unless the one lets it be supposed his policy is for war, and the other can produce some brilliant epigram or clever *sous-entendu* levelled against France. Nor will the title of poet be allowed, unless the claimant can qualify by being the author of some popular rhyme, entitled "The Rhine," "Leipzig," or "Waterloo."

Whence comes this hatred for France – a deep, inveterate, indestructible hatred which seems to pervade the very earth and air? It is impossible to say. Can it date from the time when a legion from Gaul, the advanced guard of the Roman army, first entered Germany? Abandoning this idea we come down to the battle of Rosbach as a possible cause, in which case the German national character must be an uncommonly bad one, seeing they beat us there. Still later, it might possibly be explained by the military inferiority shown by the pupils of Frederic the Great ever since the Duke of Brunswick's

famous manifesto threatening that not one stone of Paris should be left on another! One battle, that of Valmy, expelled the Prussians from France in 1792; and another, that of Jena, opened the gates of Berlin to us in 1806. Still, to these dates, our enemies – no, our rivals – can oppose the names of Leipzig and of Waterloo. Of Leipzig, however, they cannot claim more than a quarter, seeing their army was combined with those of Russia, Austria, and Sweden, to say nothing of that of Saxony, which also deserves to be remembered. Nor is more than one-half of Waterloo to their credit, for Napoleon, who till then had the advantage, was already exhausted by a six hours' struggle with the English when they arrived.

Consequently, remembering this heritage of hate, which, indeed, they have always shown quite openly – one could not be surprised at the popular emotion caused by a rumour, non-official but widely spread, that France would throw down the gauntlet and join in the impending conflict. Many, however, doubted the news, as not a word of it had appeared in the "Staat's Anzeiger" that morning. Berlin, like Paris, has its faithful adherents to the Government and the "Moniteur," who believe that the latter cannot lie, and that a paternal Government would never, never keep back news interesting to its affectionate subjects. These were joined by the readers of the "Tages Telegraph" ("Daily Telegraphic News"), certain that their special organ would have known whatever was to be known, and also by those of the ministerial and aristocratic "Kreuz Zeitung," who equally declined to believe anything not contained in its usually well-informed columns. And besides these one heard the names of a dozen other daily or weekly issues bandied from side to side in the excited crowd, until suddenly a harsh cry of "French news! French news! Telegraphic News" "One kreutzer," succeeded in dominating the din.

The effect produced on the crowd may be imagined. Despite the proverbial Prussian economy, every hand sought its pocket and drawing forth a kreutzer, proceeded to exchange it for the square bit of paper containing the long-desired news. And indeed the importance of the contents made amends for the delay in obtaining it. The dispatch ran as follows:

"June 6th, 1866. His Majesty the Emperor Napoleon III, having gone to Auxerre, in order to be present at the provincial assembly, was met at the gates of the town by the mayor, who presented an address, offering the respectful homage of himself and the inhabitants. His Majesty replied in the following terms, which do not require to be explained to our countrymen. Their meaning must be sufficiently clear to all.

"I see with much pleasure that Auxerre still remembers the First Empire. Let me assure you that I, on my side, have inherited the feelings of affection entertained by the Chief of our family for the patriotic and energetic communities which supported him alike through good and evil. And I myself owe a debt of gratitude to the department of the Yonne as being one of the first to declare for me in 1848. It knew, as indeed the greater part of the nation knew, that its interests and mine were identical and that we both equally detested those treaties of 1815, which are used to-day as a means of controlling our external policy."

Here the dispatch broke off, the sender evidently not considering the remainder of the emperor's discourse worth transcribing. Certainly his meaning was sufficiently clear without it. Nevertheless some minutes elapsed before the sense of the communication was understood by the readers, and evoked the display of hatred which naturally followed.

When at last they began to comprehend and to see the hand of the nephew of Napoleon the Great overshadowing their beloved Rhine, there arose from one end of Unter den Linden to the other such a tempest of threats, howls, and hurrahs, that, to borrow Schiller's lively expression, one would have thought the encircling hoops of the heavenly concave must all be burst asunder. Threatening toasts were called, curses shouted, and fists shaken against offending France. A Göttingen student springing on a table began to recite with due emphasis Rückert's ferocious poem entitled "The Return," in which a Prussian soldier, having returned home in consequence of peace being declared, bitterly regrets the various outrages he is in consequence debarred from committing. Needless to say,

this recital was enthusiastically applauded. Shouts of "Bravo!" and "Hurrah!" mixed with cries of "Long live King William!" "Hurrah for Prussia!" "Down with France!" formed an accompaniment which would doubtless have been continued to the next piece, the reciter proposing to give a lyric by Theodor Körner. The announcement was received with loud applause.

It was, however, by no means the only safety valve at which the passion of the surging crowd, now at white heat, sought and found a vent. A little lower down, at the corner of the Friedrich Strasse, a well-known singer happened to be returning from rehearsal, and as he chanced on one occasion to have made a hit by singing "The German Rhine" some one who remembered this raised a cry of "The German Rhine! the German Rhine! Heinrich! sing 'The German Rhine!'" The crowd instantly recognized and surrounded the artist, who, owning a fine voice, and being familiar with the piece demanded, did not wait to be asked twice, but gratified his audience by singing his very best, thereby far surpassing the Return in the tremendous reception he obtained.

But all at once a loud and furious hiss which might have issued from the throttle of a steam engine was heard above all the wild applause, and produced the effect of a blow in the face bestowed on the singer. A bomb suddenly exploding in the crowd could hardly have been more effective; the hiss was answered by a dull roar something like that which precedes a hurricane and every eye was turned towards the quarter whence it proceeded.

Standing by a solitary table was a handsome young man, apparently about five-and-twenty, fair-haired, fair-skinned, rather slightly built, and in face, moustache and costume somewhat resembling the portrait of Vandyke. He had just opened a bottle of champagne and held a foaming glass aloft. Undisturbed by angry looks and threatening gestures he drew himself up, placed one foot on his chair, and raising his glass above his head cried loudly, "Vive la France!" then swallowed the contents at one draught.

CHAPTER II

THE HOUSE OF HOHENZOLLERN

The immense crowd surrounding the young Frenchman remained for a moment dumb with stupefaction. Many, not understanding French, failed to comprehend his meaning, and others who did understand, appreciating his courage in thus braving a furious crowd, surveyed him with more astonishment than anger. Others again, who realized that a dire insult had been offered them, would nevertheless with typical German deliberation have allowed him time to escape had he wished. But the young man's demeanour showed that, whatever the consequences of his bravado, he intended to face them. Presently a threatening murmur of "Franzose, Franzose," arose from the crowd.

"Yes," said he, in as good German as might be heard anywhere between Thionville and Memel. "Yes, I am French. My name is Benedict Turpin. I have studied at Heidelberg and might pass for a German since I can speak your language as well as most of those here, and better than some. Also I can use a rapier, pistol, sword, sabre, single-stick, boxing gloves, or any other weapon you like to choose. Any one wishing for satisfaction may find me at the Black Eagle."

The young man had hardly finished his audacious defiance when four men of the lower class advanced upon him. The crowd kept silence, and the contemptuous words, "What! four to one? Leipzig again! Come on! I am ready!" were distinctly heard. Then, not waiting to be attacked, the young Frenchman sprang at the nearest and broke the bottle of champagne over his head, blinding him with foam. The second he tripped up, throwing him a good ten paces off, and disposed of the third with a vigorous blow in the ribs which hurled him against a chair. Then, seizing the fourth by the collar and grasping his waist he actually held him aloft in the air for a moment, then flinging him on the ground he placed a foot on his chest.

"Is not Leipzig avenged?" said he.

Then at last the tempest burst. A rush was made for the Frenchman, but he, still keeping a foot on his fallen enemy, seized a chair and whirled it round him so vigorously that for a moment the crowd was held at bay and only ventured on threats. But the circle drew closer, some one grasped the chair and succeeded in stopping it. A few moments more and the audacious Frenchman would probably have been torn to pieces had not two or three Prussian officers intervened. They forced their way through the crowd and formed a guard around the young man, one of them addressed the crowd thus:

"Come, come, my friends, don't murder a brave young man because he does not forget he is a Frenchman and has cried 'Vive la France!' He will now cry 'Vive Guillaume IV!' and we will let him off." Then, whispering to Benedict, "Cry 'Vive Guillaume IV!' or I can't answer for your life."

"Yes!" bawled the crowd, "let him cry 'Vive Guillaume IV! – Vive la Prusse!' and we will let him go."

"Very well," said Benedict, "but I prefer to do so freely, and without compulsion. Leave me alone and let me speak from a table."

"Stand aside and let him pass," said the officers, releasing Benedict and leaving him free. "He wishes to address you."

"Let him speak! let him speak!" cried the crowd.

"Gentlemen!" said Benedict, mounting the table nearest to the open windows of the café, "oblige me by listening. I cannot cry 'Vive la Prusse,' because at this very moment my country may be at war with yours, in which case a Frenchman would disgrace himself if he cried anything except 'Vive la France.' Nor can I very well cry 'Vive le roi Guillaume,' because, not being my king, it does not matter to me whether he lives or dies. But I will recite some charming verses in answer to your 'German Rhine!'"

The audience heard him impatiently, not knowing what he meant to recite. They had another disappointment in discovering that the lines in question were not German but French. However, they listened with all the more attention. In enumerating his accomplishments Benedict had omitted those of amateur actor and elocutionist. The lines were those written by de Musset in response to the "German Rhine," and they lost nothing in his impassioned delivery. Those among his hearers able to follow the reciter soon perceived that they had been tricked into listening to truths they had no desire to hear. Once this was understood, the storm, momentarily lulled, burst forth with redoubled violence.

Knowing that there would be no further chance of protection, Benedict was carefully considering the distance between his table and the nearest window, when suddenly the attention of the crowd was diverted by the report of several pistol-shots rapidly fired in the immediate vicinity. Turning towards the sound they perceived a well-dressed young civilian, struggling desperately with a much older man in colonel's uniform. The young man fired again, with the only result of further exasperating his adversary, who seized him with a grasp of iron, and, disdaining to call for help, shook him as a terrier shakes a rat. Then, throwing him down, he knelt upon the would-be murderer's chest, tore the now useless revolver from his hand, and placed the barrel against his forehead. "Yes, fire, fire!" gasped the young man. But the colonel, in whom the bystanders now recognized the powerful minister, Count von Bismarck, changed his mind. He pocketed the revolver, and beckoning to two officers, "Gentlemen," said he, "this young man is probably mad, or at any rate he is a clumsy fool. He attacked me without the slightest provocation and has fired five times without hitting me. You had better consign him to the nearest prison whilst I acquaint the king with what has happened. I think I need hardly mention my name – Count von Bismarck."

Then, wrapping his handkerchief round his hand which had been slightly scratched in the conflict, the count retraced his steps towards the royal palace hardly a hundred yards distant, while the two officers handed the assassin over to the police. One of them accompanied him to the prison, where he was at once incarcerated. The crowd having now time to remember Benedict Turpin found that he had vanished. However, this did not trouble them much, for the excitement of the more recent event had changed the course of their ideas. Let us profit by the interval and glance at the characters who are destined to appear in our recital. But, first let us examine the stage on which they will play their several parts.

Least German of all Germanic states, Prussia is inhabited by a mixture of races. Besides Germans proper, numbers of Slavonians are found there. There are also descendants of the Wends, Letts, Lithuanians, Poles, and other early tribes, and a mixture of Frankish refugees. The prosperity, though not perhaps the grandeur of the House of Hohenzollern, began with Duke Frederic, the greatest usurer of his day. It is as impossible to calculate the enormous sums wrung from the Jews as to narrate the means by which they were extorted. At first a vassal of the Emperor Wenceslaus, when that monarch's impending fall became evident Frederic deserted his camp for that of his rival Otho, and when Otho's crown began to totter, he passed over to Sigismund, brother of Wenceslaus.

In 1400 A.D., the same year in which Charles VI ennobled the goldsmith Raoul, as a reward for financial help, Sigismund, equally embarrassed, borrowed 100,000 florins from Frederic, giving him the Margravate of Brandenburg as security. Fifteen years later, Sigismund having had to provide for the extravagance of the Council of Constance, found himself in debt to Frederic for 400,000 florins. Utterly unable to pay, he sold, or granted in compensation, both the Marches of Brandenburg and the dignity of Elector. In 1701 the electorate rose into a kingdom and the Duke Frederic III became the King Frederic I of Prussia.

The Hohenzollerns display the faults and the characteristics of their race. Their exchequer is admirably managed, but the moral balance-sheet of their administration can rarely be compared with the financial one. They have advanced on the lines of Duke Frederic, with more or less hypocrisy, but with ever-increasing rapacity. Thus in 1525, Albert of Hohenzollern, Grand Master of the Teutonic knights, then lords of Prussia, forsook his faith and became a Lutheran, receiving in return the rank

of Hereditary Duke of Prussia, under the over-lordship of Poland. And in 1613, the Elector John Sigismund, wishing to obtain the duchy of Cleves, followed Albert's example and became a Calvinist.

The policy of the Great Elector has been summed up by Leibnitz in a single phrase: "I side with him who pays best." To him is due the formation of the European permanent standing army, and it was his second wife, the famous Dorothea, who started shops and taverns in Berlin for the disposal of her beer and dairy produce. The military genius of the Great Frederic is beyond dispute, but it was he who, in order to curry favour with the Russian Court, offered to "supply" the Grand Dukes with German princesses "at the lowest reasonable rate!" One lady thus "supplied" a princess of Anhalt, is known as "Catherine the Great." We may remark incidentally that he also is chiefly responsible for the partition of Poland, a crime which has weighted the Prussian crown with the malediction of nations, and which he celebrated by this scandalously impious summons to his brother Henry, "Come, let us receive the Eucharist of the body of Poland!" To Frederic also, we owe the economical maxim, "He dines best who eats at another's table!"

Frederic died childless, a fact for which, oddly enough, historians have seen fit to blame him. His nephew and successor, William II, invaded France in 1792. His entry, preceded by the famous manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick, was ostentatious to a degree, but his departure, accompanied by Danton and Dumouriez, was accomplished without sound of trumpet or drum.

He was succeeded by the "Man of Jena," Frederic William III. Among the numerous stupid, and servile letters received by the Emperor Napoleon in the days of his prosperity, must be counted those of William III.

Frederic William IV – we are rapidly approaching our own times – came to the throne in June 1840. According to the Hohenzollern custom his first ministry was a liberal one and on his accession he remarked to Alexander von Humboldt:

"As a noble I am the first gentleman in the kingdom; as a king I am only the first citizen."

Charles X had said much the same on succeeding to the crown of France, or, rather, M. de Martignac had said it for him.

The first proof the king gave of his liberalism was an attempt to drill properly the intellectual forces of the kingdom, which duty he entrusted to the Minister Eichhorn. The name – it means "squirrel" – was quite prophetic. At the end of ten years the project had not advanced a step, although the minister himself had done wonders of perpetual revolution. On the other hand reaction had progressed. The press was persecuted, promotion and rewards were obtained only by hypocrites and informers. High office could only be acquired by becoming a servile instrument of the pietistic party, which was headed by the king.

Frederic William and King Louis of Bavaria were the two most literary of contemporary sovereigns. But Louis encouraged Art under whatever form it appeared, whereas Frederic William wished it to be drilled into a sort of auxiliary to despotism. Feeling himself constrained, like our great satirist Boileau, to give an example of good manners to both court and city, he began a correspondence with Louis, in the course of which he sent the latter a quatrain commenting on the scandal caused by his intimacy with Lola Montes. The King of Bavaria replied in another which made the round of all the courts of Europe.

"Contempteur de l'amour, dont adore l'ivresse,

Frère, tu dis que, roi sans pudeur, sans vertu,
Je garde à tort Lola, ma fille enchanteresse.
Je te l'enverrai bien. – Oui; mais qu'en ferais-tu?"

And, by general consent of the wits, the laugh remained on the side of the versatile King Louis.

After six years of domiciliary visits, suppressions, and summary expulsions of offending journalists, the Prussian Diet at length assembled at Berlin. In his opening speech the king addressed the deputies thus:

"Recollect, gentlemen, that you are here to represent the interests of the people, but *not* their *sentiments*."

A little later in the year, Frederic William inaugurated his Divine Right by observing as he tore up the Constitution:

"I shall not allow a scrap of paper to stand between my people and their God!" meaning, though he did not dare to say it, "between my people and me."

Then the revolution of 1848 burst forth, and did not spare Berlin, which was soon in full revolt. The king lost his head completely. In leaving the town he had to drive past the dead bodies of rioters killed in the struggle. There was a shout of "Hats off!" and the king was obliged to remain uncovered while the people sang the famous hymn composed by the Great Electress.

"Jesus, my Redeemer lives."

Every one knows how Absolutism succeeded in dominating the National Assembly, and how presently reaction brought the following leaders into power:

Manteuffel, whose policy led to the unfortunate Austrian triumph at Olmutz.

Westphalen, who revived provincial councils, and brought the king to the famous Warsaw interview.

Statel, a converted Jew and Protestant Jesuit, a Grand Inquisitor who had missed his vocation.

And, lastly, the two Gerlachs, intriguers of the first water, whose history belongs to that of the two spies, Ladunberg and Techen.

Although the Constitution, establishing two Chambers, was sworn to by William IV, February 6th, 1850, it was not until his successor, William Louis, was on the throne that both Upper and Lower Chambers began to legislate.

A league was now formed by the bureaucracy, the orthodox clergy, the provincial squirearchy, and some of the proletariat. This was the origin of the famous association inappropriately designated the *Patriotic* Association, which had for its aim the annihilation of the Constitution.

There now appeared as First President of the Association at Königsberg, the Count von Bismarck, who has played so great a part in Prussian history. We cannot do less for him than we have done for the Hohenzollerns, that is to say, we must devote an entire chapter to him and to the Prussia of to-day. For is not the Count von Bismarck a much greater monarch than the King of Prussia himself?

CHAPTER III

COUNT VON BISMARCK

Many have sought, and some profess to have found, the reasons for the remarkable royal favour enjoyed by Count Bismarck, but the chief, and to our thinking the only one, is the extraordinary genius which even his enemies dare not dispute, notwithstanding the fact that genius is usually anything but a passport to the favour of kings.

We will relate one or two little anecdotes concerning the Prime Minister, beginning with one which does not refer to him personally, but may serve as a sort of preface to another. Every one knows the absurd point to which military etiquette is carried in Prussia.

A Pomeranian general – Pomerania may be called the Prussian Bœotia – being in garrison at Darmstadt and being bored even to the fullest possibility of Darmstadt boredom, was standing at his window, wishing for a conflagration, a revolution, an earthquake – anything – when he beheld an officer in the distance – an officer minus his sword! An awful breach of discipline! "Ah!" thought the delighted general, "here is a lieutenant to make a scapegoat of. Ten minutes' lecture and a fortnight's arrest! What luck!"

The unsuspecting officer drew nearer, and when within hail: "Lieutenant Rupert," shouted the general. The officer looked up, saw the general, and immediately remembering his missing sword, understood his terrible position. The general had seen him; he could not go back, and he felt he must brave the storm. The general beamed and rubbed his hands cheerfully at the prospect of some amusement at last. The lieutenant plucked up courage, entered the house, and arriving at the ante-room, beheld a regulation sword hanging on the wall. "What a mercy!" he murmured, unhooking the sword and quickly buckling it on. Then looking as innocent as possible, he entered the room, and standing at attention by the door,

"The general did me the honour to call," he said.

"Yes," said the general with severity, "I have to enquire – " he stopped suddenly, observing that the culprit's sword was at his side. His expression changed, and he said smiling:

"Yes, I wanted to ask, I wanted to ask – What on earth was it? Ah, yes. I wanted to ask after your family, Lieutenant Rupert. I particularly wished to enquire after your father."

"If my father could hear of your kind feeling towards him, general, he would be greatly gratified. Unhappily, he died twenty years ago."

The general looked considerably taken aback.

The young officer continued: "Have you any further commands, sir?"

"Why, no," said the general. "Only this. Never be seen without your sword. Had you been without it to-day, I should have given you a fortnight's arrest."

"I will take the greatest care, sir! You see?" answered the lieutenant, boldly indicating the sword which hung at his side.

"Yes, yes, I see. It is all right. You can go now."

The young man lost no time in profiting by the permission; he saluted, left the room, and carefully hung up the sword as he went through the ante-room. As he left the house the general, being again at the window, again saw that he had no sword. He summoned his wife:

"Look here," he said, "do you see that officer?"

"Certainly I do," she replied.

"Has he a sword or not?"

"He has not."

"Well then, you are mistaken; he looks as if he hadn't one, but he has."

The lady made no remark, being accustomed to accept whatever her husband said. The young officer escaped with the fright, and took good care not to forget his sword a second time.

Well, a similar misfortune – more, a real humiliation of this kind very nearly happened to the King of Prussia, when he was only the Prince Royal. Von Bismarck was then merely an attaché at the Frankfort Legation without any handle to his name. When the prince stopped at Frankfort on his way to a review at Mayence von Bismarck had the honour of being told off to accompany him.

It was a hot day in August and the railway carriages were stifling. Etiquette notwithstanding, everyone from the prince downward, unbuttoned his coat. On arriving at Mayence, where the troops were drawn up at the station to receive him, the prince refastened his coat but left one button undone. He was just leaving the carriage, when, luckily, von Bismarck noticed the oversight.

"Good heavens, prince!" he exclaimed, "what are you about?"

And, for once forgetting etiquette, which forbids the royal person to be contaminated by profane fingers, he sprang forward and fastened the offending button. Hence, according to some, came the royal favour, for the king, greatly embarrassed by the events of '58, reflected that the man who had saved his credit at Mayence might also save his crown at Berlin.

The count now became the leader of the "Junker" faction, voiced by the "Kreuz Zeitung." He was, in fact, the fittest man for the position, possessing oratorical eloquence, great mental and physical activity, and a complete conviction that any sort of means is justified by the end. And, the end accomplished, he flung from the height of his tribune this epigram in the face of an astonished Chamber: "Might is Right!" in three words summing up both his political creed and the direct consequences which followed.

The life-giving principles of humanity should be exemplified by three nations:

Commercial activity by England.

Moral expansion by Germany.

Intellectual brilliance by France.

If we ask why Germany does not occupy the great position assigned to her we find the answer in this: France has attained freedom of thought, but Germany is allowed only the freedom of a dreamer. The sole atmosphere in which she can breathe freely is that of the fortress or the prison. And if we wonder why the rest of Germany is ruled by the rod of Prussia the explanation may be found in this: German *manners* do not exist, but there is a national *genius*; a genius which desired no revolution, but peace and liberty, and, above all – intellectual independence. This desire was Prussia's greatest difficulty; she fought it, she weakened it, and she hopes to conquer it entirely. She boasts of her compulsory education; her children are indeed taught all they can be taught, but once out of school they are never permitted to think for themselves.

The Junker faction is composed chiefly of younger sons who have to seek either an official career or a military one. Failing this, they must depend on the head of the family for a decent maintenance. With very few exceptions there is no "old nobility" in Prussia, the aristocracy is not distinguished by either wealth or intellect. A few names here and there recall ancient Germanic history; others belong to Prussian military annals. But the rest of the nobility can claim no distinction, and have only owned their estates for a century or two.

Consequently, nearly all the liberal and progressive members of the Chamber depend, either by position or office, on the Government, and not one of them was strong enough to fight against a despotism which seizes a child at the moment of his birth, guides him through adolescence, and escorts him for the rest of his life. Therefore Count von Bismarck could insult both Chamber and deputies with impunity, knowing that their complaints would rouse no answering echo in the country, while at Court they were considered as being next door to the servants. On one occasion the President

Grabow, being present at a state concert, was going to occupy a chair in one of the less crowded rooms, when a footman stopped him with "These chairs are meant for Excellencies, sir."

"Indeed, my friend," answered the President, "I am evidently out of place here."

From the advent of Hohenzollern supremacy may be dated the decay of moral independence, both in Prussia and the other Germanic states. Not only have the Hohenzollerns failed to exercise any civilizing influence by encouraging literature and purifying the language, but they have changed Minerva into Pallas, and the beneficent deity of knowledge and wisdom has become the Medusa-brandishing goddess of war.

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH BISMARCK EMERGES FROM AN IMPOSSIBLE POSITION

Now for three months past Bismarck had been in an impossible position, and no one could predict how he would emerge from it. Notwithstanding the important events which were being enacted from China to Mexico, it was upon him that the eyes of Europe were fixed.

Old ministers, experienced in all the wiles of diplomacy, followed him with their eyes, spyglass in hand, never doubting that the epoch-making minister had an accomplice on the throne in a policy of which they vainly sought for precedents in the world's history. If, however, there should prove to be no accomplice, they pronounced that he must be a fool without an equal.

Young diplomats, modestly aware that they did not quite rank with the Talleyrands, the Metternichs, or Nesselrodes, studied him more seriously, believing they desired the infancy of a new policy destined to carry their epoch to its zenith, whispering the question which Germany has asked for three hundred years: "*Ist es der Mann?*" (Can it be the Man?) To make this question comprehensible we must tell our readers that Germany awaits a liberator as the Jews awaited a Messiah. Whenever her chains galled her, she exclaims: "*Wo bleibt der Mann?*" (Where, then, is the Man?)

Now, some pretend that to-day in Germany a fourth party, which up to the present has been crouching in the gloom, is preparing to emerge – a horrible figure, if the poets of Germany are to be believed. Listen to Heine on the subject:

"There is thunder truly in Germany, yea, even in Germany: it comes slowly; it rolls up gradually from afar; but I doubt not it will come.

"And when you hear a crash, such a crash as the world has not heard in all history, you will know that the German thunder has done its work. At this uproar eagles will fall dead from the upper air; and lions in the pathless deserts of Africa will crouch terrified in their lairs. In Germany will be enacted a drama compared with which the French Revolution will seem but an *innocent idyll*."

Had Heinrich Heine been the only prophet I should not repeat his auguries, for Heine was a dreamer. But here is what Ludwig B – says:

"In truth, Germany has accomplished nothing for three centuries, and has patiently endured all the suffering inflicted upon her. But, even so, her labours, sufferings, and joys have not subdued her virgin heart, nor her chaste spirit. She contains the reserve forces of liberty and will ensure its triumph.

"Her day will come; and to bring it about but little is necessary a flash of good-humour, a smile, a summer shower, a thaw, a fool the more, or a fool the less, a nothing; the bell of a mule is enough to bring down an avalanche. Then France, which is not easily astonished, France which accomplished in three days the work of three hundred years, and has ceased to wonder at her own work, will survey the German nation with astonishment which will not be merely surprise but admiration."

But whether it was the Man or was not the Man that the gallery watched as he weighed Europe in the scales, putting everything into one, nothing into the other, whether he belonged to the old or to the new diplomacy mattered little. The only question was – will von Bismarck demand a dissolution of the Chamber, or will the Chamber impeach the count?

The conquest of Schleswig-Holstein had carried him to the height of fortune, but the new complications arising *à propos* of the election of the Duke of Augustenburg, made everything seem doubtful even to the genius of von Bismarck. During a long interview with the king which took place the very day on which this story begins, he fancied that his influence was shaken, and he attributed the king's coldness to the persistent ill will of the queen.

It is true that until now the count had worked only for his own personal advancement, and, having kept entire silence as to his projects, was reserving an explanation for a favourable moment,

when by the grandeur and clearness of his views he hoped to recover the goodwill of his sovereign, by an audacious *coup d'état* to build up a more solid and unassailable position than ever.

He had, then, just left the king, intending to unmask his new plan as soon as possible, counting on the telegraphic despatches to create an effect favourable to himself, which, by making war inevitable, would ensure his own safety.

He left the palace accordingly, immersed in these thoughts, and so preoccupied that not only did he scarcely observe the excitement in the crowded streets, but he did not notice a young man leaning against one of the columns of the theatre, who left his place as he passed, and followed him like his shadow in and out of the groups blocking the street. Twice or thrice, however, as if warned of this close pursuit by some magnetic current, the count turned his head, but seeing only a well-dressed young man apparently belonging to his own class in life, he paid no attention to him.

It was not until he had passed the Friedrich Strasse and was crossing the road that he really noticed that the young man seemed determined to follow him. He then decided as soon as he had reached the other side to stop and ask what his pursuer meant by shadowing him.

But the shadower did not give him an opportunity. The count had hardly proceeded three or four steps on his way when he heard a report, and felt the wind of a ball which just missed his coat collar. He stopped and turned sharply round, seeing in a flash the eddying smoke, the aimed revolver, the assassin with his finger on the trigger preparing to fire again.

But, as we have said, the count was naturally brave: it did not occur to him either to fly or to call for help. He threw himself upon his enemy, who, without an instant's delay, fired the second and third shots, which whistled harmlessly by. Whether the assassin's hand trembled under stress of emotion, or whether, as some say, Providence (which nevertheless permitted the assassinations of Henri IV and Gustavus Adolphus) forbade the accomplishment of such a crime, the two balls passed right and left of von Bismarck.

Then the murderer lost courage and turned to fly. But the count seized him by the collar with one hand and with the other clutched the barrel of the revolver. Once again a shot was fired; the count was slightly wounded, but kept his hold and grasped his adversary closely, throwing him on the ground, and finally handed him over to the Prussian officers.

Seizing the favourable occasion with the promptitude of genius, he again took his way to the palace, bent on making this event the turning point of the situation.

This time he passed through a double avenue of spectators, whereas previously in the public commotion no one had noticed him. It was now otherwise – the murderer's attempt, of which he had been the object and from which he had emerged with so much courage, attracted every one's attention, if not their sympathy, and whether loved or not loved, all made room and saluted him. Sympathy might be wanting, but the count could at all events read admiration upon every face.

Von Bismarck was at this time about fifty or fifty-two; tall, with a well-proportioned figure, slightly puffy, and almost bald except at the temples, with a thick moustache. One of his cheeks was furrowed by a scar, the legacy of a duel fought at the University of Göttingen.

The palace guard had already heard the news and turned out to receive the count, who, as colonel in the Army, was entitled to this mark of respect. He graciously responded, and went up the staircase leading to the king's audience chamber.

As prime minister, the count had the right of entry at any time. He was about to turn the door handle when the usher in waiting stopped him, saying:

"His Excellency will pardon me, but the king can see no one."

"Not even me?" asked the count.

"Not even your Excellency," replied the usher with a low bow.

The count stepped backward with a movement of the lips that might have passed for a smile, but was certainly not one. Then he began to study, but without seeing it, a large naval picture which

decorated the ante-room, standing out by reason of its immense gilt frame from the official green paper which adorns all the royal apartments.

At the end of a quarter of an hour, the door opened, the count hearing the *frou frou* of a satin dress, turned and bowed low before a woman of forty to forty-five years of age, who had evidently possessed great beauty and was indeed still beautiful. Perhaps, if the "Almanach de Gotha" were consulted, it would be found that the lady was rather older than this, but as the proverb says: "A woman is as old as she looks," and I see no reason why queens should be excepted.

The lady was Queen Marie Louise Augusta Catherine, daughter of Charles Frederic, Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar, and known throughout Europe as the Queen Augusta. She was of medium height – is best described by the essentially French word *attrayant*. She wore on her left arm the feminine Order of Queen Louise of Prussia. She passed the minister slowly and somewhat haughtily, saluting him indeed, but without her usual kindness. By the doors through which she passed the count understood she had been with the king, and was now returning to her own apartments.

The queen had left the door belonging to the king's apartment open behind her, and the usher now intimated that the minister might enter. He waited, however, until the door had closed upon the queen.

"Yes," he said, "it is true that I was not born a baron, but let us see what the future will do for me."

And then he passed forward. The various lackeys or chamberlains whom he met hastened to open the doors leading to the audience-room. Reaching it the chamberlain announced in a loud voice: "His Excellency Count von Bismarck."

The king started and turned round. He was standing before the chimney-piece, and heard the name of von Bismarck with some surprise, it being barely a quarter of an hour since the minister had left him. The count wondered if the king had already heard what had happened to him in the interval.

He bowed low before His Majesty.

"Sire," he said, "an event of great importance has recalled me to Your Majesty, but I see with regret that the moment is unfavourable – "

"Why?" enquired the king.

"Because I have just had the honour of meeting the queen in the ante-room, and not having the happiness of being in Her Majesty's good graces – "

"Well, count, I admit that she does not see eye to eye with you."

"She is wrong, sire, for my devotion belongs equally to my king and to my queen, and the one cannot become Emperor of Germany without the other becoming Empress."

"A dream, my dear count, in which Queen Augusta unfortunately believes, but which is not the dream of a reasonable being."

"Sire, the unity of Germany is as much decreed in the design of Providence as the unity of Italy."

"Excellent," said the king, laughing; "can there be a united Italy while the Italians possess neither Rome nor Venice?"

"Italy is in formation, sire. She began her march in '59 and will not stop on the way. If she looks like stopping, she is only taking breath. Indeed, have we not promised her Venice?"

"Yes, but it is not we who will give it her."

"Who then?"

"France? who has already given her Lombardy, and has let her take the duchies and Naples. France!" said the king. "France let her take all that with quite the best will in the world."

"Is Your Majesty aware of the contents of the telegraphic despatches which arrived when I was here and which were delivered as I left?"

"Yes, I know. The Emperor Napoleon's speech at Auxerre," answered the king with some embarrassment. "You refer to that, do you not?"

"Well, sire, the emperor's speech means war – war not only against Austria but against Germany. It means Venice for Italy and the Rhine provinces for France."

"You really think so?"

"I mean that if we give France time to arm, the question without becoming desperate becomes grave, but that if we fall promptly and vigorously upon Austria, we shall be on the Moldau with three hundred thousand men before France can reach the Rhine with fifty thousand."

"Count, you do not give the Austrians their proper value; the swagger of our young men has gone to your head."

"Sire, if I appear to adopt the opinions of the heir-apparent and of Prince Frederic Charles, I can only say that the prince having been born on June 29th, 1801, is scarcely a young man; but the fact is, that in these matters I rely on my own opinion only, and I say deliberately in a war against Prussia, Austria will certainly be beaten."

"Really?" said the king doubtfully. "Yet I have heard you speak in high terms of both their generals and their soldiers."

"Certainly."

"Well then, it does not seem to me so remarkably easy to conquer good soldiers commanded by good generals."

"They have good, soldiers, sire, they have good generals, but we shall beat them because our own organization and arrangement are superior to theirs. When I persuaded Your Majesty to undertake the war on Schleswig which Your Majesty did not desire to do – "

"If I had not desired to make war on Schleswig it would never have been made!"

"That is very true, sire, but Your Majesty hesitated; I had the courage to insist, and Your Majesty approved of my reasons."

"Yes, and what is the result of the war on Schleswig? War throughout Germany!"

"True, sire, in the first place I like a situation that calls for resolute action; and as I consider war in Germany inevitable, I congratulate you."

"Will you explain whence comes your confidence?"

"Your Majesty forgets that I made the campaign with the Prussian army. I did not do it for the mere pleasure of hearing cannon, of counting the dead, and of sleeping on the battlefield, where I assure you one sleeps very badly, or for the purpose of giving you what was nevertheless well worth having, two posts on the Baltic, of which Prussia stood in great need. No, I made the campaign with the object of trying the Austrians, and I repeat that they are behind us in everything – discipline, armaments, use of arms: they have bad rifles, bad artillery, and worse powder. In a war against us Austria will be beaten from the very commencement, for we have everything which she has not, and Austria once vanquished, the supremacy in Germany must inevitably fall from her hands into those of Prussia."

"And how is Prussia with a population of eighteen millions to maintain her superiority over sixty? Only look at her pitiful appearance on the map."

"That is exactly the point. I have looked at her for three years, and now is the time to mould her anew. Prussia is a great serpent whose head is at Thionville, while her tail is at Memel, and which has a lump in her stomach because she has swallowed half Saxony. She is a kingdom cut in two by another – Hanover – in such a fashion that you cannot get home without going abroad. You must understand, sire, Hanover is bound to become part of Prussia."

"But what will England say to this?"

"England is no longer in the age of Pitt and Cobourg. England is the very humble servant of the Manchester School, of Gladstone, Cobden, and their scholars; England will do no more for Hanover than she did for Denmark. Must we not take Saxony also?"

"France will never allow us to meddle with Saxony, if only in memory of the king who was faithful to her in 1813."

"Not if we took too big a mouthful; but if we only nibble she will shut both eyes, or at least one of them. And is not Hesse also very necessary?"

"The Confederation will not abandon all Hesse."

"But if it will let us take half, that is all we want. Now let us consider Frankfort-on-the-Main."

"Frankfort-on-the-Main! The free town! The seat of the Diet!"

"The moment Prussia can reckon thirty millions of men instead of eighteen the Diet is dead. Prussia will then be the Diet. Only, instead of crying a decree she will say 'decree.'"

"We shall have the whole of the Confederation against us. It will side with Austria."

"So much the better!"

"And why?"

"Austria once beaten, the Confederation is beaten along with her."

"We shall have a million men against us."

"Let us count them."

"There are four hundred and fifty thousand in Austria – "

"Agreed."

"And four hundred and fifty thousand in Venetia."

"The emperor is too obstinate to recall troops from Venice before two or three battles if he is successful, before ten if he is beaten."

"Bavaria has one hundred and sixty thousand."

"I will answer for Bavaria – her king is too fond of music to love the sound of cannon."

"Hanover, twenty-five thousand men."

"Only a mouthful to swallow on our first march."

"Saxony, fifteen thousand."

"Another mouthful."

"And a hundred and fifty thousand belonging to the Confederation."

"The Confederation will have no time to arm them; only we must not lose a moment, sire; therefore I now say 'War, Victory, the supremacy of Prussia – myself – or-'"

"Or?"

"Or my resignation, which I lay very humbly at Your Majesty's feet."

"What is that on your hand, count?"

"Nothing, sire."

"It looks like blood."

"Perhaps it is."

"Is it true, then, that some one attempted your life by firing at you with a revolver?"

"Five times, sire."

"Five? Good gracious!"

"He thought it none too many for me."

"And you are unwounded?"

"Only a scratch on the little finger."

"And who was your assassin?"

"I do not know who he is."

"Did he refuse to give his name?"

"No, I forgot to ask him; besides, that is the Attorney-General's affair, not mine. I do not interfere with other people's concerns. Now, my own business is my King's business, and that is here."

"I am listening," said the king.

"To-morrow the chamber is dissolved; the following day we mobilize; in eight days hostilities are declared, or else – "

"Or else what?"

"Or else, as I have the honour to repeat to Your Majesty, my resignation."

Then, without waiting for the king's answer the Count von Bismarck bowed low, and according to etiquette retired backwards from the king's presence. The king said nothing to detain his minister, but before closing the door, that gentleman heard the bell rung loudly enough to rouse the whole palace.

CHAPTER V

A SPORTSMAN AND A SPANIEL

On the day following the events just narrated, a young man about twenty-five years of age arrived in Brunswick by the eleven o'clock train from Berlin. Leaving his luggage, which was labelled "Hanover," in the station, he took a small knapsack on which were strapped a sketch-book and camp-stool, buckled on a cartridge belt, flung a baldric supporting a double-barrelled gun over his shoulder, and completed his toilet with a large grey felt hat. Altogether he appeared a sort of cross between sportsman and tourist. Accompanied by a beautiful jet-black spaniel he left the station and hailed an open carriage, whereupon the dog instantly justified his name of "Frisk" by springing joyously in, and installing himself on the front seat, while his master reclined on the back after the manner of one accustomed to do things comfortably. Courteously addressing the driver in excellent German:

"Coachman," said he, "kindly take me to the best hotel the town affords, or at any rate, to the one which provides the best lunch!"

The coachman nodded as if to say he required no further instructions, and the carriage rattled and bumped over the cobble stones to the Hôtel d'Angleterre. The dog, who had hardly been able to retain his position, instantly sprang out, and showing his relief by active gambols, besought his master to follow. The latter alighted, but left his knapsack and gun in the carriage. Turning to the driver:

"You may wait," he said, "and keep an eye on my things."

Hackney coachmen, all the world over, have a keen eye for good customers. This honest fellow was no exception.

"Excellency may be quite satisfied," he answered with a wink. "I will keep careful guard over them."

The traveller entered the inn, and passing straight through it arrived at a pleasant court shaded by lime-trees. Here he selected a small table with chairs for two, one of which was promptly occupied by Frisk; his master took possession of the other and the two proceeded to lunch. This occupied an hour, and no lady could have received more attention than the young man bestowed on Frisk. The dog ate whatever his master ate, only politely protesting when a hare, accompanied by currant jelly, appeared on the scene, that as a sporting dog he ought not to touch game, and personally had a serious objection to sweets. Meanwhile, the driver remaining on his box refreshed himself with bread, cheese, and a half bottle of wine. Consequently, when master and dog re-occupied the carriage the trio presented an appearance of general satisfaction.

"Where to, Excellency?" enquired the driver, wiping his mouth on his sleeve, with the air of a man ready to drive to the world's end if you wished.

"I don't quite know," was the answer, "it depends a little on you."

"How so?"

"Well, if I find you a good fellow, I might wish to keep you on for some time."

"Oh, a year if you like!"

"No, that is too long."

"Well, a month then."

"Neither a year nor a month, but a day or two."

"Oh, that's not enough. I really thought you meant to take me on lease."

"To begin with, what will you charge for going to Hanover?"

"It is six leagues, you know."

"Four and a half, you mean."

"But it is up and down hill the whole way."

"Nonsense! it is as flat as a billiard-table."

"One can't get round you," said the grinning driver.

"In one way you can."

"And which is that?"

"Simply by being honest."

"Ah, indeed! That is a new idea."

"It is one which has not before occurred to you, I think."

"Well, name your own price, then."

"Four florins."

"But you are not counting the drive from the station and the time for lunch."

"You are right, I will allow for that."

"And the *pourboire*."

"That is as I may choose."

"Agreed. I don't know why, but I trust you."

"Only, if I keep you more than a week it will then be three and a half florins per day, and no *pourboire*."

"I couldn't agree to that."

"Why not?"

"Because I see no reason for depriving you of the pleasure of doing the handsome thing when I have the misfortune of leaving you."

"The dickens! One would take you for a wit!"

"I've wit enough to look like a fool when I want to."

"Well done! Where do you come from?"

"From Sachsenhausen."

"And where may that be?"

"It is a suburb of Frankfort."

"Ah! yes, it is a Saxon colony from the days of Charlemagne."

"That is so. So you know that, do you?"

"I also know that you are a fine race, something like the Auvergnats of France. We will settle up when we part."

"That's suits me down to the ground."

"What's your name?"

"Lenhart."

"Very well, Lenhart, let us get on then."

The carriage started, scattering the usual crowd of idle spectators. A few minutes brought it to the end of the street leading to the open country. The day was magnificent. The trees had just burst into leaf, and earth had assumed a mantle of green, the soft spring breeze seemed laden with the perfume of flowers. Overhead the birds were already seeking food for their little ones, and awakening Nature appeared to listen to their songs. From time to time a lark arose from among the corn, and ascending high in the air seemed as if floating above the summit of a pyramid of song.

Beholding this magnificent country the traveller exclaimed: "But there must be splendid shooting here, is there not?"

"Yes, but it is strictly preserved," replied the coachman.

"So much the better," said our friend, "there will be all the more game."

In fact, before they had gone quite a mile from the town, Frisk, who had given various signs of impatience, sprang out of the carriage, rushed into a field of clover, and pointed.

"Shall I go on or wait," enquired the driver, seeing the young man loading his gun.

"Go on a yard, or two," was the answer. "There, that will do; now, draw up as near to the field as you can."

The carriage, with the sportsman standing up in it, gun in hand, halted within thirty yards of the dog. The driver looked on with all the interest of his class, an interest which is always on the side of the sportsman and hostile to the landlord and the gamekeeper. "That is a clever dog," he remarked. "What is he pointing at?"

"It is a hare."

"How do you know?"

"Had it been a bird he would have wagged his tail. See."

A big leveret showed itself among the clover and fell a victim to the gun. It was promptly brought in by Frisk. Further on a covey of partridges was seen, but the dog was called off, and the young brood left in peace. They were already approaching Hanover when a startled hare was seen some sixty yards from the carriage.

"Ah!" said Lenhart, "this one wisely keeps his distance."

"It does not follow," replied the sportsman.

"You don't expect to hit at that distance, do you?"

"Have you still to learn, my friend, you who profess to be able to shoot, that to a good shot and a good gun distance is of small importance? Now, watch!"

Then, having altered the charges in his gun the young man enquired:

"Do you know all about the manners and customs of hares, Lenhart?"

"Why, yes, I think I know all any one can know who can't speak their language."

"Well, I can tell you this. A startled hare, if not pursued, will run about fifty paces and will then sit down to have a look round and perform his toilet. Look!"

And in fact, the hare, which had run towards the carriage, instead of away from it, suddenly stopped, sat down, and began to wash its face with its forepaws. This predicted toilet cost the poor animal its life. A prompt shot and the hare bounded upwards and fell back dead.

"Beg pardon, Excellency," said Lenhart, "but if we are going to war as it is said we are, on which side will you be?"

"As I am neither Austrian nor Prussian, but happen to be a Frenchman, you will probably find me fighting for France."

"So long as you do not fight for these Prussian beggars I am quite satisfied. If you will fight against them, however —*donnerwetter*— but I have something to say."

"Well? at is it?"

"I offer you the free use of my carriage to fight from."

"Thanks! my friend, 'tis an offer not to be despised. I always thought that if I had to fight, I should like to make the campaign in a carriage."

"Well, then, here is the very thing you want. I can't tell you how old my horse is, he wasn't young when I bought him ten years ago, but I know if I took him to a Thirty Years' War he would see me through it. As for the carriage, you can see it is as good as new. Those shafts were put on only three years ago, and last year it had new wheels and a new axle, and it is only six months since I provided it with a new body."

"You remind me of an anecdote we have in France," replied the other. "It is that of Simple Simon's knife, which had first a new blade and then a new handle, but was still the same knife."

"Ah, sir," said Lenhart, with the air of a philosopher, "every country has its Simple Simon's knife."

"And also its simpletons, my good friend."

"Well, if you put new barrels on your gun you might give me the old ones. Here comes your dog with the hare," lifting it by the ears. "You can join the other, you fool," he said. "See what comes of too much vanity! Ah, sir! don't fight against the Prussians if you don't want to, but, good heaven, don't fight for them!"

"Oh, as to that you may be quite easy. If I do fight, it will be against them, and perhaps I shall not wait for war to be declared."

"Bravo! Down with the Prussians!" cried Lenhart, touching up his horse with a sharp cut. The animal, as if to justify his praises, and excited by his master's voice and cracking whip, broke into a gallop, bolted through the suburban streets and only stopped at the Hôtel Royal.

CHAPTER VI

BENEDICT TURPIN

Lenhart, in his double capacity of hackney coachman and purveyor of travellers and tourists for the Hôtel Royal, Hanover, was well known to Mr. Stephen, landlord thereof, who gave him a cordial reception. Anxious to magnify the importance of his present consignment, Lenhart hastened to inform him that the new arrival was a mortal enemy of the Prussians, that he never missed a shot, and that if war were declared, he would place himself and his deadly weapon at the disposal of the King of Hanover. To all of which Stephen lent an attentive ear.

"But where does your traveller come from," he at length enquired.

"He says he's a Frenchman, but I don't believe it. I've never once heard him boast about anything, besides, his German is too good. But there, he is calling you."

Stephen quickly answered the summons. The stranger was talking to an English officer of the Royal Household and his English appeared no less fluent than his German. Turning to Stephen he said in the latter language.

"I have asked a question of Colonel Anderson, who has kindly given me one-half of the answer, and tells me to apply to you for the rest. I asked for the title of the principal newspaper here, and the name of its editor. Colonel Anderson says the 'Hanoverian Gazette,' but does not know the editor's name."

"Wait a moment, Excellency. Yes, yes, let me see. He is Herr Bodemeyer, a tall, thin man with a beard, is he not?"

"Never mind his appearance. I want his name and address. I wish to send him my card."

"I only know the office address, Park Strasse. Do you dine at the *table d'hôte*? If so, Herr Bodemeyer is one of our regular guests. It is at five o'clock, he will be here in half-an-hour."

"All the more reason why he should have my card first," and producing a visiting-card bearing the legend "Benedict Turpin, Artist," he addressed it to Herr Bodemeyer, and handed it and a florin to the hotel messenger, who undertook to deliver it within ten minutes.

Stephen then ventured to suggest that if there were private matters to discuss a private room might be desirable.

"A good idea," said Benedict, and going to Colonel Anderson, "Sir," said he, "although we have never been formally introduced, I nevertheless hope you will waive etiquette and do me the honour of dining with me and Herr Bodemeyer, who I think will not refuse to join us. Our host promises an excellent dinner and good wine. It is six months since I left France, consequently six months since I had a chance of conversation. In England they talk, in Germany they dream, it is in France only that they converse. Let us have a nice little dinner at which we can do all three. Here is my card, that of an insignificant artist, devoid of armorial bearings or coronets, but with the simple Cross of the Légion d'Honneur. I would add, colonel," he continued seriously, "that in a day or two I may find myself obliged to ask a favour of you, and I should like to prove myself not unworthy of the consideration I hope you will show me."

The colonel accepted the card and bowed politely.

"Sir," said he with courteous English formality, "the hope you give me of being able to render you some service would certainly induce me to accept your hospitality. I have no reason whatever against dining with Herr Bodemeyer, and I have a thousand for wishing to dine with you, not the least being, if I may say so, that I find your person and manners exceedingly attractive."

Benedict bowed in his turn.

"Since you have done me the honour to accept," he said, "and I feel pretty sure of Herr Bodemeyer, it becomes my first duty to see that the dinner is a decent one. If you will excuse me

I should like to interview the chef on the subject," and he departed kitchenwards while the colonel sought the hotel reading-room.

Left in possession of a fair income at an age when the usual idea is only how best to squander it, Benedict Turpin had shown practical sense as well as genius. A believer in the excellent proverb which says that a man doubles his opportunities in life when he learns a new language, he had quadrupled his by spending a year in England, another in Germany, a third in Spain, and a fourth in Italy. At eighteen he was a first-rate linguist, and he spent the next two years in completing his education by classical and scientific studies, not neglecting the use of weapons and the general practice of games, calculated to further his physical development. By the time he was twenty he had attained an all-round proficiency very unusual in youths of his age and promised much in the time to come.

He took part in the Chinese expedition, and being possessed of sufficient means to indulge his taste for travelling, spent several years in world-wide wandering, hunting wild beasts, traversing deserts, picking up tapestries, jewels, curiosities, etc., wherewith on his return he furnished one of the most artistic studios in Paris. At the time our story opens he had, in the course of a round of visits to celebrated German painters, arrived in Berlin, where he upheld the honour of France, with the insolent good luck which seemed never to desert him. When the attention of the mob was momentarily diverted by the attack on the Prime Minister, Benedict succeeded in escaping unnoticed, and took refuge at the French Embassy, where he was well known. Early in the following morning he left by train and finally arrived at Hanover without let or hindrance. He had just given his last instructions to the cook when he was warned that Herr Bodemeyer was already approaching the hotel.

Benedict hurried to the entrance, where he saw close at hand a gentleman drawing near, who held a visiting card in his hand, and seemed pondering much as to what the owner could possibly want with him.

It is said that the denizens of that ancient Gaul which gave Cæsar so much trouble have so marked a personality that, wherever one is seen, the passers-by immediately remark: "Look, that's a Frenchman!"

Herr Bodemeyer, at any rate, seemed to recognize Benedict's nationality at once. He advanced smiling, with extended hand. Benedict promptly descended the steps to meet him and the two exchanged the customary civilities. Hearing that the artist had come from Berlin, and being professionally eager for news, the editor at once demanded an account of the uproar of the previous evening, and of the attempted assassination of Count Bismarck.

As to the latter, Benedict could give little information. He had heard the shots, seen two men struggling, and one handed over to some officers, and then had hastily sprung into the café, left it by a door in another street, and found shelter at the Embassy. There he heard further that the young man was the stepson of a proscribed refugee of the '48, named Blind, and that he had made terrible accusations against the count, which, coming as they did from the relative of a banished rebel, were held to count for very little.

"Well, we know a little more than that," said Herr Bodemeyer, "we hear that the young man attempted to cut his throat with a penknife, but that the wounds were only slight and the doctor says are not dangerous. But the "Kreuz Zeitung" will be here directly and we shall know a little more."

Even as he spoke newsboys hurried down the street shouting "Kreuz Zeitung – Zeitung!" There was a rush for the paper. Hanover was nearly as excited as Berlin had been the night before. Did the poor little kingdom already feel itself in the crushing embrace of the Prussian boa-constrictor?

Benedict beckoned to one of the newsboys and bought a paper. Turning to the Hanoverian editor,

"I hope you will dine with me and Colonel Anderson," he said. "We have a private room, and can talk politics as much as we like. Besides, I have something to ask of you which I could hardly ask at a public table."

Just then Colonel Anderson approached. He and Bodemeyer knew each other by sight already. Benedict now formally introduced them. The colonel had already glanced at his newspaper.

"Do you know," said he, "that although the doctor pronounced the wound of no consequence, young Blind nevertheless died early this morning? A Hanoverian officer come from Berlin says that about four o'clock a man wrapped in a large cloak and wearing a large shady hat which concealed his face, arrived at the prison provided with a permission to see the prisoner, and was taken to his cell. Blind had been put into a strait waistcoat and no one knows what passed between them, but when his cell was inspected at eight o'clock he was dead. The doctor says he must have been dead nearly four hours, so that he must have died about the time this mysterious visitor left him."

"Is this official news?" enquired Bodemeyer. "As editor of a Government paper I am bound to accept only official information. Let us see what the 'Kreuz Zeitung' has to say."

They withdrew to the room assigned to them, and the Hanoverian editor proceeded to examine the Berlin newspaper. The first paragraph of consequence stated:

"We are assured that the king's warrant decreeing the dissolution of the Lower Chamber will be officially published to-morrow."

"Come," said the colonel, "that is of some importance."

"Wait a moment; there is something more."

"It is also announced that a decree ordering the mobilization of the Landwehr will be officially published the day after to-morrow."

"That is enough," observed the colonel, "we know now that the minister wins all along the line and that war will be declared in less than a fortnight. Let us have the general news. We know all we want to know of the political. Only, first, on which side will Hanover be?"

"There is no doubt about that," replied Bodemeyer. "Hanover is bound to adhere to the Confederation."

"And on which side is the Confederation," asked Benedict.

"On the side of Austria," answered the journalist promptly. "But listen, here is a fresh account of the scene in Unter den Linden."

"Oh! let us have that by all means," cried Benedict. "I was there, and I want to know if the account is correct."

"What! were you there?"

"Very much there," and he added laughing, "I might even say with Æneas, '*Et quorum pars magna fui.*' I was in the thick of it."

Herr Bodemeyer continued:

"We are now able to give fuller details concerning the demonstration in Unter den Linden which occurred yesterday after the report of the Emperor Louis Napoleon's speech had been received. It appears that just as our most distinguished vocalist finished singing 'The German Rhine,' which was received with tremendous enthusiasm, a loud hiss was heard. It was soon seen that the author of this insult was a foreigner, a French painter, evidently intoxicated, and who would probably have atoned for his folly with his life, had not some Prussian officers generously protected him from the infuriated populace. The young fool further defied the crowd by giving his name and address, but when enquiries were made at the Black Eagle this morning he had disappeared. We commend his prudence and wish him a pleasant journey."

"Is that paragraph signed," asked Benedict.

"No. Is it inaccurate?" returned the reader.

"May I be permitted to remark that the one thing I have everywhere observed in my wanderings over three of the four quarters of the world – I beg your pardon, there are five, if we count Oceania – is the extremely small regard for truth shown by the purveyors of this sort of news. Whether in the north or the south, St. Petersburg or Calcutta, Paris or Constantinople, they are all alike. Each journal

is bound to give so many beats of its drum every day. Good or bad, false or true, it has to give them, and those who feel injured must obtain redress – if they can."

"Which means, I suppose," observed Colonel Anderson, "that this account is incorrect."

"Not only incorrect, but incomplete. The 'young fool' it speaks of, not only hissed, but cried, 'Vive la France!' Further, he drank to the health of France, and also disposed satisfactorily of the four first who attacked, him. It is true that these three Prussian officers intervened. They wished him to cry 'Vive Guillaume I' and 'Vive la Prusse.' He mounted a table, and instead, gave them a recital of Alfred de Musset's 'Answer to the German Rhine' from end to end. It is also true that just then the reports of Blind's revolver attracted general attention, and, not proposing to fight all Berlin, he profited by the incident to escape, taking refuge in the French Embassy. He had challenged one, two, or four adversaries, but not the entire populace. He also left a message at the Black Eagle to be given to any enquirers to the effect that he could not remain in Berlin, but would wait in some neighbouring country in order to oblige any one demanding satisfaction. And, leaving Berlin by an early train he arrived at Hanover an hour ago and at once sent his card to Herr Bodemeyer, hoping that that gentleman will kindly announce in his Gazette both the town and the hotel where this 'young fool' may be found by any one unable to find him at the Black Eagle."

"Good heavens," exclaimed the editor, "then it was you who caused this mighty uproar at Berlin."

"Even I; small things make much noise, as you see." Turning to the Englishman, Benedict continued, "And now you also see why I warned Colonel Anderson that I had a favour to ask him. I want him to be my second in case, as is quite possible, some wrathful individual should arrive demanding why, being in a foreign country, I have dared to uphold the honour of my own."

His hearers, with one accord, immediately offered their hands. Benedict continued:

"And now, to show I am not absolutely unknown, here is a letter from the Head of our 'Department of Fine Arts' to Herr Kaulbach, Painter to the King of Hanover. He lives here, does he not?"

"Yes, the king had a charming house built on purpose for him."

At this moment the door communicating with the next room was thrown open, the rotund figure of the landlord appeared in the opening and a solemn and impressive voice announced:

"Their Excellencies are served."

Whether the chef had perceived that Benedict really understood what he was talking about, or else had had orders from his master to do what he was told, he had, at any rate, carried out his instructions to the very last letter, the result being neither French, English, nor German, but cosmopolitan, a banquet for a conference if not a congress. Nor was brilliant conversation lacking. Bodemeyer, like all German journalists, was a well-read man, but had never been outside Hanover. Anderson, on the contrary, had read little, but had travelled everywhere and seen much. He and Benedict had explored the same countries and encountered the same people. Both had been at the siege of Peking; Anderson had followed Benedict in India, and preceded him in Russia. Both related their experiences, the one with English reserve and humour, the other with French vivacity and wit. The Englishman, a true modern Phoenician, saw everything from the industrial and commercial point of view, the Frenchman from that of intellectual progress. Their different ideas, brought forward with warmth and also with the courtesy of well-bred and distinguished men, crossed each other like foils in the hands of experienced fencers, emitting sparks, brilliant if transitory. Bodemeyer, unused to this style of discussion, endeavoured to give it a philosophical turn, in which he was met by Benedict, but which Anderson found difficult to follow. The journalist seemed unintelligible, but Benedict's theories he understood as he had never understood before.

The clock striking eight abruptly terminated the conversation. The editor sprang up.

"My paper!" he cried, "my 'Gazette'! It is not ready by half!" Never before had he succumbed to such an intellectual temptation. "Frenchmen are the very devil," he muttered, trying in vain to find

a hat which would fit him. They *are* the champagne of the earth, they are clear, strong, and sparkling. In vain did Benedict entreat him for five minutes in which to write his announcement. "You must let me have it before eleven o'clock," cried Bodemeyer, as, having discovered his own hat and cane he fled as if the enemy were behind him.

Next morning the following announcement might have been read in the "Hanoverian Gazette".

"On June 7th, 1866, in Unter den Linden at Berlin I had occasion to both give and receive several blows in an encounter with various excellent citizens who wished to tear me to pieces because I had publicly emptied my glass to the glory of France. I have not the honour of knowing who gave these blows, but, wishing to be known by those who received mine, I hereby announce that during the next eight days I may be found at the Hôtel Royal, Hanover, by any one wishing to criticize either my words or actions on the said occasion, and I particularly hope that the author of a certain article referring to me in yesterday's issue of the 'Kreuz Zeitung,' will accept this invitation. Being ignorant of his name, I have no other means of addressing him.

"I wish to thank the three Prussian officers who interfered to protect me from the amiable people of Berlin. But, should any of them consider himself offended by me, my gratitude will not extend to refusing him satisfaction.

"I said then and I repeat now, that I am familiar with the use of all weapons."

"BENEDICT TURPIN.

"At the Hôtel Royal, Hanover."

CHAPTER VII

KAULBACH'S STUDIO

Benedict lost no time in leaving his note at the "Gazette" office, and his letter of introduction at Kaulbach's studio, where he left also his card on which was written, "I hope to have the honour of calling on you to-morrow." He therefore ordered Lenhart to be ready a little before eleven, in order to pay his two visits, one of thanks to Herr Bodemeyer, and one to Kaulbach. As the latter lived at the extreme end of the town where the king had had a charming little house erected for him, he called at Herr Bodemeyer's office first. The last copies of the "Gazette" were just being struck off, and Benedict was able to convince himself that his letter was actually in print. As the "Gazette" had numerous subscribers in Berlin and would be on sale there at six that evening, there was no doubt but that his communication would be widely read. The dissolution of the Chamber was confirmed and it was certain that mobilization would be announced on the morrow. Benedict continued on his way to the studio.

Seen by daylight the house appeared to be a pretty villa in Italian style, standing in a garden enclosed with iron railings. The gate stood invitingly open. Benedict entered, rang, and was answered by a servant in livery, whose manner showed that the visit was expected. He at once led the way to the studio.

"The master is just finishing dinner," he said, "but he will be with you in a moment."

"Tell the master," replied Benedict, "that I am too delighted at being able to see the beautiful things here to wish to hurry him."

And, indeed, the studio, full of original pictures, sketches, and copies of some of the works of the greatest painters known, could not fail to be intensely interesting to an artist such as Benedict, who now suddenly found himself in the sanctuary of one of the greatest of German painters. Kaulbach is an artist who has adhered to his Christian faith, and everywhere one saw proofs of this. But among highly finished sketches for some of his world-famous pictures, such as "The Dispersion of Mankind," "The Taking of Jerusalem," etc., Benedict's attention was drawn to a modern portrait group of five persons. It represented an officer, evidently of high rank, holding a boy of about ten by the hand. His charger stood ready on the terrace below, and a lady in the prime of life sat near him with two little girls, one leaning against her knee, while the other sat at her feet and played with a small dog and some roses. The picture, apparently, was a work of love, for the artist had taken immense pains with it; too much so, in fact, for the elaborately finished details threw the faces into the background, and the general effect was too flat.

Absorbed in the study of this group, Benedict did not observe that Kaulbach had entered the room and was standing beside him, looking on with a smile. Presently he said:

"You are right, that picture is too flat, and I had it brought back, not to finish it still more, but to tone it down and soften some parts. Such as it is your public would never like it. Delacroix has spoiled you for 'clean' pictures."

Benedict laughed.

"Do you mean to imply that he painted dirty ones?" he enquired.

"Heaven forbid! His works are excellent, but your nation did not appreciate them."

"We do him justice now, however."

"Yes, now that he is dead," said Kaulbach smiling. "Is it not always so?"

"Not in your case. Admired in France, adored in Germany, happily you are yet with us."

Kaulbach at this time was about fifty-two, slightly grey, sallow in complexion, having brilliant dark eyes and a highly nervous constitution. Tall and slight, he was at the zenith of his artistic powers

and hardly past that of his physical ones. The two men studied each other critically, until at last Turpin began to laugh.

"Do you know what I am thinking?" asked the German. "I am wondering how you have managed to wander from Pekin to St. Petersburg, from Astrakhan to Algiers, and yet found time to produce the remarkable pictures you have painted. I know these only by report unfortunately, but I have heard a good deal. You are a pupil of Scheffer's?"

"Yes, I have also studied under Cabat."

"Great masters, both of them. And you are the hero of that unlucky business at Berlin. I have just read your letter in the 'Gazette.'"

"But why 'unlucky'?"

"Well, you will have two or three duels on your hands."

"So much the worse for my adversaries."

"Allow me to remark that you are not lacking in self-confidence."

"No, because I have the certainty of success. Look!" and Benedict held out his hand. "Observe that the line of life is double. There is not the slightest break anywhere – nothing to indicate accident, sickness, or even the slightest scratch. I might live to a hundred – but I won't say as much of those who quarrel with me."

Aulbach smiled.

"At the end of your letter of introduction," he said, "there was a postscript, which informed me that you were more deeply interested in studying occult science than in pursuing your own art."

"I don't know that I study either very much. I am rather a slave to temperament. If a thing amuses me, well, yes, I study it. If I think I have found a truth, I try to follow it out to the very end. And I do believe that chiromancy can give us a glance into the future, and that the hand is a page on which the lines of our fate have been traced by Destiny. If for five minutes only I could study the hand of either the King of Prussia or of Count Bismarck, I could give you some idea of what will happen."

"Meanwhile," said Kaulbach, "your science says you will escape scot-free from any duels arising out of this Berlin scrimmage?"

"Certainly I shall. But we were talking about your work, which is infinitely more interesting. I believe I know all your pictures, or nearly so."

"I would wager you don't know the best of them."

"Yes, I do. You mean 'Charlemagne visited in his Tomb by the Emperor Otho'? It is the masterpiece of modern German painting."

Kaulbach was evidently delighted.

"You have seen that!" he exclaimed, and he held out his hand to Benedict. "I don't think as much of it as you seem to do, but it is the best thing I have done. Oh! pardon me, but I see two visitors who come for a sitting. But wait, they are kind friends of mine, and may not object to your presence. I will tell them who you are, and then if they do not mind your being here you can please yourself as to whether you go or stay." So saying he hastily quitted the studio.

A carriage was at the garden gate, quite plain in appearance, with no arms emblazoned on the panels, yet Benedict's practised eye saw at once that the horses had cost at least £200 each. Two gentlemen were leaving it, the elder of the two, who seemed about forty-five, wore the epaulettes of a general with an undress uniform of dark green, the collar and facings being of black velvet. Kaulbach said a few words, upon which he took off an order he was wearing and also two crosses, retaining those of the Guelphic Order and of Ernest Augustus. Then, that he might cross the little garden and ascend the steps he took the arm of the younger man, who seemed to be his son, and who, tall and very slight, appeared to be about one-and-twenty, and wore a Hussar uniform of blue and silver.

Kaulbach opened the studio door and stood respectfully aside. Benedict, as he bowed, instantly recognized the central figure of Kaulbach's portrait group. He glanced quickly at the picture on which the missing decoration was depicted in all its glory. It was the Star of the Order of the Garter, worn

by few except sovereign princes. He knew at once that the visitors must be the blind King of Hanover, one of the most cultivated and artistic sovereigns of Germany, and his son, the Crown Prince.

"Milords," said Kaulbach, "I have the honour to present a brother artist to you. He is young, but is already famous, and he brings a special introduction from the Minister of Fine Arts at Paris. May I add that his own personality is a better recommendation even than those."

The general bent his head graciously, the youth touched his cap. The elder man then addressed Benedict in English, regretting that his French was only indifferent. Benedict replied in the same language, saying that he was too great an admirer of Shakespeare, Scott, and Byron not to have made an effort to read these authors in their own tongue. The king, satisfied that he was unrecognized, discussed various subjects, and, knowing that Benedict had travelled much, asked many questions which were in themselves a compliment, for only men of superior intelligence could have asked and answered them. Kaulbach, meanwhile, rapidly worked at his picture softening down the too hard accessories. The young prince listened eagerly, and when Benedict offered to show him sketches made in India, he appealed anxiously to his father as to when and where he could see them.

"Better ask both these gentlemen to lunch in your own rooms," said the King, "and if they do you the honour to accept –"

"Oh! can you come to-morrow?" enquired the prince, delighted.

Benedict looked at Kaulbach in embarrassment.

"I fear I may have work of another kind to-morrow," he replied.

"Yes," said Kaulbach, "I fear my friend here is a trifle hot-headed. He only arrived yesterday and he has already written a letter for the 'Gazette,' which is now well on its way to Berlin."

"What! the letter I thought so amusing that I read it aloud to my father! Is that yours, monsieur? But, indeed, you will have duels without end."

"I count on two," said Benedict. "It is a lucky number."

"But suppose you are killed or wounded?"

"If I am killed, I will, with your permission, bequeath you my album. If I am badly hurt, I will ask Herr Kaulbach to show it you instead. If I am only scratched, I will bring it myself. But you need not be anxious on my account; I can assure you nothing unpleasant will happen to me."

"But how can you know that?"

"You know my friend's name, I think," said Kaulbach. "He is Benedict Turpin. Well, he descends in the direct line from the famous enchanter Turpin, the uncle of Charlemagne, and he has inherited the gifts of his ancestor!"

"Good heavens," said the prince, "are you spirit, magician, or what?"

"None of them. I simply amuse myself by reading the past, the present, and as much of the future as one's hand can reveal."

"Before you came," said Kaulbach, "he was deeply regretting not being able to see the hand of the King of Prussia. He would have told us what will happen in the war. My lord," he continued, emphasizing the title, "could we not find somewhere a royal hand for him to see?"

"Very easily," said the king, smiling, "only it should be that of a real king or a real emperor. Such as the Emperor of China, who is obeyed by millions of subjects, or Alexander, who reigns over the ninth part of the whole world. Do you not think so, M. Turpin?"

"I think, sir," replied Benedict, as he bent low before the king, "that it is not always great kingdoms which make great kings. Thessaly produced Achilles, and Macedonia gave birth to Alexander," and again bowing, even more deeply, he left the studio.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHALLENGE

Benedict's prediction was duly fulfilled. He had hardly opened his eyes the next morning when Lenhart, who had assumed the duties of valet, appeared, bearing a magnificent silver salver which he had borrowed from the landlord. On it were displayed two cards.

The cards bore the respective names of "Major Frederic von Bülow" and "Georges Kleist, Editor of the 'Kreuz Zeitung.'" Two different classes of Prussian society were therefore represented desiring satisfaction.

Benedict enquired where these gentlemen were to be found, and hearing that they were both at his own hotel, sent a hasty message to Colonel Anderson, begging him to come at once. When he appeared Benedict gave him the cards, requesting him to deal with the owners in due order of precedence, beginning with Major von Bülow, and to agree to whatever terms were proposed whether as to weapons, time, or place. The colonel would have protested, but Benedict declared he would have it his own way or not at all, and Anderson had no choice but to agree.

He returned at the end of half-an-hour. Von Bülow had chosen swords. But, having been sent officially to Frankfort, and having come out of his way in order to accept M. Turpin's challenge, he would be greatly obliged if the meeting might take place as soon as possible.

"The sooner the better," said Benedict. "It is the very least I can do to oblige a man who comes out of his way in order to oblige me."

"All he wants, seemingly, is to be able to continue his journey this evening," observed Anderson.

"Ah!" said Benedict. "But I cannot answer for his ability to do that, however early we meet!"

"That would be a pity," said the colonel. "Major von Bülow is very much a gentleman. It seems that three Prussian officers interfered to protect you from the mob on condition that you cried 'Vive King William!' 'Vive la Prusse!'"

"Pardon me, there were no conditions."

"Not on your side, but they undertook it for you."

"I did not prevent them from crying it as much as they liked."

"Doubtless, only, instead of doing it yourself –"

"I recited one of Alfred de Musset's finest poems; what more could they want?"

"They consider that you treated them with disrespect."

"Perhaps I did. Well, what next?"

"When they read your letter they decided that one of them must accept the challenge and the other two act as seconds. They drew lots, and the lot fell on von Bülow. That very moment he received orders to go on this mission to Frankfort. The others wished that one of them should take his place in the duel. But he refused, saying that if he were killed or badly wounded, one of them could take on the dispatches which would not be much delayed. So I then arranged the meeting for one o'clock."

"Very well. What about the other man?"

"Herr Georges Kleist is not remarkable in any way: he is a typical German journalist. He chooses pistols and wants to fire at close quarters on account of his defective eyesight. I believe it is quite good enough, but, however, he does wear glasses, so you are to be at forty-five paces –"

"Good gracious! Do you call that close quarters?"

"Have a little patience! You may each advance fifteen paces nearer, which reduces the ultimate distance to fifteen. But we had a discussion. His seconds say that he is the aggrieved party and has the right to fire first. I say, nothing of the kind; you ought to fire together, at a given signal. You must decide; it is a serious matter, and I decline the responsibility."

"It is soon decided; he must fire first. I hope you fixed an early time for him also? We could then kill two birds with one stone."

"That is just what I have done. At one o'clock you meet von Bülow with swords, and at a quarter-past, Herr Kleist, with pistols."

"Well then, my dear colonel, I will go and order breakfast, and will you be so good as to tell Herr Kleist that he can have first shot? And," he added, "let it be understood that I don't provide any arms myself; I will use the swords and pistols they bring with them."

It was then eleven o'clock. Benedict promptly ordered breakfast. Colonel Anderson returned in ten minutes and announced that all was settled. Whereupon they applied themselves to their repast until the clock struck twelve.

"Colonel," said Benedict, "do not let us be late."

"We have no great distance to go. It is a pretty place, as you will see. Are you influenced by surroundings?"

"I would rather fight on grass than on cultivated ground."

"We are going to Eilenriede; it is a sort of Hanoverian Bois de Boulogne. In the middle of the wood there is a little open glade with a spring in it, which might have been made for this sort of encounter. I have been there once or twice on my own account and three or four times on other people's. By the way, have you secured another second?"

"There are five on the other side, one of them will oblige me."

"But suppose they refused?"

"Not likely! But, even if they did, you alone would be sufficient. And, as they seem anxious to finish the affair one way or another, there will be no difficulties."

Lenhart had already announced the carriage. The colonel explained the way to him. In half-an-hour they arrived at the little glade, with ten minutes to spare.

"A lovely spot," said Benedict. "As the others are not yet here, I will sketch it."

And, producing a sketch-book from his pocket, he dashed off a very accurate view of the place with remarkable rapidity and skill.

Presently a carriage appeared in the distance. As they drew near Benedict rose and took off his hat. The three officers, the editor, and a surgeon they had brought, occupied it. In the officers, Benedict at once recognized his three protectors at Berlin.

His adversaries left their carriage at a little distance and courteously returned his salute. Colonel Anderson went to meet them and explained that his principal, being a stranger, had no second but himself, and asked if one of his opponents would supply the deficiency. They consulted a moment, then one of the officers crossed over and bowed to Benedict.

"I am much obliged by your courtesy, sir," said Benedict.

"We will agree to anything, sir – rather than lose time," replied the officer.

Benedict bit his lip.

"Will you at once select the weapons," he said to Colonel Anderson in English, "we must not keep these gentlemen waiting."

Von Bülow had already divested himself of helmet, coat, waistcoat, and cravat. Benedict studied him carefully as he did so. He appeared to be about thirty-three and to have lived in his uniform until he felt uncomfortable out of it. He was dark, with glossy black hair cut quite short, a straight nose, black moustache and very decided chin. Both courage and loyalty could be read in the frank and open glance of his dark eyes.

Von Bülow, having provided the swords, Benedict was offered his choice of them. He simply took the first that came, and immediately passed his left hand along the edge and felt the point. The edge was keen as a razor. The point sharp as a needle. The major's second observed his action, and, beckoning Colonel Anderson aside.

"Will you," he said, "kindly explain to your principal that in German duels we use only the edge of the sword? To thrust with the point is inadmissible."

"The devil!" said Benedict when this information was repeated to him, "it is well you told me. In France, where duels, especially military ones, are usually serious, we use every stroke we can, and our sword-play is actually called 'counterpoint.'"

"But indeed," exclaimed von Bülow, "I beg, sir, that you will use your sword in whatever way you find best."

Benedict bowed in acknowledgment. Having fought several duels at Heidelberg he was well acquainted with German methods of fencing and placed himself with apparent indifference. As the affronted person has the right of attack, and a challenge may be considered an affront, he waited, standing simply on guard.

CHAPTER IX

THE TWO DUELS

"Engage, gentlemen!" cried the colonel.

Von Bülow's sword swept through the air with a flash like lightning. But, rapid though it was, it descended in empty space. Warned by the instinct of a true fencer, the blades had barely crossed when Benedict sprang swiftly aside and remained standing unguarded, his point lowered, and his mocking smile disclosing a fine set of teeth. His adversary paused, perplexed, then swung round so as to face him, but did not immediately advance. However, feeling that this duel must be no child's play, he stepped forward and instantly the point of Benedict's sword rose menacingly against him. Involuntarily he retreated a step. Benedict now fixed his eyes upon him, circling round him, now bending to the right, now again to the left, but always keeping his weapon low and ready to strike.

The major began to feel a kind of hypnotic influence overpowering him. Determined to fight against it, he boldly stepped forward, holding his sword aloft. Instantly he felt the touch of cold steel. Benedict thrust, his rapier pierced von Bülow's shirt and reappeared on the other side. Had not the major remained standing motionless opposite him, an onlooker would have supposed he had been run through the body.

The seconds hastened up, but:

"It is nothing, I assure you," said the major.

Then, perceiving that Benedict had only intended to pierce his shirt and not himself, he added: "Come, sir, let us continue this game in earnest."

"Ah!" said Benedict, "but you see, had I played in earnest, you would now be a dead man!"

"On guard, sir," cried von Bülow, furious, "and remember this is a duel to the death."

Benedict stepped back and saluting with his sword:

"Pardon me, gentlemen," he said, "you see how unfortunate I am. Although fully intending not to use my point I have nevertheless made two holes in my opponent's shirt. My hand might again refuse to obey my will, and, as I do not visit a country merely to rebel against its customs – particularly when they happen to be philanthropic – so –"

He went up to a rock which rose out of the little valley and, placing the point of his rapier in a crevice, broke off a good inch of the blade.

His adversary wished to do likewise, but,

"It is quite unnecessary, sir," said Benedict, "you are not likely to use your point."

Being now reduced to ordinary sword-play, Benedict crossed swords with his opponent, which necessitated their keeping close together. But he continually retreated half a pace and advanced again, thanks to which incessant movement the major merely made cuts in the air. Becoming impatient, he endeavoured to reach Benedict, missed again, and involuntarily lowered his weapon. Benedict parried a back stroke and touched von Bülow's breast with the broken point. Said he:

"You see I was right in breaking the point of my sword. Otherwise, this time something besides your shirt would have been pierced."

The major remained silent, but quickly recovering himself again stood on guard. He now saw that his adversary was a most skilful swordsman, who united French celerity with determined coolness and who was fully conscious of his strength.

Benedict, seeing that an end must be made, now stood still, calm but menacing, with frowning brows and eyes fixed on his enemy, not attempting to strike but retaining a posture of defence. It seemed as if he awaited the attack, but suddenly with the unexpected celerity which characterized all his movements, he sprang forward with a bound like that of a jaguar, aimed a blow at his adversary's

head, and as the latter raised his arm in defence, drew a line with his blade right across his chest. Then, springing lightly back in the same instant he again lowered his sword as before.

Von Bülow's shirt, slashed as though cut by a razor, was instantly tinged with blood. The seconds moved forward.

"Do not stir, I beg," cried the major, "it is nothing but a scratch. I must confess the gentleman's hand is a light one."

And he again stood on guard.

Courageous though he was, he felt he was losing confidence, and, dumbfounded by his enemy's agility, a sense of great danger oppressed him. Evidently Benedict was keeping just out of reach, and was merely waiting until he should expose himself by an unwary advance. He understood that hitherto his opponent had simply played with him, but that now the duel was approaching an end and that his smallest mistake would be severely punished. His sword, never able to encounter Benedict's, seemed to become lifeless, and ceased to respond to his will.

His previous experience in fencing seemed useless here, and this flashing blade which he could never touch, but which rose constantly before him, alert, intelligent, as if endued with life, confused his senses. He dared not risk a movement before this enemy always just beyond his reach, so imperturbable and yet so alert, and who evidently intended, like the artist he was, either to finish with one brilliant stroke or else – which did not seem likely – to expire in a dignified pose like the "Dying Gladiator."

But, exasperated by his opponent's perfect bodily grace, by his elegant and masterly swordsmanship, and still more by the mocking smile which hovered on his lips, von Bülow felt the blood rise to his temples, and could not resist muttering between his teeth:

"This fellow is the very devil!"

And, springing forward, no longer fearing the broken point, he raised his sword and aimed a blow with all his might at his adversary, a blow which, had it reached its object, would have split his head as though it had been an apple. Again, the stroke only encountered empty air, for once more Benedict had effaced himself by a light, graceful spring, very familiar to Parisian fencing masters.

The major's raised sword had broken his guard. A flash, as of lightning, and his arm, streaming with blood, fell against his side. His sword dropped, but remained upright supported by the sword knot.

The seconds hurried to his side. Very pale, but with smiling lips, von Bülow bowed to Benedict and said:

"I thank you, sir. When you might have run me through the body you only wounded my shirt; when you might have cut me in two you let me off with the sort of cut one gets in shaving, and now, when you might have either cleft my head or maimed my arm, I escape with a ruined sleeve. I now ask you to extend your courtesy even further, and to complete the record like the gentleman you are by explaining why you have spared me thus?"

"Sir," said Benedict with a smile, "in the house of Herr Fellner, the Burgomaster of Frankfort, I was introduced to his god-daughter, a charming lady, who adores her husband. Her name was the Baroness von Bülow. When I saw your card it occurred to me that you might be related, and though, beautiful as she is, mourning could only add to her charm, it would grieve me to have been the cause of compelling her to wear it."

The major looked Benedict in the face and, stern soldier though he might be, there were tears in his eyes.

"Madame von Bülow is my wife," he said. "Believe me, sir, wherever she may meet you she will greet you thus: 'My husband foolishly quarrelled with you, sir; may you ever be blessed because for my sake you spared him!' and she will give you her hand with as much gratitude as I now offer you mine."

And he added smiling:

"Forgive me for only offering my left hand. It is entirely your own fault that I cannot give you the right."

And now, although the wound was not dangerous, von Bülow did not refuse to have it dressed. The surgeon promptly ripped up his sleeve, disclosing a wound, not very deep, but terrible to look at, which extended down the arm from the shoulder to the elbow. And one shuddered to think what such a wound would have been, had the swordsman struck with all his force instead of simply drawing his blade along the arm.

The surgeon dipped a cloth in the ice-cold spring which rose at the foot of the rock and wrapped it round the arm. He then drew the sides of the wound together and strapped them with plaster. He assured the major that he would be quite able to continue his journey to Frankfort in the evening.

Benedict offered his carriage to the major, who, however, declined, being curious to see what would happen to his successor. He excused himself on the score that courtesy required him to wait for Herr Georges Kleist.

Although Herr Kleist, having had time to see what sort of adversary he had to deal with, would willingly have been some leagues away, he put a brave face on the matter, and although he grew perceptibly pale during the first duel, and still paler when the wound was dressed, he was, nevertheless, the first to say.

"Excuse my interrupting you, gentlemen, but it is my turn now."

"I am quite at your service, sir," said Benedict.

"You are not properly dressed for a duel with pistols," interposed Colonel Anderson, glancing at Benedict's costume.

"Really," said Benedict, "I never thought about what clothes I was to fight in. I only wanted to do it with comfort to myself. That's all!"

"You can at least put on your tunic and button it!"

"Bah! It is much too hot."

"Perhaps we ought to have taken the pistols first. All this sword-play may have unsteadied your hand."

"My hand is my servant, dear colonel; it knows it has to obey me and you will see it does so."

"Do you wish to see the pistols you are to use?"

"You have seen them, have you not? Are they double barrelled or single?"

"Single barrelled duelling pistols. They were hired this morning from a gunsmith in the Grande Place."

"Then call my other second and see them properly loaded. Mind the shot is inside the barrels, and not dropped outside."

"I will load them myself."

"Colonel," asked the Prussian officers, "do you wish to see the pistols loaded?"

"Yes. I wish to do so. But how are we to arrange? Herr Kleist will only have one second."

"These two gentlemen may answer for Herr Kleist," said the major, "and I will go over to M. Turpin." And his wound being now bandaged, he went and sat down on the rock which gave its name to the glade.

Meanwhile the pistols were loaded, Colonel Anderson fulfilling his promise by putting in the balls himself. Benedict came up to him.

"Tell me," the Englishman asked gravely, "do you mean to kill him?"

"What do you expect? One can't exactly play with pistols as one can with swords or rapiers."

"Surely there is some way of disabling people with whom you have no serious quarrel without killing them outright?"

"I really cannot undertake to miss him just to oblige you! Think! He would naturally go and publish everywhere that I did not know how to shoot!"

"All right! I see I need not have spoken. I bet you have an idea of some sort."

"Frankly, I have. But then he must do his part."

"What must he do?"

"Just keep perfectly still, it ought not to be so very difficult. See, they are ready."

The seconds had just measured the forty-five paces. Colonel Anderson now measured off fifteen from each end, and to mark the exact limit which neither combatant was to pass, he laid two scabbards across and planted a sword upright in the ground at each end to decide the starting-point.

"To your places, gentlemen," cried the seconds.

Herr Kleist having selected his pistol, the colonel brought the other to Benedict, who was talking to the major, and who took the pistol without as much as looking at it, and still chatting with von Bülow, walked quietly to his place.

The duellists now stood at the extreme distance.

"Gentlemen!" said Colonel Anderson, "you are now forty-five paces apart. Each of you may either advance fifteen paces before firing, or may fire from where he now stands. Herr Georges Kleist has the first shot and may fire as soon as he pleases. Having fired, he may hold his pistol so as to protect any part of himself he wishes.

"Now, gentlemen!"

The two adversaries advanced towards each other. Having arrived at the mark, Benedict waited, standing, facing his opponent with folded arms. A light breeze ruffled his hair and blew his shirt open at the chest. He had walked at his ordinary pace.

Herr Kleist, dressed entirely in black, bare-headed, and with closely buttoned coat, had advanced slowly, by force of will overcoming physical disinclination. He halted at the limit.

"You are ready, sir?" he asked.

"Quite ready, sir."

"Will you not turn sideways?"

"I am not accustomed to do so."

Then, turning himself, Herr Kleist slowly raised his pistol, took aim, and fired.

Benedict heard the ball whiz close by his ear and felt the wind ruffle his hair; it had passed within an inch of his head.

His adversary instantly raised his pistol, holding it so as to protect his face, but was unable entirely to control a nervous movement of his hand.

"Sir," said Benedict, "you courteously asked just now if I would not stand sideways, which is unusual between combatants. Permit me in my turn to offer a piece of advice, or rather, make a request."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.