

conqueror? What a disgrace, what a misfortune!" And covering his face with both his hands, he wept bitterly.

"Be composed, dear Bernhard!" said Count Rethel. "It has been so decreed; the event which is soon to take place is not only remarkable, but it is even supernatural; for a judgment of God is about to be executed. Yes, the God of old, the Protector of St. Peter's chair, is still living!"

A carriage was now seen approaching the villa, surrounded by a staff of richly dressed officers. Leaning upon the arm of a general, Napoleon alighted from the carriage. He wore the uniform of a marshal, and appeared to be suffering and depressed; he had really grown old in one night. Ditmour received his distinguished visitor, and bade him welcome. Napoleon thanked him with scarcely a perceptible nod of the head. Broken down in body and soul, he was about to retire to his apartment, when he suddenly stopped at the sight of a tall and venerable form.

"Is it really you, Count Rethel?" asked the Emperor, with unusual animation.

"It is I, sire!"

"You followed my uncle into exile, and even to prison." And pressing his hand to his forehead, he was silent.

"Oh, your majesty!" exclaimed the count, carried away by the excitement of the moment, "I am overwhelmed by the truth of those scriptural words: 'It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!'"

"It is so, count; you do right to remind me of them, for you never concealed the truth from me, however bitter, even when I was at the height of my power. It is so—it is indisputable! If I had listened to your intercessions in behalf of the pope, I would not now be here. The warning of my uncle is fulfilled: 'If you grieve or oppress the pope, the avenging arm of the Almighty Protector of St. Peter's chair shall crush you!' My sad fate is a new evidence of this truth!"

These last words were spoken by the emperor, as if to himself; he stood awhile and proceeded towards an inner chamber, where he awaited the arrival of the conqueror.

A few of the officers of the imperial household were assembled in the court-yard, and their countenance betokened their inward depression. Louis Napoleon would sometimes appear at the window, his face giving evident signs of the disturbed condition of his soul.

The hour appointed for the interview had passed. Can it be that the conqueror will not come? Four hours had