

the Seven Years' War in a Hunters' Volunteer Battalion, and had lost a leg in the battle of Rossbach, for which he received a badge of honour, but nothing else; for, as is well known, these volunteers were allowed no pensions, but many of them had received a small office, and a few, eminent places.

Our poor soldier, who lived in miserable quarters, had asked again and again for an office, but in vain. His petition remained unnoticed. He finally went to Berlin himself, in order to beg a good office in person, and had tried to lay his petition before the king, but without success.

His patience was completely exhausted; and one morning there appeared on the palace wall a large placard, in which the king and government were attacked in the severest manner.

Naturally, this placard was promptly removed by the police, and every means taken to discover the guilty person. As, however, in spite of all their efforts, they were unsuccessful in this, they turned to the king, as a last resort, with the request that he should offer a reward to the one who should discover the author of the libel.

At first, Frederick the Great, who was always very indifferent to such matters, would hear nothing of it; but was finally persuaded to offer a reward of thirty thalers for this purpose.

Meanwhile, the old soldier had returned to his home and had heard nothing of what had been going on in the capital, until some time afterwards there fell into his hands an old newspaper containing the above mentioned advertisement. He kept this paper, put on his old hunter's uniform, and immediately set out on foot for Berlin.

Having arrived there, he at once sought an audience with the king, which, under the pretext that he came in regard to the libelous placard and would speak only with the king, was actually granted to him.

Frederick the Great sat in his council chamber at his writing-desk, and appeared to be in not a very good humor. He left his visitor unnoticed for some time. Finally, he turned to him:—

"Now, what do you want?"
"Your Majesty, I came in regard to that placard. It states in this paper that a—"

"Right. What do you know about it?"

"But shall I receive the promised reward, your Majesty?"

"If you are in condition to deliver up the right man, certainly."

"Under all circumstances, whoever it may be, your Majesty?"

"Zounds! Yes. Now, out with it!"

"Now, your Majesty, I myself had this placard"—

"Fellow, are you mad, or what is the matter with you?" cried Frederick, springing up. "Do you know what you will get for that?"

"I know it, your Majesty. I go to Spandau; but, if only my family receives the thirty thalers, then no matter what becomes of me."

And he told them in a few words in what condition he was, how he had often petitioned for a position, how he had in vain tried to see the king, how in his despair he had written this placard, and how he had come here in order to at least receive this reward.

While the old hunter was speaking, the king had paced up and down the room with long strides.

"Hm, hm," he growled, as if to himself, "that is certainly bad. In any case, another unpardonable negligence.—But," said he, pausing in front of the soldier, "you did not need to do that. You could have tried once more, and you must have obtained a hearing. It certainly cannot be altered now. You must go to Spandau, and immediately."

"But my wife shall receive the thirty thalers?" cried the soldier, bursting into tears.

"They shall have it," said the king; "but prepare yourself to go to Spandau. I will give you a letter to the commandant," added he, in a milder tone, and immediately seated himself to write the letter; but first he struck a little silver bell which stood on his desk, and, turning again to the soldier, said in the presence of the servant who had promptly entered: "You have a long journey before you, and will be very hungry. Go into the kitchen, and let them give you something to eat."

The old corporal was led into the royal kitchen, and entertained. When he returned to the royal apartment, the king had finished the letter, which he handed to him, saying, "You have come here from Kustrin on foot?"

"I have, your Majesty."

"Then you can also go on foot from here to Spandau. This country has no money to order an extra post for such people, the less that already thirty thalers have been spent on you."

"My family shall receive the money, your Majesty?"

"That is already attended to," answered the king, nodding, and added with threatening voice, "See to it that you go to Spandau, for otherwise—"

With a heavy heart the old man had entered the palace, with a heavy heart he stood again on the street. He had hoped, perhaps, to find favor with the king. But—to Spandau! It rang continually in his ears. What should he now do? Should he really go to prison, or should he try to escape? But how far could he go with his wooden leg? And, then, the last words of the king said to him only too plainly that, in that case, it would only be still worse for him; for then the thirty thalers would be lost, and all have been in vain. Should he at least first inform his wife, who had no suspicion of the whole occurrence? But he could not bring his heart to witness the grief this would cause her; so he decided without delay to struggle on to Spandau. His family were now provided for, for the immediate present; and what should follow lay in God's hands.

Arrived at Spandau, he immediately had himself announced to the commandant, and found some consolation in recognizing in him his old sergeant. He could not help drawing a comparison between him and himself. While he, the severely wounded, almost perishing from want and distress, stood here now as a prisoner, the other had already occupied this lucrative place some years.

The commandant was also highly delighted to see his brave old comrade again.

"But how in the world did you come here?" asked he.

"I am your prisoner."

"My pris-on-er! It is not possible. How does that happen?"

"I am indeed. See for yourself." He handed to the commandant the letter from the king, and related his story.

"Hem, he," said the commandant. "That is strange. 'Old Fritz' isn't usually so severe. But," continued he, laying down the letter which he had looked at on all sides, "if that is really so let us first have a glass for old friendship's sake."

They seated themselves, drank several glasses of wine, and related some of their war experiences. The old prisoner had almost forgotten his condition, when, finally, the royal letter occurred to the commandant. "Now we will see what the old man writes" said he, while he opened the letter and read. Then he handed it to his old comrade, saying: "Yes, that is something different. You are not my prisoner, but commandant, the new commandant of Spandau."

And so it was. The great king had nobly revenged himself. The man who had been guilty of wrong to royalty he had made, instead of a prisoner, commandant of the fortress of Spandau; and the old commandant, who had often requested it, he placed on the retired list.

The new commandant had scarcely become conscious of his good fortune, when a servant entered the room and announced a woman with three children, who wished urgently to speak to the commandant.

"Now," said the old commandant to the new, "it is yours to command whether you will allow them or not."

"Do as you will," said he. "As yet no one knows of the change."

Immediately the woman rushed weeping into the room, and threw herself at the feet of the cripple.

"O father," cried she. "That for the sake of these few miserable thalers you should make us so unhappy!"

It took a long time to quiet her and convince her of the condition of affairs.

And then she, in her turn told how a messenger brought her thirty thalers, with an order from the king to take the money and use it to go immediately to Spandau, how then she had heard for the first time of the connection with the placard affair, and how she had come to the fate of her husband.

And she lay on his breast, and a ray of the golden setting sun fell upon the happiest people ever surrounded by the walls of Spandau.

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