

ROYAL PRISONERS.

II.—VICTOR AMADEUS, FIRST KING OF SARDINIA.



VICTOR AMADEUS, second Duke of Savoy and first King of Sardinia, began to play the part of a man while he was still a boy. When only fifteen years of age, his mother, whose great wish was to see her son a king, informed him that it was necessary to choose a princess to share with him the dukedom of Savoy. "Very well," was his reply, "which shall I take?"

"The Princess of Portugal," said his mother, "for her dowry will be the promise of the crown of that kingdom."

"Then I will make immediate overtures for her hand," rejoined Victor.

Ambassadors were accordingly sent to Portugal for that purpose. The news soon spread that such an alliance was about to take place. This gave great uneasiness to the duke's subjects, and they clamoured loudly against it, for they had no wish that their own country should become merely an appendage to Portugal; so whenever Victor rode abroad he was greeted with murmurs, cries, and shouts of disapproval. The noblemen were quite as averse to the match as the common people, and met in consultation as to what measures they should adopt to break it off. A deputation of the most influential waited upon Victor to reason with him on his folly, telling him he would most assuredly lose the love and allegiance of his people if he persisted in it. They were already discontented, they said, and it needed but a spark to kindle the discontent into an open flame of rebellion; that it would be wise in him to reflect before he committed himself further; urged him to imprison his mother for her injudicious advice, and much more to the same point.

Victor listened very calmly to everything the noblemen urged, and in reply said, that their reasoning had convinced him of the imprudence of the step he had taken; that he should be very sorry to do anything that would alienate the affections of his subjects. The fault was not his; his mother was more to blame for having first advised him to such a course. Finding the match was so distasteful, he would immediately recall his ambassadors, and to show he was in earnest, he said he would that

very instant sign an order for his mother's imprisonment.

This he did, and the noblemen retired satisfied, even congratulated each other on the good result of their mission. Meanwhile, Victor walked quietly into his mother's apartments, and said, in the ordinary tones of his voice, as though communicating a piece of every-day news of no particular importance:—

"Mother, I have just signed the order for your imprisonment."

"My imprisonment!" was the astonished cry.

"Yes," replied Victor, calmly; "for I am convinced that your advice respecting the Princess of Portugal was bad, and my subjects will not be satisfied unless I make an example of you; it is the only course I can adopt to quiet them."

Leaving the poor woman overwhelmed with distress at the prospect of her unmerited fate, this singular son went to his own room, and there signed another order for the imprisonment of those nobles who had waited upon him, dared to reason with him upon his conduct, and counsel the captivity of his mother.

This was the first public act of Victor Amadeus, and the boy capable of performing it gave promise of turning out no ordinary man, a promise his after career amply fulfilled. He became one of the most remarkable men of the age in which he lived, and he was a conspicuous figure in all the Continental wars and intrigues of the time. He was not a faultless hero, for no one could wholly trust him; but he was a brave soldier, a valiant, skilful, and able commander. There was no war in which he did not take part, now reaping success and now suffering reverse; at one time he lost nearly the whole of his kingdom, and then, by a series of brilliant exploits, won it all back again. He seemed never contented unless at the head of an army fighting on the Rhine, in France, or on his own territory. No war was perfect, no political intrigue perfect, unless he had a share in it. He became a nephew of Louis XIV., but fought the armies of the French king and besieged Toulon; he became father-in-law to Philip V. of Spain, but that did not prevent his intriguing against him. For many years he proved himself to be one of the most active and restless of spirits, yet withal shrewd and clever, and in every transaction, whether of war or intrigue, showed he had an eye to his own interests. The result of all was that in 1713 he became King of Sicily, which kingdom he ex-

changed for that of Sardinia in 1720, of which he became the first king. By this time he had had enough of wars, and came to the determination to stay at home and rule his own people. This he accordingly did, and for ten years was the most popular of kings. His subjects loved him, for if he ruled them with a high hand, it was for the most part wisely and well.

Many times during his remarkable career King Victor had astonished his people; but perhaps never more so than when, in the year 1730, he expressed a wish to resign his crown, and retire into the peacefulness of private life. Glorious as had been his career, he had yet suffered from many sorrows. His favourite son had died from the small-pox, even though astrologers had assured him the stars foretold his recovery; his queen was dead; he was wearied with the cares, burdens, and greatness of a king; he wished to throw off the responsibilities of so high an office; he sighed for the ease, freedom, and quiet of a humbler station.

The day on which the abdication was to be made arrived, and the ceremony was one of great pomp and splendour, doubtless recalling to the minds of the actors present that other and more splendid abdication scene when Charles V., Emperor of Germany, resigned his crown in favour of his son Philip. It was held in the great hall of the Castle of Rivoli, on September 3rd, 1730. There, seated upon his throne, was King Victor; near him stood the male princes of his family, and by them the ministers and nobles of the realm, arrayed in all the splendour of their court robes; every tongue silent, and all eyes fixed expectantly upon the chief actor in the scene. Not a sound was heard when the old king rose to speak. With the solemnity and dignity befitting the occasion, he requested all present to listen to the words he was about to utter. He said he was growing old, and not so well able to bear the burdens of royalty as in his younger and maturer years; it needed a firmer hand than his at the helm of affairs; he had suffered many sorrows, borne many cares; he would soon have to stand at a tribunal where kings were judged as men, and before that day came he needed time for reflection, and that time he could not secure while he continued their king; he would therefore remove the crown from his own head and place it upon the brow of one more able to bear its weight. The Act of Abdication was then read, by which the crown was made over to his son Charles Emmanuel. Descending from his seat, Victor conducted his son to the throne, and kneeling down, kissed his hand, and was the first to hail him king; he then stood on one side while the ministers and noblemen present paid homage to the

new monarch. When this ceremony ended, he gave his son some shrewd, practical advice on the management of the affairs of the kingdom. The assembly then broke up, and Victor was king no longer, but simply Count of Tenda, and as such he was introduced to the new queen. On the following day he was escorted by his son some distance on the way to Chambéry, which town he had selected for his retirement. When the news reached Chambéry of the approach of the ex-king and his wife (for Victor had married a second time), the authorities hastily donned their official robes and hurried to the gates to give them a suitable reception. When he saw them, he said, "Gentlemen, I come among you as a simple citizen; will you bid me welcome under that name?"

The ex-king had taken care to be amply provided with the means necessary for living comfortably in his retirement. He had secured for himself and wife a large annuity, besides carrying with him to his new residence gold and jewels to the value of several millions of francs. He lived in true citizen style, having but one carriage and a single pair of horses; he would allow no sentinel to stand at his door, and contented himself with a *valet* and six other men and women servants. With the cares of a king he put away also the ceremonies and state. His son frequently came to consult him on the affairs of the kingdom, sometimes even sleeping in his father's castle; and on one occasion both king and ex-king had to spring hastily from their respective beds and rush from their rooms to save themselves from being burnt alive, a fire having broken out in the middle of the night.

Still, Victor was not happy, for his countess was ambitious and wanted to be queen, and she determined he should have no peace until he promised to return to Turin and resume the throne he had vacated. Many were the conversations between the stout old man and his countess on this question. Victor seemed resolved not to yield; the countess equally resolved to carry her point. She assailed him daily with fresh arguments and continued reproaches; she made his life miserable; until he at length yielded a reluctant consent to her wishes, and promised to resume his voluntarily resigned crown.

Now it so happened that while the last of these exciting conversations were being held, a young priest, named Michon, overheard it. He determined to convey the intelligence of his father's intention to the king himself, and set out immediately for the capital for that purpose. The king, however, was not there, and he was compelled to go on to Evian to find him. The news so alarmed the king that he instantly mounted his

horse, and making for the Pass of Little St. Bernard, galloped full speed for Turin. At the very same time Victor Amadeus was posting all haste over Mont Cenis for the same destination. It was a race for a crown between father and son, and the winning of it seemed to depend upon who should first arrive at the capital. The younger man won the race; and when the two met face to face, Victor could not utter a word in explanation of his extraordinary conduct, further than saying, "I required a change. The air of Savoy is bad, and I am ill in health."

"Your majesty," said the son, "shall enjoy change of air in my castle of Moncalieri." And thither, in due time, Victor and his countess were sent.

Baffled in attaining their purpose, the ex-king and his lady were more unhappy and discontented than before, and they resolved on a bolder stroke to secure their ends. Victor sent for the chief minister, and commanded him to surrender the deed of abdication. "Certainly, your majesty," was the minister's reply, and withdrew, as he said, to obtain it. Instead, however, of doing this, he went and roused the king from his sleep and informed him of his father's demand.

A council was immediately summoned, and Charles Emmanuel said, "If my ministry and council approve, I am prepared to obey my father's wishes." The various members of the council looked into each other's eyes, and knew not what to say, until the Archbishop Gattinara boldly denounced the idea, and counselled the speedy arrest of Victor and his countess. The king burst into tears, but signed the order for his father's imprisonment, and delivered it into the hands of the Marquis of Orinea.

While the council was being held Victor had not remained idle. Mounting his horse, he rode to the citadel of Turin, ordering the officer in command to deliver to him the keys of that fortress. The commander respectfully and, at the same time, very positively refused, unless ordered to do so by the king. This threw Victor into a violent passion, and turning his horse's head, he galloped back to Moncalieri.

In the middle of the following night the castle of Moncalieri was surrounded by troops, both horse and foot. Every avenue of escape was carefully guarded. Four officers made their way to Victor's chamber to arrest him. Finding him and the countess sound asleep, they first of all secured his sword, for they well knew what a terribly passionate man he was, and how unwise it would be to leave any offensive weapon near his hand. The countess awoke on hearing footsteps in the room, and commenced screaming; it was in vain

for the officers to assure her no harm was intended; she was deaf to all reason, and continued her screams. So, to still her cries, and make short work of the affair, they rolled her up in the coverlid of the bed, and carried her into another room, where she might scream at her leisure. She was subsequently examined, and sent to a nunnery to be out of harm's way.

Victor was a very heavy sleeper, and all the screaming of his countess did not awake him, so the four officers proceeded to shake him and pull him about, but it required several minutes of even these rough means to make him open his eyes; when he did so, he turned over on his back and stared about him, altogether unconscious of what was going on, then shut his eyes and went off to sleep again. There was more rough shaking and pulling before he could be induced to awake a second time; now he sat up and yawned, but seeing that one of the officers held his sword, he began dimly to perceive that something extraordinary was going on. He looked from one to another of his four visitors, and inquired what their presence meant at so unreasonable an hour. Their news thoroughly aroused him, and, as usual, he fell into a violent fit of fury; he declared that he would neither listen to them nor move from where he was. His captors first entreated him to go with them quietly, then commanded him; but finding entreaties and commands alike unavailing, they rolled him up in a blanket, and without further ceremony bore him off. What an ignominious position for a hero who had made his name feared all over Europe, and had beaten some of the most famous generals of his day—to be rolled up in a blanket and taken prisoner! Victor had one hope of escape; he knew the soldiers whom he had so frequently led to battle and victory loved him, and if he appealed to them they would surely re-capture him, and not allow him to suffer the degradation of imprisonment. As he was borne past murmurs were heard, and symptoms of open mutiny appeared among the troops. Their colonel commanded instant silence, on pain of death, and then ordered the drums to beat; this effectually stifled the voice of the prisoner, who was borne helplessly along, thrust into a carriage, and driven off to the castle of Rivoli.

Victor was not a patient man, and did not bear his imprisonment with the calmness which other and greater men have done. He gave way to such violent fits of fury that he seemed almost a madman; his keepers feared to approach him, so great was his strength during these paroxysms of rage. On one occasion, with a single blow of his fist he cracked a marble table which stood in his room.

This same tale was long exhibited to sightseers as a proof of the old man's power. His son did not prove himself a generous foe. He made his father's imprisonment needlessly severe and harsh; he was watched day and night; some eye was continually upon him, noting his every action; some ear always open to hear what he said during those unguarded moments when he spoke aloud; his servants were taken from him; and he was allowed no communication with his countess, who was in close confinement at a place called Ceva. By degrees, however, reports of the severity of his imprisonment spread abroad, and the principal kings of Europe interceded for him; but his son disregarded this interference, and published a paper defending his conduct,

Gradually the fury of the imprisoned Victor subsided; he became silent, moody and melancholy. He would sit whole days speechless; then his health began to give way, and his condition

became pitiable indeed. Now he was treated with more respect, but the vigilance of his keepers was as close as ever. His countess, who had been the cause of all his misery, was at length allowed to share his confinement, and with her and his books he tried to solace the weary hours; but his health rapidly failed, and those who guarded him knew the end could not be far off. He himself felt he was dying, and wishing to be reconciled to his son, sent for him to come and see him. The son, however, declined to see his father, and sent affectionate messages instead. The old man cried when his son's refusal was communicated to him.

The last months of his captivity were spent at Moncalieri; there he died on the last day of October, 1732. The father had given a crown to his son; the son, in exchange, had given a prison to his father; and the man who in his boyhood had imprisoned his own mother, in his old age died himself a prisoner.



THE SEA.



H, the rollicking, frolicking, glorious sea—
The mad, the merry, the wild, the free!
When it roars with passion or laughs for glee,
I love the sea!

When the shoreward lip of the restless thing
Gulps in the seaweed, and, light of wing,
Down come the sea-gulls hovering,
I love the sea!

When every ripple is glittering bright
As folds in a woof of golden light,
Or it gleams like one clear chrysolite,
I love the sea!

When, like a second blue heaven, it girds
The world, and the white-winged ocean birds
Lean lovingly o'er it, beyond all words
I love the sea!

Or when on a sudden the gale awakes
The liquid stillness, until it breaks
Into a thousand snow-white flakes,
I love the sea!

When into a terrible fury wrought,
The strange fierce creature, once free as thought,
Is tight in the storm-king's clutches caught,
I love the sea!

When, breaking loose in its awful might,
It climbs in curling summits white,
Or delves in graves as black as night,
I love the sea!

When raving, roaring, rolling o'er,
It breaks in thunder on the shore,
I love it then and evermore—
The cruel sea!