

to those of the maidens. The men removed the chairs, and Waldrich, *volens volens*, must make himself content to relate the tale as he had heard it from the old hunter.

Accordingly he, in some measure, prepared himself, and commenced the relation of the tale as well as he could in an extemporaneous manner—

THE TALE.

It is now more than two hundred years,—began Waldrich—since the commencement of the Thirty Year's War; and the Count Frederick had taken the crown from the Royal Bohemian. The Emperor, the Count of Bavaria, and the highest noblemen of the Catholic Netherlands, arose to retake the crown. The most important and decisive conflict between them was fought on the White Mountain, near Prague, and the Count lost his battle and his crown. The news flew about from mouth to mouth in Germany like a whirlwind. All the Catholic States rejoiced over the downfall of poor Frederick, who had sat on his throne only a few months, and his memory was cherished henceforth by the people, under the sobriquet of the "Winter King." It was known that with a small suite he fled from Prague, in disguise. Our beloved ancestors in Herbesheim, two hundred years ago, knew this. They, always fond of the news of the state and country, gossiped, as we their worthy descendants do; but they were moreover—I dare not say, more religious—but, more superstitious and fanatical. Their joy at the overthrow and flight of the Winter King was as great and as violent with them, as was the joy with us some years since, at the overthrow and flight of the Emperor Napoleon.

Three young girls one day at this time, were together, talking about the Winter King. They were all three handsome; and each had a bridegroom. One was called Veronien, another Franziska, and the third, Jacoba.

"We ought not to let the King of Heresy escape from Germany," said Veronien; "as long as he lives, the monster of Luther will live, and his progress will not be stayed."

"Yes," cried Franziska, "and to the person who rides the world of this monster, there is decreed a reward from the Emperor, from the Count of Bavaria, from all the holy church, and from the Pope. He has also a reward to expect from heaven."

"I wish!" cried Jacoba, "he would come into our state—oh! how I wish it! He must die by the hand of my lover, who would at least have an earldom for his reward."

"It is questionable," said Veronien, "whether your lover would ever become an earl. He has

not the heart to do so heroic a deed. As for my lover, if I but winked at him, he would slay the Winter King, and then the earldom would slip by your nose."

"Do not make your champions quite so brave," said Franziska; "my lover is the most valiant yet. Has he not already been a Captain in the War? And if I ordered him, he would go and pull the Grand Turk from his throne. Do not therefore flatter yourselves so much on the earldom."

While the young ladies were still quarrelling about the prospective earldom, a violent trampling of horses' feet was heard in the street, leading from the city gate. All three immediately ran to the window. It was horrible weather out of doors—the rain poured in torrents into the streets from the roofs and eaves—while a storm of wind drove floods of rain against the houses and windows.

"God take pity on them!" cried Jacoba. "Whoever is out in such weather as this, certainly travels not for pleasure."

"The wildest necessity compels them," said Veronien.

"Or an evil conscience," rejoined Franziska.

Immediately opposite them, in front of the Dragon Inn, stopped thirteen knights on horseback, who hastily dismounted. Twelve remained by their horses, while the thirteenth, clothed entirely in white, quietly entered the inn. The host soon came out with his servants, who put the horses in the stable, and the knights entered the inn. Notwithstanding the rain, the people assembled in the street to see the stranger knights and their horses. The handsome horse bearing the White Knight attracted universal attention; it was a snow-white steed, magnificently caparisoned.

"If that should be the Winter King!" exclaimed the young ladies, withdrawing themselves from the window, and fixedly regarding each other with doubtful eyes.

A noise was now heard on the stairs, and the three bridegrooms of the young girls entered.

"Does my fair mistress know," said one, "that the flying Winter King is within our walls?"

"There might be a capture made," said another.

"Anxiety causes the heavy, haggard pallor of his countenance," said the third.

A slight shudder passed over the maidens. They gazed at each other with astonishment; it was as though they conversed by looks, and understood each other. Suddenly together they raised their hands, and exclaimed: