

laughed aloud as I welcomed them to my house, and hoped that my people would do all in their power to make their stay agreeable. 'Very fine, young gentleman,' said my uncle springing from his sleigh. 'But I must spoil all your vain glorious speeches by informing you that I am master here. The law has made me your guardian; and it is your duty to submit yourself quietly to my authority.' I was thunderstruck by this address. Defiance was in my very heart; but I was too young to give it utterance. I shrunk back into the hall of the castle, mine by right of inheritance, but mine no longer, and sought in silence the solitude of my own chamber. I sank down upon the easy chair once occupied by my father. A sense of my own helplessness pressed so powerfully upon my heart, that I bowed my head upon the table, and wept bitterly. Years of future misery passed in dim review before me. I seemed to realize, in anticipation, all that has since befallen me. Whilst still indulging in these sad forebodings, a domestic entered, and very coldly told me that the Count had sent him to tell me, that supper was upon the table, and that my presence was required. 'Tell Eric Christenstien,' I cried, 'that Count Fredwald will be there to take the head of his own table.'

"The man smiled contemptuously as he withdrew.

"Yes, that fellow who had been born and brought up within the castle, a vassal of my father's—the son of a vassal—who but a few hours before had been all servility, could now laugh in my face. I longed for the strength of a giant, to spurn him from my presence.

"Slowly and moodily I descended the staircase. Crossing the great hall, I encountered the old Lutheran priest. He seized my arm and drew me into a recess. 'Fredwald,' he said in a low voice, 'I am ordered to leave the castle this evening. In parting with me you part with your only friend: but take my advice, and follow it consistently, and you may remain safe in the midst of danger. Submit yourself quietly to your uncle's authority. It is death to resist it. He has with him letters from the king, investing him with the title and estates which belong by right to you. He has bribed several of the old servants to whom your father paid little attention, to prove his insanity. This malady, they affirm, has descended to his son; and that he is in no way qualified to govern his own affairs. Your uncle, now Count Christenstien, has been appointed your natural guardian; and all that was once yours has passed into his hands.

"'Patience, my dear boy!' he cried, seeing me clench my hands with vehement indignation. 'Opposition is useless. Craft can only be subdued

by superior wisdom. I know your uncle well. He once loved your father. His wife and mother have persuaded him to this deed of injustice. His own heart already reproaches him; he will offer no violence to your person as long as you remain passive in his hands. Nay, he will even protect and befriend you from the tyrannical temper of his mother; but if you ever wish to regain your own, appear to strangers what they say you are—mad.

"When you arrive at manhood and are able to control your own actions, seek the throne. Fling yourself at the feet of the king—tell your sad story, with all the natural pathos of injured innocence. He is a good man, and you will not plead in vain. Have you attended to what I say?' I bowed in acquiescence. My heart was too full to speak. I was humbled and degraded in my own eyes. 'Now farewell!' he cried. 'Earth frowns upon you, and her minions will follow the example of their idol; but heaven and its angels smile upon you. In the hour of adversity, seek God. The inheritance which he offers to you, no earthly monarch can wrest from you. May his arm protect, may his blessing be upon you?'

"He folded me to his heart. The tears I shed upon his bosom relieved the fire that was burning in my soul. I felt that there was one heart faithful to me still; and I entered the room in which my relations were assembled with a firm step and composed air.

"I bowed to my aunt and uncle, who were seated at the head of the board, and took a seat at the lower end of the table. My uncle seemed surprised, and motioned me to his right hand. 'I prefer the seat I have chosen,' I returned gaily. 'Mine, you know, will always be the place of honour.'

"As I said this I met the large, cold blue eyes of my grandmother. She regarded me with a scrutinizing gaze. My blood seemed to freeze beneath that cruel, unfeeling stare. She turned from me, and with a knowing look at her son, said in a half whisper: 'There was little need of deception. The lad is clever; but he is mad.' Then addressing me with a studied mildness, she inquired, in the most indelicate manner, how my father died; and entered into the most minute particulars, until my whole frame quivered with agony, and tears, in spite of every effort to restrain them, forced themselves from my eyes.

"Recovering myself from this natural but ill-timed exhibition of feeling, I met the tender, mournful gaze of the sweetest eyes that ever shed light upon the dark and troubled soul of man. A young girl of fourteen had just glided into the room, and that moment stood behind my grandmother's chair, regarding me with an expression of the most affectionate interest. To one brought