

the forest, he stopped before an antique tower, and rapped with the hilt of his dagger against a low Gothic door.

The summons remained unanswered, though three times repeated, and the monarch's patience being exhausted, he boldly entered a long narrow passage, feebly illuminated by a solitary lamp; which hung suspended over a steep dark staircase, up which the page glided with noiseless steps, and pausing on the first landing, he laid his finger on his lip, and beckoned the king to follow him.

#### CHAPTER V.

"The moment comes!"

It is already here—when thou must write  
The absolute total of thy life's vast sum."

*Wallenstein.*

THE staircase terminated in a room of circular form, round which run a balcony, for the convenience of making astronomical observations. A pair of large folding doors were thrown back, and the pale beams of the moon cast many a way checker on the floor. The apartment was hung with thick black arras, on which the heavenly bodies were rudely emblazoned. There was much to attract the curiosity of a stranger, in this singular domicile, but the eyes of the king were so forcibly arrested by one object, that for some time he could behold no other.

Standing by a huge oak table, which was covered with globes, musty parchments, and mathematical instruments, with her head bent down, and her fair face shaded by her hand, Gustavus discovered the slight figure of Eleonora of Brandenburg. The Countess Aurora was seated on a low pile of cushions, anxiously watching the motions of the astrologer.

He was a tall, dark man, arrayed in a black serge dress, which fell to his feet in ample folds, and was confined round his middle by a broad gold belt, covered with strange cabalistical figures. His back was towards the ladies, and he was busily employed in contemplating the heavenly bodies.

There was something so noble and commanding in the figure of the astrologer, that the king's curiosity was forcibly excited; and wishing to observe more closely the strange scene before him, he stepped behind the arras hangings of the room, through an aperture of which, he could plainly see and hear all that was passing.

"Your majesty is willing to play at bo-peep with the devil," whispered the page; "we have a fair view of his satanic majesty from this spot."

The king followed the eyes of the page, and shrunk back with an involuntary shudder, on per-

ceiving that the torches which lighted the apartment, were held in the bony grasp of a gigantic skeleton.

"Why, your majesty has actually changed colour," said the provoking boy; "the sight of the lean gentleman appears quite familiar to the ladies."

"Hush!" replied the king, ashamed of having betrayed his feelings, and who yet felt a superstitious belief in the science; "my own fate is involved in the answer yon dark figure is about to give the princess."

At the sound of the astrologer's voice, the king started, and after fixing his eyes on him attentively, a smile passed over his lip, and his countenance became composed and serene.

"Maiden," said the necromancer; "I must look at your hand again."

The princess trembled all over, as she placed her slender white fingers in the hand of the astrologer, who continued to trace its delicate lines for some time with fixed attention, then raising his piercing dark eyes, he looked steadily in her varying face.

"Much that is great and excellent is here written in a small compass. Fortune, who smiled upon your birth, never deserts those who are born under her favourite planet. Maiden, you love power, and you will possess it; and will exchange your present high station for one of a yet more exalted nature—Fate, who destined you for a throne, will ere long encircle your brow with a regal diadem."

"Alas!" returned the princess, clasping her hands mournfully together; "thou art a prophet of evil tidings—thy words, which, a few months ago, would have sounded like music to my ears, now fall heavily on my heart, like a funeral knell."

Then hastily advancing to the open balcony, she pointed to the heavens with a look of melancholy enquiry:

"Is there no planet in all yon starry host, propitious to the cause of love?"

The astrologer appeared strangely perplexed—he raised his eyes from the pale brow of the princess, and looked long and earnestly upon the face of night.

"His familiar has certainly deserted him in the most critical moment," said the page; "and now when the lady begins to open her mind, he is at his wit's end—methinks if I were the astrologer, I could solve the queries of the princess."

"In what manner, young malapert?" asked the king.

"In the first place, love has nothing to do with the brain," said the page; "seeing that when a man's in love he cannot make use of his senses, and is consequently out of his wits. Its empire is confined to the heart, which is only a lump of flesh, destitute of reason, and, having no eyes to judge for itself, is apt to receive the most extravagant impres-