

hour—a thief, or a poet? Neither. It was a young girl of ravishing beauty. One of her elbows was supported on a table, over which her elastic and youthful figure was gracefully bending. She was thinking, no doubt, of her lover. But she had been reading :—a smoking lamp threw its light upon a number of the State Gazette : in Poland the women do not confine their thoughts to their lovers.

“Public rumour had in vague terms made her acquainted with the battle of Praga :—and her lover was at Praga ; he was to her as an offering upon the altar of her country. No doubt he had acted in a manner worthy of her ; no doubt he had fought bravely ; and was perhaps wounded—perhaps killed ! This idea flashed through her heart, like lightning through a cloud, and left a pang of dreadful apprehension. She dared not for some time open the paper and read the account of the battle, lest she should find the name of Stanislas among the slain.

“At length she took courage. From the report she found that he had been wounded, during a glorious charge, and that he was sent back to Warsaw to be cured. She should soon see him, then ! Disfigured perhaps ! But how handsome would he then appear in her eyes ! She should press him in her arms to-morrow, and walk with him through the whole city. She read no more. Her mind was wandering in search of her wounded lover, and her meditations were full of delight. The purest patriotism was linked with her love for Stanislas ; and, and at the time when she should unite her fate to his, she trusted her beloved Poland would have effected its divorce from Nicholas. By degrees her long eyelashes closed, and the paper fell from her grasp. She was asleep, and the lamp burnt on, when a Polish soldier entered the room. He was young and handsome, and he was, moreover, wounded. It was Stanislas. He contemplated his sleeping mistress. Her sleep was that of innocence ; her breathing was calm and free, and from her head, a little thrown back, a thick ringlet of auburn hair hung over each cheek. Stanislas, in profound admiration, remained motionless as a statue. A delicately white hand was spread upon the knees of the maiden ; it was the hand which had held the gazette—the left hand, that upon which the wedding ring is always worn.

“A sharp and sudden pang contracted the brow of Stanislas. Upon this naked hand he saw not a ring, which, on leaving Maria, he had given her as a pledge of his affection. He examined the other hand ; but it was not there either. She