

"Great God!" he cried. "The King!"

And, ere we could reach him, he flung the door shut behind him and sprang away, shouting as he did so:

"The King! the King! the King!"

The next instant we were in the corridor, and, Armand in front, were racing toward the wing where her Majesty was imprisoned.

As we turned the corner, the Duke of Lotzen dashed across the hallway and reached the door before us. And now his precaution against the Queen's escape worked to our profit—the door was locked and he had not the key. He turned and faced us.

"Hail! cousin," he said, his blade sweeping up in the salute. "I give you greeting but not a welcome. You come quite too unexpectedly for the latter. You seek her Majesty, I presume?"

"We do," the King answered, halting just out of distance. "Yield yourself, my lord Duke, and await her judgment."

"Not so fast, cousin, not so fast!" was the mocking reply. "You may have entered my palace, but you have not yet rescued the ladies—nor will you, except on my terms. Stay a moment, I pray you, or you sacrifice the Queen. Think you I did not provide for just such a contingency, my dear Armand, knowing the——"

"We have done with talking," the King interrupted curtly. "Yield or die."

"In either of which events, her Majesty dies be-