

they were wet with her streaming tears. The child clung to her agitated sister, weeping also with passionate vehemence—yet she scarcely knew wherefore, till Josepha, hearing the sound of approaching steps, started up with a look of wild terror, exclaiming :

“ He comes for me dearest, farewell—know you not that I go to visit our father’s tomb—my mother commands it—and oh, let your innocent prayers arise for me, when I descend into that gloomy vault—that will be my only kingdom—there shall I soon be laid, and never, no never embrace you thus in health again.

At that instant an attendant came to say Father Stephen awaited her in the corridor, and holding Marie Antoinette for a few moments to her heart, she breathed over her a silent prayer, and consigned her to the care of her women. Then suffering a large cloak to be wrapped around her trembling form, she joined the priest, who conducted her to a private staircase, by which they left the palace, and at the foot of which Prince Kaunnitz, long the able and faithful Prime Minister of Marie Theresa, awaited their appearance. One confidential attendant followed her youthful mistress, and supported her, as speechless and almost motionless, she was placed in the carriage, which stood ready to convey her to her dreaded destination. The Prince, with the kindness and tenderness of a father, strove to soothe her agitation, and arm her with fortitude, while the good father interposed benevolent words, and gentle counsel, to encourage and reassure her. But all their efforts availed nought. Her once buoyant and happy mind had lost its equilibrium—nervous terrors and superstitious dread, assumed the mastery over all calmer and more rational sentiments, and yielding to their sway, she fixed not her mind upon the act of piety which was her ostensible object ; she saw only arrayed before her the funereal gloom of that dismal vault, and all the insignia of death which reigned within its precincts. Each moment, as she drew nearer to the church of the Capuchins, whose dark towers frowned in the distance, her emotion increased, till it became so uncontrollable, that when the carriage at length stopped before its lofty portals, the Prince was obliged to lift her in his arms, and bear her into the vestibule, so utterly had strength and courage forsaken her, in the near prospect of the task she was destined to perform.

Here, as she paused with her companions, to rally her fleeing spirits, a tall figure, wrapped in a military cloak, glided past the group and disappeared in the body of the church. It was so common for persons, at all hours, to enter this sanctuary for the purposes of devotion, that neither Prince Kaunnitz nor the priest regarded the stranger as he passed. But Josepha felt the blood mantle on her before pallid cheek, as with an involuntary start she turned

her head to follow his receding figure—but it was almost instantly lost to her view, when fearful that the gesture might have been remarked, she signified her wish to proceed, and was immediately led by the prince up the principal aisle, towards the high altar of the church. Here she again paused, to pour forth a brief, but soul-felt prayer for guidance and support, after which she arose, and with agony that every instant deepened and concentrated, followed Father Stephen towards the concealed door that led into the sepulchral vaults below. Slowly she moved forward, dreading, to think, yet murmuring inarticulate prayers for the fortitude necessary to sustain her, when she was startled by beholding the same figure which had passed her in the vestibule, standing half concealed in the deep shade of a broad and projecting pillar. The stranger, as if by an involuntary impulse, moved a step forward, when Josepha appeared, and the oblique rays from a distant lamp falling on his person, revealed through the open folds of his cloak, a youthful and noble form, wearing the uniform of the imperial guards, and the decorations of many brilliant orders, among which blazed conspicuous, that of Marie Theresa.

Not all the terrors of the task she was about to perform, had so blanched her cheek, and palsied the energies of her heart, as did the sight of that young and gallant noble who now doffed his plumed hat, and bent in lowly but speechless reverence before her as she passed. She raised one furtive glance of mingled sorrow, tenderness and entreaty to the pale and agitated face that looked with earnest gaze on hers, and then by a painful effort quickened her speed, till she gained the secret door which the priest was preparing to unlock. None save the faithful attendant, on whose arm she at that moment leaned, knew that the young Count Dalmanoff stood within that sanctuary—and no other had marked the recognition which passed between the youthful Queen and this brave and noble soldier of her mother’s guard. The short lived energy which had inspired her after this incident, passed away when she heard the key turning in the massy lock of that fatal door, and saw its hinges unclose to admit her into the dreary abode of death below. The voice of Prince Kaunnitz, uttering words of kind encouragement, as he bade her a short farewell, for a moment recalled her resolution, but again it fled when she found herself descending the steps alone with Father Stephen, and actually penetrating the funereal gloom of that subterranean vault. Then it was that, though her limbs like those of a machine continued to perform their office, the pulses of her heart stood still with dread, and her eyes, fixed and dilated with horror, seemed to behold ghastly shapes beckoning to her from the tomb of her father. Wrought upon by many causes, her naturally superstitious mind, was now wound up to the highest point of endurance, reducing her to that critical