

served to modify the joy which but a moment before had been too much for a being of earth, by mingling with the joyful, the bitter realities of life.

CHAPTER XXII.

MANY were the schemes proposed, and abandoned by Gustavus de Lindendorf and the bandit Rodolpho, for wresting the Lady Isabella from the power of St. Maury. Rodolpho well knew that the power of St. Maury was far greater than his own, that his retreat had hitherto been inaccessible to his foes, and gladly would he have aided in the suppression of one, whom he had long envied, had not his reason whispered that the attempt would be in vain. When, therefore, Gustavus proposed that he should collect together all the band, and seeking the retreat of St. Maury, compel him to resign his lovely captive, Rodolpho refused to comply, urging the watchful vigilance which had long sought to ensnare him, and the almost certainty of falling into the power of his enemies, which would result from such rashness, and Gustavus convinced even against his inclination that the bandit was right, and uncertain what course to follow, bade his friend adieu, and set out on his return to Lindendorf, for he feared his parents might return before him, and he knew not, in what manner to account for his long absence from the castle. And well it was for him that he did so, for he had but just entered and expressed his wish to the domestics, that no mention might be made to his parents of his long absence, ere the trampling of horses was heard, and the baron and baroness, rode into the court yard.

Gustavus sprang to greet his parents with much apparent joy, although in his heart he regretted their coming, for he knew that their presence would interfere with any plan he might devise for the recovery of Isabella; but disguising his real feelings under a smile of pleasure, he began a lively discourse, relating to their late visit.

"Aye! but I have joyful intelligence to impart," suddenly exclaimed the baron: "Decisive measures are being taken to destroy the dreadful scourge which has long infested our land, the bandit of the Black Forest."

The heart of Gustavus beat quickly, but suppressing all emotion, he merely inquired:

"Ah! and how is that?"

"Well, I only know that a powerful force is going out against him, with the full resolve to destroy him, or perish in the attempt, and as he may not know of their coming, I trust he may

fall into their power! Oh! how shall I rejoice to know that from those men of guilt and blood, we have no longer ought to fear! When we can lay us down in peace, nor tremble, least before another morn, a horrid death await us!"

By many well-timed inquiries, Gustavus sought to learn more; but the baron had told all he knew; and soon after, the son withdrew from the presence of his parents, and sought the solitude of his own room.

Throwing himself into the nearest seat, he remained for some time, lost in thought, then starting up, he cried:

"Yes, I must save him! should I refuse to do so now, he will think it is because he refused to aid me in the recovery of Isabella, and if he should succeed in driving back his foes, then, regarding our treaty as broken, Lindendorf will become his prey, and from his fury we have much to fear; should he fall into their hands, might he not betray me? Yes, I am in his power, and come what may, I must save him!"

He heard not a stealthy step, not many moments after, glide softly from the door, and knew not that what he had uttered in communion with himself, had fallen on the ears of one, who, for long years had been his secret, but determined foe. A brother of him, who, in his early youth, Gustavus had sought for some slight offence to slay, and who was now a follower of St. Maury. The vengeance of the brother against his young lord had never slept; but he sought a revenge, deeper still than raising his hand against his life, a revenge which should cover with ignominy the name of the young heir of Lindendorf, and this he doubted not, the reckless course of Gustavus would afford him. He had long suspected that Gustavus was secretly leagued in some course of guilt, and the sparing of Lindendorf, when far more distant castles had fallen beneath their power, had led him to suspect the truth, that Gustavus de Lindendorf had, by some means, gained the friendship of Rodolpho the bandit.

By one of those fortunate incidents, which often occur, he had over-heard the remarks of the baron, and lingering near, he had seen Gustavus retire from the presence of his parents much sooner than was his wont, and with the hope, rather than the expectation, that he might learn the secret which he believed was hidden in his young master's heart, he had cautiously followed, and by listening at his door, had learned enough to place the safety of Gustavus de Lindendorf in his hands.

Returning hastily, he gained the servant's hall, and touching lightly the arm of one of his fellows, (one who had recently received a blow from the