

of yielding the contest with his life, when Prince George, heading a party of soldiers, and guided by the page, burst upon the scene.

The assassins, perceiving their murderous designs frustrated, flung down their weapons and precipitately fled; and Gustavus, wiping the moisture from his brow, turned with a cheerful air to thank his preservers. His eyes fell on the pale corpse of Zuski—the words died upon his lips—he pressed the cold hand of the gallant Pole silently to his breast, and walked to the balcony to conceal the overflowings of his heart.

Prince George observed his emotion; it surprised him; but he forbore to make any remark, but shaking the king heartily by the hand, congratulated him on his safety.

“Your page broke upon my slumbers, and roused me from imaginary battles to fight in good earnest. I have gained my first victory without much bloodshed—the cowards were soon put to flight. Believe me, noble count, I feel most happy in being able to evince the gratitude I owe you for the preservation of my sister’s life.

“Oh, name it not now,” said the king; “my silence at this moment, must express what words cannot.”

“But, my dear Dahl! how came you hither, and engaged in this desperate fray?”

“Tomorrow, I will explain every thing—I shall not fail to give a satisfactory account of my actions; but tonight I must enjoin silence.”

Then mournfully regarding the dead body of the gallant Pole, he said:

“Does your highness remember that face?”

“No,” returned the prince, glancing on the manly figure that lay extended before him; “it is one of uncommon beauty.”

“It is the astrologer, who read your destiny—the bandit of the forest—and to sum up all, the brave and unfortunate General Zuski. He died for me.”

The king turned away deeply affected, while the prince, who possessed a good heart and kindly disposition, was sensibly moved by the anguish which was depicted on the king’s countenance.

“Count Dahl!” he said; “this brave man deserved a better fate, for the service he rendered you this night, he shall be interred with military honours, due to his high station and distinguished name; while, acquitting him of crime, we will learn to consider him not guilty but unfortunate.”

The king warmly expressed his thanks to the prince for his generous offer, and taking off his cloak, he threw it over the body of his departed friend; and accepting the arm of the prince, they returned together to the palace. The topic of their conversation is unknown, but at parting, the latter kissed the king’s hand, and laid his finger on his lips in token of secrecy.

CHAPTER VI.

Oh! Clifford what are halls, and towers,
Or coronets, to me?

Far happier if with wilding flowers,
My hair were wreathed by thee.

Agnes Strickland’s Seven Ages of Woman.

UNCONSCIOUS that Gustavus had witnessed the perturbation of her feelings, on leaving the astrologer’s tower; the princess, with no small degree of alarm, found herself once more in the dark avenue of linden trees, and under the canopy of heaven.

Her courage had fled and every sound startled her; the sighing of the night breeze among the boughs, the distant murmurs from the river, spoke to her heart in the chilling tones of fear; her fortitude forsook her, and she wept unceasingly.

The Countess led her with difficulty to one of the seats erected under the trees, for the benefit of the citizens; and entreated her to calm the agitation of her mind, and consider the dangers to which their situation exposed them, and the absolute necessity of a speedy return to the palace. As she finished speaking, the bells from every steeple tolled the hour of three, and faint streaks of light were already visible in the east.

The Princess made a desperate effort to rise, but sank back weeping on the bosom of her companion, who started as his eye fell on the wan and deathlike expression of her countenance, and she used the very argument to restore her drooping spirits against which she had combatted so unsuccessfully a few hours before.

“I beseech your highness,” she said, “to calm the agitation that convulses your whole frame. The astrologer may not be correct in his calculations—remember your promise to the count; many things may happen in that interview, to render your projected alliance with the Swedish monarch less dreadful in your eyes.”

“I care not for the astrologer’s prediction,” returned the princess, “but a strange presentiment of coming ill presses upon my mind, and weighs down my spirits. It is an unusual feeling, and one which I cannot subdue. I wish I could look forward into the dark future, and see what the coming hour will bring forth.”

“Hark! I hear steps approaching towards us from the astrologer’s tower,” said the countess, “let us begone!”

Both ladies rose as a cavalier traversing the dark avenue with rapid steps advanced to the spot where they stood. His was the gay elastic step of youth, the flying mantle, and the sword tossed carelessly from hand to hand, which proclaimed a heart at rest, and spirits naturally free and buoyant, as if to drive care and sorrow far from his solitary path. He sang in a clear joyous voice, a song which had often been ap-