

genius whom the world brands as a madman. For my part, I am proud of the title when it is conferred upon me by fools."

"The young men looked at each other.

"You see I was right," said Adolphus. "There is nothing provokes his malady so much as being reminded of it. Go to your room, Fredwald," he continued, haughtily waving his hand. "You are not well to-night."

"My disease is not of the head, but of the heart, gentlemen," said I, bowing to them as I quitted the room. "I am sick of the treachery of wicked men. Let them enjoy the present. A day of retribution is at hand—and that day is mine."

"A loud insulting laugh from my cousin followed my retreating footsteps. God! how I wished to return and plunge a dagger into his heart; it was not prudence that restrained my hand, but the hope of a more terrible revenge.

"I sought my lonely tower, and without undressing, threw myself upon my bed. The sound of music and revelry floated up from the open windows beneath; I sprang to the casement and listened. Yes, there was the angelic voice of Christiann, accompanied by the manly tones of Count I——; fine bass. Why had I absented myself at my cousin's imperious command? I cursed my folly; my bosom was racked with the most tormenting jealousy; I gnawed my fingers in despair, until a verse from the ballad they were singing fell distinctly upon my ear, and shed a terrible calm through my mind:

"The rock has a brow,
The rapid stream, a tide;
There's an arrow in the bow
Of vengeance at thy side."

"Thank thee, Christiann, for that stave," I cried. "The bow is ready. The arrow is sharpened by the hand of the avenger; it only requires a firm heart, and a sure eye to launch it from the string. We cannot live in the same house together. Either he or I must die!"

"When the idea of murder is first formed in the heart of man, the soul naturally shrinks back from it, as an awful, unforgivable, terrible thing. The longer the dreadful thought is indulged, the more possible the perpetration of it becomes; the less startled are we by the frightful consequences which may accrue. The earth, which never covers long a deed of blood, may be bribed to conceal it for us. Our plans shall be laid so deep, so wary will we be in the execution of them that we shall be sure to succeed. To sleep while the enemy of souls was whispering such damnable suggestions in my ears, was impossible. I rose, and silently and cautiously descending the stairs,

crossed the hall and sought the stables. It was yet early in the night. The light had not yet left our northern heavens, and I found Christian in the stable, busy with his hounds.

"Oscar! Odin! Helza! down with you scamps! One would think that I was a deer and you all wanted to worry me at once. Ha! my young lord! are you there. What say you to a run among the hills with the hounds to-morrow. I warrant that you'll have better luck than the master, conceited as he is about his skill in the chase."

"To-morrow will not do for the game I have in view," I said. "The coast must be clear—these fine court gentlemen gone, Christian, before you and I hunt together."

"Speak out boldly," said he. "I am not a good hand at interpreting parables. I shall not betray confidence."

"Encouraged by his frankness, I poured out my tale of wrongs into his attentive ear; and then calmly asked him how they could be redressed.

"There is but one way," said he, musing; "but we must wait our opportunity and be cautious. You know that terrible precipice among the hills, that you call the Descent of Odin?"

"I do."

"A narrow path leads round it to the other side. A path so frail and slippery, that one false step would hurl you a thousand feet below. No human being ever fathomed that abyss, and returned to upper air to tell the wonders which he saw beneath. The next time we hunt with Count Adolphus, our path shall lie along that ridge. It is not new to him; often have we trod that path before; and he, exulting in his strong nerves and active form, has sprung along its perilous and dizzy height, with such a fearless and joyous air, that even I, an old hunter, have stood still and watched him with admiration."

"Well," said I, impatiently; "give me an account of his prowess some other time. What is it that you intend to gain by leading us round that fearful precipice?"

"Are you so dull of comprehension, my lord? One slight push sends him headlong into that fathomless grave. Who shall pull him up from that dread chasm to prove it upon us? Neither stain of blood nor shred of garment can be obtained to witness against us, if we are wise enough to keep our own secret."

"He will be missing," said I, "and suspicion will fall upon us."

"Not if we both return to the castle, and give the alarm that we have lost him among the hills, and call out all the people to assist in the search; they may suspect, but they cannot prove us guilt-