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THE ROYAL ELECTION.

A TALE OF THE OLDEN TIMES—BORROWED FROM THE EARLY HISTORY OF POLAND

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*Continued from our last Number.—Conclusion*

CHAPTER VIII.

THE glance of eager regard, which passed between the Princess and her humble admirer, neither escaped the jester nor the jealous noble, who sat beside her. In the breast of the one it awoke a thousand painful apprehensions for his beautiful but imprudent mistress, in that of the other it gave rise to a torrent of the darkest and most malignant passion. His love was converted into bitter hatred, and he vowed vengeance upon both. Leaving the palace of the Weyvode, he hurried home, to give vent, in the solitude of his own chamber, to the phrenzy which possessed him.

"Yes, it is true!" he cried, pacing the room with hurried steps; "I suspected it yesterday—I know it today. She loves him—dares to love him—to prefer him to my very face. This serf—this black-smoor. Oh, I could die with rage—but no—I will live to see them die. The fools—the brainless idiots—do they imagine they can deceive me? My hour is coming—their hours are already numbered. What ho! Ivan—who waits there?"

His summons was answered by the same man to whom Lechus had sold the spikes.

"Hark you! did you execute my commands?"

"I did, my lord."

"Of whom did you purchase them?"

"Of a poor young blacksmith without the city."

"What tempted you to do that?" said Lord Lechus, with a frown.

"I thought it less likely to awaken suspicion."

"Confound you for a fool! what business had you to think? That man will betray us!"

"Impossible, my lord!" said the terrified Ivan; "he does not know aught of the purpose to which they have been applied."

"I tell thee, he knows every thing. That man's the devil! Hark you, Ivan—he must be put to silence. Take six stout men at arms, surround his forge, and despatch him. If six will not do the job, take twelve. He must die!"

"Whersore, my lord?"

"Slave! that is no concern of thine—bring me his head, and I will give thee its weight in silver."

"It is a weighty argument in favour of murder," said Ivan, half persuaded to do the deed; "but I would rather not be the executioner."

"Do as I bid thee!" said the impatient noble, "and use no delay. I am thy master now! Before night, I shall be thy king!"

"Your majesty's orders shall be obeyed," said Ivan, as Lord Lechus left the room to prepare for the important race; "but this poor blacksmith—what can he have done to incur my lord's hatred. Ah, 'tis an evil world we live in—he is a handsome fellow too, and brave as a lion. 'Tis a pity—I don't like the job. I'm half inclined to give him a hint to be off. But then the silver. Humph! some one must do it—why not I? I shall not have to answer for the murder, my lord's alone to blame. Well, I suppose I must do it; but I say again, I don't like the job."

"Put a bold fate upon the matter man, and I will help thee," said the Tartar, suddenly making himself visible.

"Did my lord send you?" asked Ivan, regarding his new companion with a stare of surprise.

"No," returned the Tartar. "Did he know that I was here, he would solicit my aid himself."

"Who the devil are you? and how did you gain admittance?" said Ivan:

"My key opens all locks," said the Tartar; "and no man can make me afraid without he fights with weapons more powerful than mine. Come, let us be doing. I will deliver the blacksmith into thy hands."

"What harm has he done thee?"

"Much—he has resisted my power. Are you ready?"

"Not quite," said Ivan. "I don't half like the cut of your phiz. I won't trust you."

"Ha! ha!" said the Tartar; "you had not these scruples when you stabbed Rudolph in the crowd, and heard another man condemned for the