

"The trifling service I rendered you has been the means of introducing me to one of the loveliest princesses in Germany," returned the king, with an air of careless gallantry; "and this fortunate circumstance more than repays me for the danger I encountered with the robbers. I esteem this moment the happiest in my life."

"I perceive that my brave preserver is a knight well versed in the language of courts," replied the princess. "Had I not recently received such an obligation from him, I might place a harsh construction on that speech. But it is useless," she continued, half checking a sigh, "to expect the simple language of nature, the unsophisticated sentiments of the heart, to proceed from the lips of a courtier. Sir Knight, I thank you sincerely for the service you have rendered me."

This gentle reproof was not lost upon the king, and he instantly restrained the levity of his manner. His recent disappointment had made him conclude that all women were like Sophia of Mecklenburg, and to win their favour he must address them in a strain of flattery. The modest and dignified appearance of the young female before him, called forth his respect and admiration, and he continued to examine the slender form and delicate features of the princess, with an air of curiosity and interest, long after she ceased speaking.

Eleonora of Brandenburg was not a sparkling beauty, but she possessed an elegance of figure, and a grace and majesty of deportment, truly noble. No one could behold her without interest, but her complexion was too fair and pale to strike the spectator at a first glance with admiration. Her features were cast in the mould of faultless beauty, but they were as colourless and pure as those of a marble statue, save the ruby lip, which still trembled with agitation, and the deep azure eye, in whose long dark silken lashes the large tears lingered like dew-drops on the half closed buds of the violet. The profusion of fair unbound tresses, that floated over her shoulders, and waved round her face, served to increase its naturally pensive expression.

With unaffected ease she accepted the arm of the king, and was on the point of leaving the glen, when the trampling of horses, and the frequent blasts of the horn, proclaimed the approach of friends; and the Elector and his sons, heading a large party of nobles and gentlemen, arrived on the spot.

On beholding the dead robber, and his rash companion supporting the princess, Prince George, was convinced that he had made good his promise, while the Elector dismounted from his steed, embraced his daughter with strong emotion, and turning to the king, expressed in warm terms the gratitude he felt for the service he had rendered her.

"How shall a father repay you for the life of his child?" he said, grasping the king's hand; "a life

which you so bravely purchased at the risk of your own."

"An hour ago I should have deemed your highness thanks, and the honour of succouring a noble lady in distress, a sufficient recompense for my poor services," returned the Swede; "but now, I have a request to make which deeply interests me."

"Any favour which it is in my power to grant, demand freely and it is yours."

"Publish tomorrow, a free pardon to the outlaws who range this forest, and I am satisfied," replied the king.

The Elector who had anticipated an application of a very different nature, cast on his son a doubtful and enquiring eye.

"It is the leader of the band! It is Wolfenstein himself!" said Prince George in a low tone, but which was distinctly heard by all parties.

"Tis false!" exclaimed a deep voice from among the trees, whose thrilling tones awoke the lonely echoes of the forest, and carried alarm and dismay into every hearer's bosom; each man glanced fearfully around, and instinctively grasped his weapon. The king alone was calm, while the princess uttering a faint scream, flung her arms round her father and buried her face in his bosom, as she whispered in broken accents.

"Tis he! 'tis the voice of that dreadful man! 'tis Wolfenstein. He it was who stopped the frantic course of white Theseus, and gave me into the charge of his stern followers. Oh grant the noble stranger's request, my father! pardon the outlaws and leave this frightful place."

"I must first learn by whom this grace to a band of lawless freebooters is required?" said the Elector, sternly surveying the king.

"Not by the Captain of a band of robbers," returned the king, hardly able to suppress the smile that played round his lips; "my sword has hitherto been employed in honourable warfare. A Swede by birth, I bear the ancient name and title of Dahl, and am well known as the friend and follower of the young Gustavus!"

This frank avowal succeeded in restoring a perfect confidence among the parties.

"Your fame has reached us, brave count," said the Elector; "you are welcome to our court, and we shall feel ourselves honoured by the friendship of so accomplished and brave a cavalier. Yet marvel not that I hesitate in granting your strange request; surely," he continued glancing round the glen, "we have tracked the wolf to his lair. This place, so completely fortified by nature, must be his strong hold? What say you gallants shall we to horse, or lay in ambush here, and charge in person on the enemy?"

"To horse!" returned Prince George. "You have passed your word of honour to the count, to grant any favour you had in your power to bestow;