

CHAPTER XXII

THE time drew near when the King of Poland was to end his reign, his life, and his sufferings. It was now four years since he had given up the command of the army ; he had lately quitted the frontier, where his presence kept the enemy in awe, and fixed his residence at Warsaw on account of his health. He labored at the same time under the effects of his old wounds, the gout, the gravel, many symptoms of the dropsy, and a great difficulty of breathing ; and it was uncertain by which he would fall. He daily lost some portion of that ethereal fire which animates the human frame ; nor could the furs in which he lay wrapped upon the couch restore him either motion or spirits.

The Turks and Tartars had some knowledge of his condition, but they considered him as a lion, to whom the other animals showed respect, even when he is asleep. They attempted nothing of importance, at a time when they might have done what they pleased ; only a few Tartars made their incursions which were restrained by the Grand-General Jablonowski.

A circumstance still more extraordinary is that the King's illness contributed also to save the nation