

side in the field of battle, stepped into his cell.

"So, brother Schroll, I suppose you didn't much expect to see me?"

"No, indeed, did I not," exclaimed Rudolph in consternation; for, in fact, on the next day after the battle he had seen with his own eyes this very Werl committed to the grave.

"Ay, ay, it's strange enough, I allow; but there are not many such surgeons as he is that belongs to our regiment; he had me dug up, and brought me round again, I'll assure you. One would think the man was a conjurer. Indeed there are many things he can do which I defy any man to explain; and to say the truth, I'm convinced he can execute impossibilities."

"Well, so let him, for aught that I care; all his art will scarcely do me any good."

"Who knows, brother! who knows! The man is in this town at this very time; and for old friendship's sake, I've just spoken to him about you; and he has promised me a lucky throw of the dice, that shall deliver you from all danger."

"Ah!" said the dejected Rudolph, "but even this would be of little service to me."

"Why, how so?" asked the other.

"How so! Why, because—even if there were such dice (a matter I very much dispute)—yet I could never allow myself to turn aside, by black arts, any bad luck designed for myself upon the heads of either of my comrades."

"Now this, I suppose, is what you call being noble! But excuse me, if I think that in such cases one's first duty is one's self."

"Ah, but just consider; one of my comrades has an old father to maintain, the other a sick wife and two children."

"Schroll, Schroll, if your young bride were to hear you, I fancy she wouldn't think herself much flattered. Does poor Charlotte deserve that you should not bestow a thought on her and her fate. A dear young creature, that places her whole happiness in you, has nearer claims (I think) upon your consideration than an old dotard with one foot in the grave, or a wife and two children that are nothing at all to you. Ah! what a deal of good might you do in the course of a long life with your Charlotte! So then you really are determined to reject the course which I point out to you! Take care, Schroll! If you disdain my offer and the lot should chance to fall upon you,—take care lest the thought of a young bride whom you have betrayed, take care I say, lest this thought should add to the bitterness of death when you come to kneel down on the sand-hill. However, I've given you advice sufficient, and have discharged my conscience. Look to it yourself; and farewell!"

"Stay, brother, a word or two," said Rudolph, who was powerfully impressed by the last speech, and the picture of domestic happiness held up before him, which he had often dallied with in thought both when alone and in company with Charlotte. "Stay a moment. Undoubtedly, I do not deny that I wish for life, if I could receive it a gift from Heaven; and that is not impossible. Only I would not willingly have the guilt upon my conscience of being the cause of misery to another. However, if the man you speak of can tell, I should be glad that you would ask him upon which of us three the lot of death will fall.

"Or—stay; don't ask him," said Rudolph sighing deeply. "I have already asked him; this was the answer.

"Ah! have you so? And it is after his reply that you come to me with this counsel?"

The foretaste of death overspread the blooming face of Rudolph with a livid paleness; thick drops of sweat gathered upon his forehead; and the other exclaimed with a sneer: "I'm going; you take too much time for consideration: May be you will see and recognize me at the place of execution; and, if so, I shall have the dice with me; and it will not be too late even then to give me a sign; but, take notice, I can't promise to attend."

Rudolph raised his forehead from the palm of his hand, in which he had buried it during the last moments of his perturbation, and would have spoken something in reply; but his counsellor was already gone. He felt glad, and at the same time sorry. The more he considered the man and his appearance, so much the less seemed his resemblance to his friend whom he had left buried on the field of battle. This friend had been the very soul of affectionate cordiality,—a temper that was altogether wanting to his present counsellor. No! the scornful and insulting tone with which he treated the unhappy prisoners, and the unkind manner with which he had left him, convinced Schroll that he and Werl must be two different persons. Just at this moment a thought struck him, like a blast of lightning of the black book which had perished in the fire and its ominous contents. A lucky cast of the dice! Ay; that then was the shape in which the tempter had presented himself; and heartily glad he felt that he had not availed himself of his suggestions.

But this temper of mind was speedily changed by his young bride, who hurried in soon after, sobbing, and flung her arms about his neck. He told her of the proposal which had been made to him; and she was shocked that he had not immediately accepted it.

With a bleeding heart, Rudolph objected that so charming and lovely a creature could not miss of a happy fate even if he should be forced to quit her. But she protested vehemently that he or nobody should enjoy her love. The clergyman who visited the prisoner immediately after her departure, restored

some composure to his mind, which had been altogether banished by the presence of his bride. "Blessed are they who die in the Lord!" said the gray-haired divine; and with so much earnestness and devotion, that this single speech had the happiest effect upon the prisoner's mind.

On the morning after this night of agitation, the morning of the fatal day, the three criminals saw each other for the first time since their arrest. Community of fate, and long separation from each other, contributed to draw still closer the bond of friendship that had been first knit on the field of battle.

Each of the three testified a lively abhorrence for the wretched necessity of throwing death to some one of his comrades, by any cast of the dice which should bring life to himself. Dear as their several friends were to all, yet at this moment the brotherly league, which had been tried and proved in the furnace of battle, was triumphant over all opposing considerations. Each would have preferred death himself, rather than escape it at the expense of his comrade.

The worthy clergyman, who possessed their entire confidence, found them loudly giving utterance to this heroic determination. Shaking his head, he pointed their attention to those who had claims upon them whilst living, and for whom it was their duty to wish to live as long as possible. "Place your trust in God!" said he; "resign yourselves to him! He it is that will bring about the decision through your hands; and think not of ascribing that power to yourselves, or to his lifeless instruments—the dice. He, without whose permission no sparrow falls to the ground, and who has numbered every hair on your head—He it is that knows best what is good for you; and He only."

The prisoners assented by squeezing his hand, embraced each other, and received the sacrament in the best disposition of mind. After this ceremony they breakfasted together, in as resigned, nay, almost in as joyous a mood as if the gloomy and bloody morning which lay before them were ushering in some glad some festival.

When, however, the procession was marshalled from the outer gate, and their beloved friends were admitted to utter their last farewells, then again the sternness of their courage sank beneath the burden of their melancholy fate. "Rudolph!" whispered amongst the rest his despairing bride; "Rudolph! why did you reject the help that was offered to you?" He adjusted her not to add to the bitterness of parting; and she in turn adjusted him a little before the word of command was given to march,—which robbed her of all consciousness,—to make a sign to the stranger who had volunteered his offer of deliverance, provided he should anywhere observe him in the crowd. The streets and the wind-draws were lined with spectators. Vainly did each of the criminals seek, by accompanying the clergyman in his prayers, to shelter himself from the thought, that all return, perhaps, was cut off from him. The large house of his bride's father reminded Schroll of a happiness that was now lost to him forever, if any faith were to be put in the words of his yesterday's monitor; and a very remarkable faintness came over him. The clergyman who was acquainted with the circumstances of his case, and therefore guessed the occasion of his sudden agitation, laid hold of his arm, and said with a powerful voice that he who trusted in God would assuredly see all his righteous hopes accomplished—in this world if it were God's pleasure; but, if not in a better.

These were words of comfort; but their effect lasted only for a few moments. Outside the city gate his eyes were met by the sand-hill already thrown up; a spectacle which renewed his earth-hills and fears. He threw a hurried glance about him; but nowhere could he see his last night's visitor.

Every moment the decision came nearer and nearer. It has begun. One of the three has already shaken the box; the die is cast; he has thrown a six. This throw was now registered amidst the solemn silence of the crowd. The bystanders regarded him with solemn congratulation in their eyes; for this man and Rudolph were the two special objects of the general compassion this man, as the husband and father; Rudolph, as the youngest and handsomest, and because some report had gone abroad of his superior education and attainments.

Rudolph was youngest in a double sense; youngest in years, and youngest in the service; for both reasons he was to throw last. It may be supposed, therefore how much all present trembled for the poor delinquent, when the second of his comrades likewise flung a six.

Prostrated in spirit Rudolph stared at the unpropitious die. Then a second time he threw a hurried glance around him, and that so full of despair, that from horrid sympathy a violent shuddering ran through the by-standers. "Here is no deliverer," thought Rudolph; "none to see me or to hear me! And if there were, it is now too late; for no change of the die is any longer possible." So saying, he seized the fatal die, convulsively his hand clutches it, and before the throw is made he feels that the die is broken in two.

During the universal thrill of astonishment which succeeded to this strange accident, he looked round again. A sudden shock and a sudden joy fled through his countenance. Not far from him, in the dress of a pedlar, stands Theiler without a wound the comrade whose head had been carried off on the field of battle by a cannon-ball. Rudolph made an under-sign to him with his eye; for clear as it now was to his mind with whom