

youth, nor provoke me to an unequal combat—few ever encountered the Black Wolf of the Forest without feeling his fangs.”

“But you and I, brave Zuski, have met before.”

“When, and where?” exclaimed the robber chief, springing forward, and grasping the arm of the king with convulsive energy; “who calls upon me by a forgotten and dishonoured name? Your form,” he continued, relaxing his hold, with a heavy sigh, “is familiar to my eyes, your voice to my ears, but memory only alive to my wrongs, has long since obliterated from my mind all other impressions.”

“We measured the length of our swords in the breach at the storming of Raunsburg,” returned the king; “in the passage of the Nagutz, on the bloody plains near Sturm—you were then a suppliant at my feet, but I disdained to take the life of a brave and fallen enemy.”

“Heroic prince!” exclaimed the robber; “again behold me at your feet. I pleaded for life then, I had a wife and child, and they were very dear to me—but now,” he continued, in a voice hoarse and broken with the anguish which the recollection of those beloved objects occasioned him,—“Zuski has no living tie.”

He passed his shaking hand along his brow, while memory seemed to collect an age of misery in that brief moment of time. The king was deeply affected, and raised the robber from his feet.

“Unfortunate Zuski! by what strange fatality do I find a brave soldier, and an experienced general, the leader of a band of lawless men?”

“Your question, sire, can be answered in a few words,” returned the Pole; “I served an ungrateful master—my want of success, and the mercy extended to me and my family by your majesty, ruined me with Sigismund; I was accused of treason after the truce was concluded, my goods were confiscated, and I was sentenced to be broken on the wheel. With the assistance of a few faithful friends, I effected my escape, but the vengeance of the enraged monarch fell upon my wife and child. They were closely confined in the fortress of Raunsburg, and perished with the severity of the season, being unable to procure garments to protect them against the cold. The tidings of their death, which was conveyed to me by an old domestic, for a time affected my reason; and steeled my heart against every tender feeling. Wandering hither, I fell in with these brave men, and following the rash impulses of a mind, smarting from the remembrance of a thousand wrongs, became the general enemy of mankind.”

“You will not continue this wretched mode of existence?” said the king, whose interest was strongly excited.

“I have no other resource.”

“Serve me, brave Zuski—I will not prove my-

self an ungrateful master—you would find a beardless stripling knew both how to command and value his followers.”

The Pole pressed the king’s hand to his lips, and his kindling eye spake unutterable thanks. But anon the hand was relinquished—the joy that had lighted up his fine energetic features passed away, and a deep and settled gloom overspread his countenance. The king marked the sudden change with surprise, and said in a reproachful tone:

“You reject my offer, Zuski—I am not worthy then to be your friend?”

“It were an honour too great to be bestowed upon a degraded wretch like me,” returned the robber, greatly agitated; “never shall it be said to Sigismund, that Theodore Zuski accepted a place in the army of Sweden, or raised his hand against his country—and these brave fellows, who have fought and bled with me, how can I abandon them? I have cast my lot among them, and will not desert my trust!”

Before the king could answer his impetuous speech, the robber plunged among the trees, and instantly disappeared, leaving the astonished Gustavus alone with the princess.

CHAPTER III.

And such the colouring fancy gave,
To a young, warm, and dauntless chief,
One who no more than mortal brave,
Fought for the land his soul adored,
For happy homes and altars free;
His only talisman the sword—
His only spell-word, liberty!

Moore.

DURING the king’s conversation with the robber, Eleonora recovered from her swoon; and when, upon glancing round the lonely glen, recollection slowly returned, the horrors of her situation pressed so forcibly upon her mind, that, shrouding her face in her garments, she became totally unconscious of what was passing round her, and only alive to her own fears. It was not till Gustavus took her hand, and assured her of her safety, that she was able to overcome her fears; and dispel the terrors of her waking dream.”

“Are those stern men indeed gone?” she murmured half aloud, as raising her head from the folds of her mantle she gazed timidly around her.

“You have nothing to dread from them, Eleonora of Brandenburg, they will not return to trouble you.”

“I would fain thank you, generous stranger, for the service you have rendered me,” returned the princess; but words would poorly repay you for the preservation of my life and honour, both of which I owe to your courage.”