

thoughtfulness and in valour to be a man. Thekla is no longer a great heiress. Since Nordlingen we may consider that her father's estates have gone for ever, mine may follow in a few months. Therefore I must ask you, are you ready to take her without dowry?"

"I am," Malcolm said earnestly, "and that right gladly, for I love her with all my heart."

"It needs no questioning on my part," the countess said, "to know that she loves you as truly, and that her happiness depends wholly on you. I saw her anguish when the news came of the terrible defeat at Nordlingen and of the annihilation of some of the Scottish regiments. My heart was wrung by her silent despair, her white and rigid face, until the news came that you were among the few who had survived the battle, and, in the outburst of joy and thankfulness at the news, she owned to me that she loved you, her only fear being that you cared for her only as a sister, since no word of love had ever passed your lips. I reassured her on that score by telling her of your conversation with her father, and that a feeling of duty alone had kept you silent while she remained under your protection.

"However, Malcolm, she will not come to you penniless, for, seeing that it was possible that the war would terminate adversely, and determined to quit the country should he be forbidden to worship according to his own religion here, the count has from time to time despatched considerable sums to the care of a banker at Hamburg, and there are now 10,000 gold crowns in his hands.

"There are, moreover, my estates at Silesia, but these I have for some time foreseen would follow those of my husband and fall into the hands of the emperor. Before the death of the count I talked over the whole matter with him, and he urged me in any case, even should you