

THE COURT
OF
SIGISMUND AUGUSTUS,
OR
POLAND
IN
THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

BY
ALEXANDER BRONIKOWSKI:

DONE INTO ENGLISH
By A POLISH REFUGEE.

"A tale of the times of old!
The deeds of the days of other years."—*Ossian*.

"Despair and Poland's name must never link."—*Campbell*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER I.

"I crave fit disposition for my wife;
Due reference of place, and exhibition;
With such accommodation, and besort,
As levels with her breeding."—SHAKSPEARE.

THE deep-toned sound of the vesper bell from the cathedral and the other seventy churches at Cracow had died away on the first day of Christmas, 1548, and the brilliantly illuminated halls of the royal palace were already filled with the grantees of the empire as well as with many foreign princes and lords, who awaited the presence of Sigismund Augustus. It was then customary at the Court, for the King to enter the hall of assembly immediately after divine service, where he

saluted the Queen-mother and afterwards the rest of the Court. But today, Bona of Milan had not made her public appearance ; and though the usual time had long passed, still the monarch had not appeared. The assembled crowd had divided into several groups, with looks of expectation fixed on the folding-doors which led to the royal private apartments, and at times surveying one another with inquisitive suspicion. The Lithuanian lords stood apart from the nobility of the Crown, and the looks exchanged between the representatives of two nations subjected to the same sovereign were not of the most friendly nature. Many of them grasped the hilts of their swords, as if to assure themselves of their means of defence in case of emergency, whilst they threw looks of defiance upon supposed adversaries. The attention of the assembly was often attracted by the opening of the before-mentioned door, and was as often disappointed. At length the royal chamberlain entered, and approached with a deep obeisance some of the lords, to whom he delivered a message in a low voice, and returned to the privy apartments, followed by the lord he had addressed. In this manner nearly all the lords belonging to the privy council had left the hall, and the impatience of those who remained increased every moment.

Even those who were but little conversant in court attendance began to suspect that something extraordinary had occurred, and surrounded with inquisitive looks and hasty questions those who were supposed best able to account for the unusual delay. In a remote corner of the wide hall stood Hippolyte Boratynski, with his elder brother, whom he repeatedly addressed, questioning him respecting the brilliant display of the Court, the ceremonies which he now beheld for the first time, and which he wished to understand ; but upon observing that his brother was too deeply absorbed in thought to pay much attention to his inquiries, he contented himself with observing in silence all that was going on. The Starost of Samborz gazed at times on the door leading from the inner apartments with an expression of impatience, as if expecting something from thence ; then again he looked with a melancholy smile on the aged Lacki, who, immediately after having entered the hall, left his Polish relatives and joined his countrymen who surrounded him with all the tokens of great respect. "Do you see, my brother," said he at length, turning to Hippolyte, "the hostile manner with which the Starost of Pinsk eyes us ? Before we entered this hall we were relatives, but here we are only Poles and Lithuanians, and belong to

opposite parties." Whilst Peter spoke, the folding-doors were opened wider than they had been before. The noise of halberds announced a nobleman of high rank, and a man entered who, in spite of his middle age, still retained much of that beauty which had formerly caused him to be acknowledged as the handsomest amongst the Polish magnates. His dress was composed of Persian silver stuff adorned with rubies; precious stones of the same kind glittered on his sash and the hilt of his sword. The heron plume of his bonnet, which he held in his left hand, fell down on his red boots, and in his right he carried a massy silver staff, the token of his dignity. With a slight but graceful bow, John Firley, Palatine of Lublin, Court Marshal of the Crown of Poland, and the avowed chief of the Protestant nobility, entered the assembly, and spoke, with that careless courtesy in which the confidant of Bona ever indulged himself, in the following words: "My lords, the King on his return from the cathedral, where my religious persuasion does not permit me to accompany His Majesty, has ordered me to announce to you that important business has retarded the moment of his appearance, and therefore I invite you in his name to pass into the adjoining apartments, and there to await the hour of audi-

ence." When he had thus spoken, he approached the Starost of Samborz, and having exchanged some words with him in secret, he perceived Hippolyte, who had stepped modestly aside during their mysterious conversation. "It is my brother," said Peter, presenting Hippolyte to the Court Marshal, who looked attentively at the young man as if pleased with him; then suddenly recollecting himself he said to Hippolyte and some other young men who stood near, "My lords, it is time to take your places. Await in the little wainscoted antechamber the commands of the King." The noblemen belonging to the retinue of the Royal Consort left the hall, according to the directions of Firley. All the Lithuanians, preceded by Nicholas Radziwill, great cupbearer of Lithuania (1), and John Lacki, followed them. When the latter passed near his nephew Peter, he looked at him with a dark challenging glance; but the Starost of Samborz only shook his head, and followed the Palatine of Lublin to the royal private apartments. The subject under discussion in the privy council seemed to be of a very unpleasant nature when the two lords entered the royal closet. Sigismund Augustus reclined on the gilt chair, from which he had started up in a fit of passion, his brow overcast, and his usually pale cheek lighted up with the

glow of anger, darting on all around him looks of scorn and distrust. Next to him stood the Bishop of Cracow, who whispered at times into the ear of his sovereign. Opposite to them, and in the centre of the chamber, were the Prince Primate and the Grand Marshal. The last seemed to conceal some extraordinary emotion under an assumed air of confidence and gratified pride; but the Archbishop, who had just finished speaking, cast down his eyes on the cross which adorned his breast, throwing meanwhile a hasty glance around, as if desirous to ascertain the effect produced by his speech. At one side Jakand of Brudzeva, the palatine of Sieradz, and Janus Latalski, palatine of Posnania, had taken their places; and near them Andreas Gorka, castellan of the latter city. The Vice-Chancellor, Christopher Szydlowiecki, and Bonar, the castellan of Bieck, who was also invested with the very important office, in those times, of intendant of the salt-works, stood close to the King, and in almost a hostile attitude to those opposite to them. The Bishop of Cujavia, Andreas Zebrzydowski, went continually from one party to the other, speaking to them in a low and entreating tone, but apparently without producing any effect upon either. Sidewards, at a window, leaned John Tarnowski, playing with the golden

chain on his neck with an affected absence of mind, that apparently rendered him indifferent to all that was going on around him.

When Firley entered the room, he surveyed the assembly with a hasty glance; an almost imperceptible smile passed over his countenance, and he approached Andreas Zebrzydowski, as if to signify to him that in the present case he would follow his example; but when he passed near the Grand Marshal, he saluted him in a peculiar manner. The greeting of the Palatine of Lublin and the reply of the latter were most friendly and even confidential; but a look which the less pliable Kmita cast upon Firley, indicated that some misunderstanding existed between the two confidants of Bona Sforza, who, divided by religious and political opinions, were in fact only united when it was necessary to oppose a third, and that third no other than John Tarnowski.

“Lord Boratynski,” began the King, after a pause, “we have summoned you hither to learn the opinion of our equestrian order, and chiefly your own, who have already more than once spoken for your brothers respecting business of a completely new and particular character. We have not forgotten what you said at the foot of the throne; we have preserved in our memory your

opinion as well as that of many others ; and we will decide it in due time according to our highest power and sovereignty. But the present business, though connected with what was discussed at the Diet of Warsaw, is of another nature ; it is not now the question how far the encroachments of our nobility may reduce the splendour of our crown, and intrench on the rights of royalty and humanity ; we leave this matter to another time.” “ ‘T is now,—’t is another time !” interrupted Jakand of Brudzeva ; “ it seems to me and to many of the lords, my brothers, that it is already high time to convoke a Diet in order to arrange many irregularities which threaten the realm with danger.”

“ We did not address ourself to you, lord of Sieradz,” answered the King haughtily to the bold speaker ; “ you may give your opinion in your turn. You are not now in the hall of the senate. You are in the apartments of your sovereign.” At these words Jakand with some other senators stepped aside, with evident marks of discontent ; while the King, turning to Boratynski, said in an angry voice, “ The question we are now considering is, whethér the King on his throne is to be deprived of those domestic rights which the meanest of our vassals exercise without re-

straint ; and if one whom we have elevated to our own high station by a valid marriage—if one who is our consort according to divine and human laws, shall be deprived of the rights of a lawful wife, because she is the spouse of a king instead of one of his subjects ? If the insolence of overbearing vassals should expect to prevent us from introducing Barbara Radziwill to the Court and assembled nobility as the consort of the sovereign, and if anybody should forget in the house of our fathers that respect which is due to the mistress of it, the annals of history could scarcely furnish an instance of similar encroachment on the rights of a monarch and of a man ; and yet many illustrious lords of the Senate expect such a sacrifice from Sigismund Augustus, and even the servants of the church scorn, in their clerical pride, the holiest statute of religion ! We desire to know if the other states of our realm concur in such an opinion, and if the nobility of the Crown are grown so estranged from all honourable feeling and knightly courtesy, as to require from the first amongst them what is contrary to good faith.” “ This is not a constitutional assembly of the states,” replied Boratynski, after a short silence, in a moderate but firm tone of voice ; “ I am not in the Privy Council of the King, to which I do

not belong. If I am again entrusted with the confidence of my lords and brothers, I shall then be authorized to make the declaration Your Majesty desires. But if it is the personal opinion of Peter Boratynski the King would have, as a faithful subject of him and the republic, I will deliver it to Your Majesty with all the candour becoming a Polish nobleman."

"It is in such a character that we ask your opinion, lord of Samborz," replied Sigismund; "we are aware that you have improved your abilities by a long sojourn in foreign lands; and that you have many times made honourable use of them for the service of your country we also know; we may therefore expect your judgement to be less narrow than that of many here present, who are invested with higher rank than the dignity by which the country has hitherto awarded your services."

"I thank Your Majesty for so favourable an opinion," answered Boratynski with a slight obeisance; "and I hope it will not be diminished by what I am going to say. In the first place, most gracious lord, permit me to remind Your Majesty, that all which it is your pleasure to call the pretensions of the nobility, and the insolence of overbearing vassals, is rather to be considered as a

legal exercise of the covenants which Lewis of Hungary concluded with the states of the realm, which legal exercise was confirmed by all your glorious ancestors, and even by Your Majesty yourself at your coronation.” “To the matter!” exclaimed Sigismund imperiously, and with impatience; “we have not questioned you in order to learn what becomes a king. To the matter, lord Starost!” Boratynski drew himself up, and began with an earnest and almost severe voice: “This is not irrelevant to the matter, lord^(?) King; because on what I have just said is founded my answer to the question of Your Majesty. I will deliver it in a few words. The Diet of Warsaw has not acknowledged as Queen of Poland Barbara Radziwill, widow of Gastold, your present consort; and what the national assembly has refused to this lady no individual can grant her, without prejudice to the constitution and the *pacta conventa*, and without committing an act of felony; for it is not lawful in Poland for an individual to secede from the decisions of the community, however high his station may be. At least,” added he in a moderate but impressive tone, “till another Diet has decided otherwise.”

“Insolent!” exclaimed Sigismund with extreme anger; “is the majesty of the throne fallen

so low that a vassal dares to insult his sovereign in his own house? What shall prevent us crushing this insupportable pride by imprisonment? Lord castellan of Cracow, you are the supreme commander of this castle,—perform your duty!” But John Tarnowski stood motionless. A hollow murmur rang through the assembly, and Boratynski went on quietly. “There are two reasons that prevent Your Majesty from acting in this manner,—one, your Jagellonian heart, averse to every violence; and also the first fundamental law of the country, *Neminem captivabimus nisi jure victum* (³). It is for the lords of the senate, and for my brothers of the equestrian order, to decide if I deserve punishment, when, having been questioned by the King, I delivered to him openly, as it becomes a Polish nobleman, the opinion of those whom I represent, and propose, as the only thing which can remedy the growing mischief, the convocation of a new Diet.” “Indeed!” answered the King; “the last assembly of the states has not made us desirous to see the renewal of those scenes which happened there. I am well aware, lord Boratynski, that you wish for an opportunity of displaying your eloquence, and of making still further encroachments on the royal dignity, following up the plan you have already begun so

gloriously at Warsaw. We have been mistaken in you, lord of Samborz ; and we are very sorry to have believed that your long sojourn in the West had made you better acquainted with the duties of subjects towards their sovereign, and that we had given you credit for a mind superior to that self-conceit and vanity which we lament to find still govern your judgement and that of your colleagues.”

The Starost of Samborz, affected by these words, seemed to suppress a sigh : he cast a melancholy look on Tarnowski, who continued to play with his collar, without appearing to take any interest in the passing scene. Peter Kmita now addressing the King, said, “ I find nothing reprehensible in the words of this worthy nobleman, and Your Majesty well knows the decision of the Diet at Warsaw is valid, so long as the assembled states do not decide otherwise ; but I am of opinion that the present moment is not the best time to arrange this business. At the convocation of a new Diet there are many pressing matters of state which demand the King’s attention, and require instant arrangement even before the present subject of discussion comes under consideration.” “ For my part,” said the Palatine of Lublin, “ I attach now, as I do at all times, the greatest value to the

opinion of the Great Marshal, and I entirely agree with him, that besides the settlement of the rights of Lady Barbara, consort of our most gracious sovereign, there are many matters to be arranged; but I think this very circumstance, instead of retarding the convocation of the Diet, should rather accelerate it, as the evils, which grow every day more apparent, are, according to my opinion, of such a nature as to be remedied only by the assembled representatives of the nation.” “ When the lord Court Marshal speaks of matters concerning his fellow-sectarians, whose protector he declares himself,” said the Primate Dziergowski, “ he is right at least in saying that speedy remedies are necessary to check the evils which endanger the church and the state. I also, as a member of the senate, give my voice for the convocation of the equestrian order, and require from the King, in virtue of my dignity, that he will no longer oppose the general wish.”

“ The most reverend lord of Gniezno has spoken well,” observed the Palatine of Posnania; “ why postpone that which can be done immediately?”

“ It is extraordinary to hear the Lord Grand Marshal speaking of delay,” said the Vice-Chancellor, “ and we must suppose he has particular

reasons for acting in the present instance so contrary to his general custom.” “The spirit of his glorious father dwells in our sovereign,” exclaimed the Bishop of Cracow; “and we may confide in his wisdom, in spite of those untoward circumstances.” “We may also trust to our own wisdom,” interrupted the Archbishop, “if we do not bear the venerable name of senators in vain. The King is but an individual, whose mind may be as circumscribed as that of any other; and therefore the wisdom of our fathers has placed us round the throne, that we may, by our united forethought and consideration, point out what is essential to the welfare of the country; and consequently I repeat my admonitions to you, lord King, and entreat you to agree to the just demand of the republic.” “By no means,” exclaimed the King; “we have learned by experience how every assembly has encroached upon the rights of our dignity: we well remember what happened at the assembly of Leopol (4) during our father’s life; and we are decided to maintain, with all our power, the inheritance of our ancestors, as well as our personal freedom, unimpaired.”

“The inheritance of your ancestors!” replied Jakand of Brudzeva; “Your Majesty forgets that you are the elected King of Poland, and he-

reditary Duke only of Lithuania." "Well," said the Primate, "if the King refuses, I, who am the Vicar of the realm, will convoke the Diet." "Never, lord Archbishop," exclaimed the King, advancing to the Primate with furious looks, and pale from anger; "you shall never dare to do so without our highest will and permission."

The senators surrounded the interlocutors in a circle: their pride was offended by the violence shown to the person of the first of their order: they cast dark, almost menacing looks on their sovereign, and seemed to await attentively, if an imprudent word uttered by the King in a fit of passion, might justify an open revolt. The partisans of the King were discomposed, and Andreas Zebrzydowski endeavoured in vain to calm the irritation by his secret persuasions. Only Kmita, Firley, and Tarnowski stood aloof, at times exchanging a few words with the Starost of Samborz. Sigismund Augustus perceived the critical position of the moment, and seating himself with great dignity, succeeded in assuming the look of serene grandeur, which, except in moments of passion or intimate intercourse, never abandoned his countenance.

The Palatine of Sieradz, Jakand of Brudzeva, now said, "When the King refuses to fulfill the

duties of the high station entrusted to him by the republic, the Primate claims the rights of his dignity, as the first Senator and Interrex."

" You are a little too quick, Lord Palatine," interrupted the Vice-Chancellor, " and you seem to mistake a momentary opposition against pretensions delivered in a violent manner and in an unbecoming form, for a complete neglect of the legal duties. This is an usurpation on the rights of the sovereign." " We are senators," said Janus Latalski in a coarse voice ; " we are called the arms of the King, and he cannot undertake anything without us." " The determination springs from the head, my Lord of Poznania," retorted the Bishop of Cujavia in a tone of derision. " I am a soldier, my lord Bishop," answered Latalski, " and though I have not studied at Rotterdam to arrange my words in the most scholastic manner, yet still I believe I am better acquainted with the statutes of the realm than you are with your breviary. But we will yield so far as to allow one fortnight to reflect upon what we have said. At the expiration of that period, if His Majesty should not be disposed to attend to our complaints, the Primate must then proceed to the performance of the duties of his office."

The expressive countenance of the King showed the agitation he felt during this speech. At its conclusion he rose from his chair, and was on the point of answering the bold speaker in the tone of an offended monarch, when Peter Boratynski advanced rapidly in the circle of magnates, and began in a loud voice : “ Peace, ye lords of the senate ! —How long has it been lawful for the senators to make decisions without the consent of the equestrian order, and to decide against the sovereign ? The assembled republic alone is more than the King ; but separately, every state owes him obedience. A Diet can never be held without the previous convocation of the Dietines for the election of the representatives. If the Universals (⁵) convoking such assemblies were even signed by the Primate during the lifetime of the King, and he being able to perform the duties of his situation, it would be an act of open revolt and felony ; therefore I protest, in the name of all the equestrian order of Little Poland and Russia, against the anti-constitutional pretension of the Primate, as well as the votes of the senators which supported it. And I depose at the footstool of the throne, with all due reverence, a petition in the name of my constituents, that His Majesty will issue his

Universals for the convocation of a General Diet, in order to arrange all the misunderstandings which now disturb the realm and the royal house."

When Boratynski had ended, the King gazed with inquisitive but not discontented looks on the worthy nobleman, and Tarnowski's countenance beamed with satisfaction. The Palatines of Cracow and Lublin agreed completely with the Starost of Samborz, and the spiritual lord of Cracow enjoyed the rebuke given to the Archbishop, whose own party even could not withhold their approbation of the plan suggested by the speaker of the equestrian order.

"Every one present," said Sigismund Augustus after a pause, "has delivered to us his opinion, except the first of our temporal senators; he is still silent. What is your opinion, lord of Cracow?" "Your Majesty has heard the wish of the senate and the equestrian order, and you cannot suppose that I should separate myself from my lords and brothers. I join with them in entreating Your Majesty to act as becomes a just king and the son of your glorious father." The King cast a reproachful look on Tarnowski, and said in a low voice, "*Kai συ εἰς εκείνους καὶ συ πατηρ!*" (And thou also amongst them, and thou also father!) But the Castellan of Cracow replied

not, and a long silence ensued. At last Sigismund interrupted it with a firm voice : “ It may be, then, that in virtue of our sovereign power we will take into consideration the wish expressed to us by the senate and the equestrian order. But if any one amongst you,” continued he with a loud voice, “ thinks, in his immoderate pride, that he will be able to wrest from us, in the general assembly, concessions which despoil the majesty of the throne, and touch our dignity as monarch and as man, he is mistaken, and he will soon be aware that a descendant of Wladyslaw, and a son of Sigismund the Old, sits on the throne.”

“ Is it not Your Majesty’s pleasure,” demanded John Firley with a deep obeisance, “ to honour the assembled Court with your presence? The hall has been long filled, and many strangers await the honour of being presented to Your Majesty; amongst them, also, the Dukes of Liegnitz and Ratibor, and the Mazovian princess, Lady Anna Odrowonz and her daughter.” “ What can bring her to the Court at this moment? ” said the King with a knit brow and low voice to Tarnowski; “ amongst our subjects, she is the one we least wish to see, because I believe she is the only one whom I dare not look upon without a blush. Has not the present time griev-

ances enough, without those of the past obtruding themselves upon us, when we are still unable to amend them?" Then continuing in a loud voice: "Where are the Lithuanian lords? We do not see one of them in this assembly, where we have been discussing an affair so nearly touching them." "The Prince Radziwill," replied the Court Marshal, "has with the other lords joined the retinue of his illustrious cousin, in order to enter the hall of audience along with her." "He has acted as he should," said the King, "because this attention is due to the consort of the hereditary sovereign of Lithuania and the Grand Duchess, but—" He had not yet finished, when the scarcely suppressed expression of discontent began to reappear on the countenances of the senators. But Tarnowski hastily approached the monarch, and whispered to him, "My Lord and Sovereign, have you forgotten what you have so often called the great aim of your endeavours? Take care that you do not separate for ever two nations that you are so anxious to reunite." "I am commissioned," said the Bishop of Cujavia, "by the Queen-mother's Grace, to announce to Your Majesty, that a sudden indisposition detains her today in her own apartments; but the other ladies of the

royal family are ready to welcome your illustrious consort to the palace of her royal husband." Sigismund, in a fit of anger, stamped his foot, and an oath in the Italian language escaped his lips ; but he collected himself directly, and said to the grandes present with dignity, but mildly, " My lords, in a few moments you shall have the honour of being presented to the consort of your sovereign, and we hope and expect that every one who wishes for the continuation of our royal favour, will show her that respect which courtesy, noble manners, and his duty towards us require from him."

CHAPTER II.

“ For seldom yet did living creature see
That curtesie and manhood ever disagree.”

SPENSER’S *Faery Queen*.

WHEN the monarch entered the great audience-hall, the brilliant crowd was again assembled, and saluted him with all the reverence due to his dignity. The Kings of Poland were in former times surrounded in public with more apparent respect than any other sovereign in Europe, except Spain. Perhaps the Poles desired to gratify their monarchs by an external show of splendour and vain pomp, in place of the real power, which they continually endeavoured to abridge. Sigismund Augustus was well pleased to exchange this gorgeous display for the disagreeable scenes in his interior apartments. He saluted with great affability all the princes, amongst whom the most conspicuous were the hereditary Prince of Brandenburg, ambassador from his father, the Dukes of the Piastian family, of Liegnitz, Ratibor, and Teschen, and Frederic of Brandenburg, Duke of Prussia. Soon afterwards the folding-door at the opposite

side of the hall opened ; and Barbara, attended by her ladies and many Lithuanian lords, entered.

My fair readers will not, perhaps, be displeased to have a description of the form and dress of the beautiful Lithuanian, taken from a portrait in the gallery of the late King of Poland. Barbara Radziwill was rather above the middle size, her oval face was more delicate and lovely than regularly handsome. The paleness of her cheeks, sometimes animated by a transient blush, gave brilliancy to her dark hazel eyes, which were large, mild, and beaming with intelligence. Though her mouth was not so small as the severe rules of the sculptor require, its general expression was a lovely deep thoughtfulness, which at times gave place to that marked, indeed almost scornful look, which constituted her resemblance to her husband, a resemblance that existed not only in feature, but also in character. And perhaps it was this conformity of mind that kindled in the breast of the King a passion which neither marriage nor death was able to subdue. Her brown hair, braided on her fair high forehead, fell over her shoulders, and reached to her knees. Her faultless form was clothed in a dress of cinnamon-coloured velvet, with wide hanging sleeves, which, as well as the front of the body, were

adorned with chains of gold and enamel, which were attached to ornaments formed of large pearls in place of buttons, reaching from the folded ruff to the girdle, and from the shoulders to the embroidered gloves. Under the short velvet robe was another of white silver tissue, sufficiently short in front to show the sandals, and ending behind in a moderate train.

She leaned on the arm of her brother, Prince Nicolaus Radziwill, and advanced in some confusion to the middle of the hall. The hum of the assembly was hushed at her approach, and all eyes were directed to this lovely being. But not all the looks which were fixed on Barbara expressed feelings of benevolence or pleasure : much of hatred and ill-will lurked under the profound obeisances by which the nobility, following the example of their sovereign, saluted the unwelcome guest. Sigismund gazed on her for some moments with all the rapture and pride of love which feels the beloved object sufficient to justify his passion ; but when he perceived that his consort grew pale and began to tremble, he advanced to her hastily, and seizing her hand, turned to the assembly, and said in an impressive voice, “ Most reverend and high-born lords, we hope you will join us in welcoming Lady Barbara, daughter of the high-born George

Prince Radziwill, palatine of Wilna, whom heaven's decree has elevated to be our consort, and in whom you behold the lady of this castle." The Primate was, by priority of rank, the first to approach the illustrious stranger. He did so in a slow but firm pace, bowed his head a little, and stepped aside without speaking. The Castellan of Cracow followed. A hasty glance at the changing colour and tearful eyes of Barbara apprised Tarnowski of the painful impression produced by the contemptuous behaviour of the insolent priest. After the first words of courteous salutation, he added some remark in a low voice, which directly recalled the wonted smile on the painfully contracted lips of the beautiful lady, and he departed after an obeisance full of respect. Other senators came in their turn; but when Albert Frederic of Brandenburg approached the royal consort in the order of precedence (2) which custom assigned to him amongst the senators, the bystanders observed that he treated her with a respect which was only due to a crowned head, and that during a pretty long conversation he uttered repeatedly the words "Most serene lady," and "Your Majesty." The behaviour of the Palatine of Lublin, who followed him, being more courteous than could have been expected from the confidant and favourite of Bona

Sforza, the magnates were convinced that Barbara's appearance was a most desirable event for the Protestant lords ; a supposition which was justified by the religious opinions of her brother. The address of John Firley had an expression of confidence more becoming a protector, than of the respect which a subject owes to the consort of his sovereign.

Whilst the presentations continued, the high, gilded folding-doors were again thrown open, and a brilliant and richly attired train entered. It was preceded by a lady in deep mourning, whose long widow's veil was fastened by a golden frontlet. She held by the hand a boy of about nine years old, dressed in a richly studded dolman ; a short ermine pelisse hung on his shoulder, and he bore in his right hand a Hungarian cap, surrounded by a finely wrought diadem. Three other ladies followed her in full-dress habits. Immediately after them appeared a fifth, wrapped in a widow's veil, like the leader of the train. She wore no ornament ; but the steady glance of her dark eyes and her proud demeanour announced that the place she occupied in this illustrious company was due to her. At her side glided with a light step a lovely maiden, dressed in a simple robe of pearl-coloured silk, on whose modestly covered bosom

glittered a chain of sparkling emeralds interwoven with golden crowns. The first of this train was Isabella, daughter of Sigismund the Old, and widow of John Zapolya (³) king of Hungary. The boy whom she held by the hand was her son John, surnamed the Orphan, to whom his father had bequeathed the melancholy heritage of a royal title in a kingdom where he no longer possessed a span of ground, and who afterwards exchanged the empty title to a crown, already long possessed by Ferdinand of Austria, for the real possession of the principality of Transylvania. The three other ladies were also sisters to Sigismund Augustus,—Anna, married afterwards to Stephen Battory; Catherine, to John duke of Finland, afterwards King of Sweden, whose son, Sigismund Vasa, mounted the throne of Poland; and Sophia, future duchess of Brunswick. In the fifth and sixth of these ladies the reader must have recognised Anna of Mazovia, and her daughter Helena Odrowonz.

The Queen of Hungary walked through the assembled Court, which respectfully made way for her to pass, towards Barbara, who received her with a respectful and solemn bow. She embraced her, and said in a pleasing voice, “ Permit me, dear sister, as the eldest of the sisters of the present King Sigismund, to welcome you to the

paternal dwelling. Permit me also to recommend to your notice an orphan," she added, presenting her son to Barbara, "who, driven from his own country, seeks refuge within these walls; and as the King of Hungary has found a second father in his royal uncle, may he also find in you a second mother." Barbara, flattered and moved by the unexpected reception of the Queen Isabel, expressed her gratitude in a few words; and turning to the little king, caressed him with all the interest produced by his misfortunes, and all the respect due to his high rank. But Sigismund Augustus said in a low voice to his sister, "Your Majesty has justified our expectations,—we thank you, Isabella." The welcome of the Infanta Anna was less kind; and both the other sisters, in obedience to their mother's command, were cold and reserved. "Your Majesty will now permit me," said the royal widow, addressing the King, "to present to you two ladies who are not so well acquainted with Your Majesty as their rank and merit deserve. You behold here the Princess of Mazovia and her daughter, Helena Odrowonz, whom we have conducted to Your Majesty by the express orders of our mother." "Lady Princess Palatine," said Sigismund after having stood a while with downcast eyes before the Princess of

Mazovia, to whose stern features newly awakened anger and ill-concealed scorn gave an almost ghastly expression, “ whatever may be the reason which induces you to honour our Court after so long an absence, you will find us ready to satisfy you, so far as is consistent with our duties, as fully as you can expect from your affectionate cousin and gracious sovereign.” “ The motive that leads me to the Court of Your Majesty,” replied Anna Odrowonz in a firm voice, “ is the same which prompted the Queen of Hungary to seek your protection for her princely boy, although the descendants of a Piast can scarcely have any pretension in this palace to the rights which devolved to the Jagellonian family. I present an orphan to Your Royal Grace in my daughter Helena. It is true, she is not the daughter of a crowned head; but she descends, by her mother’s side, from a noble house. Is not Your Majesty also of that opinion, and you my princely cousin of Liegnitz? Fate has been unfavourable to this maiden from her childhood. She was educated in solitude and poverty. Her father is dead; and therefore I desire to recommend her to your patronage, as to the highest guardian of the realm.” “ You have charged me with a very agreeable office,” answered the King, “ and we are obliged to you,

lady of Podolia, for having entrusted so lovely a charge to our protection. Will you accept us for your guardian, fair cousin?" he said, turning to Helena. The address of the King slightly confused Helena. She saw the eyes of her mother fixed on her, and replied in a low and hesitating voice, "God has ordained his substitute on earth to be the protector of minors and orphans, and I embrace the knees of my sovereign with the fullest reliance on his goodness." Sigismund raised her with a quick and graceful movement; and said, half earnestly, half otherwise, "We will then fulfill the first duty of our new office by transferring it to one who will perform it better than we could do. Lady Barbara," said he, "you are the mistress of this Court, I therefore request of you to receive under your protection the ward of your husband, and to be her friend and patroness." Barbara had observed all this scene with the greatest attention. She cast a penetrating look at Helena; but seeing on her countenance the unfeigned expression of modesty and innocence, she took her by the hand, and whispered her kindly, "Will you be my friend and sister, lady? for," added she, smiling, "I am not sufficiently old for a mother, and the Princess would hardly make over to me her right in such a daughter."

She then turned to the King, and said in an audible voice, “ I am always happy to fulfill the commands of my most serene lord and husband ; and the daughter of the Princess of Mazovia shall never have cause to accuse me to Your Majesty of disobedience.”

CHAPTER III.

“ And now in madness,
Being full of supper and distempering draughts,
Upon malicious bravery dost thou come,
To start my quiet.”—SHAKSPEARE.

WHILST the brilliant assembly we have just left in the splendid halls of the castle sat down at midnight to a magnificent supper, and endeavoured to forget their different causes of anxiety in the festivities in which they were engaged, the spacious rooms of the Eagle Inn at Cracow were also filled with guests. The noble retainers of different magnates occupied the tables, deeply engaged in drinking and talking; further on, the rich burghers of Cracow conversed upon the events of the day; while in a corner many young men, disciples of the Lyceum, dressed in black, like priests, and with straight hanging hair, silently quaffed their cups of mead. Many of the younger nobles paced up and down the room with clanging spurs and armed with swords, going from time to time to look at the illuminated windows of the castle, in order to know if their masters were

returned to their respective lodgings. Amongst these nobles was our old friend Valenty Bielawski.

A noise resounded in the hitherto silent street as if a band of drunkards was approaching the inn. The host, fearing that the arrival of these nightly vagrants would disturb his quiet guests, went angrily to the door, in order to signify to them that his was not a common public-house, but a place of resort for respectable customers. However, when he saw the party he shook his head, and allowed them to enter. They were armed with swords and halberds, and proved to be a patrol of beadle's of the prebendary Czarnkowski, rector of the High School. Many soldiers wearing the livery of the Grand Marshal were among them, and their wild noise and senseless laughter completely destroyed the quiet of the party on whom they had intruded. This company was apparently headed by Waclaw Siewrak, so well known to our readers, whose stammering voice and reeling pace proved that he was more tipsy than the rest of his company. "Wine!" cried he to the landlord; "wine for the retainers of the Grand Marshal's grace, and for the patrol of the most reverend lord Czarnkowski! Make haste!" cried he louder, when the innkeeper showed some reluctance to attend to

his orders ; " we are all on duty, and a faithful servant must not be choked by thirst on such occasions." Meanwhile the leader of the beadle, perceiving the scholars drinking in a corner, directly regained his official dignity, which had been much impaired by repeated stoppages at different inns. He advanced gravely to the young men, and said, " It would give great pleasure to the most reverend lord if he knew that the *alumni* of the liberal arts spent the night drinking in bad company ! To your books, gentlemen, or to your beds ! that you may be ready tomorrow for your lessons." The young men arose, and prepared to follow these orders ; but one of them remained quietly on his bench, and looked with contempt on the speaker. " Who are you, my lordling, to despise in such a manner the orders of the superiors ! Get you gone directly, if you have no wish to spend a cold December night in prison !" " You are not my superior, but only a catchpoll, friend beadle," answered the scholar abruptly ; " but I am Paul Ordenga, chum and tutor of the high-born Hieronymus Soltyk, son of the Palatine of Chernigoff. I have never been in prison, and I have no intention to go there now. Our company had been very good before you entered with your followers, and made all this unbecoming noise and

bustle." "Let these young men remain in peace, sir beadle," said the landlord in a soothing voice; "they study all the day and all the year, they may therefore have some recreation on Christmas festivals. Moreover, there are no lectures tomorrow, and the class-rooms are closed."

Although the patronage of Hieronymus Soltyk, a young nobleman destined to the first dignities in the church, had greatly cooled the official zeal of the beadle, still he thought he owed it to the dignity of his silver breast-plate and his staff to show some doubts, when Waclaw Siewrak, advancing with a tottering pace, exclaimed, "By St. Stanislaw, the honest publican is right! I beg you, sir beadle, to let them stay in peace. They are all children of respectable parents, and our good friends." "Is it not true," repeated he, turning to Bielawski, "we are all good friends?" "I know nothing about it," retorted Valenty; "our acquaintance is very short, and, if I am not mistaken, it has by no means produced a friendship, and I hope never will do so." "A damned proud fellow!" grumbled Siewrak with a malicious grin; then, advancing to the commander of the patrol, he began to whisper with him. The subject of their conversation was not known; but it was observed that the beadle listened to Siewrak at first with

all the signs of astonishment and uncertainty. Afterwards he seemed to be convinced, and sat down quietly with his company at one of the tables, while the chancery messenger called loudly for wine, and took a seat near the scholars. When the wine was brought, Waclaw filled a large tumbler, and, addressing his neighbour, said, "A merry Christmas!" "I join you in the same with all my heart," answered the young man, "and I wish we could have more festivals through the year, that we might enjoy some rest from oppression and hardship." "T is very true," said Sie-wrak in a compassionate tone, "this continual poring over books can never agree with young people. I am also something of a scholar, and I went through the schools of Piotrkow; but I was soon tired of studying, and entered the service of a great lord, where I exercise the noble art of penmanship, and many other things I have learned, to my great honour, for the use of my master's service." "If it was only the school discipline," said another of the pupils, "it would be possible to bear it; but it is quite insupportable to pore all day over a folio book, and to learn nothing more than some legendary trash, or at most a little casuistry, for thus it is since the prebendary Czarnkowski is become rector of the Lyceum. I have

heard that it was not so formerly at Cracow ; and even now it is not so in the Protestant schools which Lord Firley has established at Lublin, and other Protestant magnates at Wschowa and Leszno (¹), where the pupils enjoy a proper freedom, and learn much more than we do here with all this monkish discipline and bad treatment. I wish I had never entered this accursed owl's nest." "Do not let the beadle hear you," said Waclaw, drawing nearer to the pupil ; " he is an honest fellow and my good friend, and willingly shuts his eyes when he is presented with a filled bowl or a piece of money; but you well know yourself, duty before everything. You may trust such opinions to me, as to a good companion and fellow-student of the *humaniora*. Now a cup more for the honour of the *humaniora* ! Will you not join us, Paul Ordenga ?" "*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes !*" answered Ordenga. " You are a very learned young fellow," continued Siewrak ; " and you must be so, because Lord Hieronymus Soltyk has received you, and has given you such a mark of his esteem. He is a very promising flower of the Polish nobility, and he will be soon adorned with the bishop's mitre, and perhaps even with the red hat. I like to converse with clever people about all that is going on in Germany as well as in our own country, the

duties of my office leaving me little time to obtain information in any other way." "I beg your pardon, sir scrivener," said the scholar; "I have heard that in many circumstances it is better to think than to speak freely." "Freedom of thought! You are right, sir Ordenga," exclaimed Siewrak. Then, lifting his bowl, he cried, "*Vivat* freedom of thought!" The exclamation was made loud enough to attract the attention of the beadle to this forbidden word. Valenty Bielawski approached the table, and said with derision, "How is it that so suddenly you are become an advocate of freedom of thought, master Siewrak? You are known to the prebendary Czarnkowski, and, if I am not mistaken, to Doctor Monti and to the other Italians of the Court, in quite a different light." "Aye, what then?" retorted the scrivener; "the heart overflows at a bowl, and service is very different from a merry bout." "'T is true," continued Bielawski with an impressive voice, "that many a heart overflows at a bowl, but it is not the case with you; and if that should happen, we should certainly hear nothing good. Confidence that is not mutual is often repented." "*Sapienti sat,*" whispered Ordenga to the adviser; and Siewrak swallowed his anger with a mighty draught from his cup. When

Bielawski left the table, Waclaw tried again to entice the scholars to some inconsiderate speech ; but the young men were not inclined to make further communications, and he saw that his praiseworthy business was over for that night.

A short time afterwards two women, in travelling-dresses, entered the public room, and modestly asked the landlord if he could give them a separate room for the night. The innkeeper greeted them as his old acquaintances, and invited them to approach the fireside until another room could be made ready for their reception. When, following his direction, they were approaching the chimney, the eyes of the younger woman met those of Bielawski, and they exclaimed in one breath, "Welcome, fair Theophila ! " "Good evening, dear sir Valenty ! " Theophila told Bielawski that her father had sent her with her aunt to the castle, where the most serene lady had promised to receive her ; and when the young man asked her if she came with pleasure to Cracow, she answered only by a bashful smile. While they chattered confidentially at the fireside, Siewrak continued to drink and to address the scholars, who refused his advances in a polite but decided manner, and began to converse among themselves in Latin, having observed that the scrivener, in spite of his boasted

learning, understood but little of that language. At last, tired by his unsuccessful attempts and excited by much drinking, Waclaw cast his stupid eyes round the room, and discovered Tosia sitting on a bench at the fireside, engaged in a confidential and animated conversation with the odious Bielawski. His intoxication overcame the fear in which he stood of the sword and muscular form of the young noble ; he cast himself on the bench at the other side of the girl without noticing the knit brow and visible anger of his rival, and began to attack her with extraordinary speeches, which were not rendered more agreeable by the stammering of intoxication. As Theophila, entirely occupied with her other neighbour, answered him abruptly, he thought that it was necessary to back his addresses by some clumsy caresses, and he threw his arms round the waist of the frightened girl, who endeavoured in vain to withdraw from his embrace without the notice of Valenty ; but Waclaw Siewrak was not a man to be easily daunted in his present state, and he pressed her to him with all the violence of an intoxicated man. She could no longer bear his insolence, and jumping up in fear and anger, ran to her aunt, who, having received the frightened chicken under her wings, poured out a torrent of abuse on the drunk-

en brawler. "What do you mean?" exclaimed Valenty Bielawski in the greatest anger, seizing with a firm grasp the scrivener by the shoulder; "are you so fond of blows that you dare, in my presence, behave in such a shameful manner to a respectable young woman?" "It is unheard of," cried the provoked aunt, "to treat the servant of a royal lady in this way! Wait only till tomorrow, you shall have a reward for your insolence." "Royal lady!" repeated Waclaw scoffingly; "like mistress, like servant." "Hearken ye," said Valenty, "get thou gone directly, if thou dost not desire that I should show thee the way through the window." The scrivener was silenced for a moment by this threat, the realization of which he knew to be possible; but he soon remembered that he could rely on the aid of the beadle's patrol, and exclaimed with affected courage, "You are always for playing the master, my worthy sir country gentleman of an estate of two acres, but you shall not do so here; this is a public room, and wenches that are strolling about during the night are common property." "Thou wilt have it then, impudent fellow!" cried Valenty; and his sword began to play with the flat side on the broad shoulders of Siewrak. Paul Ordenga approached the scene of bustle, and said,

rubbing his hands and laughing, “ Don’t pollute your good blade on the skin of such a rascal, sir nobleman ; leave him to us, we will give him what he so well deserves. We have also our own account to settle with the fellow who dares to equalize himself with the pupils of the royal school because he can write the large alphabet ; and his business is to draw from us some imprudent words, that he may misinterpret them afterwards and slander us before our superiors. What do you think, comrades, shall we not deal with this learned gentleman according to his merits ? ” This proposition was unanimously approved by a shout of applause ; but Siewrak, whose courage was entirely subdued by the appearance of so many new adversaries, began to cry with an agonizing voice, “ Help ! help ! ye gentlemen of the patrol ; will you suffer a servant of his grace the Palatine of Cracow to be illtreated by these saucy schoolboys ? ” The scholars, provoked by this contemptuous appellation, prepared to fall on the scrivener ; but in the same moment the beadle advanced with an air of official dignity, and stepping before the trembling Siewrak, lifted the staff, the token of his dignity, and said, “ In the name of the *Rector Magnificus*, I command peace ! Patrol, arrest these brawlers ! and should any of them dare

to oppose you, we have, thanks to St. Stanislaw Szczepanowski ! capital strings, and you may bind them.” The patrol were on the point of fulfilling this order, when Valenty Bielawski, who kept off the timid assailants with his sword, exclaimed, “ Are you mad, beadle, that you dare to attack a noble inmate of the illustrious lord of Cracow ? Give room to this young lady and to these respectable gentlemen ! ” “ By no means,” answered the leader of the patrol, perceiving with fright that he was near committing an abuse of power, which would be attended by bad consequences to himself, “ by no means ; far be it from me to attack you, sir nobleman. I have only to do with these saucy springals, and I will deal with them according to the right given to me by the most reverend lord prebendary.” “ Beardless free-thinkers ! ” screamed Waclaw, with a voice smothered by rage, from behind the shoulders of the beadle ; “ boys who have scarcely escaped from the rod.” “ Perhaps from the rod,” said the beadle, “ but not from the whip, which his reverence understands well how to administer for the glory of our mother church and the honour of the Lyceum.” Provoked to the utmost by this last speech, Ordenga advanced with clenched fists and sparkling eyes : “ Shall we suffer this unworthy jailer to insult us—we who are of noble

birth, and students of the liberal arts?" His companions answered this question by a general expression of anger: they instantly seized all the iron furniture from the chimney, and it appeared as if plenty of hard blows would be dealt on both sides; but at this moment two patrolmen seized the bold scholar, cast him on the ground, and, protected by the halberds of their companions, began to bind his hands and feet. Valenty, who, in the general confusion of the dimly illuminated hall, was occupied in placing Tosia in safety, and for a moment had lost sight of this scene, now became aware of the critical position of Ordenga, and exclaimed in a thundering voice, "God forbid that anybody should suffer for having taken the part of a noble retainer of Tarnowski! Desist, ye infamous hangman knaves! How dare you lay violent hands on a nobleman?" "With your permission," answered the beadle with a blustering importance, "as far as concerns your worthy person you are free to depart, but the alumnus is subject to the jurisdiction of the rector, whose executive power is entrusted to me, and of which this staff is the token. I have not the least idea of letting him loose, having once caught him, because he has long since been noted by the authorities as a novator, sectator, and a seducer of his

young patron ; and even now he spoke about the sinful freedom of thought. Although I do not understand the signification of this word, I well know that the most reverend Prebendary has the greatest horror of such things.” “ Is that your justice, ye stupid fanatics ? ” cried Bielawski. “ But what business have I to argue with you ? I ask you, once for all, “ will you let sir Ordenga free on security, as it is customary ? ” But when the beadle answered this question only by shaking his head in sign of denial, and his men continued to bind the scholar, Valenty’s sword began to play again ; one of the binders fell back with a bloody head, and the other, howling with pain, pressed his hands on his wounded side. “ Broken peace ! violence against the servants of the law ! ” cried the rector’s band. “ Down with the priest’s knaves ! ” answered the young men, who had already delivered their comrade from his bonds. “ Away with all monkish constraint ! Freedom of thought and action ! *Vivat* freedom ! ” Bielawski perceived the probable consequences of his rash deed ; but thinking it was now too late to retire, he recommended the half-swooning Tosia to the landlord’s care, and advancing to Ordenga, resolved to stand at his side to the last. The noise resounding from the inn attracted another detach-

ment of the patrol : the room was filled with armed people, and the position of the young allies would have soon become very critical, if the courage of the staff-bearer and of his companions had been in proportion to their numbers. The newly arrived patrol pressed the others forward, so that Valenty and his friends would soon have been too much confined to make use of their weapons ; neither could they have effected their escape, through the overwhelming numbers of their opponents, had not two of the students leaped through the window, and ran with the greatest haste to the school premises. “Out, *commilitones!*” cried they under the windows of the college ; “out ; we are attacked by the *Philistines!*”⁽²⁾ and they were answered by the greater part of their companions with a joyful shout. Soon the gates and wickets of the college were opened, and a swarm of half-dressed scholars rushed from thence, and followed their companions to the Eagle Inn. The Prebendary, who by an immoderate severity had alienated the minds of his pupils, fearing for his life, escaped by a back door of the college, and fled to the castle, in order to implore the protection of Peter Kmita, who, as palatine and starost of Cracow, had the supreme command over the police of the city.

The arrival of so many new scholars gave a very

different turn to the passing events. The patrol obliged to defend themselves from their numerous adversaries, desisted from their attack upon the little band headed by Bielawski and Ordenga, who, in their turn, profiting by the elbow-room they gained, fell bravely on their assailants. The Prebendary's guards, attacked violently from both parties, were compelled to give way, and many a one of them had received a bloody remembrance of that night's work. Ordenga, Bielawski, and their companions followed step by step their retiring enemies ; and it happened that Waclaw Siewrak, who was almost out of his senses with fright and ebriety, was overtaken in the door-way by Valenty Bielawski. He had already lifted his sword in order to avenge all the former misdeeds of the scrivener, and to punish the base spy who had caused all this mischief; but Siewrak fell on his knees and craved for mercy. Valenty's anger was lost in contempt ; he pushed him away, saying, “ Go, wretch! may the remembrance of this night and its consequences follow you, till you receive the infamous death which awaits spies and tale-bearers ! ” He then followed his companions into the street, which was already illuminated by tapers and torches, which had been hastily collected.

The prebendary Czarnkowski arrived out of breath at the royal apartments, where the guests were just at the end of the dessert. Having inquired hastily for the Palatine of Cracow, he received the answer that Kmita was gone to the apartments of the Queen-mother with the Primate and some other grandees. The paleness of the Prebendary, and the fear expressed on his countenance, failed not to awaken the curiosity of the courtiers ; so that when Czarnkowski departed in search of Kmita, a vague report of a riot amongst the scholars circulated about the hall. By and by, three of the lords who were present arose one after another from the table, and left the banqueting-hall to meet again in an empty apartment. These three lords were, the Duke of Prussia ; Nicolas, Prince Radziwill, great cupbearer of Lithuania ; and Firley, Court Marshal of the Crown. Their secret conversation lasted a long time, and when it was finished they were seen all three hastening by different ways from the castle to the city.

The ire of the youthful students had evaporated, the vengeance against their oppressors being satisfied : they stood in the street, silently looking at each other, and not knowing what to do. They did not think it advisable to return to the college, after all that had happened, many of them fore-

seeing, in imagination, the imprisonment and corporeal punishments which the implacable severity of the rector would infallibly inflict on them, whilst the impossibility of leaving the town, quite unprepared and scarcely dressed, pressed on their minds. Some of them began to slide aside to seek an abode for the night with their friends and acquaintances, in order to make their escape in the morning to the paternal home, where they could not expect a very tender reception from their provoked parents. Paul Ordenga suddenly stepped forward, and addressing his companions, exclaimed, "Wherefore do you stand here, comrades, in a trembling uncertainty? Do you repent that, after long restraint and subjection, you have defended your rights as citizens of the town and future masters of liberal arts? Will you return and crave pardon which will not be granted? Will you stretch your hands to the fetters, and crouch to the scourge, which yon Czarnkowski, with his monks and jailors, have already prepared for you? They call us freethinkers and heretics; well, let us make those names a mark of distinction, and prove to our oppressors that we have lighted a brand which will not be easily extinguished. A ray of light has shed its blessed influence in the den where superstition and casuistical hypocrisy

held their sway. Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin have shaken to the foundation that edifice of pride and hypocrisy raised by the priests, to the exclusion of truth and true religion. Let us leave these tottering walls, and wander through the world, as many of our brothers have done already. Youth, strength, and a clear conscience are our only wealth. The sun of heaven shines brightly in all parts of the world. Even in our own country we shall find many who can and will assist us in defence of the truth. Many of our illustrious senators are convinced of the errors of the Romish Church. Many of its priests have abjured its false tenets, preferring divine truth to all the riches of the world. Must I recall to your remembrance Lismannini ?⁽³⁾ Have you forgotten the canon of Cracow, Adam Drzewicki, and the high-born Latomirski ? Has the church greater powers over us ? Are we bound by greater obligations to it ? Up, *commilitones*, and follow me ! We shall begin our new career in the name of light and freedom ! ” His hearers applauded the young enthusiast with loud acclamations ; but when he turned to Bielawski, inviting him to join them, Valenty withdrew his hand, and said, “ Do not reckon on me. Would to God I had not been even unintentionally the cause of all that has happened ! ” The students paid little

attention to him, and marched off with loud shouts, swinging their tapers along the street.

When the prebendary Czarnkowski arrived at the antechamber of the Queen Bona, it was signified to him, that besides the Palatine of Cracow, there were many other lords engaged in an important conference, and that no servant dared enter the interior apartments at such a moment. But when the priest urged that his business was of the most important kind, and the least delay would be dangerous to the church and to the state, an Italian chamberlain took on himself to call Kmita, who came directly into the antechamber. He listened in great indignation to the account which the Prebendary gave; assented entirely to the severe measures which the exasperated priest proposed against the rioters, and offered himself to back those measures by his presence, after having previously apprised the Queen-mother of the event. The Prebendary waited long for the Grand Marshal; and when he did return at length from the Queen's presence, his demeanour was entirely changed. He called the riot of the students the effervescence of youthful spirits, who would be easily reduced to their wonted subjection by the first menace of their superiors. He listened without any interest, and even with impatience, to the

fears expressed by the Prebendary, and observed with irony, that the spiritual lord, like all others of his calling, easily transformed a gnat into an elephant; adding, that everything appeared dangerous to a faint heart. When the astonished and provoked priest urged him to hasten before the spirit of revolt had spread, Kmita had so many things to ask and to remember, that a long time elapsed before Czarnkowski, who dared not appear at the scene of riot without the company of the dreaded Palatine, left the castle with him.

Attended by many lords and retainers, Albert Frederick of Brandenburg, Duke of Prussia, was riding back from the royal entertainment to his lodgings. On approaching his dwelling he saw the place before the palace brightly illuminated by torches, and he heard a confused noise and wild singing. Astonished by such an extraordinary scene, he stopped his horse, and ordered one of his retainers to ride on and inquire if the scene before his eyes was what he suspected, or perhaps even wished it to be, though not precisely at that moment and in that manner. A general shout resounded from the crowd: "Hail to the Duke of Prussia, the protector of the freedom of conscience and of truth! Hail to the illustrious patron of science and liberal arts! Hail, hail to him!" Im-

mediately after this salutation, many deputies of the scholars came forward, and requested him, in a well-arranged speech, to patronize their intention to quit Cracow, in order to finish their studies at the Protestant universities. If circumstances had permitted the Brandenburgian Prince to act according to his wishes, he would certainly have lent a favourable ear to the students' request. The prosperity of his newly erected university at Koenigsberg (⁴) was an object he had greatly at heart, and he was perfectly aware that this still insignificant institution would rapidly increase by the accession of so many young men, who had already made preparatory studies at the university of Cracow, where, in spite of all that was said by the pupils in anger against this institution, the ancient languages, and that eloquence which is the first science of a republican nation, were taught in the greatest perfection, as well as the philosophy of Aristotle. Moreover, many considerations induced him to desire the progress of the Protestant doctrines in a kingdom whose feudatory he was; and every triumph obtained by the new over the old religion, was considered by him as a step towards certain ends, which, according to the historians of that day, he had already begun to cherish, and which he manifested afterwards, on

the death of Sigismund Augustus. On the other hand, every consideration of decorum and policy forbade him to favour openly a riot in the capital of his liege lord and kinsman, particularly at the very moment of his arrival for the purpose of having his own disputed rights to Prussia confirmed by a new investiture from the young monarch.

Such were the considerations which agitated the mind of Albert Frederick during the speech of the students. He listened to them thoughtfully, much perplexed with the difficulties of his situation. When they had ended, he replied, that it did not become him to be the patron of a party in the vicinity of His Majesty Sigismund Augustus, their common master, on whose wisdom and mercy they might rely, as it was known that the King did not suffer any one to be persecuted for his religious opinions; that they should be of good cheer, and that he would do everything in his power for them. He begged they would give him room to enter his dwelling, it being already late; and he advised them to abstain from every riotous action, which would certainly injure even the best cause. Having thus spoken, he gave spurs to his horse, and galloped with his retinue into the gate of the palace, which was immediately closed behind them.

Their reception by the Duke of Prussia did not at all answer the overstrained expectations of our young friends. The fiery zeal of the novators began once more to subside; many of them surrounded Paul Ordenga with bitter reproaches for having led them into such a perilous action; when a little wicket in the Brandenburgian's dwelling opened slowly, and some muffled men came forth and mingled themselves among the students. At the same time appeared, from another side, different persons, who were supposed to be the servants of the Palatine of Lublin and of the great cupbearer of Lithuania. They also walked through the crowd, and entered into secret conversation with the several groups. Fear and uncertainty quickly disappeared, and the scholars, singing an old Latin song, marched with the greatest order in pairs to an adjoining open place, where they encamped, by the light of torches, to enjoy in fraternal concord the store of food and liquors which those mysterious persons plentifully distributed among them.

The circumstances of the moment were not favourable to the appearance of the prebendary Czarnkowski, who at this moment arrived at the place with the loitering Kmita. His appearance produced a hollow menacing murmur; and when

urged in a low voice by Kmita to display his authority, he addressed the scholars in an angry voice ; and soon overwhelmed by passion, burst into a strain of invectives, and ordered them, under the pain of excommunication, to return instantly to their cells, in order to submit to the severe punishments which the offended church and the slighted authorities would inflict on them. The murmurs of the students changed into a loud mocking laugh, and many abusive words greeted the ears of the provoked priest. Some of the stoutest scholars arose from the ground and advanced to the infuriated Rector, as if they intended to bestow on him retaliation for all their past sufferings, which directly put an end to his sermon. He returned to Kmita, who stood at a distance observing the scene, and who, instead of lending him succour, whispered, with a scarcely suppressed laugh, " You can well conceive, most reverend lord, it is better that I should not witness a scene so injurious to your authority. Therefore I leave you to bring your subordinates to reason ; and when you stand in need of my aid, I will never refuse you the assistance becoming my station." Having said this, he pressed his richly adorned bonnet on his brow, and galloped away with his

small retinue. The Rector did not think it advisable to make a further experiment of his eloquence, and followed the Palatine of Cracow with the greatest speed, accompanied by the exulting shouts of the cheerful scholars.

CHAPTER IV.

“ I depart ;
Whither I know not.”—BYRON.

IT was early morn. The antechambers of the Queen-mother were filled with servants in rich Spanish liveries, who crowded round the large fires, yawning and shivering from cold. Many lords, muffled in their cloaks, passed through these rooms, whispered their names to the porter, and were instantly admitted. When seven of these visitors had been numbered, the lady in waiting appeared, and signified to the attendants that Her Majesty, feeling indisposed, would spend the present holiday in her apartments, and that she would not receive any one except the King.

“ If the most seréne lady is engaged in some pious occupation, I suppose it is a conversion,” observed one of the younger servants. “ What other business can the heretic Firley have among so many Roman Catholic lords? If I am not greatly mistaken, I saw him enter just now.” “ You are quite right,” said another; “ and he looked as dejected as if the Calvinistic minister

had refused him absolution." "What do you say about absolution?" retorted the first. "The Augsburgians have nothing like it; but I will tell you how they manage these matters. Instead of receiving the holy communion as we do, they make a repast of sausages, filled by the runaway nun Catherine of Bora, and drink Dantzic brandy ('). It may be that the Palatine of Lublin has drunk a little too much, and that is all." This sally was very much applauded by the surrounding servants, as something very clever and witty.

Encouraged by this mark of approbation, the second of the interlocutors replied, "What you have said is very probable indeed; but certainly it is not for the purpose of effecting his conversion that he is come, for I have frequently observed that Her Majesty and the Court Marshal had plenty of time for such an occupation, and at moments when they could do it without interruption. The Neapolitan, Assano, who stood silently near the chimney during this conversation, with his gloomy eyes bent on the ground, now advanced to the talkers, and said in a cutting accent, "Girolamo, you have recognised the lord of Lublin, and you, Francesco, have made sundry observations; but I advise you to get rid of this bad habit, which may be of sad consequences to you.

It is easy to see that you are Lombards, and that a mixture of French loquacity and foppery has crept into your Italian blood. You are wondrous clever people, no doubt; but take care that, with all your cleverness, you are not sent back to your native Alps to sell mousetraps and hatchets or to sweep chimneys. You will have then plenty of time and opportunity to make observations from the roof-tops, and proclaim them. Take care, I say, or something even worse may happen to you."

Assano enjoyed some consideration in the ante-chamber of the Queen-mother, which he owed partly to a slight degree of distinction which was occasionally shown him by his royal mistress, and probably also from his repulsive exterior making him an object of terror to the inferior servants of the Court, so that whenever he appeared all mirth and jesting was directly hushed. His present interference produced its wonted effect upon those he addressed, and they both withdrew to another corner without further comment.

Bona Sforza sat almost motionless in a large arm-chair, leaning her head against the gilt crown with which it was ornamented. She was partly covered by the widow's veil, which she always wore; but her countenance was sufficiently ex-

posed to let its deep, thoughtful expression be distinctly visible. A slight smile occasionally arched her fine mouth, as if some pleasing idea would arise to her mind, notwithstanding her anxious efforts to conceal it; but the cold, stern expression soon returned; and so absorbed was the Queen in her own reflections that she seemed unconscious of the presence of the lords assembled at her commands. Next to her stood Peter Kmita, who anxiously waited permission of the royal lady to address the assembly. The Bishop of Cujavia rested against one of the side pillars, with folded arms and gloomy countenance. The castellan of Posnania, Andreas Gorka, exchanged significant looks with the Primate Dziergowski; and Jakand of Brudzewa, tired of this mute scene, amused himself by examining the hilt of his sword. Besides these lords in clerical or national dresses, there was also a sixth person present, whose dark colour of face, sharp features, and rich Spanish dress proved him to be an inhabitant of Southern Europe. He was called Luigi Castaldo, marchese di Cassano, and he was nearly related to the family of the Sforza. After the assembly had waited for a considerable time, the Queen addressed him, saying, "Signor Marchese, you are going to join the Court of our cousin the

Emperor and King of Spain, and to kiss the feet of the Most Holy Father. You will be in no want of answers to the inquiries which the spiritual and temporal heads of Christendom may address to you respecting this northern kingdom, whose concerns may interest them, though perhaps without giving them much pleasure. The scandalous scene of the past night will, I suppose, find a place in your journal." "Most gracious lady," answered the Marchese, with a deep obeisance, "all that I have seen and heard in Poland can but augment the glory of Your Majesty, not even excepting the foolish act of these misguided youths. His Imperial Majesty and His Holiness the Pope are well aware of the evil spirit of the times. The unhallowed controversy at the Diet of Worms, and the voice of the seductors of Wittenberg and Geneva, have long since resounded through the halls of the Vatican, and disturbed the holy peace of the Vicar of Christ. You are well aware that the Emperor Charles, though he maintains with great firmness the orthodox religion in his Spanish dominions, cannot boast of the same good fortune in Germany. Both the Pope and the Emperor will certainly be grieved to learn that this kingdom is involved in the general misfortune; but they will equally rejoice to see Your Majesty oppose the

growing evil with all the magnanimity and wisdom becoming so great a queen and so true a daughter of the holy Church.” “It may be easy for the Emperor to rule as it becomes a lawful sovereign in his hereditary dominions, where the execution of justice is not opposed by long-tolerated abuses and the insolence of overbearing vassals,” said Bona, turning to the Marchese; “but it is otherwise in the North. The Roman king who governs Germany for his brother has had many opportunities of being convinced of this bitter truth; and when such a powerful and enlightened prince is unable to check the progress of the evil, what can we do, who are a powerless afflicted widow, whose strength has descended into the grave with our lamented king and husband?” “The voice of the republic has called Your Majesty’s son to the place of his royal father,” said the Grand Marshal with a cutting accent; “and it is his sacred duty to hold firmly the reins of the empire which we have entrusted to his care. It is well known in our country, as well as abroad, that Your Majesty’s wisdom has often suggested to the late King many salutary measures; but the executive power requires the strong arm of a man.” “Do you think so, lord Kmita?” said Bona, casting on him a look of contempt; and then added with a smile, “Per-

haps in a short time you will be of another opinion." Kmita only bowed silently ; and the Queen continued in a tone of indifference, " Where is the Palatine of Lublin ? We have ordered his attendance, and he has not accustomed us to wait for him." " Circumstances of an extraordinary kind must be the reason of the Court Marshal's absence," said Kmita with irony ; " I dare say he is still engaged in ordering the triumphal train of his coreligionists, in company with Leszczynski and Prince Radziwill. Religious duties must be of course fulfilled the first." " You see, Marchese di Cassano," said Bona to her cousin, " here also the hostile spirit of Wittenberg penetrates everywhere, dissolving many a tie of old friendship, and bringing forth at the very footstool of the throne its wonted consequences,—division and religious hatred." " It is precisely, therefore," interrupted the rude Palatine of Sieradz, Jakand of Brudzewa, " that this evil must be eradicated before it has time to diffuse its poison ; and permit me to say that the King, in conjunction with the Diet, is no less able to act than the Emperor in his absolute power ; his acts have even more force, because they are obligatory." " I cannot understand you, my worthy lord Palatine," said the Italian. " Will you forgive the ignorance of a

foreigner, and have the kindness to explain to me what you really mean?" "I mean," answered Jakand in a quiet voice, "that the address by which the Arragonian States salute their monarch at his coronation is not become a mere form in this country as it is now in Spain, and that when a king of Poland wishes not to do what he ought, he soon will be unable to do what he would." "And would you, my lord of Sieradz, be bold enough to grasp the young lion by his mane?" asked the Queen with an expression of contempt. "Not only by his mane, but even by his claws, if he should trespass on our liberties," answered the senator coldly.

The Marchese di Cassano had never heard anything like this in a royal palace, and he could scarcely conceal his utter amazement. He looked on the Queen, in order to read in her countenance how he should behave in circumstances so strange to him; but when he saw that, not paying the slightest attention to the Palatine's speech, she engaged in a low but animated conversation with the Grand Marshal, he was on the point of taking leave of her. But when he approached Bona with a deep obeisance, she said to him with an affable smile, "Stop a little, signor Marchese; we are much obliged to you for your good opinion of us,

and we wish to confirm such an opinion in yourself and in those to whom you may relate the events of your journey. I hope that in a few moments we shall have an opportunity of doing it."

Whilst the Queen spoke, the Palatine of Lublin entered. It appeared that he had remained in the adjoining room, because a quarter of an hour had passed since the door leading to the interior apartment was opened for him. Perhaps during this time he was engaged in arranging his toilette, which was in a state of disorder from the exertions of the preceding night, or in composing the agitation of his mind ; it may be, also, that he stood at the door sufficiently near to discern the voices of the company ; suffice it to say, that he entered just at the right moment to interrupt the conversation of the Queen with the Grand Marshal, a conversation which he had many reasons for supposing was not favourable to him.

Queen Bona cast a sharp inquiring look on the Palatine of Lublin, and said in an angry voice, " You arrive late, lord Firley, and you will give our foreign guest a bad opinion of the courtesy which reigns in a country where the orders of a lady and of a queen are followed with so much neglect." " The unfortunate event of this night and the orders of the King must excuse my want

of punctuality, most gracious lady," answered Firley, without the least embarrassment, and looking on the gloomy countenance of Kmita with a provoking smile. " You will find here many," said the Grand Marshal with anger, " who doubt that the Palatine of Lublin considers this event an unfortunate one; some even suppose that you had more business to perform this night than was imposed on you by the orders of the King." " Are you also one of those who are actuated by such a suspicion ? " said Firley, advancing a step towards Kmita, with a proud demeanour; " a great dignitary of the Crown has no right to require from his equal in office an account of his intentions and actions, otherwise I would perhaps also ask you, my lord Grand Marshal, who it was, who, by countenancing this foolish Prebendary, has induced him to use this untimely severity, which has produced such mischievous effects for science and literature in our country that they will perhaps be felt during centuries." The countenance of Kmita reddened with anger; he turned his eyes to the Queen, and cast on her a look full of reproach, as if he desired her to answer for what had been done by her orders. Bona remained passive. A strange smile curled her lips, and she cast at times a secret look on the

Italian, who drew nearer to her during this conversation.

The Grand Marshal paused for a moment, as if he tried to recollect something, then turned to Firley, and said with irony, "The mischief of which you speak, my lord of Lublin, will be, indeed, very soon repaired by the efforts of yourself and your allies, if we may believe what was observed last night." "Is it becoming a dignitary of the Crown and a senator to kindle a flame which threatens with destruction the altar and the throne?" exclaimed the Primate. "Such are then the precepts of the new doctrine, that its confessors should betray the duties of their station, and instead of opposing the growing evils of discord, promote them? Let Christians beware of them, for it is written, 'Ye shall know them by their fruits.'" "Are you also against me, my lord Archbishop of Gniezno?" said Firley with a scornful smile. "Two against one! Indeed, most gracious lady, Your Majesty should not allow in your presence such an unequal combat, but rather take my part against two such powerful opponents. It needs not to say, my lord Primate, that your spiritual dignity has but little influence on a Protestant; and as a member of the senate I want no instruction from

one who is my equal, as long as the bishops have a seat in this assembly, though time may perhaps cause many changes." "I am sorry to hear you speak in such a manner, my lord of Lublin," said the Queen, "and it is very wrong of you to address with such an unbecoming harshness the Prince Primate, whose station and dignity make him the first defender of the true orthodox faith in this kingdom; but," added she in a milder tone of voice, "you shall not have appealed in vain to our protection, and therefore we entreat you, most reverend lord Primate, and you also, my lord Grand Marshal, that, considering the errors in which the lord of Lublin is still involved, you may not be angry with him for a thing which you have sufficient reason to disapprove. We think, as Providence has been pleased to afflict this kingdom with the evil of contending opinions, it would be most advisable to put aside all religious disputation. Whenever our King and country can be served, every one should lend their united efforts to that end. Are you not of my opinion, my lord Bishop of Cujavia?" At this moment a loud singing of numerous voices resounded from the bottom of the hill on which the royal castle stood, and at the same time footsteps were heard in the antecham-

ber; the folding-doors were thrown open, and Sigismund Augustus entered.

Bona Sforza advanced some steps to meet the King, and said with an expression of surprise, “What happy accident has afforded us the pleasure of seeing our royal son at such an unwonted hour?” “We are much surprised that Your Majesty is still unaware of the circumstance which induces us to intrude now upon your presence,” answered Sigismund Augustus with great animation, and refusing to take the seat which his mother offered to him; “it is known to all Cracow, and we see in this assembly many a lord who is able to give Your Majesty ample information about this business.” “It is true that a report of a riot among the students has reached us, but we hope it is already appeased.” The Queen, uttering these words, approached a large projecting window which overlooked the high-road below; the King followed her, and occupied a place at the same window. Meanwhile the singing continued to approach; and a long train, winding round the hill, began to appear on the road. Four hundred young men, marching two and two, preceded by white banners, were singing with a loud voice the 119th Psalm, arranged in Polish verse by Paul Ordenga for the use of the new doctrine. When

the train was arrived under the window, some of the students raised their eyes. In an instant every head was uncovered, and a unanimous shout, "*Vivat Rex!*!" resounded from their ranks. Some of the scholars uttered the name of the Queen Bona, but without any sign of respect or attachment. Sigismund said to his mother, with an expression of anger, "Your Majesty can now judge yourself how far the riot, caused by untimely severity, if not by something worse, is appeased." The Queen, deeply engaged in gazing on this train, paid no attention to the words of her son, and muttered to herself, "What fine handsome young men they are; and how many among them belong to the noblest families of the kingdom! Many of these young wanderers would have become worthy members of the state, and firm supporters of the throne." "And also of the church," added, with a sigh, the Primate, who was standing behind the Queen. The King stood silent awhile, then covered his face with his hands, as if he wished to conceal his deep emotion. The Palatine of Lublin approached his monarch, and said in a low voice, "Your Majesty seems to be painfully affected by this sight. I understand these feelings, and partake the grief of my sovereign." "Can a father remain indifferent

when he sees hundreds of his children abandon the paternal house?" exclaimed Sigismund Augustus. "It is your duty, my lord of Lublin, to protect these inexperienced youths, who wander now in the wide world, for the sake of your religion. Take care that they shall be received into the schools of Dantzig, Posen, and Lublin." "Your Majesty's orders shall be fulfilled," said Firley; "and many of these young wanderers will certainly prove to be worthy of Your Majesty's paternal solicitude, by their future services to their King and to their country." "If it is Your Majesty's pleasure that they should remain," said old Kmita with great animation, "speak only a word, and a company of Tatars shall bring them to order better and sooner than all the tender cares of the lord of Lublin." "Beware of any violent proceedings!" exclaimed the King in anger; "I swear by Heaven, that as long as I am monarch of this country, nobody shall be persecuted for his religious opinions; and although some of our first dignitaries, and even persons that are the nearest to our throne and to our heart, have acted sometimes in similar cases against our express will, it shall never be done with our royal consent. We are not unaware, my lord Grand Marshal, of the part you have taken in an event which has

produced so much harm to the country, and will not conduce to our honour with foreign nations.” Kmita was on the point of answering this reproach, but an expressive look from the Queen induced the proud old man to suppress his anger. “ How can Your Majesty address in so harsh a manner the Grand Marshal ? ” said Bona in a mild conciliatory voice : “ the zeal he displays in defending the religion of his ancestors is praiseworthy, even though the means he adopted were not the best to produce so desirable an effect. But,” continued she, perceiving that Kmita was not quite satisfied with this apology, “ how can Your Majesty accuse worthy senators of having excited the mischief, whose real cause is so easy to be found ? ” “ We accuse not them alone,” answered Sigismund Augustus in an impressive voice, and fixing on his mother a piercing look ; “ there may be also others guilty of it, and such as are not subject to any tribunal except their own conscience ; but we request Your Majesty to acquaint us with these reasons, which it was not your pleasure to explain to us.”

Bona with a strong effort suppressed the anger produced by the cutting speech of her son, and said, with an assumed dignity, “ It is well known that the lower orders always follow the example

of the higher ; and we must confess that the example which is now given is not the best. The grandees of the realm secede from the pale of the holy Catholic Church, and the magnates are imitated by the equestrian order. The altar is surrounded by a clergy whose lukewarmness is even more dangerous than the fierce zeal of innovators and——” The Queen stopped abruptly at these words, and turned aside with a deep sigh. “ If Your Majesty has anything more to say,” said Sigismund Augustus, reddening with indignation, “ we beseech you not to withhold it from us, if it is becoming you to utter, and us to listen to such things.” “ If you desire it, I will speak as becomes a mother and a queen. The steps of the throne—I have no courage to say the throne itself—have become an asylum for heretics. The royal house of the Jagellons has allied itself with them, and the nation looks with doubt and amazement on their monarch, who partakes his meal and drinks from the same cup with the followers of Calvin ; who calls a novator his brother, and a late convert his consort. To this Your Majesty may ascribe the true origin of the mischief that has happened, and which threatens the state and the church with worse consequences ; and not to the severity which the faithful sons of

the church are obliged to use, in order to check the progress of evil, which will continually increase until the matters between the King, the church, and the state are brought to a clear understanding."

"Enough, my mother," interrupted the King in a voice expressive of pain and anger; "we have never supposed that you would consider—" (his eye caught at this moment the Palatine of Lublin)—"the communion with the followers of the new doctrine so pernicious as to declare a valid canonical marriage with a noble lady destructive to the state and to the church, because she has some relations among them. That you would ascribe to this union the origin of many an unfortunate event, whose real cause—" (he paused at these words for a moment, and after having cast a hasty glance on the assembly, continued in a more moderate tone)—"whose real cause the dignity of the throne and many other reasons forbid us now to express. But Your Majesty is right in saying that matters between us and the republic must be brought to a clear understanding, and it shall be done before the next spring; and we take Heaven to witness that we will abdicate the crown of our ancestors rather than it shall be said that we have borne it with disgrace,

or behaved in a manner unworthy of a monarch."

Having uttered these words, he made a deep obeisance to his mother, bowed slightly to the rest of the assembly, and departed. Bona remained awhile absorbed in meditation ; but when the Marchese di Cassano approached her, in order to take leave, she gave him her hand to kiss, whispering at the same time, "*Chi va piano, va sano, Signor Marchese*, therefore perform your journey without haste, and when you arrive at Vienna, salute on my part my royal cousin, and particularly Catherine of Austria, the widowed Duchess of Mantua."

The assembly left the room, but Firley and Kmita remained with the Queen, who addressed them in a soothing tone of voice, and said, "My lords, if you value our royal favour, you will directly forget the trifling difference which has arisen between you." The rivals bowed assent with a cold formality ; and when the Palatine of Lublin was gone, Bona continued : "I hope you understand me, my lord Grand Marshal?" "I do ; but I beseech Your Majesty to employ me no further as a tool of your political schemes ; or at least, when you require my aid, not to expose me to the pride

of a young monarch, and the insolence of an overbearing favourite."

When Firley descended the staircase of the castle, he said to himself, " Well, well, my lady Queen, I am much obliged for the part you have chosen for me in your political drama ; but I have not the least intention to act it. You are no longer sufficiently young to make me forgetful of my creed, and of many other interests that can better prosper under a rising sun than under a setting one." When the Grand Marshal returned to his dwelling, Waclaw Siewrak presented himself to receive the reward of all his pains. Kmita cast him a purse of gold, and ordered him instantly to be gone, and never to reappear in his presence, under pain of the severest punishment.

CHAPTER V.

" Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends."—SHAKSPEARE.

THE service of the second Christmas-day was over; Barbara Radziwill returned from the church to her apartment, attended by her ladies, who, according to the fashion of that time, were to spend with their royal mistress the morning of that holy day. Wearied by her long devotional exercise, the young Queen reclined on a sofa, and motioned to the youngest of the ladies to take a seat at her side, saying, that she wished to make a nearer acquaintance of her new *protégé*. Helena Odrowonz followed instantly this flattering invitation, which caused a considerable degree of astonishment among the ladies, and greatly excited the jealousy of lady Hornostay. The intentions of the Princess of Mazovia made her anxious to bring her daughter as much as possible in contact with the King, and therefore she readily agreed to Barbara's request to permit Helena to spend a few hours with her after the mass; and this pro-

position was particularly welcome to Anna, as she knew that it was precisely the time which Sigismund Augustus usually spent in the apartments of his consort. The proposition of the young Queen was also agreeable to Helena. Barbara's kindness had overcome her fears inspired by the ominous words of her mother, and a kind of presentiment told her that the consort of Sigismund would afford her the best protection against the dangers by which she was threatened. " You have never before been at Cracow," said Barbara, " and many things must appear to you quite new, and even strange, as it was with me a short time ago. Do you think that you will soon become accustomed to this Court?" " The first appearance of it," answered Helena, " to a simple country girl as I am, was so brilliant and so dazzling, that I am almost afraid of looking further, lest I should meet with something which would not be equally beautiful and good." " It is indeed a very shrewd observation for a simple country girl, as you please to call yourself," said Barbara, and continued in a cheerful voice; " the Court of my royal husband is really an assemblage of all that is noble, chivalrous, and wise. The ladies also who adorn it are not inferior to those of any other Court of Europe. You have seen Sigismund Au-

gustus' sister, the royal Isabella, whose superior mind shines with increased splendour amidst the severest trials that ever have befallen a crowned head; and who, deprived of lands and subjects, still proves herself to be a real Queen. The other princesses, sisters to the King, are also adorned with every virtue and accomplishment befitting their high station. But what do you think," added she with a suppressed smile, "of my *grande maîtresse*, the lady Hornostay? It is true that she is not very pleasant either in her countenance or in her manners, but there is nobody in the world who knows better how many steps the King's consort must make in receiving different guests, and what she shall say upon such and such occasions. However," added she in a more serious tone of voice, "it is a very necessary science, and I had a short time ago ample opportunity to be convinced of it. You have seen the Grand General Tarnowski; though his reputation is widely spread, it is not overrated; he has rendered great services to the King and the country, in the field and in the council: he will always act as it is right to do, though he lacks no power to do wrong if he chooses to act so. You have observed the proud Firley, who unites all the smoothness of a man of the world and the refinement of

a courtier with a steady adherence to his religious persuasion and to the ancient privileges of his order; the hoary Kmita, whose dark brow and haughty mind make him so repulsive, though he is not without great merit; the Bishop of Cracow, the active and zealous friend and servant of our husband; the mild and prudent Andreas Zebrzydowski, superior to all the clergy by his wisdom and learning; the honoured Peter Boratynski,—but,” said she, perceiving that at this last name Helena became visibly embarrassed, “I see that our conversation becomes tiresome to my charming pupil. You must pardon me for having dwelt so long on the illustrious personages that surround the throne, to which I have been raised by the love of my royal husband.” “I crave pardon, most gracious lady,” answered Helena, “for my momentary absence; and I beseech you to continue this interesting description.” Barbara paused for a moment; then asked her, “Have you been already presented to the Queen Bona?” “Not yet,” replied Helena; “I have not yet been in the apartments of Her Majesty.” “She is the mother of my royal husband, and a lady of a very superior mind,” said Barbara after a short silence. “You shall see her, and it does not become her daughter-in-law to influence your opinion; but,” con-

tinued she, fixing on Helena an inquisitive look; “we have omitted the first character,—I mean the King. What do you think of my husband?” “It is precisely here that I expect the best specimen of your descriptive powers, most gracious lady,” replied Helena, endeavouring to conceal a sudden embarrassment under an assumed tone of jest. “No,” said Barbara with a smile, “I will not prejudice your opinion in any way; and his station is so elevated that every one may observe him with his own eyes.” “I can enjoy this happiness rarely, and only for a short time. The daughter of Leon Odrowonz cannot have any claims to the royal favour; and I am afraid we are unwelcome guests at this Court, though the chivalrous mind of the monarch induced him graciously to receive the widow and the orphan.” “Do not think so,” interrupted Barbara with great animation; “the King considers you as his relatives. Sigismund Augustus does not approve of what formerly took place, and he will soon execute his intention to restore your ancient house from its fallen condition.” “I acknowledge as well as my mother, with due gratitude, the royal magnanimity; but my wishes soar not so high,—a humbler lot is destined for me. I seek no other happiness; and I submit it to your protection, most gracious lady,

and to that of your royal husband." "A humble lot destined for you!" said Barbara with unfeigned astonishment. "Pardon me; but all that I have heard of your mother has given me quite another idea. Explain it to me, and fear not to trust me." "Is it then unknown to you, most gracious lady, that my father betrothed me to Hippolyte Boratynski, the younger brother of the Starost of Samborz, and who is now in your service?" "To the young Boratynski!" exclaimed Barbara; and it seemed to her that she was suddenly relieved from a heavy burden. "Your father betrothed you to him, and your heart agrees with his dictates?" Helena answered this question by a deep blush, and cast down her eyes. "O lady!" said Barbara with great emotion, "it was your good genius that induced you to speak with me openly. Be of good cheer, because I mean sincerely with you. I will be now really what the King has created me in jest,—your second mother; and I can assure you that the King will join me with all his heart in promoting the happiness of such a dear relative as you are. It is a noble family the house of Boratynski, and your alliance will put them on a par with the first families of the realm; but we are going to be interrupted,—bear my words in your heart, my princely lady."

Barbara's brother, Nicholas Prince Radziwill, entering the apartment, put an end to this conversation. He hastily approached his sister, casting on Helena, as he passed her, a look of distrust ; and after having made a deep obeisance, said in a ceremonious tone, “ The King has ordered me to express his regret to Your Majesty that he is unable to come here this morning ; and he has commissioned me to communicate to you, most gracious lady, tidings which he is prevented by pressing business from doing himself.” Barbara dismissed her ladies with a graceful bow ; re-conducted Helena Odrowonz to the door with all the marks of attention due to her high birth ; and took leave of her by embracing her tenderly, to the great astonishment of Prince Radziwill. She returned then to her brother, who having learned from the Palatine of Lublin all that happened in the apartments of the Queen-mother, came hastily to report it to his sister.

The ladies who had been attending the King's consort retired into a large round hall, which opened on a staircase opposite to the door of Barbara's apartment, and on both sides into two corridors, of which one led to the apartments of the King, and the other to those of the Queen-mother. Though the hour was not later than noon, yet the

high-coloured windows, the black walls, and numerous pillars and arches of the hall, made it so obscure that it was scarcely possible to distinguish at a distance the countenances of the many attendants who were moving about the hall in various directions. It happened, consequently, that Helena Odrowonz, who was reconducted by lady Hornostay with all the marks of an overstrained civility, saw not her betrothed until she was close to him. She had so many things to say to him ; a new and unexpected hope had within a few moments opened to her ; the communication she had made to the King's consort had given a kind of publicity to her relation with Hippolyte. She turned therefore, and requesting him to wait for a few moments, hastily took leave of lady Hornostay, without paying any attention to the malicious grin of the old lady, who answered her salutation by a stiff, formal courtesy, and left the hall with a slow pace. The enraptured Helena hastened to communicate to her betrothed all these good tidings, being thoroughly persuaded that having acquired such a powerful friend as Barbara, all the obstacles to their union would be speedily removed, and the mediation of the King would easily overcome her mother's aversion ; though she did not mention to Hippolyte either the ominous words of

her mother, or the probable reasons of Barbara's eagerness to promote her wishes, and which she could easily guess : but when she spoke of the new and cheering prospects which the magnanimity of Sigismund Augustus had opened to her, and which would be promoted by Barbara's intercession ; that the faded splendour of her house should soon regain a new lustre ; and that she was to bestow on her playmate and betrothed not only a faithful heart, but also honours and riches, the doubts of Hippolyte interrupted Helena's animated speech. The reckless impetuosity of Anna of Mazovia had betrayed to him many a feature of her character which Helena, blinded by her filial piety, was unable to observe. The strange behaviour which she had adopted towards him since the death of Leon Odrowonz, and the constant care to hinder every approachment between two persons destined for each other, were too evident signs of the decision adopted by a lady of whose unbending will he was well aware. He had also some vague suspicions about the motives that had led the Princess of Mazovia to the Court. They were chiefly awakened by the fragment of the letter which he had found in the inn at Ivanovice. They were confirmed by some hints of his brother ; and his residence of two days at the Court was quite sufficient to con-

vince him that Barbara Radziwill was herself rather in want of protection than in a condition to grant it to others. The fiery mind and the known versatility of Sigismund Augustus seemed to justify this supposition. “ I am unable to express how much I feel your constancy and noble mind,” said he to Helena, “ and how dazzling the happiness which your father destined for me appears ; but, alas ! shall I ever be in possession of it ? ” “ O what a faint-hearted unbeliever you are ! ” interrupted Helena in a tone of jest. “ Do you rely so little on me ? Did you not yesterday tell me yourself, ‘ Let us remain firm and faithful, and all will be right ’ ? and your resolutions last no longer than a day ! ” “ Nothing will shake my constancy,” exclaimed Hippolyte with the greatest animation ; “ but I cannot conceal from you that every moment of our residence within these walls raises new obstacles to the attainment of my dearest wishes. Your own words have confirmed my fears. You have now told me that your royal cousin intends to amend the wrongs done to your family. The descendant of the Piasts will be surrounded with the splendour of her ancient house. Tell me, O lady ! will then your mother, who considered a Boratynski not a sufficient match for the daughter of the exiled Leon Odrowonz,—will she

accept him for a princess?" "How can you say so, Hippolyte? Is not your family one of the noblest in the kingdom? and was the station of my ancestor Piast not much lower, when the decree of heaven granted to him the crown of Poland? Behold Barbara! was it not love which raised her to the throne? And is not the distance which separates a king from the daughter of a vassal greater than that which exists between you and me, whose father was nothing but a nobleman, like yours?" "O do not name Barbara as an encouraging example," said Hippolyte; "it may be that her name will yet become a dreadful warning for all those who disregard the will of their parents, and all human considerations, in order to follow the voice of their heart." "Was it not the will of my father which has sanctioned our union?" said Helena, approaching the staircase, at the bottom of which the retinue of the Princess of Mazovia waited for her, and continued, giving her hand to Boratynski, "You are afraid of my mother's severity, but trust to me; I have likewise Piastian blood in my veins. Let us only remain firm and faithful, and the mother will agree at last."

"Never, never will she agree!" resounded suddenly a screaming disagreeable voice, in the ears

of the lovers, who started in surprise, and saw between them the horrid-looking, sallow, and gipsy-like countenance of an old woman, who stood menacing them with her withered finger. Hippolyte stretched his hand to seize the unwelcome intruder ; but she withdrew by a quick movement, and disappeared in the corridor leading to the apartments of the Queen-mother, where she was directly surrounded by some men in black cloaks, who seemed to have waited for her. Helena uttered a cry of horror, and ran down the staircase to join her retinue ; and Hippolyte returned thoughtfully to the apartments of Barbara, where he was that day on duty.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Though I do hate him as I do hell pains,
Yet for necessity of present life
I must show out a flag and sign of love,
Which is indeed but sign.”—SHAKSPEARE.

ANNA of Mazovia found herself, after a sleepless night and a morning commenced with disquieting reflections, on the most arduous road she had ever passed over—that which led to the northern wing of the castle of Cracow, where Bona Sforza held her court. She was borne in a litter richly gilt, surrounded by a retinue whose number and costly liveries bespoke her exalted station ; and with newly awakened hopes of future happiness she now arrived at the portal of that castle through which for so many centuries the kings of her line had passed as to their own habitation, and which she had last entered as the daughter of Duke Conrad, the first amongst the princely vassals of the Crown. Indignation struck powerfully at her heart as she compared the past and the present, and she had almost resolved to return home, when the door opened, the guard presented arms, and military music greeted the daughter of the Duke.

These signs of former times, these long-missed honours, worked powerfully on the feelings of her proud mind ; and with head erect and firm step she got out of the litter, at which one of the chief household officers of the royal widow awaited her, accompanied by a small though select number of attendants, in order to conduct her to the northern part of the castle. The crowd of courtiers appeared for the present to be banished ; only two rows of respectful silent domestics lined the broad steps, which the Princess, with a temper somewhat appeased, ascended. In the first antechamber even her only remaining conductor withdrew, with the remark, that such was the command of Her Majesty, who wished to receive her illustrious relative without the intrusion of any attendants, and he therefore took his leave. On a sign from the Princess her own retinue joined that of the Queen, and she proceeded alone through the empty adjoining gallery. As she approached the door of the third chamber, she perceived Andreas Zebrzydowski, who met her with a serious air and contracted brow. “ An unfriendly welcome for Anna of Mazovia in the castle of her forefathers ! ” said the Princess to him. “ It is but lately that the Bishop of Cujavia has taught me how far one may rely on the dispositions of old friends and servants.”

"Only one sort of welcome, illustrious lady," replied Andreas, with a constrained voice, while he stretched out his hand to grasp that of Anna, which she drew back with the irritation of wounded pride, "only one sort of welcome can I give you in these apartments. Take care how you cross yon threshold; for I take God and St. Stanislaw to witness, an interview with her can lead to nothing good. Listen to the last warning of one to whom, in times long past, you were an object of regard, and who will never cease to feel his former attachment to you and your family, if you do not compel him to it,—cross not yon threshold; once pass over it, and you awaken dangers that are now hushed, and in vain will you repent that you have roused them." Without deigning to answer the spiritual lord, Anna greeted him negligently and passed on. With a deep sigh Zebrzydowski looked after her, then hid his face between his hands, and disappeared through another door. Still, when Anna found herself approaching the fatal door, her steps seemed to linger; she began to fear the moment when she should again behold those hated features which so often appeared before her in disturbed slumbers, the features of one who had ruined her forefathers' house, and driven their daughter into banishment:

these recollections quickly awakened the busy scorpions in her breast. It seemed as if the words of the Bishop were indeed true, and that the spirit of desolation lay slumbering beyond that threshold which on her entrance would arise and inclose both herself and the Queen in its horrible folds. She remained irresolute, as if chained to the spot where she stood, when the porter at the door of the innermost chamber became aware of her presence and announced the name of the illustrious princess of Mazovia, lady palatine of Podolia. It was now too late—the velvet hangings were withdrawn, and the daughter of the Piasts found herself in the presence of the widowed Queen of Poland. For a considerable time the deadly enemies stood opposite, surveying each other fixedly with ominous looks. Quicker than was possible to the unbending mind of Anna, the Italian had regained her self-possession; and as the former bowed her unwilling knee to make the salute which the custom of the Court required on the royal hand, the Queen held it out with gracious affability, and the lips, from which had so often proceeded imprecations of unappeasable vengeance, now met in a cold embrace. The Queen then led Anna to an arm-chair like her own, and on which it was usual for none but the King to sit, when he made his occasional

visits to these apartments. They remained silent for the space of a minute, during which the one called up the whole power of her mind to preserve a firm composure, and the other pondered in what tone it best became her to commence the conversation. Bona of Milan had too intimate a knowledge of the art of governing, and of the human disposition, for it to be unknown to her how often dissimulation is carried too far in trying to conceal the real feelings and intentions, when a more candid confession of them would in reality succeed better ; and she had too high an opinion of the mind of her opponent to hope that a few fairspoken words and empty protestations would annihilate the recollections of her early wrongs. She therefore began the conversation, with a serene countenance, in the following manner : “ It is now a long time, lady Princess, since we have met in this place.” “ It was shortly after the death of duke Stanislaw that I last entered the castle,” replied Anna, averting her eyes, which began to light up with a lurid fire ; “ and as I returned to Warsaw I met the funeral procession of the last of my family, duke Janus.” “ Many years have since then passed over our heads,” said Bona, taking up the conversation ; “ our hair has grown thinner, and you miss in me the charms and ani-

mation of youth ; as I must also be aware of the traces time has left in your countenance. Is it not, then, reasonable to suppose that what has produced so great a change in our exterior, should not have left our interior dispositions unaltered ? I at least feel by my own that much that has come to pass had better never have taken place, and it brings to mind much wrong that we both have done.” “ Most difficult,” said Anna coldly and proudly, while she arose impatiently from her seat, “ most difficult would it be to speak on the subject you allude to, and it seems to me that Your Majesty, as well as myself, might feel that it ought never to be a subject of conversation between us.” “ Pray keep your place, Princess,” interrupted Bona, while with her hand she gently strove to prevent her rising. “ Your princely Grace is right ; wherefore fruitlessly call up the past, that never can return, while the present and future are our own, which at our time of life are valuable. But it has been decreed by heaven, that things should be as they are, and, whether with or without man’s intervention, that your house should have fallen from its former greatness, and the heiress of so many kings and princes should no longer be circumstanced as became her birth. Look not so irritated at me, illustrious

Princess, and listen to what the Queen would impart to you. My sovereign and son, in his royal generosity, which is the fair inheritance of youth, long since, even during his father's life, (over whose soul may the blessed light of eternity shine!) resolved to repair, as much as in him lay, what had taken place, and setting aside the advantage of his kingdom, (perhaps too rashly,) to commence his reign by giving a shining example of his royal beneficence, or if you so will it, by doing an act of justice." "Your Grace might yourself judge," replied Anna; who took these avowals for an intended restitution of the honours and property which she had lost; "let us not strive about words; it is sufficient that the King has declared his intentions to you, that you may the better explain them to me; you will trust to my candour, and you will believe me when I say that I acquiesce in such intentions, even though so lately made known to me." "Yes, lately, lady Princess, for repentance is not a kingly virtue, and it becomes not those who sit on a throne to beat on their breast, like the common herd, and cry out to all the world, 'I have sinned.'" "Your royal Grace has never allowed the world to accuse you of such unroyal sentiments," was the bitter retort of the Princess. "Neither shall it," continued

the Queen with unshaken composure ; “ and it is even because I have too high an opinion of your princely judgement to imagine that you will receive as an act of beneficence what is rightfully your own, that I have discovered a means whereby it may be made equally worthy to both giver and receiver.” “ It must be perfectly indifferent to me,” said Anna in a haughty tone, “ in what manner it pleases the house of Jagellon to restore what I and my relatives have been robbed of. The race of the Piasts is not so inglorious, most gracious lady, nor the fate of the scion of the male line so obscure and so indifferent to Poland and to the world, that even the richest donations which Sigismund Augustus’s incomparable generosity could bestow upon the heiress of that line should be mistaken for aught but justice. That is my opinion, and it concerns more the kind of reparation than the manner of making it.” “ It is therefore that I wish to restore to the last daughter of the Piasts not only what belongs properly to her, but also the ancient rule of her forefathers,” said Bona with an expressive voice. “ Since Wladyslaw of Lithuania, the ancestor of your late husband, had ravished from Ziemovit of Mazovia the hand of the royal Hedvige and the throne of Poland, both of which appertained to him, never has

a Jagellon been heard so to speak ; and, if it please Your Majesty, I should wish to know the meaning of such incomprehensible language.” “ You have a daughter, Princess, a fair and accomplished maiden, altogether worthy of her noble descent !” “ Her mother has taken good heed that in her child the princely qualities should not be lost with the principality.” “ Would it not rejoice you if she should sit on the throne of her ancestors, and all contest be ended in a blessed alliance ?” “ What do you mean ?” said Anna with assumed astonishment; “ have I not heard of a marriage of the King ? is not one Barbara Radziwill spoken of ?” “ Oh, that Barbara !” exclaimed the Queen with depreciating contempt; “ she will soon have dreamed out her short dream of royalty.” “ Then is it destined that the daughter of Leon Odrowonz is to be the third wife of your royal son ?—but allow me to withhold my gratitude so long as the second wife lives.” “ Your princely Grace will be convinced,” said Bona with some haughtiness, “ that we have not made an appointment with you at our Court to waste the time in idle prattle ; and after all that has taken place, it would not particularly contribute to the pleasure of either to fail in our earnest wishes, on the present occasion, in the matter we propose. So then divest yourself of

every trace of that uncertainty which it has long since been the purpose of our royal letters to efface. The world which so often, without experience, animadverts on the acts of sovereigns may form many judgements of me ; but be they true or be they false, none have ever doubted of the firm resolves of Bona Sforza. ' We would therefore wish to be spared all useless trouble of repetition, and have your pleasure made known without disguise.' " I also," replied the Princess, " hope that Your Majesty does not think so slightly of me as to suppose that I could have sought a meeting with you—with you, lady Queen, —whose presence must tear open afresh wounds which are scarcely healed, if I had not hoped by the difficulty of such a sacrifice to restore the honour and prosperity of my family, and if I had not the conviction that your conduct was influenced by the like motives. I appeared at your summons with a heavy heart ; but since I have arrived at Cracow doubts have arisen in my mind as to the possibility of bringing such intentions to pass, and even as to the sincerity and the truth of Your Majesty's intentions. I have not found all things so disposed as the letters you caused to be written to me indicated. The firm attachment of the King to the wife chosen by himself is spoken of most confi-

dently ; the Church refuses to unloose those ties united by her own holy laws ; the opposition of the senate and the equestrian order has been represented to me as the last trial against this union, but which will end in an empty form, which, however, it is judged necessary not to dispense with. Catherine of Austria has also been mentioned to me, lady Queen," she continued slowly and emphatically ; "do you suppose I would stake my child, the only treasure that remains to me out of all I have lost, on so hazardous a throw ? "

One instant only did the Milanese require to recover from her momentary confusion, which was quite imperceptible, and then speaking with placid self-possession, she said, "They have told you much, Princess, as I hear ; but I should suppose a person of your understanding would not allow your judgement to be prejudiced under such circumstances. The Duchess of Mantua has been mentioned to you, and I will not deny that it has often been my wish that the daughter of the Imperial house, to whom I am related by blood and many other ties, should succeed her so early deceased sister on the throne and nuptial couch of our royal son. It is irksome for us to acknowledge, and most unwillingly his mother con-

fesses, that our illustrious son is so much under the dominion of his sensual feelings; and she whom you name, though of high birth and exceeding virtue, is so little endowed with the charms and graces of our sex, that the King might draw unfavourable comparisons between her and the beauty of the late queen Elizabeth and that Barbara. Your charming daughter is, I hear, fairer than either, and the republic will behold with joy the heiress of a house on the throne, whose remembrance even the royal virtues of the line of Jagellon could not extinguish. Decide then if Helena shall ascend that throne which they say yon Barbara must so soon vacate; and that she shall leave it, Bona Sforza queen of Poland gives you her pledge, for they who obeyed her for thirty years have not forgotten how long her rule was acknowledged in this kingdom: every one has not turned away from the widow of Sigismund the Elder, and my will is still a law in the palace of Cracow. At the next Diet it will be declared whether the mother-in-law shall rid herself of her daughter, and whether the united voices of all ranks, demanding justice, shall be raised unheeded at the foot of the throne, from which they have been but too often wrongfully repulsed."

"But should it prove otherwise," said Anna,

interrupting the conversation of Bona, “do you propose to send us back into banishment a second time, myself and my rejected daughter, like importunate beggars ?” “But should it prove otherwise !” repeated the Queen quickly ; “and what hunter goes out to the chase with only one arrow in his quiver ?” “My own experience has taught me,” continued Anna with a significant smile, “that it is not the choice of means which would perplex my Queen, and no very delicate scruples of conscience would frustrate her measures.” The Queen replied, suppressing with difficulty her rising anger, “Are we, then, who are princesses, to resemble in our conduct two low-born women, who will not listen, but allow their tongues to run on in abusive speech and vile epithets when talking of the past ? I have declared my sentiments, lady of Podolia, and expect you will do the same, that in future no such painful contests may be renewed.” “Be it then,” replied the Princess with cold haughtiness, “as Your Majesty has said. My daughter is not worthy either by descent, beauty, or accomplishments, to share the throne of a Jagellon, and I hope this may rest in your mind. But if once forgotten,” she added with a rising voice, “it would have been better that Bona of Milan and Anna of Mazovia had never

met on this side of the grave. You have aroused the slumbering ambition, that ancient heritage of the Piasts, in my breast, lady Queen ; but look that you do not also awaken vengeance there ! It will not be so easy to banish me a second time.” With apparent calmness the Queen listened to these threatening words, and said after a time, with the measured decorum of her rank, “If the young Lady of Podolia is in the apartment of our ladies, as we requested, we desire that Your princely Grace will now present her.”

Helena’s look on her entrance was immediately directed towards her mother, and seeing her tolerably composed, she bent her knee before the Queen. As Bona embraced Helena and kissed her brow, Anna felt as if some bloodthirsty wolf was about to seize with its claws upon an innocent lamb. For a moment all a mother’s feelings arose in her breast, and she was on the point of tearing her daughter from the arms of her hated enemy. But the die was cast, and she delivered herself up to the fates, whose power she had challenged when she entered the apartment, for she felt conscious that she did not engage ignorantly in the strife which she now entered into contrary to the advice of her best friends. As the Queen released Helena from her embrace, she long sur-

veyed her with an appearance of the greatest pleasure, and then said, "We are obliged to our princely cousin for the gratification which the sight of this beautiful maiden gives us, and we request that in future she will consider us as a second mother;—do you hear, my beloved child? as a second mother;—and we hope you will be pleased with your residence at a Court where ourself and our royal son consider you as a most honoured guest."

As Helena descended the stairs in the train of her mother, she said to herself, "I have been scarcely two days at Court, and I am already provided with three mothers; would that even one of them performed those duties towards me that so responsible a relationship demands!"

CHAPTER VII.

“ But when to mischief mortals bend their will,
How soon they find fit instruments of ill ! ”—POPE.

We must now, although with little satisfaction, turn to Waclaw Siewrak, whom we have seen turned out of his place by the Grand Marshal, and whom we again meet in one of the remotest by-streets of the suburb Casimir (¹). Not yet recovered from the consternation and anger into which the ingratitude of his master, as he termed it, had thrown him, he was doing his best at least to forget his past greatness, and the present dangers which threatened him, in a little alehouse. Peter Kmita was just the sort of man to perform any promise, however hastily made, without any peculiar compunction. The laws in those days protected none but the nobles, the priesthood, and the highest class of burghers ; and it might easily have come to pass that the Palatine, in the first moments of his wrath, would, without any very tedious process, have ordered him, as the English term it, an immediate “ dance upon nothing.” He therefore held it expedient to keep close in his

hiding-place until night ; and it was already late when, with a heavy heart and a lightened purse, he proceeded on his way to seek for another asylum where he could remain undisturbed, at least for the next day, and take counsel with himself as to what was best to be done.

At the extreme end of the before-mentioned suburb, not far from a place where gloomy firs and dark pines throw their broad shadows over the graves of the Jews, burnt a faint turf fire in a lonely hut of the poorest and most wretched appearance. A discordant chanting, as if proceeding from the muffled chin of an aged woman, struck upon the ear of the person who approached ; and a disagreeable vapour, in the form of thick smoke, obtruded itself through the ill-fitted shutters on the icy atmosphere of midnight. “Heaven be thanked,” murmured Wacław through his frozen beard ; “heaven be thanked that the devil’s grandmother is at home, or the scrivener of the Grand Marshal might have passed the night in the open air ! and a bundle of straw at the turf fire is always better than a bed of snow amongst the Jews’ graves.” After this remark, he began at first with a low voice, and afterwards raising it, to call out, “Arise, Ursula, my aunt ! arise, I pray thee, and let me in, for it

is devilish cold in the night air. Get up, wench, in hell's name!"

At the commencement of this greeting the voice had ceased in the interior of the hut; and when the last emphatic epithets were pronounced, she arose, and in a hoarse chanting tone and quick words responded, "Art thou he who waitest without, beloved of my soul? art thou he, dear youth? Wherefore dost thou tarry to enter the lowly hut of thy servant? Behold, neither locks nor bolts can keep thee out. Why tarriest thou without, my master? Are we still in the month of May, when we could amuse ourselves by dancing in fair order on the top of the Bald Mountain⁽²⁾? The night-wind blows icy cold over the graves, and thou comest from a very warm place. Glide in,—the caldron boils and the couch is prepared." "So may St. Adalbert guard and help me!" said Siewrak to himself; "it is certain that my witch of a cousin takes me for her hellish gallant. Get up, I repeat, good-for-nothing old woman! The devil, whose property thou art to all eternity, may enter through the chimney or keyhole, but not a man of flesh and blood who daily goes to mass." "So you are not he!" answered the inhabitant of the hut in a tone of disappointment. "Then who are you, if you are not

he?" Waclaw was on the point of giving his name, when the old woman continued, "O, you are sent by the gracious lady Starostin (³) Falczewska with a commission from—— Now only wait a little, and I will open the door."

It was fortunate for the unemployed scrivener that he was taken for the messenger of a lady who was in high favour with the Queen-mother, for the door was opened directly, and he stood before the strange old woman on whose withered shoulders was placed the before-mentioned head, which, on the morning of the same day, had on the steps of the castle obtruded itself between the lovers.

"O, is it you, my trusty cousin and respectable sir messenger?" was the greeting of the old woman. "Have you for once in your high life recollected your poor aunt? or can I be useful to you in anything? or do you come in truth as a messenger from your gracious lord? Aye, aye, rich and powerful people often need the assistance of the poor and humble; and I serve willingly many whom it would not be supposed would ever inquire after poor Ursula of the Jews' Burying-ground." "I do not bear any commission, aunt Ursula," replied Siewrak, "and I am out of service." "So, that's the case, is it? Then what has happened?" said the old woman, speaking in

an evidently cooler tone of voice. "Why, I thought you were your master's right hand ; and you looked so assured, and regarded all those belonging to you with as much contempt as if you were the Grand Marshal himself. Was not your mother the child of my sister, of the race of the Egyptians ? and your father, was he not a quack-doctor and juggler at all the fairs and markets ? But pride comes before a fall, my dear fellow ; and one ought not to be very much surprised, for you were always a good-for-nothing fellow ! " " The devil knows better than I how it happened," continued Siewrak sullenly ; " I did not mean it to have turned out as it has. But thus it is with all your great lords. Do all in your power for them ; bring their goods to market, and make the very best bargain for them ; and when it comes to the reckoning, your only reward is the gallows, or a shot through your body. But as things stand at present, you must give me shelter for a day or two ; for nobody would think of seeking for me in this out-of-the-way owl's nest." " Very pretty talk !" screamed the old woman with increasing vehemence ; " *must*, indeed ! No, no ; my owl's nest is far too mean a place for so great a man as you are, my runaway scrivener ! There is no necessity that a poor widow should shelter a good-

for-nothing like you in her poor hut, and feed you with the fruits of her industry. There would be no sense in it, my trusty cousin ; therefore you must seek for another hiding-place.” “ Silence, thou ill-conditioned hag !” exclaimed Siewrak, losing all patience ; “ I have broken my fast already, and want none of your bat or lizard broth ; all I require is a night’s lodging on your musty straw. It is not yet so hard with me that I should have left a lord’s service without a penny in my pocket ; and this purse, from the contents of which I had destined for you two golden florins, is not the only one I have gained with great peril to myself.”

The argument of a heavy purse of gold, which her guest held out against the opposition of the hostess, now asserted its power. Her features distorted themselves into a disgusting smile, and she commenced in the mildest tone possible : “ I have always said that my nephew Waclaw had a good head, and would do well in the world. Now, don’t be discouraged. When it rains and storms, a wise man bows his head under it ; and in the mean time, if you will put up with the poor accommodation I can offer you, and trust to your aunt, you may remain here in comfort awhile, for the threshold of this house is under the protection of

a mighty power.” “ Have done with your non-sensical prattle,” interrupted the scrivener, “ and try rather if, amongst all your trash, you cannot find me a draught of some tolerable liquor. The night-wind has pierced me through and through ; and I guess well that my lady aunt is not so poor as she would have it supposed, and will share willingly with those who can give gold in exchange.”

With great alacrity the hostess then lifted a large pot from the fire, filled with an ill-smelling medley ; she then added fresh fuel to the fire, which blazed up cheerfully, and there soon sparkled in a tolerably well carved horn cup a liquor that did not belie Waclaw Siewrak’s opinion of his aunt’s circumstances. The old woman soon discovered all that had happened ; and after listening to the intelligence, sometimes screaming out and shaking her head, she broke into the following harangue : “ My trusty cousin, you have the best dispositions, and you could not have failed to have made your fortune in your master’s service ; but what man is perfect ? Two little circumstances are ever and anon turning you from the right path, which you, with such praiseworthy steadiness, are always striving after, and which neither a hard blow nor a good cudgelling

can turn you from ;—your fondness for drink, I mean, and always doing more than you are told to do. You must not take what an old kinswoman says in ill part, one who has almost the affection of a mother for you.”

At these words Siewrak looked significantly at the two gold pieces, which the old woman put with great haste into a leathern purse, whose colours had faded from long use, and he then said, “ My best thanks, aunt, for your very sudden and disinterested regard ; but I have not exactly comprehended your wise remarks. As to my liking for wine, brandy, mead, and other liquors of the same inspiring nature, it is quite true that it has been sometimes hurtful to me in service ; but it must have grown up with me from the cradle, and I know not whether I inherited it from my mother, your sister’s child, or from my father, the toothdrawer. But as to what you say about my doing too much in my master’s service, I cannot understand it, more especially in that of a severe and uncompromising one like Kmita, who would never allow a servant to flinch from any of his commands.” “ You would think, I suppose,” continued the old woman, taking a long draught, “ that you have done the sister of your grandmother a great favour by giving

her this small sum of money ; but ask yourself, have you at any time done anything except for gold ? and have you not allowed that thick head of yours to be well knocked about, provided a piece of gold was put into your hand to quiet the pain of it ? But I commend you for it, for lovely gold is good for all things, and the only sure tie between friends and kinsfolk ; therefore you may perceive that I am not so selfish as you suppose, for besides the food and lodging that I give you for your golden pennies, my trusty nephew, I give you advice into the bargain. Flinching from his commands, you say, your lord would not suffer, which was all perfectly just and right ; extremes, however, are by no means good. But believe me, had you not with doltish eagerness made a great noise about small things, you would still, like a wise man, have kept your place in the palace of the old Palatine, which would have been best both for him and you ; but the way to do that is not to go about with a dull head and noisy step. Don't imagine that I speak thus because I have had good luck, as other old women might do. Your grand aunt Ursula knows more of those things than you, my very wise chancery-messenger, may imagine. But still, as I before said, you have some good talents, which the

world ought to be benefited by ; I will therefore, if you are content to follow my advice implicitly, try to provide another service for you, which can well support its man, and where you will be as secure against the cat-o'-nine-tails and gallows of Kmita as if you were in Abraham's bosom."

" If, indeed, you will do so," said Waclaw, " you will bind me to you for ever. I have been accustomed to the service of a lord and the good living to be found there, and would not willingly linger in this damp hole ; but I might as well trust to the devil." " Say not so, my son," said Ursula with a singular expression of countenance, " you may trust the devil." " A very respectable guarantee," interrupted her nephew with blanched cheeks, for courage was not his chief recommendation ; " only manage that I may appear with safety in the city, and get out of this ominous abode, and be assured of my eternal gratitude." " Not so, not so, my friend ; we know each other, and fair promises alone will not do. Listen ; a foreigner will come tonight to this dwelling, who will take you into his service if I make the request. He has much power and interest, though it may not appear, and rewards richly those whom he employs. If your appearance, therefore, pleases him, will you give largely to

your aunt and friend of those gold pieces which you carry in your girdle, and which in future you will not need?"

Just as Waclaw Siewrak was preparing to reply with a timid voice of inquiry relative to the circumstances of the expected guest, which did not seem to bode much good, three hard knocks sounded against the rotten window-shutter. The scrivener was thrown into a state of utter confusion, for he supposed that the visitor would now appear whom the old woman at his entrance seemed to expect, and who he supposed must be the foe of mankind, to whom his services were destined. His wonder also much increased as the old woman recommenced her howling song: "Who lingers about my dwelling during the night-time? Is it you, lordly youth? Then enter the abode of thy lowly servant to rejoice her by thy wished-for appearance. No lock nor bolt opposes thy entrance: come in, therefore, to the chamber which is adorned for thee!" A hollow voice was now heard from without: "Open the door, Ursula; I am Assano, the Neapolitan." The old woman turned quickly to the trembling Siewrak, and whispered him, "Now compose yourself; this is he, nephew." Waclaw muttered between his teeth, "It is not such as he

that I expected, although he who appears looks but very little superior.” And, in truth, as the door opened, and the red glare of the flame shone on the tall figure of a man, wrapped in a black mantle, with a broad-brimmed hat and a plume of raven’s feathers in it, with darkly glowing eyes and distorted features, the horrid image of the prince of darkness was not ill represented, whose appearance the trembling scrivener firmly expected.

A conversation now began between the hostess and her guest, which continued for a long time, in a low tone, in an unknown language; and it appeared by the earnestness of the speakers that they spoke on matters of no small importance. After some time, the look of inquiry which the Neapolitan cast on Siewrak showed that their speech had taken another turn; and shortly afterwards the old woman said, in the Polish language, “This is he, learned sir Assano, whom I engage for as being the best lad that ever exposed himself to blows and knocks in his master’s service,—of course when he is well paid for it.”

The Neapolitan considered for a while the object recommended to him, who was commanded to advance nearer, and then said, “I think that I am acquainted with his appearance; I have some-

where before seen him. Wast not thou he, my good friend, from whom my learned patron took at Ivanovice a certain letter, and who afterwards made use of much needless talk about it to one of the suite of the Lithuanian? Such doings truly are not a recommendation." "Honoured sir Assano," was Siewrak's reply, "in the dark all cows are black, and your worthy master explains himself in so extraordinary a manner when he speaks the Polish language, that I do not exactly comprehend on which side the error lies, his or mine; I will therefore request of you, if you think I am worthy of serving the sir Doctor, that his commands may be imparted to me through you. You are also, as I understand, an Italian; but the Polish language is so familiar to you, it would seem that you have been in the country before." "What does it signify to you," said Assano, with an angry voice and look, "where I have been before? Your nephew," he said, turning to Ursula, "is, as it seems, nothing better than a forward, prating fellow, not fit for the service of Master Leonardo Monti." "At least, honoured sir, the heavens have been bounteous to him in the gift of speech, and he will soon improve under your guidance. Now, nephew, speak for yourself; be not over modest; a timid dog seldom grows

fat. My recommendation must not be dishonoured : timidity is not in general your failing, therefore say what thou canst for yourself." " I am well experienced in service," said Siewrak not without complacency, " and the house of the Palatine is a good school." " And what hast thou learned there ?" " To fulfill the orders of my lord with zeal and punctuality, more especially such as cannot be entrusted to the generality of domestics, for these are the services which are best paid, such as hardships, affronts, blows, and cuts with blunt weapons, be it understood so there be a good solid salve awaiting me at home, in which to wash the honour, the conscience, and the bruises ; and finally, at all places, and at convenient time and opportunity, to whisper a word in any one's ear that cannot be contradicted in this world ; but as for open strife, I must declare against that, for I am no soldier, but rather a *literatus*, and addicted to the sciences ; and further—" "Enough," interrupted Assano ; " I see that the lad, as you say, has good talents, and more diffidence than you supposed. But still there is one requisite,—canst thou be silent ?" " As the grave." " And it will also be imperative that things are not done by halves, and that tell-tale tongues are made silent as the grave,

as thou thyself sayest." "Good, good; and I will confess to you that a handfull of Spanish doubloons is a more agreeable way of stopping my mouth than a few of those drops in the chest, out of which your patron was going to help the other evening the reverend Bartolomæus Sabinus." "Just as things succeed, friend Siewrak, just as things succeed,—one or the other; and if your eyes and ears prove good, you will have it in your power to choose. Your nephew, Ursula, will suit me: there is nothing to be done just at present, but there will soon be many opportunities to make trial of his good qualities." He then exchanged a few words with the old woman in an unknown language: the new domestic of the physician retired to a corner to take leave of his aunt, although much averse to share the contents of his purse with her, and finally followed Assano on the lonely path, until they reached the nearest part of the buildings of the palace.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Thy honourable metal may be wrought,
From heat it is disposed : therefore 't is meet
That noble minds keep ever with their likes :
For who so firm who ne'er can be seduced ?”

SHAKSPEARE.

THE Count of Tarnow did not allow the King time to repent of or retract his consent to the calling of a new Diet. Watching with equal care the dignity of the Crown and the privileges of a republican constitution, he used all the means which lay in his power to induce Sigismund Augustus to fulfill a promise which, once given, could not be deferred without disadvantage and loss of honour, but which caused him to feel the not unfounded apprehension which often arises in the minds of the monarchs of Great Britain on the calling of a Parliament; and he consequently felt a great repugnance to meet an assembly of the States, at a General Diet of the Crown at Piotrkow, in the month of February 1549.

The royal letters had been issued, and the equestrian order began to assemble at the appointed places for the election of the deputies. The King would not leave his consort in that state of un-

certainty and painful anxiety which she must necessarily have felt in her present residence until her fate was decided ; a decision which, in the consciousness of his own immoveable firmness, he felt to be certain, in spite of all the obstacles which were daily arising. He accompanied Queen Barbara with a numerous retinue to Vilna, the capital of his own hereditary lands ; where, as the chronicles of that time relate, he displayed an exceeding pomp, and caused royal honours to be paid to his consort, endeavouring, by a quick succession of feasts and entertainments, to efface from her mind the mortification she had experienced at Cracow. He then returned to the crown lands, in order to keep a watchful eye on the opponents to his wishes ; after which he issued summonses to the Lithuanian lords, who held the anti-Catholic faith according to three different tenets, viz. the Lutheran, Calvinistic, and Schismatic, or those attached to the Greek Church, to appear in all possible array and numbers at Piotrkow. He commanded his brother-in-law Prince Nicolas Radziwill also to follow with the greatest expedition.

His opponents, in the mean time, had not been idle. The Palatine of Cracow left the capital, and retired to his own castle at Wisnietz, where he

continually entertained with great pomp and unwonted courtesy the neighbouring gentry. His confidants mingled in all the elections wherever they were entitled to give their votes, endeavouring to spread the spirit of opposition by banquets, presents, and all possible means. The relations and adherents of the families Odrowonz and Zborowski were extremely active in the provinces of Red Russia and Podolia; the first of them instigated by the Princess of Mazovia, and by a desire to avenge the wrongs done to their relative; the second stimulated by the ancient ambition of their family, who had already, in former days, frequently sought to advance their guilty schemes by promoting civil discord and rebellion. In Great Poland the Primate exerted all the influence of his high station to the same purpose, and he was zealously supported by the palatines of Sieradz, Posnania, and the castellan of the latter town. Even Raphael Leszczynski, the noblest republican of his time, forgot his zeal for the Protestant religion in his fears of the danger that might arise from placing too much power in the hands of so young, proud, and subtle a monarch as Sigismund Augustus. The royal party remained of course not idle, but employed every means to counteract their opponents and to increase their own numbers.

The Palatine John Firley forsook every evening the apartments of the Queen-mother, which he usually frequented till a late hour, doing homage to the faded charms of the Milanese with feigned admiration and courtly dexterity, in order that he might, in the solitude of his chamber and the stillness of night, set all the springs in motion to favour his religious party, and his ambitious views, which his great riches, his interest with the Calvinistic nobles, and his connexions with the first families of the kingdom placed at his command. Peter Borytynski had also left the capital in order to be present at the elections of the nobility of the palatinate of Russia, amongst whom he as Starost of Samborz reckoned himself. The consort of Sigismund Augustus, perhaps not yet completely divested of her early suspicions,—which having once laid hold of the imagination seldom disappear altogether, and involuntarily influence the thoughts and actions,—had only given a cold invitation to her foster-child to accompany her to the capital of Lithuania; and with scarcely concealed pleasure she received Helena's excuse, and laughingly accused her of sacrificing her friend to her lover. Barbara was not disposed at this time to dispute with the Princess of Mazovia her parental claims, who would not without great difficulty have consented to her

daughter's absenting herself on the present occasion. The Princess had observed in Helena a quiet though decided opposition to her wishes, and she did not choose her to be withdrawn from her maternal influence. The fulfilment of all was at hand; the approaching Diet would precipitate the Lithuanian from that place to which, according to Anna's judgement, her daughter was alone eligible; and the strict education of the maiden herself would, she believed, along with the influence of surrounding circumstances, her mother's command, and the dazzling prospect of the future, all unite to bring about the great and inevitable result. Above all, the Queen Bona, in many conferences which had succeeded the first, repeated to the lady of Podolia the injunctions which she had before given through the Grand Marshal, to pay every regard as long as it was necessary to the house of Boratynski, whose head would soon be placed in a very influential situation, by his office of Marshal of the Diet, in the present entangled position of affairs. "Allow yon Peter for a time to suppose," said Bona, "that the honours and riches of the house of the Piasts are to flow into his family. Let him not suppose that the humiliation of that Barbara will rob his brother of the costly jewel for which he strives, in order that it may adorn the kingly

crown ; let him still toil ; let all circumstances be placed in the order he would wish them, and then it will be time enough to discover our true meaning. *Passato il pericolo, lady Princess, gabbato il santo.*"

Anna of Mazovia looked therefore, until now, with apparently but little concern on the affianced lover of her daughter ; the door of her house was open to him as to any other visitor ; she did not prevent the young people from being together, and excused many confidential words, many animated looks, to the bystanders, on account of their youthful friendship ; but still she kept an incessantly watchful eye on them, and looked forward to the period when all should be ripe for the fulfilment of her projects, and put an end to this obnoxious connexion. In this manner she hoped to make the chivalrous Peter Boratynski the tool for carrying into effect her own selfish and ambitious plans ; whilst he pursued the way which he had marked out for himself, not for his own benefit or that of his family, but solely for the good of his country. A favourable star seemed at present to preside over the love of the youthful Hippolyte ; and Barbara Radziwill, perhaps unwilling to weaken by his absence that affection of which she had declared herself the protectress, had dispensed with his attendance on

her during her journey. Since the death of the Palatine of Podolia, after which the Princess Anna refused to execute the will of her husband, Boratynski had not seen his affianced bride so often as he had done since they met at Cracow; and he would have given himself up to delightful anticipations with all the joyful enthusiasm of his age, had not the words of his brother from time to time recurred to his mind.

"I must leave thee," said the Starost as the horses which were to convey him to Samborz stood ready saddled at the door of the house in which the brothers now occupied one of the innermost chambers; "it is a painful way which I must traverse; but yet there is no other left me which I could take. Thou remainest behind under dangerous circumstances, and the only two counsellors which thou hast to guide thee are Youth and Passion. I could have wished that it had pleased the King to require thy attendance to Lithuania; but as it has not so chanced, nothing remains for me except to leave a brotherly word of well-meant advice behind. It well becomes the knight and nobleman to serve the lady he has chosen in faith and constancy, whose hand has been promised to him by her father; but yet I fear, Hippolyte, thou wilt hardly conquer all obstacles so

soon as thou supposest, or as thou hast thought certain for some days past.” “And yet, honoured lord and brother,” interrupted the youth, “it appears nearer to me, much nearer than I could have dared to hope. The look of the Princess is not now directed as it used to be; but although it is cold and sometimes repulsive, although I do not meet in her the confidence with which Leon Odro-wonz treated his future son-in-law, still I do not appear to be an unwelcome guest at her house; therefore I mean to do as Helena desired, and await in love and hope till all things shall combine for the fulfilment of our wishes.” “God grant that they may be fulfilled!” was the answer of the Starost: “I am highly pleased with the firm and affectionate disposition of the maiden, and I think that my brother will not be behindhand in so praiseworthy a resolution; however, if any impediments arise, contrary to thy expectations, during my absence, promise me, brother, that thou wilt not attempt to overcome them till I return from my journey. It appears to me as if the course of thy love did not run so smooth as thou imaginest. But I will add no more; thou hast also had thine own misgivings, and I will only entreat of thee to hold fast to the motto of thine affianced, and go not beyond it till thou see’st thy brother

again at thy side.” “The intentions of the Princess have become very evident to me,” replied Hippolyte, “during the few days that she has spent at the Court, although her foolish plans had no real foundation; and even had they any, the courageous steadiness of the maiden would totally wreck such empty projects.” “Do you imagine,” said the Starost of Samborz smiling and shaking his head, “that two women like those whose planets have so inconceivably approximated at the present moment—two women like Anna of Mazovia and the Queen-mother—could so easily renounce long years of unappeasable hatred, unless some most difficult sacrifice were to be made the price of it? Dost thou suppose that these dark powers, like thunder-clouds coming in contact, instead of emitting the destructive lightning, will send down a soft beam from heaven in order to light the torch of Hymen for the two lovers?” “O yon Bona!” exclaimed Hippolyte mournfully, “the sound of her name pierces my heart like a sharp sword! Yet what could move her to disturb our quiet happiness? Her magnanimity I cannot believe in, but her hatred I could; and never can I suppose that she really wishes to place the crown on the head of the maiden whose fa-

mily she has pursued with unrelenting vengeance,—that she who is the bribed protectress of the house of Austria should wish to elevate the daughter of her deadly enemy to the throne, which is as they say reserved for Catherine! ” “ Unwillingly,”—interrupted Peter quickly and loudly, “ unwillingly do I hear you mention that name; and that the youth whose future calling it will be to take his place amongst the fathers of the fatherland, like an idle prattler repeats the reports which, be they true or false, are equally unbecoming. Be not angry with me, brother Hippolyte; my mind is beset with so many cares, I know so well the slippery ground on which thou walkest, that I cannot see thee traverse it without trembling. Take heed to thy brother’s request, that thou least of all shouldst mention a report which, although not at present credible, and which perhaps never may be realized, might however strengthen the King’s opposition to the will of the nation, whose representative thy brother is to be at the next Diet. No, Hippolyte, thou oughtest to consider it unworthy of thee to increase, by the idle gossiping of the Court, the estrangement which exists between the kingdom and the palace, even were it to aid thy own fortune. Thou must leave to others the odious

office of sowing the seeds of disunion between mother and son, between king and people; there will not be wanting those to undertake such an office. Remember the words spoken by a great Roman: ‘It becomes a free and virtuous man to prefer what is just to what is expedient;’ and endeavour, be the issue what it may, to rest free from all imputation, when this entangled business shall be brought to a conclusion.” “How canst thou give such an interpretation to words confidentially spoken to a brother?” replied the younger Boratynski with some warmth: “Helena is too valuable a prize to be wooed except by the path of honour; and even were it otherwise, thou well knowest that thy brother knows no other.” “Thou art right,” said Peter, holding out his hand, “therefore forgive the man who, surrounded by all the arts of self-interest, suspected for one moment even thy pure mind. Still hearken to a word of advice; thou art a young man, and standest only on the threshold of a career which the privileges of thy birth and a mind not unworthy of thy noble ancestors open to thee. It may happen that thy engagement to the Piastian heiress and thy brother’s troublesome and painful office may elevate thee in the eyes of many high and illustrious persons who have hitherto overlooked

thee; and should they heap favours on thee, thou must ascribe them not to thy own merit but to the circumstances in which thou art placed. If I am not blinded by the anxiety of a brother, many will press forward to thee with smooth brow and smiling mouth whose words will be the words of the tempter.” “And dost thou hold me to be so weak, my lord and brother,” continued Hippolyte, “that a smile or a word would have the power of turning me from the path in which my own advantage and thy example would lead me?” “It will not have that effect,” said Peter impressively and earnestly; “duty has many interpretations, and it may be wrested to either side as necessity requires. The only sure test are one’s own principles. My example, thou sayest, will uphold thee in the right path; but it is that very example which will be held out to entice thee. Thy duty lies one way, mine another. Thou reliest on thy own judgement: will that endure when the pillars are imperceptibly removed on which it is founded? Wilt thou remain firm, when suddenly thou see’st power, love, and honour on the side where thou least expectest to see them? One thing only will I impress on thy mind,—to serve and support the consort of the King; for it is not my intention, as many suppose, to place a spy or dangerous com-

panion amongst her household, which would be unworthy of our rank and ancient family ; and rather, far rather would I meet thee in open strife, —which God forbid !—than see thee at my side a rebel and a traitor.” “ You alarm me, brother,” said Hippolyte to the agitated Peter : “ could it ever come to this ? Oh ! unhappy effects of mischievous intrigue, that might point the sword of one brother against the breast of another ! ” “ There are sufficient,” continued the Starost of Samborz, “ quite sufficient sparks amongst the ashes to kindle a fire that would light up the whole kingdom into a bloody flame ; it only remains therefore to us to persevere in the course where necessity or duty has placed us ; and if we maintain ourselves in fidelity and knightly truth, we shall act uprightly, should the universe fall in ruins around us. I part from thee with a heavy heart, my brother, to go where the painful task awaits me, of opposing the duties of a distinguished office to the feelings of my own heart. But little hope accompanies me on my way. May our next meeting be a more cheerful one ! ” “ Thou leavest me with an oppressive burden on my heart,” said Hippolyte, while he grasped the hand which his brother extended to him ; “ and I may well ask, with the

Psalmist, ‘ How shall a young man direct his ways ? ’ ” “ Amongst all who here surround thee,” continued Peter after a pause, “ there are only two whom thou mayest trust in any important emergency. One is the Grand General, who, although a lord of high rank, and with many duties to perform, will not refuse advice and aid to an unassuming youth, especially to one who is my brother ; for proud I am to say that I possess the esteem of the Count of Tarnow ; and when I return to that retirement which I thirst for, there is nothing that will afford me so much satisfaction as the reward of the good opinion of him who is so justly called the father of his country. Thou mayest also confide in his wisdom, for the tree of knowledge has not remained untasted by him. Near, very near, and in the most alluring garb, has temptation been presented to him, and the highest prize held out to him which can be offered to a mortal, which— (‘) But enough—he triumphed ; and he who has been tempted himself may teach others to beware. The worldly prudence and mild disposition of Andreas Zebrzydowski will also be to thee a source from whence thou mayest draw without distrust ; but hearken, above all things, to the voice of thy own heart, and stop thy ears to the voice of both friends and adversaries.

Thou wilt not hear the voice of truth either in the residence of the Princess of Mazovia, or from the partial mouth of our respected uncle John Lacki."

Hippolyte resolved for the present to be guided by circumstances, attentively observing all that passed around him, and to enjoy the present time, which was fleeing perhaps too hastily in the midst of love and happiness.

With the departure of the King and his spouse all the festivities had by no means taken leave of the castle. As if Bona Sforza wished to show that it needed not a youthful representative to keep up a gay and stately Court and to maintain the honour of the King's house, she assembled daily in the hall of the northern wing of the castle all that was in Cracow of rank or talent, or who could lay claim to it by reputation. The species of entertainment which she usually gave had but lately superseded in Europe the combats at arms, and other wild sports, in which ladies had only played a subordinate or tiresome part. Francis the First had, at St. Germain's, formed his Court after a romantic model; which afterwards in the time of Louis the Fourteenth was still further refined. The serious Charles imitated his rival in his castles at Ghent and Brussels, where eti-

quette was less strict than at his Court at Madrid. Bona Sforza had first introduced such diversions into Poland, confined within due limits by Spanish manners, and adorned by the taste of her own country, which superseded most desirably the boisterous feasts customary in the reigns of the earlier kings of the Jagellon line, and which we have alluded to in the narration of the Starost of Pinsk.

Masterpieces of the Italian school of that day adorned the apartments of the Queen-mother, which were afterwards carried away by her on leaving her son's kingdom. The vaulted halls, where, thirty years before, nothing was heard but the din of horns and kettledrums, accompanied by the clatter of bowls and goblets, now resounded with the harmonious strains of foreign musicians. The Queen being but little acquainted with the language of the country, Spanish and Italian were generally spoken in her presence; and these two languages held at that time, in the higher circles, the same place which the French language has done for the last century. There were but few amongst the great or influential nobles who had not made a visit, of more or less duration, to the western Courts of Europe, and who were therefore enabled to take their places

at the newly formed Court with propriety, and give a tone to its manners.

It rarely happened that the Princess of Mazovia and her daughter were absent from the evening assemblies of the Milanese, which were often prolonged till near morning; and many were the stolen glances directed towards both the Princesses, to form some conjecture from their behaviour as to what could be their motives for a familiarity, which but a short time before was looked upon as impossible; but small light was thrown on the matter. Wrapt up in herself, with a cold dignity, and acting with the greatest circumspection to those amongst whom she mixed, did the Lady Anna appear in the royal apartments. The glittering scenes of which she was a witness appeared from long habit little to move her, and seldom or never caused emotion sufficient to disturb that imperturbable exterior which was usual to her. Her smile was one of mere court breeding, and disappeared instantaneously, without leaving a trace on the stony seriousness of her sharply chiseled features. No one was favoured by her with a confidential remark, neither did she permit any such to be made to her. Without avoiding the Queen, she never made any effort to be near her, and kept up continually the demean-

our which her birth and situation, as daughter to a decayed though highly distinguished princely house, and widow of a husband for whom she had mourned for the last six months, demanded. The Queen seemed somewhat less reserved ; without appearing to court her by condescension or confidence, she treated her with marked attention, and received her with friendly satisfaction, and always continued to use the strictest forms of etiquette to her princely relative ; she was most careful not to be guilty of any negligence, and failed in nothing which she thought might flatter and soothe the pride of a person on whose better feelings she hoped to work. But she acted quite differently towards Helena ; she always received the maiden with the most winning affability, which flowed not from the heart, but which she assumed to suit the present moment, while feelings of quite a different nature were concealed in the recesses of the heart, and brooded over in dark dissimulation. She seized every opportunity of placing Helena's beauty and accomplishments in the best light, and in a very short time the whole Court at Cracow united in thinking her its fairest ornament. Though Anna looked on all around her with equal indifference, yet when she saw her daughter in the vicinity of the Queen, the feelings of a mother

began to expand; she observed every look and action with the strictest attention, and regarded, not without satisfaction, the notice taken of her daughter by a woman whose talents at least nobody doubted, whatever might be said of her actions. By degrees the aversion began to lessen which the sight of Bona of Milan, and even her name, had at first caused, and which called up the same feelings of horror that the idea of the spirit of darkness would have awakened in that superstitious century.

The maiden's feelings were not quite those of her mother. Long acquainted with the hatred which existed between the Princesses, and instructed from her childhood in the causes which kindled it, the unsuspecting maiden thought it best became her to be a mediator between the deadly enemies; and she hoped that discord would be annihilated in the common love for her who was the daughter of one, and of whom the other declared herself to be the second mother. We cannot blame the youthful mind, whose experience grows only by succeeding years, for not discerning truth from appearances, and which easily forgets the past and the future in the present moment; and we must pardon the daughter of Leon Odrowonz for supposing that the cold-hearted courtesy of the

Milanese was a real affection, which awakened many hopes in her bosom. Neither had the Queen-mother, in the short conversations she had favoured Helena with, ever adverted to certain topics, which she hinted at to her mother from time to time, although with much circumspection. She had mentioned Hippolyte Boratynski, and spoke of him as an estimable young nobleman and of an honourable family, and, not displeased to remark the maiden's confusion, added, that Helena was worthy of every happiness, and it should be her care to promote her advantage in every way. Hippolyte was also honoured with frequent invitations to the entertainments given by Bona of Milan; and although the ill-will which he felt towards her was by no means lessened, yet he could not decline appearing at assemblies the access to which was undoubtedly an honour to him, and which allowed him the frequent opportunity of seeing his beloved, and interchanging many confidential words in the bustle of a crowd, which in the formality of the social circle at her own house, where her mother was always present to see and hear, was almost impossible.

One evening, about the beginning of February, our friend appeared later than usual in the apart-

ments of the Queen-mother, in the suite of the Grand General, whom he had accompanied on a hunting-party to the opposite bank of the Vistula. When the guests entered the antechamber they were struck by an unusual silence, only interrupted by a female voice, accompanied by the sound of a lute. On Tarnowski's question, what kind of amusement Her Majesty had commanded for the evening, the chamberlain in waiting answered, that the musicians of Her Majesty were present, and had been entertaining the company for some hours past with many new and beautiful pieces of music ; but that just at present the Queen had requested one of the young ladies of her circle to sing a national air, in order to give an agreeable variety to the entertainment, and to show to foreigners that the art of music was cultivated also in Poland ; and that Her Majesty had already sent twice to the Christopher Palace, to know if the Count of Tarnow had not returned from the chase. The Grand General and his suite entered with as little noise as possible, and as much as they could avoided being seen, to prevent the disturbance which the entrance of a lord like the Castellan of Cracow would necessarily have created amongst the company. After the Grand General had advanced to the

middle of the assembly, through which, notwithstanding his signs to the contrary, a passage had been respectfully opened, Hippolyte perceived, on looking over the Count of Tarnow's shoulder, who was a man of middle stature, that Helena was the admired singer. Next to her stood the Queen-mother, expressing both by words and gestures the most animated approbation. Near her stood the Princess Anna, sometimes raising her downcast looks, as if she could not deny herself the view of the wonder and admiration caused by her charming daughter. Often had the young Boratynski at the castle of his father, and also at Kaminiec Podolski, heard the sweet tones she had drawn from the lyre, accompanied by her delightful voice ; but he thought a display of her talents on the present occasion might have been dispensed with. The visible efforts of the Queen-mother to set the talents of the maiden in the most advantageous light, and the satisfaction with which Anna seemed to view the interest taken by her enemy in her daughter, appeared on consideration to strengthen conjectures which had been lurking already for some weeks in his mind. Neither did the little melancholy ballad that Helena sang, and which was of the kind that in the language of the country is called *dumka* (2),

appear so pretty to him as to many others ; and he answered the sentence of approbation which the Count of Tarnow whispered to him, in order to please the future bridegroom by praising his betrothed, only by a cold affirmative and a formal bow, that brought a smile over the countenance of the Grand General. The song was ended : Helena had returned to the side of her mother, and was courteously acknowledging the compliments she received from the Court who pressed around her, all anxious to offer the homage of their applause to the Queen's favourite, when the circle respectfully opened on both sides, and Queen Bona stood before the Castellan of Cracow. " You have been long in foreign countries, my worthy lord," she began with a bland smile and a measured inclination of the head, on which, dividing the folds of her widow's veil, shone a small crown richly set in pearls ; " you have scarcely heard anything superior to this performance in Rome, Naples, or Milan, the seats of the fair sciences, and it must be peculiarly pleasing to you to hear such at home in your own country." Tarnowski answered courteously and respectfully, but without any excess of compliment, " My long residence in foreign countries, most serene lady, has certainly not made me indifferent to

improvements of any kind which may take place amongst my fellow-citizens. The art of music belongs to them ; and myself and every friend of my country must acknowledge ourselves most grateful to Your Majesty for having introduced it here.” “ We may without vanity appropriate your compliment,” replied Bona, “ for it is perfectly true that we had the happiness of being the first to transplant the fair sciences from our fatherland into the kingdom of our blessed husband ; and if they prosper, we shall ascribe it to the fertile ground which has received them, and not to the hand of the gardener.” After the Grand General had, in the name of his countrymen, by a silent reverence acknowledged this compliment, the Queen continued : “ The young lady of Podolia too, who now for the first time has given a proof of her newly formed talent, can vouch for the truth of our observation, that we can here venture to boast of our immediate personal interference ; for at our command our master Carolini has so improved her natural talent for singing, that she may soon vie with the first Italian *cantatrice*.” “ So much is scarcely necessary,” replied Tarnowski ; “ it well becomes a young lady of illustrious descent to adorn her domestic life with the talents which she has

been gifted with, and sometimes to gratify a chosen circle of distinguished persons ; but emulation with those whose profession it is should be out of the question.” Interrupting Tarnowski, as if she had not heard his remark, Bona proceeded : “ And we, who take the place of a mother to her, have determined not to leave uncultivated those fine talents, which have hitherto been buried in the solitude of Kaminiec, and intend that the many enlightened men whom we number amongst our Court shall, each in his own way, unite their efforts with ours, and we hope in a very short period to render our cousin worthy of being deemed an ornament to any Court in Christendom. Would it not have been a pity, that one so distinguished by beauty and manners,” she added, half turning towards Hippolyte, and speaking with a sharp tone, “ that the daughter of the Princess of Mazovia had remained any longer in melancholy solitude, and the world have been deprived of a jewel which the polishing hand of art could bring to light ? ” The Grand General retired a step, leaving the young Boratynski to answer a question which was evidently directed to him. “ Most gracious lady,” he replied, as the silence of the Grand General and the look of the Queen directed to him seemed to require an an-

swer, “the value of ordinary jewels is certainly enhanced by the setting ; but when a diamond of rare value is found, the hand of the artist cannot improve it.” “Well spoken, young nobleman !” was Bona’s rejoinder, accompanied by an ambiguous look ; “but you do not mean to say that such is not worthy of adorning the crown of a monarch ?”

She then turned quickly away, and making an inclination of the head to the Count of Tarnow, went to the other end of the hall, where her arm-chair was placed under a canopy. Reflecting on what he had just heard, Hippolyte stood regardless of what passed around him, and of the searching look which his worthy patron directed to him, until Zebrzydowski, who had been for a long while in earnest conversation with the Queen of Hungary, approached him, and addressing him said, “Why so thoughtful, my good young lord ? You appear to be the only one present who takes no part in the admiration of the young lady of Podolia, and who, if report speaks true, should give you more pleasure than any one else.” “Pardon me, my right reverend lord,” said Boratynski, perhaps for the first time in his life with some bitterness, “I am only a soldier, and a novice in the art of music ; and although I feel all the gratification of

it, if I do not express my feeling it is only because my poor opinion would be of too little consequence amongst so illustrious a circle of enlightened connoisseurs." "With that opinion I do not agree," answered Zebrzydowski; "many admirable performers may miss amidst the crowd of flatterers the only voice they wished to hear, and whose approbation would be more valued than the applause of the many; and I cannot blame the lovely songstress of this evening for hearkening to the homage of those who it seems are so ready to pay it. Dost thou hear me, my young friend?" Hippolyte felt the fault he had committed, and candidly thanking his kind monitor, hastened to make reparation. Helena had observed in her affianced the apparent want of participation in her little triumph, which she meant particularly as an agreeable surprise for him. Helena was a woman, and she could not believe that it was really indifference which caused his being the only one who did not step forward to utter a word of approbation. She therefore ascribed it to a little jealousy in his behaviour, which was the more painful to her, as she was conscious of the steadfastness of her own feelings.

It was therefore natural, when he advanced to

greet her, that she received him with less kindness than usual, and willingly stood back as her mother stepped between her and the young nobleman, asking the latter some trifling questions in a cold and formal manner. In a fit of absence Hippolyte was ruminating on the unwelcome conversation, when at the same moment a courtier hastened to Helena with a summons from the Queen. Bona spoke some words in the ear of the bending maiden, who replied by a slight motion of refusal and a blush ; but, as it appeared, after a few moments of renewed entreaty she assented. The Queen motioned to a servant, and then placed the lute which he brought in Helena's hands.

It was a lively Italian *canzone* that she now played ; and those of the company present who had travelled, declared in whispering voices that even in Italy, the abode of song, they had never heard anything superior. The Queen-mother alone did not appear so attentive to the performance of her favourite as might have been expected after her repeated entreaties for it, and looked occasionally towards the opposite side of the hall, as if she sought some one. Neither did the young Boratynski appear so susceptible of pleasure in the music and voice of Helena as was natural to

anticipate. He leaned absently against a pillar, without taking any part in what was going on, and was first aroused from a deep but by no means agreeable reverie, by a slight noise not far from the folding-doors, as if an effort was made to open them against the thickly pressing crowd for a guest of importance. A moment afterwards the King, who he thought was at Vilna, entered the apartment on tiptoe; and motioning with his hand to prevent any disturbance, he proceeded quietly along the hall to the place where Hippolyte was standing, to whom he nodded in a friendly manner, and then passed onwards to the chair of the young songstress, against which he leaned, signifying to those opposite not to notice him. His mother appeared not to see the new auditor, but did not direct her eyes any more to the door, and continued to express by her gestures and words her satisfaction at the performance of her foster-child. The appearance of the King had awakened in the breast of Hippolyte the most disagreeable sensations, which at the moment he was unable to account for. He was hardly sufficiently master of himself to return the gracious acknowledgement of the King as he ought, when he encountered the eyes of the Bishop of Cujavia, directed to him, as if to point out, by the animated salutation of the

King, what he had alluded to. Putting these circumstances together, it appeared to him like a concerted plan. He began to doubt whether the sudden arrival of Sigismund Augustus was not better known to some of the company than to him, and all enjoyment was at an end for our young hero on an evening which had begun so unfavourably.

After the song was ended, the bystanders did not press as before with wondering admiration about the daughter of Leon Odrowonz, but made low obeisances all round the wide circle to the monarch, repeating their congratulations on his arrival. The Queen-mother looked back, and on seeing the mantle of gold brocade and the Golden Fleece of her son, arose quickly, and with an appearance of surprise, the reality of which we cannot vouch for, “By St. Francis of Assisi,” she exclaimed, “Your Majesty had almost frightened us! We imagined that we saw an apparition, and not our son, whom we believed to be in the capital of his Grand Duchy, surrounded by all the pleasures which, as we are told, are not wanting there; and we did not expect so soon to greet him in the apartments of a bereaved widow, where the same attractions are not to be found as those he has left.” Sigismund replied to her with the ambiguity which he could always

avail himself of, especially when he was a little provoked ; “ And yet Your Majesty appears to pass your time so well, that we only regret that our unexpected appearance has disturbed you, and that our reception had not been as becomingly silent as that of one returned from the nether world, for which you apparently took us. But Your Majesty must now permit us to offer our acknowledgements to the lovely genius of song who has so surprised us ; and a most agreeable surprise it has been.” He then turned with much graciousness and animation to Helena, and began a conversation with her which soon became indistinct to the bystanders.

Had Bona Sforza previously concerted the scene of this evening, she could hardly have had better success. Sigismund was a passionate admirer of music, and especially of that species of singing with which Helena, certainly quite unconsciously, had received him. Most of the ladies who had at times tried to assail his somewhat susceptible heart, and among them Barbara Radziwill, had first found the way to it through the charms of music, and the absence of the latter was an event which the Queen-mother would have it believed was favourable to a new impression. During the whole evening, which ended in a splendid ban-

quiet, the King never left Helena, whom he called the *prima donna* of his country ; and when the Princess of Mazovia approached the Queen to take leave of her, the latter cast on her a significant look, which the haughty Anna answered by a slight contortion of her mouth, which might have been taken for the expression of contempt quite as truly as for the smile of satisfaction. The following days the King was always to be found, when the Court was assembled there, in the apartments of his mother ; and it was soon whispered amongst the courtiers that the attraction which drew His Majesty thither lay in the bright eyes of Helena of Podolia.

CHAPTER IX.

“Trifles, light as air,
Are to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs of holy writ.”—SHAKSPEARE.

THE rumour also reached the ears of Hippolyte ; and had it not been so, there were many circumstances which, without raising any particular suspicion, could not escape his attention, as denoting some approaching change. The house of the Princess of Mazovia was open to him as before, but still it continually happened that Helena was not at home, or he found her surrounded by a crowd of persons to whom lately for the first time she had become an object of importance. Lady Anna was not colder to him than usual, but on the contrary more courteous, and often honoured him with her conversation ; but it was only of a general nature, questioning him about his present occupations and future plans, without showing any particular interest in them, and was hardly removed from a mere feeling of curiosity about the son of an old neighbour ; but she evinced none of the animated feeling of a mother for the person who by

birth and talents, even without Court favour, was a worthy son-in-law for the Palatine of Podolia. Although he had long been accustomed to this behaviour in the lady Anna, still it vexed him, and there was nothing in the words or looks of Helena to restore his tranquillity or confidence. He felt angry and impatient at the conduct of the Count of Tarnow, who gave him counsel and instruction on every other subject, but preserved an inflexible silence in all that concerned the lady Helena. This made the greater impression on him, as Peter Kmita, who seldom volunteered his favours to any, least of all to young men without rank or power, accosted him at Court, or wherever he met him, with much friendship, and once even gave him an invitation to his palace, where he said that he would be sure of finding amongst the numerous young nobles who were assembled there pleasures suitable to his time of life, which he imagined would not be disagreeable to him. Besides the vexations that seemed to encompass Hippolyte from existing circumstances, and the gratification which the courteousness of so haughty and powerful a man gave to his self-love, he had also another reason for not repelling his advances. Already for some time past no doubt had remained on his mind that the Grand Marshal opposed himself not

merely to the views of his brother, but to his own wishes ; and dissatisfied with the inactivity Peter had condemned him to, he determined, in the vicinity of the Grand Marshal himself, to endeavour to throw some light upon all that now appeared so obscure, and to render the old lord, if possible, better disposed towards the wishes of his heart.

To the court of the Palatine of Cracow (for his numerous household might well be so called,) he therefore betook himself. Besides a band of serving nobles, he was surrounded by a number of young knights belonging to the most distinguished families of the magnates. The assemblies of the Grand Marshal were not regulated with that perfect urbanity which has since superseded the rude mirth of that century, but his banquets were excellent, hilarity reigned without constraint, and nothing was wanting which could increase it. The dark reserve of the old lord had latterly given way to a milder and more courteous bearing. He was not always in the humour to controul his overbearing pride by joining in the joyous throng which he formed around him, but he never appeared unwilling to witness the festivity, even without sharing in it, which his vast riches enabled him to maintain. In his princely stables there was

always a number of the best horses ready to bear his high-born clients either to Wisnietz or any of his other castles, whose apartments, butties, and hunting-grounds always stood open; while all kinds of weapons were to be found in the armouries, ready for use in the various exercises. He also now and then assisted with his gold any young man who from some temporary difficulty stood in need of it. In short, though his household was not arranged with that refinement which might have been expected from the confidant of the Milanese, it was that of a mighty feudal lord of the olden time, and especially of a man whose connexions and disposition placed him at the head of a powerful faction. Our young friend may well be pardoned for occasionally withdrawing from the serious and ceremonious assemblies of the Queen-mother to enjoy the freedom of the old Sarmatian style of living at the Grand Marshal's palace, where we shall soon see him a daily guest; although he did not altogether forsake the court or the house of the Piastian Princess, where he observed as closely as possible all that passed around him.

Although the Palatine of Cracow was frequently prevented by affairs of state, by the infirmities of an advanced age, and still more by his ill-hu-

mour, from taking an active part in the hunts and other sports of his young friends, he very often joined them at their return to his hall, where he seemed to take a great delight in all the boasting stories for which sportsmen are renowned in every country, and particularly in Poland. In listening to these tales, his usually knit brow expanded into a placid smile, and it was even not unfrequent to see him bursting into hearty laughter when some of the young sportsmen gave an extravagant account of the extraordinary feats they had performed in the chase, at the tilt, or at some other manly exercise. He appeared but seldom in the apartments of the Queen-mother, and only when he was induced to do so by motives of policy or self-interest; preferring the unrestrained conversations of his own hall, which were always concluded by a splendid and riotous banquet, to all the refined entertainments of the Milanese.

One night the companions of Peter Kmita were seated at one of these banquets, and he himself in an unwonted serenity of temper. Hippolyte was also amongst the revellers, but the tone of the conversation did not particularly please him, as he had no feats at the chase or at the tilt to boast of like his companions. In the midst of the revels a servant entered, and announced the Grand General

and the Court Marshal of the Crown, who, commissioned by the King, desired a short conference. "How comes it," exclaimed Kmita, heated by wine and the animated part which, contrary to his custom, he had taken in the conversation; "how comes it that my house is honoured by the presence of the illustrious Count of Tarnow, with which he has so long ceased to favour me? Truly I shall stand before him with exceeding embarrassment, and know not how to make my excuse for having delayed to present myself at the magnificent Christopher Palace, and awaited humbly in his ante-room till the father of the fatherland should have turned on me the light of his countenance. Still Peter Kmita is a Pole, quite as good as, if not better than, one whose son he is rather too old to style himself. And the Palatine of Lublin," he continued, losing more and more his self-command, "the high-born John Firley! O yes, we are excellent friends; but our friendship has never reached beyond the circle of the Wawel-hill ('); and in each other's houses we are rather strangers. But what can lead the busy statesman, who serves the Crown and the Synod of Geneva, the King, the Queen-mother, and the Lutheran Albert of Prussia, to me? However," he continued, as he observed the embarrassment depicted on the countenances of all his

guests by his extravagant behaviour, and the fear which it raised that after such an ebullition of temper his ill-humour would return, and be witnessed by the magnates who were about to make their entrance,—“however, we must not allow such illustrious visitors to remain in waiting.” With these words every trace of hilarity fled from his features, and he was again the haughty and morose Grand Marshal whom our readers have already been made acquainted with. He arose, as bound in common courtesy, to meet his guests ; and the three lords went into an adjoining cabinet, from which the firm and manly voice of the Castellan of Cracow, the flowing eloquence of the Court Marshal, and the violent opposition of Peter Kmita were heard. The conversation was not of long duration ; and when the two visitors retiring passed near Hippolyte Boratynski, the Grand General cast down his eyes as if he did not see him, and an unusual degree of severity and displeasure was marked on his countenance. Firley looked fixedly at him, with an expression of features as if to say, What brings you here ? and an ambiguous and almost sarcastic smile seemed to imply “This cannot be the brother of the Starost of Samborz !” The fears of the guests were justified : Peter Kmita left the hall directly, first intimating

to them that he wished his absence not to disturb their mirth,—a request which the young knights and many others readily acceded to, troubling themselves little about the quarrels of the old dignitaries. Hippolyte alone did not feel disposed to take any further share in the banquet. The visible disapprobation of the Count of Tarnow had exceedingly disconcerted him ; he felt himself aggrieved by the sarcasm conveyed in the manner of the Palatine of Lublin, and even had an intention, without considering his high rank, to demand of him an explanation ; but, in a moment of recollection, he questioned himself if he had any right to take ill the surprise of a stranger at seeing him in the house of Kmita,—him whom the King had placed in the suite of Barbara Radziwill, whose decided opponent the Grand Marshal was. He was dissatisfied with himself, and the more so as he was well aware that the time which he had passed there amongst the riotous young men had been entirely lost ; for a few days served to show him that the hoary old statesman was too well experienced not to keep all he wished concealed, and not to draw from others all that might serve his own purposes. He then thought of absenting himself by degrees, and of at last withdrawing altogether from the palace, the inu-

tility of frequenting which he had now experienced. While he was reasoning thus, somebody thrust a folded paper into his hand. Although he looked round quickly, no one was to be seen except the young nobles, who were in a state not to allow him for a moment to suppose that they could have been instrumental in conveying the mysterious billet. He withdrew from the table, went to a candelabrum, and read the following words : “ Why tarriest thou in the vicinity of the vulture, Hippolyte Boratynski ? Hasten to the gardens of the Piastian, for there the eagle builds his nest. Tarry not, for the wings of the dove are already clipped ! ” It needed but little time to unriddle the meaning of the writer ; anxiety and dark misgivings took possession of his mind ; and although ignorant from whom the warning came, and not having at all made up his mind what to do if it should be true, he hurried away from the increasing uproar of the feast.

It was yet early,—according to our present reckoning, scarcely eight o’clock,—but at that time of year it was already perfectly dark, except when the light of the moon broke through the thick clouds, and shone on the streets through which Hippolyte hastened on his way. He had

passed through the street called Canonia (²), and was following a crooked by-way that led directly to the garden-door of the lady of Podolia, and over which the high buildings of a cloister threw a deep shadow, when a man, to all appearance perfectly drunk, fell staggering against him with so much force as to make him recede some steps. The moonshine permitted the young Boratynski to observe that it was a man of the lower rank who had put himself in his way, and he commanded him angrily to get out of the path ; but the fellow, instead of obeying him, stood firmly erect, crossed his arms, and said in a voice that Hippolyte thought he recollect ed to have heard before, “ So, so, you want room, d’ ye ? Is Your Grace in such a hurry, then ? It is so dark and cool here that I like to stay a little and enjoy it.” Hippolyte, irritated by the insolence of the man, and perhaps thinking that he meant something worse, laid his hand on his sword, saying, “ Make way, wretch, or fear for thy head !” when the other, speaking with less impertinence, and in almost a whining tone, said, “ Let it all rest ; we are both in service ; you in that of a beautiful lady, I in that of the prince of darkness. It is then all right and orderly ; for you are a distinguished nobleman, and I only a lowly born

man." "Dost thou attempt to banter, insolent fellow!" cried Hippolyte as he saw that the drunken man tried more and more to maintain his position. "Heaven forbid!" answered the other without moving a step; "only one word of reason will I say to Your Grace:—wherefore hasten to a place you will at any time reach too soon?" The patience of Boratynski was quite exhausted; he seized the man, and threw him with violence on the pavement, and hastily pursued his way; but he had not yet reached the garden-wall when he suddenly felt himself seized by a strong bony hand, and a hoarse female voice screamed in his ear, "Young man, haste does no good!—be upon thy guard, young man!" He turned quickly round, and instantly recognised the old woman who some weeks before had forced herself so unexpectedly between himself and Helena. At any other time he would not have failed to take advantage of the opportunity now in his power to have investigated who the woman was that appeared in so suspicious a character; but now he thought only of reaching his goal, and he strove to shake her off. His efforts, however, were vain; the withered fingers of the witch firmly grasped his arm, and in a shrill and disagreeable voice she screamed out to him, "Lordling, lordling,

what has my nephew done to you, that you have so shamefully knocked him down and broken his foolish skull on the stones? But I am not unreasonable; give me only a gold piece or two, and I will buy balsam for him, and also prophesy for you into the bargain,—to your beloved, a fair and sparkling crown; and to you, a shepherd's crook, adorned with many-coloured ribbons, or the crosier of a bishop, or a pilgrim's staff, with which you may set out on a pilgrimage!" "Foolish hag! take thy claws off me, lest I forget that thou art a woman," cried the enraged Boratynski, and with a desperate effort he succeeded in freeing himself from her grasp. He darted forward through the garden-door: his imagination was highly excited; the hints of the sorceress implying, as he supposed by her latter words, a fearful interpretation. The recollection of the generous character of Sigismund Augustus, and the blameless conduct of his beloved, were all forgotten in the excitement of his feelings, and he hurried forward through the leafless avenues, looking round him as if expecting to see some fearful object. The old woman followed him closely, continuing to cry out, "A golden crown for the young lady, and a pilgrim's staff for thee, youngster!" She frequently came so close to him

that he was obliged to turn back in order to frighten her away. Under these singular circumstances he reached an open space before the house, where he observed two forms, whom he recognized by the light of the moon, and the glare of the illumination from the interior of the hall, to be the King and Helena engaged in an eager conversation, apparently of the most confidential nature. At the sound of the approaching noise, produced by the loud cries and the clattering of Hippolyte's sword, Sigismund turned to the spot from whence it proceeded, wondering at the boldness of any one in approaching the house in such a manner. When he saw that it was Hippolyte, he said with great severity, "What brings you here, Boratynski, in so unbecoming a manner; and what is your business?" "Lord King," began Hippolyte, "you direct a question to me which it rather becomes me to ask; favour me, then, by naming the reason that brings Your Majesty and the daughter of Leon Odrowonz together in solitude at this late hour of the evening?" The King replied, highly irritated and with a flushed countenance, "Is it really Hippolyte Boratynski that we hear? *Cospetto!* the young nobleman thinks he may speak to our majesty as his brother the wise Starost of Samborz is bold enough to do.

Go, go ! the wine-cup of Kmita, which you have been lately plying so industriously, has bewildered your senses. Go," he repeated, " that your fault may not exceed our patience ! " " I will not go," answered the excited Hippolyte, " till either Your royal Grace or this young lady has explained to me what I desire to know." " We command you to depart !" repeated Sigismund in a threatening and commanding manner, " and that directly, that your punishment may not be measured by the temerity of your conduct." " And what is that law of the republic," rejoined the incensed Hippolyte, " which reprobates a betrothed man for watching over his affianced ? " " Affianced ! " said the King, " *Corpo di Bacco !* Do you not know that none can call the King's cousin his affianced without our consent ? and we are very much disposed to refuse it to him who thus woos this princely lady." " I doubt not what the King's decision will be," replied the young man bitterly, " and if this lady will confirm what he has said, then have I indeed no further business here." Helena, who had been an auditor of the preceding conversation, which she had listened to with the utmost displeasure and astonishment, now came forward in the greatest agitation : " Neither expect any other answer from me,"

lord Castellanic. Obey the command of His Majesty, I pray, lest you grievously repent what you have done.” She then turned to the King, and they conversed together for some time in a low voice, and as Sigismund perceived that Hippolyte still continued standing before him, he said, without any increased anger, but with his accustomed irony, “As he will not depart, cousin, let us quit the field, that this Orlando Furioso may have time to cool in this February night, and that we may with more speed be enabled to pass judgement on the offender of our majesty.” As he thus spoke, he offered his arm to Helena, and they both withdrew into the house, the door of which closed behind them. Hippolyte still remained some minutes, and then proceeded slowly back to the gate, uncertain whether to reproach his own disturbance and credulity, or curse the infirmity of woman’s faith; and as he left the garden he heard the loud laugh of mockery taunting him through the trees.

Early the next morning, after a sleepless night, a message reached him to attend the Palatine of Lublin. He found him standing before the fire in quiet conversation with the Bishop of Cujavia. When the Court Marshal was aware of his entrance, he assumed a serious aspect, and accosted

him in a mingled tone of courtly coldness and ambiguous sarcasm : “ I have to impart disagreeable intelligence, lord Castellanic. It is the King’s pleasure that you depart for Vilna in the course of this day, there to perform the duties of your service to his illustrious consort. As the first person of the King’s household,” he continued, observing the bitter smile on the countenance of the young Boratynski, “ you must permit me to say that our gracious lord relies on your prompt obedience ; and, finally, although the decree which I have imparted to you may not be very agreeable, still I think it is not so severe as you had reason to expect. But be of good cheer,” he continued in a friendly manner, “ and rest assured that John Firley will hardly rejoice less at your return than yourself.” After a silent bow, Hippolyte departed ; but he had scarcely gained the last ante-room when he heard steps quickly following him. It was the Bishop Zebrzydowski. He took Hippolyte aside, and asked him in a kind manner what was the matter with him. “ It appears, then, that you think yourself hardly used in this affair ; but any one else would feel himself indebted to the royal grace.” “ And so do I consider myself,” was the answer ; “ and as the best means of taking me out of the

way of being a spectator of the animated admiration that your right reverend Grace must have observed.” “ Eh !” answered the Prelate, shaking his head, “ it appears to me as if you had got into bad hands.” “ Into the hands of the devil !” exclaimed Hippolyte, “ who has shown heaven to me only for the purpose of precipitating me from it into despair !” “ I understand you not ; you speak louder than you should in this place and about such things, and not so openly as you ought to me. Yes, sir Castellanic,” he continued, laying his hand on his shoulder, “ the moment is now I believe arrived to entrust you with a confidence left in my hands by your excellent brother, a confidence which I fear your recent occupations have but little entitled you to. Accompany me to my house, and when you have opened to me your heart with sincerity, you will have no reason to repent of it.” The voice of the considerate prince of the Church spoke comfort to the heart of the young man, who felt as if he were forsaken by all. He followed him, and by degrees laid before him a full statement of all that had happened. The Bishop listened with great attention, making Hippolyte repeat many little things more than once, and then said to him, “ You are by no means free from blame,

young man, and your brother would be little satisfied with the manner in which you have followed his counsel. The way in which you have lately spent your time, and the outrage which you confess you have been guilty of, make you deserve the short banishment which the King's lenity has ordained for you, and which you ought not to consider as a severe one, more particularly as you leave behind so powerful a mediator. Contract not your brow, sir Castellanic ; you have done much to forfeit this mediation. But there are many singular circumstances in what you tell me, and it strikes me you have been the play of some power hostile to you, who may well have caught a young man like you in their toils, without laying themselves particularly open to condemnation. You know that old attachment and connexions of different kinds bind me to the princely house of Mazovia, and it lies in my power, more than in that of any one else, to speak a word for you. This day is freely allowed to you. Tarry till evening, when you will hear from me. Thank me not," he continued, as he saw the young man preparing to speak ; "you are of value to me, as a nobleman whose hope will one day be a support to his fatherland, like your brother lord Peter. But it is not for your

sake alone that Andreas Zebrzydowski undertakes the office of mediator between the youth and the maiden ; more important matters also urge him. Delay not the preparations for your journey, for should you do so, and the night find you still at Cracow, the wrath of Sigismund Augustus would be excited, and when once awakened it flames with the greatest violence.”

At the inn Hippolyte found his old uncle, and when he imparted to him his intended journey to Vilna, the lord of Pinsk declared that Cracow would have no interest for him after the departure of his illustrious relative, and that he would therefore make ready to accompany him on his journey.

The twilight found our friend at the house of the Bishop, who did not long keep him waiting. “ If you,” he commenced, with a firm but friendly tone, “ if you had persisted in remaining at Cracow, worthy Hippolyte, you would have been but little satisfied with my endeavours in your favour ; but as it is otherwise, and you must go on your journey, it is fortunate ; for the connexions you have formed of late have much irritated the King’s mind against you, and perhaps likewise that of another person. Your last act has rendered it absolutely necessary to remove you beyond the reach

of certain influential persons. Bear up like a man against the little disappointment, which, though it now appears painful, will in the end turn out for your good ; and I will impart some comfort to you on the journey you are about to take, in this paper, which I hand over to you, on your pledging me your honour that you will not open it until you reach the capital of Lithuania. May God take you under his protection, my son ! and take the same assurance from me as you received from the Court Marshal, that I shall await with impatience the moment that you return here in the retinue of your royal mistress."

Before the evening had quite closed in, Hippolyte was on his road to Vilna, accompanied by John Lacki and little Stanislaw.

CHAPTER X.

" What have I done, that thou dar'st wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me ?"—SHAKSPEARE.

TOWARDS the middle of February 1549, the town of Piotrkow became gradually filled with the retinues and equipages of the senators. The arrival of the King was expected at the castle, the present miserable ruins of which scarcely allow of the supposition that the monarch of a powerful and extensive kingdom once held his Court within its halls. The inns, which the lower nobility had chosen for their quarters, resounded continually with the shouts of the carousers and with the clang of glasses. The watchwords of the Polish nation,—elective freedom, *pacta conventa*, *liberum veto*, duties of the sovereign towards the nation,—were repeatedly heard amidst this noise ; but there was hardly any mention of the duties of the subjects towards their sovereign. A gloomy silence, foreboding a violent storm, pervaded the dwellings of the senators and of other distinguished members of the nobility ; and the leaders of the nation met each other with cold suspicion,

as if they sought at the present moment to hide those secret designs which they intended soon to manifest in the strongest manner. Messengers were continually passing between the capital and Piotrkow. Deputies from the different provinces arrived in great crowds, and flocked round the magnate who was the leader of their respective party, in order to back his opinions by their clamour. Peter Boratynski, whom public opinion had already pointed out for the Marshal of the Diet, arrived on the eve of the day when the King was expected to make his entrance. He avoided the noisy greetings of his colleagues, and went directly to the Grand General Tarnowski. He found the halls and corridors of his house crowded with visitors. Every one gave way to the future marshal, and he entered a hall, where he found Tarnowski surrounded by many lords spiritual and temporal. The Count of Tarnow hastily advanced a few steps to meet his guest; and the usual salutations being over, he fixed on him an inquisitive look. Boratynski cast down his eyes, and they understood each other mutually. Tarnowski gave him a secret sign, and turned to the rest of the assembly.

The intricate circumstances of that time rendered it necessary to keep secret a conference be-

tween the first of the temporal senators and the leader of the equestrian order. When the assembly dispersed, Boratynski remained in one of the halls, reclining thoughtfully in a window, till a noble of the Grand General's retinue came to conduct him to his master. Whilst Boratynski was passing a corridor which led to a distant part of the house, his conductor often turned to him, and his hesitation in advancing showed that he desired to communicate something. Boratynski observed him with increased attention, and recognised by the faint light of the lamps Valenty Bielawski. "Welcome, my young friend," said he ; "I am very glad to have met you. Can you tell me anything about my brother ? Is he well ? and how fares he at Cracow ?" "Your brother," answered Valenty with some embarrassment, "is not there, as Your Grace supposes him to be. He has followed the Queen to Vilna." "I am very glad to hear it," said Boratynski ; "the Court is not now a fit place of residence for a young man like Hippolyte, and he has acted right in leaving a place, contrary to his own inclinations, where it was no longer good for him to remain. But, my dear Valenty, you look as serious as if you had something to tell me which would give me but little pleasure." The young Bielawski replied after

some hesitation : “ If you will not be angry at the liberty I take, and remember that it proceeds only from my attachment to Your Grace and to your noble house, to whom my father and myself owe so much, I will tell you all the reports I have heard. Lord Hippolyte has not left Cracow by his own choice, and there are many extraordinary rumours afloat. I really don’t know how I shall tell them to you. It is reported that a jealousy existed against a very high personage, and people talk even of a personal offence against His Majesty. You are startled, my lord Starost ; but things are not so bad as you may perhaps suppose. However, it is certain that the lord Castellanic received an order from the King to go directly to Vilna ; that he immediately did so ; and that your uncle, the lord Starost of Pinsk, followed him to that place.” “ Jealousy !” thoughtfully repeated Boratynski, who seemed to be particularly struck by that word ; “ so their intrigue has succeeded even sooner than I possibly could have supposed. And what has your patron the Grand General done ? I recommended my brother to his particular care, being well aware what kind of reliance is to be placed on the discretion of a young man of twenty in such critical times as we live in. Did he not com-

ply with my request? Has not my brother kept constant company with the inmates of the Grand General, as I have strongly recommended to him? Or," added he, speaking in a low voice to himself, "have I already begun to reap the reward of ingratitude, to which my odious duty renders me liable?" "Your Grace asks more than I can answer," replied Valenty; "I am only a simple *to-warzysz* (¹), and it becomes me not to decide about the actions of great lords, and least of all about those of my master, the illustrious Grand General; but you know him as well as I do, and I think all he does is right. Lord Hippolyte has latterly appeared very seldom in the Christopher Palace, but more often at the Grand Marshal's." "At the Grand Marshal's!" exclaimed Boratynski; then continuing in a louder voice; with a strong expression of pain, "O brother, brother! I hope that thou wilt not also pour wormwood into my cup!" "Your Grace's penetration," said Valenty in a soothing voice, "will soon find out how the matter really stands; but I will stake my life that notwithstanding all these unfavourable appearances you will soon do justice to one who is a true Boratynski in mind and manners." "I thank you, my dear Bielawski," said Boratynski, "and I trust in heaven that it will be so. No doubt

things are not in a favourable state, and I have heard much that is extraordinary." "For some time past," said Bielawski in a whisper, "there have been many suspicious characters about here; but I will narrowly watch that they neither injure my patron nor yourself, my lord Starost, for I am perfectly aware that where such are to be found no good is intended. There is one amongst them whom I particularly observe, a most wicked fellow, and who has already done much mischief. If I catch him in his crooked ways I will pay an old debt with usury, and mark him in such a manner that every honest man shall recognise him at a distance of a hundred yards, and be able to beware of him."

Whilst our friend was giving such vent to his zeal, the door of the Grand General's closet opened; the young *towarzysz* withdrew respectfully, and Boratynski entered the room. "Now," said Tarnowski after a short pause, "what am I to hear from you, my worthy lord Peter? or rather will you confirm what your countenance has predicted to me in the great hall, and what it seems not to deny at present? Do you come as a friend or as an enemy?" "My illustrious lord of Cracow," answered Boratynski with some reserve, "whatever my opinions be, hostile or friendly,

they are known to Heaven and to you. Though circumstances may influence my actions, my mind is unchangeable. I would that every one could say so in these disturbed times !” “ If I understand you rightly,” said Tarnowski, “ our fears are well founded, and you came——” “ To fulfill the commission of all my lords and brothers,” interrupted Boratynski hastily, “ in repeating what I have already said at Warsaw and at Cracow in the name of a part of them ; to declare at the footstool of the throne what the first state of the realm, the equestrian order, judges to be right, and to maintain it against every one.” “ You have an arduous task, my lord of Samborz,” exclaimed Tarnowski ; “ and I should fear for any other entrusted with such difficult business, particularly as your own feelings contradict what your mouth is obliged to utter.” “ My feelings belong to myself,” said Boratynski with a significant expression, “ but my words and actions belong to my country. This is the line of conduct I shall follow until both may be brought to agree.” “ Your own words express that such a time is still very distant,” replied Tarnowski ; “ may you persevere ! for the further you advance the more difficulties you will encounter ; and even in the course of tomorrow you will meet with things

that might mislead any one, though I hope they will have no effect on the upright mind of the Starost of Samborz, the husband of my niece, the worthy nobleman in whom I behold my own image, such as I was five-and-twenty years ago. Is it not true," added he, when Boratynski acknowledged the compliment only by an unusually low obeisance, " is it not true that even if every one else is misled, neither John Tarnowski nor Peter Boratynski will stray from the right path ? But what does your silence imply, my lord of Samborz ? Why do you turn your eyes from me, and no longer look on me with your wonted confidence ?" " When I passed through your antechambers," said Boratynski gravely, " I there met with many whom I had never seen in the halls of the Christopher Palace. I saw many a head bowed in profound humility ; and I heard words of adulation addressed to him who a short time ago was approached only by the best amongst the nation with erect heads and plain speech, as becomes a man of honour. It reminded me of what you yourself said, that there are circumstances where even the best are misled." " What is the meaning of your words !" exclaimed Tarnowski with burning cheeks, and drawing himself up proudly ; " how long has it come to pass that you address the uncle

of your wife in a formal speech, and with these unintelligible allusions?" Boratynski suppressed with pain his emotion, and answered calmly, "Since the report gained ground that the father of the fatherland desires to exchange this name, earned by virtue, for one that can be purchased only by guilt,—since every step of my journey to Piotrkow gave me new reasons to believe what I had hitherto rejected as a vile calumny. My own eyes seemed to confirm what I dared not to believe." Tarnowski burst into a fit of anger, and exclaimed, "Do you remember, sir nobleman, in whose presence you speak? Consider that it is the head of the senate whom you dare so boldly to accuse." He paced the room up and down in visible perturbation; but after a few minutes stopped again, and continued in a more moderate tone of voice, "And is it you that speak to me in such a manner!—you, a near relative of mine!—you, to whom I have so long given my unbounded confidence, who have often called me your paternal friend, and guide to every knightly virtue!"

Boratynski was deeply moved by these words, but he forcibly restrained himself, and said in a calm and firm tone, "Our feelings belong to ourselves, but our actions belong to our country; I have listened only to her voice, and I speak to

you now, not as a knight to a senator, not as a nephew to an uncle, not as a friend to a friend, not as a pupil to his tutor ; no, it is the leader of the equestrian order, the Marshal of the Diet, who addresses the head of the senate : you listen to the words of one who is a guardian of the Crown like yourself ; yes, my lord Castellan of Cracow, of that very crown which the Marshal knows how to defend against every encroachment and pretension ; and he will do so if he even should oppose the King himself." " Peace, peace, my lord Marshal !" answered Tarnowski, after a pause, with a smile, " do not be so quick in condemning the Grand General, as if he were a common culprit, and moreover a convicted one ; have I ever withdrawn my confidence from you when your line of conduct became difficult, and your actions could be easily subjected to an unfavourable interpretation ? Do I less deserve your confidence than you did mine ? " " It is your exalted station that excites my anxiety," replied Boratynski with warmth ; " the storm which passes over the lowly shrub strikes the proud oak ; and it was not the meanest tree of Paradise which the serpent chose. How can you compare yourself to me ? A few days more, and I resign the marshal's staff entrusted to me by my brothers ; I return to their

ranks, and their approbation is my sole reward : who would dare to quarrel with his fellow-citizens, and forfeit their gratitude for a common need ? But your case is different. The idea that the end justifies the means presents itself often to an exalted mind, which holds a high station on the earth, and the voice of the tempter whispers to him that though it is infamous to be guilty of a common theft, yet it is quite otherwise to usurp a crown." " You may be right," answered Tarnowski with a suppressed voice, pressing his hand to his clouded brow, " you are indeed right. It was on the top of a mountain that the tempter proposed to our Saviour the empire of the world. Yet where the temptation is greatest, Heaven grants most strength to withstand it ; and even if the evil approaches us during the darkness of night, the light of the coming day dispels its delusions. You are still silent, and appear to be uncertain : truly, my lord Starost of Samborz, it seems that the suggestions of Kmita and the intrigues of the Milanese have produced the effect upon your mind they did upon that of your brother." Boratynski answered with a dark expression of countenance, " My lord of Cracow, I do not find my judgement either upon the interested opinion of the Grand Marshal, or the wily suggestions of the Queen-mother ; no,

I have other reasons for my apprehensions. I have been present at the elections in Little Poland and Russia, and I heard thousands and thousands of voices who openly declared their intentions of proclaiming the vacancy of the throne, and you, my lord Grand General, successor to Sigismund Augustus. It is not the whisper of calumny; no, it is the voice of the nation, which—pardon me, my gracious lord,—expresses itself rarely in such a unanimous and decided manner without having been prompted to it; and is it possible that he whose name is so loudly proclaimed can be unaware of such a universal clamour?" "I owe you thanks," replied Tarnowski, endeavouring to hide the agreeable impression produced by Boratynski's speech upon a mind which was not devoid of ambition; "I owe you thanks for this proof of my fellow-citizens' confidence, which you make known to me by this account; it would indeed be dangerous to report to every one such flattering homage from a warlike nobility, without knowing before how far he is acquainted with his advantages. But I will confess to you, my lord of Samborz, that you relate nothing new to me: I know all that has happened in the southern palatinates, and indeed I have countenanced it." Boratynski gave no answer, but turned hastily

and was about to leave the room, when Tarnowski recalled him, saying, "Then you will leave me ? Listen to me for a moment, and then depart if you choose, and tell your brothers that the father of the fatherland turned traitor to his country."

A long habit of reverence gave weight to these words, and Boratynski stopped and asked with downcast eyes, "And what can you say ? Will it be a plain Yes, or No ? All that rests between them can be nothing but subterfuge to cover the truth, and to veil what cannot be justified. Oh ! in what unfortunate times we live, when all is in such confusion that even the best of us strays from the right path, and that I must speak in such a manner to one whom my brethren call their father, and whom I have called father and friend!" "And when have I given you reason to suppose me capable of a mean subterfuge or of an artful evasion ?" said Tarnowski with dignity ; "listen to me, Boratynski, I desire to be heard by you. You have acted towards me like a man of honour ; you have not sought to inquire into my conduct secretly ; and though appearances are strongly against me, you have accused me face to face as it becomes a knight to speak to a knight, and the head of the equestrian order to address that of the senate. You have acted towards me not as towards an

ordinary man ; I will therefore treat you in the same manner. Tell me, who instructed you in lessons of policy when you were sent abroad to the Courts of Germany and Italy, where intrigue was ready to entangle by its craft the inexperienced Sarmatian ? Was it not I who reminded you of your duties, and of the example of your honoured father, when you were to appear for the first time in the assembly of your fellow-citizens ? Under whose banners did you draw for the first time your virgin sword against the enemies of your country ? Five-and-twenty years have passed since that event ; yet look on me,—was it not the same John of Tarnow who stands now before you ? Have I ever held up to you the wiles of a cabal as the precepts of the statesman's science ? Was it not I who pointed out to you the narrow line which in the constitution of this country divides the duties towards the sovereign from those towards our fellow-citizens ? Was it not I who received your oath never to draw your sword but in a rightful cause ? I have acquired a right to your confidence, a right which cannot be destroyed by a passing delusion, and I still claim this right. Tarnowski never left the pledge of his honour unredeemed, had he even to redeem it by the greatest sacrifice. I now pledge my honour to you, and it

shall be lost for ever to me and to my race, if I do not come out from all these complicated circumstances without a stain ; here is my hand, do you hesitate to accept it ? ” The hands of these noble men united in a friendly grasp, and their looks met each other with their wonted confidence. “ Trust to me,” continued Tarnowski, “ as I have trusted to you ; you have already too much to do,” added he smiling, “ to burthen yourself with the guardianship of the old General,—old enough to be your father, and who has often been your guide ; you are no more the simple knight Boratynski ; you are charged with a most important task, and it becomes not the senator to impart everything to the Marshal of the Diet. A little friction is often requisite to the engine of the State, but virtue and prudence must prevent its becoming hurtful. Let therefore John Tarnowski pursue his own way ; and if calumny should ever cast a stain upon his hoary head, let Boratynski render him justice, as Tarnowski would have done to him. But stay ; I have still something to say to you,” continued he when Boratynski was going to take his leave ; “ I have already mentioned your brother, and not entirely to his advantage ; do you know what has happened to him ? ” Boratynski replied in the affirmative, and Tarnowski con-

tinued ; “ An effort was made at Cracow to break a union which is considered a hindrance to some plans,—Heaven only knows whether real or fictitious ; being afraid of the Marshal, they sought to ascribe the fault of the rupture to the Castellan. Hippolyte is a young man, and they had already nearly succeeded in their schemes ; but they failed by too much art, and by the unrestrained pride of the machinators. The young gentleman got pretty well out of the scrape, when he was very near being completely entrapped, and a little penance will do him no harm, if it is a penance to serve Barbara Radziwill, who in spite of the opposition of the Diet is a most charming and accomplished lady, and to whom, with your permission, my lord Marshal, we wish cordially to give the name which belongs to her by divine and human law, and which neither you nor I, even at the present moment, deny to her in our hearts.”

In the time of our history, the advantages of quick travelling were reserved exclusively for royal personages, who on their journeys had always relays furnished for them by the estates of the crown, and by the starosties. Posting was introduced a century later, under the reign of Wladyslaw the Fourth, and the nobility travelled generally

on horseback and sometimes in a carriage, but always with the same horses from the beginning to the end of their journey, and very rarely was there an exception from this common mode of travelling. A long time consequently passed before the old Lacki reached the capital of Lithuania with his son and his nephew, in spite of all the impatience with which the latter pushed on their journey. The letter which the Bishop of Cujavia had given him lay burning on his heart, and he longed ardently for the moment when he should be permitted to open it and read the pardon of his guilt, or perhaps the confirmation of his fears.

When they entered the capital of Lithuania he was struck with the extraordinary and different appearance of the Court of Vilna from that at Cracow. He saw here only gay countenances: the inquisitive looks of suspicion, and the silent workings of mistrust and ambition, common at a Court, seemed to have been banished from the residence of a young Queen, whom her parting husband had surrounded with everything that was calculated to shorten and make agreeable the time which she was to spend in awaiting the decision of her fate. The friends whom Hippolyte met described in glowing colours the festivals at

which they had been present, and all the pleasures which they still expected to enjoy. The Starost of Pinsk, whose brow had been almost continually clouded since his journey to Cracow, became cheerful as he listened to the continual praises of his illustrious relative : he desired to pay his respects to her the same evening, and was soon ready for his presentation at Court. But Hippolyte retired to his room, broke the seal of the letter, the contents of which he longed so much to know, and read the following words written by his betrothed : “*Helena Odrowonz wishes Hippolyte Boratynski good success in the journey which he himself rendered necessary. Can she desire to see him soon again ? Many changes must take place before it may become desirable, and before his playmate can grant him a pardon, which perhaps the daughter of Anna of Mazovia and the cousin of the royal Sigismund Augustus ought to refuse ; yet she repeats to him the words which he himself once uttered,—‘Remain firm and true, and the rest will come of itself.’*” These last expressions poured some balm into his heart, which was deeply wounded by the beginning of the letter. “*Anna of Mazovia’s daughter !*” exclaimed he : “*in the castle of Kaminiec the son of the Castellan of Zytomierz was the playmate of*

the Palatine's daughter; but in the royal castle she is the daughter of the Princess of Mazovia! The old portraits of her royal ancestors and her enthroned cousin look down with scorn on the simple nobleman who dared to aspire to so high an alliance; and she whom I once hoped to call my own for ever, who became my betrothed with the consent of her father—she now hesitates to grant the only pardon I may claim. ‘It would not be desirable for us soon to meet again! Many changes must take place!’ Oh! I fear that much is already changed since her entrance into those halls where the dark spirit of Italian intrigue has ensnared her. A hostile destiny seems to step between us; our careers begin to be different; thy goal, Helena, will perhaps be a crown, and mine a pilgrim’s staff, as yon grisly witch predicted to me. Thou sayest I must ‘remain firm and true,’ ” continued he in a softer voice; “such was the sweet language of those good times which are now gone by. It was Helena Odrowonz who wrote that line, and not the proud daughter of the Piasts, not the confidant of the inconstant Sigismund. Yes, I will remain firm and faithful, whatever may happen! What link can exist between Helena and the King? She is bound to me by the decision of her dying father, and by the free choice

of her own heart; he is indissolubly united to Barbara by the sacred ties of marriage. I have been always true, and nothing shall again shake my firmness. At this moment the entrance of the old Lacki interrupted his soliloquy, and soon afterwards they stood in the presence of Sigismund's consort.

"I am very glad," said the Starost of Pinsk after a prolix speech to which Barbara had listened with patience and affability, though often unable to suppress a smile at the exaggerated expressions of the old Lithuanian, "I am very glad to be again in my own country, and beyond the borders of the lands of the Crown, where people never sincerely deal with a Lithuanian, as Your Majesty yourself had ample occasion to be convinced of; and I salute you in a country of which you are the hereditary Grand Duchess according to divine and human law, and which neither a Diet nor a Synod of Roman priests can deny to you. I salute you in this house, which acknowledges you its sole and exclusive mistress, and where no other, no Italian, dares to usurp your rights!" Barbara thought proper to stop the untimely effusions of a well-meant zeal, in which the old lord indulged himself a little too much, without paying any attention to the bystanders, and she re-

plied with an expression of gratitude, “ You are welcome at our Court, my dear cousin. We heard when at Cracow that you had the intention to make an important request to the consort of your sovereign ; it would perhaps be easier to grant it here than it was there, and we assure you beforehand that we will do everything in our power to satisfy your just demands.” “ Most gracious lady,” said Lacki, looking with self-complacency on the assembly, and pointing to his companions, “ here are two others who arrived with me to pay their homage to Your Majesty ; one of them you know already ; he is come to fulfill the duties of his service ; but the other, who stands yonder with downcast eyes, is my son ; I present him to Your Majesty, and I beseech you to grant him your favour, and admit him amongst Your Majesty’s attendants. I pledge myself for his good behaviour, and assure Your Majesty that though still a boy he is a true Lithuanian, and I hope that he will be able to wash away by his fidelity and devotedness to his royal mistress the stains which still remain upon his father’s name.”

Barbara cast a hasty glance on Hippolyte, but turned directly, without paying further attention to him, to the little Stanislaw, and said with great affability, “ If it is as your father says, my young

nobleman, we will receive you amongst our pages, and entrust to your hands the comb and the looking-glass, until they are fit to make use of the karabella, for our and our lord's service." The young Lacki blushed deeply, and answered with great confusion, "I hope I shall never be obliged to draw my sword in your defence; but if such were the case," added he with great animation, "you shall see, most gracious lady, that Stanislaw Lacki will understand how to wield it."

A long experience of the Court gives even to the weakest eye a quick perception of certain objects; and the negligence with which Hippolyte Boratynski was treated by his royal mistress did not escape the notice of the lady Hornostay; she seized this opportunity to give vent to her ill humour, and to the aversion which the young Pole had inspired in her from his first appearance, and which was probably increased by the favour that his betrothed enjoyed with the young Queen. She approached Hippolyte as quickly as the decorum of a *grande maîtresse* and the heavy silk gown permitted her, and said in a whisper, with an ironical smile, "Your arrival, my lord Castellanic, must indeed give great pleasure to Her Majesty, as it brings back to her Court such an agreeable companion, who so well understands to make

the conversation interesting by telling agreeable-tales, so well adapted to circumstances, as you did us the honour to entertain us with on our journey to Cracow. Probably there are too many uncalled-for truth-tellers at the Court of the Queen-mother, and His Majesty was pleased to make over the superfluity to the castle of Vilna.” Hippolyte had entered the apartment of the Queen in an excited state of mind; the unfavourable reception he had met with increased still more his irritation, and he was but little disposed to receive the ironical address of the lady Hornostay in jest, as he ought to have done, considering her age, her sex, and the presence of the Queen: he answered aloud and with anger, “It is the will of my sovereign, and not my own, which has led me hither, and my truths and stories are certainly superfluous in a place where, as I have just learnt, there is no want of uncalled-for speakers, and where the office of a reporter is executed perhaps by malignity and idle loquacity.” Barbara, though still engaged in conversation with the old Lithuanian, whose honest zeal was soothing to her feelings, and who was enjoying the continually growing embarrassment of the little Stanislaw, paid no less attention to all that was going on. When she heard the reply of Hippolyte a sudden blush coloured her

lily cheeks, and the delicate veins on her brow swelled with anger ; she drew herself up, and said in a commanding tone of voice, “ My lord Castellanic, it seems to us that your short residence at Court has not taught you the reverence you owe to the presence of your mistress, or the respect which is due to ladies. But it cannot appear strange to us in one who has neglected, for the wild carousals of an old reveller, the duties which the habits of chivalry imposed on him towards her whom he called the lady of his heart ; therefore we forbid you to appear in our presence until you have again learnt the rules of courtesy, which you have entirely forgotten over the bowl of the Palatine of Cracow : when we need your attendance, you shall be apprised of it.” The amazed Boratyński bowed to his provoked mistress and departed in silence, inwardly cursing the fate that had brought him to the Court, and the bad fortune which deprived him, though partly by his own fault, of the favour of the only person from whose patronage he could expect the fulfilment of his dearest wishes. After having spent some hours in accusing himself, and in endeavouring to find some consolation in Helena’s letter, he heard a loud knocking at his door, and a page of the Queen entered the room, jumping and frisking. A velvet

jerkin of a dark blue colour clothed the slender form of the young man; a golden chain, with a medal attached to it, hung from his neck and reached almost to his scarlet sash, which was adorned with silver fringe; a short cloak of the same colour hung loosely over his left shoulder; and red short boots completed his dress. He would have resembled in this garb a page of the Court of Madrid, had not a little cap with heron plumes, worn on the head in a dashing manner, and a little crooked sword suspended at his side by silver chains, denoted the Lithuanian dress. Hippolyte arose peevishly from his seat, and was prepared to listen to some unpleasant message, when the page jumping up exclaimed, "Be of good cheer, cousin Hipciu! I am Stas, and he would certainly not bring you a disagreeable message." He then clapped his hands, crying with exultation, "Thou hast not recognised me!" and ran to a looking-glass to admire his richly dressed figure. Hippolyte smiled at the raptures of the boy, and said to him, "Indeed you are very handsomely dressed, but do not forget that 'all is not gold that glitters;' remember what has happened to me." "Do not be so ill-humoured, my cousin Hippolyte," interrupted Stanislaw, "all is right again; and," added he with an air of

importance, “ I am commissioned to conduct you to our mistress.” “ Well,” said Hippolyte perversely, “ our royal mistress has probably some new whim; and she cannot train you in a better way for the service of ladies than by choosing you for the tool of those freaks which pass ten times in an hour through the head of a fine lady.” When Stanislaw heard this observation, he approached his cousin with blushing cheeks and sparkling eyes, and said earnestly, “ Listen to me, if you please, my lord Castellanic; if we are to remain friends, never speak again in such a manner of my Queen: she is not like other ladies; and as she is above them all in beauty and loveliness, so she is also superior in wisdom and kindness; and indeed, since I have seen her, it appears to me that she stands alone in this world,—perhaps with the exception of lady Helena, for your sake,” added he smiling, and continued: “ You may abuse lady Hornostay as much as you like, and I think she has not rendered you any great service; for when you went away she brought forward many different things about the levity of men in our days; she mentioned how you had attached yourself to the old Kmita, and how you allowed yourself to be drawn away by a dissipated life, by hunting and drinking, from

the young lady of Podolia ; how you provoked her anger, and finally broke with her, and were obliged to leave Cracow, for I know not what reason. My father came forward and contradicted her ; but I did not well hear what he said, being at the moment, I do not know how it happened, a little absent. You well know my father is not usually talkative, but when he once begins to speak, he does not cease until you understand thoroughly what he means ; yet the Queen could not well understand what he said ; it was because you told us on our journey so little of what happened to you at Cracow. The lady Hornostay seemed to be very much provoked, and quitted the apartment quite pale from anger ; and when she was gone, my most gracious lady ordered my father to repeat once more all that he had told her, and she looked indeed very pensive as she listened to his narrative. When he had finished she said with a smile,—a smile so agreeable I never before saw in my life,—‘ It would be unjust to banish a second time an exile :’ she called me and said that I should be the dove which should bring you the olive-branch ; and now, quick, quick ! let us return to the feet of our mistress.’ When they entered Barbara’s presence she gave a sign to her ladies to withdraw, and remained

alone with Boratynski. "Your uncle the Starost of Pinsk," said she after a short pause, "has reported things to me differently from what we had at first understood, from the confused manner in which we heard them; but is it not true that you have incurred your sovereign's displeasure? You desire, doubtless, to obtain his pardon," added she with a severe accent, "and you come without doubt to request our mediation to that effect; therefore let us know what has happened, that our intercession may be effectual. You are silent," continued she with increased animation; "have you then no desire to regain the royal favour?" Hippolyte listened to her words with great confusion, though the letter of Helena had in some degree allayed his fears about the sentiments of his beloved; however, all he had seen and heard gave him sufficient reason to suppose in Sigismund Augustus a design, to which his known fickleness gave but too great an appearance of probability; yet how could he confess his suspicions to Barbara, whose uncertain fate depended only on the King's attachment, and whose inconstancy would precipitate her in a moment from the throne, and plunge her into an abyss of misery and degradation? The remembrance of his unbecoming visits to the house of

Kmita also filled him with confusion ; but still he felt that she who spoke to him had a double right to his confidence, being the mistress he served, and the only one who had the will and the power to protect his love ; he answered, therefore, with more embarrassment than was usual with him, “ Most gracious lady, I can say nothing in my own justification, and can only hope this confession of my errors may recommend me to the clemency of Your Majesty.” “ The acknowledgement of the fault,” replied Barbara, smiling, “ is the first step towards repentance and amendment ; but it is not to us alone that you owe an apology,” added she in a more serious tone ; “ if the reports we have heard are true, there is another person of whose forbearance you stand much in need. We mean Helena Odrowonz, my lord Castellanic ; for we cannot credit the report that, for the sake of our enemy the Grand Marshal, you have broken an engagement, as the protectress of which you have chosen the consort of your monarch,—an engagement consecrated by parental benediction, and which we will maintain even against you, for it becomes a Queen to protect only such legitimate unions, and not the idle love-intrigues of her courtiers.”

Hippolyte began his narration, and confessed that imprudently disregarding the warnings of his

brother, he attached himself to Kmita, in order to gain the confidence of the old man ; that instead of gaining this point, he had allowed himself, with youthful levity, to be drawn into idle dissipation, and had by degrees entirely lost sight of the object of his strange behaviour. He spoke of Helena with all the ardour of a glowing passion, and conjured Barbara not to suppose him capable of so unchivalrous a proceeding as to break his word. He mentioned the behaviour of Sigismund, avoiding as much as possible every circumstance which could wound the feelings of Barbara ; and when he described the accident that had occasioned his banishment, he confessed that he had been too hasty in giving ear to certain suggestions. Barbara listened with great attention to his account ; her clouded brow became cheerful by degrees ; she ordered him to repeat all that had happened with the old woman and her cousin, and having mused awhile on what she had heard, said, with entirely recovered good-humour, and with an amenity of expression peculiar to her, “ Confess, lord Boratynski, that your resigning the sweet duties of a knight towards the lady of his heart, and exchanging them for the revelries of the old Palatine and of his wild companions, cannot be easily justified by the

schemes of your unsuccessful policy ; and that your banishment,—we will pardon your so calling the residence at our Court,—is a very mild punishment for your errors. Be, therefore, thankful to our royal husband for having sent you away from a place where so many snares were laid for your inexperience ;—give attention to our words, lord Boratynski, be thankful to our royal husband, and beware of staining your mind by suppositions which are unworthy of the exalted object and of yourself, and which sufficiently betray the impure source whence you have drawn them. However,” concluded she with a dismissing sign, “ we will not be more severe than our lord has been; and your services shall henceforward be as agreeable to us as formerly.”

This conversation was not without its consequences. Hippolyte Boratynski gained a kind of importance at the Court of Vilna, which was ascribed by many to the necessity of winning the brother of the Marshal of the Diet, whose voice would have so much influence on Barbara’s fate ; but there were also others, and amongst them particularly lady Hornostay, who endeavoured to explain by different reasons the growing favour of young Boratynski.

CHAPTER XI.

“The morning sun, that gilds with trembling rays
Windsor’s high towers, beholds the courtly train
Mount for the chase, nor views in all his course
A scene so gay.”—SOMERVILLE’S *Chase*.

THE old Lacki, having accomplished his purpose of placing his son at Court, fulfilled now the intention he had long since formed of retiring from the world and returning to his solitude at Pinsk. Stanislaw shed many tears on parting with his father, from whom he had never before been separated; but they were quickly dried in the sunshine of his mistress’s eyes, whose influence acted miraculously on the young man’s mental and bodily improvement. One day, about the time of the Diet at Piotrkow, extraordinarily fine weather induced the Queen and her merry Court to make a little excursion in the neighbourhood. Barbara herself and the younger part of her suite rode on horseback, whilst the elderly ladies and those who were careful of their health followed them in heavy carriages, and well wrapped in hoods and fur pelisses. The Queen rode at a gentle trot on her milk-white jennet towards the woods, which at that time extended nearly to

the suburbs of Vilna, and in which many glens and large tracts were cut for the convenience of the royal sports. Many of the higher attendants, and Boratynski among the rest, followed the Queen, and the train was closed by the page Stanislaw, who rode a spirited Lithuanian nag, and carried sundry ladies' paraphernalia. The road being narrow, the carriages remained a little behind; and it happened, about an hour after they had entered the woods, that Barbara, attended by Boratynski, a few other knights, and her faithful page, found herself at a considerable distance from the rest of her retinue. They were in a glen traversed by many roads in different directions; when the Queen stopped her horse, and inquired from a gentleman of her retinue which was the way that led to the hunting-lodge, where a repast was prepared for her, and pointed to a path which was more trodden than the others, saying that probably that was the right one. He answered in the negative, and said that he knew by his own experience that it led to an abrupt declivity, at the bottom of which was a deep morass; for that being once engaged in the pursuit of a wild animal in this direction, he had escaped only by a fortunate accident an almost unavoidable death, his horse having stumbled close to the edge of the precipi-

pice, which he had not seen. He pointed to a path in quite an opposite direction, saying that it led to the hunting-lodge, and advised Her Majesty to follow it; but the others contradicted his assertion, and each of them pretended to be better acquainted with the environs than the rest of the company. The Queen said, laughing, “It always happens so with those who stray from the straight path : the high-road would have brought us sooner or later to our repast, which I think will not be superfluous after a ride in the keen air of a February day. I think the best plan would be that each person should examine the path he supposes to be the right one, while we wait here for the arrival of our *cortége*.” The courtiers, hastening to fulfill the orders of their mistress, galloped into the forest, and the echo of their horses’ feet was soon lost in the distance : only Hippolyte and his cousin, who were that day on duty, remained with the Queen in the glen. A long time had elapsed, and neither the cavaliers nor the carriages came up, and Barbara began to be impatient, when they heard in the direction whence they had arrived a sudden noise, as if caused by something very large making its way through the thicket, and a tread like that of many horses. “ Well,” said Barbara, “ here at last are our attendants ; I am only asto-

nished that anxiety for my person has overcome lady Hornostay's aversion to a quick drive, which she abhors like everything else that is contrary to the etiquette of the Court." Meantime the noise in the wood increased more and more ; the trampling which they had supposed the tread of horses became terrific ; they heard an extraordinary crash of branches and underwood, and the ground seemed to tremble under an enormous weight ; a horrible bellowing resounded through the forest, and Stanislaw exclaimed in the greatest anxiety, " For Heaven's sake save yourself, most gracious lady ! 'T is a urochs ! 't is a urochs ! " (3) As the sight of a lion is dreaded by the wild inhabitants of the African desert, so the monarch of the northern forest is an equal object of terror to the animals of a colder climate. The Queen's horse trembled, snorted, and pranced with terror, struggling against the reins, which his bewildered rider drew tighter in her convulsive grasp. The trees bordering the road suddenly gave way, as if they were scattered by a storm, and the monstrous inhabitant of the forest rushed furiously on Barbara. His eyes gleamed with a bloody fire ; his mane and the hair covering his back were bristled with fury ; his uncouth beard swept the ground ; his enormous head was bowed on his chest, and his

widely extended horns were directed towards the object of his wrath. The Queen lost all presence of mind, and instead of saving herself by the speed of her horse, struggled in an agony of terror to arrest his instinctive flight. Whilst Hippolyte endeavoured to seize hold of the reins, and to draw away the Queen, Stanislaw put spurs to his little nag, and threw himself before the wild urochs. The red colour of the cloak turned the animal's attention from the Queen towards her page, who cast, with his boyish hands, a javelin at its broad front. The urochs stopped for a moment, stamping the ground with his enormous hoofs; his open jaws displayed a set of ivory teeth, and a thunderlike bellowing shook the air; he rushed with a terrible shock on Stanislaw, and overthrew with his horns both steed and rider. But before this had happened the reins slipped from Barbara's hand, and her horse ran away in a maddening flight down a forest path. Boratynski perceived with horror that it took the direction of the precipice mentioned by one of the courtiers; he spurred his horse, flew after the Queen with the greatest rapidity, and without hearing the shrieks of the *cortége*, which had just arrived on the spot, his courser soon overtook Barbara's jennet; he grasped its reins, stopped its flight, and Barbara dropped

senseless into his arms. He laid gently on the damp mossy ground the precious burthen, for the sake of which Sigismund was ready to resign the crown of his ancestors, and supporting her head, he knelt down, uncertain how he should act to restore her senses in this desert place, and thinking on his poor little cousin, whose fidelity was probably requited by death. However, he soon heard many voices exclaiming, “Where is the Queen? where is the Queen?” and in the moment when Barbara began to awake from her stupor, they were both surrounded by the rest of the Court. The salts, spirits, and other similar things with which lady Hornostay was amply provided, speedily restored the Queen to her senses, and she returned leaning on one of her ladies to the glen. Her first glance caught the little horse of her page; it was lying dead, and its entrails were seen from a gaping wound in its side: near him was stretched the boy, pale, covered with blood, and motionless. Barbara uttered a shriek of despair, tore herself from her conductress, and flew to him who had sacrificed his youthful life for her safety. She saw, with a shudder, a large wound on the breast of the faithful Stanislaw; she cast herself weeping near him, gazed a long time on his tranquil, pale countenance, and silently pressed a kiss on his

bloody brow. Hippolyte knelt at her side, holding in his grasp the hands of his senseless cousin. The Queen arose slowly, and covered her face, when Boratynski exclaimed with joy, “ He lives ! Oh ! God be praised, my Stanislaw is not dead ! ” The returning respiration confirmed this supposition. The Queen ordered the youthful martyr of his devotedness to be put on a litter formed hastily of branches, and in spite of all the representations of the *grande maîtresse*, walked at its side nearly to the gates of Vilna. This event became, of course, the universal theme of conversation. The heroic action of the page was sincerely extolled by many, and reluctantly by some ; his probable recovery excited a general satisfaction. Lady Hornostay, when in the evening she was alone in her closet, soliloquized in the following manner : “ Alone in the forest with the young man whom she distinguishes from all others ! — and in his arms ! — then the kiss on the forehead, perhaps the lips, of a boy fifteen years old, and who might be taken for one of eighteen ! Hem ! — capital matters for an interesting letter to my cousin and friend the lady Starostine Falczewska at Cracow ! ”

Anna of Mazovia eyed with an apparent indifference the growing inclination of Sigismund Augustus to her daughter and the absence of the

young Boratynski, whilst the satisfaction of the Queen Bona, caused by the same reasons, was manifest. The mutual aversion of both these ladies seemed to be lost in their united efforts to attain the same end, and the attendants of the Queen-mother frequently saw the widow of Leon Odro-wonz spending hours in privacy with their royal mistress. However, the new hopes which gradually rose in the proud mind of the Piastian Princess were never betrayed by the least change either in her countenance or behaviour. Ambition and vengeance were the only inhabitants of a heart long since disused to every kind of enjoyment, and she watched with cold attention all that passed around her. Bona tried in vain to gain her stern companion by all the means which her station and her knowledge of the world afforded. She constantly avoided every advance in matters that were foreign to the object which united the old enemies, and even during the hours of their seemingly confidential effusions about the aim of their united efforts, the Milanese saw in the eyes of the Princess of Mazovia a dark glowing fire, which seemed only to await the moment when she might feel herself deceived, in order to burst forth in a destructive flame. Oppressed by the presence of such an unhallowed ally, Bona longed impatiently for the

moment when she should be no longer in want of her aid, and when it might be permitted to throw back into degradation her odious rival, and to crush her in such a manner that she would never be able to raise her head again.

The capital became gradually deserted; the grantees went to join the Diet; and Peter Kmita, after a long conference with the Milanese, departed likewise for Piotrkow. The sounds of festivity were hushed in the royal castle, and only the dark workings of intrigue were busy in silence, when a messenger arrived from Vilna with letters for the Starostine Falczewska, the confidant of the Queen-mother. The lady of Podolia was closeted with Bona when lady Falczewska entered with hasty steps and flushed cheeks. The Queen received with apparent displeasure the welcome intruder, who put an end to a disagreeable conversation, and said with feigned severity, “What do you bring us, Falczewska? We must suppose that it is something very important which has induced you to intrude upon us in such a manner and against our express order, which prohibits to all our Court the entrance of this apartment whilst it is honoured by the presence of our beloved cousin.” “That depends on how you will take it, most gracious lady,” answered the Starostine, who was

quite out of breath from the great hurry in which she arrived, “ It is true that the cause of my intruding upon Your Majesty’s privacy is nothing more than what men call in their pride female gossip, but you know well that it is often of more importance and produces greater effects than all their clumsy deliberations and boasted feats of arms.” The Queen replied with an expression of indifference, “ Indeed, my dear Falczevska, we hope you know well that having at our disposal other arms besides the usual weapons of ladies, the tongue, we make use of it but seldom. But as you are here, discharge your burden which threatens to suffocate you, if it is also the pleasure of the lady Princess Palatine.” “ This time,” said Falczevska, “ it is a sharp pen, which takes the place of an equally sharp tongue, in giving an account of what has been observed by an uncommonly keen eye, and Your Majesty may yourself best judge if it is so, and if it deserves to be presented to you; but it may be decided by the Princess, who, if the general opinion of the Court and of the town is not wrong, is particularly concerned in the object of this confidential letter.” Bona hastily read the letter; whilst Anna, maintaining her wonted indifference, perceived by a furtive glance that the news it contained was not

of an ordinary kind. “ Nothing but follies,” said the Queen, giving the letter to the Princess with an ironical smile, “ which must be pardoned to a lady whose sudden elevation to the highest rank makes her head dizzy, so that she forgets the duties of her new station.” “ I am entirely of Your Majesty’s opinion,” answered Anna, having read the letter, which she folded and returned back to the Starostine; “ the eyes of idle ladies, which would do better to watch the needle and the frame, often magnify very unimportant things ; and the worshipful lady Falczewska has discovered in the contents of this letter something in which I am particularly concerned, but which I am unable to find out.” The provoked confidant was on the point of giving a violent answer, when the Queen, who had lost all patience with Anna’s undisturbed indifference, prevented her, exclaiming, “ It is indeed very extraordinary that the impressions produced by the charms of such an accomplished lady as your daughter are in one case scarcely visible and in the other so easily obliterated, and if we did not ascribe the fault of it to the general inconstancy of the men in our times, we should almost be inclined to suppose yon Barbara a jewel of our sex, and to lament that fate seems hostile to your daughter in every instance.” “ Every instance !”

answered Anna slowly ; “ in one case Your Majesty was quite of a different opinion only a few moments ago; and as to the other, it cannot cause any regret either in me or in my daughter, who has inherited a sufficient portion of her ancestors’ pride to resign one who, being much beneath her by birth, is now said to have lost also every claim to her esteem. But as it concerns Barbara Radziwill, I think she is right to be provided in time for a case which Your Majesty has predicted with so much certitude ; and though the supposed inconstancy of the young man is but a bad guarantee of his future fidelity, I think that the consort of the royal Sigismund will lose very little or rather nothing by the change.” The bitterness with which the Princess uttered these last words, and her hurry to leave the castle, convinced the Queen sufficiently that lady Hornostay’s letter was not without effect ; she looked smilingly through the window at Anna’s litter, and said to herself, “ Thou seekest in vain to cover thy haughty revengeful heart with a treble armour; the burning dagger of unsatisfied ambition will pierce it, and penetrate to its inmost core, and thou shalt fall a victim to the hatred which I have sworn to thee many years ago. Thou art now hastening to pierce the heart of thy daughter by this welcome

news ! Go, go, and play thy part ; Bona of Milan will also know how to act on her side."

Helena was shedding tears after a long conversation with her mother, for though the pure mind of the loving maiden had constantly disdained to listen to the suspicions which she endeavoured to raise, yet the cold sarcasm of Anna did not entirely fail to produce an impression, and her tears were not yet dried when the King entered her apartment in company with the Palatine of Lublin. " I come to take leave of you, fair cousin," said Sigismund Augustus with a cheerful countenance ; the horses are ready for my journey, but I was unwilling to depart without telling you that I go where, if it please God, your fate and mine will be favourably decided. I hope that the illustrious exile will soon return from Vilna and enter her husband's abode in a manner becoming her station ; she will bring with her another exile, and not only the Jagellonian family, but also the new stem of the ancient house of the Piasts will flourish in joy and happiness for many many years. But what do I see ! you turn from me, and tears are glistening in your eyes !" The sudden appearance of the King and his friendly speech had increased Helena's emotion ; she was troubled by the idea that the magnanimous prince who stood before

her would be betrayed by one whose happiness he was preparing with such care, and to whom he had recently pardoned a grave fault; and that she for whose sake he was going to oppose the assembled states of the realm, and to put at stake the crown of his forefathers, could play him false;—that the recklessness of youth and the obliterating power of absence on one side, and levity and coquetry on the other, could loose the bands formed by love and virtue, and forge others, to which the secresy of guilt would perhaps lend the greatest charm. The late events had shaken her implicit faith in Hippolyte's constancy; and the extraordinary circumstances which had attended the union of the King with Barbara, and which her enemies painted in the most odious colours, presented themselves to her mind, and concurred with the suggestions of her mother to fill it with anxiety. “ You are still silent, fair cousin! ” exclaimed the King, whilst Helena struggled in vain to master her emotion; “ do you mistrust us?—do you suppose us wanting in power and will to keep the promise we have given you? Tell us,” said he in a soft tone of voice, withdrawing his hand, which Helena, overpowered by feelings of pain and gratitude, was going to press to her lips, “ tell us the cause of your grief; is it your mother who has

given you cause for affliction? or perhaps you have received some bad news from Vilna, and your Boratynski has again been playing some of his tricks? *Cospetto!* We have forgiven him his trespass against our Majesty; but if he continues to afflict our beloved cousin, of whom he is unworthy, he shall feel our wrath, if he had even ten brothers Marshals of the Diet!" "Oh do not say so, most gracious lord!" exclaimed Helena with the greatest anxiety and in an imploring tone of voice; "he will not—he cannot become unworthy of Your Majesty's favour. Do not condemn him without a hearing; the world is full of treachery, and we are surrounded by mysteries and riddles." "It seems indeed to be so," answered Sigismund with increased attention, "since even our dove-like cousin speaks in riddles to her king and best friend. You would not accuse the happy felon, but it were better for him that we should learn his guilt from your mouth, than from another who would be less disposed to treat him with forbearance. Yes, we can pardon him much for your sake,—all but infidelity towards yourself; for we respect you more than any lady we have ever known, excepting one, and this you must pardon me." "Pay no attention to the follies of a girl," said Helena in the greatest trouble; "forget, O my King, forget what I have

said ; may I never be the cause of troubling the peace of your exalted mind ! Go, establish your happiness and the happiness of your kingdom, which cannot appreciate you as I do. Think not of me ; and I trust that the justice of Heaven will not allow so noble a generosity and so devoted a constancy to be put to shame .” “ Then you will not trust to us ! ” said the King with some vexation ; “ well, we must now part with you, but be assured that you have a friend to whom your happiness is an object of constant care .”

When they descended the staircase the King said to Firley, “ We were not mistaken ; it is her unmanageable lover who is the cause of her tears. We are almost inclined to think that he deserves not such a destiny as that which awaits him.” “ If it is so,” answered Firley smiling, “ I can assure Your Majesty that the young lady’s sorrow is groundless. It is true that the young Boratynski is a little imprudent and unacquainted with the world, but he is entirely devoted to his lady and a true *pastor fido*. No lady in the world will be able to withdraw his thoughts from his fair object,—even, with Your Majesty’s permission, the fairest of the fair,—the consort of my royal master.” “ What gives you such an idea ? ” answered Sigismund with some excitement. “ May it please

Your Majesty to remember the words of Helena Odrowonz: ‘The world is full of treachery, and we live surrounded by mysteries.’” The King replied, after a pause of meditation, “We thank you, my lord of Lublin; we are well aware that you are informed about many things unknown to those who might be considered more entitled than you to possess such knowledge; we will not inquire in what manner you have acquired such information, but we request you always to make as good a use of it as you have now done. Once more we thank you for it, and we will retain your words in our heart; and as there is some one who perhaps wants such kind of consolation even more than ourself, you would do well to have a little conversation with our fair cousin while we pay our parting visit to the Queen-mother.”

Bona tried in vain to instill into her son’s heart the venom of lady Hornostay; he answered every allusion to the letter from Vilna by jests, and hastened to take leave of her. When the Princess of Mazovia was joined by her daughter, Helena’s tears were dried, her countenance was cheerful, and she received the sarcasms of her mother silently and with patience, but without any emotion.

CHAPTER XII.

“ Who o'er the herd would wish to reign ?
Fantastic, fickle, fierce and vain !
Vain as the leaf upon the stream,
And fickle as a changeful dream ;
Fantastic as a woman's mood,
And fierce as frenzy's fevered blood.
Thou many-headed monster thing,
O who would wish to be thy king !”

SIR W. SCOTT.

THE Marshal of the Diet was chosen, and the name of Peter Boratynski was proclaimed by thousands and thousands of voices. Whilst many houses were filled with senators, deputies, and other persons of distinction, who were sitting at table engaged in political conversation, a large meadow close to the town was chosen for an entertainment to the lower nobility, who, in spite of the cold season, seemed fully to enjoy the hospitality of the Marshal.

In every part of the world where things are decided by the multitude, they expect from the leader of their choice a return of the golden age : they extol one day with immoderate praise the man who, soon after, for being unable to execute what is impossible, becomes an object of their most violent abuse ;

whilst the praises shortly before heaped on him are transferred to his successor, who in his turn soon becomes the object of abuse. It was, then, natural at this moment that the shout of “Long life to Boratynski!” resounded from every part of that motley assembly. The numerous servants of the Marshal being engaged with the higher guests, the revellers of the meadow were attended partly by Jews from the town and the environs, and partly by country lads and lasses, all hired purposely for that day ; and they had enough to do to satisfy the ardent patriotism and burning zeal for the new Marshal amongst the gentlemen Shlachtitz (¹), who expressed these sentiments in frequent libations. A long table was spread separately for every palatinate, where the places were occupied according to the different religions professed by the guests. Three tables, a little remote from the others, were prepared for the Lithuanians. These guests were almost exclusively noble retainers of some magnates, who had arrived with their masters ; whilst a great many nobles, inhabitants of the less distant provinces, came to Piotrkow only to gratify their curiosity, and to indulge their self-love in considering themselves as an effective part of the legislative power, though in fact they had no business whatever to

be there. At the beginning of the banquet the difference of opinions on religious and political matters had diffused among the company the silence of mistrust and mutual aversion ; but when beer, mead, and brandy had unloosed their tongues, the opposite opinions began to be manifested with great noise and confusion. All the rights of the King and the privileges of the nobility were discussed in the most decisive manner ; and though there was a great diversity of opinion among the guests about the best manner of arranging these affairs, they nearly all agreed that it was necessary, if possible, to put still more restraint upon the monarch, and to give a greater extension to the privileges of the nobility. The Lithuanians, who were at that time still hereditary subjects of the Jagellonian house, heard with great vexation the Poles boasting of advantages which they did not equally possess. Though they listened only in sullen silence to the vaunts of their neighbours, they were ready to proclaim their opinion at the first opportunity, and to maintain it, as well as the rights of their countrywoman Barbara, with their karabella. They constituted the ultra-royalist or Cavalier party of that assembly. The Protestants and Unitarians, attached to the royal family for its toleration in

religious matters, but not less unwilling to relinquish the smallest of the privileges belonging to their order, were the constitutional liberals, or Whigs of that time. The steady adherents of the Romish Church, less attached to the King, might be compared, if not in the origin of their opinion, yet in the manner in which they manifested it, to the republicans or radicals of our days. The rest of the assembly, attached by personal service or some other considerations to the powerful magnates, who sought only to promote their own advantage in the general confusion of the realm, or even dared secretly to covet the crown, were divided into parties, each of them bearing the name of its leader.

Whoever has had the opportunity of witnessing in our times the too animated scenes which often occur in less numerous assemblies, composed of persons who are or ought to be superior to the rest of their fellow-citizens in wisdom and manners, can easily conceive the noise and confusion which reigned in a crowd of more than a thousand persons, the greater part of whom were only accustomed to the sword during war, and to the plough during peace, but who nevertheless considered themselves as the natural partakers of the sovereign power, which, according to the constitu-

tion of the country, they really were. Such was the character of Boratynski's violent and intoxicated guests, to whom we will now introduce our reader.

The scene to which we have alluded presented a strange but not uninteresting sight. It was a plain of moderate size, bordered on one side by a wood, on two others by fields, and on the fourth by the houses of a suburb. A vast number of tables hastily framed of planks, and surrounded by wooden benches of the same workmanship, were covered with coarse linen cloths, and amply laden with pitchers, bowls, and enormous platters, containing the favourite national dishes. Buckwheat groats dressed with lard exhaled clouds of vapour ; the favourite *bigos*, or sour krout, stewed with beef and pork cut into small pieces ; tripe prepared with saffron ; frying-pans full of steaming sausages ; large pike with saffron sauce, the favourite condiment of that age ; hams ; plum pies,—covered the tables ; and large fires were blazing near them, for the comfort of the guests and to keep the dishes warm. The dreary winter scene was enlivened by long rows of many-coloured bonnets ; and many an uncovered shaven head was seen around the fires. Numerous attendants were busily running in every direction to ful-

fill the orders of the guests, which resounded from all sides. Amongst them the Israelites were conspicuous for the eagerness with which they served the company, watching attentively with shy looks all their movements. It was ludicrous to hear their half-suppressed shrieks when some vessel lent by them was broken, though it was to be trebly paid for ; to see how they tore their *paysakis* (²) in timid rage when the guests bestowed their clumsy caresses on the busy *shiskel*; and to hear their groans of anger when a *bachor* eagerly seized any eatables that were *treff*, instead of contenting himself with snatching the *coshér* plums furnished by his father.

A little removed from the rest of the company, under a large leafless beech tree, and near a blazing fire, stood a table apparently served with more attention than the rest. It was occupied by many nobles of Little Poland and Russia, who were neighbours and clients of the lord of Samborz; their manifestations of joy were louder than those of the others, for they considered themselves entitled to a part of the distinction which was bestowed on their countryman by the assembled nobility. Stephen Bielawski, who officiated as the seneschal of the feast, did the honours of this table. “ Long life to the high-

born Peter Boratynski, the honoured Marshal of the Equestrian Order !” resounded at least for the twentieth time, and the contents of large pitchers of wine disappeared as often in the husky throats of the revellers. “*Vestræ dominationes*,” began Stephen with great solemnity, “the nobility of Little Poland are very right to rejoice themselves during the present day, when our illustrious fellow-citizen has gained for us new *gloriam et æstimationem*.” “Very true, sir Bielawski: *Vivat* Little Poland, the cradle of the republic!” “*Vivat* the Starost of Samborz!” exclaimed the Russians; “he is *natus* in Little Poland, but he is *possessionatus* in Russia(³).” “*Bene, benissime!*” exclaimed Stephen, bowing to the company; “I thank Your Graces *in nomine patroni*.” “Lord Peter is a nobleman of the true old Polish cast,” cried one of the guests; and looking on the Lithuanians, who were not far from them, he continued, “and he will understand how to defend the republic and our rights against the princes that are arrived from beyond the Bug(⁴).” “And how to maintain the old Roman Catholic faith against the heretics and the schismatics,” added another. The Lithuanians observed them with attention, and began to whisper among themselves; when Bielawski

noticing it, said in a soothing voice, “Peace, peace ! my lords and brothers. *Concordia res parvæ crescunt, discordia magnæ dilabuntur.* Consider only that these worthy Lithuanian nobles are the guests of the lord Marshal and our brothers. Have we not the same master, our King and their Grand Duke, who is the first amongst his equals, *primus inter pares*, and——bless me ! I have quite forgotten what I was going to say.” He might have spared himself the trouble of tormenting his memory, for a roaring exclamation of the assembly interrupted his speech. “*Primus inter pares!* to be sure, the King is nothing more than the first among his equals ; he is but one, and we are many.” “Indeed,” said a noble of the Lithuanian table, “it was not much worth the trouble of King Jagellon’s leaving his country to gain the advantage of being their equal, having been the monarch of a powerful duchy and of devoted subjects.” “With your permission, sir Lithuanian,” replied a Polish noble, grasping the hilt of his sword, “if this country agrees not with you or with your master, you may all return whence you came.” The Lithuanian sprang from his seat, and drawing himself up proudly, twisted his mustachios, saying, “If you dare speak in so disrespectful a manner of

the most gracious lord, our Grand Duke and your King, I will cut *vestram dominationem per fas et nefas*, so that you shall have something to tell about it even to your great-grandchildren." This scene would probably have ended in blood-shed if Bielawski had not quickly extinguished the fire of discord. "*Vestræ dominationes!*" exclaimed he as loud as he could, "will you then disturb by quarrels a feast of brotherly concord? My lords and brothers of the Crown, we are many, and the Lithuanians are but few; they trusted to the old Polish hospitality, and would it not be a shame for us to pick a quarrel with them when we are fifty against one? My lords of the grand duchy, I assure you, in the name of my illustrious patron, that he entertains the most particular reverence towards your illustrious nation; and I beseech you to empty with us *collegialiter* this bowl to his welfare. But what do I see? your pitchers are not filled! Rascal of a Jew! how darest thou neglect in such a manner the worshipful gentlemen of Lithuania, and bring shame and dishonour on the Marshal, as if there was any want of mead and brandy for such honoured guests? Be quick! bring it directly, and, moreover, a cask of Hungary wine. Be quick! or I will give thee a good lesson for thy

negligence.” While the Jew fulfilled with the greatest haste Bielawski’s orders, he asked, “Where is the man whose duty it is to attend to this table? I will teach him to know how lord Boratynski is accustomed to receive his guests.” The man who was called came forward, and said, “It is not my fault that the gentlemen of Little Poland have laid hold on everything that was destined for this table.” “Who are you?” asked Bielawski, fixing on him an inquisitive look; “I have never seen you amongst the servants of the Marshal.” “I was received into the service of His Grace when he was on his way hither,” answered Waclaw Siewrak, for it was he whom we find here in this new office. “I do not know you,” said Stephen after a pause of reflection; “yet it seems to me that I have seen your countenance, and, to tell you the truth, I do not very much like it. I warn you, that if you do not perform your duty better, your broad shoulders shall answer for it. Order was soon restored, and the Lithuanians drowned their anger in the juice of the grape, a beverage with which at that time they were but little acquainted. Many inhabitants of other palatinates, attracted by the noise, came nearer to the table where Bielawski

was presiding. Having met there many of their friends and acquaintances, they saluted them, and engaged in a general conversation, which soon reverted to the favourite topic of politics. "We hope," said a noble of Royal Prussia, "that a Diet conducted under the staff of so worthy a lord as our present Marshal will produce at last some good effect, and will put an end to all the differences which have till now opposed brothers to brothers; for it is said, that though lord Boratynski is firm in his own religious persuasion, he is not less an enemy to persecution, and a true supporter of the privileges of nobility." "Hem!" retorted one of the guests sitting at the table, "you may easily be deceived in your too sanguine expectations; and I hope that, as a zealous Roman Catholic, he will firmly maintain the statutes of Lewis of Hungary, and that we shall have a proof of it to-morrow, when he will attack the new doctrines to their very foundation and precipitate from the throne yon Barbara, who, belonging to a heretical race, can never sincerely mean well to the Church." At this moment Waclaw Siewrak whispered something to the Lithuanian whom we have already mentioned, and who being now entirely reconciled by some cups of Hungary wine,

sat quietly at the table enjoying his meal. He directly put aside his knife, turned his back towards the Poles, and remained in this position, listening attentively to all that was going on. "I cannot rightly understand your words," said the Prussian; "I am rather inclined to think that the tenets of the Romish Church are precisely the cause that must prevent the Marshal and the deputies of the equestrian order from acting against the consort of His Majesty. It would be less strange if we Lutherans had maintained such an opinion; but it is quite the reverse with you, who consider marriage a sacrament, and consequently indissoluble." "Yes, you are right in some measure," replied the other; "but the welfare of the republic and our privileges are more important than the sacrament. This union was contracted against the fourteenth article of the *pacta conventa*, which says, 'We will never contract a conjugal alliance without the knowledge and consent of the lords of the senate and of the equestrian order.' This assent has never been obtained, consequently the marriage is not valid, and the Pope, in virtue of his apostolical power, may annul it." "It is quite indifferent to us," said the Prussian; but a noble of the palatinate of Cracow struck his hand violently on

the table, crying, “ Nonsense ! a sacrament is a sacrament, and all these subtleties are fit for nothing but to trouble the kingdom. The matter is plain : Jagellon has married the Lithuanian ; she cannot be our Queen, and he cannot leave her ; *ergo* he is no more our King ; and I, Hieronymus Zalecki, I proclaim the throne vacant ! ”

“ You are a little too quick,” replied many voices ; “ the Jagellonian family is not to be treated in such a manner ; the republic has increased under their reign in power and prosperity, and where shall we find another king to replace the present sovereign ? ” “ Where ? ” exclaimed the tipsy nobleman, without paying any attention to Bielawski’s visible anger ; “ are you blind, or have you lost your senses ? Who does not know the Grand General, John Amor, count of Tarnow, castellan of Cracow, the victor in so many battles, the father of the fatherland ? *Vivat* John Tarnowski ! I, Hieronymus Zalecki, I proclaim him king of Poland ! ” A loud murmur of discontent arose on one side, and a loud laughter on the other overwhelmed the voice of the un-called-for proclaimer, who was joined by a few others ; but the Lithuanian, who till now had remained silent, sprang up suddenly, and approaching the Poles with eyes sparkling from

anger, exclaimed in a powerful voice, “ I tell you that if the Grand General,—which I cannot believe,—says Amen to such rebellious words, the Castellan of Cracow is the devil’s first senator; the Grand General, the leader of the infernal host; the victor in many battles, nothing but a slave sold to sin and hell; and the father of the fatherland, a traitor to his country, like all those who would rob Sigismund Augustus Jagellon of his inherited crown !” These last words were lost in a tremendous noise. “ Inherited crown !” exclaimed hundreds of voices ; “ you hear what a Lithuanian says ! To be sure, it is so with you, but he is only our elected monarch ; *primus inter pares ! primus inter pares !* and it behoves us who have raised him to depose him also at our pleasure.”

Bielawski rose in the greatest anxiety from his seat at the table, cast a furious look on the forward Zalecki, grumbling between his teeth, “ *Vade ad diabolum, furcifer !* ” Whilst the guests were crowding from all parts of the plain to this scene of bustle, Waclaw Siewrak stood aside enjoying the quarrel and rubbing his hands with delight. An ugly old woman, dressed in a fantastic garb, approached him, and it seemed that he gave her a report of all that was going on, which, however,

was not received with the same satisfaction, but rather with an expression of care and anxiety. “*Seria in crastinum!*” cried Stephen, with all the power of his lungs; “tomorrow all these matters will be arranged by our lords and brothers, whom we have chosen for that purpose: such discussions belong to the assembly of the Diet, and not to a friendly entertainment. In the name of the lord Marshal, I beseech you to hold your peace! May all the devils take you!” cried he, when his first words produced no effect. “Holy Virgin of Czenstochowa⁽⁵⁾, keep us in your protection! Are you mad, or possessed by Satan? A cup more, if you please, worthy citizens of the illustrious grand duchy: ‘tis capital Hungary wine, from the cellars of the Starost of Samborz. *Vivat concord! Vivat the Marshal!*” “To the devil with Poland and its Marshal!” exclaimed the thundering voice of the Lithuanian, around whom his countrymen gathered in a menacing attitude; and he threw his bowl on the ground, and dashed it to pieces: “accursed be he who drinks another drop with this crowd of traitors, who trample on the rights of hospitality, disown their own King, and dare to attack the Queen and Grand Duchess Barbara!” In a moment all became tumult and confusion; the tables

were overturned, the pitchers, cups, and plates broken ; swords flew from their scabbards ; burning brands were snatched from the fires, and thousands of voices filled the air with exclamations of “ *Vivat* the King ! *Vivat* the republic ! Barbara for ever ! *Vivat* John Tarnowski ! Down-with despotism ! The *pacta conventa* for ever ! The house of Jagellon for ever ! Down with schismatics and Arians ! *Vivat* religious freedom ! ” &c. &c. At this moment the doors of a house situated near the scene of discord opened, and Boratynski appeared, in company with many deputies and a few senators, among whom were Raphael Leszczynski castellan of Brzesc, Gorka palatine of Posnania, and Andreas Zebrzydowski bishop of Cujavia. A deafening “ *Vivat !* ” greeted the arrival of the Starost of Samborz, who addressed the crowd in a loud voice, and said, “ In what a state do I see my fellow-citizens and brothers ! Is it possible that the poor entertainment, to which I had invited you with the best intentions, has produced strife and discord, and that you whose duty it is to watch the welfare of your country, yourselves disturb it by such foolish quarrels ? Let me for the first time exert a right, ” continued he, raising his marshal’s staff, “ a right which you have yourselves granted to me. Separate

yourselves!" cried he still louder; "and let every palatinate be assembled round the deputies and dignitaries of their province." His words acted like the *Quos ego* of Neptune on the stormy sea of excited passions; the crowd separated in silence, and surrounded the leaders of their respective parties. Those that flocked to Raphael Leszczynski were far the most numerous. All the Dissenters in general, and the Unitarians in particular, considered him as their chief and protector, and the little band of Lithuanians joined them also. However, the flames of discord were not entirely extinguished, and the opponents still menaced each other by words and jests. A hollow murmur, like that of distant thunder, was heard among the crowd; it increased rapidly, and burst forth again in the former exclamations. When Boratynski heard it, he entered into the midst of the hostile crowds, and spoke with great energy in the following manner: "What is the meaning of such names and expressions in your mouths, gentlemen? They are respected and loved by all the republic, but they may easily become the signals of civil discord. Which of you will deny that the Jagellonian dynasty has gloriously ruled this kingdom for nearly two centuries? Which of you can be such a degenerate son of his country

as to refuse to acknowledge Sigismund Augustus to be the anointed of the Lord, and his elect legitimate monarch? What have you now to do with the name of the Grand General, the father of the fatherland, and the defender and protector of every right? He would rather resign a name inherited from his glorious ancestors, than permit it to become the watchword of a guilty revolt. What is the danger that threatens your rights and privileges? And even were they endangered, are they to be defended by such senseless noise, instead of the calm deliberations of the representatives you have chosen? Who is there that desires to attack the venerable edifice of the Church, or the religious freedom of other persuasions, which the King has sworn to maintain, and the states have guaranteed? When I received this staff from the hands of your deputies, I expected to become the leader of a Christian nobility that sincerely wished the welfare of their country, and I hoped to deserve their confidence; but if I am to degrade myself into a tool of contradictory opinions, I would rather return this badge, as unworthy to be retained by a man of honour." At these last words he shook his staff as if he meant to throw it amidst the crowd. Loud applause resounded from all parts; his name was extolled by every

mouth, and the conciliatory words “ Peace and concord ! ” proved that his speech had obtained the desired effect. He looked around on the senators and deputies, who understood his intentions, and left the plain, each followed by his adherents. Boratynski approached the Lithuanians, who had remained all this time in silence and still hesitated to leave the place, and said to them, “ Your Graces will certainly not accuse me of what has happened at my table. I beg you to consider yourselves, during the whole of your stay at Piotrkow, as my particular guests ; and I hope that I shall be able to give you sufficient proof that the old Polish hospitality and fidelity to the sovereign are not yet entirely banished from the lands of the Crown.” The Lithuanian who had defended with so much spirit the rights of his monarch and of his consort, advanced a little, and said, “ We find you to be such as we had supposed, for your high reputation is spread not only over all Poland, but also over all Lithuania. Yet will you allow me to address to you a question ? ” “ It becomes every nobleman subject of King Sigismund to ask from his fellow-subjects whatever question he likes,” replied Boratynski. “ What is your opinion about the Grand General of the Crown ? Is it the secret wish of his heart which has been ut-

tered by the mouth of an intoxicated man?" Boratynski answered with a friendly expression, "Here is my hand, worthy nobleman, and I pledge it that such as you have found myself you will also find the Grand General." "All is right!" said the Lithuanian, shaking the Marshal's hand; "all is right, and we are entirely satisfied." He then joined his countrymen, and their little band left the place.

"Tell me, Valenty," said the old Bielawski to his son, who had arrived with the Starost of Samborz, "who is this fellow to whom the care of the Lithuanians was entrusted, and who, I am sure, has greatly contributed to the scene which has so unfortunately taken place at my table?" "I think I know him also," answered Valenty, "and I assure you that he will soon receive his reward. I only wish your master would commission me to deal with him after his merits."

CHAPTER XIII.

“ He may not, as unvalued persons do,
Carve for himself ; for on his choice depends
The safety and the health of the whole state ;
And therefore must his choice be circumscrib'd
Unto the voice and yielding of that body,
Whereof he is the head.”—SHAKSPEARE.

SIGISMUND AUGUSTUS ascended the throne, on either side of which stood the marshals Kmita and Firley, holding long silver staves in their hands. Below, to the right, upon seats covered with scarlet cloth, were seated the bishops, dressed in the garments of their spiritual dignity, and having at their head the primate of the realm, Vincent Dzierzgowski. To the left of the throne were the seats of the temporal senators ; and the first of them was occupied by the Castellan of Cracow, who held in his hand a staff of cedar-wood set with precious stones, the badge of the Grand General's dignity, with which he was invested. The number of the temporal senators, who were placed in a wide semicircle, was so great that they occupied two rows, of which the second, composed of the minor castellans ('), sat on

benches ; while opposite to them were the cross-bearers of the bishops, who filled up the space left unoccupied by the smaller number of the spiritual lords. Near the steps of the throne, on the right side, was a table, covered with a costly cloth, on which were placed golden implements for writing, with the great seal of the kingdom, and near it sat the Chancellor of the Crown ; to the left, a similar table with the lesser seal, and at it the Vice-Chancellor and the Grand Secretary of the Crown. The Grand Ensignbearer of the Crown, holding the banner of Poland with the white eagle ; and the same officer of the Grand Duchy being absent, his deputy, bearing the banner with the Lithuanian horseman, stood next to the Marshals. They were followed by the Ensignbearers of Russia, Prussia, and the other provinces, and by the Swordbearer of the Crown with the *szczerbiec* (²), or the sword of the heroic Boleslaw. The Grand Chamberlains, one with a gold and the other with a silver key ; the Grand Carver, with a large, richly set carving-knife ; and the other dignitaries of the Crown, and some of the Grand Duchy, formed in two rows, and all glittering with gold and jewels. The King wore on his head what was commonly called the House crown, set with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires ; he had a long sceptre

in his hand ; and was vested in a mantle, with a long train of blue velvet, and sprinkled with white eagles embroidered in silver.

The deputation of the chamber of the Nuncii, or the equestrian order, was announced ; the Court Marshal, the Grand Chamberlain, and six younger senators went to receive them at the entrance of the hall, and ushered in Peter Boratynski at the head of sixty nuncii. The Chancellor of the Crown took a parchment scroll from the table, and occupied the lowest step of the throne : the King advanced a step forward. The Chancellor read the address from the throne ; and the usual formalities at the opening of the session being over, the debates were commenced. The Primate, without rising from his seat, opened the discussion in the following words : “The appearance of our lords and brothers of the equestrian order is the more welcome, as it enables us to agitate things which concern the welfare of the republic, whose representatives now surround the throne,—the throne, illustrious lords and brothers, to which during the lifetime of the late King (over whose soul may the beams of eternal light for ever shine !), through our own free choice, we elected his son, under conditions which were sworn to by himself, and guaranteed by his

father, he being then but ten years of age. The time has arrived when this pledge should be redeemed; and I, as a prince of the senate and the primate of this realm, require you, senators and knights, to unite with me in demanding the fulfilment of those clauses before the deliberations proceed any further, or the most serene Sigismund Augustus exercises a right which the republic cannot acknowledge as long as he on his side tarries in performing his obligations." A loud murmur of approbation rang through the hall.

The Vice-Chancellor was on the point of speaking, when the King motioned to him to be silent, and said, with some bitterness, "To the matter, my lord Archbishop, to the matter! Wherein do you accuse us of having neglected the duties imposed upon us by the possession of the throne, which belongs to us according to the laws of God and man?" The Prelate answered in a cold, monotonous voice, turning rather to the assembly than to the throne, "When, by the grace of God and by the free choice of the states of this realm, Sigismund Augustus Jagellon, grand duke of Lithuania, was elected to the crown of Poland, in the year of our Lord 1530, and in the tenth year of his age, he solemnly promised, firstly, to reconquer the lost provinces; secondly, to maintain

the holy Apostolic Church in its ancient dignity ; thirdly, to quell the religious disputes which were introduced through the errors of the Wittenberg school ; fourthly, to perform the duties of sovereign without intermission ; fifthly and lastly, never to proceed without the assent of the senate and of the equestrian order in such important matters as the declaration of war, the conclusion of peace, and particularly the forming of a matrimonial alliance. It is therefore for you, reverend and high-born lords, to take into consideration if these main points of the *pacta conventa* have been fulfilled, which were the indispensable conditions upon which Sigismund Augustus occupies the seat whereon we now behold him." Many senators sprang from their seats, prepared to speak, their animated gestures and dark looks indicating the tenor of their hostile thoughts. The King looked on the Grand Marshal as if to call upon him to speak ; but as Kmita continued standing motionless and half-turned away, with contracted brow and glowing eyes sternly fixed on the ground, the King gave a sign to Firley. The Grand Marshal directly left his place at the side of the throne, and occupied the seat which belonged to him as Palatine of Cracow ; but the Court Marshal Firley struck with his silver staff upon the

ground, and said in a slow but energetic tone of voice, and with a smile which seemed to mock at the crowd around him, “ My lords, the King desires you to proceed according to order, and to deliberate on each article separately, that he may reply to them in turn.” The senators, who had risen from their seats, looked at each other, and all reseated themselves one after another, except Andreas Gorka, castellan of Posnania, who remained standing. “ Have you put these points into the protocol, my lord Grand Secretary of the Crown ?” asked the Chancellor. “ Certainly, my lord,” answered he, reaching a paper to the Chancellor, who began to read : “ ‘ In the first place, His Grace the right reverend prince Primate has reminded our royal lord of his engagement to reconquer the lost provinces.’ ”—“ And has it been the case ?” said Gorka, eagerly interrupting him : “ I ask you, my lords and brothers, whether a single village torn from us by the Muscovites and Tatars has been restored since the death of the last King ? And may it please His royal Majesty to explain to us the reasons of such delay ; for we watch not alone for the welfare but also for the glory of the republic, which our fathers and we have gained by our blood.” Many voices joined in applauding this speech. The King, whose dis-

pleasure was visible, said only these words : “ It is your duty, my lord Vice-Chancellor, to answer this.” He then leaned his head on his arm, and wrapped in the folds of his mantle assumed an air of perfect indifference. The Vice-Chancellor Szydlowiecki began : “ It appears to His Majesty, and doubtless to many of the lords of the senate and of the equestrian order, that this demand is untimely and overhasty, after a reign of only a few months. His Majesty thinks, moreover, that the duty of a monarch is to set at rest the interior discords which agitate the country before he can prudently attack his foreign enemies, to whom these discords, as well as the exhausted state of the treasury, would give great advantages.”—“ And what is the cause of these discords and of this penury ?” exclaimed Gorka ; “ is it not the King’s duty to obviate both these grievances ?” Many voices accorded with this exclamation ; but when the noise was a little abated, the Vice-Chancellor said with great composure, “ That question relates to another article.” At this moment Tarnowski arose from his seat, and spoke in the following manner : “ Permit, noble lords and brothers, the Grand General of the Crown to deliver his opinion on a subject which peculiarly appertains to his office. The watchword of war

has often resounded in this assembly, and not without pleasure does the friend of his fatherland listen to the cry which assures him that the ancient heroism has not yet deserted the nobles of the country. But he must feel a profound affliction and disgust when those very men who showed themselves so warlike in the council, are the first in the camp to mar by their contentions and want of discipline the effect of all the noble sacrifices made by the King and by the republic, and even faithlessly to desert those banners which they themselves had raised. Shall I remind you of the affairs of Lwow (³), and of the mischief produced during the war with Moscow by pride and party spirit? Shall I recall to you how many times envy and illwill have circumscribed the power of the General, when a favourable result can only be obtained by obedience and strict discipline? However, the high dignitaries of the crown are only confidential servants of the republic, and it becomes not them to decide upon such matters: they can be only decided by the King, in conjunction with the orders of the state. I urge, therefore, that we should hear the opinion of the honoured equestrian order, who defend the country and uphold its glory by their arms and by their contributions.” Peter Boratynski was

then called upon to speak ; and he began, after a short deliberation with his colleagues, in the following words : “ The equestrian order, in whose name I now speak, gratefully receive the requisition of the illustrious senate, and its acknowledgement of their being the chief support of the republic, particularly in time of war : but the blood of our fellow-citizens is too precious to be spilt in a doubtful strife ; the sacrifices which have lately been required have exhausted the means of the landowners ; and the present circumstances generally are unfavourable to the reconquering of the lost provinces. Therefore I beseech the King (in the name of the Nuncii), first to cause order to be restored in the kingdom, before we deliberate how we may with honour attack our foreign enemies.”—“ Certainly,” exclaimed the Primate, “ certainly ; it is true that our most serene lord has left unfulfilled to this very day the first of all his obligations, and the states are desirous to know what His Majesty says on this subject.” The old Chancellor then proceeded to read in a measured official tone of voice : “ ‘ In the second and the third place, the states of the republic have observed that His Majesty has delayed to support the ancient established Church, and to quell the religious discords remaining from

the schism of the Eastern Church, and recently introduced by the new doctrines of Luther and Calvin; which he had engaged to do by his coronation oath.' " "And truly," said the hoarse voice of the dark Kmita, "such imputation is not groundless. Heresy—" (a loud murmur interrupted him,) "heresy, which during the reign of the late King had crept into this kingdom, begins now boldly to raise its head, and that which was tolerated with a too great indulgence has now turned with injury on the ancient creed. Even in this assembly of the senate there is many a one who has strayed from the right path," (here the murmurs became still louder,) "and whose dangerous example spreads widely the poison of infection. Who has not remarked that lord Raphael Leszczynski, the castellan of Cujavian Brzesc, has refused this morning to pay a reverence due to the sacred ceremonies of our church, and to uncover his head before the holy sacrament(*)? Who can doubt that such an example will be followed, or that it would ever be given were it not supported by the indulgence of the throne, by the growing power of the heretics, and, alas! by the lukewarmness of the clergy, among whom are certain bishops, whom you all know without my naming them? But how can it be otherwise, when even the head of the republic

befriends the apostate, and gives to heresy a place near the throne ? from which, however, it will soon be expelled by the old faith and the voice of the country!" "The King thinks," interrupted Firley tauntingly, "that the religious zeal of the Grand Marshal leads him away from the subject under discussion, and that the one he has been now enlarging on belongs to the latter part of the protocol." "I have not studied in your schools, my lord Court Marshal," replied Kmita angrily ; "but although unacquainted with your rhetoric, I know well what becomes a senator ; nor do I understand how to make subtle classification in such things, where one grievance is connected with another, and each mischief engenders a new one." "Before God and before the King we are all alike," exclaimed Raphael Leszczynski ; "and the Acatholics⁽³⁾, far from submitting to any encroachment upon their rights, will press for the fulfilment of their just demands." "Such matters cannot be decided by an assembly composed of men, though eminent in every respect, yet without the necessary knowledge of divinity," said the Bishop of Cujavia ; "they should be left to the consideration of learned doctors belonging to the contending parties, a meeting of whom I consider the best means of removing the errors which some

have fallen into, and of leading them back to the truth by kindness and patience, which will eradicate the evil with all its consequences.” The Primate now interrupted, his face reddening with anger : “ The reverend brother resembles his master, Erasmus of Rotterdam, who was neither cold nor hot ; but the fate reserved to such is predicted in the Scriptures. Like his master, he wishes to please both parties by steering a middle course. He may be sure of becoming an object of hatred and suspicion to both ; and may it be allowed the first dignitary of the church to remind him, that even by the proposition of listening to the damnable doctrines of the heretics he betrays the duties of his episcopal office.” “ This is not a synod,” answered Zebrzydowski with dignity ; “ it is the hall of the Diet where I am now speaking. It is not here an archbishop who addresses a bishop ; but a senator, who has no right whatever to silence the voice of his fellow-senators. But as you speak of the duties of a dignitary of the church, allow me to say, that whoever endeavours to defend the cause of God by charity, conformably to his command, performs the office of a minister of peace better than he who excites to a bloody strife the sons of the same father, the children of the same country.” “ I perfectly agree

with you," said the Grand General, "that nothing but a strict investigation into the merits of both sides of the question can produce any permanently good effect." "And is the Diet not competent to do so?" exclaimed Andreas Gorka: "wherefore allow priests and doctors to meddle in it? Why should we trouble ourselves about points and opinions? Let every one believe what he pleases, do what he ought, and keep what belongs to him. Wherefore are we senators, why have we a king, if we want scholars to restore peace to the kingdom, and if he will resign his office to the cowls or to the black-frocks? It is for the republic to decide, and for the King to execute its decision."

The equestrian order then delivered their opinion upon the subject in agitation in the following manner: "The nobles professing different persuasions being more acquainted with the use of arms than with divinity, but anxious to prevent the mischief which may possibly arise from contending opinions, beseech the King, as their common master, to advise in his wisdom the necessary means for preventing the evil by which such discord threatens the republic."—Sigismund Augustus arose quickly from his reclining position, threw back his mantle, and exclaimed, "The equestrian order beseeches us! How should we be able,

who are only a man, to rule those minds which God alone can direct? How can we form a resolution, or make things agree, when out of each mouth proceeds nothing but self-interest, hidden under the garb of religious zeal? What can we do more than recall to these fermenting spirits that as men they are all subject to one God, and as citizens to one king? May He whose representative we are on earth enlighten their dark minds, and make them feel that this double community lays them under the twofold obligation to act in common for promoting the glory of God and the welfare of the republic! When the wisdom of God shall disperse from before their eyes the mists of error, prejudice, and pride, then only shall we be able to become their leader in the councils, according to our coronation oath; but that oath binds us not to impossibilities."—"If the King always excuses himself from the performance of his regal duties by the plea of impossibility," said Raphael Leszczynski, "it will do no good either to him or to our country; but I am of the opinion, and many others with me, that perseverance and a faithful performance of duty frequently render things possible which would have been abandoned in despair by an inactive and careless mind."—"That concerns the fourth article," in-

terrupted the Chancellor, “ which says, ‘ The republic likewise reminds His Majesty the King of the strict fulfilment of his regal duties, in which, according to her opinion, some relaxation has manifested itself.’ ” “ Quite right, my lord Chancellor,” said Leszczynski, trying to raise his voice above the increasing tumult ; “ and I rejoice to hear that we have touched this most important point.” “ Permit me to speak,” said the Castellan of Posnania, “ as by the agreement of my high-born lords and brothers I am commissioned to do on this occasion. Some one else may afterwards explain, in fairer and more diffuse language, what I will now declare in a few plain words. The senate beseeches the King to remember that he is not only grand duke of Lithuania, but also the elected monarch of Poland ; and it is much to be wished that he would reside more in his capital of Cracow than he at present does, and that the pleasures of Vilna did not wholly engross a time which is not his own, but the country’s.” In vain did Leszczynski attempt to say a few words ; almost all present, the Lithuanians excepted, began to speak, not in a temperate and orderly manner, but with great noise and confusion, and it was with the greatest difficulty that the Vice-Chancellor succeeded at last in delivering the royal answer.

“ Sigismund Augustus” (such was the tenor of it) “ will not disappoint the confidence of the nation, but will continue to rule as a just and gracious monarch, according to the example of his forefathers the Jagellons, as long as his subjects, mindful of their duties, will not create obstacles to the exercise of his lawful power by their disobedience and mutiny.” This answer, though very unsatisfactory, according to the ideas of that time, was received with a scarcely expected quiet. The last point still remained to be discussed, and it was reserved by the hostile parties for the decisive stroke, by which hatred, ambition, and intolerance expected to carry the day against the supreme power. All seemed conscious of the importance of the approaching moment. The King left his careless position, and sat erect on the throne, holding the globe on his knee with his left hand, and the sceptre in his right, leaning it on his shoulder ; and he seemed to be prepared to defend the rights of the throne with a dignity becoming a monarch. His pale countenance appeared to be of marble ; the smile of serenity which usually played about his mouth had now totally deserted his compressed lips ; and nothing but the quick and unsettled glances of his eyes betrayed the agitation of his soul.

The Palatine of Lublin looked attentively and significantly on the monarch, and his lips moved seemingly in a low whisper, while Kmita's countenance, glowing with anger and contracted by a forced smile, appeared like the torch of sedition, ready to set all around him on fire. The Primate and the Bishop of Przemysl exchanged significant glances, sometimes directing their looks on Gorka, who showed by his gestures the impatience he felt for the moment when he might express his sentiments. The Bishop of Cracow sat with clasped hands, as if addressing a silent prayer to the Ruler of hearts in that eventful hour ; and the Bishop of Cujavia, seemingly lost in meditation, kept his eyes fixed on his episcopal cross. The inflexible republican Raphael Leszczynski turned the proud head which he had scorned to bow before the symbol of the Christian faith, as if he would discover what impression his sentiments were likely to produce on the minds of those present. Tarnowski, apparently exhausted from his early efforts, leaned back on his seat ; and Peter Boratynski was standing at the head of the Nuncii, who were now becoming agitated, with his eyes fixed on the King, as if to penetrate those secret feelings which, in spite of every effort, became continually more visible on Si-

gismund's countenance. The hoary Chancellor alleged a sudden indisposition, and in a trembling voice requested his colleague to take on himself the reading of the next article. The Vice-Chancellor Szydlowiecki took the protocol, and looked on it a long time, being unable to utter a single word. A long pause passed in this oppressive silence, when at last Firley said, with the composure that never forsook him, "The King commands that the reading of the protocol be continued." "'Fifthly and lastly,'" began the Vice-Chancellor with an almost inarticulate voice, "'the republic reminds His Majesty that he is not at liberty to decide, without the consent of the states, in any important matters concerning the welfare of the republic, such as declaring war, concluding peace, and especially'"—(here he lowered his voice)—"'in the choice of a consort.'" The magic word which was to call into life all the contending passions and opinions was now uttered; an ominous murmur rang through the hall, many senators rose from their seats, and the Nuncii advanced some steps nearer to the throne. The Vice-Chancellor Szydlowiecki, in order by a decisive word to put an end to a subject the discussion of which might produce dangerous consequences, said, after having cast a look on the

throne, “ The King has already, at the Diet of Warsaw, declared his will on the point in discussion, and that he perseveres in.” The Primate then arose, and began in a loud voice and with a declamatory gesture, “ His will! Such an expression is strange to a republican state, and unbecoming a King who is elected only conditionally and by our free choice. It cannot escape any of the lords here present, that the monarch who has now declared such things in the presence of an assembly to whom alone belongs the legislative power, is tending to overthrow the constitution, by assuming an illegal authority, and to erect on its ruins the edifice of despotism; and that he endeavours to conceal his dangerous design under the pretext of the inviolability of the oath, the sanctity of the sacrament, and even under a feigned solicitude for the welfare of the country. Does the King imagine that we are so much degraded as to praise with fear and flattery the usurpation of our rights, and kiss the rod that he has lifted, though in vain, to strike us? But it shall not come to this; and the first effort of this kind will be the signal for the defenders of the national liberties to come forward and oppose the progress of despotism while yet there is time. And what are these oaths,” he continued in an increasing but not very pious zeal, “ whose alleged

inviolability releases the King from his duties towards the nation? Can he apply this name to the vow pronounced at the altar, which concluded an alliance, in itself illegal, and consequently not valid? Barbara Radziwill, the widow of Gastold, is not the lawful consort of Sigismund Augustus. I, the first dignitary of the church and of the senate of this realm, solemnly declare it; and even if this marriage were binding, I dissolve it in virtue of my pastoral dignity. I release the King from every sin on that account, and I divide it equally among all his subjects." The Bishop of Przemysl was even more violent in his speech, and the assembly listened with astonishment to a dignitary of the Romish Church, known for the zealous exercise of his episcopal authority in his diocese, who, attired in the sacerdotal garb, recklessly sacrificed the sanctity of the sacrament to the demands of policy. Many senators spoke one after another to the same effect, trying to induce the King by their supplications, and even by their threats, to abandon a passing inclination, and to sacrifice the conviction of his conscience to the welfare of his subjects. Many nuncii united with them; but there were also many who defended the rights of the throne and of the sacrament. All voices were soon confounded, and degenerated

into a wild uproar, which raged around the throne of the monarch, who looked down proudly and silently ; and it produced no more effect on him than the waves of a stormy sea beating against the rocky foundation of a lighthouse, at whose top the flame continues to burn with undisturbed brightness. The Bishop of Cracow sprang from his seat, and lifting his hands to heaven, exclaimed with the greatest animation and in a voice almost of lamentation, “What do I hear ! Am I amongst Christians,—amongst citizens of that very kingdom which all Europe considers its barrier against the infidels ? Is it heathenland, where the abomination of desolation has occupied the place where once the temples of God were standing ? Woe to us ! when ye, who should resist the evil which threatens us, not only by bodily arms, but also by spiritual weapons, yourselves attack the holy precepts of the church,—of this very church which relies upon you in her approaching peril. You degrade the sacrament in the person of your monarch ; you would compel him to tear asunder the sacred bond of a marriage concluded conformably to the laws of men and to the doctrines of our holy religion. Do ye not see, blind men, that ye desire to establish scandal on the throne, from which it will descend among the

people, and prepare the way for the doctrines of the heresiarchs ? I, a consecrated priest, an aged man, whom the Almighty may call before his judgement-seat the very next hour to render account of my actions,—I, Samuel Maciejowski, swear to you by the salvation of my soul that the King's marriage is lawful and holy in the eyes of God and man, and that no power has the right to take sin from the head of him who has committed it, and to lay even the smallest part of it on the head of an individual among the millions of those guiltless subjects who know nothing of what their representatives desire with such an ungodly pride. Woe to us ! Woe to Christendom ! Those who should draw their swords against its enemies, turn them against its best laws. They cast the destructive brand into its temples ; and those who fan the flames are the principal servants of God, whose cause they betray.” The artless eloquence of the hoary priest, and the inspiration beaming on his countenance, produced a strong effect. A profound silence succeeded to the deafening uproar, and Andreas Zebrzydowski, bishop of Cujavia, taking advantage of the moment, began : “ Not only may we doubt if they are the followers of the Christian religion who lift their voice in such regardless manner against her holy precepts, but we

may also doubt, when hearing them, if we listen to the fathers of the fatherland, and to valiant and blameless knights. Consider well before you proceed any further, and the majority of you will plainly see that you are blindly following the impulse of a few who desire to degrade the throne, that it may become the more easy for them to ascend it. It is not your rights that you defend, you are only promoting the dangerous schemes of some amongst you. It is now a favourable time for the dark working of concealed ambition, which tries to gain its ends by unloosing the most sacred bonds which unite society ; and indeed you are speedily advancing towards such ends. Turn your attention to all that is going on in this hall. Recover yourselves, my lords and fellow-citizens ; scare from you the delusions which encompass you ; disdain to subject yourselves to foreign influence ; and resume your own dignity as heads of the nation and its representatives. It is not the unrestrained will of the many which can establish by its contradictory purposes a government, or maintain it : a circle requires a centre, round which it may move, and a common point of support is necessary for the exercise of the united power of all ; and this centre is the point of support our forefathers have wisely given us in the

throne. To it direct your eyes, and unite your efforts in supporting it ; for I say unto you, if the throne falls, it will bury under its ruins the rights and the happiness of the community !” The dexterity of the Bishop of Cujavia in mentioning the secret influence which some magnates exerted over many of that assembly was not without considerable effect ; many of the senators and of the nuncii felt that their situation was precisely that to which Zebrzydowski had alluded. But those against whom this last speech was directed redoubled their efforts to maintain their ground. The Castellan of Posnania Andreas Gorka advanced a few steps towards the middle of the hall, and spoke with a determination which, united with his dark looks and overbearing deportment, made him appear like the personification of the worst passions. “ The King still tarries to fulfill the wishes of the states ! let him know then that our forefathers cut to pieces with their swords an ordinance injurious to their privileges, which the King’s ancestor Jagellon had issued ; and let him know also that we have inherited those swords ! I pray to the Almighty it may not proceed so far in the present day ; but His Majesty would do well to accede to our entreaties, while we seek only by them to obtain our wishes.”

Sigismund Augustus still remained unmoved, as if he did not hear this daring request, when Peter Kmita said, "It is likewise the opinion of the senate, and especially my own—" He was going to proceed, but the long-withheld irritation of Sigismund Augustus burst forth at the voice of the odious speaker; he sprang up from his seat, and in the most imperative manner ordered Kmita to be silent. A deadly paleness overspread the old man's countenance, which a few moments before was glowing with ire; an occurrence so unexpected, so incredible, suddenly tied his tongue, and he stared before him mute with rage and humiliation. An unheard-of thing had happened; in an assembled Diet the King had forbidden a senator to deliver his opinion, which was his incontrovertible right. Every one felt his own dignity wounded in the injury done to his colleague; a general murmur of discontent rang through the hall; all present left their seats and advanced towards the throne. The alarmed chancellors drew back; the small number of Lithuanians surrounded the monarch; the partisans of the King sunk their heads in dismay, and all real friends to their country were filled with a deep sorrow. Raphael Leszczynski pressed through the crowd, and approaching the throne exclaimed in a thundering voice and

with sparkling eyes, “Have you forgotten, lord King, who we are whom you treat with such overbearing wilfulness? We are Poles, who call ourselves the subjects of the King as long as he performs the duties prescribed to him by the constitution, which is above the monarch. Beware, lest by violating your oaths you absolve us from our allegiance. Your father, of glorious memory, listened to the advice of those who were placed by the constitution at his side; and it behoves you to do likewise, and to pay due attention to the voice of the republic, who acknowledges in you but her first citizen. If you think this name beneath you, leave a throne which can give you no other!” Many voices resounded with applause at this speech. The friends of the monarch and Peter Boratynski looked on Sigismund Augustus with a timid expectation; when, contrary to the supposition of all, every sign of displeasure disappeared from the royal countenance, and the benevolent smile which animated his features proved, that a superior mind can sympathize with his kindred even in an opponent’s breast. “We respect the privileges of our nobility,” said the King after a short pause, “as much as the duties and rights of our own high station; and while our heart is shut to the voice of hatred and self-

interest, it will always remain open to the warnings which remind us of our royal obligations, though expressed in harsh and discourteous language.” “Then listen to our prayers!” exclaimed many senators, suddenly moved by the unexpected self-command of the monarch. “Open your heart to our entreaties!” cried the nuncii; and all cast themselves on their knees before the throne, except those few whose interest was not conciliation, and who sullenly retired to the background of the hall. “Your Majesty sees the republic at your feet,” began the Marshal in a trembling tone of voice, as if agitated by an extraordinary emotion; “they beseech you to sacrifice your own happiness to what the decision of the assembled states considers to be the good of the country; they beseech you to sever those bonds which they consider prejudicial to the welfare of the republic. Seek your own heart, most serene lord,” added he significantly; “this is a most important moment, which will decide not only your and our present welfare, but which will equally stamp your fame in the remotest annals of history. Prove yourself a Jagellon, a knight, a Pole, and act as every one of us who is a man of honour would act in your place.” A long pause ensued after the Marshal’s speech; at length the King arose

from his seat, and addressed the senate in the following words : " Most reverend and highborn lords, we will give you an answer such as becomes a Jagellon, a knight, and a Pole, and we will act as every one of you who is a man of honour would do in our place. You remind us of our duty; you require the fulfilment of the oath we have taken ; and as surely as we shall abide by it may God assist us in our last extremity ! How could you rely on the oath we have taken to maintain your rights and privileges if we were to break the promise given at the altar to our royal consort ? Could you trust your destinies to the hands of one who had betrayed the holiest of all duties ? Could the republic acknowledge as her father one who with shameful negligence could forget the obligations due to his own family, or cowardly resign them ? Is it not rather your duty to maintain fidelity on the throne, should it ever seek to abandon it, than to banish what is the best guarantee of your rights and privileges ? And as we most solemnly promise to perform, with the assistance of Heaven, our duties towards the republic, so we will equally fulfill them towards our royal consort, should we even thereby forfeit our crown and life. You accuse us of having encroached upon your privileges by our choice. That choice is made ; and

what God has united, man dares not put asunder. But we restore to you these privileges; use them as it becomes you; let us receive our happiness from your hands, from the hands of our fellow-citizens, or take back a crown which we will not purchase by the loss of our honour." For some time after the King had ended, the eyes of the kneeling senators and nuncii remained fixed on him in silence, as if hoping that their humble posture would move him to alter his decision. But when he resumed his seat with the greatest composure and dignity, they arose slowly, and animated by different feelings: most of them, softened by the preceding speech, grieved for what they termed the obstinacy of the King; while the part best disposed could not help acknowledging that none was more worthy of the throne than he who would sacrifice himself for what he thought right, and secretly determined to assist him with all their power. Among the factious magnates and their adherents it created new hopes that it might be possible to gain for themselves or for the heads of their party that crown which its present owner was so ready to resign; and the adherents of Queen Bona, seeing that they had overreached their aim, were lost in amazement and confusion. Peter Boratynski directed his eyes, glistening with a tear, on

the Grand General, who answered him with a similar look. Those who had long ago secretly decided on Tarnowski as the successor of Sigismund Augustus thought they understood the motives for the satisfaction which was visible on his countenance. The numbers which surrounded him soon formed the largest crowd of those who were gathering round different magnates, and the words “ Vacancy of the throne ! ” “ Convocation of the elective Diet ! ” were repeatedly uttered. The Primate, the Bishop of Przemysl, and their adherents perceived with terror that all their efforts would probably produce no other effect than that of removing from the throne an obnoxious person in order to put in his place one still more so ; they loudly and eagerly contradicted what had been brought about by themselves, requiring a strict examination of the attending circumstances and the formal proclamation of the *interregnum* before the abdication of the King could be considered valid and the throne vacant. They were supported not only by the real friends to their country and their former opponents, but likewise by the party of the Milanese, and especially by all those who either dared not to oppose Tarnowski in an open contest, or did not expect to gather sufficient advantages from the troubles

of an *interregnum*. However, the crowd of Tar-nowski's adherents continued increasing, and proud of their chief and relying on their number, they were prepared to set the fate of the country on a doubtful stake, when he for whom they were so ready to speak and to act suddenly left his place and addressed the assembly in a quiet and solemn voice : “ A noisy burst of language is not sufficient to convict a monarch that he is wrong; no, such wild tumult is calculated only to degrade the nation and the throne, and not to adjust matters at this critical time. A hasty word uttered in a moment of irritation can never be considered as a real abdication; and it is most important to consider well the state of the country before we proceed to extremities, lest it be said that the Polish nation resembles the wild hordes of Tatary, who make and unmake their Khans at pleasure. Who-ever,” he continued with a more energetic expression, “ in case the most serene Sigismund Augustus perseveres in so hasty a resolution, might be judged worthy to succeed him, he will owe but little gratitude to his fellow-citizens for an elevation which would be only the effect of a transitory commotion,—an elevation that may itself be as transitory; and the throne after having been so degraded will have but little value in his eyes.” The

adherents of Tarnowski, astonished and deceived in their expectations, returned quietly to their seats, whilst many senators and nunciis pronounced short and energetic speeches, but of quite a different nature from their former ones ; even Gorka himself declared that such an abdication was contrary to the statutes, and ought to be considered as not having taken place. The Primate and his party preserved an unbroken silence ; even Raphael Leszczynski was by no means inclined to repeat what he had before said in his patriotic zeal. However, Sigismund remained firm, and was now as inaccessible to these proofs of loyalty as he had been before to blame and reproaches. At last, when Samuel Maciejowski, bishop of Cracow, conjured him by his own salvation not to desert a place where God had placed him as his anointed, he asked him with a loud voice, “ Do you speak in the name of the republic, my lord bishop of Cracow ? Is it the opinion of the senate and of the equestrian order that you deliver ? ” This question being answered by a loud acclamation, which overwhelmed the murmurs of the few discontented, the King exclaimed in a loud voice and with sparkling eyes, “ Then in virtue of our sovereign power we close for today the deliberations of the Diet, and we open the royal tribunal,

My lord Instigator of the Crown (4), summon the parties before the King and his council!" Who would have imagined that these words, uttered by the young monarch in the exercise of his lawful power, should raise a new storm? and yet they did. Many voices were heard declaring that though the King had not forfeited the throne, he had no right to exercise his sovereign power before he fulfilled the obligations of his station. Peter Kmita was the loudest in this declaration; but Sigismund Augustus cried to him in a thundering voice, "Up, my lord Palatine of Cracow, and take directly the place which belongs to the Grand Marshal in the royal tribunal, or, by our troth! we shall know how to punish the servant who offends our Majesty by refusing obedience." Many lords had already left their places, the deliberations being considered as concluded for that day; Kmita rose from his seat trembling with rage and approached the King, but instead of occupying the place belonging to his office, he stopped before the throne and dashed, with the utmost violence, his Marshal's staff on the ground, and directly left the hall. The King turned away with contempt, and motioned to Firley, who sneeringly pushed with his foot the silver staff, so that it went clattering over the floor, and lifting his own staff occupied him-

self the Grand Marshal's place. The assembly looked on each other with embarrassment and surprise, and before they could resolve on any new measure of opposition, these words resounded from the throne : “ My lord Instigator of the Crown, the King commands that the first cause may proceed ! ” and the judgement began.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-plac’d words of glossy court’sy,
Baited with reason not unpleasible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares.”—MILTON’s *Comus*.

OUR history—or, if our reader likes it better, our imagination—leads us now to a solitary place, very dissimilar to the magnificent hall filled with richly dressed senators adorned with gold and precious stones,—a ruined smoke-blackened hut in the gloomy burying-ground of the Jews near Cracow.

The faint sun of a February day could scarcely penetrate through the small, dirty, round panes of the window, and render visible through them the ominous inhabitant of this ominous abode, seated on a rickety arm-chair, whose polished wood proclaimed it to have been once the ornament of a somewhat fairer dwelling than the present. A large pair of spectacles set in lead hung on her broad and arched nose, and she sought to assist her weak and bleared eyes by trying to decipher through them the contents of a

tolerably well written sheet which she held in her withered hand.

The old woman, our former acquaintance, might perhaps be less versed in the art of reading than in others of a more extraordinary kind, for we must do the writer of the letter (the former scrivener's assistant of the Grand Marshal's office,) the justice to say that he rather excelled in the art of penmanship, on which he founded his claims to the title of a disciple of the sciences. In a howling and nasal tone, with frequent interruptions, mother Ursula essayed to read the following diplomatic dispatch: "You know," commenced the narrator, "you know that I was commanded by my superiors if possible to ingratiate myself into the service of the Marshal, lord Peter Boratynski: my zeal in the service of my employers is not less known to you; and without wishing to boast of my dexterity in all honourable things, (which, without doubt, I inherit from my mother, your sister's child,) it was not difficult for me to get not only near the lord Starost, but even into his service; but this all came singularly easy to me, who have all my life long had a natural liking for service; and two masters, which I now have, are always better than one. As I betook myself to Ivanoviec with the merry lads in the free

company of master Leonardo Monti, (who be it observed bears neither livery nor ensign,) I made myself very busy while on the journey ; and at the inn, when lord Boratynski with his suite and luggage arrived from the opposite side of the river, I was very active in unlading and stabling the horses. By means of liquor and dainty meals I had made myself good friends with some of his servants, and the next morning early, as he was going to mount his horse, I was ready at hand to hold the stirrup for him : he searched in the pocket of his girdle and gave me a piece of gold. But to show that I was not altogether selfish, and in order to merit more, I thanked him but refused his gift, kissing the hand of the giver, and while doing so letting a tear or two drop upon it. He questioned me if anything was the matter with me ; I told him, with a very wobegone visage, that I was a poor noble, but of a good family, and that it was not gold I needed so much as the honour of being taken into the service of a distinguished and worthy lord. He then demanded from whence I came ; and truly, mother Ursula, you need not have recourse to your hellish gallant to divine that my reply was, from Piotrkow. After he had asked a few other questions, which I answered with my

usual dexterity, he said I might accompany him, and ordered his servants to give me a spare horse. It is not unknown to you why I entered into this second service of the lord Starost; you will not therefore wonder that I whispered a word to my old companions, who appeared at night at the inn, where we were to rest, in most respectable attire. On our arrival we found in the drinking-room a table surrounded by a set of jovial guests, who, as they said, were going to the Diet in order to see how things would turn out, and they wished long life to the Crown General, drinking to the golden days which would ensue if this and all other things happened as they ought to do. These very respectable and merry fellows were, as you have no doubt guessed, my companions.

"As the lord Starost listened to their conversation he began to grow very thoughtful, and commanded us not to mention his name, that the jovial party might not be interrupted in their mirth. He remained longer in the room below than was his custom, and retired much later to rest, his people said, than is usual with him on a journey. They also told me afterwards that much of the same conversation was held in Little Poland and Russia. Now it happened, always as if accidentally, that my companions met us from time

to time on the road; but they took care always to assume a different character: sometimes they appeared as travelling merchants, sometimes as soldiers, who rejoiced that things would soon be in a state of confusion. It often happened that others joined them, who though they did not belong to their goodly company, united heartily in their clamours. The Starost became more and more angry the nearer he approached Piotrskow, and thought that the whole kingdom was filled with such people; and he became at last so irritated against the lord Count of Tarnow that I once heard him say to himself, ‘Is there then no one to be relied on?’ Alas, the simple lord! I was well satisfied with myself and the performance of my commission as we entered the city; but directly after, lord Peter commanded me and some others to accompany him in a walk through the town, and I could hardly trust my eyes when I saw him proceed straight to the habitation of the Grand General, and I began in my own mind to think that lord Peter was in reality not a bit better than others, and, like them, shifted his sail to every wind. It afterwards came into my head that if this were not the case, these two mighty lords might perhaps pick up a fine quarrel and that my commission would then have obtained the

most entire success. But while lord Boratyński was with the Grand General, an angel (for the devil would not injure a cousin of yours,) sent that impertinent fellow Valenty Bielawski, who,—may the ague shake him!—is the very man whom I told you I had so valiantly beaten in a duel at Ivanoviec, and who played me that bad trick the night of the student's riot, which I do not like to think of. He recognised me immediately, and when the lord Starost came down after his interview with the Castellan of Cracow, apparently in great agitation, Valenty whispered something in his ear which made him look earnestly at me: he said nothing however, and went out, I following him. I will confess to you, my lady aunt, that I felt one of those strange twitches between my shoulders, which seize me as frequently as presages do old women; and, as you shall presently hear, they never yet deceived me.

“The morning of the next day,—that on which my master was to entertain the lords,—a banquet was also ordered in an open place for the Szlachta⁽¹⁾), and I was sent to assist the attendants. I also caused my companions who had followed me faithfully to Piotrkow to dress themselves most respectably, and to appear as nobles, market-men, and sellers of mead, at the different

tables ; and after I had given them all necessary directions, I kept with the Lithuanians. Now, as I knew that meat and drink rejoice men's hearts and dispose them to concord, I wisely took care that those on whom I attended should not have too much of them, and to my great satisfaction they murmured and complained that they were neglected. An active quarrel now began to arise between those of Little Poland and Russia, who sat near ; but that cursed elder Bielawski found his way to them, and when he perceived that the platters and jugs of the Lithuanians were empty, he commanded that they should be filled with the very best, scolded me for my negligence, and said so much to me that the unpleasant feelings in the proximity of my backbone began to return with increased violence. But all had occurred at the table of those from Little Poland which I was trying to effectuate at that of the Lithuanians ; much unpleasant conversation had taken place, which I took care to repeat to the most unmanageable guests ; and, as I expected, there soon arose among them a dispute. My lads had done their duty in other places. Almost all the various palatinates assembled round the table of Little Poland ; they all cried out loudly, and but little was wanting to make them declare

that the Lithuanian Barbara was nothing more than the King's concubine, and to proclaim the Grand General king. While I now stood enjoying this scene, there came an enormous old woman to me, so large that I thought I saw the sister of the great Goliah, and as handsome—but I will not flatter—almost as handsome as yourself: she touched me on the shoulder, and as I looked in her face I recognised the Neapolitan Assano, whom I once took for your gallant when he entered your house. I wondered much, imagining him to be far off, but I rejoiced extremely, for my money had nearly run out. I then told him all that had happened, and how almost all the gentlemen Szlachta had abused Barbara, and had cried out that the King must be compelled to separate from her. He laughed right pleasantly; but when I spoke of Tarnowski, he grew very angry; and on mentioning with great modesty the strict fulfilment of my commission, and its being completed by the manner in which I had acted on the journey by deluding the lord Boratynski, and by trying even here to put forward Tarnowski, he called me a blockhead, commanded me to meet him at a place he appointed on the following day; and left me, casting on me a look which prophesied even worse than what the same

day brought forth,—yes, the very same day, most worthy cousin; for immediately the lord Marshal and some of his distinguished guests made their appearance, and in a very short time he brought the unruly nobles back to order. With him came Valenty Bielawski, whose flesh I hope may form the wedding feast for you and your bridegroom when he comes to carry you home. He spoke to his father, and they both looked at me; and when I returned to the house, the major-domo informed me that he was commissioned by his lord to discharge me after first paying my wages. These wages were a little money, and much more of that which a *literatus* would not willingly make mention of, and which fully confirmed my yesterday's misgivings.

“When I went in the evening to meet Assano, I found horses ready saddled; and although my ribs were extremely sore, I was obliged to ride after him the whole night, till we arrived at Gonmolin, one of the castles of the illustrious Queen Bona, from whence the morning after master Leonardo Monti sent a messenger, to whom I entrust this letter. What there happened to me, Waclaw Siewrak, bachelor of the fair sciences, remains to be told. My reception in that fine though somewhat lonely castle was none of the best. I was

soon after our arrival called into the presence of the learned doctor, with whom I found the Neapolitan, who had not been making the most honourable mention of me, for the master's countenance was drawn into most unpropitious wrinkles as I entered. He then made many inquiries, and cross-questioned me in such a manner that I became at last completely bewildered, though I took great care not to commend too much my zeal for my master's service in all that concerned the Count of Tarnow; but when he was informed of all that had taken place at Piotrkow, he grew more and more displeased, and whispéred aside with Assano, who felt in his girdle, and drew forth something shining; but it was not gold,—it was another metal, that I like not near so well as all-powerful gold, and then directed a look towards his master. It was a speaking look, cousin, and in good sooth a most alarming one, and made me retreat towards the door of the room. Sir Leonardo then hastily commanded me to remain, and asked me in his kind of gibberish whether my companions knew where I was; and when I replied that some of them were on the road to Gomolin, in order to see if there was anything to be got for the work they had done, he gave a sign to the Neapolitan; but it was unnecessary, for he

had already returned his shining two-edged dɔ-native to his girdle, and the Doctor called me a brave lad, spoke a few low words in Latin to Assano; of which the meaning was, as far as I could gather, ‘ You see there are not only amongst menials, but also amongst lords, over-zealous blockheads, and such are much more difficult to be kept in their proper places than men of his cast.’ He now said to me that my zeal in my master’s service should not go unrewarded ; and the Neapolitan hellhound approached me, and, with a few words of warning against doing too much, he gave me a well-lined purse, and I resolved to put my first reward from Assano’s girdle out of my head, and to make merry with the wine and damsels of Gomolin.

“ As I have no doubt the account of your own relation’s fate lies nearest to your heart, so accordingly I have enlarged on it, and you must be content to hear in as small a compass as possible all that passed amongst others. How that at Piotrkow there were great disturbances amongst the lords, that they talked of putting away that Barbara, and as His Majesty would not hear of such a thing, of depoſing himself ; how they all threw themselves on their knees on the hard floor ; pray-

ing him to give up the point, but that he resisted and is still king, which however he may not be much longer, for an experienced politician as I am can see well that all the story about the Grand General is something more than a mere trick of your cousin and servant; and to conclude, how Peter Kmita, whom I commend to your prayers and the protection of your patron and gallant, threw his marshal's staff upon the ground with such force that a piece of it broke off and flew into Firley's face; but it was meant as they say for the King. All this intelligence I communicate to you, aunt Ursula, that you may make what use of it you think proper, for the honour of the master you serve, and the especial service of your own excellent person."

"Hum!" muttered the old woman as she finished the wearisome task of reading the letter; "the Italian is not so wrong neither; there are also amongst magnates those who, like my cousin Sie-wrak, spoil everything by overdoing; and he who cast down his marshal's staff of pure fair silver in so contemptuous a manner, will not be very graciously received by his lady-patroness. But I really begin to think she herself does too much; be that however as it may, the old Ursula is not far

from the high and gracious lady, and one or two grains of her commodities would outweigh hundreds of swords and lances ; and I suppose I shall soon be called for."

This parley with herself had scarcely ended when a footstep was heard hastening over the frozen snow, and a loud knocking at the door shook the ruinous hut. Ursula looked up from her nephew's letter, pushed her spectacles straight on her nose, and blinked out of the window : she then immediately began her howling song, which we have before noticed, but which was quickly interrupted by an impatient call : "Enough, enough, mother Ursula ! we know well your ditty, and you may as well spare it ; let me in, for I am in haste ; the sun is still in the sky, and he who perhaps you expect is no friend to daylight." "In great haste truly," said the old woman to herself ; "evil walks abroad with so bold a face in these days, and people are so impatient, that the act can scarcely keep pace with the will. Which of you is now wanting ?" she continued, looking into an open chest, in which many well-stopped phials of different sizes and forms were ranged ; "the stock is large, and it would be well that a customer should present

himself." He who was without now called out again that he was in haste and had further to go; so she closed the receptacle of her commodities, and opened the door. A man entered, under whose cloak a green-and-red livery might be seen, which were the colours of the Queen-mother. "You are welcome, sir groom, on this fine day," said the old woman with a friendly scream; "to what do I owe the honour of this visit? Is it for a warm draught against the cold air? or is any one ill at Court, or amongst your worthy companions, whom I could serve with my healing pills or my costly balsam?" "I neither wish for your refreshments nor need your medicines for myself or others; it is a message that I have for you." "I hope that none of the high and mighty ladies stand in need of the trifling assistance that the old Ursula is always ready to administer to her neighbour?" said the inhabitant of the hut; "Does Her Majesty find herself unwell, or the gracious lady Falczeska?" The man then said in a contemptuous tone, "My illustrious lady is not likely to seek medical aid from the Jews' burying-ground, when she has the whole faculty at her command, particularly the learned doctor Monti; and the lady Falczeska is as little likely to do so either."

“Good, good!” muttered Ursula with a strange smile; “the doctor is an experienced man, and does not stoop to perform common cures. But say, what am I wanted for?” “It is the lady Falczeska who has sent me,” answered the man peevishly, “but not for herself. Such great ladies have nothing to do but torment other folks, and she has sent me to this hellish corner, without regarding wind or weather, because her lapdog is sick,—fat Mopsy, which the lady Hornostay has given her; for my part, I wish the hangman had him, for he is as snappish as his former mistress, and yelps like his present one; and the other day he bit a large hole in my stocking and foot.” “So, it’s the dog Mopsy,” said Ursula in a tone of lamentation; “the poor beast! what is the matter with him, worthy sir?” “The same that’s the matter with the whole Court—too little to do and too much to eat,” said the servant peevishly. “I lay myself at the feet of the lady Starostine, and will come immediately and provide all sorts of remedies,” said the old woman in a drawling tone; “and though I have a good deal to do, the master’s service goes before everything, as my cousin says.” “I suppose,” said the man, “the master whom you serve here in your own abode,

and the patroness who now sends for you, have many things in common. Come therefore at dark, and do not mistake the medicines, for people say such mistakes often occur to you." "The dog of the lady Falczeska!" said Ursula when he was gone, looking thoughtfully; whose Christian name may this dog bear?"

CHAPTER XV.

“ *Seneca*.—Signor del mondo, a te che manca ?

“ *Nerone*.—Pace.

“ *Seneca*.—L’ avrai, se ad altri, non la togli.”—*ALFIERI*.

WE now find Bona Sforza in her apartment, standing with an agitated mind before an escritoir, the contents of which, had they reached posterity, would have furnished important materials for the history of that time. She was impatient to receive some news from the Diet, for the unconnected intelligence which the reports from Piotrkow had brought to the capital had given her much care and anxiety. At that moment the sound of the bugle at the outer gate of the castle, soon followed by the tread of many horses over the drawbridge, as well as the noise produced by the guards striking their halberds on the ground, announced to her the arrival of some great lord, attended by a numerous retinue. “ The Palatine of Lublin at last ! ” said the Milanese to herself ; then quickly locking up the papers in the escritoir, she attached the key to her golden

chain, and hid it carefully under the folds of her lace collar. Meanwhile footsteps were heard approaching the door from the antechamber. She went quickly to meet her guest, and the chamberlain who came to announce him was closely followed by the person of all others whom Bona least wished or expected to see, and who was no other than Peter Kmita, the grand marshal. She was struck as she perceived the old lord, whose rarely serene brow was more clouded than ever, and whose mouth was distorted by ill concealed rage. "I come inopportunely to Your Grace, as it seems," said Kmita, observing her surprise, "and I might easily guess it was another you expected, and who is not coming. Yes," he continued bitterly, "it is only the old Grand Marshal, who lays himself at your feet, to pay due thanks for the agreeable fruits which have been the reward of his efforts for you." It might well be supposed that the feelings of the Queen at this moment were of the most painful nature. It was John Firley she expected, and whom at his departure she had conjured to meet her secretly at Cracow directly after the first sitting of the Diet, in order to learn from him the proceedings there. With apparent warmth he had promised to comply with her re-

quest, and, moreover, to assist her projects by all the means that his high rank and great influence among the Protestants enabled him to command. He had not kept his word, and it appeared from what the Grand Marshal had said during the short period of his speaking to her, that he did not intend to do so. She called to remembrance many strange things in the conduct of her favourite. Her mind misgave her that she was deceived,—she who thought that, while deceiving all others she alone was not to be deceived, and that through the only person who for a long lapse of years had been able to raise one human feeling in her selfish breast. And in his place appeared one who, of all her political tools, she could the least rely upon ; a man who was induced to join her party, not for her sake, but only for the sake of his own ambition, and who, as report said, had, through his own inconsiderate pride, sacrificed at the Diet her best interests to one whom she hated like the abyss of hell. This had all taken place since she had seen him, and he now came, not to bear the expression of her just anger with repentant excuses, but with indignation on his ruffled brow and scorn on his curved lip. Still the Italian conquered in a moment the agitation of her mind,

and answered with a cold dignity, “ You are not mistaken, my lord Grand Marshal ; it was not you we expected here at this time, when your dignity of adviser to your lord, our son, should have kept you at his side ; and your appearance makes us believe things which we rejected as falsehoods and thought impossible.” “ And why impossible, lady Queen ?” was the Grand Marshal’s answer ; “ is it so impossible that a senator should maintain the rights due to his station even against your royal son ? It indeed appears more impossible that the King should have ventured to impose silence upon him whose voice has frequently enough resounded from one end of the kingdom to the other, and that in the presence of his assembled brothers ! Truly,” he continued, his anger growing more violent, “ I will speak till my words resound not only in these walls, but in all the castles and cities of Poland, and in the very palace of Vilna itself ; and the reception I have found with Your Grace will accelerate the moment to show who Kmita is !” In a somewhat restrained tone of reproach the Queen replied, “ Such is then the fulfilment of your manifold promises, my lord Palatine ; instead of the prudence of a statesman and the carefulness of a friend, to efface all the spots which have

stained the royal family and the kingdom by the entrance of that Barbara into it, and instead of leaving the displeasure of your brothers to rest on the seducer of our son, you set your King and the respect due to him on a dangerous throw.” “Dangerous, certainly,” exclaimed the Grand Marshal haughtily, “and on his side difficult to be won. You have now, lady Queen, dwelt long in this kingdom, and ought to know that it is not here as in your country, where courtier and statesman are synonymous. With us, most gracious lady, the humour of the King may be a law to the courtier; but the statesman always keeps his eye fixed on the republic. Of what consequence is that Barbara to me? of what consequence is her husband to the Grand Marshal of the kingdom, the Palatine of the capital, the senator? I only consider him as king who respects the privileges of the states; I only call her queen whom I have acknowledged in conjunction with those states; and if Sigismund will not separate himself from Barbara, they shall both give room to others!” “Has then,” interrupted Bona with an uncertain voice, “our son continued deaf to the prayers of his mother; deaf to the counsel of his nobles, and to the entreaties of his nation, and will not put away the Lithuanian?”

"It is as I have told Your Grace," said Kmita with unfeigned coolness; "he has remained deaf to all these; they have knelt to him—the assembled states of the republic have knelt to Sigismund Augustus Jagellon, and he remained unmoved: but Peter Kmita has not bent his knee; he bends it to nobody on earth; he has other means of conviction, and those alone may the King expect from him."

With a powerful effort the proud Queen suppressed the anger which the unbridled language of the Palatine had excited in her, and she began with all the composure which she could still command, "And in order to irritate the angry monarch still more, you have flung at his feet the marshal's staff, which our blessed spouse entrusted to your keeping, and left the senate, where it was so necessary that a friend of ours should have remained." "It was not Sigismund the elder who alone entrusted me with the grand marshal's staff, but the republic with the King; and I wield it for both,—but first for the republic, and next for the King. I am Your Majesty's devoted servant or friend, as it may please you to call me, but, in the first place, the friend of the kingdom and servant of the constitution." "And most of all, of thyself," said Bona inwardly. Kmita seemed

to guess what passed in the Queen's mind, for he proceeded in a sneering tone, "It is easy to say to the Grand Marshal, So far shalt thou go, and no further; but it is difficult to restrain his actions. Kmita is a bow made of tough wood, but he who overstrains it finds it quickly recede, and turn its arrow on the marksman. And such is the way of the Polish statesmen, my illustrious lady. I mean to say that I am one of that kind, and, when it is necessary, a soldier also, and many others resemble me. Has Your Grace any further commands?" Many a lady either of that time or of the present would have been alarmed at the danger that now threatened her son and the grandeur of her family, and, betraying the anxieties of a mother and a Queen, would have had recourse to tears and entreaties, which would have still further augmented the overbearing demeanour of her separating ally. Yet Bona Sforza, though the speech she had now heard caused her to turn deadly pale, and even a slight shudder to pass over her limbs, disdained to act in a manner which would produce no effect upon a man who, during many years, had been the confidant of her thoughts and actions. She felt that selfishness and pride could only be opposed by the same weapons, and said, after a pause of consideration,

“ You have opened our eyes, my lord Palatine of Cracow, and though it is done late, we still thank you. The kite and the vulture are always at variance if in their chase they happen to meet with any prey ; but they immediately unite when the royal eagle bids defiance to them.” “ How am I to understand your words ? ” asked the Grand Marshal, looking attentively ; “ methinks this is not a time for puzzling conceits : but should Your Grace conceal under them any meaning appropriate to the time and circumstances, or directed to him to whom you do the honour of addressing them, I must beseech Your Majesty to be more explicit.” “ Wherefore not ? ” replied Bona ; “ have you not spoken sufficiently plain ? or do you suppose it requires much penetration to guess that there is one amongst the many others you have mentioned, one who, like yourself, is both statesman and soldier ? Yes, one who, even in the opinion of many, far surpasses you ? ” “ And who is that ? ” asked the Palatine with some irritation. “ Who but the father of the fatherland (who seems to have gained over a once refractory, and already hoary son), that model of Polish nobles,—the wise, heroic Count of Tarnow. Why do you seem so perplexed, my worthy lord ? Do you really hold Bona Sforza, whom you have

so long known, for a person of so little experience as not to know how such matters are going on in the world? Do you imagine that you are the first man who has rejected the good, in hopes of better, or rather for what seems so? Is it so inconceivable that the Palatine of Cracow should not wish to become Castellan, and the bearer of the Marshal's staff also should desire that of the Grand General, even were he obliged to do homage to his predecessor on the steps of the usurped throne?" "How so? what do you mean?" said Kmita, interrupting the Queen's indifferent and monotonous speech; "have, then, the strange reports concerning this Tarnowski reached also Your Majesty? Has, then, this inconceivable folly, the effects of which I confess I have witnessed with astonishment at Piotrkow, spread as far as Cracow?"—"Have you indeed perceived them?" said Bona maliciously; "neither have they escaped our perception, for they have resounded till they reached the very windows of the royal widow; and ten thousand voices have here echoed the loud cry of the revellers at the banquet given to the lower nobles by the Marshal of the Diet, and the less open murmurs heard in the hall of the senate. Tarry not; quit the apartment of the forsaken widow and mother of your King,

that you may be the first to bow the knee before the great John of Tarnow, that he may cast one gracious look on you, and that you may not have the misfortune to lose your dearly bought reward.” The swelling veins of the Palatine’s brow had for some time indicated the approaching storm, and now the flame burst forth with violence, and he exclaimed in a voice that made the high arched windows shake, “I, Peter Kmita, bow my knee before the overwise Tarnowski! Who has dared to say it? Who has calumniated the Grand Marshal in such a manner to Your Majesty?” “There has been no calumnia,” continued the Milanese coldly and resolutely; “circumstances change men’s minds. You think the royal family of Jagellon too insignificant to be their subject; perhaps you may gain more honour in serving him who was but a simple esquire when you bore the banner of the kingdom, and who will not perhaps refuse to the equally born, old and experienced man, the esteem due to him.” “The executioner shall break the ancient escutcheon of my family, and throw it with my body into the grave, ere this head should bow down a hair’s breadth to the overbearing pedantic General! before that traitor ascends the place of Sigismund, to whom he feigned always to be faithful

and devoted, and whom now he treacherously attacks, being too great a coward for an open friend or enemy; nor are there wanting men enough in Poland, if the King's pride and obstinacy carry it so far—there are not wanting many others more worthy to fill the throne than the General !” “ But you do not mean to be one of those men, my lord Palatine ? ” said Bona in a tone of compassion ; “ do not deceive yourself, it is the last counsel of your former, now betrayed friend. Go to the castles of the great, enter the dwellings of the nobles, listen at the door of the cottage, go out into the highways,—you will never hear your own name, but thousands and tens of thousands will call out, ‘ Long life to John of Tarnow ! ’ ”

The passion of the Marshal had suddenly subsided ; he remained a moment in thoughtful silence, and then said, half smiling, “ I understand you, lady Queen, and perfectly conceive that you yourself do not believe half you say, though you wish the old Kmita to think you do, for the sake of persuading him ; and yet there is more in it than you imagine : you have called it forth at the right time, royal lady, and it may bring forth good fruit for you. The hostility of the vulture and falcon is unappeasable ; take only good care that the royal eagle

may not soar too high, and that his claws may spare the princes of his airy kingdom." "It rejoices us," began Bona, changing her cold tone of offended majesty for one of confidence, "it rejoices us that I have not been deceived in the former companion of so many joys and so many sorrows. Never could your Queen believe that the honoured Grand Marshal would have sacrificed, like an imprudent boy, the fruits gained by the toil of so many years; and that in a moment of irritation, excited by the inconsiderate behaviour of a young man, to whom much must be pardoned, considering how he was spoiled by his accession to the throne at so early an age." "By no means, most gracious lady," answered the Grand Marshal, drawing back proudly; "you mistake, in calling that a momentary irritation which is the consciousness of what is due to myself and to my dignity. You know what has hindered me from doing what I should and would, and what I am too proud to conceal; but now I have nothing in common with the King. The hands of Kmita are tied for the present; but times are uncertain, and the day may come when they shall be at liberty. Therefore let Sigismund Augustus beware; and if he wishes that the Grand Marshal may resume the staff which he has

thrown away, he must considerably lower his Jagellonian pride. The chief senator has been openly offended, and public must be his satisfaction, that the latest posterity may not say it was the Palatine of Cracow, Peter Kmita, in whose person the wilfulness of a king for the first time insulted the dignity of the senate. Your Majesty has given me advice ; it is but just I should impart some in return. I think that you attach some value to one who has frequently aided you, and who still possesses power of doing so. Therefore, most gracious lady, endeavour to afford me such a satisfaction, and as soon as possible." The Queen, though inwardly enraged, answered with a gracious appearance, " Your desire, my lord, is only just, and the confidence you place in us well becomes one who even in this very hour has acquired a new right to every good service it is in our power to do ; but," continued she in a tone of complaint, " will your Queen be able to answer that confidence ? The heart of the King inclines no more to his mother, since yon Lithuanian has stept in between the Queen and her son. He listens no more either to our voice or to that of his country, and his ears are only open to the whispers of the syren. It is very doubtful if she will employ the power she has attained in

such an inconceivable manner for your service, and for promoting what is right, for indeed, if report says the truth, the Grand Marshal is not an especial favourite of hers." "What has the Grand Marshal to do with the widow of Stanislaw Gastold?" said Kmita haughtily; "it is with the King he has to do, and not with the husband of Barbara; and truly Sigismund must renounce one of these titles." "Fate seems to have become unfavourable to the long-continued fortunes of the Jagellonian family," said Bona, "and has placed on the throne a subject, that she might draw down into her own nothingness the last scion of Wladyslaw Jagellon. But it is the duty of those who call themselves the guardians of the throne, and among them yours, my lord Grand Marshal, to prevent its degradation."

The Grand Marshal, who seemed resolved to maintain the preponderance which circumstances had given him, replied, "I have nothing against Barbara. The family of the Radziwills is an illustrious one, and not less so than many foreign families, who, being of a less ancient date, rose to sovereignty in no very honourable manner; but I do not choose that the present wife of Sigismund Augustus should be Queen; because I, the Grand Marshal, have declared so at the assembly of the

Diet; and," he continued with less concealed irony, "because Firley has said it should be so." The pang which these words caused to strike at the Queen's heart was doubly felt; but the last sentence wounded her in the weakest point. She laid her hand on her pallid brow, and could not refrain from repeating, "Because Firley said it should be so!" She then continued speaking to the Grand Marshal, and said almost breathlessly, "Your words are those of a man, my lord Kmita, and we hope that you will also show a perseverance becoming a man. The King's obstinacy sets our will at defiance, and we know not where the treasonable projects of yon Tarnowski will end; and we are necessitated to defer till the future what the present denies to us." "The future!" replied Kmita sulkily; "but not a too distant one. It has pleased my lords and brothers not to accept the resignation by which your son's Majesty was to sacrifice the glory of his family to a passion, the constancy of which those who have had the honour of being long acquainted with him are surprised at. It must, according to the law of the land, remain as it is now till the next Diet; and that it be not too long postponed shall be the care of the Primate and myself." "Be it so, then, as it cannot be otherwise," exclaimed Bona with

uncontrolled vexation ; “ let this Barbara Radziwill be the King’s wife, so long as the light shines on her ; but my daughter she shall never be, if the decorum of royal dignity obliges me to bear what I am unable to change ; but time quickly passes, and she will not escape her doom.”

Just as the Queen began to speak the door of the apartment was opened, and closed again, without having been heard by either the Queen or the Marshal, the subject of their conversation having completely engrossed them. “ Act as you like, lady Queen,” retorted Kmita ; “ but I repeat once more that I have nothing against the consort of the King, but I will not have the Queen,—and the republic must be of my opinion.” Bona now turned round a little, and saw standing close by her, like a dark apparition of midnight, the black veiled form of the Princess of Mazovia.

The general order which the servants had received, never to exclude the illustrious cousin, had not been reversed on the present occasion ; and it had been altogether forgotten during the stormy visit of the Palatine. Anna had been permitted therefore to enter, without opposition or announcement, the apartment of the Queen, whose conversation relative to the failure of her projects she apparently had over-

heard, and beheld the changed countenance of her ancient foe divested of the mask of hypocrisy. Bona remained quite motionless for a moment, and her strong mind tottering under the monstrous burden which the last hour had laid on it ; but she speedily recovered herself, and met the lady of Podolia with her usual appearance of pleasure and dignity, and bade her welcome. But Anna did not long permit her to rest in a state of uncertainty. “ I should almost fear,” she commenced with the cutting coldness of anger, “ that I was not quite so welcome as Your Grace assures me I am,—particularly at a moment when I see the confirmation of what I have heard from many sources, and witness the generous renunciation of unasked-for promises you held out to me, to what you call the inevitable necessity.” “ Then as you already know,” said the Queen, interrupting this hostile speech, “ it is not necessary to repeat what has befallen us, or to renew our grief ; and the mother who has been so grievously offended dares to hope for some sympathy in a relation who is herself a mother.” “ You do not well, lady Queen, to remind me that I have a daughter ; and you know only too well that it becomes you not to speak of family connexions to Anna of Mazovia, for what I owe you

as a daughter and a sister neither yourself nor this worthy lord are ignorant of, and it now only rests with you to wound me as a mother.”—“Can we controul the decisions of destiny, or be answerable to you for what does not lie in our own power?”—“Your Majesty did not speak thus some little time ago,” replied Anna with a fiery look; “neither did the letters which the lord Palatine now present despatched to me. I then heard that the King was tired of his unusual constancy; that the secret wishes of his heart prompted him to agree with the wishes of the republic; and that he only awaited its voice in order to separate himself from his wife with due decorum. Was it not so, lady Queen? was it not so, lord Grand Marshal? This voice has been loudly expressed, and Sigismund Augustus allowed to speak as much as they chose the men who are either too cowardly or too powerless to act; and when I have expressed doubts awakened by my own experience, was it not this noble senator who assured me that the command of the Roman Curia would unite in the decision of the Diet, and the general voice overcome the King’s obstinacy? Well, the Diet has made its decision, and all rests as it was before. Nothing has been heard from Rome, in spite of Spanish and Austrian intervention, in spite of

all the emperors and kings whom Her Majesty calls cousins. A short time ago Your Majesty found fault with my want of confidence, and boasted of means to overcome all obstacles. I believed you, most gracious lady, because I know the riches of your arsenal, and the many secret weapons hidden there ; and as I believed you, I now expect that you will use those weapons for the daughter of the Piasts which you before turned against her !” Peter Kmita was on the point of replying to the harsh words of the Princess by a still harsher answer ; but an imploring look of the Queen, and the unpleasant idea of being the third in a quarrel between two women, induced him to suppress his anger, and he retired into a remote corner of the spacious closet, leaving them to themselves. “ It has pleased Your princely Grace,” began Bona half aloud and with a sort of confidential reproof, “ to mention before a third person certain things which even between two cannot be spoken of without an unpleasant feeling, and not till the most direful necessity compels us to it. How could we speak of such matters in presence of this Palatine, whose unbridled pride rejoices in what presses on the royal house, and who only a few days ago attempted with so rough a hand to touch even the Crown itself, in order to snatch it

from the head of him who we hope will share it with your daughter ; under the eyes of that man whose selfishness has within an hour changed from an open foe into a doubtful friend ? You heard the words which I spoke in the deep grief of my soul, —you have also heard that in his republican pride he rejects only the Queen, and not the consort of my son.” Anna then said with malicious joy, exulting in the triumph that she had so visibly obtained over her detested foe, “ But now we are without witnesses, and there is nothing to prevent Your Grace from explaining yourself as openly as you please, or as you are able.” This slight sting was hardly felt by the Queen, so deeply had she been afflicted by more rancorous wounds ; and she continued with the same manner as before, “ With justice have you reminded me of the power which I used to possess ; and it shall not be exerted in vain, lady Princess. I thank you, in these dark moments, for having called out that spirit which has never deserted me at the time of my utmost need. I feel I am myself again. Light and power have returned to me ; and in their strength I will renew my oath, that the widow of Gastold shall never be Queen, and shall not prevent another from sitting on that throne, which she herself shall never mount but at the peril of

her life." "You will mock, perhaps, the easy belief of the Princess, who is now only a country gentlewoman," replied Anna expressively, "when I tell you that I believe you once more. But mock me not, lady Queen; for recollect that days and weeks, slowly passing on, secretly accumulate combustible matter, and when the day of reckoning suddenly comes, the mine is sprung, and the unstable walls, built on a treacherous foundation of pride, are at once laid in ruins." "You prophesy justly, illustrious cousin," replied Bona to this threat; "it is true that fate may surprise an unprepared one; but the daughter-in-law that was forced upon us should look better to it; for she has ascended a throne which conceals a grave. We have clever miners, who know how to lay cunning trains; and doing it noiselessly, their effects are the surer." "Your Majesty may spare yourself the trouble of recounting the means which I know you are not nice in choosing. Nothing concerns me but the fulfilment of your promises:—a Piast does not desire your confidence." After having said these words, she took her leave with a solemn reverence; and the Queen, who wanted solitude, desired the Grand Marshal to attend her illustrious relative.

When they left the apartment, Bona threw

herself into an arm-chair in a state of complete exhaustion, and pressing her left hand on her heart, exclaimed, “ Is there no end to my humiliation ? Can there be more confusion heaped on the head of the widow of Sigismund ? O woe to me ! what feeling has remained unhurt in this hour of bitterness ? Have I not been wounded as a mother, as a queen, and as a woman ? Curse on my folly, when at the death of that old man, of that walking corpse, to whom I was chained in the prime of my youth, I dreamed of perceiving a better futurity ! but with him my greatness has sunk into the grave. In vain have I entrusted this Sigismund Augustus to the effeminate care of women, that he might remain a flexible tool in my hands ; in vain have I surrounded him from his cradle with enervating flattery and all the wiles of Italian policy. He is grown insolent, and he now turns against me those very arms which I myself have put into his hands. Those who formerly looked anxiously for my favour, now court the rising sun ; and this Kmita, on whom I have heaped so many favours wrung from my reluctant husband, and which are the foundation of his pride,—this very Kmita dares to affront the Queen in her own palace, and to attack the majesty of the throne, which is only defended by a

powerless widow and a thoughtless youth. I have read the triumph of scorn on the brow of my mortal enemy ; I saw her enjoying the misery of that person who had formerly cast her out of her ducal palace, and driven her into banishment and poverty. I have been obliged to confess to her,—Bona Sforza has been obliged to confess that which, though it should be done, ought never to have been confessed ; and that smooth-tongued traitor, Firley—curse on every feeling of the heart which interferes with the schemes of the head ! The royal oak stands alone, stripped of its leaves by the blasts of autumn, and deserted by the crowd to whom it can no longer afford any shelter, and the axe is already laid to its withered trunk ; but it shall not fall by its stroke. It has prospered by the storm. May a storm, therefore, destroy it, so that it may crush by its fall all the living creatures around ! Rejoice not in thy victory, my royal son ! Thy cup of happiness is already filled ; but before it touches thy lips it will be turned into wormwood. And thou, Barbara, beware that instead of a royal diadem a sepulchral wreath may not entwine thy hair ! Exult not in your pride, Tarnowski and Kmita ! The shade of the once all-powerful Bona still hovers around the throne, and he who occupies

it shall not give way to you; and though his heart may remain joyless till it descends into the grave, yet the royal purple shall cover it to the end, lest posterity should say that Bona has destroyed the house of her husband, and that, like her own race, it has sunk into darkness and oblivion. O Sigismund! there is only one happiness for monarchs, and that which rejoices the vulgar mind flies from the palace of royalty; and if thou seekest to seize it, it will become an empty shadow in thy grasp. And thou, odious wretch, who triest to patch thy beggarly habiliments with the shreds of faded purple, do not sneer in such a manner! do not, in thy imaginary greatness, look down so cold and hostile on her who is far above thee in dignity and mind! The confidence of monarchs, wrung from them in an unguarded moment, is a dangerous gift: like Pandora's box, all evils spring from it, and nothing but delusive hope remains behind. Thou wouldest conjure up an action which should be done for thy interest, as thou dreamest; and thou turnest from it in hypocritical ignorance, yet anxious to witness its approach. Thou shalt turn disappointed from Barbara's grave, which thou intendest as the stepping-stone for thy daughter's greatness; scorned thou shalt turn from it, and soon after-

wards wail in despair over another grave. Weeks and months may pass before it will be all fulfilled; and till then I must rely on the only friend that has not deserted me,—on the powerful art of dissimulation. Weeks and months may pass, yet the day will come at last: then Bona will snatch from the hands of the King his favourite toy, break it, and throw it to you, ye senators and knights. This loss will incense his widowed heart, and he will trample upon you, and avenge his own wrongs and mine!” She now violently rang her silver bell, and gave orders that the lady Falczeska should be called.

N O T E S.

CHAPTER I.

1. *Nicholas Radziwill*, “Palatine of Vilna, Grand Marshal and Chancellor of Lithuania, in the 16th century, was a very illustrious man. He travelled into most parts of Europe in his youth, and was so skilful in bodily exercises that he surpassed all the gentlemen of his time in that particular. He had a considerable share in the esteem and friendship of King Sigismund Augustus; was captain of his guards, and commanded thrice in Livonia. He there obtained a signal victory over the Germans, whereby he dispossessed them of that province and subjected it to Poland. He brought to the King the Archbishop of Riga and the Grand Master of the Knights of Livonia, and delivered up to him in full senate the seal of that Order, and the cross that the Grand Master used to wear about his neck. This noble expedition crowned him with glory; when he was sent ambassador to Charles V. and to Ferdinand, King of the Romans, he stood godfather to Archduke Ernest. He died 1567, and was carried to the grave on the shoulders of his four sons. I must not omit that he turned Protestant, and caused the Bible to be printed in the Polish language. His lady, Elizabeth Szydlowiecka, assisted him eagerly in endeavouring to settle the Reformation.”—*Bayle's Dictionary*.

2. *Lord King, lady Queen.*—Usual terms at that time in Poland.

3. *Neminem captivabimus nisi jure victum.*—‘ We will imprison none except convicted by law.’ The Polish *Habeas Corpus*.

4. *Assembly of Lwowor Leopol,* under Sigismund the First. See Introduction.

5. *Universals.*—Letters patent convoking the Diet.

CHAPTER II.

1. *The Dukes of Piastian lineage, of Ratibor, Liegnitz, &c.*—Silesia formerly constituted a part of Poland, but when Boleslaw the Third, or the Wrymouth, divided at his death, in the year 1139, the empire among his sons, Silesia became a separate principality, and was never reunited with Poland. The Piastian dynasty continued till the latter part of the seventeenth century.

2. *In the order of precedence, &c.*—The Duke of Prussia, according to the order of precedence observed at that time, occupied a place between the Palatine of Lenczyce and the Starost of Samogitia.

3. *Widow of John Zapolga.*—When Lewis Jagellon, king of Hungary, son of Wladislaw Jagellon, king of Bohemia and Hungary, and nephew to Sigismund the First, of Poland, was killed at the battle of Mohatch, in the year 1526, the Hungarians elected for their king John Zapolya, Waywode of Transylvania. But Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria, and brother to Charles the Fifth, found a strong party in the kingdom which declared in his favour, and he succeeded in driving his opponent out of the country. John Zapolya retired into Poland, where he was hospitably re-

ceived by Tarnowski, (See Note on Tarnowski, vol. I,) but afterwards, having called to his succour the Turkish emperor Soliman, he recovered Hungary. After his death, 1541, his widow, Queen Isabella, the same who is introduced here, maintained for a long time, with the aid of Soliman, the rights of her minor son John Zapolya, surnamed *the Orphan*. Finally it was agreed that the young Zapolya should content himself with the possession of Transylvania, and resign Hungary to Ferdinand of Austria.

CHAPTER III.

1. *Wschowa* (Fraustadt) and *Leszno* (Lissa).—Both these towns, situated in the present Grand Duchy of Posen, were renowned for the Protestant schools established there since the 16th century. Leszno, in German Lissa or Lissau, is known in this country by the popular novels of a religious character, Emma of Lissau and the Orphans of Lissau. It was the patrimonial estate of the family Leszczyński, and its last owner of that name was Stanislaus Leszczyński, King of Poland, and afterwards Duke of Bar and Lotharingia, father to Maria Leszczyńska, queen of Lewis XV. of France. Lissa belongs now to prince Antony Sulkowski, and the Protestant schools of this town are in a very flourishing condition, which may be particularly ascribed to the patronage of the noble owner of that place.

2. *Philistines*.—A term of contempt given by the students of the German universities to all who do not belong to their community.

3. *Francesco Lismanini*.—An Italian confessor to Queen Bona; he was sent to Geneva to dispute with Calvin, but he embraced his tenets, married, and remained at Geneva.

4. *Kœnigsberg*.—The university of this town was founded by the prince who is here introduced, who first caused also the New Testament to be printed in Polish, A.D. 1552.

CHAPTER IV.

1. *Sausages and Dantzic brandy*.—A common superstition which was generally spread by the priests among the lower classes in Poland.

CHAPTER VI.

1. *Duke Janus, &c.*.—See Introduction.

CHAPTER VII.

1. *Suburb Cazimir*.—So called from Cazimir the great King of Poland : it was inhabited by Jews.

2. *The Bald Mountain*.—A common appellation for mountains elevated so high that their tops produce no vegetation whatever. The Polish *Lissa Gora*, German *Kahlemburg*, and the Spanish *Chimborasso*, have the same origin and signify the same thing. According to a superstition common to the Slavonic and Germanic nations, the Witches held their nightly meetings on the tops of such mountains.

3. *Starostine*.—Wife of a Starost.

CHAPTER VIII.

1. *The highest prize, &c.*.—It is generally supposed that there was at that time in Poland a strong party who wished

to remove from the throne Sigismund Augustus, and to put Tarnowski in his place.

2. *Dumka*.—A ballad of the Ukraine, sung in a melancholy tone, from *dumac* to muse.

CHAPTER IX.

1. *Wawel*.—An appellation of the hill on which the royal castle of Cracow was built.

2. *Canonia*.—A street where the canons of the cathedral of Cracow had their houses.

CHAPTER X.

1. *Twarzeyz*.—Companion, a noble private soldier.

2. *Hipciu*.—Polish diminutive of Hippolyte.

CHAPTER XI.

1. *Urochs*.—The Bison. *Bos Taurus*, Linn. “The Bison is distinguished not only by his size but by the superior depth and shagginess of his hair, which about the neck, head, and shoulders is sometimes of such a length as to touch the ground; his horns are rather short, sharp-pointed, extremely strong, and stand distant from each other at their bases, like those of a common bull. His colour is sometimes a dark blackish brown and sometimes rufous brown; his eyes large and fierce; his limbs extremely strong, and his whole aspect in the highest degree savage and

gloomy."—Shaw's Natural History, vol. 2, part ii. p. 329. The statement of the learned author we have just quoted, as well as that of the renowned Cuvier, (Regne Animal, tom. i. page 170,) that the Bison is found not only in Lithuania, but also in the Carpathian mountains are not correct. These animals were formerly very frequent in many parts of the ancient Polish dominions, but now they are confined to a single spot called the Forest of Bialawieza, situated in ancient Lithuania and the present Russian government of Grodno. It is remarkable that the Urochs which is found in the forest of Bialawieza, is the only variety of this species, and that there is not in any other part of the world another of the very same kind. The American Bison has many material differences from the Lithuanian one. In order to preserve the race of this curious animal, the Russian Government has prohibited its destruction under the severest penalties. According to Baron Brinken, who has published at Warsaw a very interesting description of the Forest of Bialawieza, the number of the Urochs or Bisons existing in the year 1826 was 732 heads.

CHAPTER XII.

1. *Shlachtitz*, noble.—This term was particularly applied to the lower nobility.

2. *Paysakis*, &c.—Jewish terms; *paysakis* signifies 'curls of hair' which the Jews in Poland wear on both sides of their head, always covered with a little skull-cap; *shiksell*, a girl; *bachor*, a boy; *treff*, unclean, forbidden meats; *coshier*, clean, permitted.

3. *Natus in little Poland, possessionatus in Russia*.—In Poland to be eligible to any dignity or office it was requisite

to be *natus et possessionatus*, that is, to be of genteel blood and a landowner.

4. *Bug*.—The river which formerly divided the kingdom of Poland from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

5. *Czenstochowa*.—A renowned miraculous image, and a place of resort for pilgrims not only from Poland but also from the adjacent countries. Czenstochowa lies close to the Silesian frontier : it is situated on a rock which until a few years back was fortified. It has sustained many sieges in ancient as well as in modern times.

CHAPTER XIII.

1. *Minor castellans*.—A name given to the castellans of some insignificant towns or districts. They had an equal right of voting with the other senators, but they were inferior in point of precedence, and sat on benches in the hall of the senate, whilst the rest of the senators occupied chairs.

2. *Swords zczerbiec*,—pronounced *shcherbietz*.—It signifies ‘the notched.’ When Boleslaw the Brave entered Kiow, in the beginning of the 11th century, he gave a blow with his sword on the gate called the Golden, which caused a notch that gave to it this appellation. This sword was always used at the coronation of the kings of Poland.

3. *Lwow*.—See Introduction.

4. The fact alluded to here is historical, and was considered as a signal mark of the growing power of the Protestants. Raphael Leszczynski is the ancestor of Maria Leszczynska, Queen of France.

5. *A catholics*.—The term that was given in Poland to

all those who did not conform to the Roman Catholic persuasion.

6. *Instigator of the Crown*.—Attorney-general of the kingdom.

CHAPTER XIV.

1. *Szlachta*.—Nobles, plural of *Szlachtiz*.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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