

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

BY  
ALEXANDER BRONIKOWSKI:

DONE INTO ENGLISH  
BY A POLISH REFUGEE.

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“ 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*.

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CHAPTER I.

“ Oh! how impatience gains upon the soul  
When the long-promised hour of joy draws near!  
How slow the tardy moments seem to roll!  
What spectres rise of inconsistent fear!  
To the fond doubting heart its hopes appear  
Too brightly fair, too sweet to realise;  
All seem but day-dreams of delight too dear!  
Strange hopes and fears in painful contest rise,  
While the scarce trusted bliss seems but to cheat the  
eyes.”

MRS. TIGHE'S *Psyche*.

**T**HE Diet was ended, and it was one of the first, but, alas! not the last, in the history of Poland which ended without having enacted any of the proposed measures. The magnates and the nobles had returned to their homes, some of them to await the events which might take place, and others to prepare those events. The King returned to his

castle at Cracow, sacrificing his anxious desire of going to Vilna to the necessity which required his presence in the capital of Poland. But his habits were totally changed, and a constant gloom and an imperious behaviour usurped the place of his former cheerfulness and courtesy; and it appeared that since the lawfulness of his sway was questioned, he was resolved to exercise it with redoubled force. The spring arrived, but it did not bring back those parties of pleasure which formerly even the severity of winter did not prevent. Sigismund Augustus seldom appeared in public, and when he showed himself to the citizens of Cracow, he was always surrounded by numerous guards, and attended by a large retinue of armed nobles. He rarely appeared in the apartments of his mother, where he never remained longer than the strictest rules of etiquette required, carefully avoiding all the confidential advances of the widowed Queen. Moved by the entreaties of his real friends, he at last consented to make a kind of reparation to Kmita; but he did it reluctantly and with a haughty condescension, expressing at the same time his strong disapprobation of the Grand Marshal's past conduct, and seeming quite indifferent whether Kmita was really satisfied with this reparation, or concealed his grudge for a more fa-

avourable opportunity of expressing it. The latter was really the case. The proud old man knew that the moment when he could oppose his King was gone, and that the language allowed to a senator in the assembly of his colleagues, if assumed by a single individual, would brand him as a rebel. He therefore, like many others discontented, awaited the convocation of a new Diet, entertaining meanwhile continually in his castle of Wisniec the nobles of Grand Poland. He succeeded also in drawing into his circle many Lithuanians, even near relations of Barbara.

The Grand General appeared seldom at Court, or even in the capital, spending the greatest part of his time at his fortified castle of Tarnow, the walls of which were constantly crowded by the nobility of Little Poland and Russia; a circumstance which was reported to the King with a variety of malicious comments. The almost filial confidence of the young monarch in Tarnowski subsided into a cold formality. This change, however, was but apparent; for Sigismund Augustus was frequently seen at a late hour going muffled in his cloak to the Christopher Palace, and many times, when the King was supposed to enjoy the pleasures of the chase at the castle of Lobzow, he spent that time at Tarnow. This was known only

to a few chosen attendants, on whose fidelity the King could entirely depend. Firley frequented the apartments of the Queen-mother as usual, and as if he was quite unconscious of having done any act that could have displeased her. But the Italian servants of the Queen had no longer an opportunity to make, as formerly, indiscreet comments on certain *tête-à-têtes*, which were now reserved for others, whose arrival escaped even the curiosity of courtiers. The King now became a frequent visitor in the house of the Princess of Mazovia, often forgetting his cares in a confidential conversation with his little cousin, as he called Helena. He sometimes even regained his ancient cheerfulness, indulging himself in jests, which, however, he never did in the circle of his courtiers. He was frequently accompanied in these visits by Firley and Zebrzydowski, who were now among the most confidential advisers of the King.

The summer was far advanced, and the first of August, which was the twenty-ninth birthday of the King, was just at hand, when, one sultry evening, two young horsemen, with a few attendants, were seen pursuing their way along the banks of the Vistula. They rode slowly, in order to refresh their tired horses in the cooling evening breeze, which slightly curled the waves of the river. The

elder of them seemed unwilling to allow his noble courser that rest which delayed for a few moments his arrival at the goal of his wishes, while the other seemed to move reluctantly, and as if he had left behind him some dear object. The sun had already set, but the royal castle, towering on the Wawel hill, and the seventy churches of the capital, were distinctly visible through the purple haze which succeeded the last glow of the evening. The elder of them was putting his horse again into a trot, when the younger said, "My cousin Hipciu, it is true that the horses are rested, but I am myself tired and unable to advance further without taking some refreshment. Let us, therefore, repose for a few moments on this fine turf under these elm-trees." Hippolyte was not much pleased with Stanislaw Lacki's proposition, but as he saw him really in want of refreshment he assented to his request. They got down from their horses, and heartily enjoyed the refreshments which their servants spread for them on the green-sward. Hippolyte's looks were incessantly directed towards Cracow, the view of which was growing by degrees more and more dim in the darkening horizon, and the smile of hope animated his countenance; but the eyes of Stanislaw were fixed on the waves of the river, as if he wished to

follow the course of its waters, which ran in a direction opposite to Cracow; and he looked so pensive that it was scarcely possible to recognise in him that merry boy whose sportive sallies succeeded at times to cheer even the sullen brow of his father. "Are you not glad to be again at Cracow, my dear Stas," asked Hippolyte, "and to appear there in quite different circumstances than before,—no more as an insignificant boy, but as a fine page in an embroidered jacket and fringed cloak?" "By no means," replied Lacki; and having put back his filled goblet without touching its contents, he continued after a pause, "When I look on the threatening battlements of yonder gloomy castle with its grey towers, it seems to me as if misfortune dwelt within its walls, and as if the curse of Heaven hovered over its proud pinnacles." "You see at once a Lithuanian!" said Boratynski, laughing; "he never cares anything about our beautiful capital; and to him Vilna, with its wooden houses, is the finest place in the world. It is the effect of the twilight which makes the castle appear so gloomy: you should see it from hence when the sun is rising, how beautifully his rays are reflected on the high arched windows of the palace, and on the gilt cupola of the sepulchral chapel of the

Jagellonian family.” The youth answered as if in a reverie, and unconscious of what he said, “It is true the morning passes quickly over; the day also; the twilight of the evening arrives, and is followed by the night; but the beams of the rising sun often shine over a grave.” “Stas, my dear Stas!” exclaimed Hippolyte, affectionately taking his hand, “what is the matter with you? I have never seen you in such a state, though you are exceedingly changed since your accident. Has your cure not been complete? Do you still feel any pain?” “None, none whatever!” exclaimed Lacki with great animation; then continued in a lower tone, “and yet—yes: but do not question me at this moment, my dear cousin. The view of this town oppresses my breast, and it seems to me that before we shall reach it misfortune will overtake us.” “You are ill, Stanislaw,” said Boratynski; “our long ride in this hot weather has probably done you harm; but since that accident which happened to you in the forest you are continually in such a strange mood; sometimes you are so dejected, and sometimes you are so wild in your mirth. Indeed, since the misfortune you had of meeting that raging urochs—” “Oh, do not call that a misfortune which was the fairest moment of my short life; I mean the sa-



tisfaction of having fulfilled the duties of a faithful servant." "Then cheer up! Will you allow the best years of your youth to be spoiled by a sple- netic humour? Leave grief to the time when you will have real misfortune to complain of; for, be- lieve me, it comes but too quickly. Let us con- tinue our way." "Yes, that time comes but too quickly, and often sooner than we suppose," re- plied Stanislaw, slowly rising from the ground. While he spoke a woman appeared from behind a cluster of elm-trees. She was dressed like a pea- sant, and her face was partly muffled in a white cloth. She appeared to be very old, and her fea- tures dark and gipsy-like. She approached the travellers, and bowing very low requested them, with a voice rendered almost unintelligible by the white linen which muffled her mouth, to give her some refreshment, as she was very much exhausted by the heat of the day. Though Hippolyte was in great haste, he kindly reached to this old woman a cup filled with wine, and the remains of their repast. Having done so, he was going to join their servants, who were waiting for them with the horses on the high road, but the stranger, who had emptied the goblet with one draught, said, "Do not be in such a hurry, high-born lord; it is not the custom with our nation to receive any-

thing without payment ; and although I have neither gold nor silver, nor even copper, yet still I can repay you with a proof of our national science, which predicts futurity." Hippolyte was by no means disposed to accept this untimely proposition ; but Stanislaw seizing on the idea with all the animation of his age, besought his cousin so eagerly that at last he consented.

" To you, my fair lordling," said she in a simpering tone, " belongs the precedence, for you despise not the Egyptian art like others, who become convinced of its truth at their own expense. Be so good as to give me that milk-white little hand, which, as it seems, has only been used to handle the fan and the glass, and has not yet grasped the sword ?" Blushing slightly, and with some vexation, Stanislaw held out his hand. " Fine, magnificent lineaments !" muttered the prophetess : " What do I see, the love-knots already tied ! And you have done gallantly, that one must confess ; and," she continued in a lower voice, " your thoughts do not rest on a lowly object, for the cross you see here signifies a lady of very high rank ; yes, as one might say, a lady that has under her sway both lands and vassals. Now, you are indeed what I call a brave youth. Only one moment's patience," she continued,

holding firmly the hand which Stanislaw, vexed by her words, would have withdrawn, “—only one moment, sweet youth. Glorious contextures! Pity only, that the lines of life are twice cut through. Look here! that is it near this cross; but it seems that it is already over, and you have encountered some great danger for the sake of this fair lady; that is represented by this cross. Take courage, youth, take courage, but do not venture too much; for you see that at the second crossings of the lines life fails altogether, and again for the lady of your thoughts. Be on your guard, be on your guard! there are animals more fierce than even a bear or an urochs.” Lacki at last got rid of the old woman; and in order to conceal the confusion caused by her words, requested the impatient Hippolyte that he also might have his fortune told. The old woman meanwhile looked to the river, and seeing that a small bark manned with some boatmen was moored at its bank, cried out in a yelling voice, “I will not tell a fortune to him; he knows already his fate: a bishop’s crosier, a pilgrim’s staff, or even a beggar’s crutch. Do I not say truly, my high-born lord courtier?” Both words and voice recalled to Hippolyte’s mind the most disagreeable moments of his life. “Hellish monster!” ex-

claimed he, rushing forward to seize the gipsy ; but she sprang with an inconceivable quickness into the boat, which was directly pushed from the shore, and she cried to them in a mocking voice, " Make haste, make haste to arrive at Cracow. I also will be there as soon as I have gathered herbs, fine spicy herbs from the cliffs of the Carpathians." Her cries and laughter continued till they were lost in the distance ; and when they had mounted their horses Stanislaw asked his cousin, " Do you know her ?" " Yes, indeed I do," answered Hippolyte with a sigh. " Did I not tell you, cousin, that ere we entered that gloomy city misfortune would overtake us ?" " If not positive misfortune, at least its harbinger," replied Hippolyte. Our young travellers performed the remainder of their journey silently and with melancholy thoughts, and it was already dark when they reached the royal castle. However, as the message with which Hippolyte was entrusted suffered no delay, he immediately betook himself to the apartments of the King, but it was signified to him that his Majesty was absent. As he stood there, uncertain what he should do, the Court Marshal Firley passed by : he stopped as soon as he perceived him, and having greeted him with much kindness said, " Welcome to Cracow, my

young friend! His Majesty impatiently waits for the intelligence of which you doubtless are the bearer." "It is therefore necessary I should hasten," replied Boratynski, "and I beseech you, my lord Palatine, to inform me where I may find the King." "He is now, as far as I know," replied Firley after a pause, "at Lobzow." "Then allow me to take my leave, and deliver this very night the despatches I am entrusted with." Firley shook his head and answered, "By no means; it might chance that you missed His Majesty. Await him here, where he will assuredly return before morning. And as he perceived that Hippolyte was still undecided, he continued, saying, "I will take the responsibility of the delay on myself, and will not fail to make due mention of your punctuality." He then quickly departed, leaving the young Boratynski relieved from his anxiety about the despatches he was entrusted with.

Barbara Radziwill had left Vilna, and arrived with a considerable escort and half incognito, after a hurried journey, at the royal castle of Ivanovic, situate in the palatinate of Sandomir. She despatched thence the young Boratynski with a letter to her royal husband, and ordered her faithful page to accompany him.

The friendly reception which he met from Firley made Hippolyte quite easy about the King, and he had no doubt whatever that his former trespass would be entirely forgotten by His Majesty. Still one pardon remained to be obtained: the idea of again seeing Helena Odrowonz filled his heart with joy, but the thought that perhaps she might remember his fault scared away sleep from his wearied eyes: he left his couch at the first dawn of morning, went to the still slumbering Stanislaw, and observed that he was tormented by evil dreams. He was throwing his arms about with violent gestures, as if he would repulse an enemy; perspiration rolled in large drops over his fevered cheek, and his lips movèd convulsively. "Retire!" cried he with the indistinct voice of one who talks in his sleep, "away from hence, away! Only over my dead body shalt thou find thy way to —" Here the words died away in an audible murmur; but soon he cried aloud, "Away, I say! I fear thee not, even were thy monstrous horns made of polished steel! Here is my breast! Strike here, not there! Right, the line of life has two separations! Now it is through. Oh! how cooling is the kiss on my brow, and how well I feel myself after it! Poor Stas! my poor father! adieu, father!" Hippolyte was going to awaken his cousin, when

he sighed deeply, turned to the wall, and became composed in his sleep. "It is his adventure in the forest," said Hippolyte to himself, "which agitates him in his dreams, the remembrance of which generally occupies him too much. This event seems to have produced a most extraordinary impression on his young mind, and the playful boy is become before his time a thoughtful young man. He said himself once that the horns of the urochs had thrown him at the gate of Paradise, that they had given him a foretaste of the happiness of the blessed, and that he became wretched at his return to the earth. Poor Stas—so thou callest thyself; yes indeed, poor Stas, the tree of thy life has bloomed too soon; may the frost not destroy it before the fruit be formed!"

Many other melancholy reflections oppressed his breast, and he left his room to breathe the fresh air of the morning on a terrace of the garden. As he was passing through the still deserted corridors of the castle his ear was struck by a disagreeable sound, like that of the whining or howling of some animal; at the same time he heard steps as if of some persons walking quickly but cautiously, and as he bent round the corner of a gallery he saw just before him the physician of the Queen-mother, doctor Leonardo Monti, followed closely behind by

Assano, who bore a small chest in his left hand, and kept with his right hand under his cloak something that appeared to move, as if it was a living creature. It was evident that the Italian wished to pass without being noticed, but as he was too near to do so he stopped and bid our friend welcome. During the exchange of the usual civilities the Neapolitan's burden became very restless, and at last a large dog escaped from his powerful grasp, moaning and barking, and it crouched fawning at Hippolyte's feet, as if it sought his protection. The doctor frowned at his servant, then turned smiling to Hippolyte and said, "It seems as if the dog could foresee the fate which awaits him as a sacrifice to the anatomical science. I lately read in a treatise that certain organs of this kind of animal resemble those of the human body, and I am resolved to make a comparison, which, if it verifies the assertion of my colleague, will be of some use in the treatment of many diseases." The fate of the poor animal, and the confidence which it seemed to place in Hippolyte's protection, excited his compassion; he stooped to caress the trembling dog, and interceded for him. But the doctor paid no attention to his request, and alleging want of time, took leave of him, while Assano seized the unfortunate creature, which con-



tinually strove to escape, howling and turning its head towards Hippolyte, until he lost sight of them all in the windings of the gallery.

The morning was already advanced and still there was nothing heard in the castle to announce the arrival of the King. Hippolyte was unable to wait longer; he returned to his apartment, ordered his servants to inform him as soon as the King arrived, and hastened with his cousin Stanislaw to the house of the Princess of Mazovia. When they approached it they found at a side gate a numerous train of servants, and many splendid richly caparisoned horses, all covered with dust and much heated. It was not agreeable to our friend that after so long an absence his first interview with his beloved should be interrupted by indifferent and perhaps even ill-disposed witnesses, but as it was now too late to return they entered the house. They found in the hall a numerous assemblage of distinguished persons. The fair daughter of the house sat doing the honours to her fatigued guests at a table covered with every kind of refreshment; on one side of her the King, and on the other Andreas Zebrzydowski, bishop of Cujavia, and many other lords of the royal suite. Aside, at another table, not less provided with refreshments, was Hieronymus Sabinus, archdeacon of Cracow

and physician to the King. A sudden blush on Helena's cheek, and the absent reply which she gave to a question directed to her, proved that something extraordinary had disturbed her. The King looked towards the door and then on the embarrassed maiden; he then arose and advanced with much affability to meet the two young men. "From Ivanovic, we suppose?" he asked, half aloud; "we hope your mistress is quite well? You have made good haste, and we owe you thanks." Agitated and rejoiced by this rather unexpected kindness of the monarch, Hippolyte replied, "The most gracious lady has reached the end of her journey in perfect health, and this letter will give all the particulars to Your Majesty." "Not now, not here," interrupted Sigismund Augustus, turning away and motioning to him to conceal the letter; "we must now content ourselves with the intelligence which you give us verbally; we are not now in our own apartment, and we must apologize to the hostess of this house for the liberty we have taken in receiving our messengers in her presence." Then turning to Helena he said playfully, "We present to you, fair cousin, a young cavalier, who after a long absence has just returned to the capital, and the news he brings to us may well ensure him a favourable reception,

even should he not quite have deserved it. Give him welcome for our sake," he continued in a low voice, "even if you would not otherwise have done so, and we will be a guarantee for his good behaviour in future, for we have received the highest commendations of him; and as we have forgiven him so must you also, cousin, whether you will or not." Helena's eyes, glistening with tears, expressed her gratitude to the kind monarch; but Hippolyte was so overpowered by his feelings that he threw himself on his knees, pressing the hand of his sovereign to his lips. Helena was no longer able to restrain herself, and did the same with the other hand of the King. Sigismund Augustus remained for a short time enjoying the gratitude of the lovers, then quickly withdrew both his hands, and retiring back exclaimed, "It may easily be seen that the cavalier has been long in the service of the ladies, his gestures are become so expressive. But it is rather too early for such animated scenes and sentimentality, which appear very well in the evening, but a sorry accompaniment of a breakfast. As the representative of your mother you must take care, lady, that the hungry and thirsty companions of our ride be well provided with refreshments; but must greet this page, who, with your permis-

sion, fair cousin, has deserved our favour even better than his relative." He then approached Stanislaw, who stood afar off with downcast eyes, as if some secret guilt deprived him of all courage in the presence of his master. He laid his hand softly on the shoulder of the pale boy, and spoke to him with a friendly earnestness. "We are not ignorant, young nobleman, of what we owe to you, and we are not sufficiently rich to repay you the boon for the preservation of which we are indebted to you; but accept this," said he in a louder tone, taking a golden chain from his neck and putting it on that of the trembling boy, "and bear it as a token of royal gratitude and favour. But why do you tremble and cast down your eyes in such a manner?" continued he, resuming a jocular tone, "we hope that we have not such a horrible appearance as a urochs. Proceed, Stanislaw, in the same paths of devoted fidelity in which you have set out, and all the former faults of your father will be totally effaced, and the starosty of Pinsk will for many years own no other master than one of the Lacki family." The page, who had listened to the King silently and with his eyes fixed on the ground, pressed the hand of his royal master to his lips, while he moistened it with his tears, then bursting into a convulsive

sob suddenly left the hall. "A most extraordinary boy!" said Sigismund Augustus with astonishment; "is it always so with him when there is no wild bull to oppose?" At this moment the Princess of Mazovia entered the hall, and her appearance interrupted the conversation which was going on between the two lovers. "Permit us, illustrious cousin," said the King, pointing to Boratynski, "to present to you a new guest, whom business with us has conducted to your house: He is no stranger to you, and therefore we hardly need say that he is a most worthy nobleman and a servant whom we especially favour." "Such a commendation from Your Majesty's mouth," replied the Princess with an ambiguous smile, "would do honour even to persons of more consequence, and it remains for me only to wish that the lord Castellanic may always prove himself worthy of the royal favour." "He shall have the honour of making his first essay under your eyes," answered the King dryly, "for we have resolved to retain him about our person for the festivities of our natal day." Then turning to Hippolyte he continued, "The answer to the message you have brought will be conveyed by another messenger, and your mistress will not be sorry to receive an account of the festivals of the first of August from

an eyewitness ; and besides, we expect for that day your brother the Starost of Samborz." Having said this, the King took leave of the ladies and departed with his suite; Hippolyte followed them in all the extasy of revived hope. While they walked to the castle the King questioned him in a low voice about all the particulars concerning his beloved consort; and as they arrived in this manner at the castle they met a large dog, which drooped his head and tail and trembled as he ran. Some of the company exclaimed that the animal was mad, and betook themselves to flight or prepared for defence, when the dog stopped and crouched humbly at Hippolyte's feet, who immediately recognised it to be the same dog that he had seen dragged away by Assano. He stretched himself with a faint howl, and looking at Hippolyte as if in reproach for having abandoned him, he fell into a violent fit of convulsion, and dropped lifeless on the ground. "What could be the matter with this dog?" said the King to Boratynski; "he appeared to know you." Hippolyte was mute with horror, but the royal physician, who approached the animal, expressed his opinion that a violent poison had been administered to the dog. The King said, with the greatest

displeasure, " We will have no such cruelties, either on men or animals, and particularly we will not suffer that such experiments should be made in our castle. Therefore, sir Archdeacon, make an inquiry into this extraordinary case and give us a circumstantial report about it."

## CHAPTER II.

“Titles of honour add not to his worth  
Who is himself an honour to his title.”

FORD'S *Lady's Trial*.

Two days were passed in the preparations that a new entertainment required, more especially so from its being of an entirely new kind. It was a great masquerade in the Italian manner by which the birthday of the King was to be celebrated, and which in the middle of the sixteenth century was quite a new thing for Poland.

Bona introduced into that country many Italian customs, and among them also the gay offspring of serious Venice. The old King, however, averse to all noisy pleasures, never suffered this entertainment to take place at his Court, though in more important things he was but too obsequious to Bona's wishes; but Sigismund Augustus, resolved to be the master in all that was essential, was the more willing to accede to everything of this kind, and particularly to such an entertainment, which gave a fair opportunity for displaying all the magnificence of his Court. The superin-



tendence of the preparations, as well as the distribution of the characters, was entrusted to Firley, who was entitled to it by his office of Court Marshal, and by his great knowledge of the Western manners which he had acquired during his long travels : being as accomplished a courtier as a politician, he understood how to fulfill his duty to the satisfaction of every one.

Like many others, Hippolyte Boratynski was about to array himself in the dress prepared for the festival at Lobzow, which was that of a dignitary of the Court of Byzantium, thanking in his heart the Court Marshal for having chosen for him a part which would necessarily always keep him near Helena, who was to appear as a Princess of the Greek Imperial House, when a servant entered announcing the Castellan of Belzk. Wondering what reason could bring that senator, whom he only knew as a proud surly old man, he lingered in going to the door of the apartment to receive his guest, when it opened, and he found himself clasped in the arms of his brother. Both abandoned themselves to the delight of meeting again ; but the youngest, recollecting how much he deserved the rebuke of his elder, first withdrew from the embrace, and, stepping aside, with downcast eyes murmured some words of apology ; but

Peter Boratynski answered, smiling, "Console yourself, Hippolyte. As the King and the lady have forgiven you, I must do so likewise. It is necessary to confess that your good fortune is greater than your merit, and it has done more for you than you are aware of." "Already at my birth," exclaimed Hippolyte in an overflow of fraternal tenderness, "has it done everything for me, by giving me such a brother and friend; and now, in allowing me to see you again, what an agreeable surprise," continued he, "that instead of the Castellan of Belzk, who (by what mistake I know not) was announced, I should see my dear brother, and instead of the tedious visit of that tiresome old man, enjoy your presence!" Peter said archly, "The Castellan of Belzk is not so very old and tiresome; and though older and rather more steady, not at all more tiresome than the Starost of Samborz, whose particular friend he is. But that you may understand me, I must tell you all that has happened in the course of this day. I arrived here this morning, in order to present to His Majesty my congratulation on his birthday; and as soon as I had changed my travelling dress for a more suitable one, I repaired to the royal audience-hall, where I expected to find a numerous assembly; but, contrary to my expecta-

tion, I found the antechamber empty, and a chamberlain signified to me that it was His Majesty's pleasure to receive the senate and the nobility in the apartments of the Queen-mother. I accordingly went thither, and soon after I entered the Queen made her appearance. To my great astonishment she approached me, and said with the greatest affability, 'We are grateful to our royal son for having given us an opportunity of expressing our regard to such a worthy nobleman as you, by announcing to him a prize which he so much deserves. The King has granted you the vacated seat of the Castellan of Belzk.' Having expressed my thanks in due form of courtesy, I was surrounded by all the senators present, congratulating their new colleague; and the bishop Andreas Zebrzydowski said to me in a whisper, 'If your well-merited reward is not derived from the purest source, console yourself by the consideration that there is no good without alloy in this world; and how should the good counteract the evil, if the latter did not sometimes produce it, though against its own will?' The place and the assembly permitted me not to ask from Zebrzydowski, who directly left me, the explanation of his mysterious speech. The King appeared; and when it was my turn, I expressed, with the usual formula

of congratulation, my thanks for the favour I had received. The King listened to me with affability, and much more so than I had reason to expect after all that had happened at Piotrkow; but he left me without answering a word. I must confess that I was much vexed, having received a dignity to which I had as much right as any other, accompanied by such unpleasant circumstances; and I prepared to leave the castle, when suddenly the Court Marshal passing by seized my hand, and said in a whisper, 'If it pleases you, my lord and brother, will you approach His Majesty, who will directly retire into the recess of the last window of the gallery.' 'How have you contrived,' said the King, smiling, 'to manage the Marshal's staff to the dissatisfaction of all the parties? The party you seem to belong to, thinks you did not act with sufficient energy, while we thought that you have done too much; so that all opposite parties have united in the wish of removing you from an office which you perform so badly, and strange impulses have supported our own resolution. But be it as it may,' he continued earnestly, 'do not think that we are not fully aware of the manner how you have united the duties of a citizen and the feelings of a man, and that he in whom both are united will be the most able to promote always

and everywhere the welfare of the King and of the republic. We therefore consented with pleasure to the wish of the senate to receive in their ranks such a worthy member. You need not thank us for what was decreed to you by the general voice,' interrupted the King as he saw me about to speak; 'all that I can give you is but a morsel of bread, *panem bene merentium*(<sup>1</sup>),—the well-earned bread which you so highly deserve; and as such I grant you the starosties of Bialacerkiew and Trembowla; and if you have any request to make to the King, you may feel certain of its being granted.' There is an old proverb, brother, 'Strike the iron while it is hot:' I therefore made a request,—it was granted; and now thou art Starost of Samborz, and not thy eldest brother." Hippolyte, surprised, declined this munificent gift, representing to Peter the necessity of providing for his own family; and that instead of availing himself of his brother's generosity, he ought to win the bread of merit by his own services. But Peter Boratynski overcame all his objections, and said, "When the King consented to my request, he added these words: 'It is indeed necessary that the young nobleman who is going to ally himself to such an illustrious house should advance by degrees. Will you still continue to refuse this trifling gift,

my lord Starost ?' ” While the brothers were thus engaged in expressing their sentiments of mutual love and friendship, the door opened, and Bartholomeas Sabinus, physician to the King, entered the room. “ It grieves me very much,” he said after the usual salutations, “ to interrupt such an agreeable conversation by a business which is neither of a pleasant nature nor of any great importance ; but the express orders of His Majesty must excuse my present intrusion. His Majesty thinks he has observed that the dog which fell at your feet the day before yesterday, and expired there, was not altogether unknown to you ; and he requires you to relate what you know about it, as he attaches more importance to the matter than so insignificant an object seems to deserve.” Peter Boratynski could not help expressing how odd it appeared to him that the King showed so much anxiety about such a trifling matter ; but when Hippolyte related all the circumstances of this case, he listened to it with great attention. Sabinus shook his head, and said, “ It is then an experiment of my colleague Monti ; not, however, in anatomy, for I have spared him that trouble, and I have found in the animal’s stomach a large quantity of corrosive mercury.” “ But wherefore such an experiment ? ” asked Peter Boratynski ;

“ it seems to me sinful to treat in such a manner even a senseless animal ; and I am glad to hear that the King is so angry about it, for the just have pity even on animals.” “ I am entirely of your opinion, my honoured lord Castellan of Belzk,” said Sabinus : “ indeed the spirit of inquiry goes very far among the physicians of our time ; therefore care ought to be taken that it is not carried too far. But I think we ought not to spoil the pleasures of this day to His Majesty by such a report, which however must not be omitted to be done at a more proper time.” While Sabinus was speaking Stanislaw Lacki ran into the room ; but stopped directly, as he saw his eldest cousin, whose difference of age and serious demeanour inspired him with more respect than confidence. He bowed with formality ; and having delivered a kind of congratulatory speech, threw himself into the arms of Hippolyte, expressing his joy about what he had heard. “ Why are you so cold and formal with me, my little cousin ?” asked the Castellan of Belzk. “ I see that you as well as your father are still angry with me ; but the time will come when you will change your opinions. How much you are grown in so short a time, and from a mere boy become a fine young man ! But it seems to me that your eyes are less bright, and

your cheeks not so blooming." "My lord Castellan," whispered Sabinus while taking leave, "I do not like the appearance of your young cousin. Though he is a fine-looking boy, and much ingenuity beams in his large eyes, still I can trace in him, as one may say, a certain precocity; and the fruits which result from such symptoms fall often before they are ripe. I would beg of you to keep a watchful eye on the youngster; for all is not right with him, either in his bodily economy or in his moral system." Although he spoke in a low voice, his words did not escape the attention of the page, who clenched his fist in anger against the departing physician, and said, "Go, go, my learned doctor and archdeacon of the cathedral of Cracow! You may be very clever in discerning ratsbane in a puppy's stomach; but to see what is concealed in the heart of a Lithuanian knight is far above your science." When the Castellan departed to prepare himself for the evening, Stanislaw approached his younger cousin, and, seizing his hand, exclaimed with strong emotion, "Believe me, cousin, that I participate with all my heart in your good fortune, and which, I hope, will accelerate your happiness; and I rejoice so much the more in the felicity of those I love, as I feel, I know not wherefore, that I have nothing



to hope for myself. I cannot suffer others to speak of it ; but the Doctor and the Palatine of Lublin may both be right." " And what has the Palatine of Lublin said ?" asked Hippolyte. " I have been called this morning to the lord Firley, in order to receive a masquerade dress, or, as they call it, a character ; and he decided that I should belong to a party which is to represent the Olympian deities. After some deliberation it was agreed that I should appear as Hymen, with a burning torch in my hand, and my head crowned with myrtle and roses. When it was explained to me, I felt, I do not know wherefore, such an aversion to represent the God of Marriage, that I besought earnestly to have another part. Firley laughed, and asked if, being so young, I had already so great a horror of marriage. But after some consideration he said, that he thought I might perhaps be right in declining a part so little suitable to me ; for I was so pale and so lean, that should the roses wither, and I should inconsiderately turn down my taper, the myrtle would appear like rosemary, and I should be taken for the genius of death. He said it only in jest ; but his words struck to the bottom of my heart, as if it was a prophecy, and I remained without uttering a word. Firley went on to say,

that as I was just as obstinate as every Lithuanian, I might remain in my own dress, and appear as a page of the lady Helena, who is the intended queen of the feast in absence of one to whom it rightly belongs. Although the servant of a real queen should never attend any other person, and least of all one who is a queen only for a few hours, still I thought that I might make an exception for the lady of my cousin's heart; and indeed I shall feel much more comfortable in the colours of my Queen than in the frippery attire of a heathen deity. And indeed without a sword, what should I do with a taper, if it should be needful to strike a blow? A weapon is always necessary; and who can know what may happen in these extraordinary times?" "The times are indeed extraordinary," said Hippolyte with a smile: "men find pleasure in masks and fooleries, while boys look serious and moralize." "Boys!" exclaimed Stanislaw with some vexation; "has not the Castellan himself, who certainly does not love to flatter, called me a fine young man?" Here the little contest between the two cousins was interrupted by the sound of trumpets and the cymbals of the Turkish music. The loud bustle of the people filling the castle-yard announced the approaching departure of the

royal *cortége*, and they both hastened to occupy their respective places. Sigismund Augustus soon appeared on horseback, attended by many splendidly dressed cavaliers; while the Queen-mother and her Court were conveyed in ponderous carriages drawn by horses adorned with rich trappings, and plumes of feathers on their heads, moving slowly, and surrounded by numerous guards and attendants in rich Spanish dresses.

## CHAPTER III.

“ Fill the bright goblet, spread the festive board ;  
Summon the gay, the noble, and the fair !  
Through the loud hall in joyous concert pour’d,  
Let mirth and music sound the dirge of care !  
But ask thou not if happiness be there,  
If the loud laugh disguise convulsive throes,  
Or if the brow the heart’s true livery wear ;  
Lift not the festal mask ! enough to know,  
No scene of mortal life but teems with mortal woe.”

SIR W. SCOTT.

**THE** festival of Lobzow was to begin with the stroke of the eleventh hour ; it was now past ten, and the servants were busy lighting the chandeliers and lustres in the halls of the castle. Many avenues of the extensive garden were lightened with rows of lamps, and a gorgeous temple brightly illuminated with variegated colours displayed in a splendid transparency the united arms of Poland and Lithuania, over which the initial letters of the King’s name, S. A. R., shone in resplendent fire. The night was sultry, the stars veiled by thick clouds, and all around was enveloped in a complete darkness, when in a remote part of the park, covered with thick shrubs, appeared two persons,

followed at a distance by a third; the first two were engaged in a low and what seemed a not unimportant conversation; they advanced cautiously, looking often around them, lest they might be overheard by any one. If a ray of light had shone on the countenance of the third, it would have discovered all the signs of weariness; but now it was manifested only by frequent yawnings. At times he seemed scarcely able to restrain his impatience, and vented in broken sentences his anger against the necessity of roaming about in such a darkness that he could not see his hand before him, and was continually stumbling over some trunk or root of a tree, while his companions were indulging themselves in a well-lighted hall, where the dice rattled and the bowl went merrily round. His displeasure was beginning to be more audibly expressed, when one of those preceding him turned round, commanding him in no very gentle voice to be silent. They had just arrived at a little clump of lime trees, close to which murmured a shallow stream, which formed the boundary of the park. No noise was heard in this lonely spot, except occasionally the sound of a hammer with which the workmen were completing any preparation that might have been omitted. Here the wanderers stopped, and one of them, who did not

exceed the middle stature, spoke in a foreign language. "Is it true," said he, "that they are coming?" "You may have taken notice ere this," said his companion, a tall haggard-looking man, "that I have always my intelligence from a sure source." "The old woman has written it to her bosom friend," the other replied after a pause of meditation; "the intelligence of it has reached us too late to be made use of; there is nothing prepared, and in such an important affair we must look better to it before we act." "There is nothing to be looked to," muttered the haggard old man; "strike the blow when the opportunity is fair, that the business may come to an end, for it begins to tire me." "Gently, gently, friend," replied the other; "our business is not now to waylay a traveller, or to break at night-time into a house with a band of daring fellows and murder the defenceless inhabitants." He was interrupted by his companion, who asked him from between his closed teeth, "What do you allude to, master? how came such an idea into your head?" "We must act with the greatest caution," said Doctor Monti,—for it was no other than he and his faithful Assano,— "it is even dangerous to proceed otherwise, for the *experimentum in anima vili*, which your imprudence has betrayed to that idle courtier,

has made much more noise than you may imagine. Sabinus, who has opened the animal, has tormented me all the way along hither by his questions ; and if I had not succeeded in drawing the German pedant into a learned discussion, in which I had the advantage, I should not have got rid of him till this very time. It was madness to give the animal a quantity sufficient to kill an ox, and which, acting instantaneously, left such visible traces ; and it was still more foolish to trust it to the custody of women, who, being afraid of its rage, let it escape : moreover, I think the mixture was not good." " For my part, I think it was excellent," replied the servant ; what works quickly works surely ; and this affair has already lasted too long. I would that it were over, that I had my reward, and could return to my own country to enjoy rest in my old age." " To your own country !" repeated the Doctor, " and where is this country ? I should think it was somewhat further off than you would have it believed." " Our common country," replied the old man with a malicious composure, " is far or near as may happen ; and should I precede you there by a few years, I shall hardly fail to greet you there sooner or later. But I would wish to know what are your intentions, learned sir : what will you

do today? an opportunity once allowed to escape seldom returns, and you know the will that we both obey." A pause of silence ensued; after which Monti said, with an unsteady voice and in great agitation, "Do not press me thus, thou hoary sinner; it is not likely that she would arrive without any escort, and you have not told me whether the master of the house is acquainted with her coming: we must take counsel at the moment; let us await it." "In former times it was otherwise," interrupted the old man; "then the will created the opportunity, instead of awaiting it; but new times, new manners; old times are gone, and he who then could call himself a master is now only fit to be a servant in this over-prudent world. Where are now those days when I have been the master of my own deeds, when I could act with uncontrolled energy?" "A glorious retrospect!" said Monti in a tone of derision; 't is only a wonder that it was not terminated by a gallows." "Stop," cried Assano, gnashing his teeth; "you ought to know, methinks, that it is dangerous to jest with me on certain topics, particularly in solitude and darkness; decide on something, and let us return, for the place and hour may produce an effect that you may repent of having provoked. Come, my wise master, time passes, and what do



you intend to do?" Monti had no wish to remain any longer in solitude after the words of his companion; he motioned to the third person to join them, and all three disappeared in the thicket.

The precincts of the castle became now very animated; the great folding-door of the ground floor was thrown open, and the glaring light of the halls united with the blaze of the illuminated garden. A numerous company of invited guests in gay attire awaited outside the palace the appearance of the King with all his suite. It was a circus, inclosed by a fence of trees, and forming the central point of many diverging avenues, which, like the circus itself, were richly illuminated by lamps and barrels of pitch. The blast of a bugle, which was answered by many bands of music concealed in various parts of the garden, announced the appearance of the royal personages. The train was preceded by a great number of richly clad servants in the national and Tatar dress, some in that of the Zaporovian Cossacks, which consisted of a high furred cap, short jacket, and full trowsers, but the attendants of the Queen-mother in Spanish costume. They were followed by Court officers of a secondary rank, and immediately after came Firley in his wonted dress, but adorned with the utmost magnificence. A fairy form now ap-

peared descending the staircase which led from the great hall to the garden. A robe of purple silk, made tight to her figure and reaching to the knee, was fastened by rows of pearls, and worn over a full petticoat of white, which only allowed her delicate feet, clad in sandals, to appear beneath. Her luxuriant hair was partly wound in bands round the back of her head, while the rest fell in beautiful tresses over her shoulders, which were covered with a light tunic; a diadem of brilliants was sparkling on her brow, which was covered by a half-mask, and on her breast glittered a chain of emeralds interwoven with golden crowns. It was a jewel which many centuries ago a princess of Byzantium brought into the Piastian House, and which had descended by inheritance to Helena's mother. The Grecian maiden was accompanied by a noble Venetian in a black *tabarro*, with a plumed hat drawn over his unmasked face. This Venetian was no other than Sigismund Augustus himself. Many figures arrayed in the costume of the past and present times, of bordering and distant countries, representing objects of reality and imagination, pressed behind the illustrious couple. Yet Bona Sforza and Anna of Mazovia preserved their widow dress in the midst of this gay motley crowd: they walked

together, followed by a large retinue, and appeared like two nocturnal spectres entirely unconnected with the lively bustle around them. Then came the band of pages, advancing with a measured pace; among them was Stanislaw Lacki, who appeared to be no more fit for all this bustling gaiety than the illustrious ladies who preceded him. After these followed the rest of the Court, in fantastical dresses, in such variety that it would have appeared the creation of a midsummer night's dream, if the clerical garb of some prelates had not recalled the idea of real life. The Bishop of Cujavia was accompanied by the Sherif of Mecca in a white garment with a green sash; but the object of his animated conversation with Tarnowski, who had adopted this mask, seemed not to be of a controversial nature. They were followed by the Black Prince, son of Edward the Third of England: his armour was entirely dark and without any polish, and his shield had the motto *Ich Dien*; at his side was the Silentarius (1) of the Byzantium Court, in a green tunic with broad stripes of purple. The closed visor of the victor of Cressy and Poitiers, and the complete mask of the high Grecian dignitary, concealed the countenances of Peter Boratynski and his brother Hippolyte, and we may recognise in the richly dressed Turkish pasha the

Grand Marshal Peter Kmita. Among many other splendid masks, the most conspicuous were those of the Dukes of Ratibor and Liegnitz, of the brothers Zborowski, whose ambition afterwards, under the reign of Henry of Valois, disturbed the kingdom, the young Count of Tenezyn, and many other lords of the first rank. When the train arrived at the illuminated temple, Firley approached the monarch with a deep obeisance, who expressed, in the warmest terms, his satisfaction at the arrangements. But when he turned to the Queen-mother, she said with an ambiguous expression, "It is not for the first time that the Palatine of Lublin has given us proof how well he understands the art of dazzling by appearances; but when the feast is at an end, and the morning sun shines over the scene, nought will remain but pieces of coloured paper and broken glass; and the name celebrated this day, though it now shines so radiantly, will share the fate of all this brilliant display, and approaching days will bring forward new names." "We owe thanks to Your Majesty," interrupted the King, "for the admonition to restrain our vanity within due bounds; but yet," continued he, laughing, "we have not allowed ourselves to be vain-gloriously puffed up; it is doubtless that our name

is united with the solemnity of this day, but here really stands the queen of the fête," said he, turning with courtesy towards his fair partner. "The kindness of Your Majesty makes me the less vain," replied Helena with great cheerfulness, but not perhaps without intention, "as I am conscious that I occupy only the place of another; and that when this other to whom properly this compliment is due will be present, the poor Helena Odrowonz must, though not unwillingly, retire amongst the crowd of ladies who may have as little pretensions as herself."

The Princess of Mazovia, whose countenance at that moment became even darker than usual, would have spoken, but Sigismund Augustus anticipated her intentions, exclaiming, "What do you say, fair cousin? truly such a representative would make the feeling of regret for the absent more easy to be borne, but to one who deserves so well to occupy the first place a second should never be offered." The Princess of Mazovia answered for her daughter the courteous speech of the King; "My daughter must certainly be grateful to Your Majesty for your favourable opinion of her," said she with her usual pride; "but I trust that the mother may be permitted to remark, that if she is entitled to the place which Your Majesty has men-

tioned, it is not by her beauty and accomplishments, of which it becomes not a mother to judge, but by her birth. One who bears a jewel which is the sole heritage of the Mazovian ducal house, and which she has inherited from a daughter of the Cezars, is certainly not too mean to occupy a place at the side of a monarch." "Oh! do not speak about birth," said Sigismund Augustus, leading Anna aside; "it is not Helena's illustrious descent only which raises her so much above the others. Who, of all those here present, can vie with her in charms or mental endowments? We consider these advantages far superior to the accident of birth, and we have given a sufficient proof of it to all the world." "Yet it is only on a high elevation that these advantages can shine with their proper lustre," replied the Princess. "Poverty and lowliness obscure even the brightest qualities." "God forbid that such may ever be her fate while we are monarch of this realm!" exclaimed Sigismund Augustus; "therefore rely on us with perfect confidence, illustrious cousin. Never will we suffer her whom we love as our dearest relative, and consider as the greatest ornament of her sex (with only one exception), to forfeit the advantages which are her right. We will even confess to you that we should consider

her possession as the highest prize which a living man can gain, if destiny had not already united us with one who resembles her in every respect; we would envy you the privileges and duties of a mother, if it were not the right of a King to act as a father." "The age of Your Majesty," replied the Princess with a forced smile, "will hardly allow my daughter the honour of calling so young a monarch by the name of father; however, I agree entirely with Your Majesty, that a descendant of the Piasts should receive her happiness from no other hand but that of a king." "Let us then unite our efforts to promote the welfare of Helena," exclaimed Sigismund Augustus with a strong emotion; "let it be our care that she may find happiness—that true happiness which not only dazzles the eyes of others but satisfies one's own heart. We know her heart; we are perhaps better acquainted with it than yourself, and we know that its wants are different from those that the world generally esteem. Let, then, joy again find entrance into your desolate halls, which it has so long deserted, and let the stem of the ancient kings reflourish with a new splendour near that throne which its renowned ancestors formerly occupied."

Still Anna refused to join hands with the King,

and receding a step, said in a cold and decided tone, "I came not here with my daughter to crave alms from the generosity of a king, whose justice only I claim. It behoves me to consider what boon I can deem worthy of my acceptance; and as long as it is denied to me, I must decline every other." The King silently cast a look of contempt on the hard-hearted lady, then turning towards the assembly exclaimed, "Why do you stand so far off, lord Silentarius? Has your name influenced your organs of speech, or do you fear by your presence to silence the loud voice of joy through the palace? Your duty is to be near the daughter of the Cezars. And you, brave prince, whose motto—*Ich Dien*—suits you so well in every respect, approach here; it is, thank Heaven, not a prisoner king that requires your services."

Bona Sforza approached the Princess of Mazovia, and questioned her cautiously about her conversation with the King. "The King," said the Princess pretty loudly, "has just now declared himself a father to Helena, and he appears to be desirous of entering immediately on the duties of his office, by providing for her in marriage." She then with solemnity made a low bow, and took her place among the company, which the sound of trumpets and kettle-drums called back to the



hall for the taper dance. The assembly arranged themselves along the richly adorned walls, to begin the ceremony which at that time was quite indispensable at every festive meeting of princely persons. With a graceful reverence Sigismund Augustus presented his hand to the Queen-mother, who by her rank was entitled to lead the dance with him; they were followed by the Duke of Rati-bor with the Princess of Mazovia; the third place was occupied by Helena with the Duke of Lieg-nitz for her partner; and after them came the other lords and ladies in the order of their rank. After a short prelude, Sigismund Augustus bowed to his mother and let go her hand; then drawing his sword with his right hand, seized with his left the taper presented to him by the Court Marshal, while the Queen-mother was supplied in like manner with one by the Grand Cupbearer of the Crown; he then marked the measure with a gentle stamp, and stepped forward in a stately dance without leading his partner. Every one performed the same ceremony, the princes and princesses receiving the tapers from the hands of young courtiers, and the others from the attendants, and the dance moved on. During a turn which the figure made necessary, the Piastian Prince of Silesia bowed to his fair partner, saying in a whisper,

“Although the place which you occupy tonight, my illustrious cousin, allows me the happiness of being at your side, yet myself and all the family of Piast unite in wishing to see you in a more exalted one.” “Not all the family, my lord Duke,” replied the maiden, “if you mean to honour the daughter of Leon Odrowonz by counting her amongst the number. I am perfectly satisfied with a place which allows me the honour of being accompanied by my princely relative, and would be content with one still lower, which becomes the daughter of a simple nobleman.” “You forget,” said the Duke, “that your ancestors were expelled from the place that I mean, and therefore it is on you that all your family fix their eyes, hoping that you will regain by your charms and virtue that of which you were deprived by cunning and violence.” Helena replied gently, “True, it is said that the house of the dukes of Mazovia has suffered injustice from the Jagellons; many persons, however, are of a different opinion: but even supposing such were the case, although probably it is not, still, my lord Duke, I hold it better to suffer than to do injustice, and would be rather the despoiled than the despoiler.” The Duke would have answered, but the King, who had already in passing by looked many times

with visible anxiety towards the open windows, to the surprise of every one closed the dance, which usually lasted half an hour, led back the Queen-mother to her seat with more haste than Court etiquette allowed, and motioning to Firley left the hall in his company. Tarnowski approached Peter Boratynski, and said to him in a whisper, "I hope, nephew, that they have not failed to place a sufficient number of sentinels to prevent any mischief. It is so close and so sultry," added he, looking on the Queen-mother, "that when I consider these clouds, I cannot help thinking that a storm is at hand. You will do well by going out to look a little to it, and I will follow you directly." Bona, who was sitting with a gloomy countenance, and apparently vexed by the King's sudden departure, left her seat and went into the garden, attended by some of her confidential ladies, and by the Palatine of Cracow.

Even before the beginning of the taper dance, many guests dispersed themselves through the gardens to enjoy a pleasure quite new to them; while many bands of music concealed in different parts of the garden united their strains in an harmonious concert. In many places, and particularly along the banks of the rivulet which meandered through the garden, were erected booths, well provided

with every kind of refreshment, which were helped to the guests by servants in fantastical dresses. The young folks enjoyed themselves in the merry *Cracoviak* (²) and the lively *Mazurka* on the even sward of various lawns, encircled with majestic lime-trees, elms, and horse-chestnuts, united by wreaths of fir-branches, intermingled with flowers, and illuminated by coloured lanterns. Thus joy and pleasure had peopled the park to its very limits, bordered at one side by the tall forest, which, as tradition says, was the remainder of a sacred grove, consecrated to the pagan deities a thousand years before that time, and touching on the other side the village of Lobzow, with which it had a communication by a bridge over a small river. The King had ordered that the gate leading from this side to the park should be opened before midnight, that even his subjects of a humble rank might enjoy the pleasures of the festival, and it was only further back in the middle of the garden that sentinels were placed to prevent an excessive throng. They were masked as negroes, and armed only with staves. Thus many respectable farmers with their wives, as well as a great number of country lads and lasses enjoyed themselves in the park of their monarch, and were busily engaged at the tables, which though not

so daintily served as those nearer to the house, were still well provided with meat and drink, which appeared ambrosian food to the simple and unrefined country people.

Near this place was Waclaw Siewrak pacing up and down with every mark of displeasure, like a forlorn post who is on duty beyond the time he ought to be. His frequent visits to the booths seemed to have failed in producing their wonted effect, and rather increased his ill humour, which at last broke out into the following muttering soliloquy. " Pretty directions ! a fine commission indeed ! While my lads and all the others are taking their own pleasure, here am I, measuring for the hundredth time the length and breadth of this place,—and all for what ? in order to trace out amongst this motley crowd of country people, dressed in red, blue, and brown, three wenches, that none but the deuce himself could hit upon ! What business has the old withered sharper with them ? It would be no wonder if I did so : but I am ill disposed today ; I have not been in luck, the dice have played me foul, and I have been fairly skinned at play ; but it is fortunate that His Majesty keeps hostelry here to-day, and takes no money. It is a bad thing to feel the bottom of one's purse, and had I been

able to remain there among the gentles, a row of pearls, or a jewel at least, would have fallen into my hands, which would have filled it directly. But here, amongst peasants, there is nothing to be got that is worthy of the respectable reverence of the Grand Marshal's office; and did I not think that the old man will once more draw his purse, I would leave all the lasses to themselves, and look about if something better is not to be done." Just at this moment he heard a rustling near him, and a tall dark figure, to which the feathers in his helmet gave the appearance of a superhuman size, hastened past with long strides; carefully looking around, it stopped, and abruptly demanded of him, "Who art thou?" Siewrak, who directly recognised the voice of Peter Boratynski, disguised his own, and answered in a few words, "I am a servant, placed here to have an eye on the peasantry." "Hast thou not observed," continued Boratynski, "three Lithuanian girls, one of them in a brown *kaftanik*, another in a blue, and the third in a green one?" "Oh! more than one, sir; and if you will go to yonder table, you will see a brown and a green one, who seem to be taking mighty draughts of mead and brandy to do honour to the birth-day of our most gracious lord." This answer did not seem to satisfy

the questioner, who departed as quickly as he came, to the great satisfaction of Siewrak. However, he was not destined to remain long undisturbed, for the next moment two other men approached, one of whom was apparent at a distance by his white garment, and seemed to be giving orders to his companion, who was in the dress of a soldier. When they came nearer to the spy, he heard the voice of Tarnowski saying, "Remember well, Valenty,—in a brown dress,—keep a watchful eye on the river, not far from this, where the King's gondola awaits her; and when you see any one come like that person, observe which way she goes, and whether she is accompanied or not; then come and give me intelligence." The rest of the conversation was lost upon our friend Siewrak, as the speakers disappeared in the avenue. "It seems," said the latter to himself, "as if I was destined to see at this spot all my friends and patrons; first, the lord Boratynski, who has paid me the wages I had earned in his service by broad stripes on my back; then that saucy fellow, Valenty Bielawski, whom I hate with all my heart, and, finally, the Grand General, for whom all my life I have had an especial horror. There wants, indeed, none but the Grand Marshal, to put his

kind intention into practice, by hanging me up by one of these trees, just between two lamps, to the especial amusement and particular satisfaction of the respectable company. But the green, the brown, and the blue—humph! every one seems to be running after them; they must be indeed very extraordinary lasses. But no doubt one's pains will be well rewarded,—perhaps by a purse of doubloons, if I was fortunate enough to pounce upon these women they make so much fuss about.” These agreeable ideas, however, soon gave place to new cares. “And should they come, where am I to find that black Satan? When people proceed in an orderly way, I directly hit upon my man among thousands; but amidst this crowd and in complete darkness, it is quite impossible to find it out. Oh! cousin Ursula, what a pity that thy lover has conducted thee just on this day on a botanical excursion to the mountains! thy presence would now be of great use to me.” As he was saying these words, he suddenly felt a smart blow on his shoulders; he turned round, and saw the identical black Satan before him. “They must come directly,” whispered Assano to him; “hast thou well observed?” “To be sure I have; brown, blue, and green.”



“ Well, well ; take now particular notice whether they are alone, and you will find me a few steps from hence in the bushes, near the basin of the dolphin, and not far from the hiding-place of thy companions.” “ Aye ; there where the fat butler, who has buried in his stomach half the provisions of his table, has fallen asleep.” “ Yes, precisely there ; but be watchful, knave, or——” “ Good, good, you need say no more, sir Assano ; you know me and my ready obedience.”

The Neapolitan had scarcely disappeared from Waclaw's sight, when loud music resounded from the central part of the garden, and was answered by all the other bands, as if to indicate that some new pleasure was on foot, or to bid welcome to some newly arrived and illustrious guest. The country people, full of curiosity, though mingled with shyness, left the tables and pressed forward to the place whence the music proceeded ; even the attendants and the masked negroes spontaneously quitted their posts to see what was going on, so that Waclaw Siewrak found himself quite alone. Though dancing in the great hall was continued without interruption, the King, the Queen, and all those who had accompanied them remained in the garden, under the pretext of avoiding the heat of a crowded

hall. Bona Sforza ordered chairs to be brought into the garden, took a place herself, and was followed in doing so by the other ladies.

The Princess of Mazovia, motioning to Helena to join her, interrupted a conversation between the Grecian maiden and the now very eloquent Silentarius. The King was continually going from one group to another; but the courteous affability with which he addressed the guests bore evident marks of uneasiness. Tarnowski and Peter Boratynski had returned to the assembly; and the first, after a short conversation with Firley, had followed him to the monarch, who listened to him with a kind of measured dignity, which circumstances ordered him to assume with one who, as it was generally believed, held out his hand to snatch the crown itself off his head; but it appeared that one word, which the Count of Tarnow said in a whisper during the audible conversation, increased still more the anxiety of the King. This restraint spread by degrees over all the company, so that every sign of mirth was hushed, when suddenly the sound of bugles and cymbals re-echoed loudly. It was the same sound which we have mentioned before as having drawn the peasants from their tables towards the palace, and it announced the arrival

of Isabella queen of Hungary, with her little son John Zapolya the Orphan, and with the other sisters of Sigismund Augustus. They had then just arrived from the castle of Zips, the residence of the widowed Queen, in order to partake of the festival of Lobzow; an unforeseen accident having occurred on their journey, their arrival was delayed till midnight. Bona received her daughter and grandson with her usual formality, but Sigismund Augustus greeted them with real cordiality; and the pleasure of seeing his sister dispelled for a moment the clouds that had obscured his brow for the last hour.

Soon afterwards supper was announced, which was prepared in a broad illuminated avenue. The arrival of the new and illustrious guests changed the order of precedence, and although Helena was to sit on the left side of the King, she now found herself separated from him and from her mother.

This little derangement allowed the young Starost of Samborz to approach her, and in the spirit of his assumed character to address her in a low voice. "Will not the princely maiden, who is now surrounded by all the pomp which she was born to, willingly forget her lowly slave, who is lost amongst the crowd, and cut off from

what is most dear to him by all the restraint of a Court, and the present assumption of a character that does not allow him to express the feelings of a heart which never would be silent?" "You see, lord Silentiarius," replied Helena cheerfully, "that I have been already forced to descend some steps from my exalted station, and that I no longer occupy the place of her who, by the force of circumstances, and by the workings of malice, is separated from one whom she loves. Oh! would I were away, far away from this busy crowd, in which only one heart means sincerely with Helena,—a royal heart, which tries itself to conceal its own griefs under the glittering exterior of his rank! Would I were back, on the banks of the Dniester, again the daughter of the exiled Leon Odrowonz!"—"Only one heart that means sincerely with you, and that the heart of the King!" whispered Hippolyte in a tone of gentle reproach. "Yours," said the maiden, blushing, but confidently, "yours I have known from the years of my childhood; and when I think of my futurity, I think also of him who, by my father's commands, is to be a partner of it."

She was interrupted by a voice demanding of her, "Who is the young nobleman in the Greek

costume, with whom you, my illustrious cousin, spoke so confidentially? It seems to me that I see him now for the first time." Helena looked up and saw the Duke of Liegnitz, who came to lead her to the supper. "It is my affianced, the Starost of Samborz," replied Helena, casting down her eyes, but with a firm voice. "Your affianced!" repeated the Duke in a tone of amazement; "and does a servant of the palace dare to raise his eyes to a princess of the Imperial blood,—a subject to a descendant of Boleslaw the Third?" "My mother can best answer to your question," replied Helena, "why she, the daughter of Duke Conrad, gave her hand to the Palatine of Podolia." She then motioned a friendly adieu to her betrothed, who was fretting with rage, and followed the Silesian Duke to the supper; but Hippolyte pressed close to the side of the latter, and whispered in his ear, "The duty of him who, although a servant, is not yours, commands him to prevent every disturbance in the vicinity of the monarch; instead of causing it, therefore, he reserves for tomorrow to explain to Your Grace what becomes a Polish knight and a Boratynski to hope and to do." "We will see it," replied the Duke with a haughty tone, though in a suppressed voice.

All went on heavily at the royal banquet; it seemed as if the joy to which that feast was consecrated had departed, through the intervention of some dark power, both from the fated monarch and his distinguished guests. The looks of the King were continually glancing beyond the richly decked tables towards the faint illumination of a distant copse. The Queen-mother had also great difficulty in maintaining that apparent sincerity which almost invariably concealed her inward feelings. The Queen of Hungary beheld with deep concern the growing estrangement between her mother and her brother, which boded no good to the royal house. She revolved in her mind the gloomy retrospect of her own life, and the uncertain future for her orphan prince, and the Spanish etiquette which then ruled the Court, chased away all cheerfulness from the strictly educated Infantas (<sup>3</sup>). Ever and anon the evil demons of vengeance and ambition hovered around the Princess of Mazovia, withdrawing from her lips the cup of happiness, and she bore with unshaken firmness the burden of calamity imposed on her by destiny, and partly attracted by herself; her countenance became animated only when her looks fell on Helena, who, apprehensive of the consequences of the quarrel between her relative

and her lover, gave herself up to fearful misgivings. The rest of the company seemed also to be occupied by serious and unpleasant reflections; a spirit of gloom and anxiety pervaded the table of the King of Poland, as if the initials of his name flaming on the portico of the temple were changed into the ominous words *Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin*, which had many ages before scared Belshazzar and his companions; when suddenly loud cries from many voices, the clattering of swords, and the report of some pistol-shots resounded from the extremity of the garden. Sigismund Augustus turned pale, and cried in an irritated voice, "What means this? A breach of peace in the precincts of the castle! The clang of arms in the royal abode!"

The ladies arose screaming from their seats, and prepared to fly, while the gentlemen surrounded the ladies and the royal family in a posture of defence; but Firley, to whom a servant had whispered a few words, approached this confused group, and said with great calmness, "It is nothing. Compose yourselves, illustrious ladies and noble lords; it is nothing but a quarrel amongst the country people, who have partaken too abundantly of the cheer which the kindness of His Majesty had ordered to be

provided for them." But while saying this, he directed a look full of meaning on the King, who, surrounded by his frightened sisters, seemed to waver between the rules of princely decorum, which told him to remain with them, and a mighty feeling, which urged him to hasten away. But the latter conquered; he gently pushed back the Infantas, and was on the point of going to the place from whence the increasing noise proceeded, when Peter Kmita intercepted him, saying, "Our duty permits us not to leave the King in a moment when we hear the shouts of strife and the clang of weapons; therefore Your Majesty must allow your faithful servants to attend you to that place, where your sacred person should not be exposed without due guard to the brawls of the intoxicated populace." The King replied angrily, "Whence such unwonted solicitude for our person, my lord Grand Marshal?" But in a moment all the noblemen had drawn their swords and encircled the King; the Silesian dukes placed themselves at his side, and Sigismund Augustus, a slave to his dignity, was obliged to follow the crowd that slowly and with difficulty moved on through the narrow winding paths of the park. Some time previously the Grand General Tarnowski and Peter Boratynski had silently



left the table. Queen Bona had also disappeared from the assembly.

We left our old acquaintance Waclaw Siewrak near the bridge which led to the village of Lobzow. We find him still in the same place, which, after the country people had gone, became quite deserted; the lamps not being attended to, had almost all expired, and left the spot nearly in total darkness. The clock of the village church had long since struck the midnight hour, and still there was no appearance of the mysterious persons he was on the look out for, and the increasing hunger, united to the weariness of the worthy Siewrak, had raised his displeasure to the very highest pitch, when he perceived somebody approaching. He was, as far as it was possible to see, a very young man, in an extremely rich dress, the silver embroidery of which glittered in the light of the few faintly gleaming lamps which were not yet quite extinguished. He advanced with slow steps, sunk head, and folded arms, out of one of the side paths; he neither appeared to take any notice of Siewrak, who stood tolerably well concealed by overhanging branches, nor of anything around him, but to be entirely occupied by his own reflections, which seemed not to be of the most

animating kind; for from time to time he breathed a long-drawn sigh, followed by a short constrained laugh, like that of a man who either mocked at himself or others. He sometimes stood still, stamped passionately on the ground, murmured a few words, and then looked up to the heavens, and finally resumed his former attitude, and disappeared as he had come among the trees. The extraordinary bearing of the silent wanderer made the unperceived witness of his actions believe that he saw one who had made too free with the good things of that day, without the disagreeable necessity of paying for them, and he doubly longed to be a sharer of such delights; but when the young man came and went again for the third time, Waclaw Siewrak, who was not in the habit of caring much about the joys or sorrows of his neighbour, thought no more about him. However, as the singular wanderer returned for the fourth time, a sound proceeding from the wooden bridge, as if caused by the light steps of women, equally attracted the notice of both. The unknown young man directed his looks towards the place whence the sound came, but, as if dissatisfied with the disturbance, retired immediately. Waclaw, on the contrary,

who expected it might be those he looked for, remained in his place of concealment.

There presently appeared three women, and their dress, as far as he could discern, appeared to be the same that was indicated. They advanced step by step with the greatest caution, and when they were near the lurking Siewrak they stood still, and the tallest of them demanded, "Which is the path that leads to the castle? I have been there only once, and hardly know the way. It seems as if all had flocked towards the illumination; therefore I suppose we should proceed in that direction until we find a guard or some one whom we may send to inform the Palatine of Lublin." "Not so, most gracious lady," whispered the other; "it is so dark amongst the trees, who can tell that we may not meet with some fellows who always frequent such places, and who would frighten us to death? Let us rather wait till your retinue will put on their peasant dresses and join us here: and I still think I was right to advise you to wait for them, though you did not consent to it." "Thou art a good child, Lucy Ostrorog," replied the other, "but thou knowest nothing about the impatience to meet again one whom we love. However, you perhaps judge

rightly, and I begin to apprehend that after such a long delay my husband no longer expects me; and I have omitted to mention from which side I should come. The supper appears to have commenced; the country people are most likely gone to witness this brilliant spectacle, and I do not hear the tread of a guard in the vicinity; therefore I will remain here till my people join me, or till I receive a message from the castle.”

“That shall Your Grace soon have,” said the third merrily. “I fear nothing, and I will run swiftly till I find somebody who may inform of your proximity those who ought to know of it.”

“Perhaps you will find the young Bielawski,” said her mistress playfully; “he waits for you as somebody waits for me, and he is not so restrained by the forms of etiquette as is the other. Go then, go! and when you find him tell him to hasten.”

“Well, well,” replied she, “when I find him he will fly like an arrow from the bow, even quicker than myself.” And forthwith she ran along the avenue, passing close by Siewrak, who muttered to himself, “‘Most gracious lady!’ ‘Lucy Ostrorog!’ (†)—singular appellations for country wenches! And the little one that ran by so fast, I would wager the whole of my reward against a glass of small-beer, that it was Tosia the

daughter of the innkeeper at Ivanovice, running after that Bielawski, who for her sake has used me so ill; and the other, the most gracious Lithuanian wench. She awaits her retinue! Then must happen quickly what shall happen." He then left his place without noise, and slid away, but at the same time something rattled in the leaves on the opposite side as if a person approached cautiously. "The lady Hornostay," said the one in the brown dress, "would not spare me a severe remonstrance if she had known of my prank; and is it not true, Lucy, that you also think I have acted foolishly? Certainly I should have done better had I waited patiently till my Lithuanians were ready to follow me; but the longing to meet after such an absence, in which he had suffered so much, overcame the prudence which should never abandon one who is placed on such an eminence as that where the King's love has placed me; so you may scold me a little, Lucy, as lady Hornostay is too far off to do so herself."

They were engaged in similar conversation when Tosia came running pale and breathless, followed by five or six men, who, staggering as if from intoxication, but quickly and without noise, advanced on the ladies. At the same time two

similar parties appeared from other sides. This meeting of nightly brawlers at the same place, which seemed to be rather intentional than accidental, filled the ladies with terror. The mistress betook herself directly to flight, but Lucy Ostrog sunk down with a suppressed cry in a swoon. Barbara stopped, and endeavoured with Tosia to raise their senseless companion from the ground. The suspicious men began to surround them silently, but with a visibly hostile intention, when a slight young man sprang suddenly out of the thicket and stepped before the women with an unsheathed sword. "Youngster," whispered Siewrak, "get out of the way; you have no business to interfere here; and do not disturb these honest fellows who wish to have some fun on the King's birthday with these pretty lasses." The young man's answer though silent was expressive, for the scrivener tumbled down with a severe cut over his face. However, the men pressed silently closer and closer round the pale Barbara, who held in her arms the senseless Lucy; the sword of the page flew in rapid motion left and right, and many partook of the scrivener's fate; but daggers, with which these men appeared to be armed, began to glitter, and the heroic devotedness of the young man would infallibly have been

requited with death, without saving those whom he defended, if Theophila had not done what was the best in this critical moment. Fortunately not being inclosed in the circle which the assailants had formed round her mistress, she ran towards the bridge crying as loud as she could for succour. Many voices answered her directly, and the steps of an approaching crowd were distinctly heard. This welcome sound gave new force to Stanislaw Lacki, who, notwithstanding he had received several wounds, still defended his royal mistress with undaunted courage. He raised his voice as loud as he could, crying, "Hither, hither, ye brave men, to rescue your Queen from the hands of villains and assassins!" The Lithuanian soldiers, armed with swords and pistols, instantly dispersed the hired assassins. Waclaw Siewrak had long before sought his safety in flight; all the rest now followed his example; many, however, met with their death from the swords of the Lithuanians, and the chance bullets sent after the fugitives did not fail in bringing down others. The trembling Barbara endeavoured with Theophila's assistance to recall the spirits of the senseless Lucy, whilst her defender was fainting from loss of blood and exhaustion; still the angry shouts of the Lithuanian guards and the wail of

the wounded were not hushed, when many ladies and gentlemen arrived at a rapid pace on the spot where this action had taken place. One of them, over whose widow veil a diadem was glittering, stepped hastily forward, looked around her, and said, "Here it was,—from hence the noise proceeded." "It appears," said Peter Kmita, who had left the King and joined his mother, "that there has been a sharp combat, for many dead and wounded are lying on the ground." He then ordered his attendants to remove as quickly as possible those stretched on the ground, and he did so with an anxiety that argued his wish they should not be recognised.

Whilst he was thus engaged Bona approached the silent group, behind which the victorious band stood arrayed in order. She turned to the lady in brown as if she alone were the cause of all that had happened, asking her, with an expression of scorn and malevolence, which having been long suppressed vents itself with redoubled violence, "Who art thou, wench, who roams about in the night, and occasions such brawls and disturbances in the precincts of a royal castle?" But the other answered nothing, and continued busily tending her friend, who now began to recover; but the Lithuanian band uttered an audible mur-



mur, clashed their arms, and pressed forwards. "And who are you who dare to enter the royal park with prohibited arms?" asked the Milanese in a tone of command. "We are Lithuanians, lady Queen," answered the leader of the band; "and we are quite at our place, for we belong to the King's life-guards of the Grand Duchy. But who the lady is whom you treat so harshly, you may best ask from herself." Bona cast a fiend-like look, and said with suppressed rage to Barbara, who, kneeling on the ground, seemed to forget everything in her care for the senseless Lucy and her wounded page, "Tell me then who thou art,—thou who seemest to abandon every womanly bearing, and wander about in the darkness of night in company of wild soldiers? We the Queen command thee to speak, subject!" Trembling convulsively with rage, Stanislaw strove in vain to raise himself from the turf on which he was stretched, but his mistress laid her hand on his shoulder to hold him back, and replied with an expression of irony, "You forget, most gracious lady, that it is a masquerade, and that, according to the customs of your country, nobody is obliged to tell his name on such an occasion. Therefore let it suffice to say, that I entered these gardens in full confidence that in the vicinity of

our king and sovereign even an unprotected woman might walk securely. As, however, he does not dwell here alone, I thought it prudent to be escorted by some brave fellows, and I find that my precaution was not superfluous." Those who had accompanied the Queen were astonished at this extraordinary scene; they began to feel all its indecorum; and fearing the very worst consequences of Bona's rage, which she seldom allowed to break out, they ventured to remonstrate gently with her, that she might compose herself; but the long-suppressed flame now burst out with uncontrolled fury, and disregarding the prudent advice of her friends, she exclaimed, "Dost thou suppose that the King's protection extends to such ill-conducted damsels as thyself? Dost thou imagine that the royal park is to be made a place of forbidden rendezvous and wild brawls for such as thou and thy beardless paramour, who has already received his due from other fellows of his own contemptible class? Away from hence, that thy presence may no longer disgrace this place!" The Lithuanians quickly advanced and surrounded their mistress in a menacing attitude; but she gave them a sign to retire, and drawing herself up proudly said, "I do suppose that the King will protect me against murderous vio-

lence, even should the author of it be of the highest rank, and also against insults which are degrading to him as much as they are to me and to yourself." "Begone!" cried the Milanese, losing all self-possession; "begone, I say, lest thou shouldst meet with the punishment which awaits a low-born intruder into a place which belongs not to her." Barbara's patience was now exhausted; she proudly advanced towards the enraged Queen, and said, "Do you pretend, lady Queen, to be really ignorant who she is whom you dare to treat in such a manner? Know, therefore, that however high your rank and great your pride may be, when we are present you possess only the second place. Soldiers!" she cried out in a commanding voice, "clear the way for the Queen of Poland and Grand Duchess of Lithuania." The soldiers obeyed with alacrity the welcome command, and marched forward with an air of decision. Bona looked back to her retinue to see whether any sword was drawn for her, but she perceived she was left almost alone. Many had secretly withdrawn from a scene which boded no good to the witnesses of it, and those who remained found it advisable to feign absence, turning their eyes to another side. Suddenly a rustling was heard from the thicket, and Sigismund Augustus

appeared, accompanied by the Grand General Tarnowski and Peter Boratynski; and directly after, the rest who had at first preceded him, but of whom he had got the start. With an exclamation of rapture Barbara flew into the arms of her husband, and whispered to him, "Oh! have I found thee again, beloved of my soul! welcome, my protector from violence and insult!" "Violence! insult!" cried the monarch, with eyes rolling around the place: "who is mad enough to attempt violence so near our person? who dares to insult the Queen in her husband's abode?" A look at Barbara, and another at his mother, soon answered this question. He turned to the company, and said in a commanding accent, "Return to the castle; we will directly follow you. Away!" cried he with a thundering voice, as they still loitered; "none but the Castellan of the capital and the Court Marshal may remain." When the company withdrew, he began, violently suppressing his irritation, "Can we trust our own eyes! Is it our mother who, forgetful of all that princely decorum of which she has been hitherto the pattern in words and actions, lays open to the eyes of our subjects the unfortunate dissensions of our house? Is it the Queen Dowager who, laying aside all sense of propriety, acts in this manner towards the Consort

of the reigning King?" "How should we," replied Bona with scorn, "be able to recognise, in the garb of a peasant woman, so distinguished a lady, caught in a thicket with her young paramour, who even in our presence did not conceal her shameful care about the wounds he had received in defending the disguised beauty?" At these words the King was on the point of bursting out into a violent fit of anger; however, he succeeded in controlling his fury, and said with an energetic expression, "Your Majesty had better recollect, how our ancestor Wladyslaw Jagellon treated the calumniator whose poisonous tongue dared to defame the honour of Queen Hedvige, from whom our family derives the crown of Poland. In the assembly of the nobles the chamberlain of Cracow, Gniewosz, was condemned to sit under a bench, and, barking like a dog, to confess his falsehood! We shall not now inquire into what has happened here, or what has been the cause of the wounds of that heroic youth, and of the dead bodies we have trodden upon; but take care, that the judge may not take the place of the son; for, so may Heaven assist us, neither the highest rank nor the most sacred ties of blood shall protect those who attack the life of our life, Your Majesty." He continued, in a more moderate

tone of voice, "See here the mistress of this house; and we request that you would please in future to observe the duties of a guest." He then offered his arm to Barbara, and conducted her to the castle. The Italian followed, gnashing her teeth and vowing vengeance.

Some days afterwards, as the Duke of Liegnitz came to take leave of the Princess of Mazovia, she observed that his arm was in a sling, and his brow sullen; her countenance expressed the most angry feelings, the whole weight of which was soon to fall on the unfortunate Helena.

## CHAPTER IV.

“ I feel within me  
A peace above all earthly dignities,  
A still and quiet conscience.”—SHAKESPEARE.

NINE months had elapsed since the festival at Lobzow, the winter had passed away, and the spring of the year 1550 clothed by degrees the banks of the Vistula, and the giant groves of Krak and Vanda, with a light green foliage. The trees burst out afresh, and the storks returned from the south. In its usual peaceful and unchangeable order, Nature led on her course over the earth; animate and inanimate objects obeyed her eternal laws; but to man alone is free-will allowed either to outstrip the flight of time by the power of his reason, or leisurely to follow in the beaten track of his predecessors. Neither the autumn, the winter, nor the spring had changed the relative position of circumstances either in the Polish kingdom or its capital. Parties were still opposed in silent hostility within the vicinity of the Court, but in the country they were in open strife; neither rancour, ambition, nor vengeance had abandoned

their projects, and it was only by the laudable firmness with which Sigismund, notwithstanding his habitual fickleness, constantly watched over the rights of his station, that he could maintain the dignity of the throne against the incessant open and secret attacks of his enemies. The letters which the King at that time wrote to his brother-in-law Prince Radziwill give an idea of all the difficulties of his situation, as well as of the self-command and cheerfulness which enabled him to bear and to overcome those difficulties. A powerful assistant was however at hand, whose aid was rendered the more efficient by his secret activity. This assistant was John Tarnowski, who in his ardent patriotism exposed himself to suspicion, in order that by anticipating the appearance of the evil he might be enabled the more successfully to counteract its effects. He was satisfied that his motives would not be mistaken by the King, for whose sake he made this sacrifice, and by a few others whose opinion he valued, and he decided on placing himself at the head of a powerful party, as the sole means of rendering it harmless; a party which might otherwise have chosen another leader, who probably would have sacrificed his duties as a subject and the welfare of his country to the selfish considerations of ambition



and private interest. It was this menacing attitude which he had assumed that checked the mischievous activity of Bona Sforza and of her numerous party, by the fear of trifling away the crown from the Jagellonian house; while more than half the nation were disposed to transfer it to the head of the popular Grandee, who according to every appearance was striving for its possession.

It was a dubious position which the Grand General had assumed, and one which subjected his conduct to many different interpretations; and there are indeed some historians who in recording his eminent talents and the great services he rendered to his country, have not entirely acquitted him of having been tempted by an idea, which in an aristocratical elective kingdom would scarcely be considered as criminal. The evil intentions of the Milanese were fettered; she dared not advance a step further lest she should accelerate the moment which, as she believed, Tarnowski impatiently waited for; that moment which the inconsiderate zeal of her adherents had nearly brought on at the last Diet at Piotrkow,—when Tarnowski would be enabled to place the crown upon his head with dignity. Bona Sforza therefore withheld the brand of discord,

which, blinded by hatred and vengeance, she was ready to throw upon the kingdom; for she now feared that the flame produced by it might consume her own house. She was moreover at last convinced that her son, in whom she had hoped to find a ready tool of her ambition, was determined to be himself the master of his house and of his kingdom; and she therefore supported with the resolution of a crafty and worldly woman; what she believed to be inevitable, awaiting, without humiliating complaints or useless reproaches, the moment when it would be expedient to act.

After a long opposition the King at last determined to convoke a new Diet at Piotrkow; but it was neither the pressing requisitions of the senate, nor the haughty demands of the Primate, which decided him on summoning together an assembly which, as the experience of past times had taught, invariably circumscribed the royal power within stricter limits. A secret conference which he had with Tarnowski convinced him that it was only by complying with the wishes of the nobility that he could attain to the fulfilment of his own, and he consequently gave way to the general demand. The ancient partizans of the Queen-mother and those who had joined her faction from hatred to Tarnowski, resolved, like

their leader, to keep quiet and to wait for more favourable circumstances. Many of them declined under different pretexts to appear at Piotrkow, and it was soon apparent that the Lithuanians and Protestants would compose the majority of the next assembly of the States.

As Catherine de Medicis acted at a later period, so Bona now held it politic to unite with a party whose religious interest made it their duty to favour Barbara's elevation to the throne and the growing influence of the Radziwill family. This party was moreover strongly attached to the Jagellonian dynasty, constantly opposed to religious intolerance, and their preponderance at the approaching Diet was almost certain. John Firley, the head of the Protestants in Poland, was again seen as formerly a frequent guest in the apartments of Bona, and it appeared that their ancient connexion was renewed; and although their former intercourse was subjected to many equivocal interpretations, their present one was probably of a totally different kind, being no longer founded on mutual inclination, but rather on a basis of cunning and selfishness. As the fire of a volcano blazes fiercest under an ice-clad mountain, so did the Princess of Mazovia conceal the vengeance burning in her heart, beneath a cold

exterior, awaiting the moment when her ambition or at least her revenge might be gratified. Since the quarrel which took place at Lobzow between the Duke of Liegnitz and the affianced of her daughter, she treated Helena with increased severity. The occurrence of a duel between her relative and Hippolyte Boratynski afforded her a welcome opportunity to manifest all her dislike to the young Starost of Samborz; and he was soon banished from her house by her look of surprise to see him there after such an event, and the stiff cold formality with which she received him. It was therefore only at the festivals of the Court, and under the eye of her mother, that Helena could see the beloved of her heart; and they were rarely able to exchange even a few words of mutual consolation and of hope of brighter prospects. Hippolyte, who was appointed captain in the royal horse guards, had followed the monarch to Piotrkow, and his brother was sent to the southern Palatinates to gain over the nobility of those provinces. Helena, the poor Helena, being now deprived of the only consolation which she derived from the presence of her royal patron, was abandoned to the sullen temper of the Princess of Mazovia, who never could pardon her for having declared openly to the Piastian prince her

attachment to one whom she considered so unworthy of her.

The Grand General Tarnowski was one of the few Grandees who resorted to the Diet of Piotrkow. The preparations for his journey had been made at Tarnow, contrary to his usual custom, with much pomp and parade. Feast followed feast at his castle, a large retinue of nobles and richly clad servants surrounded him whenever he appeared at Cracow, and a rumour was afloat that he would make his entrance into Piotrkow attended by no less than two hundred nobles of distinguished families and by a thousand armed men. The Grand Marshal Kmita observed all these preparations with suspicion and anxiety, and the accounts he gave of them to the widowed Queen filled her with amazement, and she began to fear that she had carried matters greatly too far. Every day new reports were received of the extraordinary magnificence displayed at Tarnow, of the gold and silver plate which had arrived from Venice, the noble steeds that were brought from the East, and the rich presents which the Grand General had distributed among the most influential of his adherents. It was secretly whispered as a most extraordinary circumstance that the apartments in the castle of Tarnow, which had

been formerly inhabited by John Zapolya, King of Hungary, and one of which was furnished with a rich canopy, were now fitted up anew with the utmost splendour. Bona never failed to communicate to her son all these reports by special messengers, which she continually despatched to Piotrkow; but she always received from him short and unsatisfactory answers. At last he assured her, by a letter, that he trusted in Heaven and in his right, which he should be able to defend against every one who should dare to attack it.

A report was spread that Tarnowski was approaching the capital with his retinue on his way to the Diet; it was observed that a certain suppressed agitation which generally precedes important events, pervaded the inhabitants of Cracow. The Court was uncertain as to the dispositions of the citizens; Sigismund Augustus was generally beloved, but Bona felt that such was not the case with herself, and she knew that the munificence and the affability of Tarnowski had made him very popular with the burghers of Cracow. In a council which Bona called together on the occasion, the question was agitated whether the gates of the city ought not to be closed against Tarnowski, and an appeal made to the loyalty of the burghers; or whether it would be more pru-

dent to receive him with less marked precautions. The impetuous Kmita advised the first measure, being desirous to come to open strife with his ancient enemy, and to raise the accusation of high treason against him. The Queen was also inclined to adopt equally violent proceedings, but the opinion of more considerate advisers, the earnest warnings of the Bishop of Cujavia, and chiefly the fear of the King's displeasure, finally prevailed. The garrison of the castle was however secretly increased, and all necessary preparations for a sudden emergency were made; but all these precautions soon proved to be unnecessary. The retainers of Tarnowski were quartered about the adjacent villages, and he himself appeared accompanied only by a few friends and a small troop of horse, to present his respects to the Queen-mother. Bona received her dreaded guest with all the tokens of courtesy, which she often lavished with the greatest profusion upon those whom she hated the most; but observing, as it appeared to her, an unusual haughtiness in Tarnowski's manner, she was unable to conceal her anger, and said to him as he was retiring, "Indeed, my lord Grand General, if we were to judge by your numerous retinue we should conclude that you are going rather to make conquests than to

deliberate in a Diet : such splendid preparations must have occasioned you very great expense,—as great indeed, as if it concerned a crown.” “ It does indeed concern a crown,” answered Tarnowski dryly : “ we live in very extraordinary times, and every one ought well to consider what may happen to him, and look to what he does.” Apprehensively did the Queen look out from her balcony upon the plain below, where the numerous bands of Tarnowski were gathering ; apprehensively did she pursue them with her eyes until the glittering spears and flying colours were lost in the distance.

Tarnowski's train slowly and by short marches advanced on its way to Piotrkow, as he wished to delay his arrival till the decisive moment. A few days after he had left Cracow, a messenger arrived with the account that he was seized on his journey by a sudden illness ; the following day brought the intelligence that he was worse and obliged to be borne in a litter, and finally that being unable to proceed further he had stopped at the convent of Sulejow, on the river Pilica, three Polish miles from Piotrkow, and that his life was in great danger. Bona Sforza now began again to lift up her head ; many of her confidants secretly left the capital in order to observe the proceedings of the



Diet, and to resume the clue of intrigue which she had abandoned through fear of him, who was now rendered harmless by a severe illness, and whose expected death would soon relieve her anxiety. But whilst the antechamber of the illustrious patient was crowded with his adherents, anxiously inquiring after his health, and demanding when it would allow them to proceed to Piotrkow in order to execute their visionary projects,—whilst his physician, Valenty Bielawski, and his other confidential servants answered all these questions by a shrug of the shoulders or some vague assurance, Tarnowski was himself at the castle of Piotrkow, busily engaged in firmly establishing on the head of the monarch the crown he was accused of aiming at for himself, and in restoring peace to the royal family and to the kingdom by counteracting the wicked schemes of ambition and malice.

At that critical moment the state of things in the royal city resembled a cloudy morning when it is uncertain whether the damp vapours rising from the ground and covering the horizon, predict a dark and rainy day, or whether they will resolve into a refreshing dew, and bring forth a cloudless sunshine. The hopes and fears of different parties were divided according to their several wishes:

Bona succeeded, not indeed without an effort, yet still with due decorum, in maintaining the external appearance of a good understanding with the illtempered and suspicious Princess of Mazovia. She frequently invited her to the castle, always requesting her to bring her daughter, whom she continued to treat with the greatest distinction and kindness. Though Helena did not venture to oppose the commands of the Queen, or rather the will of her mother, still she could neither feel an increase of confidence in Bona, nor receive the caresses with which she honoured her, without an involuntary sensation of horror. She had seen enough to convince her that the reconciliation between her mother and the Queen was only an apparent and not a real one, and she could only look with fear and distrust to its consequences. Her soul was at Piotrkow; there she knew that Barbara's fate must decide hers, and often did she send up silent prayers to heaven for her royal friend.

One day towards the middle of May the ladies of the Court and some lords who had remained at Cracow were assembled at the palace of the Queen-mother; the serenity of the sky and the warmth of the air had induced the company to remove from the inner apartments into a large gallery on

the ground floor. One of its walls was adorned with statues of the kings and princes of the Jagellonian family, and between them were placed various pictures of the Italian school. On the opposite side of this wall were large windows, divided only by slender pillars, which afforded an extensive view over the fields and a part of the river: the open sashes admitted the balsamic air of spring, loaded with fragrance from the flower-gardens situated at the foot of the castle hill. One end of this gallery opened into the royal apartments, and the opposite door led to a passage into the cathedral. At this latter place sat Bona, reclining in an arm-chair; next to her was seated the Princess of Mazovia, and the rest of the company sitting and standing round about; amongst them the Grand Marshal Kmita and the bishop of Cujavia Zebrzydowski. All the company laboured under a visible restraint, and neither the surrounding splendour of royal pomp, adorned with all the refined art of Italy, nor the joyful aspect of renovated nature, could produce any effect upon minds absorbed in their respective fears or hopes, and indifferent to things which no longer presented to them the charms of novelty.

It was on the morning of the preceding day that the last sitting of the Diet was to have taken

place, and the intelligence of its decision was every moment expected to arrive. The present company were well aware that perhaps in an hour the castle of Cracow would receive a new mistress ; and some of them were revolving in their minds how far it might be advisable to maintain their ancient devotedness to the former one, for it was not probable that a good understanding could exist between Bona and the young Queen, after what had happened at their meeting in Lobzow. Many endeavoured to read on the Queen's countenance the news which, as they supposed, she must have received ; but her features remained unchanged, and her usual smile of condescending affability continued to play about her mouth ; and yet when she spoke, her words were uttered in an abrupt manner, and with an apparent expression of bitterness. At length the conversation was entirely at a stand, and subsided into an oppressive silence, whilst the attention of every one present appeared to be exclusively engaged in watching for the treads of a horse on the pavement of the castle-yard, which should announce the arrival of a messenger. At last the Bishop of Cujavia broke the general silence, and, addressing the Queen, said, " As I was repairing to the presence of Your Majesty, I received an intelligence which will doubt-

less give Your Majesty much pleasure, as well as all the company present. The Grand General is arrived at Piotrkow, and has been already present at two sittings of the Diet." "I think, my lord of Cujavia," retorted Kmita, "that your known friendship for the Grand General has induced you to credit too hastily the uncertain news which has been reported to you; for I have also received an account upon which I can rely, and which is quite the reverse of yours. According to its statement, the Grand General is still in a cell of the convent of Sulejow; and I am afraid," added he sarcastically, "that the country will soon have to mourn its father." "I have no doubt," answered the Bishop, "of the interest you take in the welfare of the Grand General, and I am proud to confess my friendship for him; but I think that the fears about his health contained in the intelligence you have received have no foundation, for my information was communicated to me by Valenty Bielawski, one of the noble retainers of the Count of Tarnow, and it is accompanied by many circumstances which prove its truth beyond any doubt." "We shall have much pleasure," said the Queen, "if it may please you, my lord Bishop, to make us acquainted with some particulars of this astonishingly quick recovery of your friend." "Reco-

very !” repeated the Bishop, directing a significant look on the Queen : “ the word seems to be rather misapplied, where there has probably been no illness, or at least none of an important kind ; for according to the account I have received, all the medicines prescribed by the physician of Sulejow remained untouched, whilst he for whom they were prepared was, it appears, no longer in the convent, but with your royal son, probably engaged in preparing remedies instead of taking them himself.” “ Speak more intelligibly,” said the Queen with increased attention. “ It seems to us that the extraordinary account of your report has not gained much clearness in your eloquent mouth. What signifies this mysterious pretence of illness, which you mention in so mysterious a manner ?” “ If I am not mistaken,” answered the Bishop, “ it signifies that the Grand General desired to appear in the presence of the King without the retinue by whose brilliant display it had pleased him to amuse the Court and the inhabitants of Cracow ; and it appears that though he came alone, his appearance was not less welcome to His Majesty, who sent his brother-in-law, the Prince Radziwill, to invite him to a conference, which, as many suppose, was not the first they had together. I do not know whether this last sup-

position is well founded or not ; but the fact is, that when the Grand General appeared before the King, His Majesty embraced him most cordially, and they remained a long while in each other's arms. Many lords and nobles were witnesses of this meeting, which I trust in heaven will lead to the common advantage of the country."

Bona remained speechless. At the first words of the Bishop, a ray of suspicion had already darted across her mind that she had been deceived. The conclusion of the discourse, and especially the look and expression of the speaker, confirmed her suspicion ; and neither the intention nor the importance of this deceit escaped her. She turned hastily from the Princess of Mazovia, whose calm but expressive smile she was now unable to bear, and surveyed the assembly with cold haughtiness, as if she sought to counteract by the importance of her royal dignity the feeling of humiliation which those who have been deceived naturally experience. All that she observed, however, afforded her but little consolation. The bystanders silently exchanged significant looks, and many of them retired a step back from their sullen mistress, and looked down, as if desirous of avoiding to meet her eyes. Peter Kmita alone ventured to approach her, and to address a

question ; but she turned away without giving him any answer. The Bishop of Cujavia was satisfied at having produced a desired effect on the Queen, whose actions had long since turned his feeble gratitude for the interested benefits she had conferred on him, into hatred and aversion. He rejoiced also at having been the first to announce in the castle what he regarded as a better futurity ; and animated by these sentiments he turned to Helena, who was standing near a window, and engaged with her in an animated conversation on the same topics which he had just mentioned to the Queen.

After the conversation between the Bishop of Cujavia and Helena had continued for a while, the Princess of Mazovia observed an expression of pleasure flash over the countenance of her daughter, as she pointed out to the Bishop some object in the castle-yard. She rose from her seat and approached them, inquiring what was the matter. " It is probable," replied the Bishop, " that in a moment we shall receive intelligence from the Diet ; for if lady Helena's keen eyes and my weak sight are not deceived, there is now just crossing the yard a person who attended His Majesty to Piotrkow."

Impelled by curiosity, all the company pressed



to the windows: the Queen also quietly left her seat and approached them, while Kmita occupied a place at her side. They saw the young Starost of Samborz, Hippolyte Boratynski, and the Archdeacon of Cracow, Bartolomeus Sabinus, advancing rapidly towards the cathedral, the doors of which were opened to admit them. A crowd of people streamed through the open castle gate; but in a moment they divided on both sides, to make way for the Bishop of Cracow, preceded by his crossbearer, and surrounded by the chapter of his diocese. When the Bishop arrived at the door of the church, the Starost of Samborz approached him, presenting a parchment scroll, to which the great seal of the kingdom was appended. When the Bishop read this scroll he raised his hands and eyes to heaven in a posture of thanksgiving, then folded his arms on his breast with an expression of humility, and disappeared through the door, which he closed behind him.

For a quarter of an hour a complete silence prevailed in the gallery; at last the doors of the church were thrown open,—the people thronged into the cathedral. A white banner was hoisted on the highest tower, and a salvo of artillery shook the walls of the gallery, which was followed by repeated discharges of cannon. The ladies, terrified

by this sudden noise, uttered a scream of alarm. Even Bona involuntarily started; but it was not the report of artillery that had frightened her. The sound of the bells tolling from the cathedral and the seventy churches of Cracow, united with the roar of cannons and the shouts of the people, re-echoed from every side. All the company was bewildered by this sudden event. Care and anxiety were expressed on every countenance, and they stood uncertain what to do; but the Bishop of Cujavia advanced to the middle of the gallery, opposite to the statue of Wladislaw Jagellon, and exclaimed in a loud voice, with eyes sparkling with joy, "*Te Deum laudamus!* Raise now your thundering voices, ye mighty engines of death and destruction! 'T is the glad tidings of peace and concord that you now announce to the people. And thou, glorious Prince, ancestor of the Jagellons, look down propitiously on us! for today is great salvation come to thy house. Thy generation will be renewed, and sit for centuries upon the throne." Bona said in a voice smothered by rage, "Your enthusiasm carries you too far, my lord Bishop, and you forget where you are." "Where I am!" replied the Bishop with great animation: "Is this not the palace of the Kings? And were I even the only one here present who rejoices at this fortu-

nate event, who has greater right to praise a thing which confirms the rights of the church and is advantageous to the state, than I who am a priest and a senator?" The Milanese cast on him a look of rage, and said with an expression of scorn, "Such zeal indeed well becomes a prelate who has purchased the episcopal mitre." "I have purchased, because you have sold it, lady Queen," answered Zebrzydowski. Bona was entirely silenced by this reply, and the scarcely suppressed smile on the countenances of the greater part of the bystanders proved that her reign was at an end.

The royal messenger, the Starost of Samborz, now entered the gallery, and approached the Queen-mother. Quickly recovering herself, she met him with a severe look, and said in a firm voice, "You have long tarried in imparting to us the tidings with which apparently you are entrusted. It is not seemly that the King's mother should be informed like the meanest of his subjects, by public acclamation, of news that is dearest to her heart. Such negligence on your part deserves the most severe blame. You may now deliver your message."

Hippolyte listened to her angry speech without the least emotion, and answered in a slow and measured tone of voice, as if he was exactly re-

peating the words with which he had been intrusted: "When His Majesty Sigismund Augustus, king of Poland and grand duke of Lithuania, did me the honour of choosing me, Hippolyte Boratynski, starost of Samborz and captain of his body guards, to be the bearer of this joyful intelligence, he gave me his orders in the following words: 'Hasten to our city of Cracow, and inform the Bishop thereof that it has pleased Heaven to elevate to our side on the throne of Poland our beloved consort Barbara, hitherto only grand duchess of Lithuania, that he may instantly offer to the Almighty Giver of all that is good due thanksgivings for such a benefit, and that he may also order the necessary preparations for the coronation of our Queen, which, according to the ancient custom, will take place in his cathedral; then proceed, without loss of time, to announce, with the usual formalities, to the good citizens of our capital, and to all our subjects, that the grace of God has given them a mother, who, with his aid and blessing, will be a good mother, as we shall be always a good father to them. When you have done so, repair with all becoming respect to our royal mother, and present to Her Majesty our royal greetings, with the announcement that the assembled states of the realm have acknow-

ledged and confirmed the right and dignity of the Queen of this kingdom to our beloved consort Barbara, and that we request our royal mother to receive her as it becomes a daughter-in-law and the reigning Queen.' Her Majesty the Queen Barbara will arrive here tomorrow, attended by the Grand General."

Hippolyte had ended, yet Bona remained awhile without giving any answer. The manner in which the message of the King to his mother was worded increased still more the general surprise, and nobody dared to break the silence; only Kmita, who was standing aside, murmured in a low voice the name of Tarnowski, accompanied with curses. At last the Queen arose from her momentary stupefaction, folded her hands, and all the bystanders were struck with amazement at hearing her utter the following words: "We praise the Ruler of our destinies, who has fulfilled our prayers, and restored to our royal house the peace it has so long been deprived of. Now is darkness no longer around us; for the hand of the Lord has set a light on high, that all may walk by it, without straying to the right or to the left. We are also content to do his will, even to the end." These words produced an impression of astonishment and horror on the minds of all present.

They turned away their looks ; a deadly paleness covered their cheeks ; and even the most unfeeling of them were dismayed on hearing a speech which, as they knew, was in the mouth of Bona a most terrible blasphemy. The Princess of Mazovia whispered to her, "Your Majesty has forgotten the 'Amen' to your pious prayer, and you have done well to defer it to the end." The Queen fixed on her a ghastly look, and said, with a sepulchral voice, "Amen!" Even the iron mind of Anna was appalled, and she turned away overpowered by a momentary feeling of horror. Yet transient was this last warning of her tutelary genius. The Bishop of Cujavia approached her, and said, "Allow your ancient friend to address you once more. Heaven has now decided. Can you oppose its decree ? and will you still persist, whatever may be the consequence ?" But she cast on him a look of contempt, and turned away without giving any reply.

## CHAPTER V.

“ Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,  
The ear more quick of apprehension makes ;  
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,  
It pays the hearing double recompence.”

SHAKSPEARE.

DURING the scene which had passed in the gallery Hippolyte had found means of confirming the hopes of Helena that the events of Piotrkow would have a favourable influence on their own destiny; and in the evening of the same day he had an opportunity of giving to his beloved an account of all the intentions of her royal friend ; it was therefore natural that she should abandon herself to the agreeable idea that the clouds which so long had overcast her futurity were at last dispelled, and that the King's interest, manifested in so kind and open a manner, would overcome the obstinacy of her mother. Sigismund Augustus arrived the following day, and after paying a short visit to his mother he joined Helena, with whom he conversed for a long time about his own present happiness and that which he intended for his dear relative. Nearly at this same time the Cas-

tellan of Belsk, who was just arrived at Cracow, entered the apartment of his brother. "At last," said he, "we are come to a point where I may repose and look quietly back on what I have done. The beginning was arduous, but we have every reason to thank God for the event. Right has triumphed, and the hydra of discord lies discomfited and powerless." "You may well rejoice, my dear brother," replied Hippolyte, "and you will find your reward in your own conscience and in the general reputation you have acquired; but I can only follow you at a distance in your glorious career; and I owe my elevation not to my own merit but to my good fortune. The King has advanced me thus only because I am your brother and the betrothed of Helena Odrowonz." "Good fortune is not to be slightly thought of," said the Castellan of Belsk, "for where it fails, merit is seldom of much avail. I have good reason to thank Heaven; for had its blessings been denied us, Peter Boratynski, whom the King now calls his friend, and his fellow-citizens a worthy nobleman, would probably have been branded as a rebel by some, and by others as a traitor to the republic; and instead of earning honour and popularity as I have now done, I should have been obliged to retire in shame and



disgrace. Believe me, brother, mine was a most dangerous task; I had undertaken it against the dictates of my own heart, and the artifices of the enemy were powerful; but it is not to my exertions that the country is indebted for the happy conclusion of the great difficulties under which it laboured. It would never have arrived at that termination had not the Grand General come to a resolution which would have been temerity in every one but himself; for Tarnowski is a man of such powers that things which are inconceivable to others are practicable to him. Long may he remain the guardian of the throne against its internal and foreign enemies! but for myself, I shall retire from the bustle of the world, in which my activity is now at an end." "Will you then abandon us?" cried Hippolyte; "will you not be a witness of all the good you have so much contributed to effect?" "Peace and concord are restored to the royal house," replied Peter; "it is therefore time to look after my own concerns. I shall only remain to aid the establishment of your fortunes, Hippolyte, and according to the intentions of His Majesty they will become brilliant: I shall then retire into the old ancestral castle of Boratyn, and spend the remainder of my life in the midst of my family." The conversation

of the brothers was interrupted by the shouts of the crowd in the streets, and soon afterwards the rattling of the carriages announced the arrival of the young Queen. They consequently hastened to the great hall of the palace, where the Court was assembled to receive its new mistress.

The interview of the two Queens, who had never before met, except in the gardens of Lobzow, was marked by a stiff formality. Bona was attired in the costume which was at that time worn by widows of the royal family: she advanced with measured steps towards the middle of the apartment to receive her daughter-in-law, who, adorned with the marks of her rank and resplendent with beauty, entered, led by her husband. Sigismund Augustus presented Barbara as a queen and a daughter to his mother, who answered him with a stiff and formal courtesy, and a few words uttered in so low a voice that they were lost under the broad chinstay which muffled half the countenance of the royal widow. Only five arm-chairs were placed in the hall, which were occupied by the two Queens of Poland, the Queen of Hungary, Sigismund Augustus, and the infant King of Hungary, John the Orphan. The royal sisters stood near their mother, and the Court occupied the foreground of the hall. With a visible re-

strait Isabella of Hungary addressed a few words to her sister-in-law, inquiring about her journey ; and Barbara had scarcely answered her in the same formal tone, when Bona rose, and having saluted the royal pair with the same ceremonious bow as before, she uttered a few words as unintelligible as those with which she had greeted Barbara, and quitted the hall. It seemed that a spell was suddenly broken by the withdrawal of Bona. Queen Isabella cordially embraced Barbara, congratulating her on her entrance into the royal castle ; but when Barbara desired to salute her other sisters-in-law in the same affectionate manner, they bowed to her with great solemnity as low as the stiffness of their robes allowed, and instantly departed. Sigismund looked on the princesses with a compassionate smile, and offering his arm to Barbara and to his sister Isabella, retired with them to the apartments of his Queen, to enjoy there the happiness of a domestic circle unrestrained by the etiquette of the Court.

It was already evening when Hippolyte left the antechamber where his duty had retained him. He sought for solitude, to call up all the joyful images of the happiness which awaited him, and to wander in imagination over the bright future which presented itself to his mind. The Princess

of Mazovia seemed to have relaxed in her opposition to his happiness ; and he had been told that when the King had openly declared to Helena's mother his intentions respecting her daughter, she answered his pressing remonstrances in a manner which denoted her resolution to acquiesce in the projects of the monarch. What should now prevent the happiness of the affianced lovers ? Absorbed by these joyful anticipations, he wandered about the streets of the capital. The sounds of joy resounded from every house ; the respectable aldermen (1) of the city were enjoying themselves in the midst of their families, drinking to the health of the new Queen, discussing the preparations for the coronation, and particularly dwelling with self-complacent importance on the part which was assigned to them in the approaching solemnity ; whilst the inhabitants of a lower class and the soldiers were dancing in the public houses, and the merry sounds of the rebec and the bagpipe issued from the lowest huts of the suburbs. Mere joy may delight in noisy merriment, but true happiness, which is always accompanied by a pious feeling, seeks retirement. Hippolyte left the town and roamed into the fields, along the banks of the Vistula, enjoying the fine moonlight night, and abandoning himself to his dreams of

happiness, when suddenly he saw the young Bielawski approaching him. At this moment no intruder on his solitary meditation could have been less unwelcome to him. Valenty had been the playmate of his boyhood and the companion of his youthful exercises. The patriarchal manners which prevailed at that time in Poland, drew no sharply-defined line between the sons of the master and of his noble retainer; their relation was in some respects like that of two brothers, of whom one chanced to be more, and the other less favoured by fortune. Moreover, Hippolyte knew that Valenty was also in love, and that his fate depended in some measure on the same events as his own; and he conjectured that feelings similar to his own had led him to this spot. He therefore called the young man to join him, and they continued their walk together. Bielawski expressed a hope that his father would not oppose his union with the fair Tosia, daughter of the innkeeper of Ivanovice, who, although not of noble birth like himself, was the prettiest and the best-conducted girl for ten miles round, and above all much favoured by the Queen. Hippolyte promised to forward his wishes, and could not help at the same time mentioning his own prospects.

While engaged in this pleasant conversation, they heedlessly wandered from the banks of the river, and found themselves on a sandy plain, covered with heath and thistles, close to a grove of pine trees. "Where have we strayed to, my lord Starost?" cried Bielawski, laughing; "one would never have thought that love, though blind, would have proved so bad a conductor; for if I am not mistaken this gloomy wood is the Jewish burying-ground." "Truly," said Hippolyte, "it is a frightful place, and ill suited to the delightful schemes we have been planning. Let us return to the town." "To be sure we must return; but it is first necessary to find the way, for the path is lost in the sand," replied Bielawski. While they stood endeavouring as well as they could to find out their way, they heard the noise of footsteps, accompanied by a coughing and groaning, as if he who approached was charged with some heavy burden. They soon perceived, by the brilliant light of the moon, a stout man carrying a chest under his arm, who advanced with a heavy step, and muttered imprecations as he stumbled at almost every step over the tufts of heath. Hippolyte was about to inquire from this late wanderer the road to the town, when Bielawski touching his arm bade him

be silent, and drew him behind a clump of pine-trees, whence they could unobserved watch the motions of the man. When he was already at some distance, Valenty said in a low voice, "I know this man, and had rather meet Satan himself than have anything to do with so rascally a fellow." "I am not sure," replied Hippolyte after some consideration, "but it seems to me that I have more than once met with this repulsive figure, and not in the most agreeable way." "That I can easily imagine," said Bielawski, "and I have sufficient experience to know that his presence never forebodes anything but evil." "But who is he? and what is his profession?" "He is one of those fellows who for gold and wine will do any job for any person; a kind of service which is unhappily too much in request in the present times: but he never continues long in the service of the same master. He was formerly in the employment of the Grand Marshal Kmita; he afterwards contrived, by what means I know not, to enter the household of your brother, who repaid his bad services in broad stripes; and at present I believe he is among the attendants of the Queen-mother, or at least in the service of some one of her suite. But I told you that where he appears nothing good can be ex-

pected, and I would wager ten to one that he is even now engaged in some mischief." "If that is your opinion," replied Hippolyte, "we should do well to observe what business he is about."

Bielawski readily assented to Hippolyte's proposition; they therefore cautiously followed the object of their suspicions among the fir-trees, which grew thicker and thicker as they approached the Jewish burying-ground, and they were close behind him when he knocked at the door of a miserable hut. Suddenly they heard a hoarse screaming, like the singing of an old woman; but when the man called impatiently for admittance, it was instantly silenced, and the door opened to receive him. They quickly and without noise approached the window of the hut, and saw the man standing with a frightful old woman at a table, from which the strong light of a lamp glared full on the sinister expression of their countenances. When Hippolyte saw the old woman he started back as if struck with horror; but he soon collected himself, and continued to observe what was going on within the hut. The visitor put down the chest he had brought; and its apparent weight, as well as the sound which it produced, sufficiently indicated what were its contents. He then wiped the perspiration from his brow, and said, "Here,



aunt, here is your reward beforehand, that you may not desire anything that is forbidden to you, except that which you know, as I was told, for I myself know nothing about it." "Very good, very good, my son," muttered the old hag; "it is not necessary that you should know everything." While she was engaged in examining the chest with covetous eagerness, her guest continued: "You know the day and the place; you must be very punctual, and execute all that you were ordered. Shall I repeat it to you?" But the old woman interrupted him, saying, "You have already told me enough, cousin Waclaw, and more than enough, as is your custom, which I cannot suffer. I tell you that even solitude has ears. But," continued she, muttering to herself, "I have not closed the shutters towards the graves, and not even a dead Jew shall know anything about the poor widow's mite." Saying this, she went quickly to the window, from whence Boratynski and Valenty had scarcely time to withdraw and to conceal themselves by crouching under the wall. They could only distinguish these words; "Yes, certainly, it is the mite of a widow, though not of a poor one." After this they heard only an unintelligible murmur, intermingled with rude laughter and the jingle of money.

“Now, my lord,” said Bielawski as they removed a little from the spot, “have I not conjectured rightly? Is not this place a fitting one for a sharper and his receiver to hold their meetings? and if these two are not such, I am not my father’s son.” “You would not be mistaken in calling them something still worse,” replied Hippolyte thoughtfully. “What do you think, my lord,” said Valenty; “shall we not force open the frail door of this thief’s nest? I have often longed to know what the knave was about, and to bring his practices to light, or at least to have again the satisfaction of giving him a good thrashing, as I have already done once.” “On no account,” replied Boratynski; “you say that he belongs to the household of the Queen-mother, and it is the express order of His Majesty the King carefully to avoid everything that may lead to a quarrel; for where there is so much fuel, the least spark may kindle a flame. Nor does it become me to busy myself about such a mean wretch; still I do not regret our walk, and it may be of some future use, for I own to you that I am acquainted with the face of this hag. I remember also distinctly to have met in an ominous hour the man whom she calls her cousin, and with whom, if I mistake not, this same woman was at that time in con-

nexion. But let us not forget the accident which has permitted us to make this observation; perhaps a time will come when it may serve to discover a deeper evil than the mere tricks of a common sharper."

## CHAPTER VI.

“ She said, and raised her skinny hand  
As in defiance to high heaven,  
And stretch’d her long, lean finger forth,  
And spake aloud the words of power.”—SOUTHEY.

NOT far from the hut which we have left in the preceding chapter, close to the Vistula, which here flows with great rapidity through a narrow channel between steep and rocky banks, stood at that time a country-house, of no great extent, but built like a palace in the Italian style. It was called by the Court and by the fashionable world the Villa di Milano, but among the country people it was known by the name of the Queen’s Garden. Shady walks formed by plantations of exotic as well as native trees and shrubs surrounded it in extensive circles, diffusing around refreshing coolness and a sweet fragrance. Here and there the white marble of a statue shone through the dark green foliage, and the murmur of many jets and artificial cascades united with the warbling of innumerable birds that had fixed their abodes in the groves of the garden. In one of the

apartments of this delightful villa, adorned with more taste than splendour, sat Bona at an open glass door which led through a colonnade into the garden. Scandal reported that the Milanese had often found in that delightful retreat pleasures which she missed at the side of her hoary spouse; and it was reported that even of late the Court Marshal was often seen gliding secretly through the shadowed walks of the garden muffled in a large cloak, and that he was not the first who had visited this place in a clandestine manner. It was moreover reported that not only love and pleasure had their abode at the Villa di Milano, but that many political schemes had been secretly prepared in this lovely retreat. Love and pleasure were now gone, and the dark workings of intrigue alone remained in the villa, and more busy than ever. Bona's mind was no longer alive to the beauties of this little Paradise; the murmuring of the waters, and the sweet songs of the feathered tenants of the woods, were lost to her ear, which was now listening with aversion to the incessant report of cannon and the loud peal of bells from the capital. It was the day when the primate Dzierzowski reluctantly placed on Barbara's head the crown of the Queens of Poland. An alleged indisposition excused her absence from

the festival consecrated to the triumph of her abhorred daughter-in-law, and early in the morning she had fled to her favourite retreat in order to avoid witnessing a scene so humiliating to herself. From time to time the Starostine Falczeska gently opened the door to observe the state and temper of her mistress, who generally raised to her confidant the veil which concealed from others her secret feelings; but her usual composure seemed today more shaken than she had ever observed it. The Starostine had many times entered the apartment and retired again on perceiving that the Queen wished not to be disturbed. At length the latter took notice of her presence, and turning slowly to her, asked whether any one was yet arrived? "The old woman has been waiting below stairs at least half an hour, most gracious lady," answered the confidant. "That I can believe," said Bona, laughing scornfully, "vengeance and ambition are powerful impulses, but not equal to gold, which is the best spur to expedition." "It is all over," continued lady Falczeska with a still more timid voice than before. The Queen quickly interrupted her with an angry question, "What is over? what do you mean by *it*?" "Divine service I mean, and they are now gone to the market-place." After a short silence she continued with

more animation; and as if wanting a better consolation to offer to the wounded mind of her mistress, she observed: "The messenger who is just arrived has mentioned a most singular circumstance which occurred at the solemnity, and which has made a great impression on the minds of all present: he says that the Primate, in placing the crown on Barbara's head, did it so awkwardly that it was near falling down just before the tomb of Queen Hedvige, had not the Bishop of Cujavia prevented it. Many consider this accident as a bad omen." Bona looked thoughtful, and then muttered to herself, "Thy crown will indeed totter on thy head, thou poor Queen of a day; and when it really falls upon a grave, no bishop can replace it upon thy head."

The Starostine was well aware that she had hit on the right way of pleasing the Queen, and she therefore continued with increased animation to make different remarks unfavourable to the prospects of Barbara, when they heard the rattling of a carriage in the court. "It must be the lady of Podolia," said the Starostine. "Is it Your Majesty's pleasure to receive her?" "She comes at last," muttered Bona to herself, and then continued aloud, "The princess is welcome to our presence."

“ It is indeed kind of you, cousin,” said she with unusual mildness to the Princess of Mazovia as she entered, “ to visit a Queen who is today neglected and deserted by all. You are the only one who is not courting the rising sun, and who turns with sympathy to the setting one; therefore we bid you doubly welcome, illustrious cousin.” The expression of feminine softness, pain and friendliness which were so rarely shown by Bona, produced an effect even upon the unbending mind of the Princess, and she answered with less coldness than usual, “ I have followed your invitation the more willingly, as you yourself know that I look with aversion on this new sun, or I should rather say this passing meteor; and the acclamations which fill the palace and the town are as disagreeable to my feelings as they are to yours.” With a melancholy smile Bona motioned to her visitor to take a chair; and when both had occupied their seats she continued: “ It really seems that today we can properly associate only with each other—we, to whom the present time offers no pleasures: the appearance of two princely widows in their black veils would ill suit the splendour of the feast, and the gay circle can therefore easily dispense with our presence. But,” continued she, looking at the Princess, “ how comes it that



you have made use of such ornaments for a visit into the country and to the house of a solitary widow? I think I do not err in saying that this costly chain is the inheritance of an imperial princess of the Byzantian house, which has descended through many generations to the princesses of your family? You certainly could not expect to find today in these apartments an assembly that would require such a display of ornament?" "I have often appeared before Your Majesty in a simple dress without any ornament, as it became the widow of a simple nobleman and the daughter of a fallen house; and it is not for the purpose of covering my poverty with tawdry trifles that you see today these jewels about my neck: it is another cause which has induced me to wear them now,—a cause that your strong mind may consider mean and superstitious." "Do not think so," interrupted the Queen, shaking her head and looking thoughtfully; "we all more or less pay the tribute to the weakness of human nature; and who is there that can boast of being completely free from such a feeling? It is said that it is most acute with those who are unfortunate; and you need not doubt therefore that I am now well disposed to partake such a feeling." "Your Majesty has more than once observed this

chain on my daughter's breast. But I could not consent to her wearing it today, for this imperial jewel becomes not the bride of the Starost of Samborz." "You were right," said Bona, "not to have allowed it, at least for the time she will remain his bride." "There is an old saying," continued Anna, "that as long as a daughter of my house wears this chain, that house will not be entirely destroyed; and that is the reason why I have attached this precious jewel to this gloomy attire—not entirely destroyed, I say, for Your Majesty well knows it is already almost so." As the Princess spoke these words with increasing bitterness, the royal widow bowed, as if to examine the ornament closer, but in fact to hide her emotion, and said, "Such predictions are in general only the offspring of excited imaginations; but we find them in many illustrious families, and these beautiful jewels are indeed worthy to be the object of such a tradition. Yet my house is also fallen, and no jewel could protect it." "I can well imagine that you reject such things, which make a deeper impression on the inhabitants of the North than on those of your enlightened Italy. However, to those who have lost everything else such an airy heritage may be allowed." "You are mistaken if you suppose that I despise all which is not compre-

hended by the dull senses of man ; and perhaps ere evening you will have sufficient reason to change your favourable opinion of the strength of my mind. Had you been present a few moments before," added she with a forced smile, " you would have seen that I listened with great attention to what Falczeska was telling me about the occurrences in the cathedral ; and I confess that I take it as a presage, and heartily wish to see it speedily fulfilled." " I have heard of it also," replied Anna ; " but Your Majesty may perhaps best explain the meaning of these omens." " When the present time heavily oppresses the afflicted soul," said Bona, proceeding as if she did not hear the words last spoken, " and the retrospect of the past affords no comfort, the mind seeks for consolation in the riddles of futurity, and tries to unveil its mysteries." Then, after a pause of silence, she continued : " The thunder of the cannons has at last ceased, and its odious sound intrudes no more on our ears. The illustrious assembly probably now fills the splendid halls, and drinks deep of the pleasures of the present moment ; but this moment is transient, and will be followed by the changes of time. Who can know what that time will bring forth ? A powerful mind struggles in vain to prepare events : destiny alone rules the

world, and all the schemes of mortals are crushed by its mysterious decrees. But he who should be able to unveil its secrets, and to direct according to them the power and wisdom of a mortal, he would stand the highest amongst mankind, and all that is temporal would become subjected to him. Being sensible of all the defects and littleness of that, which is called earthly grandeur and wisdom, I have often longed to attain to such knowledge; and you,—have you never cherished such a wish?" Anna's mind was not entirely free from the superstitions of her age; she was moreover strongly excited by all the events which had recently happened. It was therefore natural enough that this imaginative effusion, so unusual with the stern reason of Bona, produced a great impression on her. "I should never have supposed," replied the Princess of Mazovia, "that Your Majesty could be influenced by such feelings; but I will confess that, oppressed by misfortune, my troubled mind has often sought relief from mysterious aids; yet all my researches proved vain." "The ancestor of my family, Franciscus Sforza," said the Queen after a pause of reflection, "was, as you well know, of humble extraction, and only a peasant's son. It is said that one evening, as he was returning to his father's cottage from hard work

in a vineyard, he met a tall woman in an extraordinary dress, who watched him with great attention. She inquired of him the day and the hour of his birth, as well as some other circumstances; and having examined the lines upon his hand, she predicted great things to him, which in the course of time were realized. He entered the army, rose to the dignity of High Constable of the kingdom of Naples, became afterwards Grand Banneret of the Holy See, and finally reigning duke of Milan. He frequently confessed that it was this prediction which had created for him a destiny of which he never had dreamt; and that he certainly should have remained all his life a common peasant if he had not heard those words, which had always strengthened his courage and directed his conduct. A similar story is told about the first of the Colonnas, who was called Sciarra, from the axe he used as a wood-hewer.

The conversation lasted till the evening had closed, and it was already dark when the door of the apartment opened. Lady Falczeska entered, and, approaching the Queen, said in a whisper, "She is waiting, most gracious lady. What are your orders?" "I do not know," answered the Queen in an irresolute tone of voice. She gave a

sign to her attendant to retire, and, turning to the Princess of Mazovia, said in a confidential tone, "What will Your Grace think of the boasted strength and superiority of my mind, if I confess to you that being oppressed by many cares, I have ordered such a woman as that of whom I have spoken, to whom the popular voice ascribes a certain knowledge of futurity, to be fetched." "I am ready to depart whenever my presence should disturb you," replied the Princess. "By no means," cried Bona; "she may come some other time, rather than by her appearance deprive me of the company of my illustrious cousin. Go, Falczeska, and tell her I am now engaged." Whilst the Starostine slowly departed to perform her commission, Bona turned to the Princess of Mazovia, and said, "Would you have any objection to be present at this experiment? It is the first time I am going to try it, and indeed I very much want the presence of a third person during this extraordinary performance. It is generally asserted that in similar cases much depends on the day and the hour, and this day is certainly a most eventful one; will you not yourself make an essay of the prophetess's knowledge? Our destinies have been lately much interwoven. Wherefore should the voice of destiny be more silent to

the Queen of Poland, and to the granddaughter of the Piasts, than it was to Franciscus Sforza and to Sciarra Colonna? and why should it not strengthen their minds and guide their measures?" Bona's intention of making the Princess of Mazovia a witness of the following scene entirely succeeded, and the manner in which she executed it did much credit to her discernment. She artfully turned the conversation to the mysteries of the supernatural world, and thus awakened in Anna's dark mind the desire of relieving the pressure of the gloomy present by a glimpse into a better futurity. She considered, moreover, that she might perhaps be able to get some clue to the real intentions of her ancient enemy, who now treated her with so much apparent friendship and kindness. In short, Anna consented to the Queen's proposition.

The Starostine introduced an uncommonly tall woman, whose features were scarcely discernible in the faint glimmer of the twilight. She made a deep obeisance in the Oriental manner to the Queen as well as to the Princess of Mazovia, and Lady Falczeska left the room. "We have allowed you to appear in our presence," said Bona with her usual firm and commanding voice, "because it has been made known to us,—whether falsely

or truly remains to be decided,—that you possess the gift of unveiling the mysteries of futurity. You have obeyed our command; but I would have you remember, before you proceed any further, that the eyes which now look on you are not easily to be deceived, and that it is not a credulous mob before whom you are going to play your tricks and jugglery. Remember that you are in the presence of the high and the powerful, and that deceit will be followed by the severest punishment.” “Powerful as you are, lady Queen,” fearlessly answered the aged stranger, “he who has sent me hither is still more powerful, and all your threats will disperse before him like chaff before the wind.” “You speak with great temerity; and as you assume a right to such a positive tone, take care that your words may prove true, or your boldness will be chastised with redoubled severity.” “My words prove true!” replied the witch in a tone almost of contempt, “or my boldness will be chastised with redoubled severity! Who are you, who presume to know and to judge what truth is? I indeed may not be accused of temerity in that I appear with equal courage before the king and the beggar, whose royal purple or tattered garments may perhaps be tomorrow covered with earth. The temerity is on your part,—



to call forth the mysterious powers with doubt in your mind, pride in your heart, and vain sophistry upon your lips !” She then added in an altered tone, “ As it seems Your Majesty is ill disposed for the purpose on which I was called, I shall depart till an hour as favourable as the present one may return ; for the present moments are quickly passing away.” “ And when will it return ?” demanded Anna, who took more interest in all this proceeding than she chose to evince. “ Who can tell ? The aspects of the hours are innumerable, like the leaves of a tree, and many years may pass before a moment similar to the present will occur. Time is the most precious as well as the most transient of things : it must be carefully watched, for it never returns, and the coming moment is quite different from the preceding one.” “ Precisely because time is precious,” said the Queen, “ we have resolved it shall not be squandered away ; but you must give us a proof of your science, for it is only in this manner that we can be convinced, that all the predictions you are going to utter, are not idle talk unworthy of those who are to listen to it.” “ You desire to have a proof of my power,” exclaimed the sibyl ; “ I cannot be angry with you, for incredulity and doubt are natural to those who remain in dark-

ness. I am ready to comply with your desire. Decide yourself upon the manner in which the spirit shall manifest his presence." "Think on some experiment that may convince us," whispered the Queen to the Princess of Mazovia. "I am in such a state of agitation as rarely occurs to me; but you preserve entirely your wonted calm and self-possession." After a moment of consideration the Princess said to this strange woman, "If you boast that you have the power of unravelling the mysteries of the future, it may be much easier to you to know the secrets of the past; but the task I will give you is not a trifling one. I will not ask of you a thing already known to others, or that could have been betrayed to you by accident, idle gossiping, or penetrated by your own craftiness. You must tell me the thoughts which never passed my lips, and which lie hidden in the deepest recess of my heart. If you are able to perform this task, I will believe your predictions." "So will I," said Bona; "this will be a sufficient proof of your power. But you hesitate, prophetess."

The sibyl remained for a while as if in consultation with herself or some mysterious being; at length she answered in a solemn tone of voice, "It is indeed not an easy task which you have imposed

upon me; but it is not too much for the spirit whom I serve. Shall I name to you, illustrious lady, the thought which you never have uttered?" Anna gave an affirmative sign. "And doubtless to you alone, lest things you desire to be concealed should become manifest." "Certainly," answered the Princess in great agitation. The prophetess approached her, and, leaning to her ear, whispered in a very low voice, "When I appeared in your presence, you desired not only to penetrate the mysteries of the future, but also to cast a glance aside on the image which stands near you, whose surface alone you can see with the weak eyes of the mortal, but whose interior you wish to penetrate by the aid of the spirit." The Princess hastily retired a step, and a transient blush coloured her pale cheeks. "Has she divined?" asked Bona; and Anna only silently bowed assent. "Will Your Majesty now order," said the old woman almost tauntingly, "that the spirit may also give you a proof of his veracity?" "No," answered the Queen abruptly; "what has proved satisfactory to this lady is likewise so to us. Therefore begin your incantations directly." "No, no," boldly replied the prophetess: "you are certainly a high and powerful lady; but your supreme orders have no force with me. The pro-

phetess belongs to other powers, who are not very liberal in their grants; you must therefore allow me to stipulate beforehand for a gift." "You are in the presence of a very rich lady," answered the Princess of Mazovia, "and you should have no doubt that she is able to grant you every request, however great it may be; and although I am but the widow of a nobleman by no means affluent, still I am not in the habit of dealing with your equals without paying them." "You are mistaken, illustrious lady. I do not ask for alms that are thrown to a beggar, or for a handful of coined gold, for which the hired menial would humbly embrace your knees. It is another kind of gift I crave,—a present of something that is most dear and valuable to you, and which you are not to choose, but myself. However, I do not require my reward before I merit it." Bona did not answer this extraordinary request; but the Princess of Mazovia exclaimed with great animation, "This is a most extraordinary speech, and very like that with which, as it is said, the enemy of mankind tries to delude the unwary on similar occasions. I have already lost almost everything, and there is but little remains to me that is dear and valuable; I therefore cleave the more to it, and will not stake it on so dubious a chance. It

is possible that this messenger of a subterranean world may require in the name of her master, as a reward for her fallacious oracles, the sacrifice of our immortal soul, or that of our kindred. I wish not to purchase her words at so dear a price. Your Majesty may dispose as you like of your own property, but allow me to retire from such a bargain." The sibyl answered with a scornful smile, "Your Grace is fallen into a great error. Even if he whom you have mentioned is not quite a stranger to our proceedings, I can assure you that in the present times he makes other bargains for his trouble; and I dare say he has other means of procuring them, when he chooses. That which I require is for myself, and the reward of my own labour. What should I do with the souls of such distinguished ladies? what use could I make of them, especially as they would be perhaps disputed to me by somebody who may have a better right to them. I am moderate. A little bit of finery will satisfy me, for you know that even old women are fond of dress." "What is it she would wish for?" said Bona laughing; "perhaps some gewgaws to adorn herself for the witches' meeting on the top of the Bald Mountain." The scruples of the Princess were removed, and Bona ordered the witch to commence business; but

she answered in a hesitating tone, "Remember that if you refuse my modest request after my work is done, you will have cause to repent it. It is ill jesting with spirits and with their confidants, and the words of the deceived prophetess turn into bitter disappointment." "Begin your work," interrupted the Queen in a loud and commanding tone.

The sibyl then drew from under her folded garment a kind of frame, resembling those on which globes are placed. She set it on the table in the middle of the room, and put a little lamp under it, which being lighted produced a faint bluish flame. She then ordered the bystanders to remain silent until she should require an answer, and to keep their eyes fixed on a crystal globe, which she placed on the frame, muttering all the while some unintelligible words. The upper part of this globe was empty, and the bottom was filled with a whitish substance. She now asked which of the ladies would have her fortune told. The Princess motioned to the Queen; Bona accepted it by an affirmative sign, and the prophetess began to walk slowly round the table, quickening her pace as she went, and continually uttering words, of which nothing could be understood except the frequently repeated name of Bona Sforza. When she had performed more

than twelve rotations, the substance in the globe began to move, and to curl in little waves. The old woman repeated more eagerly her incantations; and the agitated substance began to rise in the form of an obtuse cone, and by degrees assumed the shape of a thin glittering column, the top of which divided into many parts. As the old woman raised her voice, the column spread in many branches, and finally became like a tree, with leaves and fruits on its branches. Again something like a plant rose from the bottom. It did not, however, reach the top of the globe; but it wound itself round the tree in beautiful wreaths, resembling leaves and bunches of flowers. The prophetess suspended her incantations, and asked the Queen what she saw. "It is a tree," answered Bona, "with its foliage and fruit." "Yes, it is a tree," exclaimed the sibyl in a voice of inspiration: "its roots strike deep into the earth; its head touches the clouds; the birds of the air nestle in its branches; under its shade generations are sheltered, refreshing themselves with its delicious fruits. Yet seest thou not, O Queen of Poland, what encompasses its trunk?" "I see it," replied Bona. "Dost thou not know it? It is the ivy, a clambering weed of a noxious kind, created to creep humbly on the ground; but when

it comes to a noble tree it climbs up it, encompasses its trunk, and sucks its best nourishment, so that the growth of the tree dwindles, and its blossom produces no fruit. But," continued she, laying her hand on the globe, and imperceptibly shaking it, "do not lift thy lowborn head so proudly in its borrowed greatness. When the gardener shall perceive that the leaves of the tree are withering, and its branches drooping, he will apply his pruning-hook : thou wilt be annihilated, and wilt sink down into the dust, from which thou hast risen !" And indeed, while she thus spoke, the blossom and the fruits seemed to disappear ; but the ivy soon loosened itself from the trunk, and the fruit reappeared again. The bottom of the globe boiled, and rose now for the third time ; a new plant appeared ; it likewise clasped the tree, rose to its top, and visibly gave to it a new vigour, for its branches spread more widely, and the leaves and fruit increased both on the plant and the tree. The prophetess then said in a solemn tone, " And forthwith the strength of the tree is renewed. The master of the garden has found a graft for it, a scion from a like noble stem, that gladly unites with its own species : its foliage increases in luxuriance, its



fruit in sweetness, and the universe shall be refreshed by it during centuries and centuries.”

Here the old woman ceased, as if from exhaustion ; and at the same moment the lamp expired, and the form of the tree tumbled down. The Queen remained silent : her looks met the eyes of the Princess of Mazovia, and read there the impression produced on her mind by this wonderful exhibition, which probably consisted in some kind of what are called ‘Diana-trees,’ and would produce no effect on a spectator in our times, but in the middle of the sixteenth century the secrets of natural magic were known only to few persons, and the ladies of that time were generally ignorant of them. It was therefore no wonder that the Princess of Mazovia was highly gratified by an exhibition which so well accorded with her inclination to the marvellous and supernatural, and with the secret wishes of her ambitious heart. She therefore requested the prophetess to tell her fortunes by the aid of the mysterious crystal globe. The sibyl, however, did not comply with her request, probably because a repetition of the same experiment would have produced the same tree as before ; and said, “As the common powers of nature are subjected to exhaustion, so it is

also with those that act beyond its limits ; and before the sun has thrice run his daily career, we may not avail ourselves a second time of this instrument. There are, indeed, means to compel the reluctant powers ; but they are of so extraordinary and dangerous a kind, that I fear they would hardly be acceptable to Your Grace. Still, as the reward is stipulated, the work must be done ; and truth has more than one medium to manifest itself to the eyes of mortals.”

The crystal globe and the lamp were removed with some formalities ; but the frame remained on the table, and a new vessel was placed in it. It was a bowl filled with a colourless, clear liquor, which had the appearance of pure water. The prophetess, having commanded silence, approached the table, described a circle with her clenched hand round the bowl, and commenced her adjurations ; but it seemed as if the spirit made a difference between a powerful queen and the disinherited daughter of a fallen dynasty. He delayed to produce the images of futurity, and the contents of the vessel remained undisturbed. The voice of the sibyl began to sound louder ; and it appeared that this second performance was more difficult than the first, for her dark glowing eyes rolled wildly in their orbits, perspiration covered

her brow, her voice became rough and hoarse, and her gestures violent. She repeatedly bowed over the vessel, uttering words in a strange language, as if she wished to call forth the spirit that slumbered at the bottom. Her shrill voice resounded wildly from the basin, when on a sudden the liquor boiled, and the circle she had drawn with her hand glowed with jagged, blood-red, and green-tinted flames. The eye of the Princess fell askance on Bona, and she turned away in horror, as she saw her countenance appear like that of a corpse, with distorted features already covered with the spots of decay. The flames increased in violence, and the Queen's countenance became more and more frightful; the prophetess had veiled her face, and with clenched hands, as if inwardly struggling, she continued to utter her incantations. But as the liquid in the vessel still remained without movement or colour, she tore violently from the garments which covered her heaving bosom a little box of a singular form, lifted it thrice towards heaven in silence, and extended it as many times towards the earth, murmuring adjurations, whilst she repeated nine times the name of Anna and that of her ancestor Piast; then opening this box, she poured into the vessel a few drops of a whitish, clammy liquid. It mingled

with the water, yet no form appeared; but the flames subsided, a pure, radiant light shone around the magical frame, and when Anna lifted her eyes she saw that the face of the Queen was no longer disfigured, but a soft glimmer illuminated her smiling countenance. The prophetess threw back her veil, and her expressive features beamed in the same light. The room was lit up by the magical glare, and filled with a sweet but intoxicating perfume. The bottom of the vessel began to grow troubled; a thick substance separated itself from the pure water, and began to rise, and to assume a distinct form, as it had formerly done in the crystal globe. It was, however, not a tree which now appeared. The witch suspended her adjurations, and asked, "Has the master erected the house from its ruins?" And it really seemed to the Princess that she saw a house, or rather a lordly palace, with its towers and battlements, and another at its side, arising in the water. "It is an antique mansion," continued the sibyl in a solemn voice: "many generations of kings have been born in its halls, and they have dwelt there in power, glory, and joy, till they left it for the grave; but the destinies of mankind are changeable, and when the time came that the house was left by its last

owner, ruin overwhelmed the royal mansion ; its noble towers sunk into dust ; and through the clefts of its broken battlements the stars of heaven looked into the deserted halls. But the noble dwelling shall not perish for ever ! Behold the emblem of truth appearing in the bottom of this vessel ! At the call of its master it rises from the ruins of desolation, and leans its walls on those of another edifice, which is erected for centuries and centuries, that they both may firmly remain, supporting each other, and that coming generations may dwell in its halls." And there were in reality two regularly formed masses which appeared in the vessel, joined together, and visibly increased after their union.

The Princess of Mazovia was powerfully affected by the striking representation of her family's fortunes, the object which for so long a time had exclusively occupied her mind ; she listened with motionless attention to the words which flowed from the sibyl's mouth with increased rapidity and violence. Whilst they were engaged in these proceedings a terrible storm had risen which blew in furious blasts against the windows of the apartment, the house was shaken by tremendous peals of thunder, and flashes of lightning continually illuminated the darkness of the night.

The prophetess fell into an extraordinary fit, her eyes rolled wildly, her breast heaved as if oppressed by some monstrous burthen, and she eagerly pressed her withered hands to her heart as if striving in vain to free herself from this pressure; her voice grew louder and louder, till it became a scream, and above the noise of the tempest these words were heard uttered in a shrill tone : “ The house is rebuilt, nothing is wanting but a roof to it; but beware, ye orphan and widow, for in one of its corners lurks the foe. Dost thou hear? the foe!—Thou seest him not, but I see him! and even if thou seest him, thou heedest him not; but I have recognised him!” The attention of the Princess increased at these words, and the Milanese cast a hasty and wondering look at the old woman, as if she had said something unexpected, but the witch continued without perceiving it. “ Beware of him who calls himself thy friend and still more than a friend; of him who says that he would sacrifice his life for the preservation of thy house; he will overthrow the house into which he entered with an open brow and friendly countenance, and he will destroy thee and that which is dear, not only to thee, but also to himself. Do not fear thy enemies, their action rests powerless until he appears, and the slumbering

evil can only be awakened by the voice of a friend." She now ceased, as if exhausted by an involuntary effort, and continued, after a pause, in a quiet moderate tone of voice, with her hand placed on her brow, "Fear not, illustrious lady, thy enemies or those you think to be such; this is the oracle of destiny delivered by the prophetess's mouth." At this moment the storm, which was continually increasing, blew open an ill-fastened window, and a gust of wind rushed into the room with such violence that it not only extinguished the faint glimmering flame of the circle, but throwing down on the ground the rich carpet that covered the table on which the frame stood, smashed the magic vessel to pieces. As if actuated by the same feeling of terror, all three fled together from the apartment into the adjoining illuminated hall, and mutually beheld the different impressions on their countenances. The Princess of Mazovia was extremely agitated, her gait was tottering, and she was obliged to support herself by leaning with one hand on a marble stand, whilst with the other she was wiping away the large drops that rolled over her pale brow. Although Bona's step was as firm as usual, she appeared to be pensive and absent, but the old woman was visibly the most agitated of them all.

It appeared that she had great difficulty to recover herself from a terrible impression ; she was quite breathless and looked around her with bewilderment, as if she was afraid to encounter some strange unwelcome object ; her raven hair hung wildly round her sallow wrinkled face, and deep groans convulsively issued from her blue clenched lips. She might have reminded a spectator of the witch of Endor, amazed by the apparition she had herself evoked. A long pause occurred before the silence was broken ; at last the Queen, who had observed that the old woman had recovered herself a little, and who probably wished to put an end to this harrowing scene, said, " You have made good your promises, and may fate so ordain as you have predicted ! We do not know whether the Princess is as well satisfied with your oracle as we are, but she ought to consider that the cup of happiness is but seldom unmixed, and that whenever we meet with good fortune, evil is always nigh at hand." " I also wish," said Anna, " that your words may be confirmed ; one only thing did I fear, and I have no more reason to fear it ; all the rest I will meet undismayed." " So now demand your reward," said the Queen, " yet still remember that there are things which are too dear to us to be given even



for the greatest service, and that unreasonable demands upon princesses will not go unpunished." The prophetess answered with a visible effort, "The spirit has departed from me, and I am again a common dweller of the earth and your humble slave; but your promise is registered in another place, and I hope you will have no objection to fulfill it." "Speak then," cried Anna hastily. "I will then ask my royal mistress whether she now bears any jewel in her dress that may be particularly dear to her, either for the sake of the person from whom she had received it or from any other recollections? It is such that I desire, for the powers of the fate are not to be propitiated without a sacrifice, and when their priestess's heart rejoices at the outward value of the gift, it is the heartfelt value which the giver attaches to it that constitutes the sacrifice which is recorded in the mysterious book of destiny." Bona went silently to one of the candelabras which illuminated the hall, loosened from her left hand a richly set bracelet, and held it up to the light; by pressing on a spring, a little receptacle formed in the bracelet sprang open, she considered attentively for some time what was concealed therein, pressed it secretly to her lips, and having closed the receptacle, held out, with a deep sigh, the jewel to the old

woman. The witch looked with covetous eagerness on the glittering prize, and greedily seized it. "Now, illustrious lady," she said to the Princess, who stood visibly much perplexed, "what reward will you grant your humble slave?" "I am not a queen," answered the Princess with some hesitation, "this is not my house; but come tomorrow morning to demand your guerdon, and I think that you will be satisfied with the reward that the widow of Leon Odrowonz will give you." "By no means, illustrious Princess," said the prophetess, "it is not a patient forbearing creditor to whom you are indebted; numberless moments are yet to come ere the day dawns, and in every one of them you may be called to account for omitting to pay the contracted debt. The futurity," continued she, looking fearfully around and with a visible effort, "the futurity which has been shown to you through me is not spotless; the enemy is lurking in secresy; would you give him power over you before the house you have seen rearing is perfected?" "Still I cannot grant your request," answered the Princess half in awe and half imperiously; "the events of this evening have surprised me unprepared, and my inability must be a sufficient excuse even for the spirits." "Inability!" repeated significantly

the old woman, "know then that not only you, but I also and this royal lady may suffer by your delay, for we are all equally guarantees of the fulfilment of your word." "O cousin!" exclaimed Bona in an entreating tone of anxiety. "You say that you cannot," continued the witch, "but your jewels glitter most splendidly upon your widow's apparel; and you say that you cannot, because you will not. I must therefore require from you what you refuse to grant freely." "Never," exclaimed the Princess, "will I part with the last jewel of my family to which an old tradition attaches the fortunes of my house! and for what should I give it?" "The pledge of fortune for fortune itself," quickly rejoined Bona; "the present which I reluctantly gave to her was also dear to me as a token of remembrance, but the past is gone, and our projects belong to futurity. The demand addressed to you is certainly great, but the price is not too high for what you have seen; and you have yourself confessed the truth of our prophetess, after the trial to which she has submitted." "This demand is too great," cried Anna, "and greater than I may grant." "Not so," interrupted the old woman; "how could I wish for an ornament worthy of an empress to hang upon my threadbare garments,

or to adorn my hoary head? You say that this splendid chain is a pledge of fortune? Then it is already the property of the powers which rule the fate of men, and it is forfeited to them: however, they do not wish for it before the time; I ask only a link of it, a single link of this brilliant chain; I require only one stone that it may become the corner stone of the new house, which I have shown to you in the unerring mirror of futurity." Agitated by an inward struggle, Anna paced quietly to and fro, while Bona watched her movements with an attentive eye. At last seeing that the Princess still delayed to grant the sibyl's request, she said with that tone of irony which she so well understood how to make use of, "Who would have supposed that the Princess of Mazovia was afraid to deprive herself of a little insignificant stone, as if without it the chain would be no longer a suitable wedding gift for the noble lady Boratynska, who is already so richly endowed by the munificence of our royal son!" A blush of anger coloured the pale cheeks of the Princess; she hastily approached the table, loosened a link of the chain containing an emerald of extraordinary size and beauty, and reached it to the old woman with an averted face, yet without a word or a sigh. She then wrapped the broken chain in a

corner of her veil, as if desiring to conceal it from her own eyes as well as from those of others. The prophetess received the present, thus reluctantly given, without any thanks, and after having made the same Oriental obeisance as at her entrance, she disappeared through the door, at which the Starostine awaited her. Neither of the Princesses was in a disposition to prolong their conversation; Anna soon departed on her return to the capital, and the Queen remained lost in thought until the return of her confidant. "I will never have anything more to do with such proceedings," said Bona to lady Falczeska; "should it be true as it is said, that one step beyond the circle of nature delivers us to the sway of the powers of darkness, all has succeeded, and succeeded better than we could have expected; still I cannot rejoice in it. It appeared as if some strange spell had entered into the circle we had drawn, and that the power of our minds was overcome by its influence; whether it came from the unworthy tool of our schemes, or—but no more of this, I say. In the usual course of things, the spirit of Bona of Milan rules freely and with undivided power, and we shall scarcely ever meet with a second Anna Odrowonz, when once we have despatched this woman whom in an evil hour we have employed."

## CHAPTER VII.

“ Why dost thou wander by this mournful light,  
Feeding sick fancy with the thought that poisons ?”

MATURIN'S *Bertram*,

WHILE the Princess of Mazovia was turning from every feeling of joy and benevolence to seek comfort in dark mysteries, and, striving to attain what was impossible and even forbidden, she humbled her proud mind under the rule of her mortal enemy, Helena lived surrounded by the brightest images of life and love. The ceremonies of the coronation were performed with all due pomp, and the inhabitants of Cracow, devoted to the cheerful and affable Sigismund, rejoiced at the happiness which their sovereign would enjoy during his lifetime, after having overcome by his constancy all the obstacles which had separated him from his beloved consort; necessity and prudence obliged the discontented to conceal their real feelings by feigning to participate in the general satisfaction. The accidents by the recital of which the Starostine had tried to alleviate her mistress's sorrow did not produce exactly the same general impression that she had reported

to the Queen; and though some remembered them till the afternoon, they were entirely forgotten in the evening at the feudal ceremony so gratifying to the national pride, namely, the solemn homage paid by the dukes of Prussia to the King of Poland, which was publicly performed in the market-place of Cracow. When it was over, the *cortége* returned to the palace with martial music and flying colours, among which the banners of the dukedom of Prussia now appeared for the first time, marked with the letters S. A., initials of Sigismund Augustus, a token which long afterwards remained on the breast of the black eagle. Immediately afterwards commenced the royal banquet for the people, who enjoyed with shouts of exultation the large number of roasted oxen destined for their use; and the flagons of wine, mead, and brandy, flowed with the greatest profusion.

We hope the reader will permit us to pass over in silence the festivities which took place on that day in the royal palace, and only to say that after a splendid banquet and the customary taper dance, which could not be omitted on such an occasion, the King publicly declared the intended marriage between his most beloved cousin the highborn young lady of Podolia, Helena Od-

rowonz, and the highborn Hippolyte Boratynski, Starost of Samborz, whose formal betrothal would take place in a few days, when the illustrious mother of the bride should have recovered from an indisposition by which she was unfortunately suffering during the present joyful occasion. It is needless to add that our friend received many congratulations; but though some of them, as those of his brother and of Tarnowski, were sincere, the greater part were influenced by the new and brilliant prospects of the young couple, for it was rumoured that the King destined to the bride the dukedom of Zator (<sup>1</sup>) as a dowry worthy of a descendant of the Piasts, and that the bridegroom would be raised to the dignity of the grand standard-bearer of the crown. It was also no wonder that the charms, virtues, and many excellent qualities of the new queen were suddenly discovered, particularly by those who had been her most zealous opponents, who were now the more eager in pressing forward to wish her a long life, and in declaring themselves her most devoted servants. Even the old Palatine of Cracow seemed to have laid aside his pride and ill-humour, and appeared to be highly gratified by the promise which the King had given to his most eager solicitations, that the formal betrothal of the



royal cousin should be solemnized at his castle of Wisnietz, and that his poor house, as he said, should be honoured on this occasion by the presence of Their Majesties.

It was long after midnight when Hippolyte, now the favourite of love and fortune, retired to the solitude of his chamber. He had just divested himself of his rich court dress, and was going to seek repose on his couch, or rather to abandon himself to the intoxicating dreams of his felicity, when his cousin Stanislaw Lacki entered the room. The duties of his service, and the forms of etiquette, had not permitted the page to approach his cousin and to offer him his hearty congratulations amidst the brilliant crowd of courtiers; he therefore came now to enjoy the right of a relative, and to express his feelings without restraint. He appeared to be much excited, and expressed his satisfaction in his ancient manner, by embracing his cousin and jumping about the room: it seemed however that his joy was assumed, and that an ill-concealed sadness lurked under an apparently smiling countenance. "Now all is right and well," exclaimed he, grasping the hand of his cousin, "and all has turned out better, far better for thee than it was possible to hope. Who would have supposed at that time, when we

saw the dear Helena in the church of Ivanovice that her capricious mother, who would then scarcely permit thee to speak to her daughter, would be obliged at last to give her to thee! Who would have thought that Hipciu would in so short a time become a rich and mighty lord! and that the old, grim Grand Marshal would consider it a particular honour and pleasure to himself to give a festival in his beautiful castle of Wisnietz, to solemnize the betrothal of the same young country gentleman, whom his servants repelled from the door of his apartment at the inn of Ivanovice!" "My destiny," answered Hippolyte, "has indeed proved quite different from what I could possibly have expected eighteen months ago, or even much later; for when we arrived together at Vilna, my circumstances were far from being favourable, nor were they much better when we returned last year to Cracow. You have been agitated by painful misgivings, and now you see that they prove vain, as well as the predictions of that horrid witch, though I must confess that they have alarmed us both not a little." "Do not mention it," cried Lacki, and the smiles on his countenance suddenly gave way to an expression of pensive sadness, "you are now happy and joyful; your fortunes have assumed a most brilliant aspect, and well

may you laugh at all the ill bodings, which have proved harmless to you ; but it is quite otherwise with me. No joy has stepped between me and these recollections, which have produced such a lasting impression on my heart ; and I think that those who defy misfortune act unwisely, for they say that it overhears our lowest whisper." "How come you to know anything of misfortune," exclaimed Hippolyte, "you who are so young and have always been so merry and so playful? how come you to talk continually about such melancholy things, and to watch the steps of an imaginary approaching evil? Yet perhaps you may be right," added he with a sigh, being struck by the involuntary recollection of what he had witnessed in the hut on the Jewish burial-ground, "we won't speak of such things while we have something better to talk about. But, my dear Stas, it is not only with me that things have taken such a different turn, it is also the case with an exalted person that is dear to us, and there was a time when the illustrious exile of Vilna little expected that the present day was so near at hand, since she even doubted whether it would ever come." "Well, well," said the young Lacki pensively, "all has turned out as it should, and therefore it is time that I should part from you and go

to join my father, in order to tell him all that has happened, that he may rejoice himself, for he is very much devoted to his royal relative, and so is his son." "You leave us?" interrupted Boratynski, on whom these words made the stronger impression as some days before he had received a message from Pinsk, informing him that the old Lacki was taken very ill, but he still kept this news secret from his cousin: "what gives you such an idea?" "It seems to me," replied Stanislaw, "that I am not fit for this place, where all are so happy, and I—I am not happy. But do not think," continued he, embracing Hippolyte, "do not think, my dear cousin, that I envy your happiness. No, I heartily rejoice in it, and often shall I speak with my father in our solitude, where none will disturb us, about you, and Helena, and all that were dear to me." "My dear Stanislaw, you will not be so silly as to leave the brilliant prospects which await you; the King has a great regard for you, and indeed he has good reason for it. You smile so seriously at me; can you suppose that he or the Queen will forget that you, being almost a boy, have already twice saved her life from the most imminent danger? and you choose to withdraw from a reward to which you have so just a claim." "Twice?"

whispered the page pensively, "you say twice? Oh, if it were so! but I am afraid it is not. The slight wounds which I received in the garden of Lobzow were not deep enough to be fatal. No; such trifling things will not be reckoned in the account. Twice? no, she certainly meant it otherwise."

"What is it you say, Stas?" exclaimed Hippolyte in astonishment, "who meant, and what was meant? "Never mind," answered Lacki, "you see that from a merry bantering boy, I am become a pensive wayward youth. Such a one is not fit for a Court where joy has fixed her abode, and where lively wit and elegant versatility alone are acceptable." "You are not so very inelegant for a Lithuanian," answered Hippolyte, assuming a tone of jest; "wit and frolic will come again as you advance a little in life. It is nothing unusual at your age to be somewhat whimsical and melancholy; but only wait a couple of years, and you will become more steady, especially if you have the good fortune to find, like me, a charming goal for all your endeavours." Our page fidgetted uneasily on his seat, and said, impatiently motioning with his hand, "Leave off, cousin, leave off! you vex me without knowing it." "Be of good cheer then,"

continued Hippolyte, "I believe, or rather I know it almost to a certainty, that the King bears you great kindness, and that notwithstanding your youth he will make an exception to the general rule, in favour of him who has twice saved the life of his queen; and if I am not mistaken, on the day of my betrothal you will be promoted to a higher office." "A higher office!" repeated the youth, as before, in an absent manner, "on the day of your betrothal? Yes, why not? I wish for no other office, but I will remain till that day," added he, stretching kindly his hand to his cousin, "and once more heartily rejoice at your happiness, my Hippolyte, for you have always been the friend of the childish Stanislaw. But then I think I must go—far, far from hence—and if you ever come to Lithuania, you will find out Stanislaw and his father in their lonely house."

Hippolyte embraced his cousin, telling him not to make himself uneasy with such melancholy thoughts, which spoiled all the joys of his youth, but to go to bed and to take rest, that he might be refreshed for the morrow. When Stanislaw was gone, Boratynski was long unable to get rid of the painful impression produced on his mind by the extraordinary behaviour of his cousin, and he tried in vain to guess what could have caused

such a change in his once cheerful mind ; he comforted himself, however, with the hope that the buoyancy of youth, the bustle of a Court, and especially the favour of the King, would soon do away all these melancholy ideas, by awakening and satisfying the young man's ambition. These agreeable ideas, and those of his own happiness, soon lulled him into a profound and quiet sleep.

## CHAPTER VIII.

“ Ere the bat hath flown  
His cloister'd flight ; ere, to black Hecat's summons,  
The shard-borne beetle, with his drowsy hums,  
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done  
A deed of dreadful note.” SHAKSPEARE.

AFTER the coronation the Court spent more than a week in continual entertainments and amusements of every description. The King entirely left off that cold demeanour which, contrary to his habits and inclinations, he had assumed during the time which preceded the recognition of Barbara as Queen of Poland, and he again displayed that cheerful affability which animated all around him. However, in the midst of the greatest mirth and all the pleasures of conviviality, he always understood how to maintain his own dignity; and a well-timed word, or even a look, was sufficient to prevent gaiety from transgressing its just limits. Rarely has so perfect a conformity of characters been seen in a royal couple as was the case with Sigismund Augustus and Barbara. Cheerfulness was the most prominent feature of her character as well as of that of Sigismund ;



and she likewise partook with him a certain kind of carelessness, which is so necessary to render life happy, though she had no want of that female penetration which instantly detects every trace of disaffection, however concealed it may be, and marks every omission, however transitory. Our readers have already had sufficient opportunity to observe that she was very susceptible as to that respect which was due to her rank: still, like her husband, she was exceedingly sensible to every proof of real attachment; and being now convinced that Helena Odrowonz, whom she had formerly suspected of being a dangerous rival, or at least a willing tool in the hands of others, had, on the contrary, steadily opposed all those hostile plans, she became her most zealous friend, and sought to promote her happiness by every means in her power.

During all the time of the above-mentioned festivities Helena was the inseparable companion of Barbara, and she could now enjoy without restraint all the pleasures of the Court, as her mother had ceased to watch her every action, word and look, as she had hitherto been in the habit of doing. She now accompanied her but seldom to Court, as if the bride of Hippolyte Boratynski was too insignificant an object for the notice of

the daughter of Conrad Duke of Mazovia. The continual festivities of the Court rarely allowed them to remain at home without company; and whenever it so happened, the mother and daughter equally avoided every allusion to the future, for they were well aware how widely they differed in their opinions on that subject. When the young Queen expressed her hopes to the Princess that she would join the festival at Wisnietz, where the marriage contract of her daughter would be signed, she answered by observing that it did indeed seem necessary that a mother should be present at a transaction which fixed the destiny of her only child. Queen Bona also promised to attend the Grand Marshal's fête, graciously declaring that she would not be absent on such an agreeable occasion, and that she would promote as much as it lay in her power the generous intentions of Their reigning Majesties towards the daughter of her most illustrious and beloved lady cousin.

The sun rose beautifully on the day which was destined to assemble the Court at Wisnietz; and when the invited guests were crossing the wooden bridge that led over the Vistula from Cracow to the suburb Podgorze, the river and the adjoining landscape shone with all the beauty of a fine summer morning. The party had started at

an early hour; at that period the usual time for dinner was eleven in the morning, and as the solemn signature of Helena's marriage settlement was to take place between that repast and the festivities of the evening, it was desirable that the dinner should not be later than at the usual hour. The most prominent object of the train was a large open carriage drawn by eight horses adorned with velvet trappings and plumes of feathers. This ponderous machine much resembled a wagon of our times: it was without any cover, and had doors on both sides. There were four high-backed seats inside, two and two opposite to each other; they were suspended on leather straps, but the wooden part of them was richly gilt, the hand-cushions were covered with blue velvet bordered with crimson, and the Polish eagle embroidered in silver on each. Over the seats of honour in the back of the carriage was placed, on four iron posts, a kind of canopy; it was of a square, simple, and rather clumsy form, covered with crimson velvet, and adorned on the top with a richly gilt crown. The curtains of gilt leather which surrounded this kind of cage, were drawn back, and the curiosity of the spectators was fully gratified by the sight of the Queens Barbara and Bona, the first of them in a rich court-dress, and

the second in a widow's dark costume; both, however, equally wearing on the top of their head-dresses a little diadem. The conversation between the two ladies did not appear to be very animated, and they sought to while away the tediousness of the journey, by speaking with the ladies that accompanied them, or to the cavaliers that were cantering close to the carriage. The two opposite seats were occupied by the Princess of Mazovia, who was entitled by her high birth to such a distinction, and by her daughter, who was the chief object of this day's festivity: the mother in a deep mourning dress, and without any jewels; the daughter adorned with all the charms of youth and beauty, though deprived of every glittering ornament, because the broken Byzantian chain was locked up in the Princess's casket. Besides these four seats of honour there were in the carriage two small benches; that on the right side was occupied by the ladies of the reigning Queen, the old lady Hornostay, and Lucy Ostrorog; that of the left by the starostine Falczeska, and one of Queen Bona's maids of honour. None of the ladies were much inclined to speak; the Princess of Mazovia, who had never been over communicative, was now less so than ever. Helena abandoned herself entirely to the sweet re-

veries of futurity, casting now and then a hasty look on the Starost of Samborz, or else answering with a smile a kind or jesting speech of the King, who frequently rode up to the carriage. Outside on the steps were placed six pages, and amongst them Stanislaw Lacki.

After having so minutely described the principal object of the train, it may be permitted us to cast a look on the surrounding cavalcade. Sigismund Augustus generally liked to wear, in the interior of his palace, the Italian or Spanish costume, which was more suitable to the vivacity of his movements, his low stature, and his slender form, than the national dress of Poland, which only became a tall and strongly built man; but he was well aware that on every public occasion his nation would rather see him clad in the latter. He now wore a small cap adorned with a high plume of heron's feathers, a *zupan*, or straight garment of silver brocade, and over it a *kontusz* (<sup>1</sup>) of a brown silken heavy stuff: on a sash of flowered gold brocade hung a Turkish sword; its hilt was set with precious stones, and its scabbard was of silver inlaid with gold. The horse he rode was a dapple grey, short-built, but nimble and high spirited; long Turkish housings hung from his back nearly to his fetlocks; his superb tail flowed down

to the ground, and his mane fluttered in the wind; and the rider's feet, clad in red half-boots, rested to their full extent in the golden stirrups. Amongst the train we may notice the Duke of Prussia, already known to the reader, a serious-looking man with strongly marked, bold features, and a long, somewhat grey flowing beard; he wore a German jacket of dark-coloured velvet, over which glittered a golden chain; a short red mantle of the same stuff bordered with ermine, and a bonnet with a waving plume of white ostrich feathers completed his costume. Many senators and high dignitaries of the state accompanied the King, and the splendid cavalcade was closed by a company of the royal horseguards under the command of the Starost of Samborz.

It was about nine in the morning when this brilliant train crossed the wooden bridge of the Vistula; and having passed the suburb of Podgorze they turned to the left and pursued their way along the road which leads down the right bank of the river, through a continuation of groves and meadows, to the castle of Wisnietz. The Grand Marshal, surrounded by a numerous train of nobles and a large retinue of richly-dressed attendants, awaited his illustrious guests on the limits of his estate. When the royal cavalcade ap-

proached he gave spurs to his Arabian steed, and followed by his retinue advanced in a measured gallop to the Queen's carriage. As he came close to it he checked his horse with his left hand so that it stopped snorting and rearing up on his hind legs, while with his right he doffed his cap so low that its black plume touched the grass, and welcomed the consort of his monarch with a short speech, in which he extolled the great honour done to the ground of Wisnietz, and the great favour conferred on its owner, who received in that place the ornament of the realm. Barbara answered his compliment in a becoming manner; he then reined his horse short round, and having made his obeisance to the King he put himself at the head of the train, in order to act as its leader.

They had now arrived at a kind of avenue which led through a park thinly covered with high trees: bands of music, concealed in the thickets at a distance of about two hundred paces from each other, greeted the royal couple on their passage, while loud *vivats* to the King and to the Queen resounded through the wood. At the gate of the castle crowds of Kmita's vassals were assembled clad in their festive dresses, and the higher officers of his household were arrayed in order, each of them with the badge of his office. At a sign of

the seneschal the ponderous iron-nailed gates opened creaking on their hinges ; and high on the turret over the gate the royal standard, the sign of the monarch's presence, was hoisted above the arms of the family of Kmita, which were a silver hand holding a red cross. The carriage rattled over the pavement of the castle-yard, the escort galloped up to it and surrounded it with a demi-circle, while the haughty Kmita himself dismounted from his horse, to hold with becoming respect the carriage-steps for his Queen. The illustrious company, led by their host, entered a wide hall on the ground-floor to partake of the usual morning repast, consisting of salt-fish, caviar, smoked meat, dried and preserved fruit from Kiow, and different liquors ; while their retainers and the escort were treated according to their rank, in the adjoining buildings.

In a remote corner of the house was a cold dark chamber, which had a very gloomy appearance from its naked walls and its narrow window, which scarcely admitted any light ; but the use to which it was destined on that day gave it considerable importance. It had a communication with the ice-cellar, and consequently it was filled with buckets full of ice, to keep cool the wines and other liquors. A corridor led from this chamber



to a round hall in the interior of the castle, where the sideboards were placed, and which communicated by a door with the dining-hall. In the above-mentioned round hall, which was adorned with splendid carpets and filled with gold and silver plate, were assembled the pages and other attendants of a higher rank, whose duty it was to help their respective masters and mistresses when they drank; they were now waiting till the sound of the trumpets should give the signal for dinner, examining the cups committed to their care, and receiving the necessary directions from the chief butler. Amongst them was Stanislaw Lacki, whose attention was entirely absorbed by a little cup, beautifully wrought in gold, which seemed to be destined for the small hands and delicate lips of a lady. Beside it he guarded a little flask filled with pure water, and another still smaller with sweet canary, both of which he had himself filled, though the contents were scarcely sufficient to have quenched the thirst of a very moderate drinker.

Although the crowd of attendants was very large, there was but little noise heard among them, as the proximity of their superiors, who were walking in the garden, and often passed near the windows, kept them in silence. Nothing was

heard except now and then some whispered remark about the news of the day, or an order given by the household officers, and the complying answers of the hastening servants. One, however, of the domestics, who had a scar on his left cheek as if from a cut with a sword, was more noisy than the others: he had already tried several times to engage Lacki in conversation, but the young man being more than ever occupied with his own duty, and disliking the forward and rough manners of the intruder, had constantly repelled him with contempt. He then turned to some others of the bystanders, without having better success, and only drew forth the observation that he was an idle fellow, who put himself in the way of those that were busy. In fact he appeared to be the only one who was attracted to that room by mere curiosity or intrusive forwardness, and every one began to inquire what business this rude disagreeable fellow could have there. At this moment the Grand Marshal entered, in order to examine, like a careful host, if all was properly arranged, for the royal personages had returned from their walk and the banquet was about to begin. The appearance of the stern Kmita seemed not to be very acceptable to the before-mentioned intruder. He immediately became silent; the red colour of

his face turned into a sallow paleness ; and he looked around as if he wished to get away without taking leave, as he had arrived without invitation ; but finding the exit too crowded, he tried to hide himself amongst the pages, who, proud of their higher birth and education, stood in a circle separate from the other attendants, and formed a kind of *imperium in imperio*. But the noble youths would not admit into their ranks so unequal a member, and one of them pushed him back with such violence that he tumbled forward a few paces before the very man whose notice he endeavoured to escape. As soon as the Grand Marshal's eyes caught the individual who had approached him in so disrespectful a manner, anger lighted up his countenance, and he grasped the hilt of his sword as if he intended to execute summary justice on the object of his wrath, who stood trembling, with his face half averted, in a posture of deep humility. Kmita did not however draw his sword from the scabbard, which he probably did not choose to disgrace on so mean an object, and he said in a calm tone to the surrounding servants, "Seize this knave ; I have once given him a promise, and now he is come himself to ask for its fulfilment. He shall tomorrow see that the old Kmita is as good as his word. Meanwhile, lead him to the

dungeon, where he may dance with the rats on the damp ground, before he does so in the open air with a space of two yards under his feet."

Servants in great houses are generally disposed to acts of violence, and the more so when a festival or some other occasion raises the feeling of their own importance; but they particularly like to indulge themselves in similar acts when they are sure of committing them with impunity, or even of gaining by it the approbation of their superiors. Moreover, many of Kmita's household had an old grudge against his former chancery messenger and scrivener's assistant, for it was this man and no other who had now excited the Grand Marshal's anger. A willing crowd of attendants rushed on Waclaw Siewrak in order to carry him to his destined quarters, but he defended himself with that courage which an imminent danger sometimes gives even to the greatest cowards, crying with a loud voice; "Illustrious lord Grand Marshal, look well to what you are doing! My lord Palatine of Craeow, how can Your Grace act in such a manner towards a servant who always faithfully performed his duties while he was in your service, and who acts in the same manner now that he belongs to the retinue of Her Majesty the Queen-mother!" The lackeys paid little attention

to his expostulations, and the Marshal turned away in order to leave the room. Siewrak was dragged nearly to the door, when he exclaimed with all the violence of despair, "For God's sake, illustrious lord Grand Marshal, listen to one word only, and I assure your Grace you would rather see the castle of Wisnietz reduced to ashes, with all its appurtenances, than not to have heard this word,—one word only, and then you may act with me as you choose to do." The Grand Marshal stopped, and said with a smile of contempt, "Well, let me hear this extraordinary word." The servants instantly left Siewrak, who crouched on his knees at the feet of Kmita, and embraced them in an imploring posture. The first movement of the Palatine was to push away the crouching knave; but two or three words, whispered by him in a very low voice, seemed to produce a sudden change in the magnate's disposition. He gave him a sign to rise from the ground, permitting him to approach his ear and to say something in a whisper. It appeared that the communication was not very agreeable to the Grand Marshal, for anger and even a kind of humiliation were visibly expressed on his countenance while he listened to it, but it had a most favourable influence on the fate of the discharged scrivener's assistant; for

**Kmita** said in a commanding tone of voice, "It was a mistake ; let him go in peace." He turned afterwards to **Siewrak**, and said in a rough voice, "Thou may'st remain here today, and eat and drink with my household, but for the future nothing is changed. Mark it well, scoundrel."

He turned round directly afterwards, and seeing the young **Lacki**, immediately changed his tone and the expression of his countenance, and addressed the page in a manner which, though seemingly mild and condescending, yet coming from the mouth of the proud old man had rather the appearance of an ambiguous courtesy ; "You are indeed very diligent in the performance of your duty, sir **Starostic** of **Pinsk**," said he. "Well, many people often begin with little things but end with great. As I have heard, the young bold nobleman who understands so well to deal with **urochses** and nightly brawlers, will today present the cup to his royal lady for the last time ; and I congratulate him beforehand on what he will learn even before this poor repast is over." The **Grand Marshal** had never been a great favourite with our young page, who had not yet forgotten the old magnate's enmity to his royal mistress, and he acknowledged only by a silent obeisance the **Grand Marshal's** complimentary address, which

gave him a great importance in the eyes of all the bystanders, and probably excited no little jealousy amongst his companions. When the master was gone, the servants looked with anger on the fellow who had not only deprived them of an opportunity of displaying their zeal in their master's service, but also of the innocent pleasure of seeing him hanged on the day after the festival, so that each day might have had its pleasures. Waclaw Siewrak, however, took no notice of their disappointment, but assuming an air of redoubled importance, called aloud to give him something of the best to refresh his throat, which had become hoarse from the important conversation he had had with His Grace the Grand Marshal. The general attention was however soon turned from him to another object; the clock over the portal struck eleven, the trumpets sounded the signal for the commencement of the dinner, and the rustling of ladies' silks and the clattering of spurs and swords, announced the arrival of the distinguished company at the banqueting-hall. The pages flew quickly to place themselves behind the chairs of their respective masters or mistresses, and among them Stanislaw Lacki, who, seizing hold of the two flasks committed to his care, occupied a place behind the gilt arm-chair

prepared for the reigning Queen at the upper end of the table.

The company entered the banqueting-hall, preceded by the seneschal of Kmita's household, who held uplifted his ebony staff ornamented with a silver head. Queen Barbara advanced with the King on her right hand, and on her left Kmita, on whose arm she was slightly leaning. Immediately after her came the Queen-mother, between the Duke of Prussia and the Court Marshal Firley; the Princess of Mazovia was conducted by the Duke of Pomerania, and her daughter by the Prince of Brandenburg and by her betrothed the Starost of Samborz. The rest of the company proceeded according to their respective ranks. The Bishop of Cracow, in whose diocese the castle of Wisnietz was situated, said grace, and the guests sat down in the order of precedence in which they had entered. When the first course was over, the curtains which concealed the ornamental dishes were withdrawn at a signal from the master of the house, and displayed a great number of sugar ornaments and sweetmeats, arranged in the form of different animals, towers, trees, &c., every one having either the initials of Sigismund Augustus and Barbara, or the arms of Poland and Lithuania. Before each



of the royal and princely personages was placed a basket wrought in gold, and filled with little slices of bread, and a similar one of silver for every four of the other guests. The most distinguished of the company had napkins of gold and silver brocade, and the others of silk, all which became after the repast the property of the attendants, according to the custom of the time. At the commencement of the dinner, when the first dish was presented to the King, the Grand Marshal, who stood behind the chair of his royal master, took the golden dish from the hands of his seneschal, and dipped in it a bit of bread; which having tasted, he cast it into a large silver basket, held by a servant, and with a deep obeisance presented the dish to the King. Some noblemen belonging to his household performed the same service for the Queens. When Sigismund Augustus had finished eating, the Grand Marshal took a richly wrought cup, poured a little of its contents into the hollow of his hand, tasted it, and after having wiped his hand, presented the cup to the monarch. Whilst the King was drinking, all the company arose from their places, but reseated themselves immediately after, except Kmita, who continued standing. The Queens and the other ladies declined the cups, conformably to the custom, which

at that time permitted them to drink only pure water and a decoction of orange-flowers or chicory, except at the toasts, when it was allowed them to sip a little malmsey. The King then begged the master of the house to give himself no more trouble, but to partake of the meals he had prepared for his guests. This was a sign that etiquette should be no longer observed, and an invitation to convivial mirth and hilarity.

When Kmita, following the monarch's command, took a place opposite to him, the restraint which till now had pervaded the assembly began to disappear, and many a jest was heard between the clattering of bowls and dishes. Even the Queen-mother seemed to partake of the general hilarity that reigned at the table, and lent herself with apparent good humour to the lively conversation which the King endeavoured to maintain; she even addressed herself sometimes to Barbara; and the King, whose heart was always open to every kind feeling, began to cherish the hope that time, necessity, and habit would overcome by degrees the animosity which imbittered his domestic happiness. The young Queen partook less of this agreeable illusion, for women do not easily deceive their own sex; she would not, however, destroy the delusive joys in which she

saw that her husband was indulging himself, and answered Bona's address with animation and courtesy.

“ We pity the ladies,” said Sigismund Augustus after the conversation had lasted during some time, “ that they are obliged to forgo the best seasoning of a cheerful repast, the most powerful enemy to care and anxiety, one which shows the character in its true light, and banishes all grief from the oppressed soul. *Corpo di Bacco!* our lady Queen resembles not in this respect the ladies of her ancestors, who, till the times of Wladislaw Jagellon, quaffed at the festivals of Lada (<sup>2</sup>) horns filled with mead as well as their fathers and brothers.” “ And even were it the custom now, I could no longer follow it,” answered Barbara, laughing, “ since through the affection of my sovereign and spouse I have lately become a Polish woman by name, though I have long been so in my heart. The Polish ladies despise the gifts of Bacchus, as we have now proof in the example of the first amongst them, Her Majesty our lady mother, and our princely cousins.” “ Oh, you must not speak of our little cousin Helena,” exclaimed Sigismund Augustus; “ she has now to do with another deity, and a more dangerous one too, than that

which lurks in this cup, which I will empty in silence to her welfare." "Your Majesty anticipates us," interrupted Bona; "it is not yet time for the *Vivat*, and we will join it also to honour the young lady of Podolia." "My royal lord," said Helena, bowing, "if I should express the feelings of my heart by drinking, I might easily fall into a suspicion of ingratitude; but if Your Majesty commands, I shall do my best, if my mother will permit my doing today a thing so unusual." "You are leaving today in some respect my jurisdiction," answered the Princess of Mazovia in a manner sufficient to damp the real or apparent hilarity which reigned in the assembly; "so you are entitled to make any use of your new liberty which seems good either to you or to those who had graciously offered themselves to take my place with you." Barbara perceived a light cloud on the brow of her husband, and exclaimed in a merry tone, "We must not permit our excellent host to suppose we have slighted his liquors, and the lady of Podolia will forgive her daughter if she follows the example given by the Queens. Is it not true, my lord Duke," said she, addressing the Duke of Prussia, "that in your country the ladies entirely abandon to the gentlemen the wor-

shipping of Bacchus, as we do in Poland?" "Your Majesty is right," answered Albert of Brandenburg with great courtesy; "in our country also the ladies devote themselves only to the service of the powerful deity of Love, though perhaps his shafts are not so sharply pointed as they are in this country, whilst we are often obliged to invoke the assistance of the other deity, in order to gain resolution for supporting the cares of life."

The conversation continued in the same strain; many compliments were exchanged among the company, of which the betrothed lovers and the young Lacki received their full share. The bravery of the page was mentioned in the most honourable manner, and the King, as well as the young Queen, frequently expressed to him by flattering allusions that it was for the last time he now performed his present office, and that he should be immediately exalted to a higher rank, as a reward of the repeated proofs of his fidelity. Meanwhile the banquet drew nearly to a close, the dessert was placed on the table, and the moment arrived when the solemn toasts were to be pledged. Kmita arose from his seat, in order himself to present the great cup to the monarch; the seneschal lifted his staff, the trumpeters pre-

pared themselves for the mighty blast which was to be sounded when the King should approach the cup to his lips, and the pages kept themselves in readiness to fulfill the orders of the ladies. Barbara turned to Lacki and said, "Sir Lacki, may it please you to take this trouble once more; it is the last time that you will have to serve us in this capacity."

The pages hastily passed into the room where the sideboards were placed, in order to fill the goblets destined for the use of the ladies. Stanislaw Lacki was going to pour the contents of the flasks he had guarded with so much care into the little cup which we have described, after having first carefully wiped it with a fine clean linen. The golden drops were already sparkling on the glittering metal, when on a sudden he felt himself pushed so violently, that a part of the costly liquor contained in the cup he held in his hand was spilt on the ground. He looked angrily around, and saw standing before him the very man whom Kmita had been on the point of treating in so unceremonious a manner; he appeared quite unconcerned, and instead of making the slightest excuse to the page for his awkwardness, he stared on him with an air of stupid insolence. Lacki was going to scold him for his impertinent

behaviour, when he addressed him in the following manner : " Aye, my pretty lordling, you make but a sorry cupbearer ; every one may see by the awkward manner in which you perform the service that you were not born to it. You highborn lordlings may understand how to drink, but to manage the cup handsomely is something quite different. The irritated page was going to answer this speech by a hard blow, and his comrades attracted by the noise were ready to join him in giving a good thrashing to Waclaw Siewrak, who seemed to be purposely created for that kind of amusement, when the first blast of the bugles resounded in the great hall, and all the pages hastened to their duty.

Waclaw Siewrak's assurance increased when he saw himself left almost alone with Lacki, who, holding fast his flask and cup, threatened him with words, and he exclaimed in a most insolent tone of voice, " Strike, only strike ! it is nothing extraordinary that two servants are fighting with each other, and you wear a livery as well as I do." " Down, cur !" cried Lacki, " or thou shalt repent it." " What shall I repent ?" retorted Siewrak with a stammering voice, and drawing closer to the page ; " for a fight with fists I am a match for every one, but your little sword is

today out of the question ; for it is royal peace (3), and I suppose you have no wish to lose your little white hand." The youth's anger now got the better of him ; he set down the flask and the cup which he held in his trembling hands, and accosting his boorish antagonist in a menacing attitude, said, " Beware, lowborn knave, that I forget not that it is beneath a nobleman to bandy blows with such a mean scoundrel as thou art, and that I do not give thee a cut to match that red scar which is on thy ugly face, and one that will not be cured until thou art hanged." " I have told you once, highborn Sir Page, that cuts are today out of the question," replied the other ; " we are not now amongst bushes, where a worthy lord's servant may catch anything of that, in a manner he himself knows not how. Only do your duty, and if you do not understand it let me teach it to you." And saying these last words, he stretched his hand towards the little flask. His scar, and his mention of the bushes, brought back to Stanislaw's memory the affair in the gardens of Lobzow, and a sudden idea crossed his mind that he might be the same man whom he had then cut over the face. He pushed back the impertinent fellow with all his strength, and laid his hand on his little sword ; but before he was



able to draw it, Siewrak overturned his flask, so that all its contents were spilt on the ground, and laughing aloud, he left the hall reeling, but quickening his steps as soon as he had passed the door. Lacki was so carried away by the desire of inflicting an exemplary punishment on the mean fellow who had taunted him, that he forgot his duty for a moment, and ran after him with his drawn sword; but the object of his wrath soon disappeared in the maze of the winding corridors.

It was with much trouble that the young Lacki found his way through the winding corridors back to the room he had left; and when he re-entered it all the attendants had disappeared, and the goblet of his royal mistress was gone. Vexed to the utmost by so untoward an event, and puzzled what to do, he approached the door of the banqueting-hall, supposing that one of his fellow-pages was performing his neglected duty; but he saw that all the company, with goblets in their hands, were waiting for his Queen, who stood without having a cup, and visibly surprised at his absence. How could he excuse the neglect of a duty which, as the Queen had graciously signified to him, he was now performing for the last time? An idea flashed on his mind, that all this rash

behaviour of the apparently drunken fellow was nothing but an arranged trick to get possession of the cup entrusted to his care; he therefore returned once more to pursue the thief, in order to bring him back with the cup, as the best means of excusing his negligence. He was now, however, no more fortunate than he had been before, and met with nobody in the intricate corridors through which he passed. The blasts of the bugles which resounded from the banqueting-hall bewildered him entirely, by the idea that they were waiting for him; he completely lost his way, and ran like a madman through many passages and staircases till he found himself in a gallery with a door at each end of it. He chose one of them at random, and entering it found himself in a little hall, which led to an apparently dark room by a door which was not quite closed. He was going to open it, in hopes to find somebody who would set him right, when he heard two voices conversing in a foreign language. He stopped for a moment, and heard some very strange words uttered in Italian. "Make haste," said one of the voices, sounding hollow as if out of a vault, and trembling as if the jaws of the speaker were chattering from cold; "make haste, I say; it is cold here below as on the top of Etna;

make haste, in the name of the devil, that I may return to the daylight." "Directly, directly," replied the other, who, judging by the sound, seemed to be nearer, and who till now was muttering something to himself; "have a little patience, if you wish me to count the drops. Seven—eight." "Eleven," said the first person; "eleven,—not a single drop more nor less: this time it has succeeded well, and the old woman has provided the right thing, which she does not always do; but hasten to finish it, for who knows but this cursed page may come; your servant is a dolt who does things only by halves, and it is cold here as in a grave." "Eight, nine, ten," continued the other. "In the grave you will have it perhaps much warmer, my learned master." "Do you not hear something rustling, Assano? It sounds as if the sand on the pavement was pressed by some light footsteps." "Eleven." It sounded again. "Now it is ready, take it."

At this moment Stanislaw peeped into the dark room, and saw a withered trembling arm stretched from the cellar below as if to receive something. "Your hand shakes so that you will spill it," said Assano, who was standing outside; "hasten, hasten, ere the page gets loose. Do you hear the

blast of trumpets?" Saying this he turned, and Lacki saw the cup of Barbara glittering in his hand. With one spring the page stood in the middle of the room close to the opening of the cellar, and the arm which had been stretched out from it immediately disappeared. He accosted in a bold manner the old man, who stared on him with a look glaring with fury, and said, "What are you doing, ye rakehells?" "Wherefore have thy evil stars led thee hither, thou son of misfortune? what dost thou seek here?" retorted Assano. "My Queen's goblet!" exclaimed the youth; "that is it; give it me directly, or fear my sword!" "Fear thee, boy!" answered Assano with rage and scorn; and having placed the goblet on the ground with his right hand, seized the page with his left, and pressed him with a gigantic force. Stanislaw sought in vain to make use of his weapon; in vain he struggled to free himself from the iron grasp of the hoary villain; he could only utter some words of complaint and threatening from his suffocating breast. A double-edged knife glittered in the Neapolitan's hand, and it was instantly plunged up to the haft in the bosom of the young Lacki, whose complaints died away in a low murmur, and the flush of anger which coloured his cheeks

turned into a deadly paleness ; still he whispered in a scarcely audible voice, " This is the second time. Farewell, Hippolyte ! Barbara, farewell ! " The eyes of the faithful Stanislaw closed in death ; his tender limbs hung powerless in the clutch of the assassin, who bent down over the lifeless body and whispered in his ear, " Thou wert called Lacki, I think : go then, and when thou seest thy father, tell him that thou also hast known Hassan, although half a century later than he ! " " Blood, blood again ! " resounded from the cellar in an agonizing voice ; " give, give it me quickly, for I cannot remain longer in this place of horror. " " Take it, cowardly wretch ! " replied Assano ; " this boy's death has greatly increased our reckonings. " He then seized the still warm corpse by its flowing hair, dragged it to the door of the cellar, and threw it into the ice-pit.

Meanwhile Kmita pledged the usual toast : ' The welfare of the King and of the Royal Family ; ' and custom required that the monarch should answer it by pledging the health of the master of the house, and that of the senate and of the equestrian order ; but Barbara was still waiting with increasing surprise for her goblet. The music played continually to fill the unexpected pause, and a large circle of distinguished

personages closely surrounded the young Queen, when an arm dressed in her colours, blue and silver, reached the long-expected goblet out of the crowd. Barbara being in a great hurry paid no attention to the person by whom it was presented; the bugles sounded a blast; the King expressed his thanks to the master of the house, and his wishes to him, to the senate, and the equestrian order. The Queens and his nephew Albert of Brandenburg joined him in these complimentary expressions; the bugles sounded again, and the cups were quaffed.

Other toasts followed during about a quarter of an hour, when at last Sigismund Augustus proposed the health of the affianced couple, in which he was joined by every one except the Princess of Mazovia. Barbara arose from her seat and went up to the bride, who had just perceived with great anxiety that her betrothed had absented himself: she embraced Helena, expressing her cordial wishes for the happiness which she herself had so much promoted; when at that moment her arms suddenly lost their strength, and fell down powerless from the embrace; her head leaned on Helena's shoulder, and her discoloured lips whispered, "Hold me, Helena, I am strangely unwell." The amazed bride exerted herself to support the

swooning Queen, when her mother accosted her, saying, "It seems that Her Majesty is unwell; it is necessary to call for her women, who will understand how to take care of her better than you do." The crowd and the noise which reigned in the hall had for a moment prevented the King from seeing what had occurred to Barbara; but when Lucy Ostrorog, who hastened to the assistance of her mistress, burst out into a cry of terror, he flew to his beloved, and embracing pressed her to his heart. "I am ill, my husband," said Barbara in a whisper; "I feel myself very ill—ill unto death." Sigismund Augustus was plunged into the greatest consternation; his eye caught the Grand Marshal, but he saw on his countenance the unfeigned expression of astonishment and displeasure; he then cast down his eyes on her whom he held in his arms, as if afraid to direct a look of suspicion to another side. "The accidents of young women," said the Prussian Prince to the Queen-mother, "are often calculated rather to give joy than to cause affliction; and I believe that I may congratulate Your Majesty on the fulfilment of hopes to which we have alluded in the course of the dinner." "We accept it," replied Bona; "we accept Your Grace's kind congratulations, and we hope with you that Her Majesty

the reigning Queen's present illness will become a source of joy to the Jagellonian House." However Barbara's indisposition grew worse and worse; all convivial mirth was at an end, and anxiety pervaded all the company; but the alarm became general when Hippolyte Boratynski entered the hall besmeared with blood, pale, with eyes bewildered and bristled hair, a living image of horror. He alone, standing opposite the Queen, had observed that it was not his cousin who had presented the cup to Barbara, and he directly went out to look for him. Hearing many confused voices in the little dark room which we have before mentioned, he entered it, and found there many servants marvelling at the large spots of blood on the floor. A gloomy foreboding oppressed his heart; he followed this ominous trace, which led him to the cellar, where he found the lifeless body of his beloved cousin already stiffened by the cold of the ice-cellar, and the blood congealed on the wound in his breast. "Justice!" exclaimed he in a voice of the deepest grief, falling on his knees before Sigismund Augustus; "justice, my lord and sovereign! Murder has penetrated into the house which is honoured by the presence of Your Majesty. My friend and kinsman lies murdered. Stanislaw Lacki lies murdered in the castle of the



Grand Marshal. I implore your justice and vengeance against the murderers of him who has saved the life of your Queen." The company was horror-struck, and no one was able to utter a word. On hearing of the death of her faithful page, Barbara was overpowered by sorrow, and a heavy presentiment of her own fate oppressed her heart; a slight palpitation passed over her limbs, and she fell senseless in the arms of her husband. Sigismund Augustus was seemingly agitated by the same feelings; he did not raise his eyes, and two large tears that fell on his swooned Queen were the only answer he gave to Hippolyte's address. The young Boratynski arose and approached his betrothed, who fell weeping in his arms, and they both felt that the happiness which seemed to be so near to them might probably turn into a bitter disappointment.

The royal physician Bartolomæus Sabinus approached the deserted table, took Barbara's cup, and on examining its contents started with a shudder and lifted his eyes to heaven. The Queen's brother, Prince Nicolas Radziwill, and the master of the house, approached him to ask his opinion, but he answered in great agitation, "It is nothing, my lords; I trust in Heaven it will be nothing;" but he took the cup and concealed it in the folds

of his clerical garment. Prince Radziwill cast a furious look on Kmita, but the haughty Palatine bore it with patience, and approaching the King bent his knee with unwonted humility. "My liege and sovereign," said the proud old man with a trembling and submissive voice, "will you accuse me of a misfortune which has disgraced my house for ever and ever? Say no; I beseech Your Majesty to say no. I, the oldest of the senators, I am ready to appear before the tribunal of justice; and if my lords and brethren find me guilty, so may this hoary head fall under the stroke of the executioner, and the coat of arms of my ancient family be exposed on the gallows!" "We have much to reproach you with, Peter Kmita," answered the King with deep emotion, "but not such crimes as these, for you are a knight and a Pole." He then immediately left the castle of Wisnietz, and accompanied his Queen, who was borne back to Cracow in a litter.

The remains of the faithful Stanislaw were interred at Pinsk in the grave of his father, who had died a short time before the assassination of his son. The second day after the festival, the Queen-mother's physician, Doctor Monti, and

his Neapolitan confidant, were diligently sought for in the town and the royal castle; but all search proved fruitless, and it was reported that both had fled the country.

## CHAPTER IX.

- “ For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,  
 This pleasing, anxious being e'er resign'd,  
 Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,  
 Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind ?
- “ On some fond breast the parting soul relies,  
 Some pious drops the closing eye requires ;  
 Ev'n from the tomb the voice of nature cries,  
 Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.”

GRAY'S *Elegy*.

THE eventful banquet of Wisnietz was followed by a time of deep anxiety, and month after month passed in the gloomy anticipation of coming events. All the resources of medicine were exerted by the most skilful physicians to prolong Barbara's decaying life ; and occasional improvements of her shattered health now and then inspired the King and all his friends with hopes of her recovery. Sigismund's dejected mind was therefore sometimes cheered by the consoling idea that his beloved would be restored to him, and that his mother would be cleared from the horrid suspicion which rested on her ; but Barbara herself was convinced of her approaching

end, though from a desire not to deprive her husband of his momentary solace, she endeavoured to conceal the bitter truth from him. Queen Bona left Cracow immediately after the events of Wisnietz, and took up her residence in the castle of Gomolin, which belonged to her, visiting the capital very seldom, and then only for a short time. Kmita was also rarely seen at Cracow, and never when Bona was present there. At the last interview between the Queen-mother and the Palatine of Cracow, the servants who were in waiting in the antechamber were reported to have overheard a violent altercation; and it was added, that when Kmita returned from Bona's presence, his countenance expressed the greatest anger. He never again entered the castle which had been the scene of such unfortunate events; but he soon after died without issue, and Wisnietz was inherited by the family of Stadnitzki, in whose possession it continues at present. The Princess of Mazovia remained at Cracow, but she lived in great retirement. The betrothal of her daughter was indefinitely postponed; and Helena, who spent the greatest part of her time at the side of Barbara, felt that all the prospects of her happiness would be buried in the grave of her royal friend. Peter Boratynski retired

to the castle of his ancestors, to spend the remainder of his days in the enjoyment of domestic happiness, which had always been the dearest wish of his heart. The parting of the two brothers was the more painful, as Peter was unable to give any consolation to his younger brother; and they both felt that little hope remained for the accomplishment of those brilliant prospects which a short time before seemed to be certain.

Barbara's lingering illness continued to increase; the shortlived hopes of her recovery were diminishing every day; and at the commencement of the spring the physicians declared that their art was insufficient to prevent her untimely dissolution.

About the fifth hour of the afternoon, on the 9th May 1551, a message from the castle arrived at the house of the lady of Podolia, signifying that the Queen desired the presence of Helena. The mother was present at the delivery of this message; and although she had hitherto but reluctantly granted the permission to visit the suffering Queen which was daily asked by her daughter, contrary to her habit, she now appeared to consent with pleasure, and to approve the haste with which Helena obeyed Barbara's summons. The courtier who had brought the message answered

the inquiry as to Her Majesty's state, which the Princess of Mazovia addressed to him, with great formality, adding a significant shrug of the shoulders. Helena was terrified by this ominous reply, whilst her mother expressed with unwonted prolixity the interest she took in Barbara's health.

Helena entered the silent halls of the castle with an agitated mind and a trembling step, and walked through the deserted galleries, which had formerly been the animated scene of bustle and gaiety, and where now the tread of her steps alone resounded from the arched ceilings. She met but few persons, who with downcast eyes and grief on their countenances exchanged a mute salutation with her. When she entered the Queen's antechamber, a strong smell of musk almost overcame her; the floor was covered with thick carpets, to prevent the noise of footsteps; and in spite of the advanced season, the chimneys were blazing with large fires. The doorkeeper announced in a whisper the name of the young lady of Podolia to the chamberwoman in waiting, who, holding one hand over her eyes, pointed silently with the other to the door of the Queen's apartment. On entering it Helena heard a conversation in a low tone between two persons, who seemed strongly affected.

She distinguished the faint voice of her royal friend, addressing in an imploring manner the other person, whom by the dim light of the room she could not well see. His manly voice, tremulous as that of one who tries in vain to master his deep emotion, rarely interrupted Barbara's words. Helena was going to withdraw; but the Queen perceived her, and told her to remain. "We have now ended, my worthy Grand General," said Barbara, stretching her white and shrunken hand to Tarnowski, who was rising from his seat, "and if you have proved a friend and a father to my beloved Sigismund on many a difficult occasion, you have proved it to me in the most difficult hour of my life." "The being who has been gifted with such strength of mind as my Queen enjoys needs no aid from others," replied Tarnowski. "You make me proud, my noble friend," said Barbara; "but it was a hard task to struggle against the fondest affection of my soul, and to behold with a disenchanted look what approaching death was alone able to show me in its true light." "It is the light of heaven which has descended upon you, even on this side of the grave!" exclaimed Tarnowski; "yes, most serene lady, a short time ago I also became convinced of the same necessity which you have



acknowledged yourself, and I confess that I came with the intention of beseeching Your Majesty to crown your short career with the glory of resignation. I am ashamed to confess that I had regarded my Queen only as a woman, and that I had imagined it would be necessary to oppose her weakness. O lady," said he, turning to Helena, "look on your royal friend, and learn from her how to suffer innocently, if such should ever be your lot." "May Helena be happier than I am!" said the Queen with deep emotion. "But no, I am unjust towards fate. May she be as happy as I was, but enjoy it longer than it was my destiny to do! But what have I done to deserve your praises?" continued she with a calm serenity. "Have I not resigned that which would have been wrested from me by the unsparing hand of death? You say that you see in me something more than a woman, my lord of Cracow; but is not the wish of being loved even beyond the grave a female vanity? I wish that my epitaph should be written in the grateful memory of men, and that peace may now return to the Jagellonian House, through which I have passed like a fleeting shadow! Such will be the fitting monument on Barbara's grave. What have I resigned, as long as I retain that better part, the heart, which was my own,

and which will be given back to me in heaven?" "His heart and the hearts of all Poland follow you," said Tarnowski in a faltering voice. "Farewell," whispered Barbara, again reaching him her hand, "farewell! I beg you to remain the faithful friend of my husband for my sake." Tarnowski bowed to kiss the extended hand, and Barbara said in a faint voice, "I feel tears on my hand: these are jewels more beautiful than those of the crown I leave, and a more becoming ornament for the place whither I am now going." "They are the dew of Hermon," said Tarnowski in a voice scarcely audible from emotion; then covering his face with his hands, he left the room.

"Sit down, Helena," said the Queen, after a pause of exhaustion, "sit down near me, and let us converse once more, as we used to do in the days when all was not so still and gloomy about us. My acute pains have ceased, the wearied powers of life have given over the contest, and the physicians say that I shall soon depart without any further pain. Do not weep so bitterly, Helena. You know that I have always been inclined to cheerfulness; it has proved a valuable friend to me during all my lifetime, and it ill becomes me to repel it from my deathbed. I have made my last will, and I have

bequeathed the most precious object I have possessed. But I have not bequeathed it to you," added she, smiling; "not to you, to whom it has never been sincerely destined. I well know that my Helena wishes not for it. You have preferred a modest happiness to that which the present hour proves to be so transient, and I ardently wish that you may possess it." "How can I think now of myself and my future prospects?" exclaimed Helena: "how should I dare to do so, when my hopes descend with you into the grave? You leave me unprotected, and the only friend I have is oppressed by the burthen of his own misfortunes. Do not speak of my happiness in this moment which destroys every joy and hope. Which of us may reckon on prosperity or enjoyment since misfortune has overwhelmed my Queen? All my dreams of happiness are over. The example of so noble a resignation is not in vain set before my eyes; and if Barbara must descend into the grave, of what may Helena ever complain?" The Queen remained a while in silent meditation, and then said, "The day of your betrothal was a fatal day. The blast of destruction has quenched your nuptial torch, and I shall not be alive to kindle it again. I have desired to speak with you about former times; but death is a

serious teacher, and as soon as he touches the eye, all delusive colours vanish from our sight. I have resigned, but I have done it too late. Fate put words of true warning into the mouth of your betrothed, when I observed the mound under which Vanda reposes, who cast her crown and her life into the floods of the Vistula to preserve the peace of her country, as Hippolyte told me, with the courage of a true prophet. I also resign the crown, and with the crown my life, though not voluntarily, as she did : it is a painful and forced submission to the irrevocable decree of Providence. Helena, I leave to you as a bequest my experience : may you never be in need of it ! I have done as it was my duty to do ; for I do not wish that my memory should be the cause of hatred and family dissension, as my life has been. Peace and concord will return to the royal house when the intruder has left it. I ardently wish and hope that when things have subsided into their former tranquillity, you will be able to build an humble hut from the wrecks of the magnificent edifice which I was erecting for you. But should it turn out otherwise, should the voice of necessity,—which now sounds so distinctly on my parting soul,—should it ever resound in your ears, Helena, then remember me, and learn how to resign.”

“ I am prepared for every sacrifice,” exclaimed the weeping maiden ; “ the memory of this moment will strengthen my mind, should it prove wavering in the decisive hour.” “ I hear footsteps ; they are coming,” said Barbara in a solemn voice ; “ but I have still one thing to perform in this world—one only thing. It is a sweet and a painful task ; but I will not part from my adopted child without leaving her a token of my love, and I wish it may promote that design which death alone prevents me from accomplishing myself.”

Whilst the Queen was speaking, Bartolomæus Sabinus entered her apartment ; he advanced slowly to the clock, and pointed silently with his hand to the index, which marked the seventh hour. He was followed by a long train of the canons of the cathedral, headed by the Bishops of Cracow and Cujavia. They advanced with a slow and solemn pace to the Queen’s oratory, and fell down on their knees in silent prayer. Barbara put her hand on Helena’s brow and gave her a sign to retire ; she withdrew to a corner, and falling on her knees, prayed fervently for her departing friend. The Bishops approached the Queen’s bed ; Samuel Maciejowski addressed a question to her in a low voice, which she answered aloud, “ Not yet, Father ! the earth has still

a claim upon me." A man, wrapped in a dark-coloured cloak, approached the sufferer's couch with a trembling step, and the prelates retired a little. He cast himself on his knees close to the dying Queen, who addressed him, though in a low voice, yet with great earnestness; it seemed however that her words had but little effect on him, for he frequently interrupted them by a negative exclamation. Barbara's emotion was visibly increasing; she spoke in an imploring voice: his refusals became less decisive, and at last she exclaimed, "God be praised! I thank thee, my beloved husband!" The Bishops then approached the Queen, and administered to her the last sacraments of the church. As soon as this awful solemnity was over, the priests began, at a sign of Sabinus, to read the prayers for the dead. Sigismund still remained kneeling motionless before his dying consort, and when the index had advanced to the eighth hour, he bowed once more over the lifeless corpse of his beloved, then rose, and left the room; and the knell of the cathedral bells announced to the capital that Barbara Radziwill was no more.

## CHAPTER X.

“ If I can fasten but one cup upon him,  
With that which he hath drunk tonight already,  
He 'll be as full of quarrel and offence  
As my young mistress's dog.”—SHAKESPEARE.

A TALE must be as chequered as human life, a picture composed of light and shade, where sorrow and joy follow each other in quick succession, and where the transitions from the affliction of the mourner to the mirth of the jester, and from the palace to the cottage, are as rapid as they are frequent. We therefore request our reader to follow us from the gorgeous, though gloomy apartment of the dying Queen to the unadorned public room of the Eagle Inn at Cracow, where we shall find many respectable burghers engaged in drinking and talking over the events of the week. Five days had already passed since the death of the Queen; her remains lay exposed on the bed of state, and many inhabitants of Cracow went from motives of attachment or mere curiosity to contemplate this melancholy and solemn spectacle. However, the greater part of the good

burghers of Cracow were really afflicted by Barbara's death ; and having made sundry moral reflections upon the nothingness of human things at the sight of her remains, they entered the inn of the White Eagle, in order to cheer their gloomy thoughts with a cup of mead or Hungary wine. There were not wanting among them others who had only been struck by the jewels with which the dead Queen was adorned, by the great profusion of velvet, gold, and silver, and by the bright tapers which were burning around the catafalque. There were even some who rejoiced at the unfortunate event, though they dared not manifest their real sentiments in opposition to those by which the majority of the guests were animated. Among the former a young Towarzysz was prominent, who perhaps had better reasons for moralising upon the instability of fortune than all the rest of the company. He was sitting in a remote corner of the room, at a distance from the other guests, and without paying the slightest attention to all that was going on ; the contents of the cup he held in his hand remained untouched, and his tears were fast falling into it. An elderly, swarthy-looking, but well-dressed burgher, who had for some time observed him with visible interest, accosted him in a friendly manner and said, " Sir nobleman,



you seem very much affected by what you have seen there, for I observed you in the mourning-hall, and also that young lord, who, dressed in black, stood like many others near the coffin with a burning taper, which trembled in his hand. You spoke with him, and he wept so bitterly, that one might suppose his happiness lay in that coffin, as is the case with our King, whom may God bless and preserve! Many supposed that he was a relative of Her deceased Majesty; but others said that he was only in her service, and that she was a very kind mistress to him, as well as to his cousin, about whose violent death at Wisnietz so much was said nearly a year ago. I think it must give great joy to the blessed Queen in heaven that she has left so many grateful souls on earth." "Indeed, master Gregoriz, she leaves many that mourn her death," said the young soldier, wiping his eyes, "and I am afraid that many a one who now scarcely feels her loss will soon have ample reason to lament it." "Very probably," continued the burgher with a pensive expression, "God always takes the good very soon to heaven, whilst the earth cannot rid itself of the bad ones." "He whom you noticed, good master, weeping in such a manner," said the soldier, "has indeed good reasons

to mourn her death, and when our most gracious monarch lost a beloved consort, the Starost of Samborz lost a kind benefactress, and, alas! all Poland lost a gracious queen and a mother.”

“That will be felt when a successor shall have taken her place,” observed master Gregoriz, “and I dare say she will come soon.”

“But,” interrupted one of the guests who had approached the interlocutors, “you, sir nobleman, who, as I see by your colours, belong to the household of the illustrious lord Castellan of Cracow, you must be aware that your patron pledged himself to the late Queen that the King would keep his promise of never marrying again.”

“You have always plenty of news, neighbour,” retorted master Gregoriz, “but I wonder how in your cooper’s workshop you can be so well informed as to what the Queen may have said in private to the first temporal senator; and it appears to me that such a request is not like Her late Majesty the Queen Barbara, who during her lifetime wished every one well, and who, alas! was not always repaid in the same manner. Don’t you think so, sir Towarzysz?”

“No, indeed, it is not at all like her,” with great animation replied Valenty Bielawski, who by his familiarity with Hippolyte Boratynski was better informed about

those events ; “ is it not enough that she has been slandered by her enemies during her lifetime, that people should persecute her even beyond the grave with all this silly nonsense ? ” “ I entirely agree with you,” said Gregoriz ; “ Her late Majesty had promised at her coronation to promote the welfare of the republic as much as it lay in her power, and she could not desire at her death anything prejudicial to the interests of the country. I am always thinking of the day of her coronation, when, adorned with the royal ornaments and resplendent with beauty, she appeared on the balcony, to greet us as her fellow-citizens ; —’t is not long ago, and now all is past. May the peace of Heaven be with her soul ! ” At these words he crossed himself piously, and having nodded in a friendly manner to Bielawski, turned from him to the rest of the company ; but Valenty took no further part in the conversation. “ And yet,” said the cooper, “ the King has sworn never to leave the mourning dress, and I know it from eye-witnesses. “ Well,” replied master Gregoriz, who was an armourer, “ he may keep the external mourning, as he will keep it always in his heart ; but all this is different from the welfare of the state, and it is the King’s duty to care for it.” “ What have we burghers to do

with the welfare of the state?" answered the cooper "we leave that to the nobility." "Yes, 't is true that we are only burghers," observed one of the bystanders, "but we are burghers of the capital and of a town which belonged formerly to the honourable league of the Hansa<sup>(1)</sup>, and our privileges give us a right to look a little beyond our workshop, and even to present a petition at the footstool of the throne when it concerns the general interests of the town—" "Which is the first in the kingdom," added a third. "What matters it to the town whether the King will marry or not?" cried the cooper; "I say he has sworn to wear black all his lifetime, and how does that agree with a new marriage?" "Everything will come in its due time," interrupted one who had not yet spoken, and who, judging by his dress, was not one of the burghers; "is it then absolutely requisite to have a Lithuanian queen? Are there not other countries where there are plenty of princesses, as fair and of higher birth than the widow of the old Gastold?"

The burghers looked with some anger on the man who had spoken of the late Queen with so little respect, and the cooper resumed: "It was indeed a fine exhibition," said he: "how beautifully the coffin was ornamented, and all

the hangings about it!" "And what splendid black velvet in the robes!" observed a tailor. "And the crown on her head and the sceptre in her hand, with what beautiful diamonds they are set!" added a jeweller; "what a pity it would be if all those riches should be buried with her!" "How can you talk such nonsense!" interrupted another of the company, "they are jewels of the crown, and the Lithuanian has no right to them, either on the earth or in the grave." "To be sure," said Gregoriz, "she leaves these jewels on the earth; but I saw many glittering in the eyes of the mourners who surrounded her coffin, and these she will take with her to heaven." "It would indeed be a fine thing if the jewels were buried with her," said Waclaw Siewrak, for it was he that we have already mentioned as speaking slightly of Barbara, "and how could the new queen be crowned?" "The new queen!" exclaimed many voices; and Gregoriz, approaching Siewrak, said, "I know, sir scrivener, that you always have plenty of news, but I cannot say much for their truth." The company surrounded Waclaw with great interest, asking, "What do you say about the new queen? Is she already found, in five days after the death of Her late Majesty? Will you

have the goodness to tell us what you know about it? Hey, landlord! a jug of your best for the worshipful sir scrivener." "Much obliged, much obliged, gentlemen," answered he, filling his cup, "but I have no more any right to this title. I am now, I may say, a servant at large; but that is nothing to the purpose," continued he, striking with his hand on his pocket, which jingled from the abundance of coin in it. "We know," said the cooper with great civility, "that you have been some time in the service of the Queen-mother." "In the service of the devil!" answered Siewrak, who was put in high spirits by his last libation, "in the devil's service, you may say, master cooper." "And living with such high personages, one may learn many things which never occur to any of us," observed one of the guests. "Pray, be silent, neighbour," cried the others to him, "and do not interrupt Mr. Siewrak. Your health, sir scrivener." "The young lady of Podolia has been mentioned," observed one of the bystanders with an air of mystery, "do you mean her?" "The young lady of Podolia!" cried Siewrak, striking on the table; "it is sheer nonsense, my good friend; we have had enough of marriages of that sort." "And who is she then?" "Ha! you

want to pump out of me all that I know; but I will say nothing." "I was sure," said Gregoriz, laughing, "that he knew no more about these things than we do; you will see that he will only drink your wine, and you will receive nothing for your money, which will serve you right." "What! I know nothing!" cried the tipsy Siewrak: "if you had heard the tenth part of what I know, your ears would tingle. I know nothing! I, who have had the finger in everything, and who have an aunt that forestalls the devil, and who prophesies true or false, as it best suits the sale of her commodities!" "A very respectable guarantee indeed for the accuracy of your information," said the armourer. "I know nothing!" continued Siewrak with increased animation: "to prove to you that I know something, I will tell you that our future queen will be quite a different person from the young lady of Podolia, who will be sent back to the place from whence she came." "That would serve the mother right, who is said to be so proud and so disagreeable," observed the spectators; "but the young lady Odrowonz is, they say, very good, and deserves in every respect the highest honours." The loud voice of Siewrak awakened the young Bielawski from his deep reverie; he raised his

head, and on perceiving who was the speaker, began to observe him with great attention. "Yes," continued Waclaw, "people that are no longer necessary are sent away, as I at Wisnietz despatched that young coxcomb to a place where he has cooled his blood and lost his impertinence." "It pleases you, sir scrivener," said the armourer in a cutting tone, "to speak in riddles, and I think it is better for us, and particularly for yourself, that you should not express yourself with more clearness." "Riddles!" retorted Siewrak; "yes, to be sure, riddles for you and your like; but you might explain them yourselves, if you had any brains in your heads. It does not become me to expose such mysteries to common ears like yours." "Hearken, friend," said the cooper, "I would advise you when you speak with citizens of Cracow, not to make use of such expressions as 'your like' and 'common ears,' if you do not wish to have a good drubbing." "Have nothing to do with him, gossip," whispered the tailor, "he has been in the service of Kmita, and the devil may trust him." "And who are you?" exclaimed Siewrak with an expression of contempt, "but needy, poor, wretched folks, who during the whole week must work hard that you may be able to enjoy yourselves a



little on the Sunday, when such a man as I am gains more by making a single step than you do in a month, and who is often paid only that he may drink. Here you play the gentlemen, boast, prattle, and make a great deal of noise, but when His Grace lord Kmita rides by chance near your smutty workshop, and looks cross, as is often his habit, you doff your shabby leather caps, and cry out, ‘ Long life to the illustrious lord Palatine !’ although you heartily wish him at the devil, whose property he really is. But the case is quite different with me. I have been a good friend to the Palatine for many a year, and when I say two words he becomes as silent as a mouse ; ha, ha, ha ! He once spoke, probably in jest, about hanging and other unpleasant things ; but as soon as I said to him, ‘ How was it ? I don’t well remember, Lithuania against Poland, or Poland against Lithuania ?’ he directly changed his tone, and ordered his servants to give me to eat and to drink of his best ; and so I did, as a true servant, for I continued eating and drinking when the high and illustrious guests had lost their appetite, as well as the master of the house himself.”

The honest burghers continued listening with great attention to this indefatigable prattler, but

the armourer, who had observed that Valenty Bielawski took a great interest in this conversation, gave him a secret sign, and again addressed Siewrak, saying, "You have indeed told us very singular and entertaining things; I think, however, that you should be cautious with the Palatine, whom you have mentioned in such an extraordinary manner, for you are yourself well aware that his arms are long and his jests rare." "And were his arms longer," answered Siewrak laughing, "they would not reach to Italy." "To Italy!" replied the armourer, "do you intend to go on your travels?" "I am going to follow my master, the learned Doctor Monti," answered Waclaw with an air of importance, "who waits for me, and who has left me a well lined purse for the expenses of the journey. In Italy, I am told, wine flows like small-beer in this country, and with wine and money you may be sure of Waclaw Siewrak." "It is reported," said master Gregoriz, "that Doctor Monti and his companion have made a large hole in the money-chest of Queen Bona;" and striking the drunkard on his filled pocket, he continued, "I see you have also had your share." "With your permission," said Waclaw, pushing back the armourer with his hand, "it brings me no luck when another's hand

touches my money ; whence it came it is not my business to know, and I care but little about it, provided I have it in my pocket." " I dare say you are right," observed the tailor ; " it is the master who is answerable, and not the servant ; but if I was in your place, I never would trust that Italian ; he has something false in his look, and I am sure that if he is not a rogue he is at least a miser, for I have experienced as much, having done some work for him." " Yes, dealing with you and about such insignificant work as yours, he might have been stingy ; but it is not the case with me, for reward is paid according to the service, and there is one price for a keen wit and another for a common handicraft. 'T is true that they are rather odd people, the doctor and his servant. I had once a narrow escape from the knife he always bears in his girdle, and I confess also, that I do not at all like the medicines of the learned doctor ; but it would have been very ungrateful of him if he had tried their effect on Waclaw Siewrak, the nephew of old Ursula from the Jews' burying-ground, who always furnished him with herbs. But now all cares are at an end, and we have nothing to do but to enjoy ourselves."

Whilst he was uttering these last words, Valenty

Bielawski rose from his place, paid his account, and having secretly given a sign to Master Gregoriz, left the room; but the armourer went on questioning Siewrak and said, "What is at an end? You tell a story so agreeably that one is never tired of listening to you." "Do you think so?" retorted Siewrak, laughing conceitedly and stammering from intoxication: "you must not question me, but go to my aunt; she can tell you all about it, for she is an understanding woman, and knows what she is about. Her wisdom also pays her well, and I have myself brought her so much gold that it would outweigh your anvil, master smith. If you like, we may go together, for I will see her once more to ask her blessing before I go to foreign lands, and the blessing of her lover, for, may St. Adalbert keep us in his guard! you know it is good to have friends everywhere; so if you will spend a gold florin from your sooty purse, she will tell you all that may happen to you, if anything important can happen to such a common man as you are, my good master." "So you really intend to turn your back on our good city of Cracow, my worthy friend?" asked the armourer, approaching closer to the tipsy swaggerer, so as to intercept him in case he should attempt to leave the room. "No such

intimate appellations !” answered Siewrak, rising with difficulty from the bench ; “ some one else may be your worthy friend, not I. But as for what concerns your good city, I care not whether it is blown up in the air, or swallowed by an earthquake, when I am out of it, which will be early tomorrow morning. I have drunk and enjoyed myself as it becomes a faithful servant, but I have now had enough ; for as my aunt Ursula says, too much spoils everything.” The armourer cast a glance on the door, then making way for him said significantly, “ Take care that your too great zeal does you no harm, and do not forget the advice of your respectable aunt.” “ What are you jabbering about, master handicraft ?” said the now quite tipsy Siewrak, pressing forward towards the door ; “ I say, my aunt Ursula, from the Jews’ burying-ground, has told me to drink and to enjoy myself, and she has more brains in her head than all your sooty corporation together. Now, good bye, my good masters ; go on hammering, bellowing, and snipping, while the learned scholar will quaff in Italy full cups of Falernian wine, and lead a life *in dulci júbilo*, as such an excellent genius as I am ought to do.” Having said these words he was about to leave the room with a tottering pace, when suddenly he

felt himself seized by the shoulders, and a rough voice addressed him in the following words: "Gently, gently, sir chancery-messenger and scrivener's assistant; you won't depart, if you please, so soon for your travels, and you must take a little time for consideration before you start." Waclaw looked with astonishment, and saw that he was addressed by the leader of the Starosty guards<sup>(2)</sup>, and that he was surrounded by the grim-looking countenances of the patrol. Although completely drunk, he recognised the former beadle of the university, who has already had the honour of being introduced to our readers in the same inn, about two years previously to the time of our present narration. He greeted his ancient friend, saying, "Aha! here you are, master Holdfast; I dare say you come to empty a pitcher with me as we did here the last time during that business with the scholars that had escaped the rod. You are now arrived too late, I have already drunk enough and cannot stay in your company; but wait a little, we may do it tomorrow." "Tomorrow," answered the catchpoll, "you may be on your way to Italy to join your nice companion the doctor, and I am not arrived at all too late but exactly at the right time. Is it he, sir Towarzysz?" asked he, turning to Bielawski, who

arrived with him. "It is the very man," answered Valenty, "and you would do well to perform your duty immediately." "Directly, my worthy sir nobleman," answered he with an air of official dignity: "'t is necessary first to examine this worshipful company in order to found on their evidence the *species facti*. I therefore ask you, my worthy masters and burghers of Cracow, what kind of *gravamina* can you adduce against this suspicious fellow?" "Enough, more than enough!" cried Master Gregoriz and all the company: "he has not only spoken in a most disrespectful manner of Her late Majesty, but he has also uttered things the tenth part of which are quite sufficient to bring him to the gallows." "All in due time," observed the leader of the patrol: "and are you ready, master Gregoriz, as well as all the others, to confirm your words when you shall be called upon?" "All, we are all ready!" was the unanimous answer. "'T is very good, 't is excellent," said the leader; "most respectable witnesses and in sufficient number: consequently," added he, touching Waclaw on the shoulder, "in the name of the King—" "What do you say?" asked Siewrak, a little sobered and in a tone of doubt. "I say, master Siewrak, that the King requests you, through me, to take

up your abode for a while in the cool dungeons of the Starosty before you start on your travels.”

“ You won’t act in such a manner with an old companion of yours, who has driven plenty of fine game into your nets,” said Siewrak, “ and moreover, with a man of letters like myself, who one may say is a privileged person.” “ Eh, what! you do not belong to the nobility, and the *Neminem captivabimus* <sup>(3)</sup> is not applicable to such a common scoundrel and vagrant as you are : you have been my companion, ’t is very true; but if I were to let loose all the fellows I have drunk with, your future companions, the rats and the mice of the dungeon, would eat one another up for hunger and ennui. If you have driven others into the net, it is but fair that your turn should come next.” “ Tit for tat is fair play!” exclaimed the burghers with joy. “ I recommend this fellow to your particular care,” said Bielawski: “ I myself, as well as a nobleman of high rank, have proofs that he has many companions in his misdeeds, and as it is of great importance to convict them, we shall in due time and place furnish the necessary evidence.”

“ You need not trouble yourself about it, sir nobleman,” replied the bailiff with an official air; “ we have plenty of fine things to make him speak, such as thumb-screws, stretching-boards, and the



like, which can make the most silent communicative, and the more readily as this prattler has a very tender skin, as I had once sufficient opportunity of observing." He then gave a sign to his people, and the intended traveller was hurried out of the door with involuntary speed. "Consider well what you are doing," howled Siewrak; "I am patronized by many great lords and ladies, and they will not thank you for treating me in such a manner." "They will come forward in due season," said the constable with great coolness; "only take care that it may happen before the ladder is pushed away from under your feet." He then withdrew with his prey, and the honest burghers cried after them, "May such be the fate of all eavesdroppers and talebearers!"

In the evening of the same day we find the old Ursula in her lonely hut at the Jewish burying-ground, engaged in packing a large chest, as if she was preparing for a journey. Though apparently filled with rags, it contained objects of much greater value than could be supposed from its shabby appearance. Having finished her preparations, she said to herself, "Now they may come and see; they will find only what they ought to find, and nothing more. It is already dark, and they will soon be here. They are already close at

hand," continued she after a pause; "I hear footsteps! No, 't is only the wind rustling in the dry fir-trees over the graves. What an unusual feeling agitates my mind! It seems to me as if something ghastly was hovering round me, and as if long-forgotten countenances were staring on me from these smoke-blackened walls, and dragging me into a still darker abode for a long time, perhaps for ever!" She remained awhile absorbed in gloomy meditation, then starting from her reverie she continued her soliloquy: "It is done, and now it is too late to retrograde. He has spoken as he should do—and could he do otherwise? This fool who pressed himself stupidly into such important secrets, and whose tongue can be unloosed by a cup of wine, he has spoken his own destruction. It might always have happened; but should it have occurred by my orders? Ursula, Ursula, thou hast begun a dangerous game! But whence this anxiety, when all has turned out according to my desire? Have I not always played a dangerous game, staking all in order to wrest from fate what it has denied to me? Yes, from fate, which has loaded me with the curse of poverty, frightful ugliness, and contempt. Shall I tremble now, when I have ventured the last throw, that I may gain on the brink of the grave,

that for which I have striven ever since my earliest youth? The brink of the grave! Oh, what a horrid word. I wish they were already here. Nothing is worse than uncertainty in such a case. Solitude and conscience are indeed bad companions. Conscience! How came I to utter such a word, the meaning of which I have long since forgotten? 'Trust the devil,' says my cousin Waclaw, who instead of travelling to Italy is going straight forward to the gallows, which has long waited for him. But what is it that awaits myself? Will it be something even worse than the gallows? Should my bones be destined to become a prey to the flame and faggot! 'Trust the devil,' said my cousin; and what was my answer? I think I said, 'Trust to the devil! yes, so I have done.' And certainly the devil is a faithful ally, when one knows how to insure his aid. How is it, then, most serene lady? Do you intend to play me a trick of your own fashion? Beware, beware! all is as you have arranged it with your humble servant; they will find all that you have desired they should find. But other things may be also found, if you mean to jest with me, royal lady. These things are horrid stains on your purple; they will spread corruption over it, so that it will fall to pieces, and you will stand in your nakedness exposed to

the eyes of the world such as you really are. This chest conceals what will satisfy the desires of your benevolent heart; what will drive for the second time your mortal enemy into banishment and infamy. Ursula shall speak as you have commanded her. But this Ursula has still another hidden treasure; beware lest she discover it. There is a grave in this burying-ground which I alone know how to distinguish; there I have prepared a fine cushion for the old Rabbi; fine documents indeed! Black upon white and magnificent jewels, of more value to you than a kingdom, and if the dead usurer had known upon what he lies, he would never give them back, although you offered him your dowry and all the riches you have gained by selling justice, honours, and dignities. No, no, lady Queen, I am not afraid of you; the most serene Bona and the gipsy-woman Ursula are equal here, and she who has most to lose has most to fear. But here they are."

A knocking at the door proved the truth of her supposition, and she directly began in a hoarse disagreeable voice her usual singing; but she was interrupted by the commanding words, "Open, in the name of the King!" As she hesitated to obey these orders, the door was instantly kicked out,

and her little hut was filled with soldiers and officers of justice. The Starost of Samborz and Valenty Bielawski were with them. "What do you wish, gentlemen," exclaimed Ursula in a tone of fright, "at so late an hour, and from a poor old woman who maintains her miserable life by the alms of pious souls?" "Indeed," said the magistrate, "these alms cannot be very trifling, since they enable you to fill such a chest; and the public authority thinks it necessary to investigate the nature of these alms, and the names of those pious souls, as well as the motives of such uncommon generosity." "Oh! highborn sir Judge," said Ursula in a lamenting tone of voice, "you see here all my stock, mere rags, which I have packed up with the intention of spending my last days in a warmer climate, which may better suit my old limbs." "Then Poland is too cool for you?" said the magistrate with irony; "never fear, it will soon be even too hot for you." Hippolyte Boratynski ordered to conduct the old woman to the Starosty prison, and told the magistrate to begin the inventory of her things. The hag, having recognised him by his voice, cried to him with an expression of hellish scorn, "Search, search, my young lord! turn over and over the property of

an unprotected old woman! Many a one who searches often finds things which he did not wish to find. Seek, and mayhap you will find there the pilgrim's staff I have predicted to you; the old Ursula does not lie. Remember your little cousin, who has experienced the truth of her predictions." "Away, hellish monster!" cried Hippolyte. The patrolmen dragged her out of the hut, and her howling was long heard, until it was lost in the distance. The investigation of her property began, and it was registered with great accuracy. Under the rags which filled the upper part of the chest they found many objects of value, as silver goblets, bags with coin, &c. At last, when the chest was almost empty, Hippolyte perceived something wrapped in a piece of silk; he took it from its cover, and approaching a light, carefully examined it. He was visibly struck with the sight of this object, and it appeared to him that he had formerly seen it in some other place. On a sudden he started in horror; all colour left his cheeks, and his hand trembled from agitation. "Number 127," said the magistrate, "with your permission, lord Starost." Hippolyte, averting his face, reached what he held in his hand to the magistrate,

who continued to write, saying, "Number 127, an emerald of great value, set with diamonds, and with a broken clasp. It seems to belong to another ornament, which is not found here."

## CHAPTER XI.

“ Bear witness, earth and heaven,  
That ne'er was hope to mortal given  
So twisted with the strings of life  
As this,—to call Matilda wife :  
I bid it now for ever part,  
And with the effort bursts my heart.”

SIR W. SCOTT.

AFTER a lapse of years we return once more to the cedar-panelled withdrawing-room of the Princess of Mazovia. It was evening ; and she sat with her daughter at the round marble table illuminated by the burning tapers of the large chandelier which was suspended over it. Helena bent her head over a sheet of paper, which she moistened with her tears as she read it. The Princess seemed to take no part in her feelings, but kept looking with visible impatience on a man who stood at a respectful distance from her. His short black cloak of a German fashion, large white ruff, and the writing-case at his girdle, denoted him to be a magistrate of inferior rank. “ I do not blame the emotion which the kind remembrance of Her late Majesty has caused in you, Helena,” said the Prin-



cess in a dry and almost harsh tone of voice ;  
“ but it ill suits ladies of our rank to be entirely overpowered by our feelings, and I think it is time that you should give an answer to the Procurator, who has sufficiently witnessed your gratitude.” Helena, astonished by this unfeeling rebuke of her mother, dried up her tears, seized a pen, wrote some words on a parchment scroll, and gave it to the magistrate, saying in a tremulous voice, “ Present to His Majesty this feeble expression of my gratitude, which I owe no less to him than to his blessed Queen, whose loss we both deplore.” The magistrate made a low obeisance to the ladies, and left the room.

“ You are now become rich, Helena,” said the Princess, after a pause of silence, in an ambiguous tone of voice, “ and you may now consider yourself independent of a mother who can offer you nothing but the memory of the lineage to which you belong. But I have had ample opportunity to observe that you do not understand the value of such an inheritance.” “ O mother !” exclaimed Helena with an expression of pain, “ how can you suppose that I should consider myself independent of you ? This rich present is valuable to me, in remembrance of my unforgotten benefactress ; but still more so, as it enables me to cheer

the evening of your troubled life with the shadow of that splendour with which your cradle was surrounded. You have borne privation with resignation, but not without pain." These words, expressive of her filial attachment, produced the reverse of what Helena might have expected. The Princess rose fretfully from her seat, and said with a cutting accent, "People are indeed become very liberal at Cracow. Alms have more than once been offered to the daughter of Duke Conrad, and now her own daughter dares to promise her a maintenance from the gifts of that odious woman." "O mother!" exclaimed Helena with the utmost expression of pain and bitterness, folding her hands in an imploring attitude. But the Princess continued: "It is not yet come to that. I can still give, instead of receiving. And even had I wished it, do you think," added she with a scornful smile, "that I have not observed the clause which the generous Queen has attached to her legacy?" "How can you call it a clause?" cried Helena, bursting into tears; "it is the wish of a friend, who seeks to extend the effects of her friendship even beyond her grave. Yes, such was the dearest wish of my royal friend, as it is my own. Will you close your maternal heart to my prayer, to the last words of my dying father? Two sacred

voices of the dead address you from their graves. They beseech you not to destroy the happiness of your living child, of your only daughter." "What do you wish of me?" said the inflexible mother: "what can you demand,—you who are the owner of vast domains, the inheritress of a queen, the *protégée* of the royal Sigismund Augustus,—what can you demand of a homeless exile? Go and implore the protection which that gracious monarch has promised to you, that it may enable a daughter to defy her mother! Go, trample on the memory of your glorious ancestors! You have no need of my consent. Throw yourself into the arms of a simple nobleman, you who were destined to wear a crown! Drag your unworthy existence in obscurity and lowliness, heedless whether you have your mother's blessing or——" "Do not utter this dreadful word," cried Helena with an expression of terror; then turning to Barbara's portrait, she continued with a voice of deep affliction: "Take back thy gifts, thou noble sufferer! take them back. The seeds of thy benevolence have fallen on stony ground, and they will produce no fruit for me; but I will keep thy other bequest, given me by inspiration in the last hour of thy life, for I feel that it is the only boon left to me on the

earth." "I do not understand," said the Princess, who had meanwhile collected herself, "I do not understand what you mean by this bequest of Barbara Radziwill; but there is one which is destined to you, although not by her friendship. It is the hand of her husband." "How can you still entertain such an idea?" exclaimed the amazed maiden: "Are you, then, not yet convinced by the manifest will of the King, by the early choice of my heart, which has been recently confirmed in a solemn manner, and by so many other circumstances, of the utter impossibility of executing the lofty schemes of maternal pride? Are you not yet convinced that they are nothing but an empty dream?" "Dreams are the lot of a young but not of a mature age," answered the Princess in a severe tone, "and many things that appear impossible to an imprudent, are easily attained by an experienced mind. When should I think on this project if it be not now? That Lithuanian who stood between you and the throne is now removed, and my ancient hopes revive." "Consider," said Helena, having collected herself a little, "consider that you speak to an affianced maiden; consider that the Court and the town call me the betrothed of the Starost of Samborz." "And were it really so, they will

forget this low name as soon as they learn to greet you with the highest title in the kingdom. But you are not his bride, thanks to the event which Heaven sent so unexpectedly to prevent the final degradation of the Piastian House!" These words made Helena shudder, and she cried in a great agitation, "You rejoice at an event which causes all Poland to shed tears! The murder of an innocent boy, and perhaps even a greater crime,—you call them sent by Heaven! O mother! do not proceed with such blasphemies, for they will draw down misfortunes on your head." But the Princess remained unmoved, and continued in a calm tone of voice, "The King is free, and you also. The time is now arrived to resume our former schemes, and to demand the fulfilment of promises." Helena dried her tears, and drawing herself proudly up, said with unexpected decision, "The motives which you may have to resume your schemes, or to rely on the promises that were given you, concern me not. The will of my father, the inclination of my own heart, the authority of the King, my supreme guardian, and your own consent have betrothed me to Hippolyte Boratynski as his bride; and I will remain so till I die. Will you sever what Heaven and earth have united? If you have no regard to my happiness,

if you turn a deaf ear to the prayers of your devoted and only child, I will deliver my heart to your merciless commands, and act as she ordered me in her last moments,—she whose love for your daughter you repay by abusing her memory. I will sacrifice my happiness to you, but not my honour. You think that it is unworthy of Helena Odrowonz to become the wife of an irreproachable nobleman. You will throw the burden of departed grandeur on my heart, which despises its attractions; and you desire me to disgrace myself in order to restore the ancient splendour of our family! But were it even possible to obtain such ends, can you desire that I should present to the world the scandalous example of a maiden who sacrifices love and fidelity to ambition and interest? O, believe me, Sigismund Augustus would despise me; and the path by which you would arrive at honours and glory leads only to disappointment and ignominy.” Anna listened attentively to her daughter’s words, so that Helena almost hoped that she had produced some effect upon her mother’s heart; but the Princess replied without the least emotion, “You dare to defy me, girl! And who are you, to oppose your mother and those who act with her? You say that Heaven and earth have destined you to be the bride of

that Boratynski. You are mistaken. I have listened to the voice of fate, and it has pointed out to me your destiny: it is my duty to lead you on according to its dictates. The die is cast, and a crown has fallen to your share. Throw away the fading myrtle wreath, and grasp the diadem, which the next moments will perhaps bring you. Yes, the next moments may perhaps realise the images of futurity that were shown to me, and rebuild the fallen edifice with renewed splendour."

At that moment a servant entered, announcing the Palatine of Lublin, who followed closely, so that the Princess had not even time either to accept or to decline his visit. Firley's behaviour appeared rather strange. The usual smile of a courtier had disappeared from his countenance, which bore an extraordinary serious expression; and when his eyes met Helena's, they seemed to be animated by a painful feeling. "Illustrious lady," said he with visible embarrassment, "the express orders of His Majesty must excuse my intruding upon you at so late an hour." Saying this he looked on Helena, as if her presence prevented him from delivering his message. "The messenger of my royal lord," replied the Princess, "is always welcome." She then gave a sign to Helena, who immediately left the room.

“ We are now alone, my lord of Lublin,” said the Princess, wondering at the visible irresolution of the experienced courtier ; “ it seems that your message is not of the most agreeable kind. Have no hesitation in delivering it. Anna of Mazovia has little to hope, and nothing to fear.” “ I wish you may be able to repeat these last words after having heard my message,” replied Firley ; “ indeed it will give great pleasure to His Majesty as well as to myself.” “ Speak then,” retorted the Princess, that I may be able to give you this pleasure.” “ My commission is of an extraordinary kind,” said Firley : “ although seemingly unimportant, still it is sufficiently weighty to induce His Majesty to entrust it to one of his most faithful and confidential servants. I am only charged to ask you, my lady Palatine, whether you know this jewel ?” It was a link of the Byzantian chain, which the Princess had reluctantly surrendered to the prophetess at the Villa di Milano. She was seized with horror at the sight ; a cold shudder ran over her limbs ; her eyes grew dim ; and she stood for a moment lost in amazement. “ The expression of your countenance unfortunately confirms what nobody can doubt who has ever seen the ornament from which this jewel has been torn,” continued Firley.



“And if I do acknowledge it?” asked Anna in a low voice, whilst her breast swelled with the effort to resume her wonted cold dignity. “I confess,” replied Firley, “that the person with whom this jewel was found, and the idea of your giving her such a present, by spoiling an ornament to which, as it is generally known, you justly attached so great a value,—I confess that all this, as well as many other circumstances connected with it, must necessarily lead to very extraordinary conclusions.” “And what may be those conclusions?” asked the Princess, summoning up all the energies of her mind against the storm which, as she felt, was approaching. “Do not ask, lady Princess. The answer to that question is serious; and if once uttered, it may bring infamy and death.” The Princess was mute with terror. An idea crossed her mind that her mortal enemy had taken advantage of the only unguarded moment in which she had been betrayed by the weakness of her sex, after years of mistrust and unceasing watchfulness. Although innocent of the deed, her conscience accused her of having known and desired it. She instantly perceived the extent of the danger which threatened her, and she felt that it would be difficult to preserve her honour without a stain. She remained speech-

less. Firley continued in a tone of hesitation : “ The present case is so important that every just means of proving their innocence will be allowed to those who are implicated in it : you will therefore have an opportunity of repelling the accuser face to face.” These words remained without any answer, and he again continued : “ I wish you to understand me aright. It is not the desire of His Majesty that you should act thus. I come here not as a judge, but rather as a mediator, whom my royal lord has even commissioned to advise you. You had better avoid such public and important disclosures, if—if you do not feel yourself entirely guiltless.” While he was speaking, the Princess summoned up all her family pride, to overcome the state of confusion into which so unexpected an humiliation had thrown her, and said with tolerable composure, “ I thank His Majesty for having spared the daughter of the Piasts the indignity of being opposed face to face to a common thief ; and I accept as a favour that which I could claim as a right.” “ Were I your judge,” observed Firley, “ I would remind you that your own words give evidence that your accuser is not unknown to you ; but it does not become me to catch at an unguarded word in order to prove things which were sufficiently evi-

dent before you spoke." The Princess fixed an inquisitive look on Firley, and said with a cutting accent, " Since those things appear so evident to you, I suppose that it will be not less evident to such an experienced statesman as the Palatine of Lublin is, that the circumstances which afford grounds of injurious suspicion against me may be extended to another personage, and that the inquiry by which your magnanimous King intends to disgrace the family of the ancient monarchs of this country may prove dangerous to the honour of his own house." " I understand you, lady Princess," replied Firley after a moment of meditation, " but I would advise you not to rely upon this consideration. The accusation of the prisoner, and the proofs which have been discovered in evidence, concern you alone. It is not for me to decide how far the suspicions of His Majesty may extend, in case the circumstances you have alluded to prove false; but you are aware that the privileges of royalty are above those of the rest of mankind. The dignity of the throne must never be sacrificed. The sacred duty of a monarch is to preserve the royal purple without a stain, that it may not be disgraced in the eyes of the nation. Do you think that Sigismund Augustus is not aware of this duty? Believe me, lady, he will

sacrifice every consideration to it, and he will be strengthened in his noble intentions by the promise he has given to his dying Queen. You are silent, lady Princess; you feel yourself that these considerations are not applicable to you, as they are to that other person whom you hinted at. Do not therefore attempt to tear the veil from objects which the King neither wishes nor dares to disclose; do not attempt to call forth accusations that will remain powerless against her to whom punishment is not destined on this side of the grave. All that has happened is still covered by a profound mystery; a chance, which I do not know whether to call fortunate or unlucky, has put this accusing jewel into the hands of the Starost of Samborz. This discovery has rendered him wretched, but his fidelity towards his monarch forced him to communicate to his royal master a secret which remains hidden from every one else." Hippolyte's name made the Princess shudder with terror; her cheeks burned with a feverish glow, and her eyes sparkled with fire; but Firley continued: "I think, therefore, illustrious lady, that it would be better to leave all that may have happened buried in deep secrecy; and all that I have observed in the course of our conversation confirms me in the idea that publicity would not be

advantageous to you. You do not want intercessors with the monarch, whom you have ample reason to consider magnanimous. He suspects the intrigues in which you may probably have been entangled; your illustrious lineage and the virtues of your daughter give you powerful claims to the favour of Sigismund Augustus, who is unwilling to disgrace the last scion of a house which has long occupied the throne of this country. If, therefore, you feel that you need the royal mercy, and wish to address a word of supplication to your sovereign, entrust it to me, and I warrant to you—I, John Firley, warrant to you—that it will not be addressed in vain.” Having said these last words in a mild, soothing voice, he approached the Princess in a confidential manner, but she stepped back, and drawing herself up proudly, replied in a firm voice, “However valid may be your guarantee, my lord Palatine, and I have no doubt that your proposition was suggested to you by him of whose mercy you assure me in so positive a manner, still Anna of Mazovia will neither trouble you with such a commission, nor crave the mercy of a Jagellon which a Piastian Princess does not demand. But if, like a faithful servant, you dare not return to your master without taking him an answer, report to him that the daughter

of Conrad duke of Mazovia has said, 'All that may have happened was only a just retaliation for the innumerable wrongs done by his ancestors to mine; that the blood of my brothers still cries for vengeance to heaven; and that everything is allowable against a hereditary enemy.'" "And this is the answer you wish me to report to your judge?" cried the amazed Firley, "to a judge who holds the sword ready to fall on your head?" "This and no other," was Anna's reply. "Then you compel me to act," said the Palatine; "you are arrested in the name of the King." A look of contempt was the only answer he received. "Ponder over it during the night," continued he again; "no ill-disposed ear has listened to the inconsiderate words of your anger, and the mercy of Sigismund Augustus is great." The Princess gave him a sign of dismissal with an expression of pride and dignity, as if she were still surrounded by all the splendour of her birth, and unconscious of any guilt. Firley departed astonished at having found so much firmness in a person guilty of so heavy a crime, and it extorted from him a kind of sinister respect, which was perhaps natural to a citizen of an aristocratical republic, and to the leader of a bold faction.

The efforts which Anna of Mazovia had made

to suppress, in the presence of Firley, the bitter feelings of humiliation and thwarted ambition, exhausted her strength, and she now felt with redoubled pain the pangs of disappointment and degradation. Her head fell drooping on her breast, her gait was tottering, and her mind, which no misfortune could bend, was broken by the consciousness of guilt. She approached the window, and looked pensively on the deserted street, when she perceived halberds glittering in the moonlight, and saw that her house was surrounded by soldiers; she also heard orders given by a subaltern officer, that nobody should be admitted into or let out of the house without a written order. She was overpowered by the feeling of shame, and whispered to herself, "Is it then come to this, that the descendant of Boleslaw the Third is a prisoner in the capital of her ancestors!—a prisoner, and—not guiltless!" You have vanquished, Jagellons! Thou hast vanquished, thou crowned monster of hypocrisy—oh, that I must confess it!—the last of the Piasts is fallen ingloriously! He was right—that priest who warned me not to cross the threshold, beyond which treason and destruction awaited me! I did not listen to his advice; I pressed myself blindly into the sphere of unhallowed doings, and

I am fallen a victim to the powers I have conjured in my madness. Yes, it was madness; for how could truth be expected from the powers of falsehood? But still all was not false," said she, laughing wildly, "the good alone proved so, but not the evil." The striking of halberds on the ground announced the approach of an officer of rank, and she saw a man who, having exchanged a few words with the sentinel, stepped aside. A ray of moonlight which fell on his countenance discovered to the Princess the Starost of Samborz standing with folded arms, and looking pensively at Helena's windows. "All is not false," repeated she with the joy of despair, "one at least is true. Is it not he who now stands looking on the walls which inclose the person whom he has delivered to destruction? Is it not he who called himself the friend of a house which he has destroyed ere it had risen from its ruins? He desired to lean his hut against its pillars, and now that it has fallen he stands aloof and contemplates his work. His work? Anna, is it not rather thy own? No! never shall I repent the schemes which I have been induced to form by just ambition and revenge;—yes, the revenge of centuries, called forth by innumerable wrongs—by the crime of usurpation committed against my ancestors,



and by the murder of those princely youths. Bona, you have said that repentance is not a kingly virtue, and I feel that I have still royal blood in my veins. But, that having been warned by so much experience, and having no doubt of her perfidy, I could confide in her for one moment, and yield the weapon into the hands of my mortal enemy,—of that error I indeed repent. Firley is right in saying that I shall in vain dart the arrows of retaliation at thy head, which is protected by a crown. A queen has no judge on earth except her own conscience; but it is not so with me, who am only the daughter of a fallen house, and a subject. I sought to ally myself with her race, or to destroy it. I have been repelled with scorn, and it is my own fortunes that are blighted. Now I see (but too late) that all was true that Zebrzydowski predicted to me, and that I have been infatuated from the first moment to the last. The granddaughter of Duke Conrad was chosen for a miserable bait, which was cast away as soon as it proved useless, like the worm which is thrown away from the angler's hook when it catches no fish. I have been an object of silent scorn, until the time arrived when I could be treated with open contempt. All this is done against me; and, alas! crippled by my guilt,

I am unable to avenge myself. One thing only remains for me—to fall with dignity. There he stands, looking on her whom he now, perhaps, for the first time thinks lost to him. He perhaps meditates whether it would not be disgraceful to him to give his hand to one whose mother is accused of a heavy crime; a Boratynski to a descendant of the Piasts! Have no care, sir nobleman; such a sacrifice will not be required of you. You have done your duty as a servant, and your reward will not be lost. Or perhaps you are pitying her whom you have thrown into misery and infamy; but I despise your pity, and the very ruins of my house are still too magnificent to receive you.” She then retired to her daughter’s apartment, awoke her, and recklessly displayed before Helena’s eyes the picture of the present and of the future; nor did she leave her daughter until she saw that she was dead to every joy and hope. She then retired to her room to summon up all the pride of her soul in order to meet the events which the next morning must unavoidably bring.

The morning came, after a long sleepless night, and the Palatine of Lublin entered the apartment of the Princess without observing the usual formalities. He found her pale, agitated, and her dress of yesterday proved that she had not at-

tempted to seek repose on her couch; still her look and her gesture were stately, and she said in a composed tone of voice, when Firley was going to say something about his intrusion, "You need no excuse, my lord Court Marshal; the room of a prisoner, or her jail, must be always open to the bearer of the decrees of a judge; or, if you prefer it, to an officious mediator." "Your Grace," answered Firley, suppressing his pique, "rejected my mediation yesterday in so decisive a manner, that you must now see in me only the bearer of His Majesty's supreme orders." "I have no doubt whatever," retorted Anna, "that I shall have ample reason to praise the choice of the messenger, and the unparalleled mercy of the sovereign who condemns without trial the last scion of a family whose existence can by no means be agreeable to him." "It is indeed a message of grace which I bring to you, lady Princess," said Firley, "if it were not so, another messenger would have brought it; and this would perhaps have been the case if the Court Marshal of the Crown had supposed it becoming his dignity to report literally the rash words of a lady." "I have once declared to you," cried the Princess, "that I do not desire the indulgence of the King, and less so that of his servant, were he

even one of the first and of the most confidential, as you, my lord, call yourself. Therefore I beg of you to declare plainly to the Princess of Mazovia what King Sigismund destines to be her fate." "His Majesty thinks," said Firley dryly, "that after all that has happened the residence of Cracow cannot be very agreeable to you, and that you may very likely desire to leave it for some distant part of the country; and therefore His Majesty gives beforehand his consent to your departure." "Indeed," said Anna with an expression of bitterness, "you have not in vain visited the courts of the West: it was impossible to deliver a decree of banishment in a more courteous manner. But, my lord Palatine, supposing I had no wish to depart and to make use of the royal permission?" "Then," replied Firley, whose patience was nearly exhausted, "then, lady Princess, I believe that His Majesty would command." "Command!" repeated Anna unmoved; "this is indeed a word which has seldom struck my ears. A lady of the highest birth is to be banished without trial, and on the evidence of a miserable wretch!" "Doubtless," retorted Firley, "nobody could suppose that a connexion exists between the widow of a Palatine, the sister and daughter of the dukes of Mazovia, and such a wretch; but

since it has proved otherwise, you must ascribe the consequences to yourself alone." "Do you really think so, my lord?" asked the Princess with great irritation; "but I will tell you that I know some very high personages at this Court who have acted with the same forgetfulness of their rank, and that I am resolved to make it public." "Your Grace seems again to allude to topics," replied the Court Marshal, "which ought not to be touched upon; and I repeat to you now what I have already expressed, that you alone are concerned in this unfortunate affair." "It is below my dignity," cried Anna, "to be opposed face to face to a wretch who is a tool put in my way by a base intrigue, but I will submit to it, that every one may receive his due." "It is too late," answered Firley; "you had it in your power to do so yesterday, but the old woman has now escaped from her confinement." "Escaped!" exclaimed the Princess, and being visibly released from mental oppression, she added with an expression of scorn, "it is indeed very prudent to have dismissed such a dangerous witness, and to have got rid of her by letting her escape, or even perhaps by means that may still better insure the silence of one who ought not to speak: both ways are easily

arranged by a sovereign." "It may be that it has pleased His Majesty to order so," said the Court Marshal dryly, "but it neither becomes me nor you to judge of the royal actions and motives." "It does not become me," exclaimed the Princess with great violence, "it does not become me to complain that iniquity wields the sword of justice, that it may glide powerless over the head of the guilty, and fall on one who is wickedly accused! It was indeed wise to avoid the infamy which would have befallen the partial judge in the person of his own mother; but the Piastian Princess was chosen as a victim which could be sacrificed with impunity." "It was done precisely that the sword of justice which you challenge with so much boldness might not fall upon your head," said the Court Marshal in a firm tone of voice; "my royal lord despises the means to which you allude; the mouth of the accuser is not closed, and she could soon be opposed to you, were it necessary to prove a guilt which so many circumstances and your own words render sufficiently evident. Cease, therefore, lady Princess, to oppose the clemency of the monarch by unjust complaints,—the clemency of a monarch who, instead of wishing to punish you, grants you the repose which becomes your age

and your widowhood, and who destines a noble castle for your prison, your own daughter for your companion, and her husband for your warden." Whilst Firley was speaking Helena entered the room; she heard his words, which proved to her Sigismund Augustus's generosity, and his unceasing care for her welfare; but hope could no more enter a heart which the un pitying harshness of her mother had entirely broken during the preceding night. She stood with drooping head in silent agony; a smile of melancholy, not of joy, flashed over her lips. The Princess cast a haughty look on her daughter, and said, "Have you heard it, Helena? If the noble Starost of Samborz—for I suppose it is he whom the King has chosen to be my jailer—deems you worthy to receive his hand, the royal mercy will grant to the daughter of Duke Conrad an asylum in the realm of her ancestors; and the victim chosen by his mother, and on whom he throws with unrivalled generosity the burthen of his own family's dishonour, will not fall by the decree of his justice, but linger out the remainder of her life in ignominious degradation." A suppressed sigh was Helena's sole answer; but Firley answered with an elevated voice, and even with some violence, "You alone, lady of Podolia, are able

to refuse with such obstinacy to understand the intentions of a monarch who with a noble resignation conceals his mortal grief in his own deeply wounded heart, who desires not to return evil to his enemies for all the evil they have done to him, and who suppresses the offended feelings of a man and of a sovereign in order to prevent vengeance from perpetuating its fatal consequences." "The King is still a young man," retorted the Princess with irony; "perseverance is said not to be his favourite virtue, and therefore he may easily resign a feeling which is not calculated to make life comfortable. But my case is different. It is not easy for me to divest myself of a hatred which I have cherished for many years; and I despise the paltry boons of the King, the asylum which he offers to me, as well as the warden whom he has destined for my guard." "I sympathize with you, noble lady," said Firley to Helena, "I take the greatest part in your sufferings; but," added he in a firm voice, turning to her mother, "in this case the dominions of Sigismund Augustus afford you no shelter, and you must seek beyond the frontiers of his empire a place where you may indulge yourself in your idle dreams and criminal thoughts; a place where sooner or later repentance will overtake you, that repentance which is



the unavoidable consequence of ingratitude and obstinacy." "A sovereign alone can speak thus to the daughter of a sovereign!" exclaimed the Princess: "where is the King?" "He is gone this morning to Vilna, in order to attend the funeral of Her late Majesty in that capital; but in me Your Grace sees not only the messenger of His Majesty but also the executor of his commands." The Princess cast on Firley a gloomy look, and asked in a slow voice, "And Zebrzydowski,—shall I not be allowed to see once more the old servant of my family?" "The Bishop of Cujavia," replied Firley, "is on his way to Vienna, where he is sent by the royal decision, according to the general wish of the states, to make the preliminary overtures for the King's marriage with the Archduchess Catherine of Austria, widow of the Duke of Mantua." At these words Anna's countenance assumed such an expression that Firley was horrified, and drawing back he continued: "My commission is now at an end; according to the royal orders I leave you to your warden." He made a deep obeisance, cast a look of compassion on Helena, and left the room.

Hippolyte Boratynski entered; he approached the Princess with hesitation, and his look sought to read on her countenance the decision of his

fate. Helena advanced a step to meet him, her arms extended by an involuntary motion; she seemed to fly for consolation on her lover's breast; but she stopt, her arms fell powerless, and she remained standing with drooping head like the image of hopeless grief. The Princess made a few steps to meet Boratynski, and said, "Ah, is it you, my lord Starost of Samborz? Do you come to enjoy the effects which the conscientious performance of your duty has produced? Do you wish to deserve still better the royal favour by the harsh fulfilment of tyrannical orders against defenceless women? or as I may rather suppose by the expression of your countenance, you come to excuse yourself and to insult the misfortune you have yourself caused by a pity which we do not require." "None of these reasons brings me hither, illustrious lady," replied Boratynski with an uncertain voice; "much evil is done, and my heart almost sinks under its oppression. Accident has drawn me into the fatal circle of these events: however, conscience is my support, and I will not accuse that which has sustained me in so painful a moment, and which perhaps affords me an opportunity of amending as a man that which I was obliged to do as a servant of the republic. I come not to fulfill a tyrannical order: how could

I undertake such a charge against you to whom I have borne a filial attachment from my earliest days—how could I act thus against Helena's mother? His Majesty has not charged me with such a painful duty; the King has allowed me in his mercy the happiness of conducting you from hence, where you would have many painful recollections, to become your companion and support in the days of sorrow; he entrusts you to the tender care of dutiful and respectful children, that your wounded heart may be healed by the influence of filial love and devotedness, for he knows by his own experience how painful are the wounds inflicted on the heart." "I owe you an answer to such a proposal," replied the Princess with a firm voice, though without any bitterness; "I pardon it to your youth, and to a passion which has been strengthened by the inconsiderate consent of my late husband, that you presume it will be in your power to heal the wounds which have been inflicted upon me; but you are mistaken, you may guess what were my hopes, you know what is their result; it cannot therefore appear strange to you if I reject as a paltry compensation that which I never considered worthy of my acceptance. Do not knit your brow in such a manner, my lord Starost of Samborz, do not look on me so

gloomily ; many a Polish maiden of high and noble birth would consider herself honoured by your hand : however, it is not destined to the grand daughter of Duke Conrad ; not to her to whom a crown was shown, though at a great distance ; and what could not be received by one that was courted, can be even less accepted by one who is rejected." " Rejected !" interrupted Helena in a tremulous voice ; " never did I desire that illusory object by which the wiles of intrigue sought deceitfully to ensnare me ; and when fortune was smiling on me my heart continually longed for that boon which a faithful friend offers me now that I am plunged in misfortune !" " Misfortune !" repeated the Princess in a solemn voice ; " you are right in using the expression, but misfortune must be supported with pride : happiness may be humble, but misfortune must be proud that it may not fall into degradation. The moment is come which I feel was decreed by destiny ; the race of the Piasts is going to disappear from the lands of their ancestor ; let it therefore leave them at once with dignity, and not sink by degrees into lowliness and degradation, and let not the antique splendour of the Piasts be disgraced by the insulting pity of a Jagellon." " Your words are cruel," said Hippolyte with dignity ;

“ you oppose a faithful attachment by a contemptuous pride, preferring long-forgotten images of the past to the friendly joys of life which offer themselves to you. But it shall not be so! you shall not destroy your own and Helena’s happiness; she is my betrothed, and she belongs to me by right, both human and divine; no one shall ravish her from me.” Saying these words, he seized Helena’s hand and drew her to him. She looked imploringly and with tearful eyes on her mother; but the Princess said, “ I leave it to her own decision whether she will tear herself from me and conclude an alliance which I hate, for she well knows what kind of dowry I shall give her. She may choose between the outlawed exile and the happiness of love at your side—choose between the blessing and the curse of a mother from whom all has been taken, yea, even her only child!” Helena tore herself from the arms of her betrothed, slowly approached her mother, and silently bowed on the hand which she extended to her. Hippolyte cried, “ How can you leave me, Helena? Have you forgotten your own words, ‘ Let us remain faithful till the end ’ ? ” “ And are we not at the end ? ” answered she, “ Duty has fixed my goal, and there is no hope beyond it. Look on me, thou blessed saint,” she continued with en-

thusiasm, "was it not this that you intended? Leave me thy second legacy! O leave me patience and enduring resignation to support me during a life without joy and hope!" "Pursue then," exclaimed Boratynski, overpowered by grief, "pursue your destructive course, trampling on hearts devoted to you; sacrifice to the dreadful idol of ambition and vengeance this innocent dove, and conclude as you have begun, in enmity with yourself and mankind, from whom you separate yourself in your criminal pride! But the day will come when in your self-created solitude no pitying or loving voice will answer the shrieks of your despair, and my image will appear to you reproaching you for having destroyed all that was dearest to me!" "Oh, be not angry with my mother," implored Helena; "she has nothing left but me; she is old and has lost everything on earth. You are young; a long life full of hope lies before you; you will remain in your own country and become a worthy and useful citizen. But forget me not when I am gone to an unknown, comfortless distance; do not forget the homeless wanderer, who never will forget you." "My daughter has chosen as she ought," said the Princess, and the tremulous tone of her voice betrayed that even her unbending soul was affected; "my

daughter has chosen as she ought; follow her example, my lord Starost; necessity separates you: she has acknowledged her serious call, do not therefore aggravate the pains of the sacrifice to her whom you love." Hippolyte advanced once more to clasp his beloved in his arms; but she drew back, and said in a tone expressive of pain and resignation, "It is a sacrifice, and I confess the sacrifice of my youthful life; but I make it willingly, for life could have no charm when poisoned by remorse. Leave me, therefore, Hippolyte; resign her who never could be undividedly thine; attempt not to retain her who could not find happiness even in thy arms pursued by the remembrance of having abandoned her mother to misery and exile. A mother's hatred would blast the flowers of my life like a poisonous mildew, and a guilty heart would never render thee happy. Now I part from thee pure and guiltless, and thou wilt always think with pleasure on thy affianced, who left thee only to be worthy of thyself. Farewell, my Hippolyte, we shall meet again in a better world."

The Princess privately left the capital the same day, accompanied by the severest disapprobation of every one, but Helena was followed by the sympathy and kind wishes of the good.

## CHAPTER XII.

“ May his soul be plunged  
In ever-burning floods of liquid gold !  
And be his avarice the fiend that damns him ! ”

MURPHY'S *Alzuma*.

ON the shores of the Adriatic Sea, in the duchy of Bari, within the dominions of the kingdom of Naples, stood a solitary villa, situated on a neck of land jutting out into the sea, between the town of Bari and the village of Giovenazzo. It was distant several Italian miles from both those towns, and it lay apart from any frequented road. Its situation had probably appeared to its owner too remote, as the house remained for some time uninhabited. The once elegant building had fallen somewhat into decay; and the shady walks of the garden, which led from the house to the sea-shore, were entirely overgrown with weeds. The villa had long remained in this deserted state, when a few months previously to the time at which we lead our reader from the banks of the Vistula to the shores of the Adriatic, a man appeared there in the company of the magistrate who managed the affairs of the



distant owner of Bari. It appeared that the magistrate had been apprized beforehand of the stranger's arrival, for he introduced him directly into the villa, leaving it entirely at his disposal. The installation was soon concluded; and after some wagons with luggage had arrived, and their contents were unladen and put in order, the agent returned to Bari, leaving the stranger to himself in his new dwelling. The appearance of an unknown personage in the deserted villa roused the curiosity of the few people who lived on the shore; and many reports were spread, which painted him sometimes as a secret emissary of the Court of Madrid, and sometimes as a sorcerer and treasure-seeker from the remotest part of the north. But there were also some who, having closely observed the stranger, found nothing eccentric in his exterior, and who moreover having had the opportunity of becoming convinced that he spoke Italian as well and even better than the natives of the Terra di Bari, concluded that it was highly probable that under the dark-coloured cloak which he usually wore something extraordinary lurked, perhaps the purple of a cardinal, who for some reason or other had left Rome and retired into solitude. This last opinion was, however, opposed by many, and not without good reasons;

because, although the obsequious manner in which the protonotary Messer Girolamo had received the stranger, and the mysterious silence which he kept about him, naturally led to the supposition that he was a person of note, and the quantity as well as the kind of his baggage proved his wealth, still it appeared strange that he did nothing either to repair the decayed building or to restore the overgrown gardens. The complete absence of servants was likewise much wondered at, and the attendance of a boy whom he had hired at a neighbouring fisher's hut seemed to be unsuitable to the wants and habits of a prince of the church. The answers which the boy gave to the many questions directed to him were unsatisfactory. His duties consisted only in the performance of the most indispensable domestic services, and in purchasing for his master the necessary provisions at Giovenazzo, the choice of which proved, however, a taste difficult to be satisfied, and uncommon wealth. The boy had never entered the interior apartments of the house, and the description of the riches he had seen through the keyhole might easily have been a mere creation of his own fancy. The villa and grounds were inclosed by a deep moat full of water, which communicated with the sea at the bottom of the

garden, so that it was impossible to enter the dwelling except by a drawbridge, which the Unknown always lowered himself for his little servant, but not till he had carefully examined whether it was he, and whether he came alone ; after the arrival or the departure of the boy, the bridge was instantly drawn up. This extraordinary seclusion of the inhabitant of the villa afforded sufficient matter for discussion to the good folks of Giovenazzo and the sea-shore ; but they were even more busy in their conjectures about the only visit by which this solitude was daily interrupted at a fixed hour. It was observed that a man, usually wrapped in a dark-coloured cloak, like that of the stranger, very tall, but of a dark and repulsive countenance, disfigured by a large scar over his mouth, came every evening not long before sunset to the villa ; that the drawbridge was immediately lowered for him ; and that he remained there till late in the night. Diligent inquiries were naturally made about this visitor, and it was found that he had arrived at Bari at the same time the stranger took possession of the villa ; that he had settled in a lonely house of a remote suburb, where he was leading a very retired life, and never left his dwelling before a certain hour in the afternoon, so that he was never seen in the town ;

and, what was even more extraordinary, he never went to church. This last circumstance appeared to the Neapolitans very suspicious, and it gave birth to the most unfavourable conclusions as to the stranger, whose exclusive companion he was ; so that those who had supposed the inhabitant of the lonely villa to be a disguised member of the Conclave had considerably lowered their opinion of him.

One evening Giulio, the fisher's boy who served the stranger of the villa, rushed into the hut of his parents, pale, breathless, and with all the tokens of the greatest fright, affirming that he had just had a narrow escape from the enemy of mankind. Such an encounter did not appear at all unlikely, and he was examined by his amazed parents with great curiosity. He said that he had remained that day with the gentleman he served longer than usual ; and that just as the bridge had been drawn up behind him, he saw the man from Bari coming along the footpath. The man walked quickly, but with an unequal step, muttering to himself, and clenching his hands in the air, as if he desired to catch something that was invisible. He burst from time to time into a wild laugh, and his large eyes shone with an extraordinary glare. When he perceived the boy he started suddenly, exclaiming

in a wild voice, "What wilt thou?" As Giulio was unable from fright to answer, he continued to speak, uttering most horrible things; and it appeared that he mistook him for a hobgoblin, or an apparition, for his words were as follows: "Away from me, thou pale image of a boy! What dost thou wish from me? Art thou not deeply buried in the earth, far from hence in the distant North? Art thou come to the South, that the frozen blood on thy breast may thaw, and flow to accuse me? Fly from me! Back, back to thy icy grave, for I struck thee deep! But my knife will mark thee better a second time, and send thee to the old man to greet him from his foe!" "Despairing of life," continued Giulio, "I cast myself on my knees, whilst he drew his knife above my head, and cried that I was not he whom he supposed, but a poor fisherman's boy from the shore of Giovenazzo, and the servant of the gentleman who lived in the villa. He put back his knife, rubbed his eyes, and looking terribly on me, said, 'What leads you hither in the evening? Take care, boy, that you never come across my path, for I do not like figures that resemble you!' I was glad to be saved from so great a danger; and thanking the holy Januarius for his miraculous interposition, I crossed myself devoutly; but

when he perceived it he burst out into horrid laughter, and uttered terrible blasphemies, which, happily for my salvation, I did not understand; but I heard perfectly well that he many times repeated the name of Mahomet. I then saw distinctly whom I had to deal with, and I ran as swiftly as I could, straight over fields and hedges to our hut; but I will return no more to the gentleman in the villa, who I am sure is not a whit better than his companion."

This incident soon became generally known, and nobody doubted any longer that he who preferred such company to that of the gentlemen of Bari and its environs was a necromancer and an ally of hell. People began to wonder that the Inquisition, which exercised its tyrannical sway in Naples during the Spanish dominion, allowed such mischief abroad. Some zealots even communicated these circumstances to the familiars of the sacred tribunal, who failed not to report it to their superiors. However, this report seemed to be received with great indifference, for the strangers remained undisturbed, and the zealots received an answer that their information was groundless, that the fisherman's boy had either dreamt or was a liar, and they had better leave the sacred tribunal itself to find out the guilty. The story was

forgotten after some time, and Giulio's father himself, seeing that the zecchini of the stranger instead of changing either into burning coals or dirt, were easily converted in the market-place of Giovenazzo into sundry useful commodities, persuaded his son to resume his service in the villa. The boy followed the advice of his father, although resolved always to leave his master as early as possible, in order to avoid meeting the man from Bari.

One day it was observed that a seemingly heavy though not very large chest was brought from Bari to the stranger by the servants of the Protonotary. At the close of the same day, when Giulio had left the villa, he again met with its daily visitor; but he now passed quickly without noticing the boy, and appeared to be much absorbed in thought, as he forgot to draw up the bridge behind him. It is true that he might perfectly well dispense with this habitual precaution, as no Christian soul in all the neighbourhood would have ventured for any price in the world to enter the villa, where we shall now introduce our readers.

In a little vaulted room of the villa sat the former physician of Queen Bona, master Leonardo Monti. An open chest filled with gold pieces

stood on a little table before him; on another table was prepared a supper, composed of the best that could be found in Giovenazzo. It consisted of the most delicious productions of the Adriatic, of game, the most exquisite fruit, and the choicest wines of Italy. The preparations were made for two, as he was expecting a guest. "He is rather late today," said Monti, carefully locking the chest, "I am sure he is going about to learn what is arrived, for he is as distrustful as if he really were a Neapolitan; let him be so, I will soon get rid of him; this letter announces that the Marchese di Cassano will shortly arrive here, and I can sooner come to a conclusion with him than with the pedantic Protonotary, whom neither the Queen nor myself would allow to penetrate into our secrets. It is pity indeed," continued he, after a pause, looking on the chest with an expression of sorrow, "that its contents must be again divided; I am tired of dividing; innate cruelty and thirst for blood should not be equally rewarded with learning and policy. I say indeed that the old fellow was sufficiently remunerated by the pleasure he enjoys in committing a crime. Yes, he is a horrid savage creature! but I—" here a shudder passed over his limbs and he looked wildly around—"I am not like him; I have



no pleasure in spilling blood, and I would never have done these deeds if it were not for money's sake: but wealth is the greatest boon on the earth; it commands everything; and we can never possess too much of that golden rain which softens even a heart of stone. When will that day come when I shall enjoy what I have acquired? I have spent long years in the cold countries of the North, among a rude uncivilized people, who understand not how to value the arts and sciences; I have long been a slave to the whims of an unkind mistress, and have done much that I had better not have done: and what have I gained by it? I have been obliged to wander, like a fugitive, over hill and dale, with that unhallowed companion by my side, and now arrived at this asylum I live here excluded like a leper from all intercourse with mankind, and my solitude is interrupted only by that odious being, and by recollections which I must and will smother in the bustle of the hard-earned joys of life. You have succeeded in all your wishes, lady Queen; yes, you have obtained the complete success of your schemes at Vienna as well as at Cracow; it is therefore high time that my situation should change, or else the future which still remains to me will not be sufficient to compensate the past.

But it will not change until I have got rid of this man! he follows me like a shade; and I will have no shade, I will have light, the joyous light of life, to cheer up the gloom of my soul! I must get rid of him, and as soon as possible! The arrival of the Marchese will free me from his exactions; but the Marchese does not arrive for four days, and he will come today to exact from me what he calls his part. Shall I agree to his demands, that he may go away? But will he go? Will not his avarice and his audacity increase with every new concession? He thinks me a coward, and he understands how to frighten me; I am certainly not a blood-thirsty monster like him, but I have also courage when it is necessary, and I have it in my own way. I will divide no more,—no, I have not sold the repose of my soul in order to share the price of it with a greater villain than myself!”

The sound of a bell interrupted the doctor's soliloquy, “T is he,” muttered Monti, concealing the chest in a cabinet; but when the bell sounded again, he pulled a rope which was so contrived that he could lower the drawbridge without leaving his retreat. “You are rather late,” cried he to his guest, “I almost supposed you would not come to day.” “You say that I am too late,” replied Assano, “but it appears you did not

expect me, for I have been obliged to ring the bell twice." He then threw his bonnet violently on the table, stretched himself in a chair, and looked attentively about the room. "You supposed, learned sir doctor, that I should not come; but I think that I never had better reasons for visiting you than today." "I am glad that you are arrived at last," said Monti, suppressing his rising anger under an assumed smile of indifference; "the supper is ready, and I only waited for you to begin." "We have plenty of time," replied his visitor; then fixing a piercing look on the physician, he asked, "Have you no news?" "I have," answered Monti; "Her Majesty has succeeded in all her wishes; the proposal was favourably received at Vienna, and the Queen will at last have a daughter-in-law such as she has long desired. The Marchese di Cassano is also expected at Bari; he will take the administration of the duchy, and will prepare everything for the arrival of the Queen, who, as His Excellency writes to me, will certainly come here sooner or later." Assano smiled scornfully and said, "The news which His Excellency has imparted to his worthy friend concerns me very little, neither do I care the least who will govern this duchy; but have you no other news?" "Nothing that can interest

you," replied Monti; "will you sit down to supper? It is late, and you have far to go." "You jest, Messer Leonardo, and I am glad to see you in such good spirits, though it appears to me rather strange in this dismal solitude and concealment, to which the Queen has condemned us, and which does not suit me at all." "If you do not like it," answered the physician, "you may easily dispense with it. The world lies open to you, and the money you have got will insure you everywhere a good reception. But, as I have said, let us sup, for you have made me wait for you later than usual." "You jest," repeated Assano, whose countenance became red with anger, "I tell you that you jest; but you well know, sir doctor, that I am not of a patient disposition. The business first, and then the supper. I ask you once again, have you received nothing more than the news which you have so liberally communicated to me?" Monti answered with an assumed indifference, "Yes, I will not conceal from you that I have received a part of the reward which was promised to me when certain events that you know of should happen. But I am of opinion that you have no business to inquire so eagerly about it." "I have no business to inquire about it!" repeated the old man

with a grim laugh ; “ you well know why I ask for it. I will share it, my dear companion ! Yes, I will share the reward as I have shared the deed.” “ Hearken, friend,” said Monti, “ I think that your demands become almost impudent. Have you not received what was promised to you ? Have you not received three times more ? And therefore I think we may now part. It is not just that the master should equally divide with the servant, and that the tool should be rewarded like the workman.” “ I am your tool, and you are my master !” said Assano with an expression of contempt, “ how can you deceive yourself in such a manner ? Have you then forgotten that you have ever trembled before the strong mind of him who, though supposed by the world to be your servant, was in secret really your master ? What can induce you to refuse a thing which you know to be indispensable ? How can you attempt to conceal the fright which makes your limbs tremble, by high-sounding words, with which you perhaps may succeed in frightening a boy, but not the old Assano ? Are you not aware that you are entirely in my power ? Do you not know that there is no living soul within the distance of two Italian miles to help you against your guest, who, as you

have had ample opportunity to learn, has no particular scruple to take a life, least of all that of a cowardly rascal? I hope that you understand me; therefore I beg of you to have the goodness to bring out the chest you have received today." Monti answered after a moment of hesitation, "If I comply with your desire, will this at last content you?" "We shall see that hereafter," said Assano in a commanding voice, "I say, the chest—directly!" "Monti rose from his seat with suppressed rage, took a silver lamp, lighted it and left the room; but Assano approached the prepared supper, and began carefully to examine the dishes, and particularly the flasks and the cups. He was still engaged in this occupation when the physician returned, bringing a chest, which he put on the table with the lamp. "Here it is," said he, "take your part." Assano turned eagerly to the treasure, and having attentively examined the contents of the chest, said, "All is right; I give you credit for it: even reckonings make long friends. Now let us sup." The physician gave no answer. They both sat down to supper; Assano ate and drank greedily, but his host, who probably was thinking about other things than meat and drink, addressed him in the following words: "You think your-

self that the life we are leading here is insupportable, and I really wonder why you remain at Bari under such constraint, whilst you could enjoy yourself in full liberty in other parts, as I should certainly do if it were in my power.”

“ I have not yet got enough,” replied the old man, continuing to eat. “ You have not yet enough,” cried Monti, “ even after having extorted from me this fine sum of money?” “ As I have told you, Messer Leonardo,” rejoined Assano, “ I am not yet satisfied even with this fine sum of money. It is now about twenty years since you found me at Bari, where I had retired after many adventures, which it is needless for you to know. When you engaged me to enter the service of the Queen, I made conditions not only with you and with her, but also with myself. It may be that the first have been fulfilled, but not the last. You know that many things were done beyond the agreement, and therefore some thousands of zecchini will be necessary before I have settled my own account.”

“ You are indeed very liberal to yourself, but you have forgotten that you are not your own paymaster, and you will therefore be obliged to strike from your account those thousands of zecchini.” “ No, no !” retorted Assano, “ I must

have them. I told you that some things were done beyond the agreement. One of these is the murder of that boy, and it weighs heavily in the balance. Believe me, doctor, this arm has assisted many a one into the grave, even before you directed its strokes, but not a single deed of the many I have done during my life has left such a deep impression upon my mind. You well know that I am not a dreamer, but still I must confess that I often see the closing eyes of that boy; yes, even here," cried he, pushing away his bowl with an expression of horror, "even here they stare on me from the bottom of this cup. I hear his shriek of agony in the monotonous roaring of the waves; and often I start up in the night imagining that he clasps me with his tender stiff arms. This is an action for which I have not yet settled the account with myself, and perhaps I never shall be able to do it. What is once done can never be undone. I can compensate it only with gold; and of whom shall I demand it if not of you?" "I should laugh at such apparitions," replied the doctor, "but I am afraid that if you indulge in such reveries it may have dangerous consequences for us both. This foolish affair with my serving boy Giulio has spread the most unfavourable reports in the neighbourhood. Your neglect



of the Christian rites, about which I already warned you at Cracow, has given weight to all these reports, and even the tribunal of the Inquisition has been informed of them. This time the Queen's patronage has sheltered you from the dreadful power of the holy tribunal; but if you persevere in your unwise behaviour, you may easily attract its animadversion." "You may be right," replied Assano, "but it is rather difficult to change our manners when we are old; and I confess that I do not like this country at all. I have also observed," continued he with irony, "that my presence endangers the safety of your person, and therefore if I were in your place I should certainly have done something in order to be delivered of it." "Say what you wish," cried the physician in great joy, "and if it is not beyond my means you may be sure of having it." "You know my modesty," said Assano, "and it is quite in your power to satisfy my wishes. I would have at least all this chest to myself: give it to me undivided, and then we shall see what may be done." "Indeed!" cried Monti, trembling with rage, "you must be well aware of the horror that your presence inspires in me, when you set such a high price on the riddance from it. But do not set it too high, for there are still other means to

procure it." Assano cast a look of contempt on the pale companion of his crimes, and without giving him any answer rose from his seat, approached the chest, and having opened it, said, shaking his head, "Everything well considered, I think I have been too hasty in fixing the price of my departure; and I will tell you, that even when you comply with this moderate demand, as I have no doubt you will, I must have something more to settle my own account; and I am sure that your kindness will not refuse it to your departing servant." "What is then your demand?" asked Monti, bowing over the table, and quickly pouring something into the goblet of his guest while he was turning his back to the table. The physician had already resumed his former position on the chair, when the old man turning to him said, "I demand what it becomes the strong to demand of the weak. I have spent a long and stormy life, and I will enjoy myself before it ends. I must pass my remaining days in the bustle of mirth, and even my death-bed shall be surrounded by fiddlers and pipers, that their sounds may drown the voices which I often hear in solitude,—yes, the voice of that boy; and it is for his sake that you must make a hole in your own chest." "But will you go then?" said Monti;

“remember that you have here to fear not only the sacred tribunal, but also the temporal authorities. The Marchese di Cassano has great influence at Naples, and if you continue to behave in such a manner as to attract the eyes of the vulgar on things that should be buried in an eternal oblivion, you have had sufficient experience that the great acknowledge no other law than their own will; they recklessly destroy a tool which they no longer want, and I am afraid that even my friendship will be unable to protect you.”

“I understand you, sir doctor,” replied Assano; returning to the table, “and I am not ignorant of what I may expect from your friendship. Therefore I think we had better settle our accounts today, before it will be too late for me; and I confess that I came with this intention.”

“What is the matter with you?” cried Monti, fidgeting on his seat, “your eyes roll wildly, and your countenance is terrible as that of an assassin.”

“Ha, ha!” laughed Assano, “is then the sight of an assassin so strange to you; or do you think that such a one must necessarily assume a smiling countenance with downcast eyes, like some persons that I know? No! I have always despised the mask of the hypocrite, who murders from

behind,—the mask of a poisoner,—your mask, my learned doctor Leonardo Monti!” “What gives you such ideas,” asked the physician, pale from terror; “shall we part in anger, having so long played together a dangerous game?” “The game will be soon over!” cried Assano, “we both have staked all, and it will be decided between ourselves. Fill the bowl, companion of sin, and let us drink to the welfare of him who will remain the winner!” The hand with which Leonardo poured the wine into the cup trembled convulsively, so that the flask struck clattering on the goblet; still he composed himself, and said with an assumed tone of jest, “I give you only a little wine, Assano; you are already much heated, and, if I am not mistaken, even this little is forbidden by your religion.” “Don’t mind it,” retorted his guest, snatching the flask, and filling his goblet to the brim, “the Christian blood I have spilt is sufficient to wash my soul from these few drops of a forbidden liquor.” He quaffed in one draught his goblet, and looked with scornful pity on the physician, who was wiping with an unsteady hand the sweat on his pale brow. “Why do you look about so uneasily?” continued he, “why do you rise from your seat? Will you leave your companion

alone at the parting feast?" "You did not draw up the bridge when you entered," suddenly exclaimed Monti, "I must go and do it: how easily might somebody approach and overhear our conversation." "Don't be afraid of it; nobody will approach a place where sinners are feasting, where murderers divide in darkness the price of blood, and where a Turk pledges the forbidden cup to a Christian villain. You have perhaps a wish to go and accuse the Mussulman to the secret tribunal, that he may receive from your friendship iron gyves instead of this gold, and that he may be burned at the stake. Leave the bridge as it is; it is very indifferent to you whether it is drawn or lowered, for your feet will never pass over it." "What do you intend; monster?" cried Monti, striving against the Mahomedan's grasp. "You don't like to share," said the hoary villain laughing, "and I am not fond of dividing. Do you think I am blind to your intentions? You would have cast me into a dungeon, but I will precipitate you into the grave;—you intended to entangle me in the cobweb of your crafts, but I tear it with the stroke of my knife!" A shriek escaped the lips of Leonardo Monti; he tumbled from Assano's relaxed grasp, and fell on the ground. But whilst the

old assassin looked with a wild triumph on his dying enemy, a horrible laugh resounded from his distorted mouth; it lasted till it passed into the gasp of death. "Now the alliance is loosed!" said Assano to himself, "and blood has severed that which was knit by blood. Thou liest now before me as thou hast imagined that I should lie before thee. Sleep quietly as thou canst; but I will go and fetch the inheritance which thou hast left to me. When tomorrow the Christians shall find thy disgusting corpse, and shall marvel whether thou wert killed by a robber, who forced the bridge which thy cowardice had always closed so carefully, or what other could be the cause of thy death, I shall be far off. I will go, and, as the reward of my deeds, I will enjoy life in the balmy groves of Antekiah<sup>(1)</sup>, where, after a long absence, I shall return adorned with the blood of the Giaours and enriched with their spoils."

He then went into the adjoining room; but he soon returned again. A dreadful change had taken place in his countenance; a deadly paleness covered it; his grey hair was bristling from horror, and his burning eyes were full of blood. "Devil!" exclaimed he, gnashing his teeth, "devil!" howled he like a wounded tiger,

and as if he felt his soul and body seized by a mortal pain, "Christian devil! hast thou outwitted a Mahomedan?" He approached with a reeling pace the corpse of Monti, and tore asunder the garment on his breast; he perceived a little golden flask, seized it, and a shriek of horror escaped from his mouth: "I am undone! I am undone!" He stretched his hand to grasp in his useless rage the dead body of his companion, but fell backwards in a convulsive fit on the ground, close to the man he had murdered. Still he seized a golden cup standing on a table near him, and pressed it to his breast, as if he sought to relieve his bodily pain with the gold for which he had sold his soul. Soon, however, the horrid pains he suffered made him forgetful of all surrounding objects; he lay struggling with the agony of death. The night was stormy, and the roaring of the sea, which struck on his dying ears, increased his ravings. "The bells of the cathedral ring," muttered he in his delirium, "King Alexander is no more! Let him come—Sigismund, whom they already call the First. Hassan has prepared with Peter of Balin a good welcome for him. Wherefore dost thou cut me on the mouth, thou infamous grey-beard? Dost thou suppose thou wilt escape from me? Look,

there is thy head staring on a lance,—they tear it, and cast it into the pond! Look not so accusingly on me and on the tall man who sits on horseback. My arm will destroy him, as it has destroyed thee. Cry against me in the darkness of thy dungeon, Michael Glinski! Curse my ingratitude. Hast thou not thyself been a traitor to thy king and to thy country? I scorn thee, Christian, for I was the scourge of Mahomet which he extended over the nations of the North! Therefore away from me, phantom! thou hast no part in me. Why dost thou approach me, image of a youthful woman, with a diadem on thy head? It was not I; no, it was the man who lies here who prepared the draught for thee. Bow to him; seize him with thy long arms, and deliver him into the hell of the Giaours. There I shall not go! No; I shall rise to the paradise of the Prophet, whose enemies I have been destroying, as is the duty of a true Mussulman. Why dost thou cast on me such a gloomy look, Azrael<sup>(2)</sup>? Behold, these hands are full of blood, of Christian blood; therefore open the golden gate. Thou deniest admittance! “Who art thou?” cried he with a last effort of his vanishing strength, “Who art thou, pale image of a boy, with black wings? Oh, I know thee; thou art the dark



angel<sup>(3)</sup>. Wherefore flies thy companion with the brilliant wings of the swan? Wherefore does he not lead me to the seventh heaven, which is promised to the faithful? Oh, he comes not back! Wherefore graspest thou me with thy cold arm, O black angel? Wherefore pressest thou me to thy wounded breast, covered with frozen blood? Oh, I know thee? Let me loose, let me loose! Paradise is not there where thou draggest me! No; not in this dark abyss. Let me out of thy embrace, thou dark-winged spirit, who bearest the features of yon boy! Woe! woe! I am going down—down into the abyss!”

All was now silent in the room; only the roaring of the billows resounded from without. The faint glimmer of the expiring lamp was still reflected in the golden vessels on the table, when an old woman, in a travelling dress, dishevelled by the storm, leaning on a stick, and with all the signs of fatigue, entered the room which had been the scene of all these horrors. She was amazed at the sight of the dead bodies she found lying on the floor; but when she had closely examined them, a gloomy smile animated her withered features, and she returned with a firm step to draw up the bridge, which she had found lowered.

No one knew what were the occupations of the strange woman during the remainder of the night; but when Giulio arrived at the usual time to perform his service, he found no trace either of the former inhabitant of the villa or of his guest, but only the old woman, who, unacquainted with the language of the country, could give no answer to his questions. The report of this mysterious event soon reached Bari, and the villa was the same day surrounded with a guard. As soon as the new governor the Marchese di Cassano arrived, he was informed of all that had happened in the villa. He immediately repaired to the spot, and after a long private conversation with the stranger, he declared her innocent, and that she was now the owner of the house. This conclusion produced general astonishment, and caused much disappointment to all the idlers, who expected the interesting disclosures of a criminal investigation, and perhaps even a public execution. However, it was soon forgotten; the drawbridge remained always lowered, and the old woman, surrounded by numerous attendants and living in great style, was considered to be a foreign lady of high rank, who had acquired this villa in order to spend the remainder of her days in comfortable retirement.

## CHAPTER XIII.

“ Hark ! to the hurried question of despair,  
‘ Where is my child ? ’ an echo answers, ‘ Where ? ’ ”

BYRON.

BONA of Milan succeeded in her wishes. She destroyed the happiness of her son, and raised on its ruins the edifice of her schemes. Catherine of Austria arrived : her marriage and coronation were celebrated with great pomp ; but the cold, gloomy behaviour of the King, and the mourning dress, which he did not quit even on the day of his wedding, and which he continued to wear all his life, ill accorded with these festivities. The hope which Bona entertained that Sigismund Augustus, now torn from all other ties, would submit to her influence, proved entirely fruitless. The wounds inflicted on his heart rendered him irritable ; he felt that there was no happiness in store for him, and he sought only to forget his grief in the continual bustle of pleasure. Considerations of policy had induced him to marry Catherine of Austria ; and even during the first days of their union he did not conceal from her that it was this reason, and

not the choice of his heart, which had elevated her to the throne of Poland. The bad state of her health and her unprepossessing exterior increased a dislike which the loud and unmeasured complaints of her offended vanity soon changed into a decided aversion, and it ended by her exile to Radom (<sup>1</sup>). The dignity of the throne and the duties of a son compelled the King to conceal from the eyes of the world the ruthless deeds of his mother; but his suppressed anger was the more deeply rooted in his heart, and all Bona's efforts to regain her influence over her son only led to some fresh humiliation. She was obliged to retire to Gomolin, and afterwards to Warsaw. At last, when she became convinced that all her influence was gone, she resolved to leave Poland, and to retire to her own hereditary duchy of Bari, in the kingdom of Naples. Her departure, or rather the carrying away of her hoards, met with great opposition from the senate and the equestrian order; but the King, to whom her presence was most painful, succeeded in removing these obstacles. She left Warsaw on the 1st of February 1556, after having secretly sent away sums of money which were enormous for that time. The King was not present at her departure, but only his sisters. History reports that the Princesses wer

melted to tears in taking farewell of their mother ; but that not the slightest sign of emotion appeared on Bona's countenance, and that she did not leave the smallest token of remembrance to her daughters. The annals of the times have also preserved another characteristic feature of her character. At Oyrzanow, the first place where she slept after she had left Warsaw, she called Peter Boratynski, castellan of Belzk, then one of the royal commissaries, and enjoined him to take good care of the closed and sealed vaults, in which she had left great treasures for the King and his sisters ; adding, that she should hold him answerable for the deposit. Boratynski replied, that such a responsibility could not fall on persons who had received neither the inventory nor the key of those riches ; and the conversation which ensued upon these topics led to many unpleasant allusions as to the manner in which they had been procured. The Queen ordered her carriage to drive on, and the suppositions of Boratynski were fully confirmed ; for when the vaults were opened scarcely any part of the announced riches was found in them.

The journey of the Dowager Queen through the dominions of her son resembled the flight of a criminal. Her train moved onwards with the greatest speed, making very short stoppages, and

only such as were indispensable. They avoided as much as possible everything that could attract the attention of the inhabitants of the country, whose greetings on her passage were not of the most friendly nature. On approaching the frontiers they were all thrown into great anxiety on being informed that about one hundred and fifty nobles on horseback awaited the passage of the Queen; and she had good reasons to fear that their intention was not so much to pay their respects to her as to make an attack on her baggage, and to appropriate to their own use the riches of which she had robbed the country, or, according to the ideas of that time, the nobles themselves. The further they advanced the more alarming were the accounts; and when they arrived in the vicinity of Cracow, the peasants asserted that they had seen troops of cavalry marching to intercept the Queen's train. Whether it was through ignorance that those troops were sent by the Grand General in order to prevent any attack, or whether they gave such reports purposely to frighten Bona, who was hated throughout the country, the Queen and her retinue imagined themselves to be surrounded by enemies who threatened their lives, or at least her treasures. In order to avoid this danger, Bona or-

dered her baggage to pass the frontier by untrod-  
den ways during the night, whilst she herself  
hastened on horseback, accompanied by a few ser-  
vants, to reach Olmutz in Moravia, which she had  
appointed as a place of rendezvous for the rest of  
her train.

It was on one of the most disagreeable days of  
February that the widowed Queen of Poland was  
travelling through Upper Silesia. Rain, mingled  
with snow, fell continually from morning till  
night; the roads were almost impassable, and the  
cavalcade, wet through and through and covered  
with mud, arrived late at a castle situated in the  
middle of a forest, near a small hamlet, composed  
of miserable huts. They inquired in the village  
whether they could find shelter in that castle, and  
to whom it belonged. They were answered, that it  
was the castle of Friedland, belonging to the Duke  
of Ratibor; that its owner never resided there, but  
had lent it to a foreign lady; that she was un-  
doubtedly able to receive them, though it was  
doubtful whether she would do so, as she lived in  
great retirement ever since a great misfortune had  
befallen her. However, having requested per-  
mission to spend the night in the castle, they re-  
ceived a favourable answer, with the observation  
that they must be satisfied with the shelter against

the bad weather and the scanty accommodations which the house could afford, as neither the castle nor its mistress were prepared to receive strangers. It was with great displeasure that Bona learned she was still within the dominions of a prince of the Piastian lineage, of whose hereditary disaffection, as well as of its motives, she was well aware; and she felt great repugnance to enter a house belonging to him. But necessity has no law; she resolved, therefore, to avail herself of this permission, after having strictly enjoined on her retinue the greatest secrecy concerning her person. Neither the appearance of the castle nor the reception she found there was calculated to raise the idea which she had formed of the pleasures of that abode. It is true, that at her approach the drawbridge was instantly lowered over the muddy ditch which surrounded the walls; but she was met only by an old steward, whose sulky countenance clearly showed how unwelcome was her visit to the castle; he conducted the Queen and her retinue by the light of a lantern through a spacious court, which, as well as the surrounding buildings, bore visible marks of decay. All around was still and dark, except a faint light, which apparently shone from a cellar beneath a round building or keep, attached to a remote wing of



the house. She passed through many long corridors into a row of apartments, which were quite empty, or adorned only with such furniture as was evidently not worth carrying away. The only cheering sight were the spacious chimneys blazing with large fires. The effects of stormy weather and bad roads had put the travellers into such a state that it was difficult to discern by their exterior the mistress from her servants, and the sulky steward seemed to care very little either about the rank or the name of his guests. He told them in a few words to make themselves comfortable as well as they could, while he left them to fetch such refreshment as could be found in a castle where the appearance of a stranger was of very rare occurrence. The coarse and scanty provisions, which he placed on a large table of oak, proved that he had not been over modest in his promise. The Queen, occupied with many unpleasant thoughts, which the surrounding objects rendered still more gloomy, resolved to spend the night in an arm-chair near a blazing chimney; whilst her attendants were engaged, by the orders of our old acquaintance lady Falczeska, in drying the wet baggage at the fire of a chimney in the room where the repast was served up. The

steward was still in the room, occupied in removing the remainder of the meal, when they began this task, and he perceived the royal arms of Poland embroidered with silver on the blue velvet stuff of a travelling bag; he however gave no sign of having made this discovery, and his behaviour continued the same as before.

The servants of the Queen had already abandoned themselves to the repose which they so much needed; two of them alone, who stood guard before the door leading to the antechamber of the apartment reserved for their mistress, did not sleep. She could not feel herself at ease within the halls of a Piast. This deserted edifice recalled to her mind the decayed fortunes of a house, whose fall she herself had accomplished with a destructive hand. Many other gloomy recollections mingled with this oppressive thought, and she felt as if the sword of retaliation were suspended over her guilty head. She attempted in vain to cheer her dejected soul by the prospect of the pleasures which the enjoyment of rank and wealth would afford her in the fairy-land of her birth; but greatness and power could alone satisfy her ambitious mind, and these were gone for ever. She had left the throne on which she had sat for thirty-eight years, and she left it as a

fugitive, pursued by the hatred of a nation on whom she had once looked down with contemptuous pride. She was obliged to seek refuge in a lonely castle, the inhabitants of which granted a reluctant hospitality to her who had so long been the mistress of a brilliant court; she was obliged to seek refuge in a place where the sound of her name could raise a host of enemies ready for vengeance. These ideas caused a cold shudder to pass over her limbs, in spite of the blazing fire, close to which her arm-chair was placed, and she longed for the morning, in order to leave as soon as possible this gloomy abode, and to reach Olmutz, where a brilliant reception was prepared for the cousin of the Emperor and the faithful adherent of Austria.

Bona was engaged in these meditations when the door opened, and lady Falczeska, who was waiting in the antechamber, announced an unexpected guest. It was the old steward, who came to say that his mistress, having learnt that among the guests was a lady of high rank, had signified her displeasure at the unceremonious reception they had met with, and had sent him to invite that lady to an apartment more fit for her than these deserted halls. Such a message at so late an hour appeared rather strange to the Queen;

but as she wished to escape the unpleasant impression produced by the surrounding objects, and particularly as she could not refuse such an invitation without betraying her real rank, she resolved on accepting it. She therefore followed the steward in company with the starostine Falczeska, who in passing gave a sign to the halberdiers to follow them, and to awaken the other servants, who were sleeping on bundles of straw. The old man silently conducted the ladies through many corridors and down steps, continually descending till the damp air proved to them that they were under the level of the ground. Bona asked him with great anxiety, "Whither do you lead us, old man? I hope you have no bad intentions. It is known in the village that we entered this castle, and if any evil was to happen to us you may be sure of punishment." "Entertain no fears," answered the steward with great coolness; "you are in the castle of a Silesian duke, where crime never entered unless introduced by a foreign hand. It is the apartment of my mistress to which I am conducting you, and as she has lived there more than a year, you may very well spend a single night in it." "This is a very extraordinary caprice," observed lady Falczeska; "it seems that we are approaching the abode of the dead rather than the

closet of the noble mistress of a castle." "Do you think so?" said the old man, opening a heavy iron door which led into a kind of porch: "Enter," continued he, turning to the Queen; "but as the invitation of my noble mistress only concerns yourself, you will allow your companions to await you here." Bona hesitated for a moment, but as she heard, through a window in the vaulted roof of the subterraneous building, the steps of her armed retainers, and as she could even distinguish their voices, the proximity of her retinue convinced her that she had no danger whatever to fear; she therefore advanced quickly, and found herself in the place which the steward called the apartment of his mistress. A lamp suspended from the high arched ceiling shed its uncertain light on the grey-coloured marble walls of the hexagonal room, which had no ornament except a few Gothic columns. No furniture such as is in common use was seen in this strange abode, but opposite the door stood something like an altar. When after a few minutes the eyes of the Queen became accustomed to the faint illumination of the room, she saw that this altar was placed on a large pedestal, on which lay stretched a dark veiled and motionless figure. This sepulchral appearance produced a most painful impression on the Queen, whilst

her senses were struck with a grave-like dread. The dark figure arose, and accosted her in a voice which was not unknown to her, "Chance has discovered to me the rank of the guest who has taken shelter under my roof, and I have invited you to the abode which my evil destiny and yourself, its instrument, have prepared for the remainder of my days." Bona recognised the speaker, and she was terrified at the idea of finding herself alone with her mortal enemy, whom she had unrelentingly persecuted, and whom she had at last precipitated into an abyss of misery and degradation. She started back, grew pale, trembled, and with a tottering pace involuntarily approached that which she supposed to be an altar; but the Princess of Mazovia quickly followed the Queen, and seizing her by the gown, drew her violently back. The eyes of the Princess glistened with fury, like those of a lioness when she sees the aim of a hunter directed against her little ones, and she exclaimed in a voice trembling with rage, "Away from hence, widow of Sigismund Jagellon! Thy bloody hand shall not touch the shrine of the victim! the foot of triumphant guilt shall not tread upon the place which is daily moistened by the burning tears of the bitterest repentance!" "What signify these words?" said Bona, composing

herself, though with great difficulty ; “ I am not alone ; every hair of my head is watched, and if you dare to commit the slightest violence, you will be called to a heavy account.” “ Account !” repeated Anna ; “ look round you ; you are not in the royal castle, surrounded by obsequious hirelings corrupted by your gold and your wiles. You are in the abode of death, in the presence of your mortal enemy, and the castle which stands above this vault belongs to a Piastian Prince, to a branch of that family which you have destroyed. This monument is the tomb of my daughter—the tomb into which you threw her in the bloom of life and beauty. You have left the wide cemetery which you have peopled with graves ; beware lest you stumble over this tomb in your hasty flight, for it seems that the will of Providence has led you hither.” “ You call me Helena’s assassin,” replied Bona with a hesitating voice ; “ it is your wounded conscience which attempts to throw your own guilt to the charge of another. I do not deny,—nor have I denied in the days of my power and splendour,—that in all my career I kept my eyes stedfastly fixed on the goal, caring little about the objects that were crushed under my feet in my progress ; but she is not among my victims. It is not my hand that has plucked

this rose : it was yours, which attempted to grasp a prize it could not reach." Bent over the monument of her daughter, Anna listened in silence to the words of her enemy, and when she raised her head, the wild glow of her eyes was quenched in tears, and she answered in a softer voice, " You are right; it is I who have killed my only child; her youthful life was crushed under the weight of my iron spirit. You prepared the dart which pierced her, but her own mother directed the weapon which her mortal enemy presented to her. Everywhere," continued she with increased emotion, " everywhere else, Queen of Poland, I stand far above you; everywhere else my accusing voice may be raised against you; here only it must be silent—here I am more guilty than you." She paused awhile; then continuing again, she said, " Fear nothing : divest yourself of the terror which, in spite of your pride, is expressed on your pale countenance. It is not your retinue that protects you; the foot of the hireling is slow, and the arm of death is swift; it is the shadow of Helena speaking from this tomb. Enough of murder and of sin! enough of retaliation, which engenders an endless continuation of crime and murder! How should I avenge myself on you,—you who have deprived your own child



of every joy and happiness? We stand now equals. In an unhallowed alliance we have both sacrificed our dearest objects to the schemes of ambition and vengeance. Our deeds were the same; the same is their reward. We are now both outcasts from our country, and reproach follows us both into our exile." "You are mistaken," answered the Queen; "your case is quite different from mine. You have blindly followed the dictates of your passion, and one moment was sufficient to destroy all your ill-conceived schemes. It was not so with me. I have ever trusted more to my own power than to blind accident; nor have I deceived myself. I left considerately and with dignity a place where I had nothing more to hope; but I have preserved my strength, and it will create to me a new futurity. The Queen returns to the lands of her ancestors, and the reproach which bends a lowly head reaches not to a crowned one." The Princess drew herself up, and said with an expression of dignified solemnity, "Such overbearing words ill suit a place where the grave re-echoes them as if in mockery. You attempt in vain to conceal under the smiles of triumph the pangs of grief which corrode your heart. It is your enemy that observes you, and the eye of hatred is quick and unsparing. I will therefore

tear the bandage of vanity from your bleeding heart, and cast a last look on you, humiliated and plunged into a misery which you have yourself created. Once more I will enjoy the pleasures of vengeance, and then bid an eternal farewell to the world and to its past delusions. Like other mortals, thou art vanquished by destiny, Queen of Poland! and fate has destroyed all thy lofty schemes like the plans of the meanest subject. Thou sayest that thy power has led thee on. Yes, it has led thee to an ignominious end! In spite of thy denial thou knowest it well, and thou tryest in vain to raise thyself above me. Look back! Thou hast entered the world magnificently endowed with charms, talents, and a princely birth: a powerful monarch gave thee his hand; a wide empire lay at thy feet, and fortune lavished on thee all her favours. My retrospect shows me a lofty but ruined parental house: I left it, parting from the corpses of my brethren, who were murdered by thee, and went into banishment. Thou wert blessed with a noble offspring: thy son wears a crown; thy daughters sit on thrones. I brought the misfortunes of my family into the house of Leon Odrowoncz; and, a persecuted fugitive, I gave birth, in a wretched hut, to my only daughter. My bereaved heart clung fondly to my

child, and I ardently sought to transfer to her all the rights of my lineage and all the splendour of my descent. Thou hast repelled the hearts of thy own progeny with unnatural harshness. They approached thee only with trembling fear, and thy royal son beheld in thee the rival of his power, not the mother of his heart. A mysterious decree of fate brought together two mortal enemies; and the dark spirit of vengeance and ambition united our reluctant hands in an unhallowed enterprise. My daughter, on whom I had founded my delusive hopes, perceived the threatening evil, and rejected the distinction I offered to her. Deceived by thy wiles I trampled on her happiness; she turned from the stony heart of a mother to the grave. But thou, the fortunate, the highly elevated amongst mortals, thou hast thrown the brand of discord into thy own house; thou hast thyself raised the storm which made the crown shake upon the head of thy son; and thou hast introduced murder into the dwelling of thy race. Our ways were different, but we have reached the same goal. Banished, dishonoured, and with a bleeding heart, I stand now on the grave of my daughter, from which ever and anon resounds the low voice of accusation. Thou art driven out by thine own son, and the loud curses of millions follow thee. The

house of Duke Conrad lies in ruins ; but thy family is no more, and the last of the Sforzas expiates in a monk's cowl the sins of his ancestors. Here lies the daughter of Leon Odrowonz ; and soon too will the name of the Jagellons sink into oblivion, and the dazzling meteor which long has shone over the East of Europe will set for ever. It is thy work, and I thank thee for having avenged the wrongs of my ancestors and my own. I shall spend the remainder of my life here in this dark abode of death, expiating my guilt by continual prayer and unceasing penance, whilst thou wilt live surrounded by all the enjoyments of rank and wealth. But although human law cannot reach thee, eternal justice will strike thee, and thy memory will be cursed by generations and generations. I have ended, lady Queen ; your retinue awaits you ; quit, therefore, Anna Odrowonz and the castle of a Piast !”

Bona hastened to arrive at Olmutz, where she was received with all the attentions due to her station. Her mind was strongly affected by the unexpected interview she had had with the Princess of Mazovia. The salvos of artillery fired in honour of her arrival rang upon her ears like the awful summons of the last judgement, and she fancied that she heard the curses of an injured

nation in the acclamations of the assembled multitudes.

The prediction of the Princess of Mazovia was fulfilled. The estrangement between Sigismund Augustus and his Queen continued; and all the intrigues of the Court of Vienna, as well as those of the Pope's legate, Cardinal Commendon, succeeded only in preventing the divorce which the King repeatedly solicited of the Papal See. After having spent a long time at Radom in exile, Queen Catherine returned to her brother, the Emperor Maximilian the Second. Sigismund Augustus sought to forget the happiness he had lost and could never recover in dissipation and sensual enjoyment, and died of a broken constitution in the year 1572 at Knyszyn, a hunting-seat on the frontiers of Poland and Lithuania. At his death the Jagellonian dynasty became extinct, after having occupied the throne of Poland during a period of one hundred and eighty-six years; and with that dynasty the golden age of Poland may be said to have passed away. Hippolyte Boratynski retired into the country, and never returned to the world, where he had met with so bitter a disappointment; and as Peter Boratynski died shortly afterwards, he entirely devoted himself to the education of his deceased brother's children. In this way

he spent year after year in the patriarchal simplicity of a country life. The sentiment of having done his duty constantly sustained him during a long and cheerless life, until he departed to join the beloved of his youth in a better world. Valenty Bielawski was more fortunate than his patron: he married his Tosia, and spent a happy life on the farm which he inherited from his father. During the long winter evenings, he often entertained his family circle with the recital of the events he had witnessed in his younger years; and amongst other things, he spoke of Waclaw Siwrak, pointing him out as an instance of guilt that did not escape punishment. The scrivener's assistant and chancery messenger of the Grand Marshal's office was not tried for the affairs of Wisnietz, in which he had been so deeply implicated, but which it was necessary to cover with the veil of mystery. Accusations of roguery and crime were, however, easily found in sufficient number to bring him to the gallows; and we join the honest burghers of Cracow in wishing that such may be the fate of all eavesdroppers and talebearers.

Queen Bona retired to Bari, where she entirely abandoned herself to the passions which had long been absorbed in the schemes of ambition and

the intrigues of avarice. Although she had now neither honours nor dignities to grant, she had treasures to bestow which sufficed to purchase the interested attachment of mercenary paramours. As the Queen was not nice in the choice of her means, she soon got rid of the old lady who had succeeded Doctor Monti in the villa on the sea-shore, and who was no other than the old Ursula, from the Jews' burying-ground near Cracow. Bona did not long enjoy the pleasures by which she was surrounded : she died on the 26th November 1557, poisoned by one of her Italian favourites, whose love she had sought to insure by a considerable legacy.

# NOTES.

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## CHAPTER II.

1. *Panem bene merentium*.—A name given to starosties, or crown estates, granted by the king to the nobility as a reward for their services.

## CHAPTER III.

1. *Silentarius*.—A high dignitary of the Byzantian court, whose duty was to maintain order and silence in the presence of the Emperor.

2. *Cracoviak*.—The national dance of the inhabitants of the environs of Cracow. It has a great resemblance to the *Mazurka*, which is the national dance of the peasants of Mazovia.

*Kaftanik*.—A frock-coat, reaching to the knees, worn by women of the lower class in Poland and Lithuania. It probably originates from the Oriental *caftan*.

3. *Infantas*.—In Poland the royal princesses were so called.

4. *Ostrogog*.—One of the most aristocratical names in Poland.



## CHAPTER IV.

1. *I have purchased it, &c.*—This reply of Zebrzydowski is historical, but it was made on another occasion.

## CHAPTER V.

1. *Aldermen.*—Counsellors of the town, (*scabini*), Polish *lawnik* ‘bencher’, or *radny* ‘counsellor’. See Introduction, page lxi.

## CHAPTER VII.

1. *Zator.*—The castle, town, and principality of Zator are situated in the palatinate of Cracow, near the frontiers of Silesia.

## CHAPTER VIII.

1. *Kontusz* and *zupan.*—The Polish national dress consisted of a long frock-coat, called *zupan*, and of another with slit hanging sleeves worn over it. It was of Oriental origin, and resembles the dress at present used by the Persians, but particularly that worn by the Circassians. See Introduction, page lxx:

2. *Lada.*—The goddess of festivities in the ancient Slavonian mythology.

3. *Royal peace.*—In Poland, as in many other countries, it was forbidden under the heaviest penalties to make use of the sword or any other weapon in the vicinity of the king.

## CHAPTER X.

1. *Hansa*.—Cracow belonged during a long period to the Hanse Towns.

2. *Starosty guards*.—Starosty, or the tribunal of the starost, to whose jurisdiction belonged the police of the town. See Introduction, page lxi.

3. *Neminem captivabimus*, &c.—See Vol. II. chapter 1, note 3.

## CHAPTER XII.

1. *Antekiah*.—The Turkish name for Antioch in Syria.

2. *Azrael*.—The angel of death of the Mahommedans.

3. *Dark angel*.—According to the Alcoran, two angels, a white and a black one, approach a dying man in order to contend for his soul.

## CHAPTER XIII.

1. *Radom*.—A town situated between Cracow and Warsaw, renowned for the famous Confederation of Radom in the beginning of the reign of Stanislaw Poniatowski. It is now the capital of a palatinate, or county.

THE END.