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**Vol. VII.**

CONTAINING

**THE CHILDHOOD OF KING ERIK MENVED.**

**An Historical Romance.**

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH OF

**B. S. INGEMANN.**

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**LONDON:**

**BRUCE AND WYLD, 84, FARRINGDON STREET.**

**1846.**

**THE CHILDHOOD**

**OF**

**KING ERIK MENVED.**

**An Historical Romance.**

**BY B. S. INGEMANN.**

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH,

**BY J. KESSON.**

**LONDON:**

## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

The author has given no preface to this romance; and the translator would be contented to follow his example, had the author already enjoyed an English celebrity, or could the name of his translator of itself suffice to recommend his work to the English public.

But the names of Danish writers are comparatively little known in England, and the literature and language of Denmark have not here received that degree of attention which they so justly merit. While the names of the poets and novelists of France and Germany are familiar to a numerous section of the reading public, they have yet, in a great measure, to become acquainted with the names of Ingemann, Andersen, Baggesen, Heiberg, Oehlenschlaeger, and many other Danes of recent times, whose productions as poets, novel's, and dramatists, would do honour to the literature of any country. It is only in comparatively recent times, however, that Denmark has produced a class of writers of any considerable note in the higher walks of literature. During the last century, with the exception of Holberg's "Niels Klim" and "Peder Paars," there are scarcely any other works, unless of a scientific and historical character, that have acquired anything of a European celebrity. To investigate fully the causes of this dearth of elegant writers would require more than the limits of a preface. They may be sought for partly in the depression of the national spirit, consequent upon the decay of the kingdom of Denmark, which, from the proud position it occupied during the middle ages, as one of the first powers of Europe, has gradually dwindled to a third-rate monarchy; and, partly, in the undue preference awarded by its own scholars and men of letters to the productions of French, German, and English writers. But, whatever the causes, within the last thirty years there has been an evident desire on the part of the Danes to possess a literature of their own, and to take their stand among the *litterati* of Europe in every department of the *belles-lettres*. To accomplish this, it was necessary to arouse the dormant spirit of the people--to remind them of their former greatness--to revive the memories of the ancient heroes of Denmark--to reproduce their old chronicles, sagas, and ballads--and, by dwelling on the glories of the past, to kindle bright hopes of the future.

None have laboured with more success in this vocation than Ingemann. Already known as a poet and a dramatist, he had still to earn a reputation among his countrymen as a novelist. Seizing upon the romantic materials of Denmark's former history, he revived the memory of the great Waldemars, and the proudest periods of the Danish monarchy, investing the heroes who still live in ancient ballad and story with greater charms of interest; and he has succeeded in winning a place in the hearts and estimation of his countrymen as an author and a patriot. He has written wholly for his countrymen, and in the purest spirit of the historical romance. His characters are real characters; his facts are the facts of his country's history, gleaned from her ancient chronicles and popular song, and woven together with the slightest texture of fiction, sufficient only to redeem his narrative from the character of a dry chronicle.

In this respect his romances must suffer when compared with those of Sir Walter Scott, where history is made subordinate to fiction, and poetic licence usurps the place of historical truth; but they possess this advantage--that they are truer transcripts of the past, and present us with the men, manners, and institutions of by-gone times, with a fidelity that enhances our interest in the history, and with fiction enough to make the reading of the history attractive.

In present romance Ingemann introduces us to an interesting period in the history of Denmark--the last year of the reign of Erik Glipping, and the commencement of the reign of his son and successor, Erik Menved. He gives us a portraiture of the state of society at the time--glimpses of old laws and old customs--snatches of ancient fable--and places men before us as they lived and acted towards the close of the thirteenth century.

The translator has endeavoured, in the purity of faithfulness, to present the reader with both the letter and the spirit of his original. In the course of his narrative the author alludes to matters familiar enough, no doubt, to his own countrymen, but with which the English reader can scarcely be expected to be acquainted. In many of these cases the translator has subjoined a note explanatory of a particular passage, which, in a work of this description, might otherwise be regarded as an editorial impertinence. For the adoption of occasional Scottish words and phrases, in translating the various fragments of old Danish ballads scattered throughout the

narrative, the translator can only plead the example of Sir Walter Scott, Jamieson, and others, who have followed this course in rendering several of the Kæmpeviser. Indeed, the close similarity of language and phraseology in many of the old Scottish and Danish ballads, furnishes an irresistible temptation to this mode of translation.

*London, November, 1846.*

## THE CHILDHOOD OF ERIK MENVED.

### PART I.

One evening in the month of May, 1285, a crowd of seamen and porpoise-hunters was assembled on the quay of Gremermarsh, below Hindsgavl's meadows, near Middelfert. They regarded, with strained attention, a large skiff which had left Snoghoj, and was struggling against wind and tide to approach the quay, where the landing was less dangerous than in the bad haven of the town. A storm, unusual at this mild period of the year, stirred up the unquiet waters of the Little Belt. The more experienced ferrymen shook their heads, and thought it was most advisable that the skiff should seek shelter under Fanoe or the Jutland Weald.

"Nonsense, fellows!" said a deep, gruff voice; "here they can and shall land. They get on bravely, and must have a gallant steersman on board. But why stand you here prating? Set light to the brand on the quay-head, that they may keep it in sight; and lay out the porpoise-boats, that we may fish them up, should they be capsized."

The man who gave these orders was foreman of the ferrymen and porpoise-hunters, old Henner Friser, or Henner Hjulmand, as he was sometimes called. He had hitherto been quietly seated on a large stone, observing the vessel's motions with a keen look; but now he rose like a king among his subjects, and the submissiveness with which they heard, as well as the activity with which they obeyed him, sufficiently showed the respect in which he was held among these sturdy, daring seamen. He was uncommonly tall and muscular, and, notwithstanding that he bordered upon seventy years, appeared to possess sufficient vigour to enable him to attain the age of fourscore. He boasted of being a brother's son of the renowned Frisian, Swain Starke, who, in the time of Waldemar the Victor, gained a great name among his countrymen.

For three and thirty years, Henner Friser had resided in Middelfert, or Melfert, as it is commonly called, where he had set on foot the fishing or hunting of porpoises, and, by his ability, had obtained presidency in the guild of these daring fishers, who, at the same time, attended to the ferrying over of passengers. He was skilled in the art of boat-building, and, in his youth, had been a wheel-maker, whence his by-name of Hjulmand (wheelman), although he no longer followed that occupation. That he had taken an active part in the civil wars under Erik Ploughpenny and King Abel was generally believed, and contributed much to his importance among the seamen, although he always expressed himself cautiously on the subject. He appeared to have forsaken the marshy shores of Friesland for a reason which he was proud of, and yet did not find it prudent to talk about; but that it was for some bold and daring act was surmised by everybody.

In his spacious dwelling near the ship-quay of Middelfert, the fraternity of porpoise-hunters had a place of deposit for their large captures between Martinmas and Candlemas. There met the new guild of King Erik; and there had Henner Friser established, likewise, a kind of inn for travellers, of which he had sole and sovereign control. Here, when the porpoise-hunters held their guildmotes, they often regarded with awe the old warrior's armour, which consisted of a kind of long javelin, a Danish battle-axe, a steel bow, with a rusty arrow, together with a light

linen harness. In his everyday dress, old Henner was not distinguished from the other ferrymen and porpoise-hunters. Like them, he wore a short jerkin of blue wadmél, or of dark canvass in summer; a pair of large wading boots, which came high over the knees; and over his shaggy gray locks he wore, both summer and winter, a large seal-skin cap. His long wrinkled visage was expressive of energy and harshness of manner; and his keen look evinced a determination and a feeling of superiority, which operated strongly on all his subjects, whose esteem and attachment to him was, at the same time, blended with what was peculiar to these people--an unusual dread of strife. This was, perhaps, chiefly owing to his extraordinary strength, of which, even in advanced years, he had given astonishing proofs; and he could even now, without exertion, compel the strongest of the porpoise-hunters to bend on their knees, merely by pressing his hands upon their shoulders.

A word from this man was sufficient to set all the idle spectators in motion. A light soon blazed on the large stone at the pier's end, and thirty hardy fishermen were at work, with ropes and poles, to launch a large boat, for the purpose of rendering assistance to those in distress. As soon as Henner Friser saw that his orders were punctually executed, he again seated himself quietly, and with an air of indifference, upon his stone.

"It must be another cargo of nobles for the Danish court on the day after to-morrow," he muttered. "Should Duke Waldemar be among them, it were, perhaps, better for kingdom and country, that we let them go to the bottom, neck and crop."

"Why so, neighbour Henner?" inquired a burgher who stood by his side, and whose leather apron, leather cap, and smutty face, proclaimed him a smith. "The young duke is a discreet and gracious nobleman: he once bought a dagger of me, and paid me twice as much for it as I asked. Every time he comes this way, you earn more dollars than I earn shillings in a month; and then he talks so civilly to folks, that it is a pleasure to hear him."

"Gold and silver and fair words he does not spare; that we allow," growled the old man; "and if, by so doing, he could throw dust in the eyes of every Dane, in twelvemonths and a day he might, perhaps, be King of Denmark."

"Marry, then! think you that his thoughts run so high?" inquired the armourer, hastily, scratching his ear; "there may be something in it: who knows how it may turn out? The old king, Waldemar the Victor, was certainly his great-grandfather; the young lord is just twenty years old: he may come to be chosen king one day. But there is time enough for that yet," he added; and, after a little reflection: "our king is still a young man: according to my reckoning, he cannot be more than six and thirty now; and his young son, who succeeds him--let me see--he can be scarcely eleven yet. Nay, nay, it is not to be thought of."

"What cares the grandson of King Abel about that, think you?" replied the old man, in a tone of bitterness. "The young braggart does not want daring. He had scarcely cut his colt's-teeth, when he set himself in opposition to the king, and would submit himself neither to rod nor snaffle; and now it is said for certain, that he will claim the whole kingdom; and, if he does not receive from the court of Denmark what he aims at, that he will instantly bring down the Swedes upon our heads. We have already to thank him for the present outbreak with the Norwegians. Nay, nay--he is a fellow we must look after, neighbour Troels. We knew his grandfather; and the race of a fratricide no Dane shall trust again."

The old man was silent, and became absorbed in deep thought.

"You may well say that, neighbour Henner," resumed the armourer; "we have experienced disasters enough, and may well cross ourselves when we think on what has happened in the country since old King Waldemar Seier closed his eyes. His sons, all three, were kings,<sup>[1]</sup> as was said and predicted to him; but God shield us from such kings and from such ends! In troth, it is awful to think of: I have not yet reached my threescore, and the present king is the fifth I can remember; and three of these, one after the other, were miserably murdered."

"Murdered?" repeated Henner Friser. "Nay, neighbour--that was the case with two only of Waldemar's sons, if it be true, as people say, about our king's father and the condemned priest in the New Cloister. God forgive me, and all good Christians, their sins! but priests should be pious men of God; and, when they can forgive kings and princes with God's own holy body, then the worst murder of a layman by sword or dagger should be reckoned next to nothing. Nay, two only were murdered, neighbour," he continued, after a thoughtful pause, and rising up; "nobody shall say that King Abel was murdered: he fell by his own conduct, and shamefully enough for himself; but still in open warfare with true and valiant subjects, who would not suffer themselves to be flayed by the coward who had murdered his brother, and deprived us of our lawful king."

The old man's voice waxed loud, and he spoke with great vehemence. He appeared to observe a tendency to the same in his neighbour's manner, and remarked, in a subdued tone, "We must not talk too loud about this matter, neighbour. These are unquiet times, and traitors are abroad. Should Duke Waldemar and the great nobles come to rule, we shall have to listen to a new tale, which may be worse than the first." Henner was again silent, and resumed his seat, in deep thought.

"I must say, nevertheless, neighbour Henner," began the armourer anew, "that there is

nothing so bad, that it may not be good for something. If the nobles had not courage to lay restraints on King Erik Christopherson, mischief would be the result, for both gentle and simple. It were sin to say our king is not severe enough, as he imposes penalties on both burgher and peasant; but he cares for neither law nor justice; and was compelled, last year, to a compact respecting the rights and liberties of the kingdom. Much has not come of that yet: and had not Marsk Andersen denounced him, and put him in terror of his life, at the last Thing<sup>[2]</sup> at Viborg, none of us at present could have said that his wife or daughter was safe from him."

"That is true, neighbour," replied old Henner, waking up as if from a dream, and appearing only to hear the latter sentence. "A vile story was that, regarding Stig Andersen's wife; and I will say that, had I been in the marsk's<sup>[3]</sup> stead, I would, perhaps, have done something more than merely threaten. And yet--the Lord preserve our king and his son, say I, for the kingdom and country's sake! The father is good for nothing: others may call him a villain; yet God preserve the rotten stem, for the sake of the fresh shoot! The little Erik has Waldemar Seier's eagle eyes; and, should the Lord keep his hand over him, it may yet be worth an honest man's while to live in Denmark. It is a fortunate thing for him, and for the kingdom, that he has the brave Drost<sup>[4]</sup> Hessel for his instructor in the use of arms. Without Peter Hessel, old John Little, and David Thorstenson, it would be a lamentable case for all of us."

"If the handsome young drost stand as well with the queen as is reported," observed the smith, smiling, "no wonder he takes so kindly to the young prince. He may be a wise and virtuous man; but little human frailties he must possess, as others do; and, when King Glip-eye has eyes for every other woman but the queen only, she cannot be greatly blamed for being so willing to ride a-hunting with the young drost."

"So you, too, believe the damnable tittle-tattle!" cried the old man, with vehemence and indignation. "I have seen Queen Agnes once, and Drost Peter twice only: that was in the guild of our murdered King Erik; and, if it be true, as I believe, that every woman's child bears its character in its open eyes--and I have so read the characters of both high and low, for these seventy years past--our queen, on this point, is as pure, in God's sight, as is the sun; and so is Drost Peter Hessel--a man who, in all respects, would sooner lose his life than forget the oath he openly swore in our guild, or in any way betray his country or the royal house. But so it is: when the head is good for nothing, the whole body soon bears witness to it; and King Erik Christopherson does not blink with his small buck-eyes for nothing."

"I believe, neighbour Henner, you can read more in an eye than many a priest can in his big book; and people with reason hold you to understand somewhat more than your paternoster. You have given a good reason, too," continued the smith, smiling, "why you lock up your pretty little Aasé, every time King Glip-eye comes over the Belt. I saw very well how she stood in the pantry yesterday, while the king mounted his horse outside, before you."

"Ay, then, saw you that, my good Troels?" replied the old warrior, somewhat ruffled. "It was a piece of foolery; and I shall tell you how it happened. He saw her once, and paid her a little more attention than I exactly care for. She is my granddaughter, and the apple of my eye, as you know. That I lock the cage when the cat is in the room, follows of course; otherwise I should have to take the biggest tom-cat by the neck, and throw him out of the window, if he proved saucy. It comes to this, that my little Aasé, as you may, perhaps, have observed, is a Sunday's bairn:<sup>[5]</sup> that may easily be seen in her complexion. She is somewhat palefaced; and, however blithe and sprightly she may be, she is, nevertheless, now and then troubled with a kind of dreaming fit. But that will wear off as she gets older. Her mother was so troubled before her; and I believe it runs in the family, as I am not entirely free from it myself. I do not give much heed to such dreaming now; but she has never yet said anything, while in this state, that has not proved in a manner true; though she can discern nothing, by night or day, more than others may do when they are in their senses."

"My God! is it not quite right with your little Aasé?" asked the smith, sympathisingly, and pointing with his finger to his forehead.

"She is too sagacious for her years," answered the old man; "and that will not do for this world. But when once she is married, and has other matters to think of, this will pass over; and in other respects she has a good sound constitution. But this is what I was about to tell you. Last night, she rose in her sleep, and came to me: she was frightened, and said that the king had returned from hunting, with a death's head under his hat, and wanted to come in to her. I awoke her, and then she knew nothing of the dream. She laughed, and skipped carelessly to bed. I was much inclined to frighten her about what she had told me; but, yet I did not want the king to see her yesterday, when he crossed my threshold to change his garments; and so I locked her up, as if by mistake."

"This only helps you a little way, my good, careful neighbour," observed the smith, with a sly laugh. "A good hen can lay an egg among nettles; where there is a will there is a way. The king saw her very well: when he rode off, your grand-daughter, from curiosity, peeped out between the bars of your pantry, just as the king's horse made a spring on one side. I saw, by the blink of his eye, that he had perceived her; and twice he looked behind him towards the little window, after she had withdrawn her charming little face."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" growled the old man. "It shall not happen again, I warrant you. You must not talk about this matter, neighbour. It is nothing in itself, but would soon give rise to gossip. I shall be quiet, for the child's sake. So, now let the matter drop."

"But what does the king's chamberlain still do in the village?" asked the smith.

"Chamberlain Rané!" exclaimed Henner, starting: "did he not follow the king yesterday?"

"He did, certainly; but, early this morning, I saw him, and two men-at-arms of the king's, go by your house. They stopped under the end window, and whispered together, and, as we came out, I saw their horses at your back gate."

"So, indeed!" muttered the old man. He arose hastily, his eyes flashing fire, and observed, "You might as well have told me this before, neighbour."

"I thought they might have business with you, my good Henner. You are not wont to be communicative, and one gets sick of asking questions."

Old Henner cast a sharp look once more over the raging Belt. "The skiff is saved," he said, in a subdued tone, which betrayed violently suppressed emotions. "They have caught the warp. Come, neighbour, there is no time to lose here any longer, when I have such guests at home."

With long, hurried steps, the vigorous old man strode away in the direction of his house, which was situated in that part of Middelfert which bordered on the quay, and about three quarters of a mile from the quay of Gremermarsh. The sturdy armourer, though ten years his junior, could scarcely keep pace with him. Neither of them spoke, until they came to a by-path, leading across a waste field towards Henner Friser's premises. Here he stopped, and looked carefully before him, in the direction of the gable window of his house, which, in the deepening twilight, he could just perceive. Large clouds were continually driven by the storm before the moon, which, at this instant, shone on the house gable.

"Ha! no light?" he exclaimed: "this will not do." He redoubled his steps, but suddenly stopped again, exclaiming, "do you not hear the tramp of horses, neighbour, on the road to Hegness Wood?"

"Ay, certainly," was the reply; "who can it be? The people are in a hurry. Can the king's bailiff at Hegness receive guests from Melfert so late?"

"Go to my house, neighbour; see if my Aasé is at home, and taking care of the guild brethren. If she be not at home, and I do not return, tell them which way I am gone. I am merely a little curious."

With these words, he sprang in an opposite direction towards the high road, and, from thence, over two ditches and fences, into a by-road leading from Middelfert to Hegness Wood, which the riders he had heard in the neighbourhood of the town must necessarily turn down, if they attended to their safety. Without himself being entirely conscious of it, he had drawn out the large knife used in pursuit of the porpoise, which he always carried in his right boot. With this knife in his hand, he stood still a moment, in a ditch, on one side of the narrow road, which he could half reach across with his long arm. He could hear the gallop of horses, continually drawing nearer, and could now distinctly recognise the clattering hoofs of three.

"Now, give the horses breath for a gallant ride to the castle!" cried a man's piping voice: "we are safe now, and here the road is good. Then for a bold rush to the fortress, before the old Satan can have returned from the quay."

"Death and hell!" muttered the old man; "that was long Chamberlain Rané's cracked pipe."

"You know the sign and password?" continued the same voice: "in the king's name, and three blows with your halberds on the door. If any one oppose us, cut him down: I take the consequences."

The listener thought he heard a wailing sound, as if from a half-suffocated female voice, which was lost in the howling of the storm; and his keen eye recognised, by the glimmer of the moon, the white dress of a woman fluttering over the saddle, before the middle rider. They now advanced at a gallop. At one bound the old man stood in the middle of the way.

"Hold!" he cried, with a terrible voice, as the horsemen came up. The long hunting-knife glittered in his right hand, while, with the left, he seized the reins of the middle horse. The animal wheeled and snorted; and a blow from a sword struck the old warrior on the left arm; but, with a convulsive grasp, he held firm the bridle, and groped in the dark with the knife, for fear of injuring the female form that hung, apparently in a swoon, on the horseman's left arm.

"Forward, in the devil's name! cut him down!" again cried the squeaking voice from behind.

The old man felt a wound in the shoulder, and, at the same moment, received a violent blow from the horse's fore leg. The bridle dropped from his hands; he fell to the ground; and the horse sprang over him. With desperate strength, he half raised himself, and flung his knife, with

whizzing rapidly, after the nearest horseman. He heard the piercing shriek of a man, and, at a little distance, the indistinct voice of his dear Aasé, crying, "Help, grandfather! help!" till it was lost in the storm, and in the clatter of the horses' hoofs. Faint with loss of blood, the old man fell back unconscious. Twenty paces from him, on the dark road, arose the groans of a dying man; and a frightened horse, with an empty saddle, bounded away across the fields.

For some time, Henner Friser lay insensible on the road. When he again became conscious, he heard several voices around him. He opened his eyes, and found himself encircled by his hardy friends, the young porpoise-hunters. They stood with lights and cudgels in their hands, together with his neighbour the armourer, and some burghers from the town, who came to his assistance, with perplexed and sympathising exclamations.

Seated on a tall, iron gray stallion, in the middle of the road, was a young knight, in a scarlet mantle, fringed with sable, and with a white feather in his hat. By the knight's side, holding, in one hand a torch, and, with the other, a norback<sup>[6]</sup> by the bridle, stood a little, swarthy squire. The storm was now lulled, and the torch burned clear in the still air, illuminating the anxious, noisy group.

"Look here, one of you. What is the matter? Are there rievvers in the district? Has Niels Breakpeace come over?"

"Rievvers, truly, my noble knight," answered old Henner, raising himself, with the help of the young fishermen, who, in all haste, had already bound up his arm and shoulder, and now withheld their clamour from respect to their senior and the distinguished stranger. "The cowardly pack!" continued Henner; "they have forcibly carried off my grandchild, my little Assé, my only joy and comfort. Had I not been afraid of killing the innocent child, all the three scoundrels would have been grovelling, with their faces in the dust, where I now lie. If you would know to what rieving band they belong, sir knight, you have only to ride some twenty paces forward, to find one of them with my hunting-knife in his back-ribs. I wish only, for the crown and country's sake, it may turn out to be Niels Breakpeace, and no more distinguished scoundrel." He could scarcely speak for passion.

"An abduction?" inquired the knight, "and with force and violence? rievvers, too?"

"Panderers, traffickers in souls, devils damned!" exclaimed the old man; "but if you are a true Danish knight, help me to save my poor innocent child. She has been carried to the hell-viper on the Ness, yonder, to be polluted."

"To Hegness?" inquired the knight, turning pale; and the torchlight fell on his youthful, handsome countenance.

"Whom see I? Drost Peter Hessel?" broke forth the old man, suddenly, glad to meet him; "is it you, indeed? Now praised be St. Christian and the Holy Erik, that they have sent you to me, in my need and trouble, for now we shall soon deliver the lamb from the den of wolves, even should King Glip-eye be in the midst of them!"

"Think what you say, old man," interposed the knight, sternly: "do not mix up the king in this vile business. If there has been any scoundrel's work here, I shall inquire into it in the king's name, and do you justice. If your wounds will permit you, seat yourself on my squire's horse, and follow me to the fortress. I shall prove to you and these good countrymen, that the king is not a protector of cowards and robbers. But where is the man you have slain? He deserves his fate, whoever he is."

"Here! here!" cried the young fishermen, who had already discovered the body, and were dragging it along; "here we have the fellow, as stiff as a speared sea-hog. This is a capital weapon!"

The knight observed the corpse attentively, and appeared to be seized with painful surprise. He had been a tall, broad-shouldered fellow, with bristly hair and beard; he wore a scarlet doublet; his morion, which had fallen from his head, and which was now exhibited by one of the fishermen, had no feather, but was marked with the two royal lions.

"This is a coward and a riever, who has stolen the helm and doublet of one of the royal guard," said the knight, sternly. "Pull off his doublet, countrymen! Let him no longer wear our king's colours! Drag him to a dung-pit, and there hide his infamy, till doomsday! And now let us off to Hegness."

Old Henner no longer felt the smart of his wounds; he was already in advance, on the little pony, which could scarcely bear him, but yet got on tolerably well with his burden, the heavy feet of his rider almost touching the ground.

"Bravo! my little norback!" cried the bold squire, who in a few bounds had overtaken Henner and his master; "if you can run with such a karl, you deserve a double fodder."

By the knight's command, some of the fishermen had already dragged the slain robber to a height by the wayside, where stood a gallows; whilst the others, at a little distance, followed the knight and their wounded chief.



"How far have we to the castle?" inquired the knight; "can you hold out the journey, my brave old man?"

"For my child, I could ride now to the world's end," answered Henner: "had the losel who gave me the blow not been a blundering lout, without pith or metal, he might have laid it on to some purpose; a pair of vile scratches he has given me: he shall not brag that it was he who struck Henner Friser to the ground; it was his brave Jutland stallion that kicked me below the short-ribs. Now that the pain is gone, I can run better than this little fellow. Thanks for the loan, my son," he said to the squire, as he leaped off the pony. "We have not a quarter of a mile to the castle, and I may almost as well walk as sit upon the foal."

"You shall not find fault with my norback because he is small," answered the young squire, offended: "he can vie with a roebuck when occasion serves, but he is certainly not an elephant to carry a tower."

"Now, now, are you angry, my son? If you can ride so fleetly, let me see you reach the rieviers' nest before we others, and get the gates open for us. 'In the king's name!' was the rascals' password, and three knocks upon the door was the sign. The road goes right through the wood."

Without saying a word, the >>>bold<<<< squire handed the torch to Henner, and rode back to the fishermen, who followed them. In an instant he returned, with the slain robber's scarlet doublet and morion on.

"Permit me so, to ride forward and prepare your way, sir drost," said the youth, and whispered a few words in his master's ear.

"Yes, yes!" answered the knight; "it cannot be a mile off. But be careful, Skirmen: we keep the torches. You cannot miss the road, for yonder we can see the old castle turrets."

The moon again appeared from behind the clouds, throwing its light over a huge, dull, red tower, with embattled walls, which arose high over the wood on the promontory of the bay of Middelfert.

The squire was already mounted: he hastily spurred his pony, and was out of sight in a moment.

"A nimble youth!" exclaimed the old man; "he has a falcon's eye, and the limbs of a hart. He will make a doughty knight one day. Do I guess right that he is from Alsing or Aeroe?"

"My trusty Claus Skirmen is from Femren," answered the knight; "his father was a brave man for his king and country: for that, he was exiled by King Abel, and died in banishment. His grandfather followed King Erik Waldemarson to his death, and proved himself a valiant man to the last. His body was found by the king's side, among the slain."

"Has the youth long borne your shield, noble knight?"

"This is only his second year; but the silver spurs are scarcely cold upon his heels. He is not much more than fifteen yet, and was out last year to capture Niels Breakpeace."

"Alas, fifteen years!" muttered the old man, with a suppressed sigh; "that was my poor Aasé's age yesterday. Ride on, sir knight! I shall yet succeed." And he ran on with rapid strides.

Drost Peter set spurs to his horse, but immediately stopped again. The wood was dark, and, as the torch lit up the old man's face, the knight saw, with concern, that the grayhaired warrior was pale. The bandages had become loose by his exertions, and the blood was flowing fast from his left arm and shoulder. The young knight sprang from his horse. "Let me tighten the bandages," he cried, with the air of a skilful leech; "your wounds are not so slight as you think. Seat yourself on my horse: I have young limbs, and no fresh wound."

"Nay, good sir! For St. Christian's and all saints' sake, let us not delay for such trifles!" cried the hardy old man, impatiently, whilst the knight hastily tied up the loosened bandages; "this will do very well for a poor devil like me! Thanks! I say; but pray hasten on, and redeem your promise. Except the king himself, and his panderers, there is no man more powerful than Drost Peter. Never mind me! Hurry on, noble sir!"

Drost Peter did not consider a moment longer. He vaulted again into his saddle, set spurs to his horse, and rode furiously towards the castle; while old Henner, with long and rapid strides, followed after.

At the strongly-fortified castle of Hegness all was dark and silent, but around the promontory on which it stood still raged the waters of the Sound. A flock of cormorants flew, screaming, round the lofty tower, which, on the land-side, was bright in the moonshine, while it cast its long dark shadow over the rampart, towards the Sound. The drawbridge was down; but the great walled gate was locked. On both sides of a rampart of earth, sixty feet high, the broad moat was filled with muddy water. From one of the upper apartments in the principal wing of the castle a light shone into the court-yard, and, before the lofty staircase, two sentinels, with lances, walked continually to and fro. At the opposite side of the castle, in the backcourt, six horsemen were

stationed, with two saddled horses, before a little barred door of the tower. Here the castle was provided with a private outlet, and a narrow drawbridge, now raised, concealed by a thicket of bushes. From a room in the tower, which jutted over the back-court, and had a small window into the fore-court, shone a single light. In a corner of this room a female figure knelt upon the stone floor, with a rosary in her hands, and apparently engaged in prayer. Long dark brown braided tresses fell over her nut-brown neck and shoulders; she wore a dark blue knitted jacket, a linen petticoat of the same colour, with many plaits, and a light blue apron. A cloak, composed of white knitted thread, lay at her side, as if it had fallen from her shoulders. Her back was turned towards the door, and she did not appear to observe that it was gently opened. A tall, broad-shouldered man, closely wrapped in a travelling cloak, stepped softly in, and looked anxiously and carefully around him. He turned towards the door, which stood ajar, and, at his beck, a face withdrew, which might have been taken for that of a crafty old woman, but for the incipient reddish beard, and the bright steel cap, that denoted it to be a young soldier's. The door was then softly closed. The tall, disguised figure stood in the middle of the apartment, and regarded the kneeling girl. Her head was bowed towards the rosary in her small folded hands, upon her knees; and she was so deeply absorbed in prayer and supplication, that her outward senses took no notice of what surrounded them.

At this sight, the disguised person was obviously uneasy. He cleared his throat several times, as if he would speak, or give intimation of his presence; but she continued in the same motionless position. He now made a hasty motion with his hand to his forehead, as if he would drive away some unpleasant, distressing thought. The hat fell from his head, and a strongly-marked countenance was displayed, expressive of severity and supreme haughtiness, which appeared in singular contradiction to the soft, sensual smile that played round his mouth, and his aimless, uneasy glances, which seemed incapable of resting upon any object for an instant. His projecting forehead, furrowed by violent passions, was half concealed by his thin, flaxen hair, which descended on both sides to his shoulders. According to the knightly fashion of the times, he wore a short beard on his upper lip and projecting chin; and was evidently in the prime of life, bordering upon forty. This singular want of character--the contradictory expressions of severity and mildness, of strength and weakness, of pride and meanness, of violent passion and crafty moderation--deprived his countenance of that dignity and loftiness which nature seemed to have intended it originally to possess; but that which most disfigured him was the uncertain glance of his small gray eyes, and a constant leer, and motion of the eyelids, which at once inspired distrust and fear.

He now stood, as if debating with himself whether he should remain or go, when he retreated a few steps, as the kneeling girl suddenly rose and turned round. He saw not the somewhat pale, but clear, lively countenance of the peasant girl, with the most roguish pair of eyes, who had peeped, in curiosity, through the bars of Henner Friser's pantry; but a frightened, weeping child, who entreated his pity and forbearance.

Assé, Henner's daughter, as she was called, after her grandfather, so celebrated by every traveller for her beauty, was wonderfully changed; yet was she, in a manner, fairer than ever. The cheerful little face of the fisher-maiden had the dignity and nobility of a princess's; but now she was pale as a dying person. Her lively, often roguishly-playful eyes, were closed; but there was an expression in her features as if she could penetrate entire nature with a glance, and stood on a far-off, mysterious world. She advanced with a slow and solemn step, and, in language that otherwise was foreign to her simple nature, and with a voice like that of a warning prophetess, while she raised her forefinger in admonition, she burst forth:

"Unhappy king! Thou goest in the way of thy doom. I have prayed for thy soul to our Lord and Judge, and he bade me warn thee. A sword hangs by a hair over thy head; repent, repent, ere it fall upon thee!"

"Ha! a maniac!" exclaimed the tall personage, turning pale. "Rané! Satan! where art thou? whom hast thou brought me?"

He made a hasty movement towards the door, but recovered himself suddenly, and burst into laughter.

"Ha! thou crafty, cunning child! Hast thou been in the priests' school? And is it so thou wilt make a jest of me?" he said, mildly threatening, and advancing towards her. "Thou knewest, then, I was here, and couldst allow it so saintly and devoutly. No more pious foolery, child: it does not sit well upon thee;--but now we understand one another."

He put out his hand, as if he would pat her under the chin; but she drew back a step, and, with a powerful, almost convulsive, expression of contempt and disgust, said:

"Approach me not, or thou art dead!" and she raised her hand menacingly. The blood returned to her cheeks: it seemed as if, with emotion, she would open her long dark eye-lashes, and yet could not succeed. "How thine eyes flash!" she cried; "how enraged thou art, grandfather! Ah, how thine eyes sparkle! and thy fingers--and thou bleedest, thou bleedest!"

"Nonsense, child! there is no one here who flashes and bleeds. Art thou here, prepared with these juggling grimaces? or, art thou really asleep? If so, I will try whether one can awaken thee or not!"

With these words, the tall personage again moved, as if he would approach her, but now fell anxiously back, while she directed a pair of rigid, extended eyes, without life or animation, towards him.

"I know it well," she whispered, mysteriously; "I am in the house in the wood. The mightiest man in the land stands before me. He will hear his fate. Listen, then, my lord! You are erring and unfortunate; you are sold and betrayed. If you would save soul and body, hide yourself! fly! abandon the road to your doom!"

"Are you possessed, girl?" exclaimed the tall personage, stamping his foot, and, at the same time, looking anxiously around him; "am I among traitors here? Rané! Satan! where art thou?"

"Beware! beware of him!" continued the girl, at the same time whispering, mysteriously: "call not upon him! The Evil One is near at hand, when one thinks of him!"

"Will she drive me mad?" muttered the disguised person, as he looked, with the most painful disquietude, now at the door, now at the strange maiden. "Ha! fool that I am, to suffer myself to be deceived by the artful cheat!" he at length exclaimed aloud, and again laughed to himself, while he cast his cloak aside, and stood before her, in a magnificent knightly dress. "Confess now, little Assé, you wanted to have me somewhat at an advantage--would see whether you could make King Erik Christopherson afraid. But it will not avail you: I know my people, and you, too, with your pretty black, bewitching eyes. You dreamt that the king visited you, did you not? and that you lived like a queen, in one of his castles? And that will come to pass, notwithstanding. It depends only on yourself. But, tongue within your teeth, little Assé: not a whisper that the king visited you here, alone. That is a secret no one must know."

The lofty expression on the girl's countenance suddenly disappeared. It seemed as if she had now, for the first time, awoke from a dream that had changed her entire being: she looked around her bewildered, and suddenly sprang towards the door; but, recovering herself again, she took courage, and, putting her little hands upon her sides, placed herself, proudly, opposite the strange nobleman. He seemed gladly surprised at the transformation of the prophetess into the well-known pretty little fisher-girl, with the lively, playful eyes, and open-hearted boldness, no longer excited and fearful: the sleepwalker's sternness and earnestness of manner was lost in a frank and natural anger, which made her even more lovely.

"Who are you, sir knight?" she asked, passionately. "Would you have me fancy you are the king? Nay, simple as I am, I know well that the king will maintain law and right in the country. Like King Glip-eye, you blink disagreeably enough; but I should think myself much to blame, were I to suppose the king a riever and godless evil-doer."

The nobleman coloured deeply, and regarded the haughty maiden with a malicious look. "She has been asleep, then," he muttered to himself; and then said, aloud, "you are right: I am not the king himself, but one of his greatest officers. Since you have such a good opinion of the king's uprightness, my child," he continued, in a severe and authoritative tone, "it surprises me that it should not occur to you, you are a prisoner, at the king's command. You are a suspected woman, in the secret practice of witchcraft. With your crafty old grandfather, you lodge and conceal traitors to the country, and the open enemies of the king. Can you deny that the audacious marsk, who denounced the king, has not lodged under your roof for the last eight days, and has been spared by you? At this instant, in all probability, the rebellious Duke Waldemar sits there, and with his adherents, and plots against the king and the nation. Tales are told of your grandfather that, when I inquire into them, may cost him his neck. If you would save his life, little Assé, it can only be by being friendly and complaisant towards his master and judge; and such, in truth, am I."

"You only wish to prove my constancy, stern sir knight," said the girl, with less haughtiness, and with more discreet demeanour, but still calmly and undauntedly; "you only wish to see whether you can bring me to doubt my grandfather's honour and the king's justice. You know, as well as I, that my grandfather is obliged to provide quarters for all comers, whether they are true subjects or not, so long as the king has not driven them from the country and made them outlaws; that I do not practice witchcraft, although, at times, I may have strange dreams, and, in jest, have read one or two hands, you very well know. You would only trifle with me, stern sir. But if you are in earnest," she continued, vehemently, and again placing her hands, with an air of defiance, on her sides, "you are as little likely to be one of the king's true men as you are to be the king himself. You are, rather, a riever and a traitor, seeking to do injustice in the king's name: so take care of yourself, good sir. There is yet law and justice in the kingdom; and you may happen, by-and-by, to get hanged, for all that you may fit yourself into a stately knight's doublet, stolen, probably, from some poor man."

"Shameless boldness!" exclaimed the nobleman, stamping with indignation; but his wild look fell again upon the girl's beautiful face and form, and he continued, in milder tones: "defiance does not become you well, little Aasé; and you are nothing handsomer for your obstinacy. Before the Lord, I think I could be angry with you in earnest. You are not a tame bird; and I see well, you want to make yourself precious, that you may afterwards set the higher price upon your favour. For variety's sake, that may please me at present; but do not carry it farther. I can have patience for a time; but do not make me furious."

"They are coming! they are coming!" exclaimed Aasé, overjoyed, and springing to the window looking over the great court-yard: "now shall we know whom you are, and whether the king has robbers and ravishers in his service."

The tramp of horses, and the sound of voices, were heard in the court of the castle. The tall personage looked uneasily towards the window: at the same time the door was opened, and the young soldier who had stood without the door on his first entrance hastily and flurriedly entered.

"We are betrayed, sire!" he whispered, almost breathless. "The court is full of people: they demand to be admitted in the king's name, and have Drost Peter Hessel at their head."

"Drost Peter? Are you mad?" said the nobleman, hastily throwing on his cloak. "What wants he here? How did he enter?"

"The gate was locked; nobody knows who let him in. He has terrified the warden with his royal authority. They are searching throughout the whole castle, and will pull it down if they do not find the girl. I expect them here every instant, as they have seen the light from the court. If you would not betray yourself to the people, escape by the secret passage, sire. Command it so, and I shall take the blame, and suffer myself, farther, to be taken prisoner by the drost."

"Right, my trusty Rané. The thought is worth gold. Lock the concealed door after me. Are our people at the back gate?"

"All is in perfect order and security, sir knight," said the young man-at-arms, with emphasis, winking; "and not a soul can know that you have been here, if she, there, can be silent:" here he pointed dubiously towards Aasé, who stood looking with a wild, flashing eye from the window. "Tarry no longer, sire. I hear them upon the tower-stairs."

"Betray, with a single word, whom you have seen, and you are dead!" whispered the nobleman, hurriedly, to the terrified maiden; and, in an instant, he had disappeared through a concealed door in the panel.

The young soldier hastily withdrew the key from the door, and flung it, from the window, into the back court; he then fell in a supplicating posture at the young girl's feet. "Have pity on an unhappy lover, fair, good-natured Aasé. Thou incomparable fisher-maid," he began, in a shrill, piping voice, "for thy sake, I have exposed myself to the greatest danger, and to the anger of our righteous king; for thy sake, I dared to make use of the king's name, when I took thee prisoner."

"And, for thy sake, I will soil my fingers upon such an abominable hag's face," answered the girl, giving him a few hearty boxes on the ear, which he appeared to take patiently, continuing, the while, to set forth his feigned love tale.

He was still talking in the same strain, and had laid hold of Aasé's apron, when Drost Peter and his squire, together with the warden and a band of armed fishermen, entered the door.

"In the king's name, Chamberlain Rané, you are my prisoner," said Drost Peter: "bind him, lads!"

The page rose, as it taken by surprise. "Stern sir drost," he said, with an impudent smile, "you best know yourself the power of beauty over the heart, without distinction of rank or station. You have detected me in an indiscretion, which, at our time of life, one does wisest to judge with forbearance. At most, you have seen with what little success I have sought to tame this lovely wild-cat. If you venture on taking me prisoner, good: our common lord shall decide which of us is the more blameworthy."

With these words, he gave up his short sword, without opposition, into the drost's hands, and permitted his own to be bound by Claus Skirmen, who performed this ordinary part of a squire's duties with the greatest dexterity, at the same time casting a look at the pretty little Aasé, whose dark, sparkling eyes ran over the bystanders, as if anxiously in search of some one.

"My child! my Aasé!" sounded, at length, from a man's deep voice at the door; and, with the lively exclamation, "Grandfather! dear grandfather!" she flew into old Henner's arms, and overpowered him with her childish caresses, without observing his wounds, which, however little he regarded them himself, had nevertheless considerably exhausted him.

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Drost Peter Hessel and his squire had come over the Belt in the storm, with a large company of travellers. On the road from Gremermarsh quay to the town, they had met with the armourer Troels, the ferrymen, and a band of burghers, in search of Henner Friser and the robbers. Drost Peter had landed from the vessel, with a shaggy cap over his ears, and a large boatman's jerkin over his knight's dress. They were the last to land; and, before the young nobleman had mounted his horse, he had taken off the borrowed cap and jerkin, thrown his scarlet cloak upon his shoulders, and placed his feathered hat upon his head. Without troubling himself about the other travellers, he was ready, at the moment, to assist the burghers against the supposed robbers. The rest of the travellers, tired with their boisterous passage, were only anxious to reach the inn, to

rest and refresh themselves.

On the quay of Gremermarsh, there still stood, however, in the changing moonlight, a boatman, with his arm in a bandage, by the side of a tall, knightly figure, in full black armour, with the visor of his helmet down. They appeared to talk earnestly and secretly, and, from time to time, pointed to the skiff that had newly arrived, and to a smaller boat, by which the mailed knight had seemingly come, and which lay somewhat apart, below the wood that skirted the Middelfert sound. The boatman had arrived with the large company, and appeared to be informing the knight whence they had come and whom they had brought. They at length separated. The boatman nodded respectfully; and, notwithstanding his wound, seemed to take upon himself the execution of some commission with which he was entrusted by the stately stranger. He departed, with hasty strides, towards the wood where the little boat lay; while the knight took, alone, and with thoughtful steps, the road to the town.

Although neither Henner Friser nor his pretty granddaughter was present, the travellers were received at the inn, by the people of the house, with the usual attentions. They had placed before them a flagon of ale, and a large dish of stewed flounders, of which they had always abundance. With these the greater part of the company appeared to be satisfied, as it was Friday, and they were required to observe a fast. Not so, however, were they all.

"Away with these wretched flounders! We want a hearty meal of flesh," said a long, meagre gentleman, with a sagacious but proud and arrogant countenance, and strong, passionate-looking features. "For your lives and healths' sake, I give you all an indulgence, as far as the day is concerned," he added, with the mien and authority of a pope: "for the sake of human infirmities, I am authorised to do this."

The flounders were immediately taken away, and a large dish of salt meat substituted in their place. This change the majority of the company loudly applauded, but the ecclesiastic was now offended. Notwithstanding the blue travelling dress he wore, his rank was distinguishable by the black calotte that concealed his tonsure; and, notwithstanding his leanness, he appeared accustomed to better and richer fare. He vehemently decided that the accommodation for distinguished travellers, in this new and only licensed place of entertainment, was wretched; and that, when the king thought proper to meddle in domestic matters, and prohibit people, both lay and clerical, from entertaining strangers, he ought to take care that there were ordinary cooks in such taverns.

This discontented gentleman was the only ecclesiastic in the company. He was usually called Master Grand and Sir Dean; and all treated him with the greatest respect. The rest were chiefly knights, and other distinguished laymen, with large plumes of feathers in their hats, and short travelling cloaks, fringed with sable, of the finest German or English cloth, and of the most various colours, according to their own or their ladies' tastes. Their doublets were, for the most part, of the same colour and material, with a slit in the centre, and ornamented with gashed edges, in the fashion of foreign knights. This profuse style of dress had, long before, been forbidden in Denmark; and this contempt for a law that was observed everywhere around denoted these gentlemen to belong to the bold and disaffected aristocratical party.

A tall young man, in a scarlet cloak, with a haughty countenance and princely manners, appeared to be the most distinguished in the company. An elderly personage, with a firm, warlike bearing, and in a large cloak of English blue cloth, seemed likewise to be an individual of some note. Some of the younger gentlemen shone forth in suits of bright yellow, flame colour, and green. A few of the more elderly wore brown and liver-coloured doublets and mantles. There were nearly as many squires as there were knights; and their inferior rank was discernible by their plain hats, and by their chequered and less, expensive cloaks of Scottish cloth.

A young, cheerful individual, who did not appear to belong to the knights and their train, but attached himself with particular attention to the ecclesiastic, was distinguished by his civility and pleasing manners, although his unusual corpulency would only allow him to perform any rapid motion with difficulty. His round, good-natured face beamed with life and jollity. Round his short brown jerkin he wore a broad leather belt, with a large knife and fork, a horn spoon, a pepper-box, and a number of other tools and appliances pertaining to the kitchen and pantry. He had listened with great attention to the discontented ecclesiastic's denunciation of the entertainment, while his look often glanced upon a plain wooden box, which he had carried from the ship himself, and which was now deposited in a corner, near the kitchen-door.

"Spoken after my own poor heart, worthy sir dean," he at length said, with a respectful mien, and yet with a kind of sly humour. "These royal hostelries will certainly bring the land to ruin. 'They are dung-pits,' as said our worthy Abbot of Ry, in his much-admired fast sermon; 'they are dung-pits, where every carrion bird gathers, and where the eagle and crow must eat out of the same dish.' They have brought true hospitality to decay; and now, as a necessary consequence, harmony and jollity, mirth and the noble art of cookery, have come to the ground together. Nevertheless, in half an hour's time, I shall prepare my worthy masters such a repast as shall make us all forget these doleful times, and reconcile us to this godless world."

"Right, my son," said the churchman, patting him on the shoulder. "Do not bury thy rare talents. Have a care for our present wants, cook Morten, and trouble not thyself about the preacher."

Whilst the travelling cook took his box and proceeded to the kitchen to prepare his entertainment, without heeding the growlings of the servants, the gentleman in the blue cloak made a trial of the liquor, which stood in a pewter tankard.

"What! filthy Danish pors-ale!"<sup>[7]</sup> he exclaimed, and dashed the tankard to the ground. "Fie for Satan! do the rascals mean to treat us to such trash? Saxon ale we shall have, and that immediately."

"German ale, that sets people a-crowing, we do not serve here," answered a bold fellow, who acted as tapster: "it is as strictly forbidden by the king as are the slashed doublets of yourself and these gentlemen. If, therefore, you are not contented with what we have got, the door is open; but rough words and fault-finding, neither Henner Friser nor his servants put lip with."

The gentleman in blue started, and regarded the man with surprise.

"Shameless fellow! do you know to whom you are talking?" roared the churchman, the veins of his forehead swelling with rage. "Where a gentleman of the blood royal is present, even a master and a dean is a mean man. A bumpkin like you should not grumble, were we to scrub your ears with your besom, and fling your villanous Danish ale over your dunderhead!"

"Be pacified, good Master Grand," said the young gentleman of the scarlet cloak: "the fellow, truly, did not know us, and only maintains the credit of his master. If you have any German ale in the house, produce it on my responsibility," he added, turning to the tapster, while he flung down a handful of silver coin upon the table.

The man was surprised, and loitered.

"Quick, now!" continued the young lord: "it is Duke Waldemar who commands you. The king's prohibition, to which you have already sagely adverted in reference to our doublets, does not extend to me and my followers."

"So *you* may understand the matter, mighty lord," answered the man, bluntly; "but my master says, that, on Danish ground, the king's law and prohibition extend to both gentle and simple. There is a butt of old German ale in the cellar, which has not been touched for five and twenty years; but, before my master comes home and so orders it himself, I shall not tap a single stoup of it, even if all of you were popes and emperors."

"Let the saucy rogue be thrown out of doors, my lord duke!" exclaimed Master Grand, in a passion; and a couple of squires drew near, with zealous alacrity, and seemed only to be waiting for a nod to carry the proposal into execution.

The blood mounted to the young nobleman's cheeks, and he cast a threatening look at the tapster; but his senior, in the blue cloak, caught him by the arm.

"Delay a little, sir cousin," he muttered, in a half whisper. "Let me advise. Here we must be good patriots. The king's grace rode his cock-horse by the side of Margaret's stallion,"<sup>[8]</sup> he then continued, with a loud voice, "when he performed this exploit, and stuck pegs for taps into German ale-barrels. It was a brave action, we must allow: it will be long before I achieve as much as a general. At the same time, he made his appearance in a new light, and became our instructor in the noble art of tailoring. Like good patriots, let us now drink this pors-ale to his honour, and have our doublets sewn up like honest Danish frocks, that they may see at court that we are as true and obedient subjects as John Little and David Thorstenson, and as upright friends to this kind of garment as the king himself, and the queen's handsome friend, Drost Peter Hosel.<sup>[9]</sup> Now, then, the king's health in thin ale, since there is no better: the king's health, my lords!"

This satire, accompanied by a scornful smile, occasioned a burst of laughter, and all drank, or pretended to drink, of the despised liquor.

"Every one shall drink the toast who is not a spy or a traitor," continued the warlike lord in blue: "no distinction of rank or station is permitted here. Come, thou fair swain: drink the king's health in this precious pors-water."

"I would have a care of my manners," answered the tapster: "I am too mean to join in the revels of such distinguished company."

"Understand, then, that Count Jacob of Halland, as the king's vassal, allows you to be chastised as a traitor and secret rebel," continued the lord in blue. "Drag him out, and give him a hearty salute with the stirrup-straps," said he to the squires. "We have all heard that he is a rebel who will not drink the king's health."

The stern decree was executed in a moment, notwithstanding a brave resistance made by the strong fellow.

"This is the way to baste the fellows with their own lard," growled Count Jacob, as, with a haughty air, he threw himself carelessly back on his bench.

"Perhaps a little too hard," said the young duke, yet smiling contentedly; while all laughed

heartily at the rough joke, which did not seem to them at all unusual, or in anywise dangerous.

The allusion to King Erik Christopherson's edicts respecting ale and slashed doublets, which had given rise to this scene, was followed by many jocular remarks on various other of the king's municipal regulations, which they affected to extol, whilst, at the same time, they were striving to present them in the most ridiculous point of view, or as childish and absurd. The stern *Ribe-Ret*, [\[10\]](#) in particular, was the subject of many coarse jokes.

The conversation was brought to a close by the entrance, with a large dish of seasoned meat, of the indefatigable cook, who invited the company to prove whether he had not attained a more worthy post than in cooking prison-fare for the hermits of Sjöberg.

"Should I--as, nevertheless, I hope I shall not," he added--"have to wait on any of my good lords in my celebrated castle, I am glad that, beforehand, I have had an opportunity of vindicating my honour with those who, not without success, have studied the art of cookery in the most learned chapter-houses in the kingdom."

"Thou art a rogue, Morten!" said Master Grand, playfully threatening him. "My pious colleagues taught thee first, perhaps, to sign thyself with the token of self-denial; but thy round cheeks bear witness thou art a carnal child of the world, who hath transferred his learning to ladles and carving-knives."

"Not without a bright and illustrious example," answered the cook, with a cunning smile. "Were I, in troth, your cook, as I am now a godless provider for state-prisoners, you could not help being soon as plump as I and your worthy colleagues."

He now began, like a busy host, to serve out his viands, and selected the choicest morsels for his new ecclesiastical patron. He afterwards brought from the kitchen a large wooden bowl, and, with many eulogiums, recommended the strengthening and enlivening beverage it contained, as the fruit of his own invention.

"Spiced wine!" exclaimed Count Jacob. "Thou art a most excellent fellow, Morten! This, then, was the sacred church-treasure that thou and sir dean contended for so lustily in the storm, when we were obliged to throw all our worldly goods overboard!"

"Thus it is that virtue and good deeds are rewarded, even in the present life," answered the cook. "And I hope that worthy Master Grand does not now repent that he so piously took my sacred bottle under his protection."

The knights praised the excellent liquor, and became merry and noisy. Cook Morten poured out for them, and sang them wanton ditties. All would join with him; and every one sang the song that pleased himself best, without troubling himself about those of others. At length, a well-known song obtained the ascendancy, in the midst of general laughter: it was a tolerably witty and satirical ballad, relating to the king and his favourites, particularly concerning Drost Peter Hessel, whom it sometimes nicknamed Peter Hosel (stocking-garter), and sometimes Sir Lovmand (lawyer), with coarse inuendoes on the relation in which he was accused of standing to the queen.

In the midst of this uproar, the tall mailed knight, with the closed visor, who had followed them from the quay, entered unobserved, and seated himself in a dark nook, near the door.

"See, now there is some life in the game," said the cook, snuffing the candles; "now it is quite a pleasure to tend upon my worthy masters."

"But how came you by the wine?" inquired Master Grand: "it is indeed converted into nectar."

"The preparation is a secret, my most worthy sir," answered the cook, "the knowledge of which I shall keep to myself, until I make my will: then shall I enrich after generations with my invention, if the world prove worthy of it. I have named this divine beverage *bishop*: I hope it deserves its title, and that it will hereafter render the name of Morten Fynbo immortal, among both learned and simple."

"Call it archbishop: it deserves the name better than the carlin we have now in Lund," roared Count Jacob. "Such a bishop is fitted to mediate an eternal peace between the temporal and spiritual lords of the kingdom; and, at this time, it is much needed. We have made a beginning with you, very learned Master Grand," he continued: "when you come hereafter to be archbishop, perhaps it will fare better with justice in the land. You are the man to lend me a letter of excommunication, when my own sword is too short to recover my feudal rents, withheld by a tyrant."

Master Grand made no reply, but gave the loud-voiced count a familiar and significant look.

"To our noble dean, the pride and honour of Roskild!" resumed Count Jacob: "long life to our very learned Master Jens Grand! A rogue is he who does not pledge the toast to the bottom; and confusion to all the vermin and king's thralls in the country!" With these words, he touched the ecclesiastic's cup with his own. His example was followed by Duke Waldemar and the knights; the whole bursting out into a simultaneous shout of applause, in which the cook heartily joined.

"I thank you, my high-born Count Jacob; you, too, my noble duke; and you, my valiant lords and knights," said Master Grand, agreeably surprised, while he rose, and regarded all around him with an air of seriousness and significance. "The time may come when my deeds shall prove to you that it is my highest wish to effect a friendly union between the knightly sword and the bishop's staff. Earthly and heavenly power must be truly united, when there is anything great to be done in the world. But more of this at another time and place," he said, suddenly interrupting himself. "*Latet anguis in herbâ*--there is a snake in the grass, as the saying goes: Satan has his imps everywhere."

So saying, the dean's sharp looks fell on the figure of the tall, mailed knight, who sat in the corner, by the door. All eyes were turned in the same direction, and a mysterious whispering arose among the uneasy guests. The sturdy warlike figure then arose, and advanced with firm strides towards the light at the end of the table. He moved his head, as if he would observe the guests more narrowly, raised his mailed arm, struck the grating of his helmet upwards for a moment, and then allowed it to fall. The hasty view thus obtained of the strongly-illuminated, iron features of the warrior, and the stern glance that shot like lightning from beneath his dark bushy eyebrows, struck every one with astonishment. They had all risen to bid him welcome; but he laid his finger upon the opening of his helmet, and they remained standing, as mute as statues, and regarding him with earnest expectation.

"Remember your oaths and vows! Prudence is still our safeguard," said the mailed knight, in a deep, hollow voice. "There is no security, or room for insolent bravado, where traitors may go in and out, and every door stands open. The tyrant is near at hand. Drost Peter Hessel was among you on the Belt, and you knew him not."

"Drost Peter!" they repeated, with astonishment.

"Damnation!" exclaimed the young duke, stamping: "it was reported otherwise. But how came he there? I did not see him. Where did he land?"

"Spite of the devil, I should think it would have been known if the drost had been on board," said Count Jacob. "Two boatmen and a youth excepted, there was not a cat on board I did not know."

"Who was the man who sprang from the mast, and seized the rudder, when the steersman's arm was wounded?" demanded the stern knight.

"He--the daring young fellow," said Count Jacob--"he who, at the very nick of time, came as if he had dropped from the clouds, and saved our lives--was he not a boatman?"

"It was Drost Peter Hessel," said the black knight; "and the lad who waited upon him was his squire--a youth with ears in his head."

"The fiend!" exclaimed one after another.

"In the noise and confusion I was both deaf and blind," began Master Grand; "otherwise, I should have seen whether we had Philistines on board. On the skiff I saw no one: but who was the knight in the scarlet mantle, who followed us from the quay, and rode off in pursuit of rieviers or virgins, or on some such sort of carnal, hair-brained exploit?"

"That was Drost Peter," answered the mailed knight. "Where were your keen eyes, Master Grand? Our deadly foe sat to-day by the rudder, and you knew him not; to-morrow he sits at the helm of the state, and will know you."

"Death and perdition! All is lost? We are betrayed!" exclaimed one after the other; and the commotion became general.

"Not yet," said the mailed knight, quietly, and raised his voice. "Until the Dane-court is brought to a close, the law protects you. This law only protects me," and he struck his large, rattling sword. "The moment the Danish court is terminated, separate. In half an hour, I am again on board. Yet three words in private with your and my future lord."

The young duke hastened anxiously forward, and fervently seized the knight's mailed hand. They retired a few steps, and the mysterious knight whispered some words into his ear, which he only heard, but at which the bold duke's cheeks changed colour. The knight regarded him with a keen look, laid his hand encouragingly upon his shoulder, and nodded. The duke regained his composure, and, with a haughty look, made a hasty motion with his sword. Without adding a single word more, the tall, iron-clad knight saluted the company, and quietly strode out at the door.

A general silence ensued, while the young duke appeared struggling to overcome some anxious, disquieting thought. Hastily seizing his cup, "Long life to our trusty, watchful friend!" he said: "may he return safe: he has done much for our sakes to-day."

Scarcely had he uttered the words, and put the goblet to his lips, ere the door was opened, and Drost Peter Hessel, with old Henner Friser, entered, accompanied by a crowd of burghers and seamen, carrying with them the bound Swain Rané. Old Henner led his daughter by the



hand. She cast back a kindly look towards the door, where the squire, Claus Skirmen, was standing, with his master's scarlet cloak upon his arm, and surprised apparently at the sight of so many strangers; whilst his eyes speedily forsook the fair, dark-eyed damsel, and rested, with earnest attention, upon his master's every look and motion.

As the young drost entered, Duke Waldemar and the knights hastily replaced their uplifted goblets on the table, and looked at one another with amazement.

Drost Peter did not appear to notice the general confusion which his entrance had occasioned. Having saluted the company with knightly politeness, "I perceive," he said, in a lively, unaffected tone, "I am yet in time, my lords, to greet you in my own doublet, and to thank you for your excellent travelling society. I had my reasons for appearing as a boatman: that scarcely any of my noble lords will doubt. It gladdens me that I was fortunate steersman enough, and had the opportunity, of bringing so many important patriots safe to land. I would have thanked you for your confidence immediately upon our landing, my lords; but I have been delayed by a little unpleasant adventure, which is now happily finished."

The young duke recovered his self-possession. He returned the drost's salutation with a princely air, and answered, in the same courteous tone, "It was handsome to return to us, Drost Hessel, and not to withdraw yourself from our thankful acknowledgments. But a minute ago, we learned that we were fortunate enough to have had you on board, without knowing you, and that you were the brave boatman who so opportunely caught hold of the rudder in our danger. That chance or necessity, and no deceitful intention, made us fellow-voyagers to-day, notwithstanding our difference of opinion in various matters, I am willing to believe. Accept, therefore, the acknowledgments of myself and friends; and permit us, as we were just proposing, to drain this cup to your welfare."

At the duke's signal, the active cook handed the drost a goblet of wine; and, with forced politeness, Count Jacob made room for him on the duke's right hand, and begged him to be seated.

In the meanwhile, no one evinced any disposition to do honour to the proposed toast.

Drost Peter observed this, and said, hastily: "I thank you, my lords, for the intended honour; but permit me, as the reward of my pilotage, merely to beg the favour, that I may quaff this first goblet on Funen ground, with Duke Waldemar, Count Jacob, and these worthy gentlemen, to a peaceful and happy issue to the Dane-court, and to the welfare of our country, and of our lawful king's house."

With these words, he emptied his goblet, and replaced it on the table.

"Every friend of his country who participates in my wish," he added, "will certainly not hesitate on doing justice to my toast."

All eyes were turned upon Duke Waldemar and Count Jacob; and as both these lords, although with secret indignation, emptied their cups, and set them on the table, the other knights followed their example.

The fat cook smiled knavishly. "A bitter addition to my magnificent liquor," he whispered to Master Grand.

The ecclesiastic burned with indignation. He had not yet raised the goblet to his lips; and, grasping it in his hand, with the wine dripping upon his fingers, he now dashed it violently upon the stone floor. "I drink no slavish token of homage by constraint," he exclaimed, in a rage. "On what footing I, as Dean of Roskild, stand with King Erik Christopherson, is known to every man in the country who knows that St. Michael's Church, in Slagelse, belongs to the deanery of Roskild, and has been taken from me with shameful injustice. If I have not been afraid to protest openly against the king's illegal encroachments on my rights of office, neither am I now afraid to declare openly to his drost, that I will suffer thirst till doomsday, rather than, like a miserable hypocrite, drink a single drop to worldly arrogance and injustice."

"And I hold to that, with our very learned sir dean," said Count Jacob, with a loud voice, and striking his long sword vehemently against the floor. "Every man here has his freedom; and no one shall compel us to drink any other toast than we please. I only drank, because I was thirsty, and the wine was good. I regard myself, then, so little as a wretch or a hypocrite, that no one with impunity shall call me a traitor to the country."

"It were far from me to upbraid any man with hypocrisy, or to accuse any of these gentlemen of so horrible a crime as treason," said Drost Peter, quietly. "In Denmark, God be praised, thoughts, and their rudest expression, are still free, when the law of the land is not transgressed; and I regard no Dane as the enemy of his country because, perhaps, he does not join in our common wish for its welfare, and in personal attachment to the royal house, with the same warmth as myself. In such unsettled and unhappy times as the present, we must, alas! experience that the opinions of the best Danish men differ on many important matters. But, my brave lords and countrymen," he continued, with warmth, "excuse me that I do not see any place or opportunity too unsuitable to say an earnest word in a matter that concerns every Dane. If variance and discord are not soon to rend asunder all, even the best of Danish hearts, and if the

people are not to rebel and sink into ruin by such devastating strife, we must necessarily be united in one object; and that is, in lawful obedience to the majesty and divinity of the crown, upon whatever head it may legally and by justice rest. Mournful, certainly, it will be, if we, as men, as knights, or as servants of God's word, do not, at all times, love and do homage to the personality which is inseparable from majesty. But, as we would be true to our country, we are bound, heart and hand, to defend the king to the last drop of our blood."

"I may respect your manner of thinking, Drost Hessel, though it is not mine," replied young Duke Waldemar, with warmth, and approaching him a step or two, with great haughtiness, whilst he appeared to regard the embarrassment of his friends with indignation. "I do not misunderstand the zeal that permits you to forget where you are, and to whom you are speaking. But I may beg you to remember, that we are here in a public tavern; and that I, and the highborn Count Jacob of Halland, are present. As the king's kinsmen, we were most justified in holding discourse against sedition and lese-majesty, had we found it convenient or necessary. If you have anything to complain of against us, bring it before the king and people, in the Dane-court, where you shall find us all assembled, and where I hope to settle amicably the points in dispute between us and our royal kinsman. But, here, we order and command you, in virtue of our rank and dignity, to be silent, and not approach me or my friends, with an audacity that becomes you not, and with ill-timed admonitions respecting our duty to the Danish crown. And now, my lords, to horse. Here we shall no longer tarry, to give occasion for uproar, which this king and *queen's* zealous friend should have been the very first to have avoided."

The latter words were spoken in a bitter tone of ridicule, which called up a disdainful smile on the countenance of the young knight.

"Very good," said Count Jacob, in a rude tone of derision. "We shall yield the battle-field to the amorous young sir drost, since it is in a tavern, where one only cares to fight with words, or, at most, with fists and empty pitchers. If we contend, hereafter, upon a more worthy arena, sir drost, perhaps you may find it convenient to be the first to withdraw."

With these words, both the princely lords left the room; the ecclesiastic, with the cook, and all the knights, accompanying them. The horses had already, for some time, been standing saddled before the door; the squires hastened to hold the stirrups for their masters; and, in a minute after, the numerous train departed, laughing and talking aloud, through the streets of Middelfert.

The young drost stood, silent and thoughtful, in the guests' room, and appeared to be considering whether he had not been too precipitate. Old Henner, quietly, and with the greatest interest, had given heed to every one of his words, and to his whole conduct. The burghers and fishermen, after their president's example, remained silent witnesses of the contest between the distinguished lords. Claus Skirmen stood by the door, without losing sight of his master's face, although, at times, he cast a sidelong glance at the little dark-haired Aasé, who, with curious and playful eyes, watched the illustrious stranger.

The artful chamberlain had, in the meantime, profited by the general attention given to the clamorous lords. He had given jovial cook Morten, who pretended to know him, the wink, and, with the help of the carving-knife which hung at the cook's girdle, the cords that bound him were cut without it being observed. He could not, however, immediately avail himself of this freedom, while so many stood around him, but remained quietly, with his hands behind his back, as if he had been still bound. But, now that the door was open, he suddenly sprang under the arms of his guards, and was gone in an instant.

"What the fiend! is he loose?" exclaimed the astonished fishermen, springing after him.

"Stay, let him run!" cried Drost Peter, stopping them. "If he escape, it will please me better, as he would soon have been set free. He will scarcely venture into the net so soon again, however; and we have a traitor the less among us."

The fishermen stood on the alert, ready to bring back the fugitive.

"Ay, ay: let him run to Satan, as the knight says," growled old Henner Friser. "The lanky youth may soon be settled: he shall frighten nobody. Another time that we lay our fingers upon him, let us crack his neck on the instant. Now, let him grease his houghs."

This speech the fishermen seemed to comprehend, and they remained accordingly.

"Now shall you have thanks for your assistance and interest in this matter, my nimble countrymen," continued Drost Peter. "Every one betake himself to his home, and keep himself easy. From robbers you have nothing to fear; and the safety of your brave alderman I will provide for."

"Nobody shall touch a hair of his head, so long as there is a porpoise-hunter in Melfert Sound," replied a young fisherman.

"And should he get into any trouble concerning the royal squire we pitched into the dung-pit," said Troels the armourer, "we brethren of the guild will stand by him. Twelve of us keep watch here to-night; and, if he wishes to make his escape, there are six men at the yawl, with a boat and all that is needful."

"Good, my children, good," replied old Henner. "But go, now: I will consider the matter, and tell you, perhaps, my intentions before morning."

At his beck, the burghers and fishermen left the room. The old man fervently seized Drost Peter's hand. "God and St. Christian bless you, my wellborn young gentleman, for what you have this night done for me and my little Aasé!" he said, with emotion. "If ever I forget it, I am a scoundrel. Neither shall I readily forget the words you addressed to these distinguished rascals: they have stirred up my sinful old soul more than I could have thought."

The restrained but violent emotions which the tones of his voice betrayed appeared to surprise the little Aasé, as somewhat unusual. Her grandfather, observing this, suddenly relaxed his hold of the knight's hand.

"Go, now, to bed, my child," he said gently, turning to her: "go to bed, and sleep securely until I call you. Dream neither of rievvers nor big demons. This hand already has punished the doughtiest; but it is not so nimble now--it begins to feel the rascals. But the world is wide: if we cannot be in peace any longer here, I have other plans. Now, good night, child. Pray to our Lord, and our good patron St. Christian, to afford us their protection, and not to lead us into temptation. Now, quick, to bed."

"Allow me first to look to your wound, dear grandfather," replied the little Aasé, entreatingly, while she took hold of his hand and kissed it tenderly.

"Certainly not, child: I will not hear a word about the gnat-bite. Did you not hear what I said?"

From the old man's stern tone, and the silence with which she prepared, though reluctantly, to obey him, it might be seen that the old grandfather was not accustomed to opposition. She still lingered, however; and, as he looked at her more attentively, he observed the furtive, sidelong glances of her eyes towards the door, where the young squire was still standing. "That is true--the youth by the door--he has had no supper, and well deserves one. Without him, we had not got hold of you. Now run, then, Aasé, and take care of him in the kitchen."

"Come, Claus Skirmen," said Aasé, cheerfully, and as familiarly as if she had known him for a long time; while she sprang to the door where he stood, took him by the hand, and drew him merrily along with her to the kitchen.

"Singular child!" muttered the old man to himself: "now she is the little wild cat again, and a single word can make her glad or sorrowful. But when the strong dreaming spirit comes over her, not a sinner would willingly look into her eyes. Well, well: it is a sad thing for our strength."

Drost Peter stood in deep thought, and unobservant of what was passing. He had taken a sheet of parchment from his breast pocket, and on this he gazed intently, without appearing to know what he was reading.

"Have you received disastrous tidings, noble sir?" at length inquired old Henner, regarding him with sympathy; "or is it your evening prayer you are reading? If your soul is in converse with the Lord, I shall not disturb you; but, then, you should look happier. You are young, and can scarcely have any grievous sins upon your conscience. You may well read your ave and paternoster, without looking whether the evil one stands grinning behind you."

"What said you, brave old man?" inquired the knight, recovering himself, and hastily folding the parchment. "It is late, and I stand in need of rest: the noise and journey have wearied me."

"Come, refresh yourself first, noble sir. My best apartment is ready for you. But I have now a word to say to you, for God knows when I may see you again. You are wearied, and I perceive you have important matters in your head. Come, sir drost, you will not refuse a stoup of good Danish pors-ale? What the fiend! have their lordships transformed my ale into wine? Well, that was indeed handsome of them."

They then both set themselves down to cook Morten's half-emptied bowl of spiced wine; and when a cup of the potent beverage had enlivened them, old Henner resumed:

"You spake an earnest word this evening, noble sir. My illustrious guests considered it ill-timed, and perhaps you now may think that you were over hasty; but it was a word at the right time, to me and many more. Yes, you are right, noble sir. The crown is holy, whoever bears it: for the king is the Lord's anointed; and no one shall with impunity raise his hand against him, were it the foul fiend himself whom God has set over us for a season."

"That I did not say exactly, old man," said the drost, interrupting him; "yet it is not far from my meaning. But how came you now upon this matter? Did you know these lords?"

"Who does not know the haughty Duke Waldemar and the crabbed Count Jacob?" answered Henner. "I knew their good friends, too. What these good people carry in their bosoms is no secret. This dean from Roskild is a learned, dangerous man; and the Lord preserve us from him! Thought and thew, he is the old Archbishop Jacob to a hair--he that was imprisoned by the king's father, and brought the whole kingdom under the ban. The long, big-nosed dean comes of the same brood. People dare not say it openly; but you and everybody else know, nevertheless, that

this Satan's archbishop had a finger in the pie when King Christopher was poisoned with our Lord's holy body."

"Thou art right, old man; and so much the worse," said Drost Peter: "this audacious Master Grand is Jacob Erlandsen's kinsman, both by descent and in spirit. He is the most crafty of them all, however hot-headed and open-mouthed he may be in his insolent moods." He again drew forth the parchment, and examined it. "Do you know Sir Tuko Abildgaard, the duke's drost?"

"Yes, indeed: that was the proud, smooth-faced gentleman, who sat so stiff where you are now sitting, with the light green cloak and doublet. I knew every one of them."

"Sir Lavé Little was not here--God be praised!" said Drost Peter, with a suppressed sigh. "They are a noble race, these Littles: would that they all took after the old Knight John! A truer man there is not in Denmark, although he has almost as much injustice to complain of as have his kinsmen."

"We must not judge them too severely, noble sir," resumed Henner. "Sir Lavé came over the Belt yesterday. It was sad to look upon the man. He had visited his kinsman for some purpose: that might well be seen in him. Shame is a hard cross. Old Pallé has certainly lost his wits about it; and the bold, proud Stig Andersen himself--I cannot think of him without feeling my heart ready to burst my bosom. A greater leader has Denmark never seen since the days of Count Albert of Northalbing and King Waldemar Seier. Even the mighty King Ladislaus of Sweden has him to thank for his crown. Oh, noble sir drost! when I fancy myself in this man's situation, dark thoughts arise within me. I could not say that the crown was holy, if I saw it borne by the destroyer of my wife's honour."

"And yet, brave Henner, you might say so, even were you in his place, if your fatherland were dearer to you than yourself, and your soul's salvation more precious than revenge."

"Salvation!" said Henner, gloomily; "talk not so decidedly about a man's salvation, sir drost. A bishop would not so readily undertake to do so. Believe you, then, of a truth, that the man shall be for ever damned who lifts his hand against a crowned nidding?"<sup>[111]</sup>

"Let us condemn no one, that we be not ourselves condemned," said the knight, with deep seriousness; "least of all, let us condemn him whom none human can condemn, but who has his Judge above the stars."

"Awell, you may be right, sir, when that is spoken of a righteous king, who has been chosen by the free-will of his people, and who has not acquired his crown by perjury and the murder of a brother, like King Abel. If, now, you were to see the man who shot the arrow into King Abel's breast, noble sir, would you be able to look him in the face, and say that he was a godless traitor and a regicide, who must be for ever doomed to perdition?"

"What brings this into your head, old man?" inquired the knight, astonished: "I have, indeed, said I dare condemn no one, and, truly, least of all dare I condemn the man whom the Righteous Judge chose to raise up to vindicate the pious King Erik Waldemarson, and to hurl a fratricide from the throne of Denmark."

"That man stands now before you, sir drost!" said Henner Friser, rising: "with this hand I shot the arrow that entered King Abel's false heart; there hangs the steel bow that carried the doom of death and eternal punishment to the fratricide."

The knight looked up, and regarded with a degree of dread the tall, powerful old man, who, pale and frightful as the ghost of a hero, now stood before him in the dimly-lighted apartment.

"Did you that deed, old man?" he said, with an effort. "Then let me be the last man you entrust with the dreadful secret. And have a care of yourself. Had Duke Waldemar known what this bow has done, there is not a man in the country who could save you."

"That gives me but little uneasiness," answered the old man. "You, I know, will not betray me; and, saving yourself, there is not a soul in the world knows what old Henner thinks in the midnight storm, when the wild hunter rides over his roof with his howling hounds. Fancy not that I rue the best act of my life. Nay, God and St. Christian be praised! I dread not the hour when I shall stand, with King Abel, before our Lord's judgment-seat. And yet, sir knight, it gives rise to strange thoughts, to have withdrawn a soul from mercy, and dispatched a sinner to everlasting punishment before his time. But it is the weakness of old age: I know it well. It is, besides, at night only that such thoughts come upon me. By day, when I look upon the bow, I feel proud that this hand once rescued Denmark from destruction. As I have said, it is only at night that my heart softens, and that I feel compassion for the sinner whom I slew."

"Pray the God of mercy for his soul!" said the knight, with a feeling of uneasiness.

"Nay, that can I not, sir drost--and it but little matters. What I could do for him, by the aid of a nervous arm, that I have done; but it is in vain--he is doomed to eternal misery. I drove a six-ells stake, of good charred oak, through his rotten carcass in the bog of Gottorp; but what availed that? The proud devil will not rest in the swamp, nor will he suffer others to sleep in peace. You have heard, no doubt, what is told about his night-hunts? Constantly, at midnight, he rides out,

raven-black, on his courser, over Gottorp heath, with three fiery hell-hounds at his heels. God be praised! I have not seen it myself; but every midnight, be my sleep ever so sound, it whines and howls in my ears till I awake. Perhaps it is mere rumour and superstition, and perhaps it is but the blood which rushes to my head when I recline; but now, for three and thirty years, I have never been able to close an eye until two hours after the accursed midnight. And--hear you aught? Lord! how it howls and whines again!" He held both hands before his eyes, and shook his gray head in an uneasy and anxious manner.

"Unhappy old man!" said the knight, "mayhap it is neither the blood nor the dead that disquiets you. I rather believe that there is a secret doubt in your honest heart of the justice of the deed, or that it was well-pleasing to God. Shrive yourself, in this matter, to a God-fearing clerk; and seek to make your peace with the Lord, (who, in truth, can alone give and take it away,) not only for the sake of the past, but also for what has happened to-day. It was not the Chamberlain Rané, but a greater man, that we both saw well, who had fixed upon your Aasé for his victim. I knew him, and so much the worse. Me, perhaps, he will spare, for prudential reasons; but he will not relinquish his object because he has once miscarried. It will be a serious matter with you, too, on account of the squire who lies in the dung-pit. I know but one course, old Henner: you must over the Belt with the maiden before it is day. Your house and goods may be sold afterwards. But proceed, without delay, to my warden at Harrestrup. I shall provide you with a letter to him, and he will direct you to my vacant hunting-lodge near Finnerup. There, both you and the little Aasé are safe. The wind is favourable. Take not too long to think of it."

The old man had seated himself upon a bench: he leant with his elbows on the table, and his wrinkled forehead rested in his giant hands.

"Well, I shall follow your advice, and accept your offer with respect and thanks, my illustrious young sir," said he at last, with decision, as he arose. "It is not for the sake of this gray head: were it doomed to fall beneath the axe, I should not take flight, in my old days, to escape the blow. But the maiden must be saved: she is the apple of my eye and my soul's joy--she is good and innocent. She does not yet understand her strange dreams. God grant they may never be fulfilled! She must be saved; and you are right--time presses. You have also pointed my way to peace, sir drost, and I will follow it. I shall bid good night to my worldly calling, and, in your hunting-lodge, reconcile myself to my God and Judge as best I can."

With these words, he shook the knight's hand fervently, and went out, to make the necessary preparations for his departure.

The drost hastily drew forth the sheet of parchment that he had been reading, tore off a portion on which there was no writing, and, with a silver style which he carried about him, wrote upon it a few words to his warden at Harrestrup-Gaard, near Viborg. Scarcely had he finished the brief epistle, before long-withstood weariness overpowered him. The style fell from his hand; his long, dark-haired eyelids closed in spite of him; and he leant back on the bench, until he rested against the wall. Seated in this manner, in a few minutes he was fast asleep, and was busied, apparently, in his dreams, with some dear and familiar object. The soft gleam of the nearly-expiring light fell on his youthful but strong and almost stern countenance, which now, however, was lit up with a kindly smile; while, in his right hand, he held a rosary of rubies, which he wore concealed about his neck, and to which was attached a solitary amber jewel, which had seemingly belonged to a lady's necklace. His left hand still rested firmly, and with a half-conscious carefulness, upon the parchment that lay open before him on the table.

He was still securely slumbering in this position, when the door was gently opened, and a face peered in, which, though half concealed beneath a fisherman's shaggy cap, yet, with its thin, sandy beard and crafty features, betrayed the Chamberlain Rané. He was dressed entirely like a fisherman. He allowed the door to stand ajar, and, gliding noiselessly into the apartment, advanced on tiptoe to the table, where the knight's left hand still rested on the documents. After a scrutinising glance at the sleeper, his small gray eyes rested with curiosity upon the letter. He paused, and was about to slip it away; but the knight just then making a motion with his right hand, the artful spy hastily stepped back. He again approached carefully, looked upon the letter with strained attention, and turned pale when he saw his own name among a long list of others, in the open document, headed "Conspirators." He groped with one hand for a dagger, whose bright silver hilt projected from his breast-pocket; but appeared suddenly to restrain himself, as his eye fell upon the small slip addressed to the warden of Harrestrup. He seemed surprised on reading it, and, with a smile of triumph, went out as gently and cautiously as he had entered.

Shortly after, Drost Peter awoke, completely refreshed by his short slumber, and heard, in the apartment, loud noise and laughter, the jingling of bells, and the tread of iron-heeled boots with clattering spurs. He opened his eyes, and beheld a strong, heavy, and somewhat corpulent personage, whose round, jovial countenance, and strong brown beard, bespoke him to be in the prime of life. With a pair of large gold spurs on his heels, he trod the paved apartment firmly, and, casting his mantle aside with a gentle motion of his arm, exposed a knight's magnificent dress, and a pair of glittering gold chains. He paced the apartment backwards and forwards, in lively conversation with two less elegantly attired knights, and a lanky, awkwardly-built personage, whose short jingling jacket, and peaked cap with a long fox's tail behind, denoted his rank as a jester.

Surprised, the young drost seized the parchment document, which still lay open before him,

and placed it hastily in his bosom. Thereupon he arose, and saluted the strangers with polite apologies that he had not sooner taken notice of them.

"Do I see aright?" he said: "is it the highborn Count Gerhard of Holstein I have the honour to salute?"

"Quite right, sir knight," answered the bluff, merry gentleman; "and, if I am not mistaken, you were my fortunate rival at the Swedish coronation tourney, last year--Sir Peter Hessel. Is it not so? and now, quite a drost, I hear?"

The knight gave an affirmative, by modestly bowing.

"You here behold a fortunate youth, my lords," continued Count Gerhard, turning to his companions: "this young gentleman can already boast of standing in higher favour at the Danish court than myself and some princely vassals of the blood. He wears the fair Queen Agnes' colours, and, as you perceive, watches over kingdom and country, like a true drost."

The strange knights smiled, and the lanky jester made up a droll face, while he set his bells a-jingling, and bowed before the drost until his nose almost touched the ground, the fox's tail flying over his cap, and striking the knight on the hand.

Drost Peter cast a careless look at the buffoon, and, with quiet self-possession, turned towards the princely lord. "The brave and wise Count Gerhard does not envy me the colours I wear," he began; "and, if you think I am not worthy of them, sir count, it is still open to you to settle the dispute; but only with sword and lance, and not with jeers and empty jinglings, or flaps from the fox-tail of your jester. Weariness, after unusual exertions, surprised me here for a moment. If, on this account, you think I am not so vigilant a servant of the king and country as beseems a drost, I nevertheless feel confident that I can vie in vigilance with you, or any gentleman of princely blood who calls himself a friend of the royal house of Denmark."

"You understand a jest, then, fair Drost Hessel?" answered the count, with a good-natured smile. "It was far from my wish to offend such a man as you. Only, you must not be angry with me, that, with a sincere heart, I hate your good fortune with a certain lady, and envy your last prize at the tourney. I accept with pleasure your invitation to break a lance with you upon occasion, and will most heartily settle your disputed rank as the fairest lady's knight: not at all in enmity, sir drost, but in all friendliness, cheerfully and pleasantly, as it becomes brave and honourable knights to contend. Do not be offended with my long-legged old man there," he continued, pointing to the jester: "he has, at present, a privilege with me and my friends, and intended nothing amiss. With every respect for honour, I do not think it sits so loosely on either me or others, that a privileged fool can shake it off with a fox's tail. You might even stand in need of such a fellow. In these very serious times, it is certainly highly necessary that one should keep a fool to jest for him, when he can no longer jest himself. It is, besides, both comely and christian-like, I think, to remind us that we are all as fools before our Lord. Now peace and good understanding."

As he concluded, he held forth his hand in a friendly manner, and the young knight accepted this token of reconciliation with joy. He now learned that Count Gerhard had just come over the Belt with his followers, on his way to Nyborg, to participate in the festivities at the Dane-court about to be held there. As Drost Peter was proceeding in the same direction, they soon agreed to travel in each other's company, and to start as soon as the count's followers had refreshed themselves.

While the newly-arrived guests sat merrily down to the table, which was still abundantly furnished with what they required, Drost Peter left the apartment. He proceeded to the kitchen, where he found Henner Friser and his granddaughter, prepared for their journey; and, having given the old man his brief dispatch to the warden of Harrestrup, he hastened their flight.

Old Henner had now his weapons and armour brought him, and quietly and thoughtfully equipped himself. With the long spear in his hand, the Frisian hempen mail on his breast, and the old rusty steel bow in a leather thong upon his back, he then took the young knight by the hand, to bid him adieu, and pressed it fervently, without saying a word. With tears in her dark eyes, the little Aasé seized the drost's hand, and pressed it to her lips, unable to say more than, "Thanks, sir knight. Farewell!" He patted her kindly on the cheek, and now first perceived the maiden's singular beauty, and that blending of dignity and childlike simplicity, which caused her countenance to beam with so much intelligence.

Claus Skirmen, also, seemed to expect a tender parting with Aasé. He had assumed a fearless air, not to appear moved, or to betray what was secretly passing in his heart; but she drove him, with her mantle, playfully towards his master, while she dried her eyes, and skipped out of the kitchen.

Before sunrise, Drost Peter, with Count Gerhard and his followers, rode merrily away through the streets of Middelfert. Claus Skirmen followed on his norback, along with the count's most grave jester. The bold young squire looked once more in the direction of the quay. There stood the armourer Troels, among a number of burghers and porpoise-hunters, all silently and earnestly regarding a little skiff, which was making way, with a favourable wind, across the Belt,

and from which Henner Friser and his granddaughter still beckoned them a friendly farewell.

It was a beautiful spring morning. A light mist hovered upon the meadows. Bright dew-pearls trembled glitteringly in the dawn, on the slender cobwebs, amidst the newly-sprung bushes by the road-side. The knights had arrived at a height just beyond Middelfert. The sun now arose directly before them, enlivening the magnificent landscape, while a thousand larks poured forth their lively songs overhead.

As the travellers rode leisurely along, the better to enjoy the charming scene, a tall, lanky horseman galloped swiftly past them: he was dressed as a fisherman, with a large hairy cap drawn over his eyes. The knights had not taken much notice of him; but Claus Skirmen rode hastily up to his master. "That was Chamberlain Rané, sir drost!" he said, eagerly: "his sharp fox's nose stuck out beneath his cap. Shall I after him?"

"It is not requisite," answered Drost Peter, knitting his brows. "If he travels this way, we shall meet him, time enough, at Nyborg."

"But, should *he* speak first with the king, sir, you know well how it will go."

"That I know very well," answered the drost: "let him ride on."

The young squire was silent, and discreetly returned to his former station, behind his master and his distinguished companions.

"A magnificent country!" exclaimed Count Gerhard, surveying, with delight, the shining, fragrant meadows, which, gilded by the morning sun, lay beautifully extended before his happy, cheerful eyes.

"Truly so," answered Drost Peter, with a melancholy seriousness. "Were the people as happy as the land is fair and pleasant to behold, Denmark were still a terrestrial paradise. But we have come into the world a few generations too late, noble count. It was quite other times to those who lived in the youthful days of Waldemar Seier, or in the days of his exalted father."

"Not only is the land the same, sir drost," said the count, "but the people, at bottom, are also the same. Let only a great Waldemar once more arise among you, and you will have the renowned old days again. The glory you now deplore made many eyes overflow, in the time of my brave ancestors; and we counts of Holstein have no great reason to desire a renewal of their splendour. Yet I were but an indifferent knight, if I did not admire these glorious times; and I do not blame any Dane who regrets them. But what say you of our young Prince Erik--the little king, as we may already call him? I know he has you for his instructor in the art of arms, and he ought to be half a knight already."

"On him now repose my hopes, and those of every Danish heart," replied the drost; "and, if it please God, we shall not be ashamed of it. Allow time for the bud to expand, and I promise you, at least, that none in the land shall do a cowardly or unrighteous deed with impunity; and that is much. Denmark, to be happy, requires at all times a great man upon the throne. The glorious days that it would be imperishable honour to win, I do not expect to be brought about in our times. A hundred years hence, and perhaps no one will remember the names we now hear most frequently at the court of Denmark; but the pillars that support a tottering throne stand not there in vain, though they may be hidden beneath its ruins, and forgotten."

"Whom do you reckon among the pillars, then, sir drost, besides yourself?" inquired Count Gerhard, in a half-jocular tone, and as if unwilling to enter too deeply into a conversation so serious, that did not comport with his habitual careless gaiety.

"I regret that I cannot yet number myself among the meritorious men of the country, and deserving adherents of the royal house," replied the young drost, modestly; "but, should I live to become as old and sagacious as our brave John Little, as stout and bold as David Thorstenson or Benedict Rimaardson, and as wise as the prior of Antvorskov, our learned Master Martin, I should hope to earn a name that, in our times, at least, no friend of Denmark and the Danish monarchy should forget."

"In troth, four brave and able men are those," replied the count. "And yet, I have heard say that old Sir John is a stern, hard-hearted taskmaster."

"He is a strict and upright man, and must, therefore, in such lax and lawless times, hear of much wickedness," said the drost, zealously. "He holds by law and justice, and makes no distinction between the peasant and the prelate. But whilst he is stern and bold, he is also sagacious and prudent: he effected the reconciliation with Archbishop Jacob, and relieved the country from ban and interdict--he was umpire in the dispute for the Swedish crown, and told King Magnus some hard truths--and he was not afraid to take part against his own king when, last year, he was judge respecting the inheritance of the princesses. A more upright and able man you cannot show me in Denmark."

"Now, indeed, I know that he is your pattern of a statesman," replied the count, with a smile; "and I have a great regard for the man. But the learned gentleman you mention, you must admit, with all his piety and wisdom, to be a great fool, nevertheless. I can readily believe that he is a

great theologian and philosopher; but when he comes with his antiquities and his logicorum, or whatever it is called, he does not concern himself about those he may be talking to, and, with his learning, almost drives laymen crazy. Come hither, Daddy Longlegs: thou canst show us how the learned gentleman behaves himself--him we saw with the Count of Hennegau last year--he who had come straight from Paris, and who had made the learned discovery--Master Morten Mogesen."

"Magister Martinus de Dacia, surnamed Magni Filius, which signifies 'Son of the Great,'" said the half-learned jester, pedantically. "No learned man would condescend to call himself Master Morten Mogesen, after having once passed to the other side of the isthmus." Here he suddenly assumed the grave demeanour of a schoolman, drew himself up, and spoke in a kind of mysterious whisper.

"Capital! there we have the man exactly!" exclaimed the count, laughing.

Maintaining the same posture, the jester began a discourse, full of logical terms, on the importance of adequately understanding the Martinian modi significandi in logica.<sup>[12]</sup>

The complete caricature of the famous Master Martin's entire mode and manner, as well as of his voice and countenance, amused Count Gerhard exceedingly: he held his sides, and laughed until tears ran from his eyes. The two young knights belonging to his train also laughed immoderately; and Drost Peter smiled in spite of himself, notwithstanding that the jest highly displeased and vexed him.

"I must confess, sir count," he said, gravely, as soon as the general laughter permitted him to speak, "your jester perfectly understands how to make sensible people ridiculous, by imitating and exaggerating their personal defects and foibles, excluding, however, whatever is worthy and honourable in their character, which grimacing cannot counterfeit. In my young days, this was called making faces at people, and, as a malicious kind of waggery, was rewarded with a switch and a sound drubbing. The famous Master Martin is my preceptor and confessor; and those who, after this explanation, continue to jeer or find fault with him, were it even yourself, illustrious count, shall have to do with me, as long as I can move an arm or raise my knightly sword."

"Now, you must permit me to indulge my humour at your own expense, sir drost," replied the count, still laughing. "Are people in Denmark such barbarians, that they have neither sense to enjoy the frank mimic art themselves, nor allow others to be amused with it? What signify to me your learned confessor's virtues, when I require only his follies to promote my health and exercise my lungs in an innocent, good-natured manner? If, indeed, we must fall out about that, sir knight, at the proper time and place it will afford me an excellent joke; but as I never fight for trifles in the morning, or upon an empty stomach, we can, if it please you, defer it until we have had dinner at Odense. In the meanwhile, let me assure you that I have a great esteem for your learned Master Martin, and heartily believe him to be a worthy and distinguished man."

"Whom I honour and esteem, I can never make a jest of," replied Drost Peter, zealously. "It may, perhaps, be the fashion in other countries; but, praise to God, we Danes do not yet understand it."

"That is, indeed, a fault with all of you," replied the count; "and therefore you are often, with injustice, regarded as simple-minded, although, in fact, it is only the want of a gay, light humour. You are, in consequence, as much one-sided in your praise as in your blame. Human nature is not yet perfect. It promotes truth, and nourishes humility, when one has an eye for the defective as well as for the excellent, as they lie in heaps in this fair, comical world. I know no one who has not his folly and his ridiculous side: with the most distinguished men, this is the more perceptible; and my best friends may perceive that I laugh at what is ridiculous in them, while I respect their virtues as they deserve. The same freedom I allow to every one who knows me; and, should you ever feel disposed to laugh at my expense, you will see that it does not annoy me. Come, Daddy Longlegs, show this gentleman how I behave myself when seriousness turns me crazy."

The jester bowed upon his horse in a respectful manner, and then assumed a comical expression of great good humour, which speedily passed from laughter to the deepest earnestness, and, from that, to the most uncontrollable fury. To carry out this farce in a fitting manner, he drew his wooden sword, and attacked the company, without distinction, like a madman.

"Hold, hold! Enough, Longlegs! You will drive our horses wild, and that will be confoundedly bad," shouted the count, reining in his steed with difficulty, while he laughed, and rubbed his left arm, upon which the jester had dealt him a blow.

"If this be the way in which people divert themselves at your court, sir count, I have not more to complain of than yourself," said Drost Peter, laughing; "but still, you have not convinced me of the propriety of your singular amusement."

Jesting in this friendly manner, they continued their journey to Odense, where Count Gerhard and the knights were to dine. When they recommenced their journey towards Nyborg, in the afternoon, their little difference appeared to be altogether forgotten. The count and Drost Peter



had now become such good friends, that they had sent their followers in advance, to be able to discourse together more freely, and without interruption. Their conversation was of the Dane-court, which was to be held on the following day at Nyborg, and respecting the unhappy dispute with Duke Waldemar, who had laid claim to the entire kingdom, and insisted upon his heirship to Alsen and many of the crown possessions.

"For my part, they may decide the matter to-morrow as they please," said Count Gerhard, with apparent indifference; "but, if you would know my opinion, sir drost, I must honestly confess that I consider the young duke to be in the right, so long as he only demands his ancestral fief intact, and does not aim at higher objects. The son can never forget what his father, the unfortunate Duke Erik, was obliged to undergo. His right of succession to the dukedom was unquestionable; but he was feasted with empty promises, until, at length, he became maddened, and appealed to the umpire which every prince and knight carries by his side. I do not blame him for that; but, that he became a pious hang-the-head when that miscarried, and died of vexation in a cloister, was stupid. The manner in which they have since treated the son, you cannot defend; for it is unnecessary. Had you been well advised in time, it would never have happened."

"But you must, nevertheless, confess that it was in the highest degree unjust, and a matchless piece of foolhardiness," interrupted Drost Peter, warmly.

"I know what you would say," continued the count; "but the one injustice has now taken the other by the tail. Duke Waldemar, as the king's ward by compulsion, might have grown old and gray before he could obtain a foot of land of his ancestor's fief, had he not, while a youth, taken the bull by the horns, and manfully insisted upon his rights. He managed the matter bravely, and it might now be amicably settled. But why do they continue, so meanly and pitifully, to irritate him, and withhold the beggarly islets from him? Hence the entire misfortune. But for this injustice, he would scarcely have opened his mouth so wide, and threatened to swallow the whole of Denmark. Now he is of age, and has become too strong for you: he is haughty and unmanageable, and you must beware how you hold out the rod to him. These are troublous times, sir drost. The discontent of the nobles happens opportunely for the duke. But do not let us any longer think on these perplexing matters. I do not mix myself up in state affairs, so long as I am left in peace. I am going, as I said, to the Dane-court, to amuse myself, and to see the charming Queen Agnes; and that, you must confess, is a fair and legitimate object for my journey."

At the last turn which the count gave to the conversation, Drost Peter blushed, and appeared to hesitate. "The homage you would pay our noble queen, sir count," he began, gravely, "she most truly deserves, and no one can blame you that you do not yield in courtesy to any of our Danish chivalry; but, that you travel to the Danish court for that purpose alone, I cannot credit. If you intend to support Duke Waldemar's audacious demands, consider it well. The independence of the crown and kingdom is at stake. If they do not allow the matter to be legally settled by umpires, and if both sides are not contented with such an arrangement, a sanguinary civil war is to be apprehended."

"As I have already told you, sir drost, I do not in any way mix myself up in these state affairs. Is it certain, then, that the whole court, with the fair and lovely queen, is at Nyborg?"

"That, at least, was the determination," replied Drost Peter, coldly, feeling much annoyed by the count's frankness, which he appeared to consider as injurious to the queen's person and the royal house. "I think it singular, sir count," he continued, with suppressed indignation, "that you should express so unreservedly what every discreet knight and admirer of beauty is wont only to display in his colours or on his shield; especially in a case like this, where knightly homage has its narrow and prescribed limits. I cannot reconcile this extreme admiration for the fair with your affliction as a widower."

"I have, in general, a quiet and contented mind, sir drost," replied the count, carelessly; "and that accounts for it, you may be assured. I contract my narrow world more than is consistent with my health and happiness. What pleases or displeases me I can make no secret of, least of all before friends; and if you find any singularity or amusement in that, you are welcome. I am glad when I can reconcile my pleasures with those of others."

"But this candour and amusement of your's, sir count, I consider as offensive to the exalted lady whose colours I bear with profound respect, as well as to my master and king himself; and you must excuse me, if I venture to disturb your calm and happy humour."

"So, so!" interrupted the count, suddenly changing his air of indifference for one of the utmost sternness. "Is that the case? Now I know what I have to expect, and shall be at your service immediately, as I promised you in the morning. But, first, I will make my candour intelligible, sir drost. If you come in harness against me, for my undisguised attachment to your exalted mistress, I shall only see established the truth of certain unintelligible rumours, which you are probably as well acquainted with as I am."

"Rumours?" rejoined the young drost, becoming fiery red: "if they are rumours that sully my own honour, or that of a more exalted personage, they are liars and slanderers who utter them, and shameless niddings who credit them."

"What respects the exalted lady who suffers most from these rumours," returned the count,

with a look of fire, "I am far from believing. But, as regards you, my young high-flying gentleman, I have reason now to believe that the height to which fortune has carried you has made you somewhat giddy, and that the eagle on your crest spreads his wings so wide that they stand in need of clipping."

Drost Peter became pale with indignation, and grasped his sword.

"I might choose other means to bring you back to reflection, and to awake you from a mad and perilous dream," continued the enraged count: "you walk, with closed eyes, upon a precipice. I need only mention your name, at the proper time and place, to see you fall headlong; but I dream, in a manner, the same dream myself. I readily admit that, in me, it is a folly, leading only to a bedlam: but that is my affair. My madness is still, at least, disinterested; and I do not use it as a degrading means of soaring aloft by a woman's favour. I have not yet, like you, brought our noble mistress into evil repute, by improper familiarities before the eyes of others. As her true knight and defender, I intend now to chastise your insolence. My sword is drawn, sir drost--defend yourself!"

Like two flashing beams, the swords of both knights descended and met. They fought long, with the greatest ardour, but with about equal skill, without either being able to inflict on the other any considerable wound. After a time, Drost Peter recovered his self-possession, and his blows did not fall so fast, but were better directed. On the other hand, Count Gerhard's arm and shoulder bled; and, becoming furious, he struck so wildly about him, in all directions, that the most skilful swordsman could not reckon on parrying all his blows. Drost Peter was already bleeding from several wounds, and his strength began to fail him; but now his infuriated antagonist, meaning to inflict a mortal wound in his neck, laid himself entirely open. The wounded knight dexterously availed himself of this critical moment, and suddenly disarmed the count, at the same time wounding him deeply in the breast, when Gerhard fell back on his horse, and the sword dropped from his hand. Scarcely had the decisive stroke been given, ere Drost Peter, springing from his horse, came to his antagonist's assistance; but, before he could reach him, the count sank, fainting, from the saddle.

Like a practised surgeon, Drost Peter immediately sought for the wound, and found it deep, but not mortal. He took the necessary bandages, and a healing salve, which he usually carried at his saddle-bow, and, when the count again opened his eyes, he found himself bound up most carefully. His rage had disappeared, and his countenance again assumed its gay good humour.

"It was, in truth, a warm tussle, that had not much fun in it," he said. "I have besmeared you vilely, drost. Your wounds bleed freely, and yet you have bound mine first. That is more than I could have expected from a rival. Suffer me now to do you a similar service: or can you do it yourself? I am a bad hand at it." He would have risen, but fell back with faintness.

"Your wound is tolerably deep, but not dangerous, noble count," said Drost Peter: "when you have somewhat recovered your strength, I shall assist you to your saddle. I think, indeed, we may reach Nyborg, if we travel gently. You have so hacked and hewed me, right and left, contrary to all rule, that I shall have enough to do to patch all the slits. But they are nothing to signify. The chink in the neck incommodes me the most: I believe you had a special wish to behead me."

"Naturally enough," replied the count; "unless, indeed, the head had not supplanted me with the fair lady, in whose honour we shall now present ourselves, like live hashed-meat, at the Dane-court. I have not, however, cut you so deep in the neck, but that your head can sit steadily. And, now that I think of it, it was but an absurd, confounded rumour we quarrelled about. You have hewed me altogether so bravely, that I cannot longer believe any ill of you."

Drost Peter had, in the meantime, bound a linen cloth about his bleeding neck, and, for this purpose, had been obliged to unloose the ruby rosary to which the amber bead was attached. With a quiet smile, he held out the trinket to his wounded antagonist.

"In my own justification, I shall inform you, excellent Count Gerhard, that this pearl is a love-token from my future wife. I have not seen her, indeed, since she played with dolls, and I myself rode a cock-horse; but still she is my destined bride: I promised this, with childish thoughtlessness, to my dying father. She now only presents herself to my mind as an innocent, angelic child--a half-forgotten vision. Perhaps I shall not be able to love her when I again see her. Nevertheless, to none other shall I give my hand; and, by my knightly honour, I am not conscious of any faithlessness to her. What I feel towards our common exalted mistress is only admiration and chivalrous respect, which neither love nor hate shall deprive me of."

"Here is my hand!" exclaimed Count Gerhard, heartily. "We two are trusty friends in life and in death. He who, from this day forward, says an evil word of Drost Peter Hessel, shall have his nose and ears hacked off by me, as sure as my name is Count Gerhard."

Drost Peter heartily reciprocated his warm grasp, and assisted him upon his horse. He then sprang quickly into his own saddle, and, with friendly interchange of confidence, the wounded knights leisurely continued their journey.

It was late in the evening as they approached Nyborg. They were riding northward, between Helletoft and Sprottoft, where the road leads to the town, which, however, could not yet be seen,

on account of the great wood of oak and beech which concealed it from the land side. It was a fine, clear, spring evening. The waning moon had just risen, and lighted up the knotted oaks, with their still naked branches; while the newly-blossomed beeches formed, as it were, over the travellers, the arches of a peaceful temple. The warm combat and its consequences, as well as the friendly relations that had since been established between the knights, rendered them thoughtful, and they now rode in silence through the wood, busied, seemingly, with their own reflections, while, from the adjacent copse, the thrilling notes of the nightingale fell upon their ears.

"But how far are we now from the town? I thought we had been in its vicinity," said Count Gerhard, at length, a little impatiently, under the smarting of his wound. "Another time, perhaps, you may put a better edge upon your sword, Drost Peter: it will tear the flesh less, and go a little deeper. I cannot bear to be scratched to death."

"Had it gone a finger's-breadth deeper, noble count, we had not heard the nightingales together this evening," replied Drost Peter. "But, God and our lady be praised! there is no danger, and the wound will not trouble you long, if you be only a little careful. I know my salve: it is from Henrik Harpestræng's prescription."

"May your words prove true," returned the count. "He certainly spread the plaster for Waldemar Seier's eye. But how shall I manage in this plight?" he continued, somewhat annoyed: "I shall not be able to show myself at the palace in this figure, like a ruffled cock, and I am not much acquainted with the town. Is there an ordinary inn?"

"Of inns there is no lack, noble sir. Since the Dane-court has been held here so frequently, the little town has been wonderfully extended. But, since you cannot go wounded to the palace, to frighten all the queen's fair maids, accept of a lodging and attendance with me."

"With you, drost bachelor? When, then, did you turn citizen, and become a Nyborg housekeeper?"

"Last year, if you will, though on a small scale. In my position, you know, I have scarcely a home anywhere. My ancestral seat, at Harrestrup, I rare see once a year. When the court is at Rypen, I reside with the prince in the palace; but that is seldom long. When here, I lodge alone. The palace can scarcely accommodate the numerous princely lords who here assemble for the Dane-court. I have, therefore, followed the example of the last drost, and, like Knight John, built for myself a good stone house, by the Nordre-Dam. There, I am near the court and palace, in the midst of the counsellors and king's tenants, and yet my own master."

"Ay, that is well. I am your guest, then, without farther ceremony. And since, after the good old fashion, you understand how to heal as well as how to break the skin, it could not have happened better."

"It is certainly the last time this hand shall perform such a piece of surgery on you," replied Drost Peter, holding out a friendly hand to his companion. "Meantime, you must accept of a bachelor's accommodation. I am not much versed in housekeeping; but my old foster-mother, Dorothy, is well skilled in it. I intended, previously, to be your host to-night, and my squire has taken care to provide an entertainment."

"A goblet of potent wine," said the count, "is needful after such a bloodletting."

"That is not exactly in accordance with old Master Henrik's receipt-book; but, still, with your strong constitution, I think you may venture it."

"A fig for your receipt-book and old Master Henrik! He was only a clerk: what should he understand of the constitution of a count of Holstein? Wine I can bear, were I even lying in extreme unction, like my blessed father--God rest his soul! I shall not die, as long as I can swallow a good draught of wine, nor shall a heart-sore of any kind ever overcome me. There are not, indeed, many people who get fat upon unfortunate love," he added, with a light sigh; "but still, with wine and a jester, one may succeed. I may not be able to boast of my success in love, yet, as you may perceive, I am in good condition."

"You still sorrow, then, over the death of your young wife," said Drost Peter, sympathisingly; "that I could well see."

"Sorrow! Who dares to say that I sorrow?" interrupted the count. "When any one grieves at my court, I give my fool permission to bang him with cats'-tails. Now, since you are my trusty friend," he continued, "I shall tell you how matters stand with me. Had I seen the Danish queen before last year, I had still been a bachelor perhaps, not a widower--and I had never wooed a Swedish princess. It is accursed state policy that makes almost every prince a fool; but I had the reward I merited. The princess found the Holstein count too poor to live with, and so she died; and all the honour I have gained is that of being son-in-law to a fool of an ex-king, whom any Danish knight could tear into shreds, and who is now running about from land to land, like a madman, along with a bastard woman."

For some time they rode along in silence.

"No one can have great respect for your unfortunate father-in-law," said Drost Peter, thoughtfully, as he dwelt, in imagination, on the Swedish King Waldemar's dethronement. "He did no honour to his great name, it is true; but, still, he was king of Sweden, by law and right. To me, it is a sad thought, that the unfortunate example has been set to other nations, of a crowned and anointed king being so overthrown. It was one of our proud Stig Andersen's doings; and therein he exceeded the king's mandate and authority. The Swedish people will not better themselves by the bargain: for a weak and sensual, but a good-natured, and, at times, even a devout king, they have taken a strong and prudent, but a fierce and sanguinary tyrant. For the despised log, they have taken a hydra. King Magnus has now taught them, with his headsman's axe, that no Swedish knight carries his head so high, that he may not strike it off."

"An able king is the Swedish Magnus--that you must, nevertheless, admit," replied the count. "I do not boast of him because he is my brother-in-law; but this I know, that he is not called Magnus, or Ladislaus, in vain. If he does, at times, strike off the heads of some of the haughty great ones, still the small have reason to extol him: he has put locks upon their doors in earnest, and suffers not petty tyrants to rule where he sways the sceptre."

"There you are right, Count Gerhard. He thinks that one great tyrant is quite enough for Sweden, and, with your and Queen Hedwig's permission, that he himself should be the man. Matters are not yet come to this extremity in Denmark, however bad they may be; but if Stig Andersen and his friends were at liberty to dethrone and set up kings at their pleasure, you would soon see in what a sea of blood we should swim."

With such conversation, they arrived at the town-gate, where they were stopped by an armed burgher, who, in the governor's name, sternly, demanded, who they were, and whither they were going. As soon as Drost Peter had announced his own name and that of Count Gerhard of Holstein, the stern officer made a profound bow, but still reminded the distinguished travellers of the seventh article in the civic law of Nyborg.

"Good," replied the drost: "it is right to remind us thereof." And they rode on without hindrance.

"They must be very strict here," said the count, "when the drost himself must be reminded of the law. What have their tiresome bye-laws to do with us?"

"It was in his orders," answered Drost Peter. "No stranger must here carry his weapon farther than to his inn; and every traveller must be apprised of this. The presence of the king, and of the numerous strangers, render such a precaution necessary. Of what use are strict laws, unless they are enforced? The man did not know me; but he knew that I do not suffer myself to be made an exception in these matters."

"The plague! Are we prisoners of war here, in the midst of peace? This is ridiculous!" exclaimed the count. "Is the monstrous Riben bye-law in force here? God preserve us from the Ribe-Ret! as we say in Kiel."

"Let us not talk too loud about this, noble count," replied Drost Peter, riding closer up to him, while he continued, in a subdued tone: "it is truly a great misfortune, when the law itself renders its transgression necessary. What has made the Ribe-Ret to be so decried there, has here, in part, fallen into disuse. In some points, however, the bye-laws here are too severe, and almost cruel. If it please God, in due time it shall be otherwise."

They now rode past the old Lady Kirk, which, with its lofty spire, stood in a green space, called Helletoft, where also stood several separate buildings, in the same Gothic style as the church, with pointed gables and small round windows.

"Who lives here?" inquired the count: "it looks as still and dreary as a convent."

"Here abide the clerks and vergers of Our Lady's Kirk," answered Drost Peter. "If you yearn after life and merriment, they will not be wanting here, when we pass to the palace. There are twice as many people in the town now as there are at other times, and, on such occasions, the mead and strong ale are not stinted. Fighting and disorder follow as a consequence; but these are, perhaps, looked after with greater vigilance, and punished with more severity, than is requisite. Those armed fellows you see there are the governor's people: they, too, will probably stop us."

It happened as Drost Peter had surmised: the travellers found their horses seized by six armed burghers, who demanded whether they did not know the bye-law, that they rode armed. Upon the drost's explanation, that they had just entered the town, and were riding to their dwelling, they were allowed to proceed; followed, however, by three of the strict officials, to watch their motions.

"Here the king should be secure enough," whispered the count, much annoyed. "The fellows look upon us as if they suspected a traitor in every stranger."

"Unfortunately, there is reason for it, noble count; but here we are accustomed to it. It disturbs no burgher's merriment. Hear you, now, how they are singing there, by the old stone house with the pointed gable? It is the burgher-watch of the Town-hall. Now they are drinking

the king's health."

"There are not a few. Has Nyborg so many burghers?"

"These are only a third part of them. The rest are on guard at the palace. The king has not more devoted subjects. He has also done much for the town, and specially favours it. Were he not in greater security here than elsewhere, the Dane-court would be removed to some other town, and then there would be an end to Nyborg's prosperity."

They now rode past the palace. It was a strong building, of considerable extent, with four wings, built of free-stone and burnt bricks, and protected by a massive wall, a deep moat, and four lofty turrets. From the small round windows streamed the light of numerous torches, and the music of flutes and violins was audible. A promiscuous crowd was in motion outside the walls, but without much noise, and with an order and gentleness amounting almost to anxiety, whilst the armed officials went to and fro, frequently exhorting them to quietness.

"What is to be seen here?" inquired the count.

"Over the wall there may be seen the dancing in the knights' saloon," replied Drost Peter.

Count Gerhard became attentive: he observed a tall, majestic female figure flit past the middle window, and he stopped his horse.

"The queen!--see, the queen!" he heard the curious spectators whisper to one another.

"It is the duke she is dancing with," said one.

"Nay, that it is not: it is the handsome young Drost Hessel. Look, how proud he dances! Lofty thoughts he has, you may trow," exclaimed another.

"Come, noble count," said Drost Peter, hastily, "let us not get into the crowd, with our unruly horses. We are now close to my dwelling."

They rode on a little way, and stopped at a dark-looking house, where, on the high stone steps, stood a squire, bearing a torch.

"You are arrived at last, sir," cried Claus Skirmen, springing towards him with the torch. "Has any mischance befallen you? I ventured not to disobey your commands by leaving the house myself; but I have sent all the servants out in search of you."

"We have had a little encounter with a pair of hasty young knights on our way," said Drost Peter, "and my noble guest has been somewhat severely wounded. Assist him carefully from his horse. Is all in order?"

"As you have commanded, sir. But are you not also wounded? Shall I bring a surgeon?"

"That is unnecessary, so long as you and I are here. We would have no talk about the matter. Attend only to the count."

Not without wincing and sundry oaths did the wounded Count Gerhard dismount from his horse, and ascend the high stone steps, where his two knights and the lanky jester received him with sympathising attentions.

"A truce with condolences," said the count. "I am both bound and salved. Let me only get to table, and have something to live on."

Claus Skirmen went hastily forwards, and conducted the count, through an ante-room, into a spacious vaulted apartment, where stood a covered table, with tall wax-lights, and well garnished with provisions and bright silver wine-flags.

Count Gerhard regarded these preparations with satisfaction, and immediately threw himself into a chair; and, the better to seat himself, he released his sword from its belt. As he held it in his hand, he recollected the intimation he had received at the city-gate.

"Sdeath!" he said, "if we must behave as you say, sir drost, we must now, like prisoners of war, hand you over our weapons, since you are host."

"Now, indeed," replied Drost Peter, "it is well you recollected it; for, truth to say, I had forgotten it; and, if I had not, I should have been forced to request you to do so."

"But if now I should not obey the mandate," inquired the count, "what are the consequences?"

"If you were ignorant of the law, and by a solemn oath could pledge yourself to that effect, the penalty is only a mark-penny to the governor, and one to the town. The same penalty is inflicted on the housekeeper who does not inform his guest of the law."

"But, now that I know this stupid ordinance, and yet will not allow myself to be disarmed, what

great misfortune follows?"

"Without being displeased, allow me to answer you in the words of the law itself, Count Gerhard. 'If the guest is reminded, and wears his weapon nevertheless,' it says, 'then, with the same spear, sword, or knife, shall he be run through.'"

"Oh, what a mischance! Not through the heart or gizzard?"

"Through the hand, noble count. There hangs the table of the law: you can read it yourself."

"The devil take such stupidities! There lies my sword. You do the same, gentlemen." With these words Count Gerhard cast his sword into a corner. His knights followed his example.

Drost Peter took his own sword, and placed it by the side of the others. "I must submit to the same law," he said, with a courteous bow; "and I hope, my honoured guests, that you will not think ill of me, on account of its strictness here. Be seated, gentlemen, and let us be merry."

This invitation to merriment was supported by the jester, who had already seated himself, and now arose with a look of the most grave importance. He approached Drost Peter with solemn step, and, with a deep bow, handed him his wooden sword. "Take care of that, honoured sir host," he said: "it is the famous sword Tyrping, which cannot be unsheathed without shedding blood. Look to it, that it does no mischief in this excellent city."

Drost Peter handed him his sword back again, as a mark of honour, at which they all laughed heartily, and took their places in the heavy, high-backed oaken chairs. The articles of silver, and the costly table appointments, testified that they were in the house of a person of opulence. Of male attendants, and supple pages, there was no lack; and yet it appeared extraordinary, that the polished floor was not swept, and that the dust lay thick on the backs of the chairs, and upon the window-sills.

"Where is old Dorothy?" asked Drost Peter of the squire, whilst Count Gerhard and the strangers were engaged with the viands. "She was wont to keep the house as bright as a shield."

"Alas, that is true, sir," answered Skirmen; "but poor Dorothy Brushbroom has gone quite crazy. She took a little bit of lead from a window of Our Lady's Kirk, to cure a girl who was bewitched. She has been thrown into the thieves' hole, and, it is said, will be sentenced to-morrow."

"God pity her!" exclaimed Drost Peter, warmly, rising from the table. "The unfortunate creature!"

"What is the matter, my worthy host?" inquired Count Gerhard. "Has anything disastrous happened in the house? With wife and child I know you are not embarrassed. What household sorrow, then, can thus trouble a bachelor?"

"A greater affliction than any one trows," answered Drost Peter. "I have an old trusty nurse: she has loved and been with me since I was quite a child. She is a true affectionate soul, who would readily die for me. She is the best wife in the world, and has kept house for me with the greatest order and trustworthiness; but her head is filled with stories of goblins, witches, and dwarfs; and, as soon as any one is taken ill, she believes, in the simplicity of her heart, that they have seen the elfin-king, or have been bewitched by Nixes, and then will she have a remedy of holy church lead, or such-like singular means. Now she is taken and imprisoned for a bit of metal that cannot be worth a doit. The poor creature!"

Some of the gentlemen smiled, and the jester made one of his droll faces.

"Now, what great misfortune is there in this?" inquired Count Gerhard. "The bit of lead you can outweigh with a silver penny. The old soul will be released in a day or two, and, in the meantime, another may sweep your floor."

"It is death to her, Count Gerhard, even if it had not happened in the church. You are not aware of the laws of Nyborg. Every man who is guilty of theft is hanged; but a woman is buried alive."

"And are you all mad, then?" demanded Count Gerhard. "Shall a woman be thus inhumanly punished? Is the crime more atrocious in her than in a man? You jest, sir drost."

"If you do not believe me, noble sir, read for yourself. There are the bye-laws affixed to the door-post. Read but the twenty-ninth article, and you will see that, unfortunately, I am not jesting."

"Read it, Longlegs!" cried out the count to his jester: "I have some difficulty in rising; and, truly, such confounded laws are not worth rising for."

"The twenty-ninth article," commenced the jester, taking up a candle, which threw a light upon the large table of laws on the door-post. "Here I have it. Give ear, my masters: it is the golden word of justice, and a sufficient reason is alleged." He then began to read, in a grave judicial manner: "*What woman soever shall be guilty of theft, and deserves to be hanged, with*

*the stolen goods by her side, shall, for her womanly honour's sake, be buried alive.*' Now, in truth, this is an honour that one takes straightways with him to eternity. It is no transient honour, my masters; and, therefore, it has been reserved for the fair and more fortunate sex."

"Are you, then, insane?" exclaimed the count. "What honour is there in being buried alive?"

"Where is your wisdom, my wellborn sir?" replied the jester: "for a woman, it is manifestly a far more honourable and becoming way of dying, than if she were to be hanged, like a man--like a male thief, on a gallows. Think of the scandal it would occasion her father confessor."

"It is, nevertheless, a madness," exclaimed the count. "Is it out of mere strait-laced modesty that they are so cruel here? May the foul fiend take all clerks and hang-the-heads who give out such laws and regulations! Are you alike scrupulous, Drost Peter? And will you suffer your good old nurse to be buried alive, merely that your wise king's law may not be transgressed?"

"She shall--she must be saved!" exclaimed the young drost, who had hitherto stood silent and thoughtful, with his hand on the document in his breast. "Excuse me, gentlemen: I must to the king." With these words, he left the room.

The seriousness which this circumstance had for a moment called forth was soon dispelled by the efforts of the jester, who, with comic gravity, began a legal discourse on the stern Ribe-Ret, wherein he dwelt more particularly on a certain notorious and scandalous punishment, setting it forth circumstantially, and not exactly in the most becoming manner. He concluded with the well-known Jutlandic joke: "Thank God you are out of the way of the Ribe-Ret, my child; as the old woman said when she saw her son hanging on the gibbet."

Count Gerhard laughed till his eyes ran over, and screamed with pain from the wound in his breast, which his violent laughter had caused to open. He became suddenly pale, and fell back on his chair, without consciousness.

The greatest grief and trouble took the place of the previous mirthfulness. Message after message was dispatched for the surgeon and physician, and all present were seriously alarmed for the count's life. He was carried to bed, and Claus Skirmen undertook, in his master's absence, to tighten the bandages, and stanch the bleeding with wine.

Half an hour passed away: the count still lay insensible, and no physician had arrived. The knights were impatient, and the lanky jester behaved like one out of his wits. He tore his hair, and accused himself of having killed his master with his accursed jokes. The door at length opened, and Drost Peter hurried in. He had been already advised of the critical condition of his guest, and had hastened to his aid. He found the wound properly bound up by his expert squire and pupil. By means of a burnt feather, he at length succeeded in restoring the count to a state of consciousness; and, as soon as he had opened his eyes, the drost's mind was at ease, and he declared him out of danger. For the greater satisfaction of the stranger knights, and of his afflicted, inconsolable jester, Drost Peter sent his squire to the palace, to bring the king's surgeon. In the meanwhile, he desired that they should all leave the apartment, and remained alone with the sick man.

As soon as Count Gerhard had completely recovered his senses, and saw Drost Peter by his bed, he held forth his hand, and nodded. "It was the fault of your cursed Ribe-Ret," he said; "but I must not think more about it, or I shall laugh myself ill again."

"This is not right: you talk too much," said the knightly leech, examining his pulse with satisfaction.

"Ay, but it is right. Although you did not exactly dub me a knight today, you certainly did not dub me a speechless animal. But how got you on with the king and the carlin? Is she to be hanged, or buried alive for her womanly honour's sake?" He was on the point of renewing his laughter, but repressed his desire on feeling the smart of his wound.

"God be praised, she is saved this time!" said Drost Peter; "but with some difficulty: the king was not to be spoken with."

"Then you took her out of prison yourself? That was settling the matter in the right way."

"Nay, Count Gerhard. Rather than I should have dealt so contumaciously with the laws, the unfortunate woman had been left to her fate."

"What the deuce have you done, then?"

"I went to the queen--"

"Aha! I can understand. Happy knight! But why did you not allow me to crave a boon for the poor old creature? I have still a heart in my body, I know; and I should not have risen from the queen's feet, nor taken her hand from my burning lips, till the carlin had been saved, even had it been till gale in the morning."

"You talk too much for your wound, noble count; and you think on matters that do not tend to

calm your blood. I shall now send my liberated nurse to watch over you; and, if you must still talk enthusiastically of beauty, talk so, in God's name, only before her: and sleep well."

So saying, Drost Peter left his merry, sick guest, and immediately afterwards a wrinkled old woman hobbled into the apartment, and sat down by the count's pillow; but he closed his eyes in vexation, and would not notice her.

It was midnight, and Drost Peter walked restlessly up and down his chamber. He had reassured his knightly guests, and left them to repose. But the royal surgeon had not arrived, and the jester would not believe that his master was out of danger. In a closet, by the side of the count's bed-chamber, sat the grave joker, listening at the door, to be at hand at the slightest disturbance he might hear. Drost Peter could not think of going to sleep. He was not, indeed, alarmed for his wounded guest, but still wished to be ready, at any moment, to go to his aid, should he be called by the nurse. His thoughts, besides, were in a tumult, that forbade him to think of repose. His adventure with Henner Friser and little Aasé, and his strong suspicion of the king's participation in the affair, disquieted him. The crafty Chamberlain Rané's escape, and the revenge he might, with reason, apprehend from this royal favourite, ran likewise in his thoughts. Deep suspicions of a conspiracy, of which he had in vain endeavoured to apprise the king, appeared to him now, in the night's loneliness, of greater importance, the more he dwelt upon it. His strife with Count Gerhard, and its occasion, also caused him the greatest uneasiness. The report, so injurious to his own and the queen's honour, which he had first learnt upon this occasion, troubled him more particularly; and he examined with scrupulous care the whole of the last year of his life, from the day he first held conversation with Queen Agnes, at Helsingborg tournament. He could not deny that her beauty and noble feminine graces, as well as her bold and resolute character, exercised a wonderful power over him. He owed, undeniably, to the queen's favour, his rapid rise from a simple knight to be drost of the kingdom; and, though it vexed him much, that he should, in consequence, be blamed as a fortunate adventurer, who had been raised to eminence through a woman's favour, these usual whisperings of envy were not of a nature to drown the voice of bold self-consciousness in his bosom. He was himself fully assured that he was perfectly competent for the high situation he filled, and that the royal house had not a more efficient servant in these dangerous times. Besides, his important vocation as tutor to the young Prince Erik, and as his master in the use of arms, gave to his life an activity, and a degree of importance both to himself and to the kingdom, that he could not regard without a degree of pride; and he entertained a confident expectation that, indirectly, the whole fate of a coming generation, and of Denmark, was in his hands. He stood on a lofty but dangerous eminence, near a tottering throne, and must take heed that he did not become giddy and fall. It was only necessary for some malicious foe to whisper in the king's ear what rumour said concerning the drost and Queen Agnes, to see him carried, within four and twenty hours, a prisoner for life, to the dungeons of Sjöberg, or, indeed, without law or trial, to the rack and wheel.

While these and similar distracting thoughts occupied his mind, a loud knocking was heard at the entrance of the apartment. He started involuntarily, but recovered himself, and opened the door. Astonished, he beheld his young squire, Claus Skirmen, standing, pale and breathless, on the threshold, with a parchment roll and two swords in his hands.

"What is this? What want you so late with me?" demanded the drost, hastily. "You are pale: has anything happened amiss? Say, youth, what is it?"

"Read, sir--read, and take your sword!" replied the squire, handing him the parchment and one of the swords.

He hastily seized both, and, going to the light, he turned pale on recognising the Gothic characters, and the king's well-known seal and signature.

"Deposed!" he said; "and not only so--condemned to secret imprisonment, without law or justice; and this to be carried into execution before the Dane-court commences! How came this unfortunate document into your hands, Skirmen? It is a royal private warrant. Carry it back, or it may cost thy life."

"It concerns your life still more, sir. When you are safe in prison, you are to be secretly murdered. I know it all: I have heard it with my own ears."

"Are you mad? Is it possible? Rané, then--"

"Right, sir. Chamberlain Rané procured this prison-warrant; the rest was hatched by himself and his good friends. He sat triumphantly, with this letter in his hand, in a company of toppers at the palace, along with Duke Waldemar, Master Grand, Count Jacob, and all the gay company with whom we crossed the Belt. I was inquiring, by your command, for the king's own surgeon for Count Gerhard, when I was directed to the western wing of the palace. I had to go along the dark passage that leads to the duke's apartments. The door stood ajar, with only a tapestry hanging before it. I heard your name mentioned: I concealed myself behind the tapestry, and--"

"And you listened: come, out with it! Fair and honourable it was not altogether. And so you heard--"

"What I have told you, sir. Not, indeed, in clear and distinct words; but, by putting one with



the other, I could plainly guess their meaning. You must be got rid of, it was said, and in such a way as that you could not come to light again, in case the king's humour should change. Above all, you are not to receive the least intimation of this, nor to be allowed to have any conversation with the king; and tomorrow betimes, or even to-night, you are to be seized, and secretly imprisoned."

"To-morrow--Trinity Sunday--before the court meets! So, so! But, since it is to be done so early, it shall be done this midnight. So long as I hold this scrap in my hand, time may be gained. It must now be decided who shall first speak with the king. I must ascertain where he sleeps tonight, and whether he has an ear for truth or falsehood on the morrow. But how did you obtain this hellish document? Could they be so careless as to slip the halter when they had it so nearly round my neck?"

"I did not quit my hiding-place till they had drank success to Duke Waldemar, Count Jacob, and Stig Andersen so often, that one might have pricked them all in the eye. I knew there was no danger to the wounded gentleman, but that there was to you, and I did not hesitate on remaining. Rané held out the longest before he got drunk; and they paid him great respect, on account of his relationship to Stig Andersen's wife, and because of his cunning in retaining the king's good opinion, whilst he still remained true to his friends and kinsmen. The duke having promised to procure him the rich Count Mindre-Alf's daughter, they already hailed him as future Count of Tönsberg; and thereupon he drank so deeply, that at length he was obliged to go out to obtain a breath of air, I was not seen; and, as I was alone with him in the dark passage, it was only the turn of a wrist to fling him on the ground, and take the letter from him."

"Then it was not me alone that this concerned? And Rané makes common cause against the king? Heard you aught of what should happen when I am murdered or in prison?"

"Ay, indeed, sir. Horrible things, concerning war, and rebellion, and aid from Sweden and Norway. But I only gave special attention to what referred to you. And, now, do not hesitate a moment, sir. If you will take to flight, our horses shall be saddled immediately."

"Nay, my brave Skirmen. You have never seen your master yield at tourney, nor yet at sharper fighting; much less shall you see him now give way. Here, indeed, I cannot defend my life and honour with this sword; but, if God wills, I will try another, that, without being a traitor to my country, I can use against my lord and king himself. My tongue must now be my sword, and righteousness my shield; now, it concerns not me alone, but the crown and kingdom. The revolt, it seems, is to be aided by Sweden and Norway. Now, then, I must to the king, even should the way to him lie amid serpents. But there must be quietness and vigour. Nothing can be done for three hours more. I will try if I can rest the while. This is now the third night that I have watched. Arouse me as soon as it is day."

"But, for the sake of security, shall I not quietly assemble the servant-men, and arm them?"

"That would be illegal, Skirmen. If I cannot gain life and liberty with justice, with injustice I will not. It is already so, when this blade is in my hand, instead of in the city-governor's. Still, this I will defend, before God and men. Good night."

With that tranquillity which only a pure conscience, strong determination, and utter contempt for his enemies could afford him, Drost Peter threw himself, in his clothes, upon his pallet. "Place the light on my shield, and do not extinguish it," he said to his trusty squire. "And now God guard me! I am weary."

The squire obeyed, and left the chamber. But he did not move three steps from the threshold. With his back against the door, he sat on the stone floor, that he might guard his master's slumbers until the dawn.

Scarcely had the cock crowed, and the first dim gleam of day entered the dark passage through a little grated window, when Claus Skirmen arose, and, opening the door of his master's apartment, he found him in a calm, deep sleep. The squire could scarcely venture to disturb him; but, hearing the sound of footsteps in the street, and the subdued clang of arms, he no longer delayed. "It is morning," he said, "and we are not the only persons who are awake. Resolve quickly, therefore, what you intend to do."

Drost Peter arose, and grasped his sword; but, recollecting himself, he hastily laid it down again. "Nay," he said, "this I will not take with me. No one can yet have legal authority to seize me. I shall venture to awake the king: it concerns his safety, as well as mine. You shall follow me. You can testify, on oath, to what you have heard?"

"That I can, sir. But, still, let us take weapons with us. Who knows what we may encounter? The governor's people are difficult to deal with; and Sir Lavé Little keeps guard at the palace with the halberdiers."

"Sir Lavé! Great God! my little Ingé's father! He was in the duke's train in Jutland, and I trust him not. Yet, perhaps this is fortunate. He was not with the traitors, then, last night?"

"No, sir; he must have arrived the day before yesterday, and entered with old Sir John. Last night, he mounted guard at the palace."

"If the prudent John can trust him, so can I. Come, let us leave the sword. The righteous God must now protect us."

Without farther deliberation, Drost Peter threw his large scarlet mantle about him, placed his feathered hat on his head, and went forth with a firm, determined step. The squire followed him in silence, after once more looking back dejectedly on the forbidden weapon.

To avoid creating an alarm in the house, Drost Peter and his squire went down the stone steps, and closed the door after them. The street was still and deserted. The faint twilight showed them the castle, at a little distance, lying gloomily behind the strong walls, whilst all around it appeared to be still in deep repose, except a few landsknechts, who kept watch outside the locked gate, and who paced backwards and forwards, with measured steps, their halberds and lances in their hands. Drost Peter and his squire approached the palace with rapid strides. The young drost had not omitted to take with him a token, which, by virtue of his important office, gave him a right to demand admittance into the palace, and to the king's person, at all times. This token consisted of a plate of gold, on which was impressed the royal seal, with the two crowns.

With this in his hand, the drost strode forward towards the outer sentinel, and passed the corner house in the broad King-street, when he found himself suddenly stopped, and surrounded by twelve armed burghers. A respectable man, with a large silver staff in his hand, stepped forward from among them, and said, with much seriousness, while he raised his staff: "Sir Drost Peter Hessel, the governor of the town takes you prisoner in the king's name. Be pleased to follow us."

"Not one step," replied Drost Peter, "until you show me my king and master's express order for this treatment."

"I can produce no written order," said the governor; "but that such an order was issued by the king yesterday, and taken from his chamberlain with cunning and violence, by your people, has been proved to me by the testimony of respectable persons. If you will not follow me willingly, you must excuse me if I employ force. Men, do your duty."

The armed burghers drew near to lay hands upon their prisoner. Drost Peter now held out, with an air of bold authority, the token, with the royal seal. "Know you that?" he demanded. "By virtue of my power and authority, as drost of the kingdom, I command you to follow me immediately to the king himself. Unless you can show me an order in the king's own writing, none of you shall dare to lay a hand upon me. If there should happen to be any deceit in this, and I cannot justify myself before the king, I am willing to follow you to prison, or, if the king commands it, to death. But, at present, you must follow me. I am still drost of the kingdom, and your master."

The determination and authority with which he spoke confounded the burghers, who looked at one another, and then at the governor, with perplexity. The latter, also, appeared to be surprised and undecided.

"According to the letter of the law, you appear to be right, sir drost," began the governor; "but what does it avail you to make all this disturbance? You know yourself, better than any one else, that you are deposed from office, and that we are obeying the king's express command. You will not aid your case much, by awaking him at the present hour, to hear your doom from his own lips. Besides, it is strictly forbidden to allow you to approach the palace."

"Not by the king, but by his and my deadly foes," interrupted Drost Peter, with vehemence. "You have allowed yourself to receive an illegal message from those who seek the king's life, and you will hinder me from warning him. If you would not be condemned as traitors to the country, and abettors of treason against the royal person, you will follow me instantly."

"God in mercy preserve us!" broke forth the terrified burghers, one after the other. "What shall we do, sir governor? You must answer for all. We know nothing--"

"If it be true, as you say, that the king's life is in danger," said the governor, hesitatingly, "who tells us, then, that you, yourself, are not a traitor? Appearances are much against you, sir drost. What want you at the palace, at this hour?"

"As you have heard: that which I still shall do, and which you shall not prevent. I will to the king, by virtue of my office, to warn him against traitors. No excuses, governor. Follow me instantly, or it may be as much as your life is worth." Without waiting for a reply, Drost Peter walked rapidly towards the palace, the frightened burghers respectfully giving way before him.

"Very well," said the governor: "we must follow him, if he still commands it; but farther than the halberdiers he shall not go. Take care, however, that he does not escape. And what have you to do with this, young man?" said he to Skirmen, who anxiously followed at his master's heels. "You, perhaps, would assist your cunning master in treating us like fools? Pack off! We have no orders to guard you."

"He will follow me, and you shall permit him," ordered Drost Peter, turning round: "whom I take with me to the king, I answer for."

The governor was silent, and they passed on. The palace sentinels, who knew the drost, objected not to open the gates, but did not deem themselves warranted to admit the burghers and the governor.

"Suffer them to enter on my responsibility--they belong to my train," said the drost.

The governor and burghers were admitted, and they now appeared to entertain a better opinion of their powerful prisoner, who ruled them all in such a wonderful manner. They crossed the court-yard of the palace to the northern wing, which the king himself occupied.

"If this is a mistake, sir drost," said the governor, in an under tone, as they ascended the castle-stairs, "and if I have been deceived by traitors, I entreat you, for God and Our Lady's sake, that you do not lead me and these brave men into trouble. We were acting as we judged best."

"Who gave you the right so to do, governor? You are to act according to law and justice, and not after your own or any other man's judgment. Still, this I know: that you have been deceived. Meantime, let one half of your people remain here on the stairs, that the king may not be disturbed with too much noise. Should the Chamberlain Rané, or any of Duke Waldemar's people, approach from the opposite wing, stop them here, on my responsibility. Do you understand me?"

"It shall be as you command, sir drost," answered one of the burghers, who, with six men, remained behind on the staircase.

The rest followed the drost and his squire to the guard-room. Here, the drost ordered the other burghers to take their station outside the door, with the same instructions, which they received without objection. He then, with his squire and the town-governor, walked into the large guard-room. Twelve knights, armed with long halberds, here guarded the door of the royal closet. Some paced to and fro, without the least noise, on thick woollen matting; others stood in gentle conversation, here and there, about the room. No one was seated: there was not, indeed, a single bench or chair in the apartment. The faint glimmer of a dozen expiring wax-lights blended with the gray dawn. The lights were placed on brackets, beneath bright shields; and, at one end of the hall, glittered the royal arms, on which two lions and two crowns were represented. Over the arms, suspended crosswise, were two variegated banners, in the centre of which the white cross of the national standard was, indeed, to be seen, but almost concealed by the numerous swords, stars, keys, crescents, anchors, wheels, and other arbitrary decorations and symbols that people were accustomed to see on the royal coinage.

When the door was opened, the trabants raised their halberds, and looked with surprise on the intruders.

"The drost--the young Drost Hessel!" said one to the other, saluting him respectfully.

"What brings Drost Peter Hessel here so early?" demanded a man, advanced in years, stepping towards him with a singularly undecided and uneasy countenance, whose frequent changes did not inspire confidence. Like the other knights, he wore a high trabant's cap, with a large plume of feathers, and carried a long halberd, more richly ornamented. At his breast hung a magnificent gold chain, and his short mantle of red lawn was adorned with jewels.

"It may well surprise you, stern Sir Lavé, to see me here at such an unseasonable hour," replied Drost Peter, regarding him with a sharp and penetrating glance; "but, in the execution of my office, I have an important and private matter to lay before the king, and must needs speak with him without delay."

"An important and private matter!" repeated Sir Lavé, changing colour. "I know not that there is any sedition in the town, sir drost; but, even were that the case, I dare not awake the king thus early, so long as the palace is secure and well guarded."

"But, if there should be at this moment secret traitors within the walls of the palace, stern sir knight?" said the young drost, in a half whisper, without taking his keen look from Sir Lavé's disturbed countenance.

"The rood shield us! What is it you say?" whispered the chief of the body-guard, grasping him convulsively by the arm, and drawing him to one side. "From your future father-in-law you can have no secrets, my young friend," he continued, in a soft and trembling voice. "If you think you have discovered a conspiracy, or anything of the kind, inform me, that we may avert the mischief in time. But the thing is impossible. If, however, any of the discontented vassals should have dropped a word that may appear suspicious, consider well what you are about, before you take upon yourself the hateful office of accuser, and, mayhap, bring into mischief brave men, who have only regarded the present posture of affairs with greater freedom. Have you proofs against any one?"

"That I may not say here," replied Drost Peter. "Our private relations, sir knight, must give way to our public duties. I must simply request you to awake the king. That is your duty, when I demand it. In case of need, as you are aware, I do not require to be announced, and no one has a right to deny me admittance."

"That I have yet to learn, my bold young sir," replied the knight, assuming a stern and

consequential air. "Those whom the king entrusts to guard his slumbers may justly demand to know why he is to be disturbed; and I and these gentlemen are commanded to keep guard, that no one, without due reason, disturbs the king's rest."

"This is not the time and place to dispute as to your rights," resumed Drost Peter, with suppressed vehemence. Perceiving the strained attention with which they were regarded by the body-guard, he continued: "Only one word in confidence, Sir Lavé;" and, as he withdrew the perplexed knight more aside, he said mildly, but with a tone of lively interest, "it would grieve me bitterly, Sir Lavé Little, should I be compelled to mention your name in connection with a confederacy, of which it is evident that your faithful friend, old Sir John, can have no idea, seeing the important post you at present occupy here. The company you quitted eight days ago were not friends of the royal house; but I am willing to believe, that, if you then shared their discontents, you do not yet take part in their plans, and that there is still time for you to draw back from an inevitable gulph."

"How? What plans? I do not understand you, Drost Peter. You will never accuse me for opinions that a free Danish knight may dare to express, without danger, among his friends?"

"I am no spy or secret accuser, who will bring you, or any brave man, into mischief for thoughts and opinions," replied the young drost. "I know nothing yet, God be praised, that should deprive me of the hope of one day calling you father. I know you were not at the secret council last night, that pronounced my doom, the more easily to compass the king's."

Sir Lavé paused, and became deadly pale. A struggle seemed to be passing in his unquiet soul; but he suddenly seized the young knight's hand. "Nay, nay," said he, "in this council I had neither part nor lot. Had I known that such was the intention, I should not have chosen my post by this threshold. You were, nevertheless, a dangerous man to me and my friends, yesterday, Knight Hessel," he continued, with greater resolution. "It depends upon me whether you shall be so to-day. Perhaps it depends on a single step over this threshold. I can forbid your entrance, and with justice. I have promised as much: whether I keep this promise, depends upon myself. At this moment you are no longer drost of the kingdom, and can have nothing to say here. I have seen a royal letter, by which you are deposed, and doomed to imprisonment, from the hour the cock crows after midnight. A conversation with the king may, perhaps, save you. If it only concerns your post and freedom, I would, without hesitation, cause you to be taken prisoner on the spot, by the king's command; but, if it concerns your life--if it is true--" He stopped abort, and gazed inquiringly on the young knight, who had changed colour, and stood as if thunderstruck.

"I tell you no falsehood," said Drost Peter, recovering himself. "At this moment you are a powerful man: you have, perhaps, my life, as well as that of the king, in your hand. But, whatever you may now do, you will have to answer for, before the righteous God, at your hour of death."

"Who are these two persons you bring with you?" demanded Sir Lavé.

"The town-governor, who was to conduct me to prison, and my squire, who was witness to this secret tribunal of blood. Should I tarry here a moment longer, it may be too late. My deadly foes watch under the same roof that now shelters us: they have the door of my prison, and of their den of murder, standing open--"

"Well, I will believe you," said Sir Lavé, with extreme uneasiness. "I would lend my aid to overthrow you; but your blood I will not have upon my head, and I stand not here to betray the life I guard. From this day forth, however, all engagements between us are at an end. Yet I was your father's friend. If I have saved your life to-day, remember it, young man, if, perchance, mine and my friends' lives should one day be in your hands." Tears stood in his eyes, and he grasped the young knight's hand almost convulsively. "I go to awake the king," he said, with more composure, and hastily entered the royal closet.

For some minutes, Drost Peter stood as if on burning coals. He heard loud voices without, demanding admittance, and recognised the shrill tones of Chamberlain Rané, who, in the king's name, ordered the burghers to open the door. The guards were surprised. Two of them hurried out into the passage, to learn the cause of the uproar. The door of the guard-room was again immediately opened, and Drost Peter saw Rané at the entrance, between the two guards.

At the same instant, the door of the king's closet was opened, and Sir Lavé Little stepped hastily over the threshold, and beckoned Drost Peter. With hurried steps he obeyed the signal. Sir Lavé locked the door of the king's closet after the drost, and ordered the guards to station themselves before it, without troubling themselves about the enraged chamberlain, who, insolently, and loud-voiced, stood in the middle of the ante-room, and accused the captain of the guard of having failed in his knightly promise, and of having transgressed the king's order.

"Whether Drost Peter has been improperly admitted at this door or not, we shall soon know," answered Sir Lavé. "So long as I have not the king's counter-order, it is my duty to admit the drost; but a chamberlain has nothing to do here at this hour, were he ten times the king's favourite. Be pleased to assist him out, gentlemen."

Three of the guards, with raised halberds, approached the enraged Rané, who gnashed his teeth, and left the guard-room, casting a look of vengeance at Sir Lavé.

Between the guard-room and the king's bed-closet was a large arched apartment, hung with gold-embroidered tapestry, with a round table in the middle, covered with scarlet cloth and long gold fringes. Here the king received those he would hold conversation with, and here the drost was obliged to wait for some time, until the attendant pages had assisted his majesty in dressing.

At the door of the royal sleeping-chamber stood a handsome youth, about eleven years of age, in the red lawn suit of a torch-page, and with a wax-light in his hand. He rubbed the sleep from his eyes, while he admired, and regarded with respect, the tall, serious knight who had ventured to disturb the king's morning slumber. This page was the little Prince Erik's playmate, Aagé Jonsen. He was of the same age as the prince, and daily shared with him his martial exercises, and the various instructions in chivalry under Drost Peter's guidance. The youth's tender, almost maidenly features, were lighted up by the torch; and, as he thus stood, with his long golden locks falling over his linen collar, and his dark blue eyes resting, with respectful surprise, on his knightly teacher, the appearance of the friendly youth seemed to restore calmness to Drost Peter, and to fill his bosom with bold and lively confidence in his innocence and the justice of his case.

"Good morning, Aagé," he said, patting the lad kindly on the cheek: "have you been awoke too early this morning? You stand, indeed, as if you were yet dreaming. Is your little king still asleep?"

"Yes, dear sir drost. We were both much fatigued from wrestling with Junker<sup>[13]</sup> Christopher yesterday evening; and I took the torch-watch. I remained awake here, by the door, the whole night; but towards morning I could not keep my eyes open, and, at the moment Sir Lavé came, the torch was nearly out. You are not angry with me, then, for this?"

"I know you are a bold, vigilant lad, who, otherwise, would not sleep when you should be awake, and that is an important matter, Aagé. These are times wherein one should early learn both to watch and pray."

"I have prayed, likewise," answered the youth. "I prayed to God and Our Lady, both for Prince Erik and you, for the queen, and all good men; but still my eyes closed, and, had the king called me, I should have been unhappy."

"I shall give thee good advice, Aagé. When thou watchest by the king's door, or by that of the prince, never forget that murderers may be lurking without, who will break in and do violence as soon as thou closest an eye; and I warrant thee thou wilt keep thine eyes open."

"The rood shield us, sir drost! This is something that never can possibly happen: Our Lord and the Holy Virgin take care of that!"

"Truly they care for us, otherwise it would little avail if all the armies in the world guarded us," replied the drost; "but we are not, therefore, to live securely and carelessly in the world, much less a future knight and guardian of the king."

A clear sound, as of a silver bell, was now heard. The folding-doors into the king's bed-chamber were thrown open, and, by each, stood a page with a torch. Drost Peter stepped leisurely back to the end of the saloon; and little Aagé hastily lowered his torch towards the stone floor, and took some steps backwards into the saloon.

A tall, dignified person walked over the threshold, with short, uncertain steps. In his right hand he carried, like a staff, a large sword, of three fingers' breadth, and seven quarters in length, with a cross-guard, and gilded brass pommel. A short mantle hung loose over his shoulders. He paused for a moment, and cast a sharp, uneasy glance around the apartment, till, at length, his blinking eye rested for an instant on the queen's favourite, who respectfully saluted his majesty, and remained standing at a distance. The king now advanced a few steps, and, giving the pages a signal, they placed their torches in a brass frame, suspended at half-an-ell's distance from the tapestry, after which they made an obeisance, and retired backwards into the bed-chamber, through the half-open doors of which were seen four of the body-guard, with their bright halberds. The king advanced just as far from the door as was necessary to converse with the knight unobserved by his attendants.

"You dare to come into my presence, and at this hour, Knight Hessel!" he said, in a harsh and imperious tone. "You pretend, as an excuse, to have an important and private matter to lay before us, respecting the safety of our royal person. If you think, by such foolish pretexts, to obtain pardon, you are mistaken. Speak! but not a word about yourself. What do you know that affects our own and the throne's security?"

"I know, and can testify, sire," replied the young knight, frankly, "that you have slept this night under the same roof with men who, eight days ago, at the manor of Möllerup, took counsel, with the daring Stig Andersen, against the crown and kingdom."

"Prove it!" said the king, turning pale.

"I can, if you regard the worthy prior of Antvorskov, Master Martin Mogesen, as an upright and trustworthy man, and will rather believe his testimony than mine."

"Master Martin?" repeated the king. "Ay, indeed, he is true, and attached to me, and has

never, by untimely artifices and crooked devices, sought to approach my throne. Is he present?"

"Nay, sire," replied the knight, with burning cheeks, and subduing, with an effort, his injured feelings of honour, where self-justification was denied him; "but he gave me a hint, which I am only half justified in revealing. You know his seal and handwriting, sire?"

"Right well: he was for three years my chancellor."

"Then read this letter, my stern lord and judge, and you will see that it was not to crave a boon I so urgently entreated an opportunity of conversing with you yesterday evening, and that it is not merely to vindicate myself that I stand here just now."

"Not a word about yourself! Silence, now!" The king read the letter hurriedly and anxiously, raising his eyes from it at times, and regarding the knight furtively and suspiciously. "Now, indeed, it is true that this was a highly suspicious meeting," he said; "yet, after all, they are only doubts and conjectures. There is no certain proof--no act for which I can cause any one to be punished. But where are the well-known names referred to here?"

"In my memory, sire. The document which contained them I was requested to destroy."

"Name them! They shall be imprisoned."

"To such violent measures it were far from me to advise you. Whom the law has not sentenced, my king will not condemn. I come not to accuse, but to forewarn. What Master Martin writes here, cannot affect the life of any one. It is only a hint, but still an important one, in these disturbed times."

The king made an uneasy and anxious gesture.

"The reverend gentleman admits that he knows more than he can venture to tell," continued the knight. "I can almost believe that some penitent confederate has disclosed to him, as confessor, what he dare not reveal. But all the individuals he mentioned to me as suspicious, he has talked with himself, and has vainly exhorted them to loyalty. With most of them I recently came over the Belt myself; and, although I am not yet prepared with proofs against any of them, I have, nevertheless, good reason to agree with Master Martin, and pray you to be on your guard with respect to the discontented vassals, and have your eye upon their entire conduct. The meeting at Möllerup is enough to warrant this. Your intimate Chamberlain Rané will be able to bear witness to that; for he himself was present."

"Rané?" exclaimed the king, in astonishment: "he has not told me of this. He is my spy, I may tell you, and has a right to seek what company he chooses, and say what he likes, if, only, he informs me of it. If he was at this meeting, it may have been to spy out the malcontents, and he may have important reasons for his silence."

The knight shook his head. "I trust him not, sire. But this much is certain: this meeting took place, and the malcontents we know. Respecting one of them, I shall, perhaps, within eight days, furnish you with clear proof that he is confederated with the enemies of the kingdom, and has likewise a project in his mind as audacious as it is dangerous."

"Which of them is this? Speak! He shall not depart hence alive."

"He must do so, your grace," replied Drost Peter, dauntlessly. "Here he is a guest, and defenceless, and the privileges of the Dane-court protect him. I cannot name him now. Before I can prove, I cannot accuse, sire."

"Remember whom you talk with!" broke forth the king, vainly striving to conceal his uneasiness by a stern and imperious tone. "What more have you to report?"

"If you will now permit me to touch upon a matter that regards myself, I shall prove, by a sworn witness, that a secret council, held last night, decreed my death, in order that I might not betray what I know, and that the traitors may be able to accomplish, with greater security, their most criminal designs against the crown and kingdom."

"What? Who here, save I, dares to condemn any one to death? I have doomed you to imprisonment, it is true; but ere I decree your death, I will bethink me. But, to the main point. These most criminal plans against the crown and kingdom I will know. What are they? Who has heard them?"

"My trusty squire, Claus Skirmen. I have brought him with me. He stands without, and will confirm his evidence by an oath."

"Let him enter," ordered the king.

Drost Peter opened the door, and beckoned. Frank and fearless, the young squire entered, and related, briefly yet distinctly, what he had heard behind the tapestry.

When the king had heard him to an end, he held out towards him the cross hilt of his sword. "Swear!" he said: "imprecate a curse upon thyself if thou hast said anything untrue to save thy

master."

"It is truth, so help me God and the Holy Virgin!" said Claus Skirmen, in a loud and firm voice, and laying his hand on the hilt of the sword.

"Good! Now thou mayest go."

Claus Skirmen bowed silently, and retired, casting a sympathising glance towards his master.

"Chamberlain Rané in this, too?" said the king, thoughtfully. "But, indeed, he had the right. The worst word of rebellion he uttered was with my permission, in order to sound the others. That the duke and his friends are discontented, we have long known; but to what do their projects tend?"

"As far as I can conjecture, to a revolution in the state, similar to that effected by your grace, Marsk Andersen, and Count Jacob, in Sweden."

"Conjecture--mere conjecture! If you know nothing decided, of what use to me are your hints and warnings? If there are traitors and treasonable persons in the country--if they have even presumed to penetrate into the palace as guests--let them be seized, and the headsman have them! If such be the case, it is time to show these haughty gentlemen that we have as sharp axes here as they have in Sweden."

"Remember, sire, that the throne founded in blood by these Swedish axes was not the ancient and righteous throne, but one built by rebels, on the ruins of the laws and monarchy. If the privileges and majesty of the crown are to be held sacred, the law must be their guardian; and here there are no good grounds for preventing a rebellion by a tyrannical and arbitrary slaughter."

"What wilt thou have, then? Say, my valiant Drost Peter!" exclaimed the king, anxiously: "thou art my brave subject. What was between us, I will forget. Now, speak! What thinkest thou is to be done here?"

"I think, at present, it were most prudent that we should be altogether quiet, and not exhibit the least suspicion of the existence of such a conspiracy. Whilst the Dane-court lasts, let us merely double the night-watch, but treat the distinguished guests with all civility. At court, let matters take their ordinary course, without the least disposition to bear against the opposite party. Legally chosen umpires may, upon oath and conscience, settle the points in dispute. If the chief withdraw from the country, it will then be evident that he seeks foreign aid, and will return at the head of an army; and then we may speedily devise measures to oppose him. If he retire peaceably to his castle, we have nothing to apprehend: the storm will be over; and then, perhaps, may peace and restored vigour, but, above all, strict justice, save the land and kingdom."

"You are a pearl in my crown, Drost Peter, and I was a fool when I cast it away for the sake of a whim," said the king, pacified, and clapping him on the shoulder in a friendly manner. "The warrant I yesterday issued in an evil humour--"

"That I have brought with me, my king and master, to hear it confirmed or disowned by your own lips."

"What the deuce! In your hands, and not in those of the town-governor? Now must I say, if you can be as vigilant, when it concerns the king, as when it concerns yourself, you are worth gold, Peter Hessel. Give it to me."

Drost Peter handed him the order for his arrest, which the king tore asunder, and threw on the ground, while he laughed, and said, in a jesting tone: "See, there lie your prison-walls, my trusty drost. I see I can rely upon you in important matters, and I will not come into opposition with you in minor ones. Since there is no danger just now, and you have promised to prevent whatever may be apprehended, I will follow your advice, and, for the present, appear unconcerned. But now confess to me honestly, my prudent young sir knight," he continued, in a seemingly indifferent tone, "can you boast yourself of any particular familiarity with a certain fair lady, whose colours you bear? Nay, do not blush. No one knows better than I how enchanting she can be at times; and for an amorous word, a bold look, even a familiar pressure of the hand, I should not doom you to death. I know the fair ones tolerably well: the strictest, the chastest, are not insensible to an amiable young knight, who possesses both wit and manners. You have, perhaps, observed that I do not reckon such trifles so precisely; and that I myself, now and then, forget the crown's descent, and the stern reverence of majesty, for a little lively adventure."

Drost Peter blushed deeply under this rebuke, ashamed to turn his eyes upon the king who condescended to such expressions. At length he recovered himself, and observed the crafty and unstable smile on the king's countenance, with a mixture of wounded pride, contempt, and secret horror, that did not escape his fickle and whimsical ruler. He laid his hand solemnly on his breast, and was silent.

"Now, indeed, you understand a joke," said the king, suddenly becoming serious; "but one, perhaps, should not joke in such fashion. Whatever lady a knight may worship chastely and honourably, does not concern the king. Enough of this. As regards the malcontents, you assure

me, that, at present, there is no danger. You shall, therefore, take the requisite numbers for guarding the palace as well as the Dane-court. When it is over, take heed to the chief; and, as soon as he sets foot on forbidden ground, he is our prisoner."

"Solely, however, your grace, if the information arrives which I still expect?" observed Drost Peter. "Such violent steps the most urgent circumstances can alone defend, when probability borders on certainty; and, according to the forms and laws of the kingdom--"

"A truce with that!" exclaimed the king, warmly: "no law binds my arm against traitors. You are too conscientious for me, Drost Peter. But no more of this for the present. Conduct everything well and carefully. As a proof that I now again regard you as my most prudent and virtuous servant, accept of this mark of esteem." So saying, he took from his own neck a large gold chain, set with costly stones, and hung it on that of the drost, at the same time extending him his hand to kiss.

Silently, and with the bitter feeling that he could not from his heart, as he inwardly wished, respect the hand of the individual, still, prompted by the homage due to the sacred sceptre, the knight half bent his knee to the ground, and gently saluted the gracious hand with his lips. Thereupon he arose, and awaited the signal to withdraw.

"Yet one word," said the king. "My chamberlain, Rané Jonsen, I know you have long doubted and mistrusted. You caught him in a foolish adventure, and made him a prisoner. I have pardoned him. Let that matter be henceforth forgotten. But what reason have you continually to distrust him, when you hear that he only goes about in disguise among my enemies, secretly to serve me?"

"To speak honestly, sire, the purposes for which he permits himself to be used do him no honour; and such a double-tongued individual bears no one fealty. He has not yet acquainted you with what was last transacted at Möllerup: perhaps Master Martin will be able to give you better information."

"Send a messenger, without delay, to Antvorskov, for the pious, prudent gentleman," said the king. "I shall have the matter cleared up, and the worthy man may be able to tell us somewhat more."

"He is already on his journey hither, and will arrive before midday. But I saw the chamberlain in the guard-chamber: he will, assuredly, not fail in ingenuity, in vindicating himself. I pray you, sire, trust him not too much. Remember that he is the sister's son of Stig Andersen's unfortunate wife."

"Good," replied the king, coldly, and changing colour. "You need not remind me of that. The brave Sir John, and Sir Lavé of Flynderborg, your own future father-in-law, are of the same family. As long as Rané obeys me faithfully, and adheres to me, I have no reason to distrust him. Mere honesty will not carry a man through the world, and a crafty servant may, also, be put to a good use. But an end of this. Depart now, my valiant Drost Peter," added the king, suddenly, in a mild and familiar tone. "Let me henceforth see that you are worthy of my confidence. Inform Sir John and David Thorstenson of all, and advise with them what is to be done. God protect you!"

The king turned round hastily, and Drost Peter withdrew.

In the guard-room, Sir Lavé had been relieved by his kinsman, old Sir John Little. He was a short, strongly built man, with stiff gray hair, but nimble, and almost youthful in his movements. His sagacious, penetrating eye, and stern, commanding air, as well as the brevity and decision with which he expressed himself, denoted the old warrior and leader. His mere presence, without any external mark of distinction, proved his superiority over the most notable of the body-guard, and indicated him as their chief, and as the supreme counsellor of the kingdom. This remarkable man, whom the young drost loved and esteemed as a fatherly friend, had, on the present occasion, resorted to the palace somewhat earlier than usual, and had taken his kinsman's post as captain of the guards. He had already been informed of the danger which Drost Peter had so fortunately escaped. He was engaged in earnest conversation with the town-governor, when he saw Drost Peter, with the king's well-known gold chain about his neck, issue from the door of the royal apartment. With heartfelt joy he approached him, and warmly shook him by the hand. A tear glittered in his stern eye; but, without saying a word to his young friend, he turned quietly, and with a smile, to the town-governor.

"As you perceive, my good governor," he said, in a careless tone, "Sir Drost Peter Hessel brings with him a new proof of the king's favour and satisfaction. The whole must have been a mistake. You have erred, but circumstances excuse you. Go, with God's blessing."

The governor bowed respectfully, as well to the old counsellor as to Drost Peter, and departed.

"Can you favour me with an hour's conversation before the court assembles, sir counsellor?" inquired Drost Peter: "I have an important matter to communicate to you."

"Certainly, when I have spoken with the king. Expect me home in about half an hour. Thorstenson is here. The palace-guard is doubled; there is no danger: only, be calm and collected."



So saying, he turned hastily away, and, giving a signal to one of the halberdiers, went in immediately to the king.

The knight to whom the old lord had given the signal was a tall, dark-visaged man, with a long brown beard, which fell in two locks upon his collar, and united with two large bushy and closely-curved whiskers, which half concealed a tolerably youthful, but spare and vigorous, warlike countenance. His dark eyes were full of fire, and betrayed vehemence and passion. In the counsellor's absence, he took the place of captain of the guards, and placed himself nearest the door of the king's apartments. This was Sir David Thorstenson.

Drost Peter went up to him as to an intimate friend, and extended his hand. They spoke a few words privately together. Knight Thorstenson nodded, and cast a sharp look to the door. Hereupon, Drost Peter bowed to the observant halberdiers, and left the guard-chamber with a quick step, without, however, betraying haste or uneasiness. As he proceeded, the servants and people about court stepped respectfully to one side, and regarded him with surprise and curiosity. The rumour that something unusual had happened to Drost Peter Hessel, and that the queen's powerful favourite had fallen into disgrace, had put all in commotion at the palace; and now, all the cooks, waiting-maids, and kitchen-wenches were struggling to get a sight of him as he descended the palace-stairs, with the king's large gold chain across his breast.

To be the object of the people's attention was nothing new to the young drost, and was, indeed, not displeasing to him. That he felt himself flattered thereby he could not deny, although, now and then, he saw some one whisper and smile in a fashion that would have deeply offended him, had he heard what was said concerning his supposed intimacy with the queen. But the curiosity with which he was observed bespoke, on the whole, esteem and goodwill; and his handsome, stately figure, in particular, recommended him to all the charming little waiting-maids who beheld him. At the palace-gate, he met a number of stranger knights and stately gentlemen, whom it was unusual to see abroad so early. Among them he perceived Duke Waldemar and Chamberlain Rané. They whispered together when they saw him; but he proceeded quietly forwards, and felt, with secret pride, that he met them as a conqueror. Still, he took care not to betray this feeling in his look and manner; but as he went silently and gravely past them, he saluted them coldly, yet with all courtesy. They, also, without betraying the slightest ill-feeling or unpleasant surprise, returned his salutation with equal indifference.

Squire Skirmen had awaited his master on the palace-stairs, and now followed him with undisguised joy. As Skirmen passed Rané and the duke, he could not refrain from smiling with self-satisfaction; and, making his salute, he strutted along, much taller than usual. His master observed this.

"Let us not triumph too early, my bold and trusty Skirmen," said he, earnestly. "Our enemies are still powerful; and pride goes often before a fall. I cannot entirely acquit myself on this point. We are all prone to be haughty when successful; but it is a temptation we must endeavour to contend against."

Skirmen blushed, and was silent: the air of triumph disappeared from his countenance, and, with modest resignation, he followed his master to his dwelling.

Here, Drost Peter found his wounded guest awake and merry. He examined his wound, in company with the royal surgeon, who had now arrived. The count was enjoined to keep his bed for a few days, and to remain quiet. This inactivity did not quite please Count Gerhard. He bargained with the doctor, that he might be up within eight days, to be present at the festival with which the Dane-court was to be concluded. The leech gave him hopes of this, and, on these terms, he consented to remain at rest; but it seemed to him a hard penance, that, for eight days, he must neither drink wine, nor laugh to his heart's content, to chase away the tedious hours, in company with his jester.

Drost Peter now committed him to the care of the surgeon and his house-people, requesting the count and his followers to consider themselves at home, and to excuse his absence on the necessary duties of his office. Thereupon, he hastened to Sir John's residence, where the old counsellor shortly after arrived. They had an hour's private conversation on highly-important state affairs; after which they went to mass together, in Our Lady's Kirk, where the whole court was present, and where Sir John's wife, Lady Ingefried, and his daughter, Cecilia, sat on the royal seat, next to the beautiful Queen Agnes.

As Sir John and the drost entered the church, all eyes were turned to the young knight and the royal seat; and some thought they could observe a slight blush on the queen's fair cheeks, as she hastily returned the salutations of Sir John and the drost. As soon as mass was over, the knights and ecclesiastics proceeded in crowds to the long saloon of the palace, where the Dane-court was now held, instead of in the open air--an old custom, which, by degrees, fell more and more into disuse, much to the discontent of the people, because, by this means, it was sought to exclude the burghers and peasants from taking part in the proceedings of the Danish parliament.

This day, the king alone dispensed and confirmed certain gifts and privileges to churches and convents. He seemed somewhat uneasy and out of temper, and terminated the proceedings as soon as possible. Next day he appeared in better humour, and the matters before the parliament went on in their usual course, quietly, and without interruption. The precautions that had been

privately taken by Sir John, David Thorstenson, and the vigilant Drost Peter, completely assured the king, and no notice was taken of the discontented vassals. They did not wish it to appear that the contest between the king and Duke Waldemar was the chief matter, although it excited expectation in the highest degree. Judgment, in this case, was reserved to the last day of the Dane-court, the 28th of May. The seven preceding days were employed in settling less important disputes between feudal lords and their tenants, and in reconciling the various differences between the temporal and spiritual lords, who frequently accused each other of violence and oppression, or of encroachments on one another's rights and liberties.

The most considerable lay and ecclesiastical lords in the country were present at this parliament. Here were now to be seen the Archbishop John Dros of Lund, and Bishop Tygé of Aarhus, as well as the bishops of Viborg, Rypen, Roskild, Odense, and Børglum. These spiritual lords had already, on Sunday, in conjunction and with the consent of the feudal lords and knights, or, as it was called, according to the *Best Council*, come to the determination, that they should appoint twelve intelligent men of Denmark, to form a *Worthel*, or council of jurors, who should say and swear to whom the lands and estates in dispute between the king and duke of right belonged. The stern old Sir John had been chosen one of these jurors. Before judgment was delivered, the jurors daily assembled in the counsellor's house, where they considered the subject in quietness, with locked doors.

Sir John kept an hospitable house, and received them all with the greatest politeness. He possessed one of the largest mansions in Nyborg, where his wife and daughter resided with him during the Dane-court. Every evening, great numbers of both lay and spiritual lords were here assembled; and one might observe that Duke Waldemar and his adherents were here to be found as often as Drost Peter, David Thorstenson, and others attached to the royal house. At times, the queen, with her ladies, and the young princes, might be seen at these evening assemblies. On such occasions, the old lord was particularly merry and cheerful; but, if any one ventured to speak a word to him on state affairs, he would become suddenly silent, or punish the unmannerly busybody with a biting jest. From the time that the council of jurors began to sit, Sir John would receive no one except at a time when there was company with him; and he would not talk alone with any one, not even with Drost Peter, who, at other times, had daily and familiar access to him. He had also declared, that, until the Dane-court was closed, he could not, and would not, converse alone, even with the king himself.

The day before the termination of the Dane-court, Sir John sat, in the forenoon, for the last time, in the council of jurors, with locked doors. His house-steward was strictly forbidden to admit any one whatever. Meanwhile, admission was authoritatively demanded by a tall, powerful man, in a hooded cap, who either did not know, or did not trouble himself, about this necessary precaution. In his vehemence, the cap slipped on one side, and the house-steward suddenly became so terrified that he lost both speech and self-possession, and, notwithstanding the strict order to the contrary, hastily withdrew the bar from the closed door. But, at the same instant, a bolt was secured inside.

"All twelve are here," shouted old Sir John: "we have no room for a thirteenth, if even he bore the crown and sceptre!"

The tall man in the hooded cap stamped wrathfully on the floor, and, with hasty strides, left the knight's house, without saying a word. Before evening, this occurrence was known all over Nyborg, with various explanatory additions; and Sir John was highly commended for his hardihood by Duke Waldemar and his adherents, who drew from it conclusions favourable to their case.

In the evening, as usual, there was a numerous assemblage at Sir John's. The queen and the young princes were also expected. Drost Peter was invited, together with his guests. When Count Gerhard heard that the queen was to be there, he sprang from the reclining chair, for which he had now exchanged his bed, and swore, loud and deeply, that he would go, if he should have to keep his bed for it a whole month afterwards.

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," he said. "If I have not permission to-morrow, or the day after, to attend the court festivities, and if I should die of tedium in the meanwhile, I shall lie with a long nose in my grave. This surgeon is a tiresome fellow. He makes as much ado about this scratch as if I were a maiden, and wraps me up like a suckling. And you, fortune's favourite, whose head, nevertheless, I almost hewed off--you strut there, bold and nimble enough: I trow, indeed, you have had your head linked to your neck with chains of honour."

"I have a good skin for healing," replied Drost Peter; "and, this time, the sword did not penetrate far into it. In one sense, however, you are right," he added: "my head has not sat looser upon me for a long time; and this chain has certainly somewhat secured it. But leave the junketings alone, noble count. The skin is but thin upon your wound, and, to-night, you might easily be thrown into excitement."

"Excitement! that is just what I am intent upon," interrupted the count. "A person must still draw breath, however thin-skinned he may be. I cannot live in this fashion, like a mummy, much longer. I know I am master of my body: pity it is that we should let clerks and ghostly fathers be masters of our sinful souls! Give me my court-doublet and new mantle, Longlegs. Somewhat clumsy I may be in these wrappings, but I shall leave them on to please you."

Farther objections were vain. He donned his bright red lawn doublet, placed his feathered hat on his head, and cast a stiff, gold-fringed, purple mantle over his broad shoulders.

"So, so!" he said; "I know now that I look whole and sound enough. Henceforth, I resign Dorothy Brushbroom to you, Longlegs: you, also, shall know what it is to be taken care of."

"I trust you may find the distinguished ladies as interested about your person as she has been, my gracious master," replied the jester; "but, since you seldom go so near them that they can see you, you should take my jingling-jacket, that they may hear you in the distance."

"There! you hear, Drost Peter, what I must digest, and give the clown food and wages for, merely to exercise me in Christian humbleness and patience. You are right, Longlegs. I am a little too sheepish on certain occasions; but that is a virtue your losel should respect, and apply himself to. To-night you shall see otherwise, and that I shall do you honour, Longlegs," continued the count, gaily: "I have not had such courage to talk with the ladies for a long time. Your nurse can bear witness, sir drost, that it is a falsehood and a slander, when foul tongues say I lose heart and speech with the ladies."

"No one shall say so of you any longer, gracious sir. I was shamefully unjust," replied Longlegs, bowing. "If I could not hear you snore, for some nights past, as I would have given much to have done, I had, nevertheless, at times, the pleasure of hearing your most gracious growlings; and, for these, I thanked the Holy Virgin. They are, at all times, a sure sign of life. Now, therefore, if you should like to cudgel me for your amusement, gracious master, you must stop at home."

Without listening farther to his jester, the count set out with his knight and Drost Peter. In his impatience to reach old Sir John's abode, he hurried on so fast, that his attentive host held him back, to remind him that such haste was dangerous to him. But the count suddenly slackened his pace, as soon as he perceived the magnificently illuminated building, where, under the linden trees, at the foot of the grand staircase, stood two rows of the royal household servants, with lighted torches.

"I am also to see the young princes to-night," he said. "Your pupil, the young heir to the throne, should be like his mother. You are a happy man, Drost Peter, who can train and bring up such a noble shoot."

"I fully acknowledge it," replied Drost Peter, with ardour. "I hope he shall become a worthy descendant of Waldemar Seier, his illustrious ancestor, whose chivalrous manner of thinking, and regard for truth and justice, I believe he already inherits. With God's help, he will do honour to his race."

"But is the mother really there, too, in the house of a simple knight?"

"A simple knight!" repeated Drost Peter, somewhat offended. "Old Sir John is a son's son of Esbern Snaré's daughter: he numbers the great Absalom in his race. But were he even a simple knight, without distinguished birth, he is still a man of such merit, that the king and queen need not be ashamed of being his guests. Both his wife and daughter are the queen's dearest friends."

"Sooth to say, my good friend," observed Count Gerhard, in a half whisper, and drawing Drost Peter aside, "you give quality a good day; but I am almost ashamed to show myself before the queen. I only saw her at that devil's tourney at Helsingborg, where you took the prize from me, and I could not say a single word to her from sheer bashfulness. Among men, I have not the reputation of sheepishness; and, when I walk before the eyes of kings and emperors, I feel myself to be as good as they: but, plague on it! all my confidence vanishes when I want to express myself gracefully before the fair ones."

"Notwithstanding your backwardness, you are not unknown to the queen, noble count," replied Drost Peter. "Tour valour and discretion in the lists were not unobserved; and I were a fool should I brag of the superiority of which you were deprived by a mere casual accident."

"She has spoken of me, say you, without dwelling on my awkward homage, when I made the attempt to salute her during the tilting?"

"If she has smiled at that, noble count, I can still assure you that neither mockery nor contempt--"

"Mockery and contempt!" interrupted the count, proudly: "by Satan! who thinks of that? Had the most amiable lady in Christendom contemned Count Gerhard, she must have sent her knight into the field to make me reparation. I am not quite so bashful as to be afraid of that. But tell me frankly," continued he, "am I not too stout and stiff, in these frightful swaddling bands, to show myself becomingly in such company?"

"You are not at all amiss," answered Drost Peter, smiling. "A bandage over the breast never disfigures a knightly gentleman: in my eyes, it even makes you somewhat majestic in your bearing."

"Very good, my brave friend. I have you to thank for the majestic bearing. But you are right: if

a knight has only his fame whole and sound, his body may be in what condition it may; he, at least, must be esteemed as most valiant by every noble and high-souled lady."

Count Gerhard now boldly ascended the steps of Sir John's dwelling, attended by Drost Peter and the two knights. In the ante-room servants received their hats and mantles, and opened the large oaken door leading into a magnificent vaulted apartment, which was illumined by wax-lights, on tall candelabra, borne by brazen wolves. Ladies and knights stood, here and there, in groups, on the polished oaken floor, engaged in lively conversation; while others sat, playing at chess, and similar amusements. From another saloon, still larger, the door of which stood open, came the music of flutes and violins. A *kæmpevisse*<sup>[14]</sup> was played, accompanied by the voices of a number of maidens and an elegantly performed dance. A knight, in magnificent attire, was seen in stately motion with a majestic lady in a scarlet kirtle, glittering with gold and precious stones.

"The queen!" whispered Count Gerhard into the drost's ear, and remained standing, astonished, at the first door.

"And Duke Waldemar!" added Drost Peter, who also stood surprised, but not at the beauty and noble bearing of the queen, which he had so often admired: the young duke's haughty, self-complacent countenance first struck his eyes. A distressing thought flashed suddenly as a thunderbolt through his soul, and, involuntarily, he grasped Count Gerhard by the arm.

"What is the matter with you, my good friend?" whispered Count Gerhard: "have you, too, become giddy at the sight? I have had enough already. By our Lady! it is a beauty unapproachable."

Sir John, as soon as he was made aware of the entrance of the newly-arrived guests, advanced gaily and courteously towards them. "Welcome, my lords," said the old knight. "I am rejoiced that the noble Count Gerhard can contradict, in person, the rumour that is current respecting a dangerous wound."

"A false rumour, sir counsellor; which has, nevertheless, induced me to keep my room for a few days," replied the count, in a jocular tone. "Here are life and merriment, I see; and one may be given up for death, if he do not find himself well here. Be pleased to present me to your noble lady and daughter; and, when the dance is over, to her grace the queen." The latter words he added in a subdued tone, and drew a long breath after having uttered them, his eyes again turning towards the dancing saloon.

"As you command," replied the lively old knight, with a sportive smile. "It is easily to be seen what portion of the human family Count Gerhard sets the highest value upon. My daughter, I perceive, is now standing up for the dance; but I can present you to my wife immediately, if you please."

Count Gerhard had not heard a single word. He stared, like one in a dream, into the dancing-saloon, where the fair queen had, just at that instant, curtsied with noble dignity to her princely partner, and, on his arm, moved down the room to her seat, amidst the dazzling young daughters of the chivalrous guests, and eclipsing them all with her loveliness.

A new piece of music and song was commenced, and a new couple were in motion on the floor. The lady was Sir John's daughter, Cecilia. She could not vie with the queen in dazzling beauty and majesty, but quite equalled her in the spirit and grace of her motions. With an earnestness that better suited the song than her partner's smiling mien, she regarded, with her dark, lustrous eyes, the knight who extended his hand to her, and who, in gracefulness and courtesy, seemed to vie with Duke Waldemar. This polite cavalier was the duke's drost, Sir Tuko Abildgaard, a bold and ambitious gentleman, celebrated for his influence over the duke, and as famed for his good fortune with the fair sex as for his fickleness in love, and his haughty, soaring claims to distinction. He appeared intent on distinguishing the Lady Cecilia among all the ladies at court. He seemed to give but little heed to the song to which they danced: it was a sweet and melancholy air, to the ballad of Sir Sverkel's unfortunate love to his unknown sister. Drost Peter listened to it with much interest; and even the otherwise merry Count Gerhard stood silent and serious, while the young damsels sang:--

"Pray thou, hart, and pray thou, hind,  
That I may forget the little Kirstine;

Pray thou, hart, and pray thou, roe,  
That I may forget my true love so."

"The foul fiend!" muttered Count Gerhard to himself; and, to his own astonishment, his eyes almost overflowed as the young damsels continued:

"He prayed the hart, and prayed the hind,  
But never was the maiden from his mind;

He prayed the hart, and prayed the roe,  
But could not forget his true love so."

Count Gerhard's absent gaze into the dancing-saloon caused old Sir John to cast an attentive look in the same direction, and the sight of his daughter's undisguised interest in Sir Abildgaard did not seem to please him. His cheerful countenance suddenly assumed an air of deep seriousness, while the damsels now sang:--

"The knight he from his land was driven,  
And the lady to a cloister given."

Both the old and the younger knight appeared absorbed in the same dreamy mood which the melancholy song was calculated to produce, but each in a different manner, according to the ideas they associated therewith. Yet, in the midst of the general merriment and splendour of the festivity, there were, apparently, but few who gave heed to the tenor of the song. Its conclusion, in particular, affected Drost Peter to melancholy. He involuntarily laid hold of the ruby rosary on his breast, that served to remind him of his half-forgotten child-bride, while the damsels sang:--

"A bird so small from the white strand flew,  
And she sang, Where is my heart's love true?  
A bird so small o'er the sea flew wide,  
And he sang, O where is my own true bride?  
For chastest maiden I dree."

"It is allowed that you are a lover of the dance and song, illustrious Count Gerhard," said old Sir John, in his usual social tone, and turning, with a cheerful countenance, to his abstracted guest. "If you wish, now I shall conduct you to the queen and the young ladies."

Count Gerhard bowed stiffly, and followed the old knight, without observing the breach of propriety of which he had been guilty, in not greeting the noble and matronly Lady Ingefried, who went round among the guests, and received their salutations, accompanied by a waiting-maid, bearing a silver salver with filled wine-cups.

While Drost Peter, as a well-known and daily guest, saluted the worthy house-mother, old Sir John and his distinguished attendant, before they reached the dancing-saloon, were stopped by two handsomely attired youths in scarlet jackets, with gold chains about their fine linen collars. They were both flushed with anger, and had come from the dice-table, where they had had a dispute. The one was the eleven years' old Prince Erik, who, from his second year, had taken the name of king, and the other, his brother, Junker Christopher, two years his junior, and half a head shorter, but apparently his superior in strength, though not in sprightliness and beauty.

"You shall decide between us, Sir John: you know what right is," said the little king, warmly. "Suppose the gold dice are islands and countries, and the counters knights and swains: have I, as eldest, the privilege of taking first? And suppose, further, that I, with my knights and swains, surround and conquer all Christopher's islands and countries, are they, by right, mine? If he will merely admit that, he shall readily have them back again. What care I for the dice!"

"That depends upon the laws of your game, my little hasty gentlemen," replied the old knight. "Besides, the eldest ought not only to take first, but also to be the first in good sense and magnanimity. The game, moreover, is good for nothing," he added, gravely. "Has not Drost Hessel taught you yet, my little king, that we do not play dice with islands and countries, and do not convert knights and swains into counters?"

Prince Erik went away, silent, and blushing with shame. Christopher followed him, jeeringly. Drost Peter had been attracted by the dispute of the princes, and had drawn near when he heard his name mentioned.

"See now, sir counsellor," whispered he: "our little king surrenders the whole table to his brother, with chivalrous magnanimity."

"Yes, indeed, but with wounded pride," said the old man, softly. "Could we only get the pride and thoughtlessness eradicated from him, the country might, in time, expect much of him."

Drost Peter was silent, and sank into deep thought.

"Excuse me, Count Gerhard. You wish to be presented to the queen," said old Sir John, aloud, and turning to the count. "Permit me to conduct you." He strode nimbly forward, and Count Gerhard followed him to the polished threshold of the dancing-saloon. There the count remained, standing with his back to the door-post, and bowed stiffly to the queen from that extreme distance, without troubling himself about Sir John, who, with active steps, had entered the saloon.

"The noble Count Gerhard of Holstein desires to salute your grace," said the old knight, who had approached the queen, and fancied he had still the count by his side.

"Count Gerhard!" repeated the queen, with much interest. "Where is he, then? I do not see him."

"What! has he disappeared?" exclaimed Sir John, looking behind him with surprise.

"By the door yonder, your grace," observed the duke, with a derisive smile, and a proud sense of superiority. "The noble count makes great efforts to testify his devotion to your grace at a respectful distance. I certainly think he would beg the favour to be honoured with your hand in the dance, but seemingly wants words to express his wishes."

"Inform him, sir counsellor, that I shall willingly tread a measure with him," said the queen to the old knight. "Bid him approach. I have long wished to speak with so gallant and esteemed a gentleman."

Sir John bowed, and carried to Count Gerhard the surprising message of condescension.

"The holy St. George stand by me!" exclaimed the count, terrified. "I never danced in all my born days, and, in this devil's swathing, I can scarcely stir; but, if the queen commands it, I should be able to fly. Holy Virgin!" he muttered to himself, "if I escape from this with life, it is a miracle."

He hastily recovered himself, and, not to appear embarrassed, assumed as brave an air as if he were on the point of taking a fortress by storm. With long strides and a stiff carriage, he walked up to the queen and bowed. Duke Waldemar turned to one side, and only half concealed his laughter. But the familiar manner in which the queen conversed with Count Gerhard soon restored his self-possession, and brought back his even, good-tempered simplicity of character. He spoke of his mischance at the tournament at Helsingborg, when he ventured to contend for the queen's colours, without being able to honour them with victory; and the humorous manner in which he complained of himself in the affair, and jested at his own awkwardness, greatly amused the queen.

"You may well jest at the vile mischance," she observed, with undisguised goodwill and respect: "your knightly honour you have established on more important and more serious occasions. You look well, I perceive," she added, remarking his round figure, and the difficult movements of his arm: "the world does not consume you, sir count."

"I ought, certainly, as a young widower, to look lean and dismal," replied Count Gerhard, colouring; "but you must kindly excuse me, your grace. The happiness whose loss cannot be seen in me, I have not been so fortunate as to possess rightly. It is, certainly, one of my greatest mishaps in life; but I have the singular fate to thrive by mishaps. This I have just recently experienced. But appearances are deceitful, your grace; and I hope, in about eight days, to be much thinner, if your grace commands."

"How?" inquired the queen, laughing: "can you become thin at pleasure? I am glad that, in such a case, you can preserve your cheerfulness."

Without, however, entering farther into the frank Count Gerhard's heart affairs, and the inappropriate theme of his personal appearance, the queen suddenly broke off the conversation by a few indifferent questions, to which he replied somewhat in confusion, fearing that he had said something improper.

Knight Abildgaard and the Lady Cecilia had already, for some time, stepped out of the dance, and were standing in the recess of a window, in pleasing conversation. The flutes and violins now struck up a quick, lively air, and the young maidens sang the queen's favourite ballad, about King Didrik and the Lion's fight with the Dragon.

"I like this ballad very well," said the queen, "Every age has its dragons, I fancy; but, against the paction of king and lion, there is small chance for the dragon."

"That is a true saying, noble queen," replied the count, with much interest, in reference to the allusion. "There are still lions by the side of the Danish throne; but, in these chivalrous times, they would rather serve the queen than the king, I trow."

"If you please, we will tread a dance to the song," added the queen, interrupting him.

Count Gerhard's embarrassment returned with painful force; but he took refuge in his usual expedient, and, holding the queen by the hand, he advanced, with martial strides, to the middle of the floor. He had not the slightest knowledge of dancing; but he moved about as well as he could, in the same manner as the queen, imitating her turnings, on the contrary side, with the utmost attention. Fortunately, the dance was itself a simple one, and he had naturally a good ear for time. Notwithstanding his stiffness, and although he trod the floor with his spurred heels until it thundered again, he did not behave himself amiss; indeed, he even looked noble and majestic. Before the first measure was over, the constraint in his deportment had disappeared. The cheerful song, and the queen's benignant smile, enlivened him; his good-natured countenance beamed with courage and heartfelt glee, and he swung his arm lustily as the damsels sang:--

"It was Master King Didrik  
Would prove what his sword could dow,  
He hewed into the hard rock  
Till the hill was all in a low."

He continued dancing, with the happiest face in the world, till the maidens sang the thirty-third verse of the ballad:

"The lion roared, and King Didrik hewed,  
Till the hill stood all in flame;  
And had the lion not helped him out,  
The king had died with shame."

But now he suddenly beheld the queen turn pale, and then heard her exclaim--"My God, he bleeds!" and, for the first time, he perceived that the wound in his breast had again opened, and that the blood ran from it in streams.

"Pardon me, your grace," said he, hastily, and concealing the streaming blood with his arm: "I ought certainly to have remained quiet a few days longer, in consequence of a slight wound I received; but, in that case, I should not have been invited to the present festival. This is the first time in my life I have ever danced: but your grace makes everything possible; and perhaps this is the only mode in which it may be permitted me to pour out my blood for the fairest and noblest of ladies."

He made an attempt to take his leave, but his legs tottered under him, and he became deadly pale. Drost Peter, and the count's own knights, hastened to his assistance, and led him from the saloon. He cast a respectful look towards the queen, who was in the greatest uneasiness; and, without further consciousness of what had happened to him, he was carried back to Drost Peter's residence, where the sympathising jester received him with a terrified scream, and where he was immediately waited upon by the surgeon and his alarmed friends with the greatest tenderness.

This mishap broke up the entertainment at Sir John's. The queen had shortly after left the company. Betimes in the morning, she sent to inquire after Count Gerhard's health. The surgeon pronounced him out of danger, although he would not, for some time, be able to leave his bed, and had not yet recovered his consciousness.

The last day of the sittings of the Dane-court had now arrived. On this day, according to ancient custom, the proceedings were to take place in the open air, in the large green space before the palace. Here were admitted not only the vassals of noble extraction, the prelates and bishops of the kingdom, but also the peasants and burghers, more especially the wealthy merchants, who insisted upon the maintenance of their ancient privileges, though, within the last few years, their influence had greatly diminished. The place was surrounded with royal landsknechts; but, within the area, no one was permitted to bear a weapon. Around a raised seat, beneath a canopy of red velvet, fringed with gold, stood on the right, in the form of a semicircle, a long row of bishops and prelates, in their ecclesiastical orders, with the old archbishop of Lund, John Dros, at their head.

Next to him stood Master Martinus de Dacia. This learned individual had arrived from Antvorskov, of which he was prior, eight days previously. He had had a long private conversation with the king immediately after, and, for the second time, had been appointed chancellor of the kingdom and keeper of the royal seal. He was a man above fifty, of a notable appearance, although without much clerical dignity in mien and carriage. He quite filled his ample Dominican dress, generally concealing his hands, as if they were cold, in the sleeves of his tunic. Sometimes he would suddenly stoop, and stare vacantly before him, as if in deep thought; and then as suddenly look up with surprise, and quit his place, to talk with some of the more learned of the bishops and prelates on some particular theological or philosophical subject, without waiting for an introduction. His tonsure, augmented by a natural want of hair, extended to the whole of his head, which was covered with an octagonal cap of black velvet. He wore his shoes with white heels, in the manner of the clerks of Paris; and appeared, on the whole, to affect elegance and punctilio in his dress, although everything sat stiff and awkwardly upon him.

Among the ecclesiastics might also be seen Duke Waldemar's travelling companion, the notable dean of Roskild, Master Jens Grand, who disdainfully regarded the still vacant royal seat, with a jeering side-glance at the learned chancellor.

On the left side of the throne stood a semicircle of princely vassals, counts, knights, and noble governors. In the uppermost place among these was the young Duke Waldemar, in a knight's brilliant suit of red lawn, and a purple velvet mantle, adorned with the Sleswick lions in gold. Over his brown curls he wore a Russian hat, decked with rubies and ostrich feathers. He spoke softly, and with a sagacious, crafty air, to his brother, Count Erik of Langeland, who had newly arrived at court.

Next to these gentlemen stood the plump Count Jacob of Halland, in his general's uniform, and haughtily enveloped in his blue mantle; whilst the person by his side, the fastidious Sir Abildgaard, seemed to be amusing him with satirical or mischievous jokes on some of the ecclesiastics.

Chief, in the rank of knights, stood eight of the king's counsellors, among whom Drost Hessel

and old John Little were still missing. Among the knights who had arrived with the duke were to be seen many proud and daring countenances: Jacob Blaafod, and Count Jacob's brother, Niels Hallandfar, seemed, in particular, by their appearance, to betray considerable anxiety as to the issue of the day's transactions.

Behind these two semicircles of lay and spiritual lords stood a number of respectable peasants, in their short blue Sunday smocks, with clear silver buttons, and mostly with their cowl-caps in their hands; whilst the wealthy merchant-burghers, in their long civic gaberdines, pressed before them, among many curious spectators of all classes.

A gentle murmur was heard in the assembly, the eyes of which were turned impatiently towards the palace-stairs. At length the large oaken doors were opened, and a royal herald, bearing a white wand, came forth, making way for the king and his train. In his royal purple mantle, and wearing his crown and sceptre, the tall and stately king slowly descended the steps, between the two princes, attended by Drost Hessel, his marshal and under-marshal, the chief chamberlain, Ové Dyré, Chamberlain Rané, and a number of pages, among whom the fair Aagé Jonsen walked first. The people stood respectfully on one side, and the knights' semicircle opened, whilst the king and his followers ascended to the throne. He bowed, unsteadily, on all sides, and cast a transient look over the assemblage.

As soon as he had taken his seat on the throne, with Prince Erik on his right and Junker Christopherson on his left hand, three trumpet-blasts announced that the Dane-court was seated. After a moment of expectant silence, the king arose, and, taking the crown from his head, laid it on a red velvet cushion, which was handed by the marshal to the archbishop. In like manner, the sceptre was handed to the learned Chancellor Martinus, who placed it, with great care and reverence, on a velvet cushion, making an evident effort to avoid falling into other thoughts, or losing sight of it.

"To-day I am not judge here," began the king: "I am myself a party in the cause whereupon you have to decide, and which concerns the rights of the crown and kingdom. Herald, let the jurors come forward!"

"In the name of the Dane-court," shouted the herald, "come forward, ye sworn men!"

There now stepped forth, into the middle of the circle, old John Little and nine grave and distinguished individuals. The jurors were all well-known and esteemed men, from various provinces of the kingdom. They bared their heads before the throne and the assembly, and their gray hairs showed that they were among the oldest of all assembled.

Sir John stood forward as their foreman and spokesman. Having bowed to the throne and to both sides of the court, he then said, with an audible voice, "Proclaim the cause before the people and the Dane-court, sir drost."

Drost Peter, having bowed in like manner, advanced, with his high-feathered hat under his left arm, and, unfolding a sheet of parchment, read from it, slowly and distinctly, the matter in dispute between the king and Duke Waldemar, respecting the possession of Als Island. Having finished, he returned to his place among the counsellors of the kingdom.

Old Sir John again spoke. "It is known to us all," he began, in a calm and firm voice, "that the illustrious Duke Waldemar of South Jutland, two years since, when he was still under the guardianship of the Danish king, Erik Christopherson, believed himself entitled to make certain demands, which were refused by the king and council, as opposed to the constitution of the kingdom and the privileges of the crown. Notwithstanding, King Erik has not refused to his illustrious kinsman, now of full age, the privilege of laying before this Dane-court the claims he believes he is still entitled to make; and the settlement of the question is confided, by both the illustrious parties, to the present parliament. By the National Council of Best Men, was I, Counsellor Sir John Little, with eleven Danish men, under oath and duty, authorised to pronounce sentence in this matter. Two of these men have withdrawn from the council of jurors, and have refused to witness and decide in the cause, as not being perfectly known to them; but, after mature consideration, have we ten other men, who stand here, on oath and conscience pronounced sentence, as we mean to answer for it before God and man. If any one wishes to make protestation against the sentence, on account of the withdrawal of these two jurors, let him say so now, before it is made known, and then the final settlement of the matter must be deferred until a new Worthel has been chosen by the next Dane-court; otherwise, the present parliament declares the sentence of the ten jurors to be valid and just."

The old man paused, and regarded the assembly with an earnest, penetrating look. A general silence ensued, and the straining countenances of all announced the deep interest and anxious expectations that were felt. The king made an uneasy gesture, but was also silent. Duke Waldemar, Count Jacob, and Master Grand regarded the king attentively; they also looked meaningly at each other, but said nothing.

"We proceed, then, to announce the sentence," resumed Sir John; and, at his signal, the eldest of the jurors handed him a large parchment-deed, from which were suspended seventeen seals, with green silk ribbons. The old counsellor unfolded the document, and read aloud and distinctly:--



"We, the undersigned sworn Danish men, Mogens Peterson, Niels Dué, Turé Menersson of Jutland, John Bartson of Fyen, Niels, formerly governor of Lund, John Little, Mogens Corvigson of Skaane, Anders Nielson, Oluf Tygeson of Zealand, and Jacob Flep of Laalund, say and swear, of our full knowledge and counsel, that dominion over the whole of Alseland, with the fortresses, palace, and inhabitants thereof, belongs of right to the crown and kingdom of Denmark; the peasants belong to the king on the crown's account, the paternal estate of the king's children excepted, which was recognised and conceded to them after the death of King Waldemar. The said estate is known to us by means of a patent instrument, by which it was formerly granted to Duke Erik of South Jutland, Duke Waldemar's father. If the whole country had belonged to them, this estate would not have been specially given. Therefore, to the king and crown do we adjudge dominion, with full right and jurisdiction, over the whole of Alsen. In testimony whereof, we have sworn this upon the holy sacrament, in presence of the archbishop and six bishops, who, in further confirmation thereof, have attached their seals hereto, along with ours." He then recited the names of the subscribers.

When he ceased, he calmly surveyed the various expressions on the countenances of those around him. On the king's features, although he blinked uneasily, might be seen a triumphant smile, as he cast a suspicious glance towards Duke Waldemar and Count Jacob, whose cheeks glowed with rage, while their hands were rigidly clenched in the folds of their mantles.

Drost Peter's eyes did not forsake the duke's countenance, which quickly changed into a smile, as he gave a shrug to denote that he despised his loss. All were silent, however.

But now stepped forth, from the rank of ecclesiastics, the insolent Master Grand. "The sentence is invalid," said he, with a loud voice: "two of the jurors' names are wanting; the Worthel is not perfect. This requires an express ecclesiastical confirmation."

"This protest is of no avail," replied Sir John, calmly. "The court was silent on my timely summons, and thereby recognised the sentence as valid. Please to add the ecclesiastical confirmation, worthy Archbishop Johannes."

At this summons, the aged archbishop came forward, and, with a calm assurance of his authority, raised his crook, and said--"In the name of the Holy Church, I hereby declare what I shall add, in writing, to the present document, under my own and the Church's seal, by which all shall know that the aforesaid estate, within the dukedom of South Jutland, with moneys of the mint, and other privileges in the said dukedom, is legally pronounced and adjudged, by this royal court, to the king of Denmark, for ever to possess; and we forbid, under pain of excommunication, that any one should meddle with the jurisdiction over Als, or with the forenamed estate in anywise, except with the consent and knowledge of King Erik or his successors."

Notwithstanding that the old archbishop appeared inconsiderable and indistinct by the side of Master Grand, he pronounced these words with a quiet dignity that did not mar their effect. He then stepped back. Master Grand bit his lips with rage, and walked silently to his place.

The stillness of death for a moment pervaded the assembly; when the king suddenly arose, and declared the Dane-court at an end, his words being accompanied by three loud trumpet-blasts. The archbishop and chancellor thereupon came forward with the crown and sceptre. The king pressed the crown firmly on his head, grasped the sceptre, and hastily descended from the throne. The row of knights opened, the people fell back, and the king, with the princes and his train, returned to the palace.

The assembly broke up in the greatest order; but the knights of the various parties regarded each other with a silence at once unusual and painful. From Count Jacob and Master Grand alone were heard a few loud words, the involuntary outbreak of subdued wrath. Duke Waldemar, however, preserved a better appearance: his sagacious eye ran over the rank of his attached knights, and then, making a rapid gesture with his forefinger to his mouth, he departed, with his lively drost by his side, to that part of the palace where he had his apartments.

In the evening, after these important transactions, a magnificent entertainment was given at the palace, wherein the queen, with the little Princess Mereté and their ladies, participated, and where the king was also present, with both the young princes, in full court state. Both the palace and the town were brilliantly illuminated. Flutes and violins resounded from the knights' saloon, and the serious business of the morning appeared to be wholly forgotten in social enjoyments, and in the varied display of wit and gravity, chivalrous courtesies and disguised passions, in which a thousand hidden qualities of the heart were concerned. Love and jealousy, hope and fear, pride and vanity, combined as powerfully to set the unstable, youthful soul into lively motion, as did the music and dancing to bring into action the feet of knights and ladies on the polished floor.

As at the previous evening's entertainment at Sir John's, Duke Waldemar was here, in an extremely good humour. Not a trace of discontent was visible in his countenance, and he attracted general attention, as much by his cheerfulness and affability as by his princely bearing and dazzling grandeur. His variance with the king was the reason that he had not yet received the honour of knighthood, which he could not accept from any meaner hand. He dressed, notwithstanding, in the style of the most elegant knight, and, to conceal his want of the gold spurs, wore silver ones, thickly studded with gems. He suffered no opportunity to pass of showing

himself attentive and devoted to the queen; his bold and artful drost, Sir Abildgaard, attaching himself, in a similar way, to Counselor John's fair daughter, Lady Cecilia.

Drost Peter, to the surprise of all, was extremely reserved and silent. He was wont, on festive occasions at court, to be the soul of the company, and, in particular, to entertain the queen and her ladies by an ingenious blending of the grave and gay, with a freedom and liveliness which could only be derived from a consciousness of the favour in which he stood. Since the first morning of the Dane-court, when it was reported that he was ruined and in disgrace, and yet was seen, shortly after, leaving the king's closet as the most favoured of favourites, it was observed by every one, that a remarkable alteration had taken place in his demeanour. He had become grave and taciturn, as people fancied, from pride. He appeared to avoid with care, almost with anxiety, every approach to the queen; whilst, at the same time, he often watched her, and closely observed Duke Waldemar's efforts to please her. In this behaviour, the queen's sharp-sighted ladies fancied that they perceived the jealous favourite, who kept back from wounded vanity, and esteemed himself too highly to vie with Duke Waldemar in knightly civilities. He himself believed that he had far more important grounds for his altered conduct. The experience of the last few days had taught him how hazardous it was, in a court like this, to allow his frank and lively nature to be displayed without disguise, and, like a courteous knight, to worship beauty without reservation, even where he honoured it in combination with true innate greatness.

The only occasion on which he had spoken to the queen, since his arrival at the present court, was at an unusual time, and with a degree of agitation that might have been easily misinterpreted: it was on the evening of his arrival, when he had in vain sought an audience of the king, and when recourse to this step was necessary in order to save his unfortunate foster-mother. He had, as usual, found the amiable and virtuous queen extremely gracious, and favourably disposed towards him and his business. By immediately granting his request, and effecting his nurse's release from prison, she had given him a new proof of her goodwill. The danger he had subsequently incurred, and his fortunate escape, which she learnt on the following day, filled her with the liveliest interest; but the grounds of his danger were only half known, and what the attendants fancied they did know, no one thought it becoming to inform her of. She had not spoken a single word to him since. The evident care with which he appeared to avoid her, surprised and displeased her; and, as he had neglected several favourable opportunities of approaching her, she appeared no longer to notice his presence, but confined her conversation to Duke Waldemar, Count Jacob, and the other princely gentlemen in the company.

Late in the evening, the king quietly left the saloon, attended by Chamberlain Rané. Drost Peter observed his sudden departure; and as it took place on a signal from the crafty chamberlain, he concluded that it had reference to some private understanding, and to one of those frequent but discreditable assignations wherein Rané was at all times the king's familiar and agent.

Drost Peter dared not follow, to warn him of Rané, who had already vindicated himself, and regained the king's favour. The young drost stood, alone and dejected, by one of the windows, during a wild and merry dance. He felt, with some disquietude, his peculiar position at court, where it was his first duty to guard from temptation the young heir to the throne. It was nearly impossible to watch over the security of a king who so continually exposed himself to insult and danger by his debaucheries, and by honouring with his confidence men who only flattered his inclinations to promote their own ends and lead him into temptation.

"His better part I cannot save," said the drost, mentally. "I can only think of the crown's security." He stood armed with full royal authority to seize the duke the moment he should display the least intention to quit the kingdom. Information had been received of sufficient importance to justify such a step, were it needful. Should the duke be permitted to withdraw, unmolested, into Sweden, there was little doubt that he would return at the head of a hostile army, in conjunction with Marsk Andersen, to lay waste the country, and overturn the throne. The probability that this was the plan of the conspirators now bordered upon certainty, although full and legal proof was still wanting. The drost, in conjunction with Knight Thorstenson, had orders to watch all the motions of the duke. Their horses stood saddled within the palace-gates, and a light sloop lay in the harbour, ready to sail at whatever time they chose to cross the Great Belt.

Many doubts occupied the drost's mind. At this moment he possessed the king's highest favour and confidence; and it was not improbable that the fate of the monarch depended on the important and difficult business with which he was entrusted. In his absence, however, it might be easy for the crafty Rané, and his kinsman, the chief chamberlain, Ové Dyré, to ruin him with the unstable king, and destroy the fruits of his dangerous undertaking. Still, so long as Master Martinus and Sir John were in the king's council, he believed this fear unfounded.

His eye now fell on the young Prince Erik, who danced lightly and gaily past him. For the security of this highly important individual, he had also reason to be apprehensive; and he was only consoled by reflecting that, in his absence, old Sir John would fulfil the duties of drost to the heir to the throne.

Lighthearted, and free from care, the prince danced, hand in hand, with his sister Mereté. She was only twelve years old, and was already looked upon as betrothed to the Swedish Prince Berger. By this arrangement, the differences between the new royal house of Sweden and that of

Denmark had been accommodated, after the vacillating King Erik Christopherson had in vain endeavoured to reinstate the dethroned Swedish King Waldemar, whom he had himself assisted to overturn. Still, it was scarcely believed that peace with the powerful King Ladislaus could be depended upon, and haste had accordingly been made to obtain the pope's dispensation for this union, on account of the consanguinity of the parties.

"Another victim to our wavering policy," whispered a deep, well-known voice into Drost Peter's ear. It was the grave Sir Thorstenson, who had approached him unobserved, and who had been regarding the little lively princess with a look of compassion.

"Sir Thorstenson!" said Drost Peter, recalled from his serious musings: "are you, too, an idle observer of the world's vanities to-night? Perhaps you may be somewhat mistaken in what you disapprove of so absolutely." As he spoke, he drew him aside into the next apartment, where the tables were unoccupied, and where they could converse without observation. "You pity our princess," continued he: "for her I am the least concerned: Sweden hopes as much for its heir-apparent as we do for ours. This betrothing of children is now the custom of the age, in knightly as well as in princely families. As you are aware, I was myself betrothed in the same fashion, from my cradle, and I have not felt myself unhappy in consequence. I am now released from the engagement, yet do I not feel myself happier. Children have their ministering angels before the sight of God, says Master Martin. God only knows what is best for us, and He can dispose of events accordingly. It may not be long, perhaps, before we hear of a similar betrothal of our young heir-apparent to the beautiful royal maid of Sweden, whom we saw at the tournament. The king appears to desire it ardently, and I dare offer no objections."

"Barbarous--atrocious!" murmured the knight. "But I have something else to tell you. Are you prepared to travel?"

"It is not yet time. As long as the handsome gentleman glitters and dances within, he can hardly think of leaving the kingdom."

"You know, then, that he has taken leave of the king? He departs tonight for Sleswick, it is reported; but I know that two highly distinguished gentlemen are to pass over to Korsöer to-night. These are certainly he and his drost. The ship they have hired is said to be Swedish; but I believe it is Norse, and, in fact, a pirate-vessel."

"I know it," answered Drost Peter. "Our little sloop is ready to sail. It is all in good hands, and I am fully authorised in this matter. Sir Benedict Rimaardson, of Tornborg, follows us in Zealand. As soon as the bird takes wing, we fly after him; but on this side the Sound he has his freedom. If he think proper to visit Zealand, it is no one's business."

"We understand one another," replied Thorstenson, nodding. "We, too, are only making a pleasant excursion, to visit our good friends. With Sir Lavé Little, at Flynderborg we can best guard the passage of the Sound."

Drost Peter hesitated, as if half embarrassed by the proposition. "Very good: we can determine on that tomorrow," he said, hastily. "But we must be at our post. Remain you here till the moment this cunning gentleman leaves the palace. I shall send my squire to the quay, to keep an eye upon the strange skiff. Before midnight, I shall be at the palace-gates, with our horses." He pressed Thorstenson's hand, went hastily past the dancers in the saloon, and, as he approached the queen, paused for a moment, to give her a respectful salutation.

"A word, Drost Hessel," said the queen, in an unusually authoritative tone, and seating herself upon a chair, at some distance from the dancers.

Drost Peter stopped, and approached her attentively.

"How do you find your wounded guest?" she inquired. "I regret that I was, in some measure, the cause of his relapse."

"His life is out of danger, your grace. I am at this moment going to visit him."

"Tell him that I am concerned for his mishap," she continued; "so much the more, as I hear it occurred in a chivalrous onset respecting a lady's honour."

Drost Peter blushed deeply. "How, gracious queen?" he stammered: "who has said--"

"That this was the case?" interrupted the queen. "It has just been told me that he had a dispute, on his journey from Middelfert, with a certain conceited young knight, who boasted too loudly and indiscreetly of his good fortune with a lady whose colours he wears, but one who can never consent to be the object of any other favour from a knight than true and discreet service."

"He who told you so, noble queen," replied Drost Peter, with a deep feeling of wounded honour, "I must pronounce a base slanderer, did he even wear a princely crown; and I will make good my assertion by honourable combat for life and death. This much only is true, that our common admiration of the exalted lady whose colours I wear was, undoubtedly, the cause of our untoward strife. But, by my knightly honour, the noble Count Gerhard himself can bear witness that his antagonist was guilty of no indiscretion."

"Your word of honour, brave Drost Hessel, is ample surety to me for the truth of what you state," said the queen, mildly; "but it is my express wish that not a word more be said about this matter, and that you carefully avoid every dispute with which my name may, in the slightest degree, be associated. From henceforth, neither you nor any other knight shall wear my colours with my consent. I shall see you only when it is highly needful, and when I call you. This conduct, I know, you will not misunderstand. Go, now, to your sick guest, noble knight, and be assured of my unchanged goodwill."

With bitter feelings, Drost Peter unfastened a rose-coloured silken rosette, which he wore upon his doublet, and, handing it to the queen with a suppressed sigh, he bowed silently and respectfully, and withdrew.

It was almost midnight. Count Gerhard lay impatiently in bed, unable to sleep. He seemed to hear, from the palace, the flutes and violins, and had conceived such a desire for dancing, since his first essay in the art on the preceding evening, that his legs were in constant motion, though the surgeon had enjoined him to be still, and to allow himself to be bound, if he could not restrain this singular fancy, which he thought must be a result of the fever produced by his wound. His adventure with Sir John, in the early part of the evening, occurred to him almost like a dream, and he would not ask any one how it had happened. All society and amusement were strictly forbidden him, and he saw no one but the surgeon and old Dorothy, who watched quietly by his couch. Still, when he could not sleep, she told him a variety of ghost-stories, and tales of trolchs and nixes, the truth of which she piously believed and affirmed. The count would only answer with a growl, and a brief exclamation of "Nonsense! confounded nonsense, carlin!" but in the best-tempered tone in the world.

Dorothy was not at all disconcerted by such objections. She saw plainly that her stories amused the sick man, and therefore regarded his discontented expressions merely as a peculiar mode of speaking, and a well-meant sign that he was listening. She sat quietly by his pillow, with her lean, wrinkled visage opposite to the lamp, and had almost finished a long story about a nix who had his quarters in Our Lady's steeple, and played people all sorts of pranks--sometimes in the form of a horse, at a ford, where he took travellers upon his back, and, laughing, threw them off in the middle of a bog--sometimes as a beautiful princess, or fairy queen, who would dance with vain gallants in her palace of mist, and become changed into a wisp of straw when they attempted to embrace her.

"Nonsense! cursed nonsense!" again growled the count. "But you are right, carlin. The fools were properly served, if there are such nixes. Are not you, yourself, a confounded witch, who will plague and play cantrips with me?"

The old woman crossed herself. The door was gently opened, and Drost Peter put in his head to inquire after the sick man. The simple gray dress of a burgher was the attire in which he had disguised himself for his secret journey, and, in place of his feathered hat, he wore a red cloth travelling-cap over his fair locks. When Dorothy saw him in this dress, she started up, terrified.

"St. Gertrude and all saints save us!" she cried, "here he comes!"

"Who?" growled the count: "has Satan got you, carlin? Who is it?"

"If you are not asleep, noble count," said Drost Peter, entering, "I shall merely wish you a speedy recovery, and bid you farewell. I must travel tonight, and have fortified myself against the night air."

"Ah, my gracious young master, it is you!" cried Dorothy. "I thought, by the Lord's truth, it was the gray nix with the red cap, who had changed himself into a handsome young gentleman to make a fool of me."

"Your nurse is crazy, and is well nigh making me crazy too," said Count Gerhard, recognising Drost Peter, and extending his hand. "You are for travelling--and I lying here. Well, then, set out in God's name. I require nothing, as you may see, and have entertaining company. But were you at the palace entertainment? How gets it on? With whom does the queen dance?"

"With dukes and princes of the blood. She inquired after you, and bade me inform you that she is concerned for your mischance. Leave us for a moment, Dorothy."

Dorothy left the room, casting back a look of curiosity, and allowing the door to stand ajar. Drost Peter, who knew her failing, closed the door, and took a chair by the count's pillow.

"Did she really inquire after me?" asked the count. "There is nothing of the nix in your nature, my good friend; therefore you cannot see whether I am one of your nurse's vain gallants, who have a fancy for dancing with a bundle of straw."

Drost Peter looked at him with surprise, and thought he was delirious.

"It is nonsense--stupid nursery jargon, I know very well," continued the count. "But as I have nothing to do but lie here and dream, it almost crazes me. But let that pass. What said you concerning the queen?"

"She has been inaccurately informed of the occasion of our dispute," replied Drost Peter. "I have not mentioned the circumstance to any one; so that you must yourself--"

"Only in confidence, to my dear Longlegs, and then in a highly figurative manner. But what said she to that?"

"It is the queen's wish that nothing more be said about the matter," continued Drost Peter. "She no longer permits any knight to wear her colours, and, as you may perceive, my red rosette is gone."

"I have nothing to say against that," exclaimed the count, with undisguised pleasure: "it did not well become you. You are about to travel, then, and do not accompany the court?"

"Not at present. But, before taking my departure, a serious word, in confidence. I know well that you cannot be greatly attached to the royal house of Denmark, and you may greatly disapprove of what has taken place here; but you hate all knavery, and mean well and honourably with everybody.

"Good: on that point you may rest satisfied. But if you require me to show you as much by deeds, say on."

"These are bewildering and deceiving times, noble Count Gerhard, and even the best are liable to be misled. The king's friends are few, and I dare not reckon you among them. His enemies are numerous and powerful; but the noble Queen Agnes is not less prized in your eyes than in mine. Promise me, for her sake, however much you may condemn the measures of the Danish government, that you will not enter into any secret league against the crown and kingdom; but, like a faithful vassal, make common cause with me, to preserve the legitimate order of affairs in Denmark."

"I have not, as yet, had the least thought of doing mischief," replied the count, smiling; "and, seeing the condition in which I now am, have you not taken care that I shall not be a dangerous neighbour in a hurry? I am, to speak frankly, no great admirer either of your policy or your king, and should have nothing to complain of if there happened a regular insurrection, like that which he himself supported in Sweden. It gave people something to do, and one had not time to lie dreaming about nixes and enchanted princesses. But you are right: for the queen's sake alone, it were a sin and a shame to desire an insurrection. I am well aware that the great men and vassals are dissatisfied; but I have hitherto kept myself aloof, and I will not belong to their councils, if they have not reference to an open and orderly feud, which, besides, is both just and lawful in itself."

"More than this I cannot desire, noble count. Give me your knightly hand upon it."

"There it is. I have no objection to people fighting, when they cannot agree; but with conspiracies and mutinies I shall have nothing to do: you have my word for it."

"That word is worth more to me than the most formal treaty," replied Drost Peter, pressing his hand with glad confidence. "Farewell, now, noble count, and a speedy recovery. Make my house your home as long as you please, and bear me in friendly remembrance, in whatever way fickle fortune may be disposed to play ball with me. However much we may differ on many points, on one we are agreed. The illustrious fair one who, against her wish, brought us to contend against each other, shall hereafter, like a spirit of peace and reconciliation, unite our hands and hearts in that gloomy warfare wherein friends and foes know not each other. God be with you! Farewell."

So saying, he once more ardently pressed the count's hand, and hastily left him. The count nodded, and fell into deep thought.

Old Dorothy shortly afterwards again hobbled into the apartment, and took her master's place by the count's bed; but finding him so completely abstracted, she did not venture again to disturb him with more adventures.

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It was two hours after midnight. The streets of Nyborg were still and deserted. There was no moon in the heavens; but the sky was clear, and, in the faint starlight, two tall individuals, wrapped in hooded cloaks, issued from the outer gates of the palace. They walked silently and hastily towards the quay.

Immediately afterwards, two horsemen, in gray cloaks, rode out of the palace-gate, and speedily disappeared in the same direction, without the slightest noise, as if their horses were shod with list.

At the extremity of the quay lay a skiff, with red sails, upon which a number of silent figures were in motion. The quay was quiet and solitary. At length, a few rapid footsteps and the clank of spurs were heard, and, under the outer plank of the bulwark, a little, peeping, curly head concealed itself. The two tall persons in hooded cloaks now paused: one of them coughed, and, in a subdued voice, pronounced a name or pass-word, which was answered from the ship by a

whistle; upon which they went on board. In a moment the red sails were set. A steady breeze blew from the south-west, and the skiff passed rapidly by the eastern point, out of the haven.

As soon as the vessel was in motion, the little black curly head of the spy once more appeared from beneath the bulwark. At one bound, Claus Skirmen stood in a boat, and, with a few hasty strokes of the oars, came alongside a small yacht lying in the inner part of the haven, and in which his master and Sir Thorstenson already expected him. Scarcely had the red-sailed skiff passed Canute's Head, the extreme eastern point of coast, before the smaller and quicker yacht ran out from Nyborg haven. It bore away, at first with some difficulty, as near as possible to the wood-covered west coast of the firth, to avoid drifting too far northwards, and to be able to steer in a direct line south of Sporgoe, towards Zealand.

Drost Peter seated himself silently by the rudder, and looked grave. Sir Thorstenson and Skirmen also preserved a deep silence; and, during the whole passage, the usual and necessary words of command to the boatmen only were heard. The skiff with the red sails had just disappeared from sight, and was steering to the north of Sporgoe. As the morning dawned, they were close by Korsöer. Drost Peter gazed incessantly, and somewhat uneasily, towards the north. At length he caught a glimpse of the red sail, and saw that the strange skiff was bearing down the Belt. He now ordered the yacht to be run in to Korsöer harbour.

The two knights landed unrecognised. They stood in their gray cloaks, like travelling merchants, and silently bowed before a large crucifix, which, surrounded by a gilt circle or halo, stood on the quay-head. Skirmen hastily brought the horses on shore; and, in an instant, the knights had mounted them, and the squire leaped on his hardy norback, when, without delay, the three horsemen proceeded through the slumbering town. Over almost every door there stood a cross, in a ring, as upon the quay. This holy symbol, at once the ancient arms of the town and the origin of its name, was not wanting on any craftsman's sign. Although there was not awaking soul to be seen in the place, the knights saluted almost every second house, mindful, even in their haste, of this customary token of reverence. They rode through the town-gate, and along the frith to the left or northwards, where the road wound near Tornborg. In the wood, close by Tornborg, they ceased their hard gallop, and allowed their horses to breathe.

Now, for the first time, Drost Peter broke the long silence. "You are perfectly sure it was them, Skirmen?" he said to his squire.

"As sure as I am that it is yourself and Sir Thorstenson who are riding here," replied the squire. "The duke and his drost stood on the beam right over my head, at the quay, and I could count every soul on board the skiff."

"How many were there, then?"

"I counted nine and twenty, including soldiers and boatmen. They looked a most atrocious pack of rievvers. One could hardly see their faces, for their black and red beards; and those who did not sit on the rowing-benches, had large knives in their girdles, and battle-axes in their hands. He who whistled appeared the worst of them all: he was a huge, sturdy fellow, with a face like a bear. I could only see him indistinctly, on account of the red sail that flapped about his ears; but I dare stake my head that it was no one else than Niels Breakpeace himself, the captain of the Jutland rievvers, who escaped from us last year."

"Niels Breakpeace!" repeated both knights, in astonishment. "But was not the vessel Norwegian, then?" inquired Drost Peter.

"The boatmen were Norsemen, sir--audacious-looking fellows, with large cleavers and shaggy caps. He who sat by the rudder was also a Norseman--a little sturdy fellow, dressed like a knight, with a gilded dagger-hilt in his belt. They called him Count Alf."

"The algrev--Mindre-Alf!" exclaimed both knights, regarding each other with renewed astonishment; while Sir Thorstenson, repeating the name, became pale with indignation, and grasped the hilt of his sword in his powerful hand.

"Stand!" he exclaimed, stopping his horse: "could I but break the algrev's neck, I would give half my life for it. But who has said they are coming in this direction?"

Drost Peter held the skirt of his cloak to the wind. "Do you see?" he said: "the wind has gone round to the north. They must have already landed on the coast here. That they will to Sweden, we know very well; and that they were steering down the Belt, we saw. They will certainly land either here or at Skjelskjoer, to cross the Sound by Orekrog. If we are rightly informed, the duke must first to Zealand; he and the marsk have powerful friends here."

"They will certainly not land at Skjelskjoer," said Thorstenson; "the algrev was too well known there last year."

"We shall soon see them here, then," said Drost Peter. "These Norse vikings<sup>[15]</sup> will hardly venture far from the vessel. The duke will also bethink him well of passing through the country openly, with a gang of rievvers at his heels. He will scarcely come with a large train; but, in any case, we can surprise the whole band, if requisite."

"That we can, with half a score of Sir Rimaardson's coast-jagers," said Thorstenson. "Yonder lies Tornborg. I think we should take our post by the road here, and send your squire to the castle."

Drost Peter nodded assent, and immediately dispatched Claus Skirmen to Tornborg with a verbal message; whilst he and Sir Thorstenson, leaving the horses to graze in a little green spot in the wood, close to the road, ascended an eminence, from which they had an extensive view over the Belt. From this spot they saw the red sail of the freebooter, under a woody shelter, near the coast, and were now satisfied that they were upon the right track.

Tornborg lay scarcely three hundred yards from the eminence where the knights stood. The nimble Skirmen was soon back, and brought intelligence that Sir Rimaardson had gone out hunting for the day, and would not return home before evening.

"We must assist ourselves, then, as we best can," said Drost Peter. "We can stay here until the duke has passed. Although every royal castellan will stand by us, yet the fewer we are the better: we must avoid publicity."

"But, should the pirates impede our progress, we must cut our way through the pack," remarked Thorstenson. "I take upon me to crack the algre's neck, and perhaps those of a couple of his scoundrels. Yet, however, we are only two-men-and-a-half strong."

"You may safely reckon us as three whole men, and a little more, stern sir knight," said Skirmen, strutting bravely: "what I want in length, I can make up for, perhaps, in another shape. At any rate, you and my master alone may well pass for three doughty men."

"No bragging, Skirmen," said Drost Peter, interrupting his squire. "Off now, and get under the stone trough, by the roadside yonder, and bring us word, as soon as you see them. They cannot do otherwise than cross the brook."

Skirmen leapt from his norback, and left it to graze in the wood. He then ran to the post indicated, and the two knights took their seats on the hillock.

"Ah, could we only catch the algre!" broke out Sir Thorstenson, vehemently.

"That is a matter of secondary importance, my noble knight," observed Drost Peter. "In our anxiety to secure a freebooter, let us not forget the far more important object for which we are here."

"You are right," said Thorstenson: "in thinking of the infernal viking, I had almost forgotten everything else. Respecting the duke, it is rather a dangerous undertaking. If we allow him to cross the Sound, we may chance to have him in our power; but, if it so happen, it is then extremely doubtful whether we are not doing exactly that which the king and the friends of the country would prevent. Think you not that such apparent violence, towards so powerful a vassal, would give a vent for the general dissatisfaction, and arm every traitor in the country?"

"It is a hazardous but necessary step," replied Drost Peter; "and, after what we have now seen, is nowise unjust. Besides, if this exalted personage is in league with the country's open enemies, and even with outlawed criminals, like Niels Breakpeace, we should be quite justified were we to seize him on the spot. Were that possible, we shall not exceed our authority one single step."

"Could we but lay hold of the algre at the same time, it would not so much matter," began Sir Thorstenson, after a pause, his eyes flashing with passion. "Since the cursed sea-hound is so saucy as to risk himself on land, before our very eyes, I can scarcely refrain from giving him chase, even before we deal with the other. It were shame and a scandal should the notorious algre be permitted to pass through Zealand, instead of being hanged on a gallows by the way. There is scarcely a sea-town in Denmark that he has not plundered: he has committed more atrocities in the world than he has hairs on his curly head."

"Do you know anything of him beyond report?" inquired Drost Peter. "Craft and courage he should not lack."

"I know him better than any clerk or bishop knows the foul fiend," replied the enraged knight. "He passes for a hero and a great man, both in Norway and Sweden; but here he passes, with good reason, for a vile sea-rover, an incendiary, and a ravisher. And yet such a fellow brags of his princely descent, and scorns an honest and irreproachable knight! Know you not that it is he who, with Justice Algot of West Gothland, and his powerful sons, is guardian to Prince Svantopolk's daughter, and the cause of all my misfortunes?"

"I know you speak reluctantly about this affair, my noble knight. You were inclined towards the prince's fair daughter, and she gave you her troth against her kinsman's wish; but, as far as I am aware, it was not the algre, but Justice Algot's son, who carried off the Lady Ingrid."

"It was by the algre's help, then; and not at all from true affection, but from pride and a love of rapine. The whole of this haughty race are in conspiracy against us. Chancellor Peter and Bishop Brynjalf of Sweden wished to force her into a convent; but the algre would give her to Sir Algotson, that half her fief and estates might remain in his riever claws. My only hope now is in

the bold Swedish king, and in seeing this algre on a gibbet."

"But, my dear, brave Thorstenson, do not you make too large claims on kings and princes, when you set your eyes so seriously on a prince's daughter?"

"I am as doughty and wellborn a knight as Algotson," replied Thorstenson: "but, were I even the meanest scullion, and loved an emperor's daughter, by Him who lives above! I would show the world I was worthy of her, and lay my life on winning her, spite of the world and all its rulers."

"You cannot, however, entirely despise the limits that birth and station oppose to our wishes," continued Drost Peter, with friendly interest. "However highly you may esteem a free and independent nature, my valiant friend, you must still admit, that there is something higher and greater than in blindly following its instincts to happiness. You cannot be ignorant of the great law of self-denial: that law, the powerful ones of the earth ought most of all to obey. Those who stand nearest to kings, part with heart and fortune, my friend; yea, the heart must be silent, where a higher voice speaks."

"The fiend take your higher voice and law of self-denial!" replied Thorstenson. "That law may do for reigning princes. They are bred and born to be the victims of state policy, and of their people. For that, they bear the crown and sceptre; for that, they rule over us, and hide their miseries in purple; but free, noble-born knights cannot recognise a necessity at variance with the ordinances of God and of nature. I well know what has possessed you with this fancy, my brave friend: it is respect for a deceased father's last foolishness. Such respect is, no doubt, very proper; but the usurpations of fathers and kinsmen over our childhood can never constitute a sacred obligation to sacrifice our own freedom and happiness, and stifle the best feelings of our nature. You may be glad that your foolish juvenile betrothment is at an end; it now behoves you no longer to befool yourself with fancies."

"I was not thinking of myself at the moment," replied Drost Peter, with calm animation, lying back on the green height, his clear blue eye resting on the deep vault of the spring-heaven over his head. "I was thinking of our young heir to the throne, and the little Princess Ingeborg of Sweden. They are already, one may say, bride and bridegroom, although they are yet both children. They played together at that tourney festival where the proud Ingrid gave you her troth, and you, with grave self-confidence, believed you could determine your fortune. It was to me a wonderful thought, when I saw the children playing together, that I knew what neither of them yet could dream of--that these two innocent beings were already secretly destined for one another, and chosen to become the bond of union between two kingdoms and people. It did not in any manner move me: it occurred to me, not as an audacious interference with the designs of Providence by a cold, calculating state policy, or as an unnatural usurpation, as you term it, by short-sighted men; it appeared to me as a mysterious carrying out of God's will, and as if these children had been destined for each other before any of the individuals were in being by whose plans and counsels it should be accomplished. I will not defend these views: I know you will call them fanatical, or even superstitious and foolish; but in the same manner has my own dim destination hitherto come before my eyes. This fanaticism, as you may readily term it, has, thanks to God! preserved me from a bewilderment of heart, that might have driven me mad, or, what were worse, have lost me my peace of mind, here and hereafter."

"I believe I guess what you mean, my brave friend," said Sir Thorstenson, heartily shaking his hand. "I will not enter into argument with your pious fancies. Your heart has the least share in your aristocratic bigotry; for, fortunately, your fancies have juggled the heart into a slumber. But ask not that I should regard, in the same calm manner, the dull obstacles to my happiness as a wise ordination. I esteem you fortunate that you really do not experience that vehemence of passion you seem to dread, and which would destroy your world of fancy, quick as a stormblast destroys the glittering cobweb."

"All hearts are not alike," replied Drost Peter; and his manly voice trembled, from a deep, suppressed feeling. "When it boils and tosses in you, as in the mighty ocean, in my soul it burns deep and still. If, then, I could not fix my eye on the great, calm, eternal depth above, and find peace in its contemplation, I should waste in secret; whilst you find relief and consolation in wild outbreaks."

They continued to converse together for some time, in a familiar and friendly manner. They had long been friends, notwithstanding the great difference in their modes of thinking, as well as in their nature and dispositions. The zeal and fidelity with which they both served their king were grounded upon a far from common opinion of the sacredness of the crown and of the kingly power. A steady regard to this made Drost Peter what he was with respect to the crown and kingdom; and his earnest hope to be able to support a tottering throne, and to preserve the crown untarnished for its hopeful and legally chosen heir, gave him strength for every sacrifice.

With Sir Thorstenson, it was the idea of honour, and the inviolability of a knight's promise, which alone bound him to a king he could neither love nor respect. He shared, in many points, the contempt of the discontented noblemen for a kingly power, which, circumscribed as it was, was still so frequently perverted to unjust and arbitrary ends; but he hated, in almost an equally high degree, the pride of birth, and the imperious conduct of the aristocracy, as well as the efforts of the ecclesiastics to establish a spiritual tyranny. He was, consequently, disposed to



justify the rebellious spirit of the oppressed commoners, and was an ardent admirer of the Swedish king, Magnus Ladislaus, who guarded the privileges of the commons, while he tamed the most powerful of the nobility with violence, and, at times, with cruelties. On this subject he had again entered into a warm controversy with Drost Peter, who, since the cruel execution of the Folkungar,<sup>[16]</sup> without form of law, had a strong aversion to the Swedish king, which he expressed without reserve, and considered Denmark, with all her miseries, fortunate in not having such a sanguinary tyrant and upstart monarch for a ruler.

"Nay, my good friend," cried Thorstenson, starting up: "rather an able tyrant, who treads every law under foot, than a vile turncoat, who gives laws every day and keeps no law himself. Rather an active, hardy warrior, who hacks off heads like cabbages from their stocks, than a mean craven, who can only run after women in the dark, and cannot look an honest man in the face in open day. Nay, nay," he continued, striking his sword on the ground: "I consider Sweden fortunate in her Magnus, even were he to lay one half of it waste in order that flowers and glory might spring up in the other. Rather a despotic ruler, with a determined will, who dares to wrest a crown from a crazy head, and defend it, than a legitimate madman, a dullard, without head or brains, and wrinkled like a clout under the symbol of majesty. We serve the vilest master in the world," continued he, with subdued vehemence: "that we cannot gainsay. You are true to him, Drost Peter; but, to defend him with a true word--that you leave alone. I must make free to say of him what I please, if even you are angry thereat; but he has once had my word, and he may rely on my fealty, though he is not worthy to have an honest dog in his service. Great honour no one earns here, either as knight or warrior: that you must yourself admit; but what honour I have, I shall take care to keep, notwithstanding. If, now, we have to make war on Sweden, as I respect my knightly word, I shall not sheathe my sword until I have washed the stain from the hand that gave it me, with the blood of heroes who now, with reason, despise us."

Drost Peter sprang up with warmth. "With reason, no one can despise us," he said; "and, without reason, no one shall dare to do so with impunity. The days of Denmark's glory are over, it is true; but honour even our worst foes shall leave us untouched. If we scorn the master we serve, we scorn ourselves," he continued. "The faults and errors of the king I cannot defend: it were despicable to respect them; but, as faithful servants, we should cover them with the cloak of charity when we can, and not place our glory in revealing his shame."

"To you, and between ourselves, I can state my mind without disguise," replied Thorstenson. "On this subject, you know, I am silent before strangers; and, were a stranger to venture to say to me what I have just been saying to you, I would break his neck on the spot, without a moment's hesitation.---But how is this? The wood is full of people!" He sprang hastily to his feet. "And where are our horses? They are not where we left them grazing."

Drost Peter looked round him in astonishment. They heard many voices, and the noise of hunters and hounds, on all sides; and now they perceived, beside them on the height, a tall gentleman, of knightly appearance, attired in a green doublet, and mounted on a light brown horse.

"Who are you?" shouted the huntsman, in a stern, commanding voice. "Rievers have landed hereabouts, and I have a right to make the demand: I am the king's captain at Tornborg."

"We have sought you in vain, Sir Benedict Rimaardson," replied Drost Peter, taking off his red cap, and at the same time handing him the king's authority. "Who we are, this will inform you, if you have not already recognised us."

"Drost Hessel! Sir Thorstenson!" exclaimed the knight, with surprise, and springing from his horse: "who would have expected you in this guise?" He extended a friendly hand to them, and cast a hasty glance over the document, while Drost Peter pointed it out, and laid his finger on his lips.

Although the huntsman had, apparently, some trouble in reading it, he quickly understood its meaning. "So, so! teeth before the tongue!" said he, in a tone of surprise, and handing back the parchment to Drost Peter. "I have something better to do, then, than to hunt after these horse-stealers. But still it was an accursed piece of impudence in them," continued he, enraged. "Did you not see a gang of long-bearded fellows, looking like shipwrecked seamen? A little while since they carried off all our horses, almost to the one I luckily sit upon. They did it in a twinkling, as my huntsmen were taking their morning's meal down by the moss."

"Our horses, also, have disappeared," said Sir Thorstenson. "Here there is no time to be lost. But, first, procure us three horses."

"Are you more than two, gentlemen?"

"My squire is on the outlook, down by the road," replied Drost Peter: "see, here he comes."

Squire Skirmen bounded forward like a hart. "They are coming!" he exclaimed: "there are four on horseback. I know the duke's red mantle, and the little Norse gentleman's burly beard."

"The algrev!" cried Thorstenson: "death and destruction! let us after him!"

"That illustrious individual is not to be stopped here, if I understand the pothooks rightly," said

the huntsman; "but we must be certain whether it is him. How fall you upon the algrev? Follow me, gentlemen: I know the wood. They shall pass close by us without seeing us."

While Skirmen held the huntsman's horse, he led the nimble Drost Peter and Sir Thorstenson into a thicket of white thorns and young beeches, close by the roadside. By his advice, they laid themselves on the ground, having in sight, before them, a portion of the road from Korsöer. They had not waited long in this position, before they heard the trampling of horses close at hand. Drost Peter bent the boughs aside, and Sir Thorstenson made a hasty movement.

"Still! keep still, my good sirs!" said the hunter: "game of this sort must not be frightened. Here we have them. Bight: it is the duke and his drost. The pompous little gentleman, with the bullock head, I do not know; and yet--"

"The algrev! Mindre-Alf!" interrupted Thorstenson, in a low voice, as he was on the point of starting up.

"Remember the main business, and restrain your vehemence," whispered Drost Peter, holding him back.

"Let them only get in advance, and we are sure of them," whispered the hunter. "But who is that heavy fellow, in the squire's mantle, who rides behind? He does not look at all like a fine gentleman's attendant."

"Niels Breakpeace, the Jutland rover," answered Drost Peter, softly: "but let him pass on. In the duke's livery, he has now free convoy through Zealand."

The four important travellers passed, and the knights arose.

"It is hard enough," said Rimaardson, "that I, as chief of Tornborg, should see two such notorious robbers pass along, under my very nose as it were, and dare not stop and seize them. If it was their marauding band that took our horses, there is no more security in the country for the present. Permit me to ride on before you to Tornborg, gentlemen. Measures shall be taken instantly. We may still reach Slagelse before the duke has left it. We must keep at some distance, and be not too numerous, or he may apprehend mischief."

As he spoke he hastily mounted his horse, which Skirmen, at his sign, had brought him, and rode off at a gallop towards the castle. The knights and Skirmen followed him with rapid steps.

Sir Benedict or Bent Rimaardson was about forty years of age, with a brave huntsman's countenance, embrowned by exposure to the sun and open air. He was tall and spare, and exceedingly nimble in his movements. All his paternal ancestors were Danes; but, on the mother's side, he was related to the Margraves of Brandenburg and Queen Agnes. In consequence of his fidelity to the king, he was at variance with his younger brother, Sir Lavé Rimaardson, who had been deprived of his estates, and outlawed as a traitor and fomenter of rebellion among the peasants. These family cares severely depressed the otherwise bold and lively knight; for his wild, unruly brother was still dear to him, and it often wounded him deeply to hear the name of Rimaardson associated with those of the most audacious transgressors of the laws of the land. He lived, unmarried, with his brother John, as chief of Tornborg, where he watched over the security of the coast with great strictness, and constantly lay in wait for the Norwegian freebooters. He was a distinguished sea-warrior, and had often been successful in capturing pirates with his longboat. What sometimes interfered with his vigilance was his passion for the chase--his only recreation at this lonely castle.

That a Norwegian pirate-vessel had arrived at Korsöer, and landed rovers, whilst he thought the seas secure, and was diverting himself with the chase, provoked him highly; but this recent mission, with which the king had entrusted him, gave him something else to think of. In a few minutes he had reached the castle; and, when his guests arrived, they found the horses already saddled in the court-yard. They allowed themselves no time to inspect the famous castle, from which the place derived its name, or even to refresh themselves. The chief, having entrusted the care of the castle to his brother John, dispatched a troop of huntsmen into the wood in search of the rieviers; and then, along with his guests, mounted his horse, without changing his green doublet. He ordered four jagers to follow them at a short distance, and started from Tornborg at a gallop, in the direction of Slagelse.

The road between Korsöer and Slagelse, in the western part of Zealand, is crossed, at Vaarby, by a rivulet, running between tolerably high banks, and was, anciently, broad and deep enough to be navigable for small vessels. Between Vaarby Banks the road gradually became narrower, and a wooden bridge led across the river where it was deepest. This bridge was not wider than what would allow a wain to drive over: it rested upon upright beams, taller than a ship's mast, and, as was usual, was unprovided with rails at the side. The river at this spot was very deep, though it did not rise nearly so high as it did when the bridge was built; from which it has been inferred that, from the bridge to the surface of the stream, there was a depth of more than six fathoms. Several large, almost rocklike stones, rose above the water on both sides, the remains, apparently, of a stone bridge, which had been swept away by the violence of the current: a proof that the river had formerly swollen into a mighty torrent. The steep banks were overgrown with brushwood, which almost concealed them.

Here, Niels Breakpeace's twelve daring robbers, with nine well-armed Norse freebooters from the pirate-vessel, together with the stolen horses, were concealed in a thicket. In order to deceive the huntsmen and coast-guards who had pursued them, a smaller number of the Norse pirates had fled, with much noise and clamour, in an opposite direction, and had gained their ship before their pursuers could come up with them; when they immediately hoisted sail, and bore away to the south, under Egholm and Aggersoe.

In the thicket near Vaarby Bridge, the shaggy-bearded fellows, stretched on the grass, held a short council, at the same time making good cheer from one of the huntsmen's wallets. A tall young man, with a knight's feathered hat over his handsome brown locks, but otherwise dressed as a seaman, in coarse pitched wadmél, alone stood up among them, and appeared to be their leader. He had an expression of daring in his features, which yet presented a fine noble outline, and a pair of dark eyes flashed audaciously from under his bushy eyebrows.

"There is no time now for stretching and lounging," said he, in an imperious, commanding tone. "Give heed, fellows! To-day, I am both count of Tönsberg and Niels Breakpeace; and he who dares to disobey me, I shall cut down on the spot."

The fellows seemed to understand this discourse, without being at all intimidated. They appeared to expect such a speech; and only half rising from their recumbent position, regarded him with silence and attention.

"Over this bridge," he continued, "not a living soul from Korsöer crosses to-day, were he even king of Denmark. Whoever sets foot upon the bridge is our prisoner. If he resists, we cut him down, or pitch him into the river, without more ado. I remain at this side, with my Norwegian bears; you, Morten Longknife, with your own men, shall guard the other end. If you budge a foot when it comes to the pinch, it costs you your neck. To Korsöer may travel who will; but not a cat to Slagelse. Do you understand?"

A tall, red-bearded fellow, with a knife an ell long in his belt, had sprung up, with ten others, sturdy and dirty-looking enough. "That is easy to be understood, stern knight," said he, in the dialect of a Jutland peasant, and nodding his head. "You and the northmen break backs to-day, and we Jutes cleave brainpans. For that I can be depended upon: it is a token that you know us."

"You are to lie quiet in yonder thicket until I whistle, when you shall spring up, and close the bridge in three ranks. As soon as I call out, 'Hack away!' cleave to the foot whoever comes. Now, off to your post!"

Morten Longknife nodded assent. With his ten men, he went immediately over the bridge, and disappeared in the thicket on the opposite bank of the river.

Drost Peter, in the meantime, rode between Sir Thorstenson and Bent Rimaardson, at a brisk trot, along the road towards Vemmelöv and Vaarby. They were silent, and seemed to be considering the most prudent way of accomplishing their difficult undertaking.

Squire Skirmen followed upon a lean hunter, and sorely grieved for the loss of his norback. But he soon got into a lively conversation with Sir Rimaardson's four huntsmen. They related to him many of their master's daring exploits, when he allowed freebooters to land, that he might catch and hang them. In return, Skirmen told them of his master's feats in the Sleswick war, and at tilts and jousts, and gave them a description of the magnificent tournament at Helsingborg, which he had himself seen. Thereupon, he struck up a lively tourney song, and jiggged on his saddle as he sang:--

"There shines upon the fourth shield  
An eagle, and he is red;  
And it is borne by Holger Danske;  
Who killed the giant dead."

"My master bears an eagle on his seal," he added. "Were I in his place, I would set the eagle in the shield, instead of the red bend. Do you know what I shall have on my shield, when once I am a knight? It shall be Folker Fiddler's mark. But there must be more than that: of my shield it will be hereafter sung:--

"There stands a maiden in the shield,  
And a sword, and fiddle, and bow;  
And it is borne by bold Skirmen,  
Who will sing, not sleep, I trow."

While the young squire thus gave expression to his pleasing expectations, they had passed Vemmelöv, and were approaching Vaarby Bridge. The neighing, as of a foal, was presently heard from the copse by the river-side, and Skirmen exclaimed, with surprise--"My little norback!" In a moment he was by his master's side, and communicated to him his discovery.

Drost Peter stopped his horse. All was still. "If my squire has heard aright," said the drost, "we

shall, without doubt, meet our horse-stealers here. They have probably riders with them, who will oppose our progress. If they have ascertained who we are, and the errand on which we ride, it was not imprudent of them to occupy this important post."

Both knights paused, and regarded the long, narrow bridge with an air of thoughtfulness.

"With twelve men, I could defend the bridge against a whole army," said Sir Rimaardson. "We have two choices: either we must proceed at a gallop, and endeavour to cut our way through; or we must ride hastily down, and see if our horses can swim across. To ride back, and delay ourselves by bringing aid, I will not propose to such valiant gentlemen. Besides, at this moment, I have not a single able horseman at home."

"Let us cut our way through at a gallop," said Sir Thorstenson. "But there is not a soul to be seen."

"If Skirmen is right, we shall soon see more than we may care for," replied Drost Peter. "Swim your horses well, Sir Rimaardson?"

"The two that you and your squire ride I will answer for, if it be not too muddy," replied the knight; "mine and Sir Thorstenson's are too heavy: they will stick fast where there is the least mud."

"There is no choice, then," said Drost Peter: "we must onwards, and, in God's name, may cut our way through. Follow close after us, huntsmen."

"Off!" cried Thorstenson, already spurring his horse.

"Stay a moment!" exclaimed Drost Peter: "whether we may get over the bridge alive, is uncertain; but our warrant must be secured. My bold squire's dexterity I can depend upon; and it will not be difficult for him to swim over, whilst we give the robbers something more to do than to think of stopping him. If you agree with me, good sirs, we shall entrust him with the king's letter and warrant: if we receive any hindrance, he takes it to the governor of Haraldsborg, or destroys the letter if he cannot escape."

"You are cautious, noble knight," said Sir Rimaardson; "but I grant you are right: we must be provided against every accident."

"Good!" exclaimed Thorstenson. "If we must make our wills, let it be done speedily. My fingers itch to get at the hounds."

"There, my trusty Skirmen," said Drost Peter, giving to his squire the carefully wrapt-up letter. "You perfectly understand us? This concerns the security of the crown and royal house. If I demand not this letter from you on the other side of the bridge, account to me for it beyond the greatest bridge." He pointed gravely towards the heavens, and was silent.

The blood mounted into the brave squire's cheeks. "I must flee, then, like a frightened wild goose, and not fight my way, gaily, by your side? It is a hard command, sir drost; but you will it so, and I obey. God be with you! We shall certainly meet beyond *that* bridge." Again came a neighing from the thicket. "My norback!" cried Skirmen, joyfully; and, spurring his horse, he rode hastily down a little by-path that led into the thicket near the river.

At the same instant the three knights started, at a rapid gallop, and with drawn swords, towards the bridge.

"One at a time, or we shall throw one another into the river," cried Thorstenson, taking the lead.

They had almost reached the bridge, and not a soul was to be seen.

"A false alarm!" cried Thorstenson: "there is no one here."

"On, on!" shouted Drost Peter, riding past him.

"That was not my meaning," grumbled Thorstenson; angrily, endeavouring to regain the lead.

But the first horse-shoe already clattered upon the narrow bridge, and Sir Thorstenson was obliged to rein in his steed, lest he should plunge his friend into the river. To their surprise, no one opposed them: the seventh horse had already his forelegs on the bridge; and Drost Peter, having arrived within a few paces of the opposite bank, began to think their suspicions were groundless, when the shrill blast of a whistle was heard in the rear. A gleam came suddenly from the thicket, and a threefold impenetrable wall of gigantic, bearded men, with uplifted halberds, stood at the end of the bridge, and barred the passage. At the same instant, a similar barrier of Norwegian pirates was formed behind them, and a powerful voice shouted--"Hold! or you are dead men!"

Drost Peter's horse reared before the bright halberds, and was nearly falling backwards into the river.

"On, on!" cried Thorstenson, getting to his left side, and seizing the rearing horse by the bridle: the animal plunged to the very brink of the bridge, and appeared in imminent danger of falling into the gulph. "On, on!" still shouted Thorstenson; but both he and Drost Peter vainly sought to urge on their shy and strange steeds. This sudden stoppage brought all the horses in the rear close together, and in the greatest disorder, so that none of them could now stir without the certainty of forcing another over the bridge.

"Lay down your arms!" shouted the voice behind them, "or we pitch you over, one and all!"

Presently, Drost Peter's sword rang among the halberds, and Morten Longknife fell, as his long blade whistled past Drost Peter's ear.

"Throw them over, the dogs! hack away!" cried the young robber chief, behind.

With a wild shout, they commenced a furious onslaught from both sides at once. Drost Peter and Thorstenson fought a dubious fight on the brink of the bridge, in which their plunging horses were severely wounded in the chest by the long halberds. A frightful battle raged behind: the pirates pressed on, and the four huntsmen in the rear were hurled, with their backs broken, together with their horses, into the deep.

Rimaardson could now, for the first time, stir; and he dexterously turned his horse about, to avoid the same fate as his unhappy jagers. He was on the point of rushing upon the wild, shouting freebooters, when his eye fell on the young robber chief, who wore the knight's hat. The sword fell from his hand, and both grew pale.

"Hold, fellows! give place for them!" cried the leader of the pirates: "in Satan's name, let them ride on!"

In an instant, not a single rover was to be seen on the bridge. Drost Peter and Sir Thorstenson were relieved as by a miracle, and rode hastily over the suddenly vacated bridge. Sir Rimaardson followed them silently, and as pale as a ghost. They rode up the height above the thicket, and there drew up their tired and bleeding horses. Presently they saw the ten rovers take flight, with their dead comrade's body, and disappear in the thicket at the opposite end of the bridge.

"How was this?" asked Drost Peter: "did the angel of death fight on our side, and strike the murderers with terror? Are you also safe, Sir Rimaardson?"

"Safe?" he repeated, gloomily: "yes, in Satan's name, I am safe. Better for me that I were lying, crushed and mangled, with my huntsmen."

"What has happened to you? Are you wounded?" inquired Thorstenson. "There is not a drop of blood in your cheek, and you are not the man to grow pale in danger."

"I have received no wound in my body," replied the knight; "but a two-edged sword has entered my soul. The unhappy robber chief, with the knight's hat, was my outlawed brother, Lavé. God be gracious to his sinful soul! If he fall into the hands of my coast-guards, I myself must doom him to the rack and wheel."

Both the knights were amazed; and, whilst they could now comprehend the reason of their wonderful deliverance, they also felt, with horror, their fellow-traveller's bitterness of soul.

"Think no more of it, brave Sir Bent," said Thorstenson, at length, consolingly. "In these mad times, a young hot-head may easily go astray. If he was leader of these fellows, he deserves to stand at the head of an army of warriors. The ambush was craftily and boldly planned, if he knew us."

"If it was the sight of your loyal countenance that struck him with repentance and dread, noble knight," said Drost Peter, "there is still hope of his salvation. Our gracious queen's kinsman cannot be so deeply fallen but that, with God and the Holy Virgin's aid, he can rise again, if time be granted him."

Rimaardson shook his head, and was silent.

"Welcome, welcome to this side of the bridge, noble sirs," cried a cheerful, lively voice; and Squire Skirmen came along, waving his cap with joy. He was mounted on his little norback, and leading the horses of Drost Peter and Sir Thorstenson. In an instant he was on the height along with them. He dismounted, and returned his master the packet confided to him.

"Here is the king's letter, sir," he said, joyously: "not a drop of water has touched it, though there is not a dry thread on my body."

"My old dapplegray!" exclaimed Thorstenson, springing from his wounded horse, which he set at liberty. The tall, gray steed appeared delighted again to see his master, who patted and caressed him like a restored friend, as he swung himself gladly into his own saddle.

Drost Peter, having again taken possession of the king's warrant, extolled his trusty squire for his dexterity and management. He, too, had descended from his strange horse, which bled profusely, and could scarcely bear him any longer. He first examined the animal's wounds, and

bound his scarf about its chest; then, turning him over to the care of his squire, he patted his own favourite brown steed, which pawed the ground impatiently. "It was skilfully done," he said to Skirmen, as he sprang into his saddle. "How did you get hold of the horses?"

"While you were all fighting, I did not wish to be idle," replied Skirmen. "I soon found my little norback: he nearly pawed me to death with joy, the dear fellow! The other two horses were also grazing by the river. Giving a smack to the hack I rode, I let him gallop home; and, had it not been for my little norback, I should have been sitting in the mud."

"Thou art a devil's imp!" said Thorstenson; "and, if it were not that thou art so stunted, there might be made a doughty wight of thee."

"You, too, were stunted once on a time," replied Skirmen, offended; "else Satan was the mother of you."

They were now all mounted, and Thorstenson was already several paces in advance.

"But my poor huntsmen!" exclaimed Sir Rimaardson, pausing: "might any of them yet be saved?"

"I saw them hurled over," replied Skirmen: "it was a shocking sight. I was already over the river, but I rode in again to save them. The black steed was nimble, and swam ashore; but the three Wallachians are in the mud."

"But the men--the unfortunate huntsmen?"

"Alas! that was the most lamentable part of the affair," replied Skirmen, with a light sigh: "they had neither life nor a whole limb. I had them drawn to land, and said, hastily, three paters and an ave for their souls. Their corpses an old female peasant promised me to care for."

"Brother, brother! this blood is upon thee!" sighed Rimaardson, with a choking voice, and giving his horse the spur.

They shortly overtook Sir Thorstenson, and pursued their journey in silence, and in earnest thought.

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It was towards evening of the following day. In Flynderborg, which lay near Orekrog or Elsinour, and almost in the same spot as the present Cronberg, sat, in a large arched apartment, an elderly man in a brown house-suit. There was a chess-board before him, and, opposite, was a young and beautiful girl. It was Sir Lavé Little, and his daughter Ingé. She wore the then customary in-door black dress of ladies, with her rich, golden tresses bound with a fillet of pearls, worked in the form of lilies.

After his conversation with Drost Peter in the guard-chamber, and his short dispute with Chamberlain Rané, the anxious and wavering Sir Lavé had not had an hour's rest. In the face of his stern kinsman, old Sir John, he fancied he read that he was suspected of a private understanding with the rebellious noblemen. His conscience did not acquit him; and no sooner had he been relieved by Sir John from his post in the guard-room, at an unusual hour, than he hurried away from Nyborg and the Dane-court, that he might not be farther enticed into the dangerous projects there on foot. He was the royal governor of Flynderborg Castle, which, with huge wall-slings on its ramparts, protected the entrance of the Sound, and received the ancient Sound dues, as has since been more effectually done by the far more distinguished Cronberg.

Sir Lavé Little certainly had not been guilty of any act that could have been brought against him as evidence of treason; but he had been at the recent Möllerup meeting with Stig Andersen, and had there, for his friend and kinsman's sake, declared himself against the king with more decision than formerly. That this meeting and its transactions had been discovered, he knew; and he now feared, with reason, that he would be called to account for expressions he could not deny, or even be deprived, without legal trial, of his important post as commandant of this castle. This secret anxiety pained him the more, that he was obliged to confine it to his own breast. He held no familiar intercourse with any soul in the castle. He lived there as a widower, with his daughter, whom he regarded as still in some degree a child, and feared to entrust her too freely with his affairs.

This, his only child, he loved exceedingly, albeit she little agreed with him on many important public questions, in which she appeared to take more interest than might have been expected in a girl of her age. She was scarcely fifteen, but of a tall, erect growth; and already expressed her will so decidedly, as often to astonish her wavering, hesitating father. She was a granddaughter of the recently deceased, powerful Sir Absalom Andersen, who traced his lineage from Asker Bag and Skjalm Hvide, and who, in his testament, had duly remembered Sir Lavé Little and his daughter.

Proud Ingé, as the froward damsel was already called by the people of the castle, exceedingly resembled her high-souled deceased mother, and had not only inherited the genuine Danish

exterior of her mother and the whole Absalom family, but also their ancient patriotic spirit, true love of country, and attachment to the legitimate reigning family, in inseparable conjunction. When she heard of the perils that threatened the crown and kingdom, her dark blue eyes flashed, and she wished that she could only, like her noble kinsmen, John Little, or David Thorstenson, or Drost Peter Hessel, watch over the safety of the throne and country with manly vigilance and vigour. Drost Peter's name she seldom mentioned, and; as it always seemed, with somewhat of dislike. That she had, from her childhood, been destined as his future wife, was to her an insufferable thought, and aroused her sense of freedom and womanly dignity to the bitterest degree. She could only faintly remember the drost as a handsome, kindly youth, whom she had played with when a child. At that time she appeared to have had some fondness for him; but, from the moment that she became aware that she was destined for his wife, his remembrance had become loathsome to her. It was as if an unseen power had made him her hereditary enemy, and he was the only man of whom she was disposed to think ill, without sufficient reasons. She could not, however, conceal the interest she felt in the many good deeds and excellent qualities she had lately heard ascribed to the active young drost, whose important services to the crown tended still further to elevate him in her estimation. Sometimes, indeed, she would even forget their hated relationship, and break forth into involuntary expressions of admiration. But the reports that, during the last year, had been circulated to the drost's prejudice, had also come to her ears. That he was much indebted to his comeliness and talents for his rapid promotion, was a general opinion among the people, even where they expressed themselves with the most delicacy and reserve; and the supposed taint on Drost Peter's honour, which envy was only all too zealous to exaggerate, converted Ingé's esteem for her preordained bridegroom into contempt, almost amounting to abhorrence. She had often, from that instant, begged her father rather to bury her in a convent for life, than wed her to a man who, with all his merit, she could never love and respect.

Until recently, the father had given only vague replies to these petitions, and begged her at least to suspend her judgment until she had seen him, and renewed her half-forgotten acquaintanceship. The drost, he told her, was a distinguished man, a true favourite of fortune, and that, except in case of absolute necessity, a promise made to a deceased friend should be held sacred. Moreover, its fulfilment had reference to the fortunes and future fate of two illustrious families, through their prosperity and influence. But, during the last half year, the father had frequently expressed himself dissatisfied with Drost Peter, and with his zealous efforts to exalt the misused power of the king.

On these points, however, proud Ingé warmly defended his conduct, and also extolled him as a brave friend to his sovereign and country; yet her joy was great when her father, on his return from the Dane-court, declared her entirely free from every engagement with respect to Drost Peter Hessel. He had given her his assurance that she should never be required to wed this zealous royalist, whom every open-minded Dane had the greatest reason to shun, though a certain degree of respect could not be denied him for his sagacity and bold uprightness.

Never had proud Ingé felt herself so glad and lighthearted as on that day; and she now seized every opportunity to evince her gratitude to her father for a promise that first gave her a full consciousness of her womanly dignity, and of being the free, highborn daughter of a knight. When needful, she played draughts and chess with him, and induced him to drive away his anxiety and discontent with a recreation to which he was exceedingly attached. She was careful, however, to conceal from him the slight interest with which she removed the taken pieces, whilst her thoughts flew over the whole free and glorious world she now saw opened up to her, and she joyfully recalled to her imagination a long line of famous ancestors, amongst whom the noblest women of Denmark had, from her earliest childhood stood before her eyes as glorious images of light.

Father and daughter were still sitting silently at the game of chess, and the Lady Ingé perceived that her abstracted parent heeded not his moves, and often lost his pieces. He seemed as if in a dream.

"But tell me, then, dear father," she said at length, breaking the long silence, "do you think it possible, as it was asserted when you were away, that King Waldemar's grandson, the foolhardy Duke Waldemar, really aspires to the crown, after the king's death?"

"Silence, child! Do not speak thus! It may cost us our lives," replied the father, anxiously, and looking round him. "It is mere silly talk. But those who bring such reports into circulation ought never more to see the light. Do not listen to such conversation, my dear, good Ingé, and give no heed to things you cannot understand. Discreet young damsels should not busy themselves with state affairs, but attend to their looms and household matters: I have often told you so. I rebuke you needfully, my good child; for your discourse frequently makes me anxious and uneasy."

"But when it concerns the country and kingdom, my father, we young damsels are as much Danes as the young knights and swains; and it is not the first time that Danish women have been obliged to think on affairs of equal importance. Had the Lady Ingé, and the proud Ingefried, not dared to think on something more than their looms and kitchens, they had not bored Swain Grathé's fleet, and sank it to the bottom; and then, perhaps, the great Waldemar had not been King of Denmark."

"Where get you these stories, my dearest child? Whom have you heard repeat these silly old

tales that you have always at the tip of your tongue? You have never heard them from me--that I know."

"Ah, my mother related them to me when I was very young; and she, also, it was who taught me so many of our pretty old ballads."

"Ballads! There we have it! All ballads and chronicles lie, my child. They are but fables and superstitions, which people invent who have nothing to do but to please fools and children. When do you hear me relate stories or sing ballads? People who have serious matters in their heads, have other things to think about than such silly trifles."

"Truly, father, never have I heard you sing ballads or tell tales; but my mother loved the old songs much, and delighted to sing them, and to recite the pretty tales. If there were no true ballads, and if our wild young maidens did not sing about our old kings and heroes, and our true noble women, no great man or woman would be remembered longer than a lifetime. Then it were not worth living in the world, when the most glorious events that happen among us were mere passing show. What avails it that we are rich and powerful, if we perform nothing that deserves to be remembered when we are dead? and what to posterity would be the lives of the greatest of mankind, if people had not a pleasure in preserving their names and their exploits in songs and chronicles?"

"Ah, child, dearest child! this is only enthusiasm and superstition. Whatever is worth being preserved is remembered well enough without writing chronicles and singing songs about it; and in our times, people should have something better to think of than such trifles and old stories. Yet sing, in God's name, as much as you please, about old kings and warriors: it will do no greater harm than it has done; only, leave alone what happens in our own times. There is nothing in these worth singing or talking about. 'No one is happy until he is laid in his grave,' said a wise man; and it is a true saying. In these unsettled times, my child, one cannot be too cautious: a thoughtless word may do greater mischief than you dream of. Look out once more, and see, by the banner, how the wind lies."

Ingé rose, and looked, from the little round window, into the court-yard of the castle, where, over the arched gateway, waved a lofty banner, adorned with the two royal lions.

"The wind is gone towards the east," said Ingé, carelessly, again sitting down; "you expect some one from Scania, to-night, perhaps?"

"Not exactly so," answered the knight, rising. "An easterly wind--hem!--and it was north-westerly only an hour ago. With this wind no one can cross the Sound to-night. I must go and speak with the ferrymen. I expect some strange gentlemen, child--people of distinction, and my good friends. Should they arrive in my absence, receive them in a friendly manner, and set before them the best there is in the house. Entertain them as I know thou canst; but ask them neither their names, nor whither they journey: that would not beseem thee. Above all things, say not a word on state affairs, or of what thou thinkest or dost not think on such matters. This is something that thou must not have an opinion about. Now, now! redden not thus, my child! Thou canst not surely be angry with thy father? Understand me rightly. Thou mayest, in God's name, think what thou wilt--that nobody can forbid thee: but these are not the times to say aloud what thou dost think; and thou art never cautious, little Ingé: thou often talkest, loudly and boldly, things that I dare scarcely repeat to myself in my closet. Forget not, therefore, what I have been saying. I shall ride, perhaps, to meet the strangers, and be back again in an hour. If they come by another road than I expect, and arrive here before me, see to their wants, like a good housekeeper. The porter and steward know discretion; and, to-night, the castle stands open for every traveller, without any one being required to announce himself. Thou art not afraid to be alone, my child? Thou hast thy waiting-maids at hand, and the castle is full of servants."

"Afraid?" repeated proud Ingé, colouring still more deeply; "nay, father, of what should I be afraid? Thy friends cannot be thy daughter's foes. But thou art so strange, my father--so mysterious--and not glad, and at ease. Art thou unwell?"

"No, my child; but I have some unpleasant matters to think about, which thou canst not understand. But take no heed of this. Do not sit here alone, in the twilight. Get a light, and let thy maidens come in, and sing ballads with thee. Thou mayest sing ballads, my child: it is suiting to thine years. What I said about ballads I did not mean to refer to thee. Only, be cheerful now, and be not uneasy on my account. Nothing shall happen." With these words, he patted her kindly on the cheek, and departed.

It began to grow dark. Her father's mysterious inquietude and ill-disguised anxiety had made a singular impression on the young girl, who otherwise had never known fear; and, as she now sat alone, in the great gloomy hall, various alarming thoughts took possession of her mind. She had heard many, in part unfounded, rumours of pirates and robbers: these she cared little about. But that the land was full of secret traitors, who threatened the destruction of the king, and all his more trusty and attached friends, was a general, and, to the Lady Ingé, a far more distressing rumour. This important fortress had usually been kept strongly barred against every stranger who did not, in the first place, give his name and errand with much preciseness. Why an exception was to be made this evening, she could not comprehend; and why her father had been induced to leave the castle at a time when he expected important and distinguished guests, was



equally inconceivable. From his uneasy attention to the direction of the wind, and his disappointment when he found it easterly, as well as from his command not to ask the strangers their names, or whither they were journeying, she supposed that he might be expecting some friends, who were eluding pursuit, and intended passing over to Sweden that night. Notwithstanding her father's reserve and cautiousness, she had observed that he took a zealous part in the quarrel Stig Andersen and his kinsmen were fomenting against the king. She was, however, only imperfectly acquainted with the reasons for this quarrel. That the king had outraged Stig Andersen's wife, and had been denounced by the powerful marsk, she had heard; but of the particular circumstances she knew nothing. According to her notions of a king, and the idea she had formed in her childhood, from her mother's descriptions of the great Waldemars, she entertained such a deep reverence for the name of royalty, that she could not conceive how a subject should be offended with his king, or that he should, in anywise, have a right to oppose himself to his sovereign. That her father should be induced, either from friendship, or on account of family ties, to forget his allegiance to the king, was a thought she dreaded to dwell distinctly upon; but now she secretly began to fear such a disaster, which, of all others, she considered the greatest; and, for the first time in her life, she felt herself in a state of anxiety. She looked round the gloomy apartment, and fancied she beheld a lurking regicide, with a gleaming dagger, in every corner. She hastily arose to call for lights; but scarcely had she risen, before the door was gently opened, and a rough, heavy male figure, closely wrapt in a coarse wadmél cloak, slipped cautiously and stealthily across the threshold. The last faint traces of expiring day revealed to her glance a wild, shaggy, filthy countenance, more like that of a savage animal than of a human being. She stepped back, and was on the point of uttering a cry of alarm; but, blushing at her fears, she controlled herself, and recalled to mind her father's instructions, that she should receive all his guests with a dignity becoming the mistress of the house.

"Welcome, stranger," she said, as boldly as she could, though her voice trembled, as she advanced a step or two. "My father will be here immediately," she added; "allow me to procure a light."

"Nay, no light, fair maiden. Are you alone, here, in the castle?"

This question, in a deep, gruff voice, which struck her with its subdued and mysterious tone, increased her alarm; and the tall, clumsy, gigantic form advanced a few steps farther into the hall. She stepped hastily back, and laid her hand on the latch of the kitchen-door, but again took courage, and remained.

"Alone?" she repeated. "Nay: I am, it is true, a knight's daughter, but I do not take upon myself to defend a royal fortress alone. If you wish to see the garrison of the castle, you may do so in one moment."

"Let me not frighten you away, fair madden," said the stranger, stepping back; "I have just come off the sea, and am not in train to appear before fine women-folks. I am only an humble groom, sent hither on my master's errand, to inquire whether Sir Lavé Little can shelter his friends to-night; and whether a couple of royal hounds have not arrived here this evening."

"My father's friends are welcome," replied the knight's daughter: "he has gone out to meet them, and will be here forthwith. Of the hounds I have heard nothing. If you are the strange gentleman's servant, you shall immediately be provided for in the servants' hall."

She was about to lift the latch of the kitchen-door; but the stranger raised his hand, almost menacingly. "Stay! No light. I go immediately," he muttered. "There are no strange guests here, then--no travellers from Nyborg?"

"Not that I am aware of," replied Ingé; "but the castle is large, and, although many royal soldiers be here, there is still room enough for guests who are true to their king and country."

"Good. I shall bear my master this answer; and, if he is satisfied with it, you shall soon see us. Farewell fair maiden. Although you do not seem to wish that I should approach near you, I dare, nevertheless, take my oath that you are as handsome as brave. You need not make an alarm on my account, nor call the garrison together. I come here as a good friend: my master's good friends are also thine." With these words, he hastily departed through the door by which he had entered.

To prevent his re-entrance before there were lights and other persons present, Lady Ingé first proceeded to lock the door after him. Then calling her handmaids, she caused them to light all the wax-lights, which were placed before bright shields, on the whitened walls of the large hall. In the round side apartment, she ordered a table to be spread for the mysterious guests who had been invited; and went, herself, through the kitchen, to the castle-wards, to see that the men-servants were present. She found them all, twelve in number, seated at the supper-table, and returned to the kitchen without betraying her anxiety. As soon as she had given the cooks and pantry-maids the necessary orders, she retraced her steps, with evident composure, to the lighted-up hall, withdrew the bolts from the front door, according to the hospitable usage of the house, and desired two only of her handmaidens to remain with her. They sat down, as usual, to their sewing-table, and drew forth the various articles of feminine handicraft they were busied upon. One of the maidens was a young, lively girl, always full of news, and having much to tell. She looked surprised at the numerous lights, and the sumptuous preparations, and asked,

inquisitively, who were the guests expected so late, and with such unusual state.

"I know not," answered Ingé, in an indifferent tone. "But tell us something new, little Elsie," she added, hastily, and seemingly to amuse herself. "Have you heard anything lately concerning your sweetheart? Does he come over to take you away this summer?"

"It will be some time to that yet, lady," replied Elsie, and immediately broke off into her favourite topic. "He cares more about his valiant master, at Möllerup, than about me, or all the girls in the world. Since he has been with the marsk, in the Swedish war, he has become somewhat proud; but I don't blame him for that: he can still say he has helped to pull a king off his throne. You open your eyes, lady; but it is, nevertheless, true and certain. Was not the Swedish king dethroned? and by our valiant Marsk Andersen and his brave people? Mat Jute is the marsk's right hand: he is almost as tall as his master, and a daring fellow, you may trow. Shame fall it! were he not a poor peasant's son, he would one day be a knight. But if he does not soon let me hear from him," she continued, tossing back her head, "I shall be no leaning-stick, indeed. If he no longer cares for little Elsie, I shall bid him good-day, and look out for another. There are as brave and handsome fellows in Zealand, and I am not exactly going to fall sick for a Juttish landsknecht."

"You do not resemble your faithful namesake in the ballad," said Lady Ingé--"she who fretted herself to death for Sir Aagé."

"It must certainly have been a long time since that happened, you well may trow, my high-born lady. At present the world is wiser, and girls are not so simple. Were they to fret themselves to death, now-a-days, on account of young men's inconstancy, there would soon not be a living maiden in the country. Nay, nay," she continued, humming over a song:--

"As, who that trusts the rotten bough,  
So, she who trusts a young man's vow.

"As, who would grasp the eel, must fail,  
So, she who trusts a young man's tale."

"This song is new," said Lady Ingé; "it is not so said in the old one: there the faithful lovers are borne to the grave together."

"Much good might it do them!" exclaimed the maiden. "I cannot yet say that I should be pleased, if Mat Jute were to die: a dead bridegroom would never become a living one, were one to go ten times to the grave with him."

"There must have been more fidelity in the olden times," said Ingé, seriously. "It was better also for king and country. They must have been happy people who then lived in Denmark."

"What happiness there was in dying of grief, noble lady, I cannot well conceive; and what does it signify to the king and country, that there is no constancy in a love-smit soldier?"

"I can tell you, little Elsie, that when there is no constancy in a soldier in this respect, there is little in any other; and so he cannot be depended upon when he is called on to defend the throne and the realm. He who can forget and forsake his sweetheart, can still more easily forget and forsake his master."

"By my troth, so does not Mat Jute," replied Elsie. "He would rather slay every man alive, than permit any one to say a bad word concerning his master. He once lifted his knife against me, on that very score, though he vowed he loved me as the apple of his eye. He would not be afraid to make a thrust at the king himself, if a regular war should break out between him and the marsk."

"Are you mad, girl?" exclaimed Lady Ingé, in astonishment. "The marsk is the king's subject. If he should wage war against the king, he would be a traitor and shameless rebel."

"I do not understand that," said Elsie; "but this I know well, that if the marsk could not have his wife secure against our king, when he was waging war for him like a brave man, it is not so unreasonable, that, as a brave man, he should feel angry, and do the best he can to right himself."

"This is certainly a false and shameful rumour. A genuine Skiolding<sup>[17]</sup> can never disgrace his high lineage."

"It is all the same to me," answered the maiden; "but I should be quite as well satisfied if Mat Jute would only keep himself aloof from the great and their quarrels. The small suffer at last, and he may one day meet with some great mishap. I well remember how the ballad goes:--

"The knight, and eke his swain,  
They rode from the Ting together:  
The knight they let go free--  
The swain they hanged in a tether."

"Let us rather sing one of the good old ballads, little Elsie," said Lady Ingé, interrupting the light-minded maiden; "and lay rightly to heart what you are singing, and so perhaps you may one day come to recollect that you are a Danish girl."

"I can well bear that in mind," replied Elsie: "I can never understand a word of German, and have trouble enough with the Jutlandish."

"But a Danish girl is true to her lover, and a Danish man deserts not king or country. Do you remember the ballad of King Didrik? Let us sing that."

Lady Ingé began, and her two handmaidens accompanied her:--

"The king he rules the castle,  
And else he rules the land,  
And he rules many a warrior bold,  
With drawn sword in his hand:  
For the king he rules the castle."

While they were singing, the door was opened; but Lady Ingé was thinking only of the old heroic ballad that her mother had sung to her when a child, and which always led her to fancy a king like Waldemar the Great, and a castle like Flynderborg, where she was sitting, the only castle she was acquainted with. The bold notes of the song, and the remembrances of her childhood which it awakened within her, always put her in a gay and happy frame of mind; and she felt herself secure in the castle, which the king ruled with his warriors bold. Upon this occasion, the song had the usual inspiring effect. She had forgotten all that so recently disturbed her: her eyes sparkled with lively animation; and the maidens could only give ear to her, while she sang alone, in her unusually deep-toned voice, in continuation:--

"Let the peasant rule his house and home,  
His steed, the warrior bold--  
The king of Denmark ruleth  
The castle, keep, and hold.  
For the king he rules the castle."

Lady Ingé and her maidens now for the first time noticed the tread of spurred heels on the floor. They rose in astonishment, and Lady Ingé with unwonted precipitation. They perceived three strangers in the middle of the hall. One was in the dress of a huntsman, and the two others were clad as citizens on a journey; nevertheless, under their gray cloaks they had long swords, like those worn by knights. It was Sir Rimaardson, with Drost Peter, and Sir Thorstenson. The mien and expression of the fair songstress, on their entrance, astonished them; and they remained standing, unwilling to interrupt her.

They now approached with much politeness, and saluted the knight's fair daughter. Although they were not dressed as knights, their bearing and manners instantly denoted them to be men of high station and dignity; and Lady Ingé supposed them the distinguished guests of whom her father had spoken. The first glance at their interesting and friendly countenances gave her confidence.

"You are welcome, noble sirs," said she, with entire self-possession, and returning their salute. "My father has been expecting you, and has ridden out to meet you. You must have come by another road than he anticipated. Your groom or squire has doubtless told you that there are no strangers here?"

"We have only this instant arrived, noble lady," began Sir Thorstenson; "and our squire could have told us nothing regarding the state of the house, seeing that he has not yet penetrated farther than the stables. That your father has expected us, we cannot at all suppose: indeed, we thought we should have surprised him."

"To our astonishment, the gates were opened to us without any one inquiring our name or business," said Sir Rimaardson. "This confidence is flattering. Your song, fair maiden, we would not dare to disturb: it was an assurance that, even although unknown, we should be welcome to you, as men true to our king and country."

"For none else stands this castle open," replied Ingé. "Your names and errand no one may presume to inquire about, noble sirs. You are specially welcome to my father, I can assure you." So saying, she regarded their manly, honest countenances with satisfaction and confidence.

Drost Peter had not yet said a word, but stood perplexed, and almost bashfully, before her, with a singular expression of surprise and melancholy, and with a kind of dreamy pleasure in his calm, earnest look.

"Step nearer, gentlemen," continued Lady Ingé, with a light heart, and completely relieved from any doubt of disloyalty in her father's connections, and from every uneasiness regarding the mysterious guests expected: "you find here an open lady's room, where, truth to say, I am glad to

see the friends of my father, who can occupy his place in his absence. He left me half an hour since, to return in an hour if he did not meet you. A fellow, who represented himself as your groom, almost frightened me in the dusk of the evening. The castle, at other times, is never so accessible. Under these circumstances, you are to me the more welcome. If you would please to take refreshment, gentlemen, it is already prepared."

The knights looked at each other with astonishment.

"Some mistake must have occurred here, noble lady," said Sir Rimaardson; "but, if you will permit us, we shall avail ourselves of it, and defer the explanation until your father arrives."

"Permit me a question, noble lady," said Drost Peter, appearing at length to wake from his sweet dream; his eyes, meanwhile, resting with kindly interest on the maiden's open countenance and noble form; "and pardon me if it is amiss. Is your Christian name Ingé? and are you the daughter of the governor of this castle, Sir Lavé Little, and his noble wife, deceased, the Lady Margarethé, Absalom Andersen's youngest daughter?"

"You knew my mother, noble sir," exclaimed Lady Ingé, joyfully, and, in her joy, forgetting his question and his singular solemnity of manner: "but, nay, you could scarcely have known her, else you would have known me also; for I am said to resemble my blessed mother exceedingly."

"I have seen your mother in my childhood," said the young drost; "but she was then no longer young: she was, however, about your height. You have inherited her eyes, noble lady, and, as I can hear, her deep, sweet voice, and her fondness for our old heroic ballads. The one you have just sung, I seem to have heard in my cradle: it recalls a time when I had happy dreams about the days of our Waldemars, and of him who ruled the castle, and so many warriors bold."

"That was no mere dream, noble knight," replied Ingé, with lively interest. "That you and these good gentlemen are knights, I must permit myself at once to believe, though I am not at liberty to put the question. That the king, God be praised! still rules over every Danish land and castle, and over many bold and doughty heroes, is no dream, I know: this, at least, you and these good gentlemen will admit. If, then, you have heard heroic ballads in your cradle, noble sir," she added, with a look of confidence, "they have certainly not been sung in vain."

Drost Peter blushed, but raised his eyes boldly, and with a look of frankness. "If it please God and Our Lady," he said, "there is no dream so marvellous that it cannot be fulfilled, and the good old times may yet return."

A page now opened the door of the dining-hall.

"You have probably travelled far, and need refreshment," said Lady Ingé, remembering her duty as housekeeper, and pointing to the opened door.

Drost Peter, who was accustomed to courtly manners, involuntarily offered his arm to the knight's daughter. She led him to the end of the table, in the round turret apartment, and gave the maidens a signal for their attendance. Sir Thorstenson and Sir Rimaardson followed the young hostess, and Thorstenson took his place on her right hand. Two stately pages set forth, on the fringed table-cloth, roast game and baked barley-bread, while an active cupbearer took care to fill the wine-cups from a large silver flagon. The two handmaidens stood respectfully behind Lady Ingé's chair, with modest, downcast eyes, but ever and anon contrived to cast a look of curiosity towards the strangers; the handsome young drost, in particular, appearing much to attract them.

The conversation soon became general. Lady Ingé carefully guarded herself against any expression that would appear to betray curiosity; but still she would not have been displeased if her guests had chosen voluntarily to discover who they were.

"The Dane-court is over, it is said," she remarked, when a fitting pause ensued. "I regret that I have never been present at a Dane-court, for one does not hear or see much in this lonely fortress. You must have seen the king, noble sirs: I should like to know if he looks as I picture him to myself."

"What kind of person do you fancy him, then, noble lady?" inquired Sir Thorstenson. "I'll be bound you think him, at least, a head taller than I am, and like King Didrik of Bern, or some other of those valiant kings you sing about."

Lady Ingé looked at the tall knight with the long plaited beard. "More valiant than you appear, he needs scarcely be," she answered; "but such like I do not imagine him. At the head of a band of bold troopers, I should think you were in your place; but--excuse me, sir knight--you seem too hasty in your conduct to govern a kingdom."

Thorstenson stroked his beard. "In that you may be right, fair lady," he muttered; confirming, by his air of chagrin, the young lady's frank expression.

"Were I to compare any of you with my idea of the king," continued Lady Ingé "it would be this gentleman;" and her calm blue eyes rested searchingly on Drost Peter. He started at the compliment, which a playful smile seemed instantly to contradict. "But such a comparison might

not astonish you, noble sir," she continued, "if, instead of deploring the departure of the days of the great Waldemars, you had power to bring them back again."

The guests regarded with surprise the knight's young daughter, who jested so good-humouredly; and, at the same time, with the dignity of a princess, exercised over them a secret mastery, of which she did not appear to be aware. Drost Peter's cheeks reddened; and he felt himself both attracted and repelled, in a singular manner, by the bold, composed girl. But, at her latter words, he seemed almost to forget himself and his position, in a higher and more important thought.

"The power you speak of, noble lady," he commenced, with calmness and earnestness, his large eyes sparkling with fire and energy--"that power which shall recall to a people days of departed glory, you may well miss, where it cannot be found save by a miracle. That power has no knight or hero in Denmark--that power has no monarch in this world: it must come from above, and it is not the lot of any single man to possess and exercise it. If it flashes not from many thousand eyes united, and pours not forth from every heart in Denmark, the greatest king in the universe cannot raise the fallen, nor restore to the people the lofty spirit of our ancestors."

"You may be right, noble sir," replied Lady Ingé, with an interest that gave her cheeks a deeper tinge, and her eyes an almost dazzling radiance; "but who has told you that this spirit is fled? Our king himself I know not, and he is arrogantly blamed by many; but still I know he has men by his side who boldly and bravely watch over the security of the crown and the honour of the people. Among these, I may venture to mention my own kinsman, the old Sir John: every Danish man, I know, must respect him. Were the proud marsk, at Möllerup, as loyal as he is brave, Denmark had yet perhaps an Axel Hvide, or a Count Albert. David Thorstenson, too, I have heard named among the heroes of our time; and you must certainly know, yourselves, many other names which do honour to our age."

Sir Thorstenson nodded, and felt himself highly flattered to hear his name among those of the young damsel's heroes. The adventure in which he and his friends found themselves amused him greatly, and he took a fancy to know the patriotic young lady's opinion of his comrades. "But the best you forget, fair maiden," said he, merrily. "What say you of Sir Bent Rimaardson, of Tornborg?"

"He guards our coasts like another Vetheman, they say: I and every woman in Zealand have to thank him that we need not fear the wild Norwegian algrev and the ruthless Niels Breakpeace."

Rimaardson bit his lips, and was silent in the presence of a renown that his own eyes had so recently shown him to be unmerited.

Thorstenson wished to compensate for the failure of his joke, and thought to give his other companion better cause to thank him for his sally.

"But if you would name the eminent men of the king and country," said he, hastily, "you ought, first and foremost, to have mentioned the young Drost Peter Hessel, who so soon has had the good fortune to stand so near the throne, and so deservedly."

Lady Ingé was silent for an instant, and her animation appeared suddenly to be converted into coldness. A short and general silence ensued; but to the young drost it was an eternity of torment. If he did not expect to be extolled and admired by his childhood's bride, neither did he expect to be, the object of her dislike and contempt.

"My father tarries long," said the knight's daughter, breaking the irksome silence. "I am conversing with you, noble sirs, on matters which probably are not befitting among strangers," she added. "But you must excuse me, gentlemen. On certain subjects I forget, at times, that my sex is seldom allowed the pleasure even of talking about the happy, busy life in which we are not permitted to take an active part. Respecting the person you last mentioned, you must allow me to be silent. It matters little to him what a Danish maiden thinks of him, if she cannot, like the queen, advance his power and fortune."

Drost Peter paled. He felt himself so deeply wounded with these words, that he was on the point of making himself known, or, at least, of defending himself against the last severe accusation; but, at that moment, the door of the outer hall was opened, and well-known voices were heard near at hand.

"The duke!" whispered Sir Rimaardson; and, to their surprise, they perceived the duke with his drost, together with the algrev and Sir Lavé, approaching the door of the dining-room.

Lady Ingé rose to receive her father and the new comers. The knights also arose, and Thorstenson and Rimaardson looked doubtingly at each other; but Drost Peter now felt himself entirely at his ease. The injurious mistake had awakened all his pride; and the consciousness that his own energy and merits had raised him to the honours he held, gave him a boldness that bordered almost on insolence. He felt here all the importance of his position, where, travelling on the king's errand, he had right and power, if required, to act with royal authority. He advanced towards the duke and his followers with politeness and dignity, but without letting it appear that he knew them in the plain gray cloaks in which they had wrapped themselves, as if they did not wish to be recognised. He directed his salutation principally to Sir Lavé, as governor and chief of

the castle. The astonished Sir Lavé instantly recognised the drost, and changed colour, but hastily took occasion, from the drost's plain outer garment, to greet him as a stranger of humble rank, that he had never before seen.

"I and these gentlemen are not unwelcome to you, then?" said Drost Peter, while, without the least embarrassment, he presented to him his travelling companions, without naming them. "We have, as you perceive, sir knight, partaken of your hospitality without hesitation. We have, besides, an errand to you, as royal governor here, which we shall impart to you at your convenience."

Sir Lavé bowed, silently and distantly, with an anxious side look to the duke and his followers, who did not appear the least surprised at this meeting, and had hastily turned their backs towards Drost Peter and his friends.

"We flatter ourselves that we are known to you," continued Drost Peter, "notwithstanding the strange dress we prefer travelling in. The rumours respecting the insecurity of the roads are not unfounded: we have had serious proofs of that. You perceive that those good gentlemen there have used the same precaution," he added, as he pointed to the duke and Count Mindre-Alf, who, along with Sir Abildgaard, were engaged in private conversation, in the dimmest part of the outer hall, and closely wrapped in their large cloaks, with their backs towards the dining-room.

Sir Lavé, in the meanwhile, had recovered himself. "Be pleased to follow me to my private apartment, gentlemen," he said, with apparent calmness. "I see my daughter has already cared for your entertainment; I am, therefore, now at your service, and can hear your business without interruption. Take care of my new guests, in the meantime, my daughter."

He gave the servants a signal, on which they hastily took a wax-light in each hand, and opened a little concealed door in the wall of the circular dining-room. One of the servants led the way into a long dark passage, whilst the other remained standing by the door.

"Let me show you the way," said Sir Lavé, going before them.

As soon as Drost Peter and his two companions had entered the dark passage, the servant who had held the door open disappeared. It was suddenly dark behind them, and the door closed with a hollow clang, which made the knights start.

"This is a convenient arrangement," said Sir Lavé, in an indifferent tone. "I must be prepared for all kinds of guests, you know. Gentlemen like you, who come on important state affairs, I invariably converse with as privately as possible, to avoid interruption."

The long passage led to the eastern wing of the castle, which projected into the Sound. It was terminated by a narrow, vaulted, spiral staircase.

"I must beg you to go one at a time here," said Sir Lavé: "the stair is somewhat small, and you may be incommoded in getting a few steps upwards. I often find this way troublesome; but one cannot be cautious enough in these times, and a private message from the king must be heard in private." As he spoke, he ascended hastily, without looking behind him.

Drost Peter, who followed him closely, paused once or twice, and put a few indifferent questions to him on the construction of the castle, at the same time pointing behind him; but Sir Lavé continued to ascend, and answered his inquiries without stopping or turning.

"Singular!" whispered Sir Rimaardson to Thorstenson. "Were he not the brave John Little's kinsman, we should barely trust him. Saw you his perplexity, and his look towards the duke?"

"If he betray us, it shall cost him his life," whispered Thorstenson, laying his hand on the hilt of his sword: "he shall not go three strides from us."

Drost Peter, observing that his companions whispered suspiciously behind him, turned round, and laid his finger on his lips. "The wind is still easterly," he remarked, in a careless tone: "nobody can well think of crossing the Sound to-night."

"It is scarcely possible," replied Sir Lavé: "you must determine on taking your abode with me to-night, gentlemen."

"That is not our intention," said Drost Peter: "beside, you have guests, who probably have greater claims upon your hospitality, and from whose society we necessarily detain you too long. Shall we soon reach your private apartment, sir knight?"

"In a moment," he replied, as he redoubled his pace.

Drost Peter had mentally counted the number of steps, and had reckoned the sixtieth, when they halted on a landing. An iron-studded door was opened, and they entered a narrow turret-chamber, where there was only a single window, which stood open, but was provided with strong iron bars. The wax-lights flickered in the current of air, and the servant lighted a large lantern suspended from the roof.

"Your closet almost resembles a prison," observed Drost Peter.

"It is sometimes used for that purpose," replied Sir Lavé: "it is the most secure part of the castle. This tower, as you may perceive, stands half in the water, but it commands an excellent view over the Sound.---Now you may go," he said, turning to the servant: "nobody must disturb us here. Desire my daughter and the strangers not to wait for us."

The servant went out, and the knight locked the heavy door himself, and put the key in his pocket.

"Now, I am quite at your service, gentlemen. What weighty message does the king send me by three such important persons? Prudence forbade me to recognise you sooner."

"We are sent by the king on a business of much consequence," said Drost Peter, calmly and self-possessed; "and I, Drost Peter Hessel, am authorised to demand active assistance from every royal governor in the country. The object of our journey is a secret that no one is at liberty to inquire into. But that you, Sir Lavé Little, as the king's servant, and commandant of this castle, are bound, without objection, to provide us with thirty armed men and a vessel, this letter patent, to every royal governor in the country, will show you." So saying, he handed the astonished knight an open letter to this effect, with which, in addition to the royal warrants, he had taken care to provide himself.

The knight perused the missive with evident uneasiness; taking a considerable time to get through it, as if he found some difficulty in deciphering the writing.

"I have nothing to object to this, sir drost," he said, at length. "A ship and crew are at your service, whenever you choose to give the order. But, as you have just remarked, in the present state of the wind nobody can think of crossing the Sound."

"You perceive by the same letter royal," continued Drost Peter, "that I am empowered, on my own authority, to demand aid from every royal governor, to seize and conduct to Sjöberg whatever Danish knight or vassal I may find on any suspicious business."

"I see so, with surprise," replied Sir Lavé. "But I still hope, sir drost, that you do not mean to avail yourself of an authority so extensive and arbitrary. Such a step, as you well know, is at variance with the king's obligations to the laws and charters of the kingdom. He cannot issue a letter to imprison any man, until he has been legally accused before a provincial or state court of justice, and has had the advantage of a legal trial."

"You forget the exceptions, Sir Lavé," replied Drost Peter. "This privilege extends not to rovers and criminals, and, of course, to traitors least of all. Therefore, in virtue of this royal warrant, I must demand of you, in the king's name, that you cause the castle to be locked up, and deliver over to me, under safe escort, every stranger at present within these walls."

Sir Lavé grew pale. "You are somewhat too harsh, sir drost," he said, looking anxiously towards the window: "you would not compel me to betray my guests? They are not accused of any crime; and, without apprehending such treatment, they have confidingly entered beneath my roof."

"This castle is not your's, but the king's," replied Drost Peter, apparently striving to subdue a feeling of pity, as he regarded the anxious castellan. "I fulfil a disagreeable duty," he continued; "but where I meet the enemies of the king and country, I must insist on their detention, without reference to personal feelings. One of these gentlemen, moreover, to whom you have opened this royal castle, is an open enemy of his country--that most notorious freebooter and incendiary, the Count of Tönsberg."

"What say you? the *algrev!*" stammered the castellan, terrified, and apparently highly astonished. "If that be true, then I am certainly to blame. But I assure you that one of these gentlemen was quite unknown to me: he came in the duke's train, and it is impossible I should know--"

"I am willing to believe you, Sir Lavé, though appearances are against you. You are not aware, then, that your illustrious friend and guest has the famous pirate, Niels Breakpeace, with him, as his squire?"

"You alarm me, noble sir!" again stammered the castellan, in the greatest embarrassment. "If I had suspected this, they had never set foot within these walls. What is now to be done? If the castle is full of traitors and pirates, our whole garrison is scarcely strong enough to oppose them."

"By Satan! let *us* take care of that," observed Thorstenson, impatiently. "Lock up the doors straightway, now that you know our errand."

"Courtesy I must beg of you for the present, and the matter must be well considered," replied Sir Lavé, delaying. "With such powerful criminals, it is a difficult business. I shall immediately give the castle-warden a private signal to bar the gates, and prevent all egress." He ran anxiously to the open grated window, and called out, in a subdued voice, "Lock the gate, fellow! not a living soul must be allowed to slip out!" He then took the key from his pocket, and struck upon the gratings with it.

"Lock it yourself, rather," said Drost Peter, making a hasty movement to take the key from his hand; but, at the same instant, they heard a clank on the stones in the water beneath the tower.

"What have you done, sir drost!" exclaimed Sir Lavé, as if in the highest degree terrified: "you have knocked the key out of my hand, and now we are all prisoners here. The Sound roars loud, and not a soul can hear us, as no one ventures near enough to this turret to liberate us. And my daughter--my poor child--is now alone, amidst these traitors and rieurs." All started.

"Your daughter!" exclaimed Drost Peter, with great uneasiness. "Nay, nay," he added, with more composure, "the traitors and rieurs will respect her. The duke and his drost are not rude and shameless criminals, although they have niddings in their train. If you had feared for your daughter, Sir Lavé, you would scarcely have brought home such dangerous guests, and perhaps would not so readily have lost the key of our prison here."

Sir Lavé was silent, and walked uneasily backwards and forwards.

Drost Peter and Sir Rimaardson observed the anxious castellan with scrutinising looks, betraying, at the same time, their indignation at this singular imprisonment at a moment of such great importance. None of them any longer doubted that the duke had recognised them, and suspected the object of their journey. It was, therefore, probable that he would now seize on every means of escape, to carry out his daring plans.

A suspicion of this had first crossed Drost Peter and his friends on their way to the tower; and Thorstenson and Rimaardson had, therefore, nodded to each other approvingly, when they heard the drost's bold determination, on his own responsibility, to seize the duke on the spot, notwithstanding that the royal warrant, strictly speaking, required them to defer this step until they encountered the duke on Swedish ground. This new and daring plan was now rendered impossible; and, while the castellan shared the imprisonment of his unwelcome guests, the duke and his dangerous train would, in all likelihood, place themselves in complete security.

While such thoughts as these flashed rapidly athwart the minds of Drost Peter and the cool Sir Rimaardson, Thorstenson gave vent to his indignation, and broke out into the most violent invectives against the troubled castellan, whom he did not hesitate to designate as a crafty traitor, and an abettor of rebels and foreign pirates. He immediately endeavoured to break open the door, and beat against it, like a madman, with his iron-heeled boots, but in vain.

"Open the door on the instant!" he roared, at the same time drawing his long sword; "or, by St. Canute, it shall cost your life, you cowardly, crafty cheat!"

At his terrible threat, Sir Lavé sprang towards Drost Peter.

"It is impossible!" he stammered, in terror. "Protect me from this madman, sir drost, until I can myself defend my life and honour. You can bear witness that it is not I, but yourself, who have caused our present imprisonment."

"For what has happened here, this gentleman shall be answerable when we demand it," said Drost Peter, placing himself between Sir Lavé and the enraged Thorstenson. "The commandant, as you perceive, is unarmed, noble knight. Whatever may have been his conduct in this affair, he now stands sheltered by the laws of chivalry and my protection. Let us endeavour, with our united strength, to burst our prison-door. If we do not succeed, we must be patient until we can procure aid."

"You are right, sir drost," muttered Thorstenson, sheathing his sword; "niddings are never safer than when they go unarmed amongst honest men. Let us now make a rush at the door together, and it may give way. Put forth your strength, sir commandant, and let us see you do not spare your boot-heels. You can then say, for your honour, that you have fought with your heels."

Without answering this sarcasm, Sir Lavé, apparently with his utmost effort, together with the three other knights, applied themselves to the iron-studded door. The united shock made a fearful noise, which rolled like thunder among the arches of the lonely tower; but as the door turned inwards, and was provided with strong oaken posts, it was not to be forced open in this fashion.

Greatly embittered, Thorstenson went to the window-grating, and shouted, as if he would awaken the dead--"Up hither, fellow! or it may cost your master, the commandant, his life."

But there was no reply. The restless Sound roared loudly beneath, and no sign of a human being was to be seen on this side the tower, in the stormy, murky night.

In the meantime, Lady Ingé, in her father's absence, had taken care of the last-arrived guests, and invited them to the newly-furnished board. As soon as the duke and his followers observed that their cautious host had rid them of unexpected and disagreeable company, they relied upon his cunning, and resolved to await his return, or, at least, to remain quiet until Niels Breakpeace brought word that they might set sail. They had thrown aside their gray cloaks, and shown themselves, before their fair hostess, in their dress as knights.

The young duke, with politeness and princely grace, took his seat at table, and on the young



hostess' left hand. Sir Abildgaard took Rimaardson's vacated seat; and the daring Norse freebooter stretched himself rudely on the chair where Thorstenson had been sitting.

The strangers had not announced themselves; but, on their entrance, Lady Ingé had heard Rimaardson's subdued exclamation of surprise--"The duke!" and she surmised, with secret dread, that one of them must be the, to her, hateful Duke Waldemar of South Jutland. Any other duke she had not heard mentioned; and what was told her of Duke Waldemar's ambitious and dangerous designs against the crown and kingdom, had inspired her with so unfavourable an opinion of this personage, that she had conceived as repulsive a picture of his appearance as was possible. When she heard him mentioned among her father's new guests, it inspired her with so much fear, that she had difficulty in concealing it; and, when her father left the room with the three other gentlemen, it cost her a great effort to fulfil, with apparent calmness, her duties as mistress of the house, towards these dangerous visitors, whose secret connection with her father filled her soul with painful alarm.

Reserved, and sparing in her words, she now sat at table among them, and only partially heard all the polite remarks which the duke and his drost strove, in emulation, to address to her. These two personages appeared to engross the smallest share of her attention, although their easy, unconstrained manners denoted them to be fine, courtly gentlemen. Their thoughtless countenances, and the trifling conversation in which they indulged, did not appear to her to indicate men who could be dangerous; and she deemed it impossible that, in either of them, she saw the daring duke. At the same time, she believed it certain that, in their companion, she beheld the hated pursuer of the king's life and crown. He had not yet spoken a word; but his sharp look, and bold and impudent features, betokened a craftiness and an audacity without parallel.

With politeness, but without interest, Lady Ingé replied to the duke's questions--whether she had ever been at court, whether she liked dancing and tournaments, hawking or chess, and how she amused herself in this solitary castle? She did not appear to notice the duke's admiration of her beauty, and his easy, flattering remarks thereupon to his drost. On the contrary, she gave closer heed to the short, stout-built personage at the corner of the table on her right, who was equipped, partly as a seaman, and partly as a knight of princely blood.

He had stretched himself, with vulgar carelessness, upon his seat, and his fierce-looking eyes ran round the hall, as if he did not feel himself quite secure, and, at the same time, had a contempt of danger. His broad, low, animal forehead, was indicative of energy and defiance; his short, crisped, sandy-coloured hair united with his matted beard, and concealed his brutish, almost hideous under-jaw. His wide mouth was greedily distended, and only half concealed two rows of strong, shining, white teeth. His wild, rolling eyes met almost close to his crooked nose, and lay deeply buried under a pair of bushy eyebrows. He ate rapidly, gnawing, with a species of ravenousness, the largest bones; while his sinewy hand often rested on a dagger-hilt, set with precious stones. Whenever he raised the cup to his mouth, which was not seldom, he drained it to the bottom. He appeared at length to have satisfied his hunger and thirst. His brown cheeks were heated and flushed with wine, and he began to cast lewd and impudent glances, now at Lady Ingé, and now at her handmaids, as if comparing them, in order to decide upon which his choice should fall.

"Now for pleasure, gentlemen," he broke forth at length, in a rough, harsh voice, and in a singing Norwegian pronunciation. "What signify your fine manners on a journey? and why stand the pretty wenches behind the lady's chair? Take you the demure flat-nose, sir drost; I will hold to the little roguish brunette; and thus we shall allow his grace to retain the high-born, proud damsel for his own share."

He seemed about to rise, and the two handmaids, frightened, retreated a step.

Lady Ingé was also alarmed, but she overcame her fear in an instant. The guest's impudence, and his rude tones, provoked her. From his foreign accent, she immediately knew that he was not the duke. With a contemptuous look towards the unmanneredly freebooter, she rose from the table, and turned, with calm dignity, to the other two gentlemen.

"One of *you* must be the duke, then," said she; "and I am glad of it; though, as the daughter of a Danish knight, I cannot rejoice to see a man here who dares to revolt against the Danish crown. But, whichever of you may be he, I appeal to him to protect me from the insolence of that rude man, who is probably one of your grooms."

"Satan fetch the saucy minx!" exclaimed the pirate chief, laughing. "Take you me for a groom, proud maiden, because I do not relish fine talking, like these polite courtiers? When needful, I understand that art, too; and, spite of any one, not a queen shall think herself too good to sit at table with the Count of Tönsberg, or to embrace him."

"Recollect yourself, brave count," said the duke, in a tone of authority, and rising: "we are not on board, nor in a tavern, but in the house of an honourable knight, and one of my friends. This lady and her handmaids are under my protection here."

"What the fiend! my young big-nosed duke, are you already tired of good fellowship, and desire a quarrel?" growled the algrev, projecting his legs, while he leant back on his chair, with

his arms folded on his breast. "I would rather advise you not to try such a joke. The Count of Tönsberg can sup broth out of the same dish with both a Norse and Swedish king, and has not need to make himself a dog for the favour. I am not to be cowed by the biggest emperor in the world, least of all by a little duke. As I sit here, I will undertake to turn you and your genteel drost heels over head, if you have a mind to know whether you or the algrev is the strongest."

The duke grew pale with indignation. Sir Abildgaard sprang up, and placed himself, with his hand upon his sword, by the duke's side.

"Call the house-carls," said Lady Ingé to her maidens; and the frightened girls, screaming, ran out of the room to give the alarm: the lofty, earnest maiden herself remained standing, and regarded the enraged men with attention.

"This is not the time and place to prove our strength, Count Alf; and I am no boatman, who will drag a rope against a seahorse," said the duke, with supreme contempt, and laying his hand on his sword. "The wine has proved too strong for you; and what you say to-night, you will scarcely repeat tomorrow. If you were to bear in mind where we are, and what kind of a wind we have, you would perhaps come to your senses," he added, in a haughty, threatening tone. "Here, the Count of Tönsberg is of no more avail than Niels Breakpeace, or any other vile highwayman; and if you do not wish to prove your strength with Danish gaolers, and measure your height with the gallows of Orekrog, you will tame your unbridled, berserk<sup>[18]</sup> courage, without the aid of the house-carls and castle-warden."

They already heard a noise without, and the kitchen-door flew open.

"Bar the passage!" cried Lady Ingé; and the kitchen-door was again closed.

The eyes of the maddened freebooter rolled wildly in his head. He seized a massive silver trencher from the table, and seemed about to hurl it at the duke's head; but, recollecting himself, he was satisfied with twisting the heavy salver into the form of a rope. When he had thus vented his rage, and given his opponents an astonishing proof of his enormous strength, he appeared entirely calm and pacified.

"People don't understand joking in Denmark," he muttered. "We Norse sea-dogs are not accustomed to weigh words. Be at your ease, proud maiden; and sit you quietly down again, my noble young gentlemen. The wine, perhaps, runs a little in my noddle, and so I don't like standing. We sit here tolerably snug. But where is she off to, the little roguish brunette? Let her come hither, and pour out for me; and, death and the devil! you may have all the others: but the first house-carl that sets foot in the room, I will fell him like an ox!"

He now appeared drowsy and heavy-headed, and lolled comfortably back on his chair, as if he would go to sleep; but still kept his eyes half open, whilst his left hand rested on the hilt of his dagger, and in his right was clenched the silver trencher, which he had converted into a heavy truncheon.

"He is inebriated, as you perceive, noble lady," now said the duke, softly, to Ingé, while he offered her his arm, and led her into the farther hall. "Pardon us for having brought with us this rude travelling companion, who is, otherwise, a brave Norse knight, and of noble birth; but, when in this state, there is no controlling him: he becomes crazy, and fancies himself the powerful freebooter, Count Mindre-Alf of Tönsberg. We must, at such times, talk to him after his own fashion; and, in order to tame him, threaten him with rack and gibbet. He will not now rise from the drinking-table so long as there is a drop in the flagon, and therefore we can leave him. When he falls fast asleep, he will suffer himself to be carried on board, like a log, without moving. Tomorrow, he will again be the smartest knight in the universe, if he does not dream that he has been Count of Tönsberg to-night."

"It is a singular weakness for a man so strong," replied Lady Ingé, examining the duke with an earnest, penetrating look: "perhaps, also, it was in consequence of his intoxication that he took you for the duke?"

"Nay: there he was right, noble lady. I am truly Duke Waldemar; and, although I am not welcome to you, your father has received me as his guest. For his sake, as well as for mine, I pray you to send the house-carls back, and not betray this private visit by any needless alarm. Notwithstanding that I feel confident of being able to justify myself against every accusation, I am at this moment misunderstood, and under pursuit. It may cost your father his life, if people here should recognise me."

Lady Ingé tottered and grew pale. The servants of the house had, in the meanwhile, barred all egress, and some of them now came, storming noisily, into the hall.

"Back!" cried Lady Ingé, suddenly recovering herself, and stepping with calm authority towards them: "it was a mistake. There is no danger at present. These are peaceful travellers, and my father's friends. One of them has become intoxicated, and has frightened us with his wild raving. You may return to the castle-stairs, and remain quiet until I call; but three of you remain in the kitchen."

The house-carls obeyed, and went back; but the frightened handmaidens did not venture to

show themselves, and Ingé remained alone with the duke and his drost.

"You are Duke Waldemar, then?" she said, regarding the proud young nobleman with a composed and searching look, while she placed herself so near to the kitchen-door that she could open it whenever she chose. "Your drunken comrade within is likewise the open enemy of the country--the notorious Norse freebooter and incendiary; your groom is also a riever; and yet, with such a train, you dare to make yourself a guest in a royal castle! You have betrayed my father: his life is, perhaps, in danger. Where he has gone, you must know better than I. The pursuers you speak of are probably here, in the castle. It is to me a fearful riddle; but this I know, that at this instant I am mistress of your freedom."

The duke started, and looked at the lofty, earnest girl with astonishment; while Sir Abildgaard glanced uneasily round him, and made an involuntary movement towards the door.

"The passage is barred," continued Lady Ingé; "but it costs me only a nod, and it stands open to you. Promise me, Duke Waldemar, truly and piously, that, from this time forth, you will undertake no enterprise against the kingdom and country, and I shall then no longer prevent your departure from this castle; but if you cannot or will not promise me this, I instantly call the house-carls to seize you, as the accomplices of this audacious freebooter."

The duke and Sir Abildgaard regarded each other with the highest astonishment, and, for a moment, both appeared irresolute.

"Excellent!" exclaimed the duke, at length, in a gay and courtly tone of politeness: "to a lady's humour we may, with all honour, give way." But observing Lady Ingé's beautiful, serious countenance and determined mien, he suddenly changed his manner. "I promise you, noble lady," he continued, solemnly, "that I shall take no step that I do not hope to be able to defend, before the Danish people, at every legal tribunal. My conduct you cannot pronounce sentence upon; and you have no other right or power to be our mistress here than we freely concede to your beauty and patriotic spirit. If, then, you would not place your own father in peril of death, you will allow the castle to be opened for us, and not betray to any one what guests have been here."

Lady Ingé was silent. A mighty conflict seemed violently to agitate her bosom: she held one hand tremblingly before her eyes, and, with the other, indicated that they might depart. She then opened the kitchen-door, and gave the house-servants orders to re-open the barred passages.

The door of the fore-hall was immediately opened, and she perceived, standing in the doorway, the same clumsy-looking fellow who had so much alarmed her, at dusk, with his wild, brutish countenance.

"It blows south-east, and we can sail," said he: "all is clear."

"Good," answered the duke: "we are ready. Take care of the gentleman within. Farewell, noble lady," he continued, turning to the knight's fair daughter, with a genuine expression of respect: "I am sorry I must number you among my foes; but I shall never forget this hour, and never cease to esteem and admire you. Had Denmark many such women, scarcely any man would need to boast of his valour." With these flattering words, he raised her hand to his lips, bowed politely, and, with his drost, hastened from the door.

The tall, rude groom had, in the meanwhile, according to the duke's instructions, proceeded to the dining-room, where he first made free with what remained in the wine-flagons. He then put all the silver goblets into his pocket, and, taking the sleeping algrev's silver truncheon from his hand, he placed it among the rest of his booty. He then disposed himself to lift the drunken gentleman upon his shoulder.

"It is not needful, Niels," whispered the algrev: "I am not so drunk but that I can well walk; yet I have been drinking stupidly, and must allow I have enough. So just take me under your arm, and let us off to sea."

He thereupon began to growl forth a snatch of some wanton song, and, resting on the arm of his sturdy comrade, reeled into the next apartment. Here Ingé was still standing, with her hand on the latch of the kitchen-door.

"A proud little tit-bit, Niels," whispered the algrev to his rough attendant. "Could we but take her with us, we should not leave Zealand without a prime booty."

"It would be an easy matter for me to whip her up," whispered Niels; "but, should she scream, we are betrayed. Ill birds are about already."

"The fiend take the proud wench, then! I would rather have the little roguish brunette. But let the birds fly. Farewell, proud lady," he said, aloud, as, staggering towards her, he kissed his finger. "Salute our good friend, your worthy father. Thank him handsomely, for having allowed us to drink a goblet here in peace, and put the hounds on a false scent."

Lady Ingé answered not: she stood, as if rivetted to the floor with terror; and, as soon as the fearful guests were gone, she bolted the door after them. Exhausted by these unusual efforts, she sank on a chair, almost unconscious. She still appeared to hear footsteps in the court-yard of the

castle; but soon all was still, and the castle-gates were shut with a hollow sound. The noise aroused her from her stupor, and, collecting her strength, she tried to recall what had happened. The idea of her father's connection with the terrible guests fell on her soul like an enormous burden. A flood of tears burst suddenly from her eyes, and she wrung her hands in deep and boundless grief.

"But where is he?" she broke out again, in anguish; "and where are the three brave men who went with him?" The angry sea-rover's parting words occurred to her, and she made a hurried movement towards the door, without exactly knowing what she intended to do.

At this moment, she heard a loud knocking at the front hall-door. She started, but did not long hesitate, and withdrew the bolts. An active stranger youth, in the habit of a squire, entered, and saluted her respectfully. It was Claus Skirmen.

"Be not alarmed, lady," he said, hastily; "but may I inform you, if you do not know it already, that there are pirates in the castle; whilst my master, and the two knights who came with him, together with the governor of the castle himself, are shut up in the eastern tower."

"Shut up by pirates! my father imprisoned!" exclaimed Lady Ingé, with a burst of joy, incomprehensible to the young squire. "Are you certain the pirates have shut him up? and how know you it?"

"Who has locked them in, I know not," replied Skirmen; "but, noble lady, understand me rightly: they are prisoners in the tower. I was out on the beach, washing our horses, when I heard some one shouting from above, and I rode out of the water towards the tower, in the direction from whence the sound came. They bade me look about, right under the tower, for a prison-key: it was lying, fortunately, upon a great stone, and here it is; but the entrance to the tower I could not discover. In the court-yard they were shouting that pirates are here, and I could not be heard."

"Give it me!" exclaimed Lady Ingé, anxiously snatching it from the squire's hand. "Bring the lantern from the stable: make haste!" And she hurried out across the court-yard, while Skirmen ran to the stable for the lantern.

In the castle-yard there was a great noise. The servants were all in commotion, and the old warden came towards her in great terror. "Ah, God pity us!" he whined: "the vile sea-cats! Has any misfortune happened, lady?"

"My father is imprisoned," she hastily replied, "and the strangers are gone. Unlock the eastern tower for us."

"Ah, God pity us!" whined the warden, once more, and hurried to the tower. "It was by your father's orders I locked his friends both in and out, and asked them neither their names nor errand. That Satan who last went out wrenched the key of the castle-gate from my hand, and opened it before my very nose. They must have been rovers and heretics. I saw them, from the castle-walls, hoist sail, and leave the haven, taking the direction of Scania--and in this flying storm, too. God grant that they may go to the bottom, neck and crop!"

"My father is locked in," exclaimed Lady Ingé, impatiently: "instantly open the tower for us, I say."

"Ah, the infernal rogues! have they locked the governor in? God grant they may sink!" cried the old man, obeying.

"Hence now, hammer and tongs, and break open the gates of the tower--despatch!"

The tower-gate was now open. Skirmen came with the lantern, and hastily preceded Ingé up the narrow, winding staircase. When she reached the top, she heard high words within the prison, and recognised the voices of her father and the strangers.

"This treason you shall pay for, Sir Lavé!" she heard exclaimed by a harsh-toned voice, which she recognised as that of the stranger with the large plaited beard. "If Drost Hessel will still be your defender," continued the angry speaker, "he cannot save your life when I denounce you, and prove you to be a traitor to the country."

At these words, which only seemed to confirm her own cruel suspicions, the unhappy daughter was well nigh sinking upon the spot. The name of Drost Hessel had also attracted her attention in the highest degree, and the key fell from her hands. It rolled a few steps downwards, and Skirmen picked it up.

"Still, there is no proof of so heinous a crime," she now heard uttered in the voice of the young gentleman who had known her mother, and who had seemed to her so kingly. "Appearances are very much against you, Sir Lavé," continued the same voice; "but we ought to think the best of Sir John's kinsman as long as possible; and for what has yet happened here, no one can legally condemn you."

At these words, a gleam of hope lighted up the soul of the magnanimous daughter. "Yes, he

may still be innocent!" she exclaimed, hastily thrusting into the lock the key which Skirmen had handed to her. The door was instantly opened, and the sight of the courageous girl astonished the knights. Her father appeared still more surprised to see her.

"Are the strangers still here?" he hastily inquired.

"Nay," replied the daughter, scarcely daring to look in her father's face, lest she should read in his manner a confirmation of the crime that she still hoped was a matter of doubt.

"Ha! escaped! Perdition seize them!" exclaimed Thorstenson, stamping with rage. "Now, the object of our detention is clear enough."

"Do you know whether they have gone seawards or landwards, noble lady?" inquired Drost Peter. "Can you tell us, with certainty, which route they have taken? Your word is my surety that they are withdrawn, and are not concealed within these walls."

Lady Ingé was about to answer, but her father seized her hastily by the arm.

"Be thou silent, my daughter!" he commanded her, in a sterner tone than he was wont at other times to use. "My persecuted guests, as you hear, are no longer in the castle," he said, turning to the knights, and suddenly becoming bold and determined. "It is now your affair to pursue them farther, if you believe yourselves authorised to do so. I am obliged to furnish you with fighting-men, and to provide you with a sea-boat, if you demand it; but not to be a spy and an accuser. To such meanness you shall not compel my daughter; and none of my people in the castle shall give evidence in this matter until they are summoned to the Lands-Ting, and in presence of their lawful judges. That I have received the king's own kinsman, Duke Waldemar of South Jutland, into this castle, I need neither deny nor feel ashamed of. I know of no sentence passed upon him, as an enemy to the king or the country. Whom he had in his train I know not, nor does it concern me. His servants and followers were my guests, as well as he. I am glad that this singular accident has saved him from a pursuit which I consider to be alike illegal and tyrannical."

Thorstenson and Rimaardson looked with wonder on the previously desponding castellan. Thorstenson struck his sword wrathfully on the stone floor; but Drost Peter advanced calmly towards him.

"This concerns the safety of the crown and kingdom," he remarked, sternly and gravely. "What has happened may be regarded as an accident, and I do not intend to make Sir Lavé Little answerable for it. But if you, Lady Ingé Little, know where the traitors and their piratical train have gone, I, Drost Peter Hessel, demand of you, in the name of your king and country, to reveal it, that we may not, by a bootless journey, expose the royal house and the nation to the greatest peril."

Sir Lavé grew pale, and Lady Ingé regarded the authoritative young drost with wondering eyes. She saw her father's embarrassment, and observed a secret sign he gave her, by pointing towards the west; but her resolution was taken.

"If you are Drost Peter Hessel," she said, calmly and firmly, "I know that you have royal power and authority to demand faithful testimony from every loyal subject. As a knight's free daughter, I cannot debase myself by becoming a spy and an accuser, least of all, by betraying my father's friends and guests. But the persons you speak of cannot be my father's friends. They have not come as guests, but as disguised robbers. According to the warden's account, who himself has seen them, they are fled over the Sound, towards Sweden."

"In the name of our king and country, I thank you for this important evidence, noble Lady Ingé," said Drost. Peter, taking her hand warmly. "Yet a word in my own name, in the presence of your father, and of these brave men. I hope the time may yet come, when you will as little mistake Drost Peter Hessel's heart and conduct, as you now do his fealty to his king and country. If you do not reject the hand which I now give as a friend, it will be my greatest pride and happiness to proffer it to you hereafter with a dearer title."

"Never, never shall that time come, as long as my eyes are open!" exclaimed Sir Lavé, bitterly, and tearing their hands asunder. "Silence, and go to your chamber, my daughter, I command you!"

Lady Ingé cast a look of fervent esteem towards her childhood's bridegroom; and saluting him and his friends with silence and dignified composure, she departed.

Skirmen ran down the stairs before her with the lantern, and across the court-yard. On his return, his master and both the knights had already gone out of the opened castle-gate. He hastened to bring their horses from the stable, and followed his master. He rejoined them on the quay, where Sir Lavé commanded the ferrymen to convey the gentlemen, in their fleetest sloop, and without delay, to Helsingborg. Thirty men of the castle garrison stood armed on the quay, and received the castellan's orders to follow and obey the strangers. Having done this, Sir Lavé took a short and cold leave of Drost Peter and Sir Rimaardson. To Sir Thorstenson he silently handed his glove, and returned, with hasty and troubled steps, to the castle. Thorstenson flung the glove contemptuously after him, and leaped on board.

In a brief space, the knights, with their armed followers, were embarked. Skirmen took charge of the horses. The wind was blowing strong from the south. Drost Peter placed himself at the helm, and ordered all sails to be set; and the sloop dashed along at a rapid rate, cutting through the troubled waters of the Sound.

The night was intensely dark, a few stars only being visible. They steered in the direction of Helsingborg, Drost Peter sitting silently at the rudder; while Thorstenson, exasperated, paced up and down the deck with Rimaardson, giving vent to his indignation against the crafty castellan.

"Who would have believed it of him?" he growled: "I always took him for a flounder, and thought it his only claim to be governor of Flounder Castle."<sup>[19]</sup>

"Do not speak so loud, noble knight," whispered Rimaardson. "They are his people we have on board; and see you not how they lay their heads together? Should mutiny break out in the ship during this murky night, our condition then may be worse than that we have just escaped from."

"The first man that grumbles, I shall cut down," muttered Thorstenson. "Every Dane has not yet become a traitor."

Skirmen now ascended from the hold of the vessel, and approached his grave master, who sat thoughtfully, with his arm over the rudder, now and then casting back a look to the huge dark castle, where a single light only was visible, shining from a turret-chamber in the south-eastern angle. There, he knew that Lady Ingé, in her childhood, had her apartment; and there, as children, they had often played together.

"Master," said Skirmen, advancing a little nearer, "be not offended if I disturb you in the midst of important thoughts. But steer you not rather too much to the south?"

"You are right, Skirmen," answered Drost Peter, hastily turning the helm: "yes, this must be the right course. It is dark, and we need to have our eyes about us. Fortunately, I can see the light, yonder. Now, tell me somewhat. You followed the lady from the tower. How was she affected? Did she converse with you?"

"Not a word, sir, until I had set down the lantern, and was about to depart: then, indeed, she asked me if I was your squire."

"And what did you answer?" asked the drost, hastily.

"Eh? what could I answer save 'yes,' sir? But now, are you not steering rather southerly again?"

Drost Peter hastily corrected his error. "Said she nothing more to you?" he resumed, after a pause.

"Ay, true: as she was entering the door, she dropped her red hair-band, which I picked up, and restored to her. That I might not appear a lout, without a word to say, I remarked that she wore the queen's colours as well as my master, the drost. I perceived that she started on hearing this; on which I drew myself up a little; for I know it is an honour that no knight but yourself can boast."

"Stupidity--cursed bravado!" exclaimed Drost Peter, with unusual vehemence. "Moreover, it is untrue: I no longer wear the queen's colours."

"That I knew not, stern sir. You wore them, however, when we travelled from Melfert."

"But now, as I tell you, I no longer wear them; and, for the sake of bragging, you should say nothing but what you know for certain to be true."

Skirmen was abashed, and remained silent.

"And what said she to this stupid boasting?" continued Drost Peter, in a milder tone.

"Nothing, stern sir. Yet it occurred to me, that she was much moved thereat.---But be not angry, stern sir: the helm is a little wrong again."

"Certainly not: let me attend to that. Moved, say you? Why think you she was moved? What foolish talk is this?"

"Truly by this, my master: she turned away from me, blushed deeply, and, as it seemed to me, there were tears in her eyes."

"Nonsense, Skirmen! you must have mistaken.--Spring forwards, and put that sail to rights!"

Skirmen hastened to obey his master's order, although he could not conceive why he was so singularly abrupt and abstracted.

The young drost heaved a deep sigh, and looked back once more for the light in the turret-window. It was no longer to be seen; and it seemed to him as if, with that distant light, the fair,

newly-risen star was also extinguished from his childhood's heaven.

The wind now blew strong, and they already began to perceive lights on the Swedish coast, when suddenly a wild shout was heard on board, and torches flared in the midst of clashing swords and lances. Drost Peter, surprised, sprang from the helm, and saw, with consternation, Sir Thorstenson and Sir Rimaardson engaged in fierce conflict with the thirty lancers from Flynderborg.

Drost Peter threw himself with drawn sword amidst the combatants. "Peace here, in the king's name, or you are dead men!" he commanded, in a voice which, without being alarming, had singular weight and authority. They all paused, and gazed at him. Even the maddened Sir Thorstenson, who had felled one man and wounded another, subdued his rage, and stood quietly.

"Speak! what has happened?" demanded the drost. "Here, I am supreme judge."

"Rebellion--mutiny!" cried Thorstenson: "there lies the ringleader."

"They think that we have arbitrarily compelled the commandant, and that we are leading them into mischief," said Rimaardson.

The uproarious landsknechts pressed forward, uttering defiance, and shouting lustily to one another: "We are free Danes, and will not suffer ourselves to be cowed by three rovers. We know well enough, that you would have murdered the castellan in the tower; and here are we, carried off in the murky night, like cattle for slaughter, and no one knows whither."

"Silence!" cried the drost. "Is there any one amongst you who knows the king's hand and seal?"

"That does wise Christen--yes, that does Christen Fynbo," cried the fellows.

"Let him come hither, then," commanded the drost, taking forth the royal warrant addressed to governors of castles. "A torch here! and now attend." He then read aloud, and distinctly, the order that he should be supplied with a force, whenever it should be demanded. "There you see the king's seal and signature."

"It is well attested, comrades," said the book-learned Fynbo; and the greater number were pacified: still, a few solitary murmurs were heard.

"Now you have seen black on white for our right and authority, fellows," continued Drost Peter, sternly; "but, even without this, you ought to obey, when your governor has commanded you. Meantime are you all my prisoners: I cannot employ fellows like you in the king's service. Your leader has met with his reward. Cast him overboard, and let the fish devour him. The rest of you lay down your arms immediately."

The soldiers delayed, and a subdued murmur ran among them.

"Do you hesitate?" cried the drost. "Will you be doomed as traitors? Cast the rebel's corpse overboard: his sentence is passed here--God be merciful to his soul!"

Two of the landsknechts, who stood nearest the drost, silently laid hold of the body of their fallen comrade, and heaved it overboard. It splashed into the deep, and for a moment there was a fearful silence. No one, however, had yet laid down his weapon.

"You have been misled, and in a mistake, countrymen," said the drost, in a milder tone: "I shall intercede for you, for this time. But, now, instantly lay down your arms, and descend quietly to the forehold. Whoever murmurs, forfeits his life."

The astonished soldiers obeyed: in a moment they were all disarmed, and shut down, within the fastenings of the forehold. The drost then went quietly back to the helm, which Skirmen in the meantime, at his signal, had undertaken to guide. There was a death-stillness on board. Sir Thorstenson and Sir Rimaardson stood, with drawn swords, by the hatchway of the prison-room, while Skirmen attended to the sails. The storm had lulled, and day began to dawn over the Swedish coast, when the last tack was made, and the ship glided in a right line towards the haven of Helsingborg.

THE  
**CHILDHOOD OF ERIK MENVED.**

## PART II.

It was still the gray of the morning, when, in the upper hall of Helsingborg<sup>[20]</sup> Castle, young Duke Waldemar and his drost walked backwards and forwards on the bare paved floor. Their mantles, soaked with sea-water, lay upon a bench.

"It was a stiff breeze, gracious sir," observed Sir Abildgaard, rubbing his hands; "and it was fortunate we had the algrev with us: drunk as he was, however, he has set us on dry land, like a brave fellow."

"The rude, wild sea-bear!" exclaimed the duke: "he had nearly ruined everything. At sea, he is invaluable; but he shall never more set foot on land by my side. It seems, however, that he was sober when we landed, and understood my meaning."

"He offered no objections, and he owned that he rued his folly. It is well we did not break with him: he is a fellow that may still be put to use."

"Was the daring Niels Breakpeace with him? for, at present, it is as well to have him also as a reserve; but we must not have the fellow here with us."

"Not a soul landed your highness. I strictly repeated your injunction, that they should sail immediately. I assisted the algrev to spell the marsk's letter, as well as that of the Norwegian king, and he has sworn to be at Stockholm within eight days, with thirty transports to convey troops."

"Good-very good!" said the duke, thoughtfully. "Were we only well over the Scanian border, if need there be, it shall and must succeed. When King Magnus hears our weighty plans, he must concur with them, and afford us his aid. This betrothment of children, and all their other miserable arts, shall not save them. But why, do they tarry?"

The morning light began to increase; and as the large hall, on the western side of the castle, looked out upon the sea, they saw, from the balcony, the Count of Tönsberg's rover, in which they had arrived, run out of the haven with a brisk side-wind.

"See, there goes the algrev," said Sir Abildgaard: "he must certainly feel it hard to run from a Danish coast without booty. But how is this? A sloop, with blue sails, lies at the jetty. We saw it not when we landed; and it is not a Scanian."

"Gudsöd!" exclaimed the duke, "it is a royal sloop, from Orekrog. But it cannot have come in pursuit of us, unless Sir Lavé has been frightened, and allowed that infernal drost to slip loose. Where is the castellan? Did you instruct him not to say who we are, and that he should straightway send us an escort as royal ambassadors?"

"Yes, sir; and there is no obstacle in the way. When the guards and servants heard your name, they made the utmost haste. The castellan had not risen, but he will be here instantly."

"There is no time to lose," said the duke, with uneasiness. "If we have not the escort immediately, we must set off without it. Are the horses ready, and at hand?"

"They stand saddled by the castle-stairs, sir. But, list! They are coming!"

They now heard a bustle in the castle, and the sound of armed men running to and fro. The large hall, on the eastern side, looked over the castle-yard. There, too, they heard a noise, and went anxiously to the window.

"They are closing the castle-gates!" exclaimed Sir Abildgaard; "and the court-yard is full of armed men."

"Gudsöd! What means this? Are we betrayed?" exclaimed the duke. "Come, Tuko: there must be an outlet here. We must away."

Four large doors opened from the hall. Two of these they found barred. They went to the third, which was not locked, and hastily opened it; but on the outside stood six armed men, with the Danish arms upon their helmets.

"No one can pass out here!" exclaimed a gruff voice.

Astonished, they hastened to the fourth door; but, before they reached it, it was opened, and Drost Peter stood before them, along with Sir Rimaardson and Sir Thorstenson, and accompanied by a middle-aged gentleman, in the dress of a Danish knight, with a baton in his hand. This was the governor of Helsingborg. Twelve men-at-arms followed him.



"Your arms, gentlemen, in the king's name," said Drost Peter, calmly: "you are our prisoners."

"What! How is this?" cried the duke, stamping on the paved floor. "Who dares to take Duke Waldemar prisoner?"

"I, Drost Peter Hessel, and these Danish knights, in the name of our king and master."

"I know you not. You have no power over a duke of the royal blood, and a free royal vassal."

"You know the king's hand and seal, illustrious sir," replied Drost Peter, handing him his warrant.

The duke perused it, with anger-flashing eyes. "This is illegal," he cried: "it is contrary to the laws and statutes of the kingdom. I have not been accused at any Herred-Ting or Land-Ting,<sup>[21]</sup> and I formally protest against this proceeding, as arbitrary and unjust. You are my witness, governor, that I declare this warrant null and void, and I shall answer to my country for destroying it." So saying, he tore the royal warrant, and cast it on the ground. "As the king's kinsman, and Duke of South Jutland, I now command you," he continued, in a lordly tone of authority, "that you immediately take prisoners these audacious persons, who dare to misuse the royal authority in this lawless manner."

The castellan looked doubtfully, now at the duke, now at Drost Peter, as if uncertain how to act. Thorstenson struck his sword angrily against the pavement, and Rimaardson was on the point of speaking, when Drost Peter anticipated him.

"Whether this proceeding be just or not," he commenced, "and whether the king is warranted in ordering this illustrious gentleman to be made prisoner, before he has been accused at a Land-Ting, is not now the question: that, the king must himself answer. My authority is the royal warrant you have seen: it cannot be destroyed; and, in virtue thereof, I demand that the king's will may be obeyed without delay or hesitation. If you will not deliver up your weapons willingly, gentlemen, I shall be obliged to resort to force."

Drost Peter's calm and decided manner embarrassed the duke, and overcame every doubt of the castellan.

"For the present, you must submit to necessity, illustrious duke," said this grave personage, courteously, at the same time stooping, and picking up the royal warrant. "Perhaps this is a mistake; in which case you must be set at liberty, and will have your grounds of prosecution against this gentleman for his abuse of the royal authority. At this moment he is fully empowered, and must be obeyed."

The duke clenched his teeth, and, with averted eyes, handed Drost Peter his sword. Sir Abildgaard followed his lord's example; and not another word was uttered by the exasperated state-prisoners. To the castellan's polite inquiry, whether they wished to take any refreshment, the duke indignantly shook his head. A strong guard of soldiers having surrounded the captives, Drost Peter and his companions courteously saluted the governor, who returned to the drost the torn warrant, and accompanied them to the jetty.

Before the sun was yet up, Drost Peter had departed for Zealand with his important prisoners. The rebellious landsknechts from Flynderborg were handed over to the castellan of Helsingborg, who sent them, carefully bound, in another vessel to Orekrog.

Claus Skirmen had now enough to attend to; and, although he regarded his master with proud satisfaction, he carefully avoided any of those haughty airs by which the feelings of the duke and his drost might be wounded. As for Thorstenson and Rimaardson, the moment they found themselves alone with Drost Peter at the rudder, they shook him heartily by the hand, and extolled his good fortune.

"Yet, after all, it is provoking to be engaged on any hazardous adventure with you," grumbled Thorstenson; "for before I have had an opportunity of using my good sword, you have achieved all that is required by a few words, with your sword in its sheath."

"We may yet need your good sword quite soon enough," replied Drost Peter, in a suppressed voice: "we have ventured upon a greater piece of daring than any one perhaps may trow."

The discourse of the grave knights was extremely brief, and their princely captive deigned them not a word. With suppressed bitterness, he resigned himself to his fate; and, by the side of his fellow-prisoner, paced the deck as proudly as if he had been master of the ship. At length he appeared even gay and indifferent; but Drost Peter frequently noted in his countenance an expression of vindictive hope, which rendered him in the highest degree thoughtful and earnest.

The vigilant drost took the helm himself; and when he again saw the dark towers of Flynderborg, he cast a melancholy glance towards the little turret-window from which he had seen the light twinkling on the previous evening; but the window was now closed, and seemed to be screened inside by a dark tapestry. The entire mighty fortress, which at the present moment

he did not care to visit, lay half enveloped in the mist of the calm spring morning, and seemed to him dark and enigmatical as his own future, and undefined as his unhappy country's fate.

It was soon known throughout the whole kingdom that Duke Waldemar and his drost had been sent prisoners to Sjöborg. This bold step on the part of the king and his active ministers struck the discontented nobles with astonishment, and it now seemed as if even the most daring vassals had lost courage to defy the kingly power, or to meditate dangerous enterprises against the crown and kingdom. A great number of the most powerful Danish nobles, as well as many foreign princes, sought to accommodate, in an amicable manner, the dangerous differences between the king and the duke, and to obtain the misguided nobleman's release from prison; but one month passed by after another, without any arrangement being effected.

The king, as usual, passed the summer in moving about the kingdom, and spent the winter at Ribehuus. The drost, it was said, was in high favour; but it was doubted whether the terms that he and the stern old Sir John deemed necessary for the security of the crown, in reference to the liberation of the duke, would be submitted to by the proud young prince, so long as he could depend upon his powerful connections, both within the kingdom and abroad.

It was one of the latter days of March, 1286. The captive duke and his knightly companion, Drost Tuko Abildgaard, sat opposite each other, at a chess-table, in a gloomy turret-chamber in Sjöborg Castle, where they had now spent three beautiful months of summer, and more than six of autumn and winter. They were strictly guarded, but without harshness, and with every respect and distinction that such notable state-prisoners could desire. They lacked none of the necessaries and comforts that could be obtained in this retired spot, or that could be granted them without danger of aiding them to escape, or enabling them to hold intercourse with their friends and adherents.

Each of the prisoners had his own apartment; but, as it was not forbidden them to be in each other's company, their apartments communicated by a door, which they used at pleasure. The narrow chambers were kept clean and airy, and as warm as the prisoners themselves desired. The rooms were, further, provided with all suitable furniture for their convenience, besides various kinds of chess-boards, and a few old manuscript chronicles. Some volumes of homilies, and other edifying writings, were also to be found; together with a lyre, a David's harp, and many similar things, to lighten their captivity and beguile the time. But lights and writing-materials were both denied them; and they saw not a soul except the deaf turnkey, (who never spoke a word when he waited upon them,) and the stern castellan, Poul Hvit himself.

The latter visited them daily, at uncertain hours, and never left their side during the time they were permitted to take exercise in the open air, under his charge, in the court-yard of the castle. Every day, well-cooked food was brought them, on silver dishes, and the rarest fruits of the season at all times graced their lonely board. To the handle of their silver wine-flagon, a fresh nosegay was very frequently attached, even in the severest winter months; but who it was that showed them this friendly mark of attention, they had never been able to discover.

Further, to give their uniform life a little variety, they feigned to be alternately each other's guests, and on this day Drost Tuko Abildgaard was host. The dinner-table was cleared, but the wine-flagon and two goblets still remained.

"Gaily, now, my noble guest," said the mannerly knight: "if you are tired of mating me, leave the stupid pieces alone, and let us rather drink a cup together. The wine is excellent. Had we only a couple of pretty lively little damsels to bear us company, our imprisonment would not seem to me, after all, so great a calamity. Who knows from what fair hand these lovely flowers are constantly brought us, and whether one of us may not have fallen on good fortune here, among the weaving-damsels and pantry-maids."

"Thou hast a happy mind, Tuko," replied the duke; "and I do not envy thee it. So long as thou lackest not wine and giddy girls, I believe thou couldst be happy in purgatory itself. But yet there was a time, Tuko, when thou sharedst my proud dreams," he continued, after a thoughtful pause, and pushing the chess-pieces to one side: "even in the midst of our most thoughtless follies, thou didst not forget that thou wert the friend of an injured prince, and labouredst with him for the attainment of the greatest object man can desire. Thou wert initiated into the great secret of my life: with me, thou proudly soaredst above the ignorant mass and the despicable puppets we played with, whenever thou thoughtest what thou, too, couldst perform when Duke Waldemar was in possession of his great ancestor's glorious crown."

"Think not that I have now forgotten it, noble sir," replied the knight. "But of what use is it to fret yourself pale and lean, between these thick walls, where we cannot take a single step towards our object?"

"We can do battle here, Tuko. In that narrow room I have, perhaps, already made a more important progress than if I had stood free, in the midst of a noisy and juggling court. Read, in the chronicles, of the greatest men, and thou shalt find that they buried themselves in deserts and lonely dens, to prove themselves and their own powers in secret, before they entered upon the career destined to astonish after generations, and be remembered through long centuries.

When thou hast been sleeping here, dreaming of trifles and handsome maidens, many a night have I been awake in my den, there. The wide and mighty world of thought has been laid open before me in my prison, and the great spirits of departed times have been near me."

"The rood shield us, noble sir! If you have become a ghost-seer, I wonder not that you are so pale and thin. Reveries, and night-watchings of this kind, must lay waste your strength, and carry you even a step farther. What have you thought of, then? and what are the fruits of these perilous struggles? To me, you look as grave and solemn as a clerk spent with fasting; and, indeed, I scarcely know you."

"But thou and the world shall learn to know me," said the duke. "Now, for the first time, I know myself--now know I, that I have been a light-brained fool. Miserable, insolent boyishness it was, when I would deny my tyrant's right of guardianship, and quarrel with my powerful oppressor about petty islands and paltry mint privileges, when I had his crown in view. Stupid, immeasurably stupid, it was, when I suffered myself to be misled by thee and other thoughtless persons, into making a claim to the kingdom, before I was certain that I was the people's spiritual lord."

"I understand you not, noble sir. A spiritual dominion you cannot claim: that must be left to the pope and clergy. But you are right: to strike the sceptre from the hand of a tyrant, guarded by strong and blindfolded slaves, you certainly required a marshal's baton and an army. It was, undeniably, an error, to betray your aims unseasonably, and thus put arms into the hands of opponents before you were sufficiently accoutred yourself."

"That was my least mistake, Tuko, and that I have sufficiently atoned for within these walls. My greatest error was, that I fancied actual dominion was to be obtained over a people, ere they had freely chosen and done homage to me as their lord; and that a crown could be won, like a castle or a piece of land, by daring heroism and foreign armies, so long as the people I desired to rule had yet a spark of strength and spirit; and I did not first conquer the souls whose lord and king I should wish, in reality, to be."

"These are vagaries, noble sir, the consequences of prison air, unseasonable night-watchings, and want of exercise. What think you the great ignorant masses of the people care about their ruler's inner worth and being? He who has the power and authority, is obeyed by the crowd: the ruler who has the largest army, and can swing the longest sword over the heads of the people, they readily acknowledge as their king and heart-beloved father, if only he does not impose higher taxes than his predecessors, and maintains something like law and justice in the country."

"Nay, Tuko, nay," resumed the pale and earnest duke, with warmth; "this imprudent contempt for the lives and spirit of a people has misled the greatest ruling spirits in the world. The mere external dominion, which has not its roots in the deepest heart of the people, and is not bound up with the popular mind and true renown, is worthless and despicable, did it even extend over the whole universe. It is a throne raised on the breath of pride, on the mists and vapours of a miserable vanity. It is dissipated by a blast of wind; and the first free and energetic spirit who stands up among a people so oppressed, and misgoverned by mere rude brute force, has might enough to overthrow such a monarch and his soulless hosts."

"You surprise me, noble sir. Whence have you all this new wisdom? I should almost fancy you have had revelations in your wisdom-den, and have been used to converse with spirits; or some similar folly."

"Come, thou shalt see my spirits," said the duke, rising: "I shall show thee that I am not the first who has thought earnestly, within these walls, on the condition of a people and their ruler."

"Sjöborg has held many statesmen of importance," said the knight; "but I doubt whether any of them has imparted a new thought to you. The most notable I remember, that occupied this state-prison, was the mad Bishop Waldemar, who struggled for the sixth Canute and Waldemar Seier's life and crown, and finished his days, a crazy saint, in Lockum Cloister."

"It is possible that he became crazy at last," replied the duke; "but what made others crazy, may perhaps make us wise. You have guessed aright, Tuko. I have my sleeping-chamber in the prison-cell where that unfortunate bishop, of royal descent and royal mind, sat chained to a block, and gave vent to his indignation by cursing the world and mankind. But that he also had his lucid moments, and saw clearer into the world and its blind rulers than perhaps any one dreamt of, I shall show you memorials that perhaps no human eye save mine has before seen."

They had now entered the duke's narrow prison-cell, which looked upon the castle-yard by a grated window, eighteen ells from the ground. Here was still a block, with a rusty iron ring and a heavy chain, made fast to the wall. By the side of the chain lay a large, torn-up paving stone, which appeared to have been used for barricading the door from within. The castellan would have removed these painful relics of former occupants of the cell; but the duke had expressly desired to retain them, when he heard of what powerful kinsman they were memorials.

On the dingy walls were many scratches, like runes and oriental characters. To these the duke pointed; but it was beginning to grow dark, and it was impossible to discern any of the words distinctly: the interpretation of the inscriptions appeared also to demand a degree of learning

which neither Sir Abildgaard nor his princely master was possessed of.

"If this is the book of wisdom you have read in of a night, noble sir," said the gay young knight, "you must have become profoundly learned in a hurry, and must certainly have borrowed a pair of eyes from some of the friendly owls or cats that now and then pay you their dutiful respects through the grating. In this nook, even in broad daylight, I should not be able to tell an X from a U, were I ever so clear-eyed."

"You have guessed better than you imagine, Tuko. The bird of wisdom himself has, with his fire-eyes, been a light to my bewildered path." So saying, the duke opened a chest, which, otherwise, served him to keep shoes in. "Look here," he said, taking out a large tame owl, with beautiful flaxen-coloured feathers, and a pair of uncommonly bright eyes.

"Fie, sir!" cried the knight, springing back. "It is the dismal screech-owl, which people call the dead man's bird. What do you with it? It is not worth having for a guest, and the devil may have touched it. Have you never heard that there is always sure to be a death in the house where it perches?"

"The pest may come to Sjöborg for me, as soon as we are well out of it," said the duke; "but, as you perceive, the dead man's bird and I are at present good friends. One night, as I lay awake with troubled thoughts, I saw these eyes glaring upon me from the ledge on the wall. I started, and it seemed to me as if the fiend were standing, staring me through the soul with glowing eyes, in the silent, mysterious night. I sprang up, and discovered my mistake. But while I approached to seize my unbidden night-guest, he turned his shining eyes towards the wall: a gleam of moonshine entered at the same instant; and, whether it was the light of the bird's eyes, or the moonshine, that illumined the wall, I know not, but I perceived there a dim inscription, which I could not then read. I took care to mark the spot; and, having placed my prisoner in the box here, I went to sleep. Next morning, however, betimes I examined the wall and the writing. When the morning sun shines in, it can be easily read. It is in Latin, and it cost me much trouble to understand it. You know we did not make great progress with the complaisant clerk who was to make us book-learned."

"What made you of the characters, then, illustrious sir?" inquired Tuko. "But do throw that hideous death-bird out of the grating. It glares upon us, as if it would burn our eyes out, in exchange for the wisdom it has taught you."

"Nay: this wise bird shall now be my companion in weal or woe," said the duke, patting the bird kindly, and replacing it in the box. "If it forebodes death, it must be the death of our enemies."

"But what did you read, sir?" inquired Sir Abildgaard, eagerly.

"I read many horrible words I shall not repeat, but which have often made my hair stand on end. A sentence, however, stood there, which has told me why I am come hither, and what I have to do in this miserable world. '*Thou who dreamedst of a crown and awokest in chains,*' it runs, '*lay hold of that sceptre which constrains spirits, and thy crown shall be bright as the sun!*'"

"This is the nimbus which already played in the brain of the crazy bishop," observed Sir Abildgaard; "or it is the black art and magical incantations he brooded over. Be not thus disquieted, noble sir, and suffer not the madness of becoming a saint to infect you. I dare be sworn that neither you nor I carry it to this extremity."

"I do not so understand it," replied the duke, whilst his eyes glistened. "I interpret these words in a secular sense, and as containing no folly, but, on the contrary, deep and sound policy. I do not abandon my bold life's-plan: that I shall never relinquish, so long as there is a drop of Waldemar Seier's blood in my heart. How? is the only question. The means and power I no longer seek for in foreign princes and armies, nor in an unworthy conspiracy with rebellious subjects. They would fail as much in their loyalty to me afterwards, as they had failed towards my predecessor. I shall not hinder or oppose an enterprise which may probably be advantageous to me; but I have learned to despise it. The hand that would bear a sceptre without trembling, must be unstained with the blood of kindred. The forehead which the crown would not burn, must not bear a secret Cain's-mark under its splendour."

"There we have it!" interrupted Tuko. "You will be a saint, then. Good: but there is a medium in all things, gracious sir. On the other hand, if you are at all aware of what is to be undertaken, and what you already know--"

"I shall know nothing that I need have the slightest occasion to blush for before the knights and princes of Europe," continued the duke; "and what I do know, Tuko--yes, that I shall forget, and bury in my deepest heart as a phrenzied dream. I shall not bear the crown as my unfortunate, bewildered grandfather bore it, to be murdered by rebellious subjects, after a brief period of splendour. If conspirators will play into my hands, let them. I did not invoke the storm. Our only concern now is, to allow time, and gain confidence. I shall renounce Alsen--yea, even my ducal crown: more they cannot well demand for my freedom. The undermined throne may yet fall without me; but none shall again raise it, save a Waldemar. I shall show the people that I do not bear the name of Waldemar in vain, and that I can vanquish myself. By submitting to injustice, I

shall win hearts like castles. First, I shall seize the invisible sceptre that constrains spirits; and then the crown will be offered me, by a fortunate change in the Ting. Therefore, Tuko, 'tis not an aerial crown, nor a saint's halo, but a crown that shall sit fast on this brow, and shine through centuries, like that of the great Waldemars'."

"Now, indeed, I begin to understand you, gracious sir," replied Sir Abildgaard, opening his eyes. "The storm that breaks down the rotten stem, bears with it the boughs and shoots, you think, and without you needing to risk your neck for it. I, too, begin to get clear-eyed, and to entertain a respect for your good friend in the box. Come, noble sir, let us drink a rousing cup, like our old heathen ancestors, to this noble conclusion. Hail to your wisdom-bird, my prince and master! When you come to your kingdom, we shall take the lion from your shield, and put the sagacious bird in its stead."

The duke followed his lively friend to the festive board, and was, once more, the jovial-spirited youth. His pale cheeks became flushed, and his somewhat sunken eyes sparkled with lofty and daring expectations. In the meantime it had become dark; but, ere long, the moon shone through the iron grating, and lighted their little drinking-table. Sir Abildgaard sang merry songs, in which the duke joined with wild glee, frequently emptying his goblet the meanwhile. In the midst of their merriment, the door was opened, and a grave, stalwart man, in a pelt doublet and shaggy cap, entered, with a light in his hand.

"Heyday, Poul Hvit! our acute friend, deep skilled in knowledge of mankind--our cautious host. Your health!" cried Sir Abildgaard, in frolicsome mood: "everything is in the best order, you see."

"Your health, my good friend," said the duke; and the half-intoxicated prisoners gaily emptied their goblets to the health of the castellan.

"I thank you for the honour you show me, my illustrious young gentlemen," said the quiet and serious Poul Hvit, bowing politely, at the same time doffing his cap, and examining them closely, with a self-satisfied look. "I am glad you relish the wine, and do not take the world, with its unstable fortunes, more to heart than is worth. I know the world and men," he added, nodding with self-assurance: "it is always a good sign when state-prisoners are merry. I am, besides, the bearer of a message which I think will be welcome to you," he continued, letting the light fall on their flushed faces, and seeming to study their appearance carefully. "To-morrow, betimes, when you are less merry, and more disposed for serious business, a person will have the honour of bringing you a proposal for an agreement with the king, my master. If, as I hope, you accede to it, I may soon have the pleasure of opening this door for you altogether. Meantime, I wish you a good night, and quietness."

He then bowed, and departed: the heavy door was closed with a loud noise, and the prisoners again sat alone in the moonlight. The castellan's announcement brought the young gentlemen at once to their senses, and they remained long in consultation as to what terms they could accept or refuse. At length they retired to rest, in anxious doubt whether the following morning would bring them freedom, or more rigorous and prolonged imprisonment.

The castellan returned to the ancient knights' hall, which, in his time, was furnished and in good condition, and the place where he received guests of distinction. A fire was burning cheerfully in the great chimney, and in the middle of the hall stood a richly spread supper-table, with a brazen candlestick of three branches. A young gentleman, apparently a knight, walked up and down the hall with rapid strides. It was Drost Peter Hessel. Claus Skirmen stood by the fireplace, enjoying the warmth.

"Now, my good Poul Hvit," said the drost, advancing towards the well-pleased castellan, "what say your prisoners? Will they see me to-night, or in the morning?"

"It is a pleasure to see the prisoners," replied the castellan: "they do not mope and moan like hapless criminals; and you may trow, sir drost, for all their bewilderment, that there are good honest hearts in them. They have made so merry with the wine flagon, noble sir, that it is out of the question to think of talking with them, to-night, on any subject of importance. In their present state they would, perhaps, subscribe to every proposal; but that, I know, neither you nor my master the king would wish to be done. Man is a finite being, let me tell you; and, when we men are not entirely sober, we cannot behave like free and rational creatures: so said my worthy schoolmaster of Horsens."

"We understand each other," replied the drost; "only when they have recovered their senses, shall they hear my proposition: for this is a grave matter, which they shall have time and opportunity to consider. In the morning, then. Can I sleep in the castle here, to-night?"

"Of course, sir drost: I have already made arrangements for that. We are all mortal; and, whilst the soul is active in good deeds, the body must not lack rest and refreshment. Be seated, then; and, if you will permit it, there is also room for your squire here. The ploughing ox should not be muzzled, and the man--yes, a man is still a man," he added, hastily, as no more profound observation occurred to him.

Drost Peter smiled at the castellan's awkwardly finished sentence, and sat down to table. Skirmen stationed himself discreetly behind his chair, and blushed when the courteous castellan

directed him to take a vacant seat by the drost's side.

"Be seated, Skirmen," said Drost Peter, kindly: "we are not at court here."

Skirmen obeyed, and seated himself on a corner of the chair. He maintained, as he was wont, a modest silence when his elders were speaking, and gave close heed to his master's wants and wishes.

"So, your important prisoners, my good Poul Hvit, submit to their fate without rage or bitterness?" said the drost. "I am glad to hear it; for, notwithstanding their sad infatuation, there are excellent, ay, almost great qualities, in both of them. It is from painful necessity that we have been obliged to deprive them so long of their freedom; but I know you have not made their imprisonment harsher than is necessary."

"I have punctually followed your orders, sir drost; and--I think I know a little bit of the world, and of man kind. Prisoners that are well treated, seldom even dream of making their escape. We shall see now if loneliness has brought them to reflection: if they are stubborn, and you wish them to be treated with greater severity, it shall be done. I am only an humble servant, and what is commanded me, I perform, without respect of persons. 'Man,'--said the never-to-be-forgotten schoolmaster of Horsens--God bless his soul!--'man cannot always endure prosperous days.'"

A stout, double-chinned cook now entered, and placed a dish upon the table. Drost Peter observed him, and started, but was silent until he had left the room.

"Have you had this cook any considerable time, my good Poul Hvit?" he then inquired; "and are you sure of his fidelity?"

"He has served me since the end of May, last year," replied the castellan; "and I should be a bad judge of mankind if I could doubt his fidelity: he does his business, and troubles himself about nothing else in the world. He is always chatting and singing in the kitchen, and never says a serious word. If I had only such people about me, I could sleep soundly, even had I kings and kaisers to take charge of. I trow, as I have said, I know a little of the world and mankind, sir drost. But have you any grounds for doubting my cook's fidelity, noble sir?"

"Not exactly so," answered the drost; "but have an eye upon him. It was, perhaps, an accident; but I saw him, shortly before the Dane-court, in Henner Friser's inn at Melfert, in a company of travellers that did not quite consist of the best friends of the crown and realm."

"It must have been a mere accident, noble sir," replied the castellan, with calm self-satisfaction. "I know my men, and nobody shall so easily palm a wax-nose upon me. Cook Morten cares little about state affairs, I know; and he is a merry, good-natured carl, in whom I find much amusement. He is also gardener to the castle; and I have availed myself of him to prove the disposition of the prisoners, and to augment my knowledge of mankind. I gave him private orders to supply the prisoners with flowers. They are not aware from whom the civility comes, and I have observed that it serves to amuse the young gentlemen, and put love-whimsies into their heads. Folks who can think on such fooleries are not likely to be dangerous to the crown and kingdom, I fancy. The plump Morten never sees them; but he is ready to laugh himself to death when he hears them singing amorous ditties to the fair hand that binds up their nosegays."

Drost Peter smiled, but shook his head, and would have dissuaded the castellan from this mode of studying the characters of his prisoners.

In the meanwhile, cook Morten had again entered the hall; and immediately afterwards the door-keeper announced the arrival of an ecclesiastic, with greetings and a message from the Abbot of Esrom.

"Let him come in," said the castellan. "Have you any objection, sir drost? It is probably one of the abbot's friends, who wishes to transact business with me respecting some lands. But it is a singular time o'night to come at," he added, doubtfully.

Drost Peter replied by a polite bow, and appeared to be thinking of other matters. The door was opened, and a respectable clerical personage entered. They rose to greet him; but he retreated a step, in surprise, on recognising Drost Peter. The drost was equally astonished; but the castellan did not notice their mutual surprise, and received his new guest with polite attention, and an interest that betrayed the importance of the business this visit concerned.

"A friend, probably, of the worthy Abbot Magnus," said he. "Be pleased to come nearer. What we have to treat of, this true friend of the king, Drost Peter Hessel, will bear witness to, more especially as, at this late hour, I dare not receive any stranger into the castle. There are people present who know the world and mankind, let me say; and stringent regulations here are necessary. May I presume to ask my worthy sir his name?"

"Sir Drost Peter Hessel knows me," answered the ecclesiastic, with a haughty air, and drawing nearer. "To the learned world, the name of Magister Janus Roskildensis is enough; to laymen, I am known by the name of Dean Jens Grand. Are you the castellan, Poul Hvit?"

"At your service, worthy sir."

"Good. What I have to say to you every one may hear. I have come from Esrom Cloister; and, as I was to pass this way, I have undertaken, in the name of the abbot and convent, to bring you the deed of conveyance for certain lands in Grimstop, and to settle the matter to your wishes; but if you have any doubts or objections about receiving me, the business can be deferred, and I immediately set off again on my journey."

"God forbid! Do not so far wrong me, sir. You are heartily welcome," exclaimed Poul Hvit, hastily. "Think not ill of my cautiousness. We are all men, and one must look to himself in these times. It often happens that wolves come here in sheep's clothing, and I ought to know whom I receive. Since the drost knows you, I may bid you welcome without the least hesitation. I should be but a poor discerner of mankind, if I did not see that you are a learned servant of the Lord's, and a trusty friend of the worthy Abbot Magnus. If you have the deed with you, we can arrange the matter to-morrow. Be my guest in the meantime, worthy sir, and embrace the present opportunity. Be pleased to take a seat with us." So saying, he brought a seat for this addition to the company.

Drost Peter was reserved, and sparing of words, and the dean did not find himself altogether in his element. Skirmen, on his entrance, had arisen, and taken his place behind his master's chair. The castellan alone was exceedingly good-humoured, and strove industriously to animate the conversation. He touched upon every affair and circumstance which, at that period, engaged the public attention. The Norse war, and the piracies of Count Mindre-Alf of Tönsberg on the Danish coast, he discoursed of with a zeal that proved him a man of a true and patriotic mind. He had a family in Horsens, and related minutely what this town had suffered from the remorseless freebooter's attacks.

"The Count of Tönsberg is certainly our foe," commenced Master Grand; "but he is a brave and famous foe, whom no one should accuse of being a rover and freebooter. He is certainly not one of your dainty lords, who take the eyes of ladies at a tournament; but at the present day we have not a doughtier knight: he is the greatest sea-hero of our times, and may soon expect to be elevated to a jarl."

"But when, on his own account, he ravages and plunders our coasts with barbarity, and the greatest lust of rapine," replied Drost Peter, "he does little honour to chivalry. He is a common vulgar riever, however bold and powerful he may be, even though he be of royal descent, and aspires to the name of jarl. We Danish laymen, far less our teachers of Christianity, have no reason to honour him with a nobler name."

Master Grand was silent, and endeavoured to conceal his anger; and the castellan again resumed the conversation. He strongly censured Count Jacob of Halland for having received the honour of knighthood from the Norwegian king, in a time of war. Drost Peter supported him, and thought highly of the honest castellan; but Master Grand could no longer suppress his indignation.

"It is well," said he, jeeringly, "that the merits of the deserving men of Denmark are recognised by a foreign prince, when they are suspected and wronged at home. It is magnanimous of the Norwegian king thus to distinguish an esteemed enemy; and I cannot blame the noble Count Jacob for accepting an honour so well merited."

"Pardon me, sir dean," said Drost Peter, calmly: "a true Dane never receives a mark of honour from the enemy of his country. It is impossible, however, as a friend of your country, that you can seriously defend such conduct."

"To be a reasonable and Christian friend of my country," said Master Grand, bitterly, "I have no occasion to turn my cloak to the court-wind, like a favoured courtier. In my station, thank God, no one need conceal the truth, or defend baseness, to fulfil the duties of his office. With God's holy word and the canon-law before my eyes, I am not afraid to say plainly, before the mightiest favourite of the king and queen, that I only love and esteem my earthly country in so far as the divine laws of my heavenly country are esteemed and maintained in it. If you would have proof of this, sir drost, obtain me permission to preach a single fast-sermon before the king and queen, with all their courtly flatterers; and you shall then hear that I am the man to hold up the mirror of truth before the mighty of this world, in such wise that many a cheek shall crimson if there is yet a remnant of honour or conscience in the court of Denmark."

"Such a corrective sermon, reverend sir," answered Drost Peter, with energy, "might certainly be preached often enough among lay persons, as well as learned. I could wish, however, that you would, with the same impartiality, introduce such conversation wherever, on your pious way, you meet with princely personages and royal vassals, who, in the sins and errors of their liege lord, seek justification for their own crimes."

Master Grand was again silent. The castellan looked at his discordant guests with surprise, and hastily broke off a conversation, whose bitter issue he could see no grounds for. He then abruptly inquired whether either of the honoured gentlemen, in the course of their journey, had seen the newly-rebuilt church? and, as this was answered with a brief "nay," he inquired if either of them knew where the deposed Swedish king was residing, and whether it was true that he had deserted his queen for a certain famous Lady Kristine?

"It is but too true," replied the dean, zealously, appearing to seize upon the occasion to give vent to his anger: "there, again, we have a proof of the ungodliness of our times, and of the sinpest that is spread abroad from our great ones. It is no wonder the Lord visits such princes in anger, and shows the mighty rulers of the world that there is a Judge over us all, who is not to be mocked, and who, from the skies, laughs in derision when the lofty ones of the earth swell and burst with pride. It is a comforting and elevating thought," he added, with an air of pride, "that the Mighty One, who holds the universe in his hand, can as easily cast down kings and princes, and their favourites, as he can raise the poor and meek of spirit."

The castellan had devoutly folded his hands, as at a sermon. "Ah, indeed!" he sighed, "we are all mortal: might and rank are indeed transitory."

"Many of the misfortunes of our times are certainly well-merited, reverend sir," remarked Drost Peter, with considerable warmth, and a keen look at the dean, "when sinful men presume to call down and carry out the chastisements of the Lord. The unfortunate king you have mentioned I shall not defend; but if people can justly dethrone their kings because they are not what they ought to be, then can no throne and no kingdom exist, until pure angels are sent from heaven to govern us."

"That is not requisite," replied the dean, swelling with the air and authority of a pope. "So long as the Lord's vicegerent sits in St. Peter's holy chair, and as long as he and the servants of the word are regarded as the messengers of the truth among the people, so long no nation need be doubtful how great a worldly burden they may bear with patience, or how great a sinner the Lord will endure among his anointed. Unless you are an arch-heretic, sir drost, you cannot possibly deny this."

Drost Peter did not answer; and cook Morten, who had just set a choice dish before the ecclesiastic, appeared, by his roguish smile, to enjoy the manner in which the bold dean had silenced the drost.

Without betraying the slightest anger, Drost Peter turned again to the triumphant dignitary. "As a knight, I have sworn to offer my life for the faith, as well as for my lawful king," he said, with an expression of deep earnestness; "and I am not afraid of being doomed, as a heretic, to stake and brand, if even I am of opinion that a lawfully-crowned and anointed sovereign cannot be hurled from his throne by the mightiest anathemas of the Vatican and of Lund. That our Danish kings, at least, have been of the same mind, your own kinsman, Archbishop Erlandsen, among others, experienced. I would not advise any prelate in Denmark to follow so dangerous an example. This prison, reverend sir, might at least remind you that even an archbishop's crook is unable to undo these doors, when they have been locked by command of a king of Denmark."

So saying, Drost Peter arose, and begged of the astonished castellan that he might be shown to his sleeping apartment. Master Grand, with a haughty mien, also arose, and expressed the same wish.

They saluted each other, coldly and silently; and the castellan himself, with a three-branched candlestick, conducted Drost Peter. Skirmen followed his master, with his mantle and sword.

Cook Morten, on a sign from the castellan, led the ecclesiastic to a chamber, by the side of the knights' hall. It was narrow and gloomy, and the door, which was standing ajar, opened only outwards. A strong gust of wind had nearly extinguished the light. A reclining chair, a stool and table, composed the whole of the furniture, and iron bars were fixed in the walls, across the small window.

When Master Grand entered this chamber, he started, and looked anxiously around him. "What means this?" he inquired; "do you show me to a prison-cell for a bed-chamber?"

"For that you must give us absolution, your reverence," replied Morten, at the same time placing the flickering light on the stone table, and, with a long pole, closing the shutter of the little, round, grated window, which was placed high in the wall. "There, now it is rather more snug," he continued. "Nobody, in general, passes the night here, except a bewildered owl. There is only one guest-apartment in the castle, where the inmate is master of the door; and that room the drost occupies. For unexpected guests, we have only this little mean apartment. It is said to have been a torture-room in former days; and here must have hung all kinds of horrid instruments, to torture obstinate criminals into an acknowledgment of their guilt. It is still dismal-looking enough, you perceive. But it is a pity I cannot show you the ingenious old machines for torturing. I know you are a great admirer of suchlike learned trumpery."

The proud dean became pale, and an involuntary shudder crept over him. "My good friend," said he to the cook, "methinks we should be known to each other. Cook Morten, from Ry? Is it not so?"

"At your service, reverend sir. That you could have room in your learned brain for the image of my poor but tolerably ample person, I should not have expected; but so long as my head has leave to sit between my shoulders, and my throat is not tightened so that I cannot drink and sing a merry song with it, so long shall I not forget your brave and learned reverence."

"Speak seriously, Morten. What mean you by this conversation?"



"We are quite snug here," continued the fat cook; "and you are just the man of God to whom I can, without danger, confide my sins. I may tell you, then, that when you saved my flask-case from being thrown overboard, on crossing the Little Belt, you freed me, at the same time, from a confounded itching about the neck, on account of certain letters that lay concealed under the flasks. I had consented to take them, out of pure obligingness and virtue, for a good friend, who, I am afraid, the devil will some day get hold of. What these love-letters contained, I know not, and it does not concern me; but this I know, that had they been fished up, or seen by any mother's son, I had been certain of an elevation that would have been confoundedly unsuited to my health. Hence I have vowed to the blessed Virgin and the holy Martin, to serve you in turn, whenever I can; and now, if you have anything to command, I shall stand on tiptoe for you with all my heart and strength."

Master Grand started. "So, so, my son," said he boldly, and calmly drawing breath again; "have you been employed as a letter-pigeon in these disturbed times? Your cheerfulness bears witness that, otherwise, you have a good conscience; and, for the sake of your honest countenance, I give you absolution for what you sinned in at that time. To whom brought you the letters, my son?"

"To one of your shrivelings and good friends, your reverence," replied Morten, with a smile; "but I do not exactly feel the necessity of confessing to you yet: therefore, if you will impose any penance on me in consequence, say it."

"Good, my son--good. I wish not to know; but it was an illegal transaction, and might have cost you dear. To atone for it, you can perhaps convey a word of comfort, in mine and the Church's service, to a bewildered soul, that needs my counsels, within these walls; or, what I would prefer, help me to a private interview."

"My heart! readily, your reverence. But are you jesting? You do not look upon me in the same light as do the weak children of the world?"

"That is not in my nature, Morten. I have renounced the vain follies that thou in thy worldliness thinkest of. In my sacred station, pure Christian love alone should guide our most secret as well as our most open steps. The young duke, who lies imprisoned here, is inexperienced, thou knowest; and has been misguided into foolish conduct, that may make him in the highest degree miserable, if he does not turn and repent. Regard for his soul's salvation has moved me to come hither, to speak with him, if possible, or to have conveyed to him a good counsel in writing."

"If you would converse with him, pious sir, you must change yourself into an owl or a flitter-mouse."

"But if a conversation is impossible, can you get me merely two words with him, before he speaks with Drost Hessel to-morrow?"

"If you mean two words, but no more, I think it can be managed," replied the cook, with a crafty air, after a moment's consideration; "but I must see the two words, and even give them voice and wings. If you cannot trust me, your reverence, then can neither I nor the holy Martin help you. If you are afraid the walls may hear, just whisper the words in my ear. Who knows but that they may also turn and save my sinful soul; and thus you would be killing two birds with one stone, pious sir."

"Hair-brained mocker that thou art!" said the dean, gravely, and regarding him with a searching look; after which, he bent himself leisurely, and whispered a few words in his ear.

"Good," exclaimed Morten. "Ah, by St. Martin! I can fancy that I am made pious on the instant, and that I already begin to entertain scruples. Had it been a paction with the Evil One that the talk had been about, what then, your reverence? But you are a pious man of God: I know it well; and your high-born penitent shall certainly receive your good counsel tomorrow, on a fasting heart."

"Once more--if the young duke is not free by sunset to-morrow, I must speak with him."

"That will be difficult, your reverence. How many nights do you intend doing us the honour of studying antiquity's barbarities in this torture-room?"

Master Grand once more looked uneasily around him. "Lay the stool across the threshold, my son, and let the door stand ajar," he said: "locked in I shall not be. I remain no longer here than is necessary; but I must contrive to protract my stay until the day after to-morrow."

"Ah, then, in that case we may hit upon a plan," observed the cook, moving the stool. "I know you do not lack courage. If you only mean to preach a penitential sermon to the illustrious prisoner, one or other of the saints must point your way. An angel in your form, on a celestial ladder, or, for want of that, on a fire-ladder, would certainly be highly edifying to a bewildered soul. Now, good night, your reverence. Tomorrow, betimes, I shall bring your ale-posset. There is no joke in that; and so you may sleep soundly. I must hasten away, and sing in the kitchen, or the castellan will begin to doubt me."

With these words, the jolly cook was already out of the door, and sang so lustily, that the knights' hall rang again:--

"O, it was lanky Berner Rise,  
Grew so tall that none could find him:  
He was mad, and never wise;  
Not a man could hold or bind him.  
But the wood stands all in flowers."

Next morning, when Duke Waldemar awoke, a silver cup of warm ale was already on the table by his bedside. He arose hastily, and dressed himself. As soon as he had done so, he raised the silver cup to his lips, as usual, by the handle; but set it down again with surprise, on observing in his hand a summer-fool<sup>[22]</sup> that had come off, and which appeared to have been loosely attached to the handle.

"Who wants to make a fool of me here?" said he, angrily, throwing the flower on the table; but, at the same instant, he perceived a little slip of parchment, which stuck out from its beautiful chalice. He seized the tiny flower-letter, and read the single word, "Subscribe." He gazed for some time on the mysterious billet, and fell into deep thought.

"What means this?" he exclaimed, at length, as if awoke from a dream. "Who sends me this mysterious advice? Is it friend or foe? Subscribe! That is easily said: but if it concerns my honour--if it concerns my heart and soul, and the great aim of my life, I would rather subscribe my own death-warrant than the terms I may expect to-day." He gazed, once more, upon the slip, and sank into a reverie.

"Already in the council-chamber, noble sir?" exclaimed his lively fellow-prisoner, who now entered. "If I am not mistaken, you have had a morning visit from your wise and entertaining spirit. Methinks you were just now talking with some one--perhaps with your good friend in the chest?"

"Nay, Tuko," replied the duke; "but watchful spirits are near us. It is not the dead bishop alone who speaks to me from these walls: living beings also take an interest in my fate, and would control my will ere I know it myself. See what I found in this flower." He handed him the flower and the scrap of parchment.

"A summer-fool! That you must beware of, noble sir, if it comes not from a pretty little hand, who will only joke in disguise, to make its winter-fool happy in earnest. Subscribe! Short and good advice, i'faith, in the tone of a dominant mistress. Had it been in German, I know whom I should have guessed."

"So, so! think you my unseen protecting spirit is German? Say, whom mean you?"

"Eh! whom other should I mean than the Duke of Saxony's little saintly daughter, who was more concerned about your faith and salvation than your ducal crown and all your proud expectations. You still wear, in secret, her invisible chains."

"Sophia--the good, pious child?" exclaimed the duke, raising his hands to his brow. "Do you believe she still thinks of me and my fate? Nay, Tuko; that I cannot desire: it would unpleasantly vex me. The last half year has erased that wonderful image from my heart: I have had more important matter to think of than the little daughter of a duke, and her pious, circumscribed religion. I have, happily, torn myself from that foolishness. I cannot now suffer myself to be dazzled or impeded by a pair of loving saintly eyes, that have their home in a convent or on an altar-table. Speak no more of her, Tuko. You know it only serves to grieve me; and, truth to say, since our plans drew us to the high Dane-court, I have blushed for myself when I thought of her. But you are right," he continued, with emotion: "these chaste and lovely flowers, that for almost an entire year have so kindly and gently reminded us of spring and summer, and of life's calm joys, in our prison--they might well have reminded me of her; and this white and innocent spring-flower, that has now found a voice, and begs of me to accede and subscribe----Ha! subscribe an agreement that may perhaps render me a pious slave to my own conscience, to the day of my death--and then----There was a time when such thralldom appeared to me real liberty." He was silent, and again relapsed into deep thought.

"That was a sad time, sir," resumed Tuko, hastily: "they had nearly converted you into a hang-the-head. I also say, subscribe, whatever the deuce it may be. Freedom cannot be purchased too dearly. But be not therefore the slave of a pen's stroke. The pretty little enthusiast will, at last, transform you into a quiet complaisant duke of South Jutland, who, in this life, will never think of being anything more, but, renouncing all his daring schemes, take to himself a quiet and pious wife, say good-night to this world's fleeting dreams of sovereignty, and sleep soundly in a Sleswick castle, like a true and loyal Danish vassal. That must be a charming life, sir! What we have here suffered, we shall not think of taking revenge for. Fie! that were ignoble and unchristian: we must kiss the rod like good children, and be gentle and amiable. And what a beautifully peaceful life! Your highest office will be to protect the goslings from the fox, or to strike down, with your own illustrious hand, a savoury roe for the frugal ducal table, where the pious house-mother sits, with folded hands, while the well-behaved amiable children say grace."

"Ha, nay, Tuko!" exclaimed the duke, vehemently, waking up as from a dream: "I shall show thee that Waldemar Seier was mine ancestor. He, too, sat once in prison; but he forgot not vengeance until he was old and gray; and, in misfortune, he forgot not his crown and his royal dignity!"

At that instant, a knocking was heard at the prison-door, and the conversation was broken off. In obedience to their request, the polite castellan now entered, and inquired whether it was convenient for the illustrious duke to receive Drost Hessel?

"Drost Hessel?" repeated the duke, with bitter indignation--"well, let him enter;" and he seated himself, proudly and calmly, by the table, whilst Sir Abildgaard took upon himself the office of a respectful servant, and stationed himself, with a cunning smile, behind the chair of his princely master.

The castellan bowed respectfully, and retired; and immediately after, Drost Peter entered. He made his salutation courteously and gravely.

The duke half rose from his seat, and sat down again. "What has Drost Hessel to submit to the Duke of South Jutland?" said he, in a calm voice, but with suppressed indignation.

"Illustrious sir," began Drost Peter, "my master, the king, listening to the representations of your friends, has resolved to offer you reconciliation and freedom, if you will subscribe and confirm the terms which I have, in the king's name, to lay before you." So saying, he drew forth a large parchment-deed, and, with a polite inclination, handed it to the duke.

"Read it for me, my drost," said the duke, carelessly handing the deed to Sir Abildgaard, and leaning back on his chair with an air of indifference.

Sir Abildgaard stepped firmly before his lord, and read. The deed had been prepared by the chancellor in Danish, and in the usual stiff and pedantic style of such documents. Drost Peter remained standing at a respectful distance, and closely observing the duke's manner. The duke did not appear to notice him, but gazed, gloomily and thoughtfully, on the dingy prison-wall, covered with writing.

The introduction to the agreement recited the names of the duke's friends who had procured it, and among these he seemed particularly interested to find the Duke of Saxony, of whose daughter he had just been talking. The name of the good-natured Count Gerhard of Holstein seemed also to surprise him; the more so, perhaps, as he remembered that he had endeavoured to turn this brave gentleman into ridicule, at the Dane-court of Nyborg. The introduction ran as follows:--

"To all who see or hear read the present letter: Herman, by the grace of God, Bishop of Schwerin; Johannes, Duke of Saxony; Gerhard, Johannes, and Adolph, Counts of Holstein; Helmold, Claus, Counts of Schwerin; Geert, Count of Hoya; Johannes and Henrik, Counts of Meeklinburg; eternal health with God. That all may be witness, that on account of Duke Waldemar of Sleswick, it was humbly desired by us, that we might be permitted to promise for him, that he should hold to the articles of the under-written letter, which is a deed of agreement between King Erik of Denmark and him."

"Who has requested these good lords to promise, on my behalf, that which I do not yet know?" asked the duke. "But this may be merely the usual form. To the point, then."

Sir Abildgaard now read the agreement itself, which, in the duke's name, began as follows:--

"Waldemar, by God's grace, Duke of South Jutland, eternal health with God. It is the glory and honour of princes, that they hear and grant the prayers of their petitioners; and thus, by augmenting the loyalty and affection of their subjects, they augment and strengthen the ruler's name, honour, and title--"

"This is Drost Hessel's pretty thought, and Master Martin's pretty style," said the duke, interrupting the reading, with an air of mockery. "But continue, drost."

"Therefore shall it be made manifest to all," continued Sir Abildgaard, with a suppressed smile, and in an humble tone, "that we were led, by youthful inexperience and childish counsel, to claim that, respecting Alsen, which belongs to the crown, contrary to the injunction of our lord, King Erik; wherein we acknowledge to have done wrong, as it appeared to us, and others our friends, that the laws of our country were too stringent and severe: wherefore, the before-mentioned king, after our humble supplication, his prelates' and other trusty men's counsel, hath remitted us all blame and crime, which we have imprudently committed against him."

Then followed everything relating to the dispute concerning Alsen, the mint privileges, and the king's right to wage war for South Jutland: at all which the duke smiled carelessly, and seemed to think it scarcely worth his attention; although, at the same time, he gave the closest heed to every word. But his assumed indifference was changed into evident uneasiness, as Sir Abildgaard read--"We promise, therefore, that we shall never plot or contrive the king's death or imprisonment, nor counsel or demand that he should be deprived of his lands, towns, cities, or fortresses; nor league, conspire, or practise aught against him or the kingdom; nor instigate, or

take part with, any one in *crimen læsæ majestatis*; but shall show him all honour, subjection, reverence, and fealty. And if we do anything against him, or if it can be proved against us, according to the laws and usages of the country, that we have secretly done so, then shall all our fief and estates thereby become forfeited, so that our lord and king, of his own authority, may seize them for the use of the crown, and do therewith, as a lasting possession, as to his grace may seem fit; also, that he may punish us in the body, or spare us, as his grace may pronounce."

Here Sir Abildgaard paused, and regarded his master with astonishment. But the duke's uneasiness had disappeared, and a proud defiance sparkled in his eyes, whilst he raised his head haughtily and boldly.

"Now know I both your word and spirit, Drost Hessel," he said. "To this extent you gladly carry the point, when a blinded king gives you authority."

Drost Peter gravely shook his head, and was silent.

"Continue," said the duke; and Sir Abildgaard proceeded:--

"We consent, moreover, that the prelates of Denmark may proclaim the ban of the Church against us, without previous warning, if it so happens, (which God forbid,) that we do anything contrary to the tenor of the foregoing." Sir Abildgaard again paused, and observed his lord with an inquiring look.

"Exactly so," said the duke; "do not forget the holy letters of excommunication: they may be required. Is there anything further?"

Sir Abildgaard now read a few articles relating to the obligations of the duke to stand by the king in his wars, and to attend the assemblies of the estates; which he appeared to care little about. But it farther recited--"We shall not maintain outlawed people. Item, for this our imprisonment we shall not wage war against the king, his sons, or any one, within or without the kingdom, or cause any evil, on account thereof, to any person, but hold them free and blameless. We shall not make any covenant or alliance with any person whatsoever, from whom his majesty and the realm may suffer damage; and if we have already made any such alliance, shall renounce the same."

Lastly, to the duke's great astonishment, it thus proceeded--"And, that there should not be any doubt concerning what is now promised, we have, by a solemn oath upon the holy Gospels, sworn and pledged ourselves that we shall adhere to all that is above written, without fraud or guile; renouncing every exception, device, force, threat, aid of secular or spiritual jurisdiction, law, or custom, whereby the foresaid letter may be infringed."

The duke became pale. He did not hear the conclusion, which contained the names of the bishops and princes who had witnessed the articles, and had attached their seals thereto; and he appeared to regain his self-possession only as he heard the last words--"And we shall seal this at the first opportunity."

"Yes, truly, as soon as the opportunity occurs," exclaimed he, with the utmost bitterness, and rising from his seat. "And such is the agreement you dare to bring me, Drost Hessel? And you fancied that I was coward and fool enough to sign and seal it? You have a worthy pattern for this precious document, in black Count Henry's devilish paction with the captured King Waldemar. But I shall not tread in my great ancestor's footsteps, and purchase my freedom so dearly. If you think to compel me, try. If you have chains with you, out with them! Call your hangman, and see if I shall shrink, or debase myself."

"You mistake me grievously, highborn sir," said Drost Peter, with wounded feelings. "Think not that I am pleased to see a noble-born gentleman, like yourself, in this prison. Believe, least of all, that I am so base-hearted that I would see your free will constrained by unworthy means. Not from hatred or revenge, but for the security of the crown and kingdom, are you bereft of freedom. The moment you give up the unwarrantable and sufficiently evident objects that have rendered your imprisonment here necessary, you again stand free, in the exalted station whereto you were born and bred. You will retain, without abatement, all your legal privileges as Duke of South Jutland, and, all will be forgotten. The moment you subscribe this covenant, the castellan has orders to open these prison-doors, and to conduct you, with safe escort, to my master the king; and, as soon as you have publicly acknowledged your subscription, before the estates of the realm, and confirmed it with your seal and oath, you can retire, unmolested, to your dukedom; and neither my master the king, nor any other right-minded man in Denmark, will in future doubt your fidelity towards your king and country."

So saying, Drost Peter laid his silver style upon the table, together with the parchment, which Sir Abildgaard had delivered back to him.

The duke, however, stood unmoved, and gazed upon the wall, without deigning the king's messenger a word or look.

"My lord," continued Drost Peter, "take counsel, now, with the all-knowing God and your own conscience. I leave the agreement in your hands: you may destroy or subscribe it, as you think best. Till the sun goes down, I may await your determination; and, in twenty-four hours, the doors

of your prison stand open on these terms. The moment you have subscribed, pull the bell-string there, and your prison will be opened. Meantime I leave you, with the hope that you will consider your temporal, as you would your eternal welfare. Mistake not, in this matter, either my master the king, or myself. The all-knowing God and all holy men are my witnesses, that nothing is here done out of hatred of yourself. I dare witness before God, at the last day, that I have only dealt towards you according to my oath, and my duty to the crown and kingdom." So saying, Drost Peter bowed, and hastily left the turret-chamber, not without emotion, and a strong feeling of melancholy interest in the imprisoned duke.

The prison-door was again closed and locked. On the table lay the important parchment, and by its side the silver style, which Drost Peter had left for the purpose of signing.

Sir Abildgaard regarded his master with a disturbed and inquiring look. The duke was pacing the floor with agitated steps: his eyes rolled wildly, and his cheeks were flashed with anger.

"Never, never shall I subscribe this hellish paction!" he exclaimed, "if I must sit here till the day of my death. If I subscribe, with a solemn oath, what stands here, I must either renounce the great object of my life, or become a perjurer and a nidding to all the world. Nay, nay, never shall this be so! I will show them that Duke Waldemar does not value his miserable dukedom higher than his honour and free unconstrained will. I will not foully and basely sell them my soul and my will's freedom, to breathe the air in a larger prison, like a debased, mean-spirited slave. Now, Tuko, now is the time to think seriously of escape, and to burst these walls by craft or violence, or any other possible mode. Let me once stand free, beyond this infernal prison--beyond the bounds of Denmark, and I shall no longer hesitate about what, in my sickly humour, I was well nigh on the point of relinquishing. I shall then shake the dust from my feet, and never more place them on Danish ground until I stand here at the head of an army that shall overthrow the tyrant's throne, crushing beneath it him and all his wretched advisers."

"Were only the first step taken," replied the knight, with a shrug--"were we once our own masters, I should heartily admire your lofty thoughts and brave conclusions; but so long as your great adviser can only speak to you from these walls, and cannot, as a potent spirit should, blow them away like cobwebs, so long, gracious sir, are all your heroic schemes but castles in the air--mere beautiful dreams, which but poorly compensate the loss of a free joyous life and Sleswick's ducal crown."

"How, Tuko! Wouldst thou not despise me were I to subscribe this agreement?"

"Far be such a thought from me, sir. It is a foolish bird that will not fly when the cage is open. See: there lies the crowbar, that, without witchcraft, can break these walls. The good drost has left you here his silver style: a single stroke on the parchment with this enchanter's wand, and our prison is open; the fair, wide world lies before us; we withdraw from this unfortunate country, till we can say thanks to the King of Denmark for this last good turn. We shall find a welcome with the Duke of Saxony, and how will not the fair Princess Sophia be rejoiced--"

"Hold, tempter, hold!" exclaimed the duke, advancing towards him. "Is this thy constancy, Tuko? this thy inspiration for my lofty, distant aim? What matters it that the bird is free, when its wings are clipped for life? If thou art weary of sharing my lot, I can easily set thee free. Swear thyself to the foul fiend, and go! I shall remain."

"You mistake me, my noble duke," replied Tuko, seriously. "I have shared your captivity, and been happy, even to this hour. I shall furthermore share it, without complaining, as long as you please. The main point I have not lost sight of. You have yourself discovered how you can reach it without moving a hand; and your conscience can be easily reconciled to your freedom. Will you hear me?"

"Nay, nay--not one word will I hear. Leave me now, Tuko: to-morrow thou shalt know my determination. This concerns myself, and my whole future life, and I will myself cast the die that is to decide it. Neither thou nor any other man shall guide my will in this matter."

Sir Abildgaard was silent, and retired to his own cell. The duke closed the intermediate door, and barred it with the stone. He then threw himself upon his chair, and indulged in gloomy thought. Thus he sat, motionless, the whole day, and without allowing any one to enter, or partaking of any refreshment. In the fortress, all was quiet as usual. Before the sun went down, his cogitations were disturbed for a moment by the sound of horses' feet in the castle-court. It was Drost Peter and his squire leaving the castle. The duke rose, and went to the grating. His hand was clenched convulsively, when he saw, in the rays of the setting sun, the young drost, free and vigorous, managing his brown steed. The princely prisoner heaved a deep sigh, closed the shutter before the grating, and, turning into the darkest nook of his cell, he threw himself upon his unmade bed.

The inside shutter of the iron grating, which the prisoner could open or shut at pleasure, was provided with a thin plate of horn, through which the daylight could scarcely penetrate. This shutter he usually allowed to remain open, unless the night was very cold, and the wind blew in that direction; for it had frequently happened to him, when it was closed, that he had started at midnight from a dreamy sleep, and fancied himself buried alive in the old chapel of his ancestors. But, now, life and every gleam of light and cheerfulness had become hateful to him; and, with a

sort of spiteful pleasure, he had deprived himself of the scanty glimmer of daylight that still remained.

"Come forth, my brother in misfortune, and teach me to look into the night of my futurity with thy glowing eyes," he muttered. "Let them call thee death's-bird, and corpse-bird, as they will: thou still seest clearly, when we and others are blind; and if thou shouldst now screech of death and misfortune, so much the better! that song now pleaseth me best."

Whilst, with subdued voice, he thus gave expression to his gloomy thoughts, he opened the box, and took out the great night-bird, which perched itself familiarly upon his arm, and allowed itself to be caressed. The duke leant back on his pallet, and continued absorbed in moody reveries. The stillness of death reigned throughout the castle.

By the faint light through the pane of horn, the prisoner was aware that the moon was shining. He at length closed his eyes, and fell into a slumber, without having first, as usual, shut up the owl. He wist not that he had been asleep, when the same fearful idea, that had before awoken him at midnight, again overwhelmed him: he fancied that he lay in his coffin, in the tomb of his fathers, and, in a kind of agony, half rose on his couch. He was not yet fully awake, when a frightful screech completely aroused him from his dream: he opened his eyes, and, in a ledge of the wall, near the mysterious inscriptions, he again saw the glowing eyes of the corpse-bird. It again screamed, and far more hideously than it was wont, at the same time staring at the dim light through the horn of the closed shutter. The duke looked in the same direction, and, to his astonishment, fancied he caught a glimpse of a face, half concealed in a hat, before the grating. A singular terror seized him, and he remained motionless, half erect, in bed. He now heard a gentle tap on the shutter, and sprang up.

"Who is there?" he cried. "If you are human, speak!"

The knocking at the shutter became a little louder, and a low, mysterious voice whispered--"Open, Duke Waldemar: a good friend would speak with you."

"Is it possible?" he exclaimed: "a man? a good friend? Ha! be thou the Evil One himself, I fear not."

He hastily opened the shutter. A human countenance, sufficiently palpable, met his eyes at the grating, but so thoroughly shaded, the moon falling only on the outlines, that it was impossible for him to perceive a single feature.

"You know me not, Duke Waldemar?" said the unexpected night-guest. "I risk my life, perhaps, to speak with you. You must subscribe, or all is lost."

"Grand! Master Grand!" exclaimed the duke, astonished. "Are you a wizard, and can fly? What stand you on?"

"A storming-ladder," replied the daring ecclesiastic. "Cook Morten steadies it, and keeps watch. The time is precious, fair duke--subscribe!"

"From you, then, pious sir, came the good advice this morning. But I do not thus, even were both heaven and hell to shout--subscribe! Shall I forswear every thought of my high vocation--shall I forswear even vengeance? For what, then, have I dared so much? For what have I sustained so much? I will not subscribe. If you would free me, let it be by craft or force, and I am yours: I will then place myself openly at the head of the conspiracy, and it shall succeed or perish."

"In this way all would be lost, sir. Nothing can be undertaken until you are legally free and secure. Your imprisonment binds up every hand; but subscribe, and all are as free as your own. If you do not wish to abide by your oath, the holy father can relieve you from it, as he did your ancestor. If you wish to keep it, it is well: you can stand aloof, and still be the head. The marsk and his friends will act alone--of that you need know nothing--and the vacant place becomes yours. You understand, sir? You can keep your oath, and, with a sound conscience, come forward when the time arrives. Then, with law and justice, you can seize the minor's sceptre; and when you have won the people's hearts, and shown that you are worthy of the crown, it will fall of its own accord upon your head; whilst you will have broken neither oath nor bond."

"Ha! is it you, yourself, sagacious Master Grand? or is it the dead bishop, who has lent you voice and form to teach me wisdom? You are right: thus may I grasp the sceptre that constrains spirits, and win the crown that shines pure as the sun. Now, know I what I will. You are not the first who has taught me this. You have only told me how. Good: I subscribe. From the hour I have subscribed, I know nothing, and will know nothing, of your projects. Do what you will and defend it as best you can. I go my own way; and when we meet at the goal--then--then first I know you, and dare name you my friend. You understand me, Grand?"

"I understand you, sir. It is certain, then, that you subscribe, and withdraw from this place tomorrow. At the Dane-court of Nyborg, you can confirm the agreement, and calmly await what shall come to pass."

This secret conversation was here interrupted by a sudden uproar in the court-yard of the

castle.

"I have him, master--I have him, the crafty clerk!" cried the voice of cook Morten; "he shall not escape now. I guessed at once what he bore on his shield, and helped him up the storming-ladder myself. Shall I now pull it down, and let him break his neck? or will you have him alive?"

"I am betrayed!" exclaimed Master Grand, with alarm: "the infernal cook has betrayed me. Now for it." He descended the ladder, and was immediately surrounded by ten house-carls bearing torches, in the midst of whom stood the castellan, half-dressed, with a large sword in his hand.

"Can I believe my own eyes, sir dean?" cried the honest Poul Hvit. "Have you come hither to baffle my vigilance, and to assist an important state-prisoner to escape?"

"Hear me, worthy Poul Hvit," replied Master Grand, with a bold, authoritative voice, "and you shall not mistake a servant of the Lord, who, in this secret and unusual way, has been on the service of his Heavenly King. That it was not my intention to liberate your prisoner, contrary to the laws of the country, you can satisfy yourself by searching my clothes and the prison. I have neither file nor other tool about me, with which it were possible to open the grating or assist the prisoner to escape."

The castellan seemed perplexed and undecided.

"I demand this search for my own honour's sake," continued Master Grand, throwing aside his cloak, and turning out his pockets. "If you are now convinced of my innocence in this respect, you may with reason demand to know my intentions in making this night visit. I was aware that admission to the prisoner was denied me; but I knew, at the same time, that a powerful word from God, spoken at the right time, might effect much in a bewildered sinner's heart. The haughty young duke, as you know, would not subscribe the agreement with the king, and relinquish his rebellious projects; but I have now so spoken to him, with the mighty power of God's word, that he has repented, and has penitently acknowledged his great sin. He has consented to subscribe the agreement, and will henceforth become the king's faithful subject. This have I done, and this is my offence. If you see reason to make me answerable for this Christian undertaking, I am then your prisoner. But if, as I presume, you are a god-fearing man, uniting respect for my station and sacred office with strict fidelity to your king, you will only suffer me to remain guarded here, until you have searched the prison, and satisfied yourself of the truth of my statement; when you will allow me to depart, in the peace of the Lord, within an hour."

"Guard him!" said the castellan, as he went hastily to the tower with a light. He opened the prison-door, and found all right in the first apartment, occupied by Sir Abildgaard. At his request, the duke opened his barred door. The castellan entered, and, without saying a word, examined the grating narrowly. He then placed the light on the table, and observed the duke attentively. "Tell me, highborn sir," he inquired, "is it truth, that Dean Grand has spoken with you, and that you have considered, and will subscribe the agreement?"

"It is the truth," replied the duke, taking up the silver style: "it shall be done instantly. See, here stands my name." He handed the castellan the document, and threw himself, thoughtfully, on his chair.

"Now I congratulate you on your restoration to freedom, and your country in having a true man restored to it," said the castellan, gladly. "I did not deceive myself, then: I know the world and mankind; and I well saw, from your nature and manner, that you were a noble young gentleman, who had only transgressed from the thoughtlessness of youth. Rest now, if it so please you, on your good and pious resolution, until it is day; and then, noble sir, I shall bring you with honour from your prison, and conduct you myself to my king and master."

"Good," said the duke. "But go now, and do not suffer the worthy Master Grand to experience any inconvenience. He only preached me a night-sermon, which, as you have seen, has converted me."

The castellan bowed, and retired. Sir Abildgaard, who had overheard what had just taken place, hastened to his master with lively satisfaction, to receive a full explanation of the reasons which had so unexpectedly decided him to subscribe.

In the meanwhile, Master Grand stood amidst the wondering house-carls, who, agreeably to the castellan's orders, guarded him closely, but with a reverence that, by his authoritative air, he knew how to obtain. Cook Morten stood, smiling, by the storming-ladder, and seemed to find amusement in the night's adventure. Master Grand directed towards him an upbraiding and disdainful look, without saying a word.

"I thought at least he would have slipped down," said the cook to the house-carls. "I had never before seen a worthy dean upon a storming-ladder, and could not resist the temptation; but I would have shunned the dangerous joke, had I not known that you and the castellan were in the neighbourhood. It will now be seen whether I have done the pious gentleman an ill turn. Nobody can find fault with me, for having taken him for a crafty cheat. Who else in the world is so zealous in the cure of souls, that he puts his neck in jeopardy to save a single couple? It was fortunate for

the learned clerk that you came; for I was just on the point of drawing the ladder from under him, and then his reverence might have hung suspended by his hands on the iron bars, like a cat on a bird-cage, till I had brought you."

"Wretched, faithless soul!" exclaimed Master Grand, vehemently. "I told you that my intentions were pious and god-fearing, and yet you could conceive the idea of depriving a servant of the Lord of his life!"

"I shall answer for that to my master, and his grace our most precious king," replied Morten: "here, we have no respect of persons. We lock up princes and great lords, when we have instructions to regard them as rascals. I place the most guilty on the spit, when I have orders to regard them as capons; and, if even the pope or kaiser wills to creep through the window to them, I shall answer for it before all Christendom, if I suffer them to break their high and holy necks."

Cook Morten was becoming noisy, and the castellan, who had now returned from the prison, on hearing these insolent words, ordered him to moderate his zeal, and to talk with more reverence to the pious worthy sir dean, who was entirely innocent, and had, at the same time, done a deed for which every brave Dane ought to thank him.

"I believe I know the world and mankind tolerably well," said he, with a self-satisfied air, to Master Grand; "and I am rejoiced, your reverence, that I was not mistaken in my good opinion of you. That your intentions towards the king and country are good, I am now satisfied, albeit you spoke hard words, yesterday evening, against the sins and errors of the great. As a faithful man of God, you had a right to do so; but, Herregud! we are all human, and even the most virtuous among us may be suspected, and have appearances against him. That I have myself just experienced, pious sir. You are now free to depart, at what instant you please, but I shall be delighted if you will be my guest until it is day. Night is no man's friend; and, though you are a pious servant of the Lord, you might still go astray."

"I fear not that," replied Master Grand: "I have nothing further to do here, if you are satisfied with the deed of conveyance, my good, honest Poul Hvit?"

"Entirely so, pious sir. Bear Abbot Magnus my respectful salutations; and, since it must be so, God be with you!"

At the castellan's order, Master Grand's palfrey was immediately led out. The lofty ecclesiastic saluted the castellan with calm dignity, and gave the token of benediction, with three fingers, to the respectful house-carls; whereupon, attended by a lay-brother who acted in the capacity of his groom, he quitted Sjöborg in the quiet moonlight night.

A few hours after, and when the sun had risen, Duke Waldemar and his drost, accompanied by Poul Hvit and twelve armed troopers, rode from the castle-gates of Sjöborg, and took the road to Korsøer, in order to cross over to Nyborg, where the king and his Best Men were residing, and where the agreement, under seal and oath, was required to be ratified by the Dane-court, before the duke and his drost could obtain their full liberty.

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After an unusually severe winter, during which the Baltic had been frozen over, spring once more, with rapid steps, extended her lovely and flowery reign over the favoured plains of Denmark. In the middle of May, the beech-woods were in leaf; and, notwithstanding the miserable condition of the people, and the private discords that divided so many hearts, to those who were unacquainted with its disjointed internal condition, the country seemed a peaceful and happy paradise.

On one of the finest days of spring, a company of travellers on horseback, consisting of two distinguished knights and two ladies, together with an ecclesiastic of eminence, and accompanied by a young squire, two grooms, and two waiting-maids, rode in through the gate of Flynderborg Castle, near Orekrog. On the castle-stairs stood the commandant, Sir Lavé Little, uncovered, to receive his honoured guests with due respect. The tall Lady Ingé stood by her father's side.

Whilst the knights assisted their ladies to dismount, and conducted them up the stairs, the corpulent ecclesiastic remained quietly seated on his palfrey, reading a Latin inscription over the doorway: he was the chancellor of the kingdom, the learned Master Martinus de Dacia. The short, gray-haired, but still hale and nimble knight, who first ascended the castle-stairs, with a tall, middle-aged lady upon his arm, was Counsellor Sir John Little, with his wife, Fru Ingefried. His daughter Cecilia was accompanied by a young, knightly gentleman, in whose tall form Jomfru <sup>[23]</sup> Ingé, with blushing cheeks, immediately recognised Drost Peter Hessel.

Not without a certain degree of embarrassment and secret uneasiness did Sir Lavé receive his guests. Despite his extreme politeness, he appeared to scan, with much anxiety, his old kinsman's looks. Having saluted Drost Peter with repulsive coldness, Sir Lavé seemed to regard the learned chancellor, who had at length reached the top of the stairs with a shy, suspicious glance; but when the learned gentleman at once commenced his inquiries respecting the age of the castle and its antiquities, Sir Lavé appeared somewhat more at ease, and referred him to his daughter,



who, as he said, knew better about such odd kind of things than any one else in the castle.

"You must live here like a little king, my good Lavé," observed Sir John, looking round the large arched hall, which occupied the whole breadth of the wing, and from which two large doors opened into the castle-garden, commanding a most beautiful view over the Sound.

"Yes, indeed, sir counsellor: the castle is royal enough, and your presence gives it its proper lustre," replied Sir Lavé, in a submissive tone, which showed at once the dependent relation in which he stood to his renowned kinsman, whose preponderance, both in rank and intellect, he only too oppressively felt.

"You are too polite, cousin," replied Sir John. "Lustre, you know well enough, is not my affair. But if the castle is as strong as it is fair and pleasant, I should like to be governor of it in time of war. Have you been here before, Drost Peter?"

"In my childhood I was often in these halls, and I here regain the memory of my dearest, fairest years," replied Drost Peter, with a glance at Jomfru Ingé, whom he had yet only silently saluted, and who appeared to be entirely busied with Fru Ingefried and Lady Cecilia. Her eyes now met his, and he observed, with pleasure, that this remembrance did not appear indifferent to her.

"Have you not been here since?" inquired Sir John; but Drost Peter did not hear him.

"You are under a spell, I think. Have you been here since, Peter Hessel?" he repeated.

"Last year," answered Drost Peter, somewhat embarrassed, "in the course of my unpleasant duty respecting Duke Waldemar's arrest."

At these words Sir Lavé turned, highly uneasy, towards the old counsellor, and overwhelmed him with half a score of questions at once, principally about court news, and indifferent matters.

"I do not trouble myself concerning such fooleries," replied Sir John, gravely, looking at his uneasy kinsman with a sharp, inquiring glance; "but the best and most important news is already well known to you, cousin--that, since the king has regained a faithful subject in Duke Waldemar, we may now hope for peace and unity in the country. We may therefore reasonably expect that every Danish knight who may have been mistaken, but who still means honestly towards his country, will follow the young duke's example, and sincerely forswear every thought of turbulent resistance and rebellious defiance to the laws of the kingdom. In some instances a strict inquiry may perhaps be deemed necessary," he added; "but I hope that many adherents of the audacious Marsk Andersen are not to be found in the country."

Sir Lavé had become deadly pale; and on the stern Sir John's countenance appeared a mingled expression of anger and deep sorrow, which, however, immediately disappeared, as he turned playfully to Jomfru Ingé, with reference to one of her childhood's heroines, proud Dotté, whose history was represented on the old wrought tapestry of the hall.

"Do you still hold by this proud damsel?" he inquired, pointing to the picture, representing a lady chained, on board a ship, with a little anchor in her hand. "Can you still sing about her cheese-anchors, with which she would have kept the whole of Harald Hardrada's fleet from Denmark?"<sup>[24]</sup>

"Do you still remember that, my noble kinsman?" asked Lady Ingé blushing. "When I sang that song by your side, and defended Dotté against your jokes, I was still a child, and you laughed at my zeal: but I must still defend her, my noble kinsman. Had the men of Denmark, in her time, been as brave as she calculated upon, they would have found steel enough to defend her cheese-anchors, and not have suffered the Norwegian pirate-king to carry off a Danish maiden in chains, on account of a bold word. Somewhat of haughtiness, and of childish defiance towards a superior power, there certainly was in the whole jest," she continued, with warmth; "but a little innocent boasting was still a sign that she had good faith in Danish manhood and fidelity. Had she been your daughter, I am certain that you would have gladly paid a double ransom for her freedom."

"That may well be," replied Sir John, patting his brave kinswoman on the cheek. "Right, proud Ingelil!<sup>[25]</sup> Thou art thy brave mother's daughter. The girl is right in some things," he continued, turning to the learned chancellor: "she is better acquainted with these ancient heroes than I am. This Harald Hardrada was little better than a bold, skilful pirate: a lofty, kingly soul, he never had. His doings in Denmark and Myklegaard redounded not to his honour; and I look upon the daring Jarl Mindre-Alf, of our own times, as his worthy representative."

"In mind and deed, abundance of similar representatives might be mentioned, with sanguinary, heathenish souls in Christian bodies," replied Master Martin.

"Jarl Mindre-Alf!" repeated Jomfru Ingé, starting: "the coarse, rude algrev--the little, fierce, brutish sea-rover--is he a jarl?"<sup>[26]</sup> I thought he was only Count of Tönsberg."

"He is a mighty jarl, and, next to King Erik the Priesthater, and Duke Hakon, the greatest man in Norway," answered Sir John. "But thou art right, child: he is a coarse, rude carl, and more like

a beast than a man. Thou hast never seen him, hast thou?"

"I have heard more of him than I could have desired," she replied, hastily, avoiding the question, which occasioned her father great anguish.

Drost Peter still hoped that Sir Lavé, notwithstanding his present palpable embarrassment, had been more imprudent than guilty on the occasion of the suspicious visit to which this accidental allusion had just been made. In order, therefore, to rid him of this uneasiness, and to relieve him from every fear of being called upon to answer for that transaction, the drost turned, with perfect good nature, to Lady Ingé's father, and informed him that the real object of the present journey, which gave him an opportunity of revisiting so dear a spot, was an embassy to the Swedish court of Stockholm; and that Sir John was, at the same time, taking his family to their summer residence, Tommerup Guard, in Scania.

This explanation instantly brightened up Sir Lavé's features. He seemed at once to comprehend the drost's good-natured intention in this communication, and held out his hand to him with unrestrained emotion. "You are welcome to me, sir drost," he said, with a trembling voice, and drawing him aside to the open garden-door. "What has occurred between us concerns nobody," he continued, anxiously, descending the garden-steps with him. He cast back a look towards the saloon, and perceiving old Sir John in lively conversation with the chancellor and the ladies, he drew Drost Peter hastily into a by-path in the garden. "A word in confidence, Drost Hessel," he continued, in a fatherly tone, that reminded the drost of his childhood: "what occurred when you were last here, might be misinterpreted in a manner dangerous to my honour and rank; but I have sufficient confidence in your integrity to rest assured that you will not abuse the advantage which circumstances gave you over me, to ruin and destroy me. Will you give me your word of honour thereupon?"

"By my knightly honour!" answered Drost Peter, much affected, and giving him his hand. "God be praised, I have never deemed myself bound to come forward as your accuser; and Heaven forbid that I should ever be obliged to do so."

"Good," exclaimed Sir Lavé, reassured: "I only desired to know that I was safe in your hands as regards the past; and for that, your honour is now my pledge: the future, I shall myself take care of. Our old relationship is now dissolved, and a new one cannot be formed between us. We two can now be as if dead to one another."

He turned to depart; but Drost Peter retained him. "Hear me, Sir Lavé," he exclaimed, warmly. "I have also an important word to say to you. I do not regard that relationship as dissolved, which I first learned to prize highly at the moment it appeared to be torn asunder. That which estranges you from me, binds me to your house and noble race still more firmly, and with a bond that no earthly power can dissolve. It is the same bond that unites Denmark's crown and Denmark's hearts together. In this, your noble-hearted daughter shares my views, and that, too, with an ardour and animation that have enchained my soul irrevocably with her's, spite of every opposing or doubtful circumstance. I have not spoken a word to her but what you have yourself heard, and what I now with certainty know I feel for her. Whether she entertains the same feelings towards me, I dare not yet say; but I have a great and fond hope, which I will not relinquish while I live, unless she herself, which God forbid! should rob me of it."

"Every word of this is now superfluous, sir drost," interrupted Sir Lavé, coldly and strangely. "For me, you may hope and feel what you will. My will, as her father, you know. Your connections and principles render me, and every open-minded Dane, common heretics in your eyes; and, for the future, I can never think of any union with you. Let us mutually esteem each other's hearts and good intentions, however dissimilar, in other respects, we may be in our views," he added, with less coldness: "let us not, as professors of a different political faith, condemn one another for the sake of our opinions. So, let us bid each other a peaceful farewell--for ever!" With these words, and with averted face, he extended his hand to Drost Peter.

"This, then, is the last time you give me your hand, Sir Lavé?" exclaimed Drost Peter, with subdued grief. "Oh, that I could hold fast by this hand, and drag you from the uncertain, tortuous path on which you falter--"

"Unhand me, man! and be silent!" whispered Sir Lavé, looking uneasily about him. "Would you bring me to misfortune by your discourse? My way is not your's; but I had learnt to go alone, before you were born. Unhand me! We belong not to each other."

"Pity 'tis that you are right!" sighed Drost Peter, with secret horror, as he relinquished the cold, trembling hand.

Without again looking at him, Sir Lavé hastily returned to his other important guests; whilst Drost Peter, violently agitated, took his way along a gloomy arched walk in the garden.

In the garden-hall, to his great comfort, Sir Lavé found old Sir John still engaged in jocular conversation with Master Martinus; whilst Fru Ingefried and her daughter, in company with Lady Ingé, were about leaving it, to view the castle-garden.

"Drost Hessel is already outside, enjoying the beautiful prospect," said the commandant, bowing to the stranger ladies. "My daughter will conduct you to some of those remarkable spots

where the clear waters and the green trees furnish abundant themes for the most passionate admirers of their country's beauties. I am not so fortunate as to appreciate these things myself."

The ladies smiled courteously at these careless remarks, and descended the garden-steps. Sir Lavé cast an inquiring look at the weathercock over the castle-gate, and then approached the two gentlemen, without disturbing their conversation.

"You astonish me, learned sir chancellor," said Sir John, laughing heartily. "Who could have believed that dry philosophy should be so amusing? And this is altogether your own discovery?"

"Certainly, sir counsellor," replied the learned chancellor, gravely, with a self-satisfied air: "it is the fruit of many a waking night's inquiries. I had already thought of it before I took degrees at Paris; but it first became quite clear to me in my peaceful *otium* at Antvorskov, and now it is taught in all the universities of Europe."

"And this is the famous Martinian mod--mod--what do you call it?"

"*Modi significandi Martiniani*," said the chancellor, correcting him. "It is a treasury of learning, and a fund of science, which I ought not to boast of; but I still hope, in all humility, that, with God and the Holy Virgin's aid, this important discovery in logic will preserve my name in the history of philosophy, and be remembered as long as solid learning and universities exist."

"Now, indeed, that I can understand," replied Sir John, with a suppressed smile. "Sooth to say, it must be learned and philosophic, for I will give you my head if I can understand a word of it. But what can a layman, and others like myself, know of such things?"

"How, sir counsellor!" exclaimed the chancellor, astonished, and wiping the perspiration from his bald forehead. "Is it not as clear and evident as God's daylight? and have I not taken pains to translate for you all the Greek and Latin terms, which are a great ornament in such matters, though, perhaps, dark to the uninitiated? Allow me, and I will again explain to you the whole system from the beginning. By *modus significandi*, is to be understood, in logic--"

"Nay, for heaven's sake--nay, best of chancellors!" interrupted Sir John, hastily; "plunge me no deeper into the science. I have every respect for it, and believe that it will immortalise you, among the learned, to the end of time; but, if I cannot become immortal by other means, my memory must perish, and I must be contented, in God's name, to do the best I can when living, and leave our Lord to care for the rest. Seriously speaking, sir chancellor: if a man cannot become wise and intelligent without all this vexatious trouble, and if I must twist and turn my thoughts by this method, before I can know whether they are wise or foolish--by the Lord's truth! I should be a hundred years old before I could master a single common thought, and should require the lifetime of three men before I could put an excellent thought into practice. Nay: I must make use of another method. When I know what I wish to say, I say it; and when I know what I wish and ought to do, I do it; and do not trouble myself whether the world stands or falls. There you have the whole of my system. It is not so learned as your's; but that you also follow it, in the main, you have given me excellent proof, for which I have every esteem and honour."

So saying, he shook the learned chancellor heartily by the hand, and cast a look towards Sir Lavé. "See, there stands my cousin, the commandant," he continued, gaily: "he is nearly five years younger than I, and can perhaps still learn something in the world. If you can bring him to see how we should think justly and reasonably, in these crazy times, it may not perhaps be out of the way. But I must out, and draw a breath of fresh air in the garden."

Surrendering Sir Lavé to the somewhat tiresome, philosophic chancellor, he made his exit hastily by the garden-door, and was soon plunged in serious thought in the arched walk.

On a green knoll, commanding a magnificent view over the Sound, Drost Peter stood, meanwhile, between Jomfru Ingé and Lady Cecilia, in lively conversation respecting those notable events of olden times, of which the traditions and supposed memorials were still preserved in this glorious region. Contrary to Jomfru Ingé's opinion, Drost Peter maintained that these events must be referred to other, and, to him, well-known spots in Jutland. The subject of their conversation was the great tragical legend of Hamlet. Fru Ingefried listened with interest, whilst the animated, patriotic Jomfru Ingé enlivened her description of these events by traditions and snatches of popular ballads, and pointed to every spot where, as a child, she had heard and believed that they must have happened. Fru Ingefried now perceived her husband by the end of the arched walk, and went to meet him; while Drost Peter and Jomfru Ingé continued to converse of Hamlet and his daring plans, the sagacity of which Drost Peter admired, but maintained that they still wanted truth, justice, and noble grandeur.

"This knavish cunning," he said--"this merely apparent love of truth, by means of which the real truth is concealed, when it is spoken ambiguously and figuratively--this crafty play with sound sense and madness, with jest and cruel earnest, is to me sufficiently detestable; but these features of the tradition, however un-Danish they may appear, are still founded on a remarkable peculiarity in the character of our people."

"What mean you, Drost Peter?" inquired Lady Ingé, with wounded pride. "Do you accuse yourself, and all of us, with a base proneness to craft and falsehood?"

"Understand me rightly, noble lady. The craft of Hamlet is, in the main, completely Danish, though I cannot prize it as in anywise great and noble. This kind of craft ever betrays itself in a respect for truth, even when it may not and dare not be spoken openly. Every period of disquiet and internal disturbance in Denmark will show us that, with the best and noblest of the people, our honesty, justice, and love of truth never entirely disappear, but reveal themselves where the mere semblance of truth is used as a cloak to deceit. The greatest deceiver and nidding amongst us will always blush to deny or disguise the truth openly: he is too proud to lie, even were it to save his life; and he will speak the truth even where it may endanger him, but so darkly and figuratively, that himself only and his friends can understand it, while his foes receive it in an opposite sense."

"Therein, perhaps, you maybe right," said Jomfru Ingé, gravely; "but a wish to wrest and distort the truth does not, in consequence, lie in the people's mode of thinking."

"Far be it from me to assert that it does," replied Drost Peter; "but I have observed that even the most upright of our commoners take a singular pleasure, whilst jesting, in striving to tack something on a person's sleeve, as they term it, strictly, however, without telling an untruth. In this consists a great portion of the craft and wit of our common people. It may be highly good-natured and innocent; but, in times like these, it is still a dangerous quality, which renders it extremely difficult to distinguish the true friends of the crown from its secret enemies."

"Nay, nay," exclaimed Jomfru Ingé, gladly; "in this you greatly err, Drost Peter. You know our brave and trusty countrymen better. I often see and converse with the poorest and humblest of them. They speak openly and impatiently of their burdens, and, in their language, do not spare the great and powerful. They are not afraid to utter the boldest truths, even as regards the king and his favourites; but, when I speak to them of the crown and kingdom, with the view of ascertaining their opinions respecting an illegally imposed king, you should see how readily they forget their own grievances, and how uprightly they express their devoted attachment to the ancient, legitimate, royal family. It is true that, when jesting, they often find great amusement in figurative language, and in befooling each other with old proverbs, and suchlike; but this good-natured sort of waggishness I rather admire, and certainly think there is nothing wrong in it."

"I do not blame that which is so natural to the people, and, in a manner, born with them," replied Drost Peter. "None of us are entirely free from it," he added. "We have both, perhaps, today, noble Jomfru Ingé, and even at this very hour, concealed what we know, and avoided the truth, to spare ourselves or others, without having said an untrue word."

Lady Ingé blushed. "Every one has a right to do so," she said, earnestly. "What I will not and ought not to say, no power on earth shall compel me to speak. If we could not be veracious and upright, without telling everything we know, there would be few honest men in existence. You shall judge between us, good Cecilia," she continued, turning playfully to her relation, who had hitherto been a silent listener. "Think you Drost Peter himself is so upright, that he would tell us truly, were we to ask him, which colour he esteems most highly?"

"We need not ask him that," replied Cecilia: "the colour you now wear in your hairband, is that worn by the drost--last year, at least."

Drost Peter blushed deeply. "I wore it last year, because it was the queen's colour," he replied. "I won the right to do so at the Helsingborg tourney. But for twelve months before last May I have not worn it; although it has, since then, become dearer to me than ever. I fancy I have known from my childhood that crimson band, with the small pearl-lilies, and it is the only band I would suffer to bind me prisoner; but were Jomfru Ingé even now to present me with it, I dare not openly wear it. The reason, too, must remain a secret."

Lady Ingé had hastily raised her hand to the crimson fillet, as if she would remove it; but, on hearing Drost Peter's latter words, she only secured it more firmly, and changed the conversation to another subject.

"Look at my handsome, watchful bird," she said, merrily. "Had Hamlet possessed him, he would certainly have known how to make use of him." As she said this, she patted a large tame fowl that had flown towards her, alarmed, as it appeared, by Claus Skirmen, who was in search of his master, to inform him, as he had been ordered, of the state of the wind.

Drost Peter paid no attention to his squire's announcement. He praised the noble bird, and looked at his mistress with a singularly blended sentiment of joy and melancholy, while many fond memories of childhood flitted across his soul, and mingled with his feelings of the present moment. It almost seemed to him as if he were in a dream, and that the knight's tall, fair daughter was again changed into the child-bride of former days.

In the meantime Sir John, with his wife, was leisurely approaching the knoll. He stopped, and gazed at the young man on the green strand-height. "A fine, brave, excellent young man," he said, pointing to Drost Peter; "he is quite another drost than Sir Abildgaard. Our Cecilia's interest in that subtle knight does not please me. The suspicions that have attached to him, since his imprisonment, ought to have cured her of her whimsy. Has she not determined yet?"

"Your silence has made her anxious," replied the mother, with concern; "and, without your

consent, she gives him no decisive answer."

"She is free; but from me, she shall not hear a syllable on the matter. What I think of him, she well knows."

"Then she never becomes Drost Abildgaard's wife. God strengthen her!"

"Drost Peter takes his time," interrupted Sir John, hastily.

"His childhood's bride no longer hates him," replied Fru Ingefried; "he does not delay thus merely on account of the wind."

Sir John cast a look at the vane on the turret. "You are right," he observed: "we must away. If our good Drost Peter means to jest with us, he shall have the worst of it."

They were now close to the knoll.

"Drost Peter!" shouted Sir John, "the wind is fair, and we are ready to set sail. If you will with us, come quickly." Whereupon, the old gentleman hastily returned to the garden-hall, and the whole company followed him.

When Sir John entered the great hall, he found the learned chancellor alone, deeply engrossed in a small, neat manuscript.

"Up to the ears in study again?" said Sir John. "Is that your Logica?"

"Nay, nay, noble sir," exclaimed the learned chancellor, as his eyes sparkled with almost youthful liveliness. "See, here I have found some of the glorious old Danish ballads I heard in my childhood, besides many excellent national ones I never knew of. Your cousin, the commandant, must be a brave, patriotic-souled man, and well versed in our old legends and histories. There are some capital notes in the margin of the songs; and here, of a truth, pour living fountains from the people themselves.

"That is brave!" exclaimed Sir John, with singular interest: "that is more than I could have imagined of my good sir cousin, and I like him all the better. The ballads themselves may be pretty enough. I do not understand much of these wares; but, when they are sung, I listen to them willingly. One half of these ballads are fictions and fables, I doubt not; but their intention is good, and they must have been a brave Danish people who made them."

Jomfru Ingé, with the other ladies and Drost Peter, now entered.

"Ingelil, child," called Sir John to her, "when did thy father become so learned, and take such pleasure in old songs and ballads? Formerly, he could never endure them."

"It is not my father's--it is my own little song-book," replied Lady Ingé. "My blessed mother wrote many of them."

"And the glosses--the marginal notes?" inquired Master Martinus.

"Oh, nothing more than what I heard from my old spinning-women, and what I sometimes thought of myself."

At this discovery, Master Martinus seemed almost to blush at his zeal for a work that he had only women and unlettered lay-people to thank for; but his true attachment to the ancient ballads overcame this shock to his learned pride, and he grasped Jomfru Ingé's hand warmly, while he returned her the manuscript. "You have rejoiced my soul, noble lady," he said, much affected; "and I could almost, in exchange for this unlearned feminine manuscript, give you my own sufficiently well-known work, *De Modis Significandi*."

"Such an exchange the girl would not much desire," said Sir John, interrupting him. "But where is thy father, Ingelil? We must bid him farewell, and get on board immediately."

"I will seek him," answered Ingé, as she went hastily away.

"The commandant is in his closet, in conversation with a good friend," said Master Martin: "I had forgotten him, over the book. He is travelling in great haste."

"Do you know this good friend?" inquired Sir John, with apparent indifference.

"I must relinquish this," replied the chancellor, in a half-absent manner, and still keeping his eye on the manuscript, which Lady Ingé had laid on the table. "He wore his visor down: it was a warlike figure."

"A masked warrior?" inquired Sir John, attentively.

"Probably, a coast-guardsmen," answered the chancellor. "In a royal castle, one is always in a state of war. The commandant seems to be as cautious as he is vigilant; and I do not blame him, that, in these troublous times, he should avail himself of spies and disguised servitors."

Jomfru Ingé had now returned. She was deadly pale, and sought in vain to conceal her deep anguish and embarrassment. "My father," she said, with half-choked utterance--"my father will be here immediately."

Drost Peter, alarmed, advanced a step or two towards her, with an expression of deep concern; but he paused and was silent, as he suddenly guessed the cause of her perplexity.

"What ails thee, my child?" demanded Sir John, with an uneasy inquiring look. "Thou hast run too fast," he added, considerately, giving her time to answer.

"I am not quite well," she answered, as she supported herself by a chair. "He will come immediately: I have sent a message to him."

"He is engaged officially, I hear, and we will not disturb him. Salute him, and say we were in haste. God bless thee, child! Come, gentlemen."

Anger and deep sorrow were visible in the countenance of the old knight, and, as he regarded the pale Lady Ingé, a tear stole into his eye; but in another moment he was again calm, as usual. "See, here we have the vigilant sir commandant still," he said, in his customary lively tone, as Sir Lavé opened the door, and entered with a constrained but smiling countenance. "No excuses, cousin," added Sir John: "the king's service takes precedence of every other. We must, therefore, in all haste bid you farewell."

"Already, sir counsellor!" stammered Sir Lavé: "I thought the wind--"

"We have not the most favourable wind, if your weathercock may be depended on," replied the old gentleman; "but I fear a person would be misled, were he to depend upon that. I go by the king's yacht; and I know that vessel can make head against a contrary wind tolerably well. I understand a little of sailing, too; and we have, moreover, a good steersman in Drost Peter. Farewell."

These apparently indifferent words, which the old counsellor pronounced with a peculiar emphasis, had to Sir Lavé a serious and fearful signification, that deprived him of the power of utterance. He bowed civilly, though with embarrassment, as he followed his guests to the door. Old John once more gave his hand to Jomfru Ingé, with a warmth and heartiness unusual in him. Drost Peter bowed to her with a look that carried comfort to her soul; and Master Martinus again thanked her for the pleasure her songbook had yielded him. Fru Ingefried and Lady Cecilia, like the worthy chancellor, seemed to have no idea of the cause of her indisposition. The ladies, however, would not permit her to follow them to the door; and having embraced her with hearty affection, the mother, with kind solicitude, gave her all the domestic remedies she could think of, for sudden depression of spirits.

Scarcely had they left the door, before Lady Ingé burst into a flood of tears, and sank into a chair, with her hands before her eyes. She sat thus, immovable, for some minutes. When she took her hands from her eyes, her father stood before her.

"What is this? What means this conduct, child?" he inquired, in tones that sounded almost harshly. "Dear, best Ingé!" he added, with greater mildness, "compose yourself. What is the matter?"

"Father, father!" she exclaimed, eagerly, as she rose, "is the strange knight still in your closet?"

"What leads thee to trouble thyself about my official business?" inquired the father, perplexed: "I do not permit this interference in my affairs. Go to thy chamber, and make ready my travelling-wallet. I journey from hence in half an hour."

"Thou travellest, father? and leavest me behind alone? How long remainest thou away?"

"But a few days: it is on important business. When wert thou wont to be afraid of being alone? I shall provide for the safeguard of the castle during my absence. Thou canst therefore be calm."

"For thee, too, father? Nay, nay, I cannot maintain this painful silence: thou must know the truth, father. I tremble for thy secret schemes--I tremble for thy terrible friends--I am tortured by the most dreadful anguish for thy soul!"

"Art thou mad, girl?" exclaimed the uneasy father, exasperated, and stamping violently. "Hast thou, too, conspired against me? Is it not enough that my own tyrannical kinsman and his understrappers must torture me in my own house, and threaten me, covertly, with the despotically power? Shall my own child be my betrayer? Must I not converse with a trusty friend in my closet, without being suspected and betrayed by my own? Get thee to thy apartment, child, and weep not; or, if thou must weep, let it be only in private. Guard thy tongue, also, that thou betrayest not thy father's life with thy childish nonsense. My affairs thou understandest not; and for my soul thou needest not care. I know what I dare do: my confessor is a man who better understands my salvation than thou and the conscientious Drost Peter. Do as I say, my good child, and be reasonable. I shall not have time, after this, to bid thee farewell. The gentleman I travel with is my friend, and a man I can depend upon. Farewell."

With these words he hastily departed. The unhappy daughter wept no longer: she appeared calm, almost to indifference, and proceeded to her chamber to execute her father's orders.

Scarcely had she finished packing her father's portmanteau, ere a trooper appeared, to take it to him. He was a tall, strange carl, in complete iron mail, and with a wild, audacious countenance.

"What is thy name, and who is thy master, countryman?" asked Lady Ingé, as she looked at him calmly and keenly.

"I need not conceal my honest name here," replied the man, with a Jutland accent: "people call me long Mat Jute. My master has a better name, but I dare not mention it on Zealand's ground. The three rogues who have just left, are not worthy to see his face. He never sets foot on shore here, without being cased in steel from top to toe; and whoever merely catches a glimpse of his eyes, through the bars of his helmet, is seized--with decency be it spoken--with the gripes, on the spot. But with your father it is quite another matter, fair jomfru: he is a brave man, I wot."

"Mat Jute!" repeated Jomfru Ingé: "my little maiden Elsie's sweetheart?"

"O yes, fair jomfru," smirked the man, stroking his beard: "a little sweethearting one must have, wherever he goes: it never binds him, and it is good for both man and beast. But there goes my master to the skiff. Farewell, fair jomfru." And seizing the tolerably heavy portmanteau by the thongs, with two of his fingers he swang it on his shoulder.

Lady Ingé went to the window. At the door stood Elsie, to bid farewell to her warlike sweetheart once more. He did not waste time, however, in a long and touching adieu, giving her only one hearty kiss in passing along the narrow passage, and then pushing her aside to overtake his master.

Lady Ingé stood as if rivetted to the window. She saw her father, closely wrapt in his travelling-cloak, cross the court-yard of the castle, by the side of a tan, stalwart knight, who, in a dark, tarnished steel harness, strode proudly towards the castle-gates. The castellan paused once or twice, as if he had forgotten something, or was undecided; but the strange knight seemed to give no heed to this. Near the entrance of the dark archway, the tall, giant-like figure stopped and turned round, and Lady Ingé now saw that his face was concealed by a black iron visor. He raised his mail-clad arm and beckoned. Sir Lavé still lingered a moment. The sword of the strange knight rang sharply against the stones at his feet, and again he beckoned, with an authoritative motion of his arm, like a general, and turned away. Sir Lavé hastily followed him, and both disappeared under the dark archway of the gate.

To Lady Ingé, it seemed as if her father was drawn into an abyss by the dreadful iron giant. "Merciful God! Stig Andersen himself!" she exclaimed, as, with a scream, she fell back, devoid of consciousness, on the floor.

When her recollection returned, she found herself in the arms of her waiting-maid; and little Elsie, with all her giddiness, was almost weeping over her dear jomfru's condition. But Lady Ingé soon recovered. A sudden thought seemed to inspire her with new strength and courage, and, rising hastily, she left her waiting-maids. Taking her bunch of keys, she proceeded to her father's private closet, at the door of which she stopped doubtfully, and searched uneasily among the keys; but, to her surprise, she found the closet door ajar. On examination, however, she found that it had been locked, but probably in such haste and agitation, that the iron staple, which should have held it, was broken. This accident seemed to relieve her from every doubt, and she stepped promptly over the threshold, and looked around her.

Her attention was first directed to a well-known cabinet in the wall, wherein her father kept his private letters. The steel knob, by which it could be opened, glistened in her eyes like a dangerous snake's head. She pressed the knob, the cabinet sprang open, and a bundle of papers and letters came to view, which she instantly recognised. Shortly before Duke Waldemar's visit, in the previous year, she had seen her father receive, with great anxiety, this well-known packet from a lively, fat carl, who had sung merry songs in the servants' hall, and assisted the maids in the kitchen. That these letters were of an important and dangerous character, was, to her, only too evident. Without stopping to examine them, she placed them in an iron box, wherein her father was accustomed to keep the royal toll-money, but which now stood, empty and unlocked, near the door. Having locked the box, and placed the key in her bosom, she sank down in a praying posture, and thus remained, for the rest of the day, in the lonely closet. As soon as it was dark, she dragged the heavy iron box down into the castle-garden, where, with great effort, she buried it in the knoll, near the Sound.

"God forgive me!" she sighed; "he is my father! I bury his infamy, and thus save his name and honour! But, away from me, the key to the horrible secret! It presses on my heart with the weight of a mountain."

As if seized with extreme horror, she took from her bosom the key of the box, and threw it with all her might into the deep Sound, that roared at the foot of the height. She then returned, quietly and thoughtfully, into the fortress.

In the southern part of the parish of Felballe, in the diocese of Aarhus, stood the famous castle, Möllerup, close by a stream with a few water-mills, and near a dark wood of half a mile<sup>[27]</sup> in extent. It was a strongly-fortified place, in the heavy Gothic style of building, with thick walls of hewn stone, and a lofty square tower in the centre. The fortress was provided with earthen ramparts and wide ditches, both before and behind.

Here resided the celebrated Marsk Stig Andersen Hvide, with his family. He had himself erected and fortified this castle, whose lofty tower was visible, from a considerable distance, over the wood. On the flat summit of the tower, within the battlements, stood four iron-clad men, day and night, as sentinels, who constantly kept their looks fixed towards the four quarters, like the stone giants on Kolding Castle. The heavy drawbridge was already up, and over the arched gateway fluttered a large banner, adorned with the arms of the lord of the castle--a seven-rayed star on azure, under a helmet with two white wings.

On the ramparts stood large bliders, or wall-slings--a kind of wooden machine, by which immense stones were thrown. At great expense, the marsk had here collected numerous defensive machines, some of which had been made in Roskild, by German artificers. Here might be seen the fearful igel-cat<sup>[28]</sup> with oak-peg bristles on the back, used for crushing besiegers; here, also, was to be found the dangerous brynkiöl, of iron, with crooked steel spikes, and pointed iron claws, whose purpose was, when let down from the ramparts, to seize besiegers, and drag them up. Shot-waggon, for red-hot stones, stood ready for defence, night and day. Seven hundred men in armour guarded the fortress. The order and quietness that reigned within the walls denoted the strictest discipline. The grim, ironclad men moved about with a silence and regularity that fearfully indicated the dark temper which ruled in that fortress.

The powerful master of the castle was now absent, but his return was daily expected; and the place was filled with grave and quiet guests. Every night the drawbridge was lowered at a secret signal, and the gate opened for the admission of strangers, who came disguised in the gray cloaks of friars, or in knight's full armour. In the large riddersal, and in the lofty arched apartments, were daily assembled a great number of guests; and although the clatter of knives, and other table utensils, might be heard, there was no loud conversation, nor any sound of social glee. Among these guests no woman was to be seen; a remote wing of the castle being devoted to the female portion of its inhabitants, who there passed their hours in almost conventual separation from the more warlike community.

It was now the afternoon of the third day after Sir Lavé's departure from Flynderborg with the mailed knight, in whom, for the first time, and with so much terror, Lady Ingé had seen the powerful marsk. In the women's vaulted apartment of Möllerup sat the reserved lady of a knight, in a dark coloured dress, with her countenance concealed by a black head-dress.

Two little maidens, also in black, but without veils, sat on high stools by her side. They were both beautiful children, with light hair and blue eyes. One, who was almost a head taller than the other, and had her smooth, plaited locks tied up with a dark pearl-band, appeared to be about fourteen years old: her cheeks were so faintly coloured, and her skin was so clear and white, that she almost resembled a beautiful marble statue, miraculously endowed with life, but still only half belonging to the world of mortals. A deep, calm melancholy overspread her fair, earnest countenance: there was nothing painful and consuming, however, in its grief, which was softened by a pious and kindly expression, as if she had already overcome some awful sorrow, and had found her lost, youthful joys in the far-off mysterious world to which she appeared to belong. She sat, with a weaving-frame in her lap, working, with threads of silk and gold, a picture of the Virgin and Child, surrounded by a halo of worshiping angels.

The other little girl had yellow flaxen hair, which hung down her neck in ringlets. She did not appear more than nine years old, and had a merry and extremely lively, childish countenance, red rosy cheeks, and a pair of wild, playful eyes, which were never at rest, but constantly twinkling. She was rather handsome, but violent, impatient, and restless: scarcely remaining quiet for an instant on her stool; now throwing aside her work, and then taking it up again; with a thousand other antics, which she abandoned as rapidly as they were conceived.

"Still, Rikké!" said the veiled lady, without looking at the child, or uncovering her face. "Wilt thou into the nursery again?"

"Yes, willingly, mother: it is much more pleasant," exclaimed the little restless girl, running out.

The veiled lady heaved a deep sigh, and relapsed into her former silence. She was busied in rubbing spots of rust from a large broad battle-blade, which lay across her knees; but she appeared to direct her thoughts to her work with difficulty, and her hands often fell inertly on her knees.

"Mother," said the quiet, grave maiden with the gold embroidery, "I am thinking of what our Lord and Redeemer would say, if he still journeyed about the world, and were to come to us here."

"If the Just One stood amongst us, child, he would ask why justice slumbers so long."



"Ah, mother, think you not he would rather say as he said to the holy Peter, the night he was betrayed by the false Judas?"

"I have forgotten it," answered the mother. "Has Father Anton taught it you? What said he, then?"

"It stands in the holy text, dear mother." And she repeated, with folded hands, and in a singing tone, the passage in Matthew--"Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"

The mother was silent, and sank into a gloomy reverie. "Thou art a pious child, my Margarethé," she said, at length; "but thou art little like thy brave father. Thou art still too young to understand the cruel injustice and the monstrous scandal that befell his house. Thou canst not understand wherefore thy mother will not suffer any one in the world to look upon her face. There are stains, unmerited stains, that can only be washed out in a manner that is costly, and dangerous, and dreadful, but necessary as eternal justice. Thy mother has not quite forgotten the pious instructions of her childhood. Knowest thou what our righteous Lord and Judge said, when he foresaw the cruel injustice he should suffer?--'He who hath not a sword, let him sell his garment and buy one!'"

"Yea, right, right, my daughter Ingeborg!" was uttered by a broken, aged voice, from an obscure corner of the apartment: "so it stands written. It is God's own word. Buy me a sword for my garment: I need no garments. All the garments in the world will not hide our shame!"

The person who thus spoke now made his appearance--a little, bent, aged figure, greatly emaciated, who groped his way forward, for his red, half-shut eyes were without vision. His head, almost entirely bald, appeared all scratched and torn; and his coarse gray beard was in tufts, as if it had been half plucked out. His lean fingers were crooked, and provided with monstrous nails. His dress was of a new and fine black fur, but hung about him in tatters; and his wild, crazy expression clearly enough indicated that he had thus maltreated it himself, in his fits of madness.

"Ah, poor old grandfather!" exclaimed the little Margarethé: "he has got his hands loose, and has been tearing himself again."

"Call a couple of the house-carls, child," whispered the mother, hastily; "but with all quietness. Perhaps I, myself, can talk to him best."

The little Margarethé went hastily out, with her hands folded over her breast, as if praying.

"Quiet, quiet, father!" said the veiled lady, placing the sword under the table, and advancing leisurely towards him. "The time is not yet come; but it draws near: thou shalt yet, perhaps, before thou diest, hear thy daughter's voice without blushing. To see me and my scandal, thou art free."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the old man, wildly: "that freedom, old Pallé Little has taken himself; for that he has asked neither king nor pope. If thou wilt bind me again, my daughter, do so; but quickly, and touch not my claws, I advise thee! They will serve to tear out the tiger-heart and the blinking goats' eyes. Only promise me that you will yourself unbind me, and hand me my Toké's sword, when the time arrives."

"That I have already sworn and promised you, dearly and holily, my father. But you must also keep the promise you have given me, and ill-use neither yourself nor others in the meanwhile."

"Well, bind me, then, child, and lead me back to my owlet's hole. You spoke of a sword, my daughter, and I thought the time had come. It is long, long--it is now nine long winters. There is not much life left in me; but die I cannot, before it comes to pass: that knowest thou well."

"Unhappy father!" sighed the tall female form. She knelt; and, with her own wasted fingers, took up the crooked and trembling hands of the old man, which she kissed through her veil, and then bound loosely, behind his back, with a silk riband. "Now that thou art again bound, my father," she continued, rising, "let me lead thee back to thy corner of hope. Refuse not, father. The day of retribution is certain, and not far distant."

Quietly and silently the trembling old man followed her to his nook, where he sank, as if in a slumber.

The little Margarethé now returned with two servants, who remained standing by the door.

"Hold back! I require you not!" said the lady, giving them a signal to go. The servants bowed respectfully, and retired in silence.

"The dear Holy Virgin be praised! grandfather again sleeps calmly," said little Margarethé, sitting quietly down to her work.

The mother and daughter remained a long time in silence, and all was as still as death around them, until they heard the noise of horses in the courtyard.

"Listen! more strangers have come," said Margarethé: "there are still many of father's good friends to defend us." She went to the window. "It is father himself, and a strange gentleman," she exclaimed, hastily: "he dismounts on the great stone by the stairs. God be praised, he is come! I was almost afraid of so many strangers."

The unhappy house-mother heard this account, with emotions that betrayed a momentary gladness. She arose, but, without saying a word, again seated herself, with a deep sigh.

In the large riddersal of Möllerup, thirteen grave strangers awaited the arrival of the master of the castle. They were seated at a long oaken table, which stood in the middle of the hall, covered with black cloth. Eighteen chairs stood around the table. One of these chairs was higher than the rest, and covered with red velvet: it was vacant. That on the left side of it was also vacant; but on the right sat the heavy Count Jacob of Halland, with his legs stretched out, and drumming on the table with his fingers. Between him and his brother, Niels Hallandsfar, who resembled him in manner and disposition, sat the notable dean, Master Jens Grand, regarding, with a grave and scrutinising look, the assembled personages, most of whom were his kinsmen, and as proud as himself of belonging to the great family of the Absaloms. He appeared particularly gratified at seeing four knights, whose dark visages and haughty mien indicated displeasure and resoluteness for revenge. These were Sir Jacob Blaafoed, Arved Bengtson, Peder Jacobsen, and Niels Knudson of Scania, who had all distinguished themselves, under Stig Andersen and Count Jacob, in the Swedish war, but had, along with their general, fallen into disgrace for their arbitrary proceedings in dethroning the previous Swedish king.

The dean had, opposite to him, a smart young gentleman, with a proud but lively and frivolous countenance: this was Duke Waldemar's drost, and fellow-prisoner in Sjöborg, Sir Tuko Abildgaard. Next to him sat a personage who had long been regarded as one of the king's true men--Chamberlain Ové Dyré: he, and the man by his side, Peder Porsé, had recently come to an open rupture with the king, on account of a debt which the latter would not acknowledge; and in consequence of this quarrel, they had taken refuge with King Magnus in Sweden.

All these gentlemen the dean seemed to observe with satisfaction. A noble old squire, Aagé Kaggé, who had long vainly expected the honour of knighthood from the king, the dean likewise appeared to regard with confidence and pleasure; but he cast a doubtful glance at the tall, overgrown person by his side, whose crafty countenance wore a smile of self-satisfaction, while he seemed to fancy himself a man of considerable importance in this secret council. This was the king's double-minded, cunning counsellor, Chamberlain Rané.

In the midst of the company, with an air of boorish pride, sat a short, coarse, splendidly dressed personage, with diamonds on the hilt of his dagger, and a gold chain about his animal-looking neck. His countenance was fierce, rough, and hideous, and he seemed to be tired of the long silence. This was the Norwegian freebooter chief, Jarl Mindre-Alf.

"Now, by Satan! how long will it be ere they get off their horses?" he at length growled forth, breaking the silence. "They must first in, and comfort the women, we shall find. I have ridden three beasts to death to be in time, and yet I have to wait. My time is precious, but here have I now been sitting for half an hour, like an empty barrel, without tasting either wet or dry. I have only three words to tell you from my good king, ye worthy gentlemen, but they are worth gold: if you keep me much longer, I must ride my own way, with the devil's help; and then, we shall see what comes of all your whispering and sour mouths."

"Highborn sir jarl," replied Master Grand, hastily, "after such a hurried journey, you must needs require a heart-strengthening, before you can think of more grave affairs. Please to follow me into the next apartment: there we shall find a magnificent gammon, and excellent old wine, which you have scarcely found a match for in any of our convents."

"Ha, I can understand that!" growled the heavy gentleman, rising "You are a man who understands both body and soul: you know what an honest sea-dog stands in need of, on the cursed land. A house without a host, or wine, or women, the devil may set foot into! Come, then. But it must only be a slight strengthener," he added, thoughtfully: "if I set myself regularly down to the drinking-board, you will scarcely get a word out of me concerning these vile land-crab affairs."

Master Grand took him hastily by the arm, and led him out of the riddersal.

"By St. Canute! I think I shall go too," said Count Jacob, rising: "my good comrade the marsk does not remember whom he has invited as guests."

"There he is! there is the marsk!" exclaimed one knight to another. Count Jacob remained standing, while all the others rose, and looked, with fixed attention, towards the door, which was thrown open for the powerful lord of the castle.

Proud and majestic, entered the well-known heroic figure, in his black harness and closed visor. He was accompanied by Sir Lavé Little, who looked anxiously around him, and appeared highly disquieted as his eye fell on Chamberlain Rané.

The marsk saluted the company in silence, and advanced to the table, where he placed himself on the left side of the vacant, velvet-covered chair. He then struck aside the visor of his helmet,

and made a scrutinising and earnest survey of the company. On his stern, energetic, and commanding countenance was an expression of almost painful sadness, which singularly affected them all. "Be seated," he said, with a subdued voice: "my father-in-law and my wife are agreed in what we may determine; their seats may therefore remain empty. But I miss two important men."

At that instant, the door of the side apartment opened, and Master Grand led the pacified jarl into the hall. They both bowed in silence, and took their places. The lofty marsk alone remained standing.

"Secure the doors--we are all here," he said to the two at the further end of the table.

Squire Kaggé and Chamberlain Rané rose, and placed bars across both doors of the hall. They again took their seats, and there was an expectant silence, all eyes being fastened on the marsk.

"You all know wherefore we are again assembled, my trusty friends," began the grave marsk, in a deep, subdued voice, betraying powerfully suppressed indignation: "you all know what has rendered this castle, for the last nine years, a dismal and sorrowful abode. I declared it before the people of Denmark, and before all the world, in the hour when I denounced the King of Denmark in the Ting of Viborg, and swore to revenge my shame or to lose my life. I have not had my revenge, and Marsk Stig Andersen still lives. Had I delayed so long from base fear, and had I rather wished to be a braggart and perjurer than to risk my life for my honour, then might you all despise me--then might every drop of blood in my body suffuse these cheeks with shame, in presence of my friends and kinsmen. But see! I blush not: I am calm and cool, as beseems a man who can keep his revenge until his hair becomes gray, and suffer his thoughts to grow until they ripen. My own disdain I have hitherto borne for your sakes and for the sake of my country. I have had a greater and more important aim in view than merely to wipe out the stains on my own and my house's honour. The great hour of retribution has not yet arrived; but it approaches. No impatience--no precipitation, friends--and it shall surely come. I see no one present who has not been deeply wronged and injured by this same tyrant, whom I have denounced, and whose death and downfall I have sworn; but none of you have so much to revenge as I. So long, then, as Stig Andersen can brook delay, so long may you also."

Count Jacob exhibited some impatience, and seemed desirous to speak; but a look from the marsk immediately quieted him.

"It is for more than one man's revenge," he continued; "more than the weal and woe of our whole race together: it is for the deliverance of a degenerate, but still a noble, though cast-down and unhappy people. It is not enough that we overthrow the tyrant who contemns all law, both human and divine: he must fall, but the throne must stand. While we overthrow the nidding, we must not only secure ourselves and our privileges, but must, at the same time, secure a worthy ruler for the throne. We certainly hoped to have found him, and we hope so still; but his imprisonment put a stop to our grand designs, and his oath and renunciation have, for the present, deprived us of his participation in our council. We have him not amongst us--his elevated seat stands empty; but I see here, nevertheless, his chivalrous friend and fellow-prisoner; and I see, moreover, his confessor, the sagacious, worthy sir dean. Speak, noble sirs: what may we expect of the duke?"

"Everything--everything possible!" replied Drost Tuko Abildgaard, rising. "These are not the words of my prince and master, but my own. The oath binds his tongue; but I know his heart, and dare pledge my head, that now, as formerly, he is your friend and secret defender, and that, when the time comes, he will step forward and act with energy."

"I confirm this testimony," began Master Grand, solemnly, and rising with bold dignity. "Our secretly chosen David has selected me for his spokesman here. I have, with peril to my life, shown him the way to freedom, as you desired; and he is now serving our heaven-abandoned Saul till the hour of doom arrives. He is too conscientious to break his oath, and too magnanimous to demand a dispensation of it from the father of Christendom. He cannot, and will not, at present, take any open part in your great undertakings. He will and ought not to know anything that his friends may determine for the freedom of the country. But when the time arrives, to which, in calm self-denial, he looks forward--when the way and place stand open for him--he will come forward, with the aid of the Church and the Almighty, as he can and ought, and, with honour, crown the work. This, in his name and by his princely soul, I dare swear to you, faithfully and piously."

"'Tis well!" resumed Stig Andersen: "two such creditable witnesses we may rely upon. But the tyrant has bold and sagacious friends: a great portion of the blinded people remain inconceivably firm, both with him and his sons; and without certainty of powerful assistance from the noble Norwegian king, our undertaking would be foolishness. I see our trusty sworn friend, the bold Jarl Alf of Tönsberg, in the midst of us. The answer he brings from his king must determine us when to act."

"Now, then, by Beelzebub! comes my turn, at last, to say a word," muttered the pirate chief, who had long been impatiently rubbing the jewels on his dirk. "My king's answer is short and good, Marsk Andersen," he continued, aloud, rising leisurely, and standing with his legs apart, as if he had been on a ship in motion. "You are a man, every inch of you, says my king and master; and he is to you a faithful friend, whether in fair weather or foul. Your friends are also his; and he

who offends you has to do with him. With your secret councils he will have nothing to do; but as a true and honest Norseman, he will openly defend you against every foe, and stand by you with a fleet when it is wanted. His land and kingdom are open to you and your friends, should mischance befall you; and I, his jarl and admiral, do not quit these coasts with my own seadogs, so long as you want help, and there is anything to take a hand in. In all this I am clear and ready. What you farther do here does not concern me. What comes in at the one ear, I shall let go out of the other. Talk is not my business; and you have had my oath once. But, sooth to say, you go on too quietly and sour-mouthed here. I cannot relish these secret councils and fine projects. I am good for nothing but the rude work of giving the order, and setting to, without more ado. In a word: I will burn all Denmark before your eyes, if that will help you. As for the rest, it matters not to me who is king of the country. So long as good booty is to be had, I am with you; and how I can hit, you well know. Let me now drink to your health, and waste no more time in talk. Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly, sir jarl," answered the marsk. "Yet a word. Will you keep the promise you made to Duke Waldemar, concerning my wife's sister's son, Chamberlain Rané Jonsen, who is sitting there? On that condition he is our friend; and his assistance is of greater importance than you may suppose."

While the marsk uttered these words, Chamberlain Rané had risen, and approached the jarl.

"Is it thee who would be my son-in-law?" inquired the jarl, with a smile, and measuring him with a proud look. "Now this I must say, that thou dost not look exactly the kind of carl who should woo a jarl's daughter. I gave the duke the word in an honest guzzle, and I doubt if my daughter will say yea to it. But if you are as cunning a fellow as you have credit for, we can talk of it when the time comes: if the child don't refuse you, well, the sober jarl will answer for what the Count of Tönsberg promised when he was drunk."

"Farther my bold wishes do not extend, sir jarl," replied Rané. "When the terms on my side are fulfilled, I shall show you that I have not aimed higher than I can reach."

"Good: with the time comes the care!" muttered the jarl. "Show me first, by some able exploit, what thou art worth, and in exchange I will dub thee a knight with a stroke that shall crack thy puny collar-bone?"

"That is the word, sir jarl. You all hear this, gentlemen?" said Rané, looking boldly round the assembly. He then returned to his seat; whilst the freebooter, without giving farther heed to him, nodded to the others, and withdrew into the drinking-room. At the marsk's signal, all the rest resumed their seats, and there was a death stillness amongst them.

"We have held counsel long and often enough," resumed the marsk, mysteriously. "What shall and must happen, we all know. The time has now arrived when we ought to take the last resolute determination. But what is to be resolved in our souls at this hour, even these silent walls shall not hear. An approving or disapproving sign is sufficient, and we understand one another."

Thereupon he whispered a few words in Count Jacob's ear, who immediately answered by a grave nod. In the same manner the secret word was communicated from man to man. A long and deep silence prevailed during this proceeding. Several of the gentlemen considered long before they nodded, and among these was Sir Lavé Little. He, at length, made a motion with his head, which was understood to be a nod, but which more resembled an involuntary convulsive contraction of the muscles.

At last it came to Chamberlain Rané's turn. The marsk scrutinised him with a penetrating look, and Master Grand's eyes were fixed upon his countenance. The crafty chamberlain heard the whispered word, and he opened his eyes as if greatly astonished, whilst with secret pleasure he seemed to enjoy the triumph of beholding the general attention turned on him alone. He assumed a highly thoughtful air, and still delayed giving the decisive nod. It was necessary that all should be unanimous in a project which the meanest of the witnesses could betray and ruin. The chamberlain was the last, and, next to Squire Kaggé, the humblest in rank of all; but, as the king's familiar, he was an important man; and he seemed to feel with pride that a king's life, and perhaps the weal or woe of a whole nation, solely depended on a slight motion of his cunning head. Whilst he thus remained considering, and apparently undecided, three knocks were heard at the barred entrance-door. All started, and looked in that direction. At a signal from the marsk, Squire Aagé Kaggé opened it, and the gaze of all was turned with a degree of terror towards the open door, through which a tall veiled lady, dressed in black, entered, leading by the arm a blind, decrepid old man, whose hands were bound behind his back, and on whose sightless countenance appeared an expression of quiet, but horrid insanity. These two silent figures remained standing at the end of the table. All arose, and remained motionless as statues.

"Friends and kinsmen!" exclaimed the marsk, in a voice nearly suffocated with anger and sorrow--"descendants of the great race of Absalom! look upon my wife and her hapless father! Need I say more? Would you see the unmerited blush of shame through that veil, which, for nine years, has concealed, even from me, the face of my wife? Would you hear the mad, despairing shriek of her dishonoured father? Is there one amongst you who yet hesitates in coming to the conclusion that shall cast down the tyrant, and free our unhappy fatherland?" As he uttered these words, his keen glance rested on Chamberlain Rané, who also, for a moment, appeared surprised

and affected.

Rané nodded.

"'Tis well!" continued the marsk: "you have all approved. Now, lay your hands on the holy Gospels, and swear!"

He gave Master Grand a signal, and the ecclesiastic drew forth a large book, bound in black velvet.

"It shall be truly done, so help us God and his Holy Word!" said the dean, slowly and solemnly, laying his own hand first upon the Gospels.

The book then passed from man to man. After a violent internal conflict, which was visible in every feature, Sir Lavé also laid his trembling hand upon the book, and stammered out the oath. When it came to Rané's turn, he repeated the same words audibly and distinctly; but his lips continued to move after he had pronounced the oath, although none could hear what he seemed to add to it secretly. Thereupon he laid his hand upon the book, without farther hesitation.

"Unbind me--unbind me, my daughter Ingeborg!" cried the crazy old man, suddenly waking up, as if from a dream. "I will swear and bind myself, so that the Almighty above shall hear it, and all the devils shall shake and tremble!"

"Still, still, father! Remember thy promise," whispered Fru Ingeborg; while the marsk gave her a sign to lead out the unhappy old man.

But before any one could prevent it, he had torn asunder his bands with almost inconceivable strength, and stretched forth his liberated arms with a wild and fearful burst of laughter. "For ever, for ever doomed to perdition may I be, if I be not the first," he shouted, striking the Gospels with his clenched hand: "if old Pallé is not the first who strikes, I shall wander on earth till doomsday!"

Master Grand had nearly lost his hold of the book. The marsk again beckoned, and two knights led the crazy old man from the hall. A profound silence followed, during which the dean had recovered himself, and now stood with the Holy Book in his hand, before Fru Ingeborg. She bowed her head affirmatively, and, in a voice that penetrated the souls of all who heard her, repeated the oath they had all sworn, while she bent her knee, and touched the book with her wasted hand. She remained without changing her posture, and, at the marsk's signal, all the others silently withdrew. Involuntarily, as it were, the gloomy master of the castle stretched forth his mailed arm towards his unhappy wife, but again let it fall by his side. He hastily pulled a bell-rope, when Fru Ingeborg's waiting-maidens entered, and carried their fainting lady to her own apartments.

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What had taken place at Möllerup was a secret known only to the initiated. The disguised strangers left the castle, one by one, at different times, and generally by night, as they had come. Even in the immediate neighbourhood, no one seemed to have been aware of this secret gathering. In the castle itself no change took place. The four mailed watchers were still constantly to be seen on the tower. The drawbridge, as usual, was kept raised; and, notwithstanding its numerous garrison, everything was as quiet and still as if the fortress had been waste and deserted.

The contract with Duke Waldemar had set the royal mind at rest; and the council of the kingdom did not appear apprehensive of any danger. The king and queen passed the beautiful summer at Scanderborg Castle, surrounded by their whole court, and the most considerable people of the country. Old Sir John, Master Martinus, and Drost Peter, had returned from Stockholm with good tidings concerning the object of their mission.

The negotiations opened with King Magnus chiefly referred to a closer alliance between the two royal houses, by means of a double marriage. The little Danish Princess Mereté, who had been betrothed to the Swedish crown-prince, was to be sent to the court of Stockholm during the following year, where her education, according to agreement, was to be completed. In the same way the little Swedish Princess Ingeborg was to be educated at the court of Denmark, if the request were made. Her betrothment to the Danish crown-prince was concluded by a written document, but the public announcement of this alliance was to be deferred for a few years.

With lively satisfaction, the Danish ambassadors had beheld the little Swedish princess, whom they hoped would one day be Denmark's future queen; and even old Sir John, who did not expect to live to see the time, could not speak of the pretty kindly child without particular animation, as if he expected in her another Dagmar, who would bring peace and blessings to Denmark. This prudent statesman, as well as Drost Peter, placed all his hopes of better times for Denmark in the hopeful heir to its throne and his descendants. Old Sir John often sought to be useful to the young prince; and, with all his esteem for Drost Peter, he frequently shook his head when he saw how the young chivalrous drost desired to educate the prince's feelings of honour and justice to a degree that appeared to him dangerous.

One day the old knight was present, with the queen's household, at Scanderborg, to witness the prince's exercises in arms, and observed how he sought to convert these sports and exercises into gay and costly imitations of the ordinary jousts and tournaments; the young king, as he was always called, dispensing royal gifts to the squires, and pronouncing sentence with excessive severity on every transgressor of the laws of chivalry, as applicable to the game. The old counsellor smiled, and seemed to participate in the pleasure evinced by the queen and Drost Peter on the occasion; but, when the game was ended, he called the drost to his private room.

"I am old," he said, seriously, "but I do not think I am niggardly or avaricious, although I may set greater store by outward fortune than you approve of. It is right that the prince should be liberal and magnanimous; but do not therefore teach our future king to be a spendthrift, and to despise the wealth of his people and their possessions, like the dust on which he treads. Take care that he has not more regard for knightly pomp and splendour than for substantial power, true achievements, and real greatness."

"God forbid!" said Drost Peter. "But, if the days of the great Waldemars are to be restored--"

"Good, good. I know what you would say," interrupted the old knight: "therefore, if you would make a Waldemar Seier of Prince Erik, take care that his love of honour is not mere empty love of glitter, and his love of justice untimely obstinacy. He is a youth that, with God's help, much may be made of. You have a great charge, Drost Peter: consider it well. The swiftest falcon never makes an eagle. It is dangerous to attempt to create God's work anew; and he is a fool who tries to add a cubit to his own or another's stature."

So saying, he warmly pressed the hand of his young friend, and left him. The drost found him, afterwards, as lively as usual; and it did not appear that he cared farther about giving his opinion in the matter. Sir John's warning, however, disposed the drost to very serious thoughts, and he could not deny that the sagacious old man was right in many of his views.

The learned Master Martinus, too, with the tenderest zeal, took upon himself, in his own fashion, the education of the prince; but he endeavoured in vain to form him into a philosopher, or to teach him his dry, logical *Modos Significandi*. The prince had great respect for the learned chancellor, but was never better pleased than when he could escape from his Latin.

At Scanderborg, the merry, lively heir-apparent was most happy when engaged in games of chivalry with his active squires and pages, among whom the little friendly Aagé Jonsen was his dearest comrade. When, at such times, Junker Christopher would spoil the game by some wanton boyish trick, or cause division among the pages, the little king was always umpire; and his strict impartiality rendered him as much beloved by the young pages, as disliked by his quarrelsome brother. When his daily exercise in arms was over, it often pleased Prince Erik to take diversion on the lake at Scanderborg, where his skilful tutor, Drost Peter, had also taught him to steer a boat easily and safely, even when the waters were roughest.

Drost Peter's active participation in the affairs of government, as well as his care for the important crown-prince, forbade him almost to think of himself and his private affairs of the heart. But frequently, when boating with his pupil on the Scanderborg lake till late in the evening, he would fall into deep thought, while steering the little vessel in the direction of the light from the ladies' apartment, that, from a lofty turret, looked out on the waters, like Jomfru Ingé's chamber at Flynderborg. He would often, on these occasions, sit for hours in a kind of reverie, and steer for the distant light, without observing what was taking place around him, until a lusty squall or an uneasy tossing of the boat brought him to his senses. At times, when in these reveries, he would suddenly start up and reproach himself with his forgetfulness, when the daring Prince Erik had made a hazardous alteration of the sails, and, by so doing, had embroiled himself in a violent dispute with Junker Christopherson.

The king's chief amusement was hunting, of which he was passionately fond, and for which he frequently neglected the most important state affairs. Chamberlain Rané was still his constant favourite. The crafty chamberlain was often absent on secret errands; but these appeared to have reference merely to the usual love affairs, or to miserable adventures of the basest description, which were generally pursued in connection with the king's frequent hunting expeditions.

The queen did not appear desirous of knowing anything concerning them. Since the last Dane-court at Nyborg, she had become singularly reserved and serious; and though she still affected the splendours of royalty, and showed herself with dignity at court festivals, she no longer took any part in the dancing, and withdrew herself more and more from the pleasures of the court. She seemed now to prefer the quiet, retired country life of the beautiful castle of Scanderborg, where she partly busied herself with useful occupations. Sometimes, when the king's absence embarrassed his advisers, the prudent queen would take his place in the council; and, on such occasions, all admired the delicacy with which she conducted the business, and avoided every appearance of assumption, while she sought to maintain the dignity of the throne, and to promote every plan that could alleviate the burdens of the people, or quench the still smouldering embers of sedition. With Drost Peter she conversed with favour and confidence, but with remarkable attention to the strictest forms of court. She never spoke to him except in the council, or in the presence of old Sir John, when she had anything of importance to say to him in reference to the prince's education.

Notwithstanding the increased admiration with which he now regarded the fair and prudent queen, he felt, in her presence, as if bereft of his usual freedom and liveliness. But his heart did not take the same warm share in this admiration, as when, acknowledged as her knight and distinguished favourite, he wore her colours. When he now beheld her in her scarlet robe, and with a diadem of rubies in her dark hair, he still, indeed, thought her beautiful and majestic; but the tall and noble Jomfru Ingé, with all her simplicity, was, in his eyes, far more dignified, and the crimson hair-band in her golden locks far more beautiful than the glittering diadem of the queen.

Notwithstanding the king's partiality to Rané, he always reposed the greatest confidence in Drost Peter, on whom he had bestowed many honourable proofs of his favour, especially since the drost's important and successful undertaking respecting the duke's imprisonment, and after the contract with that dangerous nobleman, who had ever since remained quietly at his castle in Sleswick. No royal letter of any importance was issued which was not signed and sealed by Drost Peter, Sir John, and the learned chancellor; whilst many important Ordinances were prepared by the drost alone; and he was justly regarded as one of the king's most influential and favoured men.

The king had often proposed to visit Drost Peter at his ancestral castle at Harrestrup, where deer-hunting, especially in autumn, was excellent. This visit of honour was fixed for the month of September, and the drost made sumptuous preparations for the reception of the king and his court. But, on account of one diversion or another, the visit was postponed from week to week. The month of October passed away; and the drost began to think that the king had either forgotten it altogether, or intended to defer it until the following autumn.

It was already the middle of November, but the autumn did not seem willing to give way to winter, and the many-coloured leaves had not yet all fallen in the woods. One morning, Drost Peter was surprised with a message from the king, brought by Chamberlain Rané, that his majesty would pay him a visit, next day, at Harrestrup, and amuse himself for eight days in hunting. Sudden resolves of this nature were not unusual on the part of the king, especially when they had reference to hunting expeditions, and were verbally announced by the chamberlain.

Although it was unpleasant for Drost Peter to receive Rané's announcement, delivered, as it was on the present occasion, in a somewhat authoritative manner, he still behaved courteously, and left Scanderborg without delay, to prepare everything to the king's wishes, and that he might, on the following day, receive him at his castle in person, with that respectful distinction which the forms of court-life demanded. He heard with pleasure that Sir John would accompany the king, and that Sir Rimaardson would remain at Scanderborg, as captain of the body-guard, with the queen and the young princes.

From Scanderborg to Harrestrup Castle, by the tortuous and uneven road, was a distance of above ten miles.<sup>[29]</sup> It was somewhat advanced in the morning when Drost Peter left the palace, attended merely by his squire, Claus Skirmen, who had a second horse with him to change on the way.

The drost rode so rapidly, and was so much engrossed in his own thoughts, that his squire several times began and broke off a conversation in which he could not bring his master to take the least interest. It was somewhat past noon when they caught sight of an eminence, of considerable height, at no great distance from Harrestrup, which, from the south and west, can be seen at a distance of four miles, and may be known by the blueish haze, arising from the adjacent morass, that almost invariably covers it.

"Seest thou Daugberg-Daas, Skirmen?" asked Drost Peter, pointing to the hill, as he drew up, and dismounted to change his horse. "Six miles have been got over quickly. We may easily reach Harrestrup before evening."

"We shall get to Harrestrup time enough," said Skirmen, as he sprang from his norback and brought his master the other horse. "Would that we may be only as fortunate in leaving it, sir!"

"How so, Skirmen? Thou art not wont to be so reflective. What has happened to thee? Thou seemest rather downcast."

"Nothing is the matter with me," replied Skirmen, holding the stirrup for his master, "if nothing is the matter with yourself, or, perhaps, with the king. You may believe me or not, as you choose--but all is not right. 'Tis true, indeed, they were so drunk that they could not see a fly on the wall; but a drunken man's jabber is not always to be despised. In our old ballads it is often said, that wisdom may be learnt in the song of birds, when it is understood. People, however, are not so wise now-a-days; yet still I think I can guess what the cock crowed this morning."

"Art thou crazed, Skirmen? I cannot understand a word of this."

"That, in sooth, is not my fault, stern sir," replied Skirmen, mounting his horse, and riding on by his master's side. "For five long hours you have not cared to listen to what I have been telling you, but have allowed me to speak to the wind. Trust me, something will come of this journey to Harrestrup. Did you not perceive how glad the crafty chamberlain was, when you rode off? Did you not mark how eagerly he repeated, that the king would meet you at home like a careful host, I and that you were not, on any account, to ride out to meet him to-morrow?"

"Ay, truly: but that is merely a curious whimsy of the king's."

"But none can better lead the king to your abode than yourself, sir. And is it not singular that you should be sent off beforehand, dancing to the chamberlain's pipe--you that are both a knight and a drost?"

"No childish vanities, Skirmen. I must obey the king's message, whoever brings it to me. I find nothing more remarkable in this than I have heretofore discovered in your sage suspicions respecting certain grayfriar monks, and hens, and Rypen burghers. If the king will visit me, it follows, as a matter of course, that I must be at home beforehand, to receive him becomingly. Sir John accompanies him, with his trusty jagers; and the country around here is perfectly quiet and secure."

"How know you that, sir? No one can tell where Niels Breakpeace is; and the algrev is constantly cruising on our coasts; to say nothing of the marsk, at Möllerup."

"He is a knight, and not a highwayman; and Niels Breakpeace is no general. A prudent robber will never rub against the king's arm; and no pirate will venture within the coast-guard. So long as Sir John and I are not afraid of highwaymen or rebels, you may make yourself quite easy, my good Skirmen."

"But have you not heard of the numerous grayfriar monks at Rypen?"

"Are you there again, with your monks? Why, there are plenty of them everywhere."

"But they are not wont to ride about in troops, and during the night; and if, as people say, they have swords and knights' harness under their gray cloaks, it is not on God's service that these good gentlemen have sneaked into monks' habits."

"Who told you this?" inquired Drost Peter, with more attention.

"The three men from Rypen, who yesterday desired to speak with the king--they whom the king told, through Chamberlain Rané, that he had something more to do than listen to their stupid quarrels: it was on that account they were so angry. When I met them at the tavern, in the evening, they were completely drunk; but this much I could gather from their conversation--that it was not for nothing they had seen three suns in the heavens--"

"Sheer twaddle, Skirmen! Drunken people can see as many suns in the heavens as there are stars."

"Many sober people have also seen the same, sir. It betides a great misfortune, they said, and they could reveal things of great importance to the king. But he must now take care of himself, since he was too proud to speak with honest burghers."

"Ay, this is the loyalty now-a-days," exclaimed Drost Peter, indignantly: "when a man is offended, he bids his king and country a good day. If you thought there was anything more than vile superstition and silly braggadocia in this ale-gossip, why did not you inform me immediately?"

"You were, with Sir John, in attendance upon the queen and the princes, sir; and I did not wish to raise a blind alarm, on the instant, about such loose talk. The Rypen burghers seemed as if they would take their ease for some days at the tavern, and this morning I was there betimes to meet them sober; but they had disappeared overnight, it was said, and no one knew what had become of them. I could not get speech of you this morning, on account of the chamberlain, and your many distinguished visitors; and ever since you mounted your horse, you have not listened to one word of all I have already told you--not even about the handsome cock with the necklace."

"Enough. To what does all this trifling tend? How can you imagine that I have leisure to think of your cock and his battles?"

"But what if it should be the same bird you so much admired at Flynderborg?"

"Flynderborg?" repeated Drost Peter, starting: "who talks of Flynderborg? Was it not at Scanderborg the marvellous cock was to be seen, that gained the victory over all the rest?"

"Truly, sir; but it came from Flynderborg, nevertheless: it is the selfsame bird respecting which you held such fair conversation with Lady Ingé, when she stroked his wings in the garden, on the hillock near the strand. I stood by, and ventured not to interrupt you. You had just been talking of Hamlet's cunning, with his charred wooden hooks,<sup>[30]</sup> and with the gad-fly and the straw; and Lady Ingé thought that her watchful bird had been a better sign of warning against treachery and danger."

"And this bird, you say, is now at Scanderborg?"

"There is no doubt that it is the same: I made the discovery this morning. You may remember the fowler from Zealand, who, one evening lately, forced his way to you into the palace, and wanted you to look at his hens? You closed the door against him, and thought him a simpleton. I,



too, thought the man crazy, when he ran away, and let loose his best cock in the court of the palace. It first occurred to me this morning that the brave pugnacious bird was an old acquaintance. The falconer had caught him, for the sake of a crimson pearl-band he had about his neck. I procured the band, and certainly think I know it. You may, perhaps, know it yourself, sir." So saying, he drew forth a crimson riband, wrought with pearls in the form of a few white flowers.

With blushing cheeks Drost Peter recognised Lady Ingé's hair-band. "Let me have it," he said, eagerly; "it is mine." He pressed it closely to his lips, then concealed it in his bosom, and, setting spurs to his horse, rode on in the strangest frame of mind. He felt himself happy beyond measure, yet at the same time disquieted and uneasy.

But the joyful hope awakened in his breast by the possession of the band, did not long sustain him. The mysterious warning, and the summons to vigilance, associated with this fond memorial, had, to him, a signification that almost forbade him to think of himself and his affection. What the patriotic maiden intended to communicate to him, by this mysterious symbol, appeared to him to have reference to the crown and the royal house alone. He suddenly checked his horse, and reflected whether he ought not at once to ride back to Scanderborg, and accompany the king himself on the following day, or, rather, induce him to abandon the visit entirely. But when he considered how absurd such a course would appear to the king and his court, and the ridicule to which it might expose him, he relinquished the thought, with a smile at his own credulity.

Skirmen, in the meantime, had overtaken his master.

"Well, now," said the drost, "the cock may still be right. We shall be cautious; although, as the king travels with a considerable retinue, there is no rational ground for apprehending any impending danger. I shall, however, ride to meet him to-morrow, and follow him through the wood with my people. At Harrestrup he can be safer than at Scanderborg itself."

"I think with you," replied Skirmen: "at present, indeed, nothing farther can be done. But that there are night-birds in the moss, I certainly believe."

They now rode on thoughtfully, and in silence. The night was beginning to darken as they passed Daugberg Church, and they continued their course northwards towards the town, through a long valley between considerable heights, wherein deep pits had been formed by the important lime-stone quarries. The dark green, newly-sprung winter corn grew on the heights, between heaps of stones and half-fallen groups of trees. The sight of this wild, picturesque spot awoke many youthful memories in the mind of the drost, and dissipated his uneasy thoughts.

"Here have I often played at robbers in my childhood," he said: "little thought I, then, that I should now be riding here in this serious mood."

"Look, sir!" said Skirmen, riding close up to his master: "see you not something twinkling, and in motion, in that great gloomy pit?"

"Are you dreaming of robbers?" inquired the drost. "I see nothing."

"Now, also, do I see nothing," replied Skirmen; "but the pit is full seventy ells deep--it could conceal a whole band."

"The place is well suited for such fellows," observed the drost; "but hitherto, this spot has been secure enough. My brave warden Tygé is not to be trifled with. Do you see the old wheel on Daugberg-Daas? It still stands there, as a grave warning to rievvers and highwaymen. The wood would better suit such gentry; but, there, old Henner Friser is on the outlook."

"Henner Friser!" repeated Skirmen, in astonishment: "is he here?"

"It is true, indeed. You should not have known it, Skirmen; but you can be silent. You may remember that he killed a royal squire in self-defence; and, to be out of the way of trouble on that account, he is attached to one of my hunting-seats."

"Which, sir? That of Finnerup?"

"Well, then, since you have guessed so much, he resides there. But you must be silent on the subject."

"I understand you, sir," replied Skirmen, highly delighted: "I shall take care not to bring the brave old man and the pretty little Aasé into trouble. But had they not better leave the hunting-seat for the next few days? How easily the king and his huntsmen might discover them! And, should that cursed coxcomb, Rané, meet them--"

"Skirmen," replied the drost, "you are more circumspect than I. To-morrow, betimes, you can ride over and warn them."

"Thanks, sir, thanks!" exclaimed Skirmen, jiggling gaily in his saddle.

They now entered a little plantation of young beeches and poplars. Twilight descended, but they could still see the tall white trees.

"I scarcely know my little Kjælderriis again," said the drost: "see how proud my poplars are grown."

"However good a look-out Henner Friser may keep, there are still poachers enough here," said Skirmen. "I heard the twang of a steel-bow just now; and--do you not hear that rustling in the thicket there?"

"Nonsense, Skirmen. It is my poplars, rustling me a welcome," replied the drost, "or a startled roebuck among the leaves. The rascals, however, should not be admitted here," he added: "probably the fences are not in good condition."

They were soon out of the plantation, and then rode through a deep dale. The last glimmer of day still lighted up the brow of a considerable hill, which rose nobly from the valley. Harrestrup Castle lay before them, on the smooth and almost circular summit of the height. The castle was small, but so well fortified by nature that it required no artificial trenches; and its steep, lofty walls and buttresses seemed inaccessible to the most daring assailants. The entire castle appeared to consist of a single round tower, built of bricks and hewn stone. It was approached only by a steep and narrow pathway, which the tired horses had some trouble to ascend; the road, at every step, becoming narrower and steeper.

Drost Peter and his squire at length dismounted, and led their horses over the most difficult spot, between two steep gullies crossed by a small drawbridge. As usual in time of peace, the bridge was down. At length the travellers stood by the castle-gate, which was closed. High over Drost Peter's head, on the summit of the wall above the gate, waved a large banner, adorned with the armorial bearings of the master of the castle--three parallel descending bars, *gules* on a field *d'or*.

"You have brought the horn, Skirmen," said the drost: "blow a merry stave, that they may know we are here."

Skirmen carried a curved golden horn in a band over his shoulder. He set it to his lips, and blew the commencement of the air of the merry old ballad about Sir John, who took the bride from her loutish lover.

This signal was immediately answered from the tower by a brisk, youthful voice, which sang the burden to the well-known song:--

"Bind up your golden helmet--  
Bind up, and follow Sir John."

"Is it you, stern sir?" then inquired the voice from the wall.

"Ay, truly. Open, Tygé," replied the drost; and the great iron-studded door was instantly opened, and Drost Peter was received, with hearty pleasure, by his bold young warden and a numerous band of house-carls, all active young men, and, as was the warden, armed with round steel caps and bright halberds. A number of grooms and torchbearers also pressed forward to see and salute their master.

Drost Peter shook hands with his warden, patted some of his house-carls on the shoulder, and nodded kindly to them all.

"Is everything in order?" he inquired. "To-morrow the king will be here."

"Came a kaiser himself here, sir," answered the warden, "you would not be ashamed of your house. Dorothy has had the waxlights placed, and the tables covered, these two months. The whole castle has been cleaned, and is as bright as are our halberds. The pantry is full of choice viands, and the cellar of prime ale and sweet wine. If the king should stay the whole winter, he will not have to lick his fingers."

"And the hunters, the hounds, and the falcons?" inquired the drost.

"They are fleet and well-trained. You shall get honour by them, sir."

"One thing more, Tygé. Is the neighbourhood secure? Are there no poachers in Kjælderriis, and no loose and suspicious people in Daugberg quarries?"

"Why should such an idea enter your thoughts, sir? Beggars and tinkers pass by here now and then: we give them bread and meat in God's name, and they touch not a rabbit in the woods, nor a feather in the hen-house. If the district were unsafe, we must have heard of it. No thief or robber may venture near Harrestrup Castle, so long as your banner hangs over the gate. Have you perceived anything, sir?"

"Not I. It was only a fancy that seized Skirmen on the road."

"What, Claus Skirmen!" exclaimed the lively warden; "when wert thou wont to have old women's fancies?"

"If you will trust me with half a score of house-carls, sir," said Skirmen, quickly and decidedly, to the drost, "I shall yet perhaps, before you go to bed, show your confident warden that I have not had old women's fancies."

"Well, if you have a desire to see a little about you, you may have ten carls, willingly. If you do not break your neck in the pits, you must be here again before midnight. The moon rises late: have you torches?"

"They are not required," said Skirmen: "the darker the better. On foot, we can find our way blindfolded. Take good care of my norback, lads. I shall have none of you with me but you, nimble John, and you, warder Soeren, and you--" And he thus selected ten of the most active house-carls, and hastened from the gate with them, whilst the grooms led the horses to the stable.

Drost Peter accompanied the castle-warden across the court, and up the stone steps, to the dwelling-house.

Before the young master of the castle partook of either rest or refreshment, he inspected the whole arrangements. He found everything in the best order, and prepared sumptuously to receive the king and his train. Drost Peter's old nurse, the careful Dorothy, with a broom and dish-cloth in her hand, bustled towards him from the kitchen, and, in her extreme joy, would have embraced him. She was not a little proud of having been entrusted with the entire management of the domestic affairs of the castle. She wept with joy at the proud thought that she should be hostess to the royal party; and it was to her an honour without parallel, to be reigning queen of the kitchen and pantry on so important an occasion--the crowning event of her life. She dragged her young master about with her everywhere, to show him all the choice arrangements she had made for the convenience of the king and his great lords, and was inexhaustible in explaining to him how she had prepared for every hour of the day, so long as the royal visit should last.

"Good, good, my dear Dorothy," said Drost Peter, at length, somewhat impatiently, and patting her kindly on the shoulder: "you have done everything excellently. I do not understand these matters, but I well know that you care for the honour of the house, as much as if you were my wife."

"Ah, dear young master," replied Dorothy, kissing his hand, "when shall I have the heart's joy of seeing you cared for and received by a pious and handsome young housewife in the castle here? You truly deserve that one of God's dear angels should come to you. God's blessing rests here, and, like the prosperous Joseph, you are, next to the king, the first man in the land; and, I dare be sworn, should Potiphar's wife tempt you--"

"Enough, enough, Dorothy," exclaimed Drost Peter, interrupting her, and blushing. "I do not doubt your good opinion of me."

"Ah!" continued Dorothy, "but what avail you honour and fortune, my dear young master, when you live in this way, like a lonely bird in the world. Trow me, fair sir, it is not good for man to be alone. So my blessed husband always said, God gladden his soul! He banged me well at times, the blessed creature, when he did not get warm hashed meat to supper--it was always a favourite dish of his--and every mortal has his weakness; but he was still a good sort of man, and as pious as an angel, after he had his supper. Ay, ay; everything in the world is transitory. My happy days have gone by; and now I have no greater joy than to see you comfortable, my dearest young master; and could I once see my good Peter Hessel married, and rock his children and his children's children in my arms, I should willingly close my old eyes, and bid this weary world good night."

So saying, she wiped a few tears from her withered cheeks with her kitchen-apron, without noticing warden Tygé's dry remark how much she would be beyond a hundred years of age before all her wishes were fulfilled.

"But come in now, my dear master, and take something to live upon," she added, going before him to open the door: "you are famishing, God help me, in your own house, and in the midst of all God's blessings." So saying, she ran back, and drew him with her into the clean, polished day-room, where she compelled him to sit down, while she busied herself about his refreshment.

Drost Peter had still much to say to his warden; and having at length prevailed on Dorothy to go to bed, he remained alone with Tygé in the apartment. He then made inquiries into the condition of his estates and his subordinates, during which some hours elapsed.

The warden had gone out to inspect his people, and had again returned.

"It is late, Tygé," said the drost, with a feeling of weariness: "what has become of Skirmen? It is time all were retired to rest. Before daybreak we must ride to meet the king, with our boldest swains. You have taken care that they hold themselves ready to start betimes?"

"The knechts are already as sound asleep as stones," replied the warden; "but this is not according to my way of management. Three of the carls who should have kept watch to-night, followed Skirmen, and their posts stand vacant. This is sad irregularity, sir drost: it has never happened to me before, and you must graciously excuse me. It is strange enough, sir, but we two are the only souls awake in the castle. Our house-carls are, at other times, brave and sober

fellows; but, out of joy at your return, they have all looked a little too deep into the ale-can, and have tapped the German tun."

"What? have you German ale in the castle?" inquired the drost, much displeased. "That, you know, I have strictly forbidden: it is contrary to the king's orders, which I and my people ought to be the first to obey."

"I have said so, stern sir; but it was on Dorothy's account: she would not let me have either peace or quiet until I had brought her a couple of barrels from Viborg. Without German ale, she thought it would be impossible to entertain the king's people becomingly, even if the king had ten times forbidden it. If he himself and his people thought good of it, there would be no sin in it, she argued."

"'Tis like her," said the drost, smiling; "and it must be so for the present; but to-morrow, betimes, let every drop of it run down the drain, whether Dorothy be sour or mild."

"It shall be done, sir; but for the sake of peace in the house, had you not better inform her of it, yourself? What now is this?" he continued, listening: "I fancied I heard a creaking at the door of the riddersal. I thought Dorothy was sound asleep, but it would seem she is still bustling about. She is so zealous in her housewifery, that, at times, she gets up in the middle of the night, and dusts everything anew. It will be a God's blessing, however, if she does not get crazy with joy at all this magnificence. But, if you will allow me, sir, I will just see if it be her."

Taking one of the lights, he proceeded towards the door of the riddersal; but before he reached it, it was softly opened, and a wild, shaggy face peeped in, but instantly disappeared, and the door was immediately closed again.

Drost Peter quickly rose, and the young castle-warden stood, as if petrified, with the light in his hand, in the middle of the floor.

"Death and misfortune!" he whispered: "Skirmen has gone off with the court-warder, and has left the gate open. For a certainty, there are thieves or robbers in the house. Let me rouse the house-carls? One does not know how strong the rascals may muster. I shall go through the kitchen, and do not open this door until I return." And as he spoke, he hastily placed the bar on the door of the riddersal.

"Well, make haste!" said Drost Peter: "if I saw aright, it was the bull's face of Niels Breakpeace. So, then, Skirmen was right."

The warden went quickly away, and Drost Peter stood alone in the apartment. He had drawn his sword, and leant upon it to collect himself and listen. He heard many voices in the riddersal.

"Is he here--is he here? how many are there?" inquired a number of low voices in the same breath.

"There are only two men, and the cursed drost is one of them," uttered a deep gruff voice. "Come, fellows: he shall not lead us into mischance again!"

They attacked the door violently, but the bar held fast.

"They have secured the door; but we can easily snap the bar," said the same harsh voice. "Run against it, lads. Let us break open the door--it yields!"

The bar gave way with a frightful crash, the door flew open, and nine wild, sturdy fellows, with Niels Breakpeace at their head, rushed in, with short battle-axes and shining daggers in their hands. Drost Peter retreated a few steps, and placed himself with his back against the wall, in a position where he could defend himself for a time, and keep the rievvers at bay with his long sword. He looked at the wild fellows sternly.

"Are you such vile niddings," he cried, "that ten of you must fight against one? I see at least one man amongst you who has received the honour of knighthood from Denmark's king; and so far as I know, the stroke has not yet been washed from his shoulder with boiling water. Stand forth, Sir Lavé Rimaardson! You are the only one of these fellows with whom I can worthily do single battle for life or death. If there is yet a spark of honour in you, advance!"

Niels Breakpeace and his comrades did not appear to notice this challenge, but pressed forward to overwhelm their single antagonist.

"Out of the way, rascals!" shouted a vehement youthful voice; and a handsome fellow, with a red feather in his cap, and a wild, audacious countenance, sprang forward. "Whoever dares to touch the drost, save I, I cut down on the spot," he continued: "one to one, and ten to Satan! Come, Drost Peter Hessel! This is the second time we have met since you made me an outlaw in Denmark. On Vaarby Bridge I had a hindrance: had my brother's blood not been a little thicker than the water of the stream, you should never have crossed the bridge. We stand now on a greater bridge--one that leads from earth to heaven, or--hell, as it may happen; for here must either you or I bid this fair and pleasant world good night!"

With these words, he threw aside his battle-axe and drew his sword, which was of the same length as Drost Peter's; and, that he might not have any advantage over his antagonist, who stood bareheaded before him, he cast his feathered cap on the floor.

"Well, if it is to be a regular cockfight, I am quite willing," growled Niels Breakpeace; "but if you don't make quick work of him, Sir Bigsnout, I shall."

The coarse robber chief and his comrades laughed, well pleased, and formed a close circle round the two antagonists. There then began a warm and serious combat, but conducted according to all the laws and usages of chivalry. Placing foot to foot, they swerved not a hair's breadth from their positions. Neither of them used the point of the sword, but hewed with the sharp edge, and aimed only at the head and breast, or between the four limbs, as it is termed. The single light on the table only partially illumined the apartment; and the clashing swords of the knights met so quickly, that a glimpse of them could scarcely be caught. Every instant threatened a mortal blow to one of them; but they both appeared equally skilled in their weapon, and neither of them could succeed in wounding his adversary, though, like constant lightning, their blades flashed over their heads.

"Shall I put an end to the game?" growled Niels Breakpeace, raising his broad battle-axe.

"By Satan! are you invulnerable?" shouted the robber-knight, springing impatiently towards his antagonist, and, contrary to the rules, with a daring and dangerous lunge. But at the same instant the sword fell from his grasp to the floor, together with the first three fingers of his right hand.

"Now, you shall never more swear falsely to your king and knighthood!" cried Drost Peter, enraged.

"Cut him down, the Satan!" shouted the furious robbers, pressing in upon the drost, who, with his back against the wall, defended himself desperately.

He had already received some wounds, and was bleeding freely, when the kitchen-door flew open, and warden Tygé rushed in, with half a dozen half-intoxicated house-carls. They came staggering forward to assist their master, and a sanguinary battle commenced with daggers and axes. The robbers had still a great advantage over the reeling house-carls, who could scarcely distinguish friend from foe. With wild shouts they tumbled among one another, and Drost Peter and Tygé alone fought with deliberation and security; but they were nearly overwhelmed, when a noise in the court and the sound of a horn were heard.

"Skirmen!" joyfully exclaimed Drost Peter and Tygé at the same time, and their blows fell with redoubled energy.

The robbers, taken by surprise, retreated with their crafty leader towards the entrance of the riddersal; but, in the next moment, the shattered door was entirely driven in, and Skirmen rushed to his master's aid with ten active house-carls, two of whom had some trouble in restraining the fury of three men, whom they guarded, bound, between them. After a short but desperate resistance, the powerful Niels Breakpeace and his comrades were disarmed and bound. They cursed and vociferated furiously; but, at the drost's command, they were immediately led off to the tower-prison.

Lavé Rimaardson still lay, with his hand mutilated, on the floor. The proud young robber had been for some moments without consciousness; and, when he now recovered his senses, he learnt what had happened, and found himself bound, and in the hands of his enemies. Drost Peter was about to bind up his wounded hand; but he instantly sprang up, tore away the bandage with his teeth, glared wildly around him, and would not suffer it to be dressed, cursing his limb, and conducting himself so furiously that it was requisite to use force with him. As soon as his hand was bandaged, his feet were set at liberty.

"Attend to him closely," said Drost Peter, as the warden was dragging him, struggling, from the door. "Give him the best prison, and good fare. A great man may yet be made of him; and although his life is now in the king's hands, I shall rejoice if he can be saved from the wheel."

"Drost Peter Hessel," exclaimed the young robber, pausing on the threshold, in an attitude of defiance, "I hate you to the death; but you are a brave fellow, and I should not be ashamed of falling by your hand. If you can save me from the wheel, do so. But not for my sake: I can die on a wheel, in the open air, as easily as on a wretched bed. But I have a brother--and I bear a noble name--you understand me?"

He paused, and a convulsive motion of the muscles around his mouth betrayed feelings for which he instantly seemed to blush, as he strove to control them. "Bear in mind that I am your fair queen's kinsman, and, perhaps, a little allied to yourself," he added, with a bitter smile. "But think not that I am afraid of death; and expect no thanks from me, if you save my life!"

"Away--away with him!" cried Drost Peter, provoked by his coarse allusions, and the daring accusation couched in his words and haughty mien. "By a perjured and dishonoured knight, no honest man need feel affronted," he added, turning his back on the prisoner, as the warden thrust him out of the door.

"You are bleeding, sir," exclaimed Skirmen: "allow me to bandage you."

"All in good time," replied the drost. "I would first hear whether you deserve praise or censure. Did you withdraw the court-warder from the open gate, and suffer the robbers to slip in, in order that you might look after them?"

"If the gate was not locked after us, warden Tygé must answer for that, stern sir," replied Skirmen. "I did not trouble myself on that score. I led the carls to the great Daugberg lime-pit, and there found something of what we were in search: three unruly fellows we have fettered and brought with us, and as much gold and silver as we could drag. When we returned, we found the gate open, and instantly noticed the confusion. It was a God's blessing we returned in time."

"Thou art a smart youth, Skirmen," said Drost Peter, patting him on the shoulder; "I have seen thee fight like the best knight. The booty thou shalt bring to the king with thy own hands; and if he does not dub thee a knight, within a year and a day I will do it myself."

"Master! dear, good master!" cried Skirmen, with the utmost glee, and warmly kissing his master's hand: "if ever I deserve to be knighted, let it be by this hand! It will do me far more honour than such a king's--"

"Skirmen!" interrupted Drost Peter, sternly and gravely, "dost thou, too, dare to censure my king and master? Thou servest me at present: if, hereafter, thou shouldst be made a knight, thou wilt then serve the king and country; and no servant should despise his master."

"But can you in your own heart, then, noble sir drost--"

"I can be silent, where the heart cannot speak without making the tongue a traitor; and that is ever the case when it contemns majesty. Be thou now also silent, and bandage me. There was still hero-blood in the arm that gave me this wound," he added, sadly, as he bared his arm. "This wild Rimaardson fights well. God support his noble kinsman, when he learns what has happened here!"

Drost Peter, attended by his careful squire, then went to his bed-chamber, and everything was soon as quiet in Harrestrup Castle as if nothing had occurred.

Before daybreak next morning, Drost Peter, together with twelve smart house-carls, was already on horseback, and rode off to meet the king. The castle-warden and the remaining house-carls he left behind, to wash out the traces of the night's encounter, and to guard the prisoners, who were chained in the tower. Skirmen, with his master's permission, rode to the hunting-seat where Henner Friser and his granddaughter resided, to inform them of the king's arrival, and to attend to their security.

Drost Peter did not regard his wounds as of much consequence, and had not troubled himself about Skirmen's scruples, or his foster-mother Dorothy's inconvenient attentions. It was not until long after the conflict with the robbers was over, that the old lady awoke, and became aware of what had occurred, when, in her anxiety for her dear young master, she went and awoke him in the middle of his most refreshing sleep, to ascertain his actual condition; and, notwithstanding his order to the contrary, she kept watch at his door for the remainder of the night. In fact, it was not until she had seen him lively and active on horse back, that she found time to cross herself whilst lamenting over the sad havoc and confusion that pervaded her hitherto well-swept and polished apartment; and whilst she sought to remedy the disaster by the aid of brooms and scouring-cloths, she was doomed to the farther sorrow of beholding, on a fasting stomach, the pitiless Tygé tap the whole of the German ale into the sewer.

The sun had not yet risen when Drost Peter, with the twelve house-carls, rode by Daugberg quarries. He stopped to examine the spot, and inquired of the house-carl John, who had accompanied Skirmen, how they had managed to seize the three fellows, and to possess themselves of the immense booty.

"That I shall soon tell you, sir," replied the house-carl. "As we stood on this spot, we saw a light in yonder big hole. None of us had exactly a fancy to enter it; but the mad Skirmen outshamed us, and immediately crept into the mouth. We then took courage to follow him. The light must have been that of Satan himself, and we were certainly a hundred ells under ground before the steps ended. One could not see the other, and many of us came down on our faces on the confounded smooth limestone. We were, however, as still as mice, and I could hear porter Soeren breathing through his nose. Where Skirmen had got to, God only knows; but we suddenly heard a wild cry, and the noise and clash of weapons in the dark, a little way before us. We started forward after the sound, and I got hold of a long nose, and held fast; but to the nose there belonged a pair of sturdy fists, and I had a long struggle with the fellow before I got him on the ground. Porter Soeren had also his work to do with a fellow still stronger. One, Skirmen overpowered; and those who had not taken a robber, struggled with one another to their heart's content. At last Jasper Strongwind arrived with a lighted brand he had got hold of; and as soon as we saw how matters stood, and that we had got hold of all that were to be found, we bound them hand and foot, and resolved to empty the treasury; and then the job was done."

"The luck was better than the judgment," said Drost Peter; "but still, I must confess that Skirmen is a bold fellow. I should not like to imitate this adventure."

While they were yet speaking, a horseman, in a gray cloak, and mounted on a gray steed, overtook and passed them at full gallop. None of them had seen him on the way, and they therefore supposed that he had issued from one of the quarries.

"Light the torches, carls," cried Drost Peter, dismounting. "We must search these robbers' dens before we go farther."

They lighted some of the torches which they had brought with them to illuminate the road, if the king should arrive late; and, whilst six of the house-carls were left with the horses, Drost Peter, with the others, proceeded to search the suspicious pits and holes. From the first quarry which they examined, they brought several weapons, and two gray cloaks and hood-masks; the other pits they found empty, and without any traces of having been recently used as a retreat for robbers. For perfect security, however, Drost Peter left behind four carls, as a watch over them, and, in profound thought, rode forward with the others on the way to Scanderborg.

The king, according to his appointment, had left the palace early; for, however frequently he might change his mind on other matters, he was extremely punctual with regard to journeys of pleasure. Drost Peter met him half way from Harrestrup; and when he informed him of what had occurred there, and mentioned the large booty which had been taken from the robbers, the king appeared much gratified, and continued his journey without delaying. Old John Little, as well as Chamberlain Rané, and a number of huntsmen, who accompanied the king, seemed to listen to the drost's relation with some doubtfulness; while his sharp looks detected an uneasy expression in Rané's countenance. But when the drost informed them that he had himself searched the Daugberg quarries, and set a watch over them, the doubts of the old knight appeared to vanish, and he laughed, and jested gaily, but at the same time kept his eye, unobserved, on every look and gesture of the chamberlain.

It was past midday when the king and his train stopped at the celebrated lime-quarry, which he had previously determined to examine, and which he could not now pass without some attention. When he perceived the armed house-carls before the pits, he started, and inquired of the drost if they were his people, and with what view they kept watch there, since the robbers had been seized, and the caves searched.

"It is still possible that we have not discovered them all, sir king," replied the drost. "Perhaps, too, they belong to a confederacy which it were important to root out. So long as your grace remains at Harrestrup, I consider it my duty to watch these lurking-holes closely."

The house-carls, with lighted torches, stood by the entrance to the largest pit, when the king, dismounting, advanced a few steps and looked timidly into it.

"It is not worth wasting time upon," he exclaimed, suddenly, and proceeded to remount. "Whoever chooses may descend. Run thou, Rané: it was thou who had so much to tell me of this lime-quarry."

"It is certainly worth seeing, sir king," replied Rané, as he zealously prepared himself to descend, along with a number of huntsmen and falconers.

Old Sir John had also dismounted; and, taking a torch, he examined the pit with much interest, but without venturing down.

"It was a good capture, Drost Peter," observed the king, as they rode leisurely on: "they were a daring and dangerous band. This famous Niels Breakpeace shall not again escape; for, before sunset, they shall all be executed. We can thus sleep soundly to-night, and begin the chase early in the morning."

Drost Peter remained mute.

"Why are you silent?" continued the king. "Have they not been seized by yourself in the open commission of robbery? Such fellows deserve not a long trial."

"They are all punishable with death," replied Drost Peter, "but it is still desirable that they were allowed time to shrive themselves, and look to the salvation of their sinful souls."

"The time will not permit," replied the king. "I shall not sleep under the same roof with robbers and murderers. If I am to be your guest, Drost Hessel, these malefactors must sleep on the wheel to-night."

"If you command it, sir king, they can be conducted this evening to Viborg prison, and you need neither rest under the same roof with them, nor consign them to so sudden a doom. There are men amongst them born to something better than to end their lives so shamefully and unexpectedly."

"None are born to that," replied the king, musingly. "If one could know what was sung at his cradle, if it had any meaning," he continued, "I should be glad to learn what was sung at ours: it would be well to know that in these times. Is there any one of note among them?"

"There is one of them, at least, who belongs not to the outcasts of humanity--in whom there is

still left a remnant of honour and of lofty mind; and whose soul, perhaps, may still be saved. His birth and rank are certainly now his strongest accusers: he is of high and noble blood, and from your own royal hand, sir king, he had the honour to receive the stroke of knighthood."

"That does not plead for him, truly. There you are right. He must die: a noble-born knight deserves to be punished with tenfold severity, when found among robbers and highwaymen. Who is he?"

"Sir Lavé Rimaardson--your noble queen's kinsman, and brother of the trusty Bent Rimaardson."

The king started, and drawing up his horse, he threw on Drost Peter a scrutinising glance, in which, as he blinked uneasily, a secret suspicion might be traced.

"The queen's kinsman, say you?" he exclaimed--"the outlaw, Lavé Rimaardson?--he who has dared to defy me, and to stir up the peasants to rebellion?--he whom you yourself assisted to adjudge an outlaw?"

"Even he, sir king."

"And you would now defend a rebel, and intercede for so vile a criminal, Drost Hessel?"

"Defend him I will not, sir king; but to crave mercy for a sinner, I still may dare. With the most righteous of all judges, clemency is the greatest quality. I pray you, my king, to consider his brother's services to the crown and country, and his relation to yourself and the royal house."

"No! I shall now prove to you, and to my faithful subjects," replied the king, with secret satisfaction, "that, in the exercise of justice, I have no respect to high descent and birth, nor even to those allied to me by consanguinity and princely blood. Sir Lavé Rimaardson I will myself see upon the wheel before the sun goes down. Onwards!"

The king set spurs to his horse, and all followed. Those who had been examining the pit, hastened to overtake him, and Sir John again rode by his side. The old knight had not heard the conversation just related, but he observed that the king was chafed and disquieted. He rode on in silence, for some minutes, with unusual rapidity, but not inattentive to the king's angry looks and Drost Peter's uneasiness.

"Why hasten you thus, sir king?" at length inquired the old knight. "Yonder you may see the tower of Harrestrup Castle, and the sun is yet far up in the heavens."

"So much the better!" observed the king. "Who is the executioner of felons here? Where resides the hangman of the district?"

"Daugberg-Daas is the place appointed for executions, sir king," replied Sir John, who was well acquainted with everything relating to the administration of law in the country: "that was the wheel, which we saw above the lime-quarries, yonder. The officer of justice you inquire for has free quarters in Daugberg."

"Good: let him be summoned immediately."

The old knight was surprised, but obeyed without replying, and instantly dispatched a huntsman back to Daugberg for the executioner. He then continued to ride silently by the king's side until he considered his momentary irritation was allayed.

"You do not intend to render your entrance to the castle of Harrestrup memorable by a sudden execution, sir king?" asked the old counsellor, as he now rode alone with him up the narrow pathway. "I do not intend to intercede for such gross offenders: severity is, in these times, highly necessary; but, when we have them securely captive, and there is no rebellion in the country, I like not such hasty justice."

The king was silent, and blinked uneasily.

"Such haste, my king," continued old John, "may easily lead to injustice, or be regarded as a sign of fear, which may weaken the confidence of your people in the power of the state. A giant, conscious of his strength, need not hasten, for his security, to slay a few captive pigmies. Besides, not even the greatest criminal ought to be sentenced without a legal trial."

"The crime is manifest," exclaimed the king, erecting himself; "the law is well known; and doom I now pronounce:--they shall be broken on the wheel. You shall conduct them to the place of execution, Sir John; and you will be answerable to me that the law and sentence are fulfilled, in all their severity, before the sun goes down. I will hear no objections--it is my royal will."

Sir John remained silent, and they rode slowly up the steep path to the castle, where Drost Peter dismounted, and placed himself by the side of the king's horse.

The train of attendants had stopped, and there was now heard, behind, the quick tread of horses, and the rumbling of wheels. The huntsmen and falconers looked back: it was the messenger Sir John had dispatched for the headsman. He approached at full gallop, with a little



broad-shouldered companion, on a miserable hack. The stranger wore a hairy cap, and a short, blood-red cloak; and held a large bright axe in his hand, whilst a sword of unusual length hung over his saddle-bow. A couple of rough-looking fellows followed with a small cart, in which were chains, fetters, a wheel, and all manner of horrible instruments of death and torture.

With this fearful train, the king and his company ascended to Harrestrup Castle. Drost Peter was silent, and Sir John spake not a word.

Outside the gate, and unknown to her master, old Dorothy had erected a triumphal arch, which was adorned with wreaths of box, yew, holly, and all the flowers that could be procured at that season of the year; whilst she herself stood by the side of it, arrayed in white, with a large nosegay in her hand, and attended by her pantry-maids and milkmaids, prepared to receive the king in a fashion which she intended should please and surprise both him and her dear young master. Since the king had pardoned her, when she was condemned to be buried alive for her womanly honour's sake, she had never been able sufficiently to extol his clemency and graciousness; and now, on this extraordinary occasion, to show her gratitude, she had, for more than two months, been exercising all the servant-maids of the castle in a ballad, which they had never heard sung before, but which was necessarily joined to a popular old tune. This song, which she had received from her confessor, was a free translation from the Schwabian meistersinger, Reinmar von Zweter's, flattering verses on the king, wherein, however, some of the true features of royalty were caught.

Outside the arch, and opposite to Dorothy and her maidens, stood the warden Tygé, with a portion of the brave garrison of the castle. Dorothy had decked their helmets with silk ribands and green sprigs, and, with their bright halberds in their hands, they stood in a respectful posture, and as immoveable as statues.

When Drost Peter perceived these festive preparations, so little suited to his own frame of mind, and to the harsh appearance of the royal train, he was singularly and painfully affected. The slightly-built arch was not unlike a gallows; and the old nurse, in her white dress, reminded him of the so-called corpse-women, who conducted interments in commercial towns. At the head of the ridiculously dressed-up milkmaids, who were intended to represent fine ladies, Dorothy felt as dignified as a queen.

In a less serious mood, this spectacle would perhaps have extorted a smile from the lively young drost; but now it augmented most painfully his gloomy state of mind. The king did not appear to give much attention to these tokens of homage, which he was accustomed to see in every small trading town, and even where he knew that he was detested by the majority of the inhabitants. Such demonstrations of homage were most frequently got up by the crafty chamberlain, who sagaciously reckoned that, if these flatteries did not always obtain the king's applause, they seldom called forth his displeasure.

Notwithstanding the tastelessness and farcical character of this parade, it was apparent that it was prompted by simple good-nature and true respect for the king, when the old nurse, with her thin, tremulous notes, and accompanied by the grating voices of the Juttish milkmaids, offered to him, in Danish, the German meister-singer's homage:--

"I prize the king who wears the crown,  
And brings the country great renown.

"He helps the widow in her need;  
His bounty doth the orphan feed.

"He guards his land--his name is dear  
To all his people, far and near.

"His heart is warm, and great his mind;  
His speech to one and all is kind.

"His hand is just to great and small,  
Nor riches do his heart enthral.

"And he whose fair renown I sing.  
Is Erik, Denmark's famous king."

The aged but zealous leader of the songstresses now first fixed her eyes upon the king, and when she beheld his austere countenance and blinking eyelids, she became deadly pale. She stared at him, like a sorceress who had conjured up some fearful spirit, and was suddenly horrified on beholding the mighty unknown which her incantations had summoned forth. She involuntarily crossed herself, and turned away her look; but the apparition of the executioner and his rough assistants, who closed the procession, raised her terror so high that her senses forsook her, and, with a convulsive shriek, she fell to the ground. The king succeeded in curbing his startled horse, and rode hastily in with his retinue.

Drost Peter, who had not observed what occurred, hastened to assist the king from his saddle, and conduct him to the large riddersal, where stood a table magnificently spread, and where the

king, by another of Dorothy's arrangements, was received with a burst of music more sprightly than harmonious. The band was composed of rustic fiddlers and shawm-blowers, who were wont to exercise their skill at the weddings and merry-makings of the peasants. They scraped and blew with might and main, until the perspiration stood on their foreheads. They bowed so profoundly, too, and were at the same time so zealous to please the king, that they produced the most woful discords. Drost Peter silenced them, and sent them away; whilst the irritated monarch held his ears, and Chamberlain Rané, with a malicious smile, praised Drost Hessel's ingenuity in providing so pleasant a surprise for his majesty.

"This device of my old foster-mother's is better meant than happily executed, sir king," said Drost Peter. "I hope you will excuse such an innocent blunder of my domestics, who are not acquainted with courtly manners."

The king, who had become absorbed in thought, made no reply.

"I am not very tenderhearted," observed Sir John; "but I confess that this cat-music has quite softened me, for I perceive that it was well and honestly meant." The king appeared not to hear this remark; and Sir John addressed himself to the drost: "Was it your nurse who sang to us outside, Drost Peter? I scarcely recognised her in her finery."

"I scarcely knew her myself," replied the drost: "in her simplicity, she wanted to surprise me, too, with all this pomp."

"She screeched like an owl; but, nevertheless, it was quite touching," said the old knight, in his usual gay and careless tone, desirous to bring the king into a better humour, and dispose him to defer the executions he had so suddenly determined on. "The good women sang your grace and clemency, my king," he continued; "but they lost their voices when they perceived the hangman in your train. Will you not, then, sleep on your resolution tonight, and allow us to send the prisoners to Viborg? Methinks it were better to partake of an enlivening meal here, than to dwell on such serious matters?"

This latter suggestion, which Drost Peter supported by pointing to the seat of honour, seemed to meet the king's approbation. He remained silent, but took his place at the table, and swallowed one or two goblets of wine. Old Sir John attempted to introduce some lively conversation, but failed in his design of putting the king into better humour.

In the court, opposite the window, sat the executioner on his raw-boned horse, awaiting, with his ferocious assistants, the king's commands. Dorothy was carried sick to bed; and the sight which had operated so violently upon her, had also made a singularly painful impression on the other domestics. Warden Tygé, in the meanwhile, attended to the huntsmen, falconers, and pages, who were sumptuously entertained in three different apartments. But throughout the castle as great a silence reigned as if a funeral company had been assembled.

The king suddenly arose. "I will see the fellows," he said, in a tone of determination: "there can be nothing wrong in that. Let them be brought hither, drost; but heavily chained, and under a strong guard."

Drost Peter immediately left the apartment to execute this order, and in a minute afterwards he again entered the riddersal. The king was pacing the floor with rapid steps, whilst Sir John and the chamberlain stood silently watching the changing expression of his countenance. Drost Peter had also been standing for some moments in silence before the king's eyes met his.

"They will be here instantly, sir king," he said, advancing. "Permit me yet one word. None of these men were taken in any robbery. They have not deprived me of my property; and Sir Lavé Rimaardson did not attack me until I challenged him to single combat. He cannot be condemned as a robber before investigation, and a formal trial, according to the laws of the country."

"Silence!" replied the king: "an outlaw has no rights. But here we have them: I shall examine them myself."

Niels Breakpeace and twelve chained robbers now entered, under guard of warden Tygé and his armed house-carls. The robber-chief stepped forward with an air of proud defiance, at the head of his comrades; but Lavé Rimaardson, who seemed to blush at being found in such company, remained in the rear.

"Who is your leader?" inquired the king.

"I!" answered Niels Breakpeace, looking so daringly at him that he retreated a step.

"What is your name?"

"That every child in Denmark knows," replied the haughty robber: "with it the mothers can still their cubs, if even they have a knife in their throats. My name is sufficient to scare into corners all the wenches in your kingdom, and many a big-nosed fellow, too. If I had but an arm free, sir king, I should not give you time to hear my name out. Niels Breakpeace I am called. If you were as able a king as I am a robber, it would be better for kingdom and country, and perhaps I should now have been at your right hand."

"You confess, then, you are a robber, and that these fellows are your accomplices?"

"Were we to deny it, we should be scoundrels and mean scurvy fellows," replied Niels Breakpeace. "Lies and deceit you are perhaps accustomed to at court. I and my comrades are still honest in this respect."

"Good!" exclaimed the king. "You all know, then, the punishment to which the law condemns you. Prepare yourselves, therefore, to die within an hour."

"As well first as last, sir king! We all go the same way. But if you will suffer me to live till tomorrow, I will tell you something that may be of service to you, and that will, perhaps, defer our otherwise speedy meeting in another place."

The king opened wide his eyes, and cast a glance at Chamberlain Rané, who gave him a secret wink, and pointed to the dirk-handle which projected from the breast-pocket of the robber-chief.

"Ah, indeed!" said the king, again turning to the robber. "So, fellow! you would raise fear and curiosity in me, to obtain a respite, that you might escape, and do fresh mischief. No, no! That trick is stale and worn-out. If you cannot hit upon something better, you shall not live out the present hour."

"'Tis well! Let me go before, and prepare your place. This service I shall do you for old acquaintance' sake. There, now, you need not look so lofty, your grace! We two will soon be the same height, on the straw. What you and your equals do in the great way, I and mine have done in the small, you see: that is all the difference. If, for that, you will make me your herald to the other world, I must submit; today, you have still the power to do so: but you will rue it, sir king! We shall soon meet again, and then you will confess that Niels Breakpeace intended better towards you than yourself."

"Put him aside!" commanded the king: "he shall be executed the last. If he does not confess that which he says he can acquaint us with, he shall be put to the severest torture: you hear, Sir John--the severest."

Sir John replied by a silent bow to this stern mandate. An expression of sorrow was visible in the countenance of the old knight; but he hastily drew his hand across his furrowed brow, and was again calm and composed.

"Come forward, Lavé Rimaardson," cried the king; and the wild and desperate youth advanced, with an air that awoke the utmost pity and compassion in all, save the king and Chamberlain Rané, both of whom regarded him with secret anxiety.

"It was you whom I dubbed a knight with this sword, three years ago," said the king; "and now the hangman of your native town shall break your knightly weapon, and suspend your shield, reversed, beneath the gallows. You confess that you have been associated with these audacious and notorious robbers?"

"Yes, King Erik Christopherson," answered the young robber; "I confess that, and more: had we two met in Daugberg quarry, half an hour since, you should no more have seen the sun go down than I now expect to do."

"Ha! a conspiracy!" exclaimed the king. "You are not merely robbers and highwaymen--you are traitors, and audacious regicides! Who has paid you for the King of Denmark's life?"

"I am not a hired assassin," replied Lavé Rimaardson, proudly: "I am a knight of princely blood, and no king shall offend me with impunity. In the hour that you adjudged me an outlaw, I swore your death and downfall, King Erik! And were my right hand now free, I should keep my oath, and this moment would be your last."

"Madman!" exclaimed the king, stepping back; "if, by such audacious confession, you think to gain a respite, you are mistaken: you shall not even have time to name your accomplices, if you have them."

"There you are wise, King Erik," replied Rimaardson, with a contemptuous laugh. "Be sparing of the moments you have yet at your disposal. You know not how few they are; and, when your hour of reckoning comes, you will have more to account for than the sinners you now condemn to the rack and wheel."

"Peace, wretch!" cried the king, enraged; but an uneasy blinking of his eye seemed to indicate a sudden change in his feelings. "Your life is in my hands," he continued: "you are an outlaw and a rebel, a robber and murderer, and have even sought the life of your king and master; but Drost Hessel has testified that there is still within you a remnant of honour and of chivalrous spirit. Your brother Bent, too, is a trusty and deserving man; and your ignominious death, in company with these felons, would cast a shadow even on my throne. Think you not now, that King Erik Christopherson could still show you favour?"

"Yes! with endless imprisonment in fair Sjöborg: is it not so?" replied the haughty prisoner. "No! I do not, by a perjury, sell my soul and salvation, or, to save my life, forswear my revenge: it

shall and must arrive, if not by my hand, by another's! When the harvest is ripe, reapers enough are to be found--"

"Satan, speak out! What mean you?" cried the king, in painful uncertainty. "Wretched felon! know you not that I have racks at hand? Look through that window: there stands he who can unbind your tongue."

"It is unnecessary, King Erik," replied the prisoner, suppressing his voice, but raising his head and gazing on the king with a dreadful look: "your hangman need not cut me for being tongued. If you will hear the truth, I shall not conceal it in my dying hour. However great may be my crimes," he continued, in a louder tone, "I am still superior to the nidding who betrayed and dishonoured the wife of his best friend, whilst he bled in the nidding's behalf in the field of battle. If the brave Stig Andersen does not take full revenge for his wife's dishonour--if the blind, crazy father of Fru Ingeborg has not sight and sense enough remaining, to guide his sword into the false heart of King Erik--then there is not an honest drop of blood in the hearts of Danish nobles, and they deserve no better king than they have got."

The king had become deadly pale, whilst he foamed with rage, and his hand convulsively clutched the hilt of his large sword. He plucked the weapon from its scabbard, and rushed furiously on the prisoner, who remained immovable, and laughing wildly.

Drost Peter sprang between them. "This is no place of execution, sir king," he said, warmly; "and you are no executioner, to slay a defenceless prisoner. He is an insolent traitor, it is true, and I no longer intercede for his life; but my house shall not be stained by a deed unworthy of yourself and your crown. If you will and must have the blood of this youth, you have brought an executioner with you."

The wild rage of the king had suddenly abated. He angrily bit his lips, as he sheathed his sword, and cast a look at the daring drost, which plainly enough indicated that this was the last time he should suffer himself to be guided by such a bold adviser.

"Well, Drost Hessel," he said, coldly, "you are right: I had nearly forgotten my kingly dignity in the insolence of this daring criminal, and you have not been far from forgetting the respect you owe to your king. I shall, however, follow your wise advice. Have the prisoners conducted to the place of execution, Sir John. Lavé Rimaardson is the first who falls: that honour I award to his high birth. He shall die by the sword; but his head shall be placed on a pole, and the foxes shall tear his limbs to pieces. The others shall be broken alive on the wheel. Now, away!"

Sir John gave the warden a signal to lead forth the prisoners. Lavé Rimaardson cast a look of contempt towards the king. In going, he laid his wounded right hand upon his breast, and, with averted face, he silently pressed Drost Peter's hand with his left.

At the door, Niels Breakpeace sprang strongly upwards, rattling his chains. "Merry now, comrades!" he cried, with a shout of wild laughter: "let me now see you behave yourselves like men, and thrust out your tongues bravely until they are bit off. Follow my example till the last, and do honour to your chief. When you have seen them all on the wheel, sir king," he cried, in a tone of mockery, and once more turning round haughtily, "then comes the turn of those of greater note. If you come yourself, and, like a merciful headsman, give me my finishing stroke, I shall whisper a secret in your ear, of which you will know the truth when St. Cecilia's day is gone by." With these words he departed.

The king turned away with a look of contempt, but seemed discomposed by the parting words of the robber-chief. "Stay!" he cried. "Yet, nay, they shall not befool me, the crafty vermin! I know their tricks. With such mysterious talk has many a hardened villain escaped the gallows. Let my horse be brought forth, Rané. I shall observe, from a distance, whether they maintain their defiance to the last."

Rané went out, and soon afterwards returned, saying, "The horse is at the door, your grace."

"Your's, too?"

"At your command, sir king."

"I think, however, I shall consider. People do not sleep soundly after such sights, and we must be up betimes in the morning. All is ready for the chase, Drost Hessel?"

"Nothing shall be wanting, sir king," replied the drost, with a look of composure, which ill concealed the agitation of his feelings.

"I shall, nevertheless, ride to Daugber-Daas," observed the king: "it is still a diversion, and people may shut their eyes on what they do not care to see. You must confess yourself, my conscientious drost, that, in this matter, I have been both just and gracious."

Drost Peter bowed, but said nothing.

"My polite host bears me company, of course?" added the king, in an apparently friendly tone, but with anger in his heart.

"It will be much against my feelings, my king; but if you so command, I obey. No injustice has taken place, I confess: but this is not a royal spectacle, and I wished you worthier entertainment on this visit, which, now, I dare not call gracious."

"Let us set off. You can follow me," said the king, as he departed.

Rané smiled; and Drost Peter followed his royal guest, with a tortured heart, and in the gloomiest mood.

Next morning, when the sun arose, he shone on the corpses of the thirteen robbers on Daugberg-Daas. In the valley beneath was heard the merry sound of horns and the baying of hounds, as a magnificent hunting-train rode by. At its head, between Sir John and Drost Peter, was the king, in a handsome green hunting-suit. Behind them, bearing falcons and other hunting-gear, rode six smartly dressed pages, among whom was the little kindhearted Aagé Jonsen, bearing the king's favourite falcon. Next came, at the head of a troop of royal huntsmen, having thirty hounds in leashes, the Chamberlain Rané, who, like those he headed, was lightly armed with a bow and short hunting-knife; but he wore, besides, a magnificent small sword, with glittering gems in a hilt of silver, which the king had recently presented to him as a testimony of his favour.

Squire Skirmen was absent, as he had not yet returned from his visit to Henner Friser at the forest-lodge. He had obtained permission to remain until the afternoon of this day; and his place was now taken by warden Tygé, who closed the cavalcade in company with some archers, and a few active huntsmen from Harrestrup.

As the king passed Daugberg-Daas, he closed his eyes, and gave the spur to his steed. When they had left the hill some distance behind, he turned to his right, and addressed old Sir John.

"They obstinately maintained their defiance, then?" he said. "Yesterday evening, I wished not to disturb my night's rest by listening to the end of your narrative; and I went not so near to the spot myself that I could hear what they said. Would the audacious Niels Breakpeace reveal nothing?"

"Not a word, sir king; but he laughed horribly in the pangs of death, and promised that, within eight days, he would tell you all he knew."

The king blinked anxiously, and became pale. "Tell me, my dear Sir John," said he: "do you think all the threats and warnings the fellow hinted at, were anything more than crafty inventions, with which he hoped to escape the gallows?"

"I know not that, sir king; but, in your place, I should not have so greatly hurried the execution of their sentence. The mere fact that an outlawed knight, of such high birth, was found among these robbers, seemed to me, even without their own confession, certain proof that they were here on a more important and daring undertaking than plundering the pantries and wine-cellars of Harrestrup. They might have given us valuable information."

The king, as he listened to Sir John, became more and more uneasy. "By Satan!" he exclaimed, warmly, "I felt constrained to make quick work of them, effectually to prevent any of their daring designs being accomplished. But why did you not inform me of these wise conclusions when they were alive? Your prudence comes too late now, Sir John."

"You would not hear a word from me, sir king; and when I have an express royal command, I must be silent and obey; especially where, as in the present case, it is undeniably just, and according to the letter of the law."

"Now, by the rood! we shall think no more of it," exclaimed the king, endeavouring to overcome his uneasiness; and at the same time he set spurs to his horse, and ordered the huntsmen to strike up a lively hunting-air.

Drost Peter was grave and silent. The king had not yet spoken a word to him; and the sharp-sighted drost read in his manner, as well as in that of the crafty chamberlain, that his fall was determined on, and that the formal announcement was only delayed in order that it might not mar the day's pleasure. But the depressing conviction that his power and influence were at an end, was outweighed by doubts of far greater importance respecting the welfare of the kingdom, which had been called forth by Lady Ingé's admonition to watchfulness, and the circumstances connected with the capture and execution of the robbers.

Sir John, on the contrary, appeared to have abandoned every gloomy and disquieting thought. In his youth he had been a bold huntsman, but for many years had not partaken of this noble diversion. The sound of the horns and the cries of the chase awoke within him lively recollections of his early days, and, as the king's companion in the sport, he considered it his duty to be as cheerful and entertaining as possible.

When the first game was started, the king engaged eagerly and passionately in pursuit. For

dexterity in the chase he was without a rival; and he now rushed with wild impetuosity among the huntsmen and unleashed hounds, and, as usual, was highly admired by the strangers, as well for his rapidity, as for the certainty with which he brought down his game. Not without difficulty could old Sir John follow him; although he took care to make it appear that it did not cost him any exertion. Recalling the memory of his young days, he gave his mettlesome hunter the reins, and took the most daring leaps over ditches and fences.

Drost Peter was accustomed to such violent sport, but on this occasion he often felt himself painfully reminded of his recent wounds. This gloomy mood was speedily augmented by the concern he felt for Sir John, who, he plainly saw, was exerting himself beyond his strength; and he knew that it was useless to caution the old knight concerning it. However merry the latter appeared, he had, nevertheless, intimated to the drost, by a look, that he shared his grave doubts, and considered it highly essential that the hunt should keep together. If, now and then, they paused by a fallen deer, the chamberlain had instantly another in sight, and the king again dashed off with renewed ardour.

At length they reached a beautiful forest-glade, in which they halted to rest their horses, and to partake of a midday meal; during the preparation of which the chamberlain was inexhaustible in entertaining the king with pleasant hunting-stories. They seated themselves on the trunk of a fallen oak-tree. The cloth was spread on the fresh moss; at a little distance the huntsmen had encamped themselves, and the spoils of the chase were piled up close by. The pages waited on the king, who appeared in a good humour, and well contented.

"It is a chivalrous and right royal diversion," said Sir John, in answer to the king's question whether he had enjoyed himself. "In my young days, I was passionately fond of it; but now I am too old and stiff for the sport. Another time, sir king, I shall do better to remain at home, like the old hunting-steed."

"You would come with me, however," said the king. "Your fancy for it certainly surprised me."

"It was not entirely for the sake of the chase, sir king," said the old man, gravely, and with an observant look at Rané. "I am but little acquainted with this part of Jutland," he added, hastily: "I am glad, also, to see our good Drost Hessel in the capacity of host."

"You have seen, then, that he is master of his own house, and keeps strict watch over the security of his guests," replied the king, with a bitter smile: "even highwaymen and murderers are safe beneath his roof."

"If in that he went a little too far, your grace," said Sir John, "I pray you, for my sake, not to be offended with it. I did not regard the prisoners as so dangerous."

"I must confess, sir king," observed Drost Peter, "that this business of the robbers was of more importance than I believed; but they have now ended their lives and crimes together. If on that occasion I erred, and for a moment forgot the respect I owed my royal guest, let not this day's sun go down upon your wrath, my king. If I have lost your royal grace in consequence, suffer me at least--"

"Enough of this!" interrupted the king, coldly. "I have come here to amuse myself, and not to sit in judgment every day. I am master of my own thoughts, and you shall know my determination at the proper time. Let the huntsmen strike up."

Rané hastily gave a signal to the royal horn-blowers, who stood on a rising ground, at a little distance, and who immediately commenced a bold hunting-air, called King Waldemar Seier's Hunt, and to which the king was extremely partial.

A painful silence followed the king's ungracious remarks to Drost Peter. Rané smiled maliciously as he filled his master's goblet, and endeavoured, by some buffooneries, to restore mirthfulness; but the king left the wine untouched, and fell into deep thought. The rapid exercise and the consciousness of his skill in the chase, as well as his anger against Drost Peter, appeared to have banished from his countenance the undecided and contradictory shades of passion which so often disfigured it; and for an instant there beamed from it an expression of true kingly dignity and greatness, while, with his hand on his ponderous sword, he regarded his three chief counsellors with the air of one who could free himself from them at any moment he chose. The only one in which he reposed any kind of confidence was Rané; but him, in his better moments, he despised, as the wretched instrument of his vilest pleasures. The power which old Sir John exercised over him, with so much prudence and consideration, seemed to him just now a crafty invasion of the royal prerogative; and Drost Peter's bold superiority he regarded as an intolerable assumption. It appeared as if the quick, heart-stirring tones of Waldemar Seier's Hunt, which he had known from his childhood, recalled the daring dreams of his youth, with the memory of the time when, by his noble mother's side, he was saluted with the name of king, and felt the blood of the Waldemars in a bold and unsullied heart. But this proud expression quickly vanished as his whole misspent life of royalty passed before him, and the painful conviction seized him that he now sat, alone and hated, in the midst of his kingdom, without a single friend. His melancholy and despondency seemed on the point of overwhelming him; but he struggled against the humiliating feeling, and a wild defiance and sternness flashed from his eyes.

Drost Peter sat silent and thoughtful: in his dejected but candid countenance it could be plainly seen how much the king's displeasure went to his heart. His entire future efficiency seemed destroyed by a single hasty and incautious word. He could not acquit himself of arrogance whilst vindicating his sense of justice, on that occasion, when, by a too daring expression, he had drawn his master's wrath upon his head; and it was to him a bitter feeling to have offended his king at the moment when, as a guest, he had entered his house. At this instant it was almost more bitter than the thought of having lost the king's favour. But the monarch's stern look now fell upon him, and its excessive harshness seemed to recall him to himself. The undauntedness with which he encountered it was, however, little calculated to appease the offended king; who, instead of penitence and humility, was met by strong self-confidence and calm courage, which no displeasure of his could humble.

Rané and old Sir John were attentive observers of this significant play of looks, which filled up the pause in the conversation caused by the music. The sagacious old statesman appeared calm and indifferent; though a tear, which he speedily dashed away, glistened in his eye, as he observed the remains of loftiness and dignity which had lit up the passion-worn countenance of the king. He saw with concern that the fall of the trusty Drost Peter was determined on, and that his own influence was also endangered; but what most annoyed him was the ill-concealed triumph of the cunning chamberlain, and the busy zeal with which he prepared for the continuance of the chase. The old knight observed that Rané now made an unusual gesture; on which the king nodded to him, as if in accordance with some private understanding. His majesty seemed about to rise, but again relapsed into deep thought. The music still continued.

"Herregud!" exclaimed old Sir John, breaking the long silence, "they are playing Waldemar Seier's Hunt. It is a strange thought, sir king. If your great ancestor, of blessed memory, had had Count Albert and the trusty Charles of Risé by his side, when this air was played at the unfortunate hunting on Ly Island, the black Count Henry had perhaps never got him into his clutches."<sup>[31]</sup>

"A stag! a stag!" shouted Chamberlain Rané, springing up.

The king hastily arose, as a herd of deer, with a stag at their head, rushed past. In an instant the huntsmen were on horseback, the horns sounded lustily, and the dogs broke away.

"Away!" ordered the king, swinging himself into his saddle; and Drost Peter and Sir John started off by his side. The chamberlain rode in advance; and the chase now recommenced with redoubled ardour. They frequently lost and again found the track of the herd; and thus continued for several hours, without any pause.

"Sir king," said Drost Peter, at length, riding close up to him as he stopped an instant to observe the hounds and the track, "permit us a slight pause. Sir John's years make this violent exercise painful to him; and my wounds are bleeding through the bandages."

"Those who cannot follow, may stay behind," replied the king: "I have huntsmen enough with me, and require you not. Away, Rané!"

The hunt was pursued with enthusiasm, but neither Sir John nor Drost Peter remained behind. The day at length began to close, and Drost Peter again rode in between Rané and the king.

"If you would get back to Harrestrup before night, sir king," he said, with visible uneasiness, "we must now turn, and give the deer a respite for to-day."

"I shall do as it pleases me!" cried the king, irritated. He had just wounded the stag they were in pursuit of. "That stag shall be mine," he shouted, "should I pursue him till to-morrow."

They continued at a flying gallop over stump and stone, through brake and briar, with hounds yelling and horns winding. Drost Peter and Sir John still followed, and did not lose sight of the king for an instant; until, in taking a dangerous leap, Sir John's horse fell with him, and he received a violent blow on the side, which for an instant deprived him of consciousness.

Drost Peter sprang from his horse to his aid, and found, with consternation, that the old knight had broken a rib. "Hold! for God's sake, hold!" he shouted, with all his might.

The huntsmen stopped when they heard the drost's powerful voice, which they were accustomed to obey. They quickly came to assist, and a litter of boughs was soon made, on which to carry the old man, every one showing for him the greatest sympathy. But, in the meanwhile, the king and Chamberlain Rané, with two of the fleetest falconers, had gone out of sight.

As soon as Sir John regained his senses, and found himself on the litter, surrounded by Drost Peter and the anxious huntsmen, he inquired with concern and alarm respecting the king.

"He would not stop," answered Drost Peter; "but he must be back immediately. It is impossible to continue the hunt longer, for it is almost night."

"After him, Drost Peter!" cried the old man; "for Heaven's sake, after him! What think you of?" he whispered: "he is alone with Rané! Your people can care for me. Away!"

"Care well for him, Tygé--he is the king's most important counsellor," said Drost Peter to his castle-warden, as he sprang on his horse. "Bear him, with your huntsmen, carefully to Harrestrup. You others follow me. God be with you, noble sir!"

In another instant Drost Peter, with the royal huntsmen, had disappeared in the forest; whilst warden Tygé and his men leisurely and gently bore Sir John back to Harrestrup.

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In a little lonely forest-house, in the neighbourhood of Finnerup, stood, at about the same hour of the evening, Claus Skirmen, with his squire's cap in his hand. Before him were old Henner Friser and Aasé. The powerful, gigantic old man seemed to have prepared himself for the worst. He stood, leaning on a long javelin, in his Frisian war-suit of leathern mail, with his seal-skin cap drawn over his straggling gray hairs. The pretty little Aasé appeared occupied with far more peaceful thoughts. She wore the same dark blue jacket, plaited kirtle, and light blue apron, in which Skirmen had first seen her, when he assisted in liberating her from Hegness. She held him familiarly by the hand, and bent on him tenderly her dark playful eyes, whilst he, half ashamed, seemed to expect some important reply from old Henner.

"Thanks for thy warning, brave youth," said the latter, shaking Skirmen heartily by the hand. "It is well thou camest so early, to assist us with our slender preparations for defence. Our persecutors may now come when they will: none shall see us longer than we ourselves list. If thy account be true--and I do not take thee for a braggart--thou art a smart youth--the affair of the robbers was no jesting matter. If thou goest on thus, and thy master, with a good conscience, can hereafter give thee the stroke of knighthood, I have no objection that my little Aasé should love thee, and thou her. But when we meet again, we shall talk more of it."

Skirmen and Aasé embraced each other with transport, and hugged the old man with the utmost joy.

"Good, good, my children. God and St. Christian bless ye!" continued old Henner, with emotion. "But this is not the time to prattle and think of love. Thou must off, Skirmen, and inform thy master of what we know."

"I have done so already," replied Skirmen: "what the Rypen burghers said in the tavern, he knows; but he does not think it has any great meaning."

"Tell him, then, from me," said the old man, "that it certainly means no less than folks say the three suns portend which we saw in the heavens on St. Remy's day. It was the day before the feast of All Saints, and the learned clerks speak much of a heathen goddess of revenge that used to be worshipped on that day. Our Lord knows the witch, and I am not skilled in the signs of the sun and moon; but this I know, that when disaffected knights creep about in monks' cowls, it is for no good or holy purpose. So beg thy master, first and foremost, to take care of himself and the king, as he passes the barn of Finnerup. And now away! Give him a kiss, Aasé, and let him run. Thy norback, Skirmen, is more zealous than thyself in the king's service. Hearest thou not how impatiently he neighs?"

"Farewell, father Henner--farewell, dear Aasé!" exclaimed Skirmen, hastily. "But be cautious, Aasé! If thou passest for an elf, be as cunning as one; and, for God's sake, disappear as soon as you observe any mischief."

"Take care, my young knight, that I am not an elf in reality!" cried Aasé, playfully, as she embraced him. "Seest thou not my blue kirtle, and brown two-peaked hood? Ay, right! look in my eyes and not to my back, for I am as hollow there as a dough-trough.<sup>[32]</sup> Away, now--out with thee! save thy king and master, or thou deservest never to be a knight, and I will have nothing more to say to thee."

Skirmen embraced her hastily, and hurried out, accompanied by his sweetheart and the old man. Shortly afterwards he was riding through the wood at a gallop, and Henner Friser re-entered the cottage with his granddaughter. Neither of them spoke. He barred the door, cast his spear into a corner, and sat down musingly on his rush-cushioned seat. Aasé took her distaff, and sat down to work by the window, for the interior of the room was now quite dark.

"Light the lamp, Aasé," said the old man, at length, breaking the silence, and rising with uneasiness. "It is still too early to go to rest in the hole inside, and thou knowest I cannot bear to sit in the dark."

"But were it not better to-night, dear grandfather?" replied Aasé. "If even I were to hang my apron before the window, the light would still shine through; and, if we would keep concealed, were it not advisable--"

"I am not a carlin," exclaimed Henner. "I am not so much afraid of man, that I must sit in the dark, and be tormented by the devil. The living I fear not: would only that the restless dead would grant me peace!"

"Dost thou again think of the dead, dear grandfather?" said Aasé, with a sigh, as she lighted



the lamp and hung it on an iron hook attached to the low rafters; having first, however, taken care to hang her thin light blue apron before the horn-window that looked out on the wood. "It is not the dead, but the living, that persecute us, dear grandfather," she continued, sitting down to her work opposite his chair. "It is only the storm tearing the dry boughs from the trees, and the wild birds hooting dismally in the woods, that sometimes make thee uncomfortable at night."

"It seems always to come from Gottorp," muttered the old man, who had resumed his seat: "'tis there he lies, with the stake through his heart--the accursed king, who caused his brother to be cast into the river Sley!--and he it is who hunts through the forest at midnight. I long regarded it as a delusion and a superstition, but now I must believe it, since I have myself seen it."

"The rood save us!" exclaimed Aasé; "when didst thou see it?"

"On the night after St. Remy's day, when we saw the wonderful sight in the air--yesterday three weeks: it was Sunday, and we had been in church. You remember how it howled in the storm. You fell asleep in the corner there; but I could not close an eye because of the horrid din. I stood up at last, and looked through the window into the forest, and then I knew it was no delusion. I saw, in the moonshine, a coal-black figure riding at full speed through the woods, on a steed of raven blackness. The animal snorted and neighed as if possessed by the Evil One, and sparks flew from his hoofs. Behind him came one of an iron mould, who must have been the foul fiend himself. Three big hounds followed, glistening in the moonlight; but whether or not they were fiery, as people say, I cannot, however, be certain. I had enough of what I had seen; and no one shall now convince me that King Abel's wild hunt is mere nonsense and superstition."

"I certainly saw the same two riders last Monday evening," replied Aasé; "but thou mayst believe me, grandfather, they were living men. The forester's Mary also saw them, and she thought they must have been the dreadful Stig Andersen from Möllerup, and the sturdy Mat Jute, who always attends him. It was shortly before we heard of the grayfriar monks of Rypen, and the apparitions in Finnerup barn, which thou thyself believest to be conspirators lying in wait for the king."

"Thou mayst be right, child!" ejaculated Henner, more composed, yet shaking his gray head dubiously: "I am an old fool to take such fancies in my head. But were it even the accursed King Abel himself," he continued, rising, "let him come when he will! I have not been afraid to look him in the face before now. I have yet my old steel-bow; and my good Frisian spear shall still keep every nidding at bay, be he dead or alive." He remained standing in the middle of the floor, his arms crossed, and in deep thought. "If it should really have been Stig Andersen?" he exclaimed, suddenly--"if he should be here, and be himself one of the apparitions at the barn, there is far more danger than I had supposed; and this is not the time to be creeping under cover from one's own shadow. It were better I rode over to the drost. Skirmen is a nimble youth; but, now that thou hast put love-whimsies into his head, he cannot be so much depended on. He has been as awkward about everything to-day as if he had never before taken spade or axe in his hand."

"He is the son of a knight, grandfather, and has not been accustomed to such kind of work. But you shall see that he is smart enough when the safety of his king's life is concerned."

"Thou mayst talk of thy squire as thou wilt. If he be not a better squire than woodman, he will never in his life be a knight. Tell me, Aasé, art thou afraid to be left alone to-night?"

"Afraid, grandfather?" she replied, quickly, colouring: "nay, not exactly that--if thou hadst not spoken of the vile dead king. But it does not matter," she continued, gaily, as she observed a shade of displeasure and uneasiness in the countenance of the old man: "I am not easily frightened, grandfather. I am an elf, thou knowest; and, when I do not wish to be seen, I have only to make myself invisible."

"That thou canst well, child," said the grandfather, regarding her with tender interest: "brave Frisian blood runs in thy veins, and thou hast now been long free from thy dreaming-sickness. That is some assurance for thy safety; but if thou art at all anxious, I will not leave thee. Thou art the apple of mine eye, Aasé, and I have nothing else in the world much to care for; but when danger threatens the land, every true Frisian will be watchful, if our Lord and St. Christian permit him. This is an important business, thou knowest well. For the king, himself, I would not give a rotten rope's end; but still, as regards the crown and country, his life is of importance, until Drost Hessel has reared a better king for us. The drost saved thy honour, and, perhaps, my life: he is true to his king, like a brave fellow; and I am bound to serve, as best I can, both him and his master. If thou canst suffer to be left alone, I shall ride immediately, and find Drost Hessel and the king, wherever they may be. On such an errand, I should think I am safe."

"Ride, in God and the Holy Virgin's name, grandfather, if thou oughtest and must. I am not afraid, and can guard myself," replied Aasé, boldly.

The old man hesitated no longer. "Come, then, a morsel of bread in my wallet, whilst I saddle my horse," he said, as he passed through the kitchen, and across the yard to the stable.

Aasé accompanied him into the kitchen, and immediately afterwards returned alone, with some victuals, which she placed in a badger-skin wallet that hung suspended from a deer's antler near the fireplace.

Whilst thus occupied, the apron fell from the little horn-window; but unobserved by her, as she stood at the table opposite the light, with her back turned towards the casement. The point of a slender sword had pierced the horn, undone the fastening of the apron, and was then hastily withdrawn. A wily face, with a reddish beard, now peeped in. It disappeared, and immediately gave place to another, which likewise disappeared as Aasé turned round. She now first observed that the apron had fallen from the window, and proceeded quietly to hang it up again, without observing the small puncture in the horn.

Her grandfather re-entered by the kitchen, equipped for his journey. "I shall ride out by the back gate," he said, as he threw his hunting-wallet over his broad shoulders. "And thou art, then, really not afraid, child? If thou noticest anything suspicious, thou knowest what to do. If thou darest not have a light, put out the lamp."

"Be tranquil on my account, grandfather," replied Aasé, without the least symptom of fear; "but, since thou hast talked so much about the dead, I shall not extinguish the lamp. The living I can guard against. When may I expect thy return?"

"Before daybreak," replied the old man. "Bar the kitchen-door after me, and open it to no one until thou hearest nine strokes on it. God bless thee!"

He fondly embraced her, and departed through the door by which he had entered. Aasé fastened it after him, and returned to the lonely room. Shortly afterwards she heard the hoofs of a horse in the forest, and recognised the firm gallop of her grandfather.

About a bow-shot from the little forest-house, behind a close thicket of white thorns, stood two saddled horses, held by two stately pages, who themselves were seated on a pair of small hunters, and carried each a falcon on his arm; and at a few paces from it stood the king and Chamberlain Rané, whispering together, behind some elder-bushes that entirely concealed them.

"That was the old man who rode out," whispered Rané: "it could not have happened better. And heard you, sir?--nine strokes on the door opens it."

"Humph! I had rather have given up the whole sport," muttered the king, with much uneasiness. "You should have sought out the road."

"Sooth to say, sir king, I was better acquainted with the forest than I pretended; but I wished to give you a surprise, and keep my promise. Now you have yourself seen that she is here, and concealed from you by Drost Hessel. This is his forest-house, and here has he maintained both the girl and the regicide since last year."

"Silence!" whispered the king, with growing fear; "name not the damned word! He has not yet gone far, and who knows that traitors are not at hand? It was imprudent in you, Rané, to lead me, on such foolery, so far into the forest, at this hour. How easily you might have carried me into the claws of the old Satan! The little minx I should like to get hold of, but I shall not risk too much for her: I have not quite forgotten what the daring Niels Breakpeace and the fearful Lavé Rimaardson said to me yesterday. They are now on the wheel, and will grin horribly in the moonshine as we ride by.----Rané," he continued, after a thoughtful pause, "I have not been in a church for many a year, and am not versed in saints' days. When is St. Cecilia's?"

"Faith, I know not, sire," replied the chamberlain: "I am not a whit more saintly than yourself. But it cannot be far off."

"The bold ruffian said that that day must be past before I could know his secret. This is not a time for fooleries and wench-hunting. It is night, and I have not a man with me except yourself. Thou wilt not betray thy king, Master Rané? Thou art not yet so godless as to lead me into a snare?"

"The cross defend me, your grace! How can you think so?" stammered Rané.

They had approached the house, and a faint glimmer from the chink in the curtained window fell on Rané's face. The king looked at his crafty chamberlain with an anxious, scrutinising glance, and kept his hand constantly on the hilt of his sword.

"I have many a time confided in thee," he continued, "and we have had many pleasant adventures together; but whom in the world am I now to trust, when Drost Hessel can be traitor enough to conceal a regicide, and even old Sir John is not to be depended upon?"

"I only half distrust them, sir king," said Rané, quickly; "and it is still possible I may be mistaken. But so long as I am with you, you are safe. When the least danger threatens, I shall warn you. If I had intended to betray you, sire, I should have taken care not to inform you of what I had heard and seen at Möllerup."

"But thou, too, didst lay thy hand upon the book, Rané--thou, too, didst swear thy king's downfall; what thou didst add to thine oath, no one heard."

"I were but a poor spy for you, sir king, did your enemies not believe me worthy of credit. But think no more of these things. Here you are safe. I hoped to have earned thanks from you to-night

for a pleasant surprise, instead of which I am paid with doubts and scruples, whilst you squander here the precious moments. The pretty Aasé sits within, and wearies. Perhaps she is already asleep, and sweetly dreams of you."

"Talk not of her dreams, Rané, for they are frightful: she nearly drove me mad with them at Hegness. Beautiful she is, it is true, but as cunning as a she-devil. It is said that she has really power to foretell the future, and I almost believe it. If it be so, there are one or two things worth knowing from her. Heard you what the peasant said about the three suns?"

"Mere superstition and nonsense, sir king. In truth, I did not half comprehend him. But what he said about elfin-moss I could understand. From his description, it was neither more nor less than our little Aasé. She is cunning enough, perhaps, to avail herself of the credulity of the peasants, to render herself of importance, and drive a sly trade in the hidden arts. So, sir king, if you too are superstitious, and wish to have your fate unriddled, you have here an opportunity of gratifying your curiosity: you are but a few paces from the elf-woman; and, from such a pretty little mouth, you can hear no unpleasant prediction. In any case this will be a sufficient excuse for your unexpected visit, and give more zest to the adventure."

"So be it, then. I will visit her, Rané; but take care that no one surprises us, and be at hand when I call."

"You are perfectly safe, sir king."

The tall huntsman then approached the door of the little forest-house, cautiously and irresolutely. He first looked through the horn-pane, but could only distinguish the light of the lamp and an ill-defined female form, reclining, apparently, on a bench. He stood by the door and raised his hand, but let it fall again. At length he summoned resolution to strike the door nine times, gently, with the hilt of his sword. He heard a light, slow footstep in the room. The bar inside was withdrawn, and all was again still. He lingered a moment, as if undecided; and then half opened the door gently, and peeped in. The lamp burned dimly beneath the rafters, and on the bench by the table lay the beautiful little Aasé, apparently asleep. He now wholly opened the door, and softly entered. Having closed and bolted it after him, he approached the sleeping girl and gazed at her with admiration in his blinking eyes. Never, he thought, had he seen a more beautiful woman. Her little cap lay on the table, by the side of a breviary written in Gothic characters and in the Frisian dialect. The jet black locks of the maiden were released from their bands, and fell freely down and over her virgin neck and shoulders. The king, not to frighten her with his long sword, hung it on a small wooden hook on the wall.

"Aasé--little Aasé--wake up!" he whispered. "Thou must grant me a kindly welcome to-night."

The sleeping girl leisurely arose; but her eyes were closed.

"Do not fall asleep again, little Aasé," he continued: "I had enough of this jest before. Open thy pretty eyes, and look on me. Dost thou not know me?"

She opened her eyes, but they did not look on him: they were widely extended, and her gaze fixed, without play or animation; and her little handsome countenance, which was deadly pale, wore the solemn and fearful expression of somnambulism.

"Now, by my soul!" exclaimed the king, falling back, perplexed, "if thou art a witch or sorceress, I shall hold no farther parley with thee. Thou shalt be burnt one day, when thou fallest into the hands of the clerks. Yet, nay: thou art too beautiful for that," he added, recovering his calmness, and looking at her keenly. "Ha, woman! is this real, and no crafty jugglery? If thou canst gaze down upon the damned, say what the dead robber on the Daugberg wheel is about? What would he tell King Erik Christopherson within eight days?"

"The robber on the wheel?" repeated Aasé in a soft, toneless voice, and without changing her mien or posture--"he is now in the black pit, and calls on King Erik Christopherson."

The king started: he gazed on her again, and blinked with much uneasiness and suspicion, as he looked around. "Deceive me, cheat, and it shall cost thee thy life!" he muttered, with his hand on the hilt of his dagger, and retreating a step farther towards the door. "Whom seest thou in the pit?" he again inquired, in a low tone, appearing no longer to doubt that she was in some wonderful state that enabled her to see into the Hidden, and perhaps to reveal the Future which he dreaded.

She hesitated to reply, as it seemed to cost her a painful effort to look on that which presented itself to her interior sense--a sense so different from that denoted by her rigid, motionless, extended eyes.

"In the pit I see robbers--murderers--ravishers!" she said, at length, in the same whispering, toneless voice: "there are kings, princes, and bishops among them. And, lo! there he sits--the murderer of his brother--on a throne of dead men's bones, with cushions of fiery serpents! He prepares a place for his brother's son! Hearest thou?--"

"Woman! demon! What devilry dreamest thou of?" exclaimed the king, overcome with fearful anguish. "Answer me! Speak! Can I yet be saved? How long a respite have I?"

"Ask the sword that rattles on the wall!" replied the somnambulist in a louder voice, pointing to the king's sword, but without turning her eyes towards it: "when that falls, thy time is near at hand."

With a convulsive motion, the king snatched at his sword; but the slender hook that supported it gave way, and it fell, rattling, on the stone floor.

"This is the sword of a king, and not that of a headsman!" exclaimed the king, proudly and vehemently, as he hastily took up the weapon, appearing, as he grasped it, to recover strength to overcome his terror. "When the heading-sword rattles on the wall, well I know it waits for blood," he muttered; "but this shall drink that of my foes. Ha! tell me, thou fearful woman!" he continued, looking anxiously around him, "who are the accursed traitors that lay wait for me? Where are they, and how many?"

"If thou wilt know their number, reckon it on thy belt," replied Aasé. "Beware of the grayfriar cloaks: they conceal bold warriors. They ride, with drawn swords, through the forest. See! look!--the blind, bald monk!--he laughs, and whets his sword on his nails!"

"Ha! Pallé, Pallé!--is it thee?" muttered the king, staring wildly in the direction on which the fearful dreamer's gaze seemed to be fixed.----"Seest thou more?"

"I see a man, with glowing eyes, clad in iron," replied Aasé, in a fainter voice, apparently exhausted, and almost sinking to the ground: "he spurs his black steed, and his great sword is drawn! Now will he revenge the dishonour of his wife!"

The king still stared wildly before him. "Sorceress! she-devil!" he at length shouted madly, "if thou art leagued with my deadly foes, thou shalt be the first to fall by this sword." And he sprang, with phrensied violence, to seize her by the throat; but his hand grasped only her loose kerchief, whilst his uplifted sword rattled against the lamp, which fell, extinguished, on the floor; and at the same moment he heard a shriek, and a hollow sound like the closing of a large chest-lid.

The girl had suddenly disappeared. The king raved wildly, and laid his sword about him in the darkness. A dreadful anguish overwhelmed him; and he would have called out, but was unable. He groped for the door, but could not find it; and then rushed madly against a wooden partition, which gave way, when the house seemed to fall about him.

A cold breeze now met him. He stumbled, and fancied he had fallen into some frightful murder-den. His senses became bewildered, and he saw before him all the hideous forms he most dreaded. The pale Fru Ingeborg, with raised dagger, nodded at him with her lean, skeleton head; her blind, crazy father danced around him with wild laughter, groping at random for his prey; and the terrible Stig Andersen stood threatening him, whichever way he turned, with the same fearful look of revenge as when he denounced him at the Thing of Viborg. A cold perspiration stood on his forehead. The ground seemed to shake under him; and he reeled forward, without knowing where, till he stumbled over a stone, and tore his face among thorns. This recalled his senses, and he now found himself in the midst of a wild thicket in the forest. The faint starlight shone dubiously, and he looked despairingly around him. There was no house to be seen, and the apparition of the girl occurred to him like a frightful dream.

He now recovered his voice. "Am I mad or bewitched?" he exclaimed. "Rané, Rané! where art thou?"

He heard a rustling among the bushes, and Rané stood, terrified, before him.

"The rood protect us, sire!" stammered the astonished chamberlain: "how have you come hither? and whither has the house vanished? I fancied I heard you calling from the thicket, and sprang towards the sound: I then rushed wildly into the cursed elfin-moss, but could find no traces of the house."

"It is devilry and sorcery," said the king: "if thou, too, hadst not seen both the girl and the house, I could have sworn I had been dreaming, or was mad. Where are the horses?"

"Close by, sire. I hear them snorting and pawing."

"Away!" cried the king: "lead me from this infernal spot. I am mad or bewitched, and while I remain here I am less than a man."

"Shall I bring the horses, sire?"

"Nay, do not leave me! Lead me to them. Give me thy hand, Rané!" And he grasped the chamberlain's hand convulsively. "Thou art still true to me? thou art not in league with my murderers, and wilt not basely betray thy king and master's life?"

"How can you doubt me, sir king? I have been in the most deadly fear for you. You may be right, however, in your suspicions of sorcery: for this cannot be so in the usual nature of things--a house cannot thus, by human means, sink suddenly into the earth. But how did you fall among the thorns?"

"I know not, Rané. Where are the horses?"

"We shall reach them instantly, sire. Follow me, and fear not. We shall find a way out of this bewitched forest. Ho, pages! Hither with the horses."

Little Aagé Jonsen and his comrade now approached with the animals.

"Has there happened any misfortune?" inquired Aagé. "I fancied I heard the king shouting?"

"He had only got bewildered in the thicket," replied Rané. "Here is your horse, sir king. Allow me to assist you, and to lead you through the thorns, until we reach a road or pathway."

The king mounted his horse in silence, and allowed Rané to lead him through the bushes. They proceeded thus for some time, but could find neither road nor path. The pages were leading their horses in the rear, and one of them began to cry. "We shall never get out of the forest," he whimpered.

"Be quiet, Bent," replied Aagé, "and do not let the king perceive that you are so silly."

"Is there no end to this?" exclaimed the king, impatiently. "Whither dost thou lead me, Rané? The farther we go the worse it seems. Where are we?"

"We must soon find an outlet, sire!" replied Rané: "I can already see an open space; but where we are I am unable to say, were it to save my life. Yet, stay; now I can see a light. Here lies a whole village: it must be Finnerup. We cannot reach Harrestrup tonight, and you must be wearied, sir king: let us therefore rest at Finnerup, at least until the moon rises. There you may be tranquil, sire. They are brave people in Finnerup; and no evil shall befall you."

"In the name of God and all the saints!" exclaimed the king, anxiously, "let us only get under cover, and out of this infernal forest."

In a short time they reached an open field, and a pathway that led to the little country village. They all mounted. The king felt himself relieved when he again saw lights, and the sign of human beings. They were not far from the village, but it was getting late, and, one after another, the lights were extinguished.

"It must be bedtime with them," observed Rané, "and we may find some difficulty in obtaining shelter, unless we make ourselves known. But if you can bear with the scanty accommodation, we can at least find admission to the large barn of Finnerup. They are bound to give travellers shelter there; and that they are honest people, I need not tell you."

"This would be safest," said the king. "But should there be any dangerous travellers there, who might recognise us?"

"I will first enter, and look after the accommodation, sire. See, yonder stands the barn: it is open, and the lights are still burning. Let us hasten, sire, before they also are extinguished."

They now set spurs to their horses, and rode at a brisk trot towards the straw-thatched building, which lay in a remote corner of the village, near a little mean hut, occupied by an alehouse keeper, and frequented only by peasants and the poorer sort of people. This ale-house was closed and dark; and at the open door of the barn they saw only a couple of stablemen, about to lead out some horses.

"Remain here, sire--I shall return again instantly," said Rané.

He rode up to the barn, looked carefully around him, spoke a few words with the stablemen, and returned immediately.

"There is not a soul in the barn," he said, hastily; "there is excellent clean straw to rest upon, and the people do not know us. Follow me, your grace."

He rode forward, and the king followed him to the long, gloomy barn, which was dimly lighted up by a solitary horn-lantern, suspended by a rope from a centre beam. As the king passed the stablemen, he threw on them a sharp scrutinising look; but they doffed their goat-skin caps carelessly, and did not appear to know him.

"Shut the barn-door, Rané, and fasten it well," he said, dismounting from his horse, which the pages took, together with Rané's and their own, and led to the long mangers.

The king, who was much fatigued, then threw himself on a bundle of straw, but kept his look upon Rané, who, with much noise, was apparently fastening one of the lower bars of the door. There still remained a bolt to be shot in at the top; but this seemed too high for the chamberlain to reach. He therefore, laid down, close to the door, a bundle of straw, on which he stood, and secured the upper bolt firmly.

"There, now," he said, returning towards the king, and panting for breath, "I have fastened both bolt and bar. It was as much as I could do to manage the large bar. It is as thick as a beam, and the man who can break it is not born of woman."

"'Tis well, my trusty Rané" said the king, kindly: "repose thyself now beside me. Thou hast suffered enough to-night on my account. When we remember what Marsk Stig said at Viborg, we should avoid such adventures," he continued, familiarly, though with inquietude. "We shall never again ride out in Jutland during the night. Humph! had I outlawed him at that time, perhaps I had done well; but old John considered it more prudent to deal mildly with him. This Marsk Stig is a violent man, and singularly true to his word. More than once, lately, have I imagined I saw him."

"He is now certainly at his table, drinking wine with his good friends, at Möllerup," replied Rané, who remained standing, respectfully; "and little dreams that the King of Denmark reposes to-night on straw, in a wretched barn. Marsk Braggart would be glad to be on terms with you," continued Rané, "although he fancies that it is he who defends the whole nation, since he got you to acknowledge the laws and edicts of the kingdom. But if you would have him alive, Möllerup is not impregnable. The foolhardy marsk should bear in mind what the ballad says."

"What says the ballad?" inquired the king, abstractedly and pensively.

"I have not, in sooth, much dependence on ballad wisdom, sir king," replied Rané; "but it is a true saying, nevertheless, if rightly understood:--

"The lapwing would fain guard everywhere,  
And about the field doth fly;  
But she guardeth not the little hill  
Whereon she might rely."

"Alas, yes, my trusty Rané," replied the king, sorrowfully; "and the saying is as applicable to me. But did you fasten the door carefully? I thought I heard it shake in the wind."

"It does not shut closely, sire; but the bar will hold it against the greatest force. I fear the light is going out," he continued, hastily: "there must be a thief in the candle. Shall I lower it and see?"

"You may; but be cautious, as there is so much straw lying about; and take care that a gust of wind does not extinguish it. Come, I shall trim it myself."

Whilst they were busied with the light, the loud trampling of horses was heard outside the barn.

"There are numerous travellers arriving, sire," exclaimed Rané, taking the candle in his hand: "shall we suffer them to enter?"

"Nay, for God's sake, nay!" replied the king, in perturbation. "If they want to come in, say the barn is full, and that there is no room."

They were silent, and held their breath to listen; but all was now quiet again.

"They have gone past, perhaps," whispered the king, as he sat half erect on the straw, in a listening posture, and with his hand on the hilt of his sword.

Both the pages had crept up to them, and all listened for some minutes, but there was a profound silence.

"What day is this?" at length inquired the king; "for a worse I have never lived."

"This is St. Cecilia's night, sir king," replied little Aagé, who perceived with terror that the king instantly became pale. "Ah, gracious sir king," continued the page, "suffer us to pray the holy Cecilia that she keep her hand over you this night."

"Pray!--pray thou, child! I cannot," replied the king. "Mass-bell and church-hymn, I never followed: the holy Cecilia aids not me."

The little Aagé folded his hands and prayed. Rané still held the lantern, which he now opened, and a stronger light fell upon the king, who, with a profound melancholy in his countenance, sat among the straw, fumbling thoughtfully with his belt.

"That is well, Rané: light me, and help me to reckon," he whispered. "How many studs are there in my belt?"

Rané held the light closer. "I count twelve," he replied: "but why desire you to know that?"

"That was a singular woman in the forest, Rané. She could see up into heaven and down among the damned. She bade me count the studs upon my belt, if I would know the number of my traitors. Twelve only you reckoned? I fancied I had counted fourteen. Thirteen there are, at least."

"Who would be guided by the number of buttons, sire?" replied Rané. "When a man cannot make up his mind, I have heard that he should count his buttons; but that is suited only to children, sire."

"Thou thinkest, then, that we should be decided, Rané? Reckon again, and, perhaps, thou mayst consider. Is it not so?--there are thirteen?"

"Well, possibly," replied Rané, shutting the lantern; "but thirteen is not a lucky number, sir king."

"Thou art right. Thirteen was the number when the false Judas betrayed his heavenly Lord and King. But, why becomest thou so pale, Rané?"

"I have fasted the whole day, your grace," replied Rané, looking towards the door: "it is, therefore, no wonder if I am a little palefaced. But listen! What is that?"

Lusty blows were now heard on the barn-door, as if with spears and poles.

"Arise, King Erik, and come forth to us!" shouted a powerful voice outside.

"I am betrayed!" exclaimed the king, springing up. "That was the terrible Stig Anderson's voice." He had drawn his sword; but stood irresolute and perplexed, and pale as a spectre.

The chamberlain, with the lantern in his hand, ran to the door. "King Erik is not here--that you must surely know," he cried. "Conceal yourself, sire," he whispered to the agitated monarch. "Lay yourself down: I will cover you with straw, and no one shall see you." He extinguished the candle, and threw the lantern from him, and they now stood in total darkness.

"Rané, Rané! wilt thou betray thy king and master?" whispered the wretched king.

"Hide yourself--hide yourself, sire! I shall defend you to the last drop of my blood."

"So shall I too!" cried little Aagé Jonsen, who had hitherto knelt and prayed, but who now sprang up with fire and spirit. "Alas! had I but a sword!"

The little Bent wept and cried aloud, whilst the noise without continued.

"Be still--be still, youth! Resistance is useless here," whispered the king to Aagé. "Do not betray me with your whining, Bent," he added; "but cover me with straw, and set yourselves down quietly in a corner."

They hastily concealed the king with straw, and did as he had commanded them.

The noise outside was still increasing. The assailants hammered lustily against the barn-door, until the slight bolt at the top snapped, when it flew open as easily as if it had been only barred with a wisp of straw. Twelve men, disguised in masks and gray friar cloaks, entered silently, with drawn swords, one of them holding a flaming torch. They looked quickly around in every direction, and seemed astonished at not finding what they were in search of.

"Where is he? He hides himself, the base tyrant!" exclaimed a powerful voice from the midst of them. They searched fruitlessly every spot, except where Rané stood, with drawn sword, by the heap of straw.

"Save my life, my trusty Rané!" whispered the king from beneath the straw, "and I give thee my own sister in marriage."

"My king and master is not here, but I guard his jewels and treasures," cried Rané, as he pointed to the spot where the king lay; "and I shall cleave the skull of the first who approaches." And he swung his puny sword wildly about him, striking it against the pole of a waggon and a clump of wood lying on the barn-floor.

"You defend your king like a rogue and a traitor!" whispered Aagé: "give me your sword, if you will not use it better."

"Away, boy!" shouted Rané, furiously, as he aimed a blow at the head of the page, but without touching him.

Among the armed, monk-like figures was a little, decrepit man, who tottered forward, with the uncertain steps of old age and blindness, by the side of a powerful and gigantic form. These two pressed on at the head of the disguised band, the blind man holding fast by the skirt of the other, until they reached the spot to which Rané had pointed. They both stopped by the heap of straw that concealed the king.

"Here!" uttered a hollow voice, proceeding from the visor of the tall masked figure, and his mailed arm uplifted a huge sword. At the same instant the weapons of all the others gleamed aloft in the lurid light of the torch.

"Aha!" shouted the blind old man, with wild maniacal laughter, as he suddenly flung himself, with his long sword, deep into the heap of straw.

A scream of horror, blended with the madman's half-suffocated laughter, issued from beneath the straw which concealed the king and his raving murderer. In their struggles both rolled from

under it, and the whole of the armed band then fell at once upon the unfortunate monarch.

Rané continued to lay wildly about him, without, however, wounding any one. At last he sprang forward, and plucked the torch from the hand of him who carried it. "Help, help! They are murdering my king and master!" he cried, as he flung the torch into the straw, and rushed furiously from the barn.

A fierce blaze instantly lit up the horrible scene.

The gory body of the king was dragged to the middle of the barn, where it lay, pierced at once by twelve swords. The fearful monk-like forms stood in silence round the body, with their dripping weapons in their hands, and gazed through their masks with straining eyes on the murdered Erik, whose features were now horribly distorted in the throes of death.

"He is dead--let the flames devour him!" exclaimed at last their leader, breaking the fearful silence. "Away! To horse!"

In an instant all had left the barn except the aged maniac, who had once more thrown himself raving on the king's body, as if he would have torn it asunder with his nails.

The two pages had hitherto sat, concealed and weeping, under the mangers.

"Monster!" now cried the little Aagé; and rushing towards him, he plucked the sword from the dead king's hand, and thrust it into the madman's heart.

"Good, good--now I can die! Blessed be the angel from heaven who has redeemed me!" he murmured, as he sank back lifeless by the side of the murdered king.

One half of the barn was already in flames. The four horses in the stalls sprang wildly over the bodies, and rushed through the open door; and the falcons flew, screaming, after them. The flames burst through the thatched roof, whilst a suffocating smoke filled the frightful den of murder; and outside, sounded the alarm of fire, and the noise of persons hurrying to the scene.

"Help me to save the king's corpse, Bent," said Aagé to his weeping comrade. And with great exertion the lads dragged the heavy body to the entrance, before reaching which they were nearly suffocated.

"God be merciful to the soul of the old monster inside!" exclaimed Aagé, as he looked back once more: "he must now be burned. Make haste!"

They were hardly out of the barn when the roof fell in with a loud crash, and buried beneath it the old man's corpse.

A great number of people had now assembled; but they gave little heed to the conflagration, being seized with fright and horror on beholding the mangled body of the king, and hearing the recital of the pages. The crowd continued to increase around the royal corpse and the weeping youths in front of the burning pile. The feelings awakened in the minds of the majority by the cruel spectacle, seemed to testify that the murdered king was less hated by the people than was generally believed. The consternation and the confusion were great. They screamed and shouted from one to the other.

"Pursue the murderers!" cried some.--"Take care of the king's body!" cried others.--"Send word to Harrestrup!"--"Bring the drost! bring Sir John!"--"Send word to Scanderborg! there are still the queen and the young king!"

Such were the various suggestions that were loudly and rapidly uttered, but no one stirred to give them effect. Women and children thronged towards the body: the children screamed; the women wept at the frightful sight; whilst the men swore and clamoured. Many commanded, but none obeyed.

At length was heard, in the midst of the hubbub, the cry of--"Room, room! the drost is coming!" and the noisy crowd was divided by three horsemen, who urged their panting steeds eagerly through them. It was Drost Peter, with Skirmen and old Henner Friser. Behind them followed a troop of huntsmen, having Chamberlain Rané, bound, in their midst.

"Silence here--give place!" cried Drost Peter, springing from his horse.

The crowd fell respectfully to one side, and a dead silence ensued. The drost beheld the king's body with horror. He hastily examined it, and found that there was no longer any sign of life. He counted fifty-six wounds, all of which were mortal. Under the king's vest he also found a dagger, which had not been withdrawn from where it had been planted in his bosom. He drew it out, and examined it closely: it was a magnificent weapon, wrought with great skill, its hilt representing a gilded lion. Having displayed it to the nearest spectators, he put it carefully aside.

"King Erik Christopherson is dead," he cried, with a loud voice, whilst he rose from the corpse and surveyed the crowd, whose earnest and sympathising faces were illumined by the flames of the barn: "he has been shamefully murdered, and this atrocious crime shall not remain unpunished, as certain as there is a righteous Judge above us!" He paused an instant, and a deep



silence prevailed around.

"The young King Erik Erikson is now our lawful lord and king," he continued, with greater calmness, and raising his right hand: "the people of Denmark have themselves elected and sworn allegiance to him. The holy Church will ratify his election; and soon shall he sit, anointed and crowned, on the throne of his ancestors. If you be true to him, brave Danish people, he shall, if it please God, be a good and righteous king, and shall severely punish the cruel and audacious murderers of his father. May the Almighty give him strength, and throw his protecting arm over him and his loyal people!"

"Long live King Erik Erikson! long live our young king!" shouted the multitude; whilst a few cries of "Vengeance--vengeance on his murderers!" were heard.

Drost Peter waved his hand for silence, and turned to those who stood nearest to him. "Who here has the fleetest horse?" he demanded.

"I--I have!" cried Skirmen, springing forward.

"Right--none can speed as thou canst. Bide instantly to Scanderborg, my trusty Skirmen. Speed thee, and carry to the queen the woful tidings. Relate what thou hast heard and seen. Say to Sir Thorstenson, in my name, that every avenue to the palace and to our young king must be instantly closed and well guarded. To-morrow, I shall arrive myself, with Sir John, when I have properly cared for the dead king's body. Away! God be with thee!"

Skirmen was mounted in an instant, and flew off, with the speed of an arrow, on his little norback.

"Thou, trusty old Henner!" continued Drost Peter, turning to the grave old man, who had remained by his side immoveable, on his tall horse, and gazing upon the royal corpse with a strong expression of sorrow--"thou, and the royal huntsmen, pursue the murderers immediately. Take Rané with thee, and compel him to lead thee in their track."

Henner Friser nodded, and turned his horse. A minute afterwards, the giant-like old man, with Rané by his side, bound, rode at full gallop past the blazing barn, followed by the huntsmen.

"Ye good Danish men," continued Drost Peter, turning to some of the more respectable peasants who stood nearest to him, and who appeared to regard the royal corpse with most sympathy, "ye shall bear the body of our murdered king with me to Viborg. Bleeding, as it now lies, shall it be exposed to the gaze of the people. Lay four planks over that harvest-waggon, and yoke to it six of your best horses. Spread my mantle over the planks, and lay the corpse carefully upon it. You, children, follow me," he said to the two weeping pages, who, in the meantime, had caught the king's steed, and one of the falcons. "Tie the king's horse to the waggon, Aagé: he shall follow his master. Give me the falcon, Bent. Light two fir-torches, and place yourselves at the king's feet. You shall bear the lights for him to-night, for the last time."

The boys wept and obeyed; and the peasants soon executed the orders of the drost. His scarlet cloak had now become the king's pall; and he himself sat quietly on his steed, with the king's favourite falcon on his arm, and saw that everything was done becomingly.

Many people still crowded around, but there was no noisy commotion. From the women only was heard a solitary sigh, or a subdued expression of pity; but among the men, astonishment at the unheard-of deed appeared more general than sorrow or commiseration.

Drost Peter perceived this with deep emotion. "King Erik's last journey is dark. Take brands from the barn, and light us," he said, in a sorrowful tone.

Some men from Harrestrup instantly obeyed.

"Honour the dead; for the crown he bore, and for the sake of the royal race from which he was descended. Follow him, as many as can, yet as a freewill token of affection: none else is wanted. Withdraw which way you will; but depart with quietness, and repeat at least a prayer for his soul. When the sun last set, he was a powerful king, and our lawful lord and master. Let that den of murder burn," he added, with horror: "its foundation shall be razed, and every trace of it rooted from the earth. Where it stood, shall no man rest any more; but, for centuries to come, shall prayers be said, night and day, for the soul of the murdered king. May the merciful God be gracious to him and all of us!"

With emotion he raised his hand to his eyes and gave a signal, when the procession slowly moved forwards. The crowd dispersed quietly and in silence; twelve peasants only attending, who walked, with blazing fir-torches, on both sides of the waggon. Near to the king's head rode Drost Peter, with the falcon on his arm; whilst the steed followed his dead master. As the procession moved past the flaming barn, a strong light fell on the drost's earnest countenance, and the royal corpse lay aloft on the waggon, visible to all. At its feet sat the two pages, with torches in their hands. Silently and slowly the gloomy funeral train disappeared in the deep night; and here and there, on the highways and byways, along the road to Viborg, stood astonished peasants, gazing in wonder.

At Scanderborg, the queen and the young princes were still in deep slumber, at the early hour when Claus Skirmen reached the palace on his panting norback, which had carried his light rider more than forty English miles in six hours.

The landsknechts who held watch at the castle-gate and by the palace-stairs recognised the drost's squire, and instantly admitted him. They were surprised at his haste.

"Pull up the drawbridge, and lock the gates!" he cried: "the foe is at my heels!"

The grave landsknechts were amazed: no enemy was perceptible in the misty dawn, and they were not accustomed to receive orders from a squire. Whilst they hesitated and delayed, Skirmen leaped from his saddle, and hurried up to the queen's large ante-chamber, where Sir Thorstenson himself kept night-watch with the royal body-guards.

"The king is murdered!" cried Skirmen, almost breathless.

The whole of the knight's men in the hall sprang up, and stood as if thunderstruck or petrified.

"Murdered!" exclaimed Sir Thorstenson: "art thou in thy right senses, Skirmen?"

"Murdered!" repeated Skirmen; "and the murderers are not half a mile distant: they are approaching, with a numerous band of horsemen. If you would not have the palace surprised, sir, let it be barricaded instantly!"

"Wilt thou drive us mad, Skirmen? Bar the palace, trabants! and every man to his arms! Righteous God! murdered!"

The alarmed trabants hastily quitted the hall, with scarcely sense enough left to execute the orders of their captain.

"Now, by Satan, speak, Skirmen!" exclaimed the enraged Thorstenson, stamping. "Who has ventured on this atrocious deed? Ha! was it the algreve--the accursed algreve?"

"Nay, stern sir: if it were not the devil and his imps, it was Marsk Stig and his kinsmen. At the barn of Finnerup the deed was done." And Skirmen then related all he had himself heard and seen, and what the drost had charged him to say. "And my master was right," he added: "had he not dispatched me instantly, the murderers themselves had perhaps first brought you the intelligence. An hour ago they held a council on Tulstrup Heath. They sat on horseback, and clothed in mail: in the fog I had nearly ridden into the midst of them; but the moon broke forth over their heads, and revealed to me their bloody swords. I hurried past them, and they pursued me up to the forest. There were certainly more than seventy men, and some amongst them were disguised as grayfriars. They must be here instantly."

"Let them come!" cried Thorstenson: "they shall find us awake. You are right: none has dared this deed but Marsk Stig. He has now fulfilled his oath, and slain King Erik. He may next aim at the prince's life; but his vengeance shall not reach it. Is everything in order, trabants?" he inquired of some of them who had returned to the ante-chamber. They informed him of what had been done for the defence of the place, and were again dispatched with fresh orders; and the utmost activity prevailed in the palace.

The sudden noise awoke the queen, who rang for her maids, and inquired what the disturbance meant. They were all frightened, but none of them yet knew what had happened. The queen arose and dressed hastily, to proceed to the guard-chamber. The noise in the palace increased. People ran about bewildered, as if a thunderbolt had fallen among them; but where, no one could tell. Every one knew that a great misfortune had happened; but what it was, no tongue ventured to ask. In the guard-room the knights stood in complete armour, awaiting the orders of their chief. The hall looked out on the palace-yard, and was provided with a balcony, commanding a view of the high road. Here stood Sir Thorstenson and Skirmen, watching, on the road to the palace, a great cloud of dust, which they were now first able plainly to distinguish from the gray mist of the morning.

"You are right, Skirmen," said Thorstenson, with a nod: "it is a large band of horsemen; they will actually treat us here on fasting stomachs. No matter--they shall have their morning meal before us. Are the archers on the tower?" he inquired of one of the trabants.

"Yes, sir knight," was the reply: "they have occupied all the loopholes, and are ready, with arrows on their bowstrings, as you commanded."

"Good: but let no one draw a shaft until I wave this banner over the balcony," he commanded, as he seized the large royal banner which stood at the end of the saloon. "The more time we can gain the better," he added: "if it comes to a storming, we must use our shot-waggons; for the fellows deserve a warm breakfast. Let the fire rage under the stones, and they will soon be hot enough. We must melt these mailed flinty hearts."

The trabant departed.

At the same moment the queen entered, attended by her ladies and maidens. "What mean these preparations?" she inquired, looking anxiously around her, and at the same time, with her customary dignity, acknowledging the military salute given her by the trabants.

"God and Our Lady support you, my noble queen!" exclaimed Sir Thorstenson, advancing, and lowering the banner respectfully before her: "I did not think your grace was up, and I would not suffer you to be awoke with evil tidings. Prepare to hear them with resolution, my noble-hearted queen. Drost Hessel has sent us this messenger; and in the colours of night ought he and we to be standing here, for the news he brings is dark and gloomy as the grave."

"That, then, has happened which I have so long dreaded," said the queen, becoming pale: "my lord and king is dead? Speak, young man!" she continued, turning to Skirmen, "what unhappy tidings dost thou bring of my unfortunate husband? Speak! The Queen of Denmark shall not be crushed by a word, though the dread of it may chase the blood from her cheeks! My lord and king is dead?"

"You have spoken it, noble queen," replied Skirmen, approaching her respectfully, whilst Thorstenson retired to the balcony, over which he looked with strained attention. "Traitors surprised him last night," continued Skirmen: "it happened in an evil hour, when he had lost himself in the forest, near Finnerup, and his trusty men were not by his side."

"Murdered, then--miserably murdered!--as is now every king of Denmark!" exclaimed the queen, leaning for support on one of her maidens.

"It is unfortunately so, my noble queen," replied Skirmen, with strong sympathy, although the expression of the queen's countenance seemed rather to indicate bitter anger than deep, heartfelt sorrow. "Drost Hessel was the first to find your unhappy husband, after the fearful deed was done, and the murderers had fled. He immediately examined his wounds, and found them numerous, and all mortal. He would not quit the royal body before it was placed beyond the reach of farther indignities; but, for the security of yourself and the princes, he bade me hasten hither; and, with God's help, I have made such speed, that I am here before the traitors. God preserve you, my queen, and the young prince, who shall now rule Denmark's kingdom."

"Where is he?" exclaimed the queen, anxiously looking around her; "where is the prince? where is my little Erik? Come the murderers this way? Are they near?"

"Be calm, my noble queen," replied Thorstenson. "A band of armed horsemen ride, indeed, towards the palace, with some disguised traitors at their head; but, so long as I and a single Dane remain alive, no enemy to the royal house shall set foot within these walls. I have sent for the princes, and they will be here immediately."

"Can the castle be defended?" inquired the queen, hastily: "are the traitors all beyond its walls? Are there none amongst us? And was it not a Dane who murdered Denmark's king?"

Overwhelmed with doubts and apprehensions, the queen turned round, and looked at the dark, armed men who filled the hall; but among them she saw not one who had been heartily attached to the king.

"The castle can and shall be defended, so long as one stone stands upon another," replied Thorstenson, with glowing cheeks. "The traitors are near us, but you have true men around you. Affront not every Dane by such dishonouring suspicions, illustrious queen. In this bloody treason the true Danish people had no part. Your royal husband was not beloved; nor was he, indeed, any favourite of mine either--that truth it is of no use to conceal; but we are not, on that account, either traitors or perjurers. Marsk Stig Andersen is the author of this horrid deed: and even he is not perjured, for he has fearfully performed what he promised: but henceforth he is the deadly foe of every honest Dane. We will protect the royal house; and your royal son shall wear with security the crown of Denmark, to which he was chosen by a free and loyal people."

"We will protect the royal house!" exclaimed the grave knights and trabants: "long live the queen and our young king!"

"Where are these traitors?" now inquired the queen, with more composure: "can we see them?" She went hastily to the balcony, and perceived the dark troop of horsemen approaching, with the disguised, hooded men at their head. "They are numerous," she continued; "but not sufficient to intimidate my protectors. They approach the castle apparently with peaceful intentions."

"Let them come close up to the walls, noble queen. They must not imagine that we are afraid to look them in the face. They have neither archers nor storming-ladders with them; and if they have anything to say to us, we can hold a parley with safety from the balcony. The moment they commence an attack, I send them a salute of a shower of arrows from the tower."

"'Tis well, Sir Thorstenson!" replied the queen, raising her head with proud indignation. "They shall behold the Queen of Denmark--they shall behold their young lord and king; and shall find that justice does not slumber, and that the sceptre of Denmark, even in the hand of a minor, has

still power to set at defiance a band of murderers!"

The princes now entered the guardroom, attended by two knights. The young king was pale with horror at the fearful tidings he had just heard; but his brother, Junker Christopherson, was burning with wrath and indignation. The queen turned from the balcony and approached them.

"My sons," she said, "your royal father is dead! Bear this sorrow as beseems his sons and avengers! Those who caused his death, thirst after your blood, and mine also, and are now approaching this castle with bold audacity; but if you are my children, these tidings will not alarm you."

Junker Christopherson now became pale and uneasy: he looked over the balcony, and stepped hastily back with alarm. But that which so frightened him, brought back the blood into the cheeks of the little King Erik.

"My sword and my royal helmet!" he cried, in a tone of command. "I am now your king, and it is my business to defend this castle and the kingdom. It shall be my first duty to proclaim the death and downfall of my father's godless murderer. Is the castle in a state of defence, Sir Thorstenson?"

The bold knight regarded with astonishment the prince, who now, for the first time, spoke to him with the authority of a chief and king. He bowed respectfully, and hastily informed him of all that had been done for the defence of the castle; taking care, at the same time, not to lose sight of the movements of the hostile horsemen.

"Good, good!" said Erik, nodding.

A trabant now presented to the young king a short sword with a gilt handle, and a little gilt helmet with a crown and high feather. Erik hung the sword by his side, placed the helmet on his head, and, with his mother, stepped on to the balcony.

The troop of horsemen had halted at some distance from the palace, and the monk-clad chiefs seemed to be holding council.

At length a tall, gigantic figure, in a gray cloak and hood, accompanied by two persons of less stature, but in the same disguise, rode leisurely towards the side of the outer ditch nearest the lofty balcony, high above the fortress walls, where stood the queen and the young king, closely attended by trabants, ready, on a signal from their chief, to form a shield of defence around the royal personages. The sun had just arisen, and shone upon the noble form and fair, pale face of the queen, sad the chivalrous young king on her right.

This spectacle appeared to make a singular impression on the hostile giant-like figure, who more than once stopped his horse. At length he reached the ditch opposite the balcony, where, throwing the monk's hood and cloak from his head and shoulders, he appeared, in closed helmet and tarnished black steel harness, like a statue of bronze on his charger, as, with sparkling eyes, he gazed upon the queen and the prince through the grating of his visor.

"Queen!" he said, in a deep, warlike voice, "you called the man a crazy braggart who denounced King Erik at the Thing of Viborg. You imagined that the man was not in Denmark who dared put so bold a speech in practice. Behold, then, in me, the Dane who has kept his promise to the king. The fire is now in the house of the mocker; and here you see the hand that cast the brand--here you behold the face from which your craven lord concealed his royal countenance in the straw of a stable."

With these words he struck his visor up; and the queen retreated a step, with horror, before the flashing, vengeful eyes and the haughty features of the warrior. But speedily recovering herself, she again stepped forward, with proud indignation; whilst the youthful king by her side grasped the hilt of his sword.

"Come you yourself, Marsk Stig Andersen, self-made king!" said the queen, with lofty dignity--"come you in person to hear your doom? Know, then, it was pronounced in that bloody midnight hour, and that here stands now your king and master, who will, if God spare him life, by a wave of his youthful hand, accomplish Heaven's judgment upon you."

"A self made king I am not," replied the marsk, with a subdued voice: "such an accursed thought never entered my soul; but who shall now be Denmark's king, the mighty spirit of the people and this sword shall determine. The time for that has not yet arrived; and I have not sped hither to contend with women and children. I came here to see what I now behold. You yourself best know who was a self-made king in Denmark. My deed of last night has not made you a mourning widow, nor brought you sorrow and heart-pangs, Queen Agnes. I bear you, instead, a welcome message."

As the queen heard these words, it seemed for a moment that she would have sunk upon the earth: it was as if the terrible avenger gave life to a secret picture, of which she had once, with horror, had a glimpse in her dreams. She blushed as red as her scarlet kirtle, and immediately became pale as the linen collar on her fair neck; but she collected her strength, and, with a deep feeling of wounded honour, exclaimed, with dignity and pride--"For these words, Stig Andersen, I

shall answer you, when we meet before God's judgment-seat! Here, you stand deeply under the Queen of Denmark's wrath."

"Let me speak, mother!" interrupted little Erik: "I am his judge and master. Thou blood-besprinkled regicide!" he cried, with singular strength and firmness, and with a look that caused the powerful warrior to start--"thou hast murdered my royal father, and mocked the queen, my mother, and shalt surely die! From this hour thou art an outlaw, as certainly as I shall wear the crown of Denmark!"

Junker Christopherson now made his appearance on the balcony: "The rack and wheel shall be thy reward, accursed murderer!" he cried, wildly and angrily, clenching his hand with excess of passion.

The impression made upon the marsk by the words and looks of the little king was effaced by his passionate brother.

"The threats of children do not alarm me," replied the giant knight. "But know this, however, thou young sire-avenger, with the infant crown!--If I must roam the country at thy bidding, there shall be in the land more widows than thy mother--if Marsk Stig must lie, an outlaw, in wood and den, Denmark shall pay perpetual tribute to him and his followers! Away!" he shouted to his attendants, raising his right arm, and turning his proud steed: "let not the blood of children smear our hands! The kingdom and country can yet be saved!"

Sir Thorstenson could no longer suppress his indignation. "Down with the traitor!" he shouted, waving the royal banner from the balcony.

At the signal a shower of arrows was discharged at the daring regicide from the loopholes of the castle-tower. The marsk turned his horse and laughed loudly at the impotent shafts, which, coming from so great a distance, fell harmlessly from his steel armour, and remained hanging in the cloaks of his disguised attendants. As if in derision of this fruitless attack, he calmly stopped for a moment, and received with scornful laughter another shower of arrows, which took no greater effect; but, as he was now about to turn his horse, a red hot stone, discharged from one of the slings on the wall, tore open the entrails of the noble steed, which, with a wild spring, fell under him.

At the same instant the drawbridge was lowered, and a troop of archers rushed towards him with bows drawn. The marsk hastily leaped on another horse, and galloped off with his mailed companions, at a speed which contradicted the contempt with which he appeared to receive the shower of hissing arrows and glowing balls from the castle of the infant king.

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Twenty-four hours after the king's murder, the rumour of it had spread over nearly the whole kingdom; but the accounts differed widely in relating the manner of his death.

At Kiel Castle, Count Gerhard received as guests the illustrious Duke Waldemar and his drost, Sir Tuko Abildgaard. They had arrived, late in the evening, from a journey through Brandenburg, and were accompanied by both the brothers of Queen Agnes--the Margraves Otto and Conrad of Brandenburg.

In these brave noblemen Duke Waldemar had, in the course of his journey, made new acquaintances, whom he seemed highly to prize, and had invited them to accompany him to Sleswick. The margraves were the intimate friends of the good-natured, excellent Count Gerhard, and they had therefore invited the duke to rest a few hours at the hospitable Kiel Castle--a proposition to which he could not refuse acquiescence, without creating reasonable surprise at the haste with which he journeyed homewards.

The duke had not met Count Gerhard since the evening he had seen him in company with Sir John, at the Dane-court of Nyborg, shortly before his own imprisonment. The interest with which the count had afterwards laboured to obtain his freedom, and to procure him terms with the king, had impressed the duke with a degree of shame for having, on many previous occasions, slighted the plain, gay-hearted gentleman, and made himself merry at the expense of his somewhat ungainly figure, as well as his bashfulness and lack of courtly language, when he desired to shine in presence of the ladies. That the brave, honest count, notwithstanding his awkwardness in the dance with the queen on that evening, had awakened far greater interest with her than his more polished rival, was a piece of good fortune which the proud, ambitious duke had never been able to forgive him.

Count Gerhard had received them with his wonted openness and gay good humour; for the rumours respecting the important crisis of affairs in Denmark had not yet reached Kiel. His guests and himself were seated at the drinking-board, entertaining each other with merry songs.

The Margrave Otto, who was about the middle age, with a calm and reflective countenance, was a skilful knight, an esteemed general, and a prince who cherished and encouraged the arts and sciences. He was a great admirer of the German minne-singers, and sang several of their lays in a fine deep bass voice. To satisfy the Danish gentlemen that his royal brother-in-law, King Erik

Christopherson, was more esteemed in Germany than by his own people, he sang Reinmar von Zweter's well-known eulogium on the king, which, in the Schwabian dialect, thus commences:--

"Ein kunig der wol gekroenet gat:"

and which may be thus translated:--

"A king so well becrown'd, and true,  
And eke a crown beking'd well, too,  
Maintains that crown aright:  
Should thus the king his crown adorn,  
That crown adorns him in return,  
And each does each requite."

It was almost the same ballad as that with which the king had been welcomed at Harrestrup, and wherein it was boasted of him, that he comforted the widow and the orphan, that he maintained peace, and that his heart and courage were great and bold.

"Pokker i Vold! To the deuce with your becrowned king and bekinged crown, my good friend!" said Count Gerhard, laughing, when Margrave Otto repeated the commencement as a chorus. "Your good Master Reinmar is somewhat too bookish for me, and lays it on too thick; otherwise, I could wish the song were Danish, and that the people might sing it from the bottom of their hearts. Yet I have no great relish for songs for the people that have to be brought to them from other lands."

"Now, now, my dear Count Gerhard," said the margrave, "this is not a people's song, but a complimentary ode. How otherwise would you like to be sung?"

"Plainly and straightforward, so that folks might know me; or not at all. Songs of this sort, to be good for anything," he continued, gaily, "must not be mere praise and flattery from beginning to end, but should give us a pleasant yet faithful picture of the whole man--of his faults and follies, as well as of his virtues and merits--so that one might see him truly and entirely, as in a bright shield. Nay, I prize more highly the art of my old Daddy Longlegs: he does more with his countenance than all our learned master-singers with their lira-la-la. You must see his pleasant gifts, gentlemen."

At his summons, the grave, lanky jester stepped forward, and applied himself diligently to entertain his master's guests by imitating the appearance and manner of all the notable personages he had ever seen. This mightily amused Count Gerhard himself: he laughed till his eyes ran over, whilst the jester, with the utmost gravity, represented a learned controversy between two ecclesiastics, whose voices, looks, and manners he mimicked by turns. In this representation the guests immediately recognised the learned, abstracted, and pedantic Master Martinus de Dacia, and his zealous opponent, the proud, passionate Master Grand, who could well match him as a dialectician and learned theologian. The dean's spare figure and authoritative air the jester could more especially imitate to the life.

The duke and Sir Abildgaard, as well as the courtly margraves, who were enlivened by the wine, laughed most heartily at the exhibition.

"Excellent!" said the duke: "that is our bold Master Grand to perfection. But if our stern sir dean knew that we so enjoyed ourselves with this imitation of his manner and reverend person, he would regard it as a shameless and unpardonable outrage on himself and the entire holy Church."

"He is not pope yet," replied Count Gerhard; "and more than one infallible clerk we are not bound to believe in. I have great respect for the abilities of the learned dean; but he is still a fallible man, and, like a good Christian, he must allow that even his best friends are not blind to his infirmities. To show you, gentlemen, that we here do not limit our selection of persons, when, at a merry moment, we have a mind to see them amongst us, without putting them to the inconvenience of a journey, Daddy Longlegs shall now give us a copy from nature, which it will probably cost you no great effort to recognise."

He whispered a few words to the jester, who nodded, and left the room. He shortly returned, attired in a princely purple mantle, with a gilded parchment crown on his head, over a tuft of thin combed-out hair. His face expressed a singular mixture of majesty and meanness, of wild strength and effeminate weakness: he seemed both to threaten and smile at the same time, and blinked constantly. He strode leisurely forward, stopping at times, as if in doubt, and supporting himself on his long wooden sword.

When Duke Waldemar saw this, he became pale. Count Gerhard laughed immoderately; and the knightly margraves seemed perplexed.

"Let this rather daring jest alone, noble Count Gerhard," at length said Margrave Otto, earnestly: "it is not becoming in us to be spectators whilst our royal brother-in-law is turned to

ridicule."

"What the deuce, my brave sirs, are you afraid of the spectre of your royal brother-in-law?" cried Count Gerhard, laughing. "As you intend shortly to visit him in person, you will do well to accustom yourself to look him boldly in the face, without being embarrassed by his blinking, or scared by his anger."

The jester had withdrawn to the farther end of the apartment, where he stood in the shade, observing the effects of his mimicry. At that moment the door was opened, and two young knights, half intoxicated, stumbled in.

"News! news!" they shouted in a breath: "there is an insurrection in Denmark, and the king is slain!"

All sprang up in astonishment, except Duke Waldemar, who swooned, and sank back in his chair. In the general confusion, this was observed by Sir Abildgaard only, who hastily came to his assistance, and chafed his temples with wine, giving no alarm, but placing himself before him, and concealing him with his mantle.

The others gazed with alarm on the young knights who had brought the unexpected intelligence. But the terror of the jester was beyond control. Notwithstanding his talent for drollery, he was subject to a deep melancholy, which at times bordered on madness. A fearful horror now overwhelmed him, and he fancied that the ghost of the murdered king had actually taken possession of him, to revenge the mockery of which he had made him the subject. Longshanks became so deadly pale, and remained so motionless, that now he really personified a fearful spectre of the murdered king, whose mask he had assumed in a playful mood.

Count Gerhard had suddenly become grave; but the young knights who brought the message of death did not observe, in their half-inebriated state, the effects which their intelligence had produced; nor knew they that the two strangers were Margraves of Brandenburg, and brothers-in-law of the murdered king. They now related, in a careless and almost merry tone, what they had heard of the king's murder.

"There is no doubt about it, sir count," said he who stood nearest him: "he fell, appropriately, in a love adventure in Finnerup Forest; and could not himself have desired a fairer or pleasanter death. Let us now drink a happy journey to him, and a better and more faithful mate to his fair queen. Merrily, sirs! The health of King Erik Christopherson, wherever he may be."

Count Gerhard stood in agony during this unseemly and inconsiderate speech in presence of the margraves. He would have reprimanded the thoughtless knight, but the jester anticipated him. Rushing madly forward, in the guise of the dead king, he seized the bone of a roebuck from a silver dish on the table.

"King Erik Christopherson thanks you for the toast!" cried he, assuming with fearful truthfulness the monarch's voice: "to you, and to all his merry friends here, he sends a greeting."

So saying, he threw the large bone at the forehead of the young knight, but it missed its aim, and struck Count Gerhard, who fell to the ground, with the blood streaming from his left eye, which was laid open by the blow.

All crowded around him, alarmed. During the commotion the duke regained his senses: he cast an anxious look towards the end of the hall, where the jester had stood; and as he no longer saw the threatening form of royalty, he appeared entirely to recover his self-possession.

At the moment the accident happened to the count, the jester had cast aside his parchment crown and purple mantle, and thrown himself, with an exclamation of intense grief, over his wounded master; but Count Gerhard quickly arose, holding his hand over his bleeding wound.

"Our untimely jest has cost me an eye," he said, with composure; "but that is a matter of little consequence at present. If what we have heard be true, the kingdom and our noble queen are in a critical position. Haste, my lords, and stand by her with aid and counsel! As soon as possible, I shall place myself at the service of the crown and country."

Count Gerhard left the drinking-room to commit himself to the care of his surgeon; and his guests instantly departed from Kiel Castle, and hastily took the road to Scanderborg.

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On the same evening the inmates of Möllerup were in a state of anxious expectation, for the lord of the castle had departed eight days before with a portion of the garrison. The gates were closed, and the drawbridge was drawn up as usual. The four watchers stood on the tower, and all was stillness in the strong, gloomy fortress.

In the women's apartment, as midnight approached, sat the tall, veiled Fru Ingeborg, in her dark mourning dress, engaged in sewing a long white linen garment. On the work-table before her, stood a lamp. The little, restless Ulrica she had sent to bed; but the quiet Margarethé sat by

her side, industriously employed on the sacred picture, which she worked with silk and threads of gold, and which was destined to adorn a holy altar-cloth in the castle-chapel of Möllerup.

"I shall soon have it finished now, mother!" exclaimed the daughter. "Look once more. The red shines beautifully in the light: to me it seems as if the little angels smiled, and as if there really came a radiance from the faces of the infant Jesus and the dear Mother of God."

"Good, good, my pious child," replied the mother, patting her pale cheek, and casting on the work a passing glance through her veil. "I, too, shall soon be done," she added, with a suppressed sigh.

"But what is this long linen garment for, dear mother? It is neither a table-cloth nor a sheet."

"When I am dead, my child," answered the mother, "thou shalt thank the merciful God, and wrap my body and face in this linen cloth: then shall I have put off the dark dress of mourning, and be clad in white garments--white is the colour of innocence and purity, my child."

"Alas, mother! cannot we wear that garment, then, when we are living? But our Lord and Saviour took all our sins upon himself, when he died for us on the cross. Angels came to his grave in white raiment; and, when we become as little children, the kingdom of heaven belongs to us, as to the angels."

"Put on thy white kirtle to-morrow, my child," replied the mother.

"Ah, mother, mother!" sighed Margarethé, "when shall I see thy face again, and thy beautiful tender eyes? I well remember seeing them when I was very little; but that is long, long ago. Poor little Rikké has never seen thy face, and she is thy child also."

"Soon, soon shall ye both see me face to face, I hope," replied the mother, with a trembling voice. "Look at the sand-glass, child: is it near midnight?"

"It is past midnight, mother. Dost thou expect father to-night?"

"He promised to be here, or to send a messenger, before midnight," replied the mother, anxiously; "and he is not wont to forget what he promises. But he has a great pledge to redeem; and before that is done I shall not hear from him: until then, there is peace for none of us."

"Alas! wherefore not, mother? Rememberest thou not that the holy text speaks of the peace which is higher than human understanding? That peace the Lord has given to us all."

"Yes, truly, child: that peace the righteous shall find: they shall enter into their peace--they shall rest on their beds, it stands. But everything in its time: first war--then peace."

There was now heard the howling of dogs in the court-yard.

"Listen, mother, listen!" said Margarethé: "the dogs are noisy. They certainly expect father; but they were never wont to howl so fearfully."

"It betokens a message of death," said the mother. "Keep silence, my child; methinks I hear thy father's hunting-horn; and, list! the watchword rings from the tower.--He comes!"

Footsteps now sounded in the court. In the still night they could hear the drawbridge lowered and the gate turn on its grating hinges, and shortly after came the noise of many horses and horsemen in the court. Margarethé ran to the window.

"It is father and his men!" she cried. "But what is this? There are grayfriars among them, with torches! Father has now dismounted, and is coming straight to us."

Fru Ingeborg attempted hastily to rise, but sank back on her chair, powerless. "Seest thou thy grandfather, too?--Seest thou my hapless old father?" she inquired.

"Nay, poor old grandfather I do not see, mother. I can see all, but grandfather is not amongst them."

The door into the women's apartment was now opened, and the tall lord of the castle stood in his steel armour on the threshold. His visor was raised, and his stern, serious face was pale. He remained on the threshold without uttering a word, but made a sign to intimate that the child should be sent away.

"Go into the nursery, my child," said the mother, rising slowly, and trembling: "what thy father has to tell me, thou art not to hear."

Margarethé had approached her father, to greet him and kiss his hand; but she saw clots of blood on his gauntlet, and ran back affrighted. She folded her hands, and left the apartment, weeping.

The marsk then stepped over the threshold. "It is done!" he said: "take the veil of shame from thy face, my wife, and embrace, at last, thy husband and thine avenger! Thy scandal is washed



out with the tyrant's blood: thou shalt no longer blush to be called the wife of Stig Andersen."

With a violent, almost convulsive action, Fru Ingeborg tore away her veil, and the rays of the lamp fell on her deadly pale and wasted face, which still bore the traces of a beauty seldom surpassed; but her dark blue sparkling eyes were deeply sunk in their large sockets. She stretched out her meagre hands, and approached the marsk. He drew back a step, surprised; but in another instant he rushed forward with wild ardour into her outstretched arms, while two large tears rolled down his iron cheeks.

"My Ingeborg! my unhappy Ingeborg! is it thus I again embrace thee!" he exclaimed: "has an age passed over our heads, and have we both grown old since last I looked upon thy face, and held thee in these arms? Live, live now, my hapless wife, and become young again! All thy griefs are over: thy years of sorrow and thy dishonour are avenged--fearfully avenged! Never was a polluter of woman more severely punished than he who murdered thy peace. Thy father was the first whose sword pierced his false heart."

"Ah! my father, my father! where is he?" inquired Fru Ingeborg, starting, alarmed, from her husband's bloody arms. "And thou art bleeding--thou art wounded!"

"It is the tyrant's blood--I swore thou shouldst see it. I am myself unscathed, my wife! but thy father--thy poor crazy father--he followed us not from the burning barn. I hurried back to drag him from the flames, but it was too late!"

"Burned! burned alive!" shrieked Fru Ingeborg. "Righteous God! thus does the Almighty Judge crush us for our vengeance!" And she fell senseless on the winding-sheet, which lay upon the floor.

When she again opened her eyes, she was on a chair, and her husband, in his bloody harness, yet stood alone with her. "Comfort thee, my wife!" said the marsk: "thy unhappy father lay not long in pain; his soul soared peacefully on the flames to that promised land of freedom for which he so long vainly sighed. Comfort thee, wife! Hear what I have to tell thee! It now concerns our own lives. Our great plans respecting the kingdom and country are not yet to be thought of. A panic has seized all our friends: every one thinks but of himself and his own safety. The people will not declare in our favour; but wail, like madmen, over the slaughter of the king. I myself am an outlaw: the young king has so proclaimed me, though without trial or judgment. I laughed thereat--but it struck my followers with dismay. And, truly, the words of the child appeared to me most marvellous. People may say what they will; but the child is now a king, however. I cannot rely on Duke Waldemar; and, therefore, we must away."

"Never, never! I remain here!" exclaimed Fru Ingeborg, with decision, as he raised her head.

"It is requisite, my wife, thou mayst believe me! I never retreated a step when it was possible to advance. Wilt thou now follow a poor outlawed man, my Ingeborg, or tarry behind, with a foul name, among our powerful foes?"

At these words the powers of life returned to Fru Ingeborg for an instant, with mighty force. She arose calmly, and regarded her husband with a look of surprise.

"A foul name I have borne long enough!" she said: "I shall no longer bear it in this world, even were I to be made Queen of Denmark. Thanks for having taken away my reproach--for me, no one shall further grieve. But if I am again the wife of Marsk Stig Andersen, hear now the last words which, in this world, I have to say to thee. My hours are numbered. The hour's honour I have won was not worth nine years' anguish, and that horrible night of fire and murder. Has the panic which struck our friends, seized also the mighty Marsk Stig? Art thou the man to be frightened by a child, and to flee the land at the bidding of a boy? Nay, nay, my bold avenger! It is the mist of the dusky night of blood that now obscures thy vision and weighs down thy soul--it is the kingly gore upon thy wambres that paralyses thine arm. Stay here till dawn. Cleanse the blood from thy harness, and bethink thee why it flowed. 'Twas not merely that thou shouldst behold this pallid countenance. Tonight, I stand before thee as a spectre only to remind thee why thou hast tarried so long, and then to descend with honour into my grave. But when thou hast closed these eyes--"

"Live, live, my brave wife!" interrupted the marsk; "and thou shalt see that I will act in a manner worthy of thee. But, alone and unaided, not even the strongest can overthrow the throne of Denmark."

"When wert thou left alone? Hast thou not lords and knights of thine own kindred? Art thou not in league with kings and princes? Live Duke Waldemar and Count Jacob no longer? And are not Ové Dyré and Jacob Blaafod yet remaining? Our powerful kinsmen will not desert thee. In Norway, King Erik is thy steady friend: he is mighty in people and ships: him thou canst depend upon. Remain here, then. Let not our race be rooted out, and the land be lost. Build a castle on Hielm, that shall stand firm against shaft, and shot, and sling. Take not thy mighty hand from Denmark, my brave, proud Stig Andersen! Set the crown on a head that can bear it, and suffer not the families of Toké and Hvide to be banished, so long as thine eyes are open! Give me thy hand upon this, if my peace and salvation are dear to thee!"

"Well, my wife, I promise you!" said the marsk, holding forth his mailed hand to her: "if it

please God, it shall so be done!" He became silent and thoughtful.

They stood thus for a few moments, hand in hand. The fire in the pale Ingeborg's eyes was quenched, and a cloud overspread her countenance.

"Thanks, thanks! now am I at rest," she said, slowly and solemnly; "now can I lie still in my grave, and grieve no more over my lacerated life, and over the blood that has been shed for my womanly honour. I shall not hear my forsaken daughters weep--I shall not hear my father's death-shriek in the flames. For the last time my eyes swim in darkness," she whispered, faintly, tottering. "Good night, my avenger! Thanks! Thou hast brought me the last message which I shall hear in the world. It was a message of victory, but of a terrible one. I am again thy lawful wife--but only beyond purgatory can I be what I was nine years ago--"

"Ingeborg, dearest Ingeborg! talk not so wildly!" exclaimed the marsk, anxiously; "retire to rest--thou art unwell."

"I go to rest," she whispered, and staring wildly before her. "Father, father! burn no longer for thy daughter! Now shall she pass with thee through the flames! Good night!" She pressed the marsk's hand fervently, and fell suddenly to the ground, as if struck with apoplexy.

Alarmed, the marsk called for help; but, before the servants arrived, their unhappy mistress lay, without sign of life, in the blood-stained arms of her husband.

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Ere Duke Waldemar and the Margraves of Brandenburg reached Scanderborg Castle, Drost Peter and Sir Bent Rimaardson stood at the head of a considerable array of soldiers before the palace, where a camp had been pitched, whilst crowds of people flocked to do homage to the young king. Old Sir John had been brought to the palace on a litter; and the strictest regulations had been adopted. No seditious voice dared to make itself heard. Duke Waldemar and his train had ridden day and night, without intermission. On the second morning after they left Kiel, they beheld the camp of Scanderborg in the distance.

"We come too late," said the duke. "Tarry a moment, my lords: if I see aright, there is an army here."

"An army of seven or eight hundred men," replied Margrave Otto, whose glance at the encampment indicated the experienced general.

"Drost Hessel and Sir John have lost no time in this matter," continued the duke: "they receive the homage of the people without waiting for the chief men of the country, and the nearest kinsmen of the royal family. In this, you may see the presumption of these gentlemen. But the power is their's for the moment, and we must be silent. The boy has been declared King of Denmark; and your wise and illustrious sister, noble sirs, must, for the present, be content to exercise, along with me, the functions of guardianship. Even in that position we must remain quiet. So long as the present commotion agitates every mind, confidence is nowhere to be expected, and no rational measure to be thought of."

They continued their way in doubt and silence.

"Your conclusion, my noble duke, seems to me somewhat precipitate," said Margrave Otto, at length: "your eloquence had for a moment, in the present unexpected posture of affairs, somewhat dazzled me. The royal election has long since been legally determined; and any alteration, in it would be a culpable encroachment on the privileges of the people. My sister, the queen, would certainly hesitate to exclude her own son from the crown, for the vanity of being called queen-regnant; the more especially as, in reality, she will be so, as long as the young king is a minor."

"I fully concur in my brother's opinion," observed Margrave Conrad, who appeared to be considerably younger than the other, in whose views, however, he generally coincided, although he betrayed a certain independence of mind and character. "We feel grateful for your concern on behalf of our unhappy sister, noble duke," he continued; "but it has misled you. Let us not speak to her of a project so dangerous and seducing, and which has certainly never yet entered her thoughts."

"You are right, noble sirs," said the duke, quickly: "it was too hasty a conclusion. We must allow matters to take their necessary course. The thought was prompted by respect for the wisdom and rare qualities of your illustrious sister, and as a means of salvation for Denmark in the present conjuncture. What I have said on it must be a secret between us, in all the trust and honour of knighthood."

"I understand you," replied Margrave Otto, examining the duke with a scrutinising glance: "during the past week you have been singularly absorbed in, and have almost distracted us with, your state policy. I could almost swear you had a presentiment of what was about to happen."

The duke changed colour; and Sir Tuko Abildgaard, who had been silent during the whole journey, hastily turned his steed, and seemed busied only in guiding him.

"So much the worse," said the duke, hastily. "Who can have paid attention to the unhappy state of Denmark, and to the variances that have long existed between the king and his powerful nobles, without fearing the worst? There was a time," he continued, "when, as you know, I took an active part in Danish affairs: with the inconsiderateness of youth. I hoped, by a daring undertaking, to bring about internal peace and good government. My attempt miscarried; and now I rejoice, that my reconciliation with the king, and my renunciatory oath, exempt me from the most distant suspicion of having participated in this insurrectionary movement. Even my stay with you, noble sirs, in these dreadful times, I regard as the most fortunate circumstance of my life. In conjunction with you and your noble sister, I may now perhaps, unsuspected, aid in restoring order to my distracted country, and in chastising those audacious nobles who would lord it over the nation. We have seen, at least, that they are not afraid of resorting to the most violent measures to advance their own petty claims, and to gratify a miserable private rancour."

"There is my hand, noble Duke Waldemar!" exclaimed Margrave Otto, extending it cordially: "you intend honestly by the people and the unhappy royal house, and we shall henceforth give you both aid and counsel in restoring peace and order in the country. Let us no longer tarry. I long to see my noble sister, and to give her comfort in her hour of need."

They set spurs to their horses, and rode swiftly towards the camp of Scanderborg, where they were stopped, and their names demanded by the sentinels, who, however, respectfully allowed them to pass, on ascertaining that they were Duke Waldemar and the queen's brothers. On reaching the palace they found the drawbridge occupied by a strong guard of landsknechts, and were obliged to dismount, in consequence of the number of people who blocked up the way. The crowd fell back respectfully on each side before the three princely personages, whose handsome dresses and gold-embroidered mantles indicated their elevated rank. They were, however, often stopped in their progress, and their squires were obliged to remain behind, with the horses. During these stoppages many expressions were heard from amongst the people, which the duke and Sir Abildgaard listened to with special attention.

"Have they caught the murderers?" inquired a burgher.

"By the foul fiend, nay!" replied another: "the carls were well disguised, and who could know them? They had crept into monks' cloaks. For aught we know, they may be here, in the midst of us--nobody can tell a hound by his hairs."

"The wood has ears, and the field has eyes--what has been hidden in the snow, comes up in the thaw," observed an old woman on a crutch: "if Sir John or Drost Hessel catch them, they will be hanged, without doubt."

"Hanged?" cried a young fellow--"where now, Dorothy Ketch? The rascals would dance for joy below the gallows, and hug the halter, if they could get off so easily. Nay, nay; the dogs must be broken, and be upon the wheel. The king wasn't just what he should be, it is true, and was too fond of hunting after wives and wenches; but they had no right, for all that, to kill him, like a mad bull, in a barn."

"When our young king grows bigger, he will revenge his father, like a good Christian," observed a sturdy peasant.

"But where is he? Are we never to get a sight of him?" cried another: "they haven't surely slain him, too?"

"Nay, nay--the Lord put a bar to that," replied the peasant: "they were here the same morning early, before the devil had his shoes on, and would fain have laid hands on the young king; but he was up as soon as they were. When they saw him on the balcony, they grew pale in the nose, and durst not crook a hair at him. If, as they say, it was really the valiant marsk, he was frightened enough when he heard himself outlawed; and the fear of the Evil One seized on all of them before they could knock at the door."

"Rack and wheel were promised them, and red-hot stones they took with them on their journey," said the young fellow.

"That was brave! He will be a doughty king," cried many voices at once: "he will be another sort of man to his father."

"There he is! there he is!" was now vociferated by the crowd; and on the balcony was seen the young king, in his little regal helmet and a knight's black suit, by the side of his mother, who stood clothed in black velvet, with a diadem on her dark tresses. Her face was pale and tranquil, and she surveyed the crowd with great earnestness and composure. On the left side of the little king was placed Sir John, in an arm-chair; and behind him were seen Sir Thorstenson, and a body of royal trabants, with halberds and bucklers.

"Long live King Erik Erikson!" shouted a powerful voice from the balcony; and old Sir John, with an effort, rose and waved his hat.

A thousand voices repeated the shout of homage. The little king bowed to the people with the bearing of a knight, and uttered a few words, which, however, were only heard by those who were nearest, although they were instantly responded to by the entire voices of the multitude.

"See how the young braggart struts and swells!" whispered Sir Abildgaard: "he has learnt betimes to play the knight and king."

Duke Waldemar angrily bit his under-lip, and gave a private signal to Sir Tuko, who left his side, and mingled with the crowd.

Shortly after, a voice from among them shouted--"No more Eriks! We must have a Waldemar for king!"

This exclamation, although no one knew whence it proceeded, was caught up by a considerable number, and a discontented murmur commenced in the assemblage.

But old Sir John again arose, and, notwithstanding the excessive pain he suffered, read, with a loud and distinct voice, a document which, ten years previously, had been signed and sealed by the bishops and estates of the kingdom, and again renewed by the people in 1280, confirming Erik's legal election to the crown. He then repeated the shout of homage, and every rebellious and opposing voice was drowned in the overwhelming cry of "Long live King Erik! long live our lawful king! Down, down with the traitors!"

Duke Waldemar endeavoured hastily to escape from the clamorous multitude, justly fearing that they might tear him in pieces as the instigator of the seditious cry. He therefore joined, with a loud voice, in the shout for King Erik, and happily succeeded, together with the Margraves of Brandenburg, in getting within the palace-gates.

The proclamation having been made, the royal party retired from the balcony, and the people soon afterwards dispersed. In the riddersal, the queen received her princely brothers with considerable emotion, and greeted Duke Waldemar with a coldness which was to him altogether unexpected.

Drost Peter had, in the meanwhile, been receiving from the soldiers the oath of allegiance to the young king; and, a few hours afterwards, he conducted the whole royal family, with a numerous escort, on the way to Viborg. The queen's car, containing the little Princess Mereté and her governess, accompanied them, the queen herself sometimes riding in it when tired of horseback.

It was a grand and solemn mourning procession. In a black velvet mantle, with ravens' feathers in her pearl-bound hat, and mounted on a snow-white palfrey, the queen, attended by her sons, rode through the villages on the route. Prince Christopher was also attired in a magnificent suit of mourning; but the young king chiefly attracted attention. He rode on a tall coal-black steed. Under his black velvet mantle, which was lined with sable and figured with golden crowns, he wore a full suit of knights' armour, the wise precaution of Drost Peter and Sir John. In his little crowned helmet waved a plume of ravens' feathers, and on his arm he bore a small shield, on which was represented a helmet with two golden horns, on the extremities of which were affixed two peacocks' feathers. The youthful king had not yet been dubbed a knight; and although, from his second year, he had been accustomed to hear himself addressed by the title of royalty, he set much greater store on being accounted a knight, and on displaying his arms. It was from this childish love of pomp that he had himself caused to be painted the shield with which he was now for the first time publicly seen, and which he bore with a mien as grave and manly as if he confidently felt he was henceforth called upon to protect the kingdom and country with his puny buckler.

Nearest the royal personages rode the Margraves of Brandenburg, with Duke Waldemar and his drost. After them followed the chancellor, the learned Master Martinus, together with the high-marshal, the under-marshal, and all the counsellors of the kingdom, old John Little excepted, whose recent accident obliged him to remain at Scanderborg.

After these came the royal trabants, and twelve pages bearing torches. At the head of the procession rode Sir Thorstenson, with a numerous band of landsknechts; and Drost Peter Hessel, with Sir Bent Rimaardson, closed it in, and guarded the royal personages on both sides with their bold and trusty horsemen.

The procession advanced slowly and quietly towards Viborg, which was reached, after numerous stoppages, on the evening of the following day, when the body of the murdered king, which, from St. Cecilia's night, had been exposed to public view in the great cathedral of that city, was to be laid in its coffin and interred.

As the procession approached Viborg, Master Martinus first broke the long and solemn silence that had prevailed during the whole journey. Notwithstanding the deep sorrow that bowed him down over the misfortunes of the kingdom, the patriotic old man had so strong a desire to unbosom himself, that he forgot for a moment the private suspicions he harboured against Duke Waldemar, as the secret head and protector of the regicides. They happened to be riding side by side, when the chancellor turned to the duke, with an antiquarian remark, on the name and origin of the ancient city of Viborg, which he thought was derived from a certain Queen *Vebecca*,

or from the Gothic people *Viti*, or, perhaps, with better reason, from its elevated position and ancient use as a place of sacrifice; or even from the heathen war-god *Vig*; and hence that the place had been originally called *Vigbjerg*--the hill of Vig.

"Very possibly, sir chancellor," replied the duke, abstractedly: "as a man of learning, you must understand that best."

But the chancellor continued to allude to several conjectures regarding Odin's surname, *Vigner*, and concerning the amazon *Vebiorg*, who is mentioned in the dithyramb on the race of Bravalla.

"It may be all very true, sir chancellor," exclaimed the duke, peevishly; "but I am not versed in these profoundly learned matters, and therefore do not concern myself respecting them."

"If we examine the town-arms," continued the chancellor, zealously, without noticing the duke's impatience, "they may perhaps confirm the opinion of these who hold that the town was first called *Vigletsborg*; the more especially if we suppose the two figures in the shield to be King Viglet and his queen. Some learned persons, however, have conjectured these to be Adam and Eve, with the tree of knowledge of good and evil between them; but, again, if we compare the shield with the city seal, (*sigillum senatorum Vibergensis civitatis*,) it is evident that the Adam and Eve of one party, and the King Viglet and his queen of the other, are in reality male persons, one old and the other young, who undeniably represent two judges; and I deem it singularly right and judicious that the young judge should have the older and more experienced one by his side; as, in like manner, our young king may now consider it fortunate, in the midst of these disasters, that he has his father's old, tried, and trusty friends by his side."

"Your learning, worthy sir chancellor, must be especially advantageous to him," replied the duke, jeeringly; "and if you could help him to discover the origin of the name of Denmark, it would certainly be a great assistance to him in governing the kingdom wisely."

"If we do not derive the name of our dear fatherland from *Danais*, as the antiquarian historian Dudo supposes, but from old King Dan, as Father Saxo maintains," replied the chancellor, calmly, although he noticed the sarcasm, "it is a thought well calculated to awake kingly aspirations in our young master's soul, that he can reckon his birth and descent from that ancient king, who gave a name to his people and country. Such knowledge is never to be despised."

He ceased, and fell into deep thought, during which he nodded, as if approving some idea that had occurred to him.

"When I behold this great and fair city, with its lofty ramparts," he said, resuming the conversation, "my hope in the Almighty God is strengthened, that he will henceforth keep his hand over the people and their lawful king. From this point the great light of Christianity was spread abroad among the people by means of the holy Bishop Poppo's wonderful miracles. On yon heathy summit our ancient kings received homage; and there the holy martyr, King Canute, got the true aid of the brave Viborgers against traitors and rebels. Here the great Waldemar was first proclaimed king; and here he found help and refuge with the trusty burghers, after that treacherous and crying slaughter at Roskild. Here, also, alas, three and thirty years ago, was homage paid to this same unhappy king, then an innocent child, whose ensanguined corpse we are now about to see carried to its resting-place. Accursed be his murderers, and they who have caused this disaster! I would they were present in the midst of us, that our murdered king and master might turn upon them his glassy eyes, and discover them to us."

As he uttered these words he examined the duke closely. It was getting dark, but he could nevertheless plainly perceive an expression of uneasiness in his countenance.

"Do you not share my wish, highborn sir?" he inquired. "And think you any one of the regicides, or of their accomplices in the horrid deed, is so hardened and godless that he would not grow pale and betray his guilt in presence of the murdered king?"

The duke's horse began to plunge, and as soon as he had brought him into a steady pace again, he replied to the chancellor's question, without, however, turning his face towards him. "You would not make a good inquisitor, sir chancellor," he said, quickly, "if you think you could detect the criminals in this fashion. You may rest assured, worthy sir, that I shall cause search to be made for them in every direction; but I should least of all expect to discover them here. The audacious murderers will certainly be careful, on such an occasion, not to come hither, where they might be so easily detected. That Marsk Stig is the ringleader, we well know; but if we were to regard every one as a participator in the horrid act who may happen to grow pale or be affected during this solemnity," he continued, "we must first denounce ourselves and all the most attached friends of the country and the royal house; for who can barely think of the dreadful deed without emotion? When the margraves and I first heard the report of it, in Count Gerhard's castle at Kiel, we were almost overwhelmed with horror. The daring marsk has accomplices, most assuredly. I have dispatched spies throughout the country; and if you can discover the murderers before I do, sir chancellor, you will be entitled to our thanks. As our young king's nearest kinsman and natural guardian, I consider myself bound to pursue them."

The learned chancellor was silent, and again relapsed into thought.

The town soon lay distinctly before them, with its numerous churches and chapels, from which more than twenty towers and steeples rose towards the heavens.

"Hark, how the funeral bells are tolling from the steeple of Our Lady's Church," exclaimed now the grave chancellor: "soon will they be thus tolled from every steeple in Denmark; and think you not, illustrious sir, they will ring like the knell of doomsday in the ears of the murderers, wherever they may be?"

While he was yet speaking the sounds of bells increased, coming louder and more distinctly from the twenty churches of the city, and from every village steeple in the neighbourhood. Night closed in, and the flambeaux of the pages lighted up the mourning procession. Duke Waldemar's horse plunged about wildly among the flaring torches, seemingly affrighted at the tolling from the bells.

"Nay, hark again to the small bell on the gable of the grayfriars' church, behind the cathedral: how clearly it sounds beyond every other, although it has no belfry!" exclaimed Master Martinus to the duke, who was warm with curbing his unruly steed. "The poor grayfriars!" continued the chancellor: "they ring zealously to-night; desirous, perhaps, to let us know that they had no share in what their cloaks concealed in the barn of Finnerup."

The duke replied not, but addressed himself to his drost. "Do we not enter by St. Mogen's Gate?" he inquired, in an indifferent tone.

"Nay, illustrious sir: that is the entrance from the Aaborg road," replied Sir Abildgaard: "here we have the sea and the Borrewold on our right, and must enter by St. Michael's Gate, and along St. Michael's Street to the cathedral."

"Thou art right, Tuko. This noise has confused me. Is it not respecting St. Mogen's Gate they relate that stupid fable?"

"Yes, i'faith, sir," replied the knight, laughing--"of a bronze horse, under ground, that is said to sound whenever we have war in the country."

"The concealed horse, under the gate of St. Mogen, has been the palladium of the city from the earliest times, gentlemen," observed Master Martin, gravely: "it is said that no traitor and enemy of his country has heard it ring, and survived."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Sir Abildgaard, with forced pleasantry; "it is a pity the good St. Michael has not such a wonderful horse under his gate: we should then soon have certain proof whether we are all as good patriots as our learned chancellor."

"The holy Michael gives no warning," replied the chancellor, "but brandishes his flaming sword against the doomed. That is his image, gentlemen, we perceive over the gate there."

The procession was now entering the arch of the gate, and the torches illumined a knight-like, brazen statue, that stood over it, with one foot on a dragon, and a long flaming sword in its hand. The sword was gilded, and shone bright, in the light of the flambeaux, above the duke's head. He looked up, and fancied the statue moved and bent towards him; and quickly spurring his horse, he dashed under the gloomy archway.

"Did I not know it was a brazen statue," he whispered to his drost, "I could have sworn it was alive, and had Marsk Stig for its shadow."

The mourning train proceeded slowly along St. Michael's Street to the cathedral. Every window was lighted, and the streets were filled with people of all ranks, among whom as deep a silence prevailed as if they had been inanimate forms. The train approached the great illumined cathedral, whose immense bells, with their deep, hollow tones, drowned those of every other.

In the large area surrounding the cathedral the mourners dismounted, and the procession advanced on foot, in the order in which it had arrived. Black cloth had been laid along the path leading to the doors of the church, which stood, grand and majestic, with its two lofty spires, and its four chapels, as it had been enlarged by King Niels, and completed by Bishop Nicolaus, in the twelfth century.

The procession entered, proceeding along the principal aisle, and past the four chapels, wherein candles burned on fourteen altars. The chapel of St. Kield, the patron saint of the city, on the northern side of the cathedral, was brilliantly illumined. In it candles were burnt night and day, under St. Kield's golden shrine, which was suspended by gilded links from the vaulted roof; and here was seen, in passing, the tomb of the murdered Svend Grathé.

The last of the train had not entered the church-porch when the first halted opposite the high altar. Here the arms of the murdered king, bearing the two lions and the two crowns, half concealed by a veil of long black crape, were lighted up with twelve wax-candles; and here stood the provost, in full canonicals, with two other prelates, an archdeacon, a chanter, and twelve minor canons, with tapers in their hands. They sang a solemn requiem over a large oaken coffin, covered with lead, on which lay the great sword of King Erik Christopherson, by the side of a silver shrine containing the holy sacrament, which was now to follow him to the grave; as his

sudden and violent death had prevented his receiving it whilst alive. On the shrine was engraved the Latin inscription: "*Panis adest veræ domini sponsalia vitæ.*"

When mass had been sung, the provost pronounced a short oration. He then raised the lid of the coffin, and placed the shrine between the folded hands of the corpse. Every one who desired to see the royal body, now received permission to advance. A few only approached so near that they could see it, and among these was the young King Erik. He bowed in silence over his father's corpse, laid his hand upon its gory breast, and said a few words which no one heard. He then stepped back, and hid his weeping face in his mantle.

No other person approaching, the prelate replaced the coffin-lid, and having again laid the sword over it, the canons raised the coffin, and bore it, at the head of the mourners, behind the high altar, where they placed it in a vaulted tomb, raised an ell above the ground; whilst a deep and solemn dirge sounded from a crypt directly underneath. The prelate then cast three spadefuls of earth on the coffin, and pronounced, with a loud voice, the usual burial-service of the Church.

He then announced to the people, that the betrayed and murdered king, five years before his sudden death, as if impelled by a wonderful presentiment, had endowed the cathedral with gifts and estates, in order that masses and vigils should be maintained until the last day for the repose of his soul.<sup>[33]</sup>

"The requiem," said he, "which is now sounding, shall never cease. Every night this song shall ascend from the depths of the earth to the throne of the Almighty. Day and night we shall pray for the soul of our murdered lord, and implore the King of kings, that King Erik may be the last monarch of Denmark who shall fall by the hands of traitors and murderers. The Lord have mercy on the soul of his anointed! Woe! woe to his murderers!"

This woe-cry was repeated by all the canons, and by many of the mourners, among whom the voice of the young King Erik sounded with wonderful distinctness. Three times the woe-cry was repeated by the invisible chorus in the subterranean chapel beneath the tomb.

During the whole of these solemnities Master Martinus had been closely scrutinising every countenance around him, although he was inwardly much affected, and held his folded hands on his breast. In some, he beheld deep emotion; but many exhibited only coldness and indifference; and in others he remarked even a degree of bravado that alarmed him.

The duke and his drost stood with their faces turned from him, and appeared to have their attention fixed on St. Kield's Chapel. But when the hymn sounded from the crypt under their feet, and the deep woe-cry echoed among the arches of the church, the duke had to support himself on his sword, and laid his hand on his forehead; whilst Sir Abildgaard hastily whispered a few words in his ear. At the same moment a subdued shriek was heard, and a momentary confusion took place amongst the people at the church-door, where a man, who had swooned away, was carried out.

The train of mourners slowly quitted the church. During the funeral solemnities Drost Peter had stood quietly by a pillar of the choir, with his hands folded on the hilt of his drawn sword, which he held point upwards, while the Gospel was read. In this chivalrous and devotional posture, which signified that the knight was prepared to defend the holy faith, he had inwardly prayed for the soul of his murdered king, as well as for the future welfare of the young monarch and his kingdom.

When the procession had retired from the church, he observed a tall female form, in a simple black dress, and with a dark veil over her face, kneeling with folded hands near the high altar, where she seemed to pray with great devotion, without observing what was taking place around her. Her noble and beautiful figure reminded him, beyond all the women of Denmark, of her who was dearest to him; and, notwithstanding her simple dress, and the improbability of her being the Lady Ingé, he remained, absorbed in reverie. It was not until the tall form rose to depart, that he became aware that the procession had already withdrawn, and that the lights on the altar had been extinguished. He then sheathed his sword, and advanced slowly towards her. When he stood before her in the deserted aisle, which was still faintly lighted up by the candles of St. Kield's Chapel, she started, as if surprised at the meeting, and appeared anxious to avoid him.

"Ingé--noble Jomfru Ingé! if it be you," said he, "oh, do not avoid me, but say what weighty reason brings you hither? It is well that our prayers should unite at the royal tomb, and before God's altar, on this great day of mourning!"

"Drost Peter Hessel," replied the maiden, pausing, "here then, perhaps, we meet for the last time in this world. I will no longer attempt to conceal my face from you; although the cause of my appearance here must remain a mystery to you."

The veil was thrown aside, and revealed her whom the dear and well-known voice had already announced: the brave Lady Ingé stood before him. She regarded him with a countenance on which a deep although calm grief was imprinted; but its expression was softened by pious confidence, and by a calm demeanour announcing a firm and powerful will.

"For heaven's sake, what has happened to you?" exclaimed Drost Peter, alarmed. "I see you for the last time, say you? What mean you, noble Jomfru Ingé? Why are you here alone? and where is your father?"

"Inquire not, Drost Peter--I cannot, I dare not answer you. Give me your word of honour as a knight that you will not follow me from this holy place, nor seek to learn the road that I shall take."

"How can you think, noble Ingé, that I should follow you?"

"Remember who I am, and you will then understand me. This only can I tell you: I am fulfilling a heavy but necessary duty in quitting this unhappy land. God knows when I shall again see it; but here only my heart and soul are at home. Yet one thing more must I declare to you," she continued, with a trembling voice--"for my justification and your own peace. You must know it--that it is the truth, you have my word--my unhappy father was at Flynderborg on St. Cecilia's night."

Drost Peter saw how much it had cost her to utter these words; and he heard them with a feeling of joy, which, however, was restrained by a thrill of horror at the frightful thought they concealed.

"The merciful God be praised!" he exclaimed. "Take my word as a knight, noble Jomfru Ingé, that although my whole soul follows you wherever you may journey, mine eye shall not attempt to spy out your way, whoever accompanies you. We stand here on a divided road," he continued, deeply affected; "and I see too well that we must be parted for a time; but by my God and Saviour, in whose presence I stand, I shall not resign the hope of again seeing you! You were my childhood's bride, Jomfru Ingé! Our angels before God's throne united our infant souls, before they knew each other. If you may not or will not hereafter become my bride in reality, when these turmoils which now part us have ceased, and Denmark's throne again stands fast--I now vow to God, and by every saint, that Drost Peter Hessel shall go down unwedded into his grave, but never shall he forget his childhood's bride! Answer me not, noble-hearted Ingé! Crush not with a word the fairest hope of my life! I have an important work to perform in the world, and feel, by the blessing of God, strength and courage to complete it faithfully, even with this greatest loss. But with you is torn away the blossom of my heart's life, the fruit of which I must be condemned never to taste. Deprive me not, then, of my fair hopes, but rather, with one word, bid them live. Say but that word, and my courage and strength shall increase tenfold, to realise with cheerfulness the thoughts which first brought our souls to know each other. Ingé, dearest Ingé! canst thou hereafter love me?" With these words he seized her hand, and cast on her a look beaming with the strongest affection.

She withdrew her hand. "I can, my childhood's bridegroom," she replied, with inward emotion; "yea, I can love thee deeply, so that, even should I never more behold thee with these eyes, I can preserve thine image in my soul, until we meet in that greater fatherland where no strife and guile can prevail, and where no might can sever us. But I am a daughter, Drost Peter," she continued, retreating a step--"I am an unhappy daughter. You are--you must be--the enemy of the man who gave me life. Do, in God's name, what you must and ought, and let no thought of me lead your mind from truth and duty. The Almighty shall determine whether we again meet in this world or not!"

"It shall, it must be, noble, dearest Ingé! the compassionate Creator will not for ever divide us."

"That no one knows, save He who knows all. Farewell, my childhood's bridegroom--farewell! God and all his saints be with thee and our fatherland! He who is merciful be gracious to us all! Farewell!"

So saying, she hid her face in her veil, and disappeared along the dark aisle.

Drost Peter dared not follow her. He stood as if rivetted to the pavement; and it seemed to him as if the dark and baleful spirit that sped over the land had now torn away from him also the delight and joy of his life; but he felt, at the same time, with a melancholy pleasure, that this farewell hour had shown him a glimpse of a blessedness of which no separation, and no power on earth, could rob him.

He had been standing for some time, gazing on a tombstone in the floor of the church, when he raised his eyes to the image on the cross, above the door of the choir, and it seemed to him as if the drooping head of the Redeemer shone with glory in the rays proceeding from the lights of St. Kield's Chapel. Suddenly he felt a powerful blow on his left shoulder, as if from a strong, mailed hand. He turned, and a tall man, clad in armour, with his visor down, stood before him.

"We are met, Drost Peter Hessel--we are met!" uttered a deep and powerful voice. "If you are the knight who is placed to guard the infant throne, defend it if you can! You now behold the man who swears to overturn it, or perish in the attempt."

"Ha! Marsk Stig! regicide!" exclaimed Drost Peter, drawing his sword. But at that instant all the lights in St. Kield's Chapel, which had alone illuminated the church, were suddenly extinguished; the powerful, gigantic form disappeared, and Drost Peter groped alone, with his



drawn sword, among the tombs in the dark cathedral.

## THE CHILDHOOD OF ERIK MENVED.

### PART III.

Half an hour after Lady Ingé had left Drost Peter in Viborg Cathedral, by the grave of the murdered king, she departed, in the plain dress of a citizen's daughter, through St. Mogen's Gate, in company with her father. Many travellers were proceeding the same way; but before midnight, by order of the young king, every gate was barred.

Duke Waldemar and Sir Abildgaard had accompanied the procession from the cathedral. The old Borrewold Castle had been prepared for the reception of the royal family and their followers; and there, late in the evening, the queen and the young king held a council, with locked doors, at which were present the Margraves of Brandenburg, Chancellor Martinus, and Drost Peter, who had hurried from the church with the important intelligence that Marsk Stig himself was in Viborg, and had had the audacity to be present at the funeral. Every precautionary measure was instantly adopted. The approaches to the royal apartments in the Borrewold were guarded by Sir Thorstenson and Benedict Rimaardson, with the royal trabants. Mailed horsemen and landsknechts blocked up every avenue to the castle. The trusty civic guard of Viborg was armed, and, at the chancellor's suggestion, the orders of the king were immediately issued to shut the gates of the city, and to institute a strict search throughout it, during which every suspicious person was seized and imprisoned.

It was past midnight. The duke, with great inquietude, paced up and down his sleeping chamber, situated in the eastern wing of the castle, facing the Viborg lake. The events of the journey and the interment had strongly excited his fears. The expressions of the chancellor on their way to the city, and his searching looks in the cathedral, had created in him a feeling of uneasiness, which he in vain endeavoured to overcome. His anxiety was farther increased by the stern preparations going forward in the castle, which had not escaped his notice. On every side he heard the tread of armed men--in the court-yard, as well as in the passage outside his chamber.

Although both himself and his drost were waited upon with the greatest attention, and even with regal pomp, it still appeared to him that all his movements were watched; and the strong guard outside his door was far from pleasing to him. He had despatched Tuko Abildgaard into the city, an hour before, to ascertain the cause of the excessive noise and clang of arms he heard there, and he had not yet returned. The door was at length opened, and the young knight entered, breathless.

"What is the meaning of the din?" inquired the duke: "is the town in an uproar?"

"Not precisely so; but matters look suspicious," replied Sir Abildgaard, with some agitation. "They are searching everywhere for the marsk. I have been three times laid hold of, and your name was barely powerful enough to liberate me."

"Have they seized the marsk?" asked the duke, hastily.

"Nay, sir duke: it is rumoured that he left the town before the gates were secured. The Stig knew well what he was about; but what he wanted here to-day, I am at a loss to conceive."

"That is easily understood," replied the duke. "To know in what temper the people are, must be to him of much importance. Great grief or lamentation I did not observe; neither saw I peasant or burgher in the procession."

"But now the wind has shifted, sir. The sight of the queen and of the young king has worked a wonderful change in the mob. You should hear how they growl against the daring marsk and his friends, and how they lament and extol the deceased king, the soft-hearted fools! We shall now have Reinmar von Zweter and all the German poets in vogue, and Erik Glipping will become a great man in his grave. But it is always thus. When the wild beast, that every one pursued, has

fallen, even his greatest foes lament over him, as if he had suffered shameful injustice; and they admire the monster for his powerful claws, when they have no longer anything to fear from them. That wavering turncoat, Sir Lavé, from Flynderborg, has been here, with the marsk: he was seized with qualms in the church, it is said, and behaved like a madman during the funeral. Fortunately, he has disappeared. Had they caught him, he was in a condition to betray us all."

"Us?" repeated the duke, suddenly changing his tone of familiarity to one of pride and coldness: "remember to whom you are addressing yourself, Tuko! What connection had I with these conspirators? Look to your own safety. After what you have stated, I would advise you to be careful. Rely not on my name: unless you can, like me, wash your hands of what has happened, and swear you had no part in it, I cannot aid you. I am here, with the young king, as his nearest kinsman and protector. With Marsk Stig and his transactions, I can have nothing to do. The late conspiracy at Möllerup is already talked of as a well-known affair, and you are named as having been concerned in it. But for me, I knew nothing of it, and nothing will I know."

"But, most gracious sir," exclaimed Sir Abildgaard, in astonishment, "you stated no objections when you accorded me permission to travel; and, though you did not expressly send any message by me, we perfectly understood each other. What I promised in your name, I have never doubted but that you would fulfil."

"What you have promised, you must yourself perform. I have promised nothing that I dare not proclaim to the world. That which I promised and swore to the deceased king, in our covenant at Sjöborg, I have kept to the letter. From that hour I have undertaken no step against the crown and kingdom, and yet here they have no confidence in me. I must remain contented with respectful servants, and an ample guard of honour, while the margraves and Drost Hessel are present in the council. But I shall speedily teach these gentlemen who is the guardian of the king, the legal protector of the kingdom; and the daring rebels, too, shall know that I am not the man who, contrary to his oath and duty, will be found protecting traitors and regicides."

Sir Abildgaard stood as if thunderstruck. "My noble duke," he said, at length, "you must be jesting? You will not strike down, in his moment of need, the faithful friend who has placed his life in jeopardy for your sake? I, who so cheerfully shared imprisonment and adversity with you--you cannot seriously propose to use me as a mere tool, which you can suffer to be broken and cast aside with unconcern, when you have no farther need of me? If this, however, be the friendship of princes, I must indeed have been the most obtuse animal in the world, when I thought I had discovered generosity and magnanimity under purple."

"Tuko," said the duke, with a transient expression of emotion, and a proud commanding look, "link not your common notions of friendship and generosity with that great chain of thought that binds my princely life to the throne of Denmark. Have you been familiar with me from my childhood, and not yet learnt to separate the thought from the word? Think you this hand can ever be so mean and base, as to crush the true and active friend of my youth, who spoke and acted, while I was forced to sleep and hold my peace? Learn truly to estimate your princely master, who ceases not to be your friend, although he must now, for loftier reasons, assume the appearance of a stern enemy. If, with me, you have discovered the true meaning of living for a great and noble object, know also that the paltry vulgar virtues, which people call friendship, fidelity, gratitude, and I know not what, are at bottom but pompous nothings, which only command the respect of children in spirit and statecraft, and which the matured ruler-mind hesitates not to cast aside when, from the puppet masses, he can embody for himself the great idea for which he lives and labours. If you now comprehend me, Tuko, you will at once acknowledge and respect that mighty spirit you nurtured in its development, and by whose side you shall again stand when I have reached my goal, and you have acquired strength to follow me. Meantime, you must depart: this night must you fly; and by your flight accuse yourself, and betray what you can no longer conceal. You, and all the other delinquents, I adjudge outlaws. As the king's guardian, and protector of the realm, I shall pursue you with rigour when the proper moment has arrived. But if there be a great spirit in you, as I have believed, you will not therefore hate or mistake me; and when the season of persecution is over, you shall find that Duke Waldemar was not a selfish or faithless friend, and that you were no credulous fool when you trusted to generosity and magnanimity under purple."

"Now, I understand and admire you, noble sir," replied the artful knight, bowing profoundly, "though I must flee you as from a stern pursuer. What I have done for you in secret shall cast no shadow on your glory. You can stand high and pure by the infant throne, and condemn your friends without blushing. Good--I shall fly--whither I dare not say; but wherever, in the north, there sits enthroned a powerful protector of Marsk Stig, there is the place of shelter for his persecuted friends. Farewell, noble duke: your drost shall soon be gone. Spare not the hardened sinner when he gains a respectable distance; but remember also, that none of us are immaculate, and let mercy take the place of justice when the hour of condemnation has arrived."

So saying, he retired into a side apartment, and speedily returned disguised as a right handsome pantry-maid. He curtsied to the duke, mimicking with much drollery the bashful manners of a servant-wench.

"Dearest gentleman," he said, with the accent of a Jutland peasant-girl, "I am a modest, innocent lass, and hardly know how I could have found my way into the presence of such a grand young lord. Pardon my intrusion, and allow me to quit this place pure and uninjured, that the

slandrous world may think no ill of me. That you are a dangerous gentleman for such as me, is well known; and your guard of honour will certainly not be surprised if I conceal my modest face from them. Thanks, worthy gentleman, for your gracious kindness. For your sake I must now hide from the world for a long time, and you must pretend not to know me, though I shall probably grieve for what is yours, and you will not certainly repel the hand of your humble servant."

"Art thou a fool? Is this a time for jesting?" exclaimed the duke, in a low tone; and, opening the door into the passage, "Good night, my child," he said, aloud, patting the cheeks of the pretended girl in the open doorway. "Run on, now: these brave soldiers will not harm thee. But take care, in future, that thou dost not thus go astray after wedlock fancies, and mistake a knight's closet for the pantry."

The rough landsknecht outside the door smiled in his beard, and, without suspicion, allowed the tall pantry-maid to slip past.

The duke closed the door, and cast himself, in gloomy thoughtfulness, on a chair.

"Flee, miserable coxcomb!" he muttered, "and find a shelter now where thou canst! Thou wilt hardly escape without getting thy wings scorched."

In a minute afterwards he fancied he heard a scream. He approached the window with some uneasiness, and distinguished a cry of "Seize her! it is a disguised traitor!" shouted by a gruff voice in the street. There followed some shrieking and tumult, which, however, soon died away in the distance.

The departure of the intimate friend of his youth, and concern for his fate, seemed to have disposed the duke to melancholy; but the feeling was not of long duration.

"Bah!" he said to himself, as he proudly paced the floor, "when the ancient heroes tied fire beneath the wings of swallows, and sent them forth as instruments of conquest, what cared they for the piping of the little creatures?"

He again threw himself on a chair, and fell into deep thought. Since his imprisonment at Sjöborg, where he had often held converse the whole night with his owl and his dead kinsman, as if the latter answered him from the inscribed prison-wall, he would frequently, in his closet, talk half aloud to himself; and it was rumoured and believed by many, that he was leagued with powerful spirits.

"As far as I know," continued he, wrapt in his gloomy fancies, "the first great stage is mounted: it requires courage to stand upon it, for it is bloody and slippery; but I did not stir a hand--not a word escaped my lips. I stand pure and free; and where is he who can accuse me? The next stage is a minor. It, too, must be ascended--but without crime. The fair hand that shall help me up is cold, but it may be warmed. It will lose me a pious soul, but a love-dream shall not stand in my way. On! on!--and then--then shall no one say, 'Behold! there goes King Abel in his grandson!'"

Next forenoon, when Duke Waldemar left his apartment to appear in the royal presence, the guard of honour lowered their lances respectfully before him. The queen and the young king received him with an attention that surprised him; whilst Drost Peter's salutation, though somewhat cold, was courteous. The duke surmised that the council had resolved to invest him with that full power and authority which they could not refuse him without overstepping the law of the land, and rousing a dangerous and powerful enemy, who, in open league with the conspirators, could easily overthrow the yet unstable throne.

The consciousness of this power, and the feeling that he was already secretly dreaded, although his authority was not publicly acknowledged, imparted to him an air of confidence and almost kingly dignity that did not ill become him. He approached the queen with as much ease and freedom as if he had already been for a long time her adviser, and the guardian of the young king. He spoke of the critical state of the kingdom, and of the measures to be adopted, with sagacity and zeal, but at the same time with the decisive air of a co-regent. This demeanour was, however, attended with so much politeness, and respectful acknowledgment of the queen's important influence as royal mother, that the fair and proud Queen Agnes could not possibly be offended. She appeared to have already been more favourably disposed towards the duke by her brothers; and, now, she could not but admire the delicacy with which he advanced his claims, without seeming at all assuming or importunate.

The constraint which was apparent in the queen's demeanour at the beginning of the conversation soon disappeared, and Drost Peter observed with concern the manner in which the duke, by his subtle flatteries and vehement denunciation of the conspirators, contrived to disarm the queen of every suspicion that had previously attached to him.

"It is a horrible conspiracy!" exclaimed the duke, warmly. "Many of the most important men of the country appear to be engaged in it. A rigid investigation has become necessary, that the guilty may be discovered, and the innocent remain unsuspected. My former misunderstanding with the king, and that youthful folly for which I had justly to atone at Sjöborg, and which there I also learnt to forswear and repent, may have exposed me to a distrust, which I hope soon to remove by faithful deed and counsel. In a magnanimous soul an unfounded suspicion can never

take deep root, though there be spirits mean and distrustful enough to nourish it. I blame no one, however, for being vigilant and cautious," he continued. "In these unhappy times, distrust insinuates itself into the closest relations of friendship and kindred. Would you believe it, noble queen, even the friend of my youth, Drost Tuko Abildgaard, had given me cause for strong suspicions, which, I regret to say, are now confirmed; for last night he disappeared."

"How?" exclaimed the queen, with surprise: "your drost--the young Sir Abildgaard?"

"Even he, noble queen! Is it not melancholy? A man, whom I regarded for so many years as my friend--he who shared my youthful follies, and was, indeed, partly the cause of them--though for that he shared my imprisonment in Sjöborg, which he left, as I believed, with the same abjuration of his errors that I made--I have now reason to believe that he was present with the conspirators at Möllerup, in the foolish expectation that I should approve that horrible project, if it could be executed before I dreamt of it. Yesterday, having heard with what horror I condemned the conspirators, he fled, and I have not since heard of him."

"Respecting this affair, illustrious sir," observed Drost Peter, "I have to inform you, that Sir Tuko Abildgaard was last night apprehended in a suspicious disguise, but afterwards escaped by a daring artifice, and is not yet discovered."

The duke remained silent, and merely raised his hand to his eyes, as if unable to restrain an emotion that seemed to do honour to his heart.

"Noble duke!" exclaimed the queen, with warm interest, "what you have lost in that false friend you have gained in my esteem and confidence. That your drost was among the conspirators was well known to me; and there was a moment when even those who defended you most zealously were forced to admit that your intimate connection with this knight was unaccountable. My brothers are your friends. From them I have learnt your disinterested sympathy, as well for me, as for the crown and kingdom. They were witnesses of your horror upon first hearing of this audacious crime; and it will greatly rejoice them to learn, that the incomprehensible enigma of your relation with Sir Abildgaard has thus been solved."

The duke blushed slightly; but hastily availed himself of the advantageous impression he had made upon the queen. He advised that a Dane-court should be held at Nyborg in the spring, where he would himself be present, and, in conjunction with the queen, assume the guardianship of the young king. In the meantime he hoped to show himself worthy of that important office, by securing the country against the daring marsk and the rebels. He suggested that the queen should, for the present, remain with the young king at Viborg, where the strong garrison and the fidelity of the burghers rendered any hostile attack impossible. This had been the advice of Drost Peter and the chancellor, in which the Margraves of Brandenburg had also concurred.

The same day the duke left Viborg, apparently on the best terms with the royal house. A short time afterwards it was announced that he had raised an army in South Jutland, to oppose the marsk and his adherents.

But Drost Peter trusted him not; and old Sir John, who, quite recovered, soon arrived at Viborg, shook his head doubtfully at these tidings. They suspected that the duke merely pretended to arm himself against the marsk, in order to muster a respectable force, with which he could assert his claims at the Dane-court, and secure his election to the regency.

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Whilst nearly all the conspirators, stricken with horror at their own deed, had sought refuge in Norway, Marsk Stig had buried his wife, and, with his two daughters, had left Möllerup, where he no longer considered himself secure. At great personal risk he had been present at the king's interment, and had marked how little favourable to him and his cause was the temper of the people.

Nevertheless, it was quickly rumoured that Rypen House and Flynderborg were in the hands of the rebels, and that the valiant marsk, with seven hundred men in iron, and his warlike engines from Möllerup, had taken a strong position on Helgeness and Hielm, from which points he appeared resolved to carry devastation through the country.

Helgeness is a peninsula, girded by immense heights. It stretches, like a promontory, from Molsherred towards Samsoe, between the bay of Vegtrup and that of Ebeltoft. The neck of land by which this peninsula is connected with North Jutland, is only two hundred paces in breadth. With the utmost haste, the marsk had caused this approach to be cut off by a deep trench, and a wall of large hewn stones, at which they laboured day and night; the old castle on Hielm Island being fortified at the same time.

This singular little island is only about an English mile in circumference. It lies in the Cattedgat, about two miles east of Helgeness, and about a mile from the point that runs out from Ebeltoft parish. The old castle on the island is said to have been built in pagan times, by the famous King Jarmerik, who was there slain. The island and castle belonged, at the period of which we treat, to Chamberlain Rané Jonsen, as did also a tenement or farm-house on the point, which, for many ages after, was called Rané's barn-yard. The island possessed a good haven, where lay Jarl

Mindre-Alf with his pirate-vessels. There was no want of fresh water; and Fru Ingeborg had, with much prudence, advised her husband to make this his place of refuge. Here he was in greater security than at Möllerup, had firm footing on the Danish coasts, and could receive supplies from Norway without impediment. The island was already, from its situation and heights, so well fortified by nature, and the old castle was so favourably situated, that it did not seem difficult to make the place impregnable. There were now added two lofty towers, with loopholes and strong battlements, and the castle was provided with deep double trenches.

The marsk had not awaited the permission of his kinsman, the crafty Chamberlain Rané, to occupy this important position, and probably he did not expect much complacency from him. The latter, indeed, appeared to have intended this secure asylum for himself, should all miscarry. Hence, on the marsk's arrival, he found a brave little garrison in the castle, who had strict orders from the chamberlain to defend it against every one to the last extremity. The marsk had therefore to take the place with the strong hand, and was so exasperated by the unexpected resistance he encountered, that he allowed the whole garrison to be slain. For this reason, it was afterwards sung, in the old ballad:--

"Marsk Stig he captured Hielm so steep--  
The truthful tale I tell:  
Full many a cheek was blanched that day,  
And many a hero fell."

Here the marsk erected his lithers and other formidable machines on the old rock-fast walk and visited Helgeness almost daily, to superintend the fortifications there. His seven hundred ironclad men were garrisoned in Hielm, and on the peninsula. Some of the peasants in the neighbourhood had voluntarily declared for him; but many he caused to be seized, and compelled them to bear stones and labour on the works. The towers on Hielm speedily arose, as if by miracle, terrifying the oppressed peasants all around, who were constrained not only to work on the walls of Helgeness, but also to supply provisions for the garrisons of both places.

These misfortunes were attributed by the depressed people to the bad government of the murdered king; and the feelings they then indulged are plainly indicated in the ballad which, a few months after the king's death, blended mournfully with the blithe spring song of the birds, and in which the new fortress was described as a monster who had risen from the sea, with horns like towers. Therein it was sadly sung:--

"The peasant he goes out o'er the field,  
And there he sows his corn:  
Help us, our Father in heaven high,  
Now Hielm has got the horn!

"God pity us poor peasants gray,  
That Glipping e'er did reign:  
Alas, that he was ever born  
To be the peasants' bane!"

This ballad the stern marsk himself heard a young peasant-girl singing, one fair morning in the beginning of May, while, mounted on his war-steed, he was surveying with pride the strong defences, to which a few peasants and prisoners of war were still engaged in dragging the last stones.

One of the strongest workmen on the walls was a stalwart old man, in a worn-out leathern harness, who, notwithstanding the presence of the marsk, had sat quietly down on an angle of the wall, his arms crossed, and regarded the proud general with a wild, disdainful look.

The peasant-girl, carrying bandages in her hand, advanced leisurely along a footpath, beyond the wall. Her song seemed to surprise the marsk. The old prisoner on the wall also listened attentively. The girl first sang aloud, at some distance:--

"They were full seven score men and seven  
Upon the muir who met:  
The king is slain--how rede we now?  
And where now shall we get?

"The king is slain, and lies a corse--  
The peace we've broken down;  
Here we can neither bide nor bigg  
In field or burrow-town.

"But we will on to Scanderborg,  
And bid the queen good-day,  
And ask the lady how she doth  
Before we farther gae.

"She may forget how she would mock,

And all our words deride:  
The fire is now in the mocker's house,  
And she the stour maun bide."

Marsk Stig started. He heard his own words to the conspirators, at the council on the heath immediately after the king's murder, and something of what had passed between the queen and him at Scanderborg.

The peasant-girl drew nearer, and sang, with a loud voice, what had been preserved in the ballad of the words of the queen and the young king:--

"Welcome, Marsk Stig, thou self-made king!  
Now shalt thou have thy due;  
This night of blood, should King Erik live,  
Full dearly shalt thou rue.

"Then up spake Erik Erikson,  
Little though he mot be:  
From Denmark thou'rt outlawed, as sure  
As the crown belongs to me."

The marsk became irritated, and reined in his steed; whilst the prisoner on the wall laughed aloud.

"Pray be not angry, stern sir marsk," he muttered: "only hear the ballad out. There is not a word of falsehood in it."

The peasant-girl seemed to concern herself only with her bandages and her song, which went on to relate how the marsk went home to Lady Ingeborg, at Möllerup, and how she advised him to fortify Hielm. With deep grief, Stig Andersen heard some of the last words of his unhappy wife, as the girl continued her song:--

"For nine long winters have I pined--  
In secret borne the blight;  
My heart is now laid in the grave--  
Good night, my lord, good night!"

The anger of the marsk changed to a deep melancholy. He sat on his horse motionless as a statue, listening to the two last verses of the ballad, which the girl sang with such an expression of sadness, that it pierced his heart, and he felt as if, in these tones of sorrow, the whole grief of the country had united to penetrate his bosom with reproaches, as with a sharp two-edged sword. The words were simple and touching:--

"The sturdy oaks in the greenwood stand,  
When the storm comes down amain,  
But the hazel and the birchen tree  
Are rooted from the plain.

"What kings and courtiers do amiss  
Upon the poor doth fall;  
Then pity us wretched peasants, God!  
Have mercy on us all!"

"My Aasé, my Aasé!" suddenly exclaimed the old prisoner on the wall, springing up and extending his arms towards the dark-eyed country-girl, who, with the delighted cry of "Grandfather, dear grandfather, have I at last found you?" dropped her bandages, and with outstretched hands ran towards him as eagerly as if she would have crossed the deep ditch and sealed the wall that separated them.

"What now, child?" exclaimed the marsk, riding up to her. "Wilt thou be the first to carry Marsk Stig's fortress by storm? Is this thy daughter, old graybeard?"

"My grandchild--my blessed little Aasé she is, stern sir marsk!" cried old Henner Friser, so deeply affected that, for a moment, he forgot his feeling of defiance. "She has sought for me the whole country round. Ah, if you have a human heart, sir marsk, deny me not the pleasure of clasping her again to my old bosom, and blessing her once more, before I drag myself to death on your accursed wall."

"Thou art an intractable and audacious carl," replied the marsk: "even when thou beggest a favour, thou defiest me, and cursest my work."

"I dare not curse your work, sir," replied Henner: "my hand is not purer than your's; but my help will bring you no blessing. Every stone I have rolled hither will most assuredly be scattered: therefore have I toiled like a beast of burthen, and have not every day laid my hands in my lap.

And well may I call this wall accursed; it bears the ban in its own foundations. It will fall, as surely as it now stands, proud and bold, a devilish barrier between Danish hearts. It parts even fathers and children; for here I stand, a miserable, thrall-bound man, forbidden to embrace my own child."

"Strange old man!" exclaimed the marsk, with a vague feeling of dread--"thou art free. Descend! Bid the landsknechts unbind thee, and depart in peace with thy child!"

"Thanks, stern sir," cried little Aasé, seizing the marsk's mailed hand, and pressing it to her lips: "for this deed will the merciful God forgive you all the sorrow you have caused me. Come, come, grandfather! Thou art free--hearest thou not, thou art free!"

"Free I have always been," replied the old man, proudly, and without moving. "I have not raised a single stone more than I chose, and from this day forth I should never have raised another. It might have cost me my head; but that I have worn long enough, and I would never wish it to fall by an abler hand than Marsk Stig's."

"Thou singular old man!" exclaimed the marsk, thoughtfully, "thou shouldst never have fallen by my hand, however much thy insolence might have deserved it. Neither of us, I perceive, should condemn the other. Thou art a man who, hadst thou so willed it, might have stood by the side of Marsk Stig."

"I do stand by your side, Stig Andersen!" interrupted Henner, raising himself proudly erect on the lofty wall above him: "at this instant I stand as high, not merely on this wall, which separates you from your country, but on the mighty boundary between the land of the living and the dead. Many days of penance I have not remaining, unless, like the shoemaker of Jerusalem, I have to roam the earth like a spectre till the day of doom. What I have to say to you at parting, I shall say aloud, before the whole world. Would that my voice could reach every ear in Denmark!" And he cried, loudly: "Cursed--cursed is the hand that is lifted against kings and crowns, were it strong as St. Christopher's, and pure as that of the Holy Virgin. The murderer of a king shall never know peace: his race shall perish from the earth--his best deeds shall be as the flax, that is consumed in smoke and flame--"

"Silence!--thou art mad, old man!" cried the marsk, in anger, and with a threatening gesture.

But the old warrior remained immovable, and gazed full in his flashing eyes. "We two are able to look angry men in the face," he continued, calmly: "but you are right--neither of us should condemn the other. I have not much to tell you, Stig Andersen. You slew the false ravisher, King Glipping. I, Henner Hjulmand Friser, slew the accursed fratricide, King Abel. We are thus equals. I can hold out my hand to you as a comrade--the one bloody hand cannot smear the other."

"Ha, old Henner! wert thou that bold Frisian?" cried the marsk, in astonishment. "Come hither! I shall dub thee a knight, even in thine old days."

"That shall you not, Stig Andersen," replied the old man. "In deeds I am your equal; and you shall now see that, without the stroke of knighthood, I stand as high as you. I have not repented my act, nor have you repented your's. But I did not persecute the dead in his innocent race--I did not undertake, with blood-besmeared hands, to distribute crowns, nor desire to become an idol among men. I would free, not lay waste, my country. I built no wall between hearts and hearts. Yet I perceive that there can be no blessing with us, and such as we. For this was I unable to seize you and your accomplices; but was led into this stronghold by the crafty demon that I myself had bound. And here have I atoned my temerity, by slaving for a greater regicide than myself. It is the reward I merited. I perceive this now, proud marsk, and am therefore a higher man than you. The time will come, Stig Andersen, when you shall see it in the same way. We then may meet again, and toil like trusty comrades on a greater rebel-defence than this."

He paused for a moment, and the wildness of his countenance gave place to melancholy. "Yet, nay," he continued, in a subdued tone, "there is still pardon for us both; but not thus--not thus--mighty marsk. I am on my way thereto: if you will with me, tear down your accursed defences, and follow me yonder, to where the sun rises!"

So saying, he descended from the wall on the inner side. His words had made a singular impression on the marsk.

"Humph! he is still half crazy, however," muttered the gloomy warrior, as he rode in silence to the gate by which the liberated prisoner was to issue.

Alarmed by her grandfather's words, Aasé, pale and trembling, followed the knight. As they reached the gate, Henner Friser, with a long staff in his hand, advanced towards it. He still wore a link of his heavy iron chain, which did not, however, obstruct his movements. The marsk's trusty attendant, Mat Jute, who superintended the fortifications, followed the haughty old man, to hear his liberation confirmed by the marsk himself, before he removed the link.

"Loose him--he is free!" ordered the marsk, and Mat Jute obeyed.

"One word farther only, Henner," said the warrior. "Whither wouldst thou I should follow thee?"

"Thither, where yonder tree once grew, and bore the eternal fruit of mercy," answered Henner, pointing to a large cross, which stood by the roadside.

The marsk laughed wildly. "Yes, truly, when I have reached my second childhood," he replied. "Depart in peace, old man. Thy deed was greater than thyself; and so it overcomes thee. Go get thyself a letter of pardon: turn saint if thou canst; and let us see who shall first reach the goal. When thou returnest, thou shalt be welcome to me, wherever I am. We can then discuss, to better purpose, which of us stood the highest, or performed the most."

The marsk spurred his horse and disappeared within the fortification. Henner Friser silently extended his hand to little Aasé, and they departed leisurely, without once looking behind.

They thus continued their way for some time, in painful silence. Aasé at length broke it.

"Dear, good grandfather," she said, tenderly, "why dost thou not speak to me? I have not seen thee for many a day--not since that dreadful St. Cecilia's night."

"What sayest thou, my child?" inquired the old man, as if awaking from a dream--"ay, let us hear: what became of thee on that fearful night?"

"Yes, fearful it was, truly! When thou and Skirmen had both left me, I fell asleep on the bench, and my dreams were frightful. When I awoke, I was in the cellar, beneath the floor, and I thought that I had seen the king, and warned him of the grayfriars. It was daybreak, and I ran to the forester's. There I heard of the king's murder, and that thou hadst followed the murderers. I waited for thee three days, in the greatest anxiety, which I could endure no longer. I then exchanged clothes with the forester's maid, took our little hoard, and resolved to travel the country over until I had found thee."

"My true, my dearest Aasé!" exclaimed the old man, patting her cheek: "thou hast had better fortune than I. And no wonder: the pure angels of God attend thee; but I--I had an imp of the Evil One for my guide. I, too, at length found those I sought; but my guide was craftier than I and my companions. That artful fox, Rané, befooled us long enough, and took us all round Jutland with him. But at last I became impatient, and threatened that my good sword should despatch him. He then swore with an oath that if the regicides were in the country, I should discover them at Helgeness. There, sure enough, I found their ringleader, was overpowered, and, as you witnessed, made a beast of burden. Ha! I merited the reward! How can Henner Hjulmand enter into judgment with regicides!"

"Dear, dear grandfather, now do I know what has so troubled thee when it stormed of a night. But, trow me, it was not the dead King Abel who rode through Finnerup Forest in the dark: it was the marsk and his man; for I knew them both again. And now be comforted, dear grandfather. Our Lord will no longer be angry with thee for that deed. The ungodly King Abel, like another Cain, had surely slain his brother, and did not deserve to live. But if thou hast not rest therefore, dear, good grandfather, let us make a pilgrimage to Rome, or to the holy sepulchre, as you intended, and there obtain pardon of all our sins."

"Yea, that will we, my child. Had I no greater burden to bear than thou hast, this path would be easy to me. Now, however, that thou knowest what oppresses me, I am already lighter of heart. I have never wished this deed undone, but still it has robbed me of my peace. If, however, it please God and St. Christian, my soul shall yet regain tranquillity ere I die. Whatever penance the holy father lays on me I shall perform, unless he require that I should repent. We shall succeed; and, if thou hast brought the gold-box with thee, we shall not suffer want on our journey. 'Tis time enough yet to fast."

"See, grandfather, here it is: I have not touched it. I bound up wounds by the way, and thus earned more dalers than I have spent." So saying, she handed the old man a little wooden box, and another containing copper money. "But, alas, dear grandfather," she continued, "is it true that the dreadful marsk is stirring up the whole land to rebellion against the young king?"

"Aye, child, and more's the pity: he is the ablest carl I have known; but Denmark has given birth to him to her own ruin. He has powerful friends, both at home and abroad. The country is full of traitors. There is something to be done here worth having a hand in, were I still young, and dared defer this penance. Flynderborg has been betrayed by Sir Lavé, and at Rypen House the marsk's banner of rebellion waves over the castle-gate."

"Ah, grandfather, there will be terrible times. The duke, with a large army, is before Rypen, but nobody believes that he intends honestly by our young king and country. Drost Peter is also expected there--and Skirmen will certainly be with him--when, it is said, the castle will be taken by storm."

Whilst they were thus conversing, they heard behind them the gallop of horses. They turned, and beheld two tall peasants, mounted on noble steeds, attended by a peasant-lad on a norback, and leading two saddled horses behind him.

"Drost Peter!--Skirmen!" cried old Henner and Aasé, in the same breath.

In an instant the peasant-lad had dismounted, and was in Aasé's arms. Drost Peter and Sir



Bent Rimaardson, for the disguised peasants were no other, then stopped. They soon learned from old Henner what he knew of the marsk's strength at Helgeness and Hielm, which, in their disguise, they had already closely approached, and were therefore almost as well acquainted with the state of the defences as Henner himself.

"Follow us to Rypen, brave old man," said Drost Peter. "Until that royal burgh is ours, I shall not appear in the presence of the queen and our young king. Good counsel is precious here; and if you know more than your paternoster, now is the time to show it. You and Aasé may mount our spare horses."

Little Aasé was soon on horseback, and they proceeded at a brisk trot on the road to Rypen.

On the way Drost Peter learned from Henner that the crafty Rané was greatly embittered at seeing his ancestral castle on Hielm in the hands of the marsk; but that, dissembling his feelings, he had been despatched from Helgeness, no doubt with a message to Norway, or probably to bring reinforcements. How he had accomplished his errand, however, Henner knew not.

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An important change had, in the meanwhile, taken place with Rané. Neither the marsk nor the Norse freebooter had received him as he had expected when he led Henner Friser and the royal huntsmen into their stronghold at Helgeness. The marsk had offered him no compensation for the island of Hielm and his ancestral fortress; and the jarl, instead of redeeming his promise to receive him as his son-in-law, had merely given him the stroke of knighthood, and told him to be contented with that honour for the present. Rané was too prudent to betray his indignation: he therefore appeared only zealous to serve the marsk, and to show the jarl that he was not deficient in daring courage. He had sailed from Helgeness in one of the freebooter's pirate-ships, giving them the assurance that he should soon prove he had not received the golden spurs unworthily. But instead of bearing to Kongshelle, as he had promised, where the Norwegian king, Erik the Priest-hater, and Duke Hakon, were residing, he steered direct for Tönsberg.

Rané, since he had received the stroke of knighthood, seemed to have acquired a spirit of daring which was strikingly manifested in his whole deportment and appearance. His squeaking voice had, in the course of the last half year, become transformed into a somewhat rough bass, not deficient in strength; his reddish downy beard had become darker and stronger; and the feminine expression of his countenance gave place to one of strong and wild passionateness. The feeling of the important influence he had acquired in these great state affairs, and the dangerous position he had placed himself in, from which he could extricate himself only by his own sagacity and abilities, gave a stamp of confidence to his air and manner which considerably mitigated the unpleasantness of his crafty smile.

At Tönsberg Castle dwelt the daughter of Jarl Mindre-Alf, Kirstine Alfsdatter,<sup>[34]</sup> or Jomfru Buckleshoe, as she was called, from the large gold buckles she wore. She was about sixteen years of age, strong, plump, with dark brown hair, very lively blue eyes, and a pert, little, turned-up nose. She had been brought up in Tönsberg, like a future princess. Her mother died during her infancy, and her father she had seldom seen. She had been indulged in every humour; and, whilst the algrev was absent on his viking expeditions, his daughter lived free and happy in the castle, where she soon ruled not only the old warden, but the whole garrison.

Yet with all her wildness and self-will, she did not lack a certain polish of education. Snorro's nephew, the famous Icelandic skald and saga-writer, Sturlé Thordarson, had visited Tönsberg three years previously, and shortly before his death; and this old man of three score and ten, with his lively and characteristic narratives of King Hagen Hagensen's exploits, and his spirit-stirring poems respecting old Norwegian heroes, awakened in the heart of the young girl so strong a desire for a life of activity, that, ever since, she had formed no higher wish than to set out on a cruise like her father, or live to see some grand event take place. A few months before the period our narrative has reached, she had made the acquaintance of Jomfru Ingé, who had followed her fugitive father to Tönsberg, and at his wish had remained there, whilst he continued his journey to Kongshelle, where most of the conspirators had found protection with King Erik the Priest-hater and Duke Hakon.

Sir Lavé suffered much from witnessing the grief of his daughter, occasioned by his treachery to the royal house of Denmark. Her presence awoke a constant warfare and inquietude in his wavering soul. He could, indeed, read nothing but filial solicitude in his daughter's looks, since she had witnessed his repentance and his agony during their flight from Viborg, after the king's funeral; yet, notwithstanding this, he had embraced the first opportunity of separating from her.

At Tönsberg Castle Jomfru Ingé again breathed freely, and conquered the feelings of dejection which her father's presence had inspired. Still it was to her a painful thought, that she was living in the castle of a hostile pirate; for, while it belonged to a vassal like Jarl Mindre-Alf, it did not seem to her like the ancient royal castle erected by King Hagen Hagensen. The assurance that the rude pirate-chief was not expected home for a considerable time, could alone reconcile her; and her horror of the algrev did not extend to his daughter.

The bold Norwegian girl and the high-souled daughter of the Danish knight soon became

intimate friends. Norwegian skald-songs and Danish kæmpeviser seemed, from their lips, lays of the same stock. Jomfru Buckleshoe rode out with her Danish friend to the fells, and proudly exhibited to her the glories of her native land; whilst the noble-hearted Ingé admired the land of rocks and Norwegian heroism with as much sincerity, as she sang with pathos and animation the quiet beauties of her own fatherland, and extolled her own faithful and constant countrymen, who, in these unhappy times, were defending against rebels the crown of Denmark and its youthful king.

Ingé's attachment to the royal house to which her father was opposed, strongly influenced the courageous daughter of the jarl. This spirit of independence recommended itself powerfully to the mind of the Norwegian damsel. She was provoked that her own father and the King of Norway should render assistance to the enemies of the youthful king, who, from Lady Ingé's account of his dangerous situation, stood before her as the personification of that peculiar form of adventure in which her imagination was most prone to feel an interest.

One day, as the two maidens were riding by the strand, they perceived a ship, under full sail, run into Tönsberg Fiord.

"See, see!" cried Kirstine, joyfully, "one of my father's galleys. And seest thou that haughty knight by the prow? Who can it be? Take heed, proud Ingé! 'tis one of thy countrymen, who can no longer bear thy absence!"

"'Tis one of thy father's ships, Kirstine," replied Ingé, "and therefore can bear no friend of mine or Denmark's. One only grieves my absence, and he it cannot be: he would not forsake his king and country in their need to visit me."

"Perhaps a wooer to me, then," cried Kirstine, laughing. "If he be a Danish knight, and please me, I may yet perhaps be in Denmark, defending your youthful king. Is it not tiresome," she continued, pettishly, tossing her head, "that we girls must always sit with our hands in our laps, and allow the men to act as they think proper, without ever being asked our opinion, as if it were a matter of course that we must have none at variance with their own? I should think, however, that we are quite as numerous as they, and have souls as whole and true in every respect. In what concerns myself, I have a will as resolute and free as any damsel in Denmark; and, as my father supports your rebels, I shall support thee and thy true countrymen. In the olden times, our Norwegian damsels were not so submissive as they now are: then, there were whole armies of *skioldmöer*,<sup>[35]</sup> which the valiant Stærkodder himself had reason to acknowledge. Knowest thou the lay of the brave Hervor, who compelled her father to hand her the sword of Tirfing from his barrow?"

"She was a Danish skioldmö," replied Ingé, "but a wild and godless pagan. Heaven preserve every Christian soul from such mad temerity!"

"She was a damsel, nevertheless, who not only knew what she could do, but also dared to do it, in spite of any man," rejoined Kirstine. "Old Sturlé taught me the lay concerning her. Listen: this is the verse I like best." And, with a voice so clear that it re-echoed across the fiord, she sang:--

"I dare to touch  
And take in my hand  
The sharp-edged sword--  
Would only I had it!  
Never, I trow,  
Shall the fire consume me,  
That playeth around  
The dead hero's eyes."

"Sing not that pagan song, dear Kirstine," cried Ingé, interrupting the enthusiastic songstress. "Hervor herself was terrified at her ungodly deed, and as she left her father's grave saw the air in flames around her. Such unnatural self-will never comes to good."

"Sturlé told me, however, that at last she got the hero she relied on," replied Kirstine. "Certainly, no luck attended the sword; but still she must have led a right pleasant skioldmö's life. It is her I intended to represent in the lady with the sword on the burning height, which you may see, wrought, in my father's riddersal. I should like to be a skioldmö: then should I away to Denmark, to defend your young king."

"Dear Kirstine," exclaimed Ingé, with much solicitude, seizing her hand, "thanks for thy concern for me and my unhappy fatherland; but let it not withdraw thee from fidelity and obedience to thy father. I praise God and the Holy Virgin that I can still obey my father, even when I appear most wayward. Let me entrust thee with an important secret, Kirstine. Thou knowest I am in fact a prisoner here; but I mean to escape, and thou must aid me."

"With all my heart," replied Kirstine, joyously; "but then I must accompany thee, for I am tired of this uniform life. Cannot two such damsels as we do something in the world? Wilt thou to Denmark, Ingé?"

"To Denmark or Sweden--I have kinsfolk in both."

"If I am to help thee, I must know everything. That letter brought thee by the foreign clerk the other day, was certainly from Drost Hessel?"

Lady Ingé blushed. "Nay," she answered, with a suppressed sigh; "but, since thou wilt know all, read it."

They halted. Kirstine seized the letter, and eagerly opened it. "*Martinus de Dacia*," she began to read. "Thou art befooling me, Ingé! This is certainly Latin."

"It is only a man's name," replied Ingé: "so our learned chancellor, Master Martin Maagenson, calls himself. He is a trusty friend of the royal house, and has written the letter for my dear old kinsman John. They wish me to proceed to Stockholm, to the young Princess Ingeborg, who is destined for our king's bride. She must have the daughter of a Danish knight for a companion, that she may learn from a native to know her future people. I am chosen for this, which they say is the only way in which I may be able to benefit my father, and serve my unhappy country. I have considered it closely, and no longer hesitate. My father has left me here, and I must not follow him. He is now safe at Kongshelle. I have his permission privately; but he dares not openly avow it: his dangerous position compels him to be silent. It must appear, therefore, that I escaped without his consent or knowledge. Your old warden has to-day been requested to detain me. Now, dear Kirstine, assist me to escape from hence: if I can only get safely from Tönsberg, my way is open. As well in Denmark as in Sweden, every castle-warden and governor is bound to accelerate my journey when I produce this letter." So saying, she took from the pocket of her mantle a roll of parchment, with three seals attached.

Kirstine opened her eyes in astonishment. "So, indeed--I understand thee now," she said: "thou hast powerful friends, I see. But we must be prudent. The warden will henceforth look after thee strictly, and will scarcely give thee liberty to ride out with me. But let us see who this strange knight is, who has arrived in my father's ship. If he returns to Denmark, he may be persuaded to take thee with him; and if it can be done, I shall accompany thee. It will be surprising if two fair damsels, like us, cannot get a knight to carry us off, and make him fancy it was against our wishes."

"Giddy girl! thy thoughts are engaged with adventures and daring freaks; but, for God and the Holy Virgin's sake, be prudent, and reveal not what I have confided to thee; for in its success lies my freedom and all my hopes of the future. Yet one thing more thou must hear," she added, with a deep sigh: "the powerful commandant at Kongshelle, Sir Thord--dost thou know him?"

"The wealthy Thord, with the long red nose--what of him?"

"He has demanded me in marriage, and my father dare not say him nay. A hasty flight alone can save me, for within eight days he will be here."

"And then his nose will be twice as long!" cried Kirstine. "Come along, dear Ingé!--thou shalt quickly away from hence, and I myself will carry thee off."

They now rode back towards the little town of Tönsberg, in the midst of which lay the castle, called Tönsberg House. The fiord, and the painted wooden houses of the town on both sides the hill, with the sun shining on its nine convents and the fourteen Kings' Chapels, as they are called, presented a scene at once beautiful and picturesque. It failed just then, however, to attract the notice of the two maidens, who had become thoughtful, as they dared no longer speak aloud among the crowds of seamen and busy merchants whom they encountered.

When they reached the castle, they found that the vessel they had seen entering the fiord had, in the meanwhile, arrived. The stately young knight whom it conveyed had landed, and presented himself with much pomp to the warden of Tönsberg House, with whom he had held a private conversation. Arrangements were made to entertain the stranger as a distinguished guest. The two young damsels entered the large day-room of the castle, where they sat down in silence to their embroidery, occasionally casting expectant glances towards a side-door, by which they knew the warden would introduce the Danish knight, who, they had already determined, should aid them in their important enterprise.

The door was at length opened, and the old warden entered, accompanied by Chamberlain Rané, whom he presented to the daughter of the jarl as a man whom her father had honoured with knighthood, and who had arrived at Tönsberg on an affair of importance.

Rané saluted the fair ones with much politeness. When Lady Ingé saw him, and heard his name, she became somewhat alarmed. His crafty smile and well-bred, insinuating manners, were highly repulsive to her, and she remembered to have heard him mentioned as the confidant of the murdered king, in many an affair that was neither to his own honour nor that of his former master. She had also heard of his suspicious conduct in reference to the king's murder; and, when she now beheld him as a messenger from Mindre-Alf, she might justly regard him as an open traitor. She could not conceal the contempt and loathing he inspired, which did not escape his observation while conversing with the lively Kirstine.

The warden having left them, Rané appeared desirous to draw Lady Ingé into the

conversation, and endeavoured to conciliate her by some expressions of concern for Denmark, and the dangerous position of the young king. Who Lady Ingé was, and her attachment to the royal house, he well knew; and he had already observed, with some surprise, that the daughter of the Norwegian jarl shared her sympathies with much spirit. He immediately availed himself of this discovery to place himself in an advantageous light before both young ladies; while, to flatter them with his confidence, he entrusted to them, as a dangerous secret, that he was a faithful friend to the royal family of Denmark, and had ventured hither on far other grounds than those which were alleged as the object of his visit.

The young damsels were astonished. In order to strengthen his statement, and allay every suspicion, Rané then painted in glowing colours, yet with apparent modesty, his valorous defence of the unfortunate king in Finnerup barn. He related to them how, notwithstanding this, he had been suspected in the most shameful manner; and assured them that, to justify himself in the eyes of every loyal Dane, he would risk his life in the most dangerous undertaking on behalf of the young king.

"My fidelity to my former king and master," he added, "has already cost me my fair ancestral castle on Hielm. Marsk Stig has seized it by storm, and slain my faithful garrison. I have been constrained to use stratagem against force; but, with the aid I pretend to obtain here for the marsk, I mean to convince him and your brave father, noble Jomfru Kirstine, that I am not unworthy of the stroke of knighthood with which the jarl has honoured me, while even I venture to expose myself to his anger."

"You are as bold as you are frank, Sir Rané!" exclaimed Kirstine, with astonishment. "What assures you that Jarl Mindre-Alf's daughter, after this confession, will permit you to slip free from Tönsberg Castle? Suppose now, that I instantly order you to be cast into the tower--"

"Then I shall have greatly mistaken your lofty, noble mind, illustrious damsel," replied Rané; "although I should not consider it a very serious misfortune even were I compelled to be your prisoner. But this I know, that the friend of Jomfru Ingé Little can never hate or persecute any adherent of Denmark's royal house."

"That you should not altogether depend upon, sir knight," replied the jarl's daughter. "The Danish kings have not left behind them the fairest memorials at Tönsberg. Tales are still told here of Harald Bluetooth's cruelty; and there are ruins lying around us from the times of your valorous King Waldemar. If you imagine that the damsels of Norway are less patriotis than those of Denmark, you mistake us much."

For an instant Rané seemed alarmed; but he soon recovered himself on perceiving a roguish smile in the countenance of the bold jomfru, and the glance she directed to her Danish friend. He bent his knee before the jocular damsel. "My freedom, perhaps my life, is in your hands," he said; "yet I repent not my avowal. In the presence of Jarl Mindre-Alf's fair daughter, it were, indeed, impossible to make a more daring admission; but I could not look on you, and for a moment forget what I bear on my shield. With the fair ones of Norway the knights of Denmark never made war, and the misdeeds of our kings and princes should not be visited on their innocent subjects--"

"Enough, Sir Rané--rise! the warden is approaching," said Jomfru Kirstine, hastily.

He kissed her hand respectfully while she raised him; and the warden now entering, a conversation on indifferent topics was gaily resumed.

But Jomfru Ingé placed no confidence in the crafty Rané. In the evening, when alone with Kirstine, she warned her of him; for she had well observed that his respectful homage to her beauty, and his flattery of her free spirit and independence, had not been without effect. Lady Ingé at the same time was forced to acknowledge that Sir Rané was not deficient in courage, and possessed much sagacity and eloquence. She even admitted that her distrust of him might possibly be unfounded; but, in the eyes of Kirstine, he was a true and doughty knight.

Next day Rané eagerly sought an opportunity of conversing with Kirstine alone. He found it, and soon confided to her that the fame of her beauty had long made him her passionate admirer. He informed her that her father had formerly accorded him permission to solicit her hand in person, but that the jarl now sought to evade his promise; and, finally, that his present journey, and the hazard to which he thereby exposed his life, having been undertaken solely for the purpose of seeing her, there was now no enterprise so dangerous that he would not venture on it for her sake.

She listened to all his protestations without any apparent displeasure, but gave him no decided answer.

Four days elapsed, during which Rané continued his efforts to win Kirstine, and to inspire Jomfru Ingé with a more favourable opinion of him. Many secret councils had been held between the two damsels, and it was finally concluded that, before they confided in him, they should, at all events, put his fidelity to a stern proof.

Rané had spoken highly of the swiftness of his vessel, and of his powerful connections in Denmark. A hint, or an apparently accidental occurrence, was therefore all that was required for

flight or an abduction. Kirstine planned the hazardous design, to which, from necessity and her dangerous situation, Jomfru Ingé was forced to accede.

On the fifth day after the arrival of Rané, Ingé was alarmed by the intelligence that her father, with Sir Thord, was expected from Kongshelle on the following day, and that festive preparations, as for a wedding, were going forward in the castle.

Rané's vessel lay ready to sail in Tönsberg Fiord, a few bow-shots from the strand. It was manned by a numerous crew, whom Rané had gained over with gold and promises. The crafty young knight had proposed a walk by the beach, where, a little before sunset, he proceeded, accompanied by Kirstine and Lady Ingé. The old warden attended them, although he was heartily tired of hearing of fells, and waterfalls, and all the other beauties of nature which strangers extol so highly. Rané conversed with the young ladies with much politeness: he greatly admired the beauty of the landscape. "But," he observed, "the view from the sea must be far more magnificent. When I arrived, the sky was not so clear as it now is."

"It appears to me, however," observed the warden, with a yawn, "that it was just as clear."

"It is possible," replied Rané; "but towards evening the coast assumes a more beautiful appearance. Here is a boat close by, with part of my crew: the ladies, perhaps, would like to row a little way on the fiord."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Kirstine, pulling Ingé along with her into the boat: "the weather is fine, and I can show thee that the sun does not set over a nobler land than Norway. Will you go with us, warden?"

Rané had placed himself beside the ladies. The warden was displeased; but, unwilling to oppose himself to the will of the proud young damsel, he entered the boat grumbling, and it rapidly glided from the beach. Whilst Rané dilated with animation on the beauties of the scenery, the boatmen, who had been previously instructed, rowed straight to the vessel, which lay with her sails half unfurled, and her crew ready to heave the anchor as soon as their master was on board.

The invitation of Rané to inspect the ship was accepted. The objections of the warden were silenced by the eloquent knight, who, the moment they stood on deck, gave a signal, and the vessel stood out under full sail. The terrified warden was conducted, as a prisoner, to the cabin; while Rané, throwing himself upon his knee before Kirstine, poured out a torrent of flattering apologies for carrying off her friend and her to Denmark; where, he said, he as certainly hoped to obtain her forgiveness, as he was now prepared by every deed of chivalry to deserve the hand of the fairest maiden in Norway.

Lady Ingé, as well as Kirstine, was half terrified at this sudden abduction, although it was their own plan which the crafty knight, without knowing it, was carrying into effect. They both remained silent and thoughtful; but Lady Ingé was too proud to carry dissimulation farther.

"Well, Sir Rané," she said, gravely, "I follow you willingly to Denmark, for I desire to leave Tönsberg." And with this avowal she retired to the other side of the vessel, leaving it to her companion to simulate anger at his daring conduct.

By this step Sir Rané had gained a great object. As long as the fate of the conspirators was uncertain, it was important that he should be able, in some satisfactory manner, to justify his connection with them. By this daring action he also hoped to increase his reputation as a bold knight in the estimation of Marsk Stig and the jarl; while in the daughter of the powerful algrev he possessed a hostage that would secure him from their enmity. Neither did it escape his observation, that, in the eyes of the brave daughter of the viking, he had established his character as an adventurous knight; and he now clearly perceived that she secretly favoured him as her suitor, notwithstanding the rage and scorn which she pretended to heap upon him. As long, too, as Lady Ingé remained in his power, he supposed that her kinsman, old Sir John, and Drost Hessel, would reflect before they took any steps against him.

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On a beautiful evening in the middle of May, there was a torch-dance and great rejoicing in the streets of Rypen. Such festivities, where the burghers mingled in the gay crowd of knights, were not uncommon; but at a time so serious, and so soon after the murder of the king, these public rejoicings gave great scandal to the friends of the royal house among the burghers of the place; while the adherents of Marsk Stig heartily entered into them, as a proof of the security with which the rebel governor of the castle, Sir Tagé Muus, defied the royal party. In this way, the revolted chief showed, too, how well he understood, and how much he disregarded, the feigned threats with which Duke Waldemar had summoned him to surrender.

The duke, with his army, was encamped about half a mile south of Rypen. His forces consisted chiefly of South Jutlanders; although among them there were also a few Brandenburg and Saxon horsemen. On the evening to which we have alluded, the duke entertained, in his magnificent crimson tent, the two Margraves of Brandenburg, old Duke Johan of Saxony, and Count Gerhard of Holstein; the latter having reached the army the previous day, at the head of a chosen troop of

Holstein horse. The brave count had scarcely awaited his recovery from the unfortunate blow which had cost him an eye, before he had armed himself for the defence of Queen Agnes and the young king. He had united his forces to those of the duke without suspicion; but was received at the camp with a coldness that surprised him. The queen's brothers had newly arrived from Viborg, to hasten some decisive attempt against Marsk Stig and his adherents. The aged Duke of Saxony, who had been the youthful friend of Duke Waldemar's father, the unfortunate Duke Erik, had often manifested a fatherly interest in the ambitious young Waldemar. He had arrived, uninvited, at the head of his brave troops, not solely to strengthen the duke, but for the purpose of preventing, by his presence, any thoughtless step which might be prompted by his ambitious aspirations, of which the old nobleman was not ignorant. He had been partly moved to this by his daughter, the pious Princess Sophia, of whom Duke Waldemar had, two years before, been an ardent suitor, without having received any decisive answer. At that time she was not quite fifteen, and had declared that in three years she would determine, should her wooer then renew his suit. She was well aware that she had made a strong impression on the young duke, whom she loved tenderly, but without passion, and she also entertained well-grounded doubts of his constancy. She therefore dreaded his ambitious plans, and felt more solicitous about his honour and the welfare of his soul than the loss of his heart, which she already looked upon as having escaped her, for she had not seen him for two years. She awaited, however, the expiration of the third year, when she intended to bid farewell to the world, and assume the veil.

The upright old Duke Johan had approved his daughter's views and determination. Without alluding to her, he had, like a true and fatherly friend, spoken seriously to the young duke relative to his present position and his duties to the Danish crown. His words were not without effect; but the idea that wholly engrossed the young nobleman was the proud consciousness that he possessed the power to decide the fate of the royal house of Denmark by casting his sword into either scale of the nicely balanced parties.

The presence of the margraves and the honest Count Gerhard, however, and their unanimous demand that something decisive should be attempted, caused him some embarrassment. A council of war was held in the duke's tent, at which, after those noblemen had each expressed his opinion boldly and frankly, the duke arose.

"Here, my lords, I am commander," he said, firmly; "and with every respect for your advice and sincere intentions, I must still follow my own convictions. Before the Dane-court has decided how Marsk Stig and his friends are to be treated, and until I myself have been formally recognised as protector, nothing decisive can be undertaken. Within twelve days the Dane-court will be held, and, consequently, my presence in Nyborg will be necessary. Until then no campaign can be commenced, far less completed. From what I have heard of Marsk Stig's preparations, a greater force than we possess will be necessary to subdue him. Besides, by the law of the land, he and his friends have still the right to defend themselves before the Dane-court, if they choose to risk it; and, as I have already said, no decisive step can be taken until it is legally determined in what quality I stand here, and with whom we have to contend."

"With your leave, illustrious duke," began Count Gerhard, "I think we know right well who we are, and what we have to do. That we two, at least, stand here as vassals of the Danish crown, requires no confirmation. That the commander of Rypen House, by placing the banner of Marsk Stig where that of the king should wave, has openly declared himself an enemy of the crown, is certain enough. Before we advance against Helgeness and Hielm, Rypen House must be ours. With what forces we have here the place can be stormed within twelve hours; and it seems to me shameful and indefensible that we should lie here idly, and tamely permit a royal castle to remain in the hands of rebels."

"If, with your own troopers, you choose to storm Rypen House, brave Count Gerhard," replied the duke, carelessly, "you are welcome; but it must be on your own responsibility; and you will further have to answer before the Dane-court for kindling a civil war before the conduct of these men has been legally condemned, and without knowing by what law and authority you yourself are acting."

"So, then, illustrious duke," exclaimed Count Gerhard, with suppressed indignation, "in God and St. George's name I shall act alone, and I doubt not that I shall be able to defend my conduct well." He then bowed, and retired.

Shortly afterwards he left the camp, at the head of fifty horsemen, and took the road to Rypen. By his side, attired as a squire, rode Daddy Longlegs, who, since the unfortunate foolery which had cost his master an eye, had laid aside the dignity and dress of a jester, but still followed his master, to whom he was indispensable.

As Count Gerhard approached the Nipsaa, which defended the town from the south, his anger gradually abated; prudence returned, and he perceived the absurdity of attempting, with his handful of men, to storm a well-fortified castle like Rypen House. Shame, however, deterred him from returning to the camp, and he rode leisurely forward. His troopers followed silently; but he perceived, by their thoughtful and serious looks, how certainly fatal they considered the enterprise on which their master and prince was conducting them.

"Let us make good speed, gracious sir," observed Longlegs, in a tone of grave raillery, "before they at Rypen House behold our terrible army and surrender themselves. It would be a sad

misfortune should we miss this chance of immortality, and have no opportunity of using our storming-ladders and ladders--"

"I rely upon thee being a wizard, Longlegs, who can as easily knock out the eye of the enemy as thou didst mine, and so prevent him from seeing our strength," replied the count, entering at once, as usual, into the humour of his jester. "But who has informed thee that I mean to storm Rypen House? There are banquetings and rejoicings in Rypen, thou knowest; and what if I should intend to treat myself and all of you to a romp with the fair maids of Rypen?"

"Ah! that is another matter, sir. A right merry dance it will be; and, besides, we come not unbidden to the junkettings, for the letter brought you in the gloaming by the old pilgrim was doubtless an invitation to sport and joviality."

Count Gerhard nodded. "Didst thou know him, Longlegs?" he inquired.

"If I am not mistaken, it was our old host in Middelfert, Henner Friser. He is a daring carl, and, it is said, knows something more than his paternoster. He fled from Middelfert for a murder: so take care, sir, that he does not lead you into a snare."

"If thou hadst heard what he said, Longlegs, thou wouldst not fear that. Onwards."

Not far from the Southgate Bridge and Hostorg Port, on what is called the Marshland, Count Gerhard ordered his troopers to halt and dismount. Having set them the example, he remained for a moment in profound thought.

"Now, my men," he at length said, good-humouredly, "I shall conduct you to the feast to-night. You see the torches are flaring on the bridge. Well, there is mirth in Rypen, and only merry guests are expected. The grooms will remain with the horses, and you others, one by one, will follow me on foot, with your swords beneath your cloaks, for the sake of security. If you can get a torch in one hand, and a girl in the other, dance away. But the jig must pass through Southgate-street to Grayfriars-street, and then along Crutched-friars, to the large bleaching-green by the castle. There you must gather around me when you hear my hunting-horn. What further fun is to be had, must depend on luck and opportunity. You understand me, carls?"

A general shout of applause announced the acquiescence of the troopers in the adventurous project of their master. He immediately crossed the bridge, followed, singly and at a distance, by the others, who mingled with the crowds of merrymakers that filled the streets.

The mirth had reached its height. Torches blazed and songs were sung in every street leading to the castle. Gaily-dressed knights, and ladies in mantles of silk and scarlet, mingled in the dance. Count Gerhard strode along in his heavy riding-boots, without taking any active part in the festivities. When he had reached and was about to pass the gateway into the court-yard of the Crutched-friars, he received a nod of recognition from a brave, well-known face, concealed under a peasant's hood, while, with a hearty shake of the hand, he was drawn beneath the arch.

"Drost Hessel!--you here, and in this disguise!" he exclaimed, with astonishment.

"Have you come to join our dance, noble count?" inquired Drost Peter, hastily.

"The fiend take the dance! I am here to storm Rypen House, in spite of the duke and his fine prudential considerations.

"'Tis well! You are in the dance, then, whether you will or not. But whence comes it? Who is the leader?"

"He that comes first, I should think. But, by Beelzebub! you must well know that, Drost Hessel. Ask not me, for I know nothing: I have had only a private hint, which I am undecided whether I ought to act upon or not. Do you know old Henner Friser, from Melfert?"

"Him we can rely upon," replied Drost Peter, gladly; "and if the hint came from him, we may safely follow it. What force is with you?"

"Not a great one; but still, I can muster half a hundred with a blast of my horn."

"Good!" exclaimed the drost: "there is, then, some meaning in it, and I now begin to be in earnest; for, hitherto, the whole affair has appeared to me somewhat like a joke. I know not with whom the daring idea originated, and I came here with only two companions, merely to discover the temper of the people. On my way I met Henner Friser, and the mysterious old man predicted me success, and then disappeared. It seems he has good friends here. The disposition of the burghers is favourable; but the duke delays, and I have no faith in him. To storm the place without an army would never have occurred to me; but there must be amongst us a spirit more inventive and daring than we were aware of. An hour since a stranger invited me to be the second knight in the row of dancers, when the Danish maidens should begin the song;--'For Erik the king so young.' But what avails it without a storm?"

"I understand," exclaimed the count rubbing his hands with delight: "for the young king, then. True, I would rather sing, 'For Queen Agnes the fair;' but it is the same. Dance only, in God's

name, across the castle-bridge. I dance behind, and follow you with my men. 'For our young king,' is the watchword; and he who hesitates to give it tongue, shall be cut down."

This conversation was interrupted by a party of boisterous young knights, with black plumes in their helmets, and torches in their hands, who danced into the court-yard of the convent, summoning the terrified monks to open the refectory for them, and bawling for wine and Saxon ale.

"Saw you the black-plumes? That is a band of Marsk Stig's adherents," observed Drost Peter, as he retired with Count Gerhard to an obscure corner of the gateway, unable to conceal his indignation at such audacious proceedings, which were not unusual during this unsettled period.

The clamour in the convent-yard subsided for an instant, while a reverend friar came forth, and reminded the disturbers that they were not in an enemy's country, and that it was the duty of the brave gentlemen at Rypen House to protect the town, and not to plunder it.

The priest was answered with mockery and threats; and one of the overbearing young knights, brandishing his torch, swore he would set fire to the convent, if their demands were longer resisted. The door of the refectory was then instantly opened, and the unwelcome guests were admitted.

Drost Peter boiled with indignation. "Behold, Count Gerhard!" he exclaimed, vehemently: "these are the men who would be masters in Denmark. Let us after them!"

"Nay, let them drink till they cannot see a hole through a storming-ladder," cried Count Gerhard, laughing--"the better will go our dance. When does it begin, and where?"

"Two hours after the ave, and on the bleach-green, near the castle."

"'Tis well. The time is near: therefore let us hence. There is some meaning in this dance, and an honest warrior can engage in it without being laughed at. Plague take it! if the queen were only here, she should see me dance better and more gaily than I did the last time."

They proceeded hastily to the bleach-green, where a great crowd was assembled. In the middle of the open space stood a table, covered with refreshments. Merry music filled the air, while many torches shed their light upon the scene, and numerous gaily dressed ladies occupied the benches around. Drost Peter and Count Gerhard observed with attention and surprise the glittering knights and dames about them, most of whom had their faces fantastically painted, and all sharing in the merriment with spirit and joyousness.

As Count Gerhard was making his remarks on this, Skirmen hastily approached, and whispered a few words to his master, who immediately, with joyful surprise, directed his eyes to a bench, on which sat three ladies veiled. In the nearest he thought he recognised the black-haired little Aasé. She who sat in the middle, Skirmen, with a roguish smile, had informed him was the lady who had invited him to the dance. Skirmen had again disappeared, and Drost Peter fixed his eyes on the tall stranger lady with a feeling of delight he could not express, although a painful anxiety mingled with it.

"Can it be possible? Can she be here, and engaged in this dangerous sport?" he exclaimed, half aloud, as he felt the ground spin round with him. He began to think he was in some wonderful dream. He again looked round for Skirmen, but without success, and was at last obliged to support himself on a bench near where he stood.

At that moment the three maidens arose, and began to sing:--

"On Rypen streets the dance goes light,  
With ladys gay and gentle knight.  
On Rypen Bridge a measure is trod:  
There dance the knights so gaily shod--  
For Erik the king so young!"

When the burthen was heard, the flutes and horns chimed in, and a number of knights sprang forward with their ladies, and formed a long row of dancers.

Drost Peter distinguished Jomfru Ingé's clear and mellow voice, and in the middle singer he now plainly recognised her tall and noble form. He started up and clasped her in his arms. "Ingé, dearest Ingé!" he whispered, "what daring is this? Are you come hither to dance to the death with me? If so, then joyfully for Denmark and our young king! But unriddle to me this mystery."

"My knight follows me to the royal castle and to victory," whispered Ingé: "if our leader deceive us not, we shall succeed."

"Who, then, is our leader?" inquired the drost, eagerly. "If any one leads here, I should do so."

"The gates of the rebels' castle are not opened to Drost Hessel," she rejoined, hastily. "There stands our leader, but you must not know him. If he were free, I should trust him as little as you



do; but here he is in our power, and must now dance himself to a bride--or die."

She pointed to a stately young knight, with long yellow hair, who stood near them, with a torch in his hand, and apparently hesitating whether he should place himself at the head of the dancers or not. He had hitherto stood with his back towards them; but as he now turned to one side, the light of his torch fell on his cheek, and Drost Peter exclaimed, in the highest astonishment--"Rané!"

"Be silent," whispered Ingé: "with a fox we must catch a fox to-night; but not like Hamlet. With May-garlands, and, as I hope, without the red rose, will we bind our enemies."

Meanwhile, the music continued, many singing to it a well-known ballad that suited the tune. Whilst Rané stood, as if yet undecided, the row of dancers was constantly increasing; and Jomfru Ingé, in a few words, acquainted Drost Peter with the whole daring plan. Jarl Mindre-Alf's daughter and herself had persuaded Rané, who knew the governor, to bring about the present festival. The bitter feeling of the knight towards Marsk Stig, and his anxiety to show himself a friend to the royal house, had favoured the project of the young damsels. Through Skirmen and Aasé, old Henner Friser had been induced to engage in it. The proximity of Drost Peter had redoubled the courage of his betrothed, although she feared that his co-operation with Rané might defeat the whole scheme.

"And now, my dear sir knight," she added, playfully, "the numerous chivalrous gentlemen you perceive around you are our trusty Rypen burghers and their sons, who, at the request of their wives and sweethearts, will dance tonight to the songs of the maidens."

Having given this explanation, she then, with the other damsels, again renewed the song, whilst the knights proceeded to arrange themselves in conformity with the words of the ballad, wherein themselves and their ladies were indicated by feigned names, taken for the most part from old romances, but the application of which they all knew well. The only one who was named aright was the governor of Rypen House, who was at that moment sitting at a drinking-bout in the castle, but whose name, being sung aloud as if he were engaged in the dance, assured any of his adherents who might be present, and suspicious of the game.

Whilst those nearest the castle arranged themselves as directed by the song, the others at the extremity of the line formed a long chain, and danced around the green, to assure themselves that none were present in the dance but those engaged in the plot. Rané, meanwhile, still stood undecided by the bench on which Jomfru Kirstine was seated, when Jomfru Ingé and the others began to sing:--

"Riber Ulf first dances here--  
A king is he without compeer."

"'Tis you, Sir Rané!" exclaimed the daughter of the Norwegian jarl--"'tis you: you are Riber Ulf to-night. Show me now that you are a king without compeer."

Rané, however, did not seem to hear her. The song continued:--

"Then dances Tagé Muns so free--  
Captain of Rypen House is he."

Drost Peter had cast aside his hood, and donned a high feathered hat, which Skirmen had brought him, together with a scarlet mantle, which he threw over his peasant's dress.

"Now are you captain of Rypen House," whispered Jomfru Ingé. His dress, which was the same as the court-suit of the castellan, and which they had procured on purpose, caused the knight to be mistaken by many for Sir Tagé Muus himself; his portly bulk, derived from his peasant's clothes beneath, greatly favouring the deception. In this guise he danced forward in the ranks with Jomfru Ingé, who, with the maidens, continued to sing:--

"Then dancing comes Sir Saltensee,  
And so come on his kinsmen three.

"Then dance the noble Limbeks trim,  
And they were kings of sturdy limb.

"Then after dances Byrge Green,  
And many a gentle knight I ween.

"And now comes dancing Hanke Kann,  
And eke his wife, hight Lady Ann.

"Then dancing comes a noble pair--  
Sir Rank, and Lady Berngerd fair.

"Then rich Sir Wolfram, with his dame,

A lady fair, without a name."

At this verse Sir Bent Rimaardson, who had received the same invitation as Drost Peter, joined the dancers, with an unknown lady by his side.

At the last couplet--

"Then dancing came Sir Iver Helt:  
He followed the king across the Belt:"[\[36\]](#)

to his great surprise, Drost Peter perceived the brave Sir Thorstenson advance, conducting a smart peasant-girl by the hand.

"What! Sir Thorstenson here, too!" he exclaimed, as he turned to Lady Ingé, who hastily informed him that the bold knight was there to accompany him to Nyborg, whither he had conducted the king and the whole court, and that he had immediately approved of and entered into her project.

Rané, however, had yet shown no disposition to take his part in the dance. They had twice danced round the open space, and each time that Lady Ingé had approached him, she had sung in a louder tone:--

"Riber Ulf first dances here,  
A king is he without compeer."

She was now drawing near a third time; but he still remained as if in deep thought.

"Are you afraid that your fair hair will get entangled, Sir Rané, that you so long delay leading me to the dance?" exclaimed the courageous Jomfru Kirstine, mockingly, and with a gesture of impatience.

"You are right, noble jomfru," answered Rané: "both head and hair may easily be entangled here. My hair is a little red, as you must have observed; but in this dance it might quickly become redder--"

"And your rosy cheeks might become all too white," interrupted she, derisively.

"You are right in that also, fair jomfru," replied Rané, smiling slyly. "You would have little service of the boldest bridegroom, when his cheeks were as pale as those of a corpse. It is natural that a man should hesitate before he springs into a death-dance, even with a damsel ever so rich and fair."

"If you hesitate a moment longer, Sir Rané," angrily exclaimed the bold jomfru, "I shall consider that I have been shamefully wronged and insulted by you; and then, instead of being the bridegroom of Jarl Mindre-Alf's daughter, you shall become the laughing-stock of every girl in Norway. Yet, nay," she added, in a milder tone--"you will never heap such shame and scorn on both yourself and me. Shall Ingé's words prove true, and shall her knight behold your weakness and hesitation? See how proudly he dances with her, the brave Drost Hessel!"

"Drost Hessel!" exclaimed Rané with surprise, as the blood forsook his cheeks.

"Drost Hessel, of course. Surely you are not afraid of the name. If you are as brave as you pretend to be, and my father has really given you the stroke of knighthood, convince us now that you are worthy of it, and show the proud drost that you are not allied to rebels and traitors. He is severe, it is said, and old Friser has sworn your death if you deceive us."

"Mistake me not, noble jomfru," said Rané, hastily. "I dread neither the drost nor the ferocious innkeeper--for fear of them I stir not a single step. But for your sake alone, fairest Kirstine, and my own knightly honour, shall I stake my head upon the game, and dance with you even to the castle-gate. When it is opened at my signal, I shall have kept my word; but will you then as truly and honestly do what you have promised, and accompany me from Rypen as my bride?"

"What I have promised I shall perform, like an honest Norwegian maiden," replied Jomfru Kirstine, gladly, as she quickly rose, and gave him her hand. "Dance but through the castle-gate with me, and you are the bold and noble hero I believed you, and worthy of the daughter of any jarl."

Rané seemed transformed as by some sudden inspiration; he sprang nimbly forward with his lady, and placed himself at the head of the dancers, who had now for the third time nearly made the circuit of the area.

Before Lady Ingé had again sung the first verse of the ballad, calling on Riber Ulf, Rané was dancing gaily along, with Jomfru Kirstine on his arm. Lightly tripping it, he sang aloud, while all the damsels and knights accompanied him:

"And on Rypen streets the dance goes light,  
With ladye gay and gentle knight--  
For Erik the king so young."

"Right!" exclaimed the lively Norwegian lady, whom he whirled along, her silken ribbons fluttering in her plaited hair, as she danced the lightest and nimblest of them all. "Dance thus over the bridge, and I shall praise your courage; and dance thus through the gate, and I give you my plighted troth."

Rané waved his scarf when they reached the drawbridge, and it was instantly lowered.

"Ingé, dearest Ingé, it succeeds!" exclaimed Drost Peter, as he warmly pressed the arm of his partner.

The heavy boots of the knights thundered on the drawbridge, amidst the light tread of shoes, and all sang merrily:--

"On Rypen Bridge a measure is trod;  
There dance the knights so gaily shod--  
For Erik the king so young!"

Rané now clapped his hands, and the castle-gates were opened. With song and shout and merriment, the whole of the dancers were soon within.

Count Gerhard, who still stood on the bleach-green, laughing heartily, then blew a merry strain on his horn; and in an instant he was surrounded by his fifty men, who followed him with great glee to the open gate. Here he posted one half of his force, and with the other followed quickly after the dancers.

A considerable portion of the castle garrison were dispersed throughout the town. The governor, Sir Tagé Muus, was sitting half intoxicated, with thirty other knights, in the large royal riddersal. He heard, without surprise, the singing and dancing in the castle-court and in the passage of the riddersal; for he had given permission to his good friend Rané and his young knights to conduct the fair daughters of the citizens to him, with dance and song. In a few seconds the doors flew open, and the whole company danced in, the knights holding their ladies by the left hand and carrying blazing torches in their right. The whole of them were linked together by a chain of green May-leaves, interspersed with rare roses. By a sudden movement the ladies formed a cluster, waving the torches, while the knights, in a compact circle, surrounded the table with drawn swords in their hands.

The governor and his thirty knights now first became aware of their betrayal, and started up in alarm to defend themselves. But in an instant, and without bloodshed, the castellan and his entire force were disarmed.

Beyond the circle of knights and their captives, the maidens now began to dance, and with loud jubilation sang:

"And thus we danced the castle in,  
With drawn sword under scarlet sheen--  
The castle it is won!"

"For Erik the king so young!" exclaimed Drost Peter, stepping forward. He then, in the king's name, took possession of the castle, and sent the rebel governor and his adherents, bound, to the dungeon of the fort.

To the great joy of the loyal Rypen burghers, the royal banner was seen shortly after waving over the castle-gate, where it had been planted by a tall and beautiful maiden. Now was there in Rypen a true feast of gladness. While Drost Peter and Count Gerhard were placing trusty men at every post, and adopting the strictest precautions, the dancing was continued in the castle, as well as in the city, with the utmost rejoicing.

When the necessary measures for the defence and security of the fortress had been taken, Drost Peter returned with longing haste to the riddersal, where he had left Lady Ingé, with Skirmen and Sir Thorstenson, in the midst of a gay dance of victory. The meeting with his childhood's bride, and the whole daring exploit, still presented itself to his imagination like a wonderful dream. The artifice by which the castle had been taken, and Rané's traitorous co-operation in it, did not please him; but joy at having once more seen the brave Lady Ingé, and the hope that her return to Denmark was no more a fleeting vision than the whole night's adventure, inspired him with a feeling of happiness that banished every other sentiment.

Doubt and inquietude, however, soon seized him, for nowhere could he find her. He saw only the cheerful knights and disguised burghers, who, with laughter, song, and merriment, whirled around with the nimble Rypen damsels. He saw Sir Thorstenson, and the otherwise melancholy Bent Rimaardson, glide past him in the mazes of the dance, as if intoxicated with the general

hilarity; while Count Gerhard clattered away in his heavy boots, and sang lustily from the bottom of his heart. In the song, to which they were now dancing with so much animation, Drost Peter heard not the mellow voice of Lady Ingé, while both knights and ladies repeated the words of their former bold songstress:--

"And thus we danced the castle in,  
With drawn sword under scarlet sheen--  
The castle it is won!

"With rosy wreath and ridder dance,  
A keep so won I ne'er saw chance--  
For Erik the king so young!"

The general delight would certainly have again communicated itself to Drost Peter, had he anywhere caught a glimpse of Lady Ingé. But her sudden disappearance was a painful mystery; and his anxiety augmented when he perceived that Rané, too, had vanished. He knew that this crafty knight had been her attendant from Norway; and notwithstanding the apparent change in his sentiments, and his important share in surprising the castle, he still considered him as the most treacherous and dangerous foe of himself and the royal house. Neither could he perceive the brave Norwegian maiden, whom Ingé had called her friend, and who, with Rané, had led the dancers. That she was the daughter of Jarl Mindre-Alf he knew, and Ingé's connection with this family increased his uneasiness. While he was assailed by these doubts and fears, Sir Thorstenson approached him and extended his hand.

"This, by my troth, I call a merry maiden's victory, Drost Peter!" exclaimed the warlike knight, gaily. "The fair damsels are likely to win the honours of war from us. To-night, at all events, the wreath of victory certainly belongs to them. Next time, I hope it will be our's."

They retired to a corner, when Sir Thorstenson informed his anxious and abstracted friend how, on his arrival at Rypen a few hours before, he had been dragged into this singular adventure, whose important and successful issue might excuse him for not having immediately attended to his proper duty.

"Truth to say, my good friend," he added, "your cool mind and knightly sword, no less than your authority as drost, were required to help us to success; but I would rather dispense with your all too conscientious scruples. Therefore it was that I persuaded Jomfru Ingé to take you by surprise. If this deserves punishment, let the offence be visited only on me. You are my superior, and can now, if you choose, place me in arrest for neglecting my duty, and taking counsel against you with your betrothed--for such, in truth, I suppose she is."

"Know you what has become of her?" inquired Drost Peter, hastily.

"That know I not," replied Thorstenson; "but leave the maidens to dance, and let us no longer lose our wit over this conceit of the fair ones."

Drost Peter was silent, and Thorstenson continued: "The duke's preparations for war, notwithstanding the queen's confidence in him, are regarded by the council as suspicious. Old Sir John considered the young king as no longer safe in Viborg; and, in your absence, I was obliged secretly to convey him to Nyborg. I myself believe that there are evil birds about. Sir John informed me that I should meet you here, and he charged me with these letters for you, both from himself and the queen. I know that you must on to Nyborg. But here you now command. Whilst you follow the king's orders, I must follow your's. I shall do so, however, with pride and pleasure."

Drost Peter hastily perused the letters. "I must depart before day," he said; and, after a moment's reflection, added--"you are governor of Rypen House, Sir Thorstenson. This important fortress cannot be entrusted to an abler knight; and, as a punishment for acting on your own counsel, I require you to defend it to the last extremity, should even the duke and Marsk Stig agree to storm it with their united strength."

"Well," exclaimed Thorstenson, joyfully, "a more honourable punishment could not have been awarded me. You show your displeasure, Drost Peter, in a noble manner. Thanks for your confidence! There are brave men amongst the burghers to defend the castle; and while one stone stands upon another, nor foe nor traitor shall set foot within it. If the king has no other place of security in the country, bring him hither. Rypen House is and shall remain the strongest royal castle in Denmark. Within a month it shall be impregnable."

"Bravely spoken!" exclaimed Drost Peter. "Within half an hour the keys of the castle, with your authority as commandant legally drawn out, shall be delivered to you. Meantime let the festivities be brought to a close, and let all leave the castle who do not belong to it. If you will, at the same time, do me a friendly service," he added, whilst endeavouring to conceal his anxiety, "let search be made, with all haste, for Jomfru Ingé Little. Perhaps she will allow me to be her escort to her kinsman, the counsellor."

Thorstenson nodded, and, warmly pressing his hand, prepared to depart.

"Yet one word!" exclaimed the drost, with much inquietude. "If you encounter Rané, he is our prisoner until his conduct has been investigated. He must be sought for diligently. Let the town-gates be locked, and suffer no vessel to leave the river within the next four and twenty hours. God be with you!"

Thorstenson nodded, and, with the joyful sense of his new dignity, he departed hastily to execute the injunctions of the drost.

The latter proceeded to the governor's private chamber, where he found everything that was requisite to enable him to complete the necessary instructions and authorities. Notwithstanding his anxiety, and the pressure of his own dearest heart affairs, he fully felt the duty imposed on him by his important station, and prepared the necessary formulas with perfect deliberation. He had already put his large signet-ring, bearing the flying eagle, to the wax of Thorstenson's appointment, when the door was opened, and Claus Skirmen entered, in great haste, and almost breathless.

"I have found you at last, stern sir," joyfully exclaimed the trusty squire. "I have been searching for you everywhere; and bring you many salutations, besides a pretty little letter, from Jomfru Ingé. I saw her depart in excellent style, in the town-governor's own carriage, drawn by four horses, with twelve troopers for an escort."

"What sayest thou, Skirmen?" exclaimed Drost Peter, in astonishment. "She travels! and whither?"

"Know you not, sir? Was it not your own arrangement? But you shall hear. When she had placed the royal banner over the castle-gate, she directed me to follow her to the town-governor, to whom she showed a letter, bearing three large seals. He bowed to her as if she had been the queen herself, and immediately ordered the horses to be yoked--"

"Whither, I ask--where does she journey to? But you have a letter--give it me quickly."

"She travels to Kolding, and from thence to Sweden, sir," replied Skirmen, as he handed him a slip of parchment, tied with a rose-coloured silk ribbon.

While the drost hastily perused the billet, he blushed deeply.

"Farewell, my childhood's bridegroom!" it ran. "'For Erik the king so young,' I still sing in my heart, and the torch in the hand of my true knight still gleams before mine eyes. He who is powerful in the feeble, has given me also a work to do. The true Sir John knows of it. Ask of him, but follow me not. In Denmark's darkest night we have danced a victor-dance together; and, God be praised! it cost no blood. When the child-king is Denmark's lord, and the crown sits firmly on his brow, we may perhaps see each other in a happier hour. My father alone can unite our hands. But our hearts, which God in truth hath joined together, no man can ever sunder."

Drost Peter heaved a deep sigh, although his eyes sparkled with a great and glorious hope. He concealed the note in his bosom, and turned again to Skirmen.

"To Kolding, sayest thou--and from thence to Sweden? Who told thee this?"

"I gathered it from what I heard her tell the town-governor, and the Norse jomfru or fru--"

"The Norse jomfru!" interrupted Drost Peter, hastily. "She and Sir Rané have not accompanied her?"

"Nay, the saints forbid, sir! Had I thought so, I should never have allowed her to go, had I been compelled to keep her back by main force. But I thought you knew all, and--"

"But Rané, Rané--where sawest thou him?"

"On the way to the town-governor we encountered the snake. He was leaving the Grayfriars' Chapel with the Norse jomfru, where, it is said, they have already been made man and wife. Jomfru Ingé cried bitterly, and embraced the Norse lady with great emotion; but Rané--the fiend take him!--would not delay. Within half an hour, he said, they must be on the open sea; and he talked of his sea-dogs, and looked about as if they were not far distant. He offered one arm to Jomfru Ingé, while he held fast his young fru with the other. But Jomfru Ingé withstood the indignity. She bade him a cold and formal farewell, and turned hastily away. I was much tempted to measure my squire's sword with the glaive of the newly-coined knight. My sword, I believe, indeed, accidentally left the sheath, and certainly I did not look very mildly at the crafty sir fox. I saw that he perfectly remembered how last I waited for him outside the duke's door at Nyborg Castle; for he suddenly became pale-nosed when he saw me about to spring at him. Jomfru Ingé seized me by the arm; and, before I had time to call him a traitorous nidding, he had disappeared with the pretty fru, whom he has cajoled and stolen."

Drost Peter again breathed easily. "Now, God be praised!" he exclaimed. "the wretch has no longer any power over her!"

"I trow he has, though!" cried Skirmen: "he took her with him."

"What! art thou mad?--Ingé?"

"Nay, Heaven forbend, sir!--Her I held fast by--but the pretty Norse jomfru--"

"In God's name, so be it! She was his wife, Skirmen; and thou hast conducted thyself like a brave fellow. She has set out alone, then, for Kolding--Ingé, I mean?"

"Nay, with twelve horsemen, besides car-swains."

"Very well: let our horses be instantly saddled."

"Already?" exclaimed Skirmen, colouring: "I thought we should tarry here to-night. Truth to say, sir, I have appointed a meeting with little Aasé and her grandfather, by the Stone-gate. They are about to make a pious pilgrimage, and I may not again see her for a long time."

"You can meet them as we go, for we shall pass through that gate. Quick with the horses!"

Skirmen left the room, with a sigh, and Drost Peter threw himself thoughtfully on a seat. He again drew forth Lady Ingé's letter, read it once more, and had just pressed it to his lips, when the door opened, and Sir Thorstenson entered, furious with rage.

"Ha! it was the cursed algre's daughter!" he exclaimed, vehemently: "and they are gone--Jomfru Ingé, with--"

"I know it," interrupted Drost Peter, concealing the letter as he rose. "Here is your appointment and authority, brave Thorstenson, and Heaven protect you! Rané has escaped us; but this time, however, we owe him thanks."

"Confound him! it was the algre's daughter he ran away with," continued Thorstenson, with indignation: "they were on the open sea before the river could be blocked. Ha! why knew I not this an hour ago? Death and destruction! The algre's daughter should have sat a prisoner in Rypen House until Sir Algotson had been hanged, and proud Ingrid had become Thorstenson's wife."

"It was well, then, you knew not the bold viking's daughter," replied the drost, "otherwise you would have had to do with me. It would have been disgraceful to every Dane had not the brave adventurous maiden been permitted to retire from Rypen as freely as she came. Had she not infused her courage into our wily leader of the dance to-night, the bravest Danish maiden had sung her song in vain, and you had not now been governor of Rypen House."

"But, by Satan! she is the daughter of the infernal algre!"

"What of that? She is a heroine, to whom we owe both thanks and honour; and she has paid dearly enough for her bold adventure, if she has given Rané her troth as its guerdon."

"You are right, Drost Peter," replied Thorstenson, cooling: "the girl was worthy of a better husband, and should surely have had a better father. Let her fly, then, the bold rock-bird! She may yet make a hero, or at least a wily pirate, of our vile knight. But--death and destruction!--had I known she was the algre's daughter--"

"Even then, you would have respectfully kissed her hand, David Barmhead!" interrupted the drost, smiling.

"The horses are ready, sir drost," cried Skirmen at the door.

Drost Peter took a hurried leave of the brave governor of Rypen House, and left the castle; having first prudently put on a light breastplate under his travelling-cloak. He rode off rapidly, followed by Skirmen, along Green-street to the Market-place, without noticing the noisy merriment of the burghers. In Merchant-street the crowds had dispersed, and Skirmen observed several dark figures stealing about, coffin-bearers apparently of the order of the Dominicans, having hoods with large eyeholes over their faces; although, from their suspicious movements and long strides, they more resembled disguised soldiers. The trusty squire directed the attention of his master to these men, who appeared to be closely watching him.

"Coffin-bearers, about to carry a body somewhere," observed the drost: "what is remarkable in that?"

"It depends on what kind of body they are to carry," returned Skirmen; "and whether it is not the first they meet."

The suspicious hoods disappeared, however, at the corner of Ship-street, and Drost Peter rode over the bridge to the Middle-dam.

"What ails thee, Skirmen?" he inquired, stopping his horse in a by-street. "Since yesterday, methinks thou hast laid thy valour aside. Thou wert quite another carl when the robbers were seized by thee in Daugberg quarry. Now, however, I see thou hast got a sweetheart in thy head; and hast forgotten that the gold spurs are not to be won by timidity and weakness."

Skirmen felt his cheeks tingle. "Had you not taken me for a timid fool on the morning that we rode to Harrestrup, and had you not supposed the grayfriar cloaks covered honest men," he replied, suppressing his emotion, "then, perhaps, stern sir, had King Erik Christopherson last year given me the stroke of knighthood, as on that evening you bade me hope he would. I would then rather have received it from your hand," he added, with a trembling voice; "but, if now you consider me a timid coward, because I fear for your life, I desire nothing more than to remain your trusty squire while I live. Warn you I must, however; for I would rather go with silver spurs to my grave, than with gold ones follow you to your's."

"My faithful Skirmen!" exclaimed the drost, much affected, as he extended his hand to him, "I know it well: thou art more concerned for my life than for thine own. But I am not an outlaw: I am here, well armed, on the king's errand, and every cowl-cloak we see does not conceal a traitor."

"These fellows have been sneaking after us during the whole day, stern sir," replied Skirmen, "and I dare be sworn they are the duke's people. I thought Count Gerhard and his troopers were to follow us."

"The count is his own master," observed the drost: "I know not whether he purposes to attend the Dane-court or no."

"But Sir Rimaardson, then?"

"He goes from hence by sea. So, let us on. In these times, defenceless travellers and princely personages only require an escort."

Skirmen was silent. They crossed the bridge to the Lower-dam, and another leading across the third arm of the Nipsaa to the Stone-gate, at the eastern end of the town. When they reached the gate, they found it closed, by the orders of Sir Thorstenson. At the drost's command and well-known sign it was immediately opened to them; and they were about proceeding on their journey, when Skirmen heard himself called by a clear female voice from above the gateway.

"For God's sake, dear master, let us halt," he exclaimed, eagerly, springing from his horse. "Aasé is certainly in the Gatehouse prison."

"Free us, noble sir drost," cried Aasé from the prison-grating over the arched gateway. "You can bear witness that my grandfather and I are neither spies nor traitors."

On the word of the drost, and his explanation to the watch, the prisoners were liberated; and old Henner, in the long cloak of a pilgrim, and leading Aasé by the hand, stepped forth. He extended his hand to Drost Peter, while Aasé flew delighted into Skirmen's arms.

"One word, sir drost," said Henner, in an under-tone. "If you would ride safely to Snoghoi or Kolding to-night, tarry here till I return, or at least allow the road to stand open for good friends. Run, Aasé! Time presses!"

"What meanest thou, old man?" inquired Drost Peter, impatiently.

But he received no answer; for, with a few tremendous bounds, aided by his staff, in the manner of the old Frisians, the tall pilgrim had suddenly disappeared in the gloom. Shortly after, the strokes of an oar were heard on the river, northward of the gate, and a glimpse was caught of a boat running down the stream towards the castle with incredible rapidity.

At the instant the old man disappeared, little Aasé also sprang nimbly from Skirmen's arms, and was quickly out of sight; but as Skirmen fancied he heard her footsteps on the bridge leading to the Lower-dam, he mounted his norback, and was about to follow her, when his master called him loudly and impatiently the other way. "Come, Skirmen, let us forward. Henner is half crazed, and I cannot wait here to please his whimsies. You may open the gate for the old man, if he again comes," he added, turning to the burgher-guard; "or, should any one inquire for me, do not detain him."

So saying, he rode off hastily. Skirmen followed him with a downcast heart, and looking back every minute after his dear Aasé, to whom he had scarcely had time to give a farewell kiss but in the faint starlight he saw only the gloomy archway, and a long mailed hand projecting threateningly from its walls.

"What means that hideous hand, dear master, on the town-gate there?" he inquired, as a pretext for lingering a little longer, while he continued gazing on the path by which Aasé had disappeared.

"The hand is placed there as a terror to transgressors of the laws," replied the drost, relaxing his speed, as he looked behind. "Whoever, by forestalling, causes a scarcity in the town, loses his hand. But if I mistake not, Skirmen, it is another hand, less stiff and cold, thou art now looking after. Thou wouldst once more take leave of thy little Aasé? Well, she is a fair maiden, and one day shall be thy wife. When we have restored peace to the land, I shall care for your welfare. But meanwhile banish all such weaknesses, and be strong. I dare not take a single step from my appointed course, even for the sake of her who is dearer to me than all."

"True: but you are now both travelling in the same direction, and perhaps you may meet her at Kolding. But thanks, noble sir, for your care for us," added Skirmen, "although lands and wealth I require not. Aasé only desires that I should, like you, be a doughty knight, and do you and our young king honour. Ride on, sir: I shall not longer detain you. Our Lord may yet permit me to see my dear little Aasé again." He hastily passed his hand over his eyes, and set spurs to his norback.

As they rode rapidly forward, Drost Peter tried to conjecture what the warning of old Henner could mean, and why he had requested the town-gate to be left open.

"It was thoughtless, Skirmen," he observed, "to humour the whim of the old man about the gate. If the fellows you spoke of be traitors on our track, we have ourselves opened the way for them to follow us."

Shortly after, they heard the sound of horses' hoofs behind them. They turned, and in the twilight perceived a troop of horsemen approaching.

"Let us turn aside, sir," said Skirmen: "it is certainly the men in cowls."

About an hundred paces behind them, and running into the wood to the right, was a by-road, down which the suspicious troop disappeared.

"They have business elsewhere," said the drost, taking his hand from his sword.--"Let us on!"

They resumed their journey at a brisk trot.

"Perhaps they prefer meeting us at the outlet of the wood," observed Skirmen. "We have still the start; but it were most advisable, I think, to return to Rypen for aid. It was not for nothing that old Henner begged us to tarry."

"Nay, we shall use our advantage," said the drost, in a tone of decision, as he spurred his horse: "if they be foes, they are in a condition to overtake Jomfru Ingé before us, and who knows what her twelve troopers are good for?"

After a sharp gallop they reached the outlet of the wood, where the road became very narrow, and inclosed on both sides by steep banks. Skirmen was a short distance in advance of his master, when he suddenly wheeled about, and rode back.

"The hollow way is intercepted, sir," he cried. "And see, yonder come the same troops again from the wood."

Drost Peter halted, looked around him, and drew his sword. "So much the worse!" he exclaimed: "they have us in a trap. But we shall not suffer ourselves to be caught like rats. Thy norback can climb like a cat, Skirmen: ride up the height, then, and sound thy horn. If Henner brings us aid, he will hear it, and hasten on. With God's assistance I can manage to keep the fellows at bay for an hour. Quick, now!"

With much reluctance at leaving his master in this extremity, Skirmen obeyed; and patting the neck of his norback, he soon reached the top of the steep bank.

In the meanwhile the horsemen were approaching from both sides; but before they could exhibit any hostile intention the horn of Skirmen resounded loudly from the bank above. Both troops paused, apparently surprised; but when they perceived only the single hornblower on the height, they pressed forward rapidly, and had nearly surrounded the drost, who, however, succeeded in placing his back to the steep bank. He now first perceived whom he had before him; and recognised in the band that came from the town the pretended coffin-bearers, with their cowls over their faces, and long drawn swords in their hands. The other band wore the same suspicious dress; and they numbered altogether more than twenty, all on horseback. They maintained a profound silence, and seemed to expect the drost to throw down his sword and surrender.

"Speak, fellows! what would you with me?" he shouted, brandishing his sword on every side: "the first who advances, dies. If you be soldiers, say under whose orders you act, that I may know the traitor; and if there be a spark of honour in you, you will engage me singly, man to man. But if you are robbers and highwaymen, expect no booty from me. Bloody crowns are all you shall get, so long as I can wield my sword."

They answered not, but continued to press closer round him, none daring first to begin the attack; for Drost Peter, as weapon-master of the young king, was well known and generally feared for his skill with the sword. In the meanwhile, the horn of Skirmen continued to sound lustily, and was now answered by another from the direction of Rypen.

"Now, by Satan! quick! dead or alive!" cried a rough voice from among the disguised horsemen, three of whom at once rushed in upon the drost.

One instantly fell wounded, the two others, and as many more as could press forward, warmly continuing the assault. Drost Peter vigorously defended himself, and kept them at bay, the violent plunging and rearing of his steed preventing their blows from reaching him. The irritated



assassins, perceiving this, wounded the noble animal, which rushed furiously into the midst of them, and fell.

Drost Peter lay for an instant on one knee, hemmed in on all sides by the troopers, who threatened to crush him beneath their horses' hoofs. He still retained his sword, although the blood streamed over his fingers from a wound in his arm. By a flourish of his weapon he succeeded in driving back the horses, and once more regained his feet.

At the same instant, Skirmen, who perceived the critical position of his master, darted his squire's sword from the bank above, and the leader of the gang rolled from his saddle, mortally wounded. The whole troop then sprang from their horses, to overpower the unaided knight by their united strength; but ere they could accomplish this, the blast of the horn, in answer to Skirmen's, sounded close at hand. The maskers, whom the fall of their leader seemed to have embarrassed, looked behind, and caught sight of a well-armed troop of horsemen, headed by a heavy knight on a white horse, who, with drawn sword, approached at full gallop.

"The count from Kiel!--the one-eyed count!" cried one of the cowls; and, as if by a thunderbolt, the whole band was scattered.

Abandoning the drost, and springing on their horses, in an instant they all disappeared, except the two who lay wounded on the road, and whose horses, with vacant saddles, followed the others.

Count Gerhard on his white steed, with Henner Friser and the Holstein troopers, came up while Skirmen, with much solicitude, was binding up his master's right arm.

"The fiend!" cried Count Gerhard, springing from his horse, "have we come too late?"

"Time enough to save my life, noble count," replied Drost Peter, joyfully extending his left hand.

"Why did you proceed in such haste, sir drost?" cried old Henner, gloomily, from his saddle. "Humph!" he added, in a half whisper, after a moment's thought, "it is on the track of a lady's car that you bleed here. You would rather run the risk of that than follow a gray-beard's advice."

"You are right, old man," answered Drost Peter: "youth and the wisdom of old age do not go together. Besides, I was on my lawful road, and on the king's errand; and if you knew that traitors lay in ambush, you should have spoken plainly. Meanwhile, thanks for rede and deed."

When Count Gerhard perceived that his friend was not dangerously hurt, he would have pursued the fugitives into the wood, but the drost restrained him.

"It is useless," he said: "they have flown like chaff before your storm of troopers. A couple of them only remain--let us be content with them. Here lies their leader, who fell, as if by lightning, without my hand."

"I hit him," cried Skirmen, joyfully, as he completed the bandage on his master's arm. "In three weeks you will again bear your sword, sir; but next time you use it, bid me not make music to your sport."

"Thy music helped me more than mine own good sword, Skirmen, and thou hast the aim of a David," said the drost, extending his hand to him.

They then approached the fallen leader, from whom Skirmen stripped the cowl and cloak, when, in his military buff doublet, they recognised with astonishment one of Duke Waldemar's Sleswick troopers. He died, however, almost immediately, and without uttering a word. The other had a similar doublet under his cloak. He was not mortally wounded; but wore a daring look, and neither threats nor promises could make him speak. They bound up his wound, and set him pinioned upon a horse.

Henner Friser now dismounted from the tall iron-gray horse he had ridden.

"I took your war-steed from the castle-stables, sir drost. You may soon require him," he said, with emphasis. "I shall now go on foot to my grave, and never more set myself on the high horse. I have done it roughly enough in bygone times, I know. Now I have finished with worldly affairs; but I shall say an ave by the Holy Grave, for you and the young king, if I do not fall suddenly into my own on the way. God and St. Christian be with you, noble sir!" he added, with unusual emotion. "Fortune is still with you in the midst of misfortune. But be on your guard. If you are not beforehand with the mortal foe, he will be beforehand with you. The crown you guard has not yet reached his head."

Drost Peter mounted his well-known, handsome war-steed, which had remained in the castle-stables since the last tilting-match. Sad, and in silence, he held forth his hand to the old pilgrim.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Count Gerhard, as Henner saluted him also, before departing. "Thou art too sage a carl, Henner, not to make something better than a penitent. I have learned more from thee to-night than from all my scribes and wisemen in my life. Stay with me: thou shalt

carry my banner, and sit at my council. From what thou hast told me of my fortune, I should like to know a little more of it."

"It is not well to know too much of that, highborn sir," replied Henner, thoughtfully, shaking his gray head, as he leant upon his pilgrim's staff. "Neither am I a wizard; but the skilled man knows the world, and an old porpoise-hunter can still tell what weather we shall have to-morrow. Our Lord's Book does not lie, and it does not quite require a scribe to understand it. I know," he continued, looking sharply at the count, "that you will get as far with your one honest eye, as your wiliest foe with two; but, for all that, you must no more depend on Fortune than another. She is a bubble that, as you well know, bursts oftenest when it shines the clearest. I should willingly bear your banner, highborn count, but what a man has promised to our Lord and the Holy Virgin he must abide by. I have a heavy reckoning to make, and death gives not long warning. God and St. Christian be with you!--Farewell, youth," he said, turning to Skirmen: "I shall answer to thee for Aasé, when thou answerest to me and her with thy fidelity and bravery."

Skirmen seized the old man's hand, which he pressed warmly to his lips; but before he could say a word, the old giant had snatched away his hand, and was proceeding with rapid strides on the road to the river.

Drost Peter and Count Gerhard proceeded in silence on their way to Kolding, and, following Henner's advice, took the road to the south of the Skodborg river. Skirmen and the old jester followed at some distance, with the troopers, having the captive highwayman between them.

"For the first time I follow you over the Sleswick border, my good friend," observed the count, at length breaking the silence. "This surprise may import much. In these times every man does not wear his heart upon his sleeve. The buff jackets prove little; but trust me, nevertheless, the duke is the man. There is more under this, too, than thanks for his imprisonment at Sjöborg. The old pilgrim did not boast of my one eye without reason. I see, perhaps, even more clearly than you; and what the wily duke carries on his shield begins to brighten upon me. I should have much pleasure in probing the cunning gentleman a little. Listen, my good drost," he continued, after a moment's reflection: "if the duke does not appear at the Dane-court in proper time, you must be at your post to preserve the queen and the young king from being deceived by him. If he is not in a hurry to be chosen protector, 'tis because he has a higher dignity in view. The old pilgrim explained a riddle to me."

"What means all this, Count Gerhard?" inquired the drost, as he scrutinised attentively his unusually grave countenance. "Old Henner has not been filling your mind with surmises and whimsies? I have every respect for his experience, but he is not always quite sane; and his dreamy fancies I shall disregard. Whatever you may propose to do, noble count, forget not that, for the safety of the crown and kingdom, we must for the present avoid every hostile step against the duke."

"What I take in hand concerns myself, and has nothing to do with the crown and kingdom," rejoined the count, "and so you shall not know it. Will you confide the captured robber to my charge? I shall answer for him."

"Of course," replied the drost: "that treasure you may retain. If it concerned myself only, I should forget the adventure, and set the prisoner loose; but if it has a higher import, it must be inquired into. I believe the wily duke superior to a mere base and personal revenge; and he must know me well enough to be assured that I would not, contrary to the laws, oppose his election to the protectorship."

"He knows you more than well enough, my good friend," said Count Gerhard, with a nod. "You would certainly be a most welcome guest in his tower of Nordborg Castle. Yet you are right: we must keep to the main business. Should I learn anything of importance to the queen and the young king, you shall hear it from my own lips, before the Dane-court is concluded. But," added he, confusedly, while the blood mounted to his cheeks--"if I should hear that Duke Waldemar and the fair Queen Agnes had concluded a private marriage-contract, you must excuse me--"

"You astonish me, Count Gerhard!" exclaimed Drost Peter. "Do you believe probable what I have long feared might be possible? And think you the queen--"

"Of her I think nothing but what is good and fair and excellent," interrupted the count, with much ardour. "But however prudent she may be, still she may err. Why should not she, too, be dazzled by a glittering exterior? Were the handsome, well-spoken duke a squat, one-eyed widower like myself, and a lout at talking with women, perhaps it were better for all of us."

They continued their route thoughtfully and in silence. The usually lively count, with his eye and some of his corpulence, seemed also to have lost a part of his even, contented disposition. The loss of his eye, however, did not disfigure him, but rather added to his martial and somewhat heroic appearance; and the tinge of secret melancholy, that blended at times with his good-natured jests, rendered the brave and sturdy lord yet more amiable.

Drost Peter became so absorbed in his own thoughts, that the conversation was not resumed. The image of Jomfru Ingé often cast its radiance over his dark and gloomy pictures of the future. In every cloud of dust he descried on the road, he imagined he caught a glimpse of her travelling-

car; and would then spur forward his steed so rapidly, that the count and his followers had some difficulty in keeping pace with him. But his hopes were invariably disappointed. Frequently it was but a drove of oxen or a troop of horses he had seen, and which, by blocking up the road, would intercept him in his impatient career.

They had ridden more than seven miles across the Sleswick border, and the sun was not yet high in the heavens, when they caught sight of the proud Ærnsborg, or Kolding House, as it was already called. The castle was situated on a rising ground above the sea, on the other side of the river Kolding; and, as it came in view, the drost's war-steed neighed, and sprang lightly forward at his master's bidding.

"But why, in the name of Beelzebub, ride we in such a hurry?" impatiently inquired Count Gerhard, puffing. "It is yet eight days to the Dane-court; and if we reach Nyborg tomorrow, we shall be time enough."

Drost Peter blushed. "I am commanded to make haste," he replied. "The wind is fair, but the passage here is longer and more difficult than by Snoghoi."

"Pokker, then! why do you not cross from Snoghoi?" asked the count. "Yet true," he added, a little crabbedly, "you would fain see your heart's dear again."

"How know you that, Count Gerhard?" demanded the drost, with some surprise and bashfulness.

"Why, every man in the country knows that," replied his companion. "The proud Ærnsborg<sup>[37]</sup> yonder is Drost Peter Hessel's favourite castle; and the eagle on a hill, with its wings displayed, stands on your seal with as much propriety as it does in the town-arms. Here it was you earned your first laurels against Duke Erik; and we have long known that in Ærnsborg you hold the gate and key of the kingdom against both myself and the Duke of South Jutland."

"You are speaking of the castle," replied Drost Peter, smiling, "and now I understand you. It is, indeed, a fortress dear to me, and of some importance to the kingdom. King Erik Christopherson put it in an excellent state of defence. It is an eyesore to you Holsteiners, I know; but let us be good friends, nevertheless. Were the duke as faithful a friend to us as you are, noble count, I should not have been so zealous in completing the defences. To speak honestly," he continued, extending his hand to the count, "I thought you meant to jest with me of my veritable heart's dear; for it is no stone-bride I am hurrying on to see. The castle is in good hands, but at present we have no time to visit it."

"As a prudent drost, you would scarcely venture on that when a count of Holstein is along with you, even although he has but half as many eyes as other people."

"With your one eye you would certainly see more defects in the defences than I should with both mine," observed the young drost, modestly, and with a look of confidence in his companion; "but I know," he added, "you would not betray its weakness to another than myself, and thus both the castle and I would be gainers."

"I take you at your polite word, Drost Peter," exclaimed Gerhard. "Defer your journey but for half an hour, and show me the castle's four giant images, and its defences too."

They were now at no great distance from Kolding river. They rode straight through the Bridge-wood, as it was called; and as they drew near the great drawbridge, which here divides North from South Jutland, they perceived approaching them an empty travelling-car, with four horses, and attended by twelve horsemen.

"There comes back her carriage," cried Skirmen, hastily riding up to his master. "You may still overtake her, as she can hardly yet have left the fiord."

"You shall see the castle another time, noble count," exclaimed Drost Peter, hurriedly, to his companion, and spurring forward his horse. "I may perhaps, instead, show you a fairer image, which I would rather bear on my shield than all the world's eagles and castles to boot."

"What the Pokker!" exclaimed Count Gerhard, laughing aloud, "am I killing my horse by riding along with a lovesick knight? Well, my good friend, if Drost Hessel can think of such follies in these serious times, I am not the only fool in company."

They rode rapidly past the empty car, but were obliged to halt at the bridge, which had been again drawn up. The drost had here established a lucrative toll, and, under pretence of strict superintendence, had recently issued an order, that this boundary bridge should be kept drawn up, as during war, which caused much delay and inconvenience to travellers.

In his impatient haste the drost himself vehemently exclaimed against the captain of the burgher-watch, to whom the knights were unknown, and who, before he would lower the bridge, demanded a strict account of their claims to be admitted with so many soldiers. After some altercation, on the drost announcing himself the bridge was lowered, and, for the delay, the captain pleaded the fair excuse, that it was the drost's own orders that had caused it.

"You are right, my friend," said Drost Peter, recollecting himself, as a slight blush overspread his cheeks--"you have done your duty, and I had no right to blame you."

The pacified captain saluted the drost, who, with his companion and the troopers, proceeded to pass the bridge.

During the short parley, Count Gerhard had with great difficulty restrained his laughter, which now broke forth in spite of him, as he perceived, while crossing the bridge, how the drost hurried on and gazed towards the vessels in the harbour.

"You now see yourself how execrable are your stringent laws, my conscientious good sir drost," he said; "you certainly thought not of a lover's haste when you ordered this bridge-barring."

"This is grist for your mill," returned the drost, who, although somewhat vexed, could not restrain a smile at the good-natured sallies with which Count Gerhard indemnified himself for the grievance of the toll, which affected the relations of Denmark to Holstein as much as it did those to South Jutland.

"If now you overtake not the fair lady, for whom I have ridden so many good horses almost to death," continued the count, in the same vein, "it will be sad enough: you will then regret having founded a toll at this confounded gutter. The deuce take it! it costs me and my brave Holsteiners more silver pieces in a year and a day, than the whole of this paltry place is worth. Laugh I must, from sheer vexation."

"A truce to this raillery, Count Gerhard," exclaimed the drost, hastily. "If I see aright, there is a ship leaving the harbour. If you knew of what this cursed delay has robbed me, you would not have the heart to laugh."

They had now ridden through the South-port and Bridge-street, when the drost, turning to the right, proceeded at a gallop to the Cloister-port, and across the large meadow-ground to the harbour, followed by the count and his train.

In an instant he stood on the quay, anxiously inquiring who was on board the vessel that had just left the harbour under full sail.

"A princess, it was, in sooth," answered an old steersman, as he continued to hammer away carelessly at his rudder. "She came here in a painted cage, with four horses. The town-governor himself was hat in hand, and all were obliged to stand on their pegs before her. It was a Swede that ran out with her. If this breeze continues, she will soon be in the open sea; and if the skiff only holds together, she will reach land; but it is a confounded rotten tub, and wont bear many thumps. With the Swede, however, she would go, even had Satan himself been on board."

"Lay to, with your fastest sloop!" cried the drost. "I shall pay you tenfold. Only make haste!"

"Shall we on a lady-chase, stern sir?" mumbled the old sailor. "Eh, well, I like that. The proud maiden has not offended you, I can see. In half an hour's time I shall bring you alongside. It was, moreover, too good a fare for a Swede."

"True, old man. But be quick!" cried the drost, giving him a handful of money.

In a few moments a small sloop lay close to the quay, and Skirmen immediately led the horses on board. Drost Peter meanwhile took leave of Count Gerhard.

"Heaven prosper you, noble count," he said, as he pressed his hand: "if our own hope be a fugitive which we can never overtake, we relinquish not the great hope of the country and kingdom: 'for the queen and our young king!' is our watchword."

"Well, my good friend," replied Count Gerhard, smiling, "you shall soon hear from me. Meantime, forget not to steer the proper course to Melfert."

Shortly afterwards the sloop, with Drost Peter and his squire, left Kolding Harbour under full sail. Count Gerhard remained smiling on the quay. He perceived the light bark speed like an arrow through the water, and gain upon the skiff with the blue and yellow sails, that conveyed Jomfru Ingé. That she was the lady with whom Drost Peter had danced into Rypen House, and whom he now hastened so ardently to overtake, was a gratifying supposition. Although the suspicion, of which the scar on his breast reminded him, had long since vanished, he was not displeased to observe that his chivalrous rival in the queen's favour seemed disposed to forget, for the daughter of a knight, all the kings and queens in the world.

The two vessels were soon so near, that they could see each other. Drost Peter stood on the prow of the one; and a tall female form, in a red mantle edged with sable, appeared on the stern of the sloop he was pursuing. He knew Lady Ingé and shouted her name.

"For Heaven's sake, slacken sail, and let me conduct you to land!" he cried, "Your boat can never keep the sea."

Lady Ingé only shook her head, and, loosening her veil, waved him a fond farewell.

"If you wish to board, stern sir knight," cried the old steersman, "I can drive in one of the Swede's planks, and I warrant he'll soon strike."

"Nay, nay," replied the drost, "no violence. She is free. Steer past them, and as near as possible."

An instant more and the vessels were side by side. Drost Peter stood, with outstretched arms, a few yards from the beautiful Ingé, whose eyes were fixed on him with a look of inexpressible tenderness.

"For Erik the king so young!" she exclaimed, pointing forwards, and at the same time relinquishing her veil, which the wind carried over to the knight. A piece of the garland from the triumphant dance of the previous evening accompanied it, and alighted on his feathered hat.

At the same instant the vessels parted, and the deep abyss again widened between the two lovers. Drost Peter fancied he saw a tear in the eye of the proud damsel; but the look she had bestowed on him filled his soul with the most joyous hopes. He pressed her veil to his lips, and, with a perfect confidence of her success, and reverence for her firm, immovable purpose, directed the helmsman to steer for Melfert. "God and his mighty angels are with the maiden," he exclaimed: "we dare not stay her."

The vessels were already far apart. Drost Peter continued to gaze after the retiring skiff, on which he long fancied he could discern a lappet of Jomfru Ingé's mantle; and sad, but wonderfully strengthened and inspirited by this fond adieu, he hastened on his necessary and appointed way.

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The almost incredible account was soon spread over the whole kingdom, of the manner in which Rypen House had been surprised, and the song of the maidens--"For Erik the king so young!" soon became a popular ballad. The news was especially gratifying to the queen and the young king, and, as first bearer of the tidings, Drost Peter was received with double pleasure at Nyborg Castle, where important affairs demanded his presence in the council. He also brought better accounts than were expected, respecting the chief object of his journey. He had seen numerous proofs of the attachment of the people to the royal house, and the general hatred of Marsk Stig and his adherents; and he had, moreover, learnt important particulars with regard to the conspirators and the king's murder. The defences of Marsk Stig on Helgeness and Hielm he could describe as an eye-witness, and they were found to be far less formidable than they were represented by the duke's reports, and by uncertain and alarming rumours.

While magnificent preparations were going on in Nyborg for the Dane-court, at which the young king would appear for the first time in the seat of judgment, the privy council assembled daily. Drost Peter did not conceal his distrust of the duke. His wounded arm excited much interest, and his account of the highwaymen's attack gave rise to many conjectures, which he himself, however, regarded as highly uncertain, for he attached little importance to the occurrence. But old Sir John and Master Martinus found in it a strong confirmation of their suspicions regarding the duke, when considered in connection with his doubtful movements in Viborg, which had caused their hasty and secret journey with the royal family to Nyborg.

The chivalrous-minded little king, too, thought they were over suspicious and cautious.

"Is not my kinsman the duke a knight and a prince?" he observed, one day, when the matter was under discussion in the council; "and does he not know that he cannot break faith and promises, without forfeiting his honour, and becoming a mockery to the whole world?"

"If God's law does not bind him, my young king and master," replied Master Martinus, "the laws of knighthood will have still less power, especially as they do not yet properly concern him. True, he is a prince of the royal blood; but the stroke of knighthood he has not formally received. Your late father, from whose hand alone he could worthily accept it, delayed this proof of honour longer, perhaps, than was desirable, considering the relation in which they stood."

"Well, I shall give him the stroke of knighthood as soon as I have myself received it, and have a right to confer it," answered the young king. "My uncle Otto must dub me previous to my coronation; for it is not becoming that I should be crowned King of Denmark, before I am duly admitted into the noble order of knighthood."

Sir John smiled, and shook his gray head; but Drost Peter contemplated his royal pupil with delight. He considered that the desire of the young king evinced his respect as much for the crown as for the order of knighthood; and he observed that it was not unusual for princes in their minority to entertain such a wish, and that they had already, in Charlemagne and his son, an example in point, and an illustrious instance of knighthood being honoured and followed.

"But, by the laws of chivalry, the minority ceases with the stroke which confers knighthood," observed Sir John; "and the constitutional law of the kingdom debars us from shortening the period of the king's minority."

"Tis true, noble Sir John," replied Drost Peter; "but here the laws of chivalry must give way to

that greater law, which secures the freedom and welfare of the people. To my mind, however, a minor king is not of less dignity than any of his knightly servants."

The queen and Master Martinus supported the views of Drost Peter, and the wishes of the little king; and, with a shrug, old Sir John gave way, considering the question as one of little importance. The duke's position in the kingdom was, to him, a subject of far graver concern. The necessity of carefully concealing every suspicion, and of entrusting the duke with his full share in the government, as well as with the guardianship of the king, was stated so clearly by the old nobleman, that even Master Martinus, to whom such a course was most repugnant, could offer no objections. On this subject the queen entertained not the least suspicion, and Drost Peter's personal distrust of the duke gave way to the exigency of the occasion, and his respect for the laws of the country.

Whilst these important state affairs occupied the council, Drost Peter vainly sought an opportunity of conferring with Sir John concerning Jomfru Ingé and her journey to Sweden; for, on the slightest allusion to the subject, the counsellor, who apparently knew nothing of it, immediately started another.

The day fixed for the Dane-court had come. The queen's brothers, the Margraves of Brandenburg, had arrived on the previous day, having, two days before, left the duke in his camp near Rypen. The duke himself, however, had not yet reached Nyborg. To delay the Dane-court until his arrival, was repugnant to the dignity of the crown and kingdom. Every one was surprised at his apparent indifference on this important occasion, when his presence was so essential. The queen, especially, was irritated by this want of attention, which seemed to her so unlike the usual politeness and knightly behaviour of the duke.

On the first day of Whitsuntide, the Dane-court was held with the customary formalities. Its general business was conducted by the council, whose decisions were confirmed by the queen and the young king, who, equally with his mother, issued and confirmed charters and grants to churches and convents, subscribing himself King of the Danes and Slaves, and Duke of Eastland. But the principal business--that which related to the king's guardianship, and the regency of the kingdom during his minority--was still unsettled. The two first days of the court's sittings had passed, and the duke was still absent.

At the close of the second day Drost Peter left the palace, and retired to his own dwelling, intending to devote a portion of the night to a revision of the business which was to occupy the court on the following day. He sat alone in his closet, and, as he recalled to mind old Henner's warning, and the suspicions of Count Gerhard, the daring thought occurred to him, that they might now, perhaps, with justice, pass over the duke's election to the guardianship.

His anxious and uneasy thoughts were disturbed by a noise in the palace-square, accompanied by the clattering of horses' hoofs, and the horns of the castle-guard--a salute given only on the arrival of a princely personage. He hastily approached the window, and perceived the duke enter with great pomp, attended by a considerable retinue of knights. Among these he observed three with locked visors, and these, by their armorial bearings, he recognised as three of the marsk's most audacious kinsmen, of whose personal participation in the murder of the king he had sure and ample proofs. Hastily seizing his cloak and hat, he hurried to the castle, where Sir John, as captain of the trabants, had already received the duke, and, at his importunate request, had admitted him to a private audience with the queen and her brothers.

Drost Peter learnt these tidings with much concern just as he reached the door of the guard-chamber, where little Aagé Jonsen stood sentinel among the torch-pages. The drost hastily entered, and approached Sir John, who was passing thoughtfully before the door of the royal apartments. He did not appear desirous of conversing, as, without stopping, he only nodded silently to the drost. The latter once or twice vainly endeavoured to find an opportunity of communicating his suspicions.

"The council must, of course, again meet to-night," at length he observed in an under tone, as Sir John turned to pass him.

"Its present leader is with the queen," replied Sir John, continuing his walk.

"Can nothing be done?" whispered the impatient drost, when the old man again approached him. "There are traitors in the duke's retinue. The queen's mind is dazzled, and this hour probably decides the fate of the crown and country."

"It is in the hand of God," replied the old counsellor, in whose eye glistened a tear. "He, you know, can cause the blind to see."

He resumed his walk with a lively and careless air, and, in a jesting humour, put a few indifferent questions to one of the trabants.

"Unless a miracle happen here," exclaimed Drost Peter, vehemently, as the old counsellor again stood by him, "either you or I must speedily open the eyes of the queen and people."

"Precipitate man! what think you of?" whispered Sir John. "Your zeal will plunge the whole country into misfortune. Be calm, my young friend," he immediately added, as he took his hand

and led him aside, "otherwise you will certainly increase our misfortunes. Some of the marsk's friends are here, to defend themselves, it is said. If, therefore, we were even certain of what we may apprehend, we must still be silent, and submit to necessity."

"What! even if, ere the morrow, it could be demonstrated to the queen and the whole people that our new protector is a traitor to the country?"

"Even then. He now holds the fate of the kingdom in his hand. By an open rupture, we might place him at the head of the rebels. At present, he must condemn and punish them, although against his wish. Until Marsk Stig falls, the duke must stand. He must be honoured as the prop of the throne, if even he be its most deadly foe. All that can at present be done is to warn the queen, and guard well the young king. Appear calm, then, as I do--and lively, if you can."

Their conference was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the court-marshal, who invited them to a supper given by the queen, and intended as a feast of welcome to the duke.

"You perceive," exclaimed Drost Peter, when the court-marshal had retired, "that our wily and eloquent protector is already in high favour."

"'Tis politic, perhaps," replied Sir John. "Our noble mistress is not easily duped. We must, however, seem unconcerned, and in good humour. In this matter let me be your preceptor, my good drost. If you would be a statesman, you must first be master of your own countenance." And, with an expression of good-natured gaiety, the old counsellor, with his grave young friend, entered the royal apartments, after having appointed another trabant captain to take his place.

In a short time all the court officers, the members of the council, and the most considerable noblemen who attended the Dane-court, were assembled in the great riddersal, where the queen's ladies already waited for her. She entered soon after, attired in deep mourning, and accompanied by her brothers and young King Erik. At her left hand walked Duke Waldemar. He, too, wore a magnificent mourning-suit, and his haughty look of triumph betrayed a high degree of self-satisfaction, as he endeavoured to conceal his joy at a success which seemed no longer doubtful, although he saw it yet only in the distance. Sir John saluted him with much politeness and ease, whilst Drost Peter observed merely needful courtesies; the demeanour of the other counsellors being indicative more of fear than of goodwill.

Drost Peter regarded the queen attentively. He thought he perceived in her features a calm contentment, which, with her air of dignity, and a quiet, half-melancholy smile, did not ill contrast with her mourning attire; and as she cast on him a grave look, he fancied he read therein a rebuke for distrusting her sagacity and knowledge of mankind. It seemed to him as if she intended, by her whole conduct, to banish every doubt, which the friends of the royal house might entertain, of the loyalty of the princely personage whom she thought worthy to be distinguished as the most important man in the country.

When the general salutations and the customary formalities of court were over, she led forward the duke, and presented him to the chief men of the kingdom. "Our very princely friend and kinsman," she said, "from regard to the welfare of the country and the royal house, has magnanimously exposed himself to be misjudged, as well by me as by you. He had deferred receiving from this Dane-court his election to the protectorship, on account of a rumour which his enemies have circulated, concerning a grievous want of confidence in him here, and of a party which, therefore, would stir up the people at the Dane-court, and create discord in the kingdom. Having learned, however, that the report is unfounded, he has no longer hesitated to come forward to justify himself. He brings us, moreover, the important and satisfactory intelligence, that the rebellious Marsk Stig has returned to reason, and has submitted his cause and that of his accomplices to the decision of the Dane-court. The duke, by not attacking the rebels, has prudently sought to avoid a devastating civil war; whilst, by collecting a numerous army, he has overawed and restrained them. He has ventured in person within the defences of Marsk Stig, to induce him to submit to the laws of the country; and he brings with him, under his own conduct, to this Dane-court, three of the marsk's friends, that it may not be said that even our most dangerous foes were condemned unheard. I look on this enterprise to be as valorous and upright as it is wise and politic; and it gladdens me that I can reasonably hope for prosperity to the kingdom of Denmark, and at the same time bid the noble Duke Waldemar welcome amongst us."

The latter words she addressed to the duke, who advanced, and bowing profoundly, in easy and elegant terms acknowledged this flattering reception. With apparent animation and sincerity, he avowed his attachment to the queen and the young king, at the same time extolling the loyal adherents of the royal house with a condescension and an insinuating address which were not without effect on the greater part of those who heard him.

The doors of the dining-hall were then thrown open, and the duke led the queen to the table, where the youthful king took his place at her right hand.

This was the first occasion on which any deviation had been made from that mournful silence which, since the death of King Erik Christopherson, had uniformly prevailed at court. And, even now, the feast was in nowise noisy: neither song, nor music, nor loud-voiced joy was heard; and, as soon as the table was removed, the company separated.

The duke retired to the wing of the castle he usually occupied during the Dane-court. Sir John again resumed his station before the royal apartments, as captain of the body-guard; and Drost Peter returned to his own dwelling, his mind filled with painful doubts and fears.

When the grave drost entered, he found Count Gerhard enjoying himself over a goblet of wine; whilst old fostermother Dorothy, who was now her master's housekeeper here, loaded the table with viands of every description. At a signal from the drost, the bustling nurse left the apartment, whilst he greeted his guest not without some uneasy apprehensions.

"Welcome home, my good friend!" cried the count, gaily, as he rose, after having drained his goblet. "I am here, gathering strength from your excellent wine. If your fostermother reared you on this, I wonder not you are so strong and active. She is a capital housewife. You could never be better treated, even had you an angel for a wife. It is lucky she was not hanged or buried alive for her womanly honour's sake. But, what's the matter? Am not I welcome? You look as if you were outlawed by the Dane-court, or cited before the Ribe-Ret."

"You are heartily welcome, noble Count Gerhard," replied the drost, extending his hand; "and if peace and joy are not to be seen in my face, it is certainly no fault of your's. You are true to your word, I see, and no false prophet. The duke arrived this evening. To-morrow he is my master, and that of the royal house. But what have you discovered?"

"A very pretty thing, my good friend. You were as near being buried alive as your nurse was; and Nordborg Tower was to have been your grave. I succeeded in unbinding the highwayman's tongue with the point of a good sword at his throat. He confessed he would have broken your neck if he could not have taken you prisoner, for you had in your pocket important proofs against the regicides."

"And for that reason--ah! I understand," exclaimed Drost Peter. "But what farther?"

"Wait a little, my good friend. A man can't live on talk. Your confounded state affairs have nearly worn me out." So saying, Count Gerhard quietly resumed his seat, and replenished his goblet, whilst the drost impatiently awaited his farther communications.

"The duke is a cunning gentleman," began the count, when he had emptied his goblet, and again praised the wine; "and I am a downright stormer, they say. 'Tis true, indeed, that I mostly cut away right before me, and go straight to my object, without deviation. But now you shall see that I too, at a pinch, can play the fox--"

"I heartily believe it, my dear count; therefore, for Heaven's sake, don't prove it to me now! What know you of the duke? What has he been doing? What could have kept him from the Dane-court? Where has he been?--"

"Softly, softly, my good friend. A man cannot answer everything at once. He has not slept for the last three days--neither have I: you can see it in my appearance. I have ridden three horses to death, and scarcely hang together myself. But listen to all in due order. When we danced with the pretty maidens at Rypen House, the duke lay, you know, on the lazy side, in his camp hard by. But on holy St. Germanus' day--let me see--yes, it was the 28th of May, the first day of the Dane-court here--he was certainly in Sleswick, where, in the presence of his own council and that of the bishop, he issued a trading charter, in favour of the shopkeepers of Lubeck, of the following tenor--"

"Do you jest with me, Count Gerhard? What possible connection has this with the crown and kingdom?"

"More than you dream of, my good friend," replied the count. "The tenor of the charter I will spare you, for I cannot remember it, and it is nothing to the purpose: but mark you--he performed a public, although an insignificant act of government, in Sleswick, on the same day on which he should here have been chosen protector and guardian of the king. There, now, you have a political riddle, which will become a hard nut for posterity to crack; but I can solve it for you. He had, shortly before, been at Helgeness, with Marsk Stig--"

"That we know," interrupted the drost, impatiently: "he has not concealed it; and it has just been explained to his honour, as a proof of his fidelity and zeal for the royal cause."

"I'faith, if you know everything, my sagacious sir drost, then are you wiser than even my Daddy Longlegs, as we shall see--"

"Your jester?"

"Aye--you know him. He is mad enough at times: he fancied he was the dead king, when he knocked my eye out; but when he is not mad, and has a mind to put a wax nose on people, he is a deuce of a carl, and ready to laugh himself to death at--"

"But, *min Gud!* what has a fool to do with state affairs? Forget not, on account of that good-for-nothing fellow, what you were about to say."

"Respect Longlegs, my good friend. Such a fool can be more sagacious than a whole privy



council. For the last eight days he has been clad in iron from top to toe, and has personated the marsk's confidential swain, Mat Jute. He resembled him to a hair, and imitated his Juttish accent in a masterly manner: it was thus he came to know that of which I had already an inkling, and what old Henner had observed during his imprisonment with the marsk. Whilst the duke kept away from the Dane-court, a tumult and an outbreak were to be occasioned here, on the first court-day, by the aid of the marsk and his friends; but I prevented it by causing all the ferries to be closed for three days, so that none of the disturbers could come over."

"My God! what do I hear? What would then have happened?"

"Under pretence of a rising against the duke himself, wherein it was believed the people would take part, the queen and the young king were to be seized during the confusion. We compelled the captive highwayman to report that you were in good keeping at Nordborg, and for that lie he had his freedom yesterday. Whilst the royal prisoners, with the algrev's assistance, were carried to Tönsberg, the duke with his army was to proceed to Viborg, and, in order to save the country, was to suffer himself, from sheer necessity, to be hailed as king. He was, as you have seen, prepared to prove, by a public document, that he was in Sleswick during the tumult on the 28th of May; so that the cunning gentleman could wash his hands of what had then happened. In the meantime, as I expected, he found out the stroke I made in the reckoning; and he must have ridden neck or nothing from Sleswick to be here to-night."

"Come, Count Gerhard," exclaimed Drost Peter, startled, "this is a matter for the closet. I turn giddy at the mere thought of it. If you can adduce me clear proofs of this monstrous treachery, he shall be overthrown, even if it costs me my own life."

Drost Peter hastily withdrew his guest into his closet, where he noted down every word spoken by the count, and every circumstance that could throw light on the truth of his narrative. The jester was also examined, and his statement duly recorded. Count Gerhard set his seal to the depositions, and further bound himself, by his oath and his good sword, to make good what might be deficient in formal testimony. With the utmost gravity of countenance, the jester likewise set his seal to the document with a button of his squire's jacket.

Next morning betimes, before the Dane-court commenced, Drost Peter had a private conversation with Sir John; but almost as early, the duke was with the Margraves of Brandenburg and the queen.

On this last and most important day of the Dane-court, the business, as usual, would be transacted in the open air, in sight of the people, in the area before the palace. It was the third day in Whitsun-week, and the finest spring weather favoured the solemnities with which the young king would, at the same time, be hailed by his Funen subjects. Everything was prepared with the utmost magnificence. On each side of the throne, which the young king would occupy, was a splendid seat, both of nearly the same elevation, provided for the queen and Duke Waldemar. Scarlet cloth was spread on the ground, and two semi-circles of chairs were placed for the princes and knights, as well as for the bishops and prelates; but in the middle of the circle stood a round table, covered with black cloth, with three and thirty chairs around it, which, however, seemed to occupy but a small portion of the large space. This unusual spectacle gave rise to many doubtful observations among the people. From an early hour in the morning, an unusually large number of burghers and peasants were assembled on the site of the Dane-court, and an anxious silence prevailed.

The knights and ecclesiastics afterward assembled, among the latter of whom were the worthy dean, Master Jens Grand, and the Archbishop of Lund, John Dros, together with the bishops of the entire kingdom.

The eyes of all were now directed to the great doors of the palace, from which the royal party was every minute expected to proceed. They were at length thrown open, and two heralds, with lofty plumes in their helmets, and bearing white rods, appeared, heading the procession, as on the occasion of a tournament; although the mourning-dresses imparted to the whole more the appearance of a funeral train. The youthful king walked gravely and firmly by the side of his stately mother, and was followed by Prince Christopher, with the duke and the queen's brothers.

Count Gerhard had unexpectedly placed himself in the princely train. Nor had he come alone; for he was accompanied by his two brothers, the young Counts of Holstein, and the wise and brave Prince Witzlau of Rygen, his private friend, and a loyal vassal of the Danish crown. These noblemen had just been presented to the king; but Count Gerhard, having had no opportunity of approaching the queen, was forced to salute her from a distance.

At the head of the twelve councillors came old Sir John, the Chancellor Martinus, and Drost Peter. No trace of anxiety was visible on the countenance of the aged statesman. Master Martinus also appeared calm; but his head was bowed, and his hands folded within the ample sleeves of his Dominican habit, as if he were engaged in secret prayer. Drost Peter strove in vain entirely to conceal the contest of feelings that divided his soul: his wounded arm rested in a sling; and under his other, concealed beneath his sable knight's mantle, he carried a bundle of documents. When he perceived the proud, triumphant glance of the duke, his eyes flashed indignation; but he had promised Sir John to control his feelings, and he was himself fully alive to the necessity which existed for dissimulation. A bitter smile, however, played for a moment on his

lips, as it occurred to him that he might then, perhaps, with a joyous face, be following the freedom and happiness of his country to their grave.

The royal squires, who, after the marsk, under-marsk, and knights, closed the procession, were headed by the favourite of the youthful king, Aagé Jonsen, who, since the catastrophe at the barn of Finnerup, had become singularly quiet and serious. Drost Peter, his own and young Erik's weapon-master, was his model of chivalry, and already he wore, with almost the dignity of a knight, the squire's sword and silver spurs with which his young king had presented him.

When the Dane-court was at length seated, and the people saw the little king upon throne, and beheld the noble bearing of the queen, with so many wise and faithful counsellors by the side of their youthful monarch, the deep, long-held silence was suddenly broken by a deafening shout of joy and loyalty.

As when the homage of the people was received at Scanderborg, Sir John now read aloud the document respecting the election of the king, and the acclamations of the assembly were repeated with redoubled ardour. In the midst of this applause the little king rose, and bowed gracefully around; the childlike pleasure he felt at being thus the object of general homage, adding a grace and simplicity to his natural dignity and early knightly bearing that invested him with an irresistible charm.

When the king rose, the queen likewise stood up, while Duke Waldemar and the other princes, with all the knights and vassals of the kingdom, acknowledged the sovereignty of their youthful monarch, by bending themselves before the throne.

When this act of homage was concluded, Sir John advanced and read that article in the constitution by which the queen and Duke Waldemar were entitled to exercise concurrently the functions of government during the minority of the king. Notwithstanding the discontent visible in many faces, no objection was offered, and the queen and the duke were formally confirmed in this authority. When the document, after being subscribed by the estates of the kingdom, was read to the people, the name of the queen was greeted with loud applause, while that of the duke was received in almost unbroken silence. A few voices only, among which was that of Master Grand, attempted to raise a shout of "Long live Duke Waldemar, the king's guardian, and protector of the kingdom!" And although a considerable number joined in it, it was in a tone indicative more of compulsion and fear than of goodwill.

The duke having bowed with an air of condescension, the young king again arose. A perfect stillness and attention prevailed, while his eye rested on Drost Peter and Master Martinus, in whose encouraging looks he seemed to read what he had to say. Quickly conquering the bashful feeling which for a moment had seized him, he began, with a firm voice, and in a tone so loud that all could hear him:--

"My loyal Danish people, I here promise, before God and Our Holy Lady, that I will be a good and upright king. I acknowledge the constitution, and recognise the will of the people, as just and binding; cheerfully submitting myself to the guardianship of my dear mother and of the duke until I have attained my majority. And as I am, under this legal guardianship, the lawful King of Denmark, and inherit the crown of my father and the great Waldemars, I now, confident of the approval of my guardians and counsellors, order and command, that the cause against the murderers of my late father shall, by this Retter-Ting, be rigidly investigated and decided. Stand forward, Drost Peter Hessel. On my behalf and that of the crown, you are appointed accuser of the regicides."

Drost Peter advanced, and drew forth the documents he carried beneath his mantle.

"With the consent of my dear mother and Duke Waldemar," continued the youthful Erik, whilst, turning his eyes on Sir John, he recited, almost word for word, what that aged statesman had prepared for him, "I propose that my worthy uncle, Margrave Otto of Brandenburg, my trusty vassal, Prince Witzlau of Rygen, the valiant and upright Count Gerhard of Holstein, and his illustrious brothers, together with seven and twenty chief men of the Danish nobility and knighthood, be now constituted a tribunal, to investigate the accusation and the evidence offered by the drost. After which, let them declare who were the men that, on St. Cecilia's night, in the barn of Finnerup, laid violent and regicidal hands on my late father, King Erik Christopherson. With this hand upon his bloody breast, I vowed to his soul and the righteous God that, from the throne of Denmark, this should be my first command, and that the ungodly regicides should receive the punishment due to their crime, according to the strictest justice and the outraged laws of the land."

The warmth and earnestness, no less than the authority, with which this demand was pronounced, excited general surprise and admiration. The latter words, which, to the astonishment of Sir John, had been added by the young monarch himself, had brought the tears into his eyes.

When he had resumed his seat, the queen, who appeared prepared for this announcement, immediately arose, and said--"I approve of the king's proposition. It has already been well considered in the council of the nation, and now requires only the approbation of the illustrious Duke Waldemar."

"I, likewise, approve of it," said the latter, in a tone which showed that he was constrained to acquiesce only by the necessity of his position.

By Sir John's arrangements, seven and twenty noblemen, the eldest and most respected in the assembly, were then chosen, who, with the princes already named, immediately took their seats at the black table within the circle, prepared to hear and examine the accusation and evidence offered by the drost. Whilst thus engaged, the deep silence of expectation pervaded the rest of the assembly. When they had concluded, the three knights, strongly guarded, advanced at the signal of the duke. As defenders of the accused, they had been brought there under his safe conduct. They were completely clad in mail, and wore their visors down.

The princes and the other members of the tribunal now approached the throne. The Margrave Otto of Brandenburg, who, with a parchment in his hand, was at their head, then bowed before the king and the assembly, and read aloud and distinctly, in Danish, though with a foreign accent, as follows:--

"After the charges laid before us, and the witnesses we have heard, we are constrained to name, as proved to have been participators in the murder of King Erik Christopherson, the following persons, knights and Danish noblemen:--The right princely Count Jacob of Halland; Stig Andersen Hvide, marsk of the kingdom of Denmark; High Chamberlain Ové Dyré; Sirs Peder Jacobsen, Peder Porsé, Niels Hallandsfar, Arved Bengtson, Niels Knudson, and Jacob Blaafoed; also Chamberlain Rané and Squire Aagé Kaggé. That the abovenamed eleven men, together with a twelfth, who has since appeared before a higher tribunal, were present in disguised dresses, on St. Cecilia's night, at Finnerup barn, near Viborg, and did personally take part in the murder of the king, we do here testify and swear, with our hands upon the holy Gospels, in presence of the all-seeing God, and before the king and people of Denmark."

While the names were read, two of the mailed knights seemed to stagger; but the third, a ponderous and stately figure, remained unmoved, wrapped, with an air of defiance, in his blue mantle, and his clenched hands crossed upon his breast. No sooner had the princes and their fellow-judges sworn to the truth of their verdict, than this haughty personage, advancing a step, struck his visor up, and, turning round, exhibited to the assembly a countenance at once wild and warlike, although somewhat pale.

"Count Jacob!--Count Jacob himself!--ran from mouth to mouth, in a subdued murmur of astonishment.

"Yes, I am Count Jacob of Holland, kinsman to the royal house, and a general of Denmark," he exclaimed, with an air of pride and defiance; "and here stand my faithful friends, the brave Sirs Arved Bengtson and Jacob Blaafoed, who, along with me, are named among the murderers of King Erik Christopherson."

His companions then struck aside the gratings of their helmets, and revealed the accused regicides, who, despite their haughty bearing, were yet deadly pale, and apparently doubtful of their personal security, notwithstanding the safe conduct of the duke.

"We mean not to impugn the decision of so many lords and knights," continued the proud count. "Lying and falsehood we bear not upon our shields. Danish honesty we expect also here. We have been promised, in the name of the king, a safe conduct and just treatment. We demand, therefore, not only the right to withdraw from hence unmolested, but first to be heard in our defence. That which we have done, we feel assured we can defend with our lips as well as with our swords, wherever honesty and justice prevail. To defend the right, in self-vindication, is nowhere forbidden; and that we call right which we have accomplished on a man of violence, who himself had broken every law, before we broke the rod over his guilty head."

The queen had risen, and the young king had sprung up, amazed at this matchless boldness. The rage of the people was great at beholding amongst them the convicted regicide, although his princely rank and his known bravery imposed silence on many. His daring, too, pleased some, and his exordium about Danish honesty was flattering to a considerable portion. The rebels had also secret friends among the people, and a dangerous murmur began to pervade the excited assemblage; while a multitude of the poorer burghers of Nyborg, who were particularly attached to the late king, rushed forward with furious clamour to wreak their vengeance on his murderers. With the greatest difficulty could the rank of knights keep in restraint the infuriated populace, and the uproar threatened to put a stop to the proceedings, when Sir John and Drost Peter restored order by announcing that sentence should immediately be pronounced on the regicides, and their punishment rendered speedy and certain.

"Let them be carried at once to the wheel!" cried Junker Christopherson, as he menaced them with his clenched hand.

The queen's indignation was great; but she remained silent, and sank back, pale and agitated, on her seat. The appearance of the murderers, and the wild faces of the people, painfully reminded her of the audacious visit of Marsk Stig, on the morning after the king's assassination.

"Had I imagined that these gentlemen had personally participated in the deed, they should

never have received a safe conduct from me," exclaimed the duke, in some perturbation. "But now, for the sake of my own honour and that of the crown, I must demand that they be suffered freely to depart, whatever judgment may be pronounced upon them."

"You are right, Duke Waldemar," said the young king, suppressing his indignation. "Would we be knights with honour, we must keep faith and promise, even with these most impious murderers; and I have vowed to God and to Our Lady to rule righteously. If, therefore, on behalf of the crown, you have promised them safety, we must suffer them freely to depart. But they shall first hear their doom; and, wherever they may flee to, by the assistance of the righteous God, it will certainly reach them. Read aloud the sentence," he added, hastily, "as it stands in King Waldemar's law-book. If they have forfeited life and honour, so shall we adjudge."

"No punishment seems to me too severe for so heinous a crime," observed the duke, sternly. "But it may assume a different aspect when viewed from another point; and, therefore, before any just and impartial sentence can be pronounced, the Dane-court should hear what the accused have to advance in their defence, and what others, skilled in the laws, can state to guide us. Let the accused advance. The king and the people will hear their defence."

Count Jacob and Arved Bengtson moved not; but Jacob Blaafod, who was celebrated for his eloquence, approached the throne, while the blood again mounted to his sun-burnt cheeks. Having bowed on every side with knightly grace, he began his defence, and immediately quelled the murmurs of the assembly by a short but flattering exordium, in which he extolled the justice of the Danish laws, and the love of freedom and magnanimity of the people. He then frankly admitted the truth of the accusation, but represented the murder of the king as a bold and heroic action, as a great sacrifice to the freedom of the nation, and as altogether a just and lawful deed. He recounted all the violations of his contracts, and of the charters of the kingdom, perpetrated by the late king, by which, he affirmed, he had forfeited his crown, and placed himself on a level with every knight and nobleman in the kingdom, each of whom could defend his own honour and integrity against any of his peers, without being guilty of lese-majesty. He then proceeded to expose, in bitter language, the deep injustice which had been suffered by the chief noblemen in the kingdom; especially depicting, in the strongest colour, the crime perpetrated by King Erik Christopherson against Marsk Stig and his wife, with its heartrending results; and concluded by demanding of the king and the people, in the name of Danish justice, honour, and freedom, that the country's greatest general, the famed Marsk Stig, with his injured friends and kinsmen, should be acquitted of all guilt, and restored to their honours and dignities, which they had never lawfully forfeited.

His words made a deep impression, and no inconsiderable number of voices were raised in favour of the accused.

The queen had veiled her face; and the youthful Erik, in spite of his grief and indignation, could not avoid blushing at the shame of his unhappy father, whilst the tears stood in his eyes.

"Speak, Drost Peter, speak!" he cried: "is it not enough that they have murdered my father? Must I also sit on Denmark's throne, and hear them mock and insult his memory?"

At this heartrending appeal Drost Peter advanced. He exhibited great emotion, and some time elapsed before he could command his voice. "In what our murdered lord and king has here offended," he began, "he has gone to his account before the King of kings. May the Almighty Judge be merciful to him, and all of us! They are not men, but monsters, who demand that his son and his bereaved subjects should justify his actions and defend his fame in the presence of his murderers. It is not as the man Erik Christopherson that he is here in question; but as Denmark's king, as the wearer of Denmark's crown, whose inviolable majesty and sacredness have been profaned by bloody and audacious hands: it is the crime against the anointed ruler of the people and of the kingdom we are here to judge."

Without reference to the king's personality, he then portrayed the regicidal crime in language so strong and glowing, that the murderers themselves were abashed, and many of those who most severely censured the deceased king, and who had just been loudest in their applause of Jacob Blaafod's speech, turned away their eyes with horror from the men of blood. The eloquent drost then proceeded to recapitulate some of the most beneficial measures adopted by his late master; and specially pointed out how much that ancient and loyal city owed to his favour and clemency. He further instanced numerous benefits which the rebellious noblemen themselves had received from the late king, whom they had basely and ungratefully murdered, and succeeded in touching the hearts of the whole assembly, and in entirely obliterating the impression produced by the address of the regicide. He availed himself, finally, of this favourable disposition, to unfold the dangerous position of the country, and, with impassioned eloquence, charged them to sustain not only the majesty and sacredness of the throne, but the dignity and freedom of the people, by tearing the mask from the face of every secret traitor who had participated, directly or otherwise, in this rebellions and audacious crime. His eyes sparkling with animation, he then suddenly turned to the duke, as the man bound to the royal house by the holiest ties of consanguinity, and demanded of him, in the name of the people, by virtue of his new dignity, first to pronounce sentence on the guilty, for subsequent confirmation by the estates.

The drost paused; and although the duke had changed colour, he quickly rose at this appeal,

and, bowing respectfully to the queen, modestly yielded to her the prerogative of pronouncing whatever sentence she and the council of the kingdom regarded as just and lawful.

"Be it so!" exclaimed the queen, unveiling her face as she rose with an air of calmness and decision. "I shall, then, be the first to declare what the council of the kingdom and myself think just and legal--what must have been already pronounced in the heart of every Dane, if God's holy law dwell there:--According to every law, both human and divine, an ignominious death is due to murderous traitors. Therefore, for the security of the crown and kingdom, let not mercy restrain the arm of justice!"

"Whoever has any legal objections to offer, can do so now," said the duke, as he directed his eyes towards Dean Grand, who apparently was only waiting this summons to step forward.

"In the name of truth and justice, then, I demand to be heard," cried the authoritative dean, as he advanced with an open book in his hand. "Here is the point of law on which alone the accused can be condemned, if, as I maintain they should, they be not with right and justice acquitted of all guilt. If the murder had been perpetrated in God's holy house, or on the property of the victim himself, the sentence of death would be a legal one; but as this was certainly not so in this instance, the accused, at worst, can only be adjudged outlaws, and have their estates forfeited to the king's exchequer. If the law is to prevail here, and not the unrighteous passion of revenge, no severer sentence than this can be pronounced."

On this bold assertion, which had found favour with many, a warm debate arose, in which the duke, with a flattering and not ineffective reference to the great privileges of the people and of the states, and to the violation of charters and engagements, declared himself in favour of this milder interpretation of the law.

Drost Peter opposed him warmly; but Sir John, to his great astonishment and that of the young king, strenuously maintained that, in accordance with the strict letter of the law, they could not come nearer the criminals. Outlawry, however, he continued, was a punishment which could not be regarded as trivial; for it implied no less than civil death, constant peril of life, and exclusion from every social or human privilege within the bounds of Denmark.

The words of the aged counsellor carried great weight with them. Drost Peter, and the other faithful friends of the royal house, quickly perceived that, for some new but sufficient reason, this wise statesman now defended an opinion he had himself opposed in the council a few days before. No further opposition, therefore, was offered to the milder sentence on the criminals; the queen and the young king declaring themselves satisfied with it, since it was considered just and legal by so many able and upright men.

The sentence of outlawry on the regicides was then formally drawn up, and immediately subscribed and sealed by the king and both protectors, as well as by those chosen for that purpose from the estates; after which, it was read aloud by the drost before the assembled Dane-court. Under a strong guard, the three knights were then conducted to the beach, where they were put on board a boat, with some provisions, and thus enabled to escape the enraged populace, against which no convoy could any longer protect them.

This important business being thus concluded, the Margrave Otto of Brandenburg advanced, and, having bowed respectfully to royalty, turned to the assembled knighthood, and said:--"My royal nephew, King Erik Erikson of Denmark, has honoured me by requesting to receive, at this Dane-court, the stroke of knighthood from my hand. A king's son, who has borne the name of king almost from his cradle, may already be regarded as exalted by his birth and position over every meaner dignity. It is commendable, however, in kings and princes, that they do not despise the rank of knighthood, but are generally desirous of being invested with that honour before they are anointed and crowned as sovereigns over their knights and princely vassals. I dispense, therefore, in the case of my royal nephew, with the customary probation which the dignity of the order otherwise requires."

He then turned to the young king, and continued, in a tone of solemnity:--"I now demand, King Erik Erikson of Denmark, before thy loyal people and in presence of the Danish knighthood, in what respect thou desirest to be admitted into our order? Wilt thou promise and swear to defend the holy Christian faith and the honours of knighthood?"

The young king arose and uncovered his head. His cheeks glowed, and his dark blue eyes sparkled with youthful pleasure and animation.

"Yea!" he exclaimed, "I will, so help me all holy men! God and Our Holy Lady know my heart's wish and my intention. I desire the stroke of knighthood from thy hand, my dear uncle, that I may be anointed and crowned King of Denmark with honour, and to show my loving people, and all men, that not only shall I be a good and upright king, but also a knight without reproach, that I may not disgrace the crown of Denmark and of the great Waldemars. That which a squire should understand, before he can wear the golden spurs, my dear weapon-master, Drost Peter Hessel, has already taught me, which I will prove at the first tournament. The laws of chivalry I have learned as the holy text; and I swear, by St. George and the Holy Virgin, that I shall maintain them while I live."

He paused an instant to collect himself; and then continued, with much ardour:--"I will not live careless, but will defend my people, and pour out my blood for the true and holy Church, which I know is the head, whilst the knighthood is the arm, to defend the whole body; and that also shall I strive to do. I will protect the widow, the fatherless, and the needy; I will be the defender of all pure and virtuous ladies; I will be just, valiant, generous, honest, and chaste; I will honour God with all humility, and be truthful and faithful to my word; I will practise the seven virtues of knighthood, and eschew the seven mortal sins, with the assistance of God and the Holy Virgin."

When the youthful king had sworn, as his profession of faith, this epitome of the laws of chivalry, which he seemed to know by heart, he descended from the throne to receive the symbols and accoutrements of knighthood, with which, according to his wish and the usual custom, he was to be invested by the most eminent men of the kingdom, and the most attached friends of the royal house. Drost Peter bound the golden spurs upon his heels, and with tender interest and heartfelt pleasure reminded him of their signification. Old Sir John, with a short and energetic encouragement to manliness and goodness, equipped him in a cuirass of light mail. Count Gerhard, who had requested the charge of binding on his wambraces, did so in his usual gay manner, wishing the son of the noble Queen Agnes success, strength, and victory in every undertaking.

At length the queen herself arose to present him with the glittering gauntlets, and to gird him with the golden sword, which the heralds brought forward. Having first carried the crossed hilt of the weapon reverently to her lips, she girt her son with the gold-embroidered sword-belt, on which was wrought, by her own hands, a lily, a balance, and a heart, as emblems of purity, justice, and Christian charity; and then, kissing him affectionately on the forehead, she exhorted him never to forget its meaning.

The queen having resumed her seat, and the knights their places, the youthful king knelt down, while Margrave Otto, kissing the hilt of his drawn sword, solemnly said--"King Erik Erikson of Denmark, in the name of God, Our Holy Lady, and St. George, I dub you a knight. Be bold, courageous, and true!"

A flourish of trumpets followed, while the margrave, with the flat of his sword, touched the novice three times on the shoulder.

Tears stood in the eyes of the newly-created knight, whilst he rose and folded his hands, as if engaged in silent prayer. He then received from the margrave a bright gilded helmet, with a large plume of feathers, which caused his eyes to sparkle with pleasure as he placed it on his golden locks. Finally, the margrave presented him with a golden lance, and hung on the wambrace of his left arm a splendid shield, bearing the same device which he had chosen for his first juvenile buckler.

His friend and playmate, Aagé Jonsen, had meanwhile led forth a proud milk-white tourney-steed, caparisoned in shining armour, with a lofty plume of feathers on his head. The youthful knight instantly vaulted into the saddle, without the aid of the stirrups, and then proceeded to caracol his steed, poise his lance, and exhibit himself in all the pomp of knighthood before the people, who received his graceful and condescending salutations with enthusiastic shouts of rejoicing. Thrice did he thus make the circle of the Dane-court, whilst the air resounded with the braying of trumpets and the loud acclamations of the people.

Even the gravest among the knights seemed pleased at the dexterity and address with which the youthful rider managed his steed; and, although, as old Sir John turned towards Drost Peter, a quiet smile at this exhibition played about his lips, yet the delighted shouts of the people, and the general animation excited by the presence of the youthful monarch, much affected him, and hastily passing his hands across his eyes, he heartily joined in the people's shout--"God bless our young king!"

Without being impeded by his armour and weapons, young Erik now sprang from his steed with as much agility as he had mounted it, and ordering his squire to lead it off, returned calmly and with dignity to the throne.

During these ceremonies the duke remained silent and absorbed in reflection. Drost Peter, however, had closely observed him; and the ill-concealed scorn which he read in his countenance only too strongly reminded him that it was not yet time for rejoicings and gladness in Denmark.

King Erik then arose, somewhat out of breath with his violent exercise, and addressing the duke, said--"As I am now myself a knight, and have a right to confer the stroke of knighthood on whom I choose, my princely kinsman and guardian, Duke Waldemar of South Jutland, shall be the first who receives it from my hand."

The duke rose hastily. He seemed taken by surprise, and his proud mien betrayed that the proposed honour annoyed more than it flattered him. Drost Peter imagined he saw in his constrained smile, an angry feeling of wounded pride, that he should now, in presence of the nation, be obliged to kneel before the youthful king, even to receive a dignity with which he had long anxiously desired to be invested.

The wily duke, however, seemed solicitous to conceal this from himself as well as from the knighthood, and, in a tone of easy dignity, he thanked the king for this gracious mark of distinction. He then knelt before the throne, whilst King Erik pronounced the customary form, and, amidst a flourish of trumpets, let fall three times his golden sword on the shoulder of the duke.

"Be a knight without reproach," he added: "be, as the laws of chivalry command, full of burning zeal for the general good, for the kingdom's weal, for the knighthood's honour, for the people's unity and prosperity, and for the welfare of your lawful king. God, Our Holy Lady, and St. George grant you strength and aid thereto!"

From the lips of the youthful king, this admonition, in which he fancied he could trace the influence of Drost Peter, did not at all please the proud, ambitious duke; although he went through the customary forms with a polite bearing. When he had received his new arms, he leaped upon his tourney-steed, and exhibited himself to the people with much princely dignity and knightly skill. At a prancing gallop he cast his lance aloft and caught it again, at the same time saluting the people gracefully and mildly. The applause he coveted was freely bestowed on him; but he seemed especially gratified when, after he had dismounted, he received the congratulations of the knights and of the royal family.

Thus terminated the Dane-court and its grave affairs, apparently to the general satisfaction. The royal family, with the duke and the other princes present, then returned to the palace, where the king presented rich gifts to the duke, to the Margrave Otto, Count Gerhard, and the Danish knights. Chargers, gold bridles, magnificent mantles, and arms were freely distributed; and all who had participated in the ceremonials received some handsome memorial of the day and of the king's munificence. Neither was Aagé Jonsen forgotten: his royal master presented him with a gilded sword, set with jewels, and bearing as an inscription--"The king's defence." For his fidelity to the murdered king, Erik would fain have given his youthful playmate the stroke of knighthood; but the exception which had been made in his own favour could not, from respect to those of riper years, be extended to any of lower degree, not even to Junker Christopherson, who appeared to consider himself as worthy of being a knight and king as was his brother.

This important election to the regency of the kingdom, and the princely promotion to the knighthood, were celebrated in the palace with magnificent festivities, during which the duke scarcely for a moment lost sight of the royal party, and outshone all present in knightly bearing, and in refined and polished conversation.

The queen's present confidence in him, and her desire to compensate him for the unworthy suspicions she formerly entertained, now led her to agree with him in a conclusion altogether opposed to the wishes of the council. The representations of the duke to herself and her brothers, induced them to consider the juncture too serious for farther festivities; and, to look carefully to the security of the royal house, they unanimously determined that, instead of carrying the young king to Zealand, there to receive the homage of the people, and from thence to be crowned at Lund, they should immediately carry him back to the strong castle of Viborg, and defer the journey to Zealand and Scania, so long as Marsk Stig, with the outlaws and Norse rovers, rendered the Belt and Sound unsafe. This determination the queen, in the presence of the duke, announced to Sir John and Drost Peter during the evening, in a tone so decided as to restrain every objection.

Drost Peter was much alarmed, for he saw in this a new attempt on the part of the duke to draw the royal personages within his own and the outlaws' power, whilst, by his cunning, he would perhaps succeed in deferring the act of homage, and delaying the coronation until he could himself unlawfully seize upon the kingdom. Drost Peter burned with impatience boldly and openly to unmask the mighty traitor, and testify to what he knew of the true reason of his absence from the Dane-court; but on a stern look of warning from Sir John, he restrained himself, and was silent. The journey to Viborg was, therefore, fixed for the next morning, and the company separated.

It was late in the evening. The servants of the palace were busily engaged with the requisite preparations for the journey, the din of which was heard in the castle-court. The duke and his retinue had withdrawn to their own apartments; but it was observed that some of his followers had left the castle, and hastily taken the road to Middelfert. The young king had retired, and the Margraves of Brandenburg had just left the queen in her private apartment. She had taken a farewell of her brothers, who, that very night, were to leave Denmark for the court of the Emperor Rudolph, to induce him to declare the Danish regicides outlaws in Germany. This reason for their sudden journey, they had, however, confided only to the queen.

The beautiful young widow sat, her cheek resting on her hand, at a table of black marble, on which stood two wax-lights. She wore her mourning attire; and, as her dark head-dress was cast aside, her rich brown hair hung in tresses over her arms, and fell upon the marble slab. Her fair white fingers were engaged in turning over the leaves of a beautiful little manuscript volume, the pages of which she frequently crossed and marked with a silver needle. In this book she had, in her lonely hours, poured out her heart with honest self-acknowledgment, and with her own hand had recorded every remarkable circumstance of her life. There stood yet the fair delightful dreams of her childhood, like half-vanished memories of Paradise. They were, however, soon followed by her humiliating espousals. Her early betrothment to King Erik Christopherson had

been one of the conditions of his release from Nordborg Castle, after he was taken prisoner in the war with Duke Waldemar's father. The record of this, her alienation to another, was but incoherently set down, and it seemed as if she had not yet understood the proper connection of events; for, in incoherent words, and in traces of tears, she saw the day recorded when, yet little more than a child, she had, in blind duty and obedience, suffered herself to be adorned as a royal bride, and become the unwitting victim of a cold political consideration. Of her wedded state, so void of love and tenderness, there were many records; for at this point she appeared first to become conscious of her dignity, and of the purpose of life. In the midst of the great and glittering world she had often felt herself alone and forsaken, although, with youthful energy, she had availed herself of her lofty position to occupy her thoughts with benevolence, and diffuse peace and joy around her. It was granted her to seem fortunate; and whatever success followed her efforts to suppress the dangerous voice of rebellion, which threatened the king and kingdom with ruin, was due as much to her personal influence as to the exalted splendour of the crown.

The kindly interest she felt in Drost Peter was the first bright spot in this dark portion of her inner life. His brave chivalrous spirit, and the homage he rendered her, had been grateful to her womanly nature; while with prudence and delicacy she had concealed, beneath the imposing cloak of majesty, every feeling of her heart's desolateness.

As she continued turning over the leaves of this her life's-book, the past flitted by her like a dream. At the lively description of the tournament at Helsingborg, she found first mentioned the name of Count Gerhard, with a witty remark on the awkwardness of his homage, but also with expressions of esteem and interest. A few pages farther she saw a bitter memorial of the injurious rumour to which her interest in Drost Peter had given birth, and a memorandum of her determination to avoid for the future every appearance of familiarity with her faithful and attached knight.

As she glanced over the account of the festival at Sir John's, and of her dance with the wounded Count Gerhard, a slight blush crimsoned her cheeks, and she felt that the bold, good-natured dancer had made a greater impression upon her than she was, at that time, willing to believe. The discreet and respectful attachment to her which had that day beamed from his one honest eye, had, in her mind, invested him with greater dignity. Her judgment both of him and of the accomplished Duke Waldemar she now reviewed with much interest. To the duke she had given the preference for his knightly bearing and polished manners; while she had found him deficient in the truthfulness and bold sincerity that enhanced the nobleness of Count Gerhard and rendered him so entirely safe to be relied upon.

Having closed the manuscript, she remained some time in deep thought, and was at length about to summon her ladies and retire to rest, when she heard a gentle knocking at the private door of the apartment which separated her closet from that of the youthful king, and which was accessible to the royal family alone.

"Come in, my son," she said, as she turned towards the door, which was then softly opened, and the trusty favourite squire, Aagé Jonsen, stepped modestly over the threshold.

He remained respectfully at a distance, and, having made his salutation, "Pardon my temerity, most gracious queen," he began, in a low voice: "my master, the king, has commanded me to open this door, to ascertain if your grace was present, and alone. He prays you, for most important reasons, to grant him and the drost an audience here, without witnesses."

"Drost Hessel!" ejaculated the queen, with astonishment--"here, and at this hour? Impossible! What means this?"

"I know not, your grace," replied the grave little squire; "but I conclude that it is on business of emergency and importance. The drost did not pass through the guard-chamber, but entered by the subterranean passage, in company with the tall lord from Kiel."

"Count Gerhard!" exclaimed the queen, as she hastily veiled her face. "Is he, too, here? Has he, also, requested to speak with me?"

"That know I not, your grace. I kept watch by the inner door of the king's chamber, and knew not there was any secret entrance until it was opened, and both the gentlemen stood before me. The drost bade me awake the king immediately. I obeyed, and they were both instantly admitted to his chamber. Shortly afterwards he rung, and, while he attired himself, commanded me to ascertain cautiously whether your grace was alone here, and to deliver the request of which I have just informed you."

"Well," answered the queen, "tell thy king and master that I await him, and whomever else he may think it necessary to bring with him."

Aagé Jonsen bowed and retired; when the queen, who felt some anxiety, arose, and opening a little gilded casket, which stood on the table, concealed therein her journal. She then walked once or twice across the apartment, but at length stopped opposite a large polished steel mirror, in which she hastily arranged her fallen tresses. The secret door was opened a moment after, and King Erik entered, leading Drost Peter by the hand.

"Hear him, my mother!" exclaimed, with excitement, the little king--"hear and read what the



good drost and Count Gerhard have discovered. The duke is false! he will entice us to ruin."

"Let not this disquiet you, noble queen," hastily observed Drost Peter, as he saluted her. "The danger is not imminent; although, except on high and important grounds, I should not have dared to approach you at so undue an hour, and in this unusual manner. To-morrow would have been too late. It is necessary, too, for your own and the king's security, that you should thus be secretly apprised of it, as it would be dangerous if the duke conceived the slightest suspicion that we had discovered his daring plans."

"You astonish me, Drost Hessel!" exclaimed the queen, with undisguised solicitude. "Have you certain proof of this, whatever it may be? or is it but another of the learned chancellor's dreams? The duke must either be the wiliest hypocrite under the sun, or he is the true and attached friend of myself and the royal house."

"Read, then, your grace," replied Drost Peter, spreading before her the parchment bearing Count Gerhard's seal: "every word that stands there can be personally attested by the noble Count Gerhard, should you so require his oath. He awaits your commands in the next apartment."

The queen seated herself, and hastily perused the evidence set forth by Drost Peter to account for the duke's absence from the opening of the Dane-Court. As she did so, she became pale, and, rising, exclaimed--"Just Heaven! is, then, the fate of the kingdom and of the royal house in the hands of such a traitor? And this you knew to-day, Drost Hessel, and yet hesitated to tear the mask from the traitor, and exhibit him to the scorn of the whole people!"

"God and my own heart know what it has cost me to be silent, noble queen," replied the drost, laying his hand upon his breast. "But Sir John was right: until Marsk Stig falls, the duke must stand. In his present position he is constrained even to punish the outlaws; but the moment he throws off the mask, he is our open foe--the head of the outlaws, and the leader of the rebels."

"You are right," observed the queen, after a moment's reflection; "and I now understand the complaisance of Sir John to-day. Great God! when has a traitor stood unmolested so near the throne of Denmark? Let Count Gerhard enter."

Drost Peter retired, and in a moment returned with Count Gerhard, who remained by the door, bowing bashfully and awkwardly.

"Approach, noble count," said the queen, as she advanced with blushing cheeks to meet him. "You have probably saved from destruction the kingdom and royal house. But explain how you attained this information. How did you divine the plans of the marsk, or suspect the duke of such base knavishness?"

"I cannot boast my own penetration, most noble queen," replied Count Gerhard, advancing with greater boldness--"that would ill become me. A large portion of my sagacity in this matter I owe to a long-headed old pilgrim whom I met in Rypen, and who seemed to know the world better than the world knew him. I had already noted mischief, and a few hints made me clear-eyed. With the subtle Duke Waldemar I may as little contend in statecraft as in accomplishments and fine manners; but this I dare aver, that when he thought he could reach the throne of Denmark without lifting his hand, or losing the semblance of being a true friend to the people and kingdom, he was willing to let the marsk disturb his election to the regency here, and to bid farewell to the honour and happiness of being the protector of your grace and of the royal house. It may be only my poor opinion, your grace," he added, with some embarrassment, "but that the duke carries a fox on his shield, is certain: indeed, he seems even to entertain the boldest hopes of your grace's sympathy and confidence."

The queen started, while the count continued:--

"I regret that I have no better proofs of this than my own word and sword, and the evidence of my trusty jester. But that many of the marsk's adherents were stopped by me on their way to the Dane-court, is beyond doubt; and that the duke was really in Sleswick on the first day of the Dane-court, he has himself taken care to furnish the best proof. With what view he was there, and whether there really would have been a tumult here, had they not perceived danger, cannot now be further demonstrated. My entire services to your grace and to the royal house, most noble queen, are thus but of small avail; and however beneficial to the crown and country they may appear, I have only given you probable grounds for guarding yourself and the young king against the counsels of the duke."

"For this important warning accept my heartiest thanks, noble count," replied the queen, as she extended her hand, which, while he bent before her, he pressed to his lips with concealed ardour.

Having quickly resumed his former respectful demeanour, he continued:--"I regret that what I and so poor a statesman as my late jester have brought to light, must, for the present, remain a secret, noble queen. At a Retter-Ting, where it can only be fought with words, I am of little service; but I would have willingly proved with my good sword, in honest combat with the duke, before the whole knighthood, that he is a nidding and a traitor, had not your trusty counsellors convinced me that I should thereby only expose your grace and the kingdom to the greatest danger. Indeed, I now see clearly that, for the present, it imports much to be at peace with him;

and therefore he shall have peace from me, until a future time. But permit me, noble queen, henceforth to join the ranks of your own and the young king's bodyguard, and grant that the protection of your royal person may also form a portion of my duty."

"I choose you for my knight and protector, brave Count Gerhard," replied the queen, in a cordial tone; "and, as a pledge, accept this remembrance of my bereaved and sorrowful position by the throne of Denmark."

As she spoke, she untied her black veil, which she handed to him; whilst he, kneeling in knightly fashion, pressed the pledge of confidence to his lips, and then concealed it in his bosom.

"My colour was formerly crimson," added the queen, in a sorrowful accent, as she looked mildly towards Drost Peter. "This faithful friend to the royal house once wore it, as you doubtless remember; but no good fortune attended it. It was, moreover, borrowed, and, in truth, did not become me. I then determined that no man should wear it with my consent. The colour of night and disappointment has now become mine, as it has become that of Denmark. If its sight inspires you not with pain, Count Gerhard, as mine and the country's faithful friend wear it until morning again breaks on Denmark."

Count Gerhard, who had again risen, felt more intoxicated with joy than he had ever been before.

"As long as God permits me to live in this fair world," he exclaimed, while a tear glistened in his eye, "so long at least, noble queen, I will think only of showing myself worthy of your confidence, and of being, from my heart's core, a faithful friend to your grace and to the Danish kingdom. For your sake, so I promised long ago to this your brave knight;" adding, as he seized the hand of Drost Peter--"he still wears the rosy red in secret; but now I fight not with him concerning it, for I know it is Lady Ingé's gage and hairband."

A blush suffused the cheeks of Drost Peter, and the queen also seemed perplexed by the indiscreetness of the plain-spoken count.

"True--this is another matter," hastily added the latter, as he observed the embarrassment he had caused: "it was perhaps a secret, respecting which I should have been silent; but this is what I would say, most noble queen, that, next to myself, you have not a more sincere admirer in the world than is Drost Hessel. We two shall now contend in earnest for the privilege of permanently wearing your colour. It imports not to me whether it is black or red, since it is your's; but this I know, that if there exists in the world one who can restore to your mind that joy and happiness you were surely born to possess, I would gladly give my only remaining eye to be that one; and then, although I could never more see your fair face and lovely form, I should still feel happy in knowing that you were pleased with the blind Count Gerhard."

The cordial sincerity with which he uttered these words, caused the queen and Drost Peter to overlook their want of delicacy and propriety. It was evident, however, from the manner of the queen, that she desired to terminate this extraordinary visit, and the direction the conversation had taken. Young Erik, too, who had been listening attentively, seemed to think that the count's speech had nothing to do with the dangerous business that had brought them thither.

"Let this subject be ended, Count Gerhard!" he exclaimed, impatiently. "My mother will be happy enough again when we have taken measures against the faithlessness of the duke, and restored the kingdom to security. We shall not set out to-morrow for Viborg: his traitor-army is there encamped, you say. If I am to be King of Denmark, I will be anointed and crowned forthwith. If it is the will of Providence that I should be betrayed and murdered, as my father and grandfather were, I shall die a lawful king, and it shall not be well for the traitors who dare to lay hands upon the Lord's anointed, young as he may be."

"Thy wish shall be done, my son," replied the queen, patting his glowing cheeks. "Thy wish was also Sir John's, and that of the whole council, before, in my blindness, I mistook the smooth words of the duke for sincere attachment. To-morrow we shall set out, not for Viborg, but for Skielskioer; and, when thou art proclaimed in Zealand, we shall proceed to the coronation at Lund. But let me advise. The duke, as my most courteous knight, shall accompany us. He must not perceive the slightest symptom of distrust on our part. To you, gentlemen, I confide our security on the way."

"Yes--let it be so!" cried the young king, joyfully. "The Almighty, and Our dear Holy Lady, will assuredly protect us. Good night, my dear mother. You can now sleep securely, for Sir John is stationed in the guard-chamber, and these trusty gentlemen will remain tonight in the palace."

"God keep his hand over thee, my son!" exclaimed the queen, as she fondly kissed his smooth forehead. "Thank Heaven, with me, for having preserved to us these devoted and faithful friends in our hour of need and danger."

With queenlike dignity she then bowed to the two knights, who, with the young king, retired through the same private door by which they had entered.

At early morning of the following day, the queen's travelling-car, with six milk-white steeds attached, stood before the castle-steps, attended by many smartly dressed outriders and grooms. More than thirty squires were grouped about, with their masters' horses in charge; foremost among whom was conspicuous, by his gray suit, emblazoned with the Sleswick lions, the attendant of the duke, who, with great ostentation, was allowing his master's noble steed, covered with splendid trappings, to prance and gambol about. Near him stood Daddy Longlegs, bearing Count Gerhard's simple shield, in the shape of a nettle-leaf, and holding a strong brown stallion by the bridle. Skirmen, carrying Drost Peter's mantle and shield, stood by his master's horse, apparently lost in contemplating the faces of the ducal lions, which resembled wolves more than the animals they were intended to represent. As he turned with his impatient charger in the direction of the Strand-gate, he was delighted to observe a great bustle among the ferrymen, and to see the royal flag carried from the house of the alderman.

"We are off for Melfert, and then for Jutland," observed Longlegs to him. "I thought, however, your master had a keener nose."

"You might wish your's were half as keen, Longlegs," replied Skirmen; "and then, perhaps, you would not allow your master's horse to turn his tail in the direction he is to ride."

"But I know that people do not ride or drive over the Great Belt in the month of May," returned the old jester. "It might be quite as well, however, while the wind sits in this quarter."

"What mean you, Longlegs? The wind is in the right quarter for the Great Belt."

"Ay, but not for the Little. The boatmen say it is the duke's wind; and when we have that against us, a sagacious nose, like that of your master, should smell the straw from the barn of Finnerup."

"Turn the car and horses!" ordered Drost Peter, who suddenly appeared at the top of the steps: "the royal family ride to the haven."

When the squires had obeyed, Drost Peter re-entered; and in a few moments the queen, leaning on the arm of the duke, and the little king, with his sister Mereté and Junker Christopherson, issued from the palace and entered the car. Notwithstanding the polite behaviour of the duke, an air of displeasure was visible in his smile.

"We dare not offer you a seat in a lady's car, Duke Waldemar," observed the queen; "and, besides, you are too good a horseman to desire it."

The duke replied by a polite bow, and vaulted into his saddle.

When all were mounted, "To the quay!" cried Sir John to the postilions; and, followed by a long train of knights, the royal car rolled across the castle-square, down to the old Strand-gate by the canal, and from thence to the harbour, accompanied by a great crowd of curious spectators, shouting with joy, while the young king saluted them, and the queen cordially returned their greetings.

"They are going to have him proclaimed at Skielskioer, and then crowned in Lund," they cried; and a thousand shouts of homage and blessing ascended from every quarter.

The following day was fixed for the proclamation in Skielskioer; and, by the arrangement of Sir John and Drost Peter, the Archbishop of Lund had departed over night, in a swift vessel, to prepare everything for the king's reception and coronation in Lund.

At Nyborg Haven all was ready for the embarkation, and they were speedily on board. In the royal smack, on which the duke had embarked, were also the drost, the chancellor, and Count Gerhard, together with Sir John and the royal trabants. To the duke's astonishment the royal smack was accompanied by six large galleys, strongly manned with soldiers. His own numerous train of knights and retainers, with Dean Grand, and many ecclesiastics, who had attended the Dane-court, in three smaller vessels, followed the king's smack, which, with a brisk and favourable wind, left the fiord.

Almost at the same time, a light-built sloop ran out from the coast, which Skirmen informed his master he took for a Norse freebooter, and on board which he had observed the duke's squire to spring before they left the haven. Drost Peter strictly scrutinised the suspicious vessel, which, however, was speedily out of sight.

The weather was fine; and as the queen stood at the stern, gazing back on the Funen coast, which was still crowded with people, waving their caps and cheering lustily, the duke approached her with an air of boldness and candour.

"This sudden change in your determination has surprised me, noble queen," he observed, in a tone intended for one of reproach more than of displeasure: "but I must suppose your grace has weightier reasons for it than those you have deigned to communicate to me. I cannot believe that a restless night and a singular dream could have such an influence on our wise and strong-minded mistress. That, as your dutiful knight, I respect and obey as commands even your most inexplicable humours, you now perceive. I must, however, observe that, at this critical juncture,

by these frequent gatherings of the people, and by this coronation journey, we expose the kingdom to the greatest danger, and afford the outlaws the opportunity they pant for of revenging themselves--nothing being too daring for them to attempt, in the first flush of their enraged feelings."

"To entertain any such fear, in your presence and that of so many bold knights, would but insult you," replied the queen. "Besides, as you may observe, I have considerably strengthened my body-guard. I am not insensible to your delicacy or your chivalrous submission to what you deem my humours and weaknesses," she continued; "and I certainly owe you a better explanation than you have yet received of the reasons which have led me to change my determination. In important affairs of state, it may seem truly unwise to be guided by dreams, presentiments, and all such considerations as are held in contempt by your stronger sex; and weaknesses of this description have not hitherto been imputed to me. But still you must allow, that a dream of warning, in connection with the dark remembrances of my life, may justly carry with it a considerable weight. Neither is it so unwise to hasten the completion of a ceremony which, in the popular estimation, can alone sanctify and protect the crown against the vindictiveness of traitors. Besides, without any whimsey, as you may term it, the actual sight of the regicides, at the Dane-court yesterday, might well dissuade me from approaching at present the crypt chapel of Viborg, or the barn of Finnerup."

The duke rapidly changed colour. "Most noble queen!" he hastily exclaimed, "your dreams and presentiments are surely not connected with these horrible events?"

"Partly. You are aware, Duke Waldemar, that grayfriars' cloaks concealed the traitors on that fearful St. Cecilia's night. I dreamt last night of these twelve men, and that they bore the crown of Denmark on the points of their spears. They seemed to me like wolves in sheep's clothing, and at their head stood one whose face was entirely concealed by his hood."

"And him you took for Marsk Stig?" hastily interrupted the duke. "You have reason, indeed, to beware of him, and therefore--"

"And therefore have I changed my resolution," she continued "I saw you, too--"

"Me?" ejaculated the duke: "you do me great honour; but I hope that, in this dream, you did not find me among those whom your grace knows I abhor and condemn."

"Methought you stood by my side, and, by your paleness and agitation, I perceived that you, too, trembled at the sight of the tottering crown on the murderers' spears. I fancied that the guardian saint of Denmark, the holy King Canute, stood before me, and said--'The anointed one shall wear the crown until his death.' Can it surprise you, then, that such a warning should determine me to accomplish what is already desired by the council and by the whole people? Before your arrival in Nyborg, it was so resolved; for to delay the proclamation and act of homage in Skielskioer, and to defer the coronation, would have but the effect of exciting popular discontent."

The queen paused, and looked scrutinisingly at the duke. "If I see aright," she added, "one portion of my dream is already fulfilled: you are now, assuredly, standing quite pale by my side."

"I cannot at all times bear the sea-breeze," he replied, passing his hand across his face. "But indeed, noble queen," he added, in a careless tone, "if you consider these ceremonies as so important, I shall not persuade you to delay them. Since, however, Denmark's patron saint has condescended to make you a revelation, I can only wish that he had been somewhat more explicit: to wear the crown until his death, is saying little; to wear it long and happily, would be better worth revealing. But whether this is the road to it, I know not."

"I know not either," rejoined the queen; "but, in Heaven's name, let us try it."

As the young king, accompanied by Sir John and Count Gerhard, now drew near, this subject was broken off, and the conversation turned on indifferent topics. Sir John was jocular, and the royal party soon assumed the appearance of great gaiety. Drost Peter remained silent and reserved. But Count Gerhard felt so happy with the secret pledge of the queen's confidence which he carried in his bosom, that he yielded himself entirely to the current of his natural humour, and far excelled the others in amusing the queen. The duke strove in vain to regain his pre-eminence; but the endeavour to conceal his uneasy feelings deprived him of his usual sprightliness, and his forced compliments and pleasant conceits, with Count Gerhard's dry additions, often provoked a laugh, by no means flattering to him, but in which he was nevertheless obliged to join.

They were now approaching Skielskioer, where multitudes of people crowded both sides of the fiord, which divides the town into two almost equal parts. Young Erik was standing at the prow, by the side of Chancellor Martinus, listening attentively to what that learned gentleman was relating concerning Henrik Æmeldorf's rebellion against his grandfather, King Christopher Waldemarson.

"It is now five and thirty years ago, my young king and master," said the chancellor, "but it appears to me as if it had happened but yesterday: it was the very week after I had gained, in the chapter-house, my first palm in logic. Here your late grandfather landed with his army, to force

the proud rebel to submission, and compel his homage. The town and castle, you must be aware, were legally in the power of the general, having been given him in pledge by King Abel for military pay; but he was grievously wrong in refusing homage to the king, and in stirring up the people to rebel against him. That deep trench there, across the town's-field, was cast up by the rebellious Æmeldorf, and on the other side he had a strong garrison to defend it."

"And my grandfather was beaten, and compelled to fly from the rebels?" exclaimed the youthful monarch. "That was truly provoking. Had he, then, no brave and trusty men in his army?"

"Many," replied the chancellor; "but what avails our strength, when the Lord intends to chastise us? The godless traitors, however, did not long retain their advantage. The following year your royal grandfather again came, like a stern and mighty judge, and the Lord was with him then. The city was taken and burnt, the leader of the rebels obliged to fly, and his adherents received the punishment due to traitors on yonder field--there, where the Retter-Ting and diets are now held. *Soli Deo gloria!*"

"And there shall homage be rendered me to-morrow," observed King Erik. "It is strange! If this occurred but thirty years ago, there must be many still living whose friends and kinsmen were then executed."

"It certainly may be so," replied the chancellor: "the race of the ungodly man is not uprooted from the earth. Might I counsel you, my young king, I would say, remove the Zealand Dane-court to another city, to avoid those gloomy recollections and forebodings of evil to which the superstition of the people will easily give birth. 'Tis true, the power and fortunes of kings are in the hands of God alone; but shortsighted men will sometimes see evil, where the Lord purposes only good; and, on what they deem an unlucky spot, they will not easily rejoice or be filled with faith in temporal prosperity."

"Entertain you any distrust of my dear subjects here, reverend sir?" inquired Erik. "See how joyfully they wave their caps. And, listen--they already salute me with shouts of welcome."

"The people, thank Heaven, are faithful and ardent," replied the chancellor; "but should the outlaws appear here, to protest against their sentence, they would, I fear much, find many adherents; for where, indeed, are not the sons of Satan? Still, you have with you faithful men, sir king; and, with the assistance of the King of kings, you have nothing to fear. If I see aright, Rimaardson also is here."

The royal smack had now reached the quay, where the royal party were received by the town's-governor and the burghers, as also by Sir Bent Rimaardson, who, with his galley, had newly arrived from Taarborg. The kinsman of the queen, and a faithful friend to the royal house, he was justly held in the greatest respect. The execution of his brother, along with Niels Breakpeace and his band, had rendered him yet more melancholy than before; but he sought, by the most vigilant activity, to efface the ignominy that thus attached to his noble race. Since the surprisal of Rypen House, in which he had taken an active part, he had been cruising about the coasts, for the purpose of protecting them against the Norse freebooters; and a pirate-vessel, that he had recently captured, now lay in Skielskioer fiord. When he had saluted the royal family, he begged to be permitted to accompany them to the Hovgaard, as the castle is called, where, he said, he had some tidings to impart.

"If your tidings are good, Sir Rimaardson, let us hear them here," exclaimed the youthful king. "Yet, nay," he added, "this is not the place for that."

The air of suspicion which Sir Rimaardson wore did not escape old Sir John, who also, as well as the chancellor, had observed the duke and Master Grand exchange uneasy and significant glances, when they discovered the captured pirate in the fiord.

Whilst the royal personages, amidst the acclamations of the people, repaired to the castle, Rimaardson hastily took Drost Peter aside. "There are traitors in the town," he whispered: "guard well the king, and keep an eye upon the duke. Had you crossed the Little Belt to-day, you had fallen into the hands of the marsk. A Norse fleet, with, it is rumoured, the Norse king himself, is lying at Ekeroe. The marsk, at this instant perhaps, burns one half of Funen with--"

"Just Providence!" exclaimed Drost Peter, "when stood a Danish king so surrounded by foes and traitors! Would only that he were anointed and crowned!"

"Would only that the duke had never left Sjöborg Tower!" whispered Rimaardson.

"He may again be there," exclaimed the drost, with flashing eyes; while the approach of the duke, at that moment, put an end to their private conference.

When the royal party were alone in the castle, they learned from Sir Rimaardson what he had just confided to Drost Peter. He produced, at the same time, a packet of intercepted letters from Drost Tuko Abildgaard in Norway, and from Marsk Stig, to Duke Waldemar, Master Grand, and Count Jacob of Halland, by which the league of the outlaws with the King of Norway, and their entire plans for overturning the Danish throne, were clearly discovered. Of the letters from the duke's drost, some were addressed, under ecclesiastical seals, to Dean Grand of Roskild,

directing him to attend to the duke and the disaffected nobles of the kingdom. From these it appeared that Marsk Stig and the outlaws intended to place the duke upon the vacant throne, if he would faithfully join them, and seize the opportunity of getting the royal family into his power. By the letters to Count Jacob it appeared, on the contrary, that the marsk and the outlaws could not depend upon the duke, and that they had promised the crown of Denmark to the Norse king, if he would assist them with a fleet, and promise to reinstate them in their rights and dignities. These important letters were found on board the captured freebooter, the crew of which were then lying bound in the castle-dungeons.

This discovery excited the greatest alarm in the minds of the queen and her son, who immediately called into their secret council Sir John, Drost Peter, and Master Martin. Every necessary precaution was instantly adopted; and, by Sir John's advice, the duke was to be admitted only in appearance into their councils, and but half informed of what had been discovered. The intercepted letters, which betrayed his connection with the outlaws, were carefully concealed; and it was deemed prudent to communicate to him only the letters to Count Jacob, respecting the marsk's audacious proposals to the Norwegian king.

When this resolution was adopted, they requested the attendance of the duke, whose astonishment at the discovery they made to him seemed real and natural. The marsk and the other outlaws he reprobated in the strongest terms, and cordially approved of all the measures which the council had taken to defend the country against the Norwegians.

In the meanwhile, Count Gerhard had disembarked the royal troops, and quartered them in the town; and stationing a considerable body of them at the castle, he himself took his place in the ante-chamber, as captain of the guard.

When Drost Peter and Sir John left the royal closet, the cheeks of the former were flushed with anger, by which, and his flashing eyes, it was evident that some bold project was in his mind.

"Wretched weakness!" he exclaimed. "Have we not now sufficient proofs of his treachery? Why should we not arrest him, as a traitor, on the spot?"

"Prudence, my young friend," replied old John.

"Your prudence drives me mad!" exclaimed Drost Peter. "I can no longer bear to see the traitor amongst us, as our master and the ruler of the kingdom. If we be not beforehand with him, he will be beforehand with us, as old Henner said. It must now break or bear--"

"It will break unless we are cautious," interrupted the old knight, emphatically. "So long as he contrives to wear the mask, he is of service to us; but the moment he casts it aside, he must be overthrown."

"Good: one word will suffice for that."

"Beware of that word, Drost Peter, for by it you may perhaps overturn the throne of Denmark. Yet one thing," added the old man, in a sorrowful tone, as he cast a look of anxious concern on his excited friend: "are you aware that the father of our faithful Ingé was the bearer of these treasonable letters, and now lies a prisoner in the tower?"

Drost Peter seemed horror-struck. "Merciful Heaven!--Sir Lavé!" he exclaimed. "I can hardly doubt it. But is his crime quite evident?"

"He was on board the freebooter, and in his care the letters were found. What he can urge in his own defence, I know not. To-morrow he is to be heard before the council; and on account of our relationship with him, I have requested that you and I may be then exempted from sitting as his judges."

"Poor Ingé!" sighed Drost Peter. "Where is she? What have you done with her? She referred me to you, who have coldly and sternly avoided every question on the subject. But I can no longer refrain. What does she in Sweden, while we imprison and condemn her father here?"

"You shall know all, and will approve of it," replied Sir John, as he seized his hand. "Follow me to the chancellor. For the sake of Ingé, I could wish that Sir Lavé might, to-morrow, frustrate us all; although, were I his judge, there were small hopes of his deliverance. But that office lies with the duke, and one raven does not pick out the eye of another. As far as this goes, we may rejoice at the miscarriage of justice, and that we have a traitor for the kingdom's protector." So saying, he passed his hand over his eyes with much emotion, and drew Drost Peter along with him.

In the middle of the castle-yard stood a small gloomy tower, the stone vaults of which served as a prison. In one of these subterranean dungeons lay Sir Lavé. He stirred not but with dreadful apprehension, and seemed terrified at the clank of his own chains. At every sound he huddled himself up, and gazed earnestly on the securely bolted iron door; but it opened not. A small grating, looking forth upon the castle-yard, was situated high in the wall. This, with the aid of an old block of wood, which some wretched captive had formerly dragged after him, and a few loose stones, he succeeded, after considerable labour, in reaching. Here he saw Sir John and Drost Peter pass by; but he was afraid to meet his kinsman's look, and indignation choked his voice as he was about to call on Drost Peter to save him. He wept and wrung his hands, but regained

courage when he perceived several of the duke's people passing to and fro. He then drew out a little note, which he had concealed in his sleeve, anxiously hiding it at every suspicious noise, and pulling it forth again when a follower of the duke appeared.

The young king showed himself for a moment on the balcony and was received by the curious spectators in the court below with shouts and waving of caps. This spectacle greatly agitated the captive, who, again concealing the letter, shortly afterwards became absorbed in deep and gloomy thought, in which he remained until the moonbeams, penetrating his cell, announced to him the approach of night. At that moment he perceived the duke descend the castle-stairs, and proceed to that wing of the castle appropriated to him. Preceding him was a royal page, bearing a torch, and six of his knights attended him at a little distance. His air was thoughtful; and, as he approached the grating of the dungeon, a gleam of hope inspired with courage the despairing prisoner. He coughed. The duke heard it, and looked towards the grating.

"Drop your glove, Duke Waldemar," whispered the captive knight, as he rolled the letter up, and threw it forth.

The duke dropped his glove as desired, and, in picking it up again, also secured the letter.

"There lies one of the traitors from Norway, awaiting the gallows," he exclaimed aloud, as he threw an indignant glance towards the dungeon, and passed on, regardless of the deep sigh that burst from the heart of the despairing prisoner.

Skirmen, who, by his master's orders, was observing every motion of the duke, was at this instant concealed in the deep shadow of a corner, near the tower. The moment the duke had disappeared, the trusty squire came forth, and was hastening to his master, when he was arrested by a voice from the grating.

"In the name of the merciful God, listen to me, young man!" exclaimed the captive knight. "Art not thou Drost Hessel's squire?"

"At your service," answered Skirmen, as he stopped.

"Inform your master, then," stammered the prisoner, "that the man who once saved Drost Peter Hessel's life and preserved his freedom, would now converse with him a moment for the sake of his own mind's peace. Tell him that I can reveal to him something of great importance. But time presses."

"I shall deliver your message," replied Skirmen, as he hastened away.

The prisoner descended from his dangerous seat, and carefully removed the means by which he had reached the grating. He then seated himself sorrowfully on the block beneath it, and listened anxiously to every sound he heard. Some time elapsed thus, when at length the rattling of the gaoler's keys, and the withdrawing of the bolts one by one from the door, announced a visitor. In another moment Drost Peter stood in the cell with him.

The moonlight through the grating fell upon the pale face of the prisoner, who remained in a crouching posture, without daring to raise his eyes. The drost stood for an instant, silently contemplating him. In the half-despairing countenance before him, there was that which reminded him bitterly both of Lady Ingé and the brave Sir John--some of the lineaments of the noble race of Littles. Tears stood in his eyes.

"Miserable man!" he exclaimed, at length, "what can I effect for your peace? And of what have you to unburden yourself to me?"

"Tell me truly, Peter Hessel," asked the prisoner, in a trembling voice, but with a tone of parental familiarity that reminded the drost of the relation in which they had stood in his youthful days, "are thou and Cousin John to be my judges?"

"Nay, Heaven be praised! Our relationship to you exempts us from that duty."

"I may, then, hope for mercy; for from thee and Sir John I could expect only what you call justice. But God help us all, if we must be treated according to our deserts!"

"Sir Lavé," interrupted Drost Peter, "think you, then, that there is not a powerful, perhaps an all too-powerful voice, which pleads for you both in my breast and that of old kinsman?"

"I believe it, and will prove to thee my sincerity," replied the prisoner, "since, as thou art not to sit in judgment on me, I can venture to unburden my heart to thee."

He arose, and threw on the drost a penetrating look, while he continued in the same familiar tone:--"Misfortune has now taught me what thou in vain wouldst have had me believe in time. I now perceive that no success or blessing attends rebellion against lawfully constituted authority, even when instigated by the purest attachment to freedom and fatherland. By the law, my doom is death; but the prerogative of mercy lies with the king, in whose hands I place my life and fate. I had no share in his father's death, and he can therefore pardon me. Had I seen him before, as I have seen him to-day, I should not now be in this dungeon. The stern Marsk Stig himself, I firmly

believe, could not look the youthful monarch in the face and deny him the name of king. I cannot now blame thee, Peter Hessel, who wert his tutor and weapon-master, for entertaining the greatest hopes of him. If he spare my life, I will swear fealty to him, and reveal matters of importance. Tell him I will confess my sins to the chancellor, and atone for my crimes in a state-prison. Tell him--"

"Kind Heaven!" exclaimed Drost Peter, joyfully, as he seized Sir Lavé's trembling hand, "dare I believe? Has, then, the Almighty heard my petition, and inclined your heart to faith and honour. You will be loyal and attached to our young king--you will confess all, and swear him fealty--you will atone your treason--and he will--he must pardon you. But he does not govern alone," he added, with a sigh; "and, without the concurrence of the queen and the duke, his wishes will avail you not."

Sir Lavé's pale cheeks flushed, and for an instant he remained silent. "The duke cannot condemn me," at length he whispered, with a smile of confidence: "I have taken care of that. The will of the king I know thou canst easily determine, and a favourable word to the queen would perhaps also find a willing ear. There was a time when Peter Hessel was all-powerful with the fair Queen Agnes--"

A frown gathered on Drost Peter's brow, for the expression of Sir Lavé's features did not please him. The joy he had felt at his conversion quickly disappeared, while the discovery that Skirmen had just imparted to him suddenly presented itself to his mind.

"As a man, I may perhaps venture to speak, where, as drost, I must be silent," he replied, sternly; "but I can only venture to do so when I am convinced of your sincerity, and that you are not, even here, taking counsel against the king and country."

"What! do you still doubt me, Drost Peter?" asked Sir Lavé, in a tone of terror and bitterness. "I say I am converted to your state-creed. Must you see me howl in sackcloth and ashes before you believe me? Intercede for me, Peter Hessel! and you will find that I am not ungrateful," he continued, fawningly. "Thy father was my friend, and what I promised him on his deathbed I have not forgotten. Save my life now, as once I saved thine, and my hand shall no longer separate what a mightier than mine hath joined together."

Drost Peter was much affected; but observing a cunning smile on Sir Lavé's restless features, he felt, with wounded self-esteem, how nearly he had been befooled.

"Not even for that prize, Sir Lavé, shall I forfeit my fidelity," he exclaimed, warmly. "If, without self-abasement, I intercede and promise for you, I must first be convinced that we dare trust you. What connection subsists between the duke and you? and what was the purport of the letter which, but half an hour ago, you bade him pick up with his glove?"

Sir Lavé became pale with terror. "Letter!--what letter?" he stammered out. But perceiving the uselessness of denial, he continued:--"Well, as you appear to be omniscient, it was so: but I swear it contained nothing but what was true--that I was an incautious fool, and had brought letters to land which would perhaps occasion the duke embarrassment, if I did not explain the nature of them. I can testify that they were written by his enemies, and, being intercepted, might lay him under the suspicion of having private intercourse with the outlaws."

"Wretched man!" interrupted Drost Peter: "on the brink of a gulph you are still playing with two sharp-edged swords, both of which will fall with deadly force upon your head. I cannot--I dare not, now intercede for you. I should myself be an enemy to Denmark and the royal house, and a traitor to my country, should I do so. But I will provide for the peace of your soul. Within an hour the chancellor will visit you. Confess yourself sincerely to him, and bethink of your eternal weal. He may then, perhaps, beg mercy for you from the pitying God."

"Alas, alas! let, then, the chancellor come, and prepare me for death!" groaned Sir Lavé, as he wiped the perspiration from his forehead. "I must now put my hope in God, for in man there is no mercy! Alas! could my Ingé see how hardhearted you are, Drost Peter, she would never love the man who can treat so cruelly her unfortunate father."

"Heaven is my witness," sorrowfully exclaimed Drost Peter, laying his hand upon his breast, "that it cuts me to the soul that I cannot trust you better. You would win the duke with false witness, and me with a false hope; and would, if you could, make my affection traitor to my loyalty. Nay, Sir Lavé Little, you are not thus to be saved. Truth only can save you, the country, and us all. God give your unstable mind constancy and strength to resolve earnestly on that to which you now only pretend for the purpose of saving yourself before a human tribunal!"

With these words he left the dungeon, and Sir Lavé sank with a groan upon the stone floor, where the fear of death wrung a sincere prayer from his bosom.

Half an hour afterwards, Chancellor Martinus, in his Dominican habit, with his breviary and a candle in his hand, was admitted to the anxious captive, whom he found in a state of such bewilderment and mental conflict, that the philosophical chancellor found it impossible to understand his incoherent and contradictory expressions.

"Is it you who are to prepare me for death?" asked the prisoner, starting up with a wild stare.



"Ha! it is time. The wheel and stile are ready. Drost Peter will not intercede for me; and my child, my poor child, she will die of shame for her miserable father. But my punishment is just," he continued, sinking his voice to a whisper: "I nodded--see, I nodded thus--in that horrible council. That nod cost me perhaps my salvation, and King Erik Christopherson his life. Was I not among the twelve in Finnerup barn? Nay, nay, that was but a dream!" he exclaimed, vehemently--"that night I only betrayed my master's castle--his blood is not upon my hand, and will not be visited upon my head. But I heard the woe-cry from his coffin: from the grave it came--nay, from hell itself! It yet rings in my ears. To be doomed an outlaw by men is nothing--but outlawed, eternally outlawed from heaven, I became at that hour. I am an unfortunate man!" He paused and sighed. "Ha! but misfortune shall not strike me down," he continued, strutting boldly across the dungeon--"I am of noble birth, and die not as a traitor, but as a patriot and the foe of tyrants. What wilt thou with me, clerk? Thou art no confessor of mine--thou art not the bold dean who bids defiance to kings and kaisers. I know thee well: thou art the book-worm from Antvorskov, the learned chancellor--thou wert the tyrants' friend, and now wouldst outlaw and put under the ban every free-minded Dane. Comest thou hither to shrive me to-night, ere thou doomest me to the wheel to-morrow? Nay, nay--that thou mayst spare thyself, my very learned sir. A wise statesman can hold his tongue, and die like a heathen, without shrift or penitence."

He continued for some time raving in this wild manner, now accusing himself as the greatest criminal, and now boasting his high birth and political sagacity, but at length recovered himself, and burst into tears.

The learned Master Martinus had several times vainly attempted to stop him, to point out the rules in *logica* against which he was offending; but the zealous carer for souls now triumphed over the philosopher, and he seized this favourable opportunity of exhorting to repentance the despairing sinner before him; and, in the supposition that he had been among the regicides, he became stern and vehement, and thundered forth the most fearful threatenings of the law against traitors and man-slayers.

"Nay, nay!" exclaimed Sir Lavé, "I am no regicide; but still I must surely perish, unless there dwells pity with Heaven and the Holy Church. Listen, and I will shrive!"

He then threw himself at the feet of the chancellor, and confessed every step he had taken, relating how he had been inveigled into the conspiracy, and protesting that he had, however, taken no share in his kinsman's sanguinary revenge.

"Drost Peter was right," he exclaimed: "the truth alone can save me and all of us. Even at that hour I would have deceived him, and he cannot trust--he cannot sue for mercy for me. Let justice, then, overtake me. Here I must be condemned; but save, oh save my soul from the eternal death!"

"Your sin is great," answered the chancellor, who was much affected; "but those who abused your weakness, have more to atone for than you have." He then, in the blessed words of the Gospel, exhorted him to repentance, and in the name of the Holy Church granted him indulgence for his sins, should he continue firm in his repentance, and true to the change of conduct he had promised. "Even your earthly judges," he added, "I hope to soften, after this your confession. What you have confided to me no man shall know without your own permission; but allow me to reveal it to the queen and our young king, and I promise that time shall be accorded you for repentance in a bearable state-prison."

"Reveal it to all!" exclaimed Sir Lavé, embracing his knees with trembling arms. "In the wall of my closet at Flynderborg is a secret depository, where lie the proofs of my greatest crime. Let all the world know it, but let me not die thus in my sin. Spare but my life--this wretched life--and I will gladly hide myself and my shame in Denmark's darkest prison. Reveal all!" he continued, in the accents of fear and anxiety--"tell them, too, that there will be a tumult here to-morrow, if they take not means to prevent it. The outlaws are here, and, with the assistance of the duke, will possess themselves of the king's person. I have even brought the duke the letter respecting it."

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed the chancellor, who, terrified, suddenly rose and knocked violently at the prison-door, which was quickly opened for him.

The prisoner attempted to escape with him; but a violent blow from the sturdy turnkey threw him backwards on the stone floor, without consciousness.

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An innumerable multitude of people from all quarters of Zealand were assembled in Skielskioer, to see and do homage to the young king. All the villages in the environs were thronged, for the town, which had been half burnt down in the feud between King Christopher and Henrik Æmeldorf, had not yet recovered its former prosperity, and could with difficulty accommodate but an inconsiderable portion of the strangers.

These throngs were further augmented by the friends and adherents of the outlawed noblemen, who had assembled in great numbers, in consequence of the rumour that the murderers of King Erik Christopherson had been personally cited to hear their doom, and that they intended to defend their cause before the people, and protest against the sentence of

outlawry.

As evening approached the tumults and contentions which occurred between these partisans and the populace became so frequent, that the town-governor was compelled to call on the royal landsknechts to assist him in keeping order.

On the following morning, when the matin-bell had rung from the lofty spire of St. Nicholas, the people were already assembled in the Thing-place, and in the large area before the Hovgaard, to witness the procession of the royal family to the Dane-court; but hour after hour elapsed, and the royal party appeared not. The castle was encircled by the royal landsknechts and a body of the burgher-guard, whilst, posted before the gate, at the head of a small party of the queen's life-horse, were Drost Peter and Count Gerhard. Both appeared thoughtful. Drost Peter still carried his right arm in a sling; but, like a skilful swordsman, he knew how to support at need his weapon with his left.

As it appeared, they had hoped to prevent all tumult at the proclamation, and had found it impolitic to break with the duke. The inner courts of the castle had, in the meanwhile, by the drost's arrangements, been secretly filled with the remaining portion of the queen's life-horse, which were supposed to have been left on board the ships. These, the most trusty of the royal troops, had orders to advance and secure the duke, the instant they saw the drawn sword in the drost's hand.

Not far from Count Gerhard and Drost Peter, in a magnificent suit of armour, was the duke, seated on his charger, in the midst of his knights and a considerable body of Sleswick horsemen. His looks, as he surveyed the multitude, seemed anxious and uneasy, and the dark, earnest countenance of Drost Peter did not appear to please him, any more than did the bold bearing of Count Gerhard.

The people now began to display symptoms of impatience at the long delay; and, with visible discontent, Drost Peter whispered to Count Gerhard--"This is the fault of our good, thoughtful chancellor."

Murmurs and expressions of anger speedily followed.

"How long must we remain here upon our pegs, before we see either wet or dry?" growled a corpulent burgher, who was standing sentry.

"There is good reason for the delay, Faerlil," answered a long-bearded Sleswick horseman: "your king, to be sure, has no need yet to stop to polish his beard; but he must be swaddled and suckled. The queen, too, must be trim and spruce, that your maids and wives may not tempt Drost Hoseol to prove untrue to her."

A boisterous laugh from the horsemen accompanied this coarse joke.

"The people are becoming merry--that pleases me well," observed Count Gerhard, who heard the laughter, but not the disgraceful words which created it.

Drost Peter, however, had heard them, and burned with indignation, which he endeavoured to suppress, looking with apparent inattention in the opposite direction; whilst the merriment continued, and was kept up with other expressions of a like nature.

"Peace, fellows, or speak of royalty with greater respect!" exclaimed the duke, with apparent severity, to his people.

"Yes," added one of his knights, "take care, you fellows! The drost's left arm is not to be laughed at. And you, my good man," he observed to the burgher--"you should remember the consequences of grumbling in Skielskioer at a royal proclamation."

"I'faith, that is true, stern sir knight," growled the burgher: "unless we would have our houses again burnt over our heads, we must howl with the wolves, and submit to boy-rule and petticoat government."

"Fie for shame on every Danish man," cried another, "that they should patiently submit to be ruled by a king in slippers and baby-clothes."

"Thou hast a mind to be outlawed before night, my bold fellow," observed a tall personage, in a monk's habit. "A good word now-a-days may bring that on a man."

"Know you the news, holy sir?" exclaimed an awkward, heavy mass-boy to the monk: "Marsk Stig and his friends have to-day been put under the ban of the Church by the Archbishop of Lund."

"The ban--the ban!" was muttered around from one to the other, with increasing discontent.

"They could never be so infatuated," observed a tall man, enveloped in a large blue cloak.

"He begins sharply, this little master," exclaimed a jeering voice close by the side of the last speaker; "and his pinafore must be as wide as a church-door, since he can carry an archbishop in

his pocket."

"The apple doesn't fall wide of the tree," remarked the corpulent burgher; whilst his neighbour began humming:--

"And so grows up the little wolf,  
With sharp teeth in his jaws."

"What else could you expect?" demanded the Sleswick horseman: "all that come of the wolf, howl like the wolf, as they say in our country."

One of the queen's horsemen, who was stationed next to the Sleswicker, had long sat in his saddle as if on glowing coals. "If there be wolves' cubs amongst us," he now at last broke out, in a broad Jutlandic accent, "they are rather in your troop than ours, my dainty Sleswicker."

"It needs a good dog to smell that out," retorted the other.

"In our country the dogs are as keen as they are true," rejoined the North Jute; "but down by Gottorp they ought to be keen indeed, as the late King Abel, your duke's grandfather, must well know, seeing that three fiery hounds hunt him every night to the infernal regions."

"Whoever says an ill word of my duke or of his race, shall have his neck broken!" exclaimed the Sleswick horseman, drawing his sword.

"And whoever slanders my queen or the drost, shall have his nose and ears cut off!" vociferated the other, already brandishing his glaive.

As the contention thus grew hot, several joined in it; and although it was strictly forbidden that any one should draw his sword before orders, many weapons were already seen gleaming among the troopers, both of the queen and of the duke.

"Peace, there!" now cried the latter, as, with some uneasiness, he examined the multitude around him.

"Whoever strikes a blow without his officer's command, is a dead man!" shouted Drost Peter; and the swords were again sheathed, whilst the noisy quarrel subsided to a murmur.

A cry of "The king! the king!" was now heard, and the most perfect silence instantly pervaded the restless crowd.

At that moment the queen and the young king issued on horseback from the castle-gate, escorted by twelve trabants, and attended by Sir John, Rimaardson, and Chancellor Martin. The ecclesiastic, who was mounted on his palfrey, and wore his Dominican habit, with polished shoes and white heels, looked very pale and apprehensive.

Nearly the entire multitude instantly greeted the king with a shout of homage, and the quarrel between the troopers was apparently at an end, when a powerful voice, from amidst the crowd, exclaimed--"Long live Marsk Stig and his friends! Down, down with the tyrants!"

The duke looked hastily around him, whilst Drost Peter narrowly watched him, with his left hand on the hilt of his sword.

Although the cheering for the king continued, the shout of "Long live the duke! Long live Waldemar Erikson!" still gained ground: it was repeated by great numbers of the burghers, and by all the Sleswick horsemen; and, as it increased in vehemence and extent, the duke again looked round, lifting his hat, and saluting the assemblage with an air of bravery.

Li this salute Drost Peter perceived a preconcerted signal; for the duke was then cheered on every side, by the same voices that had just raised the seditious cry in favour of Marsk Stig. The drost could no longer retain his indignation. "Down, down with the traitors!" he shouted, as his sword flew from its scabbard, and gleamed in his left hand, whilst, at the same instant, the concealed horsemen, rushing forward, surrounded the spot.

Duke Waldemar beheld this unexpected movement with astonishment and consternation. "Rebellion! treason!" he exclaimed: "defend your protector, brave Danes! Seize the drost! He is the traitor.--At them!" shouted he to his horsemen; who, however, before they could, in the general confusion, range themselves in any order of battle, were, with the duke, charged with so much impetuosity by Drost Peter and Count Gerhard, at the head of the queen's horsemen, that they were compelled to seek for safety in a rapid flight; the whole body hastening from the town through a narrow street, which had not yet been blockaded.

"After the duke! Seize the traitor! *He* is the chief of the regicides!" shouted the drost, as, at the head of the queen's troopers, he pursued the fugitives.

During this uproar, the noise of which was augmented by the cries and clamour of the people, Sir John and Rimaardson, with the chancellor and the twelve trabants, had instantly formed a

close circle round the king, and, without awaiting the issue, had hurried with him across the castle-square, and through the excited crowds, down to the fiord.

But the queen had boldly ridden forward amidst her faithful body-guard, and soon found herself at their head, between Count Gerhard and Drost Peter; whilst before them, and without once looking behind, fled the duke and his horsemen, as if panic-struck.

"Noble queen," exclaimed Drost Peter, "here you are exposed to too much danger."

"I think myself safer nowhere than between the brave Count Gerhard and yourself," was her confident reply.

"Shame befall us," cried Count Gerhard; "if we are not now invincible, we never deserve success."

Outside of the town, on Trandrup Field, where Henrik Æmeldorf engaged King Christopher, the duke first commanded his troopers to halt; and, availing himself of his start, he wheeled about, and hastily placed his men in order of battle.

The drost, who, with his troop, was rapidly pushing forward, now heard the wild shout of assailants behind him, and, on looking round, perceived a large body of mail-clad horsemen in his rear, in the leaders of which he thought he recognised Count Jacob and the two knights who had been outlawed at Nyborg.

"You have ventured too far, most noble queen!" he exclaimed. "The traitors have out-manceuvred us. Fall into a circle, lads--place the queen in the centre--and you, Count Gerhard, stir not from her side."

"By Beelzebub!" muttered the count, "must I be only a peg in this confounded game of skittles? Stay you here, rather, with your wounded arm, Drost Hessel."

But the drost heard him not, while the queen's troopers immediately obeyed the order of their chief, and formed a circle around their mistress, who, although pale and apprehensive, yet retained her firmness, and closely observed every movement of the enemy; whilst Count Gerhard rode around the circle like a wild beast in a cage.

The foe, meanwhile, had been pressing on from both sides, when the drost, commanding the circle to extend, slackened his bridle, and, with his sword in his left hand, dashed against the duke and his horsemen.

"Turn you now against the outlaws, Count Gerhard," said the queen, calmly.

This was precisely the intention of the skilful warrior, who sprang from the circle, shouting;--"Forward, carls, in a line! Follow me!"

The circle, thus dividing, soon formed compact lines, which fought in opposite directions against the twofold superior foe. The queen remained between the lines, a witness of the sanguinary conflict, which cost many of her faithful men their lives. Her checks glowed with ardour and excitement whilst she glanced now towards Drost Peter, and now towards Count Gerhard; but her eye most frequently rested on the valiant count, who had engaged in the fray with the greatest spirit and ardour, every stroke of his good sword appearing to drive the enemy a step before him.

The space between the two lines of horsemen was every instant increasing, and the queen, with lively satisfaction and joy, beheld the success of Count Gerhard's bold attack; when, turning her eyes once more towards Drost Peter, she uttered a cry of alarm. His troopers were in disorder, and he himself was unhorsed in the midst of the duke's people, who cast themselves upon him with a savage shout of triumph.

"Merciful Heaven!" she exclaimed, "they will murder him! Save, oh save Drost Peter, noble count!" and, heedless of the danger, she rode into the midst of the mêlée, where Count Gerhard's horsemen were on the point of beating the outlaws from the field, and, pressing close up to the side of the count, repeated her request.

"In God's name, be it as you command, noble queen!" he replied. "Forward, lads! Think not of me!" And turning his steed, he hastened to the assistance of Drost Peter, and endeavoured to restore order to his broken ranks.

But his own troops now fell into similar confusion, and the outlaws, inspired with new courage, again pressed forward with shouts of triumph; whilst, on the opposite side, the all-victorious duke continued to pursue the drost's chiefless band.

The attempts of Count Gerhard to rally the flying horsemen, and restore them to order, were vain: he found it impossible to collect the scattered soldiers; and the enemy pressed on victoriously from both sides. The confusion was now at its height, and the slaughter around him was dreadful.

"All is lost--we must fly, noble queen!" he at length cried, turning to the spot where the queen

had stood only a moment before. But he now beheld her not. One of her troopers had thrown his cloak over her, and in the confusion she had disappeared, whilst the count, who could nowhere discover her amidst the tumultuous bands of contending horsemen, then became furious, and his blows fell fast on every side, directed indiscriminately at friends or foes. His glaring eye sought only the queen; but, at last, even his sight began to fail him: the scene appeared to whirl around him, and he became unconscious. When he recovered his senses, he found himself alone on the dreary battle-field, with only dead and wounded around him. His eye was safe, but that which was yet dearer to him had disappeared. He looked around once more; and then mounting his steed, which had remained near him, he proceeded rapidly in the direction of the town.

The tumult there had not yet ceased. Soldiers and armed burghers were scouring the streets, and scenes of bloodshed were everywhere enacted. Some shouted the names of Marsk Stig and Count Jacob, and exclaimed: "Vengeance for the outlaws!" Others had for their rallying cry the name of the duke, cutting down all who refused to join in it; whilst a great portion of the burghers and badly armed peasants vociferated: "Long live our young king! Death to the traitors!" The adherents of the duke and those of the outlaws did not seem to be quite certain whether they should regard each other as friends or foes; although, in general, they made common cause against the royalists.

Meanwhile, the duke, at the head of his Sleswick horsemen, returned triumphantly to the castle. The report of his victory, and the defeat of the royal party, soon became known, and greatly alarmed the trusty burghers and peasants, who had assembled in defence of their youthful king. The duke was accompanied by a crowd of savage-looking butchers, with blood-stained axes, and by many strangers in disguise, who applauded him loudly. A band of mailed horsemen, wearing their visors down, and who were supposed to be the outlaws and their followers, closed this triumphal procession.

The duke dismounted at the castle, and immediately occupied it with his troops.

"Where is the king?" he demanded.

"Out of the fiord, on his flight to Nyborg," replied a heavy butcher.

The duke's triumphant look changed suddenly to one of disappointment. He gave a private order to one of his knights, who instantly rode off for the haven, with a troop of horsemen.

"And where is her grace the queen?" again inquired the duke.

But this no one knew; and all he could learn was, that Prince Christopher and the little Princess Mereté had been taken from the castle by Sir Rimaardson's seamen.

"Let there be tranquillity now, brave burghers," he said, addressing the noisy crowds that surrounded him; "and let every one retire to his abode, for the Dane-court and proclamation are postponed. I have succeeded fortunately in quelling this tumult, and the ringleader is now in my power. He is the queen's presumptuous favourite, Drost Hessel, who so far abused the ear of his royal mistress as to create in her distrust of me. His object was to obtain possession of the king's person, and so be master of the nation; but you have nothing now to fear from the traitor, for he shall never more see the light of day. I am still your lawful protector, and shall watch carefully over your good and the welfare of the country."

When he had finished this address, which was received with noisy acclamation, he saluted his uproarious adherents with all the condescension and bearing of a sovereign, and entered the castle, accompanied by his gay knights, and the tall mail-clad warrior with the closed visor and blue mantle, who had led on the outlaws. With this individual, in whom many thought they recognised Count Jacob of Halland, he had a short and private conversation, at the close of which the unknown warrior left the castle; and, an hour after, not one of the outlaws or their followers was to be seen in the town. They had departed in anger, it was said, threatening to return with fire and sword within a twelvemonth and a day.

The duke himself soon began to think of leaving a town where the king possessed many faithful subjects. He therefore directed that the captive and sorely-wounded drost should be carried in chains on board the ducal vessel, which, with the exception of a lugger, supposed to contain some of the queen's people, was the only one then in the haven.

The duke, however, delayed his departure till the evening, as he did not consider it advisable to leave the castle until the town was entirely quiet. The disappearance of the queen, whom he had himself seen, and again lost sight of, in the midst of the fray, gave him much uneasiness. He ordered a minute search to be made of the battlefield, but no trace was to be found of either the queen or of Count Gerhard. A portion, also, of his Sleswick horsemen, who had been separated from him in the engagement, had disappeared.

Night began to fall, whilst, with anxious thoughts, he paced up and down the riddersal. He felt proud indeed of his victory; but the escape of the king altogether thwarted his project, and he feared, with reason, that he had prematurely thrown off the mask, and exposed his daring plans. Since he had learned the promise of the marsk to the Norwegian king, he felt he could not depend on the outlaws; and hence his thanks to Count Jacob had been cold and reserved. He now appeared wavering and undecided as to the next step towards the object of his proud ambition.

"Seize the spirit-compelling sceptre, and thy crown shall be bright as the sun," he whispered to himself; feeling as if he were again in Sjöborg with his owl, and looking fearfully around the large gloomy hall, almost as much afraid of his own words as if the dead bishop had spoken.

"Lights! lights!" he now shouted; and his servants, who knew their master's great aversion to darkness, instantly produced them. He then issued some farther orders respecting; his departure, and again despatched messengers to ascertain whether the town was tranquil, and the road to the fiord unobstructed.

Shortly after, two of his knights entered with a prisoner, who had demanded to be conducted to their master. The captive, who stood closely enveloped in a horseman's cloak, with a rainhood over the head, for a moment or two seemed to scrutinise the uneasy conqueror, when suddenly the hood fell back, and the cloak dropped upon the floor; whilst the duke started with surprise, as he beheld before him the fair and majestic Queen Agnes, in her magnificent robes of ceremony.

"They say I am your prisoner, Duke Waldemar," she said, with an air of calm dignity; "but I maintain that you are mine, as certainly as that you are an audacious rebel, and I at this moment the reigning Queen of Denmark."

The duke requested his astonished knights to withdraw.

"Noble queen," he then began, courteously and respectfully, "you are, in truth, partly right: I am, now and for ever, your knightly prisoner; but rebel I am not. On the contrary, I have been attacked by Drost Hessel and your men in a manner at once treacherous and unprovoked. At your own request I accompanied you hither as joint protector; and here, against all faith and law, have I been suddenly set upon, at the moment I intended to proclaim the king, and was about to quell the popular discontent at the sentence pronounced upon the outlaws. I beheld, with astonishment, your grace yourself at the head of my assailants, which may plead my excuse if, for a moment, I left the king's side, and sought to avoid a conflict in which your precious life would have been placed in danger."

"What do I hear!" cried the queen, in amazement. "You deny that you were the leader of this tumult, and even dare to impeach me as the cause of it!"

"Nay, not you, illustrious queen, but the ambitious and arrogant Drost Hessel. On his head lies every drop of blood that has this day been shed. He is the rebel and traitor--not I--and Heaven forbid that I should accuse you of his faithlessness! He has shamefully abused your clemency and grace; and has caused me to suspect that, by my fall, he hopes to soar to the regency, or perhaps even to the throne of Denmark."

Retiring a step, the queen scrutinised keenly the crafty lord. For an instant she appeared in doubt; but, as if a light had suddenly broken in upon her, she again approached him, with an air of apparent confidence.

"You have revealed to me what may perhaps prove a matchless piece of treachery," said she, unable completely to master the tones of her voice; "and should this be proved to have been really the drost's design, he must be brought to a severe account. Before the king and people he must be condemned as the most deceitful of traitors. But where is he?"

"In my power," replied the duke, with a polite smile; "and there, with your permission, he must remain, while I am protector of Denmark."

"For his life you shall be responsible to me," said the queen, with ill-concealed uneasiness. "Be his crime as great as it may, by the king and people only can he be tried and doomed; and that in my presence and in your's, at the Land-Ting."

"Believe me, your grace, that even my bitterest foe shall have justice! But suffer me first, most gracious and illustrious queen, to lay my own cause before your judgment-seat," he politely added, as he bowed profoundly, and drew forward a gilded chair, upon which the queen seated herself. "I clearly perceive that you suspect me," he continued. "You are brought here as my prisoner, although, in truth, as I have already said, I am your captive for ever, and can easily prove to you how innocent I am of this tumult." As he spoke, his air of politeness suddenly changed to an expression of intense and passionate admiration, and he added, with warmth--"I can give you proof, clear as the sun, how foolishly, nay, how madly, I should have acted, to place myself in a position of hostility to you." He paused, and appeared to hesitate. "It must be dared!" he again broke forth: "I shall now reveal to you what has long been the dearest and boldest wish of my heart, and what, as a princely scion of the race of the great Waldemars, in my proudest moments I have sometimes dared to hope."

He paused again, and looked inquiringly at the queen, over whose countenance had passed a sudden change, which caused him to hesitate; but the consciousness of his handsome person banished every doubt, and the flush of indignation on the queen's cheeks he mistook for an indication of bashful surprise.

"Your noble and lofty mind, fairest queen," he continued, boldly, "cannot feel offended at a wish which unites the desire for a kingdom's happiness with the most respectful attachment to womanly worth--a wish which words fail me to express, but which springs from chivalrous esteem

for your beauty, prudence, and elevation of soul, and which has received ardour and strength from those feelings that reduce the prince to the man, while, in truth, they exalt the man to the prince."

"You speak prettily and politely, Duke Waldemar," replied the queen, with much composure, "and seem to think that when the Queen of Denmark is your captive, she cannot refuse her ear to a suit of love, nor buy her freedom too dearly by presenting her conqueror with her hand and heart?"

The duke started. "Mistake me not in this also, noble queen," he resumed, with less ardour. "If I chose this moment for so important a declaration, it was but to convince you, in the clearest manner, how impossible it is that I should be your enemy. Your captivity here is altogether a blunder of my people, and is at an end when you command. Here you are equally queen and mistress as if surrounded by your own soldiers. But," he added, boldly, as he perceived a proud smile on her countenance, "you are too sagacious not to perceive, that, at this moment, I hold in my hands your fate and that of Denmark. Far be it from me to abuse this accidental advantage. But, if even no responsive voice pleads for me in your heart, your keen political sagacity might still counsel you not to despise such a proposal at so critical a moment."

As he thus spoke, his air of pride and complacency betrayed a wooer who intended to allow his prisoner not even the freedom of denial. To soften, however, this stroke of policy, he suddenly changed his tone and manner, for he felt the importance of bringing the heart of the fair queen, or at least her vanity, to favour the considerations of political prudence which he had suggested. He therefore again became the chivalrous lover, and with much eloquence and apparent ardour broke forth in admiration of her beauty and in flattering compliments to her lofty mind.

"My life and happiness," he at last exclaimed, as he knelt before her, "I place in your hands, most noble queen!"

Agnes remained silent, but bestowed a glance on her kneeling suitor that seemed to pierce his soul; and a bitter answer hovered on her lips, when the door was suddenly opened, and a knight of the duke's retinue entered.

The duke arose, and, stamping furiously--"What means this?" he cried--"who dares to--"

"Count Gerhard, stern sir," hastily replied the knight--"Count Gerhard of Holstein has surrounded the castle with a superior force, and threatens to storm and pull it down, if the Queen of Denmark is not instantly set at liberty."

The duke seemed thunderstruck.

"You come right opportunely, sir knight," observed the queen, rising with calm dignity. "Your illustrious master was in a posture for which he needs not blush: he has acknowledged that a blunder of his soldiers has made him appear a rebel, and guilty of lese-majesty, thus placing his life and fate in my hands. You are witness, however, that I forgive him an error in which he had no share. Your arm, Duke Waldemar: I intend to travel within an hour; and the noble Count Gerhard expects me with my train."

A loud noise outside the castle was now heard; and the duke, bowing profoundly, gave the queen his arm without hesitating. The knight preceded them, bearing two lights, and at the duke's signal his pages hastened forward with torches. To Count Gerhard's surprise, therefore, the queen was thus led forth with the greatest pomp and attention, and, without opposition, confided to his protection.

A few hours afterwards, the queen sailed with a fair wind into Nyborg Harbour, and Duke Waldemar, with the captive Drost Peter, departed in the direction of Alsen.

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While Drost Peter lay a close prisoner in Nordborg Castle, unable to serve in any way his king and country, the measures of old Sir John, Count Gerhard, the chancellor, and the trusty Rimaardson were unceasingly directed to secure the royal house, and to strengthen the minor's throne. The duke no longer found it advisable to assert his authority as regent. The plan of the outlaws for subjecting Denmark to the crown of Norway, and his own fear that he had too soon betrayed his daring project, so completely embarrassed him, that he did not even appear at the Danish court. Annoyed by the unsuccessful issue of his attempt, as well as by the failure of his love-suit to the queen, which he felt as a mortifying humiliation, he shortly after withdrew into Saxony, and it soon became publicly known that he had suddenly espoused Duke Johan's daughter, the pious Princess Sophia.

At the same time, an accidental occurrence averted the invasion with which the country was threatened by the Norwegian fleet, which lay at Ekeroe; the armament from which, as was reported, was to have been conducted by the rude Jarl Mindre-Alf, and the favourite of the Norwegian king, Halkell Augmund. The jarl, however, had quarrelled with Halkell at the drinking-table, and killed him with a wine-stoup in the presence of the king. This led to a sanguinary strife on board the fleet, in which two hundred and sixty of the jarl's men were slain

or executed; he himself being outlawed, and forced to fly to Sweden.

The expedition against Denmark was therefore deferred; but the outlaws incessantly ravaged the Danish coasts--burning Middelfert and Hindsholm in Funen, and visiting nearly every seaport town in Denmark with blood and rapine. The name of Marsk Stig became a terror to every Dane. Nor did Rané Jonsen hold the least conspicuous place among the boldest pirates who disturbed the country. His castle, Giordslöv, in Stevn's Point, where he maintained a garrison, served as a place of refuge for his rover-crew. To mislead his pursuers, he always, when on shore, rode a horse whose shoes were reversed; and, to warn him of danger, was constantly attended by a large, ferocious hound, which could easily master the strongest soldier. Rané, as well as the marsk and the other outlaws, was included in the ecclesiastical ban pronounced by the Archbishop of Lund; but they appeared to despise excommunication as much as they did the sentence of outlawry. Most of them had again fled to Norway, where they endeavoured to incite the Norwegian king to a decisive expedition against Denmark. The marsk, however, continued boldly to occupy Hielm, whence he extended his forays to North Jutland and the adjacent islands. The proud Count Jacob fortified Hunehal, in North Halland, and, like the marsk, prepared to defend himself in the country to the last.

The queen and privy council meanwhile had deferred the coronation only until a severe winter rendered the Belt and Sound inaccessible to enemies and pirates. On Christmas-day, 1287, the young King Erik Menved, as he was already called,<sup>[38]</sup> was solemnly anointed and crowned at Lund. This was the last important transaction in which the aged Archbishop Johan Dros was engaged, as he died shortly afterwards, and before his prayer for the security of the crown was fulfilled.

Not long after the coronation, a treaty of friendship was concluded between King Erik and the powerful Swedish king, Magnus Ladislaus, and the double alliance ratified which had previously been privately agreed upon: the little Princess Mereté, who had been betrothed to Birger, the crown-prince of Sweden, was conducted by Swedish ambassadors to that court; and, about the middle of March, the betrothal of King Erik of Denmark to the Swedish Princess Ingeborg was publicly declared. On this occasion there were great festivities at Helsingborg, where the royal betrothals were to be celebrated with a tournament.

The whole Danish and Swedish courts were present at these rejoicings, where the youthful King Erik exhibited himself in all the pomp of chivalry before his future queen, the beautiful Princess Ingeborg, whose childlike beauty and graces none could sufficiently extol--the bards of Denmark in their transport having already named her Danebod--the hope of the Danes.

The tournament was conducted with great magnificence, and in the manner of those of France and Germany. On the preceding day, the arms of the different knights were displayed on the cross-walk of the Dominican convent, where a stately herald announced the names of those to whom they belonged. Here they were visited by Queen Agnes and Queen Hedwig of Sweden, Count Gerhard's sister, with the princesses and noble ladies at court, for the purpose of touching the shields of those whom they judged to be unworthy knights, and who were by this means excluded from the lists.

Two shields were thus touched, one of which belonged to the powerful Swedish knight, Sir Carl Algotson, who, with the assistance of Jarl Mindre-Alf, had abducted Sir Thorstenson's rich and distinguished bride, Jomfru Ingrid. The Danish queen, who had heard of the affair, and of the brave Thorstenson's loss, had touched the shield, which was immediately removed by the herald, and an order issued by the Swedish king that the matter should be strictly investigated.<sup>[39]</sup>

The second shield, which had been touched by a noble lady as an impeachment of its owner, belonged to a Danish knight--John Rimaardson, another brother of the trusty Bent Rimaardson. Although related to Queen Agnes, he was instantly excluded from the tourney; and, being threatened with the vengeance of the law, as a ravisher and murderer, he was forced to seek safety in flight.<sup>[40]</sup>

At the tournament itself, everything was conducted with the greatest pomp and ceremonial. The Queen of Beauty, the fair-haired Princess Ingeborg, sat, full of childish joy, between Queen Agnes and her mother, the gay, good-natured Queen Hedwig, who strongly resembled her brother, the valiant Count Gerhard. On the right of the Swedish queen sat the mighty King Magnus Ladislaus, a tall and spare but majestic figure, with a stern and warlike air, and wearing a golden crown and a mantle of purple and ermine.

Many there were, among the ladies of Princess Ingeborg, who attracted looks of homage and tenderness from both Danish and Swedish knights; but the tall silent maiden who sat nearest the royal personages, excited the greatest attention. This was Jomfru Ingé Little, who observed not the interest she awoke, but, with melancholy countenance, gazed upon the gay lists, where, as her eye ran over the line of knights, she missed the noble figure of Drost Peter. She had heard of his imprisonment, and entertained but little hope of his release from Nordborg, so long as the variance existed between the duke and the royal house of Denmark. Another still heavier sorrow oppressed the brave maiden: she knew that her unhappy father lay in Kallundborg Castle, awaiting his sentence as a dangerous state-criminal. At times, nevertheless, a light spread over her melancholy features, as she looked upon the Princess Ingeborg and the young chivalrous



king: she appeared then to forget her own heart's sorrow in the fair hopes of her fatherland; and again the sounds of the song, "For Erik the king so young!" echoed in her bosom.

Nearest the barrier, and as judges, sat the oldest of the Danish and Swedish knights, chief among whom appeared old Sir John. Within the arena were seen a stately king-at-arms, and numerous heralds bearing white staves and feathered hats in their hands, whose duty it was to preserve order, and, together with their subalterns, the pursuivants, closely to attend to every thrust and motion of the antagonists.

The tourney was opened with a joust on horseback, with blunt lances, between the Danish King Erik and the little Prince Berger, who carried light armour suitable to their years and strength. The Danish king wore the sky-blue colour of Princess Ingeborg, and displayed her little glove fastened to his helmet. Prince Berger also wore the colour of his bride, and his armour was white as Princess Mereté's silken kirtle. They both showed themselves active and dexterous; but reciprocal courtesy forbade that either should be regarded as the vanquisher.

The jousts were accompanied with song and music, numerous Swedish and Danish skalds<sup>[41]</sup> being present to celebrate the exploits of their respective knights, nearly all of whom wore gloves, veils, pearl-bands, or some other female ornament in their helmets; while, during the battle, they would often shout their peculiar watchwords, which their own ladies only understood. Many lances were broken in the fray, and many knights unhorsed; but as they fought with blunt weapons, no dangerous or serious blow was received. It seemed, indeed, that the Danish and Swedish knights, at this joyful festivity, only sought to outvie each other in gentle bearing and knightly courtesies.

But the most distinguished on this occasion was Count Gerhard of Holstein, who good-naturedly unhorsed six knights without himself being shaken. With the black veil of the fair Queen Agnes, he felt himself invincible; whilst his watchword was the burthen of a song he had heard at Sir John's on the evening he first spoke with the queen. One word in it only he changed every time he thrust a knight from his saddle shouting delightedly:--

"For so chaste a dame I dree."

All competitors having withdrawn, he was declared victor in the tournament; and springing gaily from his saddle, he received, kneeling, the prize from the hands of the fair Queen Agnes.

The tilting appeared to be ended, when a strange knight, in bright gilt harness, with a crown upon his locked helmet, and mounted on a snorting war-steed, presented himself at the barrier. He flung his steel gauntlet at Count Gerhard's feet, and, without uttering a word, tore, with the sharp end of his lance, the black veil fastened to the count's breastplate.

Queen Agnes became pale; for by this action he attacked the honour of the lady whose gage he had thus outrageously insulted. All eyes were instantly turned with surprise and amazement on the strange knight.

"'Tis the duke--Duke Waldemar!" whispered one to another; although none was sure that this surmise was well grounded.

Count Gerhard, burning with fury, sprang upon his charger, and resumed his place in the lists, having first taken up the stranger's gauntlet, to intimate that he accepted the challenge without farther explanation. The heralds then opened the barrier, and admitted the strange knight, who advanced, proudly manœuvring his steed, and brandishing a sharp lance. Count Gerhard, too, armed himself with a similar deadly weapon, when the judges reminded them that the present was a festive tournament, where no serious fighting was permitted. But the exasperated count having demanded that the combat should be as serious as the insult, the objection was urged no further.

Like thunderbolts the knights rushed against each other, and in the shock Count Gerhard's lance was splintered against the gilded breastplate of his antagonist, from whose weapon he received a violent blow on the chest, but remained immovable in his saddle.

The strange knight, who had been lifted slightly from his saddle by the violence of the shock, laughed scornfully behind his visor. He cast away his lance, and, following the example of the count, drew his sword. The blades met, and in the fierce combat that ensued, both exhibited great skill and courage. By one blow, Count Gerhard had struck the crown off the gilded helmet of his antagonist, who, however, lost no advantage offered by the unbridled ardour of the count; while the varying fortunes of either combatant were watched by all with the most intense interest.

"For the honour of my exalted lady!" shouted Count Gerhard, aiming what he intended as a finishing stroke, but by which he exposed himself to his antagonist; who, avoiding the blow, had raised his sword against the count's unprotected head, when suddenly he became motionless, gazing rigidly the while towards the barrier.

At the same instant a powerful voice cried out: "An infamous knight fights here!"

All looked in astonishment towards the spot whence the voice proceeded, where stood a tall and elegant knight, in steel-blue mail, with closed visor, and displaying a magnificent dagger in his outstretched hand.

"Knowest thou this witness, traitor?" he continued, in the same mighty voice, while in his hand he turned the dagger, on the hilt of which the golden lions gleamed in the bright sunshine.

"That dagger was drawn from the corse of King Erik Christopherson, on St. Cecilia's night," cried a loud voice among the people.

"That dagger armourer Troels of Melfert sold to Duke Waldemar," shouted another: "I can swear to it."

"It is the marsk's dagger--Marsk Stig's dagger!" cried a third.

The battle had ceased; for the knight in the gilded mail sat as if petrified, staring through the grating of his helmet at the blue knight and the dagger. The sword fell from his hand, and he was becoming faint and giddy, when, at a signal from the young Erik, the king-at-arms advanced and cried aloud--"No one shall interrupt the combatants by word or gesture, under the penalty of death!"

At this announcement the blue knight bowed respectfully, and placed the dagger in his bosom, but remained calmly gazing at Count Gerhard's antagonist.

"Hand him his weapon again!" cried the count to a pursuivant: "I know that I fight with a false and dishonoured knight; but one of us must here lose his life."

Whilst the pursuivant stooped to take up the sword, the golden knight suddenly gave the spur to his steed, and cleared the barrier at a bound. Every eye followed him with amazement, and a deathlike stillness prevailed until he was no longer visible; and when they then turned to look for the blue knight, he too had disappeared.

Count Gerhard therefore remained alone in the lists, and was declared victor in this conflict of honour; while the unusual occurrence caused many and various surmises among the spectators. The tournament was then declared to be ended, and the royal party returned to the palace, where, as old Sir John passed Lady Ingé, he whispered to her softly--"Drost Peter!"

She nodded in silence, while a deep crimson overspread her lovely cheeks. She had indeed perceived a rose-red pearl-band on the breast of the blue knight, and fancied she recognised in it her own fillet; but by what means her captive knight could have been present there was to her inexplicable.

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Scarcely was the tournament at Helsingborg concluded, before an important message summoned the youthful Danish king, with all his knights, to Zealand. A Norwegian fleet had been seen in the Cattegat, and a landing was apprehended at Elsinour, where the fortress of Flynderborg, surrendered by the treachery of Sir Lavé Little, still remained in the hands of the rebels.

When Sir John took leave of the faithful Ingé, she whispered a few words to him, and placed in his hand a little parchment scroll, on which had been hastily sketched a building, and apparently an entrance to it, denoted by small crosses. He seemed astonished, but listened with attention to what she said. She repeated a few words, and pointed to the scroll, which he then, with a sign of well-pleased assent, carefully put up, and, imprinting a kiss on her forehead, hastened on board with the royal family.

They landed unmolested on the coast of Zealand, in the neighbourhood of Elsinour, whence Count Gerhard immediately conducted the queen and Junker Christopherson to Rypen House, which, in these unsettled times, was considered the most secure abode for the royal family. The young king, who could not be induced to accompany them, set out with Rimaardson for Tornborg, by Korsöer, for the purpose of inspecting that important fortress, and to hasten in person the equipment of the fleet; while Sir John prepared to defend North Zealand against any hostile attack.

The king ordered the cruizers lying at Korsöer to be manned, and stationed opposite the coast of North Jutland, ready to act in unison with Sir John. To all the operations connected with these movements the young monarch paid close attention, and found time also to examine the defences of the castle, which in many points he condemned as inefficient. Rimaardson, in acknowledging the correctness of his opinions, could not restrain admiration of his early knowledge of fortification, which he had acquired from Drost Peter.

Four days after the king's arrival at Tornborg, he was on the ramparts early in the morning, attended by Rimaardson, and a knight who had brought important tidings from Elsinour. The Norwegians, he informed the king, had effected a landing at Orekrog, and burnt the town to ashes; but the burghers had received succour from Sir John. Through a subterranean passage, to

which he had led the way, they penetrated into Flynderborg, with the old knight at their head, and, overpowering the garrison, had from this strong point repulsed the enemy. The knight narrated circumstantially the whole occurrences, and informed the king that they had sought in vain for the letters from the outlaws, which Sir Lavé Little was accused of having received before the murder of the king.

"By all holy men, this pleases me well!" exclaimed young Erik. "The faithful Sir John has not wasted a word for his cousin's life; but now he has wiped out a portion of his crime. Let the chancellor announce to the prisoner at Kallundborg, that his doom is again deferred for a year, and this because his trusty cousin has retaken Flynderborg, and the proofs of his worst treachery have not been discovered."

Rimaardson eyed the king with a melancholy look. "Would to God and Our Lady," he exclaimed, "that every trusty knight you possess could so atone for the errors of his relations! There is now scarcely an honest man in the country some one of whose kindred is not in tower or on gibbet--and the end is not yet come."

The sorrowful knight was thinking of his brother Lavé's fate, and of his brother John, who then stood impeached with crimes affecting his life.

"The law is supreme over every man," observed the youthful monarch, with a sigh: "it was not by my own will that I became king so soon; yet, Heaven be praised, I have still many loyal and valiant men. Would only that Drost Peter were with me again!"

The king then returned to the castle, attended by the strange knight from Elsinour, and Rimaardson proceeded to examine the defences. Whilst thus engaged, he observed a short stout figure in the black mantle of a mass-boy, and a high cap drawn over his brows, waddling along the ramparts with a prayer-book in his hand, seemingly engaged in his morning devotions. The rolling boatman's gait of this individual struck the commandant, who observed him more narrowly, when, discovering traces of a badly-shorn beard, he recognised, to his astonishment, the rude Jarl Mindre-Alf.

"Good morning, my son," he exclaimed, approaching him. "Whither away so early?"

"To fetch wine for the priest, that he may pray for your soul," muttered the clumsy-looking mass-boy, in a deep gruff voice.

"Tarry a little," said Rimaardson, while he beckoned a couple of landsknechts to approach. "Methinks I should know thee. Did not we two once sit on the same bench in Lyse school-house? and didst thou not in those times play the tyrant over us all? Methinks thou shouldst be a count and jarl; and art thou only a poor mass-boy?" So saying, he raised the jarl's cap, and looked him full in the face.

"Betray me not, Bendix Rimaardson, for old acquaintance' sake," whispered the detected algrev. "We are relations, and I behaved to thee at school like a brother. I am now done with countship and jarldom. I am an outlawed man, and fain to seek protection with the pious. Be a good fellow, Bent. Pretend thou dost not know me, and let me run."

"Bind him, lads!" cried Rimaardson to the landsknechts: "he is a riever and an incendiary!"

The sturdy viking-chief threw aside his prayer-book and mass-boy's mantle, and stood in his knight's dress, prepared apparently to defend himself with desperation. The landsknechts, however, succeeded in disarming him, when he was instantly chained and fettered, and conducted forthwith, under a strong guard, to the criminal prison of Haraldsborg, having attempted in vain to bribe Rimaardson for his freedom.

The latter cared not to disturb the king with a report of this discovery, which might perhaps draw upon himself a reprimand for having allowed so dangerous a foe to find his way into the fortress. He considered, besides, that the castle was quite secure, and did not waste a thought on the insolent and sardonic laughter of the pirate-chief while he was dragged to prison. Rimaardson, amidst his pressing cares, had not observed that, on the previous night, a freebooter had run in close to Tornborg under Danish colours. Not only had the daring Jarl Mindre-Alf landed unnoticed, but Marsk Stig himself, with a crew of bold pirates, had privately come on shore; and on the evening of that day, Mat Jute, disguised as one of the king's landsknechts, stood as sentinel outside the door of the royal apartment. The watch was set, and, in the confidence of security, the garrison retired to rest.

In the middle of the night the young king was awake by a fearful noise. The whole castle was in flames around him, and the terrible cry--"The marsk! the marsk! the outlaws!" was shouted in every direction by the surprised and bewildered soldiers. Screams and the din of arms resounded from all quarters, while the youthful Erik stood alone, half dressed, in his chamber, which was already enveloped in smoke and flame.

"Merciful Heaven! must I now be burnt alive by my father's murderers!" he exclaimed, whilst he hurriedly threw his cloak around him, grasped his little sword, and prepared to rush through the flames.

He now distinguished the voice of his faithful Aagé Jonsen, mingled with the clash of weapons, outside his apartment; but the fire at that moment burst furiously forth, and the smoke so blinded him that it was with difficulty he could find the door. Suddenly he felt himself seized by a powerful mailed hand, and at the same instant he became unconscious. When he recovered, he found himself in a little open boat, speeding through cloud and storm with the rapidity of an arrow.

"Where am I?" he cried. "Am I among my father's murderers?"

"You are with faithful friends and subjects," replied a familiar voice by his side; while, through the darkness, he caught a glimpse of a knightly figure in full armour.

"Drost Peter! By all holy men, is it you?" he asked joyfully.

"Who I am I dare not say," replied the other; in whom the king now thought he recognised the blue knight of the tournament.

"A pledge of honour binds my tongue," continued the knight, "and I must hide my face from my king and the whole world. I shall convey you safely to Rypen House, but I must myself withdraw to a place of darkness. I entreat you, sir king, believe what you will, but tempt me not to break my knightly promise."

"Be silent, then, in God's name!" exclaimed the monarch, as he pressed the mailed hand of his companion. "Thou art assuredly Drost Peter. Thinkest thou I know not thy voice? Thou hast saved my life to-night; and if thou still remainest in the power of the duke, I shall set thee free, cost what it may."

"Proceed not violently against the duke," replied the knight, with a deep sigh: "his prisoner's life is in his hands."

The young king remained silent, while the skiff sped on, and quickly disappeared beyond Sporgoe, where the new tower of Marsk Stig stood gloomy and frowning in the night.

In a few days the news became generally known that the famous Jarl Mindre-Alf had been made prisoner; that Marsk Stig had captured and destroyed the castle of Tornborg, in defence of which the faithful Sir Rimaardson had been slain; and that the young Erik, mysteriously saved, was then in security at Rypen House.

The first important act of the king, after his arrival there, was his nomination of the bold commandant of the castle, Sir David Thorstenson, to fill the office of drost, so long as Drost Peter was in the duke's power. And it was soon known that, in accordance with the new drost's advice, the queen had subscribed the death-warrant of Jarl Mindre-Alf.

The duke was reported to be lying sick in Sleswick, to the great grief of his young wife. His mind, it was said, was affected, and the rumours of his connection with the world of spirits were again revived. Some time previously he had disappeared for a few days, and, on his return, after having visited his important prisoner, Drost Peter Hessel, at Nordborg, whom he found secure in his chains, he was seized by this singular malady, in the paroxysms of which he asserted that he had, with his bodily eyes, seen the accusing angel, and that his prisoner in Nordborg was in league with devils and mighty spirits against him.

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The Norwegians and the outlaws long continued to disturb the repose of Denmark; and although the Norse king nowhere succeeded in effecting a landing, yet, in the then distracted condition of the kingdom, he was no contemptible foe. He had committed ravages at Amager and Hveen; made a descent on Aalborg, which, however, proved unsuccessful; and had not spared even the towns belonging to Duke Waldemar. The council seriously thought of entering into a treaty with him; but the negotiation appeared beset with difficulties, as he had promised the outlaws, in a letter of protection, that he would never conclude peace with Denmark without the consent of the marsk.

One calm autumn evening, the vaadesang rose mournfully from the crypt under King Erik Christopherson's tomb, in Viborg Cathedral. When the wind blew from the cathedral across the lake, the deep tones of the vigil, which was thus to be chanted night after night until doomsday, for the soul of the murdered king, could, at times, be heard at the ferry-house on the opposite side. The road to the convent of Asmild lay near the ferry-house, where, upon an upturned boat, sat a tall, aged pilgrim, his head bent upon his breast in deep thought. By his side stood a young girl, also in a pilgrim's habit, and holding by the hand a gay-looking dark-haired youth, equipped as a squire, in a buff jerkin and steel cap, and bearing, besides the usual arms, a long, gilt, flame-shaped sword, apparently intended more for ornament than use.

"Shall we proceed to the convent and knock for admittance, father Henner?" asked the youth. "Neither thou nor Aasé can go farther to-night."

"Tarry here, Skirmen," replied the old man. "Here we can rest well; for many a night have we

watched under God's open sky since last we met. Until I have seen the arrogant marsk, and have delivered him the warning that I have been entrusted with, my penance is not ended. Until I have done this, no roof shall cover my head. So have I sworn."

"But, dear father Henner," exclaimed Skirmen, "what, then, dost thou here at Viborg? If the marsk be not in either of his strongholds on Hielm or Spraa, he must be out on some marauding expedition against the king's towns and castles. At Stege he was frustrated," he continued, as the old man remained silent; "but Skielskioer and the fortress on Samsøe have experienced the fate of Tornborg. Ah, Heaven help us!" he added, dejectedly, crushing a reed he held in his hand-- "since the powerful Ladislaus is dead and gone, there is not a king in the world of whom the marsk is afraid, and, least of all, of our young King Erik."

"There is one King, my son, that neither the marsk nor any man may defy with impunity; and if He is with the young king, the power of the marsk is not greater than the reed you have crushed." As he uttered these words, the old man pointed solemnly towards the sky. "I may soon encounter him," he continued, after a thoughtful pause: "he may be nearer us than thou seemest to imagine. He is not on Hielm, but on his way to Halland, with his good friend the new archbishop. They were to meet in Viborg, or in Asmild convent; where, perhaps, at this very moment, they are plotting the ruin of the country."

"Methinks thou knowest everything, father Henner!" exclaimed Skirmen, in astonishment. "But what brings the marsk to Halland? Does he carry succour to Count Jacob at Hunehal?"

"Canst guess no better than that, Skirmen? thou, who hast had a statesman for thy master! No. The council desire to conclude a treaty with the Norse king at Varberg; but it cannot be done without the marsk's consent; and the fate of two, perhaps of three kingdoms, is now in the hands of that incendiary. It is high time he had a message from the King of kings."

The old man again relapsed into deep thought; whilst Aasé and Skirmen exchanged some tender words, without disturbing him.

"It is odd, however, that we should have met, Skirmen," resumed old Henner, as he looked affectionately at the youthful pair. "Aasé and thou remain good friends, I perceive. But thou canst not greatly boast of fortune, Skirmen. Gold spurs grow not on trees; and a knight thou must be, before thou hast her. Yet, courage, my son! If St. George help thee not, perhaps St. Christian will. Thou hast my pilgrim-sword, with which thou shalt succeed: the holy Michael has borne it for a century on a church-steeple. It belongs more to a dancing-slipper than a pair of red shoes; but if the cat would catch fish, she must wet her paws. What hast thou been about at Harrestrup, whilst thy master is lying in chains at Nordborg?"

"Alas! dear father Henner," replied Skirmen, "there is no excuse so poor that people will not fly to it in their extremity. My master's trusty old nurse, who lies sick at Harrestrup, sent me word that she had something important to confide to me, and--"

"Hum! there is but little to be learned from an old woman's gabble," muttered old Henner.

"Well, but what said she to thee?" inquired Aasé, curiously. "It is plain that the old nurse made thee feel ashamed of thyself, since thou wilt not out with it. She has certainly cared better for thy master, than thou--"

"Upbraid me not, dearest Aasé!" replied Skirmen, dejectedly. "On the unhappy day that my master was taken prisoner at Skielskioer, he had sent me on a message to Rypen House; and, ever since, I have thought of little else besides the means of setting him free. Three times have I been on Alsen; but the infernal prison-tower is strongly guarded night and day. Twice I was caught, and should certainly have been hanged, had I not contrived to escape."

"Thou dear, trusty Skirmen!" exclaimed Aasé, throwing her arms around him. "That would have been a vile death for a squire who has been so long in a fair way of becoming a knight," she added, waggishly. "Yet be not angry, Skirmen. I like thee all the better for this; and, indeed, thy exploits are quite enchanting. But what said the old nurse?"

"Alas! she is in her dotage, poor creature, and her mind is filled with whims and extravagances. She would have me believe that she had lain for eight days in my master's prison, instead of him. On Alsen, she said, they took her for a witch, and the guard would not deny her access to the prison, which my master left, disguised in her clothes; having first sworn a solemn oath that he would return and release her within eight days, and that during that time he would not show his face nor discover himself to any one. The carlin must have been in a dream. It could not possibly be as she says."

"Wherefore not, son?" asked old Henner, who had listened attentively: "it could easily be done. It is, at least, characteristic of thy true and chivalrous master, for the good woman I know not. Yet what purpose could it answer, since the faithful drost had to return, and, like a wizard, again creep into his prison-hole?"

"I know not: that is the most incredible part of the story, and makes me disbelieve it all. Besides, I know that Dorothy could not have remained quiet for eight days, nor help betraying herself by song and chatter. Yet it is surprising how much she knows concerning the prison. She

described the exterior exactly as I had seen it myself; and, moreover, she gave me this key, swearing deeply and solemnly that it would open the innermost prison-doors."

"Ah, then, Skirmen, if thou doubtest longer, thou art an incredulous fool!" cried Aasé, joyfully. "If thou believest not that we women-folks can be silent to serve a good friend, thou little knowest us; and, if I mistake not, thy master could effect more in eight days, than many others could in a year. But, at any rate, he had one dear object to visit. Give me the key. I, too, can play the witch; and, since the good people on Alsen have so much respect for the weird sisterhood, we can easily hit on an expedient. We have been to St. Peter's prison, in Rome, thou must know, and have there received absolution of all our sins, and a dispensation from going to the holy sepulchre. I have not sinned greatly since, I believe; and if now our dear Holy Lady or St. Christian will make use of me to open a prison, they may well do so, though I am not altogether an angel--"

"Be silent, children, and conceal yourselves," suddenly exclaimed old Henner. "I hear horsemen on the road from the convent. It may be the marsk."

Aasé and Skirmen quickly obeyed, and retired to the thicket near the lake, where many a tender word was ex-changed between them.

A troop of well-armed horsemen now appeared, approaching the ferry-house from Asmild convent, having two tall personages at their head. One of these, who sat with a proud air on his quiet palfrey, was the haughty Master Jens Grand, who, after the death of the aged Johan Dros, had been, much against the wish of the king, chosen Archbishop of Lund. His mail-clad companion, who was stately and warlike, and mounted on a champing war-steed, was no other than the famous Marsk Stig himself. They halted on the road, while the attendant horsemen descended to the lake to water their horses.

"As I observed, sir marsk," said the prelate, "they must restore you your rank and estates if you will but allow the boy for the present to retain his throne. He is still preferable to your powerful King Priesthater."

"Out upon it, your reverence!" exclaimed the marsk: "you are afraid of the name priesthater, although it is one he does not deserve. He is the ablest monarch that ever sat on the throne of Norway, and possesses indeed the lofty soul of a king. When before, without showing fear or tyranny, has any northern king endured by his side a powerful brother, such as is Duke Hakon? Under such a king, Denmark and Norway will become unrivalled for power and greatness. Let me but wield the general's staff for ten years, while you bear the crook, and the world shall see that the ancient race of Skjalm Hvide have not degenerated since the days of Absalom. In Sweden, too, there is now a boy-king on the throne, but he will never become a man. What say you to an earthly trinity, most reverend father?"

"You will bend the bow until it breaks," replied the archbishop. "You forget that you are beyond the pale of the law, and that your large estates are in the possession of the crown."

"My will and this good sword is now my law," replied the marsk; "and as to estates, my friends and I have ample while all Denmark is in our hands."

"Still you must remember that you are an outlaw," observed the archbishop, emphatically, "and that you are also under the ban. If, then, I obtain you release from the latter, you must not set the priesthater as king over me and Denmark. I would rather you mounted the throne yourself--a step almost as easy of accomplishment."

"Mean you to tempt me, Grand?" observed his companion, with a smile. "Were Marsk Stig to sit on the throne of Denmark, Master Grand might occupy St. Peter's chair, and keep his royal kinsman in awe."

"No need of that, sir marsk," rejoined the imperious archbishop. "You despise not Holy Church and her chiefs, as does the proud Norseman, and you would be too prudent to deny the first prelate of the north that obedience and reverence he could extort. I meant not to tempt you; and, whilst I know and respect your self-control and magnanimity, you cannot be ignorant that it is my prerogative, not your's, to place the crown upon the head of him who is to wear it. Hear me, Marsk Stig!" he continued, proudly: "that I am your friend, you have had sufficient proof. I am now, after the king, the greatest man in Denmark. Acquitted of every part I took in your affair, I have even been admitted to his confidence, and am commissioned to negotiate a peace with Norway. In zealously attempting to effect this, I am labouring, not for the king's sake, but for that of the Church and kingdom. I know well, that, with a single word, you can annihilate the treaty. But be advised by me, Marsk Stig, and do not so. Demand what you will, and rely upon me; but remember that I it is who shall hereafter crown Denmark's kings, and I need not the authority of St. Peter's chair to bind or loose the monarch's soul, any more than those of his knights."

The marsk gazed for some moments with astonishment at the bold prelate. "You possess great power, it is true," he at length said; "but I believed, of a surety, that the son of Erik Glipping had no greater enemy in Denmark than yourself. After his death you persecuted his adherents, and caused even their corpses to be dug up from your churchyard, and thrown like dogs into a dung-pit. How is it, then, that you now cling so zealously to the boy-rule?"

"The boy is now anointed and crowned."

"Were he a thousand times anointed, 'tis the same. I have sworn his downfall, and he or I must perish! Upon you I trusted, Grand; but I now see that the Archbishop of Lund thinks not as did the Dean of Roskild. It is strange that changing his seat should so alter a man. But the highest elevated are the soonest giddy. Have you forgotten, reverend sir, in the archbishop's chair, what you swore to me in the dean's?"

"That I have not, most valiant marsk," replied the prelate; "but you have forgotten what we both promised to Duke Waldemar. He deserves truer friends than those who agreed to bestow the crown of Denmark upon the priesthater. That I do not support the boy's crown for the boy's sake, I have shown; but I was not in your councils when you broke promise to the duke."

"Ah! is it thus, your reverence? Now, for the first time, do I comprehend you. I had forgotten that you were confessor to the duke. But had you desired that I, or any honest man, should depend on that wily gentleman, you had trained up your shriveling otherwise than you did. As he was so base and faithless as to subscribe my sentence of outlawry, he would certainly not have hesitated to sign my death-warrant."

"Him you have to thank that you escaped so easily," replied Grand. "The duke acted as your most discreet friend, when he subscribed that sentence which, as regent, he has still the power to remit; and, if you will assist us in effecting this treaty with Norway, you shall no longer remain an outlaw. The time may come, too, when you shall sue for the saving blessing of the Church, and tremble at its ban. Despise not, valiant marsk, the lightning of its curse, which, ere now, has melted crowns and overthrown heroes stronger than you."

"A truce with your lightnings and your bans!" indignantly replied the marsk, as he erected himself proudly, and rode on. "You see, in me, that a brave man can thrive and be strong, despite your thunders of excommunication, launched against him from Lund Cathedral. Spiritual weapons avail not with Marsk Stig, nor shall they turn him a hair's-breadth from his course."

At that moment the vaadesang, from the tomb of the murdered king, sounded clearly across the calm lake.

The marsk paused. "What was that?" he asked.

"It was the blood of thy murdered king, crying aloud to Heaven for vengeance!" replied a hollow voice beside him, while the tall pilgrim-form of Henner Friser rose from the side of the boat, where he had been sitting, and, in the moonshine, stood menacingly before him.

The life-stream became cold in the warrior's veins while he gazed on the pilgrim as on some horrid spectre, and the mournful tones of the vaadesang were again wafted over the lake.

"Listen--listen!" exclaimed the pilgrim: "thus shall that song complain and mourn, till, at the last day, King Erik and his murderers stand before God's judgment-seat."

"Fiend! who art thou?" cried the marsk, unsheathing his sword.

"A king-killer--as thou art!" was the reply: "but I have atoned for my sin; and to thee I bring this last warning--Despise not the ban! despise not Heaven's weapons, Marsk Stig! Man's strength is but a reed; but the Lord's hand is mighty, and vengeance is his. Repent thee, Stig Andersen, or thine hour is near. 'Twas thus the holy father bade me warn thee: wash the king's blood from thine hands, and do penance; or set thine house in order, and prepare for death and perdition. Thy soul is weighed and found wanting--thy day of grace is but short."

"Henner! is it thee?" cried the marsk, as he brandished his sword. "But beware! thy crazy grayhead shall not always protect thee."

"Listen--listen!" calmly resumed the pilgrim, who shrunk not at the threat, whilst a gentle breeze again bore the vigil-tones over the lake, and the mournful chorus swelled louder and louder, vibrating overhead in the calm night. "Listen!" he exclaimed: "the tones from the grave ascend to heaven: they plead for the soul of the king, hurried away in the midst of his sins; but woe and eternal perdition they sound to those of his murderers!"

"Peace, accursed one!" exclaimed the enraged marsk, and his sword flashed in the direction of Henner's head; but at the same instant it was struck violently from his hand, while a sword of flame, as it were, gleamed before him in the air. Seized with terror, he spurred his steed forward, and galloped away, followed by the ecclesiastic, who, pale and frightened, continued to cross himself, as he disappeared along the dark road.

Shortly after the marsk's troop of horsemen rode past the pilgrim, who, leading Aasé by the hand, strode leisurely along the highway, whilst Skirmen still remained silently and gravely by the boat, leaning upon the long flame-shaped sword.

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Four weeks had elapsed since the night on which the inflexible marsk encountered Henner Friser by Viborg Lake, and heard the tones of the vigils ascend from the tomb of the murdered

king. It was evening, and the last golden rays of the sun rested on the turrets of Hielm Castle, when the stern marsk, accompanied by his troopers, rode across the little island in the direction of his stronghold. He had been attending the meeting between the Danish and Norwegian kings at Varberg, at which his unyielding pride and imperious demands had entirely frustrated the conclusion of the treaty; and although he now returned to Hielm with the proud consciousness of his formidable power and influence, his haughty features were pale, and his lofty figure seemed to rock in the saddle.

In presence of Archbishop Grand, he had concealed the strong impression made upon him by the occurrence which we have related, and, indeed, laughed at himself and the whole adventure, which he characterised as a mere accident, or a piece of trickery, got up by the half-crazed Henner. But during his homeward journey, when no longer sustained by the archbishop's presence, he had not spoken a word; nor could he shake off the conviction that the sword had been shivered in his hand by lightning. He still imagined that, while the vaadesang from the royal tomb rang in his ears, he had heard death and perdition announced to him by a spectre, and that a mighty cherub-sword had struck him with its lightning, while the accusing chorus swelled to heaven over his guilty head. With heavy soul he rode through the dark gate of Hielm Castle, and, dismounting from his steed, entered the arched hall of the keep, where sat his daughters.

The quiet Margarethé advanced affectionately to meet him, and proceeded to unbuckle his armour; while the impatient little Ulrica overwhelmed him with inquisitive questions, as to where he had been, and whether he had brought home booty and jewels.

"Hast thou not gold and jewels enough to fill thy young raven's maw?" asked the gloomy warrior, without looking at the child. "I have brought thee more than ever king's daughter in Denmark possessed. But the time may come," he added, in an under tone, "when thou must be contented with less. Go to the chamberlain, Rikké," he continued, in a sterner tone: "he will open the treasure-closet, and give thee the rosary on which King Erik Christopherson told his last prayer. Keep that as thy patrimony."

"Thanks, father--thanks!" exclaimed the innocent, rosy-cheeked child. "But, why dost thou always seem so angry when thou art kind to me? I may, then, now take the handsome string of pearls and diamonds to deck myself? Thanks, father--thanks!" she again cried, as she skipped away, clapping her hands with delight.

"And thou, my pious Margarethé," continued the marsk to his eldest daughter, as with emotion he gazed on her pale and quiet features--"thou carest not for my treasures; therefore to thee I give my blessing--if haply it carry not with it the weight of a curse!" he added, mentally, while he laid his hand upon her head. "Go, my child," he said, aloud, as he felt himself becoming giddy--"go, and send hither the chaplain."

"Art thou sick, dear father?" inquired the daughter, with deep concern: "thy hand is cold, and thou art quite pale."

"It will pass," he exclaimed, moodily, throwing himself into a seat. "Do as I bid thee, and remain in thy chamber until I call. God bless thee!"

Margarethé retired, with tears in her eyes; and in a little while a timorous-looking clerk entered, and bowed humbly before the master of the castle, without uttering a word.

"I have not long to live!" exclaimed the marsk: "prepare me for death, if thou canst, and administer to me the holy sacrament. We must at last, I perceive, make peace with Heaven, and think of our soul's welfare. Shrive, however, I shall not," he continued: "the world knows well what I have done, and the Omniscient best of all."

The trembling clerk began a discourse he was wont to use on similar occasions, concerning the seven mortal sins and purity of conscience, when the marsk impatiently interrupted him.

"This jargon helps me not," he said. "I wish not to hear *thy word*, clerk, but God's word. Prepare the sacrament--there is virtue in that! King Erik had it not before his death," he added, softly, "but he took it with him in his coffin. Haste thee, clerk! why lingerest thou?"

"Alas, stern sir marsk," stammered the clerk, "I cannot--I truly dare not. The canonical law, the chapter, and the holy father will condemn me, should I administer this holy rite to one who is excommunicated."

"Death and perdition!" exclaimed the marsk, grasping his sword, "thou shalt, base clerk, or thou diest!"

"Alas, most gracious master, while the ban of the church is on thee, thou hast not the power to--"

"Not the power! By Satan, I swear that, if thou bringest it not quickly, thou shalt die!"

The trembling clerk departed hastily, with a humble and obedient mien. But he returned not; for, hurrying from the castle as fast as he could, he instantly took to flight.



The marsk grew paler and paler, and, as he gazed on the door by which the priest had departed, it seemed to him an avenue of heaven, from which he expected an angel to bring him redemption. But it opened not. He endeavoured to rise, but sank back powerless. He would have shouted; but his voice was weak, and no one seemed to hear it.

At length his henchman, Mat Jute, entered. "A stranger of rank is here, stern sir marsk," he said, as he remained erect by the door, with his hand at his steel cap; "and he seems determined on entering, by fair means or foul, and that immediately."

The marsk beckoned for a cup of wine, which somewhat revived him; and "The clerk--the chaplain!" he anxiously cried, as his voice returned.

The trusty Mat now perceived with terror the condition of his master, and rushed out to bring the priest and a physician.

Scarcely had he left the door, when the stranger he had announced appeared. He was tall, and wore a lofty feathered hat, whilst the ample folds of a purple mantle, in which he was enveloped, concealed his face. They now fell aside, however, and revealed a countenance, pale and restless indeed, but on which the stamp of a daring cunning was ineffaceably imprinted.

"Duke Waldemar!" exclaimed the marsk, as he endeavoured to rise, but again sank back on his seat. "Come you hither to see how the man dies whom you have doomed an outlaw?"

"Do I come at an hour so solemn?" asked the duke. "Since, then, the angel of retribution has found you first, my design is frustrated. Know, however, that I came to defy you to mortal combat."

"You may still have your wish," replied the marsk, erecting himself. "But wherefore seek you this? Tell me quickly!"

"Like a perjured traitor, you have broken your knightly word, and have promised to the Norwegian king the crown which is mine."

"Ay, but not until you had broken our paction, and declared me an outlaw."

"That I did so to save you, you know well; but any excuse is welcome. Yet what fidelity could I expect from a regicide?"

"By that word you accuse yourself, Duke Waldemar. That sin--if sin it is--you share with me. Deep injuries had I to revenge, which you had not. If King Erik's blood stains not your hand, it yet lies as heavy on your head as it does on mine. Your counsel and wishes were in Finnerup barn, albeit you yourself were absent."

"A mightier Power has judged between us," replied the duke. "I will not curse you in your dying hour; but one thing you must tell me--you must solve to me a riddle that has driven me mad:--where is the dagger I gave you when we swore the tyrant's fall?"

"I left it in his bosom," replied the marsk, "that it might be known you were our head and prince. Your name I even had graven on it, that no doubt might exist of your participation in the deed, and that thus our fortunes might be indissolubly linked together."

"Shameless traitor! And thus it is that you would drag me with you to perdition! But say, who was the accuser that displayed the dagger of the bloody paction before the eyes of king and people?"

"If it was not Drost Hessel, let your confessor teach you the name of the angel who accuses the faithless!"

"It was not the drost," exclaimed the duke, while his brain began to reel: "he lay then in chains at Nordborg. But you it was--even you, accursed regicide!--or it was the foul fiend himself!"

"Priest, priest! where art thou?" cried the marsk, glancing fearfully, around him. "Name not the Evil One, Duke Waldemar! In our bloody council we invoked him often enough."

At that instant the door was hastily opened, and Mat Jute entered, much excited. "Sir marsk," he cried, "what is to be done? The priest has fled, and the island is surrounded by the king's ships. The troops are about to land, with Thorstenson at their head, to storm the castle."

"Let the priest speed to the infernal pit!" cried the marsk, rising. "Now, I will not die. Come on, King Erik's men! You shall once more see what Marsk Stig can accomplish!" He grasped his weapon with the suddenly returned strength of a giant. "Away!" he shouted, in a fearful voice: "every man to his post! We shall crush them with brynkiöls and glowing stones."

In an instant he was gone, and Duke Waldemar remained alone, agitated and undecided. The din of arms and soldiers was soon heard outside the castle, when at length, seizing his sword, he hurried out.

In the attack on Hielm, the royalists were repulsed with great loss; but Thorstenson still continued to beleagure the castle, and was making preparations for another assault, whilst the most marvellous stories and reports began to circulate among the people. The rumour that the marsk was dead spread among the besiegers. It was said by others, that he had mysteriously vanished, and that a stranger of eminence, who had been with him, had also suddenly disappeared. From this circumstance it was generally believed among the people, that the devil had been at Hielm, and carried off the awful king-murderer.

Meanwhile, the castle was defended with great bravery by the marsk's seven hundred mail-clad men. It was asserted that they were now commanded by the former lord of the castle, the outlawed Chamberlain Rané; and that his wife, the algrev's daughter, was with him. About the same time, too, a small female form, in white garments, with a crucifix in her folded hands, was frequently seen upon the ramparts of Hielm, where the dark warriors knelt before her as she passed them. The chiefs of the besiegers knew it was the marsk's eldest daughter; but many of the common soldiers looked on her as a supernatural being, who protected the castle, and rendered it impregnable.

One night, shortly after the rumour of the marsk's sudden disappearance had been spread abroad, a funeral train, bearing torches, landed from a ship lying off the parsonage of Stubberup, on Hindsholm,<sup>[42]</sup> and proceeded with silence and solemnity towards the churchyard. The maid-servants of the clergyman, assisted by some maidens from the village, were engaged in carding wool, forming what was called a carding-guild, which, when the work was over, terminated in dance and merriment. The girls were cheerfully at work, in the servants' room, where were a number of troughs, with a large tub in the centre, while a single dull lamp hung in an iron hook from the rafters, and two men-servants lay on a bench asleep.

The busy wool-carders were amusing themselves with singing ballads and telling ghost-stories, and were in the middle of a fearful tale concerning pirates who infested a wood in the northern part of the peninsula, and who had been captured one yule evening by Drost Peter. This was the band of Niels Breakpeace and Lavé Rimaardson, whose chiefs had then escaped, but who were next year taken and executed at Harrestrup. Twelve of these men had perished in captivity on Hindsholm; on which achievement there existed a ballad which was generally known, and which the maidens were now all engaged in singing with the greatest glee. The kitchen-maid, who took the lead, was at the fourteenth verse:--

"It was Drost Peter Hessel,  
He called unto his band:  
Wake up! wake up! no longer stay.  
For news has come to hand.  
Wake up! for now the time is come  
To don the trusty mail--"

when the ballad was suddenly interrupted by the brewer's maid, who rushed in, with terror in her looks, exclaiming that she had seen a funeral company bearing torches. The maidens dropped their cards, and the wool fell from their laps; whilst the men-servants aroused themselves, and rubbed their eyes: but none dared to venture forth to behold the cause of their fear.

"What scared fools you are!" at last exclaimed a little black-haired maiden, who superintended the work. "It must be one of the outlaws again, whom his comrades desire to bury in christian ground. Thus it was they did with Arved Bengtson, who was slain by Tulé Ebbesen."

"But they don't carry torches, and come with a long train--they sneak along, quietly and in darkness, when they go to bury a malefactor," observed the brewer's girl. "This must be a king, or some great man, unless, indeed, it is a procession of ghosts, like what old Anders Gossip has seen so often."

"Oh, what is it he cannot see, when the ale is in his head?" replied the other, laughing. "They are living men, I dare wager; and he is a milksop that dares not venture out to see."

"If thou darest venture out to see it, Elsie," rejoined the brewer's maid, "do so, and prove to us that thou art as bold as thou boastest! The fright has not yet left me: I feel it still in my knees."

"Go, Elsie," cried the kitchen-maid: "thou must, in truth, have a man's heart and courage, for the marsk's swain, long Mat Jute, is thy sweetheart, and I would not be alone with him, for all the world."

"That I can well believe," replied Elsie, with some pride. "Mat Jute is not to be jested with. Indeed, you cannot show me his match, in all Funen."

"You dare not let Christen Fiddler hear you so speak!" cried one of the girls.

"Why not?" replied Elsie, briskly. "I have told him so more than once. Had Mat Jute not fallen into misfortune, along with his master, and become such a ferocious strand-fighter, I should have had no fear of taking him for a husband. But the Lord preserve me from him now!"

"Aha!" laughed the kitchen-maid: "he kills folk, they say, for the smallest ill word said against

his master. He must be a perfect fiend."

"Say not so," cried Elsie. "Fierce he is, it is true, but he is still an honest fellow. He is true to his master--more's the pity!--and I cannot bear anybody to speak ill of him."

"Old love doesn't die," remarked one of the men-servants; "and if Mat Jute knew that thou hast now another sweetheart, little Elsie, he would yet come and bite thy head off."

"As for that," returned Elsie, "I am truer to him than many Funen lads are to their lasses; and, besides, I have only one sweetheart at a time."

"If thou wouldst see the show, Elsie, haste thee, or it will be gone," cried the brewer's maid. "It went up to the churchyard; and, if I saw truly in my fright, there was a light in the choir."

"Let us call the master!" exclaimed the kitchen-maid: "it is really awful. They may be church-robbers; and if they be ghosts, the father can read them away."

This was agreed to, and one of the maids went to awake her master.

"It is, more likely, the outlawed marsk, who wants to add to his treasury at Eskebjerg," observed one of the men-servants: "he has heaps of gold and jewels there, it is said."

"How long you think about it, Elsie," cried the kitchen-maid--"thou who hast been in a fortress. When thou wert at Flynderborg, thou wert afraid of neither soldiers nor rievvers--thou wert then as bold as thy jomfru."

"I did not say that," replied Elsie: "the brave Jomfru Ingé showed more courage than I, when the algrev and Niels Breakpeace paid us a visit. But you shall see, for all that, that I am not afraid to look at a funeral. A dead man can't bite my nose off. If it be an outlaw of mark, there are both gold and velvet with him that would make famous pillows and coverlets; and it were no sin to cheat the rieving pack of what they have plundered from our honest maids and wives. Come along with me, girls--I will go first."

Her companions opened their eyes with amazement at this proposal, but none of them had the courage to follow her, and the men-servants did not seem at all to relish the adventure.

"Very well," exclaimed Elsie, "I shall have all the treasure to myself. See it, I will, at any rate."

So saying, she went out alone, and beheld a procession with torches, exactly as described by the brewer's maid. As the procession moved slowly across the churchyard, towards the low door of the choir, the inquisitive and somewhat frightened girl paused, and, hiding herself behind a tree, peeped through the palings that fenced the priest's walk to the churchyard. She trembled as she plainly perceived the tall, muffled figures, who, in heavy iron armour, and with torches in their hands, bore forward a long black coffin; while, behind this dark funereal train, walked a priest in canonicals, with his hands bound.

Elsie summoned fresh courage, and stole close up to the gate when the procession had disappeared in the church. She now ventured to look around the churchyard, but not a soul was to be seen, and she then boldly advanced a little farther. With a beating heart she stood by the door of the choir, and peeped in. All was still and deserted, although lights were burning on the altar. Gliding noiselessly inside the church, she gazed with fearful curiosity around her, but not a creature was visible. The trap-door, however, in the middle of the aisle, was open, and, from the vault beneath, the light of many torches was reflected upon the arches of the roof. She stood a moment, hesitating whether to venture nearer or take to flight; but hastily muttering a short prayer to strengthen her, she crept cautiously towards the trap-door, where, through a chink between the hinges, she was enabled to behold what was going forward below, while, bent upon her knees, she scarcely dared to breathe. Twelve armed men, with torches in their hands, stood in a circle around a large coffin, covered with black velvet, and adorned with a gold-embroidered mort-cloth, upon which lay a sword, over the armorial bearings of the deceased. A solemn silence prevailed. The priest was unbound; and as the torchlight fell upon his face, with surprise and terror the girl recognised her master, the clergyman of the parish. The lid of the coffin was then raised, and she perceived within a long, gigantic figure, in the complete armour of a knight.

"Now, priest, lay God's body on his breast," uttered in a hollow voice one of the warriors through his locked helmet: "he had it not before his death, although he loudly prayed for it. But now he shall take it with him, even were he banned by the holy George and all the archangels to boot."

"I do it by compulsion," stammered forth the priest; "and, as I have already told you, it thus carries no blessing with it."

"Perform the rite with due propriety, or thou shalt die!" sounded fearfully the same hollow voice; while the priest, in trembling accents, consecrated the host, which he carefully placed in a little silver shrine, and laid on the breast of the corpse. The lid of the coffin was again replaced, and the priest, casting upon it three spadefuls of earth, repeated aloud the burial-service of the church.

"Amen!" cried all the iron-clad warriors, some of whom appeared to be deeply affected.

The procession then prepared to leave the vault, and the girl, springing up, essayed to escape by the way she had entered, when, with indescribable terror, she perceived the backs of two mailed figures in the church-door. She had nearly discovered herself by a shriek, which she with difficulty suppressed, as she hastily concealed herself beneath one of the benches; and not until she had heard the heavy tread of the last warrior over the gravestones in the church-passage--not until every sound was hushed, did she venture to peep carefully from her lurking-place.

The church was empty, and the door stood ajar, but lights were still burning on the altar. The trap-door of the vault remained open, and she perceived that there was still a light below. She again stole forth, and peeped through the crevice. A lantern stood on the coffin, but all the warriors were gone. She took heart, and ventured a step or two within: the splendid mort-cloth glittered before her eyes--she cautiously approached, and at length stood by the coffin, and beheld the armorial bearings on the black velvet pall, which glittered with silver and jewels. Under a helmet, with two white wings, blazed a silver star, with seven rays of sparkling gems.

"This would make a poor bride rich, and a bridal-bed magnificent," she whispered to herself. "What wants the riever with it in the grave?"

The lantern was in her hand, and the diamonds flashed a thousand rays, when, no longer able to withstand the temptation, she hastily secured the mort-cloth, and crept up the steps with it. But the rustling of armour, which she now heard behind her, petrified her with terror, and she dropped the lantern; while, at the same moment, a powerful hand seized the pall, and a terrible voice, as from the grave, cried--"Accursed woman! wilt thou plunder the dead?" She was now entirely overcome, and, uttering a piercing shriek, fell backwards insensible, into the vault.

"Rievers! pirates!" now shouted numerous voices outside the church; and all the young men of Stubberup, who meanwhile had assembled to dance at the carding-guild, came rushing up to the church, armed with flails and pitchforks, and headed by the priest's farm-servant, with a lantern in his hand.

"Go thou first, Christen Fiddler!" exclaimed one of the party: "it may be witchcraft and devilry, but thou canst read as well as the father; and where thy sweetheart could go alone, thou canst surely venture with a dozen."

While they still lingered by the church-door, a tall figure in iron mail, and with a drawn sword in his hand, rushed forth, and with a wild howl overthrew those who stood before him, and quickly disappeared.

The terrified peasants crossed themselves, and repeated their paternosters; none doubting but that it was the Evil One himself whom they had seen. At length, recovering their courage, they ventured within the church, where they found the vault open, and discovered with horror the little Elsie, bleeding and dying, beside the great coffin, over which the mort-cloth had again been thrown. They bore the maiden to the parsonage, where the priest, who appeared pale and agitated, caused them to swear never to divulge what they had seen and heard that night.

What the dying girl confided to the priest remained a secret; but, three days after, Elsie was committed with all silence to the grave; and for many a day the story was told on Hindsholm, that she had been murdered by her old sweetheart, Mat Jute, because she would have plundered his master's grave.

The priest of Stubberup caused the vault to be built up, and no one after, wards dared to open it. Some time after, it was rumoured that Marsk Stig had been secretly buried in Rörvig Kirk, in Zealand, where, probably, the funeral of one of the outlaws had taken place. In a short time, the burial-place of the excommunicated marsk became involved in uncertainty, which his friends considered it important to maintain, lest, as a man who died under the ban of the Church, his remains should be persecuted and maltreated. Some even propagated the report that the marsk did not die at Hielm, but on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land; by which pious invention they thought to protect his grave and redeem his memory.

But the story of the priest's maid-servant, who had been killed by the marsk's follower, obtained the greatest currency, although it ran differently in different quarters; the version nearest the truth relating that one of the marsk's trusty servants had betrothed a girl upon the spot where his master had been secretly buried; but that recognising, on the bolsters of the bridal bed, the velvet of his master's pall, he had, in consequence, murdered his young wife on their wedding-night. [\[43\]](#)

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The vehement Thorstenson having been appointed drost of the kingdom during Drost Peter's imprisonment, the orders issued by him in the king's name were of the most stringent character; and the regicides and their adherents were prosecuted with a degree of rigour and violence that Drost Peter would not have sanctioned. This was in a great measure attributable to Junker Christopherson's desire of vengeance; and though the king neither approved of nor permitted any base revenge, no one dared to entreat his forbearance where his father's murderers and their

accomplices were concerned.

The death or disappearance of the marsk struck his men with terror; nor did the other outlaws deem themselves so secure as heretofore. Rané Jonsen, after a fruitless effort to defend his paternal castle against the royalists, had abandoned the beleaguered fortress, and it was soon known that Hielm Castle had been stormed and demolished by Thorstenson. One evening, shortly after this event, two little girls came, hand in hand, to a miserable peasant-hut, near Helgeness, begging for shelter. These were the orphan daughters of Marsk Stig, who, in their flight from Denmark, found refuge and protection among the compassionate peasantry.

About this time the commandant of Sjöborg, the honest old Poul Hvit, was awakened one night by a loud knocking at the gate, which, on being opened, gave admission to a troop of royal horsemen and two bound prisoners. Poul Hvit himself, with a lantern in his hand, received these unexpected visitors; and as he examined the wretched habiliments of the prisoners, he appeared surprised that men of their mean condition should be conducted thither as state prisoners.

One of them, a tall and haughty figure, wore an old gray jerkin, torn down to the skirts; on his head was a dirty, small, open cowl, and he was seated in a wooden saddle, stuffed with straw, placed upon the back of a lean plough-horse, beneath whose belly his feet were tied together with a rope of coarse hair. As the commandant held the lantern to the prisoner's face, he recognised with astonishment in the proud countenance, although now flushed and swollen with indignation and grief, that of the archbishop himself, the haughty Jens Grand, who remained silent, and was apparently suffering much from his degraded position.

His companion and fellow-prisoner, who was apparelled and mounted in a similar manner, was the seditious and mischievous Provost Jacob of Lund. They had both been seized in Lund, in the king's name, by Junker Christopherson, by whose orders they were conducted through the country in this humiliating manner.

The captain of the troop then handed the commandant a royal warrant, undersigned by Drost Thorstenson, wherein he was made answerable, under pain of death, for the safe custody of the important prisoners, and commanded to load them with chains, and place them in the severest durance.

"Herregud! we are all sinful men!" ejaculated the castellan, as he obeyed, and, without further remark, conducted the half-fainting archbishop and his companion to the prison, where, however, he humanely procured them refreshment, and bade them master their sorrows before they were fettered.

Jarl Mindre-Alf still lay in the felon's dungeon in Haraldsborg. He had been condemned to death, but had artfully contrived to have his execution deferred from time to time, by occasionally communicating, to the commandant of Roskild, new and important information respecting the outlaws and their accomplices, which required time for complete investigation.

On a dark night in November, a vessel, bearing the Danish flag and pennant, ran into Roskild Fiord. On the fore-castle stood one whose long brown hair was partially concealed by a shaggy cap, whilst a pitched wadmél jerkin covered his knight's dress. A huge dog lay growling at his feet; and by his side stood a strong, plump female figure, in the dress of a fisher-girl, but wearing a fine linen cloth over her plaited auburn hair, and a pair of large gold buckles in her shoes.

"The attempt is too daring, thou headstrong woman!" exclaimed the knight: "should I be recognised, it will cost me my life."

"But 'tis to save my father's life," replied, in a Norse accent, a youthful female voice; "and he is yet a better man than thou wilt ever be, my crafty Rané. Yesterday didst thou promise me to set him free, and to-day thou refuseth. It would cost thee but a word to the castellan; yet for this thou wilt not now venture to show thyself where thou hast so often landed for plunder. Nay, nay--this time, at least, thou *shalt* keep thy word."

It was Jarl Mindre-Alf's daughter, the brave Kirstine, who thus spoke, while she cast on her husband a look indicative of anything but affection. In conjunction with the crew, who were devoted to her, she had compelled Rané personally to undertake in earnest what he had convinced her was very easy, if he but chose to set about it, but which no one except himself could accomplish. Rané had given the viking's daughter ample proofs, that, as a daring and wily freebooter, he was not deficient in courage or cunning; but she had also early discovered, with bitter indignation, that neither was he the redoubtable hero she had dreamt of, when she followed him from Norway, and danced with him over the castle-bridge of Ryphen. The chivalrous wooer soon became the rude and imperious spouse; and Kirstine's affection changed to contempt and hatred when she learnt that, as an evident participator in the king's murder, he had been adjudged and declared an outlaw.

The only tie which still bound them together was one of mutual fear and necessity--a rugged bond, which was often well nigh being snapped asunder. A ballad was already composed and sung in Norway on the unloving pair. It subsequently became popular in Denmark; and it has thus been recorded that the faithlessness of Rané to his former king, and the sympathy which Kirstine felt for the royal house, was frequently the cause of hostile scenes between them. Their

quarrel now took this complexion, while steering into Roskild Fiord.

"Beware thou of my faithful hound to-night!" whispered Rané: "he can see that thou wilt lead me into misfortune for thy father's sake."

"Pity it was," replied Kirstine, "that thy king had not a hound as faithful: he would not then, perhaps, have been basely betrayed by his chamberlain."

Rané was so enraged that, with a menacing gesture, he threatened to throw her overboard. "I betrayed not the king!" he cried. "Were they even my own kinsmen who say so, they are my mortal foes."

The ferocious hound, perceiving the threatening gesture of his master, growled and showed his teeth at the shrinking lady.

"Have a care, Rané!" exclaimed Kirstine, holding fast by the cordage. "Twice now hast thou laid violent hands on me; but it shall not again happen. A single word from me, and the boatmen will fling thee overboard. Had I known what kind of a knight thou wert, assuredly I should not have offended my father by marrying thee, nor have left my fatherland to follow an outlawed regicide."

Rané ground his teeth with rage, and again assumed a threatening attitude.

"Beware!" whispered Kirstine, still retaining hold of the cordage. "Think not that 'tis so dark here as in the barn of Finnerup! Dost hear the song of my trusty countrymen in the forehold? They know my sir husband, and apprehend mischief."

Rané, with whose rage alarm had now mingled, heard the Norse boatmen singing, whilst two of them approached the forecastle:--

"The wood has ears, the field has een,  
And we are outlaws, little Kirstine!"

"Oh, had you but King Erik spared,  
We need not from the land have fared."

"Across the table he struck her sore--  
'Beware this speech our guests before!"

"And he struck her on the cheek so red--  
'I did not wish King Erik dead,  
Though spurned by kith and kin."

"Dost hear?" again whispered Kirstine: "thou shouldst know the ballad well! If thou desirest not a worse ending, assist me now to save my father, and then I bid thee farewell for ever. But if thou shouldst act treacherously now, my trusty countrymen shall bind and carry thee to the King of Denmark."

"Be still, dearest Kirstine! I will do as thou desirest," whispered Rané, as he cast a fearful glance towards the sturdy boatmen, who appeared to be as faithful and vigilant a body-guard to their lady, as was the hound to the faithless knight.

The vessel soon lay to at a remote part of the fiord, where Rané and his wife landed, and proceeded in silence to the town. The hound followed; and, at a little distance behind, by a signal from Kirstine, the two sturdy boatmen.

They passed thus through the streets of Roskild, until they reached the prison-tower of Haraldsborg, near which a crowd was collected, listening to an old crone singing street-ballads. She was seated on a stone, and, although apparently blind, carried a lantern in her hand, while on her arm hung a tin-box, on which she accompanied her song, and into which her hearers now and then dropped a piece of money. The moon, which had now risen, shone brightly on the tower and on the people, who apparently had gathered there to catch a glimpse of the famous prisoner, and to amuse themselves with the gossip of the town.

"Saw you the drost?" asked a soldier: "such a carl!"

"Ah, Heaven help us!" exclaimed a burgher; "he is under bolt and bar at Nordborg; and, until he is free, we shall have neither peace nor luck in the land."

"Meanest thou Drost Hessel?" replied the soldier. "Ay, he truly was a brave gentleman; but 'twas the new drost I spoke of--he with the long beard: he's a tough carl, and, while he advises, neither rogues nor traitors shall long be safe in Denmark."

"How long stays he here?" asked the burgher.

"Only till the fleet is ready, and the landfolk assembled," answered the other. "The king then comes from Helsingborg, and we shall at the duke."

"Bravo! Drost Thorstenson is no fool!" cried a seaman: "he well knows there is no road to land except by sea."

"How so, friend?" asked a landsknecht: "was it not on land we got the holy banner, without which there is no road, either by sea or shore? Now, however, we go together; but if the Norsemen should land again, without leave, where were we without the landsmen then?"

"Well, my countryman," replied the seaman, "we will drink to good fellowship both on sea and land. You laid by the heels that sea-bear in the tower, where he shall no longer plunder and burn our sloops. Sing us the ballad anent the corbie in the tower there, carlin!" he cried, turning to the crone, "and thou shalt have a silver groat."

"How long will they allow him to remain there, and befool both bailiff and hangman?" inquired a burgher.

"Have you not seen the wheel outside the town?" replied the seaman: "he'll be safe anchored there in a week hence, for Drost David has sworn it. He was, to give the devil his due, a daring sea-cock; but two such rievvers as the marsk and he would soon have sunk the country."

"Say you the algrev will be executed in a week hence?" exclaimed a young girl. "Alas, it is still a sad end for such a rich and distinguished gentleman!"

"Come, carlin, sing now!" cried the seaman: "here's my groat. Look! there he is, poking his head out of the hole. He wants to see if there be any good friends here to help him."

"Merciful Heavens! within a week. Heardst thou that, Rané?" exclaimed Kirstine, weeping, and involuntarily grasping the arm of her hated husband. "And, see, there he stands looking down to us. Haste thee, Rané, and save him! I will forgive thee all, and remain with thee, outlaw though thou be--only save him! save him! Thou canst if thou wilt."

"Be silent, or, by Satan, thou wilt betray me with thy whimpering!" quickly whispered Rané, as he looked anxiously around him.

And his fears were not unfounded, for some of the townspeople had already been suspiciously watching the two strange figures; although now the attention of all was attracted to the blind crone on the kerb-stone, who began to sing:--

"Sir Alf was born in Norraway,  
Yet lists not there to bide,  
Though fifteen lordships he doth own,  
To keep his state and pride.<sup>[44]</sup>

"Alf wends upon the rampart green,  
And cons with care his book;  
There meets him Bendit Rimaardson,  
Who is so dour of look.

"What brings thee here, carl Mindre-Alf?  
Thou art of courage rare:  
If now thou'rt made king's prisoner,  
The land no worse shall fare.'

"But I am not Sir Mindre-Alf--  
That is no name of mine:  
A mass-boy, as thou seest, I am,  
And fetch the priest some wine.'

"Bent lifted off this mass-boy's cap,<.p>  
And looked him in the een--  
'An I see right, thou art the Norse  
Sir Mindre-Alf, I ween.'

"And thou wert once a clerk with me,  
I knew thee well at school,  
And thou mayst not deny, that oft  
Thou wrought'st us pain and dool.'

"An be it thou, Bent Rimaardson,  
And thou be kinsman true,  
An oath, I wiss, thou'lt swear to-day,  
That me thou never knew.'

"But now they've ta'en Jarl Mindre-Alf,  
His feet in fetters bound--"

"Away!" shouted the landsknecht who guarded the prison-tower: "finish your screaming, carlin, and draw not the whole town hither; for whoever comes three steps nearer the keep, will assuredly have a lance run through his body."

The crowd drew back, and, with them, Rané, dragging along his wife, who still clung to his arm, assailing him with urgent entreaties to redeem his promise and save her father.

"Nay, it cannot be done!" exclaimed Rané, in an under tone: "I know well he has sworn my death and destruction, and now let him help himself!"

So saying, he attempted to shake off his wife, but she held him tightly. He then pulled his cap over his eyes to avoid being recognised; for, with increased terror, he now observed near him some of the late king's servants, whom he had been the means of disgracing at court.

"Leave me, woman!" he whispered "thou hast betrayed me--I am discovered!"

A growing murmur arose among the crowd, and the cry of "Rané, the outlawed chamberlain!" ran from mouth to mouth.

"Thou desirest, then, to cause my death, obstinate woman!" exclaimed Rané, with subdued vehemence; while, with a violent effort, he succeeded in freeing himself, and immediately took to flight.

"Seize him--seize him!" shouted the crowd: "it is Rané, the outlawed chamberlain! Seize the traitor!" And he was followed with loud cries by the enraged populace, who threatened to tear him in pieces. His hound, however, by furiously attacking his pursuers, several of whom he bit and frightened, enabled Rané to escape, both master and dog having suddenly disappeared in the vicinity of the Grayfriars' Convent; whilst Kirstine, amidst the confusion, was fortunately extricated from the crowd by her faithful boatmen.

Rané remained undiscovered for some days, during which, as it was known that he had many relatives among the grayfriars, the convent was strictly searched by Drost Thorstenson's orders, but no trace was found of the dangerous fugitive.

In a narrow street, and under a wooden shed that projected from the convent-wall, was a well, out of which a large, ferocious-looking dog had been observed to leap, by a girl who went there one morning early to draw water. She related the circumstance to her neighbours, who, from the description, inferred that it was the hound of the outlawed Rané. The authorities were forthwith apprised of the circumstance, and the well was examined; when, in it, and against the convent-wall, was found a ledge, which was reached with some difficulty. Here was discovered a strongly-barred door, which was soon broken open, and revealed a low narrow passage, leading to a dark and noisome hole between the double convent-walls. The first who ventured into this mysterious hiding-place was furiously attacked by the dog, which, however, after a desperate encounter, was at last overpowered and killed. By the aid of their lanterns, they then carefully searched the hole, but no trace of a human being was perceptible.

In one damp corner, swarming with toads and lizards, lay a heap of stones and gravel, into which, before leaving the spot, one of the soldiers accidentally thrust his lance. This action was followed by a smothered cry of pain: the gravel-heap was then speedily removed, and a sad and miserable spectacle exposed. Close in the corner, and huddled quite together, lay the outlaw Rané, so disfigured by mire and blood that he scarcely resembled a human creature. He sprang up, apparently irresolute whether to fight or fly, and was instantly seized and conducted to Haraldsborg, where the stern Drost Thorstenson, without further form or delay, sentenced him to death, in the king's name.

Three days after the capture of Rané, the new Dean of Roskild was returning, late in the evening, from a farmhouse in the neighbourhood, where he had been administering the last rites of the Church. Two young choristers rode before him, carrying torches; and the holy pix and anointing-cruze; under a screen, were borne by a couple of lay brothers. Their way lay by the place of execution, which was in a waste field outside of Roskild, and where the algre and Rané had suffered the same morning. When the boys reached this spot, they became alarmed.

"Sir dean," said one of them, "it is not well to come this way."

"Proceed, children, in God's name!" answered the dean. "They cease now from troubling; and, with the Holiest in the midst of us, we need fear nothing."

The lads obeyed in silence; but, after advancing a few steps,

"See, see!" cried the younger of them--"there is something stirring up yonder."

"And look!" added the other, "now there is a light--candles are burning by the dead men."

"Ghosts and devilry!" exclaimed one of the lay brothers. "Read, reverend sir, read!"

The dean, who now also became alarmed, halted, and gazing towards the mound, on which the fatal wheels were distinctly visible, saw a female form, holding in her hand a torch, the light of which, falling full on her countenance, revealed an expression of the deepest grief, united with so much calmness, that she resembled a Niobe in marble; whilst a number of clumsy-looking fellows, in the garb of seamen, were quietly but hastily engaged in releasing the bodies of the two malefactors. This being accomplished, they deposited them in coffins, and, forming themselves



into a procession, left the mound, bearing the two corpses in their midst. The grave female figure preceded them with the torch; and the dean, who, with his subordinates, had not stirred, now perceived that she wore the scarlet mantle of a princess, or of the lady of some knight of eminence.

The funeral train took the road to the fiord, approaching close to where the dean was standing; but the calm, melancholy features of the lady remained unchanged, nor did the others who composed the procession seem at all concerned at the presence of the ecclesiastic and his assistants. The latter, folding their hands, remained in silent prayer; while, as the train passed by, and the holy pix glittered in the torchlight, the grave seamen bowed their heads, and the knight's lady knelt down, while tears streamed along her pale cheeks.

As if moved by sympathy, the dean, accompanied by the choristers, then commenced singing, in a deep clear voice, a holy vigil for the dead men's souls; which they continued until the whole procession had passed. The mourners soon disappeared at the fiord, whence, shortly afterwards, a vessel departed under full sail.

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After the death of the marsk, Duke Waldemar had openly allied himself with the brave Norwegian king, and had sent to the young Danish monarch, and his mother the queen, a declaration of war, grounded on the demands which he himself, and his brother Prince Erik, advanced for the possessions of Svendborg and Langeland. The duke and the Norwegian had agreed to commence the war with their united fleets and armies; but the impatience of the duke would not allow him to wait the arrival of the Norse fleet; and he ran out boldly with his own, which he conducted into Grönsund, between Falster and Möen.

Sir John and the council resolved to take advantage of this imprudent step, and immediately issued orders to man a number of long-ships and cutters, for the purpose of attacking the duke. This fleet, with young King Erik himself on board the long-ship Old Waldemar, early one morning ran out of Issefiord, and proceeded through the Great Belt to Grönsund, where the vessels of the duke had come to anchor on the Falster coast. Sir John and the chancellor were on board the king's ship, together with the royal trabants, and a numerous body of knights, who, in full armour, only knew each other by their helmet jewels and armorial bearings.

Close to the king's vessel followed Count Gerhard, in his own long-ship, accompanied by a few sloops from Kiel, manned by brave Holsteiners. Thorstenson himself commanded one of the largest long-ships, and, in conjunction with Sir John, directed the movements of the whole fleet.

The commanders still pursued the ancient Danish mode of attacking a hostile fleet, seeking to break the position of the enemy by a vigorous and combined movement, and, by coming as soon as possible to close quarters, to allow the fate of the engagement to be decided, as in land battles, by numbers and personal courage. To this end, they immediately ordered the whole royal fleet to form in order of battle under the coast of Möen, and opposite the duke, bringing all the ships together in a single compact line, in the centre of which was the royal vessel, from whence the position of both fleets, which were nearly of equal force, could be easily seen. The duke, however, put only his largest long-ships into line, and these he brought into an advanced position; whilst he allowed the lighter and smaller sloops and cutters to remain behind, with sails unbent, close under the coast of Falster.

In all the vessels of the king's fleet, the awning was then taken down which served to protect the deck from the inclemency of the weather. On the poop of the Old Waldemar, surrounded by the most valiant of the royal knights, himself the tallest and strongest amongst them, stood the standard-bearer, holding aloft the royal banner--the dark parti-coloured standard of the murdered king, with its numerous keys, wheels, and other remarkable symbols. The hold was filled with the common soldiers, who, besides sword and javelin, were armed with bows and slings, while a portion of them had the superintendence of the heavy war-machines; and at the stern, having the command of the whole vessel, stood the steersman, whose office, in the king's ship, was filled by old Sir John.

The young king, who, with the Chancellor Martinus, stood by his side, now exclaimed--

"Explain to me, Sir John, why the duke allows his sloops to lie detached behind the long-ships? Drost Peter, I remember, once informed me that Waldemar Seier and old King Waldemar did the same, when they had to deal with a stronger foe, and feared to hazard their whole force at once. But cannot the duke now surround us with his sloops, and fall upon our rear?"

"We will not give him time for that," replied Sir John. "When we have first saluted him at a distance, we will row rapidly forwards, working our slings and rams; and when we are once alongside of him, the engagement can be terminated sword in hand."

"The Almighty grant us victory!" exclaimed the chancellor. "Before you give the signal for battle, Sir John, we must permit our people to think of their souls, and to pray the Lord of victory to aid us."

"In God's name! But let it be soon and short, for there is little time to spare, and the Lord

shields his own."

The chancellor then, accompanied by several ecclesiastics, began a war-hymn, in which all the soldiers and fighting-men joined; whilst many, including the young king, followed the example of the chancellor and clerks, and reverently bent the knee.

Scarcely was the solemn war-hymn ended, before the standard-bearer, at Sir John's order, gave the signal for battle by waving the royal flag three times over his head; and in a moment, although it was clear noon, the sky was darkened with the arrows and stones, projected simultaneously from every sling and bow on board the royal ships. This attack was answered by a similar discharge of missiles from the duke's fleet, the foreign soldiers in which now sent forth their wild war-cries.

Sir John had ordered a shieldburg<sup>[45]</sup> to be formed around the young king and the clergymen, through which, however, many arrows pierced, while the stones and other missiles rattled on the bucklers with a frightful din. On the royal vessel there alighted such an enormous mass of stones, that it was evident the duke had concentrated his attack on it alone. A few men fell, and many were wounded; but the distance was still too great for these missiles to take much effect.

On board the king's ship, the standard-bearer now again waved the royal banner, and the entire fleet rowed rapidly forward, while the heavy engines of war were put in preparation. At the stern of the king's vessel was placed an immense prow-hog, which, with its spiked and sharp iron crest, broke into the centre of the duke's fleet, and, at the first blow, parted two long-ships, thus forcing the duke to fight his own vessel without aid from the others.

At the same instant, the sea-rams were vigorously worked. These consisted of heavy beams, cased in iron, which, suspended by chains from the masts, were swung with crushing effect against the enemies' vessels. The duke possessed no such heavy machines; and it was soon apparent that the royalists had gained a considerable advantage in this first assault, great confusion having been produced in the enemies' fleet, the line of which was already almost entirely broken.

It was, however, speedily evident that the lighter arms of the duke were not less dangerous. He seemed not yet desirous of boarding, but, with his light vessels, evaded the advancing line of heavy battle-ships; whilst, besides arrows, stones, and bolts, he continued to shower upon them great numbers of caltrops, and of fire-pots, filled with pitch, brimstone, and oil. The latter were set on fire with tow, and, as they fell, cast forth flames, which, seizing upon the sails and cordage, created great damage and confusion in the royal fleet.

The duke immediately availed himself of this to order an attack on its rear by his smaller vessels. When he heard, by the shouting, that this was in execution, and became sure that the royalists would have to fight in opposite directions and with divided strength he no longer avoided the attempt to board, but ran his own long-ship close up to that of the king.

Thorstenson, who had quickly perceived this cunning manœuvre, commanded the cables by which the royal ships were bound together to be immediately cut asunder, in order that he might secure a more advantageous position; but the caltrops had produced so much disorder, and the fire-pots taken such effect, that the men were fully occupied in extinguishing the flames, and in defending themselves against the boarders, who now threatened them on both sides.

In this extremity young Erik, who stood by the side of the chancellor, with his sword in one hand and a javelin in the other, observed the duke near him, preparing to leap on board the blazing vessel. The sight of the duke enraged him. "'Twas an unchivalrous piece of cunning, Duke Waldemar!" he cried, at the same time dashing at him his javelin, which struck the feather of the duke's helmet, and carried away its jewel.

At this a shout of delight broke forth on board the king's ship, and, abandoning their efforts to extinguish the fire, the whole crew rushed forward, to repulse the duke's boarders.

"Be calm, brave countrymen!" shouted Sir John. "Let us first quench the fire, and then reckon with them for our house-warming!"

Both fire and attack raged most fiercely at the prow, and the standard-bearer, forced to defend himself, had been obliged to fix the banner in a plank by his side, where it was soon caught by the flames, and fell hissing into the water. This incident, while it raised a wild shout of joy on board the duke's fleet, greatly disheartened the royalists, who regarded it as an unlucky omen.

"My father's banner has fallen!" exclaimed the young king, in a tone of melancholy; "no good fortune attended it."

"That of your great ancestor was always victorious, my royal master!" exclaimed the chancellor.

"But it, alas, lies in the duke's stronghold in Sleswick," sighed the king. "The Lord, however, can still aid us."

"His help is near when we call upon Him," replied the chancellor: "therefore be comforted, sir king!--But see you yonder fisherman, and in what he is engaged?"

While the king was gazing in the direction indicated by the chancellor, the duke saw with astonishment that the crews on board his vessels were slipping and reeling about like drunken men; and he now first perceived, running boldly to and fro among his fleet, a small fishing-boat, in which stood a tall man, in a black leathern mail, casting pots of soap on board the ships. On some of the vessels, too, fell pots of finely powdered lime, which blinded the fighting-men; while, to increase his dismay, some of the vessels began to fill and sink. In the midst of the terror and confusion thus occasioned, a daring black-haired swimmer was seen, with a large auger in his hand, diving here and there under the ships.

"Shoot the accursed fisherman! crash the swimmer's head!" furiously cried the duke. "Board--storm--all hands!"

The boarding soon became general. No one could any longer stand on the slippery deck of the duke's ship; and as the fire had fortunately been extinguished in that of the king, there then commenced a hot and serious conflict, in which the combatants fought man to man, and in which many fell on both sides. Thorstenson, in whose long-ship the battle also raged furiously, fought heroically, many falling by his hand. Count Gerhard, too, reaped laurels. His ship lay opposite to that of Duke Erik of Langeland, Duke Waldemar's brother, and generally known as Duke Longlegs. By the side of his master, in the equipments of a squire, stood the old jester, who, when the duke appeared on the point of boarding them, exclaimed--

"See! there comes my illustrious namesake with the long legs! Hide your lady's veil, stern sir, that it may not be again torn!"

Count Gerhard, in the spirit of chivalry and as a defiance to Duke Waldemar, had attached the queen's veil to his breastplate; but, that he might not now lose it in the fray, he took the advice of his jester, and placed it under his mail.

"We shall not run now from hares or cats, stern sir," said the jester, while a roguish smile dispelled the gravity of his countenance.

But this remark touched his good-natured master in the tenderest point, by reminding him of an unfortunate encounter with the Ditmarshers, wherein his troops were really first thrown into disorder by a hare or cat.

"Now, by Satan! Longlegs, I shall strike thee dead!" cried the count, as he furiously brandished his sword.

"Spare your wrath for the proper Longlegs--see, here he is!" replied the jester, as he stepped back, and pointed towards the forecastle, where Duke Erik came storming onwards.

"The fiend take all the Longlegs!" shouted the count, as he rushed forward to the combat.

The royal ship continued to be closely pressed upon from every side. Old Sir John had some trouble to protect the young king, who insisted on leaving the shieldburg to take part in the fray. The duke himself had struck down the standard-bearer, and, springing on board at the forecastle, he was now, backed by his bravest knights, fiercely engaged on the rowing-deck with the royal trabants. At every stroke he seemed to cut out for himself a path, by which he was advancing nearer to the king.

Sir John had placed himself in the narrow passage that led from deck to deck, where with calm energy he defended the entrance to the poop, where stood the king, between the chancellor and Squire Aagé Jonsen, in front of the ecclesiastics. A vigorous stroke from the duke at length reached Sir John's helmet, which fell cloven from his gray head, while the old man himself sank bleeding between the rowing-benches.

At this sight the king sprang forward. "By all holy men!" he exclaimed, "that stroke you shall atone for with your blood, most treacherous duke!"

He became furious, and, shaking off all restraints, rushed forward, and had slightly wounded the duke, when, in his eagerness, he stumbled over a bench. The trabants, who had each an opponent to encounter, did not observe the imminent danger of the king; but his squire, Aagé Jonsen, darting forward, now closed with the duke, while Chancellor Martinus placed himself, with his mass-book in his hand, between young Erik and the combatants. Soon, however, the youthful monarch stood again prepared for battle, but the chancellor restrained him. Squire Aagé, unable to cope with the duke as a swordsman, and bleeding from many wounds, was already beginning to give way, when the chancellor, who had raised his hands and eyes towards heaven in supplication, suddenly exclaimed--

"Behold, behold! Danebrog, Danebrog! The Lord sends us victory--*hoc signo victoria!*"<sup>[46]</sup>

The joyful shout of "Danebrog! Danebrog!" was now raised by the royalists; and the duke, on looking up, perceived before him, on a rowing-bench, the well-known Danebrog flag, in the hands of a tall knight, clad in steel blue harness, and with open visor. It was Drost Peter, in whom, with

mingled rage and fear, the duke recognised the blue knight of the tourney, and saw the well-known lion-hilted dagger gleaming in his uplifted right hand.

"Ha! thou--my deadly foe!" he cried, rushing madly towards him; but his vision forsook him, and he heard but the clash against his breastplate of the dagger, which, glancing aside, remained deep in his left shoulder. Uttering a cry of terror, he let fall his sword, and reeled backwards.

"Fly, fly! God has doomed us!" he cried, wildly, as, with a desperate leap, he regained his own ship.

His knights followed him, and, perceiving the battle was lost, quickly hoisted sail and took to flight, leaving the victory in the hands of the royalists.

The sudden appearance of the Danebrog seemed to have rendered every man of the king's soldiers invincible. From Thorstenson's ship arose a loud shout of victory; and Count Gerhard had also so entirely cleared his decks, that the severely wounded Duke Erik, finding himself nearly alone, sprang overboard, and saved his life by swimming to his brother's vessel. The royal ships were filled with slain or captured foemen; whilst of the duke's fleet, which was altogether broken up, a number of vessels were sunk, and others captured--the duke himself escaping with great difficulty and danger.

Old Sir John, whose wound had been bound up, now received, with feelings of pleasure, the thanks of the king for the brave defence he had made. His wound was not dangerous; although the heavy blow had stunned him, and he felt with regret that he could no longer wield his sword as in his youthful days. From the poop, and over the heads of the king and the aged knight, waved the sacred Dannebrog banner, which had been entrusted to the custody of the trabants by Drost Peter, whilst he hastened to aid Thorstenson in completing the victory. In the tumult of battle, only a few had recognised him.

"The Almighty be praised!" cried the chancellor, kneeling, and raising his folded hands towards heaven, as, with a loud voice, he began to chaunt the *Te Deum laudamus*, in which the ecclesiastics joined, and during which the king and Sir John, with all else on board, continued reverently kneeling.

Scarcely was the solemn hymn of victory ended, before the chivalrous Drost Peter and Thorstenson were observed in a fishing-boat, hastening towards the king's ship, accompanied by old Henner Friser and Skirmen. The drost sprang on board, and congratulated the king on his victory, whilst, with a loud exclamation of delight, the young victor rushed into his arms.

"Thou it was--thou it was!" cried young Erik--"thou broughtest me victory with my ancestor's banner."

Drost Peter bowed his head, and raised his hand solemnly towards heaven.

"Yea, the Lord be praised! for from Him alone comes victory!" exclaimed the king, with emotion, whilst he again embraced his faithful friend.

Drost Peter was greatly exhausted by his hurried journey. He had been fearful of arriving too late for the battle, and had also suffered much, after his escape from prison, in his exertions to obtain possession of the important banner, whose singular influence on the people, ever since the days of Waldemar Seier, was well known; it being their pious belief that, with this their national standard, and with confidence in God, they were sure to conquer. Its effect on Duke Waldemar had also been of vital importance. His right arm was paralysed from the moment when Drost Peter returned him the traitor-dagger, stained with the heart's-blood of King Erik Christopherson, and it was now with reason hoped that he would never more raise it against the crown of Denmark.

Drost Peter's unexpected arrival produced great joy on board the king's ship. All crowded around him, while he briefly related how old Henner, with Aasé and Skirmen, had contrived to procure his escape from Nordborg Castle, and assisted him in obtaining possession of the national standard. He then presented to the king the faithful old Henner and the active squire, both of whom had contributed to the victory--the latter by boring the holes in the enemy's vessels; while the idea of the soap and lime, which the king considered more novel than chivalrous, belonged altogether to Henner, who had pretended to the drost that he had a design of trading in these articles.

"Kneel!" said the young king, turning to Skirmen: "I shall dub thee a knight, for thou hast merited the honour, and I exempt thee from the usual proofs."

With tears of joy in his dark eyes, and an exclamation of gratitude, the brave squire knelt and received the stroke of knighthood in the name of God and the Holy Virgin.

The king then beckoned to Aagé Jonsen, whose numerous yet not dangerous wounds had, meanwhile, been bound up. "Thou, too," said the king--"thou hast defended my life today like a hero, as thou didst at Tornborg."

Aagé knelt in silence, and arose a knight.

"I desire not knighthood on account of the soap-pots, sir king," said old Henner; "but, by my troth, the soap was capital--and the carls required it much."

"If thou canst not be a knight, ingenious old man," replied the king, "thou canst be a steersman, and such from this day thou art."

Old Henner was greatly affected: he spoke not a word, but bent his knee, and kissed the hand of the young king, who, however, hastily withdrew it, for a tear which had fallen from the old warrior's eyes had scalded him.

In the midst of the general joy, Count Gerhard had come on board, when, after having heartily embraced Drost Peter, both he and Thorstenson received the thanks and commendations of the king, who now heard in detail how matters had fared in the count's ship, and how Duke Longlegs had sprung overboard.

"Take the fleetest boat, Count Gerhard," said the king, extending his hand to him, "and proceed to Helsingborg, where my mother, the queen, is expecting tidings of us. Carry her the account of our victory, and I promise you that you shall then obtain what you have so long and so ardently desired."

On hearing these words, the brave count could no longer constrain himself. He embraced the king, Drost Peter, old Henner, the jester, and, in fact, every one around him, and with difficulty refrained from taking the young king in his sturdy arms, and dancing with him on the poop.

"Shame befall me," he cried, "if there shall not be a dance at Helsingborg, in which I'll share." And in an instant he stood in Henner's fishing-boat. "Sir Steersman Henner," he exclaimed, "you shall take me to Helsingborg. Nobody steers a boat like you."

"Right willingly," cried Henner, following him into the boat. "I promised you good luck, and you see I have kept my word."

The boat was already leaving the king's ship, when one long leg, followed by another, came sprawling over the gunwale: the long-shanked jester would follow his happy master.

The rumour that the great sea-fight was expected to take place in Grönsund, had reached Helsingborg the same day on which it was fought. On that evening Queen Agnes, in great anxiety, sat in her closet, and every other moment quitted her seat to gaze out over the Sound. That the young king was with the fleet she knew; and that her devoted knight and suitor, Count Gerhard, who had gone to his aid, would dare the utmost, she felt certain. On leaving Kiel to join the fleet, he had sent to her a formal declaration of his love; and her affectionate answer to his letter now lay on the table before her, ready to be forwarded to him on the following day. She had despatched three fleet skiffs, one after the other, to bring her intelligence from Grönsund; but they had encountered a storm in the Sound, and were now all three beating about off Dragoe, when Count Gerhard, in Henner's little fishing-boat, passed them.

"The cross shield us--they will perish!" cried the seamen from Helsingborg, when, by the moonlight, they perceived the little fishing-yawl driven by, and every instant threatened with destruction by the surging billows.

The queen was ignorant of this her lover's danger; but the violence of the storm augmented her apprehensions concerning the battle. To conceal her anxiety, she had directed her ladies to retire, and, in her present loneliness, she felt as if her own and Denmark's fate depended on the message she that night expected. All the gloomy images of her chequered life seemed united in one single event, which threatened entirely to crush her heart, and banish that bright hope in which she had found a recompense for all her losses, and a comfort for all her misfortunes. If the battle were lost, and the young king slain, then would there be an end of Denmark's freedom and of her own maternal joy; and, if the trusty Count Gerhard had fallen, then was her letter to him, which now lay before her, but a mournful testimony of the great and true happiness she had lost.

The night passed on: the wax-lights flickered on the table, and the storm howled in the chimney, but the queen still sat, sorrowfully contemplating her letter to Count Gerhard, in the seal of which she was represented as kneeling in a church before a virgin and child, with a winged cherub holding a crown above her head.<sup>[47]</sup>

"Take the crown, Lord, and guard it," she sighed, "but let not the angel fly away. Leave him to watch over me, and over him who is dearer to me than all the crowns in the world."

She had drawn forth her diary, in which the dearest of all her heart's confessions was not yet expressly inscribed, although in the latter portions of it Count Gerhard was mentioned oftener than herself, especially from the time when she had presented him with her veil, and chosen him her knight and protector.

The image of her faithful knight had subdued every anxious thought in the heart of the fair queen, when suddenly there arose an unusual noise from the gardens beneath her window. She approached the balcony, and, by the moonlight, perceived a crowd of people on the quay, where the pilots were engaged in dragging a small boat through the surf; and in the next moment she heard the shout of "Victory, victory! The count--the one-eyed count!" She uttered an exclamation

of thanksgiving, and, overcome with joy, tottered to a seat in her inmost apartment.

Shortly after, the palace resounded with the joyful tidings of victory; and, within an hour, the queen, surrounded by her entire court, stood in the brilliantly illuminated audience-chamber, where the fortunate bearer of the intelligence knelt, and laid at her feet his sword and the banner of the vanquished enemy.

Whilst the whole palace shone with light, and re-echoed with sounds of mirth and festivity, Count Gerhard learned from the queen's own lips what was contained in the letter with the red seal on her table, and his happiness was complete.

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The joy created by this victory was soon after increased by the tidings, that the fortress of Hunehal, in Halland, had been stormed by the royalists, and the proud Count Jacob taken prisoner. The victory itself was followed by important results; for the Norwegian king, who, with his fleet, had arrived too late, abandoned altogether his expedition against Denmark; and shortly after a friendly meeting between the two monarchs took place at Hindsgavl, where a truce was concluded preliminary to a treaty of peace, which in its conditions should be equally honourable to both kingdoms. Duke Waldemar, too, through his ambassadors, had proposed terms which could be accepted; and, after the convention of Hindsgavl, no further measures were taken against the outlaws, who, however, were strictly forbidden ever to show themselves in the presence of the King of Denmark.

On a fine clear day in autumn great festivities and rejoicings were held at Helsingborg Castle. It was the bridal day of the fair Queen Agnes and Count Gerhard, whose sister, the dowager Queen Hedvig of Sweden, together with the entire Danish and Swedish courts, were present. The rejoicings, which were intended to celebrate at once a victory, a peace, and a marriage, were attended with a tournament, in the tilting of which, however, Count Gerhard took no part. He sat in the royal balcony, by the side of Queen Agnes; and although he seemed in some constraint in his fine bridal suit, yet the joy that sparkled in his honest eye showed him to be supremely happy; whilst, from the noble features of his majestic regal bride, beamed an expression of unsurpassed sweetness.

Next to her, and as Denmark's future queen, the little Princess Ingeborg was the object of universal admiration and knightly homage. During the tourney she sat, well pleased and happy, by the side of the young, chivalrous King Erik, where they conversed together with all the tenderness of brother and sister. Sir John had to dash away a tear of joy from his aged eyes when he looked upon this youthful pair, who, with innocent childish glee, were playing only, as it were, at bridegroom and bride, unconscious of any other affection than that which they felt, with mutual ardour, for the land and people over whom they were destined to rule.

With similar feelings the Swedish knights and nobles regarded the young King Berger and the little Danish Princess Mereté, who, also, as parties affianced, sat side by side, witnessing the tournament.

On this occasion, the prize was won by Drost Peter Hessel, who, bowing profoundly, received it from the hand of the fair Queen Agnes, whilst, as his eyes glanced over the brilliant ranks of dames, they rested with a look of intense affection on the tall lady who occupied the chief seat among the damsels of the Princess Ingeborg. It was Jomfru Ingé Little, whom he had not seen since they parted in Kolding Fiord. Her father, he was aware, still lay a prisoner in Kallundborg Castle, it being only in tenderness to the feelings of Sir John that the king had so long deferred his sentence, because his treason was manifest, although his participation in the late king's murder yet wanted proof.

Jomfru Ingé had been absent from the tournament until that moment, and Drost Peter had inquired for her in vain. Great was his joy, therefore, on now beholding her; but it soon changed to anxious grief, when he perceived the impress of a deep sorrow on her beautiful countenance; while her look, cast on the ground, seemed studiously averted from his. He hastily left the lists, and retired, to indulge his melancholy, near the Sound, whilst the royal parties and their respective attendants re-entered the riddersal, where the nuptials were farther to be celebrated with a ball and sumptuous banquet.

Drost Peter stood long by the Sound, gazing steadfastly in the direction of Flynderborg. The days of his childhood came before him, and his thoughts reverted to the time when, as a knight and drost, he had again seen his childhood's bride, and heard her sing with animation of--

"The king who ruled the castle,  
And eke ruled all the land."

The dangerous position in which his king and country had been placed allowed him of late but little time to think of his own heart's affairs; but now the sorrowful image of Jomfru Ingé had awakened in his soul a powerful desire to achieve her happiness, and partake it with her. That she should feel grief for her father and his uncertain fate, was but natural; but why she should

now seek to avoid her true and attached knight, and even to deny him a kindly look, he could not comprehend. The thought that she might have forgotten him for a more fortunate suitor, for an instant only, like a threatening demon, crossed his mind, but did not reach his heart. He remembered how he had regarded, as a messenger of love from her, every friendly bird that twittered outside the gratings of his prison; and, shaking his head, with a melancholy smile he repeated the beautiful verses of the old ballad:--

"A bird so small from the white strand flew,  
And she sang, Where is my heart's love true?"

"A bird so small o'er the sea flew wide,  
And he sang, O where is my own true bride?"

"God strengthen and cheer you, my dear sir drost!" exclaimed the kindly voice of young Sir Aagé Jonsen, interrupting his reverie. "I have been looking for you," he continued, "for I know you are not happy; and yet this is a day of rejoicing such as has hardly ever been seen in Denmark. The noble Queen Agnes is now happy, and our young king dances blithely with his affianced bride. There is no longer a traitor in the country, and Denmark's throne again stands firm. We have peace and happy times in prospect, sir drost."

"For which I thank Him who has succoured us," replied Drost Peter. "His hand has wonderfully averted the danger, and blessed the crown of the Waldemars on the head of our youthful king. I, too, ought to be happy today; but, my dear Aagé, there are sorrows of which thou knowest not yet."

"I have, nevertheless, already known great ones," replied his grave pupil; "and I guess that which now oppresses you--the noble Jomfru Ingé--"

"She, alas, is unhappy, Aagé, and will not be consoled while her father lies in Kallundborg."

"Our young king is all too stern, in rejecting every petition on his behalf," sighed Aagé. "I have, however, heard a rumour, dear sir drost--whether well or ill founded, I know not--which yet may prove worthy of your investigation. It is said that Sir Lavé Little has promised his daughter's hand to the knight who procures his pardon from the king; and that you, knowing this, either cannot or will not fulfil the conditions."

Drost Peter was startled. "He barter, then, his daughter's happiness for his own freedom," he exclaimed, in a tone of contempt. "At that I am not astonished. But what says Ingé? Will she submit to be a sacrifice for her father's sins?"

"Know you not that she has so resolved?" asked Aagé anxiously; "and are you not aware that the rich Sir Thord, from Kongshelle, is here, with four ships laden with treasure, which he intends offering to the king as the ransom of Sir Lavé Little? I myself saw him but now in the riddersal, where he was waiting until the king left the dance, to confer alone with him in his closet, and--"

"Just Heaven!" exclaimed Drost Peter, "this shall not be! I will myself entreat him for Sir Lavé's freedom: he cannot--he must not refuse me!"

"Hasten, then, sir drost. Sir Thord is perhaps already with the king. Alas, I thought you knew of this, but would or could not--Haste, haste!"

Pale and agitated, the drost hurried to the riddersal, where his eye ran through the rows of dancers. The triumphant Count Gerhard, with his fair and majestic bride--the young King Berger, with Princess Mereté--and Skirmen, in his new knight's suit, with the lively Aasé Hennesdaughter, tripped gaily down the hall; while, among the ladies of the Princess Ingeborg, he quickly descried Jomfru Ingé, who sat, pale and motionless, gazing with a calm, fixed look on all before her.

The drost perceived not the king, and his eyes began to swim; but, accosting a bustling chamberlain, he asked him, falteringly--"Where is the king?"

"In his closet," was the answer.

"With whom?"

"Sir Thord, from Kongshelle."

He turned, and darted from the riddersal.

Count Gerhard and King Berger led their ladies from the dance, as King Erik re-entered gravely, accompanied by Drost Peter, the expression of whose features indicated the greatest anxiety. The king advanced to the Princess Ingeborg, who was seated by his mother's side, and, at his signal, the dancing ceased, the music was hushed, and the attention of all forcibly arrested.

"Noble Princess Ingeborg," said the young king, aloud and solemnly, "inform Drost Peter

Hessel that King Erik of Denmark can never forget what he promised his dead father; but that Denmark's future queen gives him the right to declare Sir Lavé Little's pardon and freedom."

"Thanks, thanks, Erik!" exclaimed the little princess, springing up joyfully: "thou hast kept thy word, and enabled me to make my dear Ingé happy." Then, turning to Drost Peter, she repeated to him the king's words, and led the astonished Ingé into his arms.

Great was the joy of the faithful pair, in which all present seemed to participate. At a signal from the king, the music again commenced; and, when the damsels began to sing--

"On Rypen streets the dance goes light--  
The castle it is won!  
There dance the knights so gaily dight--  
For Erik the king so young!"

the hearts of Drost Peter and Jomfru Ingé glowed with that same warm feeling of love for king and fatherland which first knit their souls together. They joined the giddy maze; and, whilst the damsels entwined the king and the dancers with a single long garland of flowers, Jomfru Ingé, in her true knight's arms, sang with animation--

"So boldly dance we thus, I ween,  
With true hearts under scarlet sheen--  
The kingdom it is won!

"Never saw I a rosy dance  
So gaily trode, and eyes so glance--  
For Erik the king so young!"

## **THE END OF KING ERIK MENVED.**

## **APPENDIX.**

### **THE SWORD TIRFING.**

The account of Hervor, the bold skioldmö, and of the sword Tirfing, mentioned at page 270, is to be found in the *Harvarar Saga*, or the story of Hervor. It was the translator's intention to have given this saga entire, to serve at once as a specimen of the character of the ancient literature of Scandinavia, and as a picture of the mind and manners of an extremely remote and barbarous age. Doubting, however, whether the saga, in all its integrity, would possess any great interest to the present matter-of-fact age, he has limited himself to such an abstract of it as will give a tolerable idea of its nature and contents.

In its present form, the saga is supposed to have been compiled in the thirteenth century, though parts of it may date as high as the tenth. Many of the persons mentioned are entirely fabulous, and several of the places have no existence. The only gleam of historical truth it contains, is probably in that portion which relates the battle of Angantyr and his brothers, on Samsøe, against Hjalmar and Oddur, a similar account being given by Saxo of the twelve sons of Arngrim the Berserk. But to enter upon any critical investigation of this nature, would be obviously out of place on the present occasion.

The style of the original is rude and homely, and has evidently been cast in heathen mould. The quality most admired is courage; the greatest baseness, cowardice. The man of strength, courage, and sagacity is ever lord of the ascendant--chief of a band of vikings, or king of kingdoms--always a leader. In this and other sagas, we always find much romance and much heroism; but it must be acknowledged that both the romance and the heroism wear the cold hues of paganism, and want those warm tones of colour which render the old Christendom tales of chivalry so attractive.



The Turks and Asiatics came from the east, and occupied the north country. Their leader's name was Odin, who had many mighty sons. One of them, Sigurlami, possessed Gardaríke (Russia), and fell in battle with the giant Thiasse. His son and successor, Swafurlami, once, while hunting, met with two dwarfs, whom he threatened to kill unless they made him a sword of the finest qualities. They brought him Tírfing, but informed him that it would kill its man every time it was drawn, that it would be the instrument of three of the most dastardly actions, and that it would, also, be his own bane.

With the aid of Tírfing, Swafurlami revenged his father's death on Thiasse, but was slain with his own sword by Arngrim the Berserk. This Arngrim was step-son to the giant Starkother, who had eight arms, and who was killed by Thor, for having abducted Arngrim's mother from her husband during his temporary absence. Tírfing now became the property of Arngrim, who bequeathed it to Angantyr, the eldest of his twelve warlike sons. Hiorvard, one of the brothers, made love to Ingeborg, the daughter of Ingé, King of Sweden; but his rival, Hialmar the Brave, challenged him to a holmgang<sup>[48]</sup> on Samsøe. After Angantyr had wedded Jarl Biartmar's daughter, he sailed with his brothers to the place appointed. There, when the berserk phrensy came over them, they killed all Hialmar's men; but afterwards, when the latter and his foster-brother Oddur met them at the holmgang, they were all killed, after giving Hialmar a mortal wound.

Tírfing was now deposited in Angantyr's cairn or barrow. After his death, his widow gave birth to a daughter, who was called Hervor. From her childhood she proved herself of a belligerent and bloodthirsty temper; and having heard of her father's cairn on Samsøe, she dressed herself in man's clothes, and sallied forth in the company of vikings (pirates). One night she went alone to the cairns, where the country-people never ventured for fear of spectres, awoke with incantations<sup>[49]</sup> her father's ghost, and conjured him to give her Tírfing; which she obtained, but accompanied with the prediction that it would be the bane of her race. Under the name of Herward, she now visited King Godmund of Jotunheim (the giants' country), and assisted the king to play at chess; but when one of his courtiers took Tírfing in his hand to admire it, she killed him with it, left the king's court, and, after spending some years as a viking, returned at length to her foster-father's castle. There she busied herself in womanly occupations, and was so beautiful that her fame extended to the court of King Godmund, whose son, the famous Haufud, wooed her and became her husband.

Hervor had two sons, Angantyr, who resembled his father, and Heidrek, who did every one evil. On one occasion their father gave an entertainment, to which he did not invite Heidrek, who was brought up from home, with an old warrior, and, in consequence, he came to the king's court to spoil the mirth of the company. When he had succeeded in provoking a quarrel between two of the guests, until one killed the other, he laughed, and said, that the feast was never better than when the red liquor ran on the tablecloth. The upright Haufud ordered that he should be banished from the country, but gave him eight good counsels:--never to aid him who had defrauded his master; never to trust him who had defrauded his friend; never to let his wife visit her kin often, however much she might entreat him; never to tarry late with his mistress, nor to entrust her with his secrets; never to ride his best horse when he would make speed; never to bring up the child of a greater man, nor be ready to accept of his invitations; and never to have many thralls along with him as prisoners of war. If he gave heed to these instructions, he would be happy. Hervor gave him the sword Tírfing, to which his brother added a purse of gold, and accompanied him part of his way. Heidrek was most pleased with the sword; but when he drew it from its sheath to look at it, the berserk phrensy came upon him, and he slew Angantyr.

Heidrek repented the evil he had done, and lived for a space of time in the woods; but still wishing to be celebrated like his race, he repaired to the coast, where, in defiance of his father's advice, he first redeemed one who had defrauded his master, and then one who had murdered his friend. Thereupon he became the chief of a crew of vikings, was victorious, and soon became greatly renowned. By his bravery he set free Harald, King of Ridgothland, and received his daughter Helge in marriage, with half his kingdom. In a year of scarcity, the wise men declared that the noblest child in the land must be offered in sacrifice. Heidrek promised to give his son, on condition that every man in the country should swear obedience to him; but, raising a great army, he captured King Harek, and sacrificed him and his men to Odin. This was the second base deed he had performed with the aid of Tírfing. Helge hanged herself in the hall of the Disar (goddesses). In a victorious expedition south to Hunaland (the country of the Huns), Heidrek took captive King Humle's daughter, Sifka; but after she had been for some time his mistress, he sent her home to her father, and she gave birth to a son, who was called Hlöd.

Some time after, Heidrek married the beautiful Olofa, daughter of Ake, King of Saxland. Being absent on a voyage, he permitted her to go home to visit her parents; but when, one evening, he wished to take her by surprise there, he found her in the arms of a flaxen-haired thrall. Heidrek contented himself with declaring the matter before a Ting, drove the thrall out of the country, and retained his wife's rich dowry. Thereafter he offered to bring up the son of King Hrollaug of Gardaríke (Russia), and some time afterwards accepted his invitation to a sumptuous banquet. One day, when hunting with his foster-son, he begged the latter to hide himself, and thereupon returned, late in the evening, to his mistress Sifka, and confided to her that he had killed his foster-son. Sifka could not keep the secret, and Hrollaug caused Heidrek to be bound, along with

the two niddings whom he had formerly redeemed. But Heidrek was set at liberty by his own people, whom he had placed in ambush; and after much bloodshed, Hrollaug at length learned that his son was safe and sound with Heidrek, and was reconciled to him, and gave him his daughter to wife.

Heidrek now ceased to make war, gave good laws, and was the best of chiefs. Twelve wise men were appointed to judge all important disputes, and to guard the hog of Freyr (the god of the sun), the divinity to whom, in particular, he sacrificed. Every one who offended against him was either to be judged by the twelve, or to propose to him a riddle that he could not solve. A herse (ruler of a province), named Gest of Ridgothland (probably Smaland), who had highly offended against Heidrek, was terrified at both ordeals, and implored Odin to aid him. Odin showed himself before him, and proposed to go to the king in his stead. Odin proposed many riddles, having relation to natural objects, all of which Heidrek guessed; but when at last he asked him--"What said Odin in Balder's ear before he was laid on the pile?" Heidrek knew that it was Odin himself, and, having rebuked him, would have cut him down with his sword Tirfing, had not Odin transformed himself into a falcon, and flown away so swiftly that he only lost his train; which is the reason that the falcon ever since has worn so short a tail. In his flight Odin informed him, that, as a punishment for having broken his compact, he should be slain by his meanest thrall. Shortly after, when he had ridden out on his best horse, he was murdered in his sleep by some Scottish thralls.

His eldest son, Angautyr, avenged his death, and recovered Tirfing; but when his step-brother Hlöd demanded half of his inheritance, a hard battle was fought between the two brothers. On Dunhede Mark many thousands contended against each other; the valley was filled with dead bodies, and the wounded were drowned in the streams of blood that flowed. Hlöd and all his Huns fell, and Angautyr long continued King of Ridgothland.

The remainder of the saga is occupied with a variety of narratives, of comparatively little interest. What ultimately became of the fatal sword Tirfing is not mentioned; and we are left to infer, that, according to the prediction, it caused the extinction of the entire race of Hervor.

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Many are the wonderful tales of swords in these old northern romances. They were generally manufactured by the *dveryar*, or dwarfs, who were celebrated for their skill as smiths and jewellers. The sword sometimes owed its excellence as much to magic as to the temper and finish it had acquired at the hands of the workman. On Tirfing, certain runes or magic characters were engraved--a custom which was observed in the manufacture of swords for many ages. The sword of the celebrated Gustavus Adolphus was covered with a number of hieroglyphs and astrological characters, which have been the theme of many learned dissertations. The story of the sword Mimung, made by Velint (the prototype of Wieland the blacksmith), is a fair specimen of this class of marvels.

Wada, who lived in Sealand, had a son called Velint, one of the most excellent smiths that ever lived. His father, hearing of the great skill of the smith Mimer, in Hunaland, sent him thither in his ninth year, where he learnt the trade at the same time with the celebrated Sigurd (Siegfried). Afterwards he prosecuted his study with the dwarfs in a mountain, and there attained the perfection of his art. His father was killed by the fall of a rock, occasioned by an earthquake, which his tremendous snoring produced. Velint proceeded to the court of Nidung, King of Waringia, living in Jutland, at whose court he was challenged by the smith Amilias to a trial of his skill. The latter fabricated a suit of armour. Velint, in seven days, forged the sword Mimung, with which, in the king's presence, he cut asunder a thread of wool, floating on the water. But finding the faulchion heavy and unwieldy, he sawed it in pieces, and, in a mixture of milk and meal, forged it in a red-hot fire for three days, and, at the end of thirteen, produced another sword, which cut through a whole ball of wool floating on the water. Still he was not satisfied with its excellence, but committed it again to the flames, and, after several weeks, having separated every particle of dross from the metal, fabricated a faulchion of such exquisite perfection, that it split in two a whole bundle of wool, floating on the water. The smith Amilias, trusting to the impenetrability of his breastplate and helmet, sat down upon a bench, and bade his rival strike at him with the sword. But Velint split him to the navel; and, when he complained that he felt as if cold iron had passed through his entrails, Velint desired him to shake himself a little, upon which his body fell to the ground in two pieces.

## FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 1](#): Erik, Abel, and Christopher I.

[Footnote 2](#): "Thing" (pronounced "Ting"), a court of justice: also, the name of the ancient Scandinavian parliaments, or assemblies of the states of the realm, at which, generally, all the freemen of the nation had a right to attend. They were usually held in the open air. The "Danehof," or Dane-court, mentioned farther on, was a similar institution, at which were present the king and his nobles, the principal clergy, burghers, and peasants.--Tr.

[Footnote 3](#): The "marsk" anciently filled an office similar to that of the modern marshal, or field-marshal.--Tr.

[Footnote 4](#): A "drost" filled the office of prime-minister to the king. He was often required, not only to take a leading part in the councils of his sovereign, but to conduct warlike operations in a campaign. A prince of the blood might also have his drost, who attended him in the capacity of aide-de-camp. The king's drost superseded the marsk, when present with the army.--Tr.

[Footnote 5](#): "Et Sondagsbarn." A superstition exists in Sweden and Denmark, that a child should not be baptised on the same day it is born. Hence it is believed that a child born and baptised on a Sunday will not live long; or, should it happen to live, that trolde and witches can have no power over it. A Sunday's child may, it is said, be known by its clear skin and complexion.--Tr.

[Footnote 6](#): A small Norwegian horse--a kind of pony.

[Footnote 7](#): Ale brewed of the herb called sweet gale, or Dutch myrtle, instead of hops.--Tr.

[Footnote 8](#): A proverbial expression, said of one who conceives and carries out an odd or whimsical idea.--Tr.

[Footnote 9](#): A garter--a punning nickname generally given to Drost Peter.

[Footnote 10](#): Such was the name given to the municipal law promulgated by King Erik Glipping, in 1269, for the government of Ribe, or Rypen, in Denmark. It contains many judicious and some singular enactments, for the discovery and punishment of offenders against the peace and morals of the community. The penalties it attaches to some crimes might well give rise to coarse remarks among the discontented nobles.--Tr.

[Footnote 11](#): "Nidding." A term of contempt, for which we have no equivalent in English. It expresses more than the word coward. In some parts of Scotland and of the north of England, a low, mean-spirited fellow is termed a "niddy," probably from this Scandinavian original.--Tr.

[Footnote 12](#): In allusion to an acute and learned work of Master Martin's.

[Footnote 13](#): Junker, pronounced "Yungker." A name formerly given to the sons of the king of Denmark.

[Footnote 14](#): A kind of heroic ballad, or metrical romance, similar to "Chevy Chase," or "Sir James the Rose," great numbers of which are still extant in Scandinavia.--Tr.

[Footnote 15](#): Thus were called those celebrated sea-rovers and pirates, the Norwegian and Danish sea-kings;--the terror of the European nations, during the middle ages, for their daring exploits both by sea and land.--Tr.

[Footnote 16](#): The name of a powerful Swedish family, from which Magnus himself was descended.

[Footnote 17](#): Skiold is fabled to have been the first king of Denmark.

[Footnote 18](#): The Berserks are celebrated in Scandinavian history and romance for their great strength, courage, and daring. They often fought naked (hence, probably, their appellation--"bare-shirts"); and stimulated their courage to a degree of phrensy or madness by the use of strong liquors, or by chewing some herb, in which state they would rush against naked swords, dash against rocks, and oppose themselves to any odds of antagonists. They were the bullies and bravos of their age, and in this capacity were often retained in the service of great men, proving at times, however, rather intractable followers, and not always to be relied upon.--Tr.

[Footnote 19](#): Thorstenson here intends a pun; and Flynderborg has, for the nonce, to be

converted into its English equivalent, "Flounder Castle,"--Tr.

[Footnote 20](#): Helsingborg, a fortress on the Swedish coast, at this time belonged to the Danes.--Tr.

[Footnote 21](#): There were three courts of judicature in Denmark. The "Herred-Ting" was a local court, held weekly, for civil and criminal causes. This court was held, or built, in an open field, outside the towns and villages, to be at a distance from taverns and ale-houses, and strong drink was strictly forbidden to be brought into court. From this court there was an appeal to the "Land-Ting"--a provincial court, held monthly, in the principal cities of the kingdom. The highest court of appeal was the "Retter-Ting," or royal court, where the king himself often presided. It was usually opened about the middle of March, by the king in person, attended by the various estates of the kingdom, and continued its sittings almost daily, until about Christmas. The decrees of the "Retter-Ting" were final. Each of these courts had its judges, secretaries, and assessors, for the trial of causes, and the administration of justice.--Tr.

[Footnote 22](#): The snowdrop is, in Denmark, called "sommergiæk"--a summer "geek," or fool.

[Footnote 23](#): "Jomfru," the title of unmarried ladies in Denmark.--Tr.

[Footnote 24](#): It is related in the "Heimskringla," that Harald Hardrada (the Stern), king of Norway, in one of his plundering expeditions to the coast of Jutland, heard that the daughters of Thorkill Geysu had, the previous winter, in mockery, cut their cheeses into the shape of anchors, and had boasted that with these anchors they might hold all the ships of the Norwegian king. A spy, who had been sent from the fleet of King Harald, came to these women, saying, "Thorkill's daughters, ye said that King Harald dared not come to Denmark." Dotté, Thorkill's daughter, answered, "That was yesterday." The King of Norway, having secured them, carried them off to his ships, and Thorkill had to ransom them with a large sum.--Tr.

[Footnote 25](#): A diminutive, expressive of endearment. Ingelil--i. e., little Ingé: somewhat similar to our own diminutives in "ie" and "y"--as, Annie, Jenny, &c.--Tr.

[Footnote 26](#): Jarl--(pronounced yarl)--an earl.--Tr.

[Footnote 27](#): The Danish mile is rather more than four and a half English miles.--Tr.

[Footnote 28](#): A kind of chevaux-de-frise.

[Footnote 29](#): About fifty English miles.--Tr.

[Footnote 30](#): Hamlet, in his feigned madness, made wooden hooks, and hardened them by holding them in the heat of a fire. On being asked what he meant to do with these books, he replied, "To revenge the death of my father!" which all, but the more discerning, regarded as a proof of his insanity. The well-informed reader need scarcely be reminded that the discussion of Drost Peter and Lady Ingé on Hamlet, had reference to that version of his history told by Saxo Grammaticus, and not to the more popular and beautiful version given by Shakespeare in his immortal tragedy.--Tr.

[Footnote 31](#): King Waldemar Seier (the Victorious) committed an injustice on Count Henry of Schwerin, which the latter resolved to revenge. He came to the court of Denmark, and contrived to gain the king's confidence. One day, when the king was resting in a lonely forest, after a day's hard hunting, Count Henry seized him and his eldest son, carried them on board a ship, and had them conveyed to the dungeons of the strong castle of Schwerin, on the Mecklenburg coast. It was only after the interference of the pope and other princes, and the payment of a large ransom, that Waldemar and his son regained their freedom.--Tr.

[Footnote 32](#): According to popular superstition, the elfin ladies were fair to look upon, but hollow behind as a dough-trough, and were, in consequence, careful to prevent any one seeing their backs.--Tr.

[Footnote 33](#): These services for the murdered King Erik commenced at three in the afternoon and were continued until six the following morning. Even after the Reformation, and down to 1633, they were continued under the name of a Vaadesang--a song for protection from surprise and assassination--when the then reigning king substituted a morning service, more in accordance with the usages of the reformed Church.--Tr.

[Footnote 34](#): Alfdaughter. Danish and Norwegian surnames were, and we believe still are, formed in the following manner:--The male children take the name of the father or family, with the addition of "son;" the females the same name, with the addition of "daughter." Thus we have Alfson and Alfdaughter, the children of Alf, Erikson and Eriksdaughter, the children of Erik.--Tr.

[Footnote 35](#): Literally, "shield-maids," or amazons. The sword Tirfing, like King Arthur's Excalibar, was one of wonderful properties. It could never be drawn, even in jest, without causing the death of some one. The story of Hervor, and the manner in which she recovered the fatal weapon from her father's cairn, or barrow, though interesting, is too long for the subject of a note. I have therefore ventured to give it in the form of an appendix, at the end of the

work.--Tr.

[Footnote 36](#): The original of this ballad, which has little to boast of but its great antiquity, will be found in Syr's Kæmpeviser, p. 151.--Tr.

[Footnote 37](#): Eagle's-borg or castle.

[Footnote 38](#): Perhaps from his favourite expression: "By all holy men!" (hellige mænd.) Some, however, derive this surname from mændevid, or mandevid, (pronounced 'menved,' and signifying man-wit,) with reference to the young king's manly intelligence and sagacity.

[Footnote 39](#): In the year following, Sir Algotson was beheaded on the spot where the abduction took place. Thorstenson's intended bride subsequently became Abbess of Breta convent.

[Footnote 40](#): In a storm at sea, he was, some time afterwards, by casting lots, condemned to death as a secret criminal. He then confessed his crimes before the crucifix, and leaped overboard. There is still extant a ballad, entitled "John Rimaardson's Confession."

[Footnote 41](#): Skalds: the appellation anciently given to the bards or poets.

[Footnote 42](#): A small peninsula on the north coast of Funen.

[Footnote 43](#): Several traditions have been preserved respecting Marsk Stig's death and funeral, and the abstraction of the pall that covered his coffin. One account states that he was interred at Hintzeholm at midnight; that the priest's servant-maid, who had secretly witnessed the funeral, disclosed it to her master; that the priest ransacked the grave, and shared the velvet pall with the maid, who, shortly afterwards, was married to one of the marsk's swains; and that her husband, who saw the velvet on one of her pillows, and was informed by her how she had obtained it, fearful that his master's place of sepulchre would be discovered, killed her; although, as the tradition says, "he loved her very dearly." Another account, quoted from a manuscript (a kind of parish-register, kept by a clergyman from the year 1622,) in the royal library of Copenhagen, states, that the marsk had a granary on Hielm, strongly fortified with mounds and ditches. Opposite Hielm, at Biornkier, he had a barn-yard, bounded on one side by the sea, and on three others by a fresh-water lake, a great morass which was impassable, and a thick wood. In this wood which he could reach in an hour and a half's ride from Hielm, he took his pleasure in hunting. It is related that on one of these journeys he became overheated and was taken ill, and, being obliged to dismount, he sat down on a stone and there died. His body was the same night carried to the church of Helgeness, and honourably interred by Our Lady's altar; "and the priest, who then lived in the parsonage-house, had a maid-servant, who, going out to bring ale from a place under the north armoury, stopped and saw how they buried him, and laid a magnificent pall over his coffin; and when she found an opportunity, she had the grave dug up, and stole it away," &c. This story, the worthy priest adds, was told him by honest Danes who were born in these parts, and had lived in the country more than a hundred years.--Tr.

[Footnote 44](#): Danske Viser fra Midelalderen, 2 D. p. 215.

[Footnote 45](#): Formed by the soldiers placing their shields and bucklers together in such a manner, as to present to the projectiles of a foe a compact circular wall and roof of iron.--Tr.

[Footnote 46](#): The Danebrog, some readers are probably aware, is a Danish order of knighthood. The history of the Danebrog, or Dannebrog, however, may not be so well known. It is related that when King Waldemar Seier was fighting against the heathenish Laplanders, in order to convert them to the Christian faith, Archbishop Andrew of Lund stood on an eminence, as did Moses of old, and prayed to Heaven for the success of the Danish arms. As long as he was able to keep his arms raised, the Danes prevailed; but the moment he let them fall, through the feebleness of old age, the heathens gained the advantage; and the priests therefore supported his arms while the battle lasted. Then happened this miracle, that when the principal banner of the Danes was lost in the heat of battle, there descended from heaven a banner with a white cross in a field of red, by the influence of which the Danes gained the victory. This precious banner was long preserved. The belief was general that with it victory was certain, and therefore it was called the Dannebrog (the Danes' fort or strength). On the spot where the battle took place, was built the town of Wolmar, which takes its name from Waldemar.--Tr.

[Footnote 47](#): The legend on this queen's seal was "Agnes, Dei gracia Danorum Slavorque Regina."

[Footnote 48](#): The "holmgang" was a species of single combat or pitched battle. The combatants were placed on an island, and left to fight with swords, until all on one or both sides fell. He who refused the holmgang, or attempted to escape from it; was called a nidding, and subjected to every species of insult and contempt. The "berserk-gang," or fighting phrensy, was, it has been supposed, produced by eating of some intoxicating herb.

[Footnote 49](#): The incantation of Hervor has been translated by Herbert, in the work entitled "Five Pieces of Runic Poetry."

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