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Bernhard Severin Ingemann**

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Author: Bernhard Severin Ingemann

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KING ERIC

AND

THE OUTLAWS.

VOL. I.

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NOTICE

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KING ERIC

AND

THE OUTLAWS;

OR,
THE THRONE, THE CHURCH, AND THE PEOPLE,
IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

BY
INGEMANN

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH BY
JANE FRANCES CHAPMAN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, & LONGMANS,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1843.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

The historical records and traditions of Denmark, as well as the modern productions of Danish genius, are almost equally unknown to the general reader in England. While German, Swedish, and Italian works of any recognised merit, readily find translators, and the ancient ballads of Spain have received their English dress from an able and poetic pen, it appears somewhat singular that so little notice has hitherto been bestowed on the literature of a country, whose rich historical recollections are so closely interwoven with those of Anglo-Saxon England.

Though but little known in other lands, the ancient traditional lore of Scandinavia is nevertheless the source from which some of the most distinguished Danish writers of the present day, have selected their happiest themes, and drawn their brightest inspiration. The influence of

the Saga, or traditional romance of Scandinavia, and of the "Kjømpe Visé," or heroic ballad, is peculiarly apparent in the works of M. Ingemann.

The close adherence to historic outline--the development of character by action and dialogue--the delineation of scenery by brief though vivid sketches, in preference to elaborate description, are characteristics of Saga romance which M. Ingemann has been eminently successful in imparting to his own delineations of the chivalrous age of Denmark.

The Kjømpe Visé, or heroic ballads which succeeded to the Saga in the North, and bear the impress of a kindred spirit, contain a store of historic tradition, and poetic incident, equally valuable to the antiquary who delights to trace the customs and manners of a remote age, and to the poet who seeks his inspiration from the historic muse of his Fatherland.

These vivid and truthful records of the middle ages of Denmark are to the modern writer of romance, what the oral traditions of the heroic age were to the chronicler of the Saga. They relate not only the exploits of northern warriors in their own, and in distant lands, but are also especially interesting, from the light they throw on the personal history of Denmark's most chivalrous monarchs. Their joys and sorrows, their sterner passions and gentler affections, are described by the national minstrel in a strain of simple and touching earnestness, which wins the full sympathy of the reader. This power of delineating human passion lends a charm even to some ballads, handing down the wildest superstitions of a superstitious age. In Germany the Danish ballads are known through the translations of Professor Grimm, who has entered with the enthusiasm both of an antiquary and a poet, into the spirit of Scandinavian lore. In the preface to his version of the "Kjømpe Visé," M. Grimm dwells with peculiar pleasure on those ballads which have not only supplied M. Ingemann with much of the incident, but have also suggested the individual colouring of the historic portraits of "Eric and the Outlaws." All the prominent characters introduced into this romance from King Eric himself, down to Morten the cook, are historical, and enacted scarcely less romantic parts in the drama of real life, than those assigned them by M. Ingemann.

The struggle with papal authority--the encroachments of the Hanse towns--and the invidious attempts of the "Leccarii," (the socialists of the 13th century) were important features of that interesting period which this work is designed to illustrate.

The translator is aware of the difficulty of attracting attention to a romance drawn from Danish history; the work also makes its appearance without any of those adventitious advantages which sometimes ensure a favourable introduction to the public--it is translated by an unknown pen--is unaided by patronage of any kind--and has solely its own merits to rely on for success. It would afford no slight gratification to the translator were these to be appreciated by the reading public of a nation, which not only in its early history, is closely connected with Denmark, but which has inherited from Scandinavian ancestors, that indomitable spirit which rendered them in olden time masters of the seas.

KING ERIC

AND THE OUTLAWS.

CHAPTER I.

On the north-eastern coast of Zealand, about two miles from Gilleleie, is situate the village of Sjöberg, where the spade and the ploughshare occasionally strike against the foundations of ancient buildings, and traces yet remain of the paved streets of towns, the names of which are no longer known, and over which the corn now grows or the cattle graze. Towards the close of the thirteenth century there was still standing a small town, built on the ruins of the ancient Sjöberg. On a hill, surrounded by the water-reeds of the now nearly dried-up lake, fragments of walls of

hewn free-stone lie buried in the earth, and mark the site of the strong and well fortified castle, which in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries served as a place of confinement for state prisoners of importance. The spot on which the castle stood was then entirely surrounded by the lake, which thus formed a natural fastness, rendering artificial moats superfluous. The castle was surrounded by ramparts. It was built of massive free-stone, and had a strong square tower, in which the most dangerous state prisoners were confined. The air was close and bad in the subterranean dungeon of the tower, where no ray of light could enter; but the upper dungeon, at the height of thirty-six feet from the ground, admitted light and air through a small round grated window. In this upper prison, towards the close of the year 1295, was still confined one of the chief accomplices in Marsk^[1] Stig's conspiracy^[2], the turbulent and imperious Archbishop Iens Grand. He had been imprisoned here during the minority of Eric Menved, as an accomplice in the murder of Eric Glipping, and as the protector of the outlawed regicides.

This dangerous prelate had many adherents in the country, and possessed powerful friends among the potentates of Europe, as well as at the papal see. According to the famous constitution of Veile (*cum ecclesiæ Dacianæ*), which had been the cause of such dangerous disputes between the kings and clergy of Denmark, the nation was immediately laid under an interdict prohibiting the performance of divine worship throughout the kingdom, on the seizure and imprisonment of a bishop by the king or any temporal authority. This, however, was not carried into effect on the seizure and imprisonment of Archbishop Grand. Not only love of their country and dread of the ungodliness, profligacy, and confusion, the certain consequences of a national punishment of this nature, had prompted the greater part of the Danish clergy to appeal to the pope against the enforcement of this penalty, but also their fears of temporal power and the people's wrath. The closing of the churches might have been followed by perilous consequences to the clergy themselves, at a time when the agitation caused by a regicide had not yet subsided, and the excited passions of the populace often broke out in scenes of blood and violence. This important question remained undecided at the court of Rome. Divine worship meanwhile was continued as usual, but fears were reasonably entertained, that, should the archbishop not speedily be set at liberty, the interdict would be confirmed by the pope, and the nation consequently plunged into a state of the greatest misery.

King Eric Menved had attained his majority, having completed his twenty-first year. The circumstances under which he had passed his childhood had conduced to the early formation of manly character, and to the development of his intellectual qualities. The outrage committed on the royal person, to which he had been witness in his childhood, had early awakened the consciousness of authority within his breast, and imparted something of passionate earnestness to his zeal in the administration of justice. He was deeply imbued with the chivalrous spirit of the age. The care with which he upheld the dignity of the crown was deemed by many a necessary policy in so perilous a time, but this anxiety for the maintenance of royal splendour, joined to his natural gaiety of disposition, had inspired the young monarch with a love of pomp and outward show, which was often censured as ostentatious vanity. The earnest solemnity with which he assumed the regal sceptre indicated a manly and resolute temper, early disciplined to firmness in the school of adversity; and the boldness with which he issued his first royal mandates bespoke a master spirit, conscious of kindred affinity with Waldemar the Victorious, the model as well as the ancestor of the young king,^[3] Eric's first exercise of royal power was a bold attempt to assert the authority of his crown against the mightiest of earthly potentates, who from St. Peter's chair swayed kings as well as people in all Christian lands. This the young monarch dared to do, even at a time when his personal happiness was in a great measure dependent on the favour of the papal see. He had despatched his oldest and most experienced councillor of state, Ion Little, as well as Drost Hessel^[4], to Rome, to justify as an act of lawful self-defence the proceedings against the archbishop, contrary to ecclesiastical law, and to demand his condemnation as a traitor to the crown. But besides this important mission, the aged councillor was entrusted with another, which at any other time would not have been attended with difficulty, although at the present juncture its favourable issue seemed doubtful, in proportion to its being of moment to the king. Little had been commissioned to obtain from the pope, and forward to Denmark with all possible dispatch, the long promised dispensation, empowering Eric to wed the beautiful princess Ingeborg of Sweden, to whom he had been betrothed in infancy, and had long loved as the companion of his childhood, and whom he now adored with all the devotedness and fervour of first and youthful love.

While the Danish embassy was detained at the papal court by all the artifices of tedious investigation and diplomatic ambiguity, the papal nuncio, Cardinal Isarnus, had been despatched to Denmark, for the purpose of threatening the young Danish sovereign with excommunication in case he should refuse to release the archbishop unconditionally from imprisonment. The wily cardinal brought with him no letter from the pope touching the dispensation and permission for the royal marriage; but expressed himself on the subject in so dubious and enigmatical a manner, that it was evident the court of Rome designed to work upon the inexperienced monarch's feelings in a matter so nearly concerning his personal happiness, in order the more effectually to secure his submission to papal authority and his clemency towards the ecclesiastical offender at Sjöberg.

This mode of proceeding, however, was so far from producing, its intended effect on the young and impetuous King Eric, that it appeared to rouse him to such a pertinacious defiance of papal authority, as might be followed by dangerous consequences both to himself and the kingdom. The affair still remained undecided--the cardinal had quitted Denmark with fearful menaces, and was

now at Lubec.

The haughty Archbishop Grand, who was alone the cause of this suspense and impending danger, was detained meanwhile in close captivity. During the first thirty-six weeks of his imprisonment he was confined in chains in the dark, deep, subterranean dungeon of the tower, and was left to suffer great misery and want, although most persons acquitted the young king (then in his minority) of having been accessory to this severity of treatment. The archbishop's fellow-prisoner, the traitorous and malevolent provost Jacob, had been released from prison on the plea of illness, but had immediately availed himself of this act of clemency to hasten to Rome, where he zealously laboured to stir up hostile feelings towards the king, and neglected no means of forwarding the liberation of the archbishop and their mutual revenge.

The preceding Christmas the king had visited Sjöberg, and had himself offered to give the archbishop his freedom, on the condition of his vacating the archiepiscopal chair, of his quitting the kingdom, and swearing to renounce all revenge, and give up all connection with the enemies of the crown. Notwithstanding the haughty defiance and scorn with which the archbishop had rejected this proposition, the rigour of his captivity was mitigated by the king's command, and he was placed in the upper dungeon he now inhabited, where he wanted neither light nor air, but where, as yet, he remained closely guarded and strongly fettered as before. As soon, however, as the king had left the castle, the condition of the captive became once more extremely miserable. The steward, Jesper Mogensen, was notorious for his avarice, his cruelty, and hypocritical bearing; and the king's brother, Junker^[5] Christopher, was accused of having had a great share in the severity of the archbishop's treatment, although the prince took every opportunity of blaming the king's conduct in this matter, and counselled him to make any sacrifice and submit to any humiliation, to avoid a formal breach with the church and the papal see.

One evening in the month of October the steward of Sjöberg, accompanied by the cook and an old turnkey, ascended the winding stairs which led to the archbishop's prison and to the turnkey's chamber immediately above it. The strong light of a dark lanthorn, which the cook held up before him, fell full upon the countenance and form of the steward:--he was a short, strong-built man, with a true hangman's visage, in which the expression of ferocity and malice was combined with an air of wily hypocrisy; a shaggy cap was slouched over his low and narrow forehead; he wore a dirty coat of sheep's skin, and tramped up the stone stairs in heavy iron-shod boots, apparently in great wrath and alarm. "That limb of Satan! that ungodly priest!" he muttered, "if he hath dealings with the Evil One, chains will be of no use here."

"As I tell thee, master," answered the portly, round-faced cook, with an air of importance, "he talks with invisible spirits, and no turnkey dares any longer watch by him. He is as regularly bound to the Evil One as I am to thee, saving that *he* cannot shift his service, and leave his master when he pleases; you remember, no doubt, I gave you warning at the right time, and am free to be off either to-day or to-morrow, if I please. The devil take me if I stay longer here, since--since he is here already, I was near saying."

"Pshaw, Morten! thou shalt stay here till I get another cook: that thou didst promise me. But what hath given rise to all this talk about his sorceries?"

"There is something in it," answered the cook. "No one knows the Black Art out and out as he does. You know yourself that Junker Christopher's folk found the book on the Black Art among the letters from the outlaws, when they ferreted the bishop's secrets out of the chest in Lund sacristy. The book burned their fingers, and vanished instantly out of their hands. Such a devil's book always comes back to its master. That he hath not got it as yet, I am certain; but I fear he has it all at his fingers' ends. They said he never wearied of studying it at Lund, and he knows all the heathen and Greek books better by heart than his Paternoster, the ungodly hound!"

"Thou art right, Morten! He *is* a limb of Satan, and one cannot watch him too narrowly. His confounded learning never hit my fancy." Here the steward paused thoughtfully near the door of the archbishop's prison.

"Yes, take care, master!" resumed the cook; "he will soon fill the house with his devilries, and set all the imps in hell to plague us, if he doth not get his prison cleaned, and better meat and drink. It would please me right well were he to die of hunger and be eaten up of vermin. Such end would still be a thousand times too good for such an accursed traitor and wizard; but when the Evil One is in the house, it is wisest to remember one's own little transgressions, and not use a captive devil worse than we would he should use us."

"Pshaw, Morten! the devil is not our neighbour," interrupted the steward with a suspicious look. "Had I not myself heard thee curse and mock the archbishop, I should almost suspect thou wert in league with him."

"Nay, master! I can soon clear myself of that; I would sooner league with Beelzebub himself. The turnkeys can bear witness there is not one among them all that takes such delight in plaguing and vexing him as I do. When he is forced to drink muddy water, and eat mouldy bread like a swine yonder, I sing drinking songs below in the kitchen, and throw open the window that he may snuff up the scent of the roasting; and I never come nigh his door without singing one thing or another, which I know will make him turn yellow, black, and green with rage. I made a song last spring, all about freedom and fair green woods, that always enrages him. Now you shall

hear, master:" and he sang loudly before the prison door,--

"A blithe bird flits round Sjöberg's tower,
Right merrily sings he,
Rise, captive, if thou hast the power,
Rise up and flee with me;
And then thou'lt breathe the fresh spring air,
And roam in greenwood gay;
Then speed we to thy castle fair,
To Hammershuus away."

"Hast thou lost thy wits, Morten?" interrupted the steward. "Wouldst thou stir him up to flee to his castle at Bornholm?"

"He may let that alone while he is here. Heard you not how deep he sighed? It was from rage and grief to think the least spring bird can fly to its castle and build its nest, while he can stir neither hand nor foot. I made that song on purpose to plague him."

"Thou art right, Morten! *it did* plague him," said the steward with a look of satisfaction. "Thou art an honest soul; I heard myself how deep he sighed: nevertheless, thou shalt not sing him any more such songs; they only serve to put fancies into his head. Thou art a good, well-meaning fellow, Morten! I know it well; but thou art somewhat simple. If the bishop knew the Black Art, he would not have been here so long. I rather incline to think his brain is cracked."

"Have a care, master; that fellow hath all his wits about him; there is not a bishop in all the country can beat him at Latin."

"It matters not to me whether he be mad or wise," muttered the steward, who mounted the stairs leading to the turnkey's room. He opened the door of this chamber, which was the uppermost in the tower, and directly above the archbishop's prison. Here two turnkeys were always on guard, and watched the prisoner through a chink in the floor. During the night two others were usually stationed in the captive's dungeon, and sat beside his couch, when it was their wont to plague him, and by their talk often to prevent his sleeping; but the report which had recently been spread abroad of the archbishop's sorceries, had so terrified the inmates of Sjöberg, that none dared any longer remain at night in the captive's chamber. The two sentinels were seated before a backgammon board, and were throwing the dice when the steward entered. They hastily concealed them, and rose respectfully.

"This is doing duty finely," muttered the steward: "while ye sit here and game, ye suffer him below there to play with Satan for his soul. Ye had best keep your eyes upon him, I counsel ye. If he gets loose, ye may make as sure of being hanged, as if ye had already the halter round your necks, and the clear air for a footstool. Now let's see what he is after." So saying the steward stooped down to the hole in the floor and peeped below. "He surely sleeps," he whispered; "he lies on his back without stirring."

"That he is well nigh forced to do, because of his chains and the pestilent smell," said the cook.

"Well," answered the steward, "one should not despise any means which might save an erring soul. It is for this reason, seest thou, I suffer the hardened sinner below there to lie in such swinish plight. *Ignorant* folk would call it cruel; it is in truth pure compassion. How long thinkest thou the most hardened offender can hold out such captivity without repenting of his misdeeds and creeping to the cross?"

"Ay, there doubtless you are in the right, master! You have pious and fatherly manner, and even generously exposed yourself to the risk of drawing down on you the king's wrath a second time, simply for the sake of exercising true Christian compassion, and saving the sinner's soul; but he is insensible to it, the scoundrel. His obstinacy is matchless. Could you believe it, master? Notwithstanding all you do to bring him to repentance and conversion, he curses you, nevertheless, every hour of the day, and wishes you may come to suffer a thousand times more torments in hell than you have here caused him to undergo out of pure Christian charity!"

"I can well believe it, Morten; from such sort of folk one should never look for gratitude; but the roof and ceiling are in too sorry a plight," muttered the steward looking around him: "under the blue sky he needs not to sleep, either; it might be dangerous besides."

"It was done according to your own order, master," resumed the cook in a credulous tone, and staring with an air of simplicity at the holes in the ceiling and the roof, "else it could never have rained down on that confounded Satan. Of a surety he will let alone flying with the owls through the roof; and when the nights are cold, a little rain and hail are right proper means of bringing him to reflection and confession of his sins."

"Well, it is true, Morten; I myself *partly* commanded it: but one should have moderation in all things; it should not appear as if the roof had been uncovered on purpose. Evil tongues will have plenty to talk of as it is. To-morrow the roof shall be repaired. Some small holes may remain--they will not catch the eye--fresh air is wholesome; even a little rain and snow may have their use. Not a rain-drop falls to the earth, Morten, but it may prove a means for the conversion of a hardened

sinner."

"Ah, master," said Morten, with a tremulous voice and clasped hands, "you should, by my troth, have been a bishop: you often speak so touchingly and edifyingly that the tears start into mine eyes."

"Well," answered the steward with a self-satisfied smile, "I was, indeed, once intended to become a churchman, and though I got not the tonsure, I nevertheless learned many pious and useful truths during my noviciate; but it is not sufficient to *know* the truth, we must, by my troth, know how to *use* it for one's own and one's fellow-creature's salvation."

"Ah, yes, master," resumed Morten, with a devout look, "who is there can say *that* with as good a conscience as yourself? 'Tis a hard calling for a pious Christian conscience and a compassionate soul like yours, to be forced to play such bloodhound and hangman's tricks on a poor captive; but what will not one do for duty and precious virtue's sake, and to save an erring soul! Such a pious bloodhound and hangman----"

"Hold thy tongue, Morten," interrupted the steward; "thou must never use such words in speaking of thy master, however well and honestly thou meanst it. But hark! he speaks below there: canst hear what he says? It seems to me it is Latin or Greek."

The cook threw himself on his stomach and laid his ear close to the hole in the floor. "Our Lady preserve us!" he whispered with a look of affright, "he is calling on Aristoteles, the devil's schoolmaster, and is giving him directions about you; he swears that you are right ready to enter his school."

"Ay, indeed, it is just like the ungodly scoundrel! but I thought I heard another voice--there is surely no one with him?"

Morten listened again. "Master! heard you *that*?" he exclaimed, springing up with a look of terror, and looking towards the door as if he meant to escape.

"How now? What's that? What hath possessed thee, Morten? What heardest thou?"

"Stoop down your ear to the hole, master, and you shall hear. Our Lady graciously preserve us! The Evil One is manifestly with him. He is to fetch you at midnight if you do not presently give his good friend, the archbishop, meat and wine and clean garments. Only listen yourself!"

The steward cast a suspicious look at the cook, yet stooped to listen at the hole, keeping his eye all the while on Morten and the terrified turnkeys. He had not remained long in this position, ere he rose up deadly pale, and the name of Jesper Mogensen, accompanied by the sound of smothered and unnatural laughter, rung hollow as from an abyss, and in a voice wholly unlike the archbishop's. "Heard ye it not yourself, master?" said Morten; "he who now calls on *you* I desire not to see near *me*."

"Silence!" whispered the steward, stooping again with a look of alarm towards the crevice in the floor.

"Jesper Mogensen!" said the same terrific voice as if directly under his feet, "cherish my learned master and customer, or I will break thy neck, and turn inside out thy hypocritical soul."

While this voice rang through the chamber the turnkeys lay flat on their faces on the floor, and repeated their Avemaria. The steward trembled and shook; but Morten's cheeks now glowed crimson, and his eyes watered, as if affected by some secret exertion, while his lips were firmly compressed, and he stood apparently speechless with terror.

"Then let him have what he wants," stammered forth the steward. "If there are *such* tricks in the game, neither Junker Christopher, nor any one else, can require me to peril my life and soul any longer. Set thee to roast for the bishop in Satan's name, Morten! Let him eat and drink himself to death if he pleases! but escape he shall not, let him have ever so many devils for his friends."

"You will find it hard to hinder him, master," said Morten in a timid tone; "he who so can roar would deem it a small matter to fly through the key-hole with a bishop."

"I must see that, ere I believe it," said the steward, who appeared to have regained his self-possession, and recovered from his fright. "Thou art an honest fellow, Morten, but thou art somewhat credulous and simple--there is perhaps some trick in this. But this I would have thee, and all of ye, to know--if I smell a rat, or if any of ye have the least hand or part in this devilry, ye shall rue it dearly: ye shall be burned alive, or broken on the wheel, as surely as there is law and justice in the land."

"Our Lady preserve us, master!" exclaimed the terrified turnkeys in the same breath.

"I tell ye," continued the steward, "'tis nought else but trick and treachery. To try him below there, I will let him have good cheer and cleanliness for a time; but if he kicks up any more riots of this kind, he shall below in the dungeon again: and this I tell ye, knaves! if any of you dare help

him to flight, one for all, and all for one, ye shall be hanged! Ye shall all three watch here to-night."

"Alack! we dare not, master!" said the old turnkey. "If there is sorcery in the tower, we dare not stay here, unless Morten the cook stay too, to keep up our courage."

"Stay, then, with these stupid knaves to-night, Morten!" said the steward. "After all thou art the wisest among them. I shall owe thee for it, and to-morrow I shall get fellows enough with some spirit in them."

"It is all one to me, master!" answered Morten. "I will keep up their spirits tonight. He who, like you and I, hath a good conscience, need not fear a few devil's tricks."

"True enough, Morten! thou shalt first follow me down stairs. I am somewhat dizzy from stooping; and then thou canst at the same time fetch meat and drink for the prisoner and all of ye."

"Come, master, take hold of my arm!" said Morten, following the steward out of the door. "All is quiet and orderly," he continued, as they descended the stair. "I thought it would be so--one good turn deserves another. You'll find, we shall get at last so used to these impish tricks that we shall not care a rush for them; and why should not one learn to put up with two or three little devils, when they choose to behave themselves courteously, and live in Christian concord and sweet family union with us?"

When Morten had attended the steward to the bottom of the stairs, he ran into his chamber, and from thence to the kitchen and pantry. He presently mounted the tower stairs again, and returned to his comrades with a bundle of clothes, two baskets of provisions, and a couple of flagons of wine. "Take thou the meat and wine and clothes to the hound below, Mads!" said he to the old turnkey; "but steal not aught thereof on the way! Master says the chamber is to be made clean and neat. A guard will henceforth be placed outside the door night and day, so that thou need'st not load him with all the fetters. Meanwhile let us here get something to keep life in us. Look, comrades! I have both mead and German ale with me. Only get thee gone, Mads; we will surely leave something for thee, if thou comest back sober."

The old man cast a longing look at the wine and good cheer he was to take to the captive, and departed. Morten now busied himself in placing the provisions on the table, and presently began to carouse merrily with the two younger turnkeys. The one had borne arms, and styled himself Niels the horseman; he was a lover of strong drink, and had rather a red nose. The other was a timid and cautious personage, with a cunning and miserly cast of countenance. He sat with the dice in his hands, and counted the number of marks he had won from his comrades.

"Thou art an excellent fellow, Morten," said Niels the horseman, pushing back the cap which shaded his sun-burnt and martial visage, while he drained his cup of mead, and seized on the flagon of ale. "Thou knowest well how to furnish a guard-room when one is required to keep one's eyes open and one's spirits up. By my soul! I would rather keep guard in a camp over a whole army of captives than sit here, especially if the confounded bishop understands the black art, and such-like devilry. What dost think of all this, Morten?"

"Truly, that is not for laymen to judge of," answered Morten. "I know neither the white nor the black art; but *this* I know, henceforth let there be ever such a stir below there, *I* budge not from my seat. When we keep our noses out of mischief, and strive to mind our duty, we shall be left in peace, and can sit here as quiet as though we lay in Abraham's bosom. Now drink, Niels! And thou, Jörgen, what art *thou* thinking of?" said he to the man with the dice. "I warrant thou wouldst rather kill the time in gaming, than in honest and innocent drink. Now, by our Lady! every man hath his crotchets in this world, but we must ever sing with the birds we live with. First, comrade, sing and drink with us, and we will play afterwards with thee. We have bright silver pieces in plenty." So saying, the merry cook threw a handful of silver money on the table, and began to sing a joyous drinking song. Jörgen looked covetingly at the silver, and shook the dice. "Come, good Morten, let's play first," said he, in a coaxing tone, and with a crafty smile, "and we can sing and drink afterwards."

"Darest thou throw for a silver piece?"

"For twenty, if thou wilt," answered Morten; "but I snap my fingers at dice and silver pieces, as long as I can get aught to moisten my tongue; it is the most important member in the world, seest thou, and well deserves to be cherished. That little instrument can turn whole kingdoms topsy-turvy. I am already half drunk, I perceive, and thou hast not lifted the cup to thy lips as yet. The man who games with me must be as jovial a soul as myself."

"Well, then, pour me out half a can of ale, if it be not too strong," said the cautious Jörgen. "Mead instantly gets into my head: when one would play a fair game, one should always be able to count to six; besides, we are not sent here to drink ourselves drunk, I trow."

"Just as much to drink as to game," answered Morten; "but leave that to me! I know the strength of the ale well, and what four fellows can stand, provided they be not carlines."^[6] The turnkeys drank, and Morten replenished their cups.--"Know ye the news, comrades?" he

continued, raising his voice, as he seated himself at his ease, with his arms resting on the table; "we may presently expect the king here at the castle; then will there be no lack of drink. Money, and mead, and wine, and Saxon ale, will flow here, as in blessed Paradise."

"The king!" said Niels the horseman; "then of a surety will there be fine doings here; he will, by my troth! give the huntsman something to do."

"You will see, then, the bishop will get loose," said Jørgen the turnkey, rolling the dice as he spoke, "for he is surely not so mad as to put the king in a rage again, as he did the last time."

"*He* cares not for the King's wrath," answered the cook; "that fellow minds neither king nor emperor; and if it be true that the pope in Rome sides with him, the king may go to the wall at last."

"What can the pope do to *our* king?" asked Niels the horseman; "he dwells in Italy, far over the sea yonder, and hath neither horsemen nor ships to send hither."

"But he hath that which stands him in better stead," said Morten; "he hath got a bunch of keys, so heavy that a hundred men can't carry them, and with those he can both open and shut heaven and hell, to each one of us, just as it likes him. Hell-gate he willingly leaves open, for there is ever a throng in *that* quarter; but heaven's gate, by my troth! he locks every evening himself, and lays the keys under his pillow."

"But St. Peter keeps the gate," responded Niels; "he must ever stand sentinel there night and day."

"Right, Niels! but St. Peter is the pope's cousin only; besides, the pope keeps him under finger and thumb, and takes the keys from him every evening, as soon as it grows dark, just as the steward takes the keys from thee: the pope, moreover, is the Lord's stadtholder, as thou surely know'st; and when he is wroth, he is able by a single word to shut up all the churches in the country, and give all of us, body and soul, to the devil."

"Our Lady preserve us!" said Niels, crossing himself; "and think'st thou he durst act thus by our king and all Christian folk here in the country?"

"Yes, he threatens hard to do it, they say. The devil take the confounded bishop below, there! *he* is the cause of all this ill luck; 'twere better for king and country had he long since shown us a pair of clean heels."

"Think'st thou so, Morten! 'tis arrant folly, then, to pen the fellow up here as they do?"

"That's the king's business," answered Morten; "he surely knows what he is about; and hath doubtless his own reasons for what he does. The bishop had a hand in the game when they made away with his father in the barn at Finnerup--'tis true King Glipping was worth little enough, but he was king nevertheless, and the murder was a lawless business: our Lord forbid I should defend it! No one can think ill of our young king because he can't forgive the bishop; but, as I said before, state and country would fare better were the king less strict, and the bishop gone to the devil."

While this dialogue was carrying on, the old turnkey returned half intoxicated, and threw himself on a bench before the drinking table.

"How now, Mads! what red cheeks thou hast got," said the cook, laughing; "thou must surely have accredited the bishop's wine: thou didst right! who could know whether it might not be poisoned?"

"Death and pestilence, Morten! what art prating of?" lisped forth the old man in a fright, and spit upon the floor. "I have not so much as tasted a drop of his wine; nevertheless, thou shouldst not jest about such things."

"Be easy, old fellow!" said Morten, in a soothing tone; "I myself drank of it on the stairs. Well! what said he to the change?"

"Not so much as yon stone flask, comrade! The hound would sooner let himself be spitted than speak a fair word to any man: perhaps, too, he thought it was poison I brought him,--but, death and pestilence!--here he paused and spit again--"I can never believe"----

"Make thyself easy, Mads! thou knowest thou hast not tasted a drop; at any rate here is something to rince thy throat with, which I warrant thee is good and wholesome. I will sing thee a merry song the while; which will do the bishop good as well." While Morten again replenished his comrades' cups, he cleared his throat and sang:

In Sjöborg tower a spider's web
Holds sure a struggling fly;
He once was king and country's dread,
And held his head full high.
Then strive and toil, and toil and strive,

That web thou'lt never leave alive."

"What song is that?" asked Niels the horseman; "I never heard it before."

"It was made to mock the bishop below," said Morten; "and *I* it was who made it. Now ye shall hear; for to plague him properly, and mock his useless learning, I have managed to cram a little Latin into it that I learned of Father Gregory:" and Morten continued,--

"For Crimen læsæ majestatis,
The spider's web doth prison thee.
Custodibus inebriatis,
A thief shall catch a thief, thou'lt see.
Then strive and toil, and toil and strive,
That web thou'lt never leave alive."

While the cook thus sang in a loud voice, the clanking of chains was heard below in the archbishop's dungeon, and the two half-drunken turnkeys started from their seats, while Jörgen, who was still sober, took the opportunity of conveying a couple of the cook's silver pieces into his own pocket. "Let him writhe in his chains, the hound!" said Morten, remaining quietly seated; "he hears well enough how I mock him in the song, and that enrages him; but it does him good."

"Right, Morten!" said Niels the horseman, as he peeped through the chink in the floor. "He twists in his chains, as though he were possessed--thou may'st be sure it is the Latin that vexes him--but no matter for that. I would have him hear, that we lay folk know a thing or two as well as himself."

"Come, let's drink, comrades!" called the cook, and continued to sing, as he rose from the bench, and staggered, as if half-intoxicated, about the chamber:--

"Thy Latin hast thou clean forgot?
And canst not catch the blithe bird's lay?
Then dark and dreary be thy lot,
Within these walls thou'lt pine away.
Then strive and toil, and toil and strive,
That web thou'lt never leave alive."

"Hast thou a message to Rome?
Hark! the bird sings right cunningly!
Or farther yet, from my greenwood home?
Speak! and I'll haste far o'er the sea.
Then strive and toil, and toil and strive,
That web thou'lt never leave alive."

As he sang the last verse, he fell down flat beside the hole, above the archbishop's dungeon, and peeped through it.

"The false knave mocks me," he heard the captive murmur with a deep sigh.

"Then strive and toil, and toil and strive,
Thou'lt never leave that web alive,"

sang Morten at the top of his lungs, while he reeled about, and continued to repeat the burden of the song, in which the turnkeys joined with loud laughter.

"Thou art gloriously drunk, Morten!" said Niels the horseman, in an inarticulate voice, and fell under the table. "Thou shouldst bethink thee, we are on guard here, and not at an ale-house:" so saying, the man-at-arms rested his heavy head on a stone flagon, which lay on the floor, and fell asleep.

"But what hath become of Niels the horseman?" said the old turnkey, who had in the meantime drained a large flagon of potent Saxon ale (noted for its intoxicating properties). "I'll be hanged if I can see him."

"He is snoring under the table there, the guzzling hound!" answered Jörgen; "ye are pretty fellows, truly, to keep a night watch: I shall have to watch and be sober for ye all. Come, Morten! let us two keep our wits about us, and mind our duty! There lie thy silver pieces swimming in ale and mead--let's clear the table--shall we venture a throw for them? he who gets the highest throw shall pocket them; thou mayest throw first, an thou likest."

"Done!" said Morten; "but we must play fair." As he said this, he took the dice and threw.

"If thou canst count, count, Jörgen, he stuttered, without looking at the dice.

"Two, three--seven thou hast only got," answered Jörgen, hastily sweeping up the dice; "look, it

is my turn now:" he threw the dice, which turned up a high number. "I've won! the money is mine! look thyself!"--he swept the money towards him.

"I doubt thee not--thou art an honest fellow," answered Morten, reeling, as he filled his comrade's cup, "the money is thine, but, by my soul! thou shalt now drink to the health of my true love, and then I will lie down to sleep. If thou drink not that cup clean out, I shall hold thee for a rascally cheat."

"Well, then, good Morten, here's to the health of the pretty Karen Jeppé of Gilleleie! see'st thou, I am a man of my word," said Jörgen, and drank--"There is not a drop left in the can."

"That's right! Thou art an honest soul after all," lisped the cook, tumbling on the floor, where he soon began to snore louder than any of the others.

"The dull brute!" muttered Jörgen, who began to feel somewhat muddled; "one may lead him by the nose as much as one likes." It was not long, however, before he leaned his head on his arms upon the table, and slept soundly. Hardly had he begun to snore, ere the cook rose, perfectly sober, and narrowly scrutinised the faces of the three sleeping turnkeys by the dim light of the lamp. As soon as he was satisfied that they slept soundly, Morten crept softly to the hole in the floor, and looked down on the prisoner.

"Venerable sir!" he whispered, "I have managed to drink them all three dead drunk; they are sleeping like logs--you need not doubt me. I have always been true and devoted to you. I was forced to plague and vex you, to throw dust in the eyes of others. I will do your bidding, wherever you please to send me."

"Is this earnest, Morten?" whispered the captive archbishop.

"It is, by my soul and honour!" answered the cook; "you saved my life, and concealed what you well wot of; therefore have I vowed to Saint Martin to save your life--at whatever cost."

"In the Lord's name, then, I will believe thee," said the prisoner. "If thou wouldst save my life, hie thee to Copenhagen, to my canon Hans Rodis, and consult with him! Bid him send me pen and ink--a file--and a ladder of ropes."

"Hans Rodis is at Esrom, my lord," answered the cook; "he bade me put this little sausage into your pious hands. If the chains will let you, hold up your hands, just as you lie there! Look, now! see how well we have hit the mark!" In saying this, the cook pushed through the aperture a thin rolled-up packet, concealed in a sausage; it was fastened to a string, by which he lowered it, holding the end fast in his hand. "I have it," said the captive, "praised be the King of kings! My faithful servant hath sent me what I need--let not go the string," he continued, after a pause; "bring the lamp to the hole--but one single ray of light!" The cook obeyed in silence.

"I am writing a word of moment to my commandant at Hammershuus; wilt thou put it faithfully into his own hands?"

"I will, by my soul! only make haste."

"Thy reward will be great in Heaven, as on earth; but give me light, light!"

"All is arranged," whispered the cook, holding the lamp closer to the hole; "let us but make sure of Hammershuus, and all will be well! The fitting time will be when ye see me again; meanwhile use the file with caution. I and the canon will care for the rest; Niels Brock and his friends will help us. Johan Kysté and Olé Ark are here. Be of good courage, venerable sir! you may depend on me. But haste! those drunken dogs are stirring--I fear they will awake."

"One moment more!" whispered the captive. "Pull up--all is ready," he continued, after a short pause. Morten hastily drew up the string, and found a sheet of parchment rolled up in the skin of the sausage, which was fastened to it: he carefully concealed it. "Hush! they wake!" he whispered. "I must set to work again." So saying, the portly cook rolled himself on the floor among the intoxicated and half-awakened turnkeys, and began to belabour them with all his might. "Hollo, there! now for a beating of meat!" he shouted, "now for a pounding of pepper! How come we by this lump in the porridge? It must be well beaten out."

"Oh, oh! Art thou mad, Morten!" cried Niels the horseman.

"Have done with thy chatter, I know what I am about," continued Morten, still laying about him. "I am neither mad nor drunk; but the devil take me if I stay longer here!--must you, clodpates, have your say too, and fancy yourselves wiser than the cook? Would you make me believe I have horsemen in the pot?"

While Morten thus shouted and talked, as though intoxicated to an excess he overturned the lamp, reeled in the dark out of the chamber, and rolled himself down the stairs. When the keepers, on the following morning, had recovered the full use of their senses the cook had disappeared, and was nowhere to be found in the castle.

CHAP. II.

At sunrise next morning, the brisk broad-shouldered cook, with a large club in his hand, took his way through the wood skirting Esrom Lake^[7], accompanied by two other wanderers. It was a foggy morning; large flocks of wild geese flew with shrill cries over the lake, and the fallen leaves of the forest were swept along the path by the sharp morning breeze. The cook and his companions proceeded in silence and with hasty steps; and it was not until the sun began to disperse the cold mists of morning, that Morten cleared his throat, and sang a merry ballad. His companions were two strong broad-shouldered fellows, with red wadmals cloaks, over dirty leathern breeches, and with broad swords and daggers in their thickly padded belts, which also appeared to serve them as purses. They had the appearance of deserters or dismissed men-at-arms; they both wore beards in the fashion of king's horsemen, but seemed to have long neglected all attention to cleanliness and personal neatness. Their unwashed faces betokened want of sleep and fitting rest. The heads of a couple of flails served them as walking staves. They bore on their backs large bundles of rich attire, from which pieces of smoked meat and other provisions protruded. Their long uncombed hair hung about their shoulders; the skin and hair of both were so dark, and their countenances had so little of a Danish cast, that they would have passed for foreigners, had not their dialect proclaimed them to be peasants from Lolland; who, at any rate, could not prove their evidently Vandal extraction in the first generation. The taller of the two had lost an eye, and the other had a huge scar between his nose and mouth, which looked like a hare lip, and his sharp projecting teeth gave him a ferocious appearance, resembling that of a wild boar.

The three wanderers occasionally looked behind them, as if they apprehended a pursuit; but they only beheld the white gable ends of Esrom monastery, which they had passed a short time before.

"Now, thanks for good companionship," said Morten, as he halted at a cross road in the forest. "It were best we part company for the present; ye understand what I said to you--ye are to hide yourselves at Gilleleie, and watch every night, until ye see the skiff with the black pennant, then push off with Jeppé's boat, and set me on shore: meanwhile watch narrowly all that goes on here, and who goes in and out of the castle. What Niels Brock and the archbishop have promised, you may make sure of. But then ye must not be self-willed; ye will never be able to get him out by force, and if the king and Marsk Oluffsen come hither to-day or to-morrow, ye might lightly get hanged and ruin every thing."

"Leave that to us, sly Morten," said the man with the one eye. "Johan Kysté well knows what he is about. I committed but one folly in my life; 'twas on that Easter eve I deserted from the Marsk, and took the palfrey from the pious clerk; I did but knock a little hole in his skull, but it was large enough for his bit of a soul to slink out of: one should let holy men go their way in peace; for this, I am now forced to put up with one eye. I vowed, therefore, to our Lady and St. Joseph, to become pious and God-fearing from that very hour, and never more to lay my hand on other than laymen."

"A pious resolve," said Morten: "wert thou not such a bloodhound and cut-throat, I could almost believe thy soul might be saved as yet, even shouldst thou steal and rob in a small way at times."

"It bids fair to be so," answered the one-eyed. "I have a letter of absolution from the archbishop, within my woollen jerkin, that will stand me in good stead when all the world besides marches to hell. Truly I served the learned Master Grand faithfully by night and day these many years, therefore hath the pious archbishop given me freedom from fasting, and absolution for sins for ten whole years: he hath not spared his silver pieces either; and shall I now suffer them to shut up such a man, and thereby rob so many honest fellows of a living? What sayest thou, Olé Ark? Shall we suffer it any longer? hath Master Grand deserved it of us?"

"Pshaw! Kysté; who says thou art to suffer it, and leave him in the lurch?" interrupted Morten. "We all want to have him out; but we would not be as fools, trying to burst open the doors with their own thick skulls. Force will not help us here--do but as I bid thee, and keep thy courage until we want it."

"Morten is right, Kysté," began the other Lollander, with a hideous grin, which displayed his projecting teeth. "Thou art a mad bull, and art ever ready to push with thy horns. Why haste so desperately to get him out? he was a good and generous man of God while he was in power, 'tis true, but since he hath lain in Sjöborg we have heard no great things of him, and have not been blessed with the sight of a stiver from his hand."

"Dull cod-fish!" replied Johan Kysté, hastily; "believest thou not what honest Morten hath vowed and promised us in the bishop's name? As soon as we get him out we are his steersmen at

Bornholm, and get leave to catch what we can throughout the king's dominions."

"Hold, comrade," said Morten, correcting him. "It is only so long as the breach lasts between the king and the archbishop, that he gives you leave to drive that trade: it is only in the service of the church, and the pious bishop, that it may be lawful and Christian for a time; afterwards ye must content yourselves with what he gives you of his own, and lead quiet lives: but ere this day twelvemonth, you may feather your nests finely. Now begone, and neglect not what ye have taken upon ye, for the sake of other desperate pranks! I will not have you longer with me: if any one caught me in such fair company, they might take a fancy to hang me up by the side of you, for honest companionship's sake."

"Ho! ho! wouldst *thou* play the lordling, Morten?" said the one-eyed; "what higher honour couldst *thou* look for, thou turnspit!--But hark! what was that? are there hunters in the wood so early?"

The sound of hunting-horns, the tramp of horses, and the baying of hounds, was heard in the neighbourhood: the three wanderers hastened forward a few paces, but soon suddenly sprang aside in different directions.

"S'death! the king and all his courtiers!" exclaimed Morten, sheltering himself behind a large beech tree by the road side, while both his suspicious-looking comrades hid themselves among the thick brushwood.

A numerous hunting train drew near; at the head rode the young king, between the Drost and the Marsk: it was a noble sight to see the young chivalrous King Eric on horseback. He rode a tall milk-white horse, which seemed proud of its burden, and often fell into the artificial dancing-pace to which it was used in the tilt and tourney. Its bridle and saddle accoutrements glittered with gold and precious stones: the silken rein with which the king managed his steed was the only compulsory means to which it would submit; the slightest touch of the golden rowel in the king's spur caused it to rear almost upright, and for any other than the king it seemed rash and dangerous to bestride the proud animal. The king himself was a noble-looking youth, with a manly and determined, almost a stern, cast of countenance; but his long fair locks imparted a softness to this expression, which, in Eric's milder moods, called to mind the portraits of the Saviour's best beloved Apostle, leaning his head on his Master's breast. The young king had a dignified and chivalrous deportment, the effect of which was heightened by the almost dazzling splendour of his attire, which appeared indeed unsuited to a hunting party. The tall white plume in his hat sparkled with small silver stars; and the green hunting dress, bordered with ermine, was so richly brodered with silken lions, and golden hearts, that it resembled a shining suit of armour.

The splendour in which the young king appeared to delight was also conspicuous in his train. Drost Aagé, who rode at the king's right hand, was of the same age with King Eric, and had not yet attained his twenty-second year. He had been the king's playmate and confidant from childhood upwards, and now possessed his entire confidence and favour. There was a mild but almost melancholy seriousness in the expression of Drost Aagé's countenance, which gave him the appearance of being older than the king. He had thrown his dark blue mantle over the back of his smoking palfrey, by way of covering; and his rich silken dress was besprinkled with the foam of the king's restless and chafing steed, upon which he appeared to keep a watchful eye.

Marsk Niels Oluffsen, who rode at the king's left hand, was a tall strong-built man, of about thirty years and upwards, with a sharp, rough, warrior-like countenance, and stiff deportment. Next to Drost Aagé, he was the king's most indispensable counsellor, and was an exceedingly brave and doughty knight; but there was a tinge of haughtiness and severity in his looks and manner which frequently aroused the feelings of independence, and wounded the self-love, of his inferiors. Even the king and Drost Aagé, who were fully his equals in knightly prowess, and far surpassed him in tact and talent, often felt unpleasantly repulsed by his rough and blunt bearing, of which he was himself so unconscious that nothing astonished him more than whenever his uncouth roughness and self-confidence drove friends as well as enemies from him.

Among others of the king's train were two celebrated German minstrels--Master Rumelant, from Swabia, and Master Poppé the Strong, who, in their national dress of German minstrels, attracted much attention. Master Rumelant's stature was insignificant, but he had a lively and enthusiastic expression of countenance; he was a lover of argument, into which he was ever ready to enter with warmth and vehemence, especially on theological subjects, on which he entertained his own very peculiar opinions. His countryman, Poppé the Strong, well deserved his cognomen: he was a gigantic figure, with long coal-black hair and beard. His appearance often terrified old women and children, by whom he was even sometimes taken for a wizard. He spoke in a tone of emphatic decision, which would have better beseemed a commander-in-chief. He rode a lean grey horse, and always wore a black feather in his hat, in token of a sorrow he desired should be noticed and respected by others. These two strangers had been for some time the honoured guests of the young Danish monarch, who himself possessed a knowledge of the arts, and showed special favour to talented artists and men of learning. The king was also attended on this excursion by the famous Danish philosopher, Petrus de Dacia, who was accounted the greatest astronomer and arithmetician of his time, and was as renowned for his theological learning as for his eloquence and profound knowledge of Greek and Latin philology. Clad in his black canon's dress, he rode a quiet palfrey, between the two German minstrels; and

always acted as mediator when, in the heat of argument, they became vehement, and seemed disposed to exchange hard words. He was still in the prime of life: on his journey through Germany he had become acquainted, at Cologne, with Christiné Stambel, the nun, so renowned for her sanctity; and the enthusiasm with which he always spoke of this lady would have subjected him to the suspicion of a secret passion, had he not in his writings, as well as in his conversation, lauded with still greater enthusiasm the blessed Virgin Mary, as preeminent in beauty and sanctity, and exalted her to supreme rank among the saints in the calendar. He had proved, with irresistible eloquence, that the gracious confidence the Lord showed to St. Peter, in intrusting him with the care of his flock, was even vouchsafed in a far higher degree to St. John, the beloved apostle, who, as the Lord's best-loved disciple, was appointed the protector and guardian of the blessed Virgin.

His vehement theological controversy on this point with the learned and famous Aldobrandino Papparonus Venensis, of the Dominican order, was in a great measure the foundation of the esteem in which he was held by the learned. It was only when the conversation turned on this his favourite theme that his equanimity was ever disturbed; excepting when this occurred, his discourse was calm, clear, and collected. The latent energy which lay in his full and ardent eye, with its expression of somewhat visionary enthusiasm, was calculated to inspire kindly attention and confidence, and (what was a phenomenon among the learned of his time) he was altogether free from pedantry and pride.

The king and his train now approached the cross road and the tree behind which Morten had concealed himself: from this spot opened the finest view on Esrom lake. "Halt!" said the king, springing from his horse: "this is a lovely spot; we will tarry here and take our repast. They will surely come this way from Elsinore."

"No doubt they will, my liege," answered Marsk Oluffsen, while he and the Drost dismounted at the same time from their horses, and gave them into the charge of the king's groom. "Here lies the high road to Esrom and Sjöborg. But, if I know the margrave right, he will not ride through Elsinore ere all the pretty maidens are awake and can admire his fair presence and horsemanship. As yet, his head is full of nought but love adventures and such nonsense."

"Call you love 'nonsense,' my brave Marsk?" interrupted the king. "Do you forget I am a bridegroom? and I trust not one of the coldest."

"Bridegroom, my liege?" answered the Marsk: "in Danish we call no man a bridegroom until his marriage day, and much must be done ere that day comes."

"Much?" rejoined the king, and his joyous animated countenance became suddenly stern and grave--"well! much may be done in a short time, but if they make the time too long, the day I long for may come when I will."

"The Lord and our blessed Lady forbid!" said Drost Aagé, in an under tone, casting a glance at the king, full of anxious and heartfelt sympathy.

"Let the horns play, Aagé," said the king, as if desirous to prevent more exclamations of this kind, which seemed to displease him. "The day will be fine: we will begin it joyously."

At a signal from the Drost, the musicians, who followed the hunting train, struck up the air of the well-known ancient ballad of "Axel Thordson and Fair Valborg,"^[8] which they knew was a favourite with the king.

"Well, this is sweet music if it be not lively," said Eric: "where are Rumelant and Poppé? 'tis pity they cannot sing Danish; their skilful lays are but ill-suited to these tones."

"They are disputing again on spiritual matters," said the Marsk. "They are better fitted for a council of clerks than a hunting party."

"Let us listen," said the king: "I dare wager Master Poppé is in the right; but Master Rumelant nevertheless will be victor in the controversy."

While the music continued, and the attendants converted a low pile of wood into a table for the repast, the king's attention was attracted by the dispute of the two eager minstrels: each stood with the bridle of his horse in his hand, and spoke in a loud tone, while the grave Master Petrus sat calm and attentive on his palfrey, gazing on the lake.

"I will defend my opinion before the whole body of clerks, and all true believers in Christendom," said the vehement little Rumelant, striking his saddle with the handle of his whip as he spoke: "our sinfulness is assuredly better security for our salvation than all our paltry virtue--that is as true as that our blessed Lady's prayers avail in heaven, and she shows us no *favour* when she obtains grace for us; she shows us love and *gratitude*, which she is downright owing us for our sin's sake, for it is not the world's virtue, but its sin alone, she hath to thank for all her honour and glory."

"What are you driving at, my good Master Rumelant?" shouted the gigantic Master Poppé. "How is the holy Virgin honoured by our being a set of sinful scoundrels? that is no honour to us, or any one else."

"Not so, my self-sufficient sir!" shouted his opponent; "truly the case is clearer than the sun: it is assuredly not of our perfection we should boast, but, on the contrary, of our weakness. Would our dear blessed Lady ever have become that she became, had not Adam and Eve sinned, and all of us sinned too in them?"

"No, assuredly not, my dear friend: but how the devil----"

"Ergo, she hath man's sin to thank for her honour and glory! and ergo, she would be most ungrateful were she not to protect sinners, and bring us all likewise to honour and glory for our sin's sake."

"You drive me mad. Master Rumelant," shouted Master Poppé, stamping in wrath; "I know not what to answer you, but you are wrong, by my soul! as I will, like an honest German, show you with my good sword if you desire it. What if I should now commit the sin of slaying you on the spot, would the blessed Virgin bring me to honour and glory because *of that?* or would it be so small a sin that it could not be imputed to me as a great merit?"

"Worthy sirs," interrupted Master Petrus, gravely, "talk not of spiritual things with sophistry, or in an angry spirit; least of all of our blessed Lady, who is truth and heavenly calm itself. You exchange spiritual for temporal weapons, Master Poppé; and you darken the fountain of light, Master Rumelant, when you would make grace to proceed from sin on earth, instead of from incomprehensible love and mercy in God's kingdom."

"It seems to me it is of sin and grace those learned disputants are talking," said the king, seating himself by the side of Drost Aagé on the trunk of a tree at a little distance. "Well, that is a never-ending chapter, and truly one I ought to reflect on when I wend to Sjöborg."

"Most certainly, my liege," answered Aagé, looking with glad sympathy on the king's noble countenance. "When we think on the great mercy we all need, we should wish rather to be able to forgive our enemies than to execute the most lawful sentence upon them."

"*Him* thou meanest will I not forgive throughout all eternity!" burst forth the king impetuously. "He sat chief in council among my father's murderers, he ought to sit lowest among criminals in my kingdom. If the pope will not condemn him, *I* will. His blood I ask not, but outlawed and dishonoured shall he remain all the days of his life."

"The pope, however, hath alone the right to pass sentence on him, my liege," observed Aagé. "So long as he remains captive here he cannot defend his cause before his lawful tribunal, therefore it seems to me but reasonable----"

"No, Aagé!" interrupted the king, "neither just nor reasonable would it be to let loose the captive murderer, that he may perjure himself, to go forth free and honoured among his equals; but it were *wise* perhaps for my own peace and happiness."

"And perhaps for state and kingdom also," replied Aagé. "This much is certain, my liege: so long as that dangerous man is detained captive at Sjöborg, neither Drost Hessel nor Counsellor Jon can obtain the dispensation for your marriage; and if I understood the wily Isarnus aright, he is already privately empowered by the pope to enforce the unhappy constitution of Veile against both you and the kingdom."

"And were it so," said the king, rising, "think'st thou I and the kingdom would be really harmed by it? Would Denmark's bishops and priests dare to excommunicate their king, and all their countrymen? Hast thou not thyself, because of thy love to me, been for two years already under the ban of the archbishop? And art thou not well and sound notwithstanding? Hath any priest in Denmark dared to shut the church door against thee when thou camest by my side, or to deny thee the holy sacrament in my presence?"

"My sentence is not yet confirmed by the holy father," said Aagé; "and yet, my liege! I shudder, notwithstanding, to think of it--many of my noble countrymen regard me with looks which sadden and well nigh dismay me. The thunderbolts of the church are dreadful even in the hand of the chained criminal--they would have crushed me to the earth, did I not even yet hope that the ban, which a regicide hath proclaimed against me, is not accounted of by the merciful Lord in heaven. The holy father also will surely be moved by the righteousness of my cause, and by your intercession in my behalf, to recall it."

"He shall, he must do so," answered the king with warmth, "or I will teach thee to defy the might of injustice--perhaps also, my faithful Aagé, I and all Denmark may have to share thy fate! but, with the help of the Lord and our blessed Lady, we will not therefore be cast down, or stoop to humiliation. I stake my life and crown upon it!"

"For heaven's sake, my liege!" exclaimed Aagé, in alarm; but what he was about to utter was suddenly cut short by a significant look from the king, who, at that moment, had caught a glimpse of a round ruddy face, peering forth with a look of rapt attention from behind the tree beside which they were standing. "Who is that?" asked the king. "It is none of our huntsmen--art thou playing the spy, countryman?"

"A stranger!" exclaimed Aagé; "come hither; who art thou?"

"Would ye aught with me, good sirs?" said Morten, the cook, stepping forward. "I thought ye spoke to me. I am deaf, ye must know; if ye have any commands, ye must shout at the top of your lungs."

"Who art thou?" asked Aagé, raising his voice, while he gazed on him with a searching look. "What wouldst thou here?"

"*Fear?*" said the cook, assuming a simple look. "I will not deny I was somewhat afraid of your horses, and cared not to meet them on a fasting stomach."

"A poor crazy fellow," said the king, "let him go his way in peace, Aagé; had he even heard what we spoke of, what would it signify?"

"Yes, by my troth, horses do signify something!" said Morten, looking at Eric with evident interest. "The white horse signifies victory and speedy judgment on the Lord's enemies--says Father Gregory."

"So much the better!" said the king, gaily, giving him a couple of gold pieces. "Go thy way in peace, I would fain hope thou hast spoken truth in thy simplicity. The white horse is mine."

"But the dark red signifies rebellion and the yellow pestilence," continued Morten, seemingly touched, as he received the king's gift, and kissed his hand. "Mark, it was therefore I got frightened, when I saw ye between those two beasts. I am otherwise a poor sinner, at your service. I am going a pilgrimage for my own and other folks' sins. I will now pray for a blessing on you, noble sir!"--so saying, he strode hastily across the road, and disappeared in the wood.

"How would he interpret the red and the yellow horse?" said the king, gravely. "Those pious men of the cloister fill our country and people full of superstition."

"The fellow perhaps was neither deaf nor half-witted," answered Aagé; "to you he naturally said fair words, in order to escape. Our stern Marsk is not liked by vagrants; the bay horse he rides to-day is one he lately got in exchange from your brother Junker Christopher. My cream-coloured horse is well known, and since I fell under the church's ban the people look on me as the emblem of pestilence and misfortune by your side."

These serious comments on the cook's words were now interrupted by the sudden baying of the hounds, which dashed forward in couples towards a thick bush of white thorn, in full cry.

"Game! game!" shouted the huntsman; but, instead of the supposed deer, the two concealed wanderers sprang out of the bush: they had cast aside their peasants' mantles and their bundles, in order the more easily to save themselves by flight in their light cuirasses, but by so doing they had betrayed themselves, and awakened suspicion. By order of the Marsk they were instantly seized, and brought before the party of hunters.

"What means this?" called the king in surprise: "we are not come hither to hunt men."

"A couple of deserters from your Lolland horsemen, my liege," answered Marsk Oluffsen. "I know them; we have long been on the look-out for them; it is they whom the Count of Lolland hath sought after as robbers and murderers."

"Then send them to Flynderborg^[9] to await their doom!" commanded the king. "What would they here! they shall be strictly brought to account."

The captured deserters were instantly led off to be bound and conducted to the fortress. They had until now stood still and downcast, like convicted criminals; but, on finding they were to be bound, they suddenly started forward and defended themselves with all the desperation of despair. They wounded three of the king's huntsmen with their daggers, and, amid the confusion and tumult occasioned by their unexpected onset, contrived to tear themselves loose, and instantly plunged into the lake. Some hunters pursued them on horseback, and a couple of hounds, trained to hunt the wild-duck, were let loose after them; but the fugitives dived and swam with such skill and vigour that none could see them until they landed on the opposite shore of the lake, where they quickly disappeared in the brushwood.

The king and his train had gone down to the water's edge to look at this singular sight. Some hunters were ordered to ride round the lake, in order if possible to overtake the fugitives. Drost Aagé would also have despatched some one after the pretended deaf man, whom he now believed to be in league with the deserters.

"No!" said the king, "he shall not be pursued. I use not to put gold into a man's hand one hour, and fasten iron round it the next."

The party now returned to partake of the repast which was spread for them. As soon as they had refreshed themselves they mounted their horses, and were about to proceed further, but the sound of hunting-horns was now heard on the road from Elsinore, and three riders in rich attire, with several knights and huntsmen, approached at full gallop. It was the king's brother, Junker Christopher, with the young Margrave Waldemar of Brandenburg, who was at this time the king's guest, and the brave Count Henrik of Mecklenborg, who had lately entered the king's service as

commander of the army. They had been at Elsinore, where Prince Christopher had received a Swedish royal embassy on the part of the king. The margrave, it was said, had accompanied him for his amusement, and to enjoy the beautiful scenery of Elsinore, but had in reality joined the expedition at the request of Prince Christopher, who anxiously courted the young margrave's friendship. The prince seemed inseparable from him, and generally contrived to secure his companionship whenever he was charged with any important mission by the king, that it might give him opportunities, which he eagerly sought, of raising his consequence in the eyes of the people.

Prince Christopher, or the Junker, as he was generally called, was two years younger than the king. Though tall and strongly built, his figure was far from being so well proportioned as his brother's. His large features and long visage, shaded by coarse long black hair, had a gloomy and sinister expression, which reminded the people but too much of his detested father. His brother, the king, on the contrary, bore a greater resemblance to his mother, the fair and talented Queen Agnes, who, during the king's minority, had been for the most part at the head of state affairs, but who now led a happy private life with her second consort, Count Gerhard of Holstein, at the castle of Nykjöping. The popularity which the chivalrous King Eric had enjoyed from his childhood appeared little pleasing to his brother, and many believed that the prince secretly exerted himself to form a powerful party of his own in the country. In the event of the throne becoming vacant, he was in fact the member of the royal house who might first expect to be called to the crown, but of this there was no reasonable prospect. Notwithstanding that some differences had existed between the brothers on the affair of the archbishop's imprisonment, King Eric was so far from showing any mistrust of his brother, that he even promoted his consequence by investing him with considerable fiefs in the country. But Drost Aagé strongly suspected the prince of entertaining ambitious and treacherous projects, and the Drost's suspicions of Christopher were rather increased than diminished by the zeal with which, the prince seemed to enter into the negotiations respecting the king's marriage. As well on this subject, of such moment to the king, as on that of the Swedish King Birger's marriage with the king's and Christopher's sister Mereté, there were at this time frequent communications between the Swedish and Danish court. The young King of Sweden was only in his sixteenth year, and wholly dependent on his state council, which was composed of men of very opposite opinions, and Drost Aagé feared that Prince Christopher's object in receiving the embassy was to increase if possible the obstacles to this double alliance. Aagé was, however, deterred from imparting his doubts to the king by the fear of occasioning a dangerous misunderstanding between the brothers; and Eric was so far from suspecting his brother of any dishonourable design, that he considered his anxiety to meet the Swedish embassy as a proof of fraternal affection. The young king welcomed both Christopher and the margrave with much friendliness; and as soon as he had greeted them, and the gay Count Henrik, turned towards the Swedish ambassadors, who, with some Danish knights, followed the princely comers. In the most dignified of the two Swedish nobles Eric joyfully recognised King Birger's faithful counsellor, the Swedish regent and Marsk, Sir Thorkild Knudson, a tall middle-aged man, of a grave and noble countenance; but it was not without a feeling of uneasiness that the king beheld his companion, a withered shrunken figure, whose cold and wily countenance wore a perpetual smile, and whose grey, staring ostrich-like eye had an expression of sinister scrutiny. It was the Swedish statesman and Drost, Sir Johan Bruncké, who, next to Thorkild Knudson, was the most influential statesman in Sweden, and appeared to stand as high in favour with the weak King Birger as with his ambitious brothers, while he gained a knowledge of the individual foibles of each, and well knew how to work upon them for his own advantage.

When the king had greeted the strangers, he proceeded with his augmented train to Esrom monastery, where he conversed with the ambassadors, and received letters from King Birger, Princess Ingeborg, and his sister Mereté, who, according to an earlier agreement, had been brought up, as the future Queen of Sweden, at the Swedish court. Eric seemed unusually joyous and animated after he had perused these letters. His anxiety to hasten his marriage, and to have it fixed for the ensuing summer, had met with the entire approbation of the royal house of Sweden, and Princess Ingeborg's letter breathed the most tender and devoted affection.

The difficulties and objections stated by the ambassador principally regarded the misunderstanding with the court of Rome, and the dispensation which was yet withheld, to which the king, misled by the ardour of his feelings, did not attach the importance it deserved.

He invited the ambassadors to be his guests for some weeks, as he hoped very shortly to remove all difficulties. The afternoon was spent pleasantly in hunting, and in the evening the king, with the whole of his train, repaired to Sjöborg, where several cars, conveying the cooks of the royal kitchen, and domestics of every description, had arrived during the day.

CHAP. III.

The ancient fortress soon presented a scene of splendid festivity. The spacious halls glittered with regal pomp, and resounded with the stir and bustle which are the accompaniments of a court. With the exception of the tower, the whole of the castle had been recently fitted up as a royal residence. The king's principal counsellors had accompanied him, and though he occasionally hunted, he did not therefore neglect state affairs, which frequently occupied him until the night was well nigh spent.

The king never inquired after the captive archbishop, whom he appeared to have forgotten. A reconciliation, on suitable conditions, with this important personage, was, however, doubtless the secret object of the king's sojourn at Sjöborg. The adjustment of this vexatious affair was never of more consequence than at this juncture, as it was not only a present hindrance to his marriage, but threatened to prove dangerous both to state and kingdom. The king, however, was desirous that no one should know the real purport of his visit, least of all the captive archbishop, who would probably take occasion thereby to raise his demands to the uttermost. Besides, Eric himself appeared not to have decided what course to pursue in this matter. Although revenge had never been his failing, and on the contrary he had often manifested the most generous temper, the remembrance of his father's murder had rendered him stern and almost implacable towards everyone connected with the regicides, and he felt it was impossible for him to make the first advances towards a reconciliation with Archbishop Grand. He apparently expected the haughty captive would himself petition for an interview, and pave the way to reconciliation by a humble acknowledgment of his guilt. One week after another, however, passed away, without any thing of this kind taking place. The number of guests was daily increasing at Sjöborg. The presence of the Margrave of Brandenburg and the Swedish ambassadors, as well as that of the hunting party and Prince Christopher's retinue, imparted an appearance of life and gaiety to this otherwise dreary castle, which almost painfully contrasted with its gloomy destination, and the many dark recollections connected with the place.

One day in November, a singular procession approached the castle of Sjöborg. From two Hanseatic merchant vessels, which had anchored off the fishing station, there landed a number of foreign seamen, who, carrying the Rostock flag, and with large broad swords at their sides, proceeded to the castle, amid the dissonant sound of pipes and trumpets. At the head of the procession marched a tall stout man, in a burgher's coat of fine cloth, trimmed with broad borders of costly fur. It was the rich trader, Berner Kopmand of Rostock, well known at the great fairs of Skanör and Falsterbo, whither he was wont to bring rich cargoes of cloth and costly spices. He was notorious for his authoritative and overbearing deportment, and for the ostentatious pomp by which he sought to acquire the reputation of a merchant prince. By his side walked the almost equally noted Henrik Gullandsfar of Visbye, also one of the most influential Hanseatic merchants, and an adroit and politic negociator between the Hanse towns and the northern princes.^[10] They announced themselves at the castle as Hanseatic ambassadors, and were admitted into the upper hall, while their train was served with refreshments below.

A long conference took place between the king and the foreign merchants, in the presence of the Drost and council, during which Berner Kopmand was especially loud tongued, and the king preserved his patience for an unwonted length of time. The great privileges which had been granted by the king to the Hanseatic towns four years before, and which he had since augmented and confirmed at Nyborg, had not satisfied the expectations of the Rostockers; who demanded besides, the recognition of their self-assumed right, to pronounce and execute sentence of death on board their own vessels upon every Danish subject who had injured them, and fallen into their hands. The Vandal towns, together with the merchants of Mecklenborg and Lubec, were unanimously agreed, on their own responsibility, and without distinction, to hang every knight and noble who should molest them on their journeyings through Germany.

"Enough," said the king, at last, breaking off the conference, and rising in wrath, "I wanted but to hear how far ye would push your impudent demands, and therefore let ye have your say. This is my answer. My former promise to the towns I have hitherto kept; if they content ye not, we Danes may easily learn to fetch what we want from foreign lands, and export what we want not. When guests and strangers are injured here they can complain; there is law and justice in the land; but they who take the law into their own hands on Danish ground or on the Danish seas shall be condemned as traitors and robbers, whether they be knight or burgher, whether they be native or stranger." So saying, the king turned his back upon the merchant ambassadors. Without heeding their angry looks, he hastened to join his princely guests, and the Swedish lords who awaited his coming, to set out on a hunting expedition, and left the Hanseatic burghers to the care of the Drost.

The incensed merchants instantly quitted the castle with their followers, who had become intoxicated and unruly during their stay in the lower hall. The Marsk (to the merchants still greater annoyance) had taken upon himself to disarm them, as with bold presumption they had ventured on liberties which outraged both law and custom. Their weapons, however, were returned to them on reaching the shore, whither Drost Aagé and some other knights accompanied them, with cold courtesy, partly to protect them from the assembled rabble, which had crowded round the intoxicated seamen, to gaze at and deride them. On their way to the strand the wrathful traders spoke not a word, but the blood appeared ready to start from Berner Kopmand's crimson visage, while there was a calm cold smile on the countenance of Henrik Gullandsfar.

When these important personages, with their reeling train, had entered the boat, and pushed off from the shore, in order to row to their ships, the portly Rostocker suddenly raised his voice, and shouted with unrestrained wrath and bitterness, "Bring King Eric Ericson our parting greeting, Sir Drost! Tell him from me, Berner Kopmand of Rostock, and from Henrik Gullandsfar of Visbye, in our own and in the name of the great and mighty Hanse towns, that we threaten him with deadly strife, as the enemy of our liberty and of all noble burghership!"

Henrik Gullandsfar nudged his colleague's elbow in alarm; but the proud choleric Rostocker continued, "Tell the King of Denmark, dearly shall he rue the scorn and contempt he hath this day shown us; he shall rue it, as surely as I am called the rich Berner Kopmand of Rostock! and as surely as I am the man to ask what is the price of this state and country, and how many pounds a king is worth, in our times, when the lightnings of excommunication play above his head!"

"Such greeting and defiance you may yourself bring my liege and sovereign," answered Aagé, "if you fancy being sent back to Rostock with your hands tied behind you like a madman." So saying, he turned contemptuously on his heel, and returned with his knights to Sjöborg. He afterwards joined the king and the hunting-party, but made no mention of this impudent defiance, which, though it seemed to him indeed to be paltry and powerless, he yet could not but regard as a striking instance of the insufferable pride of these monied aristocrats, and of the boldness with which the equivocal position of the king at the court of Rome had inspired the ill-affected and discontented.

After a hard chase the king rode back in the evening to Sjöborg, with Drost Aagé by his side. It was already dark. The cold November blast whirled the fallen leaves around them as they rode through the forest. The moon now rose behind the trees, shining with an unsteady light from out the flying clouds, through the leafless boughs of the forest. Behind them rode Marsk Oluffsen between Henrik of Mecklenborg and the Swedish regent, whose return to Sweden was fixed for the following day. Some hunters followed with the game caught in the chase. The rest of the train remained at Esrom monastery. The king, as well as Drost Aagé, had been remarkably silent during the day. Since the arrival of the Swedish ambassadors, tidings had been daily looked for, but in vain, from the Danish embassy at the papal court. The king had not as yet taken any step towards a reconciliation with the captive archbishop. The journey of the Swedish ambassadors could no longer be delayed, and the obstacles to the king's marriage were not in any measure removed. The king and his faithful Aagé now rode in silence by each other's side, apparently occupied with a presentiment which they could not banish from their minds, but to which neither liked to give utterance. It was the unfortunate St. Cecilia's day, which yearly brought with it to the king bitter recollections of the dreadful murder of his father at Finnerup. Marsk Oluffsen appeared not to remember what day it was; he jested merrily, after his fashion, with the German and Swedish guests, and lauded the pious and frugal manner in which King Birger's tutor, a certain Carl Tydsker^[11], had a few years since restored his young sovereign to health, namely, by making the same vow to three saints at once, and afterwards drawing lots to determine to which of the good saints the vow should be kept. "I have since wondered," said the Marsk, laughing, "whether the victory over the Kareles^[12] was thrown into the bargain, and was one of St. Eric's miracles; if so, I must acknowledge that Carl Tydsker was worth his weight in gold." By this unlucky jest the Marsk wounded at the same time the national pride of both his German and Swedish companions, without appearing himself in the least to perceive it.

"When my countrymen as well as myself serve your king here in the north, Sir Marsk," answered the brave Count Henrik, "I feel we deserve thanks, and not mockery, whether we help him with prayer or with sword." As he said this he struck his hand with some violence on the hilt of his sword.

The Marsk looked astounded. He was silent; but his perplexity increased on Thorkild Knudson, also addressing him in a serious tone. "Deem ye my victory over the brave heathen to be a miracle, Sir Marsk?" said the Swedish knight, with a calm smile. "Every thing is a miracle, if ye will. Without heavenly aid no victory is won on earth; that even your victorious King Waldemar was forced to acknowledge, yet that detracts not from his glory. I reckon the victory of Wolmar with the heaven-sent banner, to be that which gained him his fairest laurels. Our times are more chary of laurels. Sir Marsk! we will not rob each other of those we win with honour."

"By all the martyrs!" exclaimed the Marsk, with wide open eyes and crimson cheeks, "who ever thought of offending either you or the brave Count Henrik? By my soul! I understand ye not," he continued in an impatient tone; "were my brains as dull as those of other people, I should be badly off indeed."

Count Henrik could not suppress a good-natured laugh at the absurd contrast between the Marsk's words and his angry tone. The misunderstanding was soon set to rights, and the conversation turned on former and recent warlike expeditions.

Without thinking of what might awaken bitter recollections in the king's mind, especially on this day, the Marsk now talked in a loud voice of the feud, with Marsk Stig, and the taking of Hjelm, at which he himself had been present, under David Thorstensen's banner.

"Yet you took not the daring Marsk Stig, either dead or alive," said Count Henrik; "'tis a strange story they tell here of his disappearance."

"His death, as his life, is shrouded in darkness and mystery," observed the Swedish knight. "With us also he hath a dreaded name."

"He was a great general, though," said Count Henrik. "I would have given much to have seen him. Was he as tall as Sir Niels Brock or the Duke of Langeland?"

"He had a finer presence than either Niels Brock or Duke Longshanks, if he measured not the same length. In that point, perhaps, both you and I might have been his match; but he was a very devil of a fellow,--truly, I believe neither Germany nor Sweden could boast of one like him."

"It is true we cannot boast of so highly esteemed a regicide," said Count Henrik, in an offended tone. "I desire not to rival his fame."

"But, by all the martyrs! what is the matter now?" exclaimed the astounded Marsk; "think ye I wished for aught better in the world than to have knocked out his confounded brains? Therefore I may surely say without offence, that neither you nor Marsk Knudson have seen his match."

"For that both Count Henrik and I should thank the Lord," said the Swedish knight solemnly. "The country which gives birth to such heroes may have to pay dearly for the boast. In our country we have storms also, at times; and alas! have to deplore the devastations they cause. It is the same case here probably? I suspect that Denmark hath dearly bought this sad experience, and learnt that one daring hand can make a deeper wound in a nation's heart than a whole century can heal."

A rather embarrassed silence ensued. The king had heard the conversation which had been carried on by the party behind him, and sighed deeply.

"It was on *this* night, Aagé," he said, in a low voice. "For nine years have I now borne Denmark's crown, and as yet I have not fulfilled that I vowed when I saw *him* last."

"Whom, my liege?" asked Aagé, absently.

"My murdered father!" said the king. "Rememberest thou not the hour they lifted the lid from his coffin in Viborg cathedral, and laid the sacrament on his bloody breast? It was then I bade him my last farewell. What I vowed to him was heard only by the all-knowing God; but assuredly I will either keep that vow, or lose my life."

"At that time you were, as I was, a minor, my liege. If your vow to the dead was other than a pious and Christian vow, you ought not now, as a knight and sovereign, to keep it."

Eric was silent. The moon shone full on his noble form, and as he sat calm and erect on his fiery steed, with the white plume in his hat, and the purple mantle over his shoulder, he almost resembled the chivalrous St. George, about to strike his lance into the dragon's throat. His manly countenance was pale, and expressive of lofty indignation. "That I vowed to the dead I must perform," he said, after a thoughtful pause. "A wise monarch should disperse the ungodly."

As the king uttered these words an arrow whistled past his breast, and stuck in Drost Aagé's mantle.

"Murderers! traitors!" shouted the king, drawing his sword, while he reined in with difficulty his restless steed. Aagé rushed with his drawn sword to that side of the king whence the arrow was sped; the three other knights rode up in alarm. "An arrow! robbers! traitors!" was echoed from mouth to mouth. They looked around on all sides of the moon-lit road, but no living being was to be seen.

"Accursed traitors!" shouted Marsk Oluffsen, and dashed in suddenly among the bushes on the left side of the road, where he had perceived some white object moving. A shriek was heard, apparently from a female voice, and the Marsk's horse started aside. At the same moment two young maidens, in the dress of peasant girls, with long plaits of fair hair hanging low over their shoulders, ran, hand in hand, across the road, while a man of almost giant stature, in the dress of a Jutland peasant, with a large broad sword in his hand, sprang forward, and placed himself between the Marsk and the fugitives.

"Keep ye to me!" shouted the man. "It was I--it was Mads Jyde who shot. I mean not to show a pair of clean heels: let the maidens flee, they have done no ill, but I am the man who dares tilt with ye all." So saying, he brandished his sword wildly around, and wounded the Marsk's horse on the muzzle. The animal reared and snorted.

"Yield thee!" shouted Oluffsen, vainly aiming to strike his daring and gigantic foe; "Yield thee captive, or thou diest!"

On hearing this affray, the king would instantly have hastened to the spot, where he saw swords glittering among the bushes in the moonshine; but Aagé and the Swedish knight sought to detain him, while Count Henrik immediately surrounded the copse with the huntsmen, and dispatched a party of them after the fugitives. The Marsk had sprung from his intractable steed, "Cast thy sword from thee, stupid devil! Seest thou not thou art caught?" shouted he to the tall Jutlander.

"By St. Michael will I not," retorted the man. "None shall take Marsk Stig's squire alive; keep but your ground, Sir Knight, and thou shalt feel what Mads Jyde is worth." He now rushed frantically upon the Marsk, but the warlike chief was his superior in swordsmanship, and after a short but desperate fight the Jutlander fell, with his skull cloven, to the ground. He half-raised himself again, and tried to lift both his hands to his wounded head. "It was for thee, little Margaret," he gasped forth; "let but my master's children flee, and you are free to----" More he was unable to utter; his hands dropped from his head, and he fell back lifeless on the ground.

Meanwhile the king and his train had ridden to the spot. Some of the hunters had overtaken the fugitive maidens, and brought them captive into the circle of the king's train. All looked at them with surprise, for as they stood there in the moonshine they had the air of princesses in disguise. Their peasant's attire could not hide the delicate fairness of their complexions and their singular beauty. The taller of the two, who seemed also to be the elder, held the lesser and highly agitated maiden by the hand, as if to protect her. She was herself calm and pale. She looked in deep sorrow on the dead body of the man at arms, and appeared not to heed the standers by. The younger maiden seemed to be both frightened and curious. Though she could not be considered a child--for she appeared to be about seventeen or eighteen years of age--her deportment was quite childlike. She hid herself, weeping, behind her sister, from the sight of the king and his knights, while she nevertheless occasionally peeped, with looks of eager observation, at their splendid attire.

"Speak out--who are ye?" asked the king, riding up to them.

The younger maiden drew back, and seemed preparing for flight, but the elder held her fast by the hand, and turned to the king, with calm self-possession, looking him steadily in the face with her large dark blue eyes. "King Eric Ericson," she said, "thine enemy's children are in thine hand: we are fatherless and persecuted maidens; no one dares to give us shelter in our native land; and our last friend and protector hath now been slain by thy men. Our father was the unhappy outlawed Marsk Stig."

"Marsk Stig's daughters!--the regicide's children!" interrupted the king, casting on them a look of displeasure. "Ye meant then to have completed your father's crime? Are ye roaming the country round with robbers and regicides?"

"We are innocent, King Eric!" answered the maiden, laying her hand upon her heart. "May the Lord as surely forgive thee our father's death, and the blood which flows here! Vengeance belongeth to the Lord. We wished but to quit thy kingdom."

"And ye would also have me depart this world," interrupted the king. "They must be taken to Kallundborg castle," said he to the huntsmen. "The affair shall be inquired into; if they can clear themselves they may leave the kingdom. Away with them; I will not look on them." So saying, the king turned his horse's head to avoid the sight of the fair unfortunate, who for an instant appeared to have softened his wrath.

No one had viewed the captive maidens with more compassion than Drost Aagé. "My liege," said he, in an under tone, "how could the innocent maidens help----?"

"That the arrow slew none of us?" interrupted the king hastily. "I dare say they were not to blame for that. Wolf's cubs should never be trusted; they shall meet with their deserts. Away with them."

"Then permit me to escort them, my liege," resumed Drost Aagé. "If a knight's daughters be led to prison, knightly protection is still owing them on their way thither."

"Well, go with them, Drost," answered the king aloud, waving his hand as he spoke. "They shall be treated with all chivalrous deference and honour; ye will be answerable for them on your honour and fealty." The king then put spurs into his impatient steed, and galloped off, followed by the Marsk, the Swedish knights, and the whole of the train, with the exception of Drost Aagé and four huntsmen.

The elder of the captive maidens still held her sister's hand clasped in her own. She had approached the body of the slain squire, beside which she knelt, bending over his head. Drost Aagé had dismounted from his horse, and stood close by with the bridle in his hand, and with his arm on the saddle-bow. It seemed as though the sight of the kneeling maiden had changed him into a statue.

The restless movements of the younger maiden did not attract his attention; his gaze dwelt only on the kneeling form: she seemed in his eyes as an angel of love and pity praying for the sinner's soul. He observed a tear trickle down her fair pale cheek, and could no longer restrain the expression of his sympathy. "Be comforted, noble maiden!" he exclaimed, with emotion; "no evil shall befall you. The man you mourn for may perhaps have been true and faithful to you, but (were he not struck with sudden madness) he fell here as a great criminal. Carry the dead man to Esrom," he said to two of the huntsmen; "entreat the abbot in my name to grant him Christian burial, and sing a mass for his soul." They instantly obeyed, and bore away the body. The kneeling maiden arose.

"Let me provide for your safety," continued Aagé. "Ere your case has been inquired into

according to law, you cannot quit the kingdom; but I pledge my word and honour King Eric will never permit your father's guilt to make him forget what is due to your rank and sex."

"If we are really your prisoners. Sir Knight," said the elder sister, "then, in the name of our blessed Lady, lead us to our prison; promise me only that you will not separate us, and that you will not be severe to my poor sister."

"Neither for yourself nor for your sister, noble maiden, need you fear aught like harsh treatment; and if you, as I hope and believe, can justify yourselves, your captivity will assuredly not be a long one."

"Our life and freedom are in the Lord's hand--not in man's," said the eldest sister, in a tone of resignation. "In this world we have now no friends. Our father's meanest squire sacrificed his life for us; he whom he made a knight forsook us in the hour of need," she added in a low voice.

Drost Aagé now gazed with increased sympathy on the calm pale maiden, and was cut to the heart by the expression of dignified sorrow in her countenance, called forth by the consciousness of her desolate condition.

"I will be your friend and protector so long as I live!" he exclaimed with visible emotion. "That I pledge myself to be on my knightly word and honour."

"The Lord and our dear blessed Lady reward you for that," answered the fair captive. "You seem to wish us well; but if you are King Eric's friend, you must certainly hate us for our father's sake."

"Assuredly I am King Eric's friend!" said Aagé, the blood mounting to his cheek as he spoke, "but I cannot therefore hate you. If you, as I fully believe, are innocent of what hath just now happened, as a knight and as a Christian also I owe you and all the defenceless friendly consolation and protection."

The horses of the two huntsmen who had quitted the party had been meanwhile led forward, and had their saddles arranged so as to admit of the maidens riding without danger or difficulty. The younger sister was first mounted. She had not as yet uttered a word, but had gazed restlessly around, occupied apparently in forming conjectures of the most contradictory nature. At one moment she appeared dejected and ready to weep, at another her bright eyes sparkled with animation, and she seemed to meditate a venturesome flight, while the next she looked with an air of queen-like authority at the courteous young knight and the two huntsmen, as if she had but to command to be obeyed. It was not until she was firmly seated in the saddle, with the bridle in her hand, that she seemed fearless and at her ease. "Let us speed on then," she said with sportive gaiety.

"What though full small the palfreys be,
'Tis better to ride than on foot to flee."

"If this knight is our guardian and protector, it is of course his duty to defend us. At a royal castle, besides, they must know how to give us royal entertainment."

"We wend not to yon dark castle as honoured guests," replied her sister; "but keep up thy spirits, Ulrica, all the hairs of our head are numbered." So saying, she allowed herself to be placed on horseback; and Drost Aagé was presently riding between his two fair captives through Esrom forest, followed by the two huntsmen.

CHAP. IV.

The party rode on for some time in silence and at an easy pace through the dusky forest. The elder sister sat with drooping head, and seemed lost in melancholy thought; but on reaching an open place in the forest, from whence they had an unclouded view of the star-lit heavens, she looked up, and the star-light seemed to be reflected in her soft blue eye, while her countenance was irradiated by an expression of that inward peace which springs from the stedfast hope of a blessed immortality. "God's heaven is vast, and beautiful, and calm, indeed," she exclaimed, in a gently tremulous tone. "In God's kingdom above no one is outlawed or persecuted."

"And no soul shut out from love and mercy," added the young Drost, painfully reminded of his separation from the church, which he felt but too deeply; "yet, even here, noble lady!" he continued, with calmness--"even here, God's kingdom can and will come to us--that we daily pray for. But what avails it, that we look for the peace of Heaven ere we have it within our own hearts!"

It is my belief that God's kingdom may be found every where."

"Assuredly you are right," said the gentle maiden, regarding him with friendly sympathy; "you must likewise have known what sorrow is, noble knight! but Christ and our blessed Lady have given you the grace to overcome evil with good. This I can see in your eyes, and hear in your voice, though you are a brave and redoubted knight."

"Would you were right touching *such* victory, noble maiden!" answered Aagé, "but evil is so mighty in the world, that no knight should vaunt himself of having overcome it; the noblest of monarchs overcomes not evil in his own kingdom, and scarcely even in his own heart."

"Yes, in his own heart he surely must!" said the maiden; "but you are right after all, the power belongs not to man." They rode on for another hour in silence, and drew near to Esrom monastery.

"The young King Eric looked as though he were good," resumed the elder maiden, at length; "sternly as he spoke to us, I still could not fear him; and our just rights he would not deny us; only thus doth anger besee a king."

"My liege and sovereign is impetuous," said Aagé; "he is strict, but just; and there is assuredly no knight in Christendom who more faithfully observes all the noble laws of chivalry."

"If that be true," exclaimed the maiden, with a suppressed sigh, "then I am thankful even for the misfortune which now brings us this way; had I even been myself the cause of our faithful foster-father's death," she added, after a pause, "his blood will nevertheless not be upon my head."

"How mean ye, noble maiden?" asked Aagé, starting. "I understand you not."

"Had my father's faithful squire but hit the mark he aimed at," answered the maiden, "you and all King Eric's faithful friends would now have had more to sorrow for than we. His arrow never missed the eagle in his flight"--she paused, as if hesitating to say more: "yet you shall know it," she continued--"had not my sister shrieked, had I not clung to the archer's arm, he would surely have been alive and safe among us at this moment, while ye wept the death of your liege and sovereign. But praised be St. Cecilia! it were better it chanced as it did, were even King Eric not so good and just as you say he is."

"Assuredly, noble maiden!" exclaimed Aagé, in astonishment, "you have been the means of averting the greatest misery: knew ye that miscreant's intention?"

"I knew he had sworn the king's death, for our father's sake, and that he would keep his vow. He meant to flee with us out of the country; but when the hunting train approached, we hid ourselves: he recognised the king, and instantly seized the cross-bow"--she stopped and burst into tears.

"You have followed a fearful guide," said Aagé, in a low voice; "weep not for his death. Although you knew his fell purpose, your soul hath been rescued from sharing his crime, and the king hath to thank you for his life. Yet would you had been ignorant of that madman's purpose! Such dangerous information you should never have confided to me."

"Why, then, did you question me of it, Sir Knight!"

The colour mounted to Aagé's cheek, and he paused for a moment. "A crazed murderer was, then, your only friend and protector," he resumed; "his accursed scheme of revenge could not have been frustrated had you not known it! Had you but other witnesses, besides yourself and your sister, of your conduct towards him! yet, I dare confirm your testimony with my blood, and with my sword: be comforted! With the Lord's blessing, you shall never need to fly from Denmark;--instead of the captivity to which I am now forced to lead you, my just sovereign owes you thanks and honour."

"That we can never look for from King Eric," answered Margaretha; "all doors and all hearts here are now shut against Marsk Stig's children; if the king will but grant us permission to quit the country, we will thank him, and pray for him in our exile. The world is wide, and there are Christian souls in other lands also."

"Courage, Margaretha!" exclaimed the youngest sister, who had listened with eager interest and sparkling eyes. "If King Eric be as just and chivalrous a prince as he looks to be, and as this good knight says he is, there cannot be the least doubt that he must acquit us, and restore to us our inheritance, with royal compensation for all we have lost."

"Alas, dear sister!" answered Margaretha, in a melancholy and beseeching tone, "gold and lands cannot replace what we have lost. The happiness and honour which this world and its rulers can give us we should no longer seek, but rather aspire to higher blessings."

"You hear, Sir Knight! that my pious sister is already half nun and saint," said the younger sister, gaily playing with a sparkling rosary of rubies and diamonds, which she had until now concealed under her neck-kerchief. "If you will defend our cause like a brave knight, she will

assuredly pray piously for you in a nunnery; but if I ever come, by your help, to the station which is my birthright, I will not forget you either in my prosperity."

Drost Aagé was startled; he bowed courteously, in answer to this address, while he turned his horse aside in silence, leaving the sisters to ride side by side.

"Hush, hush, good Ulrica!" whispered Margaretha, who glowed crimson at her sister's speech; "thou knowest not thyself what thou sayest, but it doth disgrace us in the eyes of the stranger knight."

"I know well enough what I say," answered the capricious maiden, with a scornful toss of the head, "and if *thou* wilt not vaunt thyself of our high descent, depend on it, *I* will; charity begins at home, and I have often heard that no knight's daughter in Denmark's kingdom hath ever had a greater man for a father."

"Alas! that greatness is our misfortune," said Margaretha, with a sigh; "dearest sister, repeat not to any human being what you have just now said! Ask not my reasons! I can never tell them thee; but thank God thou knowest not all!"

"Art thou beginning with thy riddles again?" said her sister, pettishly, as she looked inquisitively at her; "what in all the world canst *thou* know, which *I* know not. If thou wilt not confide every thing to me, when we two are alone, I will never more be so foolishly fond of thee. Thou art, indeed, quite insufferable at times, however pious and excellent thou may'st be."

While this little dispute was passing between the sisters, Aagé's attention was diverted from them by the sound of the tramping of horses' hoofs, and of loud talk. They were just then passing the gate of Esrom monastery, from whence a party of richly attired knights rode forth, with some ecclesiastics among them. It was Prince Christopher and the Margrave of Brandenburg, with the Swedish Drost Bruncké and the Abbot of Esrom, who, with several priests and knights, accompanied a tall ecclesiastic of foreign appearance, and wearing the red hat of a cardinal. Aagé instantly recognised the papal nuncio, Cardinal Isarnus. The sight of this powerful prelate inspired Aagé with a feeling akin to dread, and with a presentiment of coming evil, he was, besides, ill-pleased to see him in Prince Christopher's company; he desired not to encounter them, and would have hastily turned into a bye-road, but the unusual sight of two peasant girls on horseback, accompanied by a knight and two of the king's huntsmen, had already attracted the prince's attention; he hastily rode up, followed by two knights, to ascertain who they were.

"Ha! indeed! Drost Aagé," said the prince, in a scornful tone, "the preacher of our strict laws of chivalry, are ye carrying off *two* pretty maidens at once? I think you might content yourself with one--if I see aright, these fair ones are of a somewhat higher class than they care to pass for; speak, who are they?"

"The unfortunate daughters of Marsk Stig, noble junker!" answered Aagé; "I am escorting them, by the king's orders, as state prisoners, to Kallundborg."

"The viper brood of the regicide!" exclaimed the prince, while a dark crimson hue suddenly overspread his countenance. "Well! this is an excellent capture. Throw them into the subterranean dungeon; they shall never more see the light of day."

The younger sister shrieked in alarm at this wild threat, but the elder made a sign to her to be silent, and endeavoured to tranquillize her fears.

"They are to be treated with justice, and with all chivalrous deference and honour," answered Aagé, calmly; "such is my sovereign's will and express command, which I shall punctually obey."

"*I* am governor of Kallundborg, Drost!" called the prince, in wrath; "the state prisoners sent thither are under my control. Ride with them, Pallé! give my orders to the jailor! you are answerable for their being obeyed!" He now said a few words to one of his train, but in so low a tone as to be unheard by every one else, and then turned his horse, and rode back to his party. Each now pursued their separate road, but the knight who had received the prince's private orders joined Drost Aagé and his prisoners.

This unwelcome companion was a fat, short-necked personage, with a repulsive expression in his crimson-coloured full-moon visage. He was generally called the rich Sir Pallé, and made himself conspicuous by the costly, but not tasteful, splendour of his dress and riding accoutrements, which he prided himself on being able to compare in value with the king's. He sought by an affectation of youthful gaiety to conceal his age, which very closely bordered on fifty. He was still a bachelor, but was an unwearied wooer, and greatly desired to pass for a doughty knight, and an irresistible invader of the hearts of the fair of every rank. He was not liked by the king, but was a hanger-on of Prince Christopher, to whom he was appointed gentleman of the bed-chamber. He was in bad repute among the lower class, on account of several adventures, little creditable to himself, which were circulated throughout the country in satirical ballads. He rode for some time in silence by Drost Aagé's side, apparently annoyed at being despatched on this unlooked-for errand. Aagé was silent also, and pursued the journey without noticing him.

"My presence is troublesome to you, perhaps, Sir Drost!" exclaimed Pallé, at last breaking

silence. "This mission is not to my taste either. The prince was in his stern mood to-day; when that is the case he will not bear contradiction, or I should gladly have begged to decline the journey. Where *you* act in the king's name, I well know that *I*, as the junker's deputy, might just as well be absent."

"Truly, I think so likewise, Sir Pallé!" answered Aagé, in a tone of indifference, as he quickened his horse's pace.

"It is all one to me whether your captives receive hard or gentle treatment," continued Sir Pallé; "but if I bring not my lord's commands to the jailor at Kallundborg, you see yourself, I shall draw down the junker's wrath upon me, and that I have no mind to do for the sake of a couple of vagabonds."

"Perhaps you heard not what I told the prince of the name and rank of these ladies?" asked Aagé, measuring his rude companion with a look of defiance, while he slackened his horse's pace; "even without regard to their birth, you owe them respect, as honourable Danish maidens, and for the present moment I am their protector against every insult."

"Ho, ho! you are somewhat hasty, Sir Drost!" answered Pallé, "who thinks of insulting the pretty maidens? what though they may have scoured the country round, without stockings and shoes, they should not be thought the less of for that; they are now going to be led, according to their rank, to an honourable state prison. I perceive the fair prisoners have already captured our chivalrous Drost, by way of reprisal."

Drost Aagé coloured deeply at this jeering speech. "By your leave, Sir Pallé!" he said, with suppressed wrath, "here lies the road to Kallundborg; it is long and broad enough for us all, and we need not be troublesome to each other; if ye will ride on before or follow behind, we will accommodate ourselves accordingly; but if you desire to honour us any longer with your company, you must behave courteously, or you understand me----." He struck on the hilt of his sword, and was silent.

"Well, well, either before or behind, or courteously in the middle--or fighting? These, are indeed four pleasant alternatives," answered Pallé. "With your permission, I choose the third, as the happy medium, and purpose, in all peace and courtesy, to remain in such fair company. I have hardly seen the ladies as yet;" so saying, he rode up between the sisters, whom he greeted with a bold and scrutinizing stare. "What in all the world is this?" he suddenly exclaimed, in the greatest astonishment, as he looked at the youngest sister; "Gundelillé! do I see *you* here? Mean you to befool the Drost also? Would you now give yourself out to be Marsk Stig's daughter? The other day you were but the farmer's daughter at Hedegaard."

"Yes, I was so *then*," answered Ulrica, laughing; "Gundelillé is my name still in the ballad of 'Sir Pallé wooing the driver.' Perhaps you have not heard it, Sir Pallé? I will gladly sing it you; it is vastly entertaining."

If any part of Sir Pallé's visage was before wanting in a crimson hue, the deficiency was now fully remedied; he seemed highly enraged; but the sight of Ulrica's arch little face appeared to produce such an effect upon him that he could not give vent to his anger. He spurred his horse, and had nearly pushed the ladies into the ditch, as he suddenly dashed past them.

"Know ye this knight, noble lady?" asked Aagé, in surprise.

"Oh yes! tolerably well," answered Ulrica, laughing. "I once played off a little joke upon him."

"It was indeed a daring frolic of my sister's, Sir Knight!" interrupted Margaretha. "Sir Pallé had long plagued her, and she thought she could not in any other way get rid of his importunity; but it was wrong, no doubt; he became a laughing stock, and an object of general ridicule in consequence; and if you do not now prevent it, he bids fair to avenge himself."

"But what was it you did?" asked Aagé. Ulrica laughed, and would have told the story, but her sister laid hold of her arm. "Silence, dear Ulrica! here we have him again," she whispered, and Ulrica was silent. Sir Pallé had checked his horse, and joined them again. He seemed perfectly to have recovered his self-possession. He assured Drost Aagé that he was so far from desiring such captives should be harshly treated, that he even wished it were possible entirely to free them from imprisonment. "I have seen them before," he added, "and had I known who they were, they should not now have been on their way to prison." Shortly afterwards he again rode in between the maidens.

"Pitiless Gundelillé," he whispered, "speak no more of that cruel story. I meant not to wrong you; had I known you were the daughter of a noble knight, I would have proffered hand and heart, in all reverence and honour, and even now were I so fortunate as to find favour in your lovely eyes----"

Without looking at him, Ulrica began to sing,

"List ye then, Sir Pallé!
No wrong do ye to me,

When mass is sung and ended,
In my car shall ye seated be."

"Sing not that accursed song, fairest of maidens!" interrupted Sir Pallé; "I will not offend you; but believe me, loveliest of the lovely----"

Without heeding him, she now sang aloud,

"And then she clad her driver lad
In purple robe so rare;
In the driver's suit was quickly clad
Gundelill', that maiden fair."

"Hush! I will not say a word more," interrupted Sir Pallé again. "But if you knew how greatly I love and honour you----"

The sportive maiden set up a loud laugh, and continued to sing,

"Sir Pallé then, the wealthy knight,
Enters the car full bold,
Salutes the driver with delight
And in his arms doth fold.

"It was the lady Gundelillé
Who drove into the yard;
She laughed, I tell ye, heartily
At the jest he deemed so hard."

"Ha!~ that jest you shall dearly rue," whispered Pallé, in a rage. "You sing sweetly," he said aloud; "remember you the whole ballad, fair lady? If you sing another verse," he whispered, "it shall cost you dear."

"Hush, dearest sister!" said Margaretha, in a tone of earnest entreaty; and Ulrica was silent.

Sir Pallé now rode round to Drost Aagé's side, and did not again address himself to the captive maiden. He was silent and gloomy. He had observed with great wrath a repressed smile on the Drost's countenance; and the huntsmen who followed them laughed, and whispered together in a manner which too plainly indicated that Sir Pallé and his unfortunate love adventure were the subject of their ridicule. The two younger huntsmen were strongly, attached to Aagé; they had remarked how little acceptable Sir Pallé's company was to him; and they now, as if to beguile the time, began to hum the well-known ballad of the brave knight Helmer Blaa. In one of the many scenes of violence which were the consequences of the proscription of the outlawed regicides, Helmer Blaa had slain Sir Pallé's uncle. On this account he had for a long time been barbarously persecuted by Sir Pallé and his six brothers, until he at last vanquished all the six in honourable self-defence, and compelled Pallé to give him his sister in marriage, who, before this feud, had been betrothed to the gallant knight. This occurrence (so derogatory to Sir Pallé's reputation) had attracted general attention, and almost every young fellow in the country could repeat a ballad in honour of the bold Helmer Blaa, who had not only been acquitted by the king and whole body of knighthood, but stood also high in favour with Eric. The burden of the song.--

"In the saddle he rides so free,"

fell on Sir Pallé's ear.

He looked back towards the huntsmen, with a face glowing with rage, but they appeared not to notice it; and one of them sang aloud,--

"Better I cannot counsel thee,
That thou tarry not, but hence should'st flee,
In the saddle he rides so free."

"Your huntsmen, Sir Drost, would drive me hence with vile songs, I perceive," said Sir Pallé, turning to Aagé. "Is it you, or yonder pretty maiden, who have inspired them with this pleasant conceit?"

"You are perhaps not a lover of song, Sir Pallé?" answered Aagé; "that is unfortunate: the merry fellows wish to beguile the time for us on the road."

"If I hear aright," growled Pallé, "that song may perhaps shorten the road to heaven for both of them if it is not presently ended."

"Think you so?" answered Aagé carelessly. "If you will give us your company you must

reconcile yourself to our merriment. Haste to sing the song to the end," he called to the huntsmen, "or Sir Pallé will be wroth;" and the huntsmen sang gaily,--

"In the town my true love shall ne'er hear it said
That I before her brothers have fled.

"Full boldly rode Helmer her brothers to meet,
His courage was equal to every feat.

"First Ové, then Lang, his eye did survey,
And then did his sword come quick into play."

"S'death!" shouted Sir Pallé, and his sword flew from the scabbard. "If ye *will* have the sword come into play, you shall feel it too." So saying, he turned his horse, and rushed like a madman upon the huntsmen, who had not time to prepare for defence, ere his sword had cut through their jerkins, and inflicted one or two wounds. But the huntsmen, enraged at this sudden onset, drew their long hunting-knives, and threatened a bloody revenge. Ulrica shrieked on hearing the affray, and the elder sister turned pale. "Stop, knaves!" cried Aagé, riding in between Pallé and his antagonists: "two against one is not fair play. I will decide this matter alone with Sir Pallé." The Drost had drawn his sword, and was expecting his opponent to turn towards him, but Sir Pallé's horse seemed to have become suddenly skittish and unruly: it galloped off, on the road to Esrom, with its enraged master, whose spurs stuck in its sides, while he swore and brandished his sword over his head. The huntsmen laughed loudly at this sight. Ulrica joined in the laugh; and as soon as the slight wounds of the huntsmen had been bound up, the party pursued their journey, though in a different direction from that in which they had set out.

"I must have been mistaken," said Drost Aagé to the huntsmen. "It could hardly have been to Kallundborg, but rather to Vordingborg, that the king commanded me to accompany these ladies; there he, and not Prince Christopher, is ruler. If there was other meaning in his words, I will be answerable for it." As they turned into a bye road, a tall man in a peasant's dress, mounted on a small peasant's horse, without a saddle, started out of the thicket by the road side, and suddenly disappeared again among the bushes. "Kaggé!" exclaimed Ulrica, with involuntary delight, and seized her sister's arm. Margaretha gave her a significant look, and she was silent, but often gazed restlessly around.

Drost Aagé had heard the exclamation, and started. The name of Kaggé was but too familiar to him. A squire of noble birth of this name had been among Eric Glipping's murderers at Finnerup; he had fled with the other outlaws to Norway, and was prohibited, on pain of death, from setting foot on Danish ground; had he, notwithstanding, been in the train of the captive maidens, their connection with so dangerous a traitor might operate greatly against them. This incident obliged the Drost to be on the watch over the security of his captives. Silent and anxious he pursued the journey.

CHAP. V.

Prince Christopher and his train meanwhile pursued their way to Sjöborg. They rode at a slow pace, to suit the convenience of the foreign prelate. The mysterious importance which Cardinal Isarnus knew how to assume as the pope's legate, and the reserve with which he evaded every close question, had worked up the prince to a pitch of anxious expectation, which he vainly endeavoured to hide. Isarnus appeared with a splendour corresponding to his high rank as a dignitary of the church; his richly attired attendants followed him at a respectful distance, together with his famulus and secretary; near him rode the Abbot of Esrom and two foreign ecclesiastics. Isarnus conversed with his countrymen and with the abbot by turns, in the Italian and Latin tongue: his converse with the prince and the margrave was short and abrupt, and carried on in almost unintelligible German. He appeared, indeed, to avail himself of the want of a common language, by leaving every query unanswered to which he considered it might be impolitic to reply. In important negociations he made use of his famulus as an interpreter. Wherever this powerful prelate appeared in the country, he was the object of superstitious awe. The unusual spectacle of the cardinal's red hat worked upon the imagination of the people like the appearance of a comet, and was considered to be as ominous of evil, as that dreaded phenomenon of the heavens. Some of the most ignorant among the lower orders even believed it was the pope himself who had arrived in Denmark to dethrone the king and excommunicate the kingdom; and it was not alone from reverence, but as much from fear, that the wonder-stricken peasants and old women especially, knelt down whenever they encountered the cardinal. His long, sallow, and imperturbable visage, with its expression of cool menace, and foreign aspect, combined with the preconceived notion of a supernatural and mysterious power, seemed

endowed with the petrifying influence of Medusa's head.

"Dear Sir Pope! harm us not!" frequently whimpered forth the sick and crippled who knelt in his path. He understood them not, and no word proceeded from his thin compressed lips, but he extended his arm, with a cold unchanging mien, and with his three fingers, which sparkled with costly rings, signed over their uncovered heads the silent token of a blessing, which they feared would soon be changed into a curse, for the threats with which he had last left the king and the country, were generally made known through the fears of the clergy themselves, and their zealous exhortations to repentance.

Accompanied by this ecclesiastical scarecrow, Prince Christopher now approached Sjöborg. After several fruitless attempts to gain the confidence of the mysterious legate, the prince withdrew, leaving his place by the cardinal's side to the Abbot of Esrom and the other ecclesiastics, who conversed with him, in Latin, upon philosophical and theological subjects. The bold and joyous margrave rode by the side of Sir Helmer Blaa, and talked eagerly of campaigns and tournaments. The prince allowed them to pass him, and remained alone behind with the Swedish statesman, Drost Bruncké, to whom he appeared desirous of communicating something of importance ere they reached Sjöborg.

"You will now probably delay your homeward journey, Sir Drost!" said the prince, in a confidential tone. "That which yon mysterious guest brings with him may prove as important to your sovereign and to the Swedish council as to us."

"Perhaps it may alter the state of things here rather more than your royal house would wish," answered Bruncké, ambiguously; "what else can your highness mean?"

"Yonder red cloud is doubtless charged with holy lightnings," continued the prince, pointing to the cardinal, whose red hat flared through the trees in the moonlight. "If my stiff-necked brother does not now give in, misfortune stands at his door; such is ever the result of all half measures. An important state prisoner should be either timely buried, or else let loose. Was not that your opinion also, Sir Drost?"

"It is often the wisest policy," answered Bruncké. "The dead *cannot* tell tales; and the generous, once restored to freedom, *will not*."

"You know the individual I allude to," continued the prince; "he will now either be let loose, and become perhaps more dangerous than ever, or the storm will burst which he hath conjured over us hither from Rome. He was as good as buried--that was my doing, but I got sorry thanks for it. Out of mistimed compassion he was brought up once more from the grave;--to spare a sick priest, they had the folly to let loose the bishop's understrapper, so that he was able to flee, and stir up heaven and earth to work our ruin. I then counselled a timely reconciliation; but when sternness should have been used they were weak and mild, and when reconciliation became the wisest policy they were stern and pertinacious. My counsel was never heeded; hate and disfavour were my thanks. The people will now have their eyes opened, and perhaps your young king also, provided he will be guided by his wisest counsellor."

"Very possibly, noble prince!" answered Bruncké, with a crafty smile; "but as yet I see not the danger, and even were I so fortunate as to perceive it, and to understand you, so long as Thorkild Knudson is at the head of state affairs, and in such high honour and favour"--he paused, and shrugged his shoulders.

"He rises but to fall," continued the prince, "should he even win my brother's favour also. By his friendship with your dangerous dukes, and the high alliance which is spoken of, he is sealing his own doom."

"That is very possible, your highness," answered Bruncké, with a malicious smile; "his vaunted wisdom is not infallible; with time cometh experience. Were but your royal brother only not so ardent a lover, and our fair princess somewhat less devoted to him"--

"Childish fancies!" interrupted the prince. "State policy alone, not childish folly, should counsel here. Your young king hastes not so with his marriage, and therein he acts wisely. Between ourselves, Bruncké,"--here he whispered confidentially, while he nearly drew bridle,--"my sister Mereté is little suited to your king, but his soft-hearted sister is still less so to my brother. This double alliance will be ruinous for both kingdoms. You may easily come to share our unhappy position with regard to the papal see; and if enmity breaks out betwixt your king and his ambitious brother, there is no doubt against whom Princess Ingeborg, as queen, will arm Denmark and my enamoured brother. That she holds the haughty warlike duke, Eric, far dearer than his crowned brother, you know yourself much better than I."

"Truly, I cannot but admire your highness's policy," replied Bruncké, in a fawning tone, while his wily glance seemed to penetrate the prince's most secret thoughts. "You are as wise as generous; prizing Denmark and Sweden's happiness higher than your own sister's and brother's domestic felicity! Here I recognise the lofty, princely spirit, which soars above the petty interests of private life. But, to speak truly, I see not how this double alliance can be prevented or broken off, without a breach of peace, while your royal brother sways here, and follows nought but his own inclinations."

"We must have time, Bruncké" whispered the prince; "the guest we bring him to-night will soon change the aspect of affairs in Denmark. I shudder myself to think of what may happen, but things cannot remain as they are; your young king will always need a wise counsellor, who can rule people and kingdom in his name. For this office no one is so fit as yourself. Set your head to work, sage Bruncké; if it should be endangered, you may count on me."

"Let us reserve these matters for your private chamber, noble prince," whispered Bruncké, looking cautiously around. "Woods have ears, and plains have eyes, they say. It were, perhaps, good policy that I should henceforth be apparently somewhat out of favour with your highness."

"Right, Bruncké; contradict me tomorrow at table, in the king's hearing, and I will reply in a manner which you must only *feign* to take amiss."

"Every ungracious word spoken to me by your highness in public, I shall take to be a proof of your secret favour. All that I can promise you," he added in a whisper, raising his hand so as to screen his face on the other side, "is the delay of both marriages as long as possible; as to what concerns me personally, I depend upon your princely word."

"I give you my hand upon it, sage Bruncké" answered the prince, extending to him his hand. "Now let us be off; the cardinal hath reached the lake already."

They spurred their horses, and overtook the rest of their party by the shore of the lake, where a floating bridge had been contrived for the convenience of this unusual throng of passengers. While they halted here, Sir Pallé returned at full gallop, and told the prince, almost panting for breath, that he had been murderously attacked by Drost Aagé and both his huntsmen at once.

"Indeed, I am glad of it," answered the prince, in a tone of satisfaction. "The Drost shall dearly rue such unchivalrous conduct. You can of course swear to what you say, Pallé! else no one will credit it."

"Swear to it!" repeated Pallé, with glowing cheeks, and endeavouring to hide his confusion; "those who will not believe me, by my troth may let it alone; ungodly oaths I have forsworn."

"Then the devil take your chatter," muttered the prince, in displeasure, and turned from him.

CHAP. VI.

On his return to Sjöborg Castle, King Eric had shut himself up in his private chamber, engrossed in serious reflections on the imminent peril he had just escaped; it seemed to him as if St. Cecilia's eve was destined to bring with it misfortune and danger to him and to his race. This was the second time he had encountered traitors and robbers in the neighbourhood of Sjöborg. The conviction, however, that he possessed the love and devotion of his subjects, soon dissipated the young king's gloomy mood. He had summoned the Swedish Marsk, Thorkild Knudson, to a private audience, and now conversed calmly and frankly with this noble knight on the happy alliance between Denmark and Sweden, which at the present time was the chief subject of the king's thoughts, and in which his heart so ardently shared.

Thorkild Knudson was a handsome man, of a thoughtful and dignified aspect, rather more than forty years of age; his dark hair seemed to have grown untimely grey. His powerful influence as regent had gained him a high reputation, as well in his own country as in foreign courts. An honest aspiration after power and rank was manifest in his fiery glance, and the noble commanding expression of his countenance bespoke a dauntless confidence in his own powers, and a species of proud contempt for all the petty arts by which less highly gifted statesmen often seek to supply the want of sound political wisdom. As he sat opposite the young king, attired in his blue knight's dress, with the large chain of the order around his neck, and conversed with him, with freedom and sympathy, he might have been taken for a fatherly friend or relative of King Eric, had he not, by strict observance of the respect due to Eric's exalted station, but without a tinge of flattery, known how to receive the confidence reposed in him by royalty with an appearance of homage which detracted not from his own dignity as the ambassador of a foreign monarch.

Although Thorkild Knudson, as Swedish regent, was authorized on the part of King Birger and the state council to accede to the king's desire of having the celebration of his marriage fixed for the ensuing spring, yet it was only on the condition that the pope's dispensation should be obtained before that time. But because of the vehemence with which the king always rejected the idea of every obstacle, Thorkild Knudson had hitherto propounded this condition in as mild terms as possible. He now touched upon it again, and took the opportunity of bringing the case of the captive archbishop to Eric's remembrance.

The colour mounted to the young king's cheek; he became suddenly silent, and a secret struggle seemed passing within his breast. He looked around him once or twice, as if he missed some one; at last, however, his eye rested with evident pleasure and satisfaction on Thorkild's intelligent and noble countenance. "I esteem my future brother-in-law fortunate," he said, "in possessing a man like you for his friend and counsellor. You are now to him what my aged counsellor Jon and my well-beloved Drost Hessel have been to me from my childhood upwards. The misunderstanding with the papal court has long deprived me of my best and most experienced counsellors. My faithful Drost Aagé is not older and more experienced than myself. I feel confidence in you, Sir Thorkild. Were I your liege and sovereign, what would you counsel me in this weighty matter?"

"To see the prisoner, and hear his defence--*dispassionately*, noble King Eric," answered the Swedish statesman. "As far as I know, he hath not only *done* wrong, but *suffered* wrong; for a long and severe imprisonment is a suffering and punishment, which can only be called just, when it is inflicted according to a lawfully pronounced sentence."

"Was it then unjust in me to imprison a state criminal, who was an accomplice in the murder of my father--an accursed regicide?" said Eric, with vehemence, and rising from his seat. "Should I have given him time to escape, or stir up the people against me, because he was not condemned by the pope and the bishops? Can I acknowledge ecclesiastical law when it would acquit a rebel and regicide?"

"It was perhaps necessary for your grace to hinder his flight and treasonable designs," answered Thorkild Knudson, who had risen from his seat at the same time with the king, "were it not possible previously to obtain papal authority for the step; but, by your grace's leave, as your counsellor, I would have freely and openly pronounced all unnecessary severity to be as dangerous as unjust."

"With my knowledge he hath suffered no injustice," answered the king. "The manner of his seizure I highly disapproved; and I have declared what took place then in my minority to have been contrary to my wish. My brave Drost Torstenson I have dismissed. In him I have lost a faithful, but too zealous and rash a friend. My own brother I severely reprimanded. For the sake of a state criminal, I have exposed myself to unpleasant differences in my own family, which wound me deeply, and may perhaps prove dangerous to state and kingdom. What more can reasonably be asked of me?"

"Noble sovereign," resumed Thorkild Knudson, with earnestness; "you vouchsafe to show me a confidence which I highly prize. At the present moment I am, thanks to the Lord, able to reciprocate it with honest frankness. I trust a double relationship will unite you, and my liege and sovereign in a lasting union; but I will not abuse your confidence. I would not have your grace confide aught to me which you might regret I should know, if at any time, which God forbid! my fidelity to my king and my native land should compel me to seem your and Denmark's foe. Even in such a position I would esteem and admire your noble spirit, and I know you would not misjudge me."

"No, Sir Thorkild," answered the king, extending to him his hand; "even were you forced to-morrow, as a loyal Swedish statesman, to become my adversary, I should not misjudge your heart and chivalrous spirit. I value your esteem--answer me freely! think ye I have acted unjustly in this matter?"

"Well then, King Eric," said Thorkild, "allow my answer to be a question to which you can best reply yourself. Had counsellor Jon, and Drost Hessel been with you at this time, think you, you would have so long delayed the advances towards a reconciliation, which I cannot but conjecture was the main object of your prolonged sojourn here?"

"It is not for me, but for the captive criminal, to take the first step towards reconciliation," answered the king; "but I am now weary myself of this procrastination. Here lies a proposal for a reconciliation which I have caused the Drost to draw up. I will see the prisoner to-morrow."

"Why not this very evening, noble sovereign?" said Thorkild. "If you incline to reconciliation, it was perhaps in a fortunate moment you permitted me to become your counsellor. The accomplishment of your own heartfelt desire is probably more closely connected with this negociation than you imagine."

"Well, I will see him this evening--this very hour," said the king, pulling the bell string. An attendant entered. "Tell the steward, the captive archbishop is to be brought hither." The attendant bowed, and departed. The king threw himself into a chair, and fell into a reverie. Thorkild Knudson seemed preparing to take his leave.

"No, stay, I entreat you," said the king, and then paused for a few moments. "On this night was my father murdered," he resumed in a tremulous voice; "the man who is about to appear before me was the chief counsellor of the murderers. You shall be present, and see that I am neither revengeful nor unjust; but you shall also see, that even to promote my highest happiness I am incapable of forgetting for a moment, that which I owe to the crown I wear. Read! Only on these conditions will he be released." So saying, he reached Thorkild a written sheet of parchment which lay on the table. Thorkild perused it slowly, and the king watched his countenance as he

read. "Well, is it not so?" said Eric eagerly. "I demand only what is just and reasonable--safety for crown and country--peace with the church--obedience to the laws of the land, so long as he is my subject. I will not pass sentence in my own cause--as a traitor to the crown, he must be condemned by the pope."

"I must own your grace's demands are more moderate than I should have supposed. If you are perfectly correct in the charge you prefer against him, I should still call these terms generous; and yet I doubt whether he will accept them. The parting with Hammerhuus----"

"He *shall* give up that castle," interrupted the king; "a rebel and traitor shall own no fortress in my kingdom. Were he even seated in St. Peter's chair, *here* he is my subject."

"Undoubtedly; and he may perhaps make that sacrifice for his freedom; but the seventh clause--pardon me, your grace, for saying that it seems to me to be in opposition to his duty to the church and to the Holy Father. Until he is deposed by a papal bull, no one can hinder him from using the church's power against whomsoever he will, without asking leave of the king or of any temporal authority."

"He shall be forced to do so!" exclaimed Eric, with vehemence. "While I am king, no miscreant shall persecute me or my subjects with unjust excommunication and all the plagues of hell. I am placed here by the Lord Almighty to protect my people and their liberties, and not all the bishops in the world shall rob me of this right. I will answer for what I do before the Lord above as well as before my subjects, and before every true and loyal knight!" So saying, the king again pulled the bell with vehemence. Another attendant entered.

"Light all the tapers in the knights' hall!" commanded the king. "Bid the master of the household call together the whole court and every knight here in the castle. Place my throne at the end of the hall!" The attendant departed in haste on a signal from the king.

"Your grace is too precipitate," said Thorkild; "give not a publicity to your interview with this dangerous prelate which he may abuse to your hurt and prejudice."

"My cause shuns not the light," answered the king. "I use not to speak or treat with my bitterest and deadliest foe otherwise than I dare make known to my loyal subjects and the whole body of Danish chivalry. A traitor's oath demands witnesses."

"But caution and--I trust your grace will pardon my boldness--state policy demand there should be as few witnesses present as possible," objected Thorkild Knudson, with anxious sympathy. He would have said more, but at this moment the door opened, and he was silenced by the entrance of the tall Archbishop Grand in chains.

Led by the steward and the three turnkeys, besides two men-at-arms, the haughty prelate stepped across the threshold of the king's private chamber, with a stare of wild defiance, without fixing his eye on any object. He was attired in a white Cistercian mantle, without any of the insignia of a bishop; his proud countenance was pale and emaciated; his beard was shorn, his head was bare, and around his tonsure curled a ring of tangled grey hair. He moved slowly, and every step seemed attended with pain; but it appeared as if, with a contempt of all bodily suffering, he exerted himself to the utmost to prevent his outward appearance from becoming an object of commiseration.

When the king beheld him he involuntarily stepped back, and a feeling of sorrowful sympathy for fallen greatness was manifest in his look, while at the same time the remembrance of his father's murder, and this man's share in the misfortunes of state and kingdom, overspread his noble countenance with the crimson of indignation.

"You may go," said Eric to the guard. They obeyed, and through the open door of the knights' hall, which was instantly shut again, the king beheld a numerous assemblage of knights and courtiers, looking with anxious suspense and curiosity towards the entrance to the private chamber, through which they had seen the captive archbishop conducted.

The haughty captive continued standing about two paces from the door, and had not as yet vouchsafed a look or salutation to the king. He stood immovable as a marble statue, and his cold uncertain gaze, now first warmed into life, as it suddenly fixed with frightful earnestness on a silver crucifix, which stood by the side of the king's shield, on a shelf above a prie-dieu.

"You stand in the presence of your liege sovereign. Archbishop Grand," began King Eric; but he paused again to restrain his anger at the captive's look of rude defiance.

"Yes, truly, I stand in the presence of my *heavenly* Ruler and King," answered Archbishop Grand, folding his fettered hands, without withdrawing his gaze from the crucifix. "*He* shall judge between me and the tyrants of this world."

"You stand also before your *temporal* ruler and king," continued Eric--"before your lawful superior in this country and kingdom. For what ye have sinned against me and Denmark's crown you will have to answer at the great day of judgment, but first *here*; as certainly as there is justice upon earth, first *here*. I have sent in my accusation of your crimes to the tribunal of St. Peter; the Holy Father hath required me to liberate you that he may hear your defence, or your

confession."

"Why then have ye not obeyed, King Eric?" interrupted the captive, for the first time turning his proud glance upon the king. "Will ye delay until the holy lightnings melt the crown from off your brow?"

"How long I shall wear the crown, the righteous God alone can determine," answered the king. "Without His Almighty permission no power on earth can injure a hair of my head." He paused for a moment. "When we liberate a dangerous offender," he continued, with more calmness, "he must give us security for his release. The guiltiest criminal shall have the right of defending himself, but not of committing fresh crimes on his way to his tribunal. If he hath any remains of conscience and honour, and if we are to trust him, he must take the oath we require. If he will not--be it so! he may be tried in his dungeon, and defend himself in his chains."

"And what security doth King Eric demand for the release of the captive, whom he, without lawful sentence, and contrary to the law of God and the church, caused to be imprisoned and maltreated?" asked the archbishop, with bitterness.

"For the justice of your imprisonment I will answer to the Great Judge above," answered the king, raising his hand; "but the point in question is only whether you may justly and reasonably be released; to decide this I have summoned you hither. Know then, Archbishop Grand! although you were undoubtedly an accomplice in my father's murder--although I abhor you as my bitterest and deadliest foe, and as the greatest traitor in Denmark, I fear not, nevertheless, to loose your guilty hands when justice demands it; but *here* ye shall neither raise hand nor voice against crowns and sovereigns; ere ye leave these walls ye shall swear by your salvation, in the sight of God and the chivalry of Denmark, to promise that which I here, as the protector of the crown and people, have required and demanded. When you have read the conditions of your release, and are willing to take the oath before my throne, in the hearing of all my knights, your imprisonment may end this very hour."

At a signal from the king Thorkild Knudson reached the sheet of parchment to the archbishop, and placed one of the tapers closer to him. The hand of the proud captive trembled as he took the parchment, and it cost him evident effort to read it; but it seemed as if his strength and spirit increased as he proceeded; and when he had perused it to the end he laughed scornfully, and crumpled the parchment in his hand.--"Shall I leave my degradation unavenged?" he cried--"Shall I fetter my tongue myself that it may not announce to you eternal death and damnation?--Shall I part with my last earthly defence?--Shall I subject the holy church's right to the arbitration of a tyrant? No, King Eric Ericson! as yet I am an anointed and consecrated archbishop, with power to bless or curse the crown thou wearest. Even in these chains I have the power to push the crown from off thy head with a single word. Over my body, tyrant! thou may'st have power, but, by the Lord above, not over my free immortal spirit! Ere I will consent to one of these conditions thou and thy executioners may sever every limb from my body, as I now rend asunder, with this hellish compact, all bond and tie between me and the despots of this world." So saying, he rent the parchment before the king's eyes, threw the fragments on the floor, and stamped upon them until his chains rattled.

"Madman!" cried the king, in great anger, "stay then in thy prison, and defy me there, until thy dying day! I release thee not until thou hast put thy seal to every word thou hast here trampled under foot, should I be a hundred times excommunicated by the pope in consequence," Eric hastily pulled the bell-string. The door of the knights' hall opened, and the master of the household appeared. "The guard," commanded the king--"the captive is to return to prison."

The loud talking in the king's private chamber had excited apprehensions among the king's knights and courtiers, who knew he was next to being alone with the dreaded prisoner. As the chamber door opened, all thronged towards it, as if fearing some misfortune.

"Back!" said the king, and he was obeyed; but the door to the knights' hall remained half open, and ere the guard arrived to fetch the prisoner. Archbishop Grand had taken a bold resolve. He hastily seized the crucifix, upon which he had gazed so long, and with this holy symbol in his hand, before which all were forced to bow, he advanced with long powerful strides into the middle of the knights' hall; here he halted, and turned suddenly towards the king, who stood on the threshold, amazed at this sight, and seemed about to issue orders for the seizure of the prisoner.

"Anathema!" shouted the archbishop, in a terrific voice, and raising the chained hand which bore the crucifix. "King Eric Ericson of Denmark! I pronounce the sentence of excommunication upon thy head. I announce to thee, and every Christian here present, that thou art fallen under the church's awful ban--"

"What? audacious villain! seize--gag him!" exclaimed the king, stepping over the threshold.

"Anathema!" shouted the archbishop still louder.--"He who lays hands on me is accursed.--Thou art cast out of the community of believers and of saints.--Thou hast no longer any power over Christians, King Eric! In virtue of my holy office, and the apostolical authority of St. Paul, I give thee over, as the enemy of God and the church, to Satan, and to the destruction of the flesh." So saying, he described the stroke of forked lightning in the air with the crucifix, and looked

around him with flashing eyes.

All stood as if petrified by terror and amazement. The king appeared once more about to speak; but he had grown deadly pale, and it seemed as if his voice was choked by anger. Ere he was able to speak, the archbishop again burst forth with a deafening voice, while he turned to the knights and courtiers: "Fly, Christians! leave the pestilent one! pollute not your souls by intercourse with the excommunicated one! accursed is now the hand which brings him food, accursed the servant who serves him with fire or water, accursed the tongue which comforts him with a single word, so long as his soul is given over to the Evil One. He who ten days hence still serves and obeys this foe of the church I give over with him to Satan and to the destruction of the flesh, that the soul may be saved at the day of the Lord Jesus! Amen!"

On finishing this speech he made a genuflexion, kissed the crucifix, and handed it to the chaplain of the castle, who stood trembling nearest him among the king's suite, and bent his knee, while he pressed this so fearfully abused symbol of blessing with a look of sorrow to his heart. "And now, excommunicated king!" added the archbishop, with a triumphant countenance, and with the mien of an exulting martyr, tearing the mantle from his emaciated breast, "now may'st thou, if thou darest, order to be torn asunder the church's anointed, who announced to thee the sentence of the Lord. My body is, perhaps, in thy power, but the spirit is God's, and his is the power throughout all eternity."

A death-like silence reigned throughout the hall, the greatest terror was depicted in the faces of the knights, while their eyes turned with sorrowing sympathy towards their excommunicated sovereign. It seemed for a moment as if the lightnings of excommunication had struck the young king with the power of real lightning, and smitten him with lameness. He had staggered back so dizzy that he was forced to support himself by the door-post; but he now summoned up all his strength, and stepped forward with quick and passionate strides among his knights and courtiers.

"A regicide stands in the midst of us, and would give us over to the Devil, to whom he himself belongs," he burst forth, in a tone of the highest exasperation; "he who is himself accursed presumes to pronounce the Lord's judgment upon men. On this unfortunate St. Cecilia's eve my father's blood cried aloud from the earth, and accused this criminal before the Lord's tribunal. His head should long since have fallen under the axe of the executioner, and now he would judge and excommunicate us; he would destroy my immortal soul, had he the power; but no! each word he hath spoken is lifeless and powerless--his curses fall back on his own guilty head. The Holy Father shall judge between us! The King of Denmark recognizes no sentence as lawful which is not confirmed by 'the Father of Christendom. Away with the miscreant!"

The knights and courtiers appeared able to breathe freely again, on hearing these words from the king. They looked on him with confidence and devotion, yet still appeared to hesitate, and no one prepared to seize the dreaded prisoner, who stood erect and haughty among them, and seemed to triumph in the spiritual power he had exercised even in chains.

"Hence with the criminal!" repeated the king; "until he recalls the ungodly ban he sees not the light of day. Guards! halberdiers! why tarry ye? hath this miscreant's words struck you deaf and lame? Fear ye to obey your liege sovereign?"

The guards and halberdiers now surrounded the archbishop, but with manifest trepidation. The terrific prisoner stood immovable, with his eyes turned upwards, towards the roof of the hall, and no one as yet dared to lay hands on him. But the king again broke silence. "I still bear crown and sceptre," he exclaimed; "I shall know how to defend myself and my loyal subjects against this monster! I swore by my father's bloody head to uphold the rights of the crown and the insulted dignity of majesty against every power on earth whether spiritual or temporal, and by all the holy men!^[13] I will keep that vow. Will not the loyal Danish nation, will not Denmark's chivalry stand by me undismayed in my fight for truth and justice? Then, indeed, will Danish loyalty be a theme for mockery, and Danish courage for scorn. Are ye true and valiant Danish men, and do ye let yourselves be scared by a mad traitor into betraying your liege sovereign?"

All doubt and apprehension seemed now to have disappeared among Eric's knights and courtiers. The hall resounded with shouts and loyal acclamations. The archbishop vainly strove to speak again. The indignation against him was general, and without hesitation the guards laid hands on him to lead him back to prison. But ere they reached the door it opened, and Prince Christopher, accompanied by the Margrave of Brandenburg, entered with the papal legate between them, followed by their train of ecclesiastics and laymen. All started at the sight of the tall foreign prelate with his cardinal's hat and withered visage. He stepped with an authoritative air before the prince and the margrave, and bowed to the king, and towards all sides of the hall, in silence, and with the air of a superior, as if appropriating to himself the loud acclamations which were heard on his entrance, but which were now suddenly hushed. He seemed startled on perceiving the chained prisoner in the Cistercian mantle. He nodded, and the guard stepped aside. The captive archbishop felt himself suddenly freed from the sturdy grasp of the men-at-arms. "Gloria in excelsis!" shouted Grand, as he raised his fettered hands, and kneeled at the cardinal's feet. "Blessed be thou, thou messenger of the Lord!" he continued in Latin. "See here, how an archbishop in Denmark is treated! See, and judge, in the Holy Father's name, O thou, his high ambassador! I have, in virtue of my holy office, published the church's ban upon this presumptuous king, because of his defiance to the law of the Lord and the church! Confirm it in

the Holy Father's name, Lord Cardinal--or see Archbishop Grand expire of wrath and ignominy at your feet!"

"Arise, my venerable brother, and be comforted," answered Isarnus, also in Latin. "I bring with me authority from his Holiness to enforce the constitution--'Cum Ecclesia Dacianæ.' Read this document aloud to the king and the court, in the language of the country, worthy Abbot Magnus." As he said this he reached a large parchment letter, with the papal seal, to the aged Abbot of Esrom, who had accompanied him. The abbot opened it with a trembling hand, but as he glanced over it a flood of tears rolled down his furrowed cheeks.

"I *cannot*," stammered the old man; "he is my liege and sovereign! I conjure you, my lord, by the all-merciful Creator! use not the power here given you to our king's and our country's destruction. This is a matter which demands the highest consideration. This authority is not unconditional, either," These last words were spoken in Latin, and appeared to startle the cardinal.

The unexpected entrance of the papal legate at this critical moment, his singular appearance, as well as the mysteriousness of his conduct, and the speaking in a foreign tongue, had once more inspired the bystanders with a feeling of consternation which deprived them of the power of speech. Even the king appeared for some moments to have lost his self-possession and the consciousness of royal authority, while the attention of all present was rivetted upon the terrific stranger. Eric now stepped forward a few paces, and seemed about to assert his authority by a commanding address; but at the same moment the fettered archbishop snatched the document from the abbot's trembling hands. "Here is papal authority for ban and interdict," he cried, "praised be the Lord! his judgments are righteous. Enforce your authority, most reverend sir! Anathema and the church's ban upon the king, and those his accomplices in guilt!" So saying, he raised his fettered hands both towards the king and Prince Christopher, who appeared to be in great consternation at this sudden and unlooked-for blow.

"Not a word more here, on pain of instant death, impudent miscreant!" exclaimed the king, in a loud tone, and in the highest exasperation. "Take that mad criminal to prison, halberdiers! Let every one leave this place! We will inquire in our council with what authority this stranger is empowered to treat with the king of Denmark. When he proposes it, and it suits our convenience, we will talk with him in our private chamber." So saying, the king returned to his own apartment. Not another word was heard in the knights' hall; even the archbishop found it expedient to be passive as the two halberdiers and the guard approached to lead him out of the hall. All the knights and courtiers, as well as Prince Christopher and his train, departed in silence. The halberdiers who were on guard, alone remained behind. They snatched up their halberds, and ranged themselves in their customary order without the king's apartments. Abbot Magnus had also left the hall, and Cardinal Isarnus stood almost alone in the middle of the floor between his amanuensis and interpreter. He looked with surprise around the suddenly deserted hall.

It was not until he had announced himself through his interpreter in suitable form to the captain of halberdiers, and requested an audience with the king, that he was received with the demonstrations of respect due to a papal ambassador. His arrival was formally announced, and he was shortly afterwards admitted to a private interview with Eric.

What had passed had thrown every one into the greatest suspense and uneasiness, and an anxious stillness reigned in the castle. The foreign prelate quitted not the king's private chamber until the night was far advanced. The king did not make his appearance, but, according to his orders, the strictest court etiquette was to be observed. Arrangements were made in the castle for the protracted sojourn of the cardinal and his train. He was to be honoured as a princely guest. The return of the Swedish ambassadors was postponed. The following day another long and private conversation took place between the king and the papal legate. The presence of this dignitary, and his over-awing authority, banished all gaiety and cheerfulness from the castle.

CHAP. VII.

On the evening of the second day Drost Aagé had not as yet returned from his expedition, as the protector of Marsk Stig's captive daughters. He had conducted them without impediment to the king's castle at Vordingborg; but as he was about to ride into the arched gateway he was attacked from behind, and dangerously wounded, by an unknown hand. Aagé was carried, in a state of insensibility, into the castle, while his huntsmen vainly pursued his stealthy foe, in whom they thought they recognised the same tall horseman in peasant attire, and mounted upon the little Zealand horse without a saddle, whom they had several times seen on the road, but who always vanished as suddenly as he had appeared, and who they conjectured must have followed their track by secret paths from Esrom.

The commandant at Vordingborg had received the wounded knight, with great alarm; he instantly recognised in him the young Drost, and the favourite of the king. As soon as Drost Aagé had recovered his consciousness, he informed the commandant of the rank and position of the two ladies, and also that they were to be considered as state prisoners, for whose security he would be responsible, although their stay here was to be rendered as agreeable as under such circumstances it was possible to make it. The commandant instantly ordered the gates to be barred, and sentinels to be stationed; but he threw open the interior of the castle without reserve to his guests, and a messenger was dispatched to inform the king of what had happened.

Meanwhile the assembled party at Sjöborg were in some degree tranquillised, when on the noon of the third day the king again made his appearance at table, where he sat, with a calm and almost cheerful countenance, between his brother Christopher and the papal legate. Their secret negotiation seemed to have taken a friendly turn, and great reliance was placed in King Eric's manly sense and political wisdom. Report said that the Italian prelate seemed to bear our northern climate excellently well, and perhaps might not be disinclined to take up his abode here, if the king should come to an agreement with the papal see, and the archbishoprick of Lund became vacant by the deposition of Grand. It was conjectured that the formal annulment of the archbishop's authority, and of his own self-empowered sentence of excommunication, had been the subject of the king's conferences with the unfathomable Isarnus, and it was reasonably hoped that the cardinal would grant this important condition of the archbishop's release, ere the king fulfilled the demands of the pope. But some days elapsed without any apparent decision being taken. Meanwhile, no change took place in the condition of the captive archbishop, who remained in close confinement.

Although neither the king nor his loyal and devoted subjects recognised the validity of the sentence of excommunication pronounced on them by the archbishop, so long as it was not formally ratified by a papal decree, this awful procedure had nevertheless taken place, and with such publicity that it could not but be generally known. The rumour quickly spread throughout the land, and terrified the people. The threats against those who should not within ten days withdraw all help and companionship from the king had struck terror into many, and several of the domestics, and of the guard of halberdiers absconded from Sjöborg. The tales recounted of the ecclesiastical captive's skill in the Black Art now contributed still more to alarm his guard. At every unusual sound from the dungeon in the night the turnkeys stole from their posts, and the bravest men-at-arms dared scarcely remain without the prison door, where with trembling voices they often sang valiant battle songs to keep up their courage. The prisoner was guarded with still increasing anxiety. A very suspicious rumour rendered watchfulness still more necessary. Some fishermen from Gilleleie, who supplied the castle with fish, had related in the kitchen that a foreign bark was constantly sailing to and from the coast. The persons on board appeared to be fishermen, and were busied during the day with nets and fishing-tackle, but during the night they landed, and a tall knight in disguise, accompanied by some seamen of suspicious appearance, were seen to lurk in the neighbourhood of the castle. This report had not indeed reached the ears either of the king or the Marsk, but orders were issued that the guard should be doubled in the captive's tower, and that the steward should answer with his life for the archbishop's security. The lower classes now believed that the king would pass sentence of death upon him, and command him to be executed.

With the expression of fear and anger in his countenance, as well as of fatigue from a night's watch, the steward one morning descended the stairs of the tower prison with the keys in his hand. "All folk seem possessed here," he muttered. "I shall now have to watch myself to death over that confounded Satan."

"Did I not always say so, master? He will drive us all crazed at last," sounded a merry well-known voice in his ear, and Morten the cook stood before him in the twilight at the bottom of the tower stairs.

"Morten! thou crack-brained vagabond! is it thou?" called the steward; "where in all the world hast thou been? Folk said thou wert surely bewitched, and gone to the devil, and I began almost to think so myself. The whole pack of them here are losing their wits, and one after another runs off from me. Speak, man! where the devil hast thou been?"

"Ah! dear master," sighed Morten. "Thank St. Hubert that you are so pious and virtuous, and condemn not a weak worldly-minded fellow who hath been forced to do hard penance for his sins' sake. Ye have doubtless observed how I delight in dancing and singing. In former days I was not afraid of a little drink, either; but on St. Vitus's day it behoves us to be cautious. As a punishment for my ungodliness in a drunken bout, I was afflicted with St. Vitus's dance, and I thought I should have danced for a whole year, as hath chanced to many a poor sinner before. Perhaps you or other virtuous folk have prayed for me, for I got off for a few weeks' sickness; but in all that time I was not able to give any account of myself, and I have so danced the country round that I can hardly hang together."

"Indeed!" answered the jailor, looking at him suspiciously; "hast thou had that sickness? It is a rare one, though, and many will have it that it is nought but an idle superstition."

"Dear master! remember ye not then how it seized Claus Spillemans last year? He ceased not dancing till he dropped dead in Sjöborg streets."

"Well, that is true enough; he went mad, no doubt, on St. Vitus's day; but it was not upon *that* day thou did'st kick up such a riot, and did'st run off from the turnkeys. Be honest, Morten! hast thou not suffered thyself to be seduced by the bishop to run errands for him? Thou hast tramped the country sturdily round, that I see right well, and if thou now hast a fancy to be hanged for thy zeal in the service, thou comest in the very nick of time; both the king and the Marsk are here, and when the one passes a sentence, the other is at hand to execute it."

"Dear pious master! what do you take me for?" answered Morten, putting on a look of astonishment. "Had I run errands for such a traitor I must have been stark mad indeed to come back again now, and let myself be hung for it. No, trust me, master, I am not so brutishly stupid. To tell you the whole clean out, I was drunk beyond all bounds that evening; whether it was St. Vitus's day or not I do not quite exactly remember, but I have had neither sense nor recollection since. I must have doubtless scoured the country round like a madman. I have now come to my senses for the first time, and found the way to Sjöborg again. Here's been fine excommunicating work between the bishop and the king. If I can be of any use to you, say the word! I could break the archbishop's neck with the greatest pleasure in life if I could thereby save king and country. If you have any doubt of my honesty, I will only just fetch my traps, and take myself off with all reverence."

"No, stay; I will believe thee, because of thy honest face, Morten," said the steward, hastily, and casting a sharp look at him, while a new and daring thought seemed to flash across his hangman's soul. "I have never needed thee more than at this very time. My new cook hath also run off. I have only one turnkey left. I must myself be every thing and every where."

"That is more than can be required of any Christian soul, master. The Devil himself can hardly take that upon him."

"Drunk and mad thou must surely have been," muttered the keeper, still looking narrowly at him. "Hum! *so* long a drunken fit, though, have I never heard the like of. St. Vitus's dance? Truly that is an ailment akin to madness; no man can answer for what he does in that state. Hum! since thou art come to thy senses again, Morten, I will even take thee again into service. In the day thou may'st be needed in the kitchen, and in the night--well, we can talk of that afterwards. Old Mads the turnkey is good for nothing; he hath now got his nephews to help him, and I count not on them either; and those foolish men-at-arms are afraid of being excommunicated or bewitched."

"If I can help you with the night watch that shan't stand in *my* way," said Morten; "whatsoever I can do to plague and anger the bishop I do with hearty good will. I would only counsel you not to set me to watch in his chamber, for if St. Vitus's dance come over me I were in a case to dance to the devil with him. It is a kind of cramp, you must know, and I might easily squeeze the life out of whomsoever I get hold of."

"Well, well, Morten; there is no need for that. Thou art now perfectly well and reasonable," muttered the keeper, with a grisly smile. "I must have some one to help me, or I shall go mad myself. One misfortune follows another. The king is a violent man, and the junker has no great weight with him. It is an easy thing to get into trouble when one has a devil to watch, and stern masters to account to. Now comes that confounded report of the vessel at Gilleleie, which plies to and fro to help the bishop to flight."

Morten turned quite pale. "Our Lady preserve us!--say they so?" he exclaimed, hastily; "then, by my troth, master, there *is* need of watchfulness; yet it is just as dangerous to loose as to tie a mad dog."

"It will cost me my life if he escapes, Morten. I have the king's own most gracious word for it. I never let the prison keys out of my hand. The king's people are on guard, but I dare not trust them. I carry my life in my hands. I will now depend upon thee. Come!" So saying, the agitated steward took Morten by the arm, and led him across the yard towards the kitchen. It was a fine clear winter's morning. It had frozen so hard during the last few nights that a part of Sjöborg lake was covered with tolerably hard ice. As the steward and the cook crossed the castle yard they saw all the king's huntsmen, with horses and hunting equipments, waiting before the castle stairs, and the royal car drove up. "What is agog now?" asked the steward.

"We are off with the king to the chase at Tikjob," answered one of the hunters. "The great lord from Italy wants to go to Esrom. He will surely either ride, or be borne on our shoulders."

"When come ye back?" asked the steward.

"Faith, I know not," answered the huntsman. "To-morrow we shall have to go with the king to Esrom. There is a great council to be held there, they say."

"Then it surely concerns the life or death of him yonder," muttered the steward, pointing to the prison tower. Morten the cook became attentive, and stopped; but he soon hastened towards the kitchen door, where he stood, half concealed, as the door of the castle stairs opened, and the king and Prince Christopher came forth, and mounted their horses, together with the Marsk, the two Swedish lords, and a numerous company of knights. The king and his train halted, and when Cardinal Isarnus, with his famulus and his clerical train, also descended the stairs, the huntsmen

and attendants bowed low whilst they took their seats in the royal car. The train, headed by the king and Count Henrik, then issued forth out of the castle gate, amid the joyous sound of the hunting horns. Morten continued standing by the kitchen door. He had gazed on the young chivalrous monarch with a mingled feeling of fear and admiring interest, and a secret struggle seemed passing in his mind, as his glance turned from the noble and kingly form which had just passed him, to the gloomy prison window from whence he thought he heard a distant and smothered sigh. The steward had already twice called to him without his hearing; he now called again, with a round oath. The cook hastily passed his hand over his face, and struck up, in a shrill voice, one of his merriest ballads, as, with jest and laughter, he joined the domestics in the kitchen. During the rest of the day a monastic stillness reigned in Sjöborg castle. When the evening closed in the steward appeared unusually friendly and confidential, and treated his cook to a flagon of good wine from the king's travelling store. Before he sat down at the drinking table he had convinced himself with his own eyes that his dangerous state prisoner was under close keeping, and that the old turnkey and his comrade, as well as the guard without the prison-door, were at their posts. When he had fortified himself with some cups of wine, he began to unburden his heart to the cook. "I am an unfortunate man," he sighed forth. "I have not closed my eyes to sleep these three nights. Each time I shut an eye it seems to me the bishop hath fled, and I am dangling from the gallows. It hath not fared much better with the king himself," he continued; "if he now condemns him to death, despite pope and clergy, he and the whole kingdom fall into trouble. If he lets him slip hence alive, matters are just as bad. I once dreamed the bishop had hung himself in his chains. Oh! would it had pleased the Lord it had been so indeed!"

"A pious wish," answered Morten. "I would willingly lend a helping hand towards the fulfilment of that dream; of course, master, I mean in all pious secrecy; and I blame you not for this. In your case it would be almost a necessary act of self-defence, and, at the same time, a good deed for king and country. Is it not so?"

"Art thou mad, Morten! it might cost me my neck," muttered the steward; "for ought I care he may hang himself, in the Lord's name, whenever he pleases, if I only know nothing of it. If any good friend would lend him a helping hand, it might indeed, as thou say'st, save king and country, and deserve a rich and royal recompence; but I may thank my Lord and Maker if I can save my own life. Had I but a faithful fellow who durst watch in the chamber with him to-night I should sleep in quiet. Hast thou not courage enough for that, Morten?"

"Oh yes; why should I not, if I get well paid for it? If he gives me any trouble, it were an easy matter to make away with him, without any one seeing or knowing aught about it."

"Art thou serious, Morten? Hast thou really courage to----"

"To make an end of him, master?"

"Hush! No; I say not that. St. Gertrude preserve me from tempting any one to do that deed, even though it might be a benefit to state and country, and might make a poor fellow happy for life. No; that was not my meaning. Darest thou let me shut thee up with him to-night?"

"Yes, on one condition, master."

"What is it?"

"That you will not be wroth and complain of me if perchance you were not to find us to-morrow morning in the same trim as to-night."

"Pshaw, Morten; it matters not to me in what trim I find you. I will pay ten silver pieces for every night you watch beside him, and a hundred for the LAST."

"But even were that pious lord, through his witchcraft, to get loose after a fashion, I should surely get the blame of having let him slip."

"Ha, ha! thou art a merry wag, Morten," muttered the steward, with a horrible laugh. "The liberty thou canst give him, when I have locked the door after thee, shall not disturb my night's rest. Of course," he continued, with an uneasy and inquiring look, "thou must first let me search thy garments, to see that thou has not a file or any other tool with thee; that is a precaution I have ever used when I let any one watch with him in the chamber."

"That is but reasonable. You are a conscientious man." So saying, Morten pulled off his jerkin, and turned his pockets inside out. "But now I think of it, master, it won't do after all. If St. Vitus's dance should come over me."

"Pshaw! thou art quite well and hearty."

"But I am too hot-headed, master; and the bishop is wrath with me from former times. I have now and then plagued him a little, as you know, and should he take it into his head to insult me, or get hold of me, and I were forced to defend myself, it might cause a little stir, and set the guard and the whole castle agog."

"That needs not be. Thou art a bold fellow, Morten. Come! The guard shall not stand too near the door, and disturb thine and the bishop's rest, and shouldst thou get into a dispute with him

about the state of souls after death, or such like learned matters, lay folks shall not be the wiser for that. Drink a cup of wine to a good night, and then let's away. I want rest, and so doth the bishop. It is late." Morten nodded, and drank.

With a horrible smile on his coarse hypocritical countenance, Jesper Mogensen snatched up a lantern, and descended the staircase leading to the prison door, accompanied by the cook. He paused once or twice with uneasiness and suspicion, and held up the light towards Morten, who followed him with a cheerful countenance.

"Thou look'st as well pleased as if I were leading thee to a jolly night revel," he muttered; "go on before. I cannot endure that rustling behind me."

Morten obeyed, and assumed a thoughtful look.

"Let not the guard smell a rat," he whispered, and pointed to a cord which was twisted round his waist. The keeper nodded, and seemed reassured. He ordered the guard to move further from the door, which he then half opened, and peeped in, holding the lantern before him. As soon as he had seen the captive lying quietly with his hands fettered, he pushed Morten into the chamber.

"A good and *quiet* night," he said, with a grim smile, clapping to and locking the door behind him; he also carefully barred it without, and then descended the stairs. The nearest sentinel observed that he often looked timorously behind him, as if his own footsteps sounded suspiciously in his ear. "The stupid devil!" he muttered. "What he doth he shall himself answer for; it is no concern of mine."

When Morten entered the murky prison, he stood in silence, until the sound of the locking and bolting of the door had ceased, and until the hollow tread of the steward's iron-shod boots died away on the stairs; he then approached the captive's couch, and was about to speak, but he now heard singing and loud voices in the upper chamber. It was old Mads the turnkey making merry with his nephews and the young fellows from the village who were to keep watch with him. Morten listened in silence. He perceived from their inarticulate voices and drowsy songs, that the mead and Saxon ale he had secretly brought them had been greatly to their taste. Through a little hole in the ceiling above there fell a ray of light from their lamp upon the archbishop's couch, and lit up his long pale visage. He lay with closed eyes without stirring, apparently in a sound sleep. Morten seated himself upon the damp stone floor, and interrupted not his repose until the noise of the carouse had entirely ceased, and he heard in the stillness of the night how they were snoring overhead. "Sleep you, venerable sir?" he whispered, as he rose up from the floor.

"No, thou faithful servant of the Lord!" answered the archbishop, in a weak voice, and raised his head. "I and the Lord's vengeance do but *seem* to sleep, until it is time to wake and act."

"Now is the time to show clean heels," continued Morten. "Is all ready here?"

"Long since. Thou hast tarried long; yet even that was an ordering of the Lord. I was destined even in my chains to become a chastising rod in the Lord's hand; but I was well nigh believing thou had'st failed me, or wert betrayed."

"You thought, then, I was either a fox or a sheep, reverend sir. Have you the rope ladder?"

"Here--but be cautious, Morten. Tie it to the thickest bar in the grate; that is secure. Take the others out; they are filed through--but make no noise! I can rid myself of the fetters. Thy file was blunt, but the Lord sharpened it in my hand. His angel hath struck mine enemies both deaf and blind."

"But now comes the *knotty* point, pious sir," whispered Morten, as he lingered, with an ambiguous smile. "Now all depends upon whether the Lord's angel will help you still farther. Up to the window he hath indeed taught you to creep, but we have to descend thirty-six feet from thence to the tower wall, and then we still have that confounded castle wall besides. Over the moat and lake the Lord hath indeed laid a bridge. See you this cord? Were I now to strangle you with it I might perhaps make my fortune; but I am too pious a fellow for that. I will but fasten it to the slip knot, that we may be able to draw the ladder after us. I will go down first to aid you. Look now. I will answer for the ladder, if you can but keep your hold, till I can reach you from below. But----"

"With the Lord Almighty's help"--whispered Grand, in an anxious tone, and looking at the jolly cook, with a half suspicious glance--"assist me first up to the window, I am weary and weak. Now, what art thou thinking of, Morten? Haste, or we are betrayed."

"A little scruple has just entered my head, venerable sir," whispered Morten. "I am a good Christian, and I know well enough both you and the pope have my soul and the souls of all Christians in your pockets. You have saved my life, do you see, and therefore have I promised to free you, whatever it may cost; but I am also a Danish man, and you cannot ask that, for your sake, I should betray state and kingdom, or plunge our young brave king into misfortune. Had I seen *him* sooner, and known he was so noble a lord, I might perhaps have thought better on what I promised *you*. I know you have excommunicated him, and given him over to the Devil, but by my

soul he is too good for that, and if I am now to set you free you must promise me, by our Lady and St. Martin, that you will recall the ban, and do no harm to him or any other man in the country."

"Dost thou rave, Morten?" exclaimed the archbishop, greatly surprised and enraged; "would'st thou ape the tyrant, and prescribe conditions to me? If thou doest not that thou promised me, I will excommunicate thee also, and thou shalt be eternally damned."

"In that case, reverend sir," whispered Morten, hastily creeping out of the window to the rope ladder, with the loose end of the cord in his hand, with which he could slip the looped knot that fastened the ladder,--"In that case I will bid you good night, and take the ladder with me to hell."

"Morten! good Morten! betray me not," whispered the archbishop, in a beseeching tone, climbing with haste up to the window. "I will not deal harder by the king or any one here than I am compelled for the Lord's and the church's and my conscience sake."

"Then will you loose him from the ban as soon as you are free and in safety yourself?" asked Morten, still keeping his stand on the ladder.

"Yes, surely; yes, surely; only be silent, and help me."

"Then I will believe you for the present," whispered Morten, and crept down the ladder. Its last step was still ten feet from the ground, but the dexterous cook clung fast to it with his hands, and jumped down without any great difficulty. The archbishop had now also got out of the window, and with much effort held fast by one step, while he groped with his foot for the other. But on lifting his foot from the last step, to his great dismay he discovered that the ladder was much too short, and that in all probability his life would be endangered should he come to the ground without assistance.

"Help me, help me, Morten!" he entreated in a low tone. "In the name of the all-merciful Creator, help me!"

"Yes, if you swear to keep your word, on pain of excommunicating yourself to burning hell, venerable sir," answered Morten, extending his arms to catch him in case he fell.

"Yes, assuredly, by all the saints and devils!" stammered the alarmed captive; "only catch me; I must let go my hold!"

"Let go then! in the Holy Virgin's name!" whispered Morten; "if you are a pious man of your word you shall assuredly not dash your foot against a stone."

The archbishop now relinquished his hold of the last step of the ladder, and let himself drop, but though instantly caught in the cook's powerful arms, he was unable to repress a smothered burst of pain and sorrow, as his swelled feet struck hard against the stone pavement, and when Morten withdrew his support, he fell speechless and breathless to the ground.

"You have surely not sworn falsely in your heart, venerable sir," whispered Morten, anxiously. "This is no time, either, for swooning. If we delay a moment longer the guard may come, and lead you back from whence you came." As he said this, he drew down the ladder, and rolled it up with care. The archbishop yet lay as if lifeless on the ground. Without any longer demur, Morten put both arms round his waist, and carried him in this manner across the back yard of the prison to the high castle wall which encircled the tower and was surrounded by a moat. It was possible to mount the inside wall in case of need, and by dint of great exertion Morten carried the almost senseless prelate up to the top of the wall. There he secured the rope ladder, while the bishop recovered his consciousness, and gained strength to pursue his flight. Without delaying and alarming the fugitive by further stipulations, he assisted him to descend this wall also, and then drew the ladder after him. They passed the frozen moat of the castle; but that part of the lake which they had to cross was as smooth as glass, and the archbishop often fell and bruised himself. With Morten's help he at last got over the ice, but now threw himself despairingly on the frozen ground. "I cannot go a step farther," he exclaimed. "If I am to reach the shore thou must get me a horse."

"Will you give me absolution then, venerable sir, if I can steal you a horse out of the stable here?"

"It is a holy loan, which will bring thee a blessing," replied Grand.

"Good! But if you understand aught of the Black Art, pious sir, forget not your Latin now, but say a charm over the dogs, so that they bark not, and over the grooms in the stable, so that they wake not."

"I will pray to the Almighty to be with us. Haste thee!"

Morten crept towards the neighbouring stable. He went across a dunghill to the stable door, upon which a large cross was marked in chalk by way of safeguard. The usually watchful mastiffs did not bark. It seemed to Morten as if the cross on the stable door gleamed in the moonlight. The door of the groom's chamber he had to pass stood ajar. He peeped in, and saw three men in a deep sleep. In the stalls close by stood two small horses. He untied their halters, and led them

out. The stone pavement of the stable and without the back door was covered with horse-litter, and he succeeded in leading the horses out without the slightest noise. He led them slowly towards the sea shore, and often looked behind him, but no one pursued--no dog barked, and the whole seemed to him to be almost miraculous. He found the archbishop where he had left him, in an attitude of prayer. With unwonted solemnity, and with a respect which, however, seemed mingled with a kind of dread, Morten, without saying a word, assisted the prelate to mount one of the horses; he himself vaulted upon the other, and they rode in silence at a rapid trot down to the shore. There a tall grave knight and the two Lolland deserters awaited them with a boat which they had stolen from the fishing village. The knight and both the wild Lollanders bent the knee reverently before the archbishop as he extended his fingers to give them his blessing. With Morten's aid he dismounted, and stepped into the boat. Morten turned the strange horses loose, and seated himself on a rowing bench. With a few powerful strokes of the oar they reached a vessel with a black flag and pennant, which was waiting for them at some distance from the shore. They entered the ship, and let the boat float away. The day had not dawned when the vessel with the black flag sailed with a fair breeze through the Sound, bearing off without impediment the dangerous man, who, even in his chains, had dared to excommunicate Denmark's sovereign.

CHAP. VIII.

Sjöborg castle, which in the latter months of the year 1295 was honoured by the presence of royalty, and had been the theatre of such important events, stood desolate and deserted on the morning of the following new year. The gate was shut, and the floating bridge removed. The sentinel was no longer on guard on the battlement over the gate; within, no sounds of gaiety and occupancy were heard; without the southern rampart and the narrowest part of the lake which insulated the site of the castle stood a gallows, at the end of what was called the king's garden, where the roads met from Esrom and Gilleleie. On the gallows hung a lifeless corpse in a short sheep-skin coat, and with a pair of shaggy boots on the legs. A pair of ravens flapped their wings over the sinner's head, and around the stiff frozen body fluttered a flock of screaming crows.

The aged Jeppé, the fisherman from Gilleleie, who on fast days was accustomed to bring fish to Esrom, and to the kitchen of Sjöborg, was returning at day-break from the ferry, opposite the closed castle gate, with his flat fish basket at his back, and stood almost under the gallows ere he was aware of it. His servant, a young fisherman, followed him also with a basket at his back.

"It was true then, after all," said the old man; "they have made quick work of it here. The bird hath flown, and the cage stands empty. Our young king hath been wroth in earnest--by my troth, he does nothing by halves. We may now carry our cod to Elsinore. But what the devil ails the birds to-day?"

"Look, look, master!" shouted the lad; "there he hangs."

"Our Lady preserve us!" exclaimed Jeppé, and stopped. "Ay, there he hangs, indeed, in his old sheep's skin, and in the boots I brought him from Skanór fair, those he squeezed out of me for the freight and the sixteen marks. Why, the soles are whole as yet! I told him not to wear them out with his courtier-like scrapings. Faugh! he looks ugly in the face. 'Tis no wholesome sight on a fasting stomach. Let's take a sup, Olé." He took a little wooden flask out of the basket, drank, and reached the flask to the lad, while they gazed with mingled curiosity and dread on the corpse.

"By our Lady! a foul human carcass is truly soon provided for," resumed the old man, clearing his throat after the strong drink, while he crossed himself, and put up the flask. "Well, I say now what I said before; paid as deserved. He who deals against law shall be dealt with without law. One should otherwise, it is true, speak well of the dead; and this I *must* say, Jesper Mogensen was in some sort a pious man; he neglected neither mattins nor mass; he went to confession every other day. That we none of us do. But the crow is never the whiter, let her wash herself ever so often, and I would not have given a rotten herring's head for all his piety. What said I the other day to boatman Sören? 'Mark,' said I, 'that craft will one day run aground under the gallows.' That one could see with half an eye. We will pray an honest prayer for his soul, however, Olé, although he *hath* haggled many a shining piece from us, and cheated the king out of more pecks of silver pieces than the ravens have now left hairs on his sinful head. Would it might fare somewhat better with him where he now is than it fared with his prisoner at Sjöborg! *Much* better it were a shame to ask, for a pitiless master he ever was, and graceless rulers are shut out from the Lord."

"True, master," answered the young fisherman; "but might one not almost say the same of our young king himself, to say so with all reverence and respect?"

"Of the king? Art thou mad, Olé?" exclaimed the old man, with warmth; "art thou clean devil-

blinded and possessed? Is that the Christianity thou learn'st in the monastery? Thou art a pretty fellow, truly!"

"Be not wroth, master!" answered the lad; "but truth is truth, nevertheless, whether it be sour or sweet, or whether it tweak the nose of high or low, says Pater Gregor, and we Danes are a free folk who dare to speak out in council^[14], whether it be against great or small; that you know as well as I, master. The king, by my troth, is not the man to put mercy before justice where the outlaws or their kindred and friends are concerned. Now, there, are Marsk Stig's pretty daughters; he has pent them up in the maiden's tower at Vordingborg, only because their father was an outlawed man; that's not very merciful. Then there's the bishop they have so long plagued and tortured; that's a bad business, says Pater Gregor. Whether or not he was leagued with the outlaws or the Slesvig Duke no one knows or can prove; but, however that may be, he was a mighty man of God, whom none but the Lord and the pope could condemn, says Pater Gregor."

"Ay, indeed! He talks too much, that Pater Gregor," muttered the old man, seating himself thoughtfully on his fish basket. "Those pious sirs of the cloister may say what they will; but this I know, that a more just-dealing king we have never had in Denmark. As to his stringing up that fellow----"

"It was a good deed, master, that I will never deny," interrupted the lad. "If the steward did not exactly help the bishop on his road,--which, no doubt, was what he was hung for,--he still richly deserved the halter for many other things. The king did him no wrong; but that poor turnkey Mads, and his nephew, I am sorry for them. They are pent up, under bolt and bar, at Flynderborg, only because the ale was a little too strong for them that night-watch in the tower. He who helped the bishop but," he added, with a rather sinister roll of the eye, "was surely none other than that gallows bird, Morten the cook. It was both boldly and piously done, says Pater Gregor, and therefore doubtless hath holy St. Martin saved his life, and helped him out of the country; but he is an outlawed man not the less for that, and if the Devil hath not an eye on his soul I am no honest Dane."

"Hark, Olé!" resumed the old man, in a stern voice, and rising from his seat; "take care what thy beardless mouth utters, especially when thou speak'st of the Devil, or of our Lord, or of the king! Touching Morten the cook, I have also a word to say to thee; but first, of the king. 'Tis a bad hand that will not protect its head, they say; the king is the people's head, see'st thou, and when the head aches all the limbs ache also; that hath every true Danish man in our time learnt soon enough. Our young King Eric hath gone through much trouble, from the time he was no higher than my knee, but our Lord hath been with him till this hour, and preserved both his soul and his body, despite archbishop, and pope, and clergy. We are a free folk, 'tis true; each man may speak out the truth boldly and freely, whether it be against high or low; but he who speaks an ill word of the king shall account for it to me, as surely as I have a tongue in my mouth and fists to my oar. Thou art a greenhorn, Olé; thou knowest but little of what passed in the country while thou wert in thy swaddling clothes. Had the outlaws murdered thy father when thou wert riding thy stick thou would'st hardly have taken them to thy arms when ye rode with a troop of horse."

"There, by my troth, you are right, master!" answered the youth, eagerly. "Life for life! I would say, and strike off their heads wherever I met them; it were an honest deed and righteous wrath. But, nevertheless, 'Vengeance is our Lord's,' and a king should be somewhat cooler headed and wiser than any of us; he should rather suffer injustice than put state and country in peril, by standing up so stiffly for his right."

"Old woman's chatter," interrupted Jeppé; "would the egg teach the hen? Justice shall stand, though all the earth should perish. Thus should a king think. He should not bear the sword in vain."

"But, dear master! there is Pater Gregor, and all the pious monks at Esrom, and many wise men in our town, they all of them think the king pushes his zeal and obstinacy too far, and only brings himself and the whole country into trouble; for this he hath now fallen under the archbishop's ban; yet he still will kick against the pricks, and goes just the same to mattins and mass as heretofore."

"That defiance and ungodliness our Lord will pardon him, I think," said the old man, with a nod of the head; "there is, besides, surely no bishop in the country who would shut the church door against him because Master Grand hath excommunicated him at Sjöborg. When that quarrelsome lord was laid by the heels, folks said directly that all churches were to be shut in the country; but, look you, *was* it so? If ten commands to shut them were sent from the pope in Rome, may I be a flounder if he would be obeyed. But now the archbishop is free, so there is no great need for it. At any rate we have seen before that a Danish king may be under a ban, and yet bear sceptre and crown to his dying day."

"Things may go wrong enough yet, master," answered the lad. "Without the pope's permit he can never wed, and he may have long to wait for it while he deals in this fashion by every canon and priest who sided with the archbishop. There is the rich Hans Rodis in Copenhagen; he hath lost all he owned because he sent a file and tools to the archbishop in the tower. Master Peter in Lund hath not fared a hair better, and all the archbishop's church property is seized. The like of such presumption hath never been heard of in Christendom before, says Pater Gregor."

"In this matter the king will follow the advice of his best counsellors, and neither thine nor Pater Gregory's," muttered the old man. "He and the state council must answer for what hath been done. Folk have tried him rather too much, and there are bounds to every thing, even to piety and patience. 'Beware of a brawl!' said my departed father, God rest his soul! 'but if thou meddlest in one, carry it through like a man.' It avails but little to cast butter against stones. No; hard against hard."

"By your leave, master, so said the Devil, when he leant his back against a thorn bush," interrupted the young fisherman, smiling; "but it is said he repented it when he found what it did for him. I also have heard a wise old saying at times: 'If thou canst not step over, then creep under,' said my aunt to me. Had our king learnt that wisdom of the proud Drost Hessel, who taught him to flourish lance and spear, it would have been better for state and country, says----"

"Pshaw!" interrupted the old man, placing his basket again on his back; "such wisdom may do well enough for thee, and thy aunt, and Pater Gregor, who speak out all ye think; but what is fitting for rats and mice would ill beseem the falcon and eagle. Humility is precious as gold; but where a king would pass he should sooner burst the gate open than creep under it through the mire." So saying, he cast another glance at the solemn witness of the king's stern and speedy execution of justice, and then, silent and thoughtful, strode forward on the road to Gilleleí.

"But, since you side with the king in every thing, master," asked the youth, "how can you then defend mad Morten the cook, or think he will 'scape the gallows? He hath ever sided with the outlaws. That he helped the bishop out of Sjöborg you know as well as any of us. I saw he was with you on Christmas eve, ere he put out to sea again in that black pilgrim ship."

"If thou would'st keep in a whole skin, jackanapes, let that be between us two," exclaimed the old man, in wrath, turning menacingly towards him. "However Morten may have sinned, he now doth penance for it; he who puts out to open sea at Christmas, to serve his Lord and Saviour, is no bad Christian, according to my notion, and therefore no traitor to his country."

"But every one knows----"

"Gossip! we know enough! What Morten hath to do either with the bishop or the outlaws concerns not thee or me; but this I know for certain, since he hath seen our young king himself, and taken money at his hand, he hath been true as steel to him in his heart. That Master Grand got loose was perhaps a God's providence," he added. "In this matter I even think myself our brave king hath set rather too boldly to work. If Morten hath had a finger in the game it may cost him dear; but that he neither meant ill to country or king I will stake my neck upon."

"A juggler and a godless churl he is, nevertheless; and an outlawed vagabond and sure gallows bird to boot, if he sets foot again on Danish ground," said the young fisherman, eagerly. "'Tis both sin and shame, master! that your young pretty Karen will weep her blue eyes red for his sake."

"Ha, indeed! hath that come out?" said the old man; "thou would'st rather, I warrant, she should weep them red for thy sake, if weep she must. Drive these fancies out of thine head, Olé! If Morten come back ere St. Hans day, as he promised Karen and me, and can give account of himself, thou shalt have leave to dance at his wedding; but if ye would speak ill of him to me or to Karen, thou may'st pack up and pack off. Now thou knowest my manner of thinking." So saying, the old man marched forward with rapid strides. The youth followed him, crest-fallen and in silence, till they drew near the shore, where Jeppé unmoored a fishing boat for the purpose of sailing up the coast with the fish he could no longer dispose of at Sjöborg.

"You must not suppose I would speak ill of Morten," resumed the young fisherman, as he set down the basket in the boat, and stepped over the gunwale after his master. "'Twould be of no use either; you and Karen are now so bewitched by that gallows bird. I must own myself he is a comely, sharp-witted jolly fellow, although he begins to get somewhat into years; indeed, as for that matter he might almost be her father. If he helped the bishop to flee out of piety and Christian charity, he hath perhaps done a good deed, but folk will hardly say it was for the Lord's sake. Your pretty little Karen would be better mated with a young fellow than with an outlawed and almost aged vagabond, and--"

"Thou beardless greenhorn! what is thy head running upon?" exclaimed the old man angrily, and stamping as he spoke. "Think'st thou it needs but a smooth chin, and a milk-sop look, to cut out an honest fellow with my daughter? Out of sight out of mind, say many young folk now-a-days; but that shall none say of me and *my* daughter. If I hear a word more of this matter from thy mouth, Olé! it shall be the last we exchange together. But what devil is this?" he exclaimed, in surprise, as he perceived there were three in the boat; "whence came that fellow?"

"Will you carry a passenger across to Skanór, for fair words and fair recompense, good people?" asked a tall man, suddenly rising from under one of the rowing benches, where he appeared to have concealed himself under the sail. He wore a dirty peasant's cloak, but it fitted ill, and a knight's shoulder scarf peeped from under it, together with the richly gilded hilt of a sword. He seemed to strive in vain to conceal a large scar on his forehead under the goat's-skin cap; his pale and frigid countenance, and furtive glances from under his rusty-coloured meeting eyebrows, inspired a feeling of distrust; he spoke Danish, but with something of a Norwegian pronunciation, which, however, seemed not to be natural to him, but assumed for the occasion.

"What have *you* to do here in my boat?" growled forth Jeppé, measuring the intruder with a bold look. "If you would cross to Skanör, why go ye not to the ferry?"

"The king hath stopped the ferries on account of the archbishop," answered the stranger. "Every man knows Grand hath escaped hence by sea, and yet the stupid dullards hunt after him here, both by day and night. Not a cat can leave the country, and there is now hardly a wood or morass left where a friend of the pious archbishop may hide himself. I see you take me for a deserter. It avails not to withhold the truth from you. I am a persecuted man; save my life, and bring me to a sea port from whence I may escape; I will richly repay you for it."

"Well!" said the old man, and his stern look relaxed. "No doubt an honest man may get into trouble, as hath chanced ere now; *he* is often forced to quit the country in disguise who afterwards can return with honour. The wind is fair, my yawl will weather the trip bravely; but I must first know who you are, and wherefore you are outlawed?"

"Outlawed!" repeated the stranger, with a start; "who says I am outlawed, with law and justice, because I fly from lawlessness and shameful injustice? I am a kinsman of the great Archbishop Grand, whom they have here so shamefully and unjustly maltreated. If I would not expose myself to the same tyrannical treatment, from which our Lord and pious men have freed him, I am now forced to seek safety by flight."

"But your name?" resumed the fisherman, as he suddenly placed the oar against a stone, and pushed the boat out to sea, with such force that both the stranger and the astonished young fisherman tumbled over the bench. "You will not call yourself outlawed, then?" he continued calmly, while the stranger stood up, and cast an anxious look on the wide space between the boat and the shore. "I should incline to think ye were so, nevertheless. Are ye not called, because of a little mistake, Squire Kaggé with the scar? Were ye one of those who slew the king's father in Finnerup barn? and if it be you who lately sought to take the king's life, I should be a rascal if I stirred a hand to bring you to any other free port than the gallows."

The stranger's countenance had become fearfully distorted; he thrust his hand as if convulsively under his cloak, and drew forth a long glittering knight's sword. "You must either set me instantly on shore here, or bring me to Skanör harbour; no matter who the devil I may be," he cried. "The squire whom Denmark's greatest man dubbed a knight lets himself not be carried to market with cod and flounders by a vile fisherman."

"Big words and fat flesh stick not in the throat," answered Jeppé, quietly brandishing the heavy iron-tagged oar like a lance over his head. "Here I stand on my own ground, and here I am master. Cast your dyrendal^[15] from you, Sir Malapert! or you shall feel one upon your skull which will make you forget the stroke of knighthood you got from the greatest man. If that man be Stig Anderson,"--he added, "you need not mention your fair name or your fair deed--for in that case you were as certainly with Marsk Stig and the grey friars in Finnerup barn as you are now with Jeppé the fisherman on the road to judgment and the gallows."

"We shall see," shouted the stranger, like a madman, and rushed on him with his drawn sword, but at the same moment he fell back senseless in the boat, while the hat flew from his head before a stroke of Jeppé's iron-tagged oar.

"Take the dyrendal from him, and bind him, Olé, while I loose the sails," said the old fisherman calmly, as he threw down the oar, and began to unfurl the sails. "That blow he dies not of. If the king will give him his life, that's *his* affair; but none shall say that old Jeppé the fisherman sided with such like outlaws, and let a regicide slip whole skinned from Gilleleie."

The young fisherman obeyed his master. The sails were soon unfurled, and the fishing yawl sailed swiftly along the coast.

Jeppé was not mistaken. His captive was the renowned Aagé Kaggé who had been outlawed with all those who had taken a personal share in the murder of Eric Glipping. He had entered the service of the King of Norway, but had ventured to Denmark to bring Marsk Stig's daughters from thence; and also, as it appeared, with other less peaceable intentions. That he had been a party to the murderous attack of the crazed Jutlander upon the king the Drost's huntsmen had borne witness, and there seemed also every probability that it was he who had attempted the assassination of Drost Aagé, as he was riding with Marsk Stig's daughters into the gate of Vordingborg castle. Every burgomaster and all commandants of castles throughout the country had received orders to trace and to seize him, wherever he was found. As an outlaw, besides, every one who met and knew him was empowered to slay him on the spot. Although in general he, like all those outlawed regicides, was held in great detestation, there was still one heart which throbbed for him with love and sympathy,--the wayward, restless heart of the captive Lady Ulrica.

CHAP. IX.

On the same new year's day on which the outlawed knight was captured, Marsk Stig's youngest daughter slumbered, evidently disturbed by agitating dreams, in the tower called the Maiden's Tower, in Vordingborg castle, while her sister rose ready dressed from the prie-dieu, and listened with folded hands to the sound of mattins from the chapel of the castle. A faint ray of daylight fell on them through the tower window. "Help! help!" shrieked Ulrica, starting up; "sleepest thou, Margaretha? Oh, it was fearful! Yet it was, after all, but a foolish dream."

"What ails thee, dear sister?" asked the placid Margaretha, taking her sister lovingly by the hand; "thou must surely have dreamt again of that unhappy knight, Kaggé?"

"Thou mightest be rather more courteous, sister. So *very* unhappy he cannot be, when *I* am dreaming of him. Did I but know he was safe!"

"Pray to the Lord and our Lady that his grim image may be effaced from thy soul!" continued Margaretha; "he can never come to a good end. All the greatness and splendour he hath promised thee are but empty castles in the air, with nought of truth in them."

"Truth here, and truth there, sister! What you call our castles in the air are nevertheless far better than this much too real prison; and how can'st thou call Sir Kaggé grim? I think his bold, wolf-like eye-brows are perfectly lovely. Alas! sweet sister! I dreamed he was in distress and in peril of his life. He stood in chains before me, and bade me entreat the king for his life."

"He is assuredly thy bad angel, Ulrica!" answered Margaretha; "it is his fault that we are now here. Would thou hadst never believed his flatteries and false tongue, he loves no one in the world save himself."

"How can'st thou say so, sister? Did'st thou not hear thyself how solemnly he swore to free us, or lose his life?"

"But when it was time to keep his word, like a true and manly knight, his own pitiful revenge and his own life were dearer to him than our peace and freedom," answered Margaretha. "He, in truth, sharpened the arrow our faithful squire shot from the bow, but ere it flew from the string he took himself off, and abandoned us to our fate."

"But he followed us, though, at peril of his life, close to the castle gate, and had not the Drost been dearer to thee than both I and thyself we should not now have been here."

"If our freedom could only be gained by treachery and assassination, it were better we stayed here captive all our life-time," answered Margaretha. "Had the noble Drost Aagé been as much our enemy as he showed himself to be our friend--I would not even then have left him in that condition to bleed to death, without help and care. I would rather remain in prison until my dying day than flee with a cowardly assassin, and be suspected by the noble Drost of having had the least part or lot in such crime."

"Thou art really much too conscientious, sister Margaretha! In comparison with me, thou art half an angel, it is true; but confess to me now, it was surely not *purely* for the Lord's sake you stayed and behaved so generously to the Drost. He is a very handsome young knight, although he cannot be compared to Sir Kaggé, and I have seen plainly enough how tenderly and lovingly your eyes meet each time you bind up his wounds--thou art really making him greatly beholden to thee."

"Be not malicious, dear Ulrica," answered Margaretha, blushing crimson; "what harm is there in my tending him with unfeigned good will?"

"Tend him with as much good will as thou likest; I never said there was any harm in that--call him every instant the noble and the pious, just as if he were the only good knight in Christendom! but at any rate give *me* leave to defend Sir Kaggé, and feel anxious for him when he perils his life for my sake! It was indeed not *quite* according to rule that he left us when we were captured! I shall scold him finely for that when we meet; but what was he to do against so many? If he escaped, he could still hope to free us as long as he himself was at liberty. As to his attacking the Drost in the dark gateway, without sounding a trumpet before him, it perhaps did not look altogether chivalrous; but stratagem against superior force is always lawful in war, and it was after all a bold and desperate enterprise, which may even yet cost him his life, although it did nought either for or against us--ah! did I but know he was safe, I would gladly be patient, and put up with this captivity some time longer.--When the king gets to know what I now know he will have to ask pardon, and treat me like a princess."

"Poor Ulrica! what sayest thou?" exclaimed her sister in dismay, and turning pale; "what madman can have put into your head----"

"That was the secret, then, thou wouldst never out with, my pious sister!" interrupted Ulrica, with a joyous smile. "I had determined to conceal my discovery until I could show thee what use it was of; but now I will show thee that Kaggé is much more true and devoted to me than thou art. While thou thoughtest only of the wounded Drost, my outlawed knight hath enabled me to

guess who I am, and hath sent me a billet of more importance than all the Drosts in the world.-- This Runic scrap should burst before us the doors of every prison in Denmark." So saying, she produced with a triumphant air, a small and curiously carved wooden tablet, upon which was depicted a royal coat of arms with three crowned leopards, and with Ulrica's name below, in Runic characters, by the side of Princess Méréte's, King Eric Ericson's, and Junker Christopher's. "Seest thou," said she, drawing up her head proudly, "the three crowned leopards stand in the king's great seal? As yet I have only half made out the connection. But at any rate I have gathered thus much from all the puzzling hints they have given me:--The king's father must have been secretly wedded to a noble lady of Marsk Stig's kindred. It must no doubt have been a hazardous affair, since he had another for his queen; but, nevertheless, I am his daughter, just the same, and therefore Princess Méréte's and the king's half sister--though no one must know it.-- My poor mother hath no doubt suffered great wrong, and thus come by her death; but that thy father and his kinsmen have amply revenged. Me they brought up in the Marsk's house, and therefore I must now share the persecutions that have come upon thy whole race."

"Alas! believe not one word of that confused and wretched story, dear Ulrica!" exclaimed Margaretha, bursting into tears; "burn those unfortunate lines, and believe me thou art in truth my sister, and all that talk of a higher birth can but bring thee shame and degradation."

"That thou would'st scarcely say had'st thou seen thine own name by the side of kings and princes," answered Ulrica, with a proud toss of the head, while she gazed with sparkling eyes on the wooden tablet; "and look," she continued, fuming it over, "here stand the Norwegian Duke Haco's lion shield, and pedigree; it reaches in a direct line up to the great Harold Harfager; and seest thou there stands my true knight Kaggé's name in a side branch like mine--he traces his descent also from kings and princes; and rememberest thou not what old Mother Elsé foretold me at Hald? I was to become a great princess one day, she said, and get a handsome and rich bridegroom of princely birth."

"Alas, dearest sister!" exclaimed Margaretha, sorrowfully, "thy childish vanity makes thy soul the sport of dishonourable and traitorous braggarts--the domestic miseries which brought misfortune upon the country as well as on our renowned race could be represented to thee by none but an evil spirit as a source of honour and good fortune. The blood of slaves, not the blood of princes, runs in that man's veins who could picture *that* to thee as an honour which would make thee to die of grief and shame, did'st thou believe it to be true, and knewest how to prize the birth which is in truth high and honourable."

"'Tis pity thou art not a priest, sister!" said Ulrica, with a toss of the head; "if the story of my high birth were only an idle and unfounded report, it could hardly have had such important consequences here in the country; thou must thyself have thought it true, since thou never would'st confide it to me; but I have long had an inkling of it. Old Mother Elsé dared not come quite out with it; but this you must at any rate allow,--all who have known us and our family have ever bowed much lower to me than to thee, although thou wert the eldest; and I have seen folk point oft to me, when I was gaily clad, and heard them whisper, 'Look, there goes the little princess; look, her pretty eyes twinkle just like King Glipping's.'" ^[16]

"Poor, poor sister!" exclaimed Margaretha, folding her, weeping, in her arms; "and could'st thou endure to hear such hateful words? Were they able to flatter thy vain and childish heart by a glittering title which concealed the bitterest hate and scorn? Poor Ulrica! thy greatest misfortune, after all, is thy soul's blindness--it makes thee even vain and proud of what should be thy grief and shame. Alas! didst thou tremble with me at that tale as at a voice from the bottomless pit I perhaps should know how to comfort and counsel thee; then would I weep with thee, and pray our blessed Lady to give thee the hope she gave me, when at times all the horrors I saw and heard in my childhood seemed like a frightful dream, and it was as though an angel whispered to my soul that the whole was error and illusion.--Ah, mother! mother! how shall I perform that I promised thee, and bring this erring child safe to thine arms?"

"Now thou art growing tiresome again, Margaretha, with all thy love, and thy piety, and thy conscience," interrupted Ulrica, pettishly, "*Your* mother was only my foster mother; that I can well understand. Who *my* real mother was thou mightest easily tell, if there was any real sisterly love in thee; but thou art not my sister after all. I would thou wert in a nunnery! there thou mightest mourn over me, and pray for me as much as it pleased thee, without plaguing me with it; yet, no! for then I must part from thee, and that I could not bear," she added, affectionately. "I am still a worldling, dear good Margaretha!" continued Ulrica, with child-like simplicity. "I have told you so a hundred times. All the misfortunes that happened in our childhood, or before I was born, I have neither seen nor shared in; how, then, canst thou require I should grieve over them? And what good would it do were I now to sit down with thee to mourn and weep? What our parents and their kindred have suffered or done amiss our blessed Lady must pray our Lord to make amends for, and forgive them; but that I have just as little to do with as thou. I thank my Lord and Maker, and our blessed Lady, that I have come into this fair world, and that I am not ashamed of my birth, even though I am but half a princess. The sorrow and degradation thou would'st have me despair over I care not to meddle with; either it is altogether idle talk, and then there is nought to mourn for; or it is true, and I must be satisfied with it as my destiny; and then I should still be a kind of princess; and what shame can it be to me that I should be called what I am, and that a knight of royal descent woos me, and would bring me to the station and honour which are mine by right?"

"Alas! for thy honour and thy wooer, poor sister!" answered Margaretha, "there is not a true word in Sir Kaggé; all know he is come of higher birth than he deserves, and it was not till he was outlawed and fled to Norway that he thought of disowning his own kindred, and tracing his pedigree in a disgraceful manner to the royal house of Norway. Such dishonourable fiction would show thee his character, if thou didst not share his perverted hankerings after the greatness which confers not honour."

During this conversation Ulrica had arrayed herself in her richest attire, and it had become quite light. "Now look at me!" she said, contemplating herself in the polished shield on the wall. "Need I really be so terribly ashamed of my own existence, or wish I had never been born? That indeed would be shameful and ungodly. To speak honestly, Margaretha, should I doubt all that Sir Kaggé hath told me of my descent and of my beauty, I ought to doubt my own eyes also, and every mirror I looked into would be just as false a flatterer and traitor as thou deemest him to be."

"Truly the mirror *is* a false flatterer," answered Margaretha; "it shows us but the fair outside and the smooth skin, but hides the skeleton and the image of death within us. The more pleasure we take in the mimic image it displays to us in our vanity, the more the eyes are blinded and the soul corrupted. Hadst thou heard the exaggerated compliments Sir Kaggé paid *me* ere he saw thee quite grown up, and found thou hadst a more attentive ear for his fair speeches and bold plans concerning our forfeited goods and rights, he would scarcely have been less the object of thy laughter and ridicule than that foolish Sir Pallé."

"Ah, how terribly unreasonable thou art, thou dear pious Margaretha!" interrupted Ulrica; "that fat stupid Sir Pallé was made to be a laughing stock. I know well enough Kaggé was once a little in love with thee, but I can readily forgive him, since he hath got over it so well.--Thou wert too in some sort my sister, and at the time I was almost a child.--Thou wouldst doubtless have had him sigh himself to death over thy coldness, but that was too much to ask of a handsome young knight. Should he then be deemed a faithless and inconstant lover because he was mistaken in us sisters, ere he could know our hearts and his own? How could he help that thou wert so cold and indifferent, and so insufferably pious? And was it then so unpardonable a sin that at last he found out that I was quite as fair--or perhaps rather more so?"

"Dear deluded child!" sighed Margaretha, patting her sister's cheek, while she parted the fair curled locks from her brow, "must thou ever seek to trace every sentiment thou wouldst rightly understand to a vain and empty source? Kaggé was a loyal and devoted squire to our father, it is true; he was a zealous sharer in that fearful deed of vengeance, the grounds of which thou now thinkest thou hast discovered; but were those grounds not false, and wert thou in truth that thou thinkest thyself to be, how canst thou give thy hand without shuddering to a man who was with the band in Finnerup-barn?" She paused, and folded her hands as if in silent prayer, as she knelt down on the prie-dieu, and rested her lovely head on the breviary.

"Margaretha! dearest Margaretha! thou hast terrified me," exclaimed Ulrica, who had turned quite pale. "A horrible and ghastly form rises before me. Ah! thou art right; I never thought of that. If the story of my birth be true I ought never to hold Sir Kaggé dear, and yet I never saw the noble ill-fated prince who fell in Finnerup-barn. Should I hate all those who willed his death, I must also hate my mother, and thy mother, and father Stig. Alas, Margaretha! we must never think on our lot in this world, if we would be gay and happy among other human beings; we must either forget all that hath chanced to us, or go into a nunnery, and bid the beautiful joyous world good night; but that I cannot do. Dear sister! pray for me. I will forget what it is not good to think upon, but I cannot hate any living soul; and he who loves me with truth and fervour I *must* love again, whoever he may be, and for what cause soever he may be outlawed and persecuted." She burst into a flood of tears, and held up her long golden tresses before her eyes.

"Dearest Ulrica! weep not. I will pray for thee as long as I live," said Margaretha. She rose hastily from the prie-dieu, and folded her sister tenderly in her arms. "We have not as yet wished each other a happy new year. The Lord and our blessed Lady make thee pious and patient, and blessed, and grant us both that which is most profitable for soul and salvation. Weep not, dearest Ulrica! If I have spoken harshly to thee, and grieved thee, forgive me, for our mother's sake! She bade me admonish thee, and guard thy soul from thoughts of vanity. But I see it is so, thou *art* good and pious and blessed; only weep not!"

"Yes, if thou wilt never more speak evil of Sir Kaggé, or require I should forget him, and leave off dreaming of him, for that I cannot; that I *will not* do." So saying, Ulrica dried her eyes with her long hair, and peeped archly at her sister through her fingers.

"In the Lord's name, love every living soul in which there is a spark of God's grace," answered Margaretha, "only be not sorrowful."

"Well, I can understand you now," said Ulrica, taking her hand from her eyes. She laughed, and heartily kissed her sister. "A happy new year, sister Margaretha! Would thou might'st wed the handsome Drost ere the year is out, and would we might get out of this cage ere the woods are green and the birds sing." She then began to dance with her staid sister round the prison chamber, singing,

"I know where stands a castle fair,
All dazzling to the sight;
Its walls are decked with carvings rare,
With gold and silver bright."^[17]

"Hush! hush! dear sister! some one is coming," said Margaretha, entreatingly. Ulrica listened, and on hearing the bolt withdrawn from the prison door she hastily arranged her hair in the polished shield, and suddenly assumed a stiff and consequential deportment. The door opened, and a sprightly little maiden entered to attend on them, and to bring the usual morning repast. "A happy new year, with the blessing of our Lady and St. Joseph, noble ladies!" said the maiden, curtseying, as she placed the cup of warm ale on the table. "Master asks whether you will drive afterwards to high mass with his dame. There came strangers in the night," she added, anxious to impart the news. "They slept up above in the knights' story. There are to be fine doings because of them; they are to breakfast in the ladies' apartment, and there is a fire on the hearth in the great hall.--The strangers are come from court; they say the Drost will depart----"

"Depart!" repeated Margaretha, blushing deeply. "Ah, yes," she added, calmly, "it is possible, indeed, if it be necessary. Yet if they could allow a few days more it would be better for him. Follow me to the ladies' apartment, little Karen! Perhaps he wants his wounds bound up in haste."

"No, stay, and see first if my hair is properly dressed!" said Ulrica. "Happy new year, little Karen! and a lover ere this day twelvemonth."

"A bridegroom you surely mean, lady! for lovers one may have in plenty every year," answered the maiden, simpering.

"Your hair is finely dressed. Lady Ulrica! Had *I* such beautiful silken hair, and head-gear of gold and pearl to boot, as you have, by my troth I should never wish to put on a matron's cap while I lived; but *my* hair I wish to hide; the sooner the better. Whenever my sweetheart hath had a scold from master, I am ever forced to hear it is rough and short. You are as small as a reed. Lady Ulrica!" she continued, looking at her slender form and gay attire; "one may easily see you are a dainty highborn knight's daughter, and no serving maid or kitchen drudge--if *I* could appear in such fashion to my sweetheart, how he would stare! But I saw at once you were born to trail in silk and scarlet.--There hides something else under those wadmal cloaks than maidens of our condition, said I to Maren, the porter's wife, as soon as we set eyes on you; and when master grew afterwards so civil to you, and his wife sent you all those fine clothes and adornments on Christmas eve--we saw well enough how it was, that we had rare birds in the cage; perhaps even a princess, as some will have it.--That light green laced boddice becomes you marvellously. Lady Ulrica; but were I in Lady Margaretha's place I would not wear white attire on new-year's-day; it hath such a sad appearance, and it is no good omen for the good luck and happiness of the new year----"

"My colour hath been the shroud's since my father and mother died," said Margaretha, with a deep sigh; "but come now, little Karen! while you pass judgment on garments and finery many a mass may be sung to an end."

"Mattins are over, and there is time enough ere high mass," said the maiden; "but take some refreshment. It is not good to drive to church or bind the Drost's neck on a fasting stomach."

"I say so too, little Karen!" said Ulrica, with an arch smile, as she partook heartily of the morning draught. "So the Drost is well again, and going to depart," she continued; "truly it must be hard for so brave a knight to live so long under maiden's care, especially with that frightful scar on his neck."

"The shame is not his, but the coward's who dared not face him,"--answered the maiden; "is it not so, Lady Margaretha?"

"That is my sister's opinion also," sighed Margaretha; "but come! I think I hear a ringing."

"Not yet awhile; truly thou art much too devout, sister!" said Ulrica, with an arch look. "You forget your repast every morning for mass, and mattins often ring in your ears much before the hour. But it is true the Drost's neck should be looked at ere mass, and that is ever a work of time.--Now I am coming; take me with you. I am coming instantly. I will not again be shut up here alone--ah yes, sister! had I not thee by me I should be an ungodly being, and sleep over mass time every morning.--Thou mayst thank the Drost's neck that thou dost never oversleep thyself--stay a moment; I am coming."--She drained the pewter cup, and hastened out of the door with her sister and their attendant.

CHAP. X.

From the maiden's tower, which, with the ancient Waldemar's tower, near the chapel, stood within the northern semicircle of the wall surrounding the castle, a vaulted private passage led to the broad flagged and spacious hall on the first floor of the main building into which the knights' hall, the ladies' apartment, and various others opened. There was likewise a front entrance from the court-yard by a flight of high wooden steps, surmounted by a porch, and enclosed on each side with an iron railing that led up to the balcony. Directly opposite the two northern towers stood, on the side towards the sea, in the southern semicircle of the castle wall, the strongly fortified towers called the dragon and the sea tower. Above the entrance stood the castle tower, and above the chapel was a small belfry. In the midst of the castle square stood a high flagstaff, bearing the royal arms, the three crowned leopards among a number of golden hearts. The circular wall, which, with its high battlements and towers, surrounded the whole castle, was also environed by ramparts and deep moats. As the castle was often occupied by the king and his whole court, it was kept in perfect repair, and amply provided with furniture and every kind of convenience.

The castle was one of the most important fortresses in the kingdom. The number of men belonging to the garrison and household was not inconsiderable. Whenever the chapel bell rung for mattins, the commandant, with all the inmates of the castle and its precincts, proceeded to the chapel across the spacious square of the castle. They now were returning from mattins with their extinguished lanterns in their hands.

The captive maidens were guarded without any severity. When accompanied by one female attendant, the whole castle was open to them during the day. They were obliged, however, to sleep at night in the tower, which was never unlocked until daylight; and the porter was only permitted to open the castle gate for them when the commandant himself or his family accompanied them to the church of the town, or through the orchard to the chase of the castle, where at this season of the year they sometimes amused themselves by hawking, a sport of which Ulrica was passionately fond, but in which Margaretha only shared for her sister's sake.

When Ulrica, with her sister and the attendant maiden, stepped out of the dark passage into the vestibule, she instantly ran as usual to one of the bow windows, and breathed upon one of the panes to clear away the frost and make herself a peep-hole into the castle yard. "Look! look!" she said, gaily; "we shall have the new yellow car to drive in to-day to church; and look! there they ride to water with the strangers' horses--I declare they have long silken coverings on, and there are the royal grooms with them--Look! the commandant, with the Drost and the strangers, are crossing over this way--one of the strangers is a canon; but who *can* those two comical men be with the German caps?"

"Let us go into the ladies' apartment," said Margaretha; "it would not be seemly that they should find us here alone so early."

"One can never see any thing, or enjoy any thing, because of that tiresome seemliness," said Ulrica, pettishly, and followed her sister reluctantly into the ladies' apartment. Shortly afterwards the door opened, and Drost Aagé entered the ante-chamber, with the king's confessor. Master Petrus de Dacia, and the two German minstrels, accompanied by the commandant. Sir Ribolt, a tall man of noble presence, whose knightly attire was arranged in strict conformity to the fashion of the time. The commandant first crossed the threshold, and closed the door to keep in the warmth, which began to diffuse itself from the large glowing stone chimney.

"In the king's name!" he said, with a kind of solemnity, as he doffed his high plumed hat, "welcome in his hall, noble sirs! Here he is your host, though in my insignificant person--I may expect him here, then, in the spring, venerable sir?"

"He bade me bring you that message, next to royal greeting and favour," answered Master Petrus de Dacia, giving his hand to the commandant. "We have slept under your roof, but as yet your guests are unknown to you," he continued. "My name you know. In a few hours I must journey onwards; but these honourable strangers desire, and have royal permission, to be your guests for some time, partly with a learned and scientific object." He now presented to the commandant Master Poppé and Master Rumelant from Swabia, as renowned professors of the noble art of minstrelsy, who had visited the territories of many lords and princes, and who were now desirous also of seeing and knowing all that was remarkable in Denmark respecting the manners and the customs of the people, and the state of art and science, compared with that of other nations. "These learned persons," he added, "are commended to you as the king's guests, so long as it is their desire to remain here. It is the king's pleasure that they should have free access to the royal collection of manuscripts and the archives of the castle."

"Well, these learned guests are welcome," answered the commandant, saluting the strangers with some embarrassment; "it is probably the chronicles they desire to search into, and the ancient manuscripts which lie here, treating of the affairs of Denmark and the German kingdoms in olden times. There was lately here a learned monk from Nyé, who, by the king's command, had much to do with these writings. They are treasures which I, to say truth, know but little how to prize; but scholars can never sufficiently laud our king's carefulness in collecting such writings, and the free use of them which he allows both to native and foreign scholars. The Lord help me.

Sir Drost!" he whispered to Aagé, "they are surely most awfully learned; they perhaps do not understand a word of Danish?"

"Are not your king's famous 'Congesta'^[18] to be found here?" asked the tall master Poppé, in a half German half Danish dialect; "we desire especially to become acquainted with that important historical collection, as well as with the copy which is here to be seen of your famous Saxo Grammaticus, likewise Svenno Agonis^[19], and whatever may be found here of collections of old ballads, and of Norwegian or Icelandic poems, and Sagas of heathen time; item, all remarkable monumenta and volumina antiquitatis."

"What I specially rejoice over," said the enthusiastic little Master Rumelant, "is what I here expect to meet with of your famous theological lumina and christian poets, particularly the far-famed Hexameron of the great Andreas Sunonis, of which I have never been able to trace any copy among my countrymen, or among any of the noble lords and princes, my gracious well-wishers and benefactors, whose praises I have sung according to my poor ability."

"So far as I know, the manuscript you speak of is to be found here among the learned Latin writings, from the time of King Waldemar the Victorious, of blessed memory," answered the commandant, endeavouring to hide his impatience; "but it is only of what is written in the language of the country that I can give account to you--your study shall be next to the manuscript chamber--the castle chaplain has the superintendence of it; he will no doubt be able to give you all the information you want. I will arrange every thing in the best way I can for you, learned sirs; but I pray you to excuse me, who am a layman, and straight-forward soldier, for my ignorance of such matters. Permit me now to install you among my family, and to entreat you will be content for the present with some food for the body."

"Allow me first a few words in private here with the Drost," said Master Petrus, remaining behind in the vestibule with Aagé, whose pale cheek was for a moment tinged with a crimson hue as the door of the ladies' apartment closed, and he was but half able to greet Margaretha. It was evident that he had suffered from a dangerous wound. He still held his head rather stiffly, and his left arm was in a sling.

The tall ecclesiastic took him by the hand, and gazed on him earnestly, with his serene, intellectual eye. "It is chiefly for your sake, Drost Aagé, the king sent me hither," he said; "you know how dear you have been to him from his childhood, and how greatly he needs must miss you; but ere it is permitted me to speak one word to you of the king's and state affairs, I am enjoined to certify myself of the health both of your mind and body. It is said you have not only been dangerously wounded, but sick at heart besides, and plagued with all manner of disquiet thoughts and confused dreams, so that you have oft stood more in need of a spiritual than of a bodily physician. If you place any trust in me, then confide to me that which seems still to disquiet you."

"I have been a visionary since I was excommunicated," said Aagé; "I know it right well. The trial was too much for me; but now, praise be to the Lord and our Lady! a light hath dawned upon my soul, which reconciles me to what is dark and mysterious in my life and destiny.--But *my* feelings and concerns are of no moment. Tell me only what the king is about; how can he and the country be saved from downfall amid all these perplexing events; for the Lord's sake tell me?"

"Not a word of that as yet, dear Drost," interrupted Master Petrus; "I must first see how far you are capable of acting in worldly matters. The spirit that would work mightily for the peace and happiness of king and country must first be at peace with itself."

"I *have* that peace, venerable sir! My soul is as well at ease as it ever will be in this world. When I heard the archbishop was fled, and the king excommunicated, I threw myself on my horse, and would have hasted to Sjöborg, but they brought me back here half dead. What I have since heard of the king's impetuosity and wrath hath more than ever disquieted me, and in my tendency to dark presentiments I have many a night, in my fevered dreams, beheld the king surrounded by robbers and murderers."

"Be easy on that score, noble Drost. No sovereign was ever more beloved by his people; an invisible guard of the angels of love and righteousness accompany the young Eric, even when traitors and deadly foes are nigh him. I know you were with the king's father in Finnerup-barn on that bloody St. Cecilia's eve. What you then witnessed as a child you surely have never been able to forget?"

"No, never!" exclaimed Aagé, with breathless earnestness; "and I have often mourned I had neither courage nor might to avert that catastrophe. It was not till the barn burst into flames around the murdered king that I fully recovered the use of my senses. I snatched the sword from the old insane Pallé, when he threw himself on the body to maltreat it, and struck the same murderous steel into his breast with which he had slain his liege. That bloody scene, and the dying look of that crazed old man, hath often been fearfully present to me. The horrid spectacle, however, was nearly effaced from my memory, when, two years back, I was one day sent by the king to the captive archbishop at Sjöborg to bring him to confession; but when I looked on yon terrific prisoner, as he uplifted his fettered arm, and gave me over to the Devil, with the church's most dreadful curse, it seemed to me as though I stood once more in the barn at Finnerup, and as if a condemning spirit spoke through the archbishop, and thundered forth the words of

excommunication over me for my sins' sake. In the fever caused by my wound I have often suffered from the most fearful visions, and dreamed of fighting with all manner of monsters and demons; but when it was at the worst I ever saw a heavenly angel at my side, who, with pious prayers, chased away the evil spirit, and whispered comfort and consolation to my soul. At last a mild light dawned upon me--I felt I might yet redeem from the curse that life which in my childhood I had neither power nor courage to sacrifice for my former master, by my devoting it to his son, our noble young King Eric. This is now my firm and steadfast purpose; I have renounced all thoughts of happiness for myself. Yon angel of consolation hath since appeared to me in a mortal form; but she neither desires nor is able to turn me from my resolve. It was the eldest and most estimable of Marsk Stig's daughters. Venerable sir! to you alone I confide it--she hath become dear to me as my own soul, and she hath herself wonderfully strengthened me in my resolution. By saving my life, and preserving it for the service of him who hath pronounced her whole race outlawed, she hath sought to atone for a share of her dreaded father's crime. Each step I follow my beloved young sovereign will and must separate me and Marsk Stig's race in this world; yet, with the Lord's help, that shall not stop my progress, or impair my loyalty. Mark, venerable sir! from the moment in which the future destiny of my life was clear before me I was freed from the evil spirits which persecuted me, and I now feel myself nearly healed both in body and soul. Now you know all, tell me, I beseech you, that which is of far greater moment, what message bring you me from the king?"

"One word more of yourself first, noble Drost," answered Master Petrus, in an affectionate tone, taking his hand, and gazing with his usual look of calm intelligence on Aagé's melancholy but resolute countenance; "your determination I must laud as fair and noble, although it still in some measure betokens your tendency to extremes, even in what is good and praiseworthy. You can devote your life and powers to the service of your king and country without seeking the death of a martyr; you need not yourself renounce the enjoyments of life because a higher aim of existence stands in your view; but I will not upbraid you for such youthful extravagances,--There was a time when I desired myself to die a martyr in honour of the Holy Virgin; even now I should glory in it were it so ordered for me; but I no longer hanker after martyrdom with blind enthusiasm and spiritual pride. The consoling angel you speak of, noble Drost, she who stood before you here in the form of a captive maiden, I only desire her justification and acquittal, and then assuredly you need not renounce all hope in respect of the secret wishes of your heart. I also have known such a being," he continued, with emotion; "next to the Holy Virgin she is even yet to me the most precious soul of her sex that lives and hath ever lived in the world; she is, in truth, the bride of Heaven here upon earth, and her duty and condition, as well as mine, separate us here below. But I believe, to speak truly, neither you nor any worldly man can be called on or have strength to make such renunciation; but Providence and its high disposer will care for this. I rejoice from my heart that the fairest feeling of humanity is awakened in your soul. Even when attended by the greatest sacrifice and the extreme of privation, it is, next to the joys of Heaven, the richest treasure that can be bestowed on a human being."

"Yes, assuredly!" exclaimed Aagé, with joyful enthusiasm; "wholly wretched I never now can be. I have now told you the whole state of my case. Conceal not any thing longer from me!"

"Well, my excellent young friend," said Master Petrus, pressing his hand, "I will look on you as spiritually healed. It is a true and precious feeling--it is the earnest of a noble and mighty life of action which stirs in your somewhat enthusiastic and visionary soul. I would send you forth from this much too quiet and trying position, which only fosters your visionary turn of mind. I will not hesitate to enlist your whole strength in the service of king and country. Look! here is a private letter from the king." He reached a sealed packet to the Drost.

Aagé hastily broke the seal. "Ha! what means this? Of course you know the contents?"

"I wrote the letter myself in the chancellor's absence. It is come to a breach with Junker Christopher; he must be disarmed and brought to subjection ere two more suns have set. You or Sir Ribolt are to beleague Holbek castle, and join the king before Kallundborg with a hundred lancers."

Drost Aagé gazed in dismay,--now on the letter,--now on Master Petrus. "Great God!" he exclaimed; "is it come to this? Civil war and bloody feud between the brothers!"

"Be calm, noble Drost! That is precisely what you must prevent, but quietly,--cautiously. I have, besides, a question to put to you, by word of mouth, from the king." So saying, Master Petrus drew Aagé further from the door, and continued in a low tone,--"Hath the junker caused any paper to be fetched from hence lately? Of the noble Sir Ribolt there is no suspicion; but is the castle chaplain to be counted on?"

"For the commandant's loyalty I will answer," replied Aagé; "the chaplain I know not. But what mean you?"

"The letters Junker Christopher took from the chest in Lund sacristy he affirms that he deposited here, but they have been lately sought for in vain. They might now be of the greatest importance in the king's affair with Master Grand. The learned scholars I have brought hither with me are again to search the archives. I must myself haste to Sweden, to tranquillise the spirits there. You know the ambassadors left us in haste. We are on doubtful terms with their court; the negotiations are broken off. The king went too far in his anger at Grand's flight. He

now wants to carry every thing through by force. It is come to a breach also with the Dukes of Sleswig--the cardinal hath left the court, he menaces to use his fearful authority."

"Misfortune upon misfortune!" exclaimed Aagé. "Great Heaven! what will be the end of all this?"

"If the Lord please, all may turn out more favourably than seems likely at present," continued Master Petrus, calmly. "If you and the Marsk can procure peace with temporal enemies, I and my colleagues hope, with God's assistance, to obtain a truce with ecclesiastical foes. Chancellor Martinus and Provost Guido are sent to Rome to anticipate Grand. Most of the bishops in the country side with the king. The provincial prior of the Dominicans and the chapters continue their protest against the constitution of Veile. No priest will uphold the interdict; and, as I said, the people are loyal and devoted to the king."

"But this unhappy quarrel with the junker--the breach with the dukes--the doubtful terms with Sweden--the king's rashness and impetuosity--and that terrible Isarnus and the outlaws!"

"You are right, Drost Aagé! There are more clouds in Denmark's and our young king's heavens than it is in the power of man to disperse"--resumed Petrus de Dacia; "but remember," he added, solemnly, "above the clouds are the stars of heaven, and over the course and government of the stars presides the most high and righteous Creator! and forget not, dear Drost, where stern justice would annihilate us stands the Mediator and his heavenly Mother. Her prayers can shake and avert the threatenings of each evil star, however firmly fixed in the judgment heaven. Be comforted, noble Drost!" he continued, with mild tranquillity; "none can draw aside the veil of futurity: this much, however, I think to have discerned in yon vast mysterious book, that I renounce not the hope of better days for Denmark, so long as the Lord and our blessed Lady will extend a protecting hand over the king's life. With his fortunate star will that of Denmark now assuredly rise or sink."

"You are a learned and God-fearing man, venerable Master Petrus!" said Aagé, who meanwhile had been pacing uneasily up and down, with the king's letter in his hand; "but, pardon me, now, it is *you*, and not I, who indulge in visionary fancies. I have more confidence in your piety and enlightened view of the Almighty's government here upon earth, and in our time, than in your astrological knowledge and devout gaze into futurity. What we are now concerned in is the present moment; but what in the world is to be done, when neither you, nor any other wise man, can bring the king to his right senses? Hath the archbishop's flight caused him to set at nought discretion? Would he now demand justice only,--not mercy,--of the papal see? Does he think, in defiance of ban and interdict, and even without a dispensation of kindred, he can prevail on the wise Swedish government to consent to the marriage? It is an impossibility--would he despise all reasonable negotiation, and let the sword decide the quarrel with the dukes? And would he now himself storm his brother's castle, and force him to become an avowed traitor and deserter to the enemy?"

"I have shared your apprehensions, noble Drost! I blamed the king's impetuous procedure; I vainly strove to hinder these far too hasty steps. His purpose is inflexible. But amid all my fears for the consequences, I could not but admire the kingly spirit, which ventured so much for the support of royal dignity. In reliance on the justice of his cause, ere twice twenty-four hours King Eric will stand with his knights before Kallundborg, to teach obedience to his rebellious brother."

"The report was true, then, of the blockading of Kallundborg, and the new fortification?"

"Alas, yes! The king was greatly displeased at the junker's contumacy, but still more at his treacherous endeavour to hinder the marriage.--The wily Drost Bruncke hath betrayed him, probably with the view of causing a breach between the brothers, and stirring up tumult in the country."

"Hum! and the Dukes of Sleswig renew their former pretensions at the same time."

"They are probably in league with the junker; yet they have not scared the king.--If they have already forgotten the defeat at Grönsund, he will show them he dares face them on land also. Marsk Oluffsen is assembling all the foot forces against them at Hadersleben."

"And the archbishop and the cardinal, where are they?"

"Grand threatens from Bornholm, and Isarnus from Axelhuus. He demands safe conduct for the archbishop, and protests against the confiscation of the Lund church property. Bishop Johan of Roskild wavers. The enforcement of the interdict is dreaded."

"Merciful Heaven! and, amid all this, can the king think of his marriage?"

"The first of June he purposes to cross to Helsingborg, with a bridal train or an armed force. Yet, perhaps, that was but a hasty speech to me and the Marsk. The Lord forbid it should come to such extremity!"

"He draws the bow too tight; it must break. But one word more--the outlaws who were pursued; are they taken?"

"I know not; but their death doom is pronounced, wherever they are found; the last murderous attempt hath rendered the king implacable--A price is set on every outlaw's head--Aagé Kaggé was on the expedition with Marsk Stig's daughters--There is now, assuredly, little hope at present of the freedom of the unhappy maidens."

"They are innocent! by the Lord above, they are innocent!" exclaimed Aagé, impetuously. "I must to the king; it is high time." He tore the sling from his left arm, and moved it somewhat stiffly. "It *shall* do," he continued; "my right arm hath no one lamed. I must speed to Kallundborg to the king. If the castle is to be stormed--if the traitorous junker is to be chastised, leave that to me--against his own brother my king shall not himself bear sword and shield. Matters must have been carried far; his forbearance can hold out no longer."

"Still, however," interrupted Master Petrus, "he expressly enjoins you to spare the junker, wherever you meet him.--You are to blockade Holbek with as little alarm as possible.--If you could even yet make peace between the brothers, noble Drost! you would perhaps save state and kingdom."

The door of the ladies' apartment now opened, and the commandant returned. "Your morning repast will be cold, my honoured guests," he said, courteously; "but what see I, Sir Drost? Your arm is not in the sling?"

"It can and must be dispensed with," answered Aagé. "You have spoilt me here; you have been much too prudent and watchful. I have now to thank you and your noble captives for your kindly care. The king needs strong arms and swords. Can you instantly furnish me with two hundred men from the garrison here?"

"Two hundred men shall stand fully armed and in the court-yard here within an hour, if you, as Drost, command it in the king's name," answered Sir Ribolt. "Dare I ask their destination?"

"I march to Holbek and Kallundborg. There is the king's name and seal for it."--He gave him the king's letter. "It is for you also--but it is to go no farther than ourselves."

"Against the junker? merciful Heaven! Sir Drost, is it possible?" exclaimed the commandant, clasping his hands in the greatest astonishment.

"The junker hath taken a fancy to add new fortifications, and shut the gates against the king's men, as you know. It is probably only an unfortunate jest, or a misunderstanding; but you see yourself such gates must be forced betimes, when the king is on the road, and would enter therein. Two hundred men, then, within an hour, but with as little stir as possible, of course!"

"You shall find all ready ere it rings to high mass," answered the commandant, with calm determination. "But your wound, Sir Drost! Can you yourself ride forth without danger? Otherwise the task is mine?"

"With or without danger I must--I will onward," answered Aagé. "When it rings for high mass, then; and secrecy is expedient--Let it concern a hunt after the outlaws--Understand you?"

"Right! that shall be the belief in the castle here within the half hour." So saying, Sir Ribolt hastened into the castle-yard, and Drost Aagé went with Master Petrus into the ladies' apartment.

CHAP. XI.

The state of feverish anxiety into which Aagé had been thrown, had called the colour into his cheek, and restored the appearance of health to his countenance. In the spacious apartment appropriated to the female inmates of the castle, where strangers were received, and where the household assembled on holidays before divine service, Aagé and Master Petrus were received by the aged mistress of the castle, who herself presented the guests their warm morning drink in cups of polished silver. At a large round table in the middle of the apartment, which was covered with a white fringed woollen table-cloth, sat the two German minstrels, with the smoking cups before them, in pleasant converse with the ladies. Ulrica questioned them, with curiosity, of their visits to foreign princes, in whose praise and exaltation Master Rumelant was as inexhaustible as he was unwearied in reckoning up all the honour he had gained by his lays with these "excellent lords, his august and most gracious patrons."

Margaretha also took part in the conversation with the strangers; but she was more modest in her queries. She was much more interested in their art than in the good fortune they had sought and obtained by it from the great. The solemn Master Poppé favoured her with a detailed account of the genius and lays of the famous Minnésingers, whose most flourishing period Master Poppé

asserted could only be supposed by the ignorant to have passed away. He affirmed, on the contrary, that the noble art of minstrelsy had only now for the first time fully developed itself on higher themes,—in the praise of moral truth and seraphic beauty. Minstrels no longer repeated the monotonous praises of verdant May, or of the beauty of earthly females and vain loves, but now in the same, or even in a more regular measure, sang moral or religious themes and important theological dogmas. He could not, however, deny that the ancient love songs possessed a degree of pathos and animation which even his good friends Master Henrick Frauenlob and a certain Master Regenbogen, as well as the famous schoolmaster of Esslingen, with all their learning, vainly strove to attain. Meanwhile he deemed it very fortunate that, as princes and emperors no longer, as in former times, devoted themselves to the noble art of minstrelsy, now cultivated chiefly by the honest burgher class, there still were lords and princes, like the King of Denmark, to honour and encourage the art, and that the minstrel's lay yet resounded in knightly halls and in the apartments of noble ladies. He lauded the poetic spirit of the chivalrous poetry of Denmark, but still considered it, as well as the love songs, too vain and worldly; a charge which Margaretha took much to heart, although she readily admitted to the learned minstrel, that all the Danish ballads she knew and admired treated of love adventures; not a single one on scriptural or theological subjects.

When Drost Aagé entered the ladies' apartment, Margaretha rose to return his greeting, and observed, with some uneasiness, that he had thrown aside his sling. Her attention to Master Poppé's discourse was at an end, and she entreated him to excuse, that she, as an attendant on a wounded patient, had an occupation which could not be postponed. "Pardon me, Sir Drost!" she said to Aagé, and pointed to his unswathed arm. "This is not according to agreement; yet you seem to have the use of your arm," she added, when she perceived how easily he moved it. "The wound is healed in some sort. With caution you may use it, in moderation. But the stiff neck bandage----"

"That I shall wear in remembrance of you, until we meet again, noble maiden!" answered Aagé; "although I almost think it might be dispensed with. Within an hour I must leave the castle. That I am able to do so I owe to your skill and unwearied care. I think soon to see my noble master the king," he added, in a low voice, as he drew her to a recess in the window fronting the castle garden; "but the suitable time for effecting any thing towards your liberation is, alas! hardly come as yet."

"We ask no clemency from our earthly judges, but only that which is just and reasonable," answered Margaretha, with calm seriousness. "I should have thought all times were equally convenient to a good sovereign for hearing the justification of the innocent."

"It would grieve me deeply, noble Lady Margaretha!" said Aagé, "if my just-intentioned sovereign were for a moment to seem unjust in your eyes; but your case now appears dark and intricate to those who are not, as I am, acquainted with your pious sentiments and admirable conduct. It is known that the traitorous squire Kaggé was in your company—your unfortunate confidence in that miscreant brought suspicion on your innocence, and places you under a cloud; but, by the living Lord! I will justify you. If earthly justice is blind, the judgment of Heaven and my knightly sword shall surely open her eyes!"

"No, dear Drost!" exclaimed Margaretha, half alarmed; "if you will peril your precious life in any cause, let it be in that higher and more important one to which you have dedicated it, but not for the fate of two insignificant captives. To suffer injustice is, besides, surely not the greatest misfortune," she added, with a look of mildness and love, as she raised her long-fringed eyelids, and gazed through the window panes up to the clear heavens. "Do not hasten rashly for our sake; we will willingly wait for the Lord and for his appointed hour. When we think but on the injustice our Lord suffered for our sakes, we may surely bear our little cross throughout a short life for his sake. The blessing of Heaven be with you, noble Drost Aagé!" she continued; "heartfelt thanks for the kindness with which you have rendered our captivity imperceptible. We shall miss you very much. I shall, no doubt, forget how to play at chess; but what we have spoken together at the chessboard I can never forget. The sweet ballads you taught me I shall also remember; and when we maidens talk of Florez and Blantseflor, we will remember you also, and the quiet evenings by the hearth here, and all the beautiful tales of chivalry you told us. If the king comes hither in the spring, as they say, you will surely come with him?"

"Perhaps," answered Aagé; "at any rate I will please myself with that hope. But where the king or his true knights will be in the spring it hardly lies in his power to determine, noble maiden. It is a dangerous and troublous time. May the Lord order all things for us for the best!"

"He will do so assuredly, and always, dear Drost!" said Margaretha, in a confiding and friendly tone, as she laid her hand on his right arm, which rested on the casement of the large window. "Even that which seems worst and most unfortunate to us turns out at last to be the best, if no sin be in it. This captivity, which a few weeks back appeared so terrible to me, hath notwithstanding been the happiest time I have passed since my father and mother died."

"Sweet Margaretha!" whispered Aagé, with subdued fervour, laying his left hand on hers, which still rested upon his right arm; "dare I hope I have the smallest share in that heavenly peace and joy which I daily see beaming from your meek and loving eyes? Your hope and peace are doubtless drawn from the fountain of Eternal Life; such joys come not to you from any human source."

"In every noble and pious heart assuredly there shines a ray from yon source of Eternal Life!" answered Margaretha; "though its deepest source be hid in the heart of the Redeemer, which bled for our sakes, that it might include every soul in its unfathomable depths of grace and commiserating love."

"Most precious of beings!" exclaimed Aagé, with overflowing emotion; "dare I hope that which I dare not utter?" He paused; then added, in a calmer tone, "Will you, then, really miss me at times, and sing the songs I taught you?"

"Indeed, indeed I will--but the stranger guest would talk with you, Sir Drost!" interrupted Margaretha, hastily, and blushing as she withdrew her hand. "As I told you," she added aloud, as she stepped forward with Aagé out of the recess, and vainly sought to hide her bashfulness and confusion; "the bandage round your neck you must keep on, and the sling to support your arm."

"If it is convenient to you, Sir Drost!" said Master Petrus, who had modestly approached, without interrupting his conversation with the fair maiden, "we might now perhaps conclude our affairs in your private chamber."

"I will attend you instantly, venerable Sir! Permit me but a parting word to the noble and hospitable hostess."

"And to me also, surely, Sir Drost! although we have never been exactly able to agree?" interrupted Ulrica, rising from the table, where Master Rumelant's panegyrics on his excellent lords and Mecænases already began to weary her.

After many reciprocal expressions of courtesy, which, however, were not wanting in sincerity and heartfelt goodwill, the Drost left the ladies' apartment with Master Petrus; but the object on which his eye lingered the longest was the fair Lady Margaretha. As it rang for mass in Vordingborg town, Drost Aagé, clad in complete armour, rode out of the castle gate at the head of two thirds of the garrison of the fortress. At the same time the lady of the castle drove to church with the two captive maidens. At the cross-road before the fortress Drost Aagé once more turned round and saluted the ladies in the car. He observed with pleasure a white veil waving from the car in the meek Margaretha's hand. The car was followed to church by Sir Ribolt, accompanied by the three strangers on horseback.

"Whither goes the Drost, with all those men-at-arms, Sir Ribolt?" asked Ulrica, inquisitively, as she put her head out of the car; "there is surely neither war nor rebellion here?"

"They go but to rid the land of the outlaws and other vagabonds," answered Sir Ribolt. "The assassin who attacked the Drost it seems hath been taken already," he added, in a careless tone, without recollecting the connection of the captive maidens with these turbulent and hated characters, and without remarking that the lively querist turned pale.

"What ails thee, sweet child? Canst thou not endure to sit backward?" asked the watchful mistress of the castle. "Come, change places with me; I can bear it."

"Ah, let me sit quiet!" sighed Ulrica, drawing her veil over her face. "Margaretha! Margaretha!" she whispered, clinging to her sister; "my dream! my dream! He is taken! His life is in peril!"

"Hush! hush! dearest sister!" whispered Margaretha; "it is but a rumour. We will now pray for him and for all sinful souls. See,--the blessed Lord still permits his mild sun to shine upon us all."

The car rolled past a troop of richly attired burghers on their way to church, who greeted the ladies with courtesy. Ulrica recovered herself, and nodded to them with a consequential air. They whispered together, and she conjectured that their talk was, doubtless, of her beauty and supposed high birth.

CHAP. XII.

It was past midnight when Drost Aagé, with his troop of horsemen, drew near the Issefiord near Holbek. The weather was calm and frosty, the snow sparkled in the starlight winter night, the marshes and all the pools by the road side were frozen, but the ford was still open and passable. Holbek rather resembled a ruin than a town; instead of houses, there were now chiefly to be seen single walls and solitary hearths. Five years before the town had been plundered and nearly burnt down by the Norwegian fleet, in the feud with Marsk Stig and the outlaws. Some small houses, however, had been rebuilt. The church and the monastery of the Gray Friars stood unscathed, as well as the castle, which had been lately put in good repair by Junker Christopher,

and which, it appeared, he now intended, despite the king's prohibition, to make as strong a fortress as Kallundborg.

By Aagé's side rode an elderly captain of horse, Sir Ribolt's brother, a silent, serious personage, whom the Drost informed by the way of what was here to be attempted. When they approached the town they halted, and had their horses rubbed down, while each horseman received his separate directions. They then rode slowly, and as quietly as possible, through the snow-covered streets of the town, and past the monastery, where all lay in profound slumber. At the castle also the inmates seemed to be reposing in the greatest calmness and security; even the warders on the battlements were asleep. They examined the castle narrowly on every side. There was not a light to be seen in the whole of the upper story; it was only from the knights' hall, opposite the ford, that a faint light gleamed from a window; and at the quay behind the castle lay a boat with a red sail, from which glimmered the light of a horn lantern. On the quay a fat knight, wrapped in a fox-skin pelisse, paced up and down, apparently waiting for some one; he often yawned, and rubbed his hands, while he looked up impatiently at the window from whence gleamed the solitary light. A rough-looking, one-eyed fellow, with a hideous and bloated visage, lay half asleep on the rampart.

"If thou fallest asleep, and drop'st into the ford, Kyste! thou wilt cheat the rope-maker of an hempen cord," said the fat knight, and laughed at his own wit.

"Ha, indeed! think ye the halter is so sure of me. Sir Pallé?" muttered the fellow; "*you* may well crack your jests, you are neither made to be drowned nor hanged; with your round carcass, you would swim like an ale barrel, and he who would hang you must risk his own neck."

"Well," answered Pallé, yawning, "mine is a very politic shape; thou and thy daring masters might need such an one. But what the devil has become of them? They are wrangling and consulting a confounded time together."

"It concerns high play, though, Sir Pallé," muttered the man, flapping his arms around his body to keep himself warm. "Had I but a good can of German ale at my side, of a surety I would keep my eyes open."

"If thou canst keep one eye open it deserves all honour, since thou hast not more by thee," jested the knight. "But what the devil is the junker about?" he continued, "to set me to watch here in frost and cold while he consults on weighty matters in his warm private chamber! Me, his right hand, and let into all his secrets! But tell me, Kyste, what means this secret nightly visit? The proud Niels Brock and Johan Papé I well know; they are two limbs of Satan, and I can easily divine what they would be at; but who was the third stranger thou broughtest hither,--yon little fellow, with the hump and the red mantle?"

"It is the Evil One himself, I almost believe," answered the deserter, and crossed himself; "a wizard at the least. I will be hanged if he understands not the black art. They call him wise Master Thrand; he has been condemned to fire and stake by the pope, and banished both by kings and emperors; but he snaps his fingers at them all--he laughs at the world's governors and rulers, and cares not for our Lord or our Lady, either, when he is on the seas. If he is right, then are we all fools together in Christendom, and should obey none other than *him* our master, who is within us and in all things; but that passes my understanding. He can be pious too when it serves his turn. I saw that when he kissed the archbishop's hand at parting, and took the letter of absolution, which truly he afterwards cast overboard--he is a good friend of Niels Brock, and can make gold, they say."

"Then would he might teach us and the junker that art!" said Pallé; "then it were sin should he be burned for a little touch of heresy--for that he will one day burn in the other world. But tell me, Kyste, if thou and thy masters come from Hammershuus, from the archbishop, how darest thou appear before the junker? The archbishop hath given him over, as well as the king, to the devil; and I must needs admit the junker hath been worse to him than ten devils."

"That's the great folks' business," answered Kyste. "I serve the man who pays best, and ask not of aught besides--had I known the archbishop brought not so much as a mark with him, and should lose all he expected from Skaane, the devil take me if I would have perilled my life for his sake."

"You had a rough passage, then, with him from Sjöborg?"

"Yes, you may well say that;--we were hard put to it ere we got him housed. We were obliged to run in under Hveen; and we lay with our life in our hands a whole day and two nights at Saltholm.--They were chasing us every where with barks and those confounded fishing smacks; but the fog and the bishop's prayers helped us that once. We sailed, in peril of our lives, in a howling storm, to Kaasebjerg, and by the time we reached Hammershuus we were half perished with cold and hunger; and what got we for our pains? Mad Morten the cook got a bishop's letter for a pilgrimage. I and Olé Ark got a dry blessing with three wizened fingers, and a fresh absolution for ten years' sins. It may have its use;--I never slight God's gifts; but such like gifts help little to fill purse and stomach. Of course," he added, "we have now leave to seek our bread where we can find it, and plunder our Lord's and the archbishop's enemies till our dying day, without having a hair singed in purgatory for it; but----"

"Content thyself, Kyste; it will be a livelihood, nevertheless," interrupted Pallé. "But if thy new masters side with the archbishop I cannot imagine what the devil they want here--the junker and the archbishop agree together like cat and dog."

"As I said, that's the great folks' business," answered the deserter. "What they have plotted with the archbishop at Hammershuus I can't tell; but could they patch up an agreement for the junker with Master Grand, and get the ban done away, he would have nought against it, I trow; and one service is as good as the other. If the junker gets into a scrape with the king, he will need a prop; and if the king goes to the wall, the junker perhaps will get uppermost, and may help his friends again. But that concerns not me; matters may turn out as the foul fiend pleases for aught I care, so long as there are good oars to be had, and something to lay one's hands on. But what was that noise? Heard ye not horses tramp on the other side of the castle?"

"Dream'st thou, Kyste? Who would visit the castle so late?" said Pallé, listening anxiously.

"Here I have *my* masters. Now any one may come that Satan pleases," said the deserter, and ran towards the vessel.

Two tall men, in ample grey mantles, and with hoods over their heads, accompanied by a little hump-backed personage, in a red cloak, came forth from a secret door in the castle wall, and passed over a small drawbridge which was let down over the outer castle moat. They hastened down to the quay, where they greeted Sir Pallé by a silent nod, and, without uttering a word, entered the vessel, which instantly pushed off from the shore, and set sail. Sir Pallé shook his head thoughtfully, and looked after them as he listened, and thought he heard a distant noise of arms and horses' hoofs without the castle gate. He hastened over the small drawbridge before which he had stood on guard, and drew it up hastily behind him. He then passed quickly through the private door into the castle.

On the opposite side of the outer fortification stood Drost Aagé with his horsemen, who, according to his orders, had led their horses slowly, and one at a time, over the half-completed drawbridge, which as yet could not be drawn up. The strongly secured castle gate was shut, and they had knocked several times, apparently without being heard by any one. "Who is there?" at last said a drowsy voice from the battlement over the gate. It was the watchman or warder of the castle, who now stood up, with a long spear in the one hand, and an alarm horn in the other.

"Sleep'st thou at thy post, watch?" called Aagé, in a stern tone; "seest thou not it is the king's men who would enter? Haste! let the porter open to us instantly.--This is the new garrison."

"New garrison! That know we nought of here," muttered the warder. "I shall have to blow the horn, then, as the junker hath commanded."

"A single sound costs thee thy life, fellow!" menaced the Drost. "Where the king himself commands no junker hath a word to say."

"The Lord bless you, if that be true, noble sir!" said the warder, joyfully; "I shall then not have to ride the wooden horse to-morrow because I slept?"

"Haste thee! or we force the gates."--To Aagé's surprise, the castle gate was opened without demur in a few minutes. The troop presently filled the castle yard. Guards were immediately stationed at all the entrances, as well as on the towers and the battlements on the wall surrounding the fortress. This was done hastily, and with as little noise as possible. The sound of so many horses' hoofs and clashing weapons had, notwithstanding, awakened all the inhabitants of the castle, who peeped in dismay out of the windows and loopholes, ignorant into whose hands it had fallen. But the Drost now ordered three trumpeters to call together all the unarmed household servants, with all the men-at-arms in the castle. He announced to the warder and the household, in the king's name, that they were released from their duties here in the junker's service; and that the king for the present had taken possession of the castle himself. Those who would enter his service, and swear fealty to him, might remain; the rest were at liberty to withdraw, and serve the junker at his other castles and estates. On hearing this proclamation fear was suddenly changed into general rejoicing, "Long live the king!" re-echoed from mouth to mouth. There was not a single domestic who hesitated to change masters; and many expressions and exclamations were heard which showed how little Junker Christopher had understood to win the good will of his dependants. As soon as the new force had garrisoned all the posts, Drost Aagé, with the remainder of his troop, entered the castle. The steward was the first person who appeared. He was a taciturn personage, of short stature, with a half German accent. He delivered the keys of the castle to the Drost, and seemed to share in the general satisfaction; but as soon as he had installed his unexpected guests he vanished, and did not again make his appearance.

Ere the day had dawned, Drost Aagé was again on horseback, and, with the half of his troop of horse, quitted Holbek castle, and took the road to Kallundborg. Sir Ribolt's brother remained as commandant, with strict orders not to open the gates to any one, or give up the castle to the junker, ere he had the king's warrant and seal for so doing.

"Sir Drost," said an old horseman, as they rode out of the still slumbering town, amid its ruins and deserted sites, "was it then your own order that we might not stop any one who would out of the castle; and that none, under pain of death, might lift a hand against the high-born junker, if

he was on the spot?"

"That was the king's command to us all," answered the Drost.

"Then I now know that I was right, even though I did let rogues and traitors slink off," continued the horseman. "I stood on guard at the gate of the back court. Sir Drost, and I saw three men in disguise lead their horses out of the stable. They disappeared through the rampart gate close to the ford, and the Lord only knows what became of them. My comrades thought we should have stopped and seized them, for they stole so strangely away, and looked around them on all sides; but I said, 'No! it is a criminal act if we touch them,' and we let them 'scape. The one was assuredly the little German who was forced to give you the keys; the other was a fat fellow, who could hardly waddle away; but the third was a tall stern man; he swore, and laid about him, at every step. I could almost take my oath it was the junker himself. He was hardly twelve paces from me when he caught a sight of me, and shyed off, as it were.--He led his horse over the dunghill, that he might not come too near us, I suppose; but then the hood fell back from his neck, and I saw the long black hair you know of; it is as rough as a horse-tail. No one in the country has such dark unsightly hair as the junker. But, as I say, we let him go, and budged not from the spot.--The king himself will know how to chastise him, thought I."

"Good!" exclaimed the Drost; "thou hast behaved as was thy duty--as to the rest, what is between the king and his brother concerns not us, and still less whether the junker's hair be fine or coarse." He then spurred his horse, and proceeded at a brisk trot, without stopping.

Ere Drost Aagé, with his horsemen, reached Kallundborg, the king approached the town, with the greater part of his chivalry, and a more numerous troop of horsemen and spearmen than he was ever wont to take with him when about to visit his vassals or one of his castles. It was noon. The horses foamed with hard riding. The troop halted at St. George's Hospital, upon the high hill just without the town.

CHAP. XIII.

The report of the king's arrival had preceded him. It had excited great alarm in the whole neighbourhood, and had especially thrown the burghers of Kallundborg into a state of anxious suspense. Their devotion to the king, and fear of his wrath, placed them in a most dangerous position with regard to their stern deputed master, Junker Christopher, and his warlike commandant at the castle. Disquieting and contradictory reports respecting a difference between the king and his brother had already for some time been in circulation, but no one knew the real state of the case. As Lord of Samsöe, Holbek, and Kallundborg, Junker Christopher exercised an almost royal authority wherever he had troops and fortresses under his command. Latterly he had been often seen in Kallundborg, where he had assembled a considerable garrison at the castle, and, to the dismay of the burghers, had put the fortifications opposite the town and the land side into such a state of defence as if the breaking out of a dangerous civil war might daily be expected. Some weeks back admittance had been refused at the castle to Marsk Oluffsen, who, with a small troop of men-at-arms, had demanded to enter in the king's name. From this refractoriness towards a royal ambassador it was thought the most serious results were now to be apprehended. The prince himself went night and day to and from Kallundborg; now with a large armed train on horseback, and now by sea with the armed vessels which constantly plied between Samsöe and Kallundborg, and conveyed both men-at-arms and provisions to the fortress. No one knew whether Junker Christopher was personally present at the castle at the time when the report of the king's arrival threw the whole town into commotion; but it was observed with dismay that the drawbridge was raised, and that serious preparations were making to repel an attack.

The king halted at the head of his numerous train on the hill, and caused his white steed to be rubbed down while he looked down thoughtfully upon town and castle. At his right hand was the brave young Margrave Waldemar of Brandenburg, who had deferred his homeward journey, and accompanied the king on this expedition, to take leave of his good friend Junker Christopher, and, if possible, to avert the storm which menaced him. At the king's left hand was seen his energetic general, Count Henrik of Mecklenborg, who now, next to Drost Aagé, seemed the king's most confidential friend. The troops watered their horses at the pond by the chapel of the Holy Cross. All the cripples of St. George's Hospital came out to see the king, and the numerous fraternity of St. George, or demi-ecclesiastical attendants on the sick, vied with each other in offering refreshments to him and his train. The thronging and curious crowd kept, however, at a respectful distance from the king and the two stranger lords.

"Your grace will find the whole is some absurd mistake," said the young margrave, in a light and careless tone, as he sprang off his horse, and adjusted his rich attire. "At all events, it is assuredly nothing more than a mistaken sense of honour in the junker, or rather in his

commandant here, and the brave Marsk Oluffsen; that excellent man hath an altogether peculiar talent of offending every one, without dreaming of doing so himself. That you must yourself have observed. Such persons one can but employ to plague both friend and foe. I am fond of being mediator between kinsmen and kind friends," he continued, gaily--"there is nothing like drinking to a reconciliation after every quarrel, and then all goes on merrily.--I know the junker's wine cellar at the castle here; it is almost better than any prior's; if he willed not to open it to your sharp spoken Marsk, he hath perhaps but wished to reserve it for dearer guests."

"The Lord grant we may have come hither to a friendly feast, Sir Margrave!" answered the king, solemnly, and in a low tone, while his gaze dwelt on the beautiful winter landscape which lay outstretched before him. The sun beamed brightly on ford and town. The castle rose proudly, with its round towers and high battlements, behind the shining copper roof of the Franciscan monastery. Esbern Snaré's five Gothic church spires pointed boldly towards the heavens from the ancient church of St. Mary, while furthest, and near the ford, the sea tower proudly reared its head. "If my brother can justify himself," continued the king, "he will surely now not shun my sight, but come to greet me according to duty and fealty."

"But he surely expects you not--he is perhaps out hunting, or roving from one domain to another," said the margrave. "The noble junker's blood is thick.--I have counselled him to be ever on the move, in order to drive away melancholy fancies. I have often deplored that his magnanimous hankering after action and distinction hath as yet no decided object, and so often disturbs the balance of his princely mind, giving occasion to even his nearest friends and kindred to misjudge him."

"If I see aright, noble king!" said Count Henrik, shading his eyes with his hand from the sunshine, "yonder comes a crowd of people towards us from the town. It must be the burghers, who would show you their loyalty and devotion."

"Hum! they were also leagued against the Marsk," said the king. "The people are loyal to me personally--this I know, that were I to pass through the country as a leprous beggar, no burgher or peasant would shut his door upon me. In the eyes of many, no doubt, I seem a leper, since the bishop's ban," he added; "yet I am every where met with affection. It is only my brother who turns his back upon me, and refuses me obedience in this time of need."

"The noble junker is surely not here," resumed the margrave, "or he would certainly never delay to crave your pardon for his commandant's rashness, and to lead us to his well-appointed table--he hath put the fortifications of the castle in excellent repair, I perceive--were I in your grace's place I would thank him for that," he continued. "Kallundborg is an important spot in time of war, and a good harbour for your fleet."

"For that very reason no vassal should presume to shut the castle on the lawful ruler of the land, or his generalissimo," answered the king. "I cannot but commend your endeavours to excuse my erring brother, Sir Margrave," he added, abruptly; "and be assured, if he can be acquitted,--if he can only give me his princely word that he hath had no share in this contumacy,--he needs not that a stranger should plead for him, where a brother is his liege and judge."

The margrave bowed courteously, and was silent, while he passed his hand over his brow, and appeared desirous to hide a look of annoyance.

"Will your grace speak to the burghers now?" asked Count Henrik; "they seem timidly waiting for permission to approach you."

"They have it of course, count; let them come hither."

Count Henrik rode to meet the lingering burgher crowd, and soon returned to the king, accompanied by the burgomaster, and twelve of the oldest burghers of the town, who, clad in their holiday attire, and with their heads uncovered, reverently greeted their sovereign. After several salutations, the burgomaster somewhat bashfully and humbly began his address. "Most mighty liege and sovereign! your grace's august presence--this poor town's joy at seeing your most royal grace----"

"Is not very great," interrupted the king; "say it out at once, burgomaster, and speak without a long-winded preamble! You fear there may be bounds to my most royal grace this time, and that I mean to call you to strict account for the reception my Marsk hath met with here."

"Your princely brother, our strict master, the junker, had ordered his commandant at the castle"--stammered the burgomaster.

"I speak not now of what he hath or hath not commanded his servants," interrupted the king. "Such contumacy he himself, or his commandant, shall answer for. But who enjoined you to refuse obedience to my ambassadors?"

"The commandant, in the junker's name, and in your own, my liege," answered the burgomaster--"although we could not consider the behest as lawful, or obey it, when the Marsk, with your authority, enjoined us the reverse, after a short demur, what he demanded was even granted him, and his people, though it came to cost us all dear."

"What!" interrupted the king, with vehemence, "have ye since been chastised because you obeyed my orders?"

"We complain not, my liege, and least of all of your august kindred, and the ruler you have given us--whatever injustice we have suffered is but trifling, in comparison of our sorrow and shame if we have brought upon us the displeasure of our noble liege and sovereign."

"You have suffered injustice for your loyalty to me--could I then be wroth with you, brave burghers?" said the king, with sudden emotion. "By all the holy men! were I so, I should not longer deserve one loyal and devoted heart among ye. The injustice ye have suffered shall be atoned for--we are come hither to call to account for what here hath been done--where is the junker?"

"We know not, most mighty king!"

"Where is his commandant, then? Why comes he not hither to receive us?"

"He affirms he hath received commands, my liege, which are so hard to believe that we dare not name them."

"What! Who dares command here when I am present?" exclaimed the king, with vehemence. "Yet, no; it is impossible," he added, more calmly, and restrained his impatience. "The man must be sick or mad. Ride to the castle, Count Henrik, and announce my coming! I will stay the night here with my knights and an hundred men--you will care for the rest of the men-at-arms, burgomaster!"

Count Henrik was instantly in motion, and rode down with a small train towards the castle.

"Mighty king!" resumed the burgomaster, in a timid tone; "my life, and the lives and property of my fellow burghers are at your service and the country's; but be not wrath with us, my liege, for what it lay not in our power to hinder! The castle gate is locked, the draw-bridge raised, men-at-arms and balista are posted on the outer walls, and the commandant hath announced to us that he hath orders to fire the town with burning stones within twenty-four hours from the moment it is beleaguered by your men-at-arms."

"Doth he rave?" exclaimed the king. "Well, then, away with all grace and mercy--we will see who is master here.--To horse, my men! You stand under our royal protection, brave burghers!" he said to the burgomaster and elders of the town. "If a straw is scorched over your heads for my sake it shall dearly be atoned for! Every rebel and traitor I will strictly punish, however high he may carry his head."

"Honour to the king! to Eric, the youthful king!" shouted the burgomaster, waving his hat; and this well known acclamation (derived from a national ballad) was re-echoed by the whole burgher troop, amid the waving of caps and hats.

"Now place, good people!" ordered the king, reining in his steed. "I will see who dares to lock the gate through which we would enter."

"Permit me to detain your grace one moment," said the Margrave of Brandenburg, who had again vaulted into his saddle, and now rode hastily up to the king, with his head uncovered. "Ere you take any compulsory step, I wish, as an impartial friend both of yours and your princely brother, to have a minute's conversation with you without witnesses."

"Well, that shall not be denied you. Sir Margrave--Aside, my friends!"

All withdrew to some distance and the margrave remained in the same respectful attitude, with his high-plumed hat in his hand. "Your noble brother hath honoured me with a confidence and friendship which makes it my duty to plead his cause in his absence--what hath already been done, and hereafter may be done, against your will, hath undoubtedly the appearance of contumacy and treason: but it is impossible it should be according to your noble brother's wish or order, for that,--(pardon me this expression,)--for that I count him to be at least too *wise*. Of our inmost heart and mind, He who knoweth the heart of man alone can judge--I will stand security for Prince Christopher in this matter, until he can stand forth in person before you to justify himself. I offer my services to seek him out, and bring him to you. He must certainly be at Holbek castle, or at Samsøe--Will you promise me so long to delay every compulsory measure, and at the utmost only to beleaguer the castle?"

"Well, Sir Margrave! for twenty-four hours I will await him, but not an hour longer. Till tomorrow at this time I will restrain my just wrath, and with sheathed sword wait without the gate which hath been presumptuously shut before mine eyes. But ere I hear another ave from the pious Franciscans here--the castle shall be in my power; that I vow, by all the holy men! as surely as I am lord here, and would be called king in Denmark."

"It is agreed, then, your grace!" answered the margrave, with spirit, after a moment's deliberation. "If I stand not within twenty-four hours with your brother acquitted before your sight--then let yon fair castle mount up in smoke and flames--or take it with a storming hand! Count Henrik hath no doubt a strong desire to show you his prowess and generalship. Then I

shall have done what lay in my power, and shown you both, as I trust, that you have had a friend for your guest."

"You have my word for it, Sir Margrave! I shall owe you thanks if your good purpose succeed. See you how the shadow yonder falls from the middle spire upon the cloister roof--It marks the bounds of my patience to-morrow. The Lord and our holy Lady be with us all!" So saying, Eric waved his right hand, and saluted the margrave, as he spurred his horse, and rode forward at the head of his troop of warriors. The king and his knights now rode down the hill in the direction of the castle, while Margrave Waldemar, with his little train of German and Danish men-at-arms, proceeded at full gallop on the road to Holbek.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 1](#): "Marsk," a military title, corresponding in some degree to our field marshal. This office, however, comprises civil as well as military duties, the marsk being also one of the principal ministers of state.

[Footnote 2](#): The private wrongs committed by Eric the Seventh, surnamed Glipping, against his Marsk, Stig, a nobleman of high rank, had rendered him his deadly foe. Stig headed a band of conspirators on the 22d of November, 1286, disguised as Franciscan monks, and murdered him while asleep in a barn at the village of Finnerup, where he had taken refuge from their pursuit. The king's chamberlain, a kinsman of Marsk Stig, conducted the assassins to the place where the king lay concealed.--*Translator's Note*.

[Footnote 3](#): Waldemar the Victorious was Eric Menved's great-grandfather.

[Footnote 4](#): Drost, the prime minister of state in Denmark in the middle ages; all state ministers however, in that age, were required to serve in the field as well as in council. When the Drost was present, he superseded the Marsk in the command of the army.--*Translator's Note*.

[Footnote 5](#): Junker (pronounced Yunker) was the title of the sons of the kings of Denmark in the middle ages, corresponding to that of Infant in Spain.--*Translator's Note*.

[Footnote 6](#): Baron Holberg supposes that the word "carline" (kierlinge in Danish) had its origin in the easy victories obtained by the Northmen over the French, or Carlines, the subjects of Charles the Bald: the word carline or kierlinge now signifying in Danish an old woman, and applied in derision to the fainthearted of the other sex.--*Translator*.

[Footnote 7](#): Esrom Lake, situated about eight English miles from Elsinore, is a fair specimen of the placid lake scenery of Zealand. The monastery is still in part in a habitable state.

[Footnote 8](#): "Axel and Valborg," one of the gems of Scandinavian poetry. The interest of the poem turns on the separation of the hero and heroine (who had been betrothed from childhood) by an interdict of the church, on the plea of the parties standing within a forbidden degree of affinity to each other. This affinity, however, consisted merely in having one common godmother. Circumstances like these, however trivial, were frequently made available by the church for the extension of its power, and the furtherance of its secular interests.

[Footnote 9](#): Flynderborg, the castle at Elsinore, of which no vestiges now remain. Its site was not far from that of the present castle of Cronberg.

[Footnote 10](#): At this period the Hanseatic merchants were absolute masters of the whole trade of the Baltic. The Danish fleet was in a reduced state, and the Hanse were therefore under the necessity of guarding the seas themselves, for the security of their trade. This was peculiarly the case during the disturbed reign of Eric Glipping, when the northern pirate, Alf Erlingsen, infested the Danish seas. This is the subject of a ballad still preserved among the Danish peasantry.--

"The German men they sailed up the sound,
With meal and with malt sailed they,
But Erlingsen's ships there to meet them they found,
And theirs he took all for his prey."

In the time of Eric Glipping the Hanse had no less than thirty armed vessels stationed in the sound at Elsinore.--*Translator's Note*.

[Footnote 11](#): Carl the German.

[Footnote 12](#): The Kareles were a heathen tribe of Livonia, conquered by the Swedes, under the command of Marsk Torkild Knudson.

[Footnote 13](#): A characteristic exclamation of King Eric, who according to Holberg, scrupled making use of a stronger expression, even in confirmation of the most solemn engagements.-- *Translator's Note*.

[Footnote 14](#): In the early ages of Denmark the people bore an important part in the affairs of government, a fact of which there are traces at this day in the Norwegian constitution, in which the peasantry as a class are represented. The people at large decided on war or peace, nor was any royal decree considered valid until it had obtained their consent. Every town had its own "Ting," or place of assembly, in the open air; a large flat stone, placed in the centre of a circle of upright ones, served as a platform for the speakers. In these assemblies the peasants discussed, not only public affairs, but decided on all private differences, &c. Saxo Grammaticus blames King Svend Grathé for neglecting to attend these meetings of the people. In such assemblies the king was not permitted to take his leave until he had greeted even the meanest of his subjects, and sent a friendly greeting to his family. The English reader may perhaps require to be reminded of these facts, in order fully to perceive that Jeppé is a representative of his class in that age.-- *Translator's Note*.

[Footnote 15](#): Dyrendal, the name of Roland's sword, afterwards used for swords in general by the Danes. Scandinavian warriors esteemed their swords above all other treasures. If a sword had done good service, it was distinguished by some epithet expressive of the deeds it had achieved. The sword of King Hagen of Norway was called "quærn bider," or mill-stone biter, from having cut through a mill-stone. If the owner of such a sword had no immediate descendants, it was buried beside him in his grave.-- *Translator's Note*.

[Footnote 16](#): King Glipping, so called from his twinkling eye.

[Footnote 17](#): Fragment of an old Danish ballad.

[Footnote 18](#): A valuable collection of historical documents made by King Eric, called Congesta Menvedi.

[Footnote 19](#): Sveno Agonis, a Danish historian contemporary with Saxo Grammaticus.

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