

CHARLES XII

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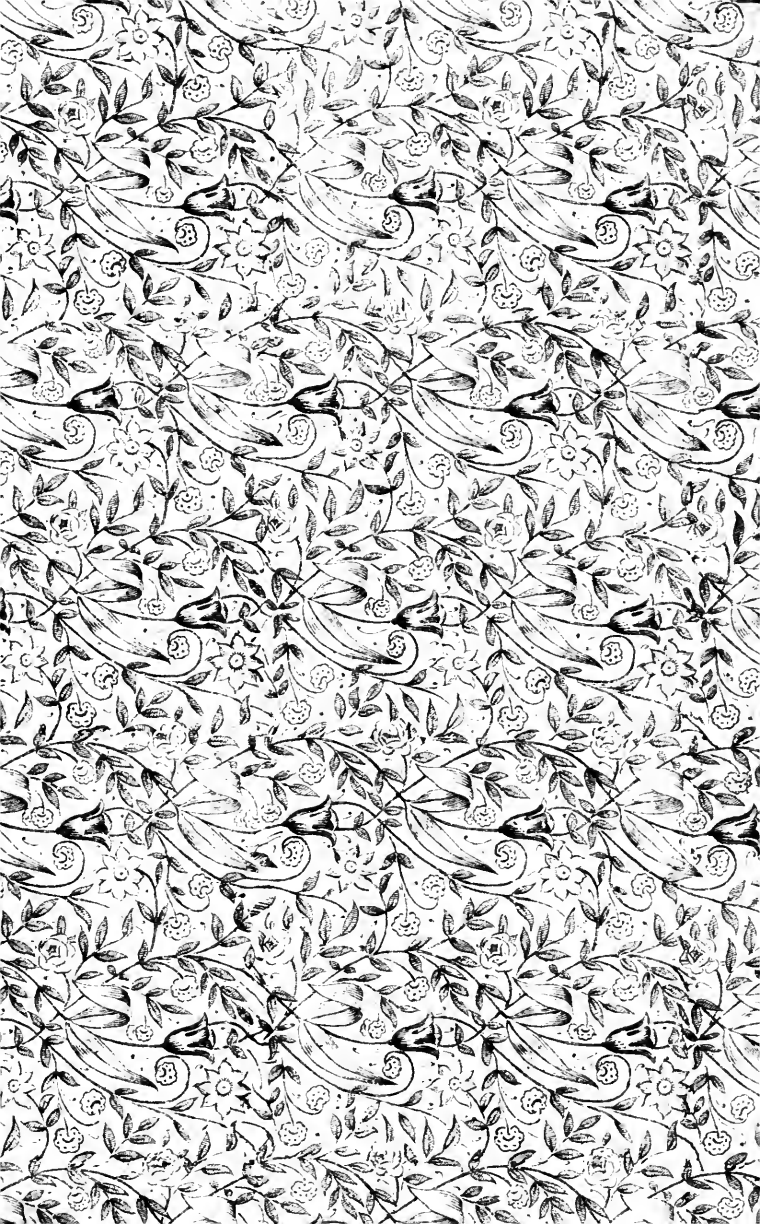


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THE SURGEON'S STORIES.

BY Z. TOPELIUS.

THE
SURGEON'S STORIES.

BY

Z. TOPELIUS,

PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF FINLAND.

A SERIES OF

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THE SURGEON'S STORIES.

TIMES OF CHARLES XII.

BY

Z. TOPELIUS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL SWEDISH.

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THE SURGEON'S STORIES.

THIRD CYCLE:

TIMES OF CHARLES XII.

PART I. —THE BLUE.

PART II. —THE FUGITIVE.

PART III.—THE SHADOW OF A NAME.



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TIMES OF CHARLES XII.

PART I.—THE BLUE.

INTERLUDE.

A WHOLE summer had passed since the Surgeon finished his former story. During the time, he had been seldom seen in town, and when he showed himself, in his gray fishing-jacket and heavy coarse-seamed boots, he bore over his shoulder a knotty staff, on which hung as a trophy a respectable twenty pound pike destined for the old grandmother's table. As a matter of course, Bäck was invited to dinner; and on his account there was served that day a dessert consisting of the most beautiful strawberries and rich new milk.

"Cousin puts on too little sugar," grandmother used to say, with a kind look, although Bäck let whole drifts snow over the strawberries. He was certainly no epicure; he could live for weeks together in his fisherman's hut on sour milk and boiled catfish; but he had a weakness for sweet things, the honest old man, when they were offered. Grandmother knew this, and though she did not stir the sugar-sprinkler for herself, she said again, in a friendly way :

"A little more sugar, Cousin Bäck."

Then the Surgeon heard what was new in the papers, and expressed himself in language not exactly polite concerning Don Miguel, whose devastations were car-

ried on at that time. In exchange for the news, he generally told some amusing story of the forest or the sea; as, for example, how brother Svanholm lately went hunting. His comrades (including Bäck) had beforehand shot a hare, drawn it, and, having put in roasted meat, small herrings, and boiled potatoes, sewed it up again. When this was done, they placed the hare in a suitable spot near the edge of the woods, and Svanholm was unsuspectingly led in that direction. The hounds started; the cry was: "Keep watch!" and then some one shouted: "Look out there, brother Svanholm!" Brother Svanholm was not slow to shoot; *bang!* the hare tumbled over and was carried in triumph to the cottage. A greater exploit Svanholm had not achieved since the famous retreat. The brave Captain was the hero of the day. He claimed for himself the right of cutting up the hare according to the rule of art, and of giving the heart and liver to the hounds. Miraculous! he found roast mutton in the hare. "The d—l, brother Svanholm! your hares eat up our sheep!" Then he found the herring: "What, the deuce!—your hares go a fishing!" At last the boiled potatoes: "A thousand d— brother Svanholm! your hares understand boiling as well as roasting!" But Svanholm was quite furious over the affair, and growled under his moustaches at Bäck for a whole week afterwards.

The summer passed. When the end of August drew near, and Bäck, as usual, was invited to dine on his own pike, little Jonathan came one day, with rather an important air, and handed him a branch, on which were three large dark-red raspberries.

"Well?" said the Surgeon, and, as was his wont, lifted the little fellow up by his collar, about as one lifts a kitten.

"Yes, godfather," answered Jonathan briskly, "now the raspberries are ripe in the woods."

"That's good," said the Surgeon, and set the boy on his feet again, after a circumflex in the air.

Anne Sophie was cutting up sugar at the sideboard close by. "Yes," cried she, "the raspberries are ripe in the woods, and now we may demand a new story."

"H—m," said the Surgeon, "the whittings are at their best now, and the broods of ducks are beginning to fly; in three weeks we shall see."

Several objections to waiting were interposed, but none availed. Three weeks went by. The Surgeon had salted a goodly number of quarter-barrels of whittings, and had sent home a good many braces of sea-fowl with their legs tied together. It became too stormy, dark, and chilly to stay out on the water. Then one day at the dinner-table the old man was heard to say of his own accord: "This evening we can begin."

Said and done. At six o'clock, when it began to grow dark, the usual company sat again in the Surgeon's chamber. Captain Svanholm, long since appeased, stroked his moustache before the hearth; Master Svenonius, the school-teacher, fixed the fire; grandmother was knitting a stocking; Anne Sophie was picking over whortleberries, and the boys were picking down, being seated at a little distance from her, that they might not be tempted too much by the berries.

The Surgeon looked at the agile, light-yellow flame, winding up about the white birch wood, and did not seem in any hurry to begin. The children grew impatient.

"Now we shall hear about Charles XII," whispered Jonathan, purposely so loud that the others heard it.

"Be quiet!" said Svanholm. "Brother, you have a devilish good comrade to deal with. Those who have smelled a little powder in their day, as you and I have, understand Charles XII rather better than the quill-fighters who have written about him."

"Powder-smoke only makes men black," said the schoolmaster, aroused by this challenge. "I hold that Charles XII has to thank the quill-fighters who have written concerning him, for much of his greatness.

Suppose one had asked the much-bled, depopulated, and famished country, after his death—”

“Yes, only ask,” interrupted the Captain, “only ask, and the poorest cottager will answer: ‘We have beaten the Dane and the German and the Turk and the Russian; devils and heroism! that have we done, sir, and that have we done under Charles XII.’ He was no fault-finding, niggardly fellow, like his father, and if he did not spare others, neither did he spare his own royal person. Quill-fighters would have done something for his honor? They would have blotted his blue and gold banner with ink!”

“Bernhard Bertelsköld is now dead,” said the old grandmother, in order to stop the controversy. “It seems to me that I have known him from childhood, and a good man he was; yes, I must say that I liked him from the first.”

“D—d if I did,” broke in the Captain, bluntly. “Such sweet-milk counts haven’t two stivers’ worth of backbone in them.”

Grandmother lowered her voice, and said, in a tone which immediately silenced the brave Captain:

“I have said many times that it is indecent for cousin Svanholm to swear so before the children. If cousin had let me speak to the end, I would have said something more. Cousin ought to bear in mind that the departed Count Bertelsköld was in more battles than even cousin has lived through, and if he was a courteous, good-natured and cultured gentleman instead of a ruffian and brawler, he was not the less a braver man than cousin, and was not at all made of either sweet or sour milk. But I cannot reconcile myself to his end. I think it is unchristian and awful that a man so good of heart and mind should at the last become such a captive to unbelief and worldly thoughts that he entirely forgets to think of his poor soul. What did he live for? The supremacy of the nobility? We are all of us common people; we cannot understand that.”

“Our class will certainly come to the front, when it is the Larssons’ time,” remarked Svenonius. “Between the power of the nobility, the people, and the king, the strife is *per sæcula sæculorum*. Sometime I will tell cousin about the old patricians and plebeians of Rome.”

“Thanks, cousin, but I am not curious; I prefer to keep out of the way of papists. There must be some papal spell connected with the king’s ring. Righteous heavens! What a forboder of misfortune! We shall see that that ring will yet destroy the whole Bertelsköld family. I cannot forgive the excellent Greta for not casting the ring into the sea, as she thought of doing. It would have been a wise and discreet thing to do, instead of allowing herself to be beguiled into giving the bewitched thing to the count. Mark my word: I believe Torsten Bertelsköld will give her little thanks for that.”

“But,” interrupted Anne Sophie quickly, “to succeed in everything! Think of it, grandmother! The power of that family continually increases, and the ring descending from father to son, in the sixth generation one becomes a king! It is already in the third or fourth generation, in possession of Torsten Bertelsköld. What a pity we cannot turn over the leaves in godfather’s mind, as one turns over the leaves of a book when he would know the result beforehand!”

“My dear child,” said the grandmother seriously, “it seems to me that the king’s ring ought deeply to impress upon us the words: ‘What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?’ What happiness or what benefit had the elder Bertelsköld and Janssen from all their good fortune? Two men, intended for something better, has the ring already destroyed; the third, it turned away from God at the close of life. Be sure of this: it will destroy still more. Moreover, I do not like young Torsten, and his brother Gustaf Adolph I am yet too little acquainted with. With the exception of Greta, all that I had any

friendship for in the former story are already gone. We must have new people now, since we have a new era."

With these words the grandmother cast a questioning glance at the old Surgeon, who silently and contemplatively continued to gaze at the flames sporting in the great old-fashioned open fire-place. As the fire-light fell upon his tall figure and his sunburnt but still strong features, it occurred to all that an unusually stern expression rested on his furrowed brow. Often before had this simple, humble man grown as it were with his subject, so that he was no longer the same person while he talked. Now his seriousness became so gloomy that the children looked at him almost with affright. And he said, as if to himself :

"A new era!"

Thereupon, his presence of mind regained, his countenance cleared up; and he turned to Anne Sophie saying : "Put more wood on the fire, my girl; I would rather see flames than ashes. And seat yourself so that I can see you better, my child. It will help my story if I can all the while look upon your kind and cheerful face."

CHAPTER I.

THE LION SLEEPS.

THE grand, powerful and high-minded seventeenth century had just laid the last stone upon its portion of the structure of the world's history. The curtain had fallen upon its mighty conflicts for power and light; its long series of years and achievements unrolled like a panorama to the view of the thoughtful, and people asked themselves what might now come.

For it was not the accidental change of dates and figures that made a new era for the world; stars had disappeared and powers decayed, and new kingdoms and new thoughts were working themselves forward, and where was the man who could govern them? He who now for more than a generation had been the acknowledged lawgiver for both genius and power, he who in the opinion of his admirers gave a name to the whole epoch—King Louis XIV of France—still lived, and believed himself called to write laws for the new century as he had done for the old. But while the bards still sung his praises, and kings feared his statesmanship even more than his arms or his gold, his head began to grow heavy with age, and his mind with ceaseless penitence. Whilst he stretched out his hand after new sceptres, his own began to wear away; and doubt, hitherto dumb, and scorn, tired of sealed lips, began to scrutinize the encomiums of contemporaries and thus disclose the destiny of all mortals—that fate which, sooner or later, overtakes the glory of the world.

The lower the sun sank toward the horizon of the epoch of Louis XIV, the clearer it became to the thoughtful, and to the instinct of the masses themselves, that the times demanded new men as much as new ideas. The ideas came of themselves. They had long grown in silence, and waited only for sun and air to put forth new leaves. But in vain did one look about for men. Eugene and Marlborough were thought of; the great strife between the Bourbons and the Hapsburgs was closely watched. England was seen rapidly increasing, and gaining more and more advantage over her rival, Holland; the eye was turned from Spain fallen and oppressed, from Germany sun-dered and enfeebled, from Poland egotistic and suicidal, to the hopeful prospect of Turkey's incipient weakness—Europe's bugbear stripped of its mask. Everywhere were found masses and powers, but seldom men. Few were they who looked to the north. Barbarous

Russia lay in apparent lifelessness and debated whether the sign of the cross should be made with two fingers or with three. Sweden, mistress of the Baltic, had negotiated peace at Ryssvik, but its sword had rested; gold flowed into Charles XI's treasury under the Reduction, and a beardless youth without ambition or ability—so they said—had mounted the throne to hunt bears.

They did not know then that Peter the First worked as a carpenter in the shops at Saardam. They did not know then that Charles XII as a child had said when he read Curtius, and was asked what he thought of Alexander the Great, "I will be like him." And when he was told, "Alexander the Great only lived to be thirty-two years old," the twelve-year-old prince Charles answered: "Is not that enough for one who has conquered empires?"

They wrote 1700 for the new date. It was a cold but clear winter evening. The stars looked down on Lake Mälaren, covered with ice, where the tramp of horses' feet and the jingling of bells was now and then heard through the frosty air. A few hours before, the scene was livelier. A pleasure party from the court had driven out in elegant sleighs trimmed with fringe; and the cheeks of many a rosy little maiden had grown still rosier, and many a high-born gallant had with his own hands guided his snorting charger over the ice-field. But this evening had the queen dowager Hedvig Eleonora, the king's paternal grandmother, invited the court to an evening assembly at Drottningholm. The widowed queen had found circumstances unpleasant. She would willingly have had a hand in governing the kingdom, as she had had in Charles XI's youth; but she had become old, and her grandson's hasty words to Count Piper at the review of a company, that he would himself command such brave men, had been fulfilled almost as soon as spoken. Hedvig Eleonora formed her resolution. She continued to build pleasure resorts, surrounded herself with young and gay people,

especially artists, and thus right cheerfully spent her remaining days and her generous income.

The wax candles in Drottningholm's high windows shone brilliantly out over the lake, when two horsemen, wrapped in short army cloaks, galloped forward over the ice toward the castle, while three or four sleighs in the distance seemed vainly endeavoring to overtake them. Having reached the castle court, one of the riders dismounted and approached the other, who remained on his horse and said something half aloud. Thereupon the first rider fastened his horse at the gate and ran up the castle steps, while the other sat there in the sharp winter cold and seemed inclined to conceal his face from the glare of the torches and tar-barrels that were burning in the court.

In a moment the first returned, and said, in a low voice: "Hård is sick; he cannot go along, much as he wishes it. His eyes sparkled in his head as I told him of your majesty's adventure, and he answered merely: 'She never would have broken through the net if I had been along.'"

"If he had been along?" repeated the other, annoyed. "Did he say that, the old stiff-neck? Well, it is honor enough for him that I came to Drottningholm on purpose to fetch him. We will ride back to the city, the sleighs will follow us, and we will try our luck again in the morning."

"It is hardly worth while to try the contemptible she-bears when Hård is absent," said his companion. "Your majesty has to-day struck down the shaggiest paw that ever broke a spear in pieces. I will wager that the sainted king's hunting record can show nothing to equal it."

"We will try again to-morrow," was the curt answer.

The king, for it was he, turned his horse to ride away again, when the queen dowager's equerry, Hoghusen, followed by servants with torches, besought on behalf of his mistress that his majesty would honor

the assembly in the castle with his noble presence. Taken aback at being recognized, like a boy caught in a neighbor's fruit tree, the king wheeled his horse, let him make a spring toward the stairs, and purposely rode straight over an elegant chamberlain who was tripping across the court, in silk stockings and shoes, bearing dishes of preserved fruits and other delicacies for the court ladies. The joke was rather a severe one; the poor fellow stumbled and went down with a bloody nose, and all the rare contents of his salver were spilled into the snow. The king, laughing, threw him a gold coin, and went up to his grandmother in a much better mood than he would have been in but for this circumstance.

The inner staircase in Drottningholm castle is, as is well known, a masterpiece by Nicodemus Tessin—a work in so light and agreeable a style, that it seems to be built especially for the feet of the Graces and the tip-toes of princesses. The king tramped up the stairs with rattling spurs and steps so heavy that one might easily believe he was riding up. In the upper vestibule he was met by the queen-dowager, costumed as Ceres—at least she had a *cornucopia* and a bunch of silvered grain-heads; and after a few compliments, which on the part of the king were quite monosyllabic, he was led into one of the great halls, on the walls of which are still seen and admired the battle-pieces of Charles Gustaf and Charles XI, painted by Ehrenstrahl.

Charles XII had inherited much of his father's shyness in the presence of women, and was, if possible, still more indifferent than he to the allurements of pleasure. Seventeen years old, nearly three years a king, what an object he would have been for all seductive arts and innocent admiration, had not his thorough indifference warded off the shafts of beauty in advance! When he entered the hall, where a motley multitude swarmed about in the brightest costumes, it suddenly became silent as if a winter snow had fallen

down over the spring of youth and gayety which just now were making merry in the lustre of the wax-lights. The king went, somewhat embarrassed it seemed, with slight bows and brief salutations, along the brilliant lines, until at the farther end of the hall he found some of the officers of the life-guard, with whom he entered into conversation, glad in that way to avoid the curious glances which annoyed him.

He had scarcely disappeared in the crowd before youth and levity resumed the full enjoyment of their rights. Roguish laughter, mingled with cutting remarks, played upon the lips of the young ladies and their cavaliers. They looked down at the waxed floor and then at each other, while they sought to conceal a merriment which by that very means became more ungovernable. The cause was evident. Without thinking about it, the king had come into the dancing hall just as he was, after a twenty mile ride on an adventurous chase. The marks thereof were visible enough on his dress; probably he was still spattered with the bear's blood which so lately flowed before his short spear. But they were accustomed to such things, and the courage of the hunter, like that of the warrior, seldom fails of its impression on vivacious temperaments. There was something besides this which increased the mirth of the company,—a little circumstance which not even a king can forget unpunished by laughter—and that was, that he had entered in his high hunting-boots, which were covered with snow. The result was that every step the royal youth took over the brightly polished floor, which seemed designed to be trodden by silken shoes only, left dark wet tracks of his great boots, which royal footprints the young people jocosely pointed at, when one of the ladies was bold enough to ask her friends to behold "King Charles's galaxy."

They did not then know, these gay and bustling court butterflies, that King Charles would leave many a track after him as he went through the world—not of

the white snow, but blood-red tracks, which should lead from Stockholm's saloons right across Europe even to the shore of the Black Sea.

Among those who did not spare their witticisms at these innocent traces of the royal feet, was a tall slim youth of a pale and sickly appearance, with blonde hair and refined and intelligent but somewhat scornful features. A jest concerning the "bear's paws" had just escaped his lips, when he felt a heavy hand on his shoulder and heard some one whisper in his ear in a voice trembling with wrath: "Be careful, Torsten, of playing tricks with the bear; it might be that you would find yourself in the lion's claws."

The person addressed turned around and saw before him a handsome black-haired youth of scarcely sixteen years, but so full-chested and broad-shouldered that in spite of his youth he was evidently an opponent not to be despised. This youth was the same horseman who had accompanied the king to Drottningholm, and he wore the same hunting dress which had drawn upon his master the jests of the court.

The pale youth, costumed as Mercury, measured the other with a look which might indicate fatherly solicitude but which really implied a great deal of ridicule. "What ails you, Gustaf?" said he; "what a dress! Look about you, my friend; you are not just at present out in the woods. Make no mistake about high standing. This company is not pines nor firs; and above all, *mon cœur*, do not mistake the ladies for junipers. Are you sure of being invited, *pauvre* Gustaf? I pray you, borrow my wings and make yourself distant, or at least change your costume; you might, for example, represent Cerberus."

The dark youth, whose arm was certainly stronger than his tongue, would probably have given a passionate answer, if at that instant a very young girl, scarcely fifteen, in the costume of a wood-nymph, had not taken him by the arm and whispered: "Never mind him,

Gustaf; he is in the habit of sharpening his words on the keen maids of honor. Come, I belong to the woods too; I will get you a cap with a green plume, and then an attendant shall brush your coat. You are handsomer than all the rest of them now," she added playfully, and with such kindness beaming in her mild blue eyes that Gustaf felt pacified and willingly let her lead him to one of the side rooms.

Torsten smiled, and turned on his heel to seek new targets for his shafts of wit.

"Can your ladyship tell me who are those three young people over there?" said a newly arrived foreign ambassador to one of the queen's waiting women. "One seems to be head, another hand, and the third heart, of the same family."

"Rightly guessed, my good viscount," answered the maid of honor. "You see there the three children of the Bertelsköld family; perhaps you were acquainted with the late Count, an amiable gentleman, but ruined by the Reduction. The pale young man, Count Torsten, is devoting himself to diplomacy, and has lately obtained a situation with the Swedish legation in Paris. The younger, Count Gustaf Adolf, is an ensign in the life-dragoons, and is one of our young king's *va-partout*. The sweet fair girl is Ebba Cecelia Bertelsköld, of whom all the malice in the court finds nothing ill to say, although through her aunt, the Countess Sparre, she has lately been appointed acting maid of honor to the princess Ulrika Eleonora. There, my dear viscount, have I not given you an edifying little family history? But what do I see! It has pleased his majesty to assume the costume of Mars, the god of war. I venture most humbly to suggest that our god of war lacks one little attribute which the ancients never forgot to endow him with—and that is, whiskers. Upon my honor, viscount, a beardless war-god!—it appears to me that is as natural as the Graces in mustaches!"

The viscount smiled, and upon his lips there faltered

one of those objections which are made merely to be refuted. But before we listen further to this conversation, let us seek an explanation of how it was possible to induce this morose young king, just returned from a bear-hunt, to masquerade at a court ball.

The queen-dowager Hedvig Eleonora had the same solicitude for her grandson Charles XII as she formerly had for her son Charles XI. This wild, unbrushed and unkempt boy, who could not talk French, must be taught common-sense and royal manners; in her motherly solicitude it was not esteemed sufficient that he could drill soldiers and talk Latin; in order to govern a kingdom, he must also be able to address a brilliant lady and figure in a ballet. Unfortunate mother! her endeavors in that direction had altogether failed in the case of Charles XI, as she had realized with grief during the long twenty-five years when the court chronicles were filled with devotional exercises, army drills, racing, hunting, and ice-fishing. Queen Ulrika Eleonora had never learned to play *femkort* and ruff; but the time had now come to enjoy a gayer life in Sweden. Charles XII must be reared a gentleman; this was difficult; and the day when, at his coronation, he set the crown on his own head, the old grandmother began to fear that the boy, by being made a governor himself, had become ungovernable for others.

What tribulations she had already had with little Charles, when he had told Behm, the court painter, to his face, that he looked like a monkey! The queen-dowager took the artist's part; the prince must beg his pardon—but no, he stood by his words: "Behm looked like a monkey." It was not easy to make so stubborn a will bend to courtesy. The old grandmother held firmly to her convictions; and she certainly meant well, according to her view of the matter. She recalled with regret the splendor of the old regency days; scarcely had Charles XI closed his eyes, and there had hardly been time to recover one's self after the great fire at

the castle, before, in the first place, the king's burial was celebrated with such pomp as had not been seen in Sweden for a long time. Next came the coronation, and then a royal wedding; and thus the court festivities by degrees were set on foot. The young king assented, with the stipulation that he should be allowed to pursue his own pleasure, according to his own will. But neither his own inclinations nor his submissiveness to his grandmother led Charles XII upon this round of brilliant amusements. It was his affection for his beloved and amiable elder sister, Hedvig Sophie, just then, in the flower of her youth, married to the young and gay Duke Frederick of Schleswig Holstein. For her sake, silver gathered by the Reduction flowed from Charles XI's treasury for masquerades and court-balls; for her sake, Charles XII many a time forgot his own hunting excursions to take part in his sister's gentler pleasures. It was she, the good and happy royal child—child enough still to exchange the offer of the crown of England for a little disputed dukedom, and innocent enough not to notice her little highness's early crown of thorns—it was she who caused Europe to mistake the young lion's temper, and thereby indirectly wove together the tangled threads of the great northern war.

Hedvig Sophie was now at Kiel, and from there wrote the letters of a princess of eighteen to a seventeen year old prince. A courier had just arrived with one of these letters, so full of childish innocence, and the queen dowager had received it in the king's absence. The old lady knew how to conceal her vexation at the king's entrance to her brilliant ball in his stained hunting dress, and she once more determined to "bring up" her lordly grandson. She sought him out among the officers, pretending that she had an important matter to lay before him. This important matter was Hedvig Sophie's letter, accompanied by an elegant harlequin's mask in a richly ornamented Holstein basket.

The king read the letter, and the farther he read the

more the cloud cleared away from his noble forehead, until at sight of the mask he burst out in a laugh so hearty and so happy that it was easy to see how warmly his heart throbbed for his sister—for the only woman besides his mother who could ever boast of being loved by Charles XII.

Smiling, he handed the letter to the queen-dowager, who with some difficulty spelled out the following lovingly careless lines:

TO THE KING OF SWEDEN.

Most Mighty King:

I hope that this letter may find your majesty in good health and since I have promised in my former letter to tell you of the amusements which P. Christian was about to give, I will tell you in this that last Friday there was a ball here and a Collation besides, and after the Collation was over, P. Marie Elizabeth, and P. Christian and the other ladies and gentlemen, disguised themselves in Scaramouch clothes, and danced an entré which was right pleasant, when they had danced out, then the duke and I and my women disguised ourselves as a full Harlequin's band, and came in dancing, the duke was Harlequin and I was Madam Harlequin, and the others represented all the other buffoons, which looked quite laughable, we danced till it was day, there are a good many folks here out of service who have come here to Kiel by way of a show, we have assemblies here over three times a week and twice a week we have balls and the other days we go to the theatre, now the word is that the Duke and I must give some pleasure parties on our side, so it will soon be done, I wish that we could be so fortunate as to have Your Majesty here and then all our amusements would be perfect, the duke sends his most gracious compliments to Your Majesty and her highness does the same, for the rest I beg You to the end of the world to keep me in your grace, who is with the greatest submission Your Majesty's

humblest most faithful Sister and servant

HEDVIG SOPHIE.

Kiel the 16 January,

I desire you to give my most gracious compliments to the queen, and greet my Sister after my fashion if Your Majesty would like to see my Mask I send it herewith, hope Your Majesty will not take it ungraciously because I take this liberty. . . .

It was under the influence of this happy letter, and with thoughts of the duchess, that Charles XII allowed

himself to be attired in the costume the queen-dowager had in readiness for him—the costume of the war-god Mars.

But this time the war-god was not frightful. The sunshine on his brow did not fail to have an enlivening influence on all those butterflies which fluttered about in the palace halls. The dancing became more frolicsome; they had a ballet, in which the beautiful Stina Fleming represented Calypso, and the Finn Arvid Horn, afterward so renowned, took Ulysses' rôle. The ballet was varied with a pastoral written by Count Carl Gyllenborg, in which Calypso is heard to declaim:

“ Gracious sun, O quickly go,
 Let the sea thy brightness cover,
 Let the silent darkness hover,
 In thy going be not slow.

“ Sea and wood can listen dumb,
 Part in all my sorrow taking;
 All with me lament are making,
 Since my angel doth not come.”

The king did not dance. Among the teachers of his boyhood there was a dancing-master, of course, but the advancement of the prince in this noble art was, and remained, like a certain cadet's, “unobservable.” The twelve year old princess Ulrika Eleonora took the part of shepherdess. By a rose-colored ribbon she led, not a lamb, which really belonged to the costume, but the king's favorite hound Pompey, decorated for the occasion with an embroidered necktie. It was the same Pompey so celebrated afterwards, whose Latin epitaph by Holmström became well known even in foreign lands, and is found thus translated:

“ Pompey served the king aright,
 Slept upon his bed at night;
 When his years and toils were numbered,
 At his master's feet he slumbered.

“ Maidens sweet have fondly sighed
Pompey’s life to make their story;
Heroes brave, in search of glory,
Longed to die as Pompey died.”

During the ballet the experienced eye of the queen-dowager might have been seen studying whether beauty and grace would not finally make an impression on this heart of marble, only seventeen years old. She would gladly have seen a beginning made. She ventured to throw out a remark concerning Calypso’s charms, but the king answered quickly :

“Calypso was a witch, and I do not intend to be bewitched.”

“ Nevertheless the day will come when your majesty will be charmed by a beautiful princess and Sweden will have a queen.”

“ Who knows,” said the king laughing, “ when I am thirty years old! ”

In the meantime the diplomat continued in his own way to make himself familiar with current opinions concerning the king’s character.

“ His majesty must have a courageous temper, of which great enterprises may be expected,” said he.

“ God protect us from such courage my best viscount,” answered her ladyship in the arm-chair. “ If you call it courage to break the necks of horses, bears and men—oh, well, I admit his majesty can compete in that with King Orre himself. Just imagine : last summer there was a sea-fight here. His majesty and Captain Horn contested in small boats on Lake Mälaren. To be sure, instead of cannons they had the city fire engines, and instead of muskets they had hand-syringes. With these they threw water upon each other so long that Horn’s boat began to sink and he was obliged to jump into the sea. “ Is the leak dangerous?” shouted his majesty. “ No, provided a man is not afraid,” replied Horn, who is a good swimmer. Plump, the king jumped in after him, and I assure you, vis-

count, that the Pfalz-house would from that moment have ceased to reign in the male line had not Horn caught the king by the hair and dragged him to land."

"Even kings are not free from boyish tricks" said the viscount. "But one can also see something chivalrous in this."

"Chivalrous? *Grand dieu!* Then you should have seen his young majesty at Ystad in Skåne last spring! Live geese were hung up on a gallows, and peasant women and girls assembled in multitudes to ride at full speed and pull off the heads of the geese, and for every head he gave them a ducat. What do you say to that, my dear viscount?"

"His majesty has nevertheless with great diligence devoted himself to science," observed the diplomat with a shrug.

"Just passably. They say he studied mathematics some, but since he became king he has forgotten how a book looks."

"His majesty is said to be very brusque in his ways."

"Like a country squire. God save me from saying a disparaging word of our young master. Without doubt he is a very modest youth; yet it is said that he paid considerable attention to a certain Sara Törne, the wife of his *valet de chambre*, Düben. What could you expect—a sovereign from the nursery!"

Just then the ballet commenced, and the conversation was broken off.

After the ballet, came the supper; and it is probable that there was served—as Count Tessin describes—fifteen courses, four small plates and "pyramids" and seventeen baskets of confections. After supper they returned to the city; and this was accomplished in a very peculiar manner.

As many of the court, both ladies and gentlemen, as had courage for it, were packed two and two, in small sleds, which were fastened to each other by the

poles, all in a row, so that by this means there were sixteen sleds in a line. In front of the first sled, in which sat the king with Horn, were harnessed sixteen horses, not in spans or pairs, but the whole sixteen in line one after the other so that the jockey who rode the leader directed the whole train. And thus they set out, sixteen horses and sixteen sleds in line, cautiously at first on account of the curves, but as soon as they were out on the ice, at breakneck speed, so that the snow blew about them. It was of no use to shudder and turn pale when one went with King Charles, for he gave no quarter. If a sled suddenly overturned, the occupants must take care of themselves and try to set their sled to rights again, otherwise they would drag in the snow and no one would take the trouble to stop for them. Therefore there were many bruises and scratches before they reached the city; but the king was never in better spirits than when everything went so wildly that both himself and others tumbled down, with danger of being run over and killed.

The diplomat, having reached his room in the city, sat down that same night to complete for his government a description of the young Swedish monarch, which he had already begun, and in which Charles XII was portrayed in about the following manner:

“Strong and toughened body, manly appearance beyond his years, narrow mental capacity, neglected acquirements, heedless disposition, given to all kinds of childish amusements. Add to this, incredible obstinacy united with a foolhardiness which will soon shorten his life if he is not led into excesses for which he does not lack inclination so completely as is believed. Your majesty’s government can be calm in reference to the political results of an unlimited power in this wild boy’s hands. He will never play any great *rôle*, and if he attempts it he will inevitably fail. We may be calm; this young eagle will in time become only a cuckoo.”

How human wisdom prophesies!

CHAPTER II.

THE LION WAKES.

WHO has not seen the thunder-storm approach in summer—the dark clouds rising up along the horizon? The country-folks dance in the meadow, the children frolic in the green grass; no one thinks of danger, every one lives in the passing moment. Wilder becomes the dance, the frolic bolder; the air grows oppressive, sweat drips from brow and cheek unnoticed; the frenzy seizes even the calmest; unbridled joy hastens to empty pleasure's brimming cup ere it is overturned; the flies bite more boldly, the birds fly swifter; there is an excess with all living as well as with all dumb nature, and the old shake their heads, talking about "bringing on rain."

Then, in the midst of the giddiness of the dance and of the vehemence of the games, a flash of lightning suddenly lights up the dark cloud; sharp rolling thunder follows, and rain begins to fall in heavy drops. The ranks of the players are broken, hand is snatched from hand, laughter flees, song and music are quickly silenced;—scattered in all directions, the crowd in the fields hasten to seek shelter from the rising storm.

Not unlike such a scene was the Swedish court at the beginning of the year 1700. Clouds obscured the horizon; the vision of a seer might have discerned the giant shadow of Czar Peter in the east and the Saxon's Hercules' club and Jutland's clenched fist in the clouds of the south. But Swedenborg was yet silent. King Charles, the youth of seventeen, still had faith in the oaths of princes, and the warning words of venerable statemanship sounded like the harsh croak of the raven

through the court castles amid the youthful pleasures of the northern spring.

To avoid Denmark's assault, the duke and duchess of Holstein had sought an asylum in the royal castle. A ray of sunshine before the thunder-storm had come with them, to gild the court festivities; the young Duchess Hedvig Sophie had forgotten her banishment and her lost crown in the delight of once more breathing the winter air of her fatherland, and of seeing a gayer court swarming about the burnt palace of her royal father.

Had a Lapland seeress stepped forward amid the buzz of the ball and said to the amiable "Madame Harlequin": "Dance, dance, beautiful princess, while life still has roses to offer you!—Before two summers have passed, your young duke will fall, the first brilliant victim at the side of Charles XII; during seven years of widowhood shall you watch over a son; that son shall wed the daughter of him whom his father fought; your grandson shall reign in an imperial castle, built on ground now belonging to Sweden, snatched from your brother and your sister by your son's father-in-law;—your grandson's son and his descendants, generation after generation, shall bear the scepter of the Orient;—from thee shall descend the mighty ones who shall reign over wider lands than any mortal before them ever ruled;—in a hundred years shall your grandson's grandson take away a third part of what remains of your father's and your brother's territory;—in a hundred and fifty years Europe shall stand in battle array against the son of your grandson's grandson, and a foreign house shall with difficulty hold back their fathers' land;"—perhaps the young Countess Hedvig Sophie would have paused in the dance, and thoughtfully cast down her mild blue eyes before the picture which the future unrolled. But the Norns had compassion on so much innocence and beauty; they veiled her eyes to the vicissitudes of the future with rosy-

colored gauze, and the duchess continued to dance and rejoice and hope, as youth does when it lives in the passing moment, and builds upon it its dreamed eternity.

The horizon was becoming obscured; the storm drew nearer. Frederick IV, King of Denmark, invaded Holstein, beleaguered Tönningen, took possession of Gottorp. Hedvig Sophie wept for her castle, and smiled after the tears.

Frederick August, King of Saxony and Poland, he who with his right hand bent together a horse-shoe, silently gathered his armies against the borders of Livonia, while his ambassador, in words as sweet as honey, was talking of eternal friendship. Patkull's hatred and patriotism drove alternately the princes and the people to Sweden's destruction. The Swedish court continued to amuse itself.

Peter I had begun to lift Russia upon his giant shoulders. While he let the land breeze of Europe blow over the steppes of his broad domain, he sought a vent through which might stream in a warmer sea-breeze than that of the Artic sea. From Azov's pinnacles he looked out over the Orient and the Black Sea. But it seemed to him too far; his longing could only be quenched by the waves of the Baltic. He drew together his barbarous hosts and struck hands with the Saxons at Birnau. King Charles ordered a bear-hunt at Kongsör.

The wise men of the land said: "Our king is blind." But King Charles saw only the oaths and the treaties. They cut off all further prospect like a wall.

One day in the beginning of March, 1700, a hunting party was assembled at Kongsör, fourteen miles from Stockholm. The king was in a merry humor, and the Duke of Holstein, who constantly accompanied him, had an inexhaustible supply of wild hunting-stories. Now it was a fallow deer, now a wild boar, now an elector, now a comely miller-girl, that played the chief

rôle in these adventures. The king was pleased with them. The fresh spring air played about the pine forest; the snowdrifts melted at midday, and in the morning the snow crust bore up admirably.

The very first day, a bear was surrounded, and Hård came to receive his master's orders. The king turned to the duke:—"My brother said that the Elector of Brandenburg captured his wild-boars alive?"

"Yes," answered the duke. "He caught his game in snares, which he set in the beech woods and near the mill-dams."

"Snares I cannot endure," continued the king. "But if the elector caught wild boars, I will catch bears. Hård, have the net stretched. But let none of the hunters take their fire-arms with them."

"The bear-spears are in order," replied Hård.

"Not one of the hunters is permitted to take a spear."

"But," objected the astonished equerry, "these beasts are too rough to be taken by the collar."

"Get good cudgels for us all, three and a half feet long, oak or birch as you please. Station every man at his post, and give orders to beat the dust out of Bruin's pelt, wherever he shows himself. My brother shall see that we also understand the art," added he, rubbing his hands with delight at his new idea.

"A devil of a boy!" muttered Hård to himself; "his father was no soft fellow, but the son goes ahead as if he was iron-plated. We shall see; the devil will take him some fine day."

It was not long before the bear was driven out and rushed against the net. The first hunter knocked him down. Next to him stood Gösta Bertelsköld. His oak stick whistled through the air, and, hit upon the ear, Bruin fell with a crash to the ground, never to rise again.

"No," said the king, annoyed, "that will not do; you are too hard-handed. Select a lighter stick, and

have a little sense when you strike. Would you believe it, my brother," continued he, turning to the duke, "that boy lifts a full-grown man at arm's length over a fence."

The second bear was surrounded. He was scarcely out of his lodge before a hailstorm of cudgel blows so bewildered him that he slipped down in the snow and was bound without any considerable opposition. The king was not pleased, and the next time had the net so arranged that the bear had time to consider before he was taken. Hård swore in silence, but obeyed punctiliously.

This manœuver turned out satisfactorily. The third bear came out snarling, and at first sought a place where he might slip away by fair means. Not succeeding in this, and excited by the dogs, he raised himself on his hind legs, threw four of the hunters to the ground, wounded the duke, and was about to break away when he was felled by the united attack of the king and Arvid Horn.

The hunt continued several days. They went a long distance from Kongsör. They ate in peasant huts and hovels. They slept at the parsonages. Day scarcely dawned before the war against the king of the woods was renewed.

The fourth and fifth bears were caught without adventure. The sixth one escaped, was hunted all day and finally captured in a wolf-pit. The seventh put himself in an attitude of defense, killed a dog and hugged one of the king's grooms so energetically that the fellow was carried off more dead than alive. Rushing against the net, he was finally brought down by the king's own hand. If medals for bravery had been in vogue in those days, King Charles would have granted one to his valiant adversary.

The number of the captured reached thirteen, and they could not discover the track of another bear. The order to return had already been given, when the report came from the farthest line of hunters, that one bear

more was surrounded about a mile from the king's headquarters. The company immediately broke up and betook themselves again to the deep woods. King Charles was merry even to foolhardiness. They were about to stretch the net as usual. "Away with the net," shouted the king. The hunters obeyed, accustomed to see their master lucky in the boldest adventures. With no other weapons than their sticks, they formed a complete chain around the bear's den, and foremost among them all stood the king.

It was difficult to drive the bear out. In vain the dogs yelped; in vain were long poles thrust into the entrance of the den. The bear broke the poles asunder, and the dogs that went nearest returned with bloody noses. It was necessary to resort to smoke. Boughs of spruce and of juniper were collected around the hole and set on fire. In a moment the bear was heard snarling inside; finally his nose was seen at the opening, snuffing after air.

King Charles had the chain of hunters withdraw about thirty steps. At his side, in front of the den, he kept only the duke, Horn, Hård, and young Bertelsköld.

With scorched pelt and roaring with rage, the bear rushed out. Seeking his enemy, he cast himself with this beast's remarkable instinct straight against the king. At the same moment there hailed down on his head four powerful blows; the fifth, Bertelsköld's, glanced off, struck a stone, and the oaken cudgel was broken.

"Out of the way all! —one against one!" shouted the king, lifting his weapon for a second stroke. But before it fell the bear's heavy paw hit his right arm, tore open his coat, and knocked the cudgel out of his benumbed hand.

The king with his left hand snatched Horn's cudgel from him, but at the same time was thrown down; the duke and Hård sprang forward and succeeded in drawing the bear's wrath against themselves; heavy fell their

blows, but they were soon disarmed and their weapons broken. The hunters came nearer; but before any of them had reached the spot, Gösta Bertelsköld threw himself weaponless upon the bear to wrestle for the victory in good Swedish and Finnish fashion.

“One against one!” he also shouted.

“Well spoken!” the king was heard to say, as he arose, incapable of taking part in the strife.

Gösta had sprung for his enemy's body as he stood upon his hind-feet, and hoped with a single hold to throw him down into the snow. He had not taken into the account that he had by that means got the bear's foaming mouth over his head and one of his heavy paws over each shoulder. His hold missed, steady as it was. If the bear had now made use of his teeth, there certainly would be nothing more to tell of Gösta Bertelsköld. But, confused by the smoke and the blows, Bruin forgot to make the best of his advantage. His arms alone with their twelve-men's strength pressed him irresistibly to the earth. Gösta fell, but not alone; he drew the bear with him in his fall.

Then the king once more came forward, scorning all weapons that he might not be outdone, but more exposed than any of them because he had only the use of his left hand. The bear left his certain prey . . . he is seen to totter towards the king—to lift his terrible paw . . . a cry came from those standing by. But the lifted paw grew stiff and slowly descended—the animal's powers were exhausted—the bear staggered to one side like a drunken man; then the king seized him by the throat and without-difficulty cast him to the ground . . . and the heavy Colossus fell without resistance, without a sound, as if conscious of the right moment when he could fall with honor before Charles XII.

A loud shout of rejoicing from the whole chain of hunters accompanied the fall of the bear. The king regarded the fallen beast almost with friendship. “Bind him, but do not draw the cord too tight,” he

said to his equerry. "Get a sled decorated with young pines, and let the music sound. There shall be a feast whose like was never seen at Kongsör."

The command was executed. Fast bound, with moss under the ropes so that he might not be pained by the bonds, the bear was borne in triumph, with music, to the castle. The sun shone on the gay procession; the eye was blinded by the white snow. Old peasant women and children ran out to the highway to see the noisy troop go by. Old men and boys threw their hats in the air and hurraed for the king. The joyful shout of the hunters answered them. King Charles was happy—happier perhaps than at a later day after his bloody victories. Now the sun sank slowly behind the tops of the pines. His last rays played soft and clear over the king's high brow. With these rays the joy of childhood sent its last farewell to the great King Charles, for this day the sun went down upon his childhood's, his youth's, his whole life's peace.

At Kongsör there was a royal festival. In the court-yard there was hastily set up a guard of pine trees in which the living bears—as of old the captured kings in the triumphs of the Roman Emperors—were kept bound, and mingled their cries with the joyous tones of the music. The dead bears were made ready by the most skilful cooks of the court as an entertainment for the guests.

The whole population of the nearest villages, men, women, and children, assembled at the castle to bear witness to King Charles' at that time greatest victory. The supply of brandy was sufficient though moderate, but the ale ran in streams. Holland tobacco was abundant, and there were short pipes and long twists. The old sat and talked of the times of the now sainted king and his peaceful and happy reign, since the Reduction had lost its keenest edge and the great famine had ceased to afflict. Uncertain rumors of distant wars had reached even the common people. A

comet had been seen, and in Dalecarlia it had rained blood. A wise old woman in the country had dreamed that the whole of the Swedish kingdom was covered with gold and clothed in roses. She interpreted this according to the rule of dreams, "by contraries;" so there might be expected great poverty and much sorrow. But those who were more resolute and cheerful agreed that such dreams should be interpreted literally. The land and the people were accustomed to victory, and the uncultured man, in the habit of admiring courage and physical strength, judged more correctly than diplomats the young king's heroic power. An attentive observer would have seen that a presentiment of great victories went through the popular mind on the very evening before the war.

The young people danced in the great hall between the servants' rooms in the court buildings. The bugles played; such stately music had never been danced at Kongsör. The king with his suite came to look upon the dance, and was received with a great shout of rejoicing. In order to set off his bear feast, he had decorated his hunting dress with some of the ornaments of the time. King Charles still wore the long peruke which is seen in his portrait as crown prince and during the first years of his reign; he still wore the fine white lace necktie; the expensive collar had disappeared, but not the cuffs which he at a later period used to snatch off from his courtiers' arms and which in truth were too fragile to be suitable for the iron-hard struggles of his campaigns. The duke, although slightly wounded in the leg, was, like the king, in the merriest mood, and sportively pointed out the prettiest peasant girls. Probably it was at his suggestion that they had decorated the shaggy brow of the last and bravest bear with laurel leaves from the hot-house. Thereupon had they laid the crowned bear—bound, of course—upon a sled and drawn him unexpectedly into the hall and in the very midst of the dancers.

Those who knew nothing of the affair beforehand, started in astonishment in every direction ; the musicians forgot to play, everybody crowded back against the walls, and left a spacious place in the middle of the room, where was seen the king, somewhat surprised, awaiting what the bear had to say to him.

Walborg Ersdotter was the name of the prettiest peasant girl, a plump and blooming Westmanland lass, with right warm and languishing eyes, who would have been considered a beauty at the genteel court of King August. She now came forward, costumed as Diana as well as could readily be done with spruce twigs and bows and arrows, as spokesman for the bear. Quite resolutely, and without allowing herself to be frightened by his snarling, the maiden took the wreath from the bear's head and wound it about the king's brow, while she recited the following verses of an unknown author:

“ Since Northland soil its ranks of birch and pine tree beareth,
The scepter of the Forest king no equal shareth.
But from this moment he's no longer Earl—
Subdued he lays his crown before King Carl.

“ E'en so though vast the realm the King inherits,
Still greater that his valor gains, his wisdom merits ;
And while on mount or valley birch and pine remain,
His name renowned shall high be writ in Honor's fane.”

The king, in his good humor, accepted the homage both graciously and gaily, declaring that he would not take the crown of honor from so powerful and brave a ruler as the bear. To give immediate force to these words, he took the wreath from his own head and laid it again upon the bear's. Then he saw that the bear was still bound. “ It illy becomes a conqueror,” said he, “ to crown an enemy in bonds, as if in the ignominy and disgrace of his overthrow. Go, and be free for thy manhood's sake.”

Before anyone could approach or venture to make

a remonstrance, the king had taken out his hunting knife and cut the bear's bonds. At sight of this, great and small rushed with affright for the door. Only King Charles, and some of his men who did not wish to be less daring than he, remained, with hands on their sword-hilts and awaited with curiosity what the bear would undertake when he realized his freedom.

The forest's shaggy king did not seem much inclined to make use of his liberty. Snuffing, he slowly lifted his head, stretched out his benumbed limbs, and seemed to consider. Then he raised himself with difficulty from the sled, took a melancholy survey of the lights, made a few steps, tottered forward, sighed deeply and stretched himself out motionless before the king. They looked at him more closely; he was dead, and his laurel wreath, which King Charles had so handsomely returned, he had cast before his conqueror's feet.

The king touched the animal with his foot; it lay there without sound, without life. The event was easily accounted for by those who were witnesses of the chase. But so unexpected an ending to a hazardous jest had almost the appearance of a miracle, and did not fail of its impression on a young mind. The king was silent.

The duke, on the other hand, exclaimed cheerfully: "Upon my honor as a hunter, sire, this untutored beast has paid your majesty a compliment which the most elegant courtier ought to envy him. Halloo! brave heroes and heroines, who so graciously guard the door on the outside, come in, there is no danger here; Bruin has had more sense than all of you."

The whole troop streamed in, and if the jubilation had been noisy before, it now became next to wild. The mighty bear was borne away in triumph. With the first inspiration, the crowd lifted the king upon their shoulders. Old men, boys, girls, all strove to assist in bearing the young monarch, whose look was pow-

erful enough to cause the freed king of the forest to cast himself before the feet of the master.

"Wine here!" shouted the duke, while the king still sat on high, upon the shoulders of his people. Wine came. The improvised Diana reached the beaker to the king. He accepted it. At the same time the duke whispered so loud that those standing nearest heard him: "Diana, in the deepest humility, implores your majesty to deign to gladden her with a gracious kiss."

Immediately many arms were in readiness, and lifted the frightened girl, without heeding her opposition, to a level with the king. "Kiss her," whispered the duke softly. "The people would construe your majesty's refusal as contempt."

Never before or afterwards in his whole life was King Charles in so remarkable a position. Seventeen years old, a beaker in one hand, a beautiful girl at the other; round about him jubilation and shouts of acclamation. All the feelings of youth surged through his soul. He blushed like a boy, and wished he was seven leagues away.

Then the courier's bell was heard in the court. But the king, though hesitating, lifted the cup and drank to his faithful peasants. Then he leaned to one side, timorous and shy, and kissed Walborg Ersdotter. An immeasurable shout of joy at this moment arose from the lips of the surrounding guests.

At the same time the door opened, and Count Piper, gloomy and ominous of evil, stood among the assembled multitude.

The crowd did not notice him, but the king, raised high towards the roof, saw him at once. With a spring he stood upon the floor, and the wine from his half emptied goblet sprinkled those standing near, as well as the beautiful Walborg's glowing cheek.

"What news?" said he, curtly and hastily, to the

new guest, whose high rank at once led him to suspect an important errand.

“Bad news!” answered the count, in a low voice. “Will it please your majesty to grant me a private audience?”

“Bad news!” repeated the king, as now opportunely freed from his dangerous position, he felt himself extremely bold and joyous. “No, my dear count, I pray you spare your news till a more convenient season. To-day we have no time to listen to it.”

“I beg your majesty’s pardon, but the affair is of moment and will not admit of delay.”

“Follow me, gentlemen!” continued the king, without appearing to hear the objection. “These good people need refreshments, and—Hård, where are you? Is not the roast bear smoking in the dining-room?”

“The meal is ready, your majesty.”

“Come, sir count,” said the duke, somewhat satirically; “I protest that you will not run the least risk, for the bugbear we are now to conquer is perfumed like a courtier, fat as a capuchin monk, appetizing as a Dalecarlian girl, and as well roasted as an honest soldier. *Allons.*”

Kongsör’s kitchen and dining-room had to-day outdone themselves. The table bent under its weight of dishes, among which a bear’s head dressed with parsley and laurel leaves occupied the place of honor. French and Spanish wine gleamed in great silver tankards. Before each guest stood a silver goblet, large enough to prove the powers of him who would pledge with it. One might think himself carried back to the voracious times of the regency.

After a short grace, platters and goblets were seized with a hunter’s hunger and a hunter’s thirst. No one was allowed to be absent; the wounded hunters hobbled in; among them was the half-squeezed-to-death Gösta Bertelsköld.

Everyone must drink. When the king's glance fell upon the embarrassed and uneasy Piper, it was only to seize the tankard and nod to him a *res severas in crastinum!* Never was King Charles seen to drink so much; and yet he only drank like a girl. But the tried veteran in the art began to hope that he "in time would learn manhood."

Wine flowed and the company became noisy. Fierce military exploits, wild hunting stories, amusing love adventures, made up the talk. Gyllenburg, challenged to improvise, stood upon a table and declaimed, travestying, "King Carl's first victory: "

"When chaste Diana's tempting lips to Mars were offered,
Sly Bacchus smiled; by Cupid, Venus's message proffered.
Go quick, my son"—

Just then the great clock on the wall struck twelve. Piper arose, but the king motioned to the poet to continue.

"Go quick, my son, to Vulcan be it spoken,
That Virtue's slightly scratched, the coat of mail is broken."

One more resounding shout of joy—the last—accompanied the poet's jest. But thereupon King Charles arose with sudden gravity, turned to Piper and said: "Sir Count, I have promised my friends a pleasant day. It is ended, and I am prepared to hear you. You see about you men who betray nothing. Speak out freely; what have you to tell me?"

"Your majesty," said Piper hesitatingly. "The Danes are making progress. Holstein is laid waste. Tönningen is about to fall. *War is inevitable.*"

"Proceed!" said the king with a hasty glance at the duke, who reddened deeply.

"The Czar Peter has brought together one hundred thousand men against Ingermanland. Reliable information has arrived that he has made an alliance with

Poland and Denmark in order to take from Sweden her Baltic provinces. *War is inevitable.*"

"Proceed!" said the king, as he mechanically took up a beaker of Spanish wine standing near.

"The Saxons and the Poles have marched into Livonia. Flemming has taken the Kobruun fortification by storm and bombarded Riga. Count Dahlberg asks for reinforcements. *War is inevitable.*"

With these words a red stream, as of blood, spurted over the white table-cloth. It was the Spanish wine in the silver beaker which the king had unconsciously pressed together in his hand. A dark cloud had spread over his high brow. Oaths were broken, treaties mocked, faith and honor forfeited. But King Charles only answered :

"You are right. *War is inevitable.*"

Thereupon he turned to the duke, tall, haughty, grave as he had never before been seen. All trifling ordinary affairs which usually take possession of men's minds and soothe their passions had now disappeared ; before his youthful eyes there spread out vast prospects of a righteous war, even if it were against a whole world. "It is wonderful," said he, "that both my cousins will have war. Then so let it be. King August has broken his word and proceeded contrary to oath and treaty. We have a righteous cause. God will indeed help us. I will first transact business with one of them ; then I can say a word or two to the other."

From that day King Charles laid aside all ornament in dress, all luxuries of food, all diversion, everything except his royal calling.

From that day war became his noble chase and whistling balls his music.

From that day he drank neither ale nor wine, only water.

From that day he never kissed the lips of woman.

From that day he became a hero, for whom the

standard of common men was not made; great in prosperity, greater in adversity, unique in virtues, unique in faults, admired by many, understood by few, and equalled by none.

CHAPTER III.

HOW THE LION BEGINS TO HUNT.

*Letter from Gustaf Adolph Bertelsköld, Ensign in the Life-Dragoons, to his sister Ebba Bertelsköld, maid of honor to Her Royal Highness the princess Ulrika Eleonora.**

NARVA, December 7th, 1700.

MA TRÉS CHÈRE SŒUR.

Ever since our meeting last spring, when we amused ourselves so admirably, and I at the last was somewhat ill after the scuffle at Kongsör, and my sister so lovingly cured me with salves and music, that I, God be praised, now live, since that time have almost eight months gone by, in much confusion; from which I have my excuse for most humbly begging you to not to take amiss my great neglect; because I am poor at writing as master Schönberg can testify, for he once, at Majniemi, likened my writing to a magpie's scratching in the new fallen snow.

I have duly received your letters of May 8th and August 14th, for which I cannot say enough about how they pleased me; and I beg you to learn from these crooked lines, my brotherly gratitude. I have now more time than I have had, although I lie here at Narva in the hospital to cure a scratch received in the charge

*The Carolinian orthography in this letter, the Surgeon has corrected with the exception of a few words.

against the Russians; it was nothing more than a musket ball in the left shoulder, and it is taken out successfully, so that now, after two weeks, I have permission to write ; but not before Christmas will they let me sit on a horse.

You, my dear sister, have of course already learned by the great newspapers of our victories against the Dane as well as the Russian; yet I think it will not be unpleasant to you to hear something more about it from one who was along and applauded till his arms were tired. You probably remember the day last winter when I threw Gustaf Otto Douglas down stairs for slandering the Finnish nobility, by saying that they were bull-heads who were not ashamed to talk their dirty Finnish language among themselves in the royal castle itself; for all of which Douglas, when he went out, forgot to count the steps in the stairway. And when I escaped arrest you remember that Eva Falkenberg told me that I was courageous enough to attack a poor page who was younger than I, but what manhood I had to show the enemies of the country, that she would not say. And you remember that just then your book lay open on the table, whereupon I said without counting the leaves: Miss Eva shall know that I will not come back to Stockholm before I with God's help have a victory or at least an honorable encounter to record on every page of sister Ebba's memorandum book. And to this Eva Falkenberg answered: "I do not believe it; you may take pleasure in clubbing bears." Then I said: "What will you promise me if it happens as I said?" And she replied: You can ask me anything you please and I will not refuse it.' "Is that true?" said I. "Yes," said she "as sure as the cock on St. Jacobs' Church tower; before he crows I will not fail." And now I desire you to begin the record and print on the first page Seland (or Tiberup) and on the second page in somewhat larger letters, NARVA. After that I will slowly continue the row until the book is filled; be-

fore that is done I dare not go back to Stockholm; perhaps it is better that I do not know how many leaves there are.

I will tell you here that on the 14th of April last spring I went in the king's suite from Stockholm to Malmö. We were there about twelve thousand men, and it was clear the Jutlander's hide was at stake. But there was some hindrance to the fleet which should unite with the English and Dutch fleets, so that we did not get into action before the 25th of July,* which was Sunday, between five and six o'clock in the afternoon. I wish you could have seen the beautiful sight we had from the fleet when the red flag was hoisted on the mainmast of the admiral-ship, Fredrike Amalia; but the king was on the yacht Sophie. The wind was not hard at the time, yet enough to make the horses on the deck stamp impatiently; otherwise the weather was splendidly clear and warm. Zealand lay green before us, with its beech-woods; Humlebäck manor and a light-house, and a wind-mill where the miller had no time to grind. Many boats pushed off from the ship, rowing towards land, but the water became too shallow; then Major Carl Numers with his guard sprang out of the boat and waded to land, and his battalion with him. When the king saw this, he was seized by such a sudden fit of impatience that no one could restrain him, but he jumped into the sea up to his arms and motioned with his sword to the others to do the same. They were at once followed by Count Piper; but the most laughable was to see the French Ambassador, Monsieur Guiscard, in his elegant black silk stockings jump down into the water, although the king said: "Monsieur has no crow to pluck with the Danes!"

Then the Jutlanders shot from the shore with six small cannons, so that the water during the time was colored red; but 400 cavalry who lay concealed in the edge of the woods to hew down the Swedes had hardly

*All these dates are in old style.

ventured to advance, when our big guns on the ships hailed down about them like peas, tearing up the sand and stones like a tornado. The horses went down, and there was no help for it. It did not fare any better with the Danish infantry, which consisted of 300 peasants who had been promised freedom from thralldom if they would serve in the field. The Jutlander was hunted to the woods before dark; and when King Charles had won this brilliant victory, he fell upon his knees and thanked God. The same evening our camp was pitched on the shore.

We cavalry-men were of all this, merely spectators;—with what an earnest attention you can well imagine. No more could land that day on account of the darkness, and the following Monday it blew very hard from the northwest, so that when a boat pushed off a sea immediately rolled over it, and thus some lost their lives. The sea that day was also hard on the horses, and in our regiment alone nearly half a score broke their legs; but on Tuesday there was favorable weather and we got ashore. In camp the talk was, that perplexity and fright prevailed in Copenhagen, for their king was absent in Holstein. Schack the commandant was so checkmated by our arrival that he did not know whether he stood on his head or his feet. But the students and some of the citizens went upon the walls to meet us in a manly way, and like honest men to defend their country; for no one could think otherwise than that King Charles would invest the capital with his army and make an entrance there quicker than his sainted grandfather, in his time, had been able to do.

You may think that I do not deserve a place in the book, for the little exertion I had in beholding a victory; so I will mention that I was sent out with my squadron to clear the land of the cavalry-men who had taken to the woods to save themselves. In this we had several engagements, in which we did so well that we returned with forty prisoners. It is certain that we had more

trouble in protecting Zealand than we had in taking it, for some of our men, especially among the Dutch and English sailors who landed from the fleets, undertook to plunder the grounds of the nobility. This we had to prevent by force, and not without blows ; for it was the king's will that lord and peasant should each retain his own. When the Danish serf understood this, and thought how the stewards drove him to the plow with whips, he became very friendly to us. A peasant was captured and brought a prisoner to camp; the king at once turned him loose and put a bright silver dollar in his hand, saying: "Go to your work, my good old man; I have not come to seek your ruin, but simply in good neighborly friendship." Whereupon the old Jutland father wept heartily and the tears rolled down into his beard as he answered: "God bless your majesty, you do us no harm; you are indeed our pious Ulrika's son!"

When King Fredrik found that the people came in crowds to our camp, so that it was more a market there than at Copenhagen, his intentions were changed and he concluded peace at Travendahl, promising to keep the old treaty and to pay King Charles two hundred and sixty thousand rix-dollars for war expenses. Many of us could not cease to wonder when we heard it as we were advancing towards a public house at Remgsted, about fifteen miles from Copenhagen, believing that an attack was at hand. Some thought the king acted like a boy, knowing how to conquer, but not how to make use of his victory; the Jutlander would of course bite us in the heel as soon as we turned our backs. That may those judge who are wiser, God reigns over us all. Only this I can assure my dear sister: all Europe has seen with astonishment that our king is so unlike other princes that he desires naught but justice; right for all; although he has power to impose the severest conditions; yes, even to demand the whole of Norway, (and I believe the Jutlanders with aching eyes would consent to it,) instead of this the king said to the peasants when he went

away: I should be sorry if any especial harm should come to you; what I have done I have done against my will, but you can rest assured that from this moment I will be your king's sincerest friend.*

The sport in Zealand ended merrily in four weeks, to the great glory of the king and the colors of Sweden. The Finns were not present—since you told me not to fail to tell you how they behaved when it so happened that the king had them in the fire with his “blue boys.”

You would hardly recognize the king now since we have taken the field. His majesty has laid aside his long peruke and combs his hair upwards, which makes him look exceedingly resolute; he wears a black neckerchief that you perhaps would not admire, and no gambling or hard drinking is permitted in the whole army. The Danish ladies have been dreadfully curious to see his majesty, and when some of the noblemen have come to the camp they have had their wives with them, but his majesty did not take it graciously.

There was also in the camp a Russian fellow, Chilkoff, sent out by Czar Peter with great demonstrations of friendship and assurances that there should be nothing but peace and quiet in the East; at which the king was very glad. And it seemed to him very wrong of Monsieur Guiscard to speak so often of the three hundred iron cannons which his majesty had lately presented to Czar Peter to be used against the Turks; as if these cannons might be turned against his majesty. But this his majesty would not believe until, in Skåne, he learned his mistake.

You may hereafter remember that after we returned to Sweden the king reviewed his body-guard at Christianstad; they are only one hundred and fifty men, but every one of them is a hero. The king himself is their captain, the lieutenants are not less than colonels, and

*“When I traveled through Denmark,” said the Surgeon, “the people pointed out after a hundred years Charles XII's spring in Enerum, and near Rongsted there stands an old beach tree whose top is called Charles XII's crown.”

every corporal is a lieutenant-colonel, and the men themselves are captains either of cavalry or infantry; they have such a bearing and such strength that no better hand ever held a sword. My dear sister, pray faithfully for me that I also may yet be worthy of so great an honor; then I should be satisfied if the opportunity offer while I am young, to give my life for king and fatherland. I ought not to think of that, but I will deport myself as if I would do it: it may be that Miss Eva will have entirely forgotten my insignificant self before such a thing can come to pass.

In the autumn we went to Carlshamn, to go over to Livonia and pull fingers with the Saxon king, since he is said to be so uncommonly strong. News came from Narva that the Russians had entered the country with a great force and were laying it waste; and this occurred immediately after the declaration of war was published at Moscow. You may not be any better posted in politics than I am; so we will leave it to others to consider the alleged causes of the war, such as that his imperial majesty's ambassador, when the czar also was present, three years ago, was poorly entertained by Count Dahlberg at Riga, and was also charged a high price for poor quarters, etc., etc. But one thing I will not omit: you surely remember the steward Casper Klingenstjerna, who was in debt to God and all the world; it is complained among other things in the declaration of war that he owes the Russians and will not pay.

His majesty did not say much when he heard it, but he said to Admiral Ankerstjerna: "Do not steer to Riga, but to Revel." We embarked the first day of October, and the king and his body-guard with him were on the ship *Westmanland*; I had the good fortune to be with them. It was a severe voyage, dreadful storm and waves, so that the king, although he bit his teeth together, was quite overcome by sea-sickness and had to go into Pernau on the yacht *Sophie*, whither some of the ships accompanied him. But the others,

after having cruised in hard weather off Helsingfors, came with great difficulty into the harbor at Revel. There we found that the Russians invested Narva with a large force, but Henning Horn defended himself to the uttermost like a brave cavalier. Autumn went steadily along, but King Charles was not dilatory. All the available troops were moved to a city called Wesenberg, and the Finnish troops from Åbo and Helsingfors were taken over to the same place. The king reviewed us the 6th day of November, and the whole army, cavalry, infantry and artillery, was found to be thirteen thousand men; that day we received an extra allowance.

Five thousand young men were left to guard Esthonia, so we were not more than eight thousand and perhaps three hundred over, who started out against the Muscovites. On this account many said to the king: "Do not be insane." (I am not positive that any spoke so uncivilly, but they did not think otherwise), and Monsieur Guiscard was especially diligent in dissuading the king. Yet his majesty held to his design and let nothing frustrate his plans; answering: "If they were twice as many I would save Narva, for God is with us and we have a just cause."

The 13th of November we began the march upon Narva over the worst roads I ever saw. We marched without baggage, in rain and fogs, and all the country about us was desolate, after the enemy's advance. You would certainly pity my horse Bogatir, who you remember was foaled at Majniemi of a Polish breed; in five days he did not get more than two meals of oats and a little dry grass; it caused my Finnish groom many a deep sigh. But the 17th, we overtook a Russian party that Schermetoff had sent out foraging, and seized so many bundles of hay that Bogatir ate his fill.

It was still better that Schermetoff at once abandoned Pyhäjoki pass, and immediately afterwards Silmäggo (Siltamaki), where all expected a severe struggle, and thus we came on the morning of the 19th to

Laggena forest ten miles from here; but we were very tired, and chilled through; the infantry especially let their weapons fall from weariness, and the horses hung their ears just like post-horses. Whereupon we were compelled to rest almost in sight of the enemy; the officers got wine and the men ale to warm themselves with, for it was pretty cold and most of them slept in the open air. I cannot tell you with what wonderful thoughts we passed that night; we knew an attack would be made and that we poor weary soldiers in cold and darkness had against us eighty thousand men in a fully equipped camp fortified with all art. But we trusted in God, and our young king, who shared with us every vicissitude, having in his tent his sword by his side and his Bible by his pillow; and young Stenbock, the king's page, told me that his majesty spread his own cloak over him that night because it was so cold.

Now, my dear sister, I am too poor a writer to adequately describe that day, which was the 20th of November, and which no one can soon forget. But this I will not omit: That the enemy's fortified camp, with one hundred and forty-five cannons, extended in a crescent on three sides of the town, and both points of the crescent rested on the banks of Narva river, and the town had the river behind it on the fourth side. The czar was not there; he had gone away that morning, and left the Duke of Croy in command.

At ten o'clock the double Swedish gun was fired, and we awaited in vain the advance of the enemy. The king rode about in the sunshine and took a careful survey of the situation; as he halted his body-guard he noticed his humble servant and nodded to me, saying: "Gösta, now we shall hunt the bear out of his den," which came to pass as the king said.

At two o'clock in the afternoon we saw two signal rockets from our men rise up over the woods, and immediately two were seen to arise from the town in reply. "God with us!" was our watchword, and we

advanced briskly, and the enemy's pieces began to play so that the ground shook. Hitherto we had had clear weather, but now the skies darkened and became black, and a strong northerly wind blew through the woods, and at the same time it began to snow and the wind drove the whole cloud of snow over the Russian camp so that the enemy were entirely blinded and could not sight their guns nor see our movements.

Our thirty-seven pieces soon began their lusty music in the driving storm. The right wing under Gen. Wellingk rushed forward in a race with the storm. The first to arrive was Lieut. Rehnsköld with fifty grenadiers; after them came the guard; then the Westmanlanders, Helsingers, and Åbolanders, under Tiesenhausen. Next followed the cavalry under Wachtmeister; the first life-dragoons under Hamilton; the Nylanders under Klingsporre; Carl Magnus Rehbinder's Finnish dragoons and his brother Hans Henrik Rehbinder's Karelsha cavalry. The victory was an exceedingly speedy one, for the Russian cavalry, thrown into confusion, flew with loose reins to the river: as many as could, rode across, but the current there was swift and many drowned. But the Russian infantry did not slip away, and darkness coming on at that time nothing more could be done by us that day.

The sport was more severe on the left wing—which had against it the strongest fortifications and was led under fire by Gen. Majdel and Gen. Magnus Stenbock. Majdel's boys advanced on the right; first the grenadiers under Klessendorf, Grandel, and Roos; then a battalion of Finns under Mellin, another under Lode, and a battalion of 'Tavastehus' regiment under Major Berg, who fell at the head of his battalion; next came the Wermlanders under Fock, then infantry from the same place under Feiletz, then Finns again under Sasse. At the same time the Dalcarlians under Stenbock and the Åbo infantry under Hastfer advanced; nothing could restrain the king, but he, with Rehns-

köld and the body-guard, with a part of the life-dragoons under B. Rehbinder, a noble troop of horse under Liewen, and a part of the Åbo cavalry, burst forth against Wepsekylä, who was in a position commanding both lines. I can assure you, as I was there, that it was no joke, but under a violent fire we moved upon the entrenchments and beat our way with pikes and swords. In a short time we had thrown them all topsy-turvy, after which the enemy, who, in the confusion and the storm, had so mixed themselves up that not a single regiment could obey orders or use their swords, ran at full speed down to the bridge and crowded on it so excessively that the bridge broke under them and they perished miserably in the river, by thousands.

But the worst work yet remained. With the river before them, and defeat behind them, the Muscovites made a stand behind their baggage and defended themselves with the courage of desperation. They were still four to one; they could not yield, they would not die. The king sent the right wing to the assistance of the left, but the autumn darkness fell over us and there was severe shooting between the Dalecarlians and the guard who did not recognize each other in the darkness. Nevertheless it turned out to our advantage, for it made the Russians mistrust their German command and talk of treachery, so that Croy and the other gentlemen were compelled to surrender to us for their own safety. After that bait the mass of the enemy surrendered, some in the night and some the next day; and they were treated in a friendly manner, the poor starved men receiving food, and the wounded having their wounds dressed according to their condition. But since they were so many, we could not keep them, but they were compelled to lay down their arms and walk past the king bare-headed, with staves in their hands; then they were allowed to go home again. In this way we released more

than twenty thousand men ; but Croy and the other leaders we kept as prisoners, treating them with all respect. Croy is said to have received from the king one thousand ducats, as he had nothing left but the clothes he had on.

You will undoubtedly hear from others a better description of this great day of victory ; I will only say that of the enemy, eighteen thousand fell or were drowned ; of our men, the dead and wounded numbered about two thousand. And we captured their whole camp, and relieved the city, which we entered on the third day amid the beating of drums and the ringing of bells.

Although every one of our men fought as though he had no more respect for his life than for a rotten thong, the king was without an equal. Wherever the sport was most vigorous, was his majesty certain to be found ; he got a ball in his neckcloth, and lost his sword and one of his boots in a bog ; we drew him out with difficulty, and he won his great victory in his stockings. If you wish to know about the Finns, I will say in truth : first, that all the cavalry, excepting the lifedragoons, were Nakota Finns, and besides a third part of the infantry, so that fully one half of the whole force at Narva was Finns ; they have, like all Swedes, honestly paid for the day's honor with their hearts' red blood.

Concerning your humble servant, I will not weary you longer than to say that I hewed in with the rest and that Bogatir got off with a scratch on the neck. In the last encounter near the river bank, on the left wing, I felt a little prick in the shoulder, but did not notice that it was a ball, until I rode a little way and fainted quite unexpectedly from loss of blood. After I had lain there three or four hours in the bloody snow by the side of many dead, I was taken up and carried to the surgeon ; but he had no time to attend to me before the

next day in the afternoon. It was not ended without a grimace, but it is nothing to speak of; joy made me well again.

You can never imagine what a heart-felt pleasure it is to fight and conquer under the great King Charles. There, no one cares for wounds or death, but only the high honor of bleeding by such a hero's side. You will hardly believe me, when I say that the common soldier thinks he shares the king's greatness, and is at the moment more than a nobleman. It is fortunate that you cannot now see our king—you would be smitten with love, and he would not understand it. Give my best love to our gracious mother, and send her this letter. Do not forget the memorandum book and your sincere and faithful brother,

G. A. B.

P. S.—I dare not send regards to Miss Eva. This crooked letter has cost me eight days' work. *Adieu, mon cœur.*

CHAPTER IV.

AURORA KÖNIGSMARK.

A COLD winter evening in January, 1702, two young officers sat in their tent near the castle of Würgen, in Courland, in the vicinity of which King Charles had his headquarters. They had, in accordance with the king's suggestion, covered the roof with straw, and had done their best to keep it warm with glowing cannon-balls. But their efforts were altogether too feeble to contend with the severe January cold. By the glimmer of the single miserable tallow candle which lighted the tent, one could see the young warriors' breath like smoke fading away in the frosty winter atmosphere.

Count Charles Lindsköld, a captain of the guards, drew the straw on the ground closer under his campstool, seized a glass that stood on the table near him, and emptied its rich Rhenish contents, which he had secretly brought with him under his cloak. Thus armed against the cold, he continued the confidential conversation with his friend, his equal in age, Count Gustaf Adolf Bertelsköld, now lieutenant in the life-dragoons.

“What the devil were you doing at Triski? I heard the discreet Stenbock, forgetting his usual caution, say to Piper: ‘But, sir count, it is war no longer, it is boy’s play.’”

“Stenbock may be a wise man, but what he does not understand is King Charles. Should we patiently endure seeing Oginski wander about our camp every day like a goat? Now in our flank, now in our rear, never where he was looked for, always where he was not expected, doing us more harm—the devilish fellow—with his three to five hundred horsemen, than all the rest of the Polish and Saxon army taken together. ‘The devil will take him,’ said the king one day;—no, he did not swear; you know, Lindsköld, it is all foolishness to swear, it has no blessing with it, and the king never swears. Well, now, we marched out in the beginning of December and assembled at Schanen; not a soul knew what was to be done. We were eleven hundred mounted men of Hummerhjelm and Meyerfelt, and we expected in addition four hundred infantry to come after us on sleds; if we had only had Oginski to deal with, a squadron or two would have been enough; but the Courlanders are the devil’s own. Is it not devilish that I continually swear? You taught me that, Lindsköld; it is your fault; but I must break myself of it.”

Lindsköld laughed. “Take care lest some fine day you see his satanic majesty in petticoats,” said he. “You read your Bible, I suppose, like the others?”

“Yes, of course. Seriously, I do so nearly every

day, and you ought to do it, too. The king reads every morning a chapter or two of the Bible."

"It is understood, since the king does it, we must all do it. Well, to proceed; let the devil be at peace, and tell me how it went at Triski."

"Everywhere we went, Oginski had just been there. We ran after him as a child runs after a rainbow. In that way we came to Samogitien, and the infantry could no longer follow us. One evening in the twilight we saw before us a castle and a few miserable cabins, which were honored with the name of a town. This was Triski. The castle and the town belonged to Oginski, and consequently must be captured. A little river flowed by, and the bridge was destroyed; but we had no time to wait. Therefore—horses and men into the water—*usch!*—it was like being plunged through a hole in the ice. But we got over successfully, wet through up to the neck, and frozen till our teeth chattered. All the inhabitants had run away from the town; only the priest and the sexton were discovered on a hay-mow. However, it was good to have a fire and a bit to eat; the king took up his quarters in the castle, the rest of us in the town, and all fared like princes. Just as we had become partially dried, and had stretched ourselves out comfortably on the straw and were about to go to sleep, those devilish Poles were upon us like Jehu—there, I swore again! We were wakened by cries and alarms; the town was on fire; it was eleven o'clock in the evening. Naked or half-clad, some in white linen, having hung up their clothes to dry,—we hastily got up. 'What is the matter?' 'Oginski is here.' 'Where?' No one knew. Sach and Flemming were the first to meet, and they slashed away like madmen. It was so dark that no one could see his hand before his face. In a moment we heard the king shout: 'Hew away, boys!' And we did so without knowing where the blows fell. Then we noticed that it grew thinner around us; Ogin-

ski had turned about ; before we were fairly awake, he had slipped away from us."

"Or we from him. No sentries out ; admit now that this was boy's play !"

"He got away, that is the vexatious part of it. We pursued him towards Kovno, and rode in sight of the enemy over Niemen, letting the horses swim by the side of the flat-boats. Oginski fled, we garrisoned Kovno. From there we rode through forests and waste country back to the army. 'Take more men, your majesty; the country swarms with enemies,' said Hummerhjelm.

"'More men !' said the king, pointing at the few of us who accompanied him; 'do you not see, Colonel, that I am the tenth ?'

"In fact we were barely ten. It was a hard ride. More than once a shot was discharged through the bushes. Poles and Courlanders swarmed about us like gnats. But every one took us for the advance guard of a large body of troops and let us pass. For five days—night and day—we rode, fought, froze and starved. On the sixth day we heard the Swedish watch-cry and recognized the smoke of roast mutton. I assure you, Lindsköld, we ate a buck apiece."

"The whole camp was in a state of anxiety. They thought the king was lost and sent Arvid Horn with the life-guards to seek him. Do you intend to let your sister write 'Triski' in her memorandum-book ?"

"Think you it merits it ? Tiberup, Narva and Düna stand there already ; Triski is a mere trifle."

"I will tell you of an opportunity to do something better. Have you ever seen a witch ?"

"A witch ? oh yes. I remember that I saw one in Åbo several years ago. The people really had no other testimony against her than that she looked wicked and was blear-eyed."

"Dear Gösta, what a child you are. The worst witches do not look like that. Imagine a tall, stately

female figure, beautiful as the spring sun in a dark cloud, flashing eyes, voluptuous figure, seductive grace, costume of a queen, bearing of an empress. . . . In a word, we spoke just now of satan in petticoats—since one must not say the devil before your delicate ears. Will you see the original? Believe me, it would be a victory for your sister Ebba's book more worthy to be presented to Eva Falkenberg than Tiberup, Narva and Düna."

"Listen, Carl; I believe you have looked too deep into the bottle. True;—not a drop left!"

"This is the result of theological studies during army life. The poor boy always pictures the devil with a pair of knotty horns and one foot of a horse or a goat, according to taste. But we free-thinkers, who have considered the question among ourselves and in society, do not think the devil so stupid. We know right well that he can be amiable at times, when he will—he, or rather she, for now we are talking of a witch."

"What witch?"

"The Countess Königsmark."

"I have not the honor of an acquaintance with that worthy personage."

"Have you not seen every afternoon for two or three weeks a carriage drive out from the castle, take the road to the king's tent, and then after a long circuit drive back to the castle again? In the carriage sits a lady dazlingly beautiful!"

"Yes—I will call it to mind."

"You will call it to mind? Look me straight in the eyes, Gösta! Yes, by Cupid's darts, I really believe the boy has never seen the Countess Königsmark. And yet the whole camp is talking of her. They say that she is sent here by King August, and that she has made use of every means to obtain an audience with our king. But you remember how Walborg Ersdotter's kiss pained his lips like glowing coals. King Charles is too wise for the siren. *Apropos*, Bertelsköld, I have

a proposition to make you. Station yourself for seven days by the road where the carriage passes, and look closely at the countess who sits therein. If you, after seven days, have left in your heart a single corner for the haughty brunette, Eva Falkenberg, then you may write with good conscience to your sister : *Mon cœur*, I have won more than Narva ; I have seen Aurora Königs-mark, and have not been conquered !”

“ You talk nonsense !”

“ Depend upon it. Adieu, my boy. You have it so deuced cold in your tent, and the wine is all gone. The watchword to-night is ‘Kongsör.’ I wish we were there !”

With these words the jolly captain took his departure, humming a song, perhaps intending to look up other comrades who had more to offer. Gösta Bertelsköld threw himself on his bed and tried to while away the evening thinking of his friends away in the North. Now he called to mind his mother, the noble and haughty countess ; now his brother Torsten, who still breathed the air of the court of France ; now his beloved sister Ebba, in the first beauty of her youth ; now a dark-eyed Eva who had perhaps already forgotten her wandering knight ; now it was Stockholm’s palaces ; now Kongsör’s hunting music ; now childhood memories of Majniemi, which had left both with Gösta and his sister an imperishable love for Finland. All these images wove themselves together in the young warrior’s thoughts, and with them mingled his dreams of ambition and his bold plans for future victories. Gösta Bertelsköld had already been in the school of Charles XII ; he saw nothing impossible to a good conscience, a strong arm and undaunted courage ; but in everything outside of this, and especially in everything that belonged to the free gallantry of the times, he was still, as his friend remarked, a perfect child.

And yet, was it so very strange, that under all these circumstances the beautiful countess’s image more than

once returned to the mind of this youth of nineteen? His curiosity was awakened; he sought to recall the lady in the carriage; he imagined that she was really uncommonly beautiful; and what a contrast was such a vision to the uniformity of camp life! The more Gösta thought of it the more curious he became to see again a woman of whom for ten years all Europe had spoken as a miracle of genius and beauty.

The impatient youth left the tent. It was already eight o'clock in the evening; a clear, starry sky looked down over the snowy district where the tents stood in rows like drifts. Scarcely three hundred yards away were seen the lights of the castle. Gösta knew that Stenbock occupied one wing, and that the main building was allotted to the court martial. But he guessed also that a smaller wing was assigned for the present to the Countess Königsmark. In that very wing gleamed a wonderfully clear light.

Who has not at some time experienced the peculiar sensation with which of a winter evening one beholds such a light, when the imagination connects it with an object which for the moment has an especial interest? Gösta Bertelsköld looked at the light, he looked away, and then looked at it again. Almost unconsciously he found himself at the castle gate, and was awakened out of his dream by the sentry's challenge.

He blushed before the man; it would be ludicrous to turn back. "I might call on young Stenbock," he said to himself, careful to quiet his conscience. "Kongsör!" answered our lieutenant, and was soon in the castle court.

Gösta had not visited the castle before. He was entirely unacquainted with its interior. Finding no one in the court, he went at random up the steps which in the darkness he conjectured were the right ones. The steps led to a long and dark corridor. "I must finally meet some one who can show me to Stenbock's room,"

thought the young man, as he groped his way upwards, feeling with his hand along the wall.

He was suddenly grasped by the arm. "Is it you?" said an unknown voice.

Bertelsköld's hand went to his sword-hilt. But immediately regaining his presence of mind he answered in the same tone: "Yes it is I."

Again was he ready in silencing his conscience. "How can so stupid a question get any other answer?" he thought to himself.

"Follow me," said the unknown. "You can take hold of my sash and then you will not have to grope along the walls. It is on your account that I was ordered to put out all the lights in the stairways."

"Just so, on my account!" thought Bertelsköld.

"You are punctual to the second," continued the guide. "But how did you learn the watchword to-night?"

"H—m!" answered the lieutenant within his dawning mustache. Whom was he taken for?

"I understand . . . a little gold. It is not worth while for the Swedes to boast of their honesty. But you did not meet any one in the court-yard? I think you would not come out more than even if Stenbock had a scent of your presence here."

"H—m!" answered the young warrior again. To himself he thought: "It looks like an agreeable adventure. Monsieur, I had a good mind to write 'Swedish honesty' on your back. But, patience! let us see what it comes to."

"Now we are here," said the guide, after they had gone through several passages as dark as the first. "Step in here and wait till I announce you."

Gösta Bertelsköld stood alone in the dark room about five minutes. All kinds of strange thoughts crossed each other in his young brain. What was wanted? What expected? What feared? Ought he

to stay? Ought he to fly? No one answered. It seemed to him that he heard in the distance the tones of a guitar; immediately afterwards all was silent, dark and mysterious.

Then the double doors at the farther end of the room were thrown open and to the young man's astonished eyes was presented a *tableau vivant*, so dazzlingly beautiful, and withal so artistically planned, that the most skillful painter could not have arranged a more ingenious effect of light and shadow, of color and grouping.

It seemed to Gösta that the curtain at a theatre had been rolled up before him. Between him and the stage it was dark; but the stage was lighted up and captivated the sight. In this illumination by unseen lamps, far away in the distance, sat a female figure, a fairy; or, more correctly speaking perhaps, one of those Olympian goddesses of which the poetic imagery of that time had such an inexhaustible abundance.

She was stately and tall as Juno, and at the same time as beautiful and languishing as the poets love to paint Aphrodite. Diana's moon would not have shamed to light her royal brow; Minerva's wit and genius played upon her fine full lips and beneath her raven lashes. If Gösta Bertelsköld had had in his day a Tegnér to admire, he would at once have called to mind how

"Gold-haired, full-bosomed, slender,
Came Aurora, fair as day;"

but he would immediately have corrected the poet in one thing: this golden hair was as black as a southern night, and floated like a setting of shadows around the brilliant whiteness of her brow and cheeks. All the delicate details of this picturesque face the amazed youth could not distinguish at once and at a distance. He did not see the arching of those eyebrows which the poets of that time likened to the skies of night over

the rising sun. He did not see the roundness of that mouth, by the poets likened now to a rose of Helicon, now to Aganippe's spring, and which was so small and cherry-like that it would not have been approved by the taste of the present time, but for that time was, and for several succeeding generations continued to be, a pattern and a charm. He did not see the Graces, which, if one may believe the same poetic descriptions, continually sported in wanton flocks about the roses of her lips. He saw not either, fortunately for him perhaps the almost imperceptible softness in the lower eyelids and that peculiar, tender, mischievous expression of the upper lip's vanishing line, which indicates that woman's mouth was created for other kisses than those of heavenly love.

The Countess Aurora Königsmark understood admirably how to arrange scenic effects, so that to the spectator they might seem to be entirely natural and accidental. She simply sat by the writing-table in her cabinet, somewhat carelessly leaning forward while she wrote a letter by the rosy-colored light of two alabaster lamps which spread a mild perfume through the room, which was small, but decorated with exquisite taste. Her toilet was simple, as it must be in Charles XII's camp, but as choice as the closest calculation ventured to indulge. It is a pity that Charles XII's biographer, the learned and diffuse Nordberg, in his three great folios did not consider it worth while to devote more than a few lines to the beautiful countess's visit, and not a single little word to her toilet. This much is certain: that the single solitaire upon her temple did not outshine the pair that nature had created beneath it, and that the black velvet robe, calculated to enhance the whiteness of her neck, was not softer than the ebon locks which the countess never entirely, but only according to her own taste, deigned to wear under the tyranny of fashion.

Bertelsköld took several steps forward, but stood

still again. For the first time in his life he felt afraid, for it was the first time that he had failed to act in an open and knightly manner.

Although there were two dark rooms between, the countess heard the tramp of the heavy Carolinian boots, slowly lifted her head and said: "Is that you *leiber* Törnflycht? Come in, my page!"

"Lieutenant Törnflycht, count Piper's brother-in-law—her page! It was for him they took me!" thought Bertelsköld, plucked up his courage and again took a few steps forward and thus came within the light of the lamp. At the same instant the countess's Polish chamberlain came towards him from an outer room, grasped him roughly by the arm and said with the same voice in which he had whispered before in the stairway: "You are not the right one! Who the devil are you, sir, and how have you ventured to intrude here?"

Bertelsköld slowly withdrew his arm, and whispered, without paying any attention to the man's question:

"Who is that lady?"

Useless question! He already had the answer in his own mind.

The chamberlain misconstrued the young warrior's meekness, and became bold enough to take him by the collar with a gesture that indicated that he would show him the door. "You braggart, you night-prowler!" said he, "dare you defy her serene highness in her most private apartment? You scoundrel! you Mr. Nobody! I will teach you a lesson—"

The presence of a Königsmark was sufficient to keep him quiet during the first half of this address. The second half was evidently one-half too much. Without answering, Bertelsköld grasped the chamberlain, lifted him from the floor, and, holding him at arm's length, bore him to the door and cast him, not very gently, out into the dark corridor. The poor fellow

was so overcome with astonishment that he did not utter a sound, but fell like a clod to the floor.

Disturbed by the confusion, the beautiful countess forgot her little theatrical pose, rose up hastily, and rang for her waiting-maid. But before the girl had time to come, Gösta stood in the door. Nature never intended him for a courtier, but he had passed three gay years at court, and a sense of right told him that an explanation of his unexpected entrance was due the beautiful lady.

He gave his name, told of mistaking the stairway, of his meeting the chamberlain, and begged her not to take it ill that he answered, "It is I," when the question was asked, "Is it you?"

The explanation was received very graciously. A hearty smile, one of those smiles that enchant half the world, played upon the Countess Königsmark's lips. The young count's naïve explanation, perhaps also his tall and strong though not yet fully developed stalwart form, evidently pleased her. Possibly a plan immediately suggested itself, for the countess was known to plan well. The world, society, and her own varied fortunes had taught her the art to perfection. Probably her quick wit had at once conceived the idea of making the disagreeable mistake useful to herself.

The waiting-maid who entered from one side, and the chamberlain from the other, received a sign to retire. Gösta Bertelsköld found himself *tête-à-tête* with the woman who had disturbed the tranquillity of so many. She assigned him a place quite near her, and he sat down—not without embarrassment.

"I thank my lucky stars for this mistake," she said, in an easy and unaffected manner. "Do you know, indeed, my dear count, that I have the honor of claiming kinship with your family? Your mother is a Sparre! I hope she finds herself well? There is a double relationship between us and the Sparres, through my father

and my brother-in-law Lewenhaupt. Besides, with your indulgence, my cousin . . .”

Count Gösta blushed and answered only with a bow.

“I had also the pleasure of making your father’s acquaintance in Hamburg,” continued the countess. “Permit me, womanlike, to tell you that I have seen few gentlemen like him, *sans peur et sans reproche*. My cousin, I hope that you may one day be like your father.”

There was something sisterly, almost motherly, in the countess’s tone as she said this, and she continued :

“I wish you success in the heroic school in which you are now distinguishing yourself. I sincerely admire your king. Believe me, my cousin, there is no stronger bond between exalted souls than honor ; men may have the misfortune to oppose each other as enemies, and yet be able to appreciate bravery’s victories. Your king is a new Alexander. Congratulate me, my cousin ; that I have passed the age of fancy ; you see, I have only seen him once, and I have painted his portrait from memory.”

With these words she drew forth an oval piece of ivory, on which appeared an unfinished portrait of Charles XII, tolerably like, but considerably flattering.

“What do you think of the portrait ?” asked the countess, with a somewhat haughty air of unconcern.

“Your grace, perhaps, saw his majesty at court ; in that case the likeness is good, but now it looks too young ; his majesty has been browned by the weather.”

“Do you think so ? Then I will make it a little darker—much darker ! I have a reason for it. His majesty is a Jupiter, though one sees of him only the lightning. I can testify to that, my cousin. But to shut himself up behind the thunder cloud for weeks and

months to avoid the necessity of seeing a woman whose great crime is to have two fatherlands which she would reconcile—it is not right, it is not noble! Your king is”

“Brutal” was probably the word which trembled on the lips of the countess, but she checked herself. The vehemence in her tone sank to gentleness again; the passion in her look melted away in new sunshine.

“Your king is a hero, before whom we other mortals are too little!” she exclaimed, with irony’s sharp point swathed in cotton. “I have been bold enough to write an epigram on him; will you hear it? You are too polite to refuse; a moment’s patience. Your camp, my cousin, is quite tedious; how would you that I should pass the time? My guitar is out of tune, so is my temper. In my perplexity I write verse.”

With these words, the beautiful countess took from her portfolio a little sheet of paper and read with finished skill a poem in which all the ancient gods appeared, one after the other, to extol the virtues of Charles XII: Mars for his bravery, Apollo for his beauty, Jupiter for his justice, Minerva for his wisdom, Diana for his exploits of the chase, etc.

“’Twas thus within Fame’s temple he was led,
And thus each god his every virtue praised.
But silent were the gods of wine and love.”

One would have believed he heard Aphrodite herself declaiming her grief, her humiliation, with a nicety and a grace that were truly inimitable. Alas! these flowers of genius were to a great extent lost upon the Carolin Gösta Bertelsköld. He saw what no young man could fail to see: the most beautiful woman of his time, in the ecstasy of wounded pride, describe her own discomfiture;—more he did not see; the fire of genius and the enigmas of woman’s heart were things hidden from his inexperienced eyes.

The young nobleman felt his inferiority; he seemed

to himself exceedingly awkward and unfortunate; he did not dare to look up, for the brilliancy of those eyes burned like a tropic sun on a northern pine forest. It became impossible for him to endure this situation. He arose to go.

The countess, so accustomed to flattering eulogies of her talents,—and poetry at that time was only the talent of arranging words agreeably and quickly—seemed for a moment astonished at her auditor's unconcern; but she soon penetrated his thoughts. It was not thus that one of Charles XII's warriors could be won.

She at once changed her tone. "Nay, my cousin, I can not take it upon my conscience to have wearied you to death with a tedious poem. Have the kindness to listen to me a moment. Let us leave these playthings with which one whiles away a lonely and unoccupied moment. I am in a certain way a prisoner in your camp. You have power. I have only prayers. Will you still go, my count?"

"Your grace"

"You have a sister; imagine that I am your sister. You have a mother; imagine that I am your mother. You are a true nobleman, and I can therefore say to you frankly and plainly that I desire a service of you."

"If it is in my power."

"You tell me that in a tone as if you feared I intended to ask you to commit an act of high treason. Fie now, my cousin! Have you ever heard of a Königsmark staining his shield with disloyalty? I presume that the fortunes of my family are not unknown to you. After we chose Sweden as our country, we served it honestly. We have had the good fortune to do the government important service. We owned an immense estate; we relied on the word and honor of the king. Yet Charles XI took from us everything he could, and, disappointed, impoverished and insulted, we left the ungrateful land which had reaped the benefit

of our services, and now reaped the benefit of our plundered estates."

The countess abstractly scratched the brightly polished surface of the table with the handle of her fan, and continued :

"You can see that our devotion to the Pfaltz-house must grow cool under such circumstances. My brothers fell in their prime. My sister and myself were two defenceless women. The just Charles XI refused us; we expected something of his son. Charles XII refuses me even an audience. For three weeks have I sought for it in vain. Even Count Piper's intercessions and petitions have been in vain. I have humbled myself to beseech, where I had the right to demand. You are proud, my count; you know then what it means to humiliate one's self before the confidants of a king. . . Charles will not see me. Oh, he does not know a Königsmark. He *must* see me, he *must* hear me whether he will or not. And for this purpose, Count Bertelsköld, you will assist to me."

"I, my countess !"

"Again that mien, my amiable cousin, quite as if I would demand a crime of you ! What then do you think of me ! You have perhaps been told that I am sent hither by King August to mediate a peace ? And if it is so, which you can believe or not as you like, would it be anything so wicked to wish to reconcile two high-minded princes, who, united, could turn against their common and most formidable rival, Russia ? Saxony is my second fatherland. I should then speak in its behalf to my first fatherland. With or without politics, are not the just demands of my family upon the Swedish crown an eloquent reason for this visit to the Swedish camp of an unfortunate woman whom the world reviles ? Is it a crime for you to assist me in this ? Is it now the oath of a knight in Sweden to refuse to the persecuted even the possibility of regaining their rights ? No, my count, *bon*

grè, mal grè, the king must hear me even if I cast myself under his horse's feet. Will you aid me in this?"

"I do not comprehend your meaning."

The countess seized the hand of the youth, held it between her own, and regarded him with a look which might be either motherly or sisterly, but which, perhaps against her own will, was sufficient to burn to ashes the heart of a boy of nineteen. "Every day," said she, "an hour after dinner, the king spends a short time alone in his tent. Some say he then writes to his sister, the Countess of Holstein—he requires a week to write a letter. Others say that he is engaged in devotional exercises. It matters not, Bertelsköld; you must procure me admission to the king's tent at that time"

The young warrior was silent.

"I understand you. It would attract attention. Be assured; I will come wrapped in an officer's cloak. In the twilight, no one will recognize me."

Bertelsköld remained silent. The fire in the countess's eyes blazed higher.

"Perhaps you think the king will be provoked. It is possible. I do not fear him. I know the temper of princes. I know how to conquer them. King Charles will, it may be, meet me in anger he will be reconciled when we separate.

Bertelsköld was still silent. The flush rose higher on his brow. The countess noticed it. She redoubled her powers of enchantment.

"Bertelsköld—all my hope is in you. Every other means against the king's obstinacy has failed. Without you everything is lost. On you depends the fate of my family. Yes, more,—on you depends perhaps the weal or woe of two kingdoms and the peace of the world. And you still hesitate! Noble count, you demand a greater reward—a greater still! If there is anything still higher, still more beautiful, speak, and

the thankful Aurora Königsmark is ready to reward your knightly service with her respect, her admiration, her eternal friendship”

O sorceress, sorceress, thou princess of darkness in angel form, thou who hast bewitched half of Europe by the lightning of thine eyes—thou before whom princes have bent the knee and multitudes of adorers have burned idolatrous incense—thou beautiful, talented, irresistible demon,—thou offerest a fascinated youth the boldest reward that his most audacious dreams have trembled to imagine,—thou charmest him with the music of most pleasing words ;—and now he stands with dizzy brain upon the brink of ruin, and no rescuing voice warns him : “Take care, take care, sin’s most beautiful apparition ensnares thee with roses, but within are cruel thorns !”

Yet, that voice came ; an insignificant, unimportant recollection—the book of victories, which his sister kept at Stockholm. This thought was enough. Gösta Bertelsköld passed his hand over his glowing brow as if to assure himself that all this was not a juggling dream. Thereupon he manned his soul, withdrew his hand from that of the countess, and answered firmly and positively, that he might free himself from every scruple.

“Countess, you just now said that a Königsmark never stained his shield with disloyalty. It cannot be that you seriously desire a Bertelsköld to do so. What you ask is high treason ;—my master and king I will never betray. You ought to know it ; what reward could you give me that would outweigh honor ? Farewell, your grace ! You cannot misunderstand me. You have asked like a woman ; I have answered like a soldier, and every warrior in our camp would answer as I have done.”

With these words Gösta Bertelsköld hastened away, abruptly, precipitately ; without once venturing to lift his eyes to another meeting with those dangerous

flames which threatened to set his whole being ablaze.

Returned to his tent, he sought to pray. He would thank God that he had escaped temptation. In vain. His thoughts were in a whirl. His blood was in an uproar. He threw himself upon his hard bed; there was no sleep! He again rushed out into the frosty winter-night; there was no chill! A stream of fire raged through his veins. A demon continually brought before his eyes the bewitching image away there in that luxurious chamber. Finally he lighted the candle and sat down to write. He wrote to his affectionate, his beloved sister; he kept in his mind another image whose amiable features had now for a long time grown into his heart. And behold, it was successful. The fire raged less, was abated, died out, and gave place to the indescribably happy quiet of a good conscience. Gösta Bertelsköld even ventured in a postscript to ask Ebba to inscribe Würgen in the book of victories. More he did not dare to divulge.

When he left the castle, the eyes of the countess shot dark flashes after the youth, and bit by bit she broke up the glittering fan in her hand. Then she rung. "Czernicki, you have your discharge to-morrow. To send me such a dolt! To humiliate me before such a marble stock! Send after Törnflycht!—No, you need not, I will not see him. I will not see any one from this detestable camp."

The chamberlain departed. The beautiful countess burst into tears. Alas, she was still a woman, she still had a heart—that heart was once as noble and beautiful as herself, and sin and the world had not availed to obliterate all traces of its original majesty. All the levity of her time, a whole web of temptation's most artful snares, had conspired for her overthrow. How many mortals have had strength to bear her triumphs and avoid her fate! Those who have, may cast the first stone at the admired, the worshipped, and

yet, in the depth of her heart, disappointed woman, Maria Aurora Königsmark, a king's mistress and a hero's mother!

Concerning her visit to the Swedish camp, there can be added that she undertook the boldest project and totally failed. One day she succeeded in meeting the king on a narrow road where he could not pass her. She immediately stepped out of the carriage. But the king raised his hat—neither more nor less than he would have done to the most insignificant person,—threw himself at once upon his horse, and rode away without saying a word. This was her last attempt. With angry tears the countess left the Swedish camp, taking with her the proud knowledge that she was the only mortal that Charles XII ever feared.

“Gold-haired, full-bosomed, slender,
Came Aurora, fair as day;
From Sweden's young defender
She went unheard away.”

CHAPTER V.

REX REGI REBELLIS.

THE stormy times continued, and King Charles steadily advanced. The book of victories, kept by young Ebba Bertelsköld at Stockholm, was constantly receiving new inscriptions on new pages. The entrance into Warsaw, the victory at Klisson, July 19th, 1702, and the capture of Cracow, were the greatest and most illustrious events of that year.

During that time the intrigues of factions and strategy played their dark games for Poland's crown, which had now become the stake in the war's bloody game of

chance. Misfortune, though cowardly as a thief, began, in the darkness, to nibble the conqueror's heels. At Jesna, where Wicnowiecki slew the brave Hummerhjelms knight, the first Swedish blood flowed in a Polish defeat. Patkull destroyed Schlippenbach's corps at Erastfer. At Cracow, where Magnus Stenbock one moment levied contributions from the property of the churches and the citizens under penalty of conflagration, and the next moment let the choicest wines flow at his brilliant table, the king broke his leg. But King Charles regarded such things as trivial.

No pen can describe what his warriors had to endure under painful marches, in hunger, heat and cold, a little band surrounded by numberless embittered foes. Often victory was their reward just because they fought for life. Their fame went before them like a whirlwind; terror paralyzed the enemy's arm; under the Polander's polished harness the heart beat harder and under the Saxon's embroidered jacket fear ensconced itself, when, afar off, the Swedish standard was seen waving on the border of the forest. Behind Cracow's iron gate stood old Wieopolski fully determined to defend the castle and the town. King Charles, with Stenbock and a few men, crossed the Vistula. "Open the gate!" shouted the king in French. The gate was opened. Poland's second capital fell.

But during these conflicts and victories the king's heart hardened, as iron becomes more dense by constant hammering. All his royal and human virtues stiffened as it were under their own excess, and thus by degrees became the sure harbinger of impending ruin. They sued for peace: never has a conqueror, with greater blindness, trampled upon the fruits of victory.

Sweden should have Courland, King August would resign Saxony's electoral crown, pay six million rixdollars in reparation of damages, and, with the Polish

Republic, ally himself with Sweden against Russia. Charles refused; he was inflexibly determined to snatch the Polish crown from the perjured August's head, "if he must for that purpose remain in Poland fifty years." These were fateful words. They bore within themselves Poland's destruction, Sweden's discomfiture, Finland's loss. Had the Swedish hero then turned his sword against the East, where the avalanche, heavily, slowly, but irresistibly moved forward from the sources of the Volga against the western countries, many things would now have been different; but, Charles XII it may be would never have become the man of whom the poet says that

". . . . he could not surrender,
But he could fight and die."

The whole summer and autumn of 1703 the Swedish army lay spread out before the strong fortification of Thorn. Seven thousand Saxons, the core of King August's army, were within, under command of the valiant Kanitz, and swore along with the citizens to defend the place to the last. It was here that the hoary Bernhard von Liewen fell at the king's side, struck by a cannon ball,—the most severely felt loss that Charles had experienced since the gallant Duke of Holstein fell before a falconet ball at Klissow. It was September before the Swedes obtained heavy artillery and reinforcements so that they could begin to bombard the fort which they had hitherto sought to reduce by starvation. The whole Swedish camp was exposed on every side and had no other ramparts than the courage of its defenders. It was boldness even to temerity,—the most defiant sporting with danger that any general ever indulged in; for all around the camp buzzed the Polish light cavalry under Brandt. Not even an earthwork was thrown up in front of the king's tent; the enemy's balls continually hovered above and

about it. "Breastworks," said King Charles, "are less evidences of prudence than of the heart's cowardice."

Late one evening, the king returned from reconnoitring in the vicinity, went softly into his tent on tiptoe that he might not waken his sleeping page, threw himself upon his hard bed and slept soundly. Early the next morning the page was awakened by a heavy concussion, which shook the tent-poles and the light canvas. A ball had struck the top of the tent and carried off a piece of it; daylight shone in through the improvised window. But the king slept.

One day when the king and the German princes had just arisen from the table, a ball went straight through the tent and nearly destroyed the silver service on the table. The king smiled.

Another day the king stood in a trench and handed out a fascine himself, in order to hasten the work. A ball whistled by and snatched the fascine out of his hand. King Charles took another fascine and continued the work as though nothing had happened.

These dangers had their fascination; this personal courage did not fail of its impression. The least important soldier schooled himself not to regard life and blood more than his king did.

One morning in the beginning of October a squadron of the life-dragoons had taken position at the farthest point of the works, as a shield for the laborers, and perhaps still more for the purpose of watching the unfortunate Polish peasants who were required in the midst of a shower of balls to prepare walls and batteries to overcome the strongest bulwark of their country. The king himself was as usual foremost in the danger not far away. A conversation arose among the dragoons, since they had nothing else to do.

"Bogatir has grown very poor lately," said a bearded captain to Gösta Bertelsköld, who stopped beside him. "I'll bet you my stirrups against a cast-off horse shoe that he won't last through the next

engagement. Shoot him in the forehead, that is the best thing to do; we shall get better horses in Thorn."

"I would be crazy to do that," answered the exasperated young lieutenant. "Bogatir had a Finnish dam, though his sire was Polish, and everything Finnish is as tough as sin; it lasts when one thinks it is about worn out and in a hopeless condition. No, better so than that Polish vivacity which rushes along, galloping at first and dragging its legs before the ride is over. When do you think, Lagerkrants, that we shall get in behind those walls?"

"When God and the king will," was the reply. "There he stands again by the outer battery. Look you, that is a king! The balls hail around him like peas."

"Certainly King Charles stands. God is his shield."

"Let him believe that who will. I have my own opinion."

"What more is necessary than trust in God, and a good conscience?"

"Yes, you see, the king is invulnerable."

"Nonsense."

"Tell me, you have been with the king in a good many adventures, have you ever seen him bleed?"

"No, I do not remember that I have ever seen that."

"There we have it. Twice have you seen the king fall before the bear's paws. Twenty times have you seen him, as it were, nod to the balls: 'Go by, scoundrels!' But you have never seen him bleed. I think it is clear. The king is invulnerable. Neither iron nor lead, neither living nor dead, can harm him."

"I cannot believe that. God is his shield."

"The king is not a worse man because he is invulnerable. Every child knows that Gustaf Adolph was also invulnerable. Nothing could wound him except-

ing a silver ball cast from the image of a saint. Your grandfather was also invulnerable, they say."

"I have heard that said. But I believe that men willingly seek small causes for great things. It is something great for a man to have a heroic heart and for a general or a king not to give way an inch to danger, but to seek it even more than his poorest servant. Common persons do not comprehend this, but they invent all kinds of superstitions in order to not believe in a heroism which they do not understand."

"No, Bertelsköld, you are putting on airs. You can not deny that your father became invulnerable because a Finnish witch gave him a ring. You are also a Finn; you know more than you pretend. I would not be ashamed of it if you could get me such a talisman. Then would I at once become a hewer. I would take Thorn alone."

"That you can do without the ring. I cannot get it for you; my brother Torsten has it."

"That is a shame. Such a quill-fighter as he is will never in his life have to do with anything but ink. But wait—yes, now I think of something. I met Torsten the day before he went to Paris. We were talking about the ring, and he swore that he had lost it a week before."

"Is it possible? He did not tell me of it."

"Because you were always in a quarrel. I have an idea. People said of your grandfather that he had luck in everything, and that on this account his disposition became somewhat inflexible, so that he did not care for anything else, if he but accomplished what he had in view."

"I have heard that said."

"Well, do you understand now? What do you say of the king? Is he not, as it were, a little stiff in his way, so that no devil could turn him from his undertaking, though it might seem quite impossible?"

"Yes, because he always wishes what is right and good and earnest."

"Bombast! I have a proper respect for the king; no blackguard can say that I have not. But can he help it that he is human and can go astray? He is quite inflexible. When we add to this that he has good luck in everything, and everybody knows that, then—"

"Then what?"

"Then I will swear to it that he has the ring that Torsten lost. Yes, just exactly the same ring!"

"You are crazy."

"Do you notice," continued the captain, "how the Saxons from their bastion are firing continually at the trench where the king stands? Thunder and lightning! They have brought over their largest cannon. I know it. One of their deserters told me that they called it *The Cat*."

"That cat will not get her claws in our ermine."

"If your eyes are better than mine, tell me. I seem to see the artillerist approach with the match. I'll wager that they have a hint of the king's presence and are aiming at him. *Hagel und Wetter*, Bertelsköld. Shall I ride thither and warn his majesty?"

"If you go there, the king will tell you to learn manners. Never yet has King Charles answered a warning otherwise than with a frown, and when there was an opportunity, a few lashes."

"But you are out of your mind. Scarcely four hundred paces. Look out! You will see in a minute that the cat snarls."

Bom! The captain had hardly finished his sentence before the gun at the nearest bastion went off with a deep bass that outvoiced the cannonading and the discharge of musketry round about. A dense cloud of dust and sand showed clearly enough that the heavy ball had hit the low wall of gabions, by the trench where the king stood.

“*Sapperment!*” shrieked the captain. “Where did the king go?”

“I saw him just now standing there by the gabions. Great God, if any misfortune!—One can not see anything for the dust.”

“What did I say?” shouted the captain, and put spurs to his horse. Gösta Bertelsköld followed him in great consternation.

At the trench all was perplexity. A broad furrow in the wall showed where the ball went; it had cut off a peasant’s head and a soldier’s arm; a third was swept from the ground, and that was the king.

It is impossible to describe the amazement which at that moment seized upon those who were standing about. The king was everything to the army, and, as some thought, to Sweden. With him went victory; without him all was lost. The army had so accustomed itself to this thought, that no one could imagine a future, if the king fell.

The first impression lasted hardly a minute. When the first dust was driven away by the wind, they saw the king’s arm with a skirt of his well-known blue coat appear above a pile of sand, endeavoring to work out. Everybody rushed thither with spades and shovels, and threw the dirt about with more zeal than discretion. A moment afterwards King Charles was rising above the dirt-mound as from a grave—gray as his mother earth, but mettlesome, and grumbling because his mouth was full of sand. A miracle had occurred; the royal hero was entirely unhurt; the ball had only swept over him a little mountain of sand and small stones.

“What did I say!” whispered Lagerkrants, forgetting his former fear. “He is invulnerable—invulnerable as granite. All the cats in the world would break their claws against his blue coat!”

“That amounts to nothing!” shouted the king. “More baskets this way! Fire away, boys! Give the

cat some peas in her eyes, so she will stop scratching!"

A terrible fire from all the Swedish batteries, followed by a resounding shout of exultation, showed the Saxons the king's peril, his salvation and his courage. The cat was soon dismounted. Great pieces of the walls and breastworks of the fort tumbled down. At midday, Kanits desired to capitulate with free egress. The king refused, and ordered his men to redouble their fire. Irritated perhaps by the last scratching, he determined that the city should be stormed.

In the first place, Generals Posse and Stenbock, with two thousand men, were to go around the island in the middle of the Vistula, which was covered with cannons. From there the city should afterward be stormed. But the king had miscalculated in one thing: it was impossible to obtain boats enough for more than six hundred men.

When he was informed of this, the well-known angry frown made its appearance above King Charles' eyebrows, and his only answer was the equally well-known:

"Forward! March!"

Charles XII was a Titan ready to defiantly storm the very lightnings of heaven. Then involuntarily came into the mind of Gösta Bertelsköld the three letters R. R. R. in the heirloom of his family, the copper ring, which letters came to mean: *Rex Regi Rebellis*, the king rebels against the king. These words seemed to him so terribly apt, that in spite of himself, he recalled Lagerkrants's improbable conjecture concerning the ring, and determined that he would ask his sister Ebba about it in his next letter.

In the meantime night set in, when the adventurous enterprise was to be executed. The danger, yes, the impossibility, of thus storming the enemy's works was so apparent that the bravest hesitated. Stenbock, always wise and cautious, took courage from the

unusual expression he read in all eyes, and ventured the unheard-of proceeding of addressing the king in the following sharp words, in the name of the whole command :

“Your majesty, your royal will is entirely free to undertake this attack, although it is done against the humble opinion of your whole command, and will take your people to certain butchery. We shall, as faithful subjects and warriors, follow your majesty wherever the project leads ; but we, and all with us, declare that at the moment your majesty puts his boat out from the land, we shall rush blindly to storm the walls, that we all may find death where our king and master cannot fail to find it.’

At this speech, learned in his own school, King Charles hesitated. The darkness of night spread itself over his illustrious brow, and he gazed silently and long upon the cloud-wrapt tower of the fort, and the broad river, whose dark waters, stirred by a storm, seemed greedily waiting to draw down thousands of brave men to its dark grave.

For the first time in his life, Charles XII wavered ; mighty thoughts dashed against each other in his unyielding mind. While he yet stood there, undetermined which sacrifice was greater—his will, or thousands of wasted lives,—Piper approached, the man who best understood how to lead wisely the inflexible lion.

“Your majesty,” said he warily, “deign to cast a look at the southeast. Day breaks ; it is too late to storm.”

The king turned his head mechanically. In truth, there already appeared a slight stream of the tardy autumn morning’s light glimmering in the sky and lighting the pinnacles of the sleeping Thorn.

“You are right,” said the king, glad perhaps to find a reason for the first countermand he had ever given when it related to an attack.

The king’s rebellion against the king was for the moment put down.

This victory of right was soon rewarded by a complete triumph. Kanits saw the preparations made by the Swedes to storm, and for the second time he desired to capitulate. The fort surrendered October 13; the officers were allowed to retain their arms; the entire garrison became prisoners of war. Thorn had manfully defended itself. The greater part of the inhabitants had died from want and disease. Of the seven thousand defenders, there remained but one thousand six hundred well, and two thousand five hundred sick. The valiant Kanits was received with great honor, and given a place at his majesty's table. But the fortification was leveled to the ground, and a fire-tax* of one hundred thousand rixdollars took away the last remains of the wealth of this city, lately so rich.

More difficult perhaps than all the foregoing victories, was the victory of prudence and humanity over the inflexible, imperious will. As in the days of Charles Gustavus, there often arose the question which continually will arise where the pride of great and strong spirits is puffed up by the wind of prosperity :

What remains for him who has conquered the world? To conquer himself.

CHAPTER VI.

Letter from Ebba Bertelsköld to her brother, Gustaf Adolph Bertelsköld, lieutenant in the life dragoons.

STOCKHOLM, Jan. 25th, 1704.

CHER GUSTAVE :
 With what joy of heart your forsaken sister received your letters, I can never accurately describe. I hold you so very dear, that there is no other person

* A tax levied under penalty of conflagration.—TR.

in the world, excepting one, who in some degree is like you, and that one *Cœur de ma vie*, Gustaf, if you do not come back soon, your sister will never find any one to comfort her.

My dear brother, I have not forgotten what you wrote me : that I should inscribe all your victories in the blue book that Erik Falkenberg gave me. I have done so faithfully, and there is already a long row which I cannot count up by memory. When Eva comes to see me, she is always very curious to know if anything has happened. I tell her that everything is done on her account, yes, that actually the kings of Sweden and Poland and the czar would make peace with each other if Eva did not set herself against it and spur you, dear Gustaf, on to such ambition that there never can be peace, unless Eva Falkenberg's blue eyes wink their consent to it.

"The blue, the blue, have all deserved," says Gyllenberg in his new song of 'Daphnis and Chloe.' To that Eva answers with another color, one that is not found on Sweden's banner, namely, the red. Yes, dear Gustaf, it is now more than four years and a half since you went away, and yet Eva blushes deeply every time we speak of you. But I cannot promise that she will blush always,—impossible, my wandering knight. Eva will be nineteen years old in March, and I in April, children of Eve that we are. One year, at most two, can the war last yet, otherwise

Ah, no ! A Småland girl sung for me a few days ago one of their old songs :

"For fifteen years slow-rolling, will I thy coming wait,
And after if thou comest not will I wait on
Mid the roses."

Cher Gustave, I congratulate you and the king—no, the king and you—for all your great bravery, the fame of which quite fills the whole of Europe. But in your private ear I would whisper : There are many who

regard peace as far better than all of Bellona's mandates, and that many sorrowing girls think as I do—I mean as all the rest do ;—you must not take that amiss. It is said here in Stockholm that the king's absence is more to the glory of the kingdom than to its good, and the council begins to do obeisance to my most gracious Princess Ulrika, who has grown tall since you were here, and resembles somewhat her saintly mother ; but is not so good at heart as the blessed queen. It is true that she is sometimes so friendly to us that we see nothing to show that she is not one of us ; particularly when we feed the canary birds together ; but at other times she is haughty, and regards us countesses as so many chamber-maids, which is almost insufferable ; but I should add this, that she is for the most part quite amiable, and that I know her four (!) chief inclinations to a dot; but dear Gustaf, you certainly would not wish me to . . .

Yesterday, which was the 24th of January, her royal highness's birthday was celebrated. Her majesty, the queen dowager, through the housekeeper and her own servants, invited only high officials, foreign ministers, countesses, and every other lady who is accustomed to come to court. At five o'clock there were cards and dancing in her majesty's apartments,—the dancing was in the rotunda. At the usual table sat as many of the most illustrious as could find room, and up in the ladies' hall a table was spread for eighteen persons, with four courses and pyramids. In the rotunda was set an oval table with seventeen baskets of confections, but they did not dance after supper, because it was Saturday evening.

It cannot be very interesting to you, dear Gösta, to learn the court gossip ; but the bird twitters most about its nest. I cannot keep it secret that Catherine Lillje was betrothed last Friday to the page Palmfelt, the same one who for a half a year burned in a bright flame for Eva Falkenberg ; be calm, my best brother, he is as

certainly bound in bonds and fetters as I am not so, but . . . I enclose herein a letter from our dear mother, who, God be praised, is in good health, as is also Torsten. He was last summer at the baths in Piermont. Adieu, a thousand adieux, *cher frère*. I can go no further. I write this early in the morning, by candle-light, and *déshabillé*, but the princess expects us to be on duty at eight o'clock, and I must not neglect that. Adieu, Adieu.

Your always faithful little sister,

EBBA.

P. S.—2 o'clock, p. m.—I can not seal this without telling you what the princess said to me this morning. I came to her a quarter after eight. Her highness made a little mouth, and I made my excuse—that I had been writing to you. “How does your handsome brother prosper?” said she, *tout apropos*. “In his majesty’s presence,” I replied, “every one prospers.” “That is good,” she then said; “I wonder if his pretty blue eyes have become black with powder-smoke?” Again the blue! *Ciel*, Gustave, can you actually have been princess Uirika’s first flame? and never a word have you told me about it. Now, for the first time, I recall what you asked about in your letter. The ring—Gösta, can I depend upon your silence and upon the courier? They say that letters from Stockholm are sometimes broken open by Piper.

Chide me not, my best friend; I am dreadfully sorry for my childishness, but remember that I was only fourteen years old; her royal highness the duchess is to blame for it all. You know how she loves King Charles, and he her. When he was about to go to the war she had me called to her one day, caressed me fondly, and gave me a big bag of candy. Then she said to me: “Tell me, little miss, is it true that your brother Torsten owns a ring that was worn by the sainted King Gustaf Adolf, and which makes a man invulnerable in war?”

“I have heard so, your royal highness,” said I, “but I do not know it for certain.”

“If you will get me that ring,” said she, “I will give Count Torsten in its stead a ring of much greater value. He is no warrior and does not need such things.”

“I will ask Torsten for the ring,” I said.

“No, not at all,” said the duchess, “do not by any means do that, little friend; this must not be talked about to any one; his majesty has a terrible dislike for all charms. But you exchange the two rings without Torsten’s knowing it, and afterward give me the one I want, and I promise that you shall be present at the great *fête* before the king’s departure.”

Ah, dear Gösta, I am so sorry! I never can be sorry enough for having done her royal highness’s will. I never should have done it if, that very evening, when Torsten swore and protested to old Miss Posse that he was madly in love with her (which was mere show, for I found out afterward that he had laid a wager with his comrades about it). just then he drew off his glove and dropped it, and when I took up the glove the ring was in it, although it generally fitted so tight that no one could get it off.

In a little while Torsten enquired for his glove, asking mockingly, as is his wont, if I had found a better glove than my own. We had that afternoon had a controversy and disputed like little children, he was always so annoying. So I answered: “Here is your miserable glove. I would not put it on my little finger.” Then I gave him back his glove, but not the ring, keeping it for the purpose of annoying him when he missed it. He did not notice that evening that the ring was gone.

I can not tell certainly, *mon cœur*, whether her royal highness noticed my quarrel with Torsten, and drew her conclusion from that, but very soon afterwards she came upon me suddenly and asked for the ring, saying

that I most surely had it. Whereupon I became very red, and did not dare to refuse, but gave her the ring;— I have bitterly repented it since. Torsten was very sad when he missed the ring, and had a careful search made in every room we were in that evening; *mon cœur*, you can imagine with what success it was done. He forbade my ever telling you; you would find fault enough with him for other things, he said. So he was obliged to go away without the ring, and with a chagrin that really pained me; but could I help it? I gave him the duchess's ring instead, telling him it was a farewell gift from her royal highness, which he believed without suspecting anything.

I did not afterwards dare to ask her royal highness her intentions regarding the ring, but when I think of her great love for his majesty, and her asking before if a person with that ring would not go safe and sound through every encounter, I am almost certain that she gave the ring to the king (in case she did not give it to the blessed duke, her husband). So I will tell you that the king has it, but does not himself know it; I can never believe that he would make use of any charm if he knew it. I have also heard that he wears a medalion with his blessed mother's portrait; but I can not say this for certain. If you can form any clear opinion about this secret, I shall be glad. I am extremely sorry for my foolishness; forgive me, *cher Gustave*, and I will never do so again.

Your foolish and repentant sister,

EBBA.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHASE AT LIEBEVERDA.

KING CHARLES XII now stood at the height of his victorious career. What brilliant triumphs! What irresistible progress! Warsaw taken, re-taken, and again conquered; Lemberg stormed with a handful of cavalry; the Saxons slaughtered at Punits, the Poles at Jacobstadt, the Russians at Gemäuerchhof; Lithanen, Vohhynten conquered; the net of intrigues hewn asunder with the sword; the crown of Poland snatched from the head of August, and pressed upon the brow of Stanislaus; the conqueror entering Saxony like a heavy sea; all Germany in a tremor; all Europe in astonishment; the Roman Emperor trembling on his throne, and ready to grant the oppressed Protestants everything they demanded of his kingdom!

And during all this time, while victory, like a conquering Norn, followed the Swedish banner in the South, destruction, like a lurking thunderbolt, crept behind the conqueror's back, and took silently but surely territory after territory, strand after strand in exchange for victories without gain, and honor without wisdom. Nöteborg conquered; Nyenskans thrice stormed and taken with capitulation; Dorpot besieged and taken; Narva stormed and conquered; Ingermanland and Esthonia overrun and taken; Livonia and Courland threatened; Petersburg founded; Ankarstjerna's attack upon Kronstadt repelled,—nothing of all this was able to withdraw the Swedish hero from his glorious but unfortunate game for Poland's crown. He did not see what every prudent man about him saw, that these armies which during his absence had planted

the aggressive Russian standard in the west, were no longer the same that he had overthrown at Narva. War had bred them; Czar Peter knew how to learn lasting wisdom from defeat, while King Charles gathered ruin from victory itself.

The treaty of peace made at Altranstadt, where the Polish crown fell for a moment from the head of the humiliated August, was yet a diplomatic secret, when Menschikoff at Kalisch slew the Swedes under Marderfelt. Nothing was able to disturb King Charles's firm faith in his fortune,—that same faith of which Dahlberg formerly said: "King Charles thinks fortune is four-cornered!"

King Charles was a great man; he fought for what he considered just and right, without looking to the right or left. He could not bend; therefore, he fell. The Czar Peter was a great ruler; he fought for his country's regeneration; he could bend before adversity without breaking; therefore, he did not fall until he had reached his goal.

At Altranstadt, near the renowned battle field of Lützen, the Swedish army encamped. Charles XII was shown the spot where Gustaf Adolf fell. The king was heard to say: "I have sought to live like him; perhaps God will one day grant me an equally glorious death!"

Yet the death of Charles XII was not like that of Gustaf Adolf,—nor was his life like his.

King Charles and King August had for the first time met personally at Günthersdorf near Leipsic. Nordberg describes this notable event in four long columns. To see these two kings, cousins by birth, whose feuds had for six years covered extensive and fruitful lands with blood and desolation—to see them with open arms fall upon each other's bosom, this was something so moving that tears trickled down the cheeks of the assembled warriors. The meeting was so hearty, so brotherly; King Charles was, contrary to his custom,

so polite, so attentive; he always gave King August precedence; they ate side by side, they slept under the same roof, they conversed together long and confidentially in private. The scoffer, Voltaire, whose admiration never once induced him to lay aside his vile habit of grinning at everything, describes King Charles at this meeting as dressed in great cavalry boots, black neck-cloth, coarse blue coat with its gilded copper buttons, and the long sword which he carried at Narva and upon the hilt of which he often leaned. And then he says that King Charles told his guest that for six years he had not taken off his boots excepting when he went to bed, and not even then if the enemy was in the neighborhood, and that the conversation was of this character,—a libel which greatly offends the honest Nordberg. But of King August it is said that he was the most finished courtier of his time, and knew how to preserve the most cheerful countenance and the most unaffected courtesy, even when his heart was filled with sorrow, anxiety, and suppressed rage.

In commemoration of this meeting a medal was struck having on it the busts of the two kings, and the inscription: "The heroes whose military renown mounted to the stars, agree to the desired peace, and meet at Altranstadt December 17th, 1706." The medal as well as the meeting was something for the world to look at; nothing more. Anger continued to seethe in the breast of August; Charles's inflexible will did not give a hair's breath; the humiliation and the victory both alike remained, and the peace at Altranstadt was an armistice, during which the two adversaries prepared for new contests.

This winter in Saxony, 1706-7, was the culminating point in the brilliant military career of the Swedish hero. Two kings whose crowns he had taken or given away did him homage; twenty princes, future monarchs and foreign ambassadors, thronged about this feared youth who had been victorious in six successive

campaigns. Marlborough, the contemporary hero of the great Eugene, came to learn of Charles "what he had not yet gathered of the art of war." Many noble Swedish ladies had journeyed thither from Stockholm to meet their husbands. The splendor of the court mingled its shimmer with the gleam of arms. The Swedish army, in which many Finns also fought, numbered 16,000 cavalry and more than 19,000 infantry; no army in Europe could compete with it in military experience, bravery, discipline, and confidence of victory.

At this time, in February, 1707, a little Swedish company of ten dragoons and as many grooms leading extra horses, and, besides these, twelve or fifteen hunters with their packs of hounds, marched slowly towards the draw-bridge of the castle of Lieberverda on the banks of the Elster. It was twilight when they arrived, and their coming seemed not to be unexpected, for a part of the attendants at the castle immediately came to meet them, and conducted the frozen huntsmen into warm rooms, where tables were spread with smoking roasts, and provided with great goblets of both ale and wine.

The officer who led the expedition brushed the wood-lichen from his blue riding-dress, and was conducted into a brilliantly lighted hall, where a considerable company were still assembled after the long-continued dinner. Coming in hungry and cold, it did not escape his attention that the company had been drinking, but there was also still left the trace of a ceremonious respect, with which the assembled drinking champions held themselves at a distance from one particular person, whose handsome and knightly figure showed at the first glance that he was of noble birth and accustomed to command.

This man, who was the center of the gay company, was no other than the elector of Saxony, now ex-king of Poland, and the dark man at his side, with the inqui-

sitive look, was his renowned field-marshal, the conqueror of Dünamüde, General Fleming.

The Swedish officer stepped forward with a respectful salute, gave his name and delivered his message: that his master King Charles would not fail to come to the castle the next morning, to take part in the great chase to which his majesty was invited, and also that the king's hunters and hounds under the care of the messenger had been sent thither beforehand.

The Swedish messenger was a young man, little more than twenty years old, but tall and broad-shouldered. The ex-king scrutinized him a moment with the eye of a connoisseur, frowned as he noticed the skill with which the Swede, with all respect otherwise, avoided giving him the title of "majesty," but quickly resumed his obliging and complaisant mien; was glad that King Charles would honor his hunt, and finally asked the newly-arrived guest to take a place at the table. "I have been told," added the elector, with ready memory, "I have been told that Count Bertelsköld was a valiant participant in my royal friend's bear-hunts. It will be an honor to the wild boars of Saxony to be laid low by so experienced an adversary."

Gustaf Bertelsköld—it was he who bore the king's message—was too little experienced as a talker to reply to this civility. Therefore, with a silent bow, he took the appointed place.

After the short interruption occasioned by the message from King Charles, the carousal proceeded with a zeal and after a fashion which in our day would be little suited to the presence of a sovereign prince. But the chivalric August knew equally well how to conduct carousals and love affairs, the coarsest raillery and the most exquisite gallantry. How two crowned heads had several years before rioted at Birsen! And here at Liebeverda the wild boar's funeral banquet was celebrated in advance with an energy which in no slight degree reminded one of the natural disposition of the

animal for whose destruction they now prepared themselves. There was no deception in the beakers emptied by that circle of hunters, and it was a lawful and loyal custom that as soon as the elector raised the bowl to his lips, all the guests were bound to do the same, and between times freely to remember the sparkling grape as often as they pleased.

By degrees the wine cup's evening red rose higher on the cheeks of those assembled, and the conversation became louder, and there were not wanting travesties of the dubious stories from the court chronicles of that time, which are found collected in that remarkable book "*La Saxe Galante*,"* which was published in Amsterdam in 1736, in four hundred and sixteen large octavo pages, with a shameless vignette and a motto that suited it: *Vis inita major*. There were not wanting, either, strange stories of the elector's youth, not forgetting among them the bull-fight at Madrid, where he, then prince of Saxony, made his *début* with a success which was dangerous to the hearts of the Spanish beauties.

On King August—why deny him a title that he afterwards regained?—these memories did not fail to have an enlivening influence. Smiling, he took a silver plate from the table, and quite easily, without apparent effort, bent it to a roll between his hand, and then tossed it as drink-money to a servant.

Loud cries of *bravo* followed this princely achievement, and the example challenged imitation. A heavy-limbed Saxon cavalry captain took out a copper coin, turned the table-cloth aside, laid the piece upon the bare table, and with a single blow of his clenched fist drove it so deep into the oaken board that it stuck fast. New shouts of applause immediately interpreted the general admiration.

The king, more and more animated, had several

* This book was a rich mine for Prof. Palmblad in writing his historical romance "*Aurora Königsmark*," certain parts of which are composed with great talent, while other parts, not without reason, are classed as "vile literature."

horse-shoes brought in. He inspected them carefully, laid some of them aside, and finally selected one, which he passed around the company, that everyone might be convinced that the shoe was whole and strong, and had not the least flaw. Then he stood up, took the iron shoe in his hands and opened it slowly two or three times. The third time the shoe broke just in the middle of the curve in two equal pieces, which the king triumphantly held out, one in each hand, as a proof that neither wine nor love had softened his muscles—harder yet than the iron itself.

Enthusiasm was now at its height. All the goblets were filled and emptied, and filled and emptied again, in honor of “the modern Hercules, the flower of the chivalry of his time, the invincible, in strength and grace alike the irresistible prince and lord elector of Saxony and king of Poland (all honor to the peace), who breaks iron and hearts”

“And shall one day break all his enemies’ weapons as he breaks this horse-shoe, in spite of twenty snow-kings,” interrupted the Saxon cavalry captain, moved thereto by the wine and the acclaiming shout, and giving no heed to the king’s frowning glances.

Gösta Bertelsköld arose to go ;—the only answer he considered appropriate to the occasion.

But the captain stationed himself in his way. “Upon my honor,” said he, “I believe the little Swedish count is afraid of us. Gently, gently, my young friend ; your delicate virgin-fingers would certainly never break a horse-shoe in two. Drink, —drink I say, to the health of his majesty, the King of Poland ! *Mort de ma vie*, the Swedish boy has not emptied a single honest beaker yet !”

Young Gösta’s hand went to his sword-hilt ; it was seldom far from the hand to the sword in those days. But at the right moment he checked himself, seized the goblet, and draining it to the last drop, said, with a

ready comprehension befitting a more experienced soldier :

“At the request of this gentleman, I drink to the prosperity of his majesty, King Stanislaus. May he live long and reign happily.”

Scarcely was this said, before one of the Polish noblemen present drew his sword and placed himself defiantly before the bold Carolin.

“Draw!” shouted he, “or by the walls of Cracow, I will write this toast, letter for letter, in red upon your blue coat!”

“Calm yourself, Wielopolski,” interrupted King August in a commanding tone ; probably he considered it high time to end a scene which might lead to dangerous results. “Lobenstein, remember that the count is our guest. Gentlemen, why waste time in needless quarreling? If Count Bertelsköld drank to Stanislaus Leczinski, that is his own affair, as it was yours to drink to me. Let us rather ask him if in the Swedish camp they do not amuse themselves with any interesting experiments of the kind that we have just been having. The Swedes are hard-handed as well as brave. I wager that the young count will not refuse you an answer, my dear Lobenstein.”

“If my honored host will permit, I will attempt something that is customary with us,” answered Bertelsköld, as his hand for the second time slipped from his sword.

“Yes, do so, my dear count ; you will thus do me a great favor,” replied the king, glad to turn the quarrel into a pleasant jest.

“Yes, by all means, show us what your fashion is !” joined in the bystanders, with a rather palpable irony, convinced as they were that after an August II and a Lobenstein, the young man would make a failure.

Bertelsköld looked about him a moment without replying. Then he suddenly seized Lobenstein with his right hand and Wielopolski with his left, raised them

both up at once, held the sprawling gentlemen at arm's length, and bore them thus, in spite of their opposition, twice around the table, and with perfect solemnity sat them down at the feet of the astonished king.

Not a single bravo was heard this time from the lips of the amazed champions, but their silence gave better evidence than their previous shouts had done, of the impression made upon them by this exhibition of immense physical strength.

The Polander and the Saxon hardly felt their feet on a firm bottom before they, beside themselves with wine and wrath, rushed with drawn swords at Bertelsköld.

The king's authority came near being insufficient. He finally succeeded in bringing Lobenstein to his senses, but Wielopolski shrieked at the top of his voice that he was not going to allow himself to be insulted by either Swede or Saxon. He was a free-born republican and nobleman ; the king should be careful about insulting noble Polish blood ; every Polish nobleman was as good as he, and perhaps a trifle better ; the Poles had done him the honor of choosing him king, but such kings could be found by the dozen in every neighborhood ; the Diet should hear of his behavior.

August seemed for a moment to be disconcerted ; his countenance quickly cleared, he took Wielopolski several steps aside and whispered in his ear. This had its effect. The Polander kept silence, looked now at the king, now at Bertelsköld with sullen and suspicious mien, and left the hall with a haughty and defiant bearing.

"Gentlemen," said the king, "I hope none of you will pay any attention to this insignificant contention. To-morrow has in store for us a brilliant display of valor. Let us now take a little rest, for my cup-bearer tells me that many noble wine-vats remain in Liebeverda's cellars. Before the next sun goes down and goes up, we will see the bottom of them ; and I promise you

that all Germany shall be astonished at our achievements. A pleasant night, gentlemen ! ”

With a gracious look the king left the hall, and all the guests followed him.

Bertelsköld was shown to a small room in one of the castle towers. The winter-night was cold, and the moon shone clear over the snow-clad ground. The young man was wakeful, and he sat for a while in the window and contemplated the prospect. Strange thoughts ran through his mind. What had the elector whispered to Wielopolski? And what did it mean that “all Germany should be astonished” at the achievements of the next day? There was something in this castle that did not exactly please Bertelsköld.

In a moment it occurred to him that he ought to see whether the horses were well provided for this cold winter night. Perhaps the grooms were drunk ; he thought he heard Bogatir neigh. Therefore he left his room and groped his way down the steep and pitch-dark stairs.

The castle was a peculiar building, with all kinds of winding stairs and crooked corridors. When Bertelsköld had fumbled in the darkness long enough without finding any means of exit, he seized the first door his hand touched. This led to an ante-chamber faintly lighted by a lamp. Two pages, who were on watch, sat there sound asleep. Bertelsköld shook them, to try and find the way out ; it was impossible, the fellows had tiddled too much, and they half waked and muttered a drowsy oath.

Impatiently he went further on, passing one empty room and then another. Then he heard talking in the room before him, and he stopped, for he recognized the king’s voice :

“ But if he escapes . . . *Sacré dieu*, if he escapes ? No, my dear Fleming, no, the hazard is too great. We risk getting the whole swarm upon us like

wasps, and my Cousin Charles would never forgive me”

“Everything is carefully considered,” said the other voice. “Wielopolski, with his hundred horsemen, will lie in wait just back of Königsschlucht, and will fall upon him Jehu-like. It can not fail. Remember that your majesty owes Wielopolski satisfaction ; we have a scarcity of such powerful friends, and can not afford to offend them. On the other hand, with ‘the furious boy’* behind grates and bars at Königstein, your majesty can dictate new terms of peace.”

“But what will Europe say of it?”

“Europe always takes the part of the strongest. Besides, your majesty is entirely innocent. These crazy Poles—a plundering party—mounted highwaymen—let not your majesty be disturbed about that. I mentioned Königstein. There are dungeons there, in which a rival in power as well as a rival in love may disappear without a trace. Your majesty, this arrogant Charles, before whom Germany trembles,—what a revenge, if the astonished world should some day find that he had disappeared at the height of his renown, disappeared without a trace, like a meteor at night, and only Königstein’s rats and spiders could tell of the end of his mouldered greatness !”

Bertelsköld heard no more. His eyes grew dim. Without knowing how, he got out into the castle yard, found Bogatir, and galloped furiously towards the Swedish camp, where he arrived after a six hours’ ride in the gray of the morning. This ride cost him a tried friend ; it was too hard for his faithful old Bogatir. The noble animal who had borne his master through so many conflicts and so many dangers, who had shared with him the good and evil of seven years, this faithful comrade died upon his sheaf of straw a quarter of an hour after their arrival. Gösta Bertelsköld patted his neck fondly, as he was accustomed to do. “Well done,

* Patkull’s expression for King Charles.

Bogatir, well done," said he, with a tear in his eye, "you have died for our king!"

But of this he had now no time to think. Gösta immediately reported to Piper what he had heard. Piper shook his head distrustfully, and sent him to Lagerkrona. Lagerkrona took the matter more seriously, and showed an intercepted letter in which a friend wrote to Patkull: "König August gewinnt mehr durch eine jagd als König Carl durch eine Schlacht."

The result was that Piper and Lagerkrona united in the most earnest prayers that the king would forego his journey to Liebeverda. The horses were already saddled. King Charles listened sadly to his friends' advice. In what other case would he have obeyed them? But he had begun to suspect his friend, King August, and nothing could dispel the suspicion. These princes were more distinctly opposites in character and disposition than they were in politics. King August worthily represented the faithless statemanship and gilded vices of his time, while his Swedish opponent stood before his astonished contemporaries as the representative of the old-fashioned virtues and the chivalric fidelity of the past.

King Charles listened this time also to prudent counsel, and sent Lagerkrona in his stead to Liebeverda with the king's compliments, and to say that he had been prevented from joining them. History omits to mention with what mien King August and his faithful followers received this news, but it is probable that they wore rather long faces.

Eight months afterwards, when the Swedish army decamped from Saxony, it happened that King August sat *en dishabille* one afternoon in his country castle, near the gates of Dresden, when King Charles, accompanied by several officers, entered quite unexpectedly to pay his devoirs to his royal cousin, and to thank him for the invitation to Liebeverda. Both August and his minis-

ters were completely put out of countenance, and did not know what they ought to do. King Charles this time was as discreet as he was brave; he did not leave his dangerous hosts for a minute out of sight; he gave them no time for any kind of agreement. The king said afterwards that in Fleming's eyes he read thoughts that were not friendly. But everything passed off courteously on both sides. On King Charles's return, he found his whole army in confusion; they thought he had been taken prisoner; they were making plans to set him at liberty. Unnecessary fear! King Charles's good-fortune was still irresistible. The next day, King August and his ministers held a consultation in regard to what they ought to have done the day before.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EVENING BEFORE PULTOWA.

KING CHARLES sat one evening in his headquarters before Pultowa, a cannon-shot from the city, and quite near the Swedish approaches. His headquarters had lately been a simple Cossack hut, situated at the foot of a sand-hill; its walls bore the marks of Russian balls, which every day tore splinters off its sides and corners. The king had been forced to shift his quarters to a deserted cloister in the vicinity.

The king was very pale. He had himself just taken away a little piece of bone which worked out of his wounded-left foot. The ball, which lodged in the great toe, had been extracted, but little pieces of bone were still taken away every day, and the king had never winced. None of the generals were present. His butler, Hultman, to dispel his master's uneasiness,

continued his story of the West Gothland Prince Götrik's adventures.

At last the king became impatient, and cut short his faithful servant.

"Do you believe in charms and tokens?" he asked, as Hultman had just been describing King Götrik's charmed coat of mail.

The butler was silent.

"Answer me, man, do you believe in charms?" repeated the king, more vehemently than was his wont.

"I believe in God alone," answered the servant, after some deliberation. "But if God so permits, it is indeed possible that sorcery can do some harm, but never any real good as we know concerning Götrik"

"Who is talking of sorcery?" continued the king in the same tone. "I mean only such a memento as one may have of one dear to him—for example a mother—and which he has carried from his youth, and which has a blessing with it, because it is a godly memento, and not of evil, but of Christ-like love. Do you believe that such a souvenir is lucky?"

"I do not perfectly understand what my gracious master means."

"I will tell you something, Hultman; it has sometimes of late seemed strange to me that I, only last autumn, should lose the blessed queen's locket. It contained her miniature and a lock of her hair. When we took to the field, the countess had a little copper ring attached to the locket for a loop. The twentieth of September we had a battle at Rajovka; it went rather hard with us there; I was that day in a bad humor; I was compelled to deceive the Cossacks. I lost my horse; it was a fight for life. It was an unlucky day, Hultman; Hården fell; in that struggle I lost the sainted queen's locket."

"My gracious master, do not lay it so to heart. It may be the medallion will be found again. Everybody knows the queen's likeness."

"I do not think so; but there is something—I have a fever, nothing else. When can I mount a horse again?"

"Will not my gracious master tell me what lies so heavy on his heart? Some cure may be found."

"Only foolishness. God help us, man is a frail being. It occurs to me sometimes that everything turned out well as long as I had the locket. Just before, we had defeated the Russians at Holofzin—was it there that the sun went down upon my good fortune? Ever since, adversity after adversity"

"My gracious master could not know beforehand that the winter would be so incomparably severe from the last of September, that many of our men would be frozen to death and the rest enfeebled. My gracious master could not calculate upon the battle of Liesna, which lost the army its stores and the lives of so many honest soldiers"

"Who told you that I could not, that I ought not to have foreseen all this? But it is too late. If only that infamous ball had not massacred my foot! I have gone unharmed through so many hard struggles before this, that,—Hultman, say not a word of what I have told you. It is all foolishness. The fever has confused my brain. All will be right again if God only gives me health. Who comes there?"

Field-marshal Count Rehnsköld entered without being announced. Hultman was allowed to retire at once. And there was no longer seen a wounded and suffering man, his soul consumed with anxiety, one who in a moment of human weakness, from which not one of the greatest is absolved, reveals to a faithful servant the secret cares concealed in his reserved mind,—but only the royal hero, the conqueror, the invincible, who never yet turned aside and never intended to turn aside for any danger. King Charles received his commander-in-chief as calmly and proudly as the day after Narva or Holofzin.

“Your majesty,” said Rehnsköld, “the czar is crossing the river just above the town. Without doubt, he knows of your majesty’s wound, and expects to find the army disheartened.”

“It is well,” replied the king, “he will find it the harder to get over the river again.”

“But the suspicion has some ground. It is talked among the soldiers that your majesty diligently seeks death, since there is no deliverance for any of us.”

“It is nothing. The first victory will show them that they talk to the wind.”

“I cannot conceal from your majesty that our position becomes every day more critical. The enemy’s light troops swarm around us on every side, and tire us out with watching them night and day. The siege does not advance. The Wallachians and the Saporogians are deserting in crowds to the Russians.”

“Rehnsköld, we shall fight !”

“I ought to add that we have a scarcity of powder and lead. The guns have such light charges, that the report is like striking together a pair of gloves, and the balls are not thrown more than thirty paces. In the meantime, the Russians daily gain military experience and courage. The czar is untiring ; he is unfolding a well studied plan for our destruction. He has devastated his country to stop our advance ; he will avoid no sacrifice for our complete annihilation.”

“Rehnsköld, we shall fight !”

“Before us we have a fortification not yet reduced ; around us an army of fifty thousand men, without reckoning the entire population of the country, who regard us as heathens, and who would cast themselves upon us furiously if we should be defeated.”

“Rehnsköld, we shall fight !”

“If your majesty commands. I have never feared battle, neither do I see any other means of escape. It is all Lewenhaupt’s fault that we got into this situation.”

“Field-marshal, you can reserve your censures. Who was it that counseled me to hasten the march from Mohilew, where I intended to await Lewenhaupt? Who was it who continually, and against the warnings of Piper and others, advocated this expedition to Ukraine, and persuaded me that the Cossack’s assurances could be relied on? It was you, Count Rehnsköld, you who now turn the responsibility from yourself to another.”

“Not I,” answered the field-marshal, proudly—“not I, but your majesty’s own will, which prevailed over all others, and your immovable confidence of continued victory wherever our weapons might be turned. This has brought us to Pultowa; God grant it may take us well away from here.”

King Charles glanced sullenly at the bold subject who made use of language hitherto unknown in the Swedish camp.

“It looks like the evening before a defeat,” he said at last, sad as never before.

“The future is in the hands of the Most High,” answered the field-marshal. “Whatever the result may be, your majesty’s army will fight as it always has fought.”

“Good, Rehnsköld, good!” said the king, again appeased. “In God’s name then. No moment is to be neglected. Now or never. To-morrow we fight.”

“Your majesty—the day will settle for the century the dominion of the North. To-morrow?”

“To-morrow.”

“I go to execute your majesty’s commands.”

“Rehnsköld, give me your hand. It does not tremble?”

“It has never trembled, your majesty!”

“Good. To-morrow we open the road to Moscow.”

“Or, Cræsus like, we destroy a great kingdom,” muttered the field-marshal to himself.

CHAPTER IX.

PULTOWA'S SETTING SUN.

NOW it had come, absolutely come—the day that was to decide the fate of the North, perhaps that of Europe. The lion and the double-headed eagle were to finish their long, heroic conflict. The two greatest men the North had ever produced were to meet in single combat, to struggle for life or death. This day would bear one of them to the shores of the Baltic, or the other to the walls of the old Kremlin. Narva's honor will never die; Pultowa's echo never be silenced. Holofzin and Smolensk—Pultowa and Borodino; defeat has in all ages marched in at victory's gate.

Lewenhaupt, Charles XII's greatest general, was one of the last to learn what the king and Rehnsköld had determined, the rest of the command not being consulted. Rehnsköld was personally exasperated with the general; besides, the whole conduct of the brave field-marshal that day had been a riddle. The preparations went on as if for a feast, not for a day that was to decide the fate of centuries.

The whole Swedish army, sick and wounded included, consisted of about twenty thousand men, to which were added twelve thousand Cossacks and Poles under Mazeppa and Poniotovski. Among these twenty thousand were the following Finnish troops:

1. Åbo province's cavalry regiment, eight squadrons, under Major von Holden, who was afterward taken prisoner.

2. Nyland's cavalry, eight ditto, under Col. Count Anders Torstenson (killed).

3. Karel's cavalry regiment, eight ditto, under Col. Löschern von Hertfelt (captured).

4. Bjerneborg's infantry, two battalions, under Major-general Baron Stackelberg and Major Willebrand (both captured).

5. Åbo province's battalion, under Lieut. Col. Sinclair (captured).

6. Nyland's battalion, under Lieut. Col. Nodèe (captured).

7. Österbotten's battalion, under Lieut. Col. De la Gardie (killed).

8. Björneborg's triple regiment, two battalions, under Col. Wrangel (killed).

All these, as well as the Swedish regiments, were so consolidated with each other that many battalions did not reckon much over two hundred, and many squadrons hardly fifty men. According to an approximate calculation, there were from two thousand six hundred to three thousand Finns at Pultowa. Before that, many had fallen at Liesna. As six thousand men must be left in the trenches and to protect the artillery, there remained not more than about twelve thousand Swedish and Finnish troops to take part in the decisive struggle.

The evening before the battle, the king showed himself before his brave men. He was borne upon a hand-barrow, with one boot on and his sword in his hand. After he had finished his round, they sat him down on the ground; generals and colonels threw themselves down around him for a few hours rest. The camp became still; only the sentry's call and the low sigh of the distant river Worskla broke the silence of the camp or disturbed the warriors' dreams, as they, far from their fatherland, slept around their king, the next night perhaps to sleep in death.

No Tegnér has sung this night, neither has any sung the day which followed. The fates, sad and silent, looked down upon the Carolins' last dreams of victory.

Immediately after midnight, June 28, 1709, Rehn-

sköld's voice was heard ordering the breaking up of the camp. The troops fell into the ranks in the darkness, and not without some confusion. The Russian camp was silent as the grave ; only far from the town were heard the axes of those at work upon the Russian fortifications.

Two of the king's attendants, Gustaf Bertelsköld and Erik Falkenberg, both promoted to the rank of captain in the king's body guard, after the battle of Holofzin, exchanged a few words of parting in the morning darkness.

"If I fall," said Falkenberg, "bear my greeting to your sister, and tell her that I have fallen for my king and my country, with her image in my heart to the last."

"And if I fall," responded Bertelsköld, "greet your sister from me with the same words, and add thereto that the book of victories was untarnished to the last, although many leaves remained unwritten."

Now the drums were beaten in the Russian camp, and the report was received that the czar had drawn up his army between the fortifications, protected by one hundred and thirty cannons, and with Pultowa as a point of support. The right wing was lead by Bauer, the left by Menschikoff ; the center by the czar himself, and under him Schermatoff.

The Swedish infantry, led by Lewenhaupt, received orders to charge the Russian redoubts. This was done without cannons, and almost without muskets, for there was a lack of powder, and the troops were obliged to form under the fire of the enemy. In spite of all this "the blues" charged with naked swords, and in the first assault took two redoubts. Menschikoff did all that a brave chief could ; three horses fell under him. But nothing could stay the advance of those who were making the charge.

Now the Swedish cavalry, under Hamilton, Kruse, Schlippenbock, and Creutz, rode forward to attack the

Russians. The latter wavered, were on the point of falling into confusion, and of being chased into the Worskla or into a morass. As of old, victory smiled on the Swedish standard, and Pultowa's norms first showed a wrinkled brow to Russia's Peter.

Then arose among the Swedish commanders that inborn jealousy which afterwards produced 1714, 1742, 1788, 1809, and which now brought forth 1709.

In the very moment of victory, with the first step of success, everything gave way and went to pieces from a lack of unity and coöperation, through the absence of a clear, guiding eye to take in the situation and master events. Accounts contradict each other; most of them roll the whole burden of the vast responsibility upon Rehnsköld, but all explain this by saying that King Charles's strong spirit was paralyzed, and no longer went like a heath-fire before the ranks of "the blue." On the other hand, the Russian defense, ordered by the masterly will of the czar, became proportionately effective. Mistakes were repaired, individual deficiencies were made up by numbers, everything worked with that unity which is the presage of victory, and finally defense turned to attack, inchoate ruin to complete triumph.

Lewenhaupt was in full march to follow up his first success, when he received orders to halt, just as the Russian ranks began to waver and retreat across the stream. The result of this order was a fatal suspense. General Roos, intercepted by the Russians, approached Pultowa, and was compelled, after a short resistance, to surrender. Defective oral orders increased the confusion. Never had such a want of counsel prevailed when Charles himself had the command. The left wing was ordered to face the enemy, while at the same time the cavalry was drawn back from the wings at so inconvenient a place that it had to "crowd together like boiled rice."

"This sight," says Lewenhaupt in his autobiography,

“was a dagger-thrust to me ; it pierced my very heart, for the enemy had three times our strength, and flanked us on all sides.”

With twelve battalions, in all four thousand men, Lewenhaupt attacked the whole of the enemy's infantry, about twenty thousand strong. “We went,” says the field-marshal, “like victims, head first against the wall.” The first attack was irresistible, and made a wide breach in the enemy's ranks. But the breach was soon filled, and the weak Swedish line, unsupported by the cavalry, was outflanked. Breaches were made, the left wing was cut off from the right, surrounded, crushed and overrun. Lewenhaupt rode to the right wing. It also was surrounded by fire, crushed, lost and flying. “I set myself,” says he, “with sword in hand, against them, and cut and slashed, but I could not stop them. The most of them shouted : ‘Stand ! Stand !’ but they broke and ran wherever they could.”

During this time, King Charles had them carry him around on the barrow wherever the fire was hottest. Several balls had struck the barrow ; a horse had been shot under the king, who in his impatience attempted to ride, and for his preservation he had to thank a young officer, who, wounded himself, had given him his horse. With his leg laid across the pommel of the saddle, Lewenhaupt met him.

“Are you still alive ? What shall we do next, Lewenhaupt ?”

Lewenhaupt hastily collected the remains of the left wing of the infantry and all the cavalry, formed around the king, and retreated upon the baggage.

The right wing defended itself still longer, with a courage worthy of a place by the side of the Carolins' most brilliant exploits. Among the many incidents which have come down to posterity, the Nyland cavalry is spoken of. At the head of this gallant troop, the young Count Torstenson, worthy descendant of that great name, hewed his way in under the cover of the

redoubts and overthrew them, but, left without support, he fell, and with him the greater part of his troops.

The Czar Peter also knew the value of a victory, and fought with great personal bravery. Riding a Turkish horse, a present from the Sultan, he flew around among the ranks of his soldiers, encouraging officers and men to do their duty as honest warriors. His hat was bored through by a ball when he was trying to restore order among his flying cavalry. Catherine Alexievna, afterwards Empress of Russia, was assiduously engaged behind the contending lines. To the weary she dispensed spirits and bread; to the wounded, bandages and medicine.

By degrees the strength of the Carolins failed. Many of their bravest heroes lay dying on Pultowa's bloody field. A sally from the city completed the overthrow. Rehnsköld, Piper, the Prince of Würtemberg, Schlippenboch, Roos, and several other general officers, were obliged to surrender. The loss on the side of the Swedes, in dead, wounded, and prisoners, was reckoned at four thousand to five thousand men; on the side of the Russians the number of the killed was greater, but small in comparison with the vast importance of the victory.

What followed—the sorrowful retreat with the shreds of a defeated army—it was easy to foresee. Two days after the battle, June 30, at two o'clock in the afternoon, King Charles stood with the remainder of his army by the banks of the Dnieper, "in a hole where one might keep sheep and goats rather than protect troops against a powerful and victorious enemy." Shut in by the opposing force, all strength of soul and body spent, raging like the lion which the medal shows us with the inscription *indocilis pati*, the defeated but not subdued hero for a long time withstood his marshal's prayers "to save himself that he might yet save Sweden."

Finally, late in the afternoon, when the Russian

army had already shut in the Swedish army at the junction of the Dnieper and the Worskla, the king consented to be borne across the river, accompanied by one thousand of his faithful men, and also by Mazeppa with three thousand Cossacks, thus leaving with a breaking heart that faithful army, of whom it has been said that they loved victory more than life, but the king more than victory. It was not King Charles who acted thus; it was a broken spirit, to whom they said: "Be no longer a general; be a governor." What was the wiser course, let history decide. A feeling within us says: King Charles would have been truer to himself and to his vows if, rather than subject himself to the reluctant hospitality of the enemies of Christianity, he had died with his whole army by Dnieper's strand.

Lewenhaupt capitulated July 1st, with all the Swedish army, at the Dnieper, and was carried captive into the interior of Russia. Pultowa bore its fruits. Pultowa bore its memorials. One of these is the great plain in front of the town which is still called "The Swedish Grave."

And here ends the story of "The Blue" and of the book of victories. When the narrative is resumed it will chronicle less brilliant achievements, but will disclose the destinies of those who have a nearer place in our memories and our hearts.

PART II.—THE FUGITIVE.

INTERLUDE.

WHEN the company next assembled in the garret, one of the usual members was found to be absent. Fate, which sometimes makes keen jokes of human affairs, had sent the learned schoolmaster, Svenonius, a severe rheumatic pain in his right arm, which member has in all times been considered especially indispensable in the exercise of the schoolmaster's calling. Svenonius, who, no less than his colleagues in the business, looked upon the birch as the proper regulator of school order, was now busily engaged in restoring the refractory arm that wielded the whip, and sent his excuses to the Surgeon's evening circle.

Little Jonathan and his comrades were divided by conflicting sentiments. They could not conceal a certain malicious pleasure at the Nemesis which held the frightful lash inactive; but their joy was embittered by the fear that the Surgeon's stories would now cease, and that the sun would not rise again over Pultowa's bloody field. It was therefore a glad surprise to them when the Surgeon, quite unsought, announced one evening that the thread would run from the spool again, that the bloody skein was ready to be reeled.

"I prefer to be out in a great rain rather than in the sultry calm just before the first bursts of lightning," said he, "and I am really very impatient to go back from the steppes of Ukraïn. For those who lived between 1700 and 1709, it may have been a time of exalted thoughts and victorious exultation; but for us who know what followed, it lies like suffocation on our

hearts when the great ruin casts its shadow back over the glare of victory. Better, then, to stand right in the midst of the frightful reality than sorrowfully to behold our joys through the dark veil of a coming night of misfortune."

"No, indeed, if you have nothing better and pleasanter to promise us, we may as well begin at the end," said the old grandmother, plainly, as she always spoke. "You can let it rain and thunder as much as you please in the records, but what has that to do with your stories? You can, heaven be praised, let the storms pass by and go on with the sunshine which followed—since you have a mind to speak in figures. Tell us, therefore, fairly and openly: 'My friends, it went so and so with Charles XII, he went up like the sun and fell down like a fur-coat, fought quite enough and died a bachelor;' and you can probably add that it was a shame to a brave man like him, that in his time copper was worth more than silver. Afterwards you can let young Bertelsköld marry and hold a stately wedding at Majniemi Castle; and besides, I hope we shall have the good fortune to pass by the war and all its incidents, and hear more about that modest girl, Ebba Bertelsköld, and more about the king's ring."

"I do not suppose," growled Captain Svanholm, struggling between his great respect for the old lady and his utter amazement at her bad taste, "I do not suppose that brother Bäck will so lightly cast aside Charles XII's broadsword to pick his teeth over the pastry-work at a wedding."

"Both the king and Gösta Bertelsköld are in exile and captivity; we must first have them back again," Anne Sophie hastened to remark, when, by the tremor of the captain's mustache, she suspected a storm was approaching.

"Heroism!" shouted the captain; "that costs handsome blows, that does!"

“Did he kill all the Russians?” interrupted little Jonathan.

“No,” replied the Surgeon. “While the Russians took his land, Charles XII slew his friends, the Turks. That is one of a great man’s peculiarities. Besides, I would tell you, cousin”—and with this the Surgeon, somewhat nettled, turned to the old grandmother—“that no man is allowed to be independent of his time or the events of his time. I can no more have a wedding at Majniemi during the great discord, than one could think of a ball in a house, the four corners of which were on fire. In times of peace and sobriety, in case any should come deserving the name, we might possibly imagine that one and another could separate their lives from the general life of the nation so as to make a noise in the world individually. But grand and stormy times tinge every living being which moves and breathes in them. The greater the rise and fall of the billows of events, the greater the oscillations of every little boat, yea, of every chip that rides upon them, and rest is found only in the dark depths. And a Finnish nobleman, a warrior, an attendant of Charles XII, should he not during the great commotion have something else to think of than getting married? The king himself had no time for that, notwithstanding it was a matter of preserving the crown for his family. No, cousin, when we presume to plant seed for history, we must lay it in such soil as its nature requires, and let it grow upon its own roots without grafting it with any trumpery. I can let all the seed lie, like much of the seed of past times which has fallen upon barren soil; but if it grow, it must grow, out of *itself* and not out of *me*. I can not remould the epochs; our Lord has formed them as they are in his great crucible.”

“Well, well,” said the old grandmother, with her kind, forgiving smile, “you must not get out of humor because I, a peace-loving woman, was a little afraid of the raw weather in the story. Tell just what the truth

demands; if it is altogether too shocking, I will give my attention to my knitting so that I may not make one foot longer than the other. There are plenty of listeners here with more warlike inclinations than I. I see by cousin Svanholm's martial bearing that great battles are imminent, and I am sure that both Anne Sophie and Jonathan already think themselves in the thickest of a shower of bullets."

"Dear godfather, tell about his killing the Turks," interrupted the very warlike little Jonathan, having become valiant by hearing himself counted among Charles XII's admirers.

"No, my little old man," replied the Surgeon. "That pleasure you can better enjoy in reading Swedish history. We must be careful not to wander too far out in the world, lest we remain as long away as the king was in Turkey, to the great detriment of himself and his kingdom. It is long since we were in Finland, and now we must see how that country bears the heavy burden of its share in the victories and the misfortunes of Charles XII."

"What is the name of the next story?"

"*The Fugitive*. For at that time every thing that could fly, fled from its fate. The prisoner of war fled from the foreign land—neighbor fled to neighbor, the peasant left his burned home, the dweller in town his vacant place of business, the scholar his overturned bookshelves. The storm swept with it every thing that came in its way: the miser's money-chest and the poor man's last cent, the peaceful flags in the harbor, the seed-corn from the furrow, the horse from the carriage, the cattle from the field, the hand from the plow, the only son from the widow, the bread and marrow from the land, and hope out of its heart. The time which stands as the portal of our story is the time of transition from victory's shout to lamentation's wail; and during this time was fought a desperate battle over the remnants of a forsaken and oppressed land. For

he who, next to God, ought to protect its borders and preserve for it the fruits of its cultivated fields—fields which many generations had laboriously, yea, with unspeakable sacrifice, conquered from the wilderness,—he, in the land of the unbeliever, continued the venturesome game for foreign crowns; he whose name alone was more than a host, and whose least victory, now useless, would have saved Finland from destruction, bore his head so high, even in his exile, that he looked away over his bleeding country to Europe and the world, to hear the din of Rumor's thousand tongues repeating his name, and the sound of the Osman war-cry, which was to break the charm of his good fortune. Immovable in his faith in the victory of the right, he did not notice that fate was secretly undermining his power and loosening stone after stone in the ground-wall of his predecessor's giant work.

“Land after land, fortress after fortress, army after army, gave way in violence and blood; Sweden fell asunder, Finland went down, and everything tottered beneath him; but he stood erect, alone, invincible; capable of everything except to bend before the fickleness of human fortune; exalted above all that history relates concerning hero-virtues, and yet less than the least in the art of forgetting and forgiving; greater than any in renouncing all, and yet so powerless in renouncing himself.”

CHAPTER I.

THE STUDENTS TAKE THE FIELD.

ONE fine spring-day in the last of April, 1710, a Pomeranian galley had succeeded in entering, between the cakes of ice, the mouth of the Aura river, and had laid to at the quay in Åbo to discharge its cargo of grain. The crops had failed badly the year before, so that rye during the winter advanced to from twenty to thirty dollars a barrel, and it was therefore natural that a multitude of enterprising buyers should immediately crowd around the welcome Pomeranian supplies. People of all classes—merchants, tradesmen, servants, the learned and the unlearned, and a crowd of breadless mechanics and seamen—streamed in together, in the hope of supplying their needs at a tolerable price; and the Pomeranian had great difficulty in making them understand that the whole cargo was under contract to the crown for the use of the Finnish army.

The whole crowd, disappointed in their hopes, began to grumble. "What now?" exclaimed a heavy-built butcher who had nothing more to kill;—"shall we starve for the sake of swelling General Lybecker's fat purse! Sell for fifteen dollars, comrade, and a good piece of pork in the bargain, provided you are not a Jew!"

"The general can eat a little less and then he can march better," interrupted another. "Hark, you Pomeranian turnip, don't let the government rat slip into your meal chest; it will gnaw holes in it!"

"Aren't you a little ashamed, you beef-hawker!" shouted a burly quartermaster, who elbowed his way

through the crowd. "I am the man that has the commissary's order to receive the grain, and if any one offers any resistance, I will beat him into grits."

"Nail him up, the crown-thief!" shouted back several voices. "Carve him, the state coward! They intend to gobble up all the grain in order to skin both the government and us!"

"Wait, you beer-funnels, you pudding-makers, you scullions, I will teach you to insult his excellency, the general's august person, when the welfare of the whole country depends on our weapons!" shrieked the quartermaster, when he had luckily slipped through the crowd to the Pomeranian deck.

"Yes, in your jaw lies the country's welfare," retorted the crowd. "Paste the poltroon to the mast! Dip him in the river! Calk and pay him! Duck him! They can brag, but let the Russians come and we would see them running for the woods!"

The times were so disquieted, the passions so discordant, that the least spark might set everything ablaze; and so even this quarrel threatened to terminate in violence, when, fortunately, the attention of the crowd was turned in another direction. The most hot-headed of them were already about to push forward to the deck of the galley and violently hunt out the burly quartermaster, when the tones of a choir of men's voices, so uncommon at that time, caused them to stop and hear what it meant. They very soon saw a numerous company of students advancing in martial order from the farthest part of town, which of old was known as Russian-hill, because—if we may believe the learned Daniel Justén—it was there that the Muscovites had their camp when they laid waste the town in 1318. This company of young men was probably something more than three hundred strong, but its ranks were not so straight and well-ordered that they could be counted with as much certainty as the regular militia. There was wanting also that congru-

ous exterior which one, especially in these days, is accustomed to expect in the common uniform, and in measured, disciplined conduct; for the greater part of these improvised soldiers wore quite unconcernedly the same gray or blue homespun jackets with which they had been fitted out by the parish tailor at home, and only a few among them had made an attempt, with yellow cuffs and leather belts of the same color, to copy in some degree the well-known and world-renowned Carolin uniform. A military man would have noted many faults in their bearing, for many of their necks had heretofore crooked under the burden of Latin grammar; but, on the other hand, one saw strong, muscular figures, and powerful, athletic limbs, such as hardly any company of the youth of to-day can show. Many chins at that time bore "manhood's ornament" while yet in school, and if students of fourteen and fifteen then as now were not so especially scarce at the Finnish University, yet much the greater number had reached the mature age of thirty and forty years when they prepared to exchange books for swords. Thus it came about that the youngest novitiates who were kept under the strictest discipline by their older companions and by them treated as little better than servant-boys, were not considered worthy of taking part in the heroic exercises. From this it may be assumed that the most exacting mustering officer could not find many to reject in the troop that now marched forth along the street of Åbo.

The students sung—when do not students sing their joys and their hopes? In artistic execution their song would not, it is true, compare with the quartettes of the present day, but a powerful and steadfast spirit breathed in those tones. It was Dahlstjerna's well-known song of Sir Peter, who tried to capture a beautiful maid, the pride of Narva, and of King Charles who protected her.

“From out the eastern woods there came an anguished cry
Ah woe betide! our men in death are sleeping!—
Who now our plowshares guide, our harrows ply?
And bolts and bars our noble lords are keeping.
But know ye not that in King Charles she found protection?”

An uncommonly tall and broad-shouldered man in sailor dress had just stepped ashore from the galley and turned to his neighbor in the crowd, a sooty smith, with the inquiry: “What does this warlike appearance mean? Is the enemy already in the country, that the students arm themselves with the apparent intention of taking the field?”

“I ought to know,” answered the smith. “For four whole weeks, day and night, I have hammered away at musket barrels and broad-swords, not to mention stirrups and horse-shoes and such like, so that there was no time to repair a single lock, even if it was for the rich Wargelin’s money-chest. The students? To be sure; they have now for eight years run after rapiers, and drilled as soldiers, although it was quiet meanwhile. But now the Russians are before Wiborg, and Easter night there came an order from Governor Palmenberg for all the students to seize their muskets and march with the *nosto*-folks.* A hammer-stroke that set the bellows roaring! The professors opposed it as long as they could, but Greek and Latin have got out of fashion at Åbo, and only the crooked, the halt and the blind are left at their books. But the students were determined to go, and that’s how the matter stands. Slag in my forge! but there’s powder in those boys! I fought them for seven years, two or three evenings a week, while I was an apprentice, and many a good fellow carries marks in his hide now, made by my blows; but since I have been out of my time, I take sides with them. But just look at those polished muskets;—they are all of them from my shop; straight

* *Nosto*—that is, *levied*—an old half-Finnish word then current.

and bright as sunshine! And one half of them- I let them have on credit."

"Who is that right reverend, in the caftan and the long peruke, away there by the corner, and who seems to be watching the student's parade very closely?"

"That is Professor Tammelin, rector at the University. It makes his reverence feel worse than a three-inch nail under a forty-pound sledge. The bishop is in Stockholm, and the whole town is in uproar. Easter evening, three balls were fired into Assessor Gyllenkrok's chamber while he was in the bath-house. Satan knows if the students had anything to do with it, but I know this much: the student's dungeon for the last two weeks has a larger population than the lecture rooms, and I have had to make two new padlocks for it. 'Do not forge them too strong, Wasara-Jaako,' said the students; 'you understand that we would rather fight for King Charles than catch spiders in prison.' 'I only know my business,' I replied; 'but if you had King Charles's knuckles you would be too much for my locks, would you believe me, sailor? the clever young sparks took me at my word, and one fine morning my new locks were broken to pieces. Thereupon the most learned conspiratory'"

"Consistory," said the sailor, by way of correction.

"Let it go. The most learned consistory put a strong iron bar across the door, and since then the birds have modestly remained in the cage. But the rest make more noise than ever, and meet and drill every day on Russian hill. Just listen now. They have stopped and are counseling about some new project. I'll bet my shop against a brick-bat that they are not putting their heads together in regard to examinations or Greek ballads. Look sharp! Just hear! Old Wäder, the jailor, will find something to do now!"

The song had ceased, and the students halted on Strand street. After a moment's eager consultation there was heard all through the company the

noisier shout: "To the prison! to the prison!" And the whole band were soon on the march towards the university, whither the sailor, who for the time had nothing else to do, followed them at a distance.

The Royal University at Åbo had at that time, and for about a hundred years after, its frugal seat in the high wall that surrounded the churchyard nearest the cathedral; and the side of the same wall, half way between the laboratory and the library, had a peculiar projection which answered an important end by serving as a *carcer*, or student-dungeon, as it pleased the blacksmith to justly translate it. It was hither the students directed their march, and they were scarcely at the place, before they undertook to do what in all probability they would not have ventured to try if the strict and venerated bishop Johannes Gezelius the younger, chancellor of the university, had been in the city: namely, with loud shouts to demand the release of their imprisoned comrade. "Out with the prisoner!" shouted the crowd. "Open the prison! Out Peldanus! Out Miltopœus! Out Bång! All prisoners free to fight for king and fatherland!"

Wäder, the jailor, an old discharged ensign, who was invalided at the battle of Lund, was probably not unaccustomed to similar visits, for he took care about opening the barred door, and contented himself with looking through a little grated window above it and asking in a harsh voice: "What foolishness are you up to now?"

A couple of skillfully thrown rotten eggs, and the renewed shout of "Out with the prisoner!" was the answer to the question, so clear that it could not be misunderstood. Wäder* took this with a calmness that one would not think the name capable of, and went without further exchange of words to see if the locks and gratings were in proper shape.

The students were for several minutes at a loss,

* The word means *Storm*.—Tr.

Some of the boldest counseled storming the door at once, and in that way breaking into the prison. Others thought it would be easier and more prudent to go around the corner and crowd in through the court door that stood open the whole day, and from that side set free their imprisoned comrade. The most discreet argued that they ought rather to betake themselves to the rector's house *en masse*, and by petition gain what in any other way might have such an uncertain issue.

Before they had come to any conclusion, their indecision was suddenly ended by the approach of the rector accompanied by two members of the consistory. It should be remarked that the two energetic bishops Gezelius, father and son, for almost two generations maintained among the students the strictest discipline which even before that was a part of the spirit of the times and which now only an extreme public peril and the absence of the rigid superior had turned from its ordinary course. When Bishop Gezelius the younger, of ruddy and healthful countenance, used with his sharp brown eyes to review the students' corps, no mouth ventured to open and no hand ventured to move except in token of the most entire obedience and submission. Now he was away, but the traditional respect for an authority of the university was not yet forgotten, and as soon as the rector showed himself, every cap flew off, there was perfect silence, and, with uncovered heads, all awaited what the highest authority of the university now present had to say to them.

Rector magnificus, Professor Tammelin, was a lean man of ungraceful figure, made more noticeable by his clerical dress and a consciousness of the ascendancy which indisputably belonged to the theological faculty. He went among the students with an assurance becoming the vicar of the chief of the church, and addressed them in Latin, because that learned tongue was in general use in all matters concerning teachers and schol-

ars, and perhaps also because he would not initiate the bystanders into the domestic broils of the university.

“What do you mean by this noise?” he said. “Why are you here in arms? And what is your excuse for the confusion which now for several weeks has disturbed the peace of the university and the respect you owe its laws?”

Gabriel Peldan, a brother of the resolute Israel Peldan who on this occasion was in jail, now stepped forward from the crowd, bowed low to his rector, and boldly answered in Latin no less fluent than that of the learned professor himself. “Your magnificence,” said he, “knows much better than we poor students the need and peril that have come upon our country through the unexpected invasion of the Muscovites, and that the government authorities have ordered that the students shall be armed and disciplined to march against the enemy. I take the liberty to say, and we would all witness it with our blood, that we students earnestly desire with the greatest assiduity to fulfill this high command, and would willingly die for our heroic king and our beloved fatherland. But now, contrary perhaps to your magnificence’s knowledge or will, all kinds of obstacles and hindrances have been laid in the way of this our highest desire, by persons whose intentions are not honorable either regarding us or the country. And when we, in spite of this, have assembled for military exercise according to these orders, and have, perhaps somewhat noisily, made our good intentions known, some of us have been incarcerated as rioters and thus prevented from serving our fatherland. On this account are we, protesting our meek obedience to and respect for your magnificence’s commands in all else, come hither to humbly petition for the deliverance of our imprisoned comrades, so that we all as soon as possible may march to the field, and thus his

gracious majesty's will, as far as concerns us, soon go into execution."

"Your humble speech, Peldan," replied the rector, "does not well agree with this defiant appearance and the tumult which under the very walls of our sacred university have frightened the peaceful muses into flight. Young men, you go widely astray if you believe that the peril of our fatherland can be averted by noisy defiance when the safety of all depends rather upon the unity of all. Know ye that the authorities of the university can not set themselves against the proclamation of the governor, but on the other hand they ought not to submit without reservation to what clearly conflicts with the law and constitution. The second paragraph of the last chapter of the constitution of the university says expressly: *Studiosi habebunt vacationem militiae, cujuscunque sortis sint vel conditionis.*"

"Will your magnificence most graciously deign to call to mind the words immediately following: *nec sub quocunque denique titulo ad eam inviti trahentur,*"* interrupted Peldan, somewhat carried away by that general desire for disputation which awakens as soon as the Roman tongue is used.

A scarcely perceptible flush on the rector's cheeks gave reason to suspect that the shot hit, but he considered it more judicious not to enter upon any refutation.

"The consistory," continued he, "has carefully considered the great danger that would threaten Finland's future if the students who are called in their time to fill the public offices and guard the public instruction, should fall in great numbers before the enemies' bullets and by that means bring the obscurity of barbarism over coming generations. Entirely on this account have the university authorities thought it necessary to

* Students shall be free from military service under whatever circumstances or conditions.

Nor shall they under any pretext whatever be compelled thereto *against their will.*

delay the military exercises until the royal council has had time to resolve our most humble doubts, and we have rightfully permitted the punishment of those of you who have acted in opposition to the known judgment of your superiors. But there have just now come to hand certain documents which duly settle that only twenty of you, who are large and strong in body and least inclined to study, shall take the field while the rest remain at their peaceful exercises *in literis et artibus*. Young men, in consideration of your original good intentions and the exigencies of the times, we, your superiors, will for this time overlook your less appropriate behavior and release your comrades who have been incarcerated, on condition that you act in accordance with the call of the royal government and yourselves select from among you the twenty to be the champions of the land. Go also, ye others, in peace, and serve your country, not with defiance and alarms, but by commendable works."

With these words the rector retired, leaving the whole troop of young men undetermined and at a loss. The message was not welcome, that only a few of them should go out and clothe themselves in blood for fatherland. Their enthusiasm was not of that kind, which, mighty in words, flames up between the cup and the wall only to cool off the next day. They were genuine sons of their time and their people, ready and willing to march, not to splendid feasts, but to the unmitigated, and fatally bloody rigors of an iron-hard time; and, like all the Swedes and Finns of that day, felt themselves capable of fighting the world. Therefore, the judicious caution of their elders fell like a cold shower on their youthful zeal, and some of the boldest ventured to propose that immediately, and without further questioning the worthy fathers, they should attack the enemy. Others again recollected that General Lybecker was just then on very unfriendly terms with the Chancellor of the University, Bishop Gezelius, and

would probably favor their refractoriness just to gall the bishop. But Lybecker was not a man who could fire the Finnish student's patriotic enthusiasm. A shout of disgust arose at the mention of his name, and immediately after, when the prisoners were liberated, they determined to comply with the rector's demands.

"The time will probably come though, and sooner than we wish, when every one of us that can carry a musket will have a chance to fight for his own fireside," said the vigorous and discreet Gabriel Peldan, prophetically.

"But I will go against the enemy at once"—"And I"—"And I," shouted fifty eager voices. They disputed vehemently for the honor of being one of the twenty; and each one swore by all the gods and goddesses of antiquity that no one was less "inclined to study" than the speaker himself, and if it came to a question of physical strength, any one might try it now. The number was too great; they must finally decide by lot. They who drew the warrior's lots immediately fastened them proudly to their caps, while those who were doomed to remain at their books, in grief and anger trampled the lots under their feet.

When this was done the word went around among the twenty lucky ones that they ought to elect one of their number corporal.

"Let Simon Bång be our corporal!" shouted several voices, and Simon Bång was chosen on the spot.

He was one of the eight rioters from the prison and one of the strongest built. But Simon Bång had his scruples, and declared that he would accept the distinction only on one condition, namely, that the company should at the same time be led by an experienced captain.

"Nonsense!" said some. "He who has alone put eleven apprentices to flight on Gertulus hill, can also alone drub a whole hostile army."

"I stick to my word," replied Bång, who was known to be a bull both in strength and obstinacy.

"Bång is right," added Peldan. "But whom shall we choose? There is no real Carolin left in the city, excepting the lame Tavast and the armless Ridderstorm and the drunken Falström. If we go to Lybecker without our own commander, he will thrust us in the ranks, or give us a fellow that has learned of him the art of retreating."

"If the gentlemen wish for captain and comrade an honorable Carolin who has been under fire before, I am at your service until the great commander shows me another place," sounded suddenly a strong manly voice from the direction of the wall near by. The students looked about and saw the tall man in seaman's dress whom we have mentioned before—the one who landed from the Pomeranian galley. The first look showed them that Simon Bång was scarcely higher than this giant's shoulder.

They asked in some surprise who he was.

"A poor Carolin, as I have already said, and my name is Gustaf Adolf Bertelsköld."

"Is it Count Bertelsköld of the life-dragoons—one of the king's attendants—he who fought so bravely in all the king's conquests—he who was wounded at Pultowa and taken prisoner at the Dnieper?" questioned several voices at once in a tone of admiration and respect that showed that the brave count's achievements were not unknown in his fatherland.

"I am the same, and have had the honor of witnessing his majesty's victories, although my sword weighed no more there than that of the least of the soldiers," answered Bertelsköld. "My story since that time can be told in few words. I was eight months a prisoner, then fled to Poland and Germany, and succeeded finally in coming by way of Pomerania to Åbo to offer my weak arm to my fatherland."

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Bertelsköld is our captain!

Live the king ! Live Bertelsköld !” exultingly shouted the students.

“ Now it will go like a dance—hunting the Muscovites home to great Novgorod,” cried several voices.

“ Gentlemen,” said Bertelsköld, not without an expression of sadness in his charming and manly voice, “ there was a time when I, as well as all our army, marched eagerly forward in the same resolute faith. Many thousands of our men were taken prisoners or killed,—victory’s bloom withered in the hands of the most habitually victorious army which ever defied Europe ; all this has taught me not to despise an enemy who has learned the art of war from ourselves, and who can continually oppose personal bravery with numbers. When I just now saw the joyous mood with which all the students competed for the honor of fighting for king and land, I said to myself : ‘ We may still hope, yes with heaven we may still conquer, for such are we all ! We know not what fear is.’ But to conquer we need discretion too. Not rashness, gentlemen ! We have before us an enemy who may become dangerous to us if we consider him less than he is. I accept your invitation ; I become your captain for the short time allotted me, and as I swear to you an honorable comradeship to the last drop of blood, so should you swear to me military obedience.”

“ We swear it ! Only lead us forward ! Lead us at once against the enemy !”

“ If it is possible we will march to-morrow. God grant us the good fortune to accomplish something for our poor land. At least we shall know how to fight and to die for her. Live King Charles !”

“ Live King Charles ! To arms ! To arms !”

CHAPTER II.

THE KLINGSPOR OF THE GREAT WAR.

IT had for a long time been cloudy in the east, and the storm was gathering. As a sailor on the sheltered bay sees by degrees the water grow dark as the thunder-cloud rises above the horizon, and restlessly turns eye and ear in that direction to be on the watch for danger, so stood Finland for ten years with eye and ear stretched towards the east to note the signs of the times. The lightnings flashed continually on the dark cloud, but they were still afar off and their report was weakened by the distance. It was still hoped that the storm would go by on one side, when suddenly the name Pultowa, like a frightful thunder-clap, rolled from east to west, foretelling menace and danger. From that moment safety was no longer found on the east side of the Bothnia. Those who lay down at night asked God what sun would rise upon the morning, and listened during the darkness to every unusual sound from wood or bay. Those who went to the field enjoined the children at home to hasten with tidings if any uncommon noise was heard in the neighborhood, and whoever went on a journey requested his neighbor, before he started, to look after his house if anything occurred. The old hunter examined the lock on his gun every evening; the mother thanked God every morning that she still had her dear ones; the little boys played war; the daughter's spinning-wheel ceased to turn when a stranger was seen at the door, and the watch-dog began to growl when he heard the report of a gun in the adjoining woods. If a wayfarer came, he was overwhelmed with questions, and one sought to read in his

countenance whether the enemy had crossed the border. People who took thought for the morrow, had turnip patches planted in the uninhabited tracts that they might have stores in time of need. Others had secret cellars walled up in which to preserve their property, and many sent betimes their silver to Sweden. The towns exercised their remaining youth in arms and stationed sentries along the roads to give warning in time if anything happened. The people assembled at church every Sunday in larger numbers than ever, to learn something of the war, and during the very prayer especially appropriate to the times, it often happened that all rushed out when a shout was heard on the highway or the clang of the carrier's bell sounded disquietingly on the other side of the lake. In these times a musket was worth more than a silver watch, a rusty sword was more valuable than the best plow, and next to God's name, King Charles was the first and the last word, the first and the last hope, which was still considered able to exorcise the menacing spirits of the future.

In the year of our Lord 1710 the storm broke loose. At first it contented itself with sweeping away the eastern fortifications of Finland, moderated for a little while afterwards, but only that it might in a short time break out anew over the southern portion of the country, and then, irresistible as fate, snatch away the whole of the interior and northern districts of this extensive land. Nature and mankind seemed to have conspired to favor its progress, and when it finally became quiet its waves had forever washed away the southeastern portion of the Finnish peninsula.

A swift messenger had hardly reached Czar Peter with the news of Måns Stenbock's victory at Helsingborg, before he foresaw that Stenbock might repeat Charles X's and Charles XII's venture of crossing the sound to Zealand and forcing Denmark to make peace. Wishing to prevent this, he determined, with his usual spirit, to give Sweden something else to think of.

Besides, he had had ever since 1706 an unsettled account with Wiborg, and he therefore let the troops that were gathered at Retusaari start across the ice for Finland. The 22d of February, 1710, this corps reached, by way of Wekkalahti, the neighborhood of Wiborg, but continued its march and encamped at Hietala and Aironaipale, three Swedish miles from the town, intending by means of fortifications to entirely cut off Wiborg from connection with the interior. The Russian strength at this time was about eighteen thousand men and fifteen cannons, under Apraxin, Bruce, and Birckholtz ; the soldiers lived in huts of snow and suffered very much in the severe cold. General Lybecker, under orders of the council, had retired from Wiborg. The man next to him in command was Colonel Zacharias Aminoff, an aged veteran who could hardly leave his bed ; and therefore the brave Colonel Magnus Stjernstråle was appointed to the command of the castle. He was a genuine good fellow of the quality and caliber of those times, and as he was provided with a brave garrison four thousand strong, and good stores, it was not doubted that he would turn back the enemy with bloody heads, until Lybecker should have time to come with reinforcements.

All Finland, all Sweden, all the North, were looking attentively to Wiborg and Lybecker. Sweden had before lost Nöteborg, Narva, and Nyen ; Wiborg, strong as iron, was the remaining key to its eastern borders and to Finland itself. On Lybecker chiefly depended its preservation. We shall see what conception he had of the importance of his position.

The bombardment began ; the top of the tower of the castle was shot away, and the town had been set on fire three times, but each time the garrison had extinguished the flames. In April, when the sea had become free of ice, a strong Russian fleet, under High-Admiral Apraxin, arrived off Wiborg, closed the entrance by means of sunken obstacles, and brought considerable

reinforcements to the besiegers. The czar himself arrived shortly after with heavy artillery, and the united Russian force then amounted to twenty-three thousand men with eighty cannons and twenty-six mortars. Day and night there was a rain of bombs and red-hot balls upon the unfortunate town. Stjernstråle returned the salute as well as he was able. Near Hietala, on the other side of Kirisilta bridge, is a stone which to this day is called Kasakankivi or the Cossack's stone. Here, it is said, Czar Peter often stood to watch the town and decide upon his plans of attack. The garrison noticed this one day, and pointed a cannon towards the stone. A Cossack standing near saw the danger and with difficulty succeeded in prevailing upon the czar to exchange places with him. This was barely accomplished when a ball came whistling from the castle and took off the Cossack's head.

The czar did not remain here long, but returned to Petersburg with strict orders that Wiborg should be taken, cost what it would.

The defenders bled—the stores decreased. The oppressed city's final hope was in Lybecker. In his strength, supported by a levy from the whole land, depended the key to Finland.

And who was this Lybecker to whom all eyes were now turned? He was one of those who, in a subordinate position in life, probably would not have been better or worse than most other mortals, but whose historical record makes them pay dearly for the exalted position in which chance has placed them to their own ruin and the people's misfortune.

Lieutenant General Baron George Lybecker had as a brave and fortunate partisan won the favor of the king, but lacked all capacity for a high command. Much less was he qualified for the difficult charge of sustaining sinking Finland at such a dangerous point and of uniting its last heroic exertions in a judicious and energetic defense. As a man, he wasted his repu-

tation by that mean parsimony which continually brooded over petty interests when the dangers of the times more than ever demanded great thoughts. As a general, he had recorded his perfect incompetency during the renowned expedition against Ingermanland in 1708. It was he who, with fourteen thousand men, was on the point of changing the fate of the North by destroying the young Petersburg, when he allowed Apraxin to frighten him by an artful letter which was placed in his hands, threatening with forty thousand Russians to cut him off from the coast. Never has a brilliant feat of arms been more miserably spoiled by a most shameless flight. So senseless was the retreat before an imaginary and invisible foe, that besides the loss of other stores, six thousand horses were shot or houghed, in order that Lybecker might get away to the Swedish fleet under Anckarstjerna's command. No wonder his name in 1710 had in Finland a sorry sound, which his later unfortunate course could only make the more hateful. It is true that his military forces were insufficient and his stores still worse, but the enemy was no better provided at its first advance. Lybecker neglected his opportunity to fall upon the Russian army in March, when it was enfeebled by disease and by the cold, and instead withdrew, overcome by the same groundless fear that hunted him from Ingermanland, and thereby gave the enemy time to increase its force until the prospects of the conflict became every day more unequal, and Wiborg's destruction with every lost hour more unavoidable.

One fine afternoon in the beginning of June the general sat in his headquarters at Keltis employed in examining the paymaster's accounts, which, as usual, showed more unpaid bills and wages than cash in hand. The heat somewhat annoyed the valiant general; he had brushed his peruke to one side, his snuff-box lay beside him on the massive oaken table, and now and then he gathered fresh strength from a mug of buttermilk,

which rural beverage left here and there conspicuous marks on the outspread accounts. To judge from the pleasant smile which at times appeared on the thin lips of this trusted man, it would seem that he was perfectly at home—just in his right element,—in this as in other things a prototype of his successor, field-marshal Klingspor, whom Finland's unlucky star a hundred years after Lybecker called to repeat the same tactics with the same result; two Fabii who each "*cunctando restituit rem*," to the especial satisfaction of the enemy.

"What now, Rydholm!" said he to the paymaster, who at a respectful distance awaited the result of the examination; "one hundred and thirty-four dollars for boots for the Nylanders? and one dollar a pair? Those Pjex shoemakers deserve to be hanged."

"The men have gone bare-footed several weeks, your Excellence."

"And yet they struggle with a will to march upon the enemy! But this is the way they extort from the government. Home-spun cloth for the Tavastlanders? If their wives and daughters are so lazy that they can not keep them in clothes, tell them to go without."

"Your Excellence, they have long gone in rags. . . ."

"And yet they want to fight! They should get stripes on their bare backs. . . . What does this say? A hundred barrels of rye to be delivered at Tavastehus? Are you crazy?"

"The Österbotten levy is on the way, and not a bit of bread is in readiness."

"If the council sends us a cumbersome lot of trash it may look out for their supplies. Strike out the order for the delivery; it is no concern of mine.—Lord! contrary to my express order you have paid out ducats at fourteen dollars!"

"Your Excellence," stammered the paymaster.

"Not less than fifteen dollars, man! Fifteen dollars and one cent, not a farthing less. The devil take

you, sir, if you pass them for less than fifteen dollars; you shall pay the difference yourself."

The paymaster hesitated. "Your Excellence perchance does not know what evil tongues say of the exchanges. . . ."

"So they grumble, do they? Out with it, Rydholm! what do they say? Is it some of those slanderers that have no more sense or honor than a whipped pack-horse? What does the rabble say about the exchanges?"

"They say—I beg that it may not be taken amiss. . . ."

"Well? I take Russian bribes, perhaps?"

"No one ventures to say that of your Excellence!"

"Well! out with it, or march!"

"They say that your Excellence receives the government ducats at thirteen dollars and pays them out at fifteen."

"Bah! Let them talk. The devil take me, but I will teach them to talk when the king comes."

"On that account I thought we might let the ducats go at fourteen, to shut their bawling mouths."

"Fifteen, I say, fifteen-two, for gold coin is going out of circulation. If the king lives a few years longer, Rydholm, ducats can not be had for twenty dollars. Thunder! and I should become a beggar by your exchanges. That would be my thanks for wearing out my boots in this swampy country—for taking command of servants and clowns who do not know anything but to drink up their pay in ale and whiskey. I am expected to do everything, indeed. For a few paltry hundred dollars, which they have scraped together for me, I have to feed all these sots with blood-dumplings and sausage, establish magazines where there is nothing to store, make uniforms for all these naked Lapland bears, and fight the Russians with a handful of recruits, dumb as oxen—people who, when they

meet me, make their salute a quarter of an hour after I have passed them!"

The sentry here announced that an officer who called himself Count Bertelsköld desired audience with his excellence.

"Let him wait. I tell you, Rydholm, fifteen dollars and three cents we must take for ducats. I shall be impoverished. I shall finally have to pawn the spurs off my boots and the scabbard of my sword. Thunder and lightning! — they think that gold grows here like crow-berries! What have you paid for butter and pork? Sixty-eight dollars for a few contemptible barrels! Is he possessed? One would think that the stable boys nowadays fry their pork in butter!"

"I beg most humbly to remark that the pork and butter are for your Excellence's table. The men, and many of the officers, have often had to content themselves with half rations, and the peasants complain that their barn-yards and hen-houses have had to furnish the rest by night."

"So, the peasants complain? I know nothing of it; mark that, Rydholm, I know nothing of it. The greasy country-sots lie behind their stoves and fatten themselves, while the defenders of the country live on bread and water. I'll give them the devil! Just let the Russian come — lightning! He will teach them where David bought ale. You can haggle about the hay, I say. These cart-horses will eat me up and the government too."

"The cavalry horses drag their legs after them from lack of fodder, and half the draft horses have died."

"Let them forage for themselves then. Shall we eat hay ourselves, so that the horses may have oats?"

"The pastures are short yet, your Excellence, and all the barns are empty. The peasants complain that our cavalry tramp down the crops in their fields."

"I'll have the country bumpkins hung, and the

commissary in the bargain. Must I beggar myself for their stinginess? You must beat them down on the price of hay, Rydholm. Tell them they must risk their purses while the soldiers risk their skins for the defense of the country. I wish they had the Muscovites to provide for."

"We might give them bills on the government, to be paid when peace is concluded. . . ."

"Peace? You prate about things you do not understand. If the devil does not take the king, we need not expect peace."

"Your Excellence!" was suddenly heard from a strange voice in the door of the room, and a tall officer in the uniform of the life-dragoons made a military salute.

The general reddened perceptibly, shoved his butter-milk mechanically to one side, and surveyed the new-comer with a look of indignation and embarrassment. "Who are you, smuggling yourself in unannounced and disturbing me in my business?" was the general's harsh inquiry.

"My name is Bertelsköld, a major, and one of his majesty's attendants. Smuggling was never an affair of mine, and your Excellence will probably excuse me, as I had myself announced a little while ago, but had not time to wait, as my errand did not admit of delay."

"So, indeed—Bertelsköld? And an order from his majesty! You are welcome, major. Rydholm, leave us and go and revise the accounts. Remember my orders."

"Yes, your Excellence, I will haggle over the hay," said the paymaster, as he retired with a satirical bow.

"I have not the honor of bearing any orders from his majesty," replied Bertelsköld, who almost pitied the general's embarrassment. "I was captured at Dnieper, have escaped from prison, and now come at the head of a troop of volunteers to offer my services to your Excellence and the country."

"You are welcome, my good major," repeated Lybecker, "but I do not find your errand, as given, at all events, so especially pressing."

"It was not on that account that I desired admission," answered the major coldly. "During the march hither I have had the good fortune to obtain reliable information that the government fleet sent out from Stockholm to relieve Wiborg was obliged to turn back without accomplishing its object, because the Muscovites had sunk obstructions in the entrance to the harbor and had protected them with batteries."

"Bad, major, very bad. Stjernstråle will be obliged to surrender."

"I have learned further, that the Österbotten levies were on the march to assist Wiborg. The fourteen parishes north of Old Carleby have armed to defend the northern boundary, and the fourteen parishes south of the same town have marched out under command of Captain Faber. Everywhere great enthusiasm has prevailed and the readiest willingness to offer blood and life for the fatherland."

"Pleasing news, very pleasing. But, major, tell me honestly, for you are an experienced soldier, what the devil shall I do with all this trash from Österbotten? Without arms, without clothes, without discipline, such a loose drove of peasants must make disturbance and confusion among regular troops, and besides this they can accomplish nothing else than to plunder the country and die like flies in the hospitals. What the devil can I do with all this rabble that the government at Stockholm is pleased to send to encumber me?"

"Your Excellence is right so far as it concerns the difficulty of disciplining and provisioning the levies, which nevertheless ought to be attainable by proper orders and judicious arrangements. But your Excellence is wrong in calling these honest peasants trash and rabble. They are in truth the must and marrow

of the land, and their honorable and manly desire to serve against the enemy is entitled to a better name and a better reception. Unhappily, the whole levy will probably be lost."

"In what way?"

"Pardon my saying it—through the most incredible, the most lamentable carelessness. A student just arrived from Österbotten reports to me that a review was held at Ilmola, and that, leaving one man on each farm and one or two on those which had already given three or four to the crown, they have enrolled four thousand two hundred men, all good, capable people, under command of their sheriffs and parish clerks, and the most highly esteemed of the peasants. This troop marched out, but did not find any arrangements made either to clothe or feed them. To proceed soon became quite impossible. First the sheriffs deserted, then the clerks, and afterward most of the men, so that now of this army, which could have saved Wiborg, only a few hundred in miserable condition have reached Keltis."

"Now, what did I say, major? Mere trash scraped together, with no knowledge of military discipline! God be praised that we are rid of them."

"Your Excellence, you can as well say: God be praised that we are rid of Wiborg, and soon will be of the whole of Finland!"

"Can I help it? Stjernstråle will have to capitulate. I have enough to do to take care of myself."

"No, your Excellence, Stjernstråle must not capitulate. We must save Wiborg if it costs the whole army and our right hands."

"We? we? The major may be one of the king's attendants, but it is I whom his majesty has been pleased to intrust with the command in Finland. I beg the major not to forget that when he speaks of what *we* must do."

"Your Excellence, I entreat you, for the king's and

your own honor, for the welfare of the country, in justice to posterity, which will sit in judgment on our actions,—save Wiborg! If it falls, it may be that all Finland will soon be lost. Let us not neglect for a moment to reach out and boldly seize the enemy wherever we can meet him! I understand your Excellence's scruples; I know that we are much inferior to the enemy in numbers and *materiel* of war, but we have instead the approval of our king and our indomitable spirit; we protect our land, we can at least die for it. A retreat, an armistice, would paralyze our whole army. As long as we stand idly here, while we can almost hear the thunder of cannon at Wiborg, and while every day a part of its walls tumble down, a part of its few defenders bleed,—so long is every arm unstrung and every soldier a cripple. But give us the order to move forward to attack, and with God's help our arms would be of steel and the weakest among us would be as good as ten! I know this people; your Excellence ought also to know them. They are not fit for camp life, they would work in blood when they can not work with the plow and harrow. If our king stood here among us,—by my good sword, he would not remain in camp now, he would fall upon the enemy Jehu-like and would hunt him like a wolf from his certain booty. Let us, therefore, make the attack to-day, now! I lead a little company of fifty men, students and deacons. Grant us the honor of being first of the advance guard to elbow the way. I swear to your Excellence that if Wiborg is not by this means set free before the next moon is lit anew, the midsummer sun shall shine over the graves of myself and comrades by its walls."

"Major, where have you learned to make so fine a speech? Upon my honor, it would be charming at a banquet, but as an old soldier and *your chief*, sir, I ought to inform you that I did not desire your counsel and do not intend to order my conduct by it. For what I do I am answerable to his majesty alone, who has

given me positive orders ; and in obedience to them I am not authorized to engage in any fool-hardy and adventurous enterprises with an insufficient force. If Stjernstråle can not take care of himself, I will not sacrifice the king's troops for his sake, let the result be what it may."

"The result will be that after the fall of Wiborg you will have the whole Russian force upon you."

"That is my affair. Farewell, Major. You must excuse me that important business"

"Your Excellence, allow me at least with my little party to make a raid on the enemy's couriers and transports."

"What were you pleased to say? Students and deacons? No, Major, I cannot answer for your sacrificing them in your hazardous games. You remain here with your company until I find a more fitting opportunity to make use of you."

"Blood flows near us; the cannons thunder, Finland's outer walls fall, and you refuse to let me strike!"

"I command you to remain, and obey my order. Farewell."

"Your Excellence, now I foresee Finland's fate! Wherefore should a people so willing to fight, in its misfortune be bound hand and foot to an incompetent general!"

These last words the brave officer uttered half aloud and left the general's apartment with sorrow and bitterness in his heart.

CHAPTER III.

THE PLAGUE—1710.

GALLANT WIBORG, forsaken by every one, had been compelled to capitulate on the 10th day of June, and Stjernstråle and the greater part of his remaining forces were obliged to give themselves up as prisoners, delivering to the enemy one hundred and forty cannon, eight mortars, and a multitude of military equipages of all kinds. In the same year, September 3d, Kexholm, with two hundred and thirty-one cannons, forty mortars and three hundred and eighty-one thousand pounds of powder, fell into the enemy's hands after its little garrison of three or four hundred men had defended it for two weeks against a force more than ten times as strong. Ancient Finland and Ladoga were thus forever lost to the Swedish government. Shocking outrages were perpetrated in the parishes about Wiborg, the outburst of the savage warriors' lust and avarice—atrocities the memory of which ages are insufficient to obliterate and which were outdone only by the scenes of Österbotten several years later. Rather than live over again these sorrowful memories, we will pass them by in silence, only remarking that the strict military discipline of the Russian troops and the generally merciful treatment of the country in the late war fortunately can give no idea of the horrors of that great conflict.

But as if the angels of the judgment would pour out all the vials of wrath upon this unfortunate period, there came yet the third angel of destruction to visit that which hunger and war had spared in this devastated land. From these gloomy times was brought forth a new public calamity, a desolating pest which slowly

spread over the north and west of Europe. It seemed, if also of eastern origin, to have arisen with the poisonous exhalations from the battle-fields of Poland and Galicia, in the midst of the victorious career of Charles XII, in 1707, and it found everywhere a fruitful soil in the distress and anxiety which attended the war. A mysterious derangement in nature's workshop seemed now, as during the great famine years, to loosen the joints of health and life. Fearfully cold winters, with packs of wolves, oppressively hot summers, earthquakes, and death, were the precursors of the plague. Refugees from Esthonia and Livonia, half-dead from hunger and suffering, spread destruction along the Swedish and Finnish coasts. The 9th of September the plague, brought by two Livonian women, reached Helsingfors. The houses where the disease appeared were at once isolated, and all refugees arriving from the sea were taken to an island distant from the rest of the group—probably Mjölö. But in spite of this the pestilence advanced, and within three months snatched away eleven hundred and eighty-five persons from this city, at that time so inconsiderable. Then it burst out in Borgå, and six hundred and fifty-two persons died, after which it spread farther, both along the coast and into the interior. The greater part of Finland, even as far as Uleåborg, was visited by this frightful guest, but with very different results. In some of the country districts, as for instance Janakkala and Mäntyharju, more than half the population was destroyed, and entire villages became extinct. Others escaped much more easily, while some seem to have been entirely spared.

Our story now takes us to Åbo, in the middle of October of the same unfortunate year.

Among the few travelers who at that time, for weighty reasons only, visited Åbo, was our old acquaintance Simon Bång, corporal of Bertelsköld's volunteers. His entrance was not a brilliant one; it was accomplished on foot, and he led by the bridle

an old cavalry horse which had hitherto borne him, but now was about dying from hunger and fatigue. Honest Simon Bång hardly recognized the place of his nativity; Åbo had so changed in a few months. A hazy, sultry south wind blew softly over the city, the smoke settled down, and the shores of the turbid river were covered with a thick green slime. The quays along the shore, formerly so lively, were unoccupied, the halls of the university were deserted, the streets were empty, the market place strewn with yellow autumn leaves. Here and there a human being anxiously and hastily stole along towards the apothecary's. The open houses resembled newly-made graves, and most of the windows were covered with white curtains. Occasionally a heavy wagon rattled along the streets, driven slowly and solemnly by a man wrapped from head to foot in an oil-cloth cloak, and wearing over his face a mask which made him look all the more frightful. After this wagon ran screaming children, sometimes weeping, sometimes threatening with their little hands to strike the grim man in the oil-cloth cloak, if he did not give them back their father or mother whom he was carrying away in his wagon. Simon Bång was not easily moved to tears, but at this scene he turned away his eyes and a pair of great drops rolled down upon his black, untrimmed beard.

He approached the center of the town, the venerable cathedral. Its doors were open, although it was a week-day, and the organ therein was playing a funeral hymn. In the church-yard outside was a confused crowd of people. The well known smith Wasara-Jaako had, during the night, buried there his wife, who had died of the plague. This was strictly forbidden, it being ordered that all who died of this disease should be taken to the new burying-ground outside the city. As soon as the fact became known, Governor Palmenburg, who was not to be trifled with, ordered the city police to remove the body and arrest the smith. But Wasara-

Jaako was not one to give up readily what he considered his right as a citizen and a man. The desperate fellow struck about him like a madman, and his knotty fists felled one after another of the police to the ground. The crowd took his part, the police were driven away, and the dead body was again deposited in the grave. It was complete anarchy. The bonds that hold society in order were on the point of bursting. A lot of drunken apprentices and sailors, who the night before had plundered the wine cellar of a lately departed merchant, bent on mischief, mingled with the crowd.

An old woman with wildly staring eyes and flowing hair climbed upon one of the monuments and began to prophesy. One after another those who were screaming about her became silent, and by degrees perfect quiet prevailed in the church-yard. Everybody knew Inkeri from Tyrvis. She had formerly, as the witch of Majniemi, been an object of horror to the multitude and the subject of many judicial investigations. Convicted of sorcery upon imperfect testimony, she had been imprisoned that she might confess—one of the last martyrs of that fearful witchcraft period which was described in the second of these stories. But now people were no longer so certain of the reality of such crimes; the judges considered longer before they condemned any one to be burned. And Inkeri was no witch of the old sort. In her confused imagination she considered herself a saint, a prophetess, rather than a servant of the devil, and was accustomed to mingle with her conjurations the keenest exhortations. Her madness would have been perfectly harmless if she had been left in peace, but her judges were confounded, and were not certain whether a good or an evil spirit spoke through her. So old Inkeri remained in prison for years without having her fate decided, until now, during the disorders of the plague, she had escaped, no one knew how.

“Wo, wo to Åbo!” she shouted with a frenzy which was at once fired by a feeling of revenge for past persecutions and by a fanatical belief in her supernatural gift of prophecy. “Wo, wo to thee, doomed city, that like Israel burned thy prophets and dragged thy prophetesses before judges and cast them in the rivers, to the reproach of mankind. I tell thee that fire from heaven shall fall upon thee and sweep thee from the earth when the day of wrath shall come upon thee, and the funeral fires shall blaze up and destroy thee. Wo, wo to thee, cathedral, which hath opened thy doors to curse things holy and consecrated! I tell thee, O church, that thy portals shall not be closed before the abomination of desolation shall stand in thy innermost sanctuary, and horses’ hoofs shall tramp within thee upon the graves of thy dead. Wo to thee, river, which hast swallowed up Walborg Kyni, my mother’s mother, and others, her equals, who had the gift of prophecy! I tell thee, Aura river, that thy waves shall be covered red with blood and gray with ashes, and flames of fire shall dry up thy channel, and the keels of the enemy shall throng thee like ice-blocks in the great spring flood. Wo unto thee, sand-hill, that lent thy earth to the witches’ funeral pyre! I tell thee that thou shalt be clothed with the bones of the unburied, thou shalt be watered with blood and become the abode of vultures and wolves. Wo unto thee, O wood, which lent thy timber to the pyre! I tell thee that thou shalt fall before the ax of the enemy and the flames of violence, and shalt be destroyed from the face of the earth, and upon thy ground no grass shall ever grow. Wo unto thee, people”

“Silence the crazy old woman!” sounded the governor’s heavy voice, he having arrived on horseback to restore order.

No one dared to touch her. Among all that multitude no one raised an arm and no mouth opened to command her to be still.

“Wo unto thee, people of Åbo!” she continued, “wo unto thee who bathed thy hands in the blood of martyrs and sneered at their lamentations! I tell thee that thou shalt enrich thy lands and thy church-yard with thy bodies and be scattered like dust before the wind. Wo unto thee, all the inhabitants of our great Finland, whose sins cry unto heaven and shout for vengeance! I tell thee that thine enemy is upon thee; behold, he standeth at the threshold of thy hut, and he shall enter in and destroy thee and thy children, so that not a gray hair and not a sucking child shall be spared, and for seven years he shall rule thee with an iron scepter and scourge thee to death and trample thee like weeds. Wo unto thee, O king”

“Hew down the accursed witch, who reviles the king!” shouted the governor, beside himself with wrath. But fear had palsied every one;—no one stirred.

“Wo unto thee, O king!” burst forth the woman, with indescribable frenzy; “wo unto thee, Charles, Sweden’s, Gothland’s and Venda’s King, who callest thyself a Christian prince and dwellest in league with infidels and defilest the earth with blood and abomination! I tell thee that thy star hath set and shall never more arise out of the night. Bloody are thy footsteps and in blood shalt thou tread misfortune’s path, and thine enemies shall triumph over thee, and they whom thou hast trusted most shall secretly take thy life by night.”

The governor, provoked to the utmost, now pressed forward to the seeress, and a couple of constables plucked up their courage and stepped up to arrest her.

“Touch me not!” she shrieked. “I have the plague!”

The uplifted arms of the men sank down at these magic words.

But now the strength of the unfortunate woman was exhausted. She was silent and stood quite still.

Then she sank slowly down, but her lips moved again more slowly, and she was heard to say: "Wo, wo, also unto Inkeri. In sin was she brought forth, in sin has she lived and spoken, and the spirit has come to make away with her and take her before the living God. . . ."

With these words she sank motionless to the ground. They lifted her up. She was dead.

The crowd scattered under the awful impression of this event. The rebellious spirit of defiance was blown away from the minds of the multitude. The words of the seeress had suppressed the storm like a sudden rain. The smith voluntarily permitted them to bear away his wife; no one uttered a single word in opposition. The vision of the future, which the dying woman had set before them, stood like a black shadow before every imagination.

"More sand, more sand on the graves!" again commanded the governor. "Is that you, Bång? I know your errand, and have just received an answer from Stockholm. The government has granted your request. To-morrow a letter will go to General Lybecker, with the royal senate's wish—for one cannot command the general-in-chief—that Count Bertelsköld's volunteers be permitted to operate by themselves to harass the enemy. Adieu, I wish yourself and your comrades good luck!"

All that autumn the foggy, unhealthy weather continued, without wind, without rain, without frost or snow; all the time a dull, cloud-concealed sky seemed to hang like an arch of lead over the unfortunate land. Beneath this oppressive atmosphere the plague continued its devastations, and a deep and gloomy dejection prevailed everywhere. On Christmas evening, when the world's light had gone down into the shadows of death, the skies, hitherto inexorable, cleared for the first time, and Christmas day, at eleven o'clock in the forenoon,

when the people were coming home from church, the sun, which for long months had not been seen, made its appearance. With it, hope revived in every wretched heart—revived not to be disappointed. The plague diminished rapidly, and in January of the following year entirely disappeared. But its havoc had been great. In Åbo it took away one third of the entire population, at that time reckoned at not over six thousand and seven hundred persons. The figures for the whole of Finland are unknown,—Sweden alone is counted at not less than one hundred thousand human lives. The court and all in public employ fled from Stockholm; twenty thousand died there, and in Copenhagen twenty-three thousand. Many who fled from the pest did not return to the cities till late in the winter. History still preserves the account of a Finnish inspector by the name of Johan Erik Nordenberg, an ancestor of the renowned family of Nordenskiöld, who fitted out a secure vessel, stocked it with all necessary supplies, and then, another Noah, went on board with his wife and his children and his servants, and for several months cruised around in the Åland archipelago, and letting no other person or boat approach him, remained on board his vessel until the worst of the plague season had passed by.

CHAPTER IV.

HEADQUARTERS AT BORGÅ.

THE years 1711 and 1712 passed without any noteworthy military events. The Russian corps made a raid from Wiborg; the Russian fleet showed itself in the archipelago, but as Czar Peter's eyes were perforce anxiously directed toward the crescent, he

had no time to think of Finland. The victor at Warsaw, Count Nieroth, an honest and resolute man, but enfeebled by age and sickness, was put in command in Finland and made an attempt to recapture Wiborg. He failed for want of artillery and provisions. His levies also, so poorly subsisted were they, were incapable of carrying forward an orderly siege, but deserted their banners and went back to their homes. Wiborg's fate was written in the stars.

Nieroth died in the beginning of the year 1712, and in July of the same year the king ordered Lybecker to resume the command,—perhaps just because the council had brought forward so many complaints against him.

Reports of the Kalabalik * at Bender flew over Europe on the wings of rumor, and the czar, now quieted concerning matters in that direction, began again to look towards the North. “Charles XII is mad!” exclaimed with one voice the statesmen of that time, and Czar Peter probably entertained the same opinion. At all events the Swedish Lion had realized nothing from his hopes in Constantinople, and the czar was now free to complete his mastery of the Baltic by the conquest of Finland.

Helsingfors received the first stroke when the eagle swooped down. This event is described by Henrik Forsius, in his topographical description in the year 1755, in the following words :

“In the year 1713, on a Sunday of public thanksgiving, at eleven o'clock before noon, the Russian fleet arrived with hostile designs; and when it advanced almost unperceived over Hertonäs sound, the Finnish regiments † there present, in their surprise, could not

* This is the name given by the Turks to the fight at Bender, where Charles XII, with fifty men, defended the castle against ten thousand Turks and Tartars until it was in flames, when, undertaking to cut his way out, he stumbled and fell and was taken prisoner.—TR.

† Fifteen hundred men under C. G. Armfelt. Forsius forgot to mention that Armfelt at first drove the enemy back with great loss, and only retired when Czar Peter at the head of his cannon-boats attacked Helsingfors and threatened to surround the little Swedish force.

offer any considerable resistance, but were compelled to set fire to the town, as with streaming eyes they made their escape. Hereupon, the Russians landed without opposition, and, dividing their men, a part of them sought to quench the furious flames ;—but they saved nothing by their trouble except a few half burned timbers and some warehouses and dwellings near the shore. Some of the troops were allowed to follow at the heels of our flying people ; but they were hindered in their progress by our men, who, as soon as they had crossed over, burned the two bridges at the Tavast gates near the city. But the indefatigable Russians made rafts of the remaining timbers and set their men across. Meanwhile, our men found time to collect at Gammelstad for resistance, but were yet in such a disordered condition that they were compelled to leave the place to the enemy. Then the Russians became masters of everything, but two days afterwards, when our Swedish galley-squadron arrived, they were obliged to betake themselves to Borgå, from whence late in the summer they advanced again on Helsingfors, when, with renewed courage, they subdued the city and held it till 1721. The fugitives, who at this time were safer with the wild beasts than in their own homes, now more hopeful, gradually began to creep forth. If the Russians when they went away had not left undisturbed the barracks they had, during their stay, built from the many demolished houses transported hither from the neighboring country, the inhabitants would not have known where to lay their heads. Yet, hoping for more propitious skies, they willingly accepted, in place of their well-built houses and valuable estates, these few hastily and unskillfully built barracks already falling to pieces. In amazement they gazed at the ashes sprinkled with the blood of the inhabitants, and could with difficulty recognize their former homes.”

Helsingfors was burned, because time and horses were wanting to bear away its rich stores. Some say it

was done by Lybecker's orders, and it is certain that he was very much censured by the council. This Lybecker had an uncommon faculty of bringing upon himself everybody's displeasure and indignation. Along in the summer, when the Russians approached, he wanted to burn Åbo, "to damage the enemy." It was prevented, it is true, but the very mention of it awakened general exasperation. Lewenhaupt seemed not to have forgotten his exemplar Lybecker, when, twenty-nine years afterwards, fleeing ignominiously, he applied the torch to Fredrikshamn.

The gallant Charles Gustaf Armfelt, then major-general and colonel of the Nyland infantry, retired from Helsingfors, joined the principal Finnish forces at Borgå, and awaited the conflict. The Russian fleet soon approached, and Lybecker retreated as far as Mäntsälä and from there still farther towards Tavastland. During this time the enemy harried the coast and the whole district about Borgå. Meanwhile there came the censures of the council and reinforcements of men. Lybecker marched back to Borgå, and it is here that we find him in the summer of 1713.

Borgå, which after the fall of Wiborg was the last remaining city of the east, had suffered much in the Russian attack of May 11th, 1708, when a marauding party of three hundred men had succeeding in surprising the unfortified town. To be sure, eighty of the young men were sent to guard the bridge, and drove the enemy back with a loss of fifty men; but the next morning the enemy landed again near Tarkkis, slew the defenders' unorganized band, plundered the city, and burned a part of it, together with the surrounding estates. From this misfortune and the plague which followed, Borgå had not yet recovered; half of its inhabitants were dead or scattered, and the ancient cathedral, with its steep, pointed roof, looked down in dumb solemnity on the narrow, half-burned streets, and the

crowds of soldiers who swarmed about the headquarters.

The city and its environs presented a lively appearance. A part of the troops were encamped in tents on the high sand-wall which is called Borgback, one of the remains of old fortifications; others again were quartered on the nearest manors, while the levies, not being supplied with tents, had thrown themselves down in scattered groups at Näseback, just in front of the town. The smoke of hundreds of camp-fires rose toward the blue August sky; drums sounded from the trampled corn-lands and plundered turnip-fields.

The Finnish strength had now increased to nine thousand men, of whom about half were regular troops and the remainder levies, and all able and ready for the conflict. The consciousness of having defeated the great Russian army at Narva with a much smaller force than this, dwelt in every breast, and no one doubted of victory. Finally, after so many troublesome and ignominious retreats, they would have an opportunity to fight in earnest, and for the first time in a long period the Finnish birches resounded with brave and joyous war-songs.

Therefore when General Lybecker, surrounded by his staff, rode out to review the troops, the soldiers forgot their old grudge and saluted him with ringing hurrahs, in the certain conviction that the review presaged a bold attack, whether it were against Helsingfors, where the enemy's strength was inconsiderable, or against Wiborg, where sharper blows and greater honors were to be expected.

These hopes were enlivened even to jubilation by the news of successful raids which Finnish partisans, both in the east and the west, had lately made to the injury of the enemy. Colonel Ramsay, at Jackarby, not far from Borgå, had, with an independent company under his command, raided to the very gate of Helsing-

fors and brought away not less than forty-odd prisoners, including two officers. In the east, Bertelsköld, with his volunteers, had not only returned with a good-sized transport from the vicinity of Wiborg, but had also intercepted a courier with important despatches from the minister of war at Petersburg. Corporal Bång, who brought the despatches to the commander-in-chief, reported that a part of the population of Karel were under arms, commanded by the brave peasant, Sallinen; that the intrepid partisan Luukkonen, with his Lieutenant Långström, was operating in the enemy's rear; and, finally, that Bertelsköld hoped to be able to cut off all connection between Wiborg and Petersburg by land, provided he could rely on the advance of the Finnish army.

The commander-in-chief received these advices with considerable embarrassment. He had some time before publicly commissioned Luukkonen as major and appointed Långström captain. But partisans were not in accordance with his taste. He pretended not to hear the hurrahs. He looked upon them as direct challenges to battle; for he understood his people. Sulenly he rode by the side of Armfelt, concealing at times his embarrassment by harsh remarks concerning the bizarre uniforms of the levies and their awkward way of carrying a musket.

"I will not answer for these men in the front line of a parade, but I will answer for them eye to eye with the enemy and in a volley at ten steps," answered the gallant Armfelt, with some indignation. "If your Excellence was only pleased to give them an opportunity."

"The lubbers showed what they were worth at Wiborg," rejoined Lybecker. "Did they not run to the woods like a flock of sheep as soon as they heard the dogs bark?"

"No, your Excellence, they did not run from fear of the enemy, they ran because they were not permitted

to meet him man to man in close combat, and they will do the same now if they are not permitted to fight. Their knapsacks will soon be empty, the crops stand unharvested in their grain-fields and meadows. How can your Excellence ask them to endure a tedious camp-life without seeing any other results than incessant marches and countermarches, while the enemy harries the neighborhood without hindrance! These people are not made for campaigns, but for battles. To hold our army we must fight."

"We are too weak; we must await reinforcements."

"And while we are getting a few hundred men, our enemy will gain time to reinforce himself with thousands. While our regulars get one or two companies of recruits, perhaps two thousand of the levies will desert their colors. The pleasant weather is going by, and soon the fall rains will make the roads impassable. Your Excellence, we *must* fight."

"If the roads become impracticable, it is the enemy that will be most embarrassed. It is to our advantage to delay him as long as possible."

"While the enemy advances with fire and sword—while the country bleeds,—while anger, exasperation and shame fill every soul! No, your Excellence, as the matter now stands we must not delay, we must act. We have now nine thousand men, and the enemy has hardly more than twelve thousand at any one point. If we do not dare to attack now, three weeks from this time we shall not have more than one-half our present force and the enemy will have doubled his. No choice is given; we are compelled to fight!"

"Major-general, you understand my opinion and his majesty's explicit orders. I wish to discontinue this subject—you had better instruct your men in the rudiments. *Kreutzsapperment!* those fellows shoulder arms like toads!"

"Permit me a single inquiry. Is it your Excellence's intention to await the enemy here?"

"I shall act according to circumstances."

"But if he attacks us I hope we shall make a stand. Our position is advantageous. . . ."

"I have told you, General, that I shall act according to circumstances, and I shall make use of your sword if we need it. Will you please to dine with me?"

With a slight bow Armfelt raised his hand to his hat.

"*Auf Wiedersehen!*"

And the two generals parted;—Lybecker pleased with having avoided the farther remonstrances of a man whom he both feared and hated, and by whose side as a warrior he could not but feel himself infinitely inferior; Armfelt, on the other hand, irritated, and, like Themistocles of old, brooding over a plan to force the commander-in-chief to fight whether he would or no. He had hardly reached his quarters before he seated himself and wrote the following note to his wife Louisa, born Aminoff, at Isnäs :

MY BELOVED LOUISE :

This in haste to advise you of a possible visit from me in case we should be beaten and compelled to make our escape to Sweden. Our position here is a desperate one, the army is in rebellion, our stores all gone and our ammunition entirely destroyed by the last rain. I hope at least that the enemy will not attack us in this very unfavorable situation to-day or to-morrow, for if such a misfortune should occur, I foresee our complete and inevitable destruction. In the meantime be of good cheer; I shall look out for all of us, that in your faithful arms I may forget the fickleness of fortune. Kiss little Gustaf, and have Stolt drill him assiduously; in a few days perhaps I shall be with you, and within two weeks shall be in Sweden. *Au revoir. Jusqu' à la mort.* Thine,

C. G. A.

Borgä, Aug. 4, 1713.

The general sealed his billet and rang. "François!" said he to his faithful groom who had accompanied him

from France and was sufficiently initiated in the weighty matter necessary to be attended to in those days, to catch the meaning of a half-sung song—"would you like to earn twenty ducats?"

The Frenchman smiled. "Your Grace has a talent for spurring my zeal, which reminds me of gay days of yore,—at Valenciennes for example"

"Silence, you lubber. This is not a question of bachelors' adventures. Get you a peasant's dress as soon as possible and sew this billet in your jacket—but not too skillfully, you understand?"

"Not too skillfully? Well."

"Betake yourself with some buckets and whatever things you can get hold of, out past the enemy's sentry line; they are hardly two miles from here in Sibbo. You will be taken prisoner—do you understand?"

"Good! I shall be taken."

"And released again,—provided you are not previously hanged."

The groom made a comic grimace.

"I hope this billet will be your safeguard. You will be examined. You do not speak. They assault you, they search you, and the billet which you should smuggle to Isnäs is discovered. In order to avoid the rope, you lie to the best of your ability about our bad condition, and after a great many objections, allow them to prevail upon you to guide them to the enemy, that they may early to-morrow morning surprise us. It is quite possible that Lybecker will have you hung when you come, but by that time you will be used to it. Stay! I remember now that we might get away on the side of the camp toward Mäntsälä. You must in a cunning way call the attention of the enemy to this, and arrange it so that a detachment may be in our rear, and if possible surround us on all sides. On all sides, you hear; oh that would be fine! When you are taken down from the gallows I will make you my steward and double your pay."

"Your Grace's orders shall be scrupulously followed. I venture only one most humble prayer."

"Speak out. Not twenty ducats more?"

"Fie now, what does your Grace think of me? I only most submissively supplicate that if I should be taken down a little too late for my exalted station, that your Grace would have the following epitaph engraved on my tomb: 'Here lies a faithful lubber who lived and died for his master's boyish amusement.'"

"Good, good," laughed Armfelt; "your desire is reasonable, and shall be granted. But be off at once, or I am afraid we shall retreat in the morning."

"Ah, my valiant General!" said Armfelt when the groom had departed. "You have invited me to dinner to-day; would God I could invite you to a good breakfast early to-morrow morning. François is no chicken. He will feed them this story like blood-pudding. Now if they only surround us right royally! *Grand dieu!* I want just once to see this pitiful retreator obliged to fight in earnest!"

The day passed, and Armfelt was in capital spirits. So outspoken was he, that he could not refrain from an occasional thrust at the commander-in-chief. The conversation at the dinner table turned on Rutger von Ascheberg, when he surprised and slaughtered Czarnetski's Polanders during the night at Kunitz.

"Czarnetski was a fool," said Armfelt; "he should have hamstrung his horses and run away to the fleet."

Lybecker was forced to swallow this contemptuous play upon his renowned retreat from Ingermanland. But Czarnetski's fate must have awakened in him some slumbering apprehensions, for at nightfall he sent out videttes in all directions to watch the enemy's movements.

Armfelt, on his part, rode out among the troops and satisfied himself, without letting it be noticed, that every sentry was on watch and that all the scattered divisions could be readily drawn together. From the camping

ground of the levies he had all the spirits secretly removed, and the Nylanders, under pretense of an early review, were ordered to sleep in full uniform and with loaded muskets.

The night was already far advanced when one of the videttes returned at full speed to Lybecker with the report that on the side toward Sibbo he distinguished the dull sound of the marching of a large force of cavalry. Shortly thereafter came another, and then a third, with similar reports that the enemy was in motion along the whole Mäntsälä side. Lybecker, who could not be denied the merits at least of being a *prudent* general, had all his cavalry horses immediately saddled and marched towards the threatened point at the north, after which the infantry received orders to break camp, the baggage was brought together and what could not be carried along was burned or destroyed.

Armfelt foamed with rage. His plan had been prematurely discovered, but he still hoped above all that the enemy would attempt to take advantage of the evident confusion. In vain. The Russians, seeing themselves foiled in their expectation of finding the Finns unprepared, did not follow up the attack but drew back to their former position. A slight skirmish between the Cossacks and the Nyland cavalry was the only result of this exceedingly dubious night-surprise.

But, on the other hand, when the army after four days forced march halted in Pelkäne, the indignation of the Finnish army, so long restrained, burst into flames. The officers, and foremost among them the soldiers' favorite, the valiant Armfelt, had the greatest difficulty to prevent a general mutiny.

"Why are we not allowed to fight?" shouted the soldiers, and in their indignation spit upon the written order of the day in which the commander-in-chief enjoined order and military discipline during the new retreat.

“Why may we not fight?” repeated the levies, beside themselves with rage. “Have we marched so many miles from our homes and patiently endured every hardship for the sake of dishonorably turning back without firing a shot while the enemy takes away our lands?”

“Why do we slink around the country like hunted hares, the scorn and ridicule of the enemy? We deserve to have the boys in every village point their fingers at us and to have our own women hunt us home with brooms!”

“Our highest officer runs away from the drum like a hare! Shall we permit our country to be betrayed? Shall we suffer our wives and children to be sold like plucked hens to the first Muscovite that scares the general to the woods?”

“Let us hunt up the biggest crock to be found in Pelkåne village, and stuff the general into it and throw him into the water. If there was any harm it would be to the crock.”

“Yes, boys, and then we’ll take Armfelt for commander.”

“And then we’ll go against the enemy anew — and that time go to stay!”

“What now, you shameless rascals!” shouted Armfelt, who was just riding by. “Do you not know the laws of war, and what it is to make revolutionary speeches against your commanding officer?”

“Hurrah! hurrah for Armfelt!” was the soldiers’ reply.

“Live the king!” replied Armfelt. “Be patient, boys! No mutiny, for then ropes would be found. So help me God, I tell you we shall have a fight, if not to-day, then another day. Now keep your mouths shut. I am going to see the general.”

Armfelt went, and found Lybecker exchanging some hard words with a deputation of the levies headed by a stately young peasant, Lars Larsson, from Storkyro, one

of their self-chosen leaders. Lybecker had as usual received the militia with contempt, and called them vagabonds and beggars, who were good for nothing but to eat up the army stores like rats.

The peasants were enraged to the last degree. "We won't take any of your insults, General Backward, or whatever your name is!" burst out young Larsson angrily in Finnish. "We are neither vagabonds nor beggars, but free, honest peasants, who have come hither to hazard life and limb for our king, but not to be nicknamed by such lords as you, whose greatest courage is in their uncivil mouths. We are not the scum of the land, but rather its pith and substance, the timber of which King Charles has, for the past thirteen years, built the armies that have won his victories. And this will we tell you, general: Since you have so little respect for the king's judgment that you will not let us make a stand and fight, but intend to make us play the fool by running about the country, we free peasants will bid you good-day and go home and leave you to answer before God and the king how you have taken care of this unfortunate country."

"Arrest the traitor!" shouted the general to the guard at the door.

But Armfelt stepped between them. "Let them go, general!" said he, with that fine gravity which now, after more than a hundred years, one so much admires in the statue of that proud and heroic Carolin. "Let them go if your life is dear to you, for it hangs on a single hair!"

Lybecker turned pale. "What language, general!" said he, as he beckoned to the peasants to retire. "I have long known that you too were among my enemies, but I did not believe that you would venture to defy the king's orders in my person. No, my dear sir, you shall not take my place so easily."

"For shame!" said Armfelt, when he was satisfied that they were alone. "For shame, general, thus to

address a man but for whom the whole army would at this moment be in insurrection. Your faint-heartedness and your perverseness have given the land as a prize to the enemy and brought both the regulars and the militia to the verge of despair. I exhort you for the last time to change your tactics and make a stand against the enemy. If you refuse to do this, I can no longer answer for the men."

"That is my affair. I obey the king's orders, and do not need your advice."

"Finland is lost, and that through you! Think, general! this ignominy will attach to your memory to the latest posterity."

"Have you anything more to say?"

"Yes. I see that you shut your ears both to reason's and to honor's voice. Well, then, the government shall be the judge of your conduct. I shall act in the matter as duty and honor bid. Farewell."

And Armfelt went, leaving Lybecker nonplussed and apprehensive. The general sadly suspected that he had played out his rôle, and his suspicions proved true. The retreat from Borgå was decisive. The peasants left the army by crowds, and a great many of the regular soldiers followed their example. A few weeks after this unfortunate countermarch, the Finnish army had without a battle melted away to less than half its strength, and privation and despondency had palsied those who remained under its banners.

CHAPTER V.

THE PARTISANS ON THE BORDER.

OF the twenty students and sixteen deacons who marched out from Åbo in 1710, about half were scattered by the middle of the summer of 1713. Some had fallen before the plague, some before the enemy's balls, and five or six had preferred to serve under Armfelt among the regular troops. On the other hand Bertelsköld's renown as a brave partisan had brought to his standard many young men from all classes of society, from among whom he had been pleased to select twenty of the most serviceable, while he sent the remainder to serve in Armfelt's ranks. Bertelsköld's independent company, therefore, at the time Lybecker made his famous retreat, consisted of only thirty men, but such ones that each considered himself a fair match for ten;—brave, crafty fellows, who knew every nook and hiding-place in the neighborhood better than if they had been born there, and who, like a thunderstorm, burst forth from the woods upon the unsuspecting enemy, and as suddenly disappeared after having inflicted the greatest possible injury. Several such independent companies ravaged in the enemy's rear, carried away his couriers and transports, attacked or destroyed or made prisoners his scattered detachments, and brought to naught more than one well considered plan of operations. Unable to reach the partisans themselves in their inaccessible places of concealment, the enemy often avenged himself terribly on the neighboring inhabitants, who, certainly not without reason, were suspected of being connected with the freebooters and favoring their undertakings. Writers of a later

date, like Lencquist, have on this account regarded the partisans as very mischievous, since they drew the vengeance of the enemy upon so many innocent persons.

But it is certain that the people were pleased to assist "the little war," and had the partisans received any support from the regular forces, they would certainly have contributed largely to the country's deliverance. In the traditions of the people their exploits live to the present day, and even now the old man in the Lapland hut tells his wondering listeners of the bravery of Luukkonen and Långström and others; of Kivekät, Härkmaunin, and more of those shadows of the past which, in the mysterious obscurity of history, have obtained an almost mythical significance.

During the year 1710, and up to and including the year 1713, Old Finland, or more correctly the district around Wiborg and the southwest coast of Ladoga, was the arena particularly appropriated to the Finnish partisans. It is here also, in August of the year last mentioned, that we again find Bertelsköld and his men in one of the great forests in Kivinebb parish, not far from Rajajoki and north of the great road leading from Petersburg to Wiborg.

It was night, and the darkness of autumn, now beginning, had already cast its long shadows over the spreading pines, while a flaming wood-fire lighted the rocks and hillocks between their tall, mossy trunks. According as the light flashed up or died away, its fantastic glare fell upon more remote or near objects, and in this uncertain, flickering light, the giants of the forest seemed to crowd more closely around the fire, while the owls flitted from branch to branch, and the wolves,* frightened, concealed themselves in the inaccessible clefts.

Around the fire sat, or rather half lay, twenty well-

* After Kivinebb, at a later time, became included in the great real estate grants, its wolves became fatally notorious. Year after year children were carried off from the villages, while the people were forbidden to own fire-arms lest they might do harm to the game belonging to the owners of the estate.

armed men in Russian soldiers' cloaks, showing that they maintained their wardrobe as they did their larder, by booty from the enemy. They had just finished their frugal meal, and a silver beaker with tolerably potable wine—also booty—passed around the company. Time and again some uncommon sound in the woods attracted their attention, but after they had listened and convinced themselves that it was only the sentinels' call to each other not far away, or the sighing of the wind among the tall pines, they resumed their conversation with a cheerful gayety which showed that they had already learned to accustom themselves to their adventurous life in the forests.

"Bång ought to be back by this time," said Bertelsköld, "and I hope with good news. If we only had the army twenty miles nearer, I would promise Bruce at Wiborg that he should see the spook by daylight."

"And dream every night of the Wiborg explosion," interrupted Miltopæus, one of the former prisoners of Åbo.

"I hope for nothing until I see Lybecker taken along the streets of Åbo, riding backwards on a starved baggage horse, dressed in sheep-skin and his hat trimmed with a long pair of hare's ears," added Israel Peldan, also one of the former inhabitants of the prison.

"Away with all hare's ears!" resumed Bertelsköld. "Let us empty this beaker to the success of our expedition to-morrow. Fifteen wagons with powder, six caissons of bullets, eight hundred Saxon muskets, besides pork and brandy, caviar, fruits, and other delicacies for the czar's own table, for they say he intends to visit Wiborg;—that will be something worth earning, boys! I have it from a reliable source; old Eero has himself been with the transporting party, and it is now resting, scarcely a mile from Rajajoki. The devil knows why they did not send all these goods safely by water, but perhaps they had a scent of the Swedish

fleet. It is true that we shall have to deal with about two hundred men besides the luggage, but there are hardly forty Cossacks. And with the remainder we shall fight our way out. . . . ”

The savage men at the fire smiled in their beards. They had respect for the Cossacks; they were a brave people; but they could make it all right with forty comrades from the Don.

“I have looked out for the caltrops here and there along the road, so that a part of their horses will surely be lame. Besides, we will allure them into the woods by false alarms. Eero has a boy that can blow signals to compete with a trumpeter in the life dragoons, and the Cossacks finally will not know where they live. It is too bad that Långström and Luukkonen are not with us.”

“They always wanted to be their own masters, so let them take their chances!” said Miltopæus. Envy had found its way even to these brave freebooters’ hearts.

“Now, by my father’s shade!” replied Bertelsköld, enraged, “you ought to be ashamed of yourself to talk so of a man that serves his country better than you and I both. It is three weeks since they disappeared, and probably their honest Finnish blood now waters Russian soil. I would give my left hand, if thereby I could buy them back to their fatherland!”

These words were hardly uttered when the sentry on the east side called out, and steps were heard in the woods. The men by the log-fire sprang up and seized their guns, prepared, as they must always be, to fight for life against an unequal foe, who often hunted them like wild beasts and sought to annihilate them at whatever cost.

It was not long before two men came forward to the fire, clad in prison clothes and so covered with dirt and dust that it was next to impossible to recognize them.

“King Charles !” the men cried, and sank down by the fire, tired even to fainting, being unable to utter more than these two words, the partisans’ common password and token of recognition.

“Luukkonen ! Långström !” shouted Bertel-sköld, with glad surprise. “Here with the silver beaker ! The poor devils look as though they had come direct from the infernal regions !”

“From Moscow !” groaned Luukkonen, after he had somewhat recovered. “From Moscow, or rather from the gallows ! Another swallow, comrades ! Thanks ! We have been six days on a wolf hunt—hidden in bogs while the Cossack pikes whistled about our ears. No matter—we are here again, and bring good news.”

The men camped down around the fire by the newcomers, shook their hands heartily and urged them to tell their adventures.

“Well, then,” answered Luukkonen, while Långström kept silent and drank, and then drank and kept silent, until from weariness he slept where he sat. But the wine, and the danger fortunately passed, had loosened the tongue of the laconic Finn. “It can be made a long story,” continued he, “or it can be made a short one. We had heard some talk about the powder transport which is now on the road, and we were out on a scout towards Systerbäck. In the twinkling of an eye we had the Cossacks upon us, and after several of them had bitten the grass they caught us and took us at once to Petersburg. It turned out that they recognized Långström by the rags of his uniform, and so they took us both to the czar. After he had examined us a little and we had lied as well as we could in the hurry, he cut the matter short by saying: ‘To the gallows with that dog !’ As I had on my peasant jacket I was able to see the point, and began at once to cry, ‘Your imperial grace, I am an officer !’ and as good luck would have it, I had my major’s commission in my breast-

pocket. The czar ran his eye hastily over it, and frowned. It don't do to fool with him when he does that, and all who were standing around began to tremble like aspens. But he threw the commission back to me and said: 'Am I obliged to know every mole? Give the men a tankard of whisky and send them to Moscow; they may be of service to us.' Then he put on a kinder look, slapped us on the shoulder, and said in Swedish: 'A singed dog is a good dog!' And then he said in Russian that he liked us because we fought so like young devils, and we must teach his men to drill, he said. God forgive me, I came very near liking the Muscovite! Next to our own king, I hardly know a doughtier fellow."

"Well, what else? You had a good long road to Moscow."

"No, we did not get so far as that. They drove us in a prison cart and sent an escort of four men with us. The third or fourth night we lay at a grocery, and our guard had, as usual, taken some refreshments. I lay awake—I could not sleep because my wrists ached with the bands. 'Are you awake, Långström?' I asked. 'Yes,' said he, 'I think we can get away.' 'That is just what I was thinking,' said I; 'if I could only get these devilish bands loose.' 'Turn over,' said he, and in five minutes he had gnawed off the band. Then I loosed him and we took the soldiers' weapons and cloaks while they slept, and some food in a knapsack, and left. But Långström was angry at one of the rascals who was snoring on the floor, for having given him a rap the day before, and as the fellow was very attentive to his long brown beard, Långström, just as we were going, took a pair of shears and clipped off his beard, when the brute waked up and began to give the alarm, whereupon we hit him over the ears and rushed out. We had the good luck to fasten the door on the outside, and so we just nicely got us a pair of horses from the stable and set off in the dark without knowing whither, with the whole

village at our heels. At last we came to a swamp and had to let the horses go, and get down on our backs in the mud and stay there all the next day. The next night we continued our journey, and so on, night after night for eight nights, living on turnips and berries, and stealing horses in the villages whenever we had a chance. One evening we came up with two girls, each of whom was carrying a crock of milk; it rained a shower, and the poor things were freezing. 'Wait a little,' called Långström. Then we drank their milk and gave them our cloaks in exchange. That is the reason, comrades, why we now must pay our respects in these rags."

"No need of that!" said Bertelsköld. "Great Novgorod has looked out for our wardrobe. Well, comrades, as our lucky stars have brought us together again, will you join us in a good *coup*?"

"I intended to ask you the very same thing," replied Luukkonen.

"You have a mind to take the powder transport then?"

"Bother myself about a few miserable barrels of powder? Better than that."

"Well—not a whole arsenal?"

"Better yet!"

"Prisoners to take? A colonel?"

"Better yet!"

"A general?"

"Better yet!"

"What, man, you do not think of lying in wait for . . ."

"The czar!"

"Explain yourself!"

"I learned by one of our Kivekåts * who was rov-

* Kivekät is one of the heroes of the popular traditions of this time. It is uncertain whether or not this appellation, meaning *stone-hand* or *stone-thrower*, is a common name for those among the partisans, who, on account of a lack of ammunition, were accustomed to throw stones at the enemy, or were for any other reason considered uncommonly hard-handed.

ing about in that vicinity, that the czar, attended by a few faithful men, will dine to-morrow at Menschekoff's country-seat near Bjeloostrow, four miles from here. As I had no prospect of getting together more than ten or fifteen men, and poorly mounted at that, I hurried to find you and ask you to share the honor and the danger."

"Capture the czar!"

"Why not? He is a brave fellow, and his body-guard will defend him to the last drop of blood. But we are no milk-sops either. What does it matter if half of us never come away, if the remainder only succeed in doing more than an army, more than King Charles himself!"

"Luukkonen, you are a peasant, and I bear the title of count, but this brave thought ennobles you far above all the counts in the kingdom of Sweden! You are right; what does it matter if you and I and all of us fall in this affair if barely two of us remain to conduct such a precious booty to a place of safety! Here is my hand; we will risk the attempt."

"Luukkonen!" exclaimed Miltopæus, and in his turn shook the brave peasant's hard hand; "it so happened a little while ago that I said some very foolish words about you. I now take it all back, and whoever says otherwise of you than that you are the crown of all the capable fellows between Aura and Rajajoki, shall find that he has me to deal with."

"Luukkonen shall have the command of this expedition," resumed Bertelsköld. "I, and we all, place ourselves under his orders."

"But the powder transport—the muskets—the caviar and all the other delicacies?" said Peldan, who possibly had nothing against high living in the woods for a while.

"To catch the eagle we must let the field-fare flit," answered Bertelsköld. "Not the least sound must be heard of any movement in the neighborhood before we

reach Bjeloostrow. We await your orders, Major Luukkonen."

As good a plan was matured as the circumstances would permit. They were to break camp without delay, take advantage of the darkness to press forward as far as possible along the forest roads towards Ingermanland, and then rest at daybreak. Thereupon, Luukkonen's and Bertelsköld's united strength, which very little exceeded forty men, should approach the country-seat in small parties from different directions, disguised as peasants, and at a given signal—a pistol-shot from Luukkonen—rush to the attack. But as it was of the greatest importance, where everything depended upon despatch, that they should take horses along, and as it was impossible to do this by the forest roads, they agreed to procure as many carts as possible and send them, with Bertelsköld's horses attached, along the great highway to the appointed place of meeting, as if they were an empty transport retiring from Wiborg. The command of this party was given to Miltopœus, who talked Russian enough to serve the occasion, and was to represent the commissary or quartermaster who usually accompanied such transports. Under some hay in the carts were concealed weapons and saddles for four of the fleetest horses which were expected to serve the noble prisoner and his guard for a hasty retreat over the Finnish border.

After they, with some difficulty, had put life into the sleeping Långström, they all hastened with great eagerness to put the plan in execution.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EAGLE - HUNT.

THE following morning found the little troop, after a most difficult forced march through the forests, not far from Systerbäck and only half a mile from Bjeloostrow. The early August sun had already for more than an hour gilded the tops of the birches, when the troops took a short rest in order to renew their strength for their dangerous undertaking. Fortunately the district was to a great extent desolated by the war, and besides, was filled with bottomless bogs, through which filtered Ladoga's enormous mass of water down toward the sea by means of subterraneous channels, so that fleeing lynxes, wolves and foxes were the only living beings that seemed inclined to contest the entrance of the partisans into Ingermanland.

"I wish we had Löfving with us," said Luukkonen ; "a sharper fellow than he never lay in wait for an enemy. Långström must try his fortune ; he knows every bush here ; indeed, it is not many hours since we were here last."

Långström, as indefatigable now as he was sleepy before, took a Kivekät with him and went out to reconnoitre the neighborhood. The forenoon was already well advanced, and his comrades had begun to suspect the worst, when he returned. The country-seat, he reported, was filled with Russian and Finnish colonists, probably a hundred in number, who were digging ditches, arranging gardens and erecting a splendid stone house. A company of the Preobraschen guard was quartered in the nearest village, a verst away ; scarcely thirty soldiers were at the country-seat itself,

and even these had laid aside their weapons and their coats to dig and lay walls, so zealously the czar drove on the work. He had, accompanied only by Menschikoff and his valet, ridden close by a barn under the floor of which the two partisans lay concealed. "It was hardly fifteen paces," said Långström; "I could certainly have hit him with my horse-pistol,—a good mark for an active bullet; but I said to myself: 'If it were Satan himself in his own person, he were too good to be brought down in a mean way by an honorable soldier, and it is hardly three weeks since he gave me my life.' So I let him ride by, and I understood this much: he told Menschikoff that more folks ought to be brought here from Finland, because they knew better how to cultivate the marshy lands. To this Menschikoff replied that he might have twenty or so Finnish girls brought here and marry them to his Russian serfs, for it was always a benefit to cross the races. And it seemed to amuse the czar."

Since they had satisfied themselves that the venture might be made, the men were divided according to agreement into small parties, and set out—not without beating hearts—on the way to the country-seat.

In approaching the house our adventurers had to pass one of those low but fruitful plains which spread out over the greater part of Ingermanland. A few barley-fields, in cultivation again after the devastating incursion, awaited the scythe with heavy heads, and gave a part of the marauders a welcome shelter, even quite near to the house itself. Two parties, led by Bertelsköld and Långström, thus succeeded in reaching the gate quite unobserved.

The other parties, led by Luukkonen, Peldan, and a Kivekät by the name of Toivonen, without any hindrance approached the same point from opposite directions, after they had got rid of some importunate questioners, by the assurance that they were laborers from the vicinity, who by order of the czar had come

hither to assist in the work. Everything promised a fortunate issue, excepting that Miltopœus did not put in an appearance with the horses.

They waited, but it was impossible to wait long. The czar was eating his dinner within; they feared his eagle-eye if he should come out and see their disguises.

Luukkonen had made up his mind to give the signal, when a confused alarm was heard from the highway, and immediately afterward was seen a part of the expected horses attached to the wagons and ridden by several of our adventurers, but without saddles, galloping towards the gate. After them in hot haste came a dozen Cossacks. The occasion of this was, as was afterward learned, that the Cossacks wished to capture the carts; a good prize, as they were in need of transports. But the weapons and saddles were concealed under the hay. Miltopœus objected a long time, but he made such a brilliant fool of himself with his Russian phrases that, finally, one of the Cossacks permitted him, in a manner not very gentle, to make the acquaintance of his pikestaff. That was more than our gallant student could digest, and in a twinkling the man with the pike lay stretched on the ground. A tumult could not be avoided; the partisans snatched their weapons and succeeded in beating back the enemy for an instant, but only long enough to attach ten horses and get as many muskets, whereupon the whole crowd, friends and enemies, started precipitately towards Bjeloostrow.

Luukkonen saw at once that there was no time to lose, and fired one of the pistols he had concealed under his peasant-jacket, at the guard who was posted at the gate. At this agreed signal all the partisans started forward with the thundering field-cry of "King Charles," and crowded into the court.

Here were about twenty men of the guard carelessly scattered about enjoying their midday rest.

They had stacked their arms by the steps of the little country-house which was to give way to make room for the stately stone mansion. Before they could get weapons the freebooters were ahead of them and succeeded, now well armed, with several violent assaults in driving them over the low half-finished walls.

This was only a prelude to the real play,—one that had a more precious object in view. At the first outcry Bertelsköld started for the main entrance, intending to crowd into the house and decide the destiny of the day before the guards could come to their senses. But here he met a gigantic guard who was posted in the vestibule and stopped the passage. A strife of doubtful issue arose between him and Bertelsköld,—a strife between Titans, both equal in height and bodily vigor. Finally, the count's more practiced fencing prevailed; the faithful guard fell at his post like an honest soldier, and Bertelsköld pressed on.

He met new obstacles. The doors were locked on the inside, an evidence that those within had presence of mind enough to make use of the seconds.

“In through the windows!” shouted Luukkonen. They had no time to break in the doors.

Långström was the first who jumped in. The rich roasts were still fragrant, as were also other remains of the repast, but no one had time to enjoy them. Långström burst open the nearest door and found himself in the midst of a group of weeping female servants. But as courtesy to the fair sex was no affair of the valiant captain's, he was less than ever in his place here. He tried to push ahead, with harsh gestures on every side; but it was impossible. The faithfulness of these serfs to their master was no less determined than that of the giant in the vestibule. They clung fast to the freebooter's limbs, they threw themselves at his feet, he could only move by passing over them. His powerful sword he had no heart to use, and so several minutes were lost,

In the meantime, and before the attacking party were able to guard all sides of the house, several persons had jumped out of the windows and fled to the field. One among these, of uncommon strength and agility, had made his way through Luukkonen's men, and given Toivonen, his nearest opponent, a mark to carry to his dying day.

Some thought they recognized the czar, and were inclined to follow him. But others insisted that they had seen the czar at the window of the innermost room, and knew him by his ornamented hat and his dark-green coat embroidered with gold. The partisans did not dare divide their strength, and therefore hastened to force the door to the inner room, which the prince used as a work-shop when he stayed at the country-seat.

The resistance at this point was extremely vigorous. The door was found to be barricaded with all the furniture in the room, and when it was at last broken from its hinges, the invaders were received with pistol shots. Two of them were wounded; the room was filled with smoke. But through the smoke they discovered the czar and one of his chamberlains, half shielded by an upturned writing-table, with swords drawn ready to defend themselves to the uttermost.

"Surrender, sire!" shouted Bertelsköld in German; "opposition is useless, and your majesty shall be treated with all respect, as is becoming to your royal person."

The czar was silent, but his chamberlain replied. "On your knees, slave, when you address the emperor of all the Russians!" cried he. "The great czar does not surrender to robbers; it becomes them to beg for mercy."

"We are neither slaves nor robbers," proudly replied Bertelsköld, "but officers and soldiers in his Swedish majesty's service. I pray you, sire, do not compel us to use force, for I swear by your crown that you must follow us, and that immediately!"

“His imperial majesty consents to listen to your terms,” said the chamberlain, after a few whispered words with his master.

“He wastes time !” said Luukkonen. “His men gather from all sides. Seize him !”

Bertelsköld saw too well that every second was precious, and therefore without further negotiation sprang over the table upon the czar, while Långström, with a stroke of his fearful sword, stretched the chamberlain upon the floor. The sword was wrenched from the struggling prince’s hand, and Bertelsköld bore him, in spite of his determined resistance, unhurt to the door.

“Death and hell !” screamed Långström, when they were out of the smoke and the clear sunshine fell upon their prisoner’s countenance; “it is not the czar !”

“It is he !” shouted the others. “We know his embroidered coat and his hat !”

Luukkonen, who had so lately had personal dealings with the formidable ruler, pressed forward and stroked aside the hair from the prisoner’s brow. “No,” said he, in an angry tone of disappointed expectation, “it is not the czar ! God help us, the czar has escaped !”

“I told you so !” cried a Kivekät ! “It was the czar that leaped through the window and cleft poor Toivonen’s forehead.”

And so it was, in fact. The prisoner had only put on the czar’s well-known hat and cloak and stationed himself at the window, in order to mislead the assailants and detain them as long as possible while his master gained time to reach a place of safety. Menschikoff also had escaped. The bold experiment had totally failed.

“You shall pay for this, you crafty dog !” said Långström, in a rage, and lifted his deadly weapon over the prisoner’s head.

“Strike, if it please you,” said the Russian defi-

antly. "I am only my master's and sovereign's most insignificant slave, but I know how to die for him if it be the will of the saints, and he will take care of my wife and children. Why do you delay, man of the bloody hand? Do you not see that the czar has escaped your ambush and will return to avenge me? Therefore strike!"

Långström did not strike. "No," said Bertelsköld, "this man has only done his duty and acted by his master as every one of us would have done by ours. Let him go."

The prisoner was set at liberty. These rude partisans, who, faithful to the death, strove for their king, even during the first vexation occasioned by the failure of their undertaking, knew how to respect the fidelity with which the Russians at all times gave their blood for their ruler. It is true that these people acted under the influence of an unreasoning emotion, while the free men of the west acted from conviction; but the sacrifices of both, their devotion, and their mode of action, were at the last the same.

"To horse, comrades! To horse!" sounded Luukkonen's voice. And it was in truth high time. The scattered guards had united with the advancing Cossacks and threatened to cut off retreat. The laborers, armed with axes and iron bars, surrounded the yard. From all sides men were seen hastening to the place, and in the distance a moving cloud of dust, raised by the Preobraschian guard, probably led by the czar himself, showed that they were marching up to scourge the bold assailants.

The contest had lasted hardly twenty minutes, but with every minute the danger was doubled. The little Finnish troop had one dead and two wounded. Fortunately, ten men had been left behind to watch the horses. These, too, were only ten in number and without saddles, and about forty were needed. Even with two upon each horse, half their force would have been

lost if the Cossacks had not brought with them the horses and carts they had just taken from Miltopœus. Luukkonen saw them, and sent his ten mounted men, under Bertelsköld and Långström, to attack the Cossacks, while the rest on foot pushed headlong upon the conspiring laborers, scattered them without much difficulty, and took the horses and carts, with which they soon reached the highway, and afterwards, by hard driving, the border and the Finnish woods.

Bertelsköld and Långström, with eight comrades mounted on unsaddled horses, had, with no hope of assistance, to cut their way through more than a hundred soldiers and farmers on foot, and from thirty to forty Cossacks, while the guard at double-quick approached the place. Their destruction seemed certain; but these brave partisans, experienced in all kinds of danger, did not despair. Instead of awaiting attack they resolutely took the offensive, and made for the Cossacks, their most dangerous enemies.

But the Cossacks, equally courageous and equally desirous of strife, took advantage of their long pikes and their excellent horses, and wheeled aside to attack their adversaries in the flank and rear. The conflict became unfavorable to the partisans. Two of them fell before the pikes, and a third, Miltopœus, thrown from his horse, was, amid tumultuous shouts, taken prisoner by those on foot.

Bertelsköld was almost frantic at this misfortune. He was, as will be remembered, a man of giant strength, and, besides, one of the boldest horsemen of his time, from childhood, as it were, fast-grown to a horse's back. He had noticed that the leader of the Cossacks rode a most excellent horse, far better than any of the others, but dangerous to the partisans because he would suddenly wheel and take them in the rear. Bertelsköld rode towards him, and at the same time, making it appear to be accidental, he slipped to his horse's side, so that he hung there holding fast by the mane. The Cos-

sack was at once beside him, and raised his long pike over him, but at that very moment Bertelsköld was again on his horse, grasped the Cossack in front with his right hand and lifted him out of the saddle, while with his left hand he seized the loosened horse by the bridle and drew him away. In this strange position, with his floundering antagonist lifted at arm's length before him and followed by his captured horse, the powerful Carolin rode in among the people who were on foot, without heeding their bullets or their sabers, and cast his prisoner loose into the thickest crowd. The terrified group scattered in all directions, believing nothing else than that the devil himself rode in among them; and not the least astonished was Miltopœus, whom they were just about to bind with his hands behind his back. Bertelsköld gave him his own horse and took the Cossack's himself, and they both hastened to the assistance of Långström, who, about to be overpowered, hewed about him like a madman with his well-known and dangerous broad-sword.

Once again in the saddle, and with an impassioned horseman's perfect fascination at having under him a charger breathing like a flaming fire and strong as a tempest, Bertelsköld seemed quite another man, and his opponents soon found it out. Now it was he that with the lightning's speed was on every side of them, always attacking them at exposed points; and rider after rider fell heels over head to the earth before his destroying steel. Like the champions of old, he seemed to wear a charmed corselet; pikes and swords appeared to rebound from this raging Hercules, who overthrew all who came in his way, and victory soon turned on the side of the partisans. Every man took new courage and fought like four. "King Charles! King Charles!" their war-cry sounded, and the enemy, uncertain whether they had not the fearful Finnish sorcery to deal with, scattered in wild flight just as the guards came almost within musket-shot of the grounds.

Bertelsköld and his men did not think it best to await their coming. Two men less in number, and with several wounded, they galloped away towards their own inaccessible forests, leaving on the field, besides Toivonen and the two horsemen, a larger number of fallen and wounded foes than one now-a-days hears of in a modern war-bulletin. They were also compelled to leave their hope of that precious booty which would have had such an immeasurable influence upon the whole war; but they took with them the proud recollection that they had once more come forth from an unequal fight as conquerors, and that, few as they were, they had at least undertaken an achievement upon which whole armies had turned their backs.

CHAPTER VII.

MAJNIEMI CASTLE.

WHAT could easily be foreseen, had happened. Lybecker's retreat to Pelkäne left the coast and all the southern portion of the country open to the enemy, who did not delay to take possession of it. As soon as he had secured Helsingfors, he advanced without delay on Åbo, attacked Colonel Stjernschantz, who with eight hundred men sought to stop him at Kare's bridge, and marched into the city on the 28th day of August, the last thanksgiving day of the year. All the civil officers, together with the members of the university and the greater number of the inhabitants, had fled before the dreaded enemy, who found the town abandoned and half in ashes. For Åbo had in 1711 been visited by a great conflagration—the first fulfillment of the witch Inkeri's prophecies of disaster. The Russian

troops therefore encamped in the castle grounds. The czar arrived soon after, and took up his abode in Wittfooth's house, near the bridge. In commemoration of his entrance into Åbo, he had a medal struck, the face of which bore his bust, and the reverse, Hercules with his club driving Neptune from his chariot out into the sea. Under this was inscribed : Åbo, Sept. 8th, 1713.

And now we are carried back to one of those minor battles which blazed up in every Finnish neighborhood, while the enemy was advancing and the regular army of the country was falling back, and to Majniemi castle, concerning which our story has been silent ever since the spring of 1697, when the castle was confiscated on account of the Reduction. The proposition to appropriate this great estate, with its sightly buildings, to the use of the Åbo regiment, for the colonel's residence, seems not to have been acted on, for we find that Kunstö manor, thereafter, as well as before, served this end. Instead of this, the extreme pecuniary embarrassment experienced by the crown as the result of the long continued war had compelled the government to offer for sale, together with many other estates, the reduced Majniemi. But the Finnish nobility were also so impoverished by the Reduction and the war, that none of them in those uncertain times had a mind to appear as buyers, and so the property was managed for the use of the crown by a man whom the reader will remember from the foregoing story, namely, the honest and gentle Master Pehr, whom Count Bernhard Bertelsköld selected as manager and steward of his father's estate—the same Pehr who in his childhood received a present of an Öland pony from Charles XI at the famous hunt in the vicinity of the priest's residence at Saltvik.

This Pehr, a man of honor, who now at forty-six years of age had many cares upon him during these times of distress, sat one evening in his simple dwelling by the side of the castle, engrossed with his ac-

counts, while his wife and children about him were shelling beans lately gathered from the great garden now half overgrown, when a knocking was heard at the closed door. The whole family started up and turned pale at the sound, for they every day expected the enemy that had already marched by to Åbo, only twenty-five or thirty miles away ; but as Majniemi lay on one side, it had hitherto been saved from the dreaded visit.

Master Pehr went with beating heart to ascertain if their apprehensions were well grounded, and saw from the gate-keeper's window some twenty horsemen halted outside the gate. It was already rather dark, but he thought he could see that the men did not have long pikes nor tall hats as he apprehended, but looked more like hunters in civil attire and his own countrymen. With a somewhat quieted mind, therefore, he determined to open the window and enquire who they were, that so late in the evening came to ask the hospitality of the castle, at the present time so scantily supplied.

"Good friends!" was the answer from without. "Present our compliments to Master Pehr, and tell him that Gösta Bertelsköld, who was formerly called Count of Majniemi, is here with some of his friends to ask shelter."

Pehr did not give himself time to answer, but went with huge strides to the gate. "God forbid!" said he, with tears in his honest grey eyes, "God forbid that Majniemi's gate should ever be closed to my beloved master's son, or to any that he calls his friends."

"Yes, make haste, my good Pehr," said the count. "Make haste to get us a good fire and a little fodder for our horses. We have ridden more than forty miles over infamous forest roads and with the Russians at our heels. We intended to help Stjernschantz defend Åbo, but I hear we have come too late. Well, now, you and yours are well?"

“As well as can be in these deplorable times,” answered the steward, as he showed the company the way. “My old mother desired me to greet your grace. She fell asleep last spring. She left this evil world in good time, at seventy-four years of age, pious and accepted of God, as she had lived.”

“So good old mother Greta has left this world!” said Bertelsköld, greatly moved. “She was my sainted father’s childhood friend, and a ray of light in this world’s darkness. But let us not disturb you in your home, my good man. Can you not quarter us in some wing of the castle?”

“Your grace must make the best of it here with me,” said the steward; “it is warmer. As to your friends, I can fit up for them the big hall in the first story. I think a fire can still be made in the chimney. Alas, your grace, the castle looks quite different now from what it did when you left it eighteen years ago!”

With these words the steward hastened to make the necessary preparations for the reception of the guests, and Bertelsköld, thoughtful, remained in the great dark castle yard. The moon, which just then broke through the autumnal clouds shone with a melancholy light upon the high façade of his ancestral castle, which he had not seen since the days of its prosperity. Storms had torn loose a part of its roof plates, broken in pieces the panes of its high windows, and sadly disfigured the great statues of the champions in *basso-relievo* that were placed upon the walls. The castle had been built with the forced tributes of the Thirty-years’ war. The heir of the iron warrior who perhaps had stained these tributes with much blood and many curses, now stood with gloomy sensations before these ruined walls, within which he trod as a stranger this dark evening. His own adventurous life had taught him how men enrich themselves in war, and involuntarily he recalled the old proverb: “Ill-gotten, ill-spent.”

Bertelsköld delayed so long, absorbed in these sor-

rowful reflections, that the steward was finally obliged to remind him that the fire and a hastily prepared meal awaited him within. "You must see my good wife," said he. "An excellent woman, though now a little way on the wrong side of the flower months! She is a Larsson; her father is a merchant in Wasa; and we became acquainted sixteen years ago, when I went there with the lamented count, your father, to buy grain in the great famine year."

They went into the simple but thrifty dwelling, where Bertelsköld was received with a respect and cordiality that went to his heart. It was a long time since the valiant Carolin—he who had no home in the wide world—had seen himself surrounded by the quiet happiness of home. His exiled spirit had so long been driven about on life's stormy wave that he had nearly forgotten what peace and contentment, what the smile of affection and the light of one's own fireside, signify to the human heart. A feeling of being once more at home took possession of him, and he listened with friendly sympathy to the good steward's stories of all that had befallen Majniemi during these sixteen years since it passed out of the possession of its former owner; how the crown had appropriated nothing to keep up the castle and the grounds, leaving them to go to ruin; how the extensive acreage had been mostly brought under cultivation; how the condition of the people had been improved by means of the blessed count's village school and other wise institutions, until the war and the plague had taken more than half the hands from the plow; and how the people still blessed the memory of the sainted count for the help with which he saved them from death by starvation in the dreadful famine.

The narration of these incidents was broken off by a new knocking at the door, and Master Pehr, feeling secure in the thought that he now had brave defenders, went to open it. He soon returned, conducting a

young man in peasant's dress, whose sinewy frame betokened strength as much as his twinkling eyes indicated shrewdness and judgment.

"Löfving!" cried Bertelsköld in glad surprise. "You here, my brisk boy? And we believed that long before this you were dangling at the end of a Russian rope."

"Not yet!" cheerfully replied the renowned partisan and spy, Stephen Löfving, for it was indeed he. "I came from Åbo, where I was in the czar's own kitchen and sold fourscore eggs. From the cook and the kitchen boys I found out something about the condition of affairs in the city, where we for the present cannot accomplish anything; but I sent word to Taube at Öland that he could pay his respects with his galleys, for I had spread the rumor that I had seen the whole Swedish fleet on the reefs. And as I thought one might earn a little on his own account, I played the rôle of simplicity, and dropped a word or two about the fat calves which the peasants were taking away to an island in Pargas. They at once began to press me to show them the way thither, which I did with many objections, and they sent the under-cook and two men with me to seize the roasts. Whereupon I led them to an out-of-the way cliff and drew my pistols from under my jacket, saying to them: "Here with the *dengi!*" This they understood at once, and fell to their prayer-books. Thus I captured two guns and two sabers, which, as they were of no particular use to me, I sold to the peasants for eight dollars, and I captured besides a neat purse of rubles. But the prisoners I left on the cliff to find out about the calves. Thanks for the pleasure of our last meeting, Master Pehr. Here are the ten dollars I owe you for keeping me away from the Cossack's pikes in a load of straw. I have something to tell you, but it will do no harm to let the major hear it. We have the enemy three hundred paces from here,"

"The enemy!" cried Master Pehr. This single word had frightened the color from the cheek of every one in this thrifty family, and, like a hurricane, had blown away the mirage of quiet happiness which had so lately fascinated Bertelsköld.

"I tell you," resumed Löfving, "that when I was going along a by-path not far from the great lane, I saw by the road a Cossack on watch. There were certainly more of them in the village."

"You are right," said Bertelsköld. "I ought to have expected it. We noticed a wandering party at our heels this afternoon; but as we wanted to reach the castle before night, we did not stop to chastise them. If I know you aright, you let the Cossack follow your lead?"

"I sprang for his waist, so that he could not use his long pike, and tried to snatch him off his horse, but as he would not surrender I was obliged to cleave his head. Well, he did not say any more then. It is too bad that his horse got away; he might tell tales out of school."

"We must not lose a moment in putting ourselves in a condition for defense!" exclaimed Bertelsköld, animated by the danger. "All the powder and all the weapons you can procure, my good Pehr, take to the great hall. Let the servants sleep in their clothes tonight. Be of good cheer; the women and children may sleep in quiet. Löfving, take two men with you and go out and reconnoitre, while I post guards about the castle."

His commands were executed. There was soon a lively stir everywhere at Majniemi. Lanterns flew across the yard and lights shone in deserted windows. When Bertelsköld entered the great hall he found his faithful comrades enjoying the meal which Pehr had hastily prepared. Once more the beaker passed around the company at Majniemi castle. It was the last remains of the cellar's olden stock; the honest steward

had never before wished to touch it. "I found," said he, "this half anker of rich Hungarian wine under the rubbish, and determined that it should only be drunk to the success of my late beloved master's son. May God keep your grace in all dangers, and permit you yet in better times to resume your place as master at your father's table!"

Hardly were these words uttered when a great crash was heard, and immediately afterward a cloud of dust arose near the wall. The portrait of the founder of the family, General Bertelsköld, with its heavy frame, had started from its place, and in its fall drawn with it stones and mortar.

Bertelsköld smiled sadly. "My grandfather," said he, "answers your toast in his way with 'amen.' It is probably the last time that honest champions will ever empty a beaker within these walls."

"Do not say so! We shall protect them to the last drop of our blood!" said the men.

"May these walls fall if our land but stands," rejoined Bertelsköld. "I would not sacrifice a single one of you for Majniemi, if our country could gain nothing by it."

"No," replied several voices, "but we are here by the side of the highway to Åbo, and could do much injury to the enemy."

"Well! In God's name, then!" added the chief. "But let us now take some rest; we may need all our powers to-morrow."

The steward had the floor covered with straw, and the wearied champions gladly stretched out their stiffened limbs. But it was written in the book of fate that they, like Mohammed's warriors, should say of themselves: "In Paradise we shall rest."

Löfving returned. He had been, in his peasant's dress, right among the enemy, who, a hundred horses strong, had taken quarters in the village of Arvio. He had sat by their log-fire, drank with them, filled them

with lies, and stolen one of their horses. Bertelsköld ought, in his opinion, to surprise them that night, for they expected early in the morning a reinforcement of a considerable body of infantry, and would without doubt attack the castle.

The partisans were ready at once. Just as the agreeable numbness of the first sleep was upon them, they arose again to saddle their horses and ride out into the darkness of the night. Such was their life.

In the meantime Pehr took the precaution during the night to send two faithful servants, with all the women and children on the place, to one of the remote and concealed islands in the group, whither he had previously sent his most valuable possessions. With many sorrowful tears these good people fled, as at that time many others in Finland fled, from the dear home which they might never see again. Neither were Master Pehr's emotions of the most joyous character, when he accompanied his friends a little way and then returned alone to the deserted court of the castle. But he was not a man to flee from his post; he would watch the property of the crown to the last, and serve his dear old master's son in the dangers which were imminent.

With his return, the first streaks of dawn began to gild the creaking vanes on the castle peaks, and the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard on the road. Master Pehr listened with beating heart; the noise came nearer, and soon one, then another, then a larger troop of the partisans, and finally Bertelsköld himself, came galloping into the court. They could hardly be recognized for blood and dust. They had had a hard bit of work in the village, for the enemy had been awakened by the neighing of the horses and had defended themselves manfully. As good luck would have it, the enemy's horsemen were scattered about in the village, and on account of the darkness did not discover the slight strength of their assailants. Forty men had been cut

down; thirty prisoners and more than sixty horses were brought in as booty. Of Bertelsköld's men two had fallen and six been wounded in this night's conflict.

After the prisoners had been locked in the cellar of the castle, and the horses put in the roomy stables, the champions, faint from weariness, threw themselves on the sheaves of straw, and in a few minutes slept as calmly as the reaper at evening when he has housed his crops from the night's frost. But the chief, and as many men as were needed to watch the castle and care for the wounded, were not permitted to sleep. Löfving also, who had performed his lion's part in the night's adventure, was already, early in the morning, mounted to reconnoitre the neighborhood.

About ten o'clock in the forenoon he returned with information that the expected hostile infantry, four hundred men with three field-pieces, were marching against the castle. The fugitives from Arvio had probably hastened their march and stimulated their revengefulness by the story of Arvio's destruction. The defenders had therefore to choose between a hasty flight in the opposite direction, and a strife for life and death with an excited and greatly superior foe.

After a short consultation the partisans chose the latter. They mustered their forces, which, deducting the wounded, amounted to three and twenty men; but this little band was increased by Master Pehr with his remaining servants, and a group of fugitives from the nearest villages, so that Bertelsköld's little army was made up of about fifty men, all well provided with arms which had just before been taken from the enemy. Besides, Master Pehr had concealed in the lowest cellar of the castle a considerable lot of powder belonging to the crown, and which was not carried away at the enemy's first approach. It was found, too, that even the six old swivels, which in happier times had been used to fire salutes from the castle, could be used, although

for want of balls they must be loaded with small stones.

The necessary arrangements were scarcely completed before the enemy began to show himself at mid-day on the road from Åbo. At first he advanced cautiously in small divisions, fearing an attack in the rear; but he soon became bolder, and sent out a line of skirmishers to force their way into the park between the castle and the lake. This had to be prevented at whatever cost, for the knolls in the park commanded the castle, and the enemy would find shelter there behind the old lindens. Bertelsköld had also placed his best marksmen there, and the skirmishers were repulsed.

This was only the prelude. The enemy had experienced the danger of passing a night in the neighborhood of these desperate adventurers, and hoped before evening to be master of this unfortified country-seat, protected only by a handful of peasants and wood-rovers. He therefore, without delay, had his field-guns placed beyond musket-range from the low brick wall which surrounded the yard in front of the castle. By two o'clock the balls clattered against the garden wall and the walls of the castle, accomplishing nothing more than to knock down some plaster and mar the window posts. No shot, no sound from the castle answered this impotent assault. There was no reply but that of the old blue and yellow flags—the same that swayed before the gayer winds at the festivities attending the entrance of the Countess Bertelsköld—which still fluttered spitefully and defiantly from the five small towers arising from the wings and the center of this aristocratic building.

The enemy began to lose patience. In order to decide the affair at once, he sent three companies to take the park, while his other forces annoyed the castle from the farther side and from the east.

Bertelsköld had foreseen this. While half of his

men made the enemy fight for every inch of the way into the park, he and twenty of his most active men threw themselves into the saddle, rode out through the back gate, took a circuit and hewed in upon the enemy's flank near the west part of the park wall. If a thunderbolt had struck among the assailants, they could not have been more astonished than they were at this sudden, unexpected, and dangerous onset. They scattered like lambs, they fell like ripe grain before the reaper; and as nearly all their cavalry had been destroyed the night before, there was no other escape for them but to clamber over the wall into the park, where about half their number were exchanging lively shots with the defenders of the castle. Baggage, arms, ammunition and cannons, in short, all of the enemy's war material, fell into Bertelsköld's hands, and he was often afterwards heard to say that if he had only had twenty more men outside the castle and twenty more in the park, the enemy in spite of his vastly superior numbers would have been captured or annihilated to the last man.

The little troop of horse had accomplished no more than to nicely spike the three cannons, when the appointed signal, a red flag on the middle tower, told Bertelsköld that distress and danger prevailed within the castle. He was obliged therefore to wheel about immediately and hasten with all speed back to the gate. Here he met Master Pehr, wounded in the arm, and crying out :

"For God's sake, your grace, hurry to the park ! They have taken Flora's palace and are shooting balls of fire upon the castle !"

"Flora's palace !" repeated Bertelsköld, struck with memories of childhood which this long forgotten name awakened in his soul. "Was it not there that Prince Wintersnow and Prince Autumnnight once strove in sport for victory ?* Ah, Pehr, now we will play the same game, but in earnest !"

* The Surgeon's Stories, second cycle, page 262.

Before Pehr had time to reply, Bertelsköld and his men had dismounted and were running at full speed to the park. The scene which presented itself there was not encouraging. The twenty marksmen that had been stationed there were as good as lost in the extensive park, and could only here and there, posted behind trees, fell their man; they could not prevent the enemy from crowding from all sides into the close avenues and the old—now fallen—hot-houses, even to the highest and central knoll, which, on account of the magnificent pavilion which formerly adorned it, had received the name of Flora's palace. Utterly enraged at his overthrow, the enemy began to shoot from here in through the castle windows, and to throw fire-balls upon the roof of the old wooden structure beside it, in which Master Pehr and his people had their residence. From the castle windows the men let the swivels answer as well as they could with their stone balls, and for every shot was heard a clattering in the tops of the lindens, as the broken branches fell to the ground. But this artillery was only a child's plaything; it was not sufficient to drive the besiegers back from the hill.

Once more Bertelsköld called his men together. They had now melted away to about thirty. But without stopping to count whether there were more or less, without heeding the fire from more than a hundred muskets, they all stormed the hill. Here was fought out the last battle for Majniemi, man against man, blow for blow. Never had Gustaf Adolf Bertelsköld's iron arm cut down with such fury all who came in his way; never had his champions so irresistibly broken through the enemy's wavering ranks. In spite of his brave resistance, he was driven from the hill. Flora's palace was covered with blood, and the water in the pond was colored red. Once more victory seemed to smile on Majniemi's brave defenders, but it was her farewell glance,—the last sunny ray of hope on Majniemi's

towers, now waving their flags but destined never to see the morrow.

Bertelsköld was hardly in possession of the hill, before the cry arose behind him that the castle was on fire. He turned around. Evening was already casting its shadows over the stately building, and in the twilight he saw in four or five places the red light of tongues of fire, where, still quite small, they began to wind themselves out under the cornice. "To the castle, boys!" he shouted in a voice of thunder. "If we succeed in quenching the fire, the enemy will never again venture an attack, and the victory is ours!"

At these words all hastened to the castle. But it was already too late. A thick suffocating smoke brought to naught every attempt to ascend to the garret and get near the fire. Soon the wooden building by the side of the castle blazed up, and then all effort to thwart the flames had to be abandoned.

All the people were called together by the beating of the drum in the great hall, and received orders to retreat. Master Pehr and the rest of the wounded were laid in carts, while all the available men, mounted in close ranks and prepared for defense, surrounded the vehicles.

Bertelsköld had undertaken all these preparations with perfect *sang froid*, but when he came for the last time to leave his ancestral castle, his courage failed. He wished at least to say farewell to the family portraits in the great armory. He hastened thither.

The flame of the burning house outside shone clearly through the high windows, and made the armory, though filled with smoke, as light as day. The image of the founder of the family, again placed in its position, seemed to contemplate his descendant with a dark and threatening countenance, and in the flames' wavering light the iron-clad champions of the Thirty-years war all around him seemed to move upon the canvas as though they would spring out from the frames. A bitter

thought penetrated the Carolin's soul. His brother Torsten had neglected to carry the pictures away; they would be consumed, these honorable mementoes of his family would be destroyed, and he could not save them. The founder of the house was buried in the sea, his image would be destroyed by fire. Dark Fate, what meanest thou by this?

Once more Bertelsköld looked back. Then there met him from the canvas those beautiful, enthusiastic, never to be forgotten glances with which Regina von Emmeritz had once fascinated his stern grandfather. The grandson stood like one petrified; those dark eyes flashed, those beauteous princely lineaments seemed alive; a mild, unspeakably sad smile flitted over the noble princess' pale lips—her mouth opens—she wishes to speak—what would she say to him?

But at the door was now heard an anxious, hurrying voice: "Come, for God's sake, sir Count! Master Pehr bade me remind you of the powder in the vault."

Bertelsköld started out. His people were ready at the gate; the word concerning the powder winged every foot. They marched out in the dark evening, and no enemy was seen.

They had thus reached the highway on the north when Bertelsköld suddenly stopped and looked back. His ancestral castle was now on all sides enveloped in flames—one single gigantic column of fire, whose light clearly illuminated all the surrounding country.

"The prisoners!" exclaimed Bertelsköld. "Has any one let the prisoners out of the cellar?"

All were silent. Since mid-day no one had had time to think of the unfortunate men.

"Two men may voluntarily accompany me," continued the count, "or if not, I will go alone, and the rest may continue the march."

"Hold, your grace!" cried Master Pehr, "your life

is at stake! In a few minutes the fire will certainly have reached the vaults."

"The enemy himself has fired the castle; let him answer for the prisoners!" objected the reluctant soldiers.

"For shame!" replied Bertelsköld passionately. "Friend or foe, it is a matter of thirty human lives!" And with these words he sprang back to the castle. Two men followed him, his faithful Bång and the brave and clever Löfving. The castle yard was so thick with smoke, and the heat was so great, that they with the greatest difficulty and danger reached the cellar door. It was an iron door provided with a strong lock, and no key was to be found. But the greater the danger the greater Bertelsköld's giant strength. He broke loose from the great stairway its heated bannister of iron; the others followed his example; the solid door bent before their united energies—it burst open. They rushed in and found the prisoners already half-dead with the heat. They must first let them out into the garden and thence to the park. A whole crowd of marauders from the enemy had already come to plunder. Bertelsköld threw his purse to the prisoners and left them in care of their countrymen, and with his followers made a circuit through the park back again to the highway.

Here he halted once more. By the bright firelight he saw the enemy in closer groups swarming about the castle as near as the flames would permit. These had now reached the foundations. About five minutes the fire continued to redden the cloudy evening sky Then the earth was shaken by a frightful report—the horses started—a thick ash-gray pillar of smoke and rubbish arose from the castle and for the moment put out the light so that the brightly illuminated district was at once enveloped in complete darkness. Then followed a clattering shower of stones, which fell on every side and penetrated several feet into the earth. The whole of that lofty and proud castle, with its five

towers, had disappeared from the earth and buried beneath its ruins every living being which had breathed within twice a gunshot of it.

Upon the site where Majniemi formerly stood, one now sees a small substantial peasant cottage surrounded by high birches, near a pretty bay. The former park is now a pasture, and the bells on the cattle ring and the shepherd-girl sings her simple ballad where noble ladies once danced on the hill of Flora's palace.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BATTLE OF STORKYRO.

THE results of Lybecker's unfortunate retreat soon appeared, both as they affected himself and the country. He was removed (without the king's knowledge), and was summoned to appear before the council. Here he was finally acquitted, as Armfelt magnanimously undertook his defense. He fell into a sharp contest with Bishop Gezelius, however, and demanded redress from the bishop. Hereupon there followed a new and bitter lawsuit, which ended with Lybecker being convicted of letting fall the well-known expression: "If the devil does not take the king, we have no peace to expect." These insignificant, forgotten words affected him more than the whole weight of Finland's loss. He was condemned to lose life, honor and goods, was pardoned as to life on New Year's day 1718, but died a few months later, and is rather to be pitied than considered intentionally criminal, for history exonerates his memory from the disgrace of treason if it cannot also release him from the hate with which his contemporaries loaded him.

In September, 1713, the valiant Carl Gustaf Armfelt took command in Finland ; but it was already too late to repair Lybecker's mistakes. He could not gather more than six thousand men when his army was at its best, and the Russians had possession of all the southern part of the country. In order to check their farther incursion, he put himself on the defense at Kuokkola pass, in Pelkäne, in the heart of Tavastland. But early on a foggy autumn morning, the 6th of October, 1713, seven thousand Russians crossed over Lake Pelkäne on rafts and attacked Armfelt in the rear. After the bravest defense, the little Finnish army was driven back with a loss of twelve cannons, eight standards and more than five hundred men—or, according to some authorities, even a thousand men. It was Armfelt's wish to make a stand at Tammersfors ; but here faltered for the first time the enduring perseverance of the Finnish soldiers, or, more accurately, of what remained of the Finnish militia. Half-naked, famished and tired out by marching in the chilling autumn rains, the men followed the vicious habit acquired under Lybecker's command, and deserted in such large squads that Armfelt was compelled to retire to the vicinity of Wasa. Most of the militia was from this district; here they would stand by their colors to the last man.

Meanwhile, the Russian army marched by way of Tammersfors, Birkola, and Tavastkyro, to Björneborg. These marches consumed the month of November, and winter set in early and severe over these northern settlements.

In the beginning of December the Russian cavalry made a foraging expedition against Nerpes and Christinestad and plundered the neighborhood. Then the Finnish army consolidated at Solf, and a watch of peasants was stationed at Laihela and Ilmola. It is here, in Kauhajoki chapel, that we again find Gustaf Bertel-sköld with his little troop of volunteers zealously drilling the peasants in the use of weapons and the arts of

war, assisted therein by those vigorous brothers, Gabriel and Israel Peldan. His troop, which by degrees increased to two hundred and ninety men, was also joined by six brothers named Larsson, from Storkyro, all manly young men, led by the eldest brother, Lars, the same who at Pelkäne was spokesman for the peasants who waited on Lybecker. The enemy also remained quiet in the winter quarters; and thus Christmas went by, and the whole of January, 1714, without any especial adventure, waiting for whatever might come.

But in the beginning of February the report came that the enemy were advancing from Björneberg along the winter roads and upon the frozen lakes in Tavastkyro and Ikalis. The peasant watch in Kauhajoki, on the 12th of February, received orders to make a reconnoissance towards Kurikka chapel on the enemy's road and to return after a two days' march.

It was an obscure night, with little moonlight, and the troop had made about five miles south of Luoppa village, when they learned that the enemy's outposts were not more than five or six miles away on the other side of the woods. Therefore they must from a nearer point ascertain his position and his intentions.

"Friends," said Bertelsköld, "our horses can never go through the woods and the snow. Are there among you a half dozen good skaters that are willing to risk life for king and fatherland?"

"Sir Major," answered Lars Larsson quickly, "I and my brothers are exactly as many as you want, and from our childhood have our skates known how to overtake the wolf in the forest. Command, and we are ready."

"Well said, honest Larsson," replied the chief; "if my word has any weight with the general, the pen is already cut that shall sign your commission. But beware of the open field; if the Cossacks get at you, you are riddled."

"No danger," said the peasant. "If we are not

back by day-break, remember us to our old father. So far as the officer's commission is concerned, major, many thanks, but I do not care for it. Our family belong to the people, and you are the only nobleman with whom I have ever shaken hands. In God's name, forward ! ”

“ A stiff-necked democratic race, those Larssons ! ” said Bertelsköld to Gabriel Peldan. “ My father and my grandfather have been in contention with them. But they are brave fellows, God bless them, with as honest hearts as ever beat under a peasant's jacket. ”

They still live on the old peasant-king Bertila's manor,” answered Peldan; “ only one branch of the family became merchants in Wasa. But come, major, let us rest a few hours here in the hut. ”

“ The night passed, and the Larssons did not return. It was broad day, and they did not appear. Then Bertelsköld with ten men rode, by a circuitous route, around the woods, and found that the enemy had already marched farther from the deserted village, where they had rested. But the tracks of the horses' hoofs led them to an open, almost snowless meadow by the edge of the woods, and here the Larssons were found. They had probably ventured too near the village, and upon the snowless field were overtaken by the enemy's horsemen. All six lay close beside each other on the bloody tufts, stiffened in the sleep of death; a dead horse and the bloody path back towards the village showed that they had dearly sold their young lives. They had fallen as brothers, not one of them had attempted to desert the others, and as brothers were they also buried—the whole six side by side.

Sorrowfully Bertelsköld and his comrades hurried back to the main force. It was as if this little prelude had foreshadowed the result of the great and bloody conflict at Storkyro.

When Armfelt, the sixteenth of February, received reliable information of the enemy's advance, he called his whole command together for a council of war at the Storkyro parsonage. The most of them voted against action, and especially the chief of cavalry, Major-General De la Barre, who gave as a reason that hardly half of the volunteers who were streaming together from all corners had arrived. But the brave Armfelt had seen sorrowful specimens of the policy of retreat; his martial honor was wounded by reproofs from Stockholm, in which he who never paled was twitted of being, as the words ran, "sensitive regarding his own skin." He demanded battle, and he was not alone. The soldiers outside raised their caps upon their pikes, loudly demanding battle, and the peasants added to this that if their homes were to be given up to be pillaged by the enemy, they would to a man desert a miserable army that knew nothing but to fly from danger.

The battle was determined upon, and the Finnish army, which then consisted of four thousand five hundred regular troops and fifteen hundred militia from Storkyro, Lillkyro, Laihela, Mustasaari, Wöra and Malak parishes, and the city of Wasa,* was stationed in the barley-fields on both sides of the frozen Kyro river, with their rear sheltered by an open, roaring water-fall and by flat marshes and stone hills. Napo, the nearest hamlet, about twenty miles southeast of Wasa and consisting of six homes, was torn down and brought in and made into breastworks. In this position they awaited the enemy for three days, during weather so cold that only Charles XII's warriors could withstand it.

The 18th, a company of hostile cavalry showed itself, and was saluted with a cannon shot from headquarters, "which," says the records, "for a bad omen, did no better than to shoot the horse of Bishop Geze-

* The whole of Osterbotten's population capable of bearing arms was called out for the country's defense, and a part of them were already on the way. The peasants of Ny-Carleby were only a Swedish mile from Storkyro when the battle occurred.

lius' noble trooper who was posted as advance-guard; whereupon the Russians, after having completely inspected the situation, withdrew."

February 19th, at mid-day, the Russian army was seen in full march, advancing along the ice-covered river. Their number, as given by the Russians themselves, was eight thousand, three hundred and eighty-four men, but as given by the Swedes, from fifteen to twenty thousand, and they were led by the brave prince, Galitzin, who afterwards as highest in authority over conquered Finland, "erected for himself, by his gentleness and his magnanimity, an imperishable monument in the hearts of the unfortunate inhabitants." Armfelt had in him a worthy opponent, and although no Finn hesitated as to which he wished might have the honor of the victory, they could both in truth be said to have deserved it as warriors and as men. Before the battle, Armfelt rode along the lines of troops, whose frozen fingers could hardly hold their guns, and encouraged them with a short speech and a prayer. They were, he said, the last army of their country, and upon them rested its last hope. Their watchword should be, "With God's help," and verily God would help them, if they defended themselves unitedly and manfully, as they had promised, to the last drop of blood.

A loud "With God's help" answered these words, and the battle began. A Russian column marched up from the ice on the north shore of the river, and united with another column from the woods, and attacked the left wing of the Finns. At the same time the Russians set on fire the Turpola buildings and the Finns their retrenchments made of the torn-down buildings. The skies, which all the morning had been cloudy, began to send down their snow, accompanied with strong easterly squalls, on account of which both the smoke and the snow filled the eyes of the Finns so that they could scarcely see the enemy. But in spite of this, the infantry of the left wing did not wait for the attack, but

rushed swiftly forward, and, as they had learned in the school of their chief, Charles XII, reserved their first salvo until they were within ten paces of the enemy. The effect was that the first ranks of the enemy fell over each other and the rest were violently driven back. But they rallied for the second attack. During this time the Finnish right wing had swung around over the ice and came to the assistance of the left. The second attack of the Russians was repulsed with still greater loss. Now it was the Finns who in their turn attacked, taking six cannons, which without delay were turned upon the enemy. In vain the Cossacks rode in upon the close ranks of the levies, in hopes of an easier victory; they were turned back with bloody heads, and the battle took a decidedly unfavorable turn for the Russians.

Prince Galitzin followed these movements with lively anxiety, and summoned his nearest chiefs to a council of war. Against a desperate people, it was said, everything was at risk, for if the third attack should be repulsed, the Russian army would be lost in these bogs and forests with armed peasants all around it. It was therefore determined to retreat in good order, and General Bruce, with four regiments of dragoons, was sent to prevent the Finnish cavalry from interfering with the retreat. While Bruce was executing this commission, and before his men had even fired a pistol, he was astonished to see De la Barre wheel and command a retreat,* which was effected with such zeal that when the last finishing conflict began, the chief of the Finnish cavalry was already a league away from the battle-field, at the house of Gumse, the sheriff

*According to Bruce's own account to Provost Wahl, 1718: "He was," he said, "much obliged to Gen. De la Barre, for if he had only ordered his men to quietly smoke a pipe, the victory would have belonged to the Swedes." Such was also the general belief among the Finns, and it was added that De la Barre, on account of his jealousy of Armfelt, had begrudged him a victory. But Armfelt's report only says that all did their duty; nor was De la Barre ever called to an account for his behavior, but continued in the service, and with Armfelt made the unfortunate expedition against Trondhjem in 1718.

of the district, whom he bade to take to his heels. By this means the right wing of the Finnish infantry was exposed, and Bruce immediately received orders for his men to dismount and attack it. Here he met the peasants first, and succeeded in throwing their lines into disorder. At the same time the defeated Russian infantry turned about, and for the third time threw itself upon the Finns, who were now on all sides surrounded by an overpowering force. And now began one of those terrible massacres, the memory of which ages will not obliterate, and where fidelity and valor fought—

No more for glorious victory fled,
But only to rejoin the dead."

The whole Finnish infantry was, as it were, squeezed into a ring of pikes and of muskets, from which the shots flashed through the smoke and sleet. Armfelt did all that his contemporaries or that posterity could demand of him on this decisive occasion. "My heart fails me even at this day," says an eye-witness, "when I think how the major-general, with sympathetic words, rode back and forth; how the men with incredible cheerfulness promised to fight unto death, and while so doing, at the sight of the vast multitude of the enemy, with tears in their eyes threw themselves on their knees and begged God for help, and then fought till their last breath. I saw there many a Finn lying dead, who in his stiffened hands held the musket whose bayonet still stuck fast in the body of his enemy, also fallen." In truth, it was not a flock of sheep, which, driven against a wall, unresistingly suffers itself to be slain. It was desperate men, who for every blow they received returned two, and who, after having fired away their powder and hewed in pieces their swords and broken off their pikes, still with frozen hands grasped their guns by the heated barrels and broke the stocks over their enemies' heads. Time and again they tried to reform their broken ranks and beat their way through;

every time the officers fell at the head of their companies; every time the companies were thrown back again upon the bloody, crowded center of the infantry. Three companies of cavalry from the province of Åbo were all that manfully sustained the honor of their colors. They were commanded by Axel Beere, who fell upon the battle-field, and Kuhlfelt and Freudenfelt, who, badly wounded, escaped.

The conflict lasted three hours, and at its close the Finnish army was destroyed. More than two thousand men lay fallen in the bloody snow; the soldiers by files, the peasants by parishes, the officers so nearly to a man that towards the close the shreds of three regiments were commanded by a subordinate officer. The Russian loss was also very heavy, but was more than balanced by the results of the battle, which brought with it the conquest of the whole of this northern land.

Armfelt himself was one of the last to leave the battle-field, and with difficulty escaped capture. With some of his companions he hurried through the forest to Laihela and thence to Wasa. But it was in Old Carleby that were first gathered the small remains of the Finnish army, which now, in consequence of De la Barre's consideration for the safety of his own men, consisted for the most part of cavalry; as it was quite rare, says a contemporary record, to see an infantry-officer who had come out of the action alive.

Thus ended the unfortunate battle of Storkyro, which, for the severe cold of the northern country in which it was fought as well as for the bravery there displayed, and for the loss of men, about one-third of the belligerents being left on the field, occupies a notable place among the military events of all times. For the destiny of Finland, this district seems to have been destined by the Norns as an altar of sacrifice; for, ninety-four years after this event, a cloudy Autumn day, occurred the battle of Öravais. scarcely four

Swedish miles from the battle-field of Storkyro ; and when the sun went down on these two days and these two fields the night darkened as deeply over the hopes of those then living as if the morrow was never to dawn for their crushed and bleeding fatherland.

Of Gustaf Bertelsköld it is told that he and his valiant little troop stood during the whole battle in the hottest of the fight on the left wing. There, one after another, his men fell at his side ; the broad-shouldered, honest Simon Bång, the faithful and active Miltopæus, and all of the former students excepting the brothers Peldan, fell there by honorable wounds in the last conflict for their fatherland. And then Bertelsköld, seeking death, threw himself in among the enemy's closest ranks ; but all yielded, all went down before his desperate blows, and, almost without knowing it or wishing it, he cut his way through, and found himself the day after, astonished that he still lived, in the neighborhood of Wasa. They said that in this flight he was on the chase for De la Barre, in order to wreak vengeance upon him for all the disgrace, all the ruin that he had brought upon Storkyro ; but the chief of the Finnish cavalry had a good start and could not be overtaken. Certain it is that shortly afterward Bertelsköld disappeared, and it was taken for granted that in his blind rage he had been killed or taken prisoner by the Russians. How much ground there was for this conjecture, will appear in the next story.

On that field, which, the nineteenth of February, 1714, was watered by the blood of so many brave men, now every summer wave rich crops of that excellent variety of grain known as Wasa rye. It sucks the substance of its kernel from the bones of champions who moulder till the judgment-day under its most verdant knolls ; and sometimes even yet, when the plow turns the renowned furrow, its iron point rattles against pieces of rusty swords or the whitened bones of an arm once sinewy and accustomed to strife. The broad river,

upon whose frozen waters so many breathed their last sigh, flows with a gentle murmur through these fertile fields, and upon its level shores are flourishing villages with handsome red-painted houses and industrious inhabitants. The whole neighborhood presents such an aspect of cultivation and prosperity that the wayfarer asks with wonder if it is the design of Providence that peace shall reap where war has sowed. The wood has disappeared or retired to a great distance ; the stone-hills alone remain from those savage days, with their rugged, defiant cliffs which were once the point of support of the Finnish army. Even the genius of the people seems to bear, as it were, a scar from the ancient conflicts ; there is at bottom a certain wildness left in their industrious, peaceful disposition, and when the winter snow goes forth in tempestuous whirls over the wide plain, one seems to hear Armfelt's shout of command, the sound of the hoofs of Bruce's dragoons, and galloping away in the snow-storm the Finnish cavalry under whose feet the hopes of Finland were trampled down.

A morning has again dawned over both Storkyro's and Oravais' night. Its sun is not so sad that it can only shine on the graves of the departed, nor is it gay enough to play with rosy hues alone over the unknown destiny of the future.

PART III. — THE SHADOW OF A NAME.

INTERLUDE.

ONE evening, the last of October, a step was heard in the dark garret stairway, and some one fumbled after the latch of the Surgeon's chamber-door. The little circle there assembled turned curiously, for no one else was expected ; the company was complete with the exception of the schoolmaster, Svenonius, who for several weeks had been sick, and was expected all the less because the gossips of the town, who always had cognizance of all important events, had distinctly stated that the learned *magister* was that same evening to be cupped.

Yet it was no other than Svenonius in his own person, who now entered, somewhat unsteady in his gait, and puffing after clambering up the tiresome garret stairs. His tall lean figure, scarcely a hand's-breadth shorter than the Surgeon's own, seemed in his worn black coat even leaner than before, and his spectacles, whose bows were lost in a forest of tufty black hair which surrounded his pale cheeks like pine trees round a winter lake, hardly had a resting-place on that sharp and shrivelled nose, the sight of which had never failed to command a wholesome respect from the school-boys of the town. The learned man's face, provided with a pair of thin lips, a prominent chin and two sprightly brown eyes, had little claim to be called fascinating ; but it was considerably softened by the poor fellow's undisguised joy at again finding himself in a company which he so long had missed, and which, with all its

angularities, consisted of downright good people like himself.

One would not easily find two more perfect opposites than the Surgeon's learned auditor, and his friend and adversary, the short, fat, sleek postmaster, Captain Svanholm, with his (in his own mind at least) martial aspect, his light stubby hair, and the long mustaches whose original ruddy hue time had changed to gray, and out of which his groping thumb on every important occasion never failed to draw, as it were, brilliant ideas and appropriate and vigorous words. The postmaster had on as usual a close green hunting-coat, with posthorns on the buttons, and no less threadbare than the schoolmaster's; and besides, snuff-brown small clothes, with a gold pistol on his fob-chain, yellow vest, and a cravat of indefinite color, which rather variegated involucre covered an individual as conservative as any German Haudegen, and who would have been exceedingly monotonous if nature had not furnished him with a passionate temper and a disposition to quarrel when in his cups;—the latter, however, never came in question at the evening assemblies of the strictly temperate Surgeon.

Svanholm was the first to bid his learned friend welcome, and was delighted to see him again looking "as fresh as a Cossack in the twilight." In this sentiment the old grandmother, Anne Sophie, and the Surgeon himself, joined with hearty good-will, while the children felt that their old respect was not a little increased by the new and sharper angles which sickness had left in the schoolmaster's figure. They were all astonished at the courage of this invalid, who, like Döbeln, threw his medicine into the corner to listen to the Surgeon's war-stories.

"Do I care for war-stories?" answered the schoolmaster cheerfully. "*Quidquid delirant reges plectuntur Achivi.* The honor of the hero is paid for by the people. No, my dear brother, I had enough of 'The

Blue;’ I have, like a good Christian and a peaceable man, let the most of our part in the great war storm by; and now that the worst of the noise is over, I come to be present at the beginning of a new and more peaceful time after the frantic northern lion has ceased blustering.”

“Conscience! Do you say that?” roared Svanholm, and rose up like a fighting-cock to his full height—five feet and five inches from crown to sole.

“Certainly I say it,” answered the schoolmaster unaffrighted. “A bit of bread is better than a piece of lead, a straw-roof than a bivouac, a book than a sword, a harvest field than a battle field. The fact is that Charles XII procured for his whole kingdom lead, bivouacs, swords and battle fields in abundance; but all the less bread, and roofs, and books, and harvests”

“We have heard that before,” interrupted the Surgeon, who was unwilling to let the old contention kindle up anew, “and therefore Brother Svanholm ought to have lived in the first two decades of the former cycle and Brother Svenonius in the decade next following, so that each one would have lived in a time suited to him, instead of unseasonably haunting the present, each one biased by his own partiality. Brother Svanholm shall learn what war costs, and Brother Svenonius shall notice how the giants of history cast their shadows far in advance of their times. It is with history as with the setting sun: the lower it sinks in the night of the past, the more colossal become the shadows of those terrestrial objects which chance to come within its light.”

“I think Cousin Bäck has, God help us, ruin enough to tell us about,” said the old grandmother, wishing to do her part to put aside the subject of controversy. “Yet I hope that this story will be nothing near so terribly wild and bloody as the former one.”

“It is in this wise,” said the Surgeon. “We are now at 1714. Following that were seven of the longest

and most sorrowful years that Finland ever experienced. But the great northern war, as well as Charles XII, had at that time already played out its best card, and what came after that, was the surgical fever which follows the conflict and goes before restoration to health; it was a long and gloomy combat with death, filled with desperate efforts to save a broken greatness; it was a time in which the pursuits of peace were feeble, during which the seeds of a new future took root unnoticed in the rubbish of a colossal structure fallen; one of those wonderful eras which seem to have no present, but in which men live entirely in the memory of the past and in the hope of the future, contented with almost any change whatever, if they can but be saved from that fearful uncertainty which oppressed and paralyzes them. It is very remarkable to see how a people grows old. The twelve years next after 1709 changed the Swedish people from boys to old men; fortunately the boy remained in the spirit of the people, and may be found there to this day, and so no one knows what moment the sundered army may regain its elastic power. But there are scars that can never be entirely obliterated,—scars of the soul rather than the body,—and it is certain that the whole genius of the North has been different since 1721. Either Charles XII or Peter the Great or their epochs were born a second time.”

“Cousin, you have told us a great deal about Gösta Bertelsköld, but next to nothing about his brother Torsten,” interrupted the old grandmother, whose practical mind always carried her “from sounds to things,” from the region of resonance straight forward to men and events. “I doubt very much if either of them will ever be as capable a man as their father; they have no time for it, poor boys, on account of the everlasting fighting.”

“You forget,” replied Svanholm, forcibly, “that Gösta Bertelsköld escaped from captivity and has fought as a partisan in not less than fifty engagements,

not to mention the great battles. For example, when he with fifty companions of the genuine sort, defended Majniemi and came so near being buried in the ruins."

"Is Majniemi destroyed?" asked Svenonius with as much astonishment as his limited admiration for incidents of war allowed.

"Heroism! don't you remember that? When they landed to make a diversion against the Russians' base of operations at Åbo?" answered the postmaster.

"But I have not heard a word of it," replied the schoolmaster.

"Yes, one must live among switches, floggings and grammars, to forget such things," rejoined the postmaster. "Brother does not remember perhaps either the adventures in Åbo and Borgå, or the attempt to capture the czar, or Löfving's exploits, or the story of De la Barre—whom may the devil take, hair and all—with respect be it said, since no one is permitted to swear here."

"Not a word Brother Svanholm!"

"Heroism! He is schoolmaster and teaches children morals, and does not know the least thing about the battle of Storkyro. He is *magister* in the bargain, and would any day get his coat dusted at a college examination!"

"Brother Svanholm ought not to mix things that do not belong together," suggested Svenonius, evidently stung. "I believe I know as much about the battle of Storkyro as you do, but I have not heard a word about it from Brother Bäck."

"Great heavens! and he talked about it a whole long evening."

"Yes, but then Uncle Svenonius was away," interrupted little Jonathan, proud of putting an end to the gentlemen's controversy by so convincing a remark. The Surgeon had winked to the old grandmother to let them quarrel; and Anne Sophie, who was just then reel-

ing off some thread, laughed so that she broke her thread twice.

"There is some justice in that, my little old man," answered the postmaster, somewhat confused. "Brother Svenonius was not with us at Storkyro. Instead of taking Wiborg, he took elder-tea, the honorable peace-advocate."

"If Brother Svanholm had been at Storkyro he would not have run at Karstula," remarked the schoolmaster, who could not put up with the warlike captain's ridicule of his learning.

"Sir, I did not run, I retired in good order!" roared the captain, while the points of his mustaches bent upward much as the whiskers of an old house cat do at the unexpected sight of a starved dog in the kitchen.

"Tell them then, Cousin Bäck, how we succeeded in crossing the Kyro river on the ice and are now at—really, I don't know where," said the grandmother, who had become infected with the fun, but was apprehensive on account of Captain Svanholm's mustaches—just as by the rings around the moon, one predicts wind and rain.

"Never mind that now," said the Surgeon, in a tone of reconciliation. "We find ourselves for the present in Stockholm, in the year 1714, and are fully occupied with the diplomatic intrigues which undermined the ground on which the northern lion took his last defiant steps. And since I do not feel myself competent to measure every hand that here and everywhere about was stretched out in the darkness, after the tottering crown and the mouldering monarchy, we will see what became of Torsten Bertelsköld, who at that time was a prominent person, and who represented what would happen in Brother Svenonius' epoch, as the Carolin Gsöta Bertelsköld belonged, body and soul, to the time of Brother Svanholm, which now draws to a close."

"I can not imagine that Brother Bäck intends to

treat us to quill-fighters as long as Charles XII is on his feet," said the captain peevishly.

The Surgeon remained silent for a moment. "It would be childish," said he, "to expect any sudden leap in the fortunes of the people or the development of the times. There may be periods when affairs progress so evenly that one thinks everything remains unchanged, and then there suddenly comes a crash which turns everything topsy-turvy, and, as it were, brings forth a new era, full-grown. But if you look about, you will perceive that the new era had a long time before taken root in that which was and is only the ripened fruit of seed planted years and generations back. There is no time so complete in itself that it is not also a transition to something new. Making a comparison, I would say that every time works its way upward by degrees. Now it cannot be disputed that at one time Brother Svanholm was a lieutenant; well, then, lieutenant as he was, he had an ensign in him and a captain a-brewing, and you see therefore the lieutenant was only passing by, as if on a foraging expedition."

"But the captain has fixed his standard in the ground and gone into winter-quarters," observed Svanholm good-naturedly, with a sigh at the thought that in his haversack might also have been a field-marshal's *baton*.

"Time could better be likened to a postmaster," said Svenonius.

"Yes, and to a schoolmaster or a surgeon," answered the old hostess. "Time can be likened to a great many things besides old men with gray hair, though it is customary to paint him as an old man. Time is essentially an eternal youth. He cannot brook decay. He always wafts it away with his great storm-filled wings, in order to put in its place something young and fresh. But the old do not understand such things; they believe that the times and the world are

continually growing worse, because they cannot accustom themselves to the thought that a new time is coming forward under new forms."

Anne Sophie, who in her admiration for Charles XII almost surpassed the postmaster and was herself only excelled by the haughty little Jonathan, had long found it difficult to remain silent, and now advanced like a skirmisher with: "Godfather will not deny that the times after Charles XII dwindled to the proportions of a dwarf."

"Yes, to daubs and blots and misery and creeping things!" interrupted Captain Svanholm, like a faithful ally.

"Wait, wait, we are yet some way from that," said the Surgeon evasively. "Taken strictly, we are all justices of too inferior an order to judge such a lusty fellow as humanity. It is best for us to let him judge himself."

"Cousin, do you intend to take us back to Finland again?" asked grandmother.

"It may be, if it cannot be avoided. For my part I have a great liking for nature in its original wildness, but I do not like artificial deserts, especially where my forefathers have lived."

"Those good, honest men! They must have endured much evil!"

The Surgeon did not reply. But his gray eyebrows descended, and without being conscious of it he broke the mouth-piece off his old silver-mounted curled-birch pipe.

When all were still, grandmother finally asked if he would not begin now.

"Yes," he answered indifferently.

"And what is the new story called?"

"The shadow of a name."

CHAPTER I

THE RIKSDAG CLUB.

ONE evening in March in the year 1714, a company of fifty or sixty persons was assembled at Colonel Count Gustaf Lewenhaupt's in the vicinity of Riddarhus square in Stockholm. The window-blinds were carefully closed, and, to judge, from the servants, who for no obvious purpose were posted in the stairways as well as at the entrance, they seemed at the same time desirous of avoiding the appearance of a secret meeting and careful to protect themselves from all surprises.

An experienced observer could readily gather from the varied elements of the company, that this was no common evening entertainment where the noble lords made up for the many cares of the day ; nor one of those party-meetings which were so common in these restless times, and especially now during the sitting of the diet, when "the cat was away and the mice could play," as one of the friends of the king openly expressed himself in the house of nobles. Here were seen experienced old men from the bitter times of Charles XI, members of the humiliated and now beggared nobility who could never forgive the Pfaltz-house for the Reduction and the Sovereignty ; middle-aged men who had grown weary of wars and taxes and reduced salaries and military supremacy ; youths, "full of the future" but rather empty of all that pertained to the present, and who had no higher wish than to make a noise in the world, no matter in what way. All of these could nevertheless be contained in a single party, provided they all, like the host, belonged to the higher orders of the nobility ; but besides these, the cream of the Swedish

aristocracy, who were here represented by several brilliant names, there were also some of the lower nobility, such as Stjerneld, Leijonmark, Wulfvenstjerna, and in addition several peasant priests and civil officers, whose names have a very citizen-like sound—such as Lars Molin, Erik Benzelius, Adam Schütz,—but who were nevertheless called to play an important part in the political revolutions of that time.

Somewhat apart from the rest, in the recess of a window, stood a group engaged in a lively conversation. It was Major-General Count Abraham Brahe and Vice-Admiral Baron Axel Lewenhaupt, who had with them the vice-president of the Åbo court, Sven Leijonmark, and seemed to be softly but earnestly elaborating their views to this influential party-champion. To this group was soon added a fourth member, at that time royal librarian at the Upsala University, Benzelius, whom one of his contemporaries called “a young germ of everything brilliant which afterwards came or could come to his lot,” though he did not look higher than the seat of the Archbishop at Upsala. The conversation referred to the deplorable condition of the kingdom, as set forth in a memorial offered in the house of nobles, by Lewenhaupt, as a proof of the necessity, in such a desperate situation and when nearly all hope of ever seeing the king again was lost, of appointing—a regent.

This bold word seemed to cause no small amount of embarrassment.

“Since his majesty’s *glorieuse* campaigns have left us nothing but honor, it is necessary for us to save that at home as well as abroad.” Thus Axel Lewenhaupt expressed himself.

“His royal majesty cannot take it amiss that certain matters which cannot be decided at Demotika come to a speedier termination here,” said Gustaf Lewenhaupt, with much caution.

“God has set a limit before kings, beyond which

they cannot go, and all good Swedes may make timely preparations for such a mortal event," observed Sven Leijonmark, with the devout boldness which characterized this crafty party-man.

A smile, almost scornful, curled the lips of Benzelius. "My good gentlemen," said he, raising his voice so that all were attentive, "you are setting up systems of government, and whispering in each other's ears fair-sounding words, concealing hooks and spurs, presuming that the northwest winds may at any time take them to Demotika. In plain words, we priests and citizens are invited here to agree concerning what ought to be done to save the country, with or without music in the words."

"The peasantry desire the princess as regent!" cried Major Stjerneld, in his customary rough way severing the Gordian knot. It was he who worked most zealously for this object, and for a long time with slight success, for the peasantry were, of all, most loyal to the king.

"The major says this with remarkable certainty," said Bishop Molin, with a statesman's prudence.

"I have the evidence in my pocket, and will lay it before the nobles to-morrow," replied Stjerneld, without reflection.

"I would sooner have thought that the peasantry would submit to be ruled by the renowned boot,"* exclaimed Judge Baron Conrad Ribbing contemptuously.

Benzelius, of peasant extraction himself, was enraged. "The judge knows, as we all do, that that boot was not made by any shoemaker of the house of nobles; and the peasantry of Sweden will, neither now nor hereafter, suffer themselves to be governed by boots, even if they are ornamented with golden spurs."

"Nor drive with a fifth wheel under their wagon,"

* This refers to the wide-spread falsehood which Voltaire also helps to circulate, that Charles XII sent his boot to the council to preside in his stead.

replied Ribbing, nettled, referring to the proposition to make a fifth order of the civil officers who were peasants, which proposition was supposed to have originated with Benzelius.

"No quarreling, gentlemen," interrupted the bishop. "We have come here to agree as to the best method of instituting a strong form of government during the absence of the king. The matter will come up in the house of nobles to-morrow, and all patriots must be united or everything will go to pieces."

"What follows?" exclaimed Stjerneld. "We shall cut the claws of the Holstein party by immediately installing her royal highness in the government."

"Yet, with that limited power which for the *prosperité* of the country in such circumstances ought to be insisted on," added Count Brahe, with an aristocratic inclination of his proud neck.

"The count is right," said Leijonmark, who had republican proclivities. "*Fata trahunt nolentes*. This is necessary, in case anything fatal should happen to the king, which God forbid, so that no progressive *acteur* may direct the affairs of state to the destruction of the kingdom."

"The welfare of the kingdom demands that the form of the government previous to 1680 should be restored and the several orders regain their lawful *privilegia*," remarked Gustaf Lewenhaupt.

"The former times bear witness that where each order maintained the rank that rightfully belonged to it, the kingdom has thrived best," was the opinion of Count Brahe.

"Gentlemen of the nobility," exclaimed Benzelius, again aroused, "you talk all the while as though the good old time was only driven out into the vestibule and you had only to open the door and bid him most graciously to come in again. You forget that during the reign of the late king, many changes occurred to the great advantage of the kingdom, and which the peas-

ant class would not be pleased to have stricken out of the statutes. You wish to have a regent under bands and stays,—that is, of course, in the sorrowful *casus* that anything should happen to our reigning king, whom may God keep in life and health. But I tell you that we peasants will have a word in this law, if there is to be one, and that we do not intend to allow ourselves to be plucked like grouse by a handful of petty kings, whether they are called the government council or the king's high council, or are nonplussed counts or starved barons."

An indescribable tumult arose at these daring words—all shouting promiscuously; and while the most embittered cried out that the speaker ought to be turned out of doors, the witty Wulfvenstjerna was heard to say half aloud to the Ribbings: "Hang him or make a noble of him; in either case he will hold his tongue like a good child."

Molin sought in vain to restore harmony, reminding them that they had not met to quarrel over the interests of the several orders, but to consult for the preservation of the whole kingdom. Times of common peril divided opinions as often as they united them, and the scourge of discord was not the least of the misfortunes which now, all at once, raged over the North.

It was apparent that all present—and among them were many who seriously wished for the welfare of the kingdom—were agreed that a change was necessary; but as soon as the question was asked, in what shall the change consist, to what end shall it be particularly directed? opinions were immediately divided into a multitude of conflicting fragments.

Benzelius soon had around him a not insignificant party, which seemed fully determined, be it here or at the sessions of the orders, to oppose the precedence of the nobility, and the fear of displeasing this party prevented an outbreak of wrath on the part of the noble gentlemen. Schütz sat down to write the protocol, and

it was formally determined to push through the appointment of the Princess Ulrika Eleonora as regentess during the king's absence.

"And with the advice of the deputies of the orders," added Stjerneld, who was at once zealously supported by Benzelius and his friends.

"What now!" exclaimed Axel Lewenhaupt. "Will you give us a Long Parliament and a Cromwell?"

"I know of no person better adapted to the rôle of Cromwell than Leijonmark," whispered Wulfvenstjerna to Schütz.

"Must go before the deputies," assented the crafty Conrad Ribbing. "It is in any event a bone for the lap-dogs of the opposition, and will sound well in the appropriation bills."

"Gentlemen," said Gustaf Lewenhaupt, with an equivocal smile. "I very much fear that we are reckoning without our host. If I do not mistake myself, here comes a man who can probably solve our doubts regarding it."

Just then a man somewhat over thirty years of age, of slender form and pale but intellectual countenance, entered. His unusually careful attire, with the inevitable appurtenance of a long peruke, and the wide shapeless sleeves of his embroidered coat, together with his easy and rather haughty bearing, led one at once to suppose that he was a member of the highest order of the nobility, cultured in the saloons of foreign courts, while the greater part of the younger noblemen of the time showed traces of the rougher education of the battle-field.

"Who is the lofty gentleman?" asked one of the new legislators of his neighbor Schütz.

"He is a man," answered Schütz, "of whom one does not know which is more dangerous, to have him for a friend or an enemy, to meet him socially or officially; a man of great *capacité* and still greater

ambition ; a man who sees through everybody but is seen through by few or none ; a man who by birth and inclination belongs to the higher nobility, but knows how to make himself necessary to all parties without any one being able to claim him ; allied to all, intimate with none ; slighting preferment and yet employed in the most important affairs ; scarcely more than a youth, and yet already gray in all the dissimulations of diplomacy ; in a word, a worthy pupil of his master and patron, Count Arvid Horn,—the secretary of the legation, Count Torsten Bertelsköld."

It was not long before a group of politicians of various opinions gathered around the new-comer, who, with the most unembarrassed frankness, talked of what he knew or what he believed he knew. "The Holstein party," he said, "had set everything in motion ; the royalists were bent on mingling in the affair ; the princess herself had not decided ; Count Horn entertained for her, as well as for the gentlemen here, the highest consideration, and did not doubt that the matter would end to the entire satisfaction of all"

"Count Horn is then for the project?" exclaimed the Lewenhaupts. "Now victory is complete."

"Count Horn," answered Bertelsköld, "has not expressed any opinion concerning the gentlemen's *dessein*, but I think I know that, in his position of royal counsellor, and surrounded by *rapporteurs*, he will to-morrow, at the sitting of the council and in the presence of the princess, give six or seven of the gentlemen a solemn reprimand."

"What!" again cried the Lewenhaupts and others, "he is then against the project! He will then blame us! disarm us! ruin us!"

"I am convinced that the count entertains both for the gentlemen and for the affair the greatest *égard*, and that her royal highness will not have any reason to be dissatisfied with the count."

"But is he then for us, or against us?"

“All that I can say is that without doubt the count will follow the line of duty.”

“Hang the man—one never knows on which side of the fence he is!” exclaimed the party men, and the club separated in uncertainty and confusion.

CHAPTER II.

THE DIPLOMATS' DECLARATION OF WAR.

THE evening after the meeting of the club, Count Torsten Bertelsköld passed through the lofty carved oak doors into General Count Liewen's house. The general was absent on an embassy to the king in Turkey, to set forth, on behalf of the council, the actual condition of the kingdom, and to induce the king to return home; but Bertelsköld, without being previously announced, continued his way through the empty rooms to the countess's chamber. With politeness—almost with cordiality—he kissed her hand and exchanged a few words concerning her health.

The countess was a woman about thirty years old, rather short than tall, clad in black, with an exterior not particularly beautiful, but full of goodness and grace. Far from being displeased with a familiarity which could not be misinterpreted, she seemed moved by it; a moist lustre shone in her beautiful eyes, and she answered Bertelsköld's greeting with even greater warmth than his own.

Those among us who remember Majniemi castle and the masquerade ball at Drottningholm, would perhaps still recognize in the countess the lovely Ebba Bertelsköld of former times, then maid of honor and now lady of honor to her royal highness the Princess

Ulrika Eleanora. For long years had a sorrowful memory caused her to refuse all offers ; but Count Torsten, a few years since, had persuaded her to give her hand to a widower already growing gray,—now her husband. But the black mourning garments she only laid aside when etiquette positively demanded it.

“I hope I do not discommode you?” said Count Torsten, as he sat down by his sister’s side.

“A guest who comes so rarely could not do that, even if he were less welcome than you are,” replied the countess.

“I believe it is several weeks since I had the pleasure of meeting *ma sœur*. Business”

“It is three months. Let that be forgotten now”

“As well as the little *brouillerie* at our last *rencontre*. You defended your position like—a Carolin. *Apropos*, have you heard the news of the day?”

“No. But it must be something singular ; I know you never come without a reason. Can I serve you in something different from your last *propos, mon ami*?”

“Ebba, you would be a wise woman if you only knew how to profit by your position. But let us not wrangle about that. Weightier matters have precedence. The parties are at open war with each other ; the crown is considered as good as vacant. *Enfin*, what can one do with a king thousands of miles away, whom some think demented, others dead, and others a prisoner? Just imagine,—Görtz and the Holsteiners have won a victory to-day ; yes, of course in the name of loyalty and for its good. The partisans of the princess, joined with a large number of people of suspected intentions, the honest Creutz at their head, have to-day received an appropriate *avis au lecteur* before the sitting council. The gentlemen were quite artistically gored by our Finnish unicorn;* Crusbjörn, for example, had the pleasure of hearing that he was as poor a

*Count Arvid Horn.

statesman as he is a good soldier. He who used the most *badinage* was Axel Lewenhaupt. Riksdag is graciously adjourned; the princess insisted that it should take place with *douceur*. In the meantime the nobles have voted for the princess as regentess. Imagine how. They had a *protocol* with two columns—one for those who would immediately assist her royal highness to the illustrious *fauteille*; the other for those who graciously wished to persuade her royal highness to have patience until some janizary should help the kingdom out of its embarrassment.”

“*Perfidie!* Proceed.”

“There were two hundred and thirty-five noblemen present. In the first column were written one hundred and thirty-seven names, and in the other none. You know Cederhjelm?”

“The wittiest man and the slyest rascal in Stockholm—next to my honorable brother.”

“Thank you humbly. Well, Cederhjelm made believe that he was in a great hurry, scrawled something in the first column, and quickly went his way *tout èperdu*. When his crow-feet were deciphered they were found to run thus: ‘*To invite her highness I deny not to be advantageous to her and to us. Carl Gustaf Cederhjelm.*’”

“So he was against the regency?”

“Or for it; just as one takes it. It depends upon a little punctuation mark before or after the ‘not.’”

“Exactly in accordance with his taste. I am surprised that you did not—”

“I did not write in either column. Impossible; the unicorn considers it most discreet not to pronounce his opinion, and his politics are for the present mine. But as the matter stands, it is my opinion that sooner or later the princess will gain the preponderance, and then she would never forgive our having worked against her. *Me voila*. You will place me under great obligation if you let the princess know that I am one amongst her

most devoted followers, and that I am working *sans bruit* in private for her advantage."

"So I guessed right; you found I could be of use to you, and so you remembered that you had a sister. Torsten, I have very little claim upon your affection, but you know what I think of your political career. Why this deceit, which flatters and betrays all parties? Yesterday you were a royalist, to-day a Hessian, to-morrow a Holsteiner, the day after a little of each or none of either. Choose your party, *mon frère*; you have at least three to choose from, and whichever one you decide upon, lay your talents, a significant weight, in the scale. But permit me to tell you: this eye-service gains you enemies in all parties, friends in none. Torsten, your behavior is unworthy of your name and your rank, and I do not intend to lend myself as a tool for your purposes."

"Another lecture. Admire a patience, my countess, that does not suffer itself to be frightened by the severe admonition with which you have just honored me, when I was bold enough to propose a political alliance to find out the princess's *démarche*. *Eh bien*, I will not speak of that"

"It is more than unwise, *mon ami*, it is ignoble. Our father would never have acted so."

Count Torsten reddened. Accustomed as he was to entertain an exalted opinion of his own political genius—an opinion which was also entertained by others,—this reprimand from a woman so little experienced in the many intrigues of the day, necessarily seemed to him in a high degree unjust. But he controlled himself.

"*Mon cœur* is right," said he. "To make such a system the rule of one's life, would be neither wise nor noble. But have you considered in what a time we live? We all stand on the brink of three abysses, one of which will to-day or to-morrow swallow all who lean to the opposite side. Either the king, the princess or

the duke of Holstein will conquer; then woe to their enemies ! And if only individuals were concerned, but no, it concerns systems. You mentioned our father. Well, I will repeat to you what he told me at the close of his life. 'It is upon you, Torsten, that I build,' said he. 'Remember that if I leave you no other inheritance, I leave you an idea, and this idea is the maintenance of a middle power between the monarchy and the sway of the multitude, between the absolute right of the king, which denies the right of all others, and the unbridled power of the many which divides everything into parties. Promise me, Torsten, that you will always strive for the vocation of the nobility as mediators between the king and the people.' "

"Stand fast by that and make no terms with the other parties."

"No, there you are wrong. I have my party; it is Count Horn's, the only one that befits our birth. It is I who shall one day lift up this party; and shall I now, while everything totters, throw myself under the rolling chariot wheels of the times and allow myself to be crushed by the first royal princely or ducal lackey that crosses my path ? Oh, if I only had my ring, my ring, then would I laugh at all these reptiles, instead of now"

"It is mere superstition concerning the king's ring."

"I know it, and yet it imparts a wonderful power through the simple hope of succeeding in everything. But, *enfin*, will you *protéger* my interest with the princess ?"

"As a sister, yes. As a political tool, no."

"You compel me then to cast myself into the arms of the Holstein party and Görtz ?"

"As long as Charles XII lives, there is but one party for loyal subjects. Be the king's man, Torsten ; use your talent to unmask his enemies, strengthen his power and serve"

“The monarchy? Never! It is to this, Ebba, your generosity leads. I should be serving the saber, that savage force that hews down all our rights—that soldiery of higher and lower grade that treats free-born nobles like janizaries; a king whose kingdom knows his existence only by the most unheard of exactions; failing greatness, shadows of past victories which were swallowed up in defeat; matchless power which has nothing left but its own selfish ambition and unlimited pretensions! I, who bear within me a new era, an era of freedom and justice which will not be conquered by force nor annoyed by weakness, shall I throw away my ability and my future for a lost cause which may overwhelm us to-day, but which to-morrow will be only a story from the age of fables? No—I leave this rôle to our wandering knight of a thousand adventures, *mon cher Gustave*, who at this moment has the best of opportunities for rebuilding in Finland the Carolinian wind-mills”

“Torsten, do not revile Gösta! He is an honorable knight, without duplicity, as well as without fear, faithful unto death to the king and the cause whose banner he has sworn”

“Without doubt. *Apropos* of our Gösta, they say that Eva Falkenberg has lately become a widow by old Rhenfelt’s death. You promised me just now your sisterly protection. I forgive you, *mon cœur*, your reproaches, and hope you will give me your *secours* in case it should suit me to contend for the amiable widow’s hand.”

“Another affair! A combination! Great politicians, how little ye understand the heart of woman!”

“*Allons*. As you please. You know, however, that I adored Eva Falkenberg long before her marriage. That we were continually at war with each other ought to be an evidence to your quick wit that I had not the misfortune to be entirely indifferent to my beautiful antagonist. I know what you will say: a childish

affection, like your own. Illusions, that fade at twenty and disappear at thirty! Gösta has long ago forgotten her, as she has forgotten him; the match is suitable, and I see no reason”

“Reckoners like you, *mon ami*, usually sum up a host of small figures in the human heart and forget the larger ones. You ought to know Eva Falkenberg; she is an independent character, much stronger than I. She would scorn your proposal”

“Why, *s'il vous plait*?”

“Because she still loves Gösta, and she never would deceive you, *mon cher*. I can therefore do nothing for you.”

“So much greater reason for me to conquer her. My dear countess, I have now conversed with you like a brother, but you have not been pleased to answer me as a sister. I have confessed to you some of my plans, my hopes; still you do not comprehend me. You forget that I too have no small share of pride by inheritance. We might end here. But I apprise you further, that hereafter there is an open feud between us. I shall cast down your princess, if I find it useful for my plan; I shall set her on the throne if I find it more useful. Regarding Madame Rhenfelt, either by or against her wish, either with or without the consent of our Finnish Don Quixote, she will within a year or two be the Countess Bertelsköld. Your humble servant, my countess!”

“Torsten!” cried the countess, but he had already disappeared. Her beautiful eyes filled with tears. “Why,” she said to herself, “should such great faculties be clouded by such great selfishness? O men, men, who always make yourselves the end, and everything else the means—how often you forget that outside of you there are hearts that suffer and a God who governs!”

CHAPTER III.

THE FUGITIVES.

SWEDEN'S greatest living statesman, the Finnish, Count Arvid Bernhard Horn, was in his private room working with the secretary of the legation, Count Torsten Bertelsköld, upon the composition of a circular to the Swedish ministers at foreign courts. Count Horn was, in fact, a stately representative of the old aristocracy, tall in stature, with an unusually upright and regular profile, his noble expression somewhat increased by the peruke which was combed upwards, and which fell in bushy locks over his neck and throat ;—an aquiline nose, prominent mouth, with a rather thick underlip and a marked touch of determination of character, a high handsome forehead, and a pair of large, piercing, light-blue eyes. His toilet was made, even for the work room, with the greatest care, and was of the choicest elegance ; on his embroidered blue dressing-gown and black small-clothes there was not seen the least speck or wrinkle ; the fine silk stockings covered faultless calves, and the feet, for the time being encased in a pair of velvet slippers, had no occasion to blush for their *chaussure*. The room itself was furnished with exquisite elegance in the prevailing French style, and, notwithstanding the poverty of the time, might have served without fear of comparison, as the cabinet of one of the ministers of Louis XIV at Versailles.

The count rose and approached Bertelsköld, still limping from the wound received in his knee thirteen years before, at the crossing of the Düna. "Is it

ready?" he asked, with the decisive yet polite tone of a chief accustomed to routine.

Bertelsköld reached him the draft, which he read through attentively. "You will please to observe, with the most scrupulous attention, such proceedings as will probably be taken to regulate the succession in Sweden, while his majesty, dear to all his faithful subjects, still lives, and is in perfect vigor. You should not neglect with all diligence to avert measures which might be in the highest degree injurious and prejudicial to his majesty and the government, so that they may be deprived of even the semblance of success at the court to which you are accredited. It has come to the knowledge of the royal senate that Baron Görtz will perhaps be employed to further such plans at the French court. The senate has, through the royal board of chancellors, ordered Envoy Cronström to attack the said Görtz's credit; besides, it should not escape your attention that over and above the Danish administration, and even the Holland minister, he is the one who, more than all other powers, has done most to chagrin his majesty and compromise the government," etc.

"That is good," continued the count, after he had finished the reading. "I see that the secretary of legation has caught my meaning, and it pleases me to have a man that I can depend on. We will preserve his majesty's crown as long as possible."

"As long as possible?" repeated Bertelsköld, with a slight, almost imperceptible smile.

"This Görtz may become dangerous," resumed the count, without appearing to notice any double meaning in Bertelsköld's reply. "He is in diplomacy what Charles XII is on the battle-field; a man who always plays *va la banque*. If fate should ever bring together these two characters, so unlike and yet so like, such men as you and I would be superfluous."

"Luck at play is inconstant," answered the secretary, in the same manner as before.

"You may be right. Let us now look out for a means of rescue in the general shipwreck which threatens us. What news?"

"Your Excellence knows perhaps of the rumor which was spread this morning by fugitives from Finland?"

"Ever since the Finnish coast-roads have been blocked up by the enemy the government has received no mail from Northern Finland."

"They say that Armfelt has been totally defeated somewhere in Österbotten, and that his whole army is destroyed."

Count Horn turned very pale, but almost instantly controlled himself and answered: "I hope the rumor is untrue. According to the latest advices Armfelt had fortified himself in Österbotten, and Golitzin was still in the neighborhood of Björneborg. But we must examine the fugitives. I remember that your brother joined Armfelt with a band of partisans. You have no advices from him?"

"My brother has entirely forgotten the art of writing. I only know that he so enraged the enemy by a foolhardy defense, that they entirely demolished our ancestral castle of Majniemi in the vicinity of Åbo."

"The secretary judges rather harshly the school in which Sweden's most glorious laurels have been produced," remarked Horn, with a shrug.

"I entertain the highest respect for a school which reckons your Excellence among its pupils," replied Bertelsköld, "but I appeal to your Excellence's judgment of games. My brother has put everything on a single card and—lost."

"Your brother is a brave man; I cannot reproach him with his misfortune. But have the kindness to see what all that noise is, out in the street."

In fact, an uncommon din outside had attracted

the count's attention for some time. When Bertelsköld went out he found a great crowd of people, shrieking and hooting, about to enter upon a struggle with the police, who, supported by a military patrol of twenty men, seemed to hesitate whether they should resort to violent means. Stockholm had for some time been so flooded with helpless fugitives from Esthonia, Livonia, and Finland, that at last it was hard to know how to subsist them. The inhabitants, who themselves suffered so severely from the hard times, had, with true Swedish hospitality, sought as long as possible to help these destitute people; but when new flocks continually streamed in, all their resources were by degrees exhausted and their former good-will very naturally turned to impatience and murmuring. When, therefore, a troop of more than a hundred fugitives, frozen and starved, came over on the ice, the most of them from Åland, dissatisfaction rose to its height, and the unfortunates were driven away whenever they showed themselves to ask for shelter. The police endeavored to persuade them to leave the city and seek asylum in the country, but they, quite tired out with the difficult journey over the sea, refused to go away, and had now to be driven by force. This intervention again awakened the wearied sympathy of the citizens of Stockholm in behalf of the fugitives; the crowd took their part, and, with loud cries, exclaimed that the government ought to provide for their maintenance. A revolt was about to burst forth, so much the more dangerous because it assumed a loyal character and turned against the councillor as the highest governing power during the absence of the king. They were not ignorant of the extravagant luxury with which the royal councillor, Count Horn, surrounded himself, both by habit and inclination, and they did not know, or had forgotten, that the noble count, as hospitable as he was rich, had made more private sacrifices than any

other man, both for the defense of the kingdom and for the support of his suffering countrymen.

Both the fugitives and the crowd, therefore, the armed force not venturing to hinder them, marched to Count Horn's house, and by degrees filled up and closely packed the entire street. The throng was increased by many sleighs which the fugitive Finns had brought with them, some drawn by horses and some by hand, filled with infirm old men, weeping mothers, crying children, and all sorts of household goods and utensils which they had not wished to leave as booty to the enemy. All this dismal crowd now set up a mighty cry in which were mingled exclamations of a more dangerous import.

"Bread, bread! We are starving!"

"House-room and warmth! We are freezing to death!"

"Away with the police!"

"Have we house-room for all the beggars in the world?"

"That is the affair of the government."

"They must look out for that who are the cause of all the misery."

"And who prevent the king from making peace."

"So that they can reign the longer."

"It is not the king's fault!"

"No, no, such a king is not found."

"Live the king!"

"He lives like the simplest soldier."

"It is not he who burdens us with taxes."

"No, no, it is the lords."

"They gormandize on our last farthing."

"They plunder and impoverish us."

"That they may live in pomp and luxury."

"Therefore they prevent the king from coming back; he would soon drive them away from the council table."

“And incited the Russian to attack us, that they might increase the war taxes.”

“They have taken bribes of Denmark.”

“And to disable us they take all our young men and send them to be consumed by the enemy.”

“All these people freeze and starve, while the rich count sits there in his velvet gown and fattens himself with roasts and Spanish wines.”

“Down with the councillors ! Down with Horn !”

“Peace and bread ! Down with all traitors !”

“Live the king ! Hurrah !”

And now the stones began to rattle against the count's windows ; but yet only a single one was cracked in the corner.

Bertelsköld comprehended the danger of the situation in a hasty glance, not unworthy of his great master. His first order to the servants was to bar the doors and close the blinds of the lower story, the next to arm themselves with whatever was most convenient. Wholly unobserved, he had several old blunderbusses loaded in the yard. But that ill-fated cry: *Massacrez la canaille !* which has ruined so much greatness both before and since that day, did not escape the proud youth's lips. He remembered the fate of his father at the defense of Majniemi, and, besides, it was another who had the command here. He reported the matter in few words to Count Horn.

“Do what you will,” said the count, quite calmly, and scarcely lifting his pen from the paper. His working room fronted the court.

“But it concerns your Excellence's person.”

“Do you intend to complete your draft ?”

“But the rabble are going to extremes ; discontent is outspoken ; a revolt is in progress ; the authority of the council is at stake ; and if the multitude is not appeased, the princess will be proclaimed regentess before night.”

Count Horn now laid his pen aside, looked at Bertelsköld without changing his countenance, and said with an air of perfect unconcern :

“Well, yes, tranquillize the crowd, if you please; but let the men in the court draw the charges out of those blunderbusses; I do not like to have boys play with powder.”

“I shall make use of your Excellence’s authority,” answered Bertelsköld, inwardly irritated at being obliged to stand there like a school-boy before his master. Within a few minutes he appeared at a window in the second story. It was high time; the rain of stones increased; at least half a dozen panes were already broken, and for every crashing pane the crowd hurrahed. “Let us be gored by the Finnish horned cattle!” shouted some wag in the crowd, and this rude witticism was rewarded with new hurrahs.

The sight of Bertelsköld, who stood there to all appearance cool and unconcerned as the stones that hit the wall beside him, quieted the noise for a moment. They were curious to know what he had to communicate.

“My friends!” said he, not displeased to let the aristocrat within pay for his pre-eminence; “his Excellence, Count Horn, considers himself, a Finlander by birth, bound to sustain at his own expense the newly arrived Finnish fugitives, and offers them free shelter and fare at Fågelvik, Stjerneberg, or Hvitvik, as they may prefer.”

The fugitives burst out in loud exclamations of joy.

“And in order that none of them may suffer on the way, his Excellence will distribute, as traveling expenses, ten dollars to each family, and five dollars to each unmarried or childless person among the fugitives.”

“Hurrah! Long live Count Horn!” shouted the Finns.

But the brawl began again among the citizens. The dangerous cry: "We will have the king back again!" was heard anew.

Just then Bertelsköld saw from his high position the gleam of the muskets of a company of soldiers which was pressing hastily forward at the end of the street.

"One word more!" he cried, with ironical courtesy. "Friends and neighbors of Stockholm, his Excellence would let you know that he will present you—the window panes you have had the kindness to repair in his house!"

"Down with Horn! Down with the councillor! Live King Charles!" shouted the crowd again in new rage, and the favoring voices of the fugitives were lost in the growing tumult.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CAROLIN.

IN order to comprehend the meaning of a street riot, which under other circumstances would have ended in a little noise and some benefit to the glazier, one must call to mind that the council had just adjourned the Riksdag and sent home its members with errands unaccomplished, that discontent was general, the situation dubious, the most miraculous stories afloat concerning the king, all parties in angry feuds and the capital nearly stripped of military. No one could prophesy where the movement would end if perchance a spark should set all this combustible material on fire.

Meanwhile, there marched forward a reserve company of the Upland regiment, lately recruited, and mostly young men, commanded by some of Måns Sten-

bock's remaining warriors from Helsingborg, who had survived the late disaster at Tönningen. The company halted at the nearest street corner, and the commander ordered: "Order arms!" There seemed to be an inclination to make terms with the crowd, which was increasing every instant. All eyes were turned toward Count Horn's house; they expected the renowned councillor would show himself. But he came not; his proud soul scorned to treat with the rebellious rabble.

The street was now completely blocked, and a carriage, the luggage on which seemed to belong to travelers from the country, was hindered by the press from moving either forward or back. Some vicious boys gave the horses a lash; they reared and backed the carriage against the people. Those standing nearest gave way, fell upon the coachman with abusive language and pretended to be about to cut the traces and overturn the carriage. A woman's voice ordered the coachman to hold the horses still, but this was impossible; the noise and the throng made the horses wild.

At that instant an unusually tall and broad-shouldered man made his way through the crowd. His military bearing, and the remains of a uniform, half covered by a gray peasant-jacket, revealed the man's occupation; but the worn, neglected dress, the strange, excited, almost wild expression of his originally noble and handsome face, would lead one rather to suspect that he was a robber lately come from the woods and surprised to find himself in the midst of the buzz of a capital.

The stranger seemed to have noticed the danger in which the carriage was placed, and with giant arms thrust aside the people about him as a practiced swimmer cleaves the water with his hurried stroke. He soon stood beside the carriage, opened the door, and said to the lady, in good Swedish, that she had better alight; adding, that she might be calm, as he would conduct her to a place of safety.

"I am not afraid," answered the lady, who was uncommonly beautiful, was dressed in mourning, and seemed to be about thirty years old; "but to remain here is as impossible as it is to drive on. Have the kindness to take me to Count Horn's house, just opposite."

The stranger did not answer; his hand, already stretched out, sank down, and he stood some seconds immovable. Meanwhile the mass of people stormed on, and the crowd became so dense that no one could stir hand or foot by the side of the carriage.

"Well?" said the lady in black, impatiently. "Is it you who are afraid?"

"You cannot get away on foot," answered the stranger hesitatingly.

"Then have the kindness to carry me. You look to me as though you had borne heavier burdens and beaten your way through denser walls."

Notwithstanding the Dalcarnian hat was pressed down over his brow, and his cheeks were browned by all the winds, it could be seen that he blushed. But there was no time to lose. He lifted his beautiful burden, light as a child, on his left arm, and with his right he thrust aside the crowd, as the wind bends the waving harvest field. To the right and to the left of him fell, cursing and shrieking, one after another who did not give way quick enough. At last he approached the door of the house designated. There he set down his burden and placed himself in a position of defense before the lady in black, for the door was closed.

Either the people were irritated by the stranger's somewhat hard-handed procedure, or, on account of his position at the door, they took him for one of Count Horn's men; at all events it was not long before they, seeking an object on which to wreak their indignation, turned to the man at the door. The first insulting words were very soon followed by the throwing of stones and by blows with sticks. Yet the stranger

seemed entirely careless of his own danger, his only plan of operations being to shield the lady in black against all the missiles which might reach her. Two of those standing nearest, a journeyman coppersmith and a brewer's fat servant, mistook this for fear, and daringly went forward with the expectation of seizing the tall man by the collar, throwing him to the ground and cudgelling him for their pains. But this mistake turned out badly. The stranger seized one of them in each hand, lifted them up at arm's length, and flung them so violently to the ground that all their joints cracked, and the blood spurted out of the nose and mouth of both the champions.

Such a powerful grasp, such unheard-of strength, never fails of its impression on the masses, and the Swedish temper of that time was so readily captivated by astonishing exploits, that the feeling of those standing about the stranger turned to respect, almost admiration, while, on the other hand, the fallen had to endure their comrades' ridicule. "Oho! there you got a blow, copper-beater! There you got a crack on the spigot, brewer!" screamed the crowd. "The man at the door is no baby. Who wants to try another round?"

"Let him be!" cried another voice. "Do you not see that long back-sword hanging down under his peasant jacket? Can't you comprehend, blockhead, that he is one of the king's blue boys?"

"Ah, it is one of 'the blue!' Yes, indeed, I saw that at once by the grip. Live King Charles!"

"Live his brave boys! Hurrah!"

"There, do you see that? The man lifts his hat. How devilish stupid to begin a quarrel with one of the blue! Say, there, comrade at the door, let the joke go now, and come and drink a glass with us. We will throw in three stivers apiece, and let the rest make the best of their quarrel with the count in there."

"Thanks!" replied the stranger, pacified by the shout for the king, at whose name he did not fail to lift

his hat. "I have a greeting for you," continued he, "but of that we will talk hereafter. Help me now to get this lady to a place of safety."

"Wait," responded a glove-maker, who was allied with the nobility, "leave that to me. Count Bertelsköld! Count Bertelsköld!"

The stranger reddened again; but soon found that the call was intended for a person who was seen in the window. The glove-maker exchanged a few words with the gentleman above, and it was not long before the door opened and Torsten Bertelsköld appeared, offering his arm to the lady in black. "*Madame Rhenfelt!*" cried he. "Your arm, I pray; you can now be perfectly calm."

"I thank you, count, but permit me to bring in my brave defender!" said the young widow of Councillor Rhenfelt, for it was she. But the tall stranger had disappeared.

"Lundberg," said Count Torsten loftily, to one of the attendants, "hunt up the tall fellow who stood here by the door, and give him this purse. How fortunate I consider myself, dear Eva, to be able to save your precious person! Follow me! The countess, up-stairs, fortunately has her room facing the garden."

The lady in black followed him. But while still in the door she cast a look back and said, as it were, involuntarily: "A wonderful man. I wish I could thank him myself."

"Give yourself no uneasiness," answered Count Torsten, smiling; "at this instant he is probably in a grocery drinking the king's health. To people of his profession it is always an excellent excuse."

"Yet there was something in his answer But you may be right. Wonderful! I know of but one who could compare with him in strength."

"And who is that, if I may ask?"

"Your brother."

"What a fancy! But you need rest. Come, let us seek the countess."

CHAPTER V.

HATS OFF.

MEANTIME the confusion outside, in front of Count Horn's house, continued. The secret emissaries of the political parties were undoubtedly actively endeavoring to produce a demonstration and compel the government to take sides. This confused, augmenting discontent with the present, kept up the excitement in every mind, and both those who knew and those who did not know what else they wanted, were all of one mind in wanting a change — something different from the present insufferable situation.

The evidence of the parties' intent in stirring up the meeting was soon apparent, as the cries, at first scattered, became by degrees concentrated in one which was really the watchword of all parties, the friends of the king included: "Peace! Peace! We will have peace!"

"Hear the pack outside!" said the royal councillor, Falkenberg, who, with several of the councillors, had hurried to the place and come in through a back-door. "There is a new Riksdag in the open air, only a little noisier than the other. One might be tempted to say: 'It is Sweden's mouth that speaks!'"

"Sweden's mouth has not talked for so long that it squeaks for want of practice," said another of the council, Count Horn's father-in-law, Field-marshal Count Nils Gyllenstjerna, who, as well as Falkenberg, were out of favor and almost in open rupture with the ultra-royalists.

"Mere mouthing!" said Count Horn laconically. He, who understood the situation better than any, also

understood that the new era was not yet ripe to be plucked like fruit from a tree. "Be kind enough to see that the promised aid is distributed to the fugitives," added he, turning to Torsten Bertelsköld.

"Peace! Peace!" shrieked the crowd, higher than ever, and again a pane rung in the adjoining room.

The women, who sought an asylum in the rooms adjoining the inner court, took the matter less calmly than the men. Countess Horn besought her father to appease the crowd, and Eva Rhenfelt used her influence with her uncle, the venerable Falkenberg. Afterwards they altogether stormed Count Horn.

This proud noble, of whom not even envy could say that he ever feared, had been a soldier before he became a statesman. Though he had hitherto disdained to make use of violent means against the crowd, wishing to avoid even the appearance of using force to secure his personal safety, yet it is probable that the soldier within him found it difficult to submit to the calm deliberation of the statesman. Spies were sent out and returned with new reports concerning the situation. They thought they had seen money distributed among the crowd, and free entertainment was furnished at the groceries. Count Horn conferred with the other councillors, and the result was that the long expected order went to the commander of the military to clear the streets with clubbed muskets, and arrest the instigators of the riot.

Did they wish to hasten the crisis? Who can determine the motives for a perfectly lawful and authorized means of maintaining order? The noble gentlemen were conscious that they themselves wished for peace more than any one else did, but the king's watchword was war. Meanwhile the crowd shouted, "Peace!" and broke in Horn's windows while they shouted, "Live the king!" Such is always the logic of the masses.

The order was scarcely despatched, when Bertel-

sköld, who was posted at one of the windows with a glass, whispered something to Count Horn, and the result was that a countermand was at once sent out. One after another of the count's guests approached the windows and perceived a marked change in the crowd. The turmoil had mostly subsided, hostilities ceased, and the crowd pressed closer together. All thronged around a certain point away at the corner. Sometimes was heard a subdued sound of assent, or a murmur of suppressed grumbling went through the crowd like the roar of a distant waterfall; then all became so quiet that even those standing farthest away, who could not know what the matter referred to, kept entirely still when those in front of them were silent; and they sought to press nearer that they might possibly find out what was going on.

"Our Riksdags are always the same," said Falkenberg, rather mockingly. "It is always the rope-dancers that find the best market."

"I do not believe that the people are amusing themselves to-day with such trifles," rejoined Gyllenstjerna. "Or has Count Horn sent out a harlequin for their entertainment?"

"I confess that I might have tried that. But the times are changed; the crowd, always taken up with playthings, now want new ones,—perhaps our heads. The attempt to get them will not succeed to-day, I think. They are flocking together there around a speaker, and I have a desire to know what he is telling them."

"Lundberg has been sent out and will soon report the details," said Bertelsköld, as he reached the glass to his superior.

"I think I see a tall figure in the midst of the throng," said Count Horn.

"Perhaps it is your Excellence's cashier, Långström, distributing the money."

The experienced statesman smiled. "When men

worship the golden calf they dance and shout about him; his power is seldom sufficient to so suddenly make them dumb, and to cause them, in devotional silence, to crowd around an unknown middle point. Take notice, gentlemen, it must be a preacher who is talking there."

"The confusion begins again no, it becomes still hear, they shout: 'Hats off! hats off!'"

"Yes, by Jupiter, the hats fly off, every head is bare see, the movement goes outward from the centre like the rings upon the placid surface of the water when a stone is thrown in."

"The men press their jacket sleeves to their eyes, the women the corners of their aprons. If the honest Isogœas had not died so long ago, I should believe that he had arisen from his grave in the Clara churchyard to reprove those vicious, disorderly fellows out there."

"Gentlemen," continued Horn, "after God's name there is but one name in Sweden before which every head is uncovered. If the speaker is not a priest and his speech a sermon, he must be a returned soldier, and is telling them something about"

"Live King Charles! King Charles!" A loud hurrah went through the entire mass of people from the front ranks to those farthest away, and practically completed Count Horn's interrupted sentence. Then all became silent again; the speaker continued and the crowd listened, but the distance did not permit the gentlemen to distinguish what the question was.

"What can he be telling them?" said Countess Horn, with a natural curiosity.

"What can he say to a people who hunger and freeze and bleed and sink under burdens of every kind, and before enemies from every side—what can he say other than what they have themselves just cried: Peace! Peace!" answered Gyllenstjerna.

"I am sure he is promising them peace until spring," said Falkenberg. "We must find out who he is. Perhaps it is a secret agent of Denmark."

"If it is he whom I think it is," whispered Madam Rhenfelt to her uncle, "peace is the last thing he will demand."

This was hardly said before a confusing cry again began in the street, in which could plainly be distinguished the shout: "War! War! Live the king! To Finland! To Finland!"

"What!" exclaimed Gyllenstjerna. "Just now they were ready to crush out the council in order to have peace, now they would assail us to have war. I acknowledge there was rather more sense in their first wish."

"The sense of the masses," replied Falkenberg with a contemptuous smile.

"Yes," said Horn, "and the enthusiasm of the masses. What might have been accomplished with this people if they had not been urged on to death! They have in the last ten years bled on a hundred battle-fields; they have given the last hand from the plow; they have submitted to be slaughtered and plundered and trampled upon to serve as a pedestal to that hero who now fills the world with his exploits and his foolishness. And when, with the crushing burden of their misery upon them, a sigh for peace escapes their lips, it only needs one of the blue boys to arrive in their midst and tell them stories, as one does to children, about King Charles and his victories, and immediately the same people are ready to forget every discomfiture, all suffering, and again shout their "live" for him who has taken their blood, and to cry, "war! war!" as if they had never known what war costs. Gentlemen, it is possible to disapprove this people, it is possible to consider them fickle,—but no one can ever deny them his admiration!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE MESSENGER FROM FINLAND.

THE reports which came to Count Horn at once confirmed the conjectures of this experienced statesman. A soldier, remarkable on account of his stature and his strange dress, had arisen in the midst of the people and plainly set himself against their cry for peace. He had in simple and almost uncivil soldier language, which captivated his hearers, told them of the king's wonderful achievements and his extraordinary sacrifices; that he never spared himself more than the least; that he, with a handful of his brave men, had fought and would yet fight his thousands; that his greatest fault was that he had always considered and still regarded the Swedes as invincible; that he was now in misfortune, and expected with certainty that if the whole world forsook him, his own people would not do it; that he would one day return, and with an iron arm crush all the enemies of the kingdom; that it would grieve him if the Swedes, during this time, should give up his cause as lost; that the enemy had overrun and taken away the Österbotten provinces, and finally Finland, which at all times had so faithfully fought and bled, standing as Sweden's outer wall; that Armfelt's army had lately striven with incomparable courage, but had been defeated at Storkyro through De la Barre's cowardice; and that it would be shameful for the Swedes, in this extreme need, to leave their brothers in arms on the other side of the water without assistance. The result of this statement showed itself at once in the vigorous outburst of the new cry for war, and the people again crowded around

Count Horn's house, to demand speedy help for devastated Finland.

At this information the gentlemen of the council looked at each other with considerable embarrassment. "All the world knows that we have suffered defeat in Österbotten, and the government does not know the least word of it," said Falkenberg.

"It is possible," said Horn, "that a private person might reach here by way of Qvarken, before Armfelt's courier could arrive by way of Torneå."

"At all events, we must find out who the messenger is, and examine him thoroughly," was the opinion of Gyllenstjerna.

"The tall soldier stands at the door and asks audience of his excellence," reported Lundberg, the footman, who had been out reconnoitering.

"Bring him in!" was the short answer.

All eyes were turned towards the door. Torsten Bertelsköld, who during this time was engaged in his own private diplomacy, and represented to the amiable widow of the late Rhenfelt, councillor of war, how wrong it would be that she, who was fitted for the most brilliant career, should pass the bloom of her youth on her country estate in Småland, perceived with indignation that his flattery made very little impression. The thoughts of the beautiful Eva Rhenfelt seemed to be turned away, and it did not escape the keen scrutiny of her admirer that her handsome eyes, like all the rest, were turned with singular interest towards the entrance by which was expected the messenger of misfortune from Finland.

Torsten Bertelsköld suspected the cause. "And you also, beautiful Eva," said he, sharply, "share the ladies' general liking for the wonderful. I fear, however, that these adventurers in the Finnish huts have only kept one-half of the old chevalier's watchword. The knight of our day has learned of our Orlando Furioso to respect honor highly but beauty all the less,

and I am much mistaken if, for example, my brother, who is a conspicuous member of the wandering chivalry, does not set more value upon a horse than upon a court lady, and consider it more honorable to conquer a morass in Österbotten than the heart of the most lovable woman in Stockholm."

"It is possible that you are right," replied Eva Rhenfelt, "and so far as your brother is concerned, he may have changed very much in the fourteen years since I last saw him. But I believe that King Charles' indifference would not prevent any princess, any woman in Europe, from admiring *him* in the highest degree—loving him, if she dared to lift her love so high."

"I have indeed heard it said that a man with dusty boots and bloody spurs rides straight into a woman's heart, but I could not imagine that the doors stood so wide open. The rôles must be changed in our times, since I hear that the beautiful ladies *par force* will take the first step. But let us talk no more of that. I await with the greatest anxiety this message from Finland. We have lost a battle; my brother without doubt was in the fire, and when one knows his foolhardiness, not to say insanity"

"So you hope, my count, that the valiant and knightly nobleman may leave the field free for diplomacy's less dangerous victories"

"My lady, we have no inheritance to begrudge each other," replied Torsten Bertelsköld, provoked.

Just then the soldier entered.

Eva Rhenfelt at once recognized her protector, who, two hours before, had borne her through the crowd. His singular dress, the gray peasant jacket over the blue uniform, torn almost to tatters, bore plain marks of the throng in the street, and the bearded cheeks which for a long time had not known a razor, gave him a bewildered appearance, which was in evident contrast with his otherwise stately figure and noble, manly fea-

tures, a contrast which was all the stronger on account of the brilliant surroundings and careful toilets among which he was introduced.

The stranger surely realized the *outré* in his appearance; he seemed disconcerted, and sought after words.

“Step nearer!” said Count Horn, in that gentle, courteous tone with which men in his position encourage an inferior who, from mere respect, loses his notes. “You wished to speak with me; what is your name?”

“My name was not unknown to you when I had the honor of lending your Excellence my horse at Narva, or when I was permitted to fight under your command at Düna, Clissow, and Thorn,” replied the stranger, with a pride which clothed him befittingly, despite the whiskers and the homespun jacket.

“What!” exclaimed the count, with the tone of open familiarity which he always assumed with his old companions-in-arms. “And with what regiment served—the devil—yes, I have forgotten the name; pardon me, my honorable friend.”

“My name is Gustaf Adolf Bertelsköld, at that time ensign in the life-dragoons, afterwards with the life-guards, and for the present again with the life-dragoons, major, at your Excellence’s service.”

The distinguished company started, and Torsten Bertelsköld most of all. Master as he was of his outward presence, he saluted his brother immediately and with the greatest heartiness. Count Horn also united in this, and all vied with each other in showing attention to the new-comer. But the Countess Horn pointed in jocose amazement to the conspicuous tracks left by the wet, spurred boots of the unexpected guest, on the costly carpets.

Gösta Bertelsköld—for so we will now call him—at once ignored the questions which were heaped upon him from all sides, strode straight forward to Count Horn, and coming directly to the point, said:

“Your Excellence! Armfelt is defeated and Finland lost. I have at the risk of my life come by way of Qvarken, and have ridden hither day and night to ask for prompt relief. I hope that your Excellence will permit this to serve as an excuse for my appearing in this guise.”

“What a misfortune!” exclaimed Count Horn, without giving any attention to his last words. “The count has probably a report and instructions from General Armfelt?”

“During the battle I became separated from the main force and cut my way through to Wasa; from there I came to Björkö islands, and from there over the ice to Vesterbotten.”

“Have the kindness to tell us about the battle.”

Gösta Bertelsköld did so.

“It is an incalculable misfortune,” repeated Horn, solemnly. “The means of the government are exhausted; I see no way in which we can send any assistance from here to Finland.”

“Your Excellence may be right. And yet—forgive my boldness—Finland cannot, Finland must not be lost. Sweden is destitute, but it has at least free arms at home. When it is a question of a limb of one’s own body, the blood of one’s own blood, the heart of one’s own heart, the means of preservation must be found. Your Excellence knows what Finland was and what it is to Sweden at this moment. It defends itself now as the last champion on the kingdom’s outworks; but it is overpowered, it bleeds, it dies. Your Excellence! Finland *must* be saved, even if it costs all that we have, our right arms and the half of our lives!”

“Young man,” said Gyllenstjerna, “the government will do all that is in its power; no reasonable man can ask more. Our coffers are empty”

“We will take the silver from our tables”

“That is already done. The princess herself eats from tin.”

“The diamonds from the king’s crown! The ducat from our children’s savings-banks! The wedding ring from our mother’s hand!”

“Why not Stjerneld’s proposition to sell the trophies from Breitenfeld, Lützen, Warsaw and Narva at auction, with the free consent of the several orders!” exclaimed Falkenberg bitterly.

“Is there no other means? We will ask for volunteers.”

“Women, children and old men now attend the plow. The farms are becoming deserts. In all Scania there are hardly twelve thousand men.”

“Let the twelve thousand march out. The children will rest the muskets on the old men’s shoulders and fire them off. The mothers will make powder and run bullets. The daughters will defend Sweden as Varend’s girls did of yore.”

“Denmark attacks us in the rear.”

“Sweden has more than one Stenbock.”

“On all sides are enemies, envy, faithlessness, deceit, and expectation of Sweden’s fall!”

“The king is coming!”

“Peace, not the king, can save us.”

“Noble gentlemen and governors of the kingdom!” burst out the Finnish messenger, and a hot tear rolled down his manly brown cheek, “when a man fights for life, for his brother’s house, for his daughter’s honor, there is no hesitation. He does not ask where he shall find the weapon to strike and the arm to lift it, he strikes with his clenched fist; he forges, as the Carthaginians did, swords of the hinges of his doors, the iron plates of his hearth and his last plow. The women cut off their hair to be twisted into ropes and the children give their last shirts for bandages. O, noble lords, tomorrow I hasten back to Finland; do not refuse to let me bear back some encouragement, for to fight without hope is to fight with death in the heart. Count Horn, noble, valiant Count Horn; you are, as I am, a Finn by

birth! These other gentlemen and royal councillors are honest, wise, and patriotic men; I beg them to forgive a warrior who speaks for his home and has long since forgotten how to arrange his words as they should be presented before the highest officers of the government; but they can think of Sweden without Finland; we, Count Horn, cannot imagine that; we can live no longer if Finland dies;—save it! save it or we must perish in its ruins!”

Count Horn arose. In spite of his self-control, so often proved, his firm undisturbed bearing, one could yet detect an unusual warmth in his voice. “Sir Count,” said he, “you have spoken like a man, and I am sure that all of us here understand one another. I promise you that so far as it depends upon me everything possible shall be done. More I cannot, more I must not promise. Have you any especial plan?”

“Will your Excellence permit me to establish here in Stockholm a recruiting station for the enlistment of volunteers?”

“Do so, if you can in that way accomplish any good. And as you were just now talking to the people outside, try, my dear Count, to calm their minds. After that I beg you to have the kindness to remain with me this evening; we still have much to ask about.”

Gösta Bertelsköld bowed and retired. When he went, Eva Rhenfelt stood in his way and pressed his hand. “God bless you, Count Gösta, and may your heart’s desire be accomplished!” said she in a voice which drove the blood in flames to the bashful soldier’s cheeks.

A great part of the crowd had already scattered; the flame of the straw had died out, want and anxiety had quickly cooled their enthusiasm. Those who remained contented themselves with the half-way assurance which the councillors had ventured to give;—and by degrees they also separated.

Bertelsköld returned. They talked all the afternoon

about Finland; very little was known about it at Stockholm. In the midst of the conversation the clock struck seven. Count Horn stopped in a half-uttered opinion, and called in his people. The Bible was opened, and all knelt in accordance with the custom of the time, and united in the evening prayer.

When they arose, the noble count resumed his speech where he had left it. "Gentlemen, my colleagues," said he, "let us now consider the letter which has just arrived from his majesty concerning the princess's betrothal."

CHAPTER VII.

THE BOOK OF VICTORIES.

IN those great, violent storms which overthrow empires, sweep away powers, and turn the stream of Time into new channels, there are many thousand sighs breathed out unheard. Kings, marshals, statesmen, stand like rocking topmasts in the ocean's swell; who reckons the unnumbered waves which heave about them, glittering a moment in the declining sun and then sinking down to disappear, forgotten? History notes only masses and points, the sum of the sacrifices, the river of the tears; individuals perish and yet continually survive, the human heart continues to beat with the same stroke in every age.

The day after the occurrence which is described in the foregoing chapter, three such hearts were beating in the confidential twilight of Countess Liewen's cabinet. Parted for many years by the storms of time, all of them bleeding from deep wounds and yet all unconquered by shifting fate, they found each other no longer the same as before in the first bloom of youth, when

life sported before them in rosy hues at the court of the young king, but unchanged in heart, equally noble, equally affectionate, only made stronger by life's trials. An unusual sight—three noble persons who could lay their hands upon their hearts and say to each other that during the past fourteen tempestuous years they had not for an instant failed in their duty, their love, or their remembrance!

Gösta Bertelsköld had, in his task of raising soldiers, been obliged to remain at Stockholm. He had allowed himself to be persuaded to take lodgings with his sister, and was now in some measure restored as to his exterior; the beard was shaved and the uniform necessarily repaired. He had even consented to show himself in the company of ladies,—he who had never ventured to look a woman in the eye since that fateful evening with Aurora Königsmark! Yet it was only his sister, the Countess Liewen, and the friend of their childhood, Eva Falkenberg, now Rhenfelt's widow, who were able for an evening to keep the stubborn soldier with them. They had lured from him some of his adventures,—short, powerful sketches, where oftenest the king, sometimes Horn, Lewenhaupt, or Armfelt, but never himself, played the principal rôle in the story. And they pictured in their turn all the rapture of the victories, all the anguish of the defeats, all the fearful uncertainty which, for months at a time, during these martial events, now enchanted, now tormented, those who remained at home in Sweden.

There was also a painful subject, which all avoided touching upon, until Bertelsköld took his sister's delicate soft hand in his hard grasp, and, looking her heartily and faithfully in the eye, said: "I am to greet you, Ebba, for Erik Falkenberg!"

The countess was silent, and her warm eyes, never far from the source of tears, were moistened by a mist which soon began to drop in clear pearls down her lovely cheeks. She only nodded that she understood him.

“The night before the battle of Pultowa,” continued Bertelsköld, “and a little before midnight, we were both on watch at the same bivouac, and exchanged greetings with each other. ‘If I fall,’ said Erik Falkenberg, ‘greet your sister and tell her that I fell for my king and my country, with her image in my heart to the last.’ The rest you know. He fell the next day at noon, while we were covering the king’s retreat; I had only time to press his hand, for I could not remain there longer.”

Both the ladies melted into tears. Eva Rhenfelt pressed his hand. “My brother’s shade thanks you through me for delivering his message,” said she warmly.

“I could not do it before,” replied Bertelsköld, and unconsciously pressed the hand that was reached to him, so severely that the beautiful Eva winced from pain. Bertelsköld noticed it, and blushed deeply; this was his bad habit now, when a strange fate brought him into ladies’ company.

“You should likewise know, Count Gösta,” said Eva, to compose him, “you should know that your sister mourned my brother for five years, and when a year ago she allowed herself to be persuaded to become Count Liewen’s wife, she did so only on condition that she should retain her weeds whenever etiquette did not peremptorily demand gayer colors. But let us not talk of this. Count Gösta is so dear and so rare a guest, that we must not frighten him away with such sorrowful memories.”

“Dear Eva,” interrupted the countess, “permit me to claim your olden friendship. Call him *you*.”

“If the count has nothing against it,” replied Eva Rhenfelt, and before the tears had had time to leave her long black lashes, the old roguishness lay in wait in the corners of her eyes.

“I?” said Bertelsköld, utterly embarrassed, and

probably wishing that he was a hundred miles away, in the midst of Cossack pikes on Storkyro ice.

"*Allons,*" interrupted the countess; "we will consider that settled. Here are we three, grown up, as it were, from the same root, out of the same times, the same joys and the same sorrows. Let us three play politics for once and form an alliance, offensive and defensive—of course with my husband's consent. No one knows what may come to pass. We may all need a friend to rely upon."

Bertelsköld could not refuse his hand, but he took good care not to press too hard. It seemed to him as if his hand burned when it touched Eva Rhenfelt's. The countess smiled. The happiness of again having her beloved brother quickly dried up the fountain of her tears. "Does my valiant brother know a certain book—*le voici!*" And with this she reached out a little memorandum book elegantly bound in green morocco, and gilt-edged; the leaves showed evident traces of having been frequently opened.

Gösta Bertelsköld opened the book and read on the first page, in Ebba's hand: *The Book of Victories. Gustaf Bertelsköld. Anno 1700.*

This struck a sensitive cord in the Carolin's breast. He laughed and cried at the same time; he fell upon his sister's neck with such vehemence that she, almost choked, drew herself by force out of his arms.

"As several persons in this company may possibly have forgotten the circumstances connected with my little book, I will refresh their memory," continued the countess. "It happened one fine winter day that my hot-headed brother was pleased to throw the page, Gustaf Otto Douglas, down stairs at Drottningholm, because Douglas called the Finnish nobility oxen, since they were not ashamed to talk their vulgar Finnish among themselves in the royal castle. For this exploit my brother was arrested, and when he was

released he chanced to get into a quarrel with Eva Falkenberg, who chided him for showing his manhood on a poor page, and intimated that she doubted how courageous he would show himself against his country's enemies. My new book lay unwritten on the table before him; whereupon Gösta took the book and said, without counting the leaves: 'Miss Eva shall know this, that I will not come back to Stockholm before I have a victory, or at least an honorable encounter, to inscribe on every one of these leaves.' And as he went away the next day, and now, for the first time in fourteen years, has returned to Stockholm, the time has come to examine the leaves, and see if he has kept his word."

"That is true," said Eva Rhenfelt; "the man must show that the boy has kept his word."

Count Gösta began to turn over the leaves of the book. The most of them were already inscribed in Ebba's hand. On the first leaf he read: *Tiberus, July 25th, 1700*. On the second, *Narva, November 20th, 1700*. And so on continuously, leaf after leaf, year after year, victory after victory, till the unfortunate year 1709. Here the entries stopped, and ten or fifteen leaves remained uninscribed.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE UNINSCRIBED LEAF.

"I HAVE no more victories!" exclaimed Gösta Bertelsköld, half in sport, half in sorrow, as he contemplated the blank leaves after 1709.

"'Or an honorable encounter'—so ran the promise!" rejoined his sister, whose kind heart suspected

how much seriousness lay behind the defeated Carolin's smile.

"I accept it," Eva Rhenfelt hastened to say. "I accept it all the sooner since Narva, Duna, Clissow, Holofzin, Warsaw, Thorn, and so many others which fill long pages in books of history, have taken up but a single leaf and a single line in the 'Book of Victories' by Gustaf Adolf Bertelsköld."

"By Charles XII.," said Bertelsköld, by way of correction.

"As you like. Written by the greatest author of this kind of literature of the present age, and perhaps of all ages, but published with the last ducat of the Swedish people. Go on; an encounter now for each remaining page!"

"Very well, I accept the invitation, but with the reservation that the encounter shall not be ended with defeat, and that the honor of arms shall be unflecked."

"I know of defeats that bore with them undying honor, while victory accomplished very little. And besides, when has the Swedish escutcheon ever been stained, whether victory or misfortune was the result?"

"Would that I could answer: Never! But even the brightest shield may be stained sometimes, for we are all mortals, who cannot undo what is done, although we afterward bitterly repent what, in the heat of the battle, we have done amiss. Well, I will write, since I must keep my word. But it is a long time since I last saw pen and ink."

"*Mon ami* cannot deny the evidence of his own eyes," laughed Ebba, for Bertelsköld's first literary achievement was a great blot in the Book of Victories.

"The pot-hooks will be too abominable for this fine paper," answered the embarrassed warrior, but yet continued to write, and had by degrees filled every leaf with a name and a date up to "Pelkäne, October 6, 1713." The last leaf was left unwritten.

Both of the ladies looked at the new contents of the

book—great, stiff letters, printed as if with the point of a sword. “The last leaf,” they both exclaimed at once.

“Empty!”

“And why not Storkyro?”

“We were beaten.”

“But after a valiant defense, after having twice repulsed the enemy and taken six cannons, as you told us yourself—”

“We were beaten, I say.”

“Two thousand Finns fell in the most perfect order, rank by rank, man by man, officers at the head of their companies, under-officers at the head of their files; they fell with honorable wounds without yielding a step from their places, and surrounded by fallen foes. Are you a soldier, Gösta, and refuse to this overthrow a place in the Book of Victories!”

“Fall? Any cart-boy can do that. Fight! Any hireling can do that. But to do one’s duty! We did not do it at Storkyro, and therefore that day cannot be entered in Ebba’s book. Every one of us who outlived that day ought to be court-martialed.”

“But Armfelt, you, all of you excepting the cavalry, fought with unexampled bravery to the very end.”

“Except the cavalry, yes. To whomsoever the fault belonged, it is not our custom to survive such days. It is very simple: A man falls, and there is nothing more to say. For my part I did my best to share the fate of the others, but I could not do that without fighting, and so I chanced to hew my way through. Let us talk no more about it.”

“But what shall we write on the last page!”

“I do not know. Perhaps Eva will give a poor soldier credit till the next time for new victories on interest and secured by his heart’s blood?”

“‘The next time’ is a knave.”

“Then I have no expedient.”

“Unless you give yourself in pawn,” said his sister.

"That would be a surer pledge than your heart's blood, which every hostile bullet has a claim on."

"Eva will not have so poor a pledge, neither is it in my power to give it just now," replied Bertelsköld, and unintentionally broke in two a pair of fine English shears which he took from the sewing-table.

Eva looked out of the window and drummed on the pane Charles XII's March at Narva.

"I know of one means yet," continued the countess, pleased with the embarrassment which she had caused one of the bravest men and one of the most heroic women of the time. "Can you guess it?"

"I am very bad at guessing riddles," replied Gösta. "Let Torsten guess in my place; he understands it better than I do."

"I doubt if Torsten would be of my opinion," smiled Ebba, "and it is therefore better that we three allies guess together. Here is a leaf in the book on which is inscribed: *Vürgen, January 20th, 1702. Mon ami* has perhaps forgotten it. I will remind him that he won a victory which with all reason may pass for two, for with the exception of his Majesty King Charles XII, Gösta Bertelsköld is the only mortal who, at nineteen years, has ever, unconquered, parted with Aurora Königsmark."

"So you mean . . ."

"That we shall write on the last leaf: Balance to credit a victory in 1702. Approved: Eva Rhenfelt, *née* Falkenberg."

"Approved," answered Eva.

"Disallowed," said Bertelsköld.

"What!" exclaimed the countess. "My lord has then deluded us?—was probably overcome in the struggle?"

"No, but . . ."

"Permit me to refresh your memory with a circumstance that will perhaps make it more desirable to have the last page fully inscribed. *Voici*. In the same let-

ter, dated Narva, December 7th, 1700, in which *mon ami* narrates his promise at the time of his departure from Stockholm, it is mentioned further:—And to this, answered Eva Falkenberg, I do not believe it; you may be pleased to club bears. Whereupon I said: What will Miss Eva promise me if it turns out as I have said? And then she said: You may ask me whatever you will; I will deny you nothing. Is that sure? I said. Yes, as sure, said she, as the cock on the top of St. Jacob's church tower; before he crows I will never fail.—There, does Eva Rhenfelt refuse to keep Eva Falkenberg's promise?"

"My hope is placed on St. Jacob's tower," replied Eva, smiling.

"So," said the countess, "if the last page is written in the Book of Victories, the holder of this bond has the right to demand of the widow of the councillor of war, the well-born Madame Eva Rhenfelt, *née* Falkenberg, the obligation of this bond to its full amount, namely: *whatever he will.*"

"I appeal to the oracle on the church tower," resumed Eva in the same tone.

"As the bond is unwritten, the most lawful demand fails," exclaimed Bertelsköld, also in the same tone. "A man makes speedy advancement in the school of such amiable teachers."

"In so remarkable a suit the order of the action must be suspended," continued the countess. "I propose a compromise. The bond shall be cancelled but the creditor shall take in its stead a mortgage on the debtor."

The parties were silent. They both knew that their whole life's happiness was at stake. From his earliest youth Eva Falkenberg's image had grown indelibly into the brave Carolin's heart; this image had been with him in a hundred conflicts, among the dead of the battle field and in the private thoughts of the bivouac; it had guarded him in the presence of innumerable dangers

during his wild, adventurous war-career, and it was this beloved image he had to thank that his lips had never met those of woman, and that to this moment, at thirty-one years of age, he retained the modesty and innocence of the first years of his youth. And she—the widow of an old man of eighty, to whose expiring life she had, out of friendship, devoted two years of self-denial,—with what ecstasy had she listened to these victories, the renown of which filled the world and in which the favorite of her childhood had such an honored part! What a charm had all these extraordinary dangers and adventures for her elevated and noble mind! The older she grew the more plainly she understood that only such a man, a man in the strictest sense of the word, was worthy of her love. And now at twenty-nine years of age, when woman's love is her whole life,—now there stood before her the hero of the legends, modest as herself, equally ardent but equally dumb, and casual words, whichever way they fell, bore a whole future for them both. Therefore, Gösta Bertelsköld was silent. Therefore, Eva Rhenfelt was silent. The spring winds beat with snowy wings upon the window-panes, and within there was a long, long pause, occupied by tempestuous thoughts.

Bertelsköld arose and took his hat. A long farewell awaited them. Ebba Liewen felt it and spoke. "Gösta," said she kindly, "*mon cœur*, your life has hitherto been mere danger and strife; no one dares to doubt your courage. You have hitherto been an exile bleeding away your youth in foreign lands; but your own land needs you at home with us. You must no longer live for honor alone, you must live for us who love you, for your sister and for—her. Do not go away from us; stay in Sweden! Count Horn needs your experience, perhaps also your arm, if the Danes should attack us. Stay with us!"

"Do not speak of it! I understand your goodness,—your friendship; why should not Sweden be dear to me!

But in Finland I was born; Finland is forsaken and in extreme need; to stay with you would be to abandon my birthplace."

"All Finland is overrun with enemies. It is lost and you cannot save it. Stay with us!"

"If it is lost and I cannot save it, I can at least die for it. I must go to Finland."

"Think what unspeakable difficulties await you; I do not say dangers, for them you despise,—but to be hunted like a wild beast in those desolate woods, without honor and without victory, to die of hunger and cold in that devastated land which no longer owns a hut where you can obtain rest and care, when you have in vain poured out your blood in battle! Alas, stay with us!"

"The snow has often been my lodging place and the starry vault of heaven my roof by night. I shall sleep there more calmly when I have done my duty than I could at home with you, in the softest bed."

"At home with us you will find more than rest, more than care:—an activity full of honor! You will find here more than a sister—alas, I do not speak of myself! You will find a heart which has throbbed for you through every fate, a heart as noble and as brave as your own, and one which Sweden's most valiant nobles would envy you. Stay here, Gösta! Away, there await you desolation, solitude, cold, darkness, despair, death; here, prosperity, friendship, light, love, life! Choose!"

"My choice is made. Farewell, Ebba!"

His sister threw herself into his arms. "Eva, Eva!" she cried, "help me to keep him! You can do it, you can do it!"

But Eva Rhenfelt stepped nearer, with high-borne head and eyes flashing with pride. Before any one suspected her intention, she had seized the pen and with a vigorous hand had written on the last page of the Book of Victories:

"Stockholm, March 24th, 1714."

“What have you written?” whispered Ebba. “To-day?”

“To-day.”

“A victory?”

“The greatest!”

“And your promise?”

“That shall be fulfilled, when and how Count Bertelsköld may demand. Go with God, noble, worthy champion of our unfortunate land! Whether you return or not, whether you remember me or forget me, my promise is inscribed on the last page of the Book of Victories!”

CHAPTER IX.

THE LION RETURNS FROM THE CHASE.

THE first day of December, 1714—the day is noteworthy—several of the boldest of the party-men were assembled at Sven Leijonmarck's at Finstaholm, not far from Upsala. Sleighing had come early, and the winter was sharp, as it always was “when the Russians were in motion,” for they were in league with the elements. Round about was heard the howling of wolves in the snow-storm, and the working-men before the great fire whispered to each other that the cry of the wolves meant new human victims out on the ice. Six or eight Finnish fugitives, stretched out before the fire, fainting from weakness, lifted up their heads at this noise and looked at each other in sad dejection. They knew too well that a day seldom went by in these times without their learning that a lonely traveler, sometimes a whole family among the fugitives, chilled and hungry, wandering from farm to farm, from village to vil-

lage, had been torn to pieces by wolves in the desolate winter night.

The gentlemen within did not seem to be in much better spirits. They had, at the customary hour, taken part in the usual evening prayer, which was seldom neglected; but it was with scattered thoughts and anxious minds. Not even Leijonmarck himself, who often asked counsel of the Holy Spirit, received any especial inspiration. He distractedly turned over some sheets of manuscript, lying on the table before him, with the title: "Address of all of the four orders of Finland to the nobility, the clergy, and the citizens of Stockholm."

The occasion of the meeting of these gentlemen was the rumor that the king was on his way back from Turkey. But Rumor had so long and so often lied with a thousand tongues, that no one knew what he ought to believe and what he therefore ought to do. The cautious dean, Molin, was thoughtfully silent; the bold Erik Benzelius ruminated on new plans; the down-cast councillor Gyllencreutz had lost his notes; and Leijonmarck, who was in general a temperate man, sipped oftener than was his custom from the ale-can provided for the entertainment of the company.

While these gentlemen were in such great perplexity, a bell was heard ringing in the court, and soon after Torsten Bertelsköld entered and pleasantly laid aside his elegant sable cloak. The gentlemen crowded around him, asking the news from Stockholm, and it was remarkable to see how wisely they understood what to say, before the answer gave them any indication of what was to follow.

"The count looks as though he brought agreeable news," said Molin. "His majesty probably will soon cheer his faithful subjects by his longed-for return."

"God grant it!" exclaimed Leijonmarck.

"I would give my last dollar to the poor, if we could rely on that with certainty," remarked Gyllencreutz.

"Next to the welfare of the kingdom, must the welfare of the king be our highest wish," said Benzelius, altogether too sincere to feign over-much loyalty just in this uncertainty.

"What news?" they cried in chorus.

"Nothing especial, so far as I know," answered Bertelsköld, rather maliciously, for he was evidently pleased to make a jest of the gentlemen's curiosity.

"But the government must have received the courier, who was expected to arrive yesterday from Stralsund," said Molin.

"He arrived this morning in fact, but was obliged to make a *détour* on account of the Danes."

"And what news did he bring of the king's return?"

"Nothing—excepting that King August had put in motion a whole army of freebooters to capture if possible our gracious king on the way."

A pause ensued, and they looked at each other in some embarrassment. The mere possibility of the king's capture by this most inveterate enemy was sufficient to cause even those most unfriendly to Charles XII to recoil.

"We are honest men," said Benzelius with warmth, "and wish his majesty well, yet no one can take it amiss that we have before us *salutem regni*. You can therefore lay aside all circumlocution. Count Bertelsköld, you have come from Horn and know his suspicions, as well as those of the rest of the council, in this affair. Plainly, what does the council think of it?"

"The council always most submissively thinks exactly what his majesty thinks," replied Bertelsköld. "And as his majesty thinks he will soon stand upon Swedish soil, the council thinks so, too. I presume the gentlemen all think the same."

"Undoubtedly," said Gyllencreutz. "But since here are no facts, only conjectures—what does Count Horn think about it?"

"Gentlemen, I know nothing," and the diplomatic

shrug was very becoming to Count Torsten. "I have not the honor of knowing the conjectures of the council. It is feared that his majesty's journey may be broken off in some disagreeable way. There is reliable information that his majesty left Demotica the twentieth of September at ten o'clock in the morning, and when one knows his majesty's way of traveling . . ."

"It is now the first day of December," said Molin, seriously.

"And the tenth of November in the afternoon, when the courier left Stralsund, not the slightest news of his majesty had been received," added Count Torsten, quite coldly.

"His departure must have been known both to Czar Peter and King August," observed Gyllencreutz.

"And it is probable," said Leijonmarck, "that Belial's prince sent out from Dresden portraits of his majesty on every road where he might possibly pass."

"Unnecessary trouble!" objected Benzelius. "Charles XII's portrait is already found in every cottager's hut in all Europe."

"When one puts everything together," observed Gyllencreutz . . .

"With the king's well-known temerity," added the peace-loving Molin . . .

"And the counsel of the ungodly," put in Leijonmarck . . .

"And Sweden's fate!" exclaimed Benzelius

"So . . ."

"So it is quite probable that his majesty is . . ."

"Captured!"

"No. . . Charles XII will never suffer himself to be taken alive," said Benzelius gloomily. For a time all were perfectly still. The thought of the fall of such a giant paralyzed every tongue.

"Gentlemen," finally said Count Torsten, the only one who had the courage to smile, "a conjecture, *rien de plus!* I have said nothing."

"But considering the general tenor of the circumstances," began Gyllencreutz.

"And with the reservation of all loyal faith and respect," added Molin.

"We must so act," said Benzelius.

"The time has come," said Leijonmarck, boldly. "Saul has fallen upon his own sword, and the Lord must save Israel out of the hands of the Philistines."

"If it has unfortunately happened that the king has fallen," continued Molin, "discretion bids us to be prepared for whatever may come. The council will in such a case call a Riksdag immediately, and I presume the first work would be to make peace as soon as possible and upon any conditions."

Benzelius raged. "The dean goes too far in his eagerness for peace," cried he. "Before we come to that it will be necessary to have a king."

"Or a queen!"

"At all events, freedom!"

"We have sufficiently proved the monarchy, and will have nothing farther to do with Turkish pashaws!"

"They have trampled us under foot!"

"Plundered us, and drawn our blood for foreign phantoms of kings!"

"All for Poland! Nothing for Sweden!"

"Footstool for a Moloch!"

"Victim, slave for a Dschingiskhan!"

"Hecatomb to a Fury!"

"Shall we submit to Ahab's tyranny and Saul's madness?"

"Never! Gentlemen, let us immediately write out a plan for a new form of government!"

"Reinstate the privileges of the orders!"

"Revise the Reduction!"

"Purify the civil service!"

"Reduce the army!"

"Abolish the taxes!"

"Gentlemen, the plan is already written out," burst forth Leijonmarck with eager zeal, and, taking from a secret press thick bundles of papers, he began to read aloud his plan, which he had long before elaborated and which was of essentially the same tendency as that which five years later became the constitution of the government, excepting that it was evidently more radical, showing that he was a man of the future. He was from time to time interrupted by the vociferous applause or disapprobation of the others. The company was in a state of indescribable rapture. Even the clerical gentlemen did not themselves notice how deeply they had peeped into the ale-mug, kept constantly refilled.

Torsten Bertelsköld alone was outwardly cool and calm, but he continued artfully to blow the kindling fire.

They were just debating in the gayest mood the curtailment of the power of the king and the possibility of a republic after the Polish pattern, when a snowy runner entered unannounced and handed Bertelsköld a billet. The seal was Horn's. The master's pupil could not conceal a sudden pallor. All present noticed it, and the noise in the room ceased.

"Gentlemen," said Bertelsköld, in vain trying to regain his usual mocking tone, "our apprehensions were fortunately ungrounded. Count Horn advises me that a new courier arrived two hours later than the former one, bringing the joyful news that his majesty, our most gracious king, the eleventh of November, at one o'clock in the morning, in most excellent health, reached Stralsund."

The gentlemen looked at each other very devoutly. There was an end of new plans of government, an end of revisions, purifications, privileges, of Ahab, Saul, Moloch and Dschingiskhan, an end of the "mice who play when the cat's away." Leijonmarck quite silently smuggled his thick project into the stove; it blazed up

and was consumed! Soon everything kindly adjusted itself to circumstances. The shadow of a great name had struck them with consternation.

CHAPTER X.

THE MEETING AT STRALSUND.

ONE beautiful summer morning near the end of July, 1715, a little Swedish schooner sailed into the harbor at Stralsund. To judge by the broken oars, the riddled sails, and the shrouds hanging loose, the vessel had either encountered a severe storm or had, in the extremest peril, barely escaped from hostile balls. The latter was the fact. Tordenskjöld's and Schested's Danish fleet cruised extensively in these waters, and the attempt to smuggle through in the darkness of the short summer night had well-nigh cost the bold sailor dear. He had undauntedly exchanged shots with two or three Danish frigates, and had finally succeeded, near the shore of Rügen, in reaching shallower water, where the great ships could not follow him. He was now saved, and greeted the fort heartily with a Swedish salutation, as two pillars of smoke, followed by flashes and reports, streamed out of his bow.

A delicate, pale gentleman, dressed in a sable cloak, although the sharp sea-breeze had long since resigned its power to the warmer land-breeze, appeared on the after-deck and looked with a spy-glass into the gaping muzzles of the cannon. He turned about to ask the commander some questions, and a lively surprise pictured itself on his face, usually so cold, as he saw just behind him the slim figure of an uncommonly beautiful

woman, who, with the same curiosity as himself, contemplated the fortifications.

“Do I see aright? Madame Rhenfelt here without my suspecting in what agreeable company I had crossed over from Ystad!” exclaimed the fine gentleman in the sable dress.

“That comes from the fact that Count Torsten kept his stateroom during the whole voyage,” replied Eva Rhenfelt rather spitefully, as she continued looking at the fort. “Not even the affair with the Danes was sufficient to awake the count out of his stoical calm.”

“What would you have a man do, beautiful Eva?” observed Bertelsköld, annoyed, for it was difficult for him to present the true reason, which was not cowardice, but sea-sickness; “to have exposed myself to your brilliant sally and at the same time to the Danish cannon, would have been to put myself between two fires. But allow me to ask what procures Stralsund the good fortune of receiving so formidable a reinforcement within its walls? I wager that Madame Rhenfelt aspires to nothing less than to become Sweden’s Joan of Arc.”

“And what induces the count, for the first time in his life, to take the field against the enemies of his country, and in such an unheard-of manner expose Sweden’s diplomatic future?”

“A small matter, an errand from the council, which has every prospect of success since I have my gracious war councillor as an ally. I shall call his majesty’s attention to the fact that Stralsund is now out of all danger. It is only necessary to use your sallies of wit for palisades about the fort; the Danes and Prussians would undoubtedly impale themselves upon them. . . . *Eh bien*, shall we make peace?”

“When diplomats say peace they mean war. I accept the declaration of war.”

“Hear me, Eva; let us make the enormous sacrifice

of tolerating each other. In spite of all our enmity, I am your friend more than you believe. You are a woman with a head”

“Oh, sir count, you begin to flatter! It is true, your position is critical, you need influence with his majesty, but you should rather turn to some one who can serve you better.”

“Be done with your word-thrusts; you see that I am steeled against them. When I say that you are a woman with a head, I pay you the highest compliment that a man can pay a woman”

“You mistake; he pays a higher compliment who calls her a woman with a heart.”

“Please to hear me through. You are something rarer, you are a woman of character. I pray you, do not interrupt me; why should I flatter you? I know that you hate me. Well, hate me, if it please you, but let us make an alliance, for we can injure each other as enemies, but we can be of advantage to each other as friends. Fate has brought us together on a narrow plank, which might easily be hit by a single ball. The time is limited. I embrace the opportunity and renew my suit for your hand.”

“Although we hate each other?”

“I respect you and you fear me. That is all that is necessary.”

“You are mistaken. I neither fear you nor need you.”

“You are independent and bold: two qualities which will lead you to the highest renown or to a sudden fall, according as you use them. Weigh well your decision, weigh it calmly and wisely, as you can if you will. Weigh it wisely, and you will find that the princess will one day be queen, and by my side you will be capable of everything. But if you bind yourself to the present order of things, which depends on every Danish cannoneer’s ball, and scorn an alliance with me, you will soon seek your country-seat in Småland’s remote

forests, for the world will have forgotten the existence of Eva Rhenfelt."

"Have you done now?"

"Not yet. There is found in you a third quality, which thwarts, as I know, all the decisions of your judgment. You are slightly visionary, my grace; you are in a certain way entitled to be so, for all Swedish people and especially the female portion of them have now for fifteen whole years exalted the same person and the same follies. You see where it has led, and the result will be the same to you. Continue to exalt Charles XII, and you throw aside the reality and the position you have inherited, to chase after dreams and phantoms and air-castles,—an honor which at the last goes in rags, a greatness that would not awe a chambermaid. As for your romantic fancy for my brother . . ."

"By what right, sir count . . .?"

"Be calm, I pray you; I know it is a sensitive string, but it is well to tune the instrument at once, that there may hereafter be no discord in our duet, my grace. Therefore, regarding your little romantic fancy for my brother, I ought to tell you that it does not frighten me in the least. Your inclination is quite natural. Gösta has bravery, and the original in Stralsund casts a little reflection on the copy in Lapland; his achievements no longer find place in any other part of Europe. But *voyez-vous*, if your inclination is possible and comprehensible, his is in a greater degree impossible and incomprehensible. I will wager Drottningholm castle against a Finnish smoke-house that Gösta, ever since he went away, has been so absorbed in contemplating the art of killing Cossacks that he has not had a single minute left for you, beautiful Eva . . ."

"You believe that," said Eva Rhenfelt mockingly, at the same time showing Bertelsköld a letter, in whose superscription, stiff and resembling fire-hooks, he recognized the hand of his brother Gösta.

"It is all the same to me," replied the count,

haughtily. "I have finished now and desire your answer."

In the meantime the schooner had neared the out-works of the harbor and had cleared anchor. The young widow seemed so interested in looking at the fortress that she had no attention left for her neighbor on the deck. Accidentally she let her sachel fall. The gallant Count Torsten took it up and reached it to her without especial thought.

"Give me the contents and you can retain the rest," said Eva Rhenfelt carelessly, and continued her scrutiny of the fortress.

Bertelsköld now for the first time noticed that the sachel was of green morocco and plaited in the form of a basket.* "This is then your answer?" asked he, biting his lips.

"Do you see," continued Madame Rhenfelt, with the spy-glass at her eyes and without appearing to hear him; "do you see the Danish and Prussian mortars throwing bombs into Stralsund? It will be dangerous for you, Count Torsten, to meet them with pen against sword and ink-horn against shield. But it will be more fearful to meet him over there, whose penetrating glance can see through you more easily than you think. You talk continually of your wise calculations. How can you explain by them that this king, who returns defeated, destitute, with scarcely a single follower, with half of Europe against him, and who comes to a kingdom still poorer, still more destitute than himself—how will you explain, that merely the certainty of his return, merely the sight of his blue coat with its yellow belt, as if by enchantment equips every wall with cannons, every sea with fleets;—stamps new armies from the earth, steels every arm, animates every heart, and if it were possible would call the slain themselves from their bloody graves? Two kings beleaguer him here with far su-

* "To give the basket" is a Swedish phrase equivalent to "give the mitten" in America.—TRANSLATOR.

perior forces; according to all calculations Stralsund should have already fallen. Explain to me why everything stands as long as he stands, and all hope as long as he lives; and why does the world, which in every other instance gauges its praise by success, for this single mortal make an exception, and admire him, if possible, more in the days of his adversity than in the days of his good fortune? Count Torsten, you are a subtle reckoner; you add and you subtract only the small figures in humanity and thereby obtain but small results; but you forget that a single large figure can outweigh numberless small ones and change the result beyond all your calculations. Let us be honest; I do not like little souls in great minds, and you, Count Torsten, are without doubt too great a diplomat to further honor so poor a reckoner as I with any attention . . . The anchor has fallen, the die is cast. Your servant, my count!"

"Well, then," exclaimed Torsten Bertelsköld bitterly, "you have said it, arrogant woman, the die is cast; you will play war, and you shall have war,—but it shall be for life and death. Farewell."

CHAPTER XI.

AN AUDIENCE WITH CHARLES XII.

THREE or four days had passed since the secretary of legation, Count Torsten Bertelsköld, sent by the council at Stockholm with an important message to the king, had arrived at Stralsund; and yet he had not succeeded in obtaining an audience. Now his majesty was away at Rügen, now he was engaged in some affair with the enemy, now closeted with Count

Görtz. It seemed as if the king purposely permitted the humiliation of the council in the person of the ambassador, or else that he mistrusted, not without reason, that the messenger in addition to his official commission had private orders from Count Horn to spy out the situation, apprise himself of the king's designs, find out the character of Görtz, and undermine him, who had suddenly grown above the heads of all of them.

Bertelsköld went to General Düker. "Well, what would you have done?" answered Düker, not entirely devoid of ill-nature. "Go with me this afternoon to the intrenchments at Frankenport; there may be some leisure between the bombs. That is the way diplomats usually speak with Charles XII."

In the meantime we leave for a moment the courier and go with Eva Rhenfelt, who has thus far been equally unsuccessful in obtaining an audience. No one of the staff would venture to introduce her; everybody knew that the northern lion regarded beautiful ladies as quite superfluous in a camp or a fortress; and when an Aurora Königsmark had made so conspicuous a failure, the rest of her sex had every prospect of sharing her fate.

Yet there was probably found some one among those about the king, who, more chivalric or less devoid of sentiment than he, had given the handsome widow a hint; for the same day that Bertelsköld visited Düker, Madame Rhenfelt was also seen on foot,—for all the carriages were confiscated for war uses,—walking toward Frankenport. The nearer she approached the walls the louder sounded the din of the hostile bombardment; the wounded were borne on barrows from the outworks, baggage vans blocked up the streets, the wives of citizens returned with empty provision baskets from their husbands on the walls, and everything showed the disturbed and stormy life of a beleagured fortress.

Eva Rhenfelt did not allow herself to be frightened. She passed the gate and pretended not to hear the gate-

keeper's warning not to approach within range of the enemy. Perhaps her woman's heart beat a little harder, when, not far from her, a piece of a shell splintered the wall of a house already shot in pieces, or when fresh traces of blood were seen upon the ground beside her feet; but she went on. Riders galloping in haste met her and signed to her that she must turn about; single sections of troops hastening by her threw themselves on the ground whenever they detected a small smoking stream in the air above their heads. Twice the courageous wanderer had to follow their example; she went down, the flying wonder burst and its fragments showered about her. But she continued her walk without heeding the shouts of warning.

Finally she reached the indicated fortification. It was called Carolus, was mounted with fourteen cannons, and was one of the most important outworks at Frankenport. The Swedish banner of blue and gold fluttered upon its walls, shot to rags, but proud and elevated yet, like the indomitable hero who commanded the fortification.

Trembling, not for the danger, but from the mighty spirit within that defied danger, Eva Rhenfelt entered within the fortification. No one prevented her, no one seemed to notice her. Had any one time for that? The Saxons, who perhaps suspected the king's presence, had the night before opened a new trench and now let about thirty pieces of all calibers play upon Carolus at hardly six to seven hundred paces distance. The fire was such that it could well have affrighted those of stronger nerves than the young widow. Nearly every second a ball bored into the earth-wall and covered those near by with sand, or a cannon in the embrasures was dismounted, or a bomb fell at the side of the wall, exploded and made deep furrows in the sandy ground. Most of the Swedish guns were already dismounted, but new carriages were held in readiness, and seven of the iron mouths were yet in condition to

reply to the enemy's speech. Four or five persons, just shot, whom no one had time to get out of the way, lay there without arms and legs. At least twenty wounded and bleeding sought to slip out of the fortification. Eva noticed them; no one complained, they were only heard to express a fear that the king might meet the same fate. Four men had lifted one of the king's adjutants, just wounded at his side, upon a hand-barrow, and a surgeon had completed the first dressing. No one paid the wounded man any attention. All in the fort, who had arms and legs—and there may have been two or three hundred men—worked so that the sweat ran down their burnt cheeks; carrying balls and powder-boxes, loading, sighting, firing, and repairing those parts of the earth-wall which were continually broken down by the enemy's fire. Add to this that the whole fort was enveloped in thick smoke and the noise was so great that the earth shook, and one can picture to himself the scene that met the courageous woman when she entered Fort Carolus, to attempt to procure an audience which could not be obtained in any less dangerous situation.

Nevertheless she went in. Something stirred deeply her beating heart. Was it the peculiar grandeur of the situation, or was it the proximity of a still stronger spirit which was master of the situation and of her? She did not know, but she felt herself grow to a level with the danger. The circumstances seemed to be entirely appropriate; an audience with Charles XII could not be otherwise.

"Out of the way, woman!" cried the rough voice of an artillerist who hastily pushed before him a hand-cart of powder boxes, and at the same time Eva felt the wheel go over her delicate foot. A cry of pain was about to escape her, but she suppressed it. "Where is the king?" she asked.

"Where else than there by the Saxon brooch?" replied the man. He had not even time to wonder that

there was such a guest in Fort Carolus. By his brogue Eva at once knew him to be a Finn. Finnish soldiers were at that time found everywhere except where they were most needed—in Finland.

The wanderer approached the Saxon brooch; this was the largest cannon in the fort and the one that was most exposed to the enemy's fire, for which reason it had already been twice dismantled. Probably this was also the reason why King Charles had his headquarters by it.

The smoke was so thick that Eva was within seven or eight steps of the king when she saw and recognized him. He stood upon a gun carriage which had been shot in two, leaning with his left arm upon the breast-work and so high that his head and shoulders had no protection against the balls. In his right hand he held a spy-glass, with which he seemed attentively to observe the Saxon batteries opposite. On the parapet below him stood the French ambassador, General Croissy, the favorite Grothusen, his traveling companion from Turkey, Otto Frederick Düring, and also Generals Bassewitz and Dahldorf, all brave men, four of whom fate had determined should not leave Stralsund alive. A little distance from them General Düker was in conversation with Torsten Bertelsköld. The elegant diplomat seemed evidently embarrassed; he was unaccustomed to such audiences.

Eva Rhenfelt, silently and with wonderful courage, waited to be noticed. But no one looked at her. The balls continued their wild sport around her and covered her with sand.

At that moment a whistling shell exploded in the earth-wall so near the king's side that he at once disappeared in a cloud of smoke and dust. The generals started, the diplomats forgot to smile, Eva Rhenfelt experienced a sensation as though a ball had pierced her heart. But the next moment they saw the king step down from the carriage; he had only lost his hat,

"That fellow did not shoot so badly!" exclaimed the king. "Dahldorf, tell the boys there at number two that they are shooting too high. Düring, mount and take some men with you and clear the wheat field to the right; their creeping shooters make us trouble. Wait; it is better that I go myself."

"If your majesty rides out the dogs will take it for a flight," answered Düring craftily, for he regarded it very imprudent to let his master ride into a wheat-field filled with hostile musketeers.

"Then I will remain," said the king, smiling gayly. "I think we will keep on till evening, and repair the walls during the night. Here, some one, see if you can find my hat."

Croissy, French in everything, offered him his, but it was refused with a smile. The hat was found on a projecting part of the breastwork, and two of the nearest artillerymen clambered down the outside to get it. But before they succeeded one of them had a leg shot away and grasped convulsively at the casing that he might not fall. The other, trying to assist him, lost his foothold and fell to the bottom.

The king was displeased. "Help, you man there!" shouted he, as he fixed his eyes on Bertelsköld, who could not endure his look, but, perhaps for the first time in his life, cast down his eyes.

Grothusen and Bassewitz jumped to the breastwork and with the greatest difficulty hauled up the wounded man just as he was about to lose his hold. It was not the custom of Charles XII to spare his favorites any more than himself.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" he asked sharply, after he had finished his short survey of Bertelsköld's person.

The count, naturally bold, had soon regained his countenance and began most humbly to set forth his errand in regard to the impossibility of collecting the new war tax, and a petition for delay in the arbitrary

price of the new copper coin—one of Baron Görtz' gold mines.

The king broke him off short. "I know what you would say. Tell the council with my compliments that the Danes and Saxons question us with iron; we must answer them with steel. Are you not Count Horn's private secretary?"

"I am ordered by the council to serve with his excellence . . ."

"The council orders much that we shall hereafter more carefully inquire into. Your master has become a head higher since we last met."

Bertelsköld was silent. He saw that the well-known storm-boding flush mounted to King Charles' face, and that his upper lip once or twice involuntarily curled. Sufficient reason for a prudent man to be silent. The king turned his back upon him and started to give further orders.

But with this he caught his right spur in Eva Rhenfelt's dress, drew away his foot and tore off a piece of a fold. "What do you want here?" exclaimed he, at the unexpected sight of a lady in black velvet in the midst of powder-smoke and the dead.

Eva Rhenfelt comprehended the importance of this decisive moment, bent a knee quickly and replied: "Your majesty, help for Finland!"

The king started back. "What have you to say to me? Speak!"

"Your majesty, I arraign the council and appeal to your royal grace. The council promised immediately after the disaster at Storkyro to send Finland help, but instead left General Armfelt without support and he was compelled to retreat to Westerbotten. His farthest advance guard is now at Kemi; the whole country is in the hands of the enemy, and only in Kajana castle are the last remains of Finland's defenders maintained. Your majesty, you are great and high-minded; Finland has bled for your royal house and still bleeds in all your

battles. Save Finland! Send it an army, or only send it again its own soldiers, and they will win back for you one of the most precious jewels of your crown!"

With these words a new bomb exploded but a few steps from the speaker; two men were killed at her side, and the blood spattered her black velvet dress. But she did not stir.

Charles XII beheld her almost with admiration. A kind smile passed over his stern lips, he reached her hand and said: "Arise! It gladdens me that a Swedish woman does not fear."

"Who has told you to speak to me of Finland?" he asked again, with a kind look.

"One who had the honor of fighting under your majesty's banner from Narva to Pultowa, and who has sworn to fight to the last for his birth-place—Major Gustaf Bertelsköld, at present in Kajana castle."

"My valiant bear-clubber! Brave fellow! Greet him for me and tell him to hold out as long as he can. If God wills and I live, Finland shall not be given up; only we must first rid ourselves of these Danes and Saxons. For the present we have all that we can do. Farewell. You are not afraid, but return now to the city; it is too rough for you here. Colonel Wolfrath, escort the lady!"

"I shall remind your majesty of his promise," said Eva Rhenfelt, and pressed to her lips the king's hard, unwilling hand.

CHAPTER XII.

A VISIT TO FINLAND IN 1715.

ONE evening in October, 1715, the early twilight had already lowered its curtain over Björkö, in Wasa Archipelago, when a Dutch trading vessel quite cautiously sailed into one of those numberless secret coves which nature seems to have created here as the especial haunt of smugglers. Her sails were blue, that they might form no contrast with the color of the waves; she bore no flag; she fired no signal gun; all was so still on board that, in the twilight, the trader looked more like a sea-eagle which, with black wings outspread, sails along a desolate strand to steal down upon its prey among the cliffs, than like a vessel boldly and gayly entering the longed-for harbor. Equally silent was it on the stony shore of the island grown up with alders; only here and there could be seen a half ruined cottage, and behind its corners a timid human being who with restless curiosity watched the boat, uncertain whether to expect a friend or fear an enemy.

The trader cast anchor as silently as she had come; a boat pushed off from her side and rowed cautiously to the shore near by, after which three or four well-armed men stepped ashore and approached one of the cottages. At their coming there was a stir among the occupants of the cottage; women and old men were seen hastening to the woods, followed by crying children; and those who from age or infirmity were unable to get away in time, sought with anxious haste to hide themselves behind the stones. In vain the newcomers called to them to remain; the fugitives did not stop; a panic of fright had seized them.

The strangers went into the hut ; the fire was still burning on the hearth ; the kettle, with the evening's frugal pudding, black with bark-meal, was still upon the fire ; the torn fish-nets which they were just mending lay spread out on the floor ; the miserable bed was yet warm—probably some invalid had been snatched from his rest ; even the unpainted cradle, with its wretched rags, showed signs of having been quite lately inhabited ; but no living being was seen, excepting that a black cat had leisurely taken a place in the empty bed, and, snarling, crooked her back at the entrance of the unbidden guests.

“Stupid folks !” angrily exclaimed the leader of the sailors, in Dutch. “Stupid folks ! Here a man risks his vessel and his life to help them with a little salt, and they run away to the woods like mad hens.”

“Let us warm ourselves a moment by the fire, captain,” said one of his companions. “They take us for enemies ; that is a proof that no enemies are in the neighborhood. The schooner is safe, and after a while the folks will come back.”

“Mist and mizzen ! Something is stirring under the bed,” exclaimed the captain. “Halloo—out with you, dog or cat ! Out with you !”

With these words he thrust his hand under the bed and drew out a struggling and shrieking figure, which on close inspection was found to be a white-haired boy, quite crazed with fright.

“The devil take the beast !” exclaimed the captain, flinging the boy quickly from him ; “you bite my hand ? Get away, you scalawag !”

In fact, four bleeding wounds in the seaman's hard fist showed that the little savage had defended himself with the only weapon nature had provided. But the captain was a good-natured man, and his wrath did not last till the blood dried. “Hang such folks as these Finnish crabs !” laughed he, wiping his hand on his pitchy coat sleeve. “It must have gone hard in

these days, when even the children learn to bite like cats."

The boy continued his wild cries. "Will you be still, you devilkin!" roared the skipper, laughing again, and he took out a white sea-biscuit of wheat flour and held it before the boy's eyes. "Tell us where your father and mother are and you shall have the biscuit!" he added in a friendly tone, and in Swedish, for the Björkö people are of that tongue.

The boy seized the biscuit with a quick motion and conveyed it to his mouth. He devoured it with his eyes, his lips touched it convulsively; but he did not bite it, he crushed it in pieces between his fingers, saw with dazed eyes the crumbs fall to the floor, but said not a word.

"Plague on such folks!" cried the skipper. "Look at him! I venture that it is a good while since he has eaten pure bread, and yet he lets no fellow bribe him. Hard times, hard times indeed, when folks become so obstinate! Look here, boy! one more biscuit—go out and hunt up your father and mother and tell them that we are good friends, who have come to them with a schooner loaded with salt."

The little fellow went like a rocket out into the open air. The sailor sat down by the fire and undertook to taste the pudding. It was burnt and black, not fit to eat, and had not the least flavor of salt. Among the little stock of food was also found a boiled fowl—one that had been shot with an arrow,—and half of a fresh-water herring cooked on the coals; all without any trace of salt.

"Hard times!" again repeated the sympathizing skipper. "If money were as plenty here as salt is scarce we would do a good business."

A woman peeped slyly in at the door and was soon followed by several others. They gradually convinced themselves that the strangers were peaceable Dutch sailors who in the midst of hostile cruisers had ventured a

tour to the poor North to bring its only indispensable article of import—the only article that makes the Scandinavians and Finns dependent upon foreign countries—the most precious, the most useful and the most wholesome of all seasoning, and the incalculable value of which one can only appreciate when he cannot get it—salt !

The news was hardly known with certainty, before an unusual and gladder stir arose among the intimidated inhabitants of these devastated and plundered islands. Messengers were sent that same evening in boats to the surrounding islands to announce the arrival of the precious merchandise. Within a few hours a mass of several hundred people had assembled, nearly all old men, women and children,—for most of the men of Österbotten as well as of the whole kingdom had either fallen upon the battle-field, fled to Vesterbotten, or had been hewed down by the enemy or carried into captivity. Now, in autumn, a part of the inhabitants of the islands who had fled to Vesterbotten had ventured to return to look after their homes and possibly take up some of their valuables which they had buried in the ground. For from the land side they had now a short period of safety ; the hostile forces, eight thousand dragoons and five thousand Cossacks under General Tschekin and General Bruce, had left their camps in the once rich but now despoiled districts of Wasa and Storkyro, farther north. The galleys, the scourge of the islands, had in October, for the most part, gone south, or had followed the course of the army along the coast in order to be secure from surprise in case they should be frozen in early. The whole neighborhood drew a long breath, and never were the darkness and the storms of autumn as welcome as now ;—what indeed was the raging of the elements in comparison with the misfortunes of war !

All that had life and breath hastened hither to provide themselves with salt ; it had long been bought

and sold as a rarity for which one would give the coat from his back, and a worse condition existed in the interior and the north. Here in the islands it might be measured by quarts and pints; farther up it was measured by gills; still farther up it was sold by spoonfuls, yes, by grains if that were possible; and finally it could not be had for gold. Even here, where the scarcity was not nearly so great, the Hollanders witnessed a scene which awakened both sympathy and laughter. When a few grains of salt were spilt in the measuring, the children threw themselves down and licked the ground. Mothers gave to their infant children these precious grains, which for them had more value than sugar in our days; and the old, who for months had been compelled to do without the longed-for seasoning, thought themselves now rich at once, and in their delight salted fish and fowl, bread and whatever they ate with it, and swallowed it quickly with a grin of satisfaction, as if they would salt themselves for future times when there should again be a scarcity of the precious ware.

The trade began late in the evening and continued all night. No one knew when a hostile galley might put a frightful end to it all. But what a trade! The salt was carried ashore, and although there was no lack of willing buyers, yet these wanted means with which to buy. If there was found a copper coin or a silver dollar it was a rare discovery, lately hunted out of a pile of stones by the shore or from under the roots of a pine in the woods. The story of treasures hidden in the earth has now for more than a hundred years haunted the traditions of the people and lured to the work of digging for treasure those who wished to become rich in haste and without difficulty. When the enemy overran the country in 1714 and everybody fled that could fly—and fled so precipitately that the man who had gone bareheaded to the gate did not return for his hat, and the mother who had gone to the well for water had no

more than time to call to her children to follow her—then much valuable property that could not be taken away was concealed under the first suitable stone or tree, tuft or unplowed ridge, that could serve as a sign for after-recognition. But many, nay the most of those who fled never returned, and of the few who did return many could not afterwards remember the place where, in their haste, they had concealed their property; the trees were cut down or blown over by the winds, the stones which were to serve as marks could not be recognized among hundreds of similar ones, the tufts were overgrown with moss, the ridges had run wild and become overgrown with bushes. On this account it was seldom that small coins and other treasures that were buried were regained, and much has been found by unknown later generations, and much is to this day concealed in the bosom of Finnish soil. But it happened, as has been said, that the hidden was sometimes found, and what could be found was now brought out to buy the Hollander's salt. A few of the islanders had had the good fortune to smuggle fish or tar to Vesterbotten and in that way had obtained small sums which were now used. But the most had nothing but dried fish; only those from the mainland had fox-skins, squirrel-skins and bears' hides to exchange for the salt, and the Hollanders were altogether too good merchants not to accept these wares at the least possible price.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HOLLANDERS IN ÖSTERBOTTEN—1715.

TWO days and two nights the Dutch trader continued to retail salt to the dwellers on Björkö. The report had spread far along the coast, and boat after boat pushed out in the darkness of the night to procure the precious goods. What could not be carried away was buried in cellars, and wells with double bottoms, or concealed in barns and outhouses. It would have been a profitable business to the Hollanders if the poverty had not been so great. Their vessel presented a strange appearance. Furs of all kinds, grain, pitch, tar, hand-sawed boards, wool, flax, cloths, even woolen skirts and home-spun jackets, had been taken in exchange for salt and were stowed away as well as could readily be done with such a miscellaneous collection. And yet here, in one of the naturally richest districts of Finland's coast, scarcely half the cargo of the indispensable and ardently wished for commodity could be sold.

Among the Hollanders there were two passengers who took no part in the business, but time and again went ashore and questioned now this Finn and now that one concerning the condition of the country. One of them, a slim youth with his hat drawn down over his fine face, often turned with an impatient, inquiring look to the other, a strong-limbed, gray-haired man, who, as if in answer to the inquiring glances, shook his head with the respectful familiarity of an old servant and answered: "Not yet! not yet!"

Among the salt-buyers was an elderly peasant, accompanied by two boys about fourteen and sixteen years of age. His tall figure and his more distinguished

appearance as compared with the multitude of the crowd of poor people about him seemed to attract the attention of the young stranger, and in good Swedish he inquired his name.

"Lars Larsson Bertila from Storkyro," was the short answer in Finnish, which the servant at once interpreted to his master.

"Are the boys your sons?" asked the stranger.

"Two left of eight," answered the man bluntly, and turned around to lift another salt sack into his boat at the side of the vessel.

"Bertila? Bertila?" repeated the stranger thoughtfully, as if the name was not wholly unknown to him. "That was the name, if I remember aright, of the family seat of the present noble house of Bertelsköld."

The man looked up but did not reply.

"Perhaps you know a person by that name—Major Gustaf Bertelsköld?"

A dark flush covered the peasant's brown cheeks, and it was a moment before he answered: "I must indeed remember the man who cost me six sons, all good and true men of six feet and two inches, with iron in their arms and hearts in their breasts."

"Poor father!" said the stranger sympathizingly. "If anything can mitigate your loss, it is that your sons fell for king and fatherland under the leadership of a brave man."

Bertila again remained silent. The pain was too bitter to permit him, like Thomas Hane, to bless his honorable lot in having sacrificed six sons to his country.

"My good man," said the stranger again, "if you can procure me a safe guide through the forests in the interior of the country to Kajana castle, I will richly reward the service."

The peasant smiled sadly, almost with pity. "Everything that can, flees from this land which the scourge of the Master punishes; far around there is nothing to

see but blood, ashes and misery; the wild beasts of the forest roam about in many of the formerly rich villages and men seek out their lodges in the woods. Every road and path swarms with enemies; for all the gold in the world you could hardly buy a shelter for your head or bread for your hunger; and you wish to go to Kajana castle! You are young, sir, young and inexperienced; listen to the advice of an old man who pities your fair, beardless cheeks. Turn back to the place you came from; you have perhaps a mother there who every evening fixes the pillow under your head, or a sister who combs your black hair, or a bride who gently strokes your rosy cheeks, or perhaps an old father that will one day weep when he hears that you have been nailed fast to the stem of a Finnish fir, or bound to the pommel of an enemy's saddle and forced to run bare-footed in the snow till you gave up the ghost. Turn back, young man; there is yet time. If you seek death, seek him in gentler form on some battle-field; here there is no longer found a battle-field, only unknown martyrs and forgotten graves. Go! What do you look for here? Here is worse than death, here is despair!"

Saying this the old man jumped into his boat at the schooner's side, waved a mute farewell, and was soon lost to sight behind a projecting point. Sadly the stranger saw him disappear. "What is to be done?" said he, hesitatingly to himself.

"Go with the Hollander," said the voice of his servant behind him. "This is no place to go ashore; the coast is blocked up with enemies, and the woods, at this time of year, are impassable. The Hollander has decided to-day to go farther north, as he has not been able to sell more than half his cargo. We must go with him."

"You are right, Tobias," answered the stranger. "We must make the attempt farther north."

And, in fact, the Hollander sailed away the follow-

ing night, and continued his adventurous journey farther northward. It was known that the principal strength of the enemy was now stationed in and around Gamla-Carleby, whither the galley-fleet had also gone in order to maintain connection with the land forces. The bold sailor therefore held near the Swedish shore till he had passed the roadstead of plundered Ny-Carleby, burnt Jakobstad, and the headquarters at Gamla-Carleby. But, reaching the height of Kalajoki, he again approached the Finnish coast, and farther north made a cautious attempt to find out beforehand if he might venture to lay to. For that purpose he made towards some fugitives sailing by ; their fear was so great that they threw overboard their valuables that they might the more easily get away. The Hollander was not a bad fellow ; he began by swearing at the "dumb asses," and finished by blessing the "poor devils." The slim stranger and his Tobias acted as interpreters. And "not yet" was again the dry answer from Tobias's lips.

"We knew," said the fugitives, "that the enemy, thirteen thousand strong, was in camp at Gamla-Carleby, on the land belonging to the city and the church. But as he made no show of going farther, and we had a strong post in Siikajoki to keep off marauders, at the end of August both priests and peasants, who had before fled to Kemi, returned. The crop sowed in 1714 was ripe in the fields ; every kernel of rye was a treasure, and who would not harvest what could be harvested ? There was no time to reap, we cut with the scythe ; there was no time to thresh, the bundles were laid on the straw-wagons and whoever had a horse drove north, but mostly men and their wives drew the loads and the children pushed, and the littlest ones were laid on the straw. Many also hunted up what they had hidden and were not able to take away at the last flight ; and so there were seen again endless rows of wagon after wagon on the highways moving

northward. Those who were along the year before now saw again the same pitiful sight as when the enemy's galleys landed at Ny-Carleby Åminne in the rear and the Cossacks mined the road in front. A single cry from the last in the row would frighten at least a hundred driving before him ; grain and goods and clothes were thrown away on the road ; if there was a horse on the wagon he was unhitched, and those who could, mounted and rode away ; if a wheel broke there was no time to mend it, and everything had to be left in the lurch. The husband came seeking his wife ; the mother sought her children, the children their mother, bewildered in the great hastening crowd. At last the danger came in earnest. The garrison at Siikajoki, mere peasants, had no better commander than an old painter and a drunken under-officer. They did not understand how to post their sentries, and allowed themselves to be surprised. Mannstein and Tscherkasnikoff attacked them with cavalry and in a moment scattered the whole post, after which they set off in haste towards Limingo and Uleåborg and fell upon the rear of the fugitives. What happened afterwards is easier thought than said. Many priests and gentlemen were captured and sent to Åbo, but the people who remained fled to the woods, and," said the fugitives in conclusion, "the whole country between Siikajoki and Uleåborg is an uninhabited desert."

The Hollander frowned and went on. Nothing could be made here.

Off Uleåborg he exchanged shots with a Russian galley which was, even in Autumn, out to intercept fugitives. The light sailing-vessel made use of its advantage over the heavy oared galley, gave him in passing a few well-directed balls fore and aft, and continued its dangerous journey in unknown waters where even better sailing charts than those then in use, in twenty years became useless on account of upheavals of the land and consequent shallow waters.

Finally, one of the last days of October, the trader anchored at the mouth of Finland's largest river, the mighty Kemi, and began a profitable traffic with the inhabitants. At Kemi lay the farthest outpost of the Swedish and Finnish army, a division of four or five hundred men under Colonel Boije, supported by about an equal number of drafted militia. The tract was therefore for the moment safe, and as it had hitherto suffered less by the war, so that *only* half of the population was killed or scattered, and *only* three-fourths perhaps of the wealth had been swallowed up in war-taxes and the disasters of later years, the salt found the desired demand, and could in some slight degree be paid for in ringing coin. Especially did the Hollanders greedily receive the heavy stamped copper blocks which for a time, like Sparta's iron coin, circulated in trade in place of gold and silver, and which, having been superseded by coin below the standard, were in many places concealed in the earth, to be dug up a hundred years after and wrought into Finnish coffee boilers.

The stranger questioned Tobias, who, after having counseled with well-informed persons, finally answered: "The attempt can be made now;" after which both the master and the servant, provided with guides, set out on the hazardous journey to Finland's only remaining fortified point, little Kajana Castle.

CHAPTER XIV.

KAJANA CASTLE.

FRIENDLY listener, you who yet remember the former days when the haughty historian and a beautiful German princess sighed within the walls of Kajana Castle, accompany us once more to the far north, to the gray walls above Ämmä's roaring falls. It is winter now as then ; the drift lies white upon the branches of the pines, and the ice feebly stretches its farthest corner out towards the reeking falls which it has not power to enclose in its embrace of steel. But the region about the castle is not as solitary as before. The little city at its side swarms with military ; every hut and cabin in the vicinity is filled with gray coats, and since these were not sufficient to hold a whole army, long barracks have been built on the bank of the river, and then, not having room for the constantly increasing multitude, snow huts have been thrown up, furnished inside with bast mats and provided with doors and small windows filled with canvas instead of glass panes.

The Russian army, under General Tschekin, beleaguered Finland's only remaining fortress, Kajana Castle. A great change was going on in this improvised camp, for although four thousand men marched thither in the beginning of December, 1715, at the beginning of January of the following year the greater part of them had already disappeared from the earth. But it was not the sword and balls of the defenders that had mowed them down like straw before the scythe of the harvester ; it was Egypt's angel of death which of old destroyed Sennacherib's army, and which, now in the form

of a destructive camp fever, snatched away hundreds and thousands of the beleaguering army. Two of the largest barracks were turned into hospitals; new patients constantly poured in; others were constantly carried away, those who had fought out their battle and found rest under northern snows. So terrible was the fatality that, in January, when three thousand fresh troops had reached the camp, the number of men fit for duty soon became even less than when the siege first began a month before.

Yet the strength of the enemy was colossal in comparison with that of the besieged. Major Fieandt defended the castle with fifty invalids—lame, palsied, one-eyed remains of the Finnish army—reinforced by a few partisans, known by the mysterious and frightful name of "*sissar*," all of them desperate men clad in rags, accustomed to fight for weeks and months without a roof over their heads, and with no other food than bark-bread, squirrels killed with arrows, and horses that had died a natural death. These defended themselves with a heroism worthy of the Carolins' most brilliant achievements in this desperate time. They repulsed storm after storm, they made sallies by night, not hoping for any decisive success but that from the enemy's stock of provisions and ammunition they might add something to the slender resources of the castle. They fought night and day without hope of assistance, separated from the nearest Swedish forces by two hundred miles of wilderness;—they fought for a lost country, whose whole broad territory, even to the remotest corner, was overrun with enemies, without hope of deliverance; forsaken by the king for whom they had bled; forgotten by the world, which, with admiration and sympathy, beheld farther south the other champions in the great death-struggle of the Carolins; exposed to hunger, cold and sickness, and hearing every day the wail of the fugitives in the narrow arches of the castle. And they did not waver, did

not murmur, did not complain. Every morning and evening prayers were held under the central arch, and the priest Cajanus of Peldamo, who, with all his family, had taken refuge in the castle, with the immovable courage which true piety gives, urged the men to be steadfast even unto death. And when they counted over their thinned ranks and found now one and now another disqualified for the conflict by wounds or by disease, these enervated, ragged, powder-blackened beings would voluntarily fill up the breaches; they slept an hour less, they worked an hour longer, they bled a little more than before, they multiplied themselves, they were everywhere;—and the enemy saw with astonishment that the number of the garrison rather increased than diminished. Traveler, you who on a northern summer day tramp over the ruins of the fallen Kajana Castle, go not indifferently by these walls; take off your hat in the presence of the shadows which walk again among these ruins, for there was a time when this little spot was all that remained to Finland, and brave Finnish men bled here for their fatherland!

All the bravery of the defenders would nevertheless have availed them little, had the enemy been in condition to bring with them heavy artillery. Fortunately this was impossible. They kept up the fire with small field-guns and grenades, which could not accomplish anything against the firm walls; and the castle, whose artillery was in a still more deplorable condition, answered the cannonade with a well-directed and carefully spared fire of musketry. In addition, arrows were used on both sides; the Calmucks and other irregular troops were, at that time, only in exceptional cases provided with fire-arms, and the Finns oftentimes seized their bows to save their powder. It was the last days of ancient archery; for after the great war cross-bows went entirely out of use, and are only at times found again in the earth or in worn-out repositories,

often beautifully inlaid with ornaments of bone and provided with a steel bow which centuries have corroded and which arms of the present day are powerless to draw.

In one of the castle chambers, the little grated window of which looked toward Ämmä, there lay a tall young man, enfeebled by severe wounds, and unable to raise himself from the beggarly bed. His beard had grown long; his eyes were sunken; his sinewy arm, now powerless, rested on the edge of the bed and held mechanically a doll which a little girl had just handed him. The Cajanus family lived in the adjoining room, and the wounded man shortened the time by looking at the children's playthings. It was characteristic of the times that even the doil had a sword belt and a wooden sword modeled after reality. The little girls themselves played war, and the very infants had become so accustomed to the roar of cannon and the clattering of balls against the castle walls that they were no longer put to sleep with any other cradle-song.

The wounded soldier was Gösta Bertelsköld. It was evening. A young man entered, sat down on the edge of the bed and looked at the wounded man with affectionate devotion. To judge by his immature and childlike features, the new-comer had hardly attained the years of youth; and, in fact, he was only twelve or thirteen years old. But in height he was already the equal of Bertelsköld, who measured almost seven feet. This young giant, who afterward grew to a height of eight feet and four inches, was Daniel Cajanus, grandson of the priest Johan Cajanus, of the noble family of Gyllenhjerta.

"There will be a raid to-night," said this peculiar boy with a pleasant smile; "now we will get the major a drop of wine. Besides, the wood is out, and since we have had a taste of those Russian loaves, the ammunition bread with bark in it is not to our liking."

"Will it take you far to-night?" asked Bertelsköld.

“I do not know, but they say there are ‘*sissar*’ at Manamansalo ; we must go as far as we can in that direction, and a mine is prepared to be sprung behind us when we come back. It was fortunate that we took those three loads of powder the last time we were out ; we have now enough to blow the whole castle into the air.”

“That will be the best we can do at the last; do you not think so, Daniel?” said the wounded champion with a sad smile.

“I shall not jump into the Ämmä on account of that,” said the boy proudly. “All the gates wide open, thousands of enemies upon us, and if no one else wants to go with the match to the powder-room, I will do it. But good-bye now, Major ; do not lie awake to listen to the shooting, it will go well enough, and before day dawns I will bring you a bottle of good wine—if I live so long.”

Evening went. Night came. At midnight, when the moon had gone into a thick snow-cloud, an alarm was heard on the west side of the castle, in the direction from which the eternal roar of the Ämmä was heard in the silence of the northern winter night. The wounded champion could not sleep ; he listened with accustomed ear to every shot, to every clash of arms that might disclose which way the fight was turning. But these indications were altogether insufficient. He became conscious of a light in the adjoining room. The sally was of the boldest character, and no one in the castle was asleep that night, except the little children who had no suspicion of the danger. More than half the garrison had gone out ; an army of about thirty men against three or four thousand. The rest kept watch, every arm by the match, every hand upon the trigger. Even the women stood at their posts ready to touch off the guns ; and the children, who had their appointed places to bring forward the powder and balls, were encouraged with the dainty hope of being

rewarded with a cup of milk from the five or six cows still found alive in the castle. But the enemy did not attack, either because he feared an ambush or because he considered his booty certain without further waste of life. Yet a confused uproar indicated that all the enemy's camp was in commotion. Finally, after five or six long hours, the clash of arms was heard close beside the walls and the gate on the north side was opened to receive the returning men. Bertelsköld listened. By the shots and the noise he could guess that it was with the greatest difficulty and by the hardest fighting that they succeeded in returning to the castle. How willingly would that wounded Carolin have given his left arm to have been able to fight in their ranks with his right !

Notwithstanding his room looked towards the south, the first streaks of the January morning had not dawned when the young giant burst in, bearing in his hand a little earthen bottle. "Drink, Major, drink !" he cried, "it will do you good !" and with these words he sank down fainting by the warrior's bed.

The women hastened in and brought him to his senses again. Bertelsköld gratefully pressed his hand. "This has cost more than a drop of wine is worth," said he, much affected.

"Do not trouble yourself about me," said the boy, who was bleeding from several slight wounds, but who had fainted from over exertion rather than from loss of blood. "I have done my work ; I have struck to the ground five or six ; that amounts to nothing. But I have met the '*sissar*' and helped them to cut their way hither. We went forward even to the ice of Oulujärvi and blew the horn till it echoed in Hiisi castle. We have taken wood, but no provisions. On our return we had half of the enemy's strength upon us. Not one of us would have returned, if the Ämmä had not helped us by cutting under the ice, so that it broke beneath the enemy and drew at least a hundred into

the deep. But the victory cost us dear—too dear, Major, for half our men fell or were captured. I do not know whether fifteen or twenty of us succeeded in reaching the gate. But we brought with us ten fresh partisans, and, among them, one who immediately enquired for you.”

“Brave boys!” exclaimed Bertelsköld. “Who is it, that still remembers I am in the world?”

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE LAND OF THE AMAZONS.

“**W**HO is it, that remembers you?” repeated Daniel. “Do I know that? It is a plump little fop, a gentleman who would have room enough in one of my jacket pockets!” And the giant-boy laughed contemptuously, with the superiority of strength.

As he said this, a youth was seen at the door, on whom faintly shone the light of a couple of pine logs, which crackled in the open fire-place; for tallow candles were an unknown luxury at Kajana Castle in these straitened times. The new-comer was slim in figure, and was dressed in an expensive fur coat; a broad-brimmed hat, which he did not lay aside on entering, concealed his face so that one could only distinguish a beardless chin and a pair of pale cheeks somewhat sooty with the powder-smoke of the late engagement.

A silence ensued. A strange emotion possessed Bertelsköld. “Go, Daniel, go my friend!” said the major. “The young gentleman may have something private to tell me.”

Daniel went with a displeased side-glance at the

strange guest. With the quick instinct of a child of nature, he seemed to suspect in the new-comer a competitor who might crowd him out of his undisputed place as the major's acknowledged favorite.

A new silence ensued, which neither seemed inclined to break. Finally, Bertelsköld half arose and said: "Young man, you might have chosen a better shelter than this. But you are, it may be, a fugitive from some place that has been burned?"

"The whole kingdom is like a burnt manor," said the stranger, in a melodious voice, which drove the blood to Bertelsköld's pale cheeks. "One seeks his friends where they may be found; one place is as good as another."

The wounded man wandered; his head sank down on his hard pillow of straw. Delirious words escaped his lips. "My horse!" cried he, "my horse! Hew in, boys, hew in! They are carrying her away, and we must save her!"

In an instant the stranger was at his side, smoothed his pillow, and laid his delicate white hand on the major's high-arched brow. But the wounded man continued: "Ride, Daniel, ride! Loose the reins, put the spurs in! We must find her if it costs our lives; but see to it, child, that you do not ride across the peasants' fields. We must save our own land! Ride, Daniel, ride . . . not that way . . . that road goes to Pultowa and Storkyro . . . hither, here is Narva . . . here!"

Daniel heard the cry, hastened in and seized the stranger firmly by the arm. "Stop your witchcraft with the major," he cried, "or I will throw you over the wall to play leap-frog with the enemy! That is all you are fit for."

"Daniel! Daniel! they are looking for you! the enemy is getting ready to storm the castle!" was shouted from without.

"Look after him and see that he does not enchant

my major!" shrieked Daniel, and hastened out. No one had any time for Bertelsköld.

The stranger blew a little whistle, and old Tobias entered. The reader has probably already recognized in the new-comer the young passenger on the Dutch schooner engaged in the salt speculation.

Tobias, an old man of few words, with a peculiar Björneborg brogue, made an examination of the major's wounds and shook his head. "Are they dangerous?" asked the young man anxiously.

"Might be," answered the old man dryly. "These Lapland doctors think lectures are sufficient to stop blood."

"Use your herbs then, and if you succeed in saving him, you may select the best farm in your parish and I will buy it for you."

Tobias nodded; he considered it unnecessary to waste words on so plain a matter, and in a moment the wounds, which consisted of four or five pike stabs and as many saber cuts across the breast and arms, were dressed anew, and by a skillful hand. Then he gave the wounded man a drink of herbs which he carried with him in a little bag. The delirium ceased. Bertelsköld fell asleep, and slept quietly for twelve full hours, while the battle raged about the walls, and the garrison with the utmost exertion drove back the storming party.

It was already evening, when he wakened quietly, and with a pleasant feeling of new-born strength. Tobias had gone out to relieve a tired guard on the walls; the elegant youth sat by the bedside, and could not restrain a quiet exclamation of joy. The firelight from the chimney now fell more clearly on his face, and it was no longer smirched with powder. Bertelsköld looked at him in perfect silence; one could see by his look that he was uncertain if what he saw before him was not the figure of a beautiful dream.

"Are you better now?" asked the stranger. "No,

you must not look at me so strangely," added he, when the flush again mounted to the wounded man's cheek. "I must, in fact, be deceived in thinking that I was not recognized at first,—but I forgive you on condition that you now recognize me and obediently comply with my demands."

With these words the stranger laid aside the broad-brimmed hat, which, until now, he had kept on his head; and Bertelsköld instantly recognized the beautiful, proud and resolute features of Eva Rhenfelt, born Falkenberg. Only the long black hair was gone, clipped short in the neck that it might not betray its owner.

"But is it not a dream?" exclaimed the major, and suspecting the extent of his loved one's sacrifice, a single clear tear trickled from his manly eye.

"Quiet, my lord; no excitement; I shall have to answer for it to your new doctor. Promise to listen like a good child, and I will tell you a story. I received your letter last summer, in which you besought me to set every spring in motion to procure help for Finland. What is the use of going to the council, I thought; the council has already promised more than it can perform. I sought out the king at Stralsund; it was not easy, you may believe, but I saw him"

"You saw him, Eva?"

"Be calm. I saw him and talked with him too. He remembered you well"

"Ah, he remembered me yet!"

"Be quiet! If you regard me as a dream you will force me to disappear. He spoke of you with respect. A brave man! said he—take notice, it means something when King Charles says that! Well, I will not make you too proud. Regarding the aid I asked for Finland, the king promised that he would not forget it, when he had first got the Prussians, the Saxons and the Danes off his neck. You must hold out, he said, as long as you can. . . ."

Bertelsköld smiled. "When King Charles says 'as long as you can,' it means as long as I have a barrel of powder left with which to blow myself and the castle into the air. It is well to know it; I have long been of the same mind."

"No, that cannot be the king's intention," resumed Eva, amazed; "I am certain that he would rather use your arm where it can be of the most service to the country. Well, I returned to Stockholm, then to Småland. I sought country quiet upon my estate there. In vain; the thought of you, of your peril and self-denial, pursued me night and day and chased sleep from my eyes. Not in a condition to bear arms for my fatherland, what had I to live for if not for you! I could not endure it any longer, I must seek you out to die with you if that must be; live without you—I can do it no longer! I found among the Finnish fugitives an old man who had the courage to accompany me; I sacrificed my long hair for you, since I could not, like the Carthaginian women, offer it to fatherland. I would go over to Finland, but how? I went on board a Dutch vessel; we landed, now here, now there, to trade in salt; impossible to find a safe point before we were far north, in Kemi! There I left the Hollander, to press forward through the desolated land to you. More than three long months have I wandered about in the wilderness to find the way hither; Gösta, you need not blush for me, I too am familiar with strife and hunger and thirst. What a life with these partisans, these Sissars and Kivekäts, who live like robbers in the most impenetrable recesses of the forest, and suddenly break forth on their snow-shoes to surprise a hostile transport, capture a post, or cut off a marauding party, and then vanish like the mist into their inaccessible hiding places! All my gold was spent, and I had lost all hope of ever finding you, when I finally met a party that succeeded in reaching

the ice of Uleå lake and thence during a nocturnal raid came to Kajana Castle!"

"Eva," said Bertelsköld, with much feeling, "do you know that you are now in the land of the Amazons, who, according to Messenius and Rudbeck, had their kingdom and their ancestors here in Kajana? What one of them all could compare with you in courage!"

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW FINLAND'S LAST FORTRESS FELL.

IT was a bitter cold morning in January, 1716. The commandant at Kajana Castle, Major Fieandt, had called a council of war in the middle archway. Do not imagine a brilliant staff in decorated uniforms. It was the garrison of the castle, or as many of them as were not for the moment needed on the walls. What an assemblage! About twenty starved and ragged figures, chilled through, tired to death, and still bleeding, after having with the courage of desperation repulsed the last storm, which had continued nearly all night. All the provisions of the castle and all its stock of wood were exhausted. They had slaughtered the last cow, they had cut to pieces the last bench; yes, they had even taken the children's beds to keep up the fire. It was so cold that their breath mounted like smoke from their lips and their hands stuck to the barrels of their muskets.

Under these circumstances the enemy had demanded of them to surrender at discretion. The commandant considered himself under obligation to advise the garrison of this, but it was plain from his look that

he did it less for the sake of asking advice than as a merited tribute of respect to brave men who had dearly bought the honor of saying what their fate should be.

One of the partisans who had lately arrived, arose and counseled the acceptance of the enemy's proposal. He had brought with him sad tidings from the west. The Finnish post at Kemi had, just before Christmas, been attacked and blown up. As a punishment to the peasants for their defence, and since the province of Österbotten would not take the oath of allegiance, strict orders had been issued to lay waste all the region lying south of Kemi and to carry away the children and youth into captivity. On account of the deep snow it was difficult to execute this order in the wooded tracts, but a beginning had been made in Limingo, where there were no woods, and farther down at Ypperby in Pyhäjoki. A longer resistance would draw down upon the district about Kajana the same fate. He, the speaker, cared no more for his life than for a wad already shot away, but he did not wish to have the destruction of thousands on his conscience.

"What is the major's opinion?" enquired Fieandt of Bertelsköld, who, somewhat strengthened by medicine and rest, was present at the council.

"My opinion," said the wounded man, "is that we must do our duty. The king has sent us word *to hold out as long as we can*, and every one of us knows what that means. Have we powder?"

"That is the only thing we have," answered Fieandt with a shrug.

"Then I think," said Bertelsköld, "that brave Carolins will not puzzle over unnecessary words. We will let them storm once more, we will barricade the middle vault, and when the castle is filled with the enemy we will blow ourselves and them into the air."

"Exactly so," responded Fieandt, coldly. "That is also my opinion. Is there any one else who has anything to propose?"

"I have," answered the priest Cajanus. "In the castle there are, besides the wounded, more than seventy women and children. I propose that we first send them out of the castle; not to General Tschekin, but to Colonel Mannstein. I know him; he is kind and humane; he will spare them. I will remain with you; before the torch is applied to the powder vault, we will partake of the Lord's Supper."

A murmur arose among those present. "Why should we send out our women to dishonor and our children to slavery? Rather let them all die with us."

Eva Rhenfelt, still in her male attire, had stolen out on hearing the priest's proposition, and now returned with new members of the council. They were the women and children—a sight that can be imagined, not described. A mere glance at these innocent beings, now faint and exhausted by weeping, drew tears to the eyes of the austere warriors. "Surrender! surrender!" cried the mothers, as they sought with their cold bosoms to warm their stiffened darlings.

"Away with the women! Away with the children! Unlucky was the day when I permitted them to seek refuge in the castle?" exclaimed Fieandt.

But they did not go. They clung fast to the men's garments, and continued without cessation the heart-rending prayer, "Surrender! surrender! We will not be sent over to the enemy. We would rather die here with you!"

"Away with you!" ordered the commandant, in the same harsh tone, and turned away that no one might see the traitorous tear in the corner of his eye.

"Do you hear that? Do you hear that?" screamed one of the mothers, beside herself with rage. "Away with us! Do you know why he says that? Yes, because he has twice run away from the enemy. He knows that he has no mercy to expect himself, and so he will drag us all to destruction."

Fieandt turned pale. He had not thought of that.

He, the spotless hero, would be charged with having offered innocent blood to his own despair. "What is that you say, crazy woman?" he cried.

An indescribable commotion arose among the noisy crowd. "Powder! Powder, and no tears!" was Bertelsköld's word. At the same time his eye fell upon the slender youth with the dark hair and the flashing eyes. "What is your opinion?" he whispered, embarrassed and unable to endure the loved one's look.

"I desire nothing for myself, nothing even for you!" whispered Eva in return. "But think of these unfortunate people. A surrender in extreme need and upon honorable terms never yet stained a soldier's reputation."

The priest Cajanus heard these words. "I propose," said he, "to spring the powder-vault, provided they offer us nothing better than unconditional surrender. But if they will allow us free exit, the soldiers to retain their arms and the rest their own personal effects, we might surrender."

"Women and priests!" exclaimed the commandant, bitterly. "The king did not put me in possession of Finland's last fortress that I might give it away."

"Powder! Powder!" repeated Bertelsköld.

"He has also run away from the enemy!" burst out the despairing mother. "Wo, wo unto these military gentlemen! They will drag us with them. Our blood be upon them!"

"Do you hear that?" whispered the youth in Bertelsköld's ear.

"Bread! Bread!" cried the children, and their little lips were blue with cold and their teeth chattered.

"Come," said Fieandt to Bertelsköld, sadly. "I cannot stand it any longer. Let us commend our souls to God, and blow ourselves all into eternity. Seven barrels of powder are below. It is a second's work. Come!"

Bertelsköld followed. But the giant boy, Daniel

Cajanus, placed himself in their way. "Give me the match," whispered he, boldly, "and I promise not to miss fire. But not before my mother and my brothers and sisters are out of the castle."

"Do you dare to interfere?" burst out Fieandt, in exasperation. "Out of the way, boy!"

"Not a step before my mother and my brothers and sisters are beyond the gates!" continued the boy, in the same tone, and blocked the door with his immense frame.

Fieandt drew his sword. His arm was always swifter than his tongue. All would have been over with Peldamo's giant if Bertelsköld had not stayed the uplifted arm.

"Let us make a sally from the south gate!" he whispered. "That will be better. During the time the boy can slip the women out through the north gate, and afterwards keep his promise with the powder-room."

"Let it be so," said Fieandt. "There are not twenty of us that can draw a sword, but quite enough to fall in good company."

Just then the report came from the walls that the enemy in thick black masses were pressing forward on the ice to renew the storm from the east side, where the wearied garrison were no longer able to keep open the holes in the ice on account of the intense cold. The west side, which lay towards Ämmä, was inaccessible; on the north and south sides the river flowed with such strong currents around the castle's little island, that the ice was extremely weak and offered to every larger troop that approached it a certain grave.

The council of war was broken up; each one hastened again to his post, but it was with palsied arms and broken hearts.

A flag of truce appeared, and asked for the last time if the castle would capitulate.

"Yes!" shouted the priest Cajanus, so loud that

all heard it. "We capitulate, but only on condition that we have free exit with our families, our side arms and our private property."

"Yes, yes; we surrender!" shrieked the same matron who had but just before been so severe on the commander of the castle.

Fieandt was about to protest with a thundering no, when Cajanus seized him by the arm and silently pointed to a corner at the side of the bastion. A woman sat there with her child on her breast. They did not stir; they complained no more. They had starved and frozen to death.

Fieandt surrendered.

Contrary to expectation, the enemy accepted the conditions. They did not know, in Kajana Castle, that if they had been able to hold out a week longer the enemy would have been obliged to raise the siege.

Such frightful devastation had sickness made among the closely-packed masses in the circumscribed camp that a longer delay would probably have brought with it the annihilation of the entire hostile force. If one may believe the statements of contemporaries, the little castle of Kajana had cost the besiegers about four thousand men.

Surrender! What a hateful ring has this word in the warrior's ears! Never was a surrender more justifiable than here, and yet Kajana Castle's few and brave defenders sorrowed all the rest of their lives that they had not been granted the honorable fate which befell so many other of the Carolins' strongholds, to be at once the grave of themselves and thousands of their enemies.

Straw was spread on the weak ice on both arms of the river, water thrown upon it and allowed to freeze, and afterwards the road was strengthened with beams and planks. Over this improvised bridge the defenders marched out and the besiegers marched in. Valiant officers in the enemy's ranks scarcely believed their

eyes when they saw this little, ragged, enervated band, which for a whole month had defended Kajana Castle, and counted among them at least three old men, women, and children, to every one capable of bearing arms. General Tschekin's exasperation knew no bounds. They say that he would have cut them all down on the spot if Colonel Mannstein had not unbuckled his sword and sworn to quit the service if he permitted such conduct. The history of those times is full of such deeds of violence; it is certain that Tschekin, without respect for these, the bravest of the brave, in a cowardly manner violated the terms of the capitulation. In the meantime Mannheim's word prevailed; most of the prisoners had their lives spared, but were carried away plundered and half-naked in the extreme cold. The priest Cajanus, who was charged with having encouraged the garrison to resist to the utmost, was, with his mother-in-law and her children, carried a prisoner to Åbo Castle.

By Mannstein's order the wounded Bertelsköld received a sled and was carried away with the rest. By his side walked among the other prisoners the slender youth, the old Tobias, and the giant-boy Daniel. The latter looked back so often that the major finally asked him if he thought it was pleasant to see his ancestral castle in the hands of the enemy.

"No," said the boy. "I am merely curious to see whether they have kindled a fire in father's room in the north tower."

"And how does that concern us now?"

"O, not particularly. Only I broke a hole through the hearth and the floor beneath it, and put in a couple of fuses leading down to the powder vault. It is, as the major knows, right under it."

"Boy, what have you done!"

"Nothing. Only kept my word."

Meanwhile, nothing was heard that day. But the next morning, when the prisoners and their guard were

resting about twelve miles from the castle, the earth shook and a subdued peal like distant thunder was heard, a flame like lightning colored the sky, and a thick, dark cloud of smoke and dust arose above the horizon in the direction of the castle. Then the giant-boy knit his hands convulsively together, and it was as if one saw in his eyes a reflection of that vanished flash which had lighted up Peldamo's gray winter sky.

"What was that?" asked the prisoners in amazement.

The giant-boy clenched his teeth, and with indescribable glee whispered in Finnish: "It was Kajana Castle jumping into the air."

"Yes," said Bertelsköld sorrowfully, "it was the fall of Finland's last fortress!"

Thus ended the short story of Kajana Castle. Of its ruins there remain to this day the walls, which serve for supports to a bridge by which the road leads across the stream from the city of Kajana to the church in Peldamo. To this day the fir-grown heights look sadly down on the theatre of Finland's last struggle during the calamities of the great war; even to this day one seems at times to see Fieandt's valorous shadow, sorrowing, stand upon the ruined arches; even to this day there wanders the giant-boy's ghost with a burning brand, seeking the vault where the hidden force of the powder's element held the fate of the castle; and even to this day the subdued roar of the Ämmä repeats the story of the fall of the castle and of the exploits of the Carolins in the far north.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MOLE-TRACK AT THE FOOT OF A COLOSSUS.

“THEY amuse themselves finely in there!” whispered one of two travelers, clad in furs, who one evening in February, 1718, went back and forth before the brightly illuminated windows of one of the larger houses in Christinehamn.

“It is indeed a perfect display!” responded his companion, with a foreign accent. “Why are not the window curtains closed?”

“It is a wedding. The princess marries her waiting-maid, Eleonora Uttermark, to David Gedda, master of the armory. You see, my dear Siquier, that I am well informed, although we arrived in town not more than a half hour since. It is the custom in our country not to let down the curtains at a wedding. It would be regarded an evil omen for conjugal felicity. And our majesty is pleased with old customs—when he does not find it more convenient to use new ones.”

“Just look! see how they run there, like wild hens! I confess if that is intended to represent a dance, it does not give me an especially high opinion of the advancement of the fine art in your fatherland.”

“Once for all, sir colonel, put Versailles out of your mind when you come to Sweden. We took our *pas de deus* and our *pas de quatre* at Drottingholm when the times were better: that is, when his majesty was pleased to impale the janizaries at Bender. But it is now all over with the ballet; our unsurpassable King Arthur of the round table is stronger in his arms than in his legs; and therefore the court now amuses itself playing blind-man’s-buff, hunt-the-slipper, and such antediluvian

games. Our majesty is, as it were, created for blind-man's-buff; no one understands better than he the art of letting himself be lured; and they lure him to their heart's content. One cries to him: 'Puh! here is the Polish crown!' and he immediately rushes thither with the blinder over his eyes. The second cries: 'Puh! here is the great Mogul's beard!' and he runs there. The third: 'Puh! here is the key to Copenhagen!' and there he goes. The fourth whispers: 'Puh! here are the steps to England's throne!' and he makes haste to gambol over all the North Sea. Yet no one has lured him in so masterly a manner as a certain neighbor, who, to be sure, omits saying 'puh!' but instead takes one pawn after another in the game."

"I am afraid, my dear count, that the king has now at his side a man who lifts up the blinder a little and sees clearer than any of us."

"Possibly. But it is also certain that that same man is the greatest of puh-shriekers. It is he who has taken upon himself, for the good of all of us, to entice the blindfolded king head foremost against the wall. Let him be sustained!"

Siquier looked at his companion in amazement. "I have long known," said he, "that Count Bertelsköld, with perhaps one more dangerous exception, is the most dangerous spider in the neighborhood of a royal blind-fly; but I could not imagine that he had succeeded in entangling even Baron . . ."

"Sh! We are on the open street, and the very stones are enchanted with the royal heel that tramps upon them. *Fi donc*, Siquier, you have been too long in the school of the Duke of Orleans. When one bribes half the world, in order to find out and betray the other half, he becomes at last a poor judge of human nature. Money is much, *mon colonel*, but passion is more. It is necessary to know how to use the one and to make the other harmless. Görtz—the devil, I speak amiss—I mean Jernskrap, is a man who with

unusual sagacity unites uncommonly strong passions. He is a man who is one half ambition, three-eighths envy and one-eighth hate. We have no power against him, but let him be sustained! He plays into our hands!"

"I doubt it. But look, there is the king, there by the window. A good French musket and a pair of swift balls from where we now stand, and the fate of the North would be changed!"

"That is the worst jest you have spoken, Siquier, since we left the court of Orleans. Here in Sweden we do not kill our lions,—we let them chase themselves to death!"

"As you please. He is looking at us. Come, let us step farther to one side!"

"My dear colonel, if it were not so highly improbable, I should think you were troubled by a guilty conscience. It is brilliantly lighted in there, and we are here in blinding darkness. I see there,—well, by the Sultan's beard, it is our majesty in his own person who has seized hold of the princess's arm. Poor princess! You ought to know, my friend, that the princess is rather proud of her beautiful arms and hands; it is in fact the only thing handsome that one has ever been able to detect in her. But I have heard the court surgeon declare that, whenever there were games at the court, he took the precaution to carry with him a bottle of lead-water, for the evening seldom passed without the princess receiving two or three bruises at least, as souvenirs of fraternal tenderness. For other ladies' bare arms his majesty has a certain shyness. But there is one that has it not, and that is his highness the Prince of Hesse—no, just see there, he is chasing the bride—ah, he does it with the *finesse* which only such a dexterous hunter is capable of. *Diable!* in the end I shall have to keep poor Gedda in good spirits, for why need I conceal the fact that I arranged this match so as to have one ear in the princess's bed-chamber and the other in his majesty's army . . . *Mille tonnerres!*"

"What is the matter with you? Your voice trembles."

"I? You deceive yourself."

"Nay, I pray you, do not get nearer the lights. Who are you looking at so attentively? Ah, I understand. A woman—rather pale, with fascinating black eyes You do not answer me, Sir Count. Permit me to repeat your own compliment: *fi donc*, a diplomat like Count Torsten Bertelsköld, and smitten by two black eyes!"

Bertelsköld did not reply. His eyes were fixed upon one of the windows.

"She approaches the king," continued the Frenchman in a tone of levity. "I understand; it is one of those moths that are singeing their wings in the flame of the candle. The king turns about, he seems surprised, embarrassed She addresses him By the sun of France, the woman must speak bold words, for the play all around her stops and all look at her with anxiety. What can she say to him?"

"I must find out," muttered Bertelsköld between his teeth, and with hasty steps approached the door of the royal headquarters.

"Permit me to remind you," whispered the Frenchman anxiously, "that our interests to-morrow demand an *incognito*."

"It can be no other than she but if it is *she*, then is *he* also here I must know positively about it," continued Bertelsköld, and he already stood in the door when Siquier seized him by the arm.

"One word," said the Frenchman. "When one wishes to overcome an adversary consisting of one-half ambition, three-eighths envy, and one-eighth hate, he ought not himself to be seven-eighths infatuation and the remainder diplomacy."

"Go to the devil, sir!" was what was on Bertelsköld's lips. But it flew away in an ironical smile, and he only said: "That reveals, my dear Siquier, that you

have just come from Amourette's court. You mistake our northern emotions. What you take for sunshine is only frosty northern-lights,—and a frozen tear," he added almost unconsciously to himself. "But you are right," he continued, "it is better that we return to the hotel; a crowd will be gathered there. Our majesty cannot bear drinking and gambling; but of an evening when King Arthur plays leap-frog about the round table, then the knights of the round table think they can do the same about the ale-can. We may get some news while we take our supper in the next room."

Said and done. The gentlemen soon found themselves in the overfilled public-house, where they obtained a small room that opened into the public saloon. The company in the latter place consisted mostly of under-officers who had taken the day to enjoy themselves and were already pretty noisy from Shrove-Tuesday's ale.

"Heroism!" shouted one of the good fellows; "we shall soon have thirty-five thousand men; now we ought to drub the Jutlander!"

"The whole world, Maths Stång, the whole world!" answered one of the crowd. "First we will crack the Jutlander, and then the Saxon, and the Prussian, and the Polander, and the Russian, and the Englishman who injures our ships, and then the grand Turk that told us to go to the devil. *Carolus vivat!*"

"No, we will let the grand Turk alone," cried another. "He is more of a Christian than many others. He took a whipping of us and afterwards kissed our boots. My opinion is that the king ought to take the German sausage first and the French raisins afterwards. That would only be a priming for the king; he can do what he will. In Paris, brother, by my spurs, we would dance about with the beauties till summer, and every capable man would be a duke at least."

"Just listen," whispered Siquier, nettled, "this Carolinian peasant ale sparkles as if it were champagne."

"The fellows have studied history better than we,"

remarked Bertelsköld, smiling. "It has happened once before that one of these ale-funnels took it upon himself to be Duke of Normandy."

Just then one who had been relieved as watch at headquarters came in. "Have you heard the news, boys?" he cried. "The devil himself rules the women-folks now-a-days."

"What is it?" shouted several voices.

"Hand along a can of ale first; I am as cold as a Finnish wolf and as thirsty as a Muscovite. Yes, I have just come from the king, and it run through all the headquarters as a true tale, that a Satan of a woman, who was called Rhen—, Rhen—, all the same whatever the rest was; anyhow, she had lately escaped from captivity among the Muscovites, and Satan put it into her head that as soon as she met the king she should ask him what he had done with Finland. We have indeed lost more fields than the Lapland huts stand on. Well, then,—does the devil ride you, Stång, that you snatch my ale-can out of my hands?—she met the king this evening, and the first thing she said to him was: 'Your majesty, what have you done with Finland?' Yes, it is not well to grumble when one looks Carolus in the eye, but she said it."

"And what did the king answer? I wager that he said: 'Remember your manners!'"

"Yes, the most wonderful part is that the king merely swung on his heel and said nothing."

"What the devil could he say to such a shrewish question? By my scabbard, what deviltry in a woman!"

"It is she!" thought Bertelsköld to himself. "What a woman! And she might have been mine!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

A REVIEW AND A MEETING.

IT is with a melancholy interest that one beholds Charles XII, in the evening of his heroic career, playing blindfold games and hunt-the-slipper with the gay court at Christinehamn. It was the last time that he was surrounded by that sunshine of joy, which other mortals seek, and without which they are unable to live. It was the last time that a sister's soft hand touched his own hard palm, which had grown stiff in clasping the sword-hilt, and that the boyish cheerfulness of a sister's son mingled with warlike sounds;—the last time that gentle, tender feelings played around him, who stood at such an elevation above humanity that its joys as well as its sorrows seemed, to rebound without response, from his mailed breast. This glimpse of sunshine disappeared, never to return. From that time the evening of this solitary greatness had only shadows and flashes ending in a black night, with a thunderbolt from a murderer's hand.

At three o'clock in the morning, after the evening of which we have had a glimpse in the foregoing chapter, the king had already arisen from the mattress of straw, his field-bed, said a short prayer, and the chamberlain had lighted the wax candles. It was tolerably cold in the room; to roast himself before a glowing fire was not to the king's taste. The page slept still, half-clad, upon the floor. The king let the light shine upon him a moment, smiled as he was only accustomed to do when alone with his thoughts, spread his cloak over the sleeping youth, and seated himself to read in King Gustaf Adolf's prayer-book which he always

carried with him. Every morning he read two chapters in the Bible, and in 1708 had read the Old and the New Testament through four times, but after that he kept no account for fear he should seem to boast of it. So one sees it was possible for Charles XII to fear. For some time now the Bible had given way to the shorter prayer-book. It was argued that the society of the philosopher Leibnitz, at Leipsic, and his stay afterward among the infidels, had modified his strictly orthodox Lutheran faith. However this may have been, his unfeigned piety continued the same to the end of his life, a model for kings and people, and a power which sustained him in all vicissitudes, giving him moderation in the days of his prosperity, and courage strong as iron in the days of his adversity.

It was not yet four o'clock when Baron Görtz, who occupied two rooms in the same house, came in and worked with the king until eight o'clock, when breakfast, consisting of a single course of meat and a cup of milk, was hastily served on tin plates, with knives and forks of iron, a domestic manufacture of Polhem's invention. There was no longer any silver; it had all gone to the mint; even the queen-dowager and the princess for several years ate from tin, but when the king on his return noticed it he was distressed on account of it, and Feif, the summer before, had prevailed upon Tessin to make, as if it were his own thought, a little silver service for the ladies. The meal lasted hardly ten minutes, after which the king rode out to review the troops, who, in the midst of a violent snow-storm, were drawn up on the square. His sharp eye scanned the ranks as though he would discover any who winced before the icy wind. Pleased to find them almost as indifferent as himself, he began to inspect each one separately. Nearly all were boys between fifteen and twenty years old, biting their teeth together that no one might notice how they quaked with the cold; the officers only were old Carolins,

proved by a hundred battles, the last remains of an army that had once caused Europe to tremble. They drilled, they went through their evolutions. Their lines, as they wheeled, were often crooked, their muskets were not always borne at the same angle, their feet were not always lifted as precisely on the same line as though they were connected by a steel wire, their hats did not always sit according to regulation, their coats were not always properly buttoned; but such things did not worry generals of Charles XII's school. The main point was that the command was understood instantly and obeyed promptly, but not mechanically, like marionettes, but so that eye, ear, hand and heart were in it, and the lowest soldier, when he executed an order, felt himself his own commander. The habit for long years of contending with enemies of superior numbers, where the rule was that each man had three, five, even ten against him, had cultivated in the warriors of Charles XII that personal consciousness which made of every soldier an army, and which contained the conditions for and the explanation of their victories. It was Frederick II who discovered and Napoleon who perfected the tactics of masses which have been adopted as the basis of the modern art of war. But Charles XII, "the last knight," still fought according to the old fashion of knights, and although Gustaf Adolf had taught him the maxim, "all for one," he added to it, from Tiberup even to Fredrikshall, his own favorite maxim, "one for all." From this it followed that everyone's duty, knight or peasant's, was to stand as his king stood, and strike out of the Swedish dictionary the word impossible. They endeavored to do this, and it was on this account that all finally went to pieces; but as long as it held or could hold together, the rawest recruit felt himself doubly strong through the consciousness of his right and his duty to answer for himself.

In consequence of these principles, Charles XII

inspected each man more closely than he reviewed the whole; his father, Charles XI, was renowned for his art of drilling soldiers, and Charles XII had done honor to his teaching. Time after time he called one and another out of the ranks, and had him alone and independently execute the ordered movements; it was not well to fail when the king cried: "Are you loitering there?" Oaths, although they had already been brought in with other French customs, were no part of Charles XII's military exercises. Although there was no lack of reproofs, the king seemed to-day to be in the best of spirits. Next to the trenches and the hail of bullets, nothing suited him better than to be in the snow and rain in front of resolute ranks. There was something at this moment which, more than ever before, enlivened his thoughts and fired his heart with new hopes. The improbable had come to pass; the bleeding country, wearied to death, had organized a fully equipped army, of which, under such a leader, one might again expect everything. Astonished Europe could scarcely believe its eyes. With the report of these equipments there flew about rumors of Baron Görtz's dangerous plans. What might not be feared when the greatest captain of the time had by his side its greatest diplomatic genius! Cabinets trembled; and though it has never been proved, on the other hand there has scarcely been reasonable doubt, that Charles XII's death was determined beforehand in the council of the powers. His fall, says a talented author, was not unworthy of his life, for he fell before a coalition of all Europe, which feared him, and which could say of him, in the tyrant's words: Let him be a God, so he does not live!

After the review was ended, the General, Prince of Hesse, rode forward to the king and presented Colonel Siquier, called into the Swedish service with Colonel Maigret, as an officer skilled in the art of fortification, and appointed adjutant general. Military etiquette demanded that these gentlemen, like the king, should

not wear overcoats, although the thermometer, in case they had such a thing at that time, would, perhaps, have shown several degrees below zero. Siquier was purple with cold and vexation. The prince had understood the matter better; he had gained somewhat in size since yesterday, and, since he lived well, the good prince, there was nothing strange in it; but the fact was, that, on such occasions, he prudently put on an extra suit of fine Dutch flannel underwear beneath his roomy outer garments.

"What does the colonel think of my blue boys?" asked the king, who was always embarrassed in conversation with strangers, and seized the subject nearest at hand.

"They must be invincible, since your majesty has taught them to resist the shafts of Boreas as well as those of Mars," replied Siquier, in the elegant imagery of the court of those times.

The king smiled; it was seldom that he rewarded a Frenchman's politeness with a smile. To-day he found a degree of truth in it. "They can, indeed, stand a little snowy weather," said he gayly; "but I cannot answer how they would gasp in the heat of the sun. If we should ever have occasion to call upon his French majesty, it would please me to see them stand the test."

"I do not suppose, sire, that my king can hope to see such honored guests," observed Siquier, stung in the Frenchman's most sensitive part; "but should your majesty's troops honor France with a visit, I have no doubt they would be warmly received."

The king laughed, and, with the prince, Siquier, and his staff, returned to headquarters. During this time a meeting had occurred which was significant of the condition and feeling of the times.

It was known that on the afternoon of that day Baron Görtz would set out for Åland. Foreign ministers, Swedish civil officers, and fortune-hunters of all

nations, crowded the room of the king's favorite. But at the same time a double watch was stationed around his dwelling, since all his influence, and even the proximity of the king, were insufficient to shield him from the indescribable hatred which high and low in Sweden, almost without exception, felt for him.

Count Torsten Bertelsköld, sent with a commission from Count Horn and the council at Stockholm, had audience with the mighty baron and minister of finance. That they both hated each other most sincerely, they knew too well. They were all the more polite on account of this ; one might have supposed them to be the most intimate business friends. The haughty Swedish count, with the most pliant obsequiousness set forth his delicate commission, which was to seek to avert the most oppressive of the unheard-of extortions of the times, the threatened displacement of all the coins then current by treasury notes and baser coins ; after which all the old coinage would be prohibited and confiscable. The Holstein baron, no less haughty, was this time all honey and shrugs. He was for his part inclined to all possible indulgence, but the condition of the kingdom, the necessities of the army and his majesty's will . . . *enfin*, what would one do? He could not lay golden eggs. Everything depended upon peace, and he, for his part, had done all that he was able to do to overcome the king's obstinacy ; but his majesty, *voilà tout ; go to the king !*

It is not likely that Bertelsköld, or even the council, was quite in earnest in these representations ; it was rather in their interest to force the situation to the utmost limit ; but they must also save their own skins. All the more urgent and more heated were the negotiations ; naturally without success. It was only one of the many examples in history ; on one side an independent minister, who throws all the blame on the monarch and washes his own hands in snow-white innocence ; on the other side the interest of a party which

shouts with others on the brink of the country's destruction, but secretly pushes its members forward that they may draw their gains from the ruins they foresee.

When the two gentlemen thought they had talked enough for appearance sake, the mask began to be too close for them. "I have nothing more to add," said Bertelsköld, rising to go. "Your Excellence may answer before his own conscience and before the kingdom for future measures, and for what is already done."

"For my measures, Sir Secretary of the Legation, I am under obligation to account to the king alone, and I presume that neither you nor anyone else has the right to control my conscience," answered Görtz, without rising, as etiquette demanded, when so high-born a person took his departure. Baron Görtz never neglected an opportunity to humiliate the Swedish nobility, and it was this provoking contempt which afterward, more than anything else, brought his head to the block.

A sharp answer was already on Bertelsköld's lips, when a window crashed, a stone flew in and fell close by the favorite's feet. "The Swedish people answer in my stead ; you can also count upon being, at some time, rewarded according to your service," said Bertelsköld, with icy coolness, as he bowed and went out.

Görtz smiled contemptuously. "Such are at all times the arguments of parties," said he, and seized the bell. "Let the Holland minister step in !"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE KING'S RING.

COUNTRESS Ebba Cecilia Liewen, born Bertel-sköld, had, as lady of honor to the Princess Ulrika Eleonora, accompanied the court to Christinehamn. They were quartered according to their means in the better houses, and the countess controlled three or four rooms in the vicinity of the princess' residence. It was the afternoon of the day of the review just described. The king was at work in his private room with Baron Görtz ; the court had no amusement for the evening ; and the countess sat alone in her room, after having, according to custom, attended the princess during dinner.

Yet she was not alone; she had an agreeable reason for remaining at home. With her sat the dear friend of her youth, Eva Rhenfelt, whom we left in captivity at Kajana Castle, and who appeared to Torsten Bertel-sköld so mysteriously the evening before. The two friends had confided to each other their fortunes since they separated. That of Countess Ebba was soon told: she had divided the four hard and restless years between her duties to her husband and numerous sufferers for whom she, although she forgot to say it, had been a good angel in those sorrowful times. Eva's fortunes, on the contrary, were changeable and adventurous. She accompanied, in manly garb, Gustaf Bertel-sköld to his imprisonment in Åbo Castle, where he, worn out by the difficult winter-journey, wavered long between life and death, until the care of his faithful nurse and the medical skill of Tobias succeeded in restoring him to health.

“Then,” continued Eva, “we obtained the commandant’s permission, one day in June, 1716, to go out of the castle under guard, with our friend from Kajana Castle, Cajanus the priest, his family, and my old Tobias. We wandered through the desolate streets; it was the picture of destruction! Scarcely a twentieth part of the inhabitants of the city remained; most of the houses were without doors or windows; a part were used as stables, others were half torn down for firewood. Tall grass grew in the streets; the horses of the Cossacks grazed on the public square; nowhere was heard the glad song of the seaman, the chat of the laborer, or the noise of children; only the drum sounded at times in those empty lanes. We came to the renowned old cathedral. No sexton was needed to open the door for us, no organ tone invited us to worship beneath the high arch. The doors stood wide open; the wind whistled through the broken panes. The clock was still; its hands had fallen off; time had stopped in its flight. The high-altar was plundered of its ornaments; the chancel was filled with rubbish; only the monuments on the graves of heroes peered forth from the side aisles. We went farther in; a jackdaw flew up from the pulpit and lighted on the altar-crown; we approached the altar, the bird flew to the empty organ-loft. On the psalm-tablet two figures remained; they showed one of King David’s psalms, Swedish Psalm-book Number 68; it was the last the congregation had sung. We recalled it with tearful eyes and sang:

‘Assist me, Lord, when o’er me roll
Great waters which o’erwhelm my soul,
When stormy winds o’ertake me.
Benumbed, in deepest mire I sink,
While skin and flesh upon me shrink;
Yet God will not forsake me.
With weeping am I weary grown,
Though blind and dumb, God hears my moan;
Waiting, on God still calling,
Suffering, but kept from falling.’

“Then,” continued Eva, “the priest Cajanus married us at the altar, and it seemed so wonderful that our happiness should begin in the midst of Finland’s extreme need and in that desolated sanctuary where so many generations had sent up their prayers to the throne of the Almighty. That same summer we were taken over to Narva and thence into the land of the Muscovites to a city called Novgorod, where we served in captivity and were treated mercifully. I had laid aside my men’s clothes and went with my husband as his servant, and as he was well versed in the art of breaking wild horses which no one else could control, he became equerry to a noble lord with whom he stood in great favor. There God gave us a son in our captivity, and he is called after King Charles, but, since we still hoped for the day of victory, the name Victor was added. Late in the autumn of 1717, we made a journey to Narva with our master. There we met a yacht from Runö, where the people are of Swedish descent, and it was agreed with the men from Runö that during the darkness of the night we should go on board their vessel and escape from bondage. But it was so late in the year, that we did not get farther than Gotland, where we were obliged to remain until ice formed between the island and the main land, supporting ourselves as best we could, my husband by shoeing horses and myself by weaving and spinning. When we came to Stockholm, two weeks ago, it was decided that Bertelsköld should enter the service in Armfelt’s corps, which is encamped near Gefle, because those troops are for the most part Finns. But I came here to you, Ebba, to procure for Bertelsköld an adjutant’s place with Armfelt, his old chief. I have succeeded, as you know, though with some difficulty, for when I saw this new army which is intended to attack Norway, while Finland is bleeding to death, my heart was oppressed, and the words came irresistibly to my lips: ‘What has your majesty done with Finland?’ The rest you know. I am happy in

again seeing you and in obtaining the king's assent. To-morrow we shall separate again, and who knows if it be not forever?"

"Why such sorrowful thoughts?" said a well-known voice at the door, and Torsten Bertelsköld entered. "Is my fair enemy still implacable?"

The two women exchanged glances. "I did not believe," replied Eva, coldly, "that the count would have anything to add after our last interview in the harbor of Stralsund."

The morsel must have been hard of digestion, for Count Torsten sharpened his tone as he said:

"Ah, you are right, I had almost forgotten that we had seen each other so lately. I hope the time has passed agreeably, away there in the Lapland huts? With a confidence free from prejudice, like yours, fair Eva, one is never at a loss for diversion, for acquaintances—in a word, I am certain that the loss of so small a thing as my friendship has received manifold compensations"

"Torsten!" said Ebba, reprovngly.

"It is true," replied Eva, smiling, "manifold compensations! Permit me, my dear count, to present to you one of those compensations."

So saying, she beckoned to a servant in the next room, and there entered a dark-haired boy, about a year and a half old, uncommonly large of his age and so far advanced that he was taking his first steps in this world.

The question on Count Torsten's lips died the moment it was born.

But Countess Ebba took the boy, sat him upon the knee of her astonished brother, and said:

"Do not put him away from you, Torsten; let him be a pledge of reconciliation and friendship between your sundered hearts. Be a good uncle to him; he is one of us; his lawful name is Charles Victor, Count of Bertelsköld."

All the studied calm of the diplomat was insufficient to control the muscles in the count's face. An unspeakable bitterness contended with the irresistible influence of the innocence of childhood and the natural rights of consanguinity. He kissed the boy's forehead and gently put him down, rose hastily, and turning to Eva said, in a tone intended to be calm and deliberate, but which revealed all the pain of his disappointed hopes:

"My sister is right—there is no room for ill-will between us. I welcome you, my countess, you and your son, I welcome you to our family. *Eh bien*, fortune is fitful, it has granted my brother what it denied me; let us have no further controversy concerning it. *Apropos* of fortune, my sister, I came here to call you to account for a certain ring on which the fortune of our family is said to depend. I had missed it for eighteen years without any suspicion of what had become of it, until, by chance, a packet of letters was delivered to me, which were left by my brother when he went away four years ago. Among them I found one from you, dated Stockholm, January 24th, 1704, in which you acknowledged that I lost the ring in a glove, and that you gave it to the Duchess of Holstein, and that she gave it to the king fixed in a medallion with Queen Ulrika Eleonora's portrait. You do not know, my sister, what you have done. You have thrown away the fortune and the future of our family!"

Countess Ebba reddened deeply, and grasped her brother's hand. "I confess," said she, "that in the ignorance of childhood I made a mistake, greater, perhaps, than you can forgive. But, Torsten, why put faith in a superstitious amulet? Is there not an eternal Providence that rules our destinies, and is it not ourselves who, under its care, ought to forge our own fortunes?"

"Lectures from the nursery! And yet there are wonderful coincidences which cannot be explained by

any law in the catechism. At his death, my father left a sealed envelope containing the history of this ring ; it is enough, as I tell you, that the fate of our family is inseparably connected with this jewel, and that its loss heretofore has continuously brought with it a chain of misfortunes, as its possession has brought us power and honor. I am myself a proof of this but, *enfin*, do you know whether the king still wears this medallion ? ”

“ According to Gösta’s account, the king lost the medallion in the autumn of 1703 in a hand-to-hand engagement at Rajowka, the same in which Hård fell.”

“ *Diable !* Lost, never to be found again ! At Rajowka ? That was shortly after the battle of Holofzin ! It was also just before the expedition to Ukraine ! It was the turning-point in Charles XII’s fortune. Before that, nothing but victory ! Afterwards, nothing but defeat. This accursed ring always brings happiness or misery, whatever hand may bear it or lose it. And I, fool, who had it and took no better care of it ! When I had it, I advanced rapidly ; since I lost it, I have fought against fate in vain. Everything goes adversely. . . . And who can tell me what ragamuffin with my talisman is at this moment swinging up to the first dignities of the kingdom ! ”

Count Torsten went with vehement strides about the room. Was it the ring’s demoniac power, or was it ambition’s phantom and the exasperation caused by so many miscarried plans, that now bereft Horn’s disciple of his diplomatic frigidty ? His sister had never seen him thus ; in sorrow for his emotion, she did not venture a word to pacify him.

A servant entered and announced a stranger who earnestly desired an interview with Madame Rhenfelt ; her later marriage was yet unknown. Eva went out ; a short time passed, in which the brother and sister sat there in silence with their own memories and their diverse opinions of life’s happiness.

Finally Eva returned, agitated, weeping, grasped the countess's hand and said: "Will you permit me to bring back an old friend?"

Ebba inquiringly nodded assent.

An officer of noble bearing entered, pale and with eyes filled with tears. His hair had grown gray, his cheeks were sunken, yet there was something in his person which was less like an old man's bowed figure than that of a man in his best days bent down by misfortune. Countess Ebba had not looked at him many seconds before her cheeks suddenly blanched, and she sank, silent and fainting, into her friend's arms.

"What is this?" exclaimed Count Torsten, incapable of comprehending the cause of his sister's sudden emotion.

The stranger did not hear him. His eyes were fixed with an indescribable expression on the mild and pale features of the countess, as she slowly recovered herself.

"Sir, who are you, and what gives you a right to frighten by your presence Countess Liewen?" said Torsten to the new-comer.

"When the dead arise the blood of the living runs cold," said the stranger, sorrowfully. "Who am I? A man risen from the grave, and who was not formerly unknown to you, Sir Count. My hair has whitened during nearly nine years of captivity; why should I wish you to recognize him who is regarded as dead, Erik Falkenberg, formerly one of the king's body-guard, and the nearest friend of your brother, Gustaf Bertelsköld."

"Falkenberg? Nephew of the royal councillor of the same name? Brother to—to the Countess Eva Bertelsköld, born Falkenberg?"

"The same. I did not know, Sir Count, that you"

Torsten bit his lip.

"You mistake, sir," said he. "It is my brother

who has been so fortunate as to win your sister's hand. Welcome back again. It rejoices me that the report lied which said you had fallen on Pultowa's bloody field."

"It was only half untrue," answered Falkenberg, with a sorrowful look at Countess Ebba, who had regained consciousness but had not yet courage to look up to the formerly loved, long mourned, finally returned and yet forever lost friend of her childhood.

"I left the better part of my life and all my happiness at Pultowa. What remains, Sir Count, is worth but little."

"And do you count as nought a long line of achievements which yet remain for you? You forget a sister's warmest affection?" said Eva, kindly.

"And a devoted friend of your childhood?" added Countess Ebba, in a lower voice.

Falkenberg was silent.

"Your salvation must really have been miraculous," said Torsten, desiring to get away from these unpleasant memories.

"Perhaps not more miraculous than that of many others," answered Falkenberg; "but yet sufficiently so to make a story for children. Permit me to spare the ladies an account which could only agitate them. In short, I lay for twelve hours among the dead on the battle field; a plundering marauder detected in me a spark of life, and undertook to rescue me; it was a profitable transaction for him to sell me to a *boiar*, who received of him a Swedish captain as a servant for life. I was taken far into the interior; they looked upon me as a monster, they abhorred me as a heretic, but upon the whole did not treat me very badly. As I understood something about horticulture, I was able to be of some service. Finally, I rose to the position of overseer, and earned some money. One day there came to our village a wandering peddler who sold busts of the saints. Judge of my surprise when I dis-

covered among the confused collection a little medallion”

“With Queen Ulrika Eleonora’s portrait?”

“But how did you know, Sir Count”

“It was, then, really that!” burst out Torsten vehemently.

“It was the same medallion that his majesty lost at Rajowka; the whole corps knew it; it could not be mistaken. I concealed with difficulty my astonishment, stuffed half my savings in the peddler’s purse, and obtained the medallion.”

“Ha, where is it? Give it here!”

“I consider myself fortunate to be able to place it in his majesty’s own hand,” replied Falkenberg calmly. “Remarkably enough, my fortune changed as soon as I got possession of this jewel. Everything played into my hands; my master’s young wife, who saw me languishing and growing gray from longing for my native land, spoke so warmly for my emancipation that my master was jealous and gave his consent and took me himself to Riga; from there he got me a situation to go to Copenhagen, and—I saw my fatherland again.”

“Have the goodness to show me the medallion,” said Torsten, with a strange expression.

Falkenberg took it out, well protected by a leather case. The ring was found so fastened that it formed the ring of the medallion by which it hung when worn on the neck.

“This is my ring!” exclaimed Torsten Bertelsköld, and seized it with a convulsive vehemence, as if he would not let it go again for all the world’s treasures.

“It is the king’s property, which must this very day return to his majesty,” objected Falkenberg.

“*Rex regi rebellis!*—ah, you see that I know the inscription. Do you know, indeed, that if the king should once again possess this ring and take care not to lose it by an untruth or a broken oath,—it can be lost in no other way,—then his fortune would turn;

he would again cast the whole of Europe at his feet, and the fate of the north would be changed for centuries !”

All were silent. It was as though they stood under the influence of an unknown, mysterious power, against which religion and reason strove in vain. Eva arrested Falkenberg's arm, which was already raised to seize the medallion. “The ring is his,” she said ; “the king has no right to it. But if you love the king, Count Torsten, and if you love our country, give him the ring again !”

“Not if he broke his sword asunder before my feet and bowed his knee before me and kissed my foot. Not if he offered me Norway's crown and England's throne ! The medallion is his ; he shall have it ; but the ring is mine !”

And Count Torsten disappeared.

Then disappeared that feeling of paralysis which had possessed them. Falkenberg raged. The ladies wept. But it was too late. Torsten Bertelsköld had the ring, and he kept it.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SHADOW OF A NAME.

CHRISTMAS morning's tardy sun, in the year 1718, arose over Tydal's mountains in Norway on the border of Jemtland. The night had been frosty and clear, but from the sea at the west there now appeared a black snow-cloud against the dark edges of which the first rays of the sun gleamed like golden embroidery around a gloomy mourning-veil. The tops of the mountains, high and snow-covered, lifted

themselves to meet the deep of the darkened heavens ; and when the sunshine fell upon their crowns of ice, they seemed light and spring-like as hope, which, at a distance, continually mocks the human sight.

At the foot of the mountain all was life and motion. Armfelt's troops were there—the last fragments of Finland's last army, which, after the unsuccessful attack on Trondhjem, marched back from Norway's mountain dales to winter-quarters on Swedish ground. The night had been severe ; they had collected heather and the slender dwarf birches which grew among the cliffs to make a fire in the intense cold ; but the weak flame blazed up too quickly and as quickly died away again ; and many of them had already frozen their hands and feet. But there was yet a spark of courage left in those stiffened joints. The campaign was lost ; the valiant and renowned Långström, Finland's most efficient partisan, had lately fallen in one of those lonely desperate encounters where only the mountain echo answers the champion's cry, and no salvation is found for those who are outnumbered. The march was difficult, provisions scarce ; but yet the Finnish troops went forward, for King Charles yet lived, and if all was lost then all remained to be won, so long as he was on the earth. Vague, half-understood rumors of his prospective great plans flew around among the troops, and with these stories of the future and similar stories of the past, they enlivened each other's sinking courage in the bivouac. It was known that Görtz was working with success for peace with their most dangerous adversary, Czar Peter, with whom he had had personal interviews in Haag and Petersburg. It was known that the czar was displeased with his German allies who, with jealousy and fear, watched his endeavor to gain a foothold in Germany. It was known that the czar's personal character was of that standard that made a union with Charles XII possible ;—bold, ambitious, aggressive. Something was whispered of an

impending marriage between King Charles and Czar Peter's lovely daughter Anna. Thereafter these mighty champions, after having so long struggled for supremacy in the north, would be reconciled and form an alliance which must make the thrones of Europe tremble. It was said that Sweden was to give Esthonia and Ingermanland in perpetuity and Livonia for fifty years, and that the czar in exchange would return Finland and with his fleet assist King Charles to conquer Norway. Then King Charles, in punishment of King George's perfidy, would permit thirty thousand men to set the pretender Stuart on the throne of Britain; but he himself would, in connection with Czar Peter, invade Germany, recapture the lost possessions, and reconstruct Europe.

These were giant plans at the going down of the sun; they all revolved around the same central point, the same heroic human arm. It is known that there were found two or three men who considered themselves equal to these plans; they had sprung up in the genius of a diplomat, and, like a prairie fire, had inflamed the minds of two monarchs longing for exploits. It is also known that these plans in all their stormy greatness were more reasonably contrived than those which Charles XII made by himself. But what is perhaps forgotten, is, that there were still thousands of others who believed in their possibility; and among them were the last Finns. For long years all the Swedish kingdom had dreamed of victory; misfortune and sacrifice had undeceived those who were the nearest fainting under the burden, but the soldier still undertook everything in his proud faith that under the king's banner he could conquer the world. Finnish inertia does not quickly give up its illusions. Nothing, not even reverses, retreat, and the thousand dangers, were able to disturb the indomitable spirit of Armfelt's army, so long as the king lived. They fought in a

shadow, as Leonidas fought under the darts of the Persians : "The shadow of a name."

But it came—the message which palsied every arm and erased all the future from the book of victories. A whisper, sad as the grave, went through the ranks ; Charles XII was no more ; he had fallen as he had lived: above the breastwork, hand on his sword-hilt, eye on the enemy, balls whistling about him. "He fell," says one of his contemporaries, "by a ball which went straight through his head, and that ball felled Sweden." His contemporary forgot more fully to explain *how* he fell. If it was "before a coalition of all Europe," if it was before a Swedish ball or a Norwegian ball, or if it was not a ball but the sword—these things seemed of no weight at that time. The only important matter was that the man fell who, mountain high above the pigmies of the times, bore singly on his shoulders a whole era that fell with him, never to rise again. His contemporaries did not believe, with the greatest of Sweden's later historians, that Charles XII's death was a "finished life;" it expected of his later career improbable things like those he had done before, and who shall say that they expected foolishly? * The only certain thing is that the world breathed easier after the last giant's fall, for military greatness burdens the earth, and it oppressed Sweden as though a mountain had fallen upon its breast. Yet, it is equally sure that where human greatness is added to it, it elevates more than it depresses, and it enlarges the heart of man to such exploits as live in history. Under Charles XII every little boy in Sweden and Finland felt that he was growing up to be a giant. Those who reckon this king's actions according to the common system of debit and credit make the result: balance, loss so and so much. And it cannot be otherwise, for Charles XII was, per-

* Shortly before his death, Charles XII gave orders for the renovation of the summer castles. Many believed that he had determined to devote his later years to peace and the restoration of the kingdom.

haps, the greatest spendthrift that ever lived, wasting his kingdom, his conquests, his army and himself, with the same contempt for the art of accumulating. But the accountants have forgotten a credit balance, which elevates his time and which elevates all coming generations, namely: the lustre of his greatness. He was the apex and the last dazzling example of that Scandinavian spirit of heroism which for the preceding thousand years had raged over Europe. He, therefore, bore within him more than an epoch, more than a people; he bore within him the soul of the past thousand years. They were past, and, therefore, it fell with him; but the shadow of his name, which filled and darkened the north while he lived, fills and illumines the north since his fall.

Armfelt obtained the sorrowful news of the king's death from an intercepted Norwegian postillion. It could not long be concealed from the soldiers, and from that moment the Finnish army was lost. The power of enthusiasm, the power of victory, which had so long sustained the champions amid superhuman exertions, that power was broken. Reality seized and overpowered them, as if the rock which a giant had overturned upon the precipice, rolled back upon his palsied arm. And the reality at this moment was a cold Christmas morning on Norway's pathless mountains.

The army decamped from Tydal, and it was forty miles to the nearest village in Jemtland. With the army were Norwegian prisoners, and among them mountaineers, who, having to choose between the rope and a generous reward, acted as guides. The sun was still shining on the highest mountain tops, Bokhammaren, Öjefjäll, Remmen, and Einhagen. But its light was soon quenched in the black snow-cloud, which continually rose higher and came nearer with a slight breeze from the northwest. In a few minutes mountain, men, horses and sleighs were all wrapped in

a snowstorm so thick that no one could see ten steps ahead, and so icy cold that it penetrated the warmest clothing. They were few who had a coat of sheepskin or an untorn homespun jacket. The guides went astray and froze to death. The army marched forward without knowing where, but it went forward as long as it went at all. And they went as long as they could walk—otherwise they would not have been Finns. But soon they could go no further. The horses fell dead. The guns fell from the soldiers' hands. Some were buried in masses of snow, some sank down exhausted, and slept, never to waken again. Some fell into deep clefts covered with a treacherous roof of snow. The remainder sought bivouacs. In the shelter of rocks, fires were kindled; everything that could burn—gunstocks, ramrods, transport sleds, gun-carriages, saddles, harness, sword belts—was burned without sparing. But the snow-storm continued to rage with undiminished violence all of Christmas day and the day after. The fires could no longer be kept up. The whole army was devoted to destruction.

In this terrible Christmas sport might be seen the tall figure of a champion appearing in the snowstorm accompanied by about three hundred men who still followed him. He was one of the few who did not yet doubt. It was he who in the renowned expedition against Trondhjem first lifted a cannon on his shoulder and bore it across the chasm. It was he who now on the return first broke across his knee a heavy timbered transport sleigh and made a fire of it. It was he who, unwearied, took now one and now another out of the drifts and the clefts and recalled them to life. His troop followed him as a preserving angel, and through incredible dangers beat a road to Eina river, which flows from the mountain to Handöl, the first village in Jemtland.

When the three hundred came to the river they set up a shout of joy, for they had now a compass which

would not fail them, as the sun, moon and stars had failed in this terrible snow storm. They cut a hole in the ice and looked to see which way the water ran; thence was Jemtland, thence was salvation. Hope once more smiled upon these few remaining braves. Filled with gratitude, they surrounded their leader, Major Bertelsköld, and begged to take turns in carrying him, for, as he had for the last thirty-six hours worked more than twenty of them together, his strength began to fail. But he pressed their hands in farewell, and said a few words which outvoiced the storm.

“Go on, boys,” said he, “that is the way to life. I turn back here, and no one may follow me. More than three thousand of our men still wander about among these mountains; God knows how many of them can still stir a foot. But it is Finland’s last army; I cannot forsake them; I must find as many of them as I can, to show them the way here to Eina river. Do not deny me; it is the last order I shall give you, my children; you know I cannot brook resistance in the service. Should I not return, bear my greeting to my wife and my little son, my Charles Victor. Tell them that they, next to God, were my last thought. Tell them that my brother Torsten shall watch over them, and bring up my son to be a good man, who fears and honors the king. Tell them I died as I lived, for Finland and for King Charles. Since they are no more, it is not worth while for me to live longer. Farewell, boys; God be with you. Should any of you see Finland again, salute her for me!”

With these words the valiant champion wiped off the frozen tear with his snowy sleeve and hurried away with brisk step, as if he feared that love for wife and child and life should at the last moment betray his fatherland. The soldiers looked after him sadly; no one ventured to set his own will against his last order, and he soon disappeared from their sight, hidden by the mountain and the falling snow.

It was also the last time that anything was heard of this hero of our story, the honest and brave Carolin, Gustaf Adolf Bertelsköld. If he succeeded in saving any of Finland's last troop of heroes, it has never been known. It is certain, however, that he with thousands of others disappeared without a trace in the mountains' immeasurable snow-covered grave, sealing with his life that love for king and fatherland which constantly enlivened his steadfast soul during hundreds of strifes, victories, and adversities, from the beginning of his career even to its end.

All, or nearly all, that had life and breath on the mountain that Christmas day, perished. The story goes that some who were left set free the Norwegian captives and sent them to the commandant at Trondhjem to ask assistance, and that he sent three hundred skaters and one hundred and fifty light sleds to seek out and save the lost. These honest Norsemen who marched forth to save a hostile army, could not advance in the mountains while the storm lasted. After it was over, they followed the track of the Finnish army; and fearful was the sight that met them among the rocks. The path of the army was only too well marked by cannons which had sunk down in the drifts and were left, and weapons thrown away and lying strewn around. Then they encountered officers and men frozen to death, first one by one, then whole files, finally entire companies and battalions. Some were found dead by their extinguished camp-fires, others sitting or lying in sleds behind dead horses; many lay crushed in the deep abysses, others again had stiffened and fallen in the order in which they marched. All around was heard the bark of wolves; the mountain eagles circled in flocks about this great battle-field of death; and Tydal became for many years the best hunting ground in Norway.

The losses by this Christmas devastation have never been accurately numbered. They might be judged by this: Armfelt's army entered Norway with six thous-

and five hundred men fit for war, and of these about five hundred returned, part of them with frozen limbs. If we estimate the loss in dead and captured during the remainder of the expedition at twenty-five hundred men, the number of the frozen would be about three thousand five hundred. Some give a higher figure, some a lower; it is certain that the loss was for that time immense.

Thus ends the last adventure in Charles XII's great bloody tragedy, and thus fell Finland's last Carolins, of whom the poet sings :

“ The last of Finland's troops thus flew,
Sought out from regions dreary;
Among the mountains there to die,
Beneath the northern snows to lie.”

And again he sings :

“ Though Sweden wept, wept Finland more,
As mother weeps, and widow.”

You who in the verdure of spring, charmed with milder pictures, have listened to this sad but noble story; you whose heart warms in contemplating the luster of Swedish honor or the Finnish exploits of later days immortalized in song and story; remember that Finland of old had heroes worthy to be known in history, although it never had before and will probably never have again an Ensign Stål to sing them.

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