

AXEL

A Tale Of The Thirty Years' War

By C. F. Van der Velde

The beautiful Tugendreich von Starschedel was standing in the baronial hall of her ancestral castle before the pedigree of her family, which occupied the space between two pillars in the wall. Her little hand powerfully pressed her heaving bosom, as if it wished to check the violent palpitation of her agitated heart, and her dark blue eyes wandered stealthily from the gay escutcheons and glanced through the lofty arched windows into the open riding-course, in which Axel, the groom, was just then breaking in a young stallion, with all the grace and strength of the horse-tamer Castor.

"Well," said Gundchen, her maid, who was leaning against the window, "there is nothing, in my opinion, like a good horseman. Only look, gracious Fräulein, how the untamed animal is rearing, and how the man sits on him like a puppet."

"That is a silly picture, if it is intended to be flattering," said Tugendreich, and blushing, she stepped to the window, as she feared she had betrayed herself.

"Do not torment yourself so much, Axel," cried the baron from the window. "You and Hippolytus may break your necks together; he is sure not to leap, and the master of the stable has given him up already."

"All depends on the rider," replied Axel, with powerful voice. "He shall leap, I assure you, though he had Wallenstein and Tilly on him." So saying, he pressed the snorting animal with great strength, and galloped with him to the end of the course, that he might better leap the bar.

"A devil of a fellow this Axel," said the nobleman, laughing in approbation.

"Heavens!" shrieked Gundchen, "there will be an accident," and Tugendreich suppressed a sigh of anguish. With frightful side-leaps, the black horse furiously galloped towards the bar. At this moment the little daughter of the gardener ran across the course, and frightened at the approaching furious steed, fell just under his fore feet. Terror prevented the spectators from crying out, but Axel saw the child at the critical moment when the hoof was raised over its head, and, thinking of its peril, only reined the leaping horse suddenly in with such force that he fell rearing on his haunches.

"He will fall back," cried the baron.

"I cannot look upon it," exclaimed Gundchen, holding her hands before her eyes, and Tugendreich leaned against the recess as white as her veil. In the meanwhile Axel had given the horse so violent a blow on the head, that he was on his legs again and stood trembling; he dismounted, lifted the crying child gently from the ground and kissing it, carried it to its mother, who came up running and shrieking.

"Gallantly done," cried the nobleman, "but the experiment might have cost your life."

"Better that Hippolytus and I should die than the innocent child," replied Axel. He mounted again, and the steed now knowing his master, leaped readily and gracefully without a run over the high bar.

"Well done," cried the nobleman again. "Come up, you shall have a bottle of wine for that." "I must first cool the animal," was Axel's short reply, as he rode off in a gentle trot. "This fellow is not to be bought for gold," muttered the baron; "but he sometimes assumes a

tone that makes it doubtful which of us two is the master and which the groom."

Tugendreich, agitated by the scene she had just witnessed, was about to leave the hall. On her way, she again passed the pedigree, and turning her glowing countenance upon it, a black escutcheon met her eye. This belonged to a lateral relation whom her father had only recently struck out on account of a misalliance. With a gloomy foreboding she gazed at it, then cast an anxious glance upon the one bearing her name, and hurried sobbing from the hall.

About an hour after this, Tugendreich met the dangerous groom in the anti-room of her father's closet. Their eyes flashed as they met each other, but both immediately looked on the ground while a blush, like the sky tinged by the rising sun, overspread her cheeks. "The gardener's little Rosa has recovered from her fright," she whispered softly, "I have just left her."

"May heaven reward you, Fräulein, that sent you upon earth as a ministering reconciling angel!" cried the groom with transport.

"But promise me, Axel, not to ride so furiously again; I have been in great anxiety about thee," stammered Tugendreich, becoming confused in the midst of her speech, as she had not yet settled in her mind as to whether she should address this groom by "thee," or "you." [1]

"About me? This makes me indescribably happy," said Axel with delight, and suddenly raised her beautiful hand to his lips, imprinting a fiery kiss on it. At this she appeared angry, withdrew her hand from his bold grasp, though a minute too late, and saying, "You forget yourself," quickly left the room.

Axel's eyes followed her with rapture, and he then entered his master's room and found him in company with Magister Talander, his spiritual

adviser and factotum, playing chess, and exchanging high words. In vain did the excited magister prove from Damiano, Phillippo, Carrera, and Gustavo Seleno, that the adversary's piece which threatened one of the squares over which the king must be moved, was one of the five impediments to castling the king. In vain did he assert that Palmedes, Xerxes, Satrenshah, and even Tamerlan could not have played otherwise. The baron stood to his own opinion, and said, the absurdity of the rule was so evident, that even his groom Axel, if he had but a notion of the moves, could not but see it.

"I know the moves, and you are wrong," interrupted Axel. With open mouth, the master wondered at the impudence of his servant, who quietly added: "You forget that the question here is about a paltry king of chess, about an indolent, cowardly despot, who is only born to be protected by his people; and if ever compelled to act himself, moves in a narrow, pitiful circle. It is quite consistent that such a king should take the only important step in his life with the utmost caution, and avoid doing it if there is the least appearance of danger. My king, indeed, would not recognise himself in this picture."

"What does the fellow mean by talking about his king?" muttered the old baron. "Our gracious sovereign is the elector of Saxony."

"But not mine," was Axel's proud reply. "I have the honour to be a Swede."

"For heaven's sake, Magister, tell me whence this fellow gets his pride, and bold words?" asked the baron softly.

"Why, I have already had my meditations on that subject," replied he, with a shake of the head; and the old baron said, in a commanding tone to Axel: "There's your wine, but you shall drink to the health of our lord elector."

"Most joyfully," replied Axel, filling a bumper, and raising it in the air; "here's to the health of your noble elector, and my heroic king, and may the concluded alliance prove a blessing to Saxony and to Sweden for many generations to come."

"Well, that is something new again," replied the baron, sarcastically; "I suppose you were in the cabinet when the alliance was concluded. Unfortunately we have not come to that yet."

"We have come to it, my lord," replied Axel, familiarly tapping the baron on the shoulder; "your elector is no chess king, who is afraid to take a quick and decisive step that shall decide the welfare of his land."

He went away, and the two old gentlemen sat, struck with astonishment, staring at each other, like the pair of lions at Dresden.

In melancholy mood, Tugendreich was standing before an old decayed shaft, to which her walk had brought her, and her maid, like Fräulein's little spaniel, was crawling about among the bushes in search of something. At this moment Talander came up to them, laden with a large bundle of plants on his return from botanising. To his inquiries, as to what they were in search of, Tugendreich informed him, that, in running down a hill, she had laid hold of a branch, and twisted from her finger a beautiful sapphire ring, a beloved legacy of her late mother, which had probably rolled into the shaft, as they had at present searched for it in vain.

"Oh, what youthful levity!" replied the magister, in a grumbling voice. "This precious stone ought not to have been merely valuable to you as a remembrance of your revered mother, but, having been dug and cut out under particular constellations, it was the talisman of your life. Have you been forgetful enough not to remember that the greatest secrets of nature lie in verbis, herbis et lapidibus? A foreboding which

rarely deceives me, tells me that this loss will have a decisive influence on your fate."

Tugendreich listened anxiously to the words of the old tutor, which she was wont to consider as oracles.

"Do not grieve too much, however," continued the old man, in a milder tone, "the same foreboding tells me also that the hand from which you will receive back the lost stone, will also lead you to the true happiness of your life." Thus saying, he walked slowly down the foot-path towards the castle, while Tugendreich looked thoughtfully after him. A crackling and rustling was heard in the branches of an old pine-tree standing near the shaft, and from its top, which touched a high rock, descended a sturdy huntsman, boldly leaping from bough to bough, who soon stood before the astonished maiden as Axel.

"I overheard all," he said, with rapture, "and joyfully will risk my life to make good the prophetic words of Talander. You shall see me either with the ring or not at all. In the latter case shed a tear over my grave." And before the Fräulein could raise her hand to prevent him, the audacious man rushed into the shaft, and with a dull and rumbling noise pieces of earth and stones rolled after him into the dark abyss.

"He is lost," sighed Tugendreich, sinking into the arms of Gundchen, who, astonished by the clear light which broke upon her at this moment, could not feel the same grief for the lost man.

With a look of affection Tugendreich bent down over the shaft, so that Gundchen thought it advisable to lay hold of the dress of her mistress to prevent her from following her beloved, should she be inclined to do so. A joyful sound now resounded from the depth below, and immediately Axel was struggling up the shaft through various minerals that had shot out in the shape of goblins, and with bleeding hand presented the lost ring to the Fräulein. With a heavenly look the astonished girl thanked him, while tears of gratitude fell on the

wounded hand, which Axel eagerly kissed away. Now, for the first time, she saw the blood on his hand, shrieked aloud, and insisted upon binding the wound herself of which she had been the cause. Slowly he offered his hand. Not seeing the handkerchief which her maid offered, the Fräulein took her own, binding it with the ribbon of the bow she wore on her own bosom. As she let go his hand Axel fancied that he felt a gentle pressure, but before he had time to think of this happy moment in which he saw a symbol of his future happiness, the lovely girl had fled like a frightened roe. As if in a dream he slowly pursued his way to the castle, where Talander received him at the gate, being commissioned from the Fräulein, and ready for every emergency, took out his case of surgical instruments to dress his wound in due form. While doing this the old man said, "You have a fine hand, almost too delicately formed for your station; I suppose you have also seen military service, these hard parts show that you have frequently handled the sword."

"Ah, true," stammered the patient, embarrassed.

"You seem altogether a strange customer," continued Talander "and I am somewhat curious to know more of you. Pray just show me the palm of your hand."

"Never mind such fooleries, magister," said Axel, withdrawing his hand.

"Only ignorance judges hastily of what it does not understand," said the magister, angrily. "How can you thus with contempt reject that noble chiromancy to which I have devoted myself for nearly a generation." Forcibly seizing the wounded hand he examined it long and closely, then said, muttering, "Well, these lines indicate that you were born for something superior to a stable. This line may be truly called the cingulum veneris, it promises success in love; and here are fame and honour and high dignities. Ah, ah, friend, you are not what you appear."

"Your crotchets deceive you in a singular manner," said Axel, embarrassed, and wishing to escape.

"The old Talander is no woman," said the magister, "and therefore has no crotchets, and has never deceived himself yet." And, retaining his hold of Axel, he added, "I tell you plainly you are no groom, and if you were not a good evangelical Christian, and had not a pair of clear faithful eyes, through which one may imagine that one can look into your very heart, I should say you had some wicked design, and I should communicate my suspicions to the baron."

"By heavens and my honour," cried Axel, warmly, "my intentions are pure."

"A groom may indeed be an honest man," said Talander, mockingly, "but it is something uncommon for him to give his word of honour; it sounds rather cavalier-like, and you must act more in character. I have done now," continued he, fastening the bandage; "give me the handkerchief and ribbon to return to the Fräulein."

"Never," cried Axel, as he concealed the precious pledges in his bosom.

"'Never;' say you, youngster! you are rather too bold for me," said the old man, menacing with his finger. "Go, settle it yourself with the Fräulein. There she stands in the garden, near the rose-tree, herself the most beautiful rose in the garden. How wicked must be that worm that would malignantly approach this flower to poison its sweet bloom--are you not of the same opinion?"

"Indeed I am of the same opinion," said the groom; "be unconcerned about this sweet flower which so proudly sets forth your care as its gardener. With the ray of love it will bloom more beautifully, and if

myrtle and laurel shall once be entwined around it you will weep tears of joy."

"Amen," said the old man, with emotion, and Axel ran to the garden to Tugendreich.

"The magister demanded from me the handkerchief and ribbon in your name, Fräulein," said Axel; "I only bring you back the former, stained with the blood which flowed for you. May it speak a friendly word for poor Axel, when some day he will sigh far from you. The ribbon I must keep. It rested on your angelic heart, it is hallowed, and it will also hallow and purify the heart upon which it shall rest from this time."

Tugendreich wished to answer but was unable, she wished to look up but could not. It then occurred to her that she ought really to be indignant at this audacity, but that she could do still less; and the beautiful rose which she held in her hand became the victim of her inward struggle, for she plucked off leaf after leaf, dropping them on the ground.

"May I keep the ribbon?" asked Axel, imploringly. She at length raised her beautiful eyes, and a ray of love flashed powerfully from them. Enraptured he stretched out his arms to embrace her; deeply blushing, she sank into them, and he pressed the first pure kiss of ardent love on her lips. At this moment the baron suddenly appeared from behind the hedge, contemplating the group with a truly noble horror. "Begone to the castle!" he cried to his daughter; "to the stable!" he cried, in a voice of thunder, to Axel. Like a finger-post, he pointed to the places mentioned, and the frightened couple obeyed in silence.

* * * * *

In anxious expectation of what would follow, Tugendreich had been standing for some time in the window of the baronial hall, from which she had in the morning admired Axel's horsemanship, when her father came up to her with a wrathful countenance, seized her hand, and led her to the gigantic portrait of the ancestors of the Starschedels, which gloomily and menacingly looked down, as it were, from the gold frame upon the delinquent. "Who is that?" asked the baron, with suppressed wrath.

"Magnus von Starschedel, the founder of our family," repeated Tugendreich, words which had been impressed on her memory from infancy. "In the war against the emperor, Henry IV., Duke Rodolph of Swabia dubbed him knight, A.D. 1078, at Stronow, near Mellenstädt; and he fell in the battle fought against the same emperor, near Würzburg, A.D. 1086, after his valour had contributed to gain the victory."

"What think you this glorious knight would have done, if he had, like myself, seen you from behind the hedge?" asked her father, while Tugendreich cast her eyes down on the squares of the inlaid floors. "He would have cleft the head of the unfaithful servant," continued the baron, raising his voice, "and thrown the degenerate girl into the dungeon, until he should have placed her and her passion for ever in a cloister."

The Fräulein gave a silent assent to the justice of this sentence.

"Tugendreich! Tugendreich!" continued her father, reproaching her; "why did I give you this lovely name?[2] I ought to have christened you Philippe, for Talander has interpreted this name to me, to mean a lover of horses, and it would therefore be some excuse for your predilection for the stable."

Now a feeling of pride rose within her, and she cried, "I deserve blame, but do not merit your contempt. My feelings are pure, and I need not be ashamed of him."

The furious impetuosity of noble wrath would now have broken through the last barrier of paternal love, when fortunately for the poor Fräulein a loud shriek of terror resounded from the court-yard, and Talander entered the hall with a countenance as pale as death. "May God and his holy gospel protect us," exclaimed the old man. "A swarm of Croats is storming through the country, and may probably come this very night."

"Well," replied the baron, with affected composure, "Saxony has nothing to fear from the troops of his Imperial Majesty."

"So you think, my lord, but I do not," rejoined the magister, trembling. "People whisper already about the alliance concluded between Saxony and Sweden, and if the Croats are terrible even as friends, may Heaven preserve us against their inroads as enemies. They are said to commit the most awful havoc on the estates of the protestant noblemen."

The baron fell into an arm-chair as if thunder struck, and Tugendreich was wringing her white hands as Axel entered the hall. A helmet covered his head, a sword was rattling at his side, and before the old baron could think of his wrath against him, he said in a firm and manly tone, "The Croats are approaching, and will not want a pretext for committing their depredations here as they have done every where else; your property and life, and the honour of your lovely daughter are in jeopardy. Nothing but a bold resistance can save you. Isolani's followers spare nothing, not even those who submit readily."

"Are you out of your senses?" asked the baron. "With what force am I to begin the struggle against an imperial army?"

"Only he who abandons himself is abandoned," said Axel. "This castle has high, strong walls and deep moats. I have raised a whole village, and have armed your rangers and servants. If they follow my advice they will all take refuge here with their property. We must give up the village, and hold out here until succour comes."

Surprised by Axel's bold design and chivalrous conduct, old Starschedel sat there as incapable of opposition as of coming to a resolution of his own. "The means are desperate," said Talander, "but I see no other way of proceeding."

"But what of the imperial band?" sighed the old baron.

"We do not resist the imperial troops," argued the magister, cunningly. "We only protect our property against marauders and robbers, who plunder the country contrary to the will of his imperial majesty."

"Tell the people from the balcony that I act in accordance with your wish," said Axel, "and leave the rest to me."

Starschedel looked inquiringly at his oracle, who returned a nod of approbation, and submitted patiently to be dragged to the balcony by Axel, where he delivered general orders of obedience to Axel, though often interrupted by shortness of breath. A loud vivat resounded from the robust Saxon youths, who were eager to fight.

With proud satisfaction Tugendreich looked down on the singular groom who instructed the armed band in the court-yard as if he had been used to military duty all his life, assigned to every one his post in the court-yard, ordered the placing of men, cattle, and property, and then sallied forth with the mounted servants to reconnoitre the enemy. The baron, in the meanwhile, buried with trembling hands a casket of jewels in the cellar, while master Talander looked through his long telescope at the stars which now began to appear, compared his observations with the singular circles, lines, and signs upon a large

table, and then made his calculations until the drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead, examining the results now with a joyful nod, and now with a thoughtful shake of his white head. At midnight the reconnoitring corp returned. The garrison was summoned with beating of drums, and Axel addressed them as follows: "The Croats will presently enter the village and will not spare any thing; the sky is already red with their torches; they will burn here also, but we shall be secure behind these walls while you show yourselves to be men. Bear in mind that you are to fight for your good lord and his noble daughter, for the pure doctrine of the gospel, for your venerable pastor, for the honour of your wives, and for the lives of your children. Now long life to the elector!"

"Long life to the elector!" shouted the band after him, joyfully; but the "Hoch" stuck in many a throat, as at this moment the music of the approaching Croats chimed in with their "Vivat" as a flourish.

"To your posts," cried Axel in a thundering voice, and then once more looking to the draw bridge, he ordered the gates to be secured and ascended the battlements of the donjon. A wild tumult was now heard in the village. The Croats searched boisterously for the inhabitants and provisions but in vain, and therefore avenged their disappointment upon the doors and windows of the cottages. At length a troop with torches galloped up to the castle, startled at the drawn bridge and sounded the trumpet as a summons for admittance. The trumpet within the castle was sounded in answer, and Axel asked in military form what was their wish.

"Down with the bridge first," blustered an infuriated captain of the Croats in broken German, "and then you will see what we want."

"Show us the orders of his Imperial Majesty and our Elector, that this castle is to receive a garrison," replied Axel, modestly, "and the bridge shall immediately be lowered."

At this the foreign barbarian foamed with rage, snatched his carbine from his saddle and fired it at Axel. The bullet missed, and Axel in return sent a bullet from his gun whizzing through the cap of the Croat.

"This is to teach you uncivilized fellows the usage of war, that no shot should be fired during a parley," he cried. "My shot was only to warn you of this; but if you do not draw off, the next shall be in earnest." Upon this the captain swearing turned his horse round and galloped madly back into the village with his troops.

As Axel was turning to descend, he saw Tugendreich standing before him as pale and motionless as a statue. "For heaven's sake, Fräulein," he cried, "what are you doing up here? this is not a place for a gentle lady."

"I heard firing," said the lovely girl, sighing deeply; "I thought you were in danger, and could not longer remain below."

"Faithful heart!" exclaimed he, with emotion and affection. "By all that I hold sacred I will some day requite you." And quickly taking her in his strong arms he carried her down the steps, and consigned her to her attendant, whom he strictly enjoined not to allow the Fräulein to ascend the walls again. He then returned quickly to his post, as he already heard resounding through the night the march of the approaching enemy threatening the castle.

Suddenly the thatched cottages of the villages were blazing up in a terrible manner. Amid the light of the flames the Croats assaulted the castle in close bodies and with wild fury. But the garrison made a brave resistance, and their rifles created great havoc among the enemies' ranks. Axel was everywhere, and though the Croats attempted in different places to scale the walls by the aid of ladders, he immediately was at the spot, to strike down the foremost, and then with powerful hand to precipitate ladder and all into the moat. For an

hour the most furious combat had been raging when the enemies' trumpets sounded the retreat, and the infuriated captain who led the rear cried out with a savage laugh, "At sunrise we shall return with heavy cannon, and show you who we are."

The morning dawned after a sleepless night, and found the two old gentlemen sitting sorrowfully in Talander's closet, which was bomb-proof. The lamp was nearly out, and they started up terrified on hearing the trumpet sound outside the castle walls. After a short time Axel, who had been wounded in the cheek, entered, announcing Baron Grotta, lieutenant-colonel in the imperial army, saying, "My lords, the colonel awaits you in the hall: for heaven's sake show no fear, and let the magister settle the terms of a capitulation."

He consented and left the room. On arriving in the hall a fine-looking officer met him, whose countenance might be called beautiful, had there not been an expression of defiance and haughtiness about the eyes and mouth which detracted from the impression first produced. After the usual civilities had been exchanged, the stranger informed him that a division of the imperial army was to pass through the village on that day, and that their general had learned with astonishment the audacity with which the castle had opposed their light troops; that he was inclined, however, to pardon this, knowing the rapacity and outrages of the Croats, who made no distinction between friend and foe; but that now he expected the castle to be surrendered to him immediately.

"On what conditions," asked the astonished baron.

"Methinks you ought to be glad if an imperial general," said he in a sarcastic tone, "after what has happened, once more kindly invites you to trust blindly to his generosity. At all events it is more advisable for you to open your gates than to let our cannons burst them open."

At this moment the beautiful Tugendreich entered the hall, followed by a servant with flasks and goblets. Love, with its joys and sorrows had diffused a supernatural charm over her noble countenance, which did not fail to produce so magical an effect upon the warrior, that he at once in a gentler tone added to his menaces the question, "Is this your daughter?" The baron then introduced her, and the stranger took the brimming goblet she presented to him, and in a polite manner asked on what conditions the castle would capitulate. The baron pleading indisposition in consequence of the nightly assault promised to send his chaplain to negotiate, and left the hall delighted to be released from this purgatory. The experienced hero now addressed himself courteously to the Fräulein, and after condoling with her on account of the terrors of the past night, and expressing his satisfaction at being able to contribute something to alleviate their present situation, was beginning to get as sentimental as it became a soldier in the thirty years' war, when old Talander entered bowing, followed by Axel, who, unarmed, and in a respectful manner, brought in writing materials.

"In the name of my noble master I am to have the honour of treating with you, gallant sir," said he in a submissive tone; "we have only a few just conditions to propose, which I beg your gracious permission to state."

"Granted," said the colonel, casting an expressive look at the Fräulein, which told her it was only on her account that he granted any conditions whatever. The magister began to read the following propositions: "Unconditional amnesty for the past night; liberty for religion and her servants until the fate of this country is decided; exemption from all contributions under whatever name or pretext they may be demanded."

"Great demands," interrupted the colonel.

"In return, Baron Von Starschedel grants to the troops of his imperial majesty the right of garrison in his castle," continued Talander.

"But only to the regiment of Tiefenbach," interrupted Axel, hastily. "It is best disciplined, and the promise which your general has given us in writing is a security of the capitulation being kept."

With angry astonishment the stranger looked at the insolent groom. Tugendreich and Talander showed consternation. The magister broke the silence by saying, "The hasty interruption of this young man reminds me of two important points which my old head had forgotten; I therefore hasten to supply them."

While the magister was writing, Tugendreich observed, in a gentle tone, as she suddenly became conscious of the influence of her sex, "So gallant a man as the colonel will certainly do his utmost to concede such reasonable conditions."

"What would I not do, for a kind look from those eyes?" said he tenderly, and he took from Talander's hands the points he had written down, made a military bow to the Fräulein, cast a look of contempt on Axel as he departed, and was soon seen to gallop through the gate.

A quarter of an hour had scarcely elapsed, when the chains of the drawbridge and the creaking of the gate were heard again, and the colonel galloped into the court-yard, waving the signed capitulation on high as a banner of peace. With great respect and delight, the baron went to meet him at the castle entrance, and the welcome officer dismounted with graceful ease from his charger, giving the bridle with a haughty contempt into Axel's hands, evidently to make him conscious of the respect which was due to him, and which he had before forgotten.

One of his fellow grooms, seeing the anger which flashed from the eyes of Axel at this pointed humiliation, took the horse from him and

led him about. The colonel did not fail observing this, and to complete the mortification of the insolent servant, he set his foot on the steps of the entrance, and called to Axel, "Groom, my right spur galls me, loosen it."

"I will let your groom know that you want him," said Axel haughtily, "if you will have the condescension to tell me where I can find him."

The colonel's face reddened with indignation, and addressing the baron, biting and grinding his teeth, he requested him to remind his groom of his duty, as his rank demanded he should insist upon it. The baron satisfied his demands in a ludicrous manner, not knowing in his heart, of whom he was most afraid. Axel shook his head in silence. "Pray, good Axel," whispered the baron entreatingly, "when you have often fastened my spurs, will you refuse it to a person of such distinction.

"I honour and love you as a father," said Axel, "and consider it no disgrace to serve you; I would willingly perform the most menial services for you, but cannot suffer indignity from the haughtiness of a stranger."

"I am curious to see," said the stranger scornfully, "whether the master or the servant will get the best of this singular dispute." And, irritated by this observation, and working himself up into a passion in order to gain his point, the baron cried, "Either you loosen the spurs, or you quit my service immediately."

"I go, gracious master," said Axel most respectfully. "I know you are safe for some time to come, and I carry with me the delightful satisfaction of having so far contributed to your safety. Remember sometimes, kindly, your faithful servant;" and, shaking heartily the hand which the baron offered him, he went to the stable to pack up his knapsack.

Absorbed in secret dreams, Tugendreich stood in a grotto in the garden, and did not even hear the drums of a company of Tiefenbach's regiment which was entering the castle, when suddenly Axel stood before her with the knapsack on his back. "Your father has dismissed me from his service," he said, with emotion, "but I shall never quit yours, sweet Fräulein. You shall soon hear of me." With tears in his eyes, he offered a forget-me-not, which she could not refuse accepting from the hand that still showed the scar from the descent into the shaft. "But," continued he, recollecting himself, "this keepsake will soon be destroyed, therefore take another of a solid material from my own native country." And, taking out a Swedish copper dollar, he broke it with gigantic strength, offered one-half to the Fräulein, and said, "He who shall bring you the other half will come from me." Before Tugendreich was aware how she had got the burning kiss which glowed upon her lips he had vanished, and Talander stood before her like a personified lecture. He was on the point of delivering it, when the baron, who was somewhat wearied by the first impetuous demands of his new guest, approached in a gloomy mood, and asked, astonished and peevishly, "What was the meaning of the flower which the Fräulein was still affectionately contemplating?"

"I was just disputing with the good magister about it," replied she, with genuine female composure, whilst she wiped away her last tears. "Being my instructor in botany, he thinks he can make me believe anything. Only think, he maintains that this is the *Myosotis palustris*, or mouse-ear, and it is evidently the *Veronica chamaedrys*, or germander, which moreover rhymes with Talander. Am I not right, dear father?" So saying, she bounded away out of the garden, to cast, if possible, one more look from the tower after her departing favourite, whilst Talander raised his hands in utter astonishment at the consummate ingenuity which his timid pupil so readily displayed.

* * * * *

The calamities of war which the large armies marching to and fro brought upon the country did not press with particular weight upon the inhabitants of the castle. For this they were indebted to the colonel who was quartered within it with his company. But it soon became evident that his services were not altogether disinterested, for he daily made nearer and more evident advances towards the beautiful daughter of the house, and ventured many a time to storm her heart with tender, chivalrous courtesy. His noble demeanour and manly beauty, in addition to his high rank as a soldier, his birth and his fortune, powerfully supported his suit. But an invincible antagonist was in Tugendreich's heart; the image of poor Axel and the half-copper dollar were to her a more precious treasure than the rich necklace which Baron Grotta ordered from Dresden, and which she was forced to accept by the command of her father. A dim foreboding seemed to tell the proud colonel what rival he had to contend with, and the recollection of the handsome insolent groom and the scene with the spur began to assume the shape of a suspicion which produced ill humour. This was expressed in many contemptuous observations concerning low-born persons, and his scorn at their desire to force their way into the upper classes daily wearied the patience of old Talander, who entertained very high notions of his own worth as a man. When it happened upon one occasion that the colonel in his presence boasted rather too complacently to the Fräulein of his hereditary privileges, the old man commenced reading a passage from a poem which an old collegian had sent him from Halle, running thus:[3]

"Ye who prefer your dross to silver pure and fine, And think your glass as good as diamonds from the mine; I mean you, who in lists of ancestors take pride, And seem so many noughts set other noughts beside; Who worship that vain idol--old nobilitié, Ye truly are besotted--I pray ye, pardon me."

The colonel looked with eyes of wonder, which, in spite of the *captatio benevolentia* in the concluding line, expressed no

forgiveness, at the daring magister who, however, was not silent, but continued reading.

"The flags your sires have left, of what avail are they? And what avails the plume that decks your arms so gay? The helm and shield bequeath'd by men who liv'd of yore, The burnish'd arms ye keep a thousand years in store, Are vanities; and he that's wise will say, indeed, When real worth appears they must perforce recede."

At this the colonel left the room in a blustering manner as if he anticipated the sixteen lines of the poem which were yet to come, and with which Talander intended to treat him. The door closed after him with a great noise, and a pressure of the Fräulein's hand thanked the grey knight who had so victoriously beaten that powerful enemy of her secret wishes out of the field.

But this satisfaction was not of long duration. The colonel, despairing of obtaining the hand of his chosen one, in the modern way, that is to say, by his own powers of persuasion, chose the ancient plan, and called to his aid paternal authority. Poor Starschedel had to maintain a difficult position between the importunity of the noble suitor, the tears of his daughter, and the veto of Talander who, with the eloquence of a confessor, imposed the denial as a matter of conscience upon his protestant master. But here, as every where else, power and rank at last conquered. The colonel's corps received orders to join Tilly's, who expected to fight a pitched battle, and he, therefore, vehemently urged a quick decision. The baron, who could not resist, announced to his pale daughter the following morning as the day on which she was to be betrothed, adding with the utmost energy that this was his unalterable will. He then left her quickly, fearing his resolution might be changed by her imploring looks. The poor girl retired into the garden unconscious of what she was doing, and standing before the rose-tree which had witnessed the first kiss of Axel, looked sorrowfully to the grotto of his last farewell. Suddenly a capuchin friar, with a white beard, stood before her silently presenting half a

copper dollar. "For heaven's sake tell me whether you come from Axel?" cried the lovely maiden trembling, while her pale cheeks were suffused with blushes.

"I come from him," replied a strong unknown voice. "He now serves as dragoon in the Swedish army, which is about to engage in a pitched battle. Before this takes place he wishes once more to see you, and bid you farewell. But at present he does not venture here, and therefore entreats you to meet him this night on the Mordmühle in the scharfen Thale. You may bring the old magister with you, and safe conduct is provided for you thither and back. Axel will wait there for you until one o'clock, at which time his duty will oblige him to leave. Will you come?"

"I will come," whispered the Fräulein, after a short struggle.

The capuchin now hastened with long unfriar-like strides towards the high garden wall, climbed it nimbly like a cat and disappeared. At this moment Talander entered the garden to speak a few words of consolation to his pupil concerning the terrible morrow. But his words of unction died on his eloquent tongue, when the Fräulein made him the singular proposal to accompany her that night on a promenade to the Mordmühle. He refused, she entreated, he remonstrated, she coaxed him, he was inexorable, she wept, and he, incapable of resisting tears from such eyes said, at length 'concedo.'

Whoever knew the Mordmühle could not but think the demand of Axel hazardous. It lay in a narrow valley formed by steep rocks, and lofty black pines, through which rushed the dark fierce torrent, and its last proprietor, whose soul was burthened with the commission of many murders, had fallen by the hand of his own son. The shepherds only dared during the day to let their herds graze in the rich pasture of the meadow surrounding the mill. As soon as evening twilight approached every living thing fled the awful precincts, within which, according to popular tradition, only the spirits of the murdered held

their fearful haunts. Tugendreich was not quite free from the superstition of the times, but strong love, which conquers every obstacle, overcame her fear, and when the last glow of evening in the west reddened the sky, she had contrived to get rid of her father and the importunate suitor, and commenced her heroic journey with the grumbling magister. As they came to the last heap of the ruins of the desolated village he drew her attention to four tall figures in dark clothes, who started up suddenly with a clattering noise, as if at the word of command, from behind the wall of a cottage that was burnt down, and accompanied them step by step, surrounding them on all sides. Tugendreich recollecting the promised escort walked on fearlessly. But as they entered the valley, the moon rising from behind the lofty firs, and the church clock in a neighbouring village striking twelve, she felt some alarm, and now fancied she heard but too distinctly the wheels of the long deserted mill in full motion, which at this time, and under these circumstances, could not be caused by any one but evil spirits. Her companion silently shared her fears and thoughts, being moreover already so terrified by the figures who accompanied them in cloaks, that the drops stood on his face. At length he broke the awful silence, saying:

"Child, I have complied with your wish, I have put my life in jeopardy and come this accursed walk. Now tell me, daughter, what do you wish to do in the most ill-famed corner of this country?"

"To bid farewell to Axel," said the Fräulein, "he has appointed to meet me here."

"To Axel. I wish I had known that," muttered the magister, adding in an admonishing tone, "Have you perhaps been deceived by a hellish phantom? There are instances in which the evil one, with divine permission, avails himself of an excessive forbidden love in order subtilely to destroy a soul. The place and time of your appointment are not in accordance with my notions of propriety. Supposing your singular admirer were dead, and that his departed spirit had sent you

this summons, and was waiting for you in the Mordmühle with his outstretched bony arms, to draw you into the dark subterranean bridal chamber?"

At this instant the speaker was interrupted by a loud and long-continued blast of a bugle, which was answered from the mill, the wheels of which were really revolving with a terrible noise, and emitted a thousand silvery sparks which were reflected by the moonlight: a tall man came out from the mill. The foremost of the four attendants approached him with respect, and a moment after Tugendreich was in the arms of Axel, reclining her burning cheeks against his beating heart.

"Come into the mill, beloved girl," he whispered imploringly, "we are not quite safe here from discovery. You, reverend sir, will bear us company. I thank you for having conducted the Fräulein hither."

The magister followed the two lovers, shaking his head in doubts at the suspicious dwelling.

"Let every thing proceed as I have already ordered," said Axel, in a tone of command, to the tall figures who had posted themselves outside the door like statues, "and do not stop the wheels of the mill until the Fräulein is again safe."

He now conducted his beloved into the only habitable room of the mill, which being well lighted with lanterns, looked tolerably cheerful, while a camp table, set out with flasks and cake, invited the weary and hungry magister, who sat down a camp-stool near to it. Axel affectionately took the Fräulein to the window; and whilst they were conversing confidentially, the magister, who was enjoying the repast, made his reflections on the decent preparations which Axel had made for the rendezvous, and which were not in unison with the plain jacket of a Swedish dragoon that he wore. But his ideas became more and more confused; soon he had hardly a clear conception of what passed

through his mind; and when, at length, the effect of the long walk, his age, the night, and the generous wine closed his eyelids, the creatures of his imagination assumed the shape of substantial and significant dreams, from which the old seer had already received many prophetic warnings. The village clock now struck one, and Axel gently disengaged himself from Tugendreich, in whose tears the rays of the setting moon were shining.

"I must go, dearest," said he. "Only this one blissful hour could I withdraw myself from my duty. I would ask you to accompany me; but my journey will not be without danger, to which I will not expose you, and your father's house will still be your fittest residence. To escape the hated betrothal to-morrow, you must feign illness. Every thing may be gained by time, in the unhappy period in which we live. If God preserves my life, you shall soon hear good tidings of me; and if I die, let the thought that I fell in his holy cause be your consolation." Dissolved in tears, she clung to his neck, and thus they quitted the mill, on the outside of which a powerful roan-colour horse was pawing the ground. "Farewell, and pray for me," cried Axel, with a trembling voice, and he cut off with his sword one of her golden locks from her head as a remembrance, clasped her once more in his arms, leaped on to his charger, and galloped out of the valley.

Tugendreich returned to the room in which Talander still sat dreaming, his venerable wrinkled countenance being gloomily illumined by the lights which burned low in their sockets. His sleep became more and more troubled, his breathing heavy, and his half-open eyes stared as if glancing into a gloomy futurity. He now commenced talking in his dreams. "Courage, my countrymen," he muttered, "though the number of the enemy threaten to crush you; you fight for God's word, and liberty of conscience. Behold on your banners the white messenger of heaven, spreading his shining wings; behold he hovers over your ranks; he announces victory. Now the cannon is thundering. Ah! blood, much blood! What! my Saxons, fleeing? Yet no, their whole force is still standing firm, a proud

bulwark, bidding defiance to the waving masses of the enemy. Brave Swedes, fight fiercely, and the aged monster[4] slowly yields, grinding his teeth. Heavily the arm of requital lies on him; the bleeding infant menaces him from amid the ruins of Magdeburg. He yields, he flies, the day is won--triumph, triumph, the good cause prevails." At these words the dreamer started up from his slumber, and recovered slowly, while the pale Fräulein contemplated him, trembling.

"This was a heavy sleep, child," said he, as he fetched a deep breath. "It is fortunate that I awoke; it was too much for this old body of mine. I may say that I know much, but the dark realm of spirits makes one pay dear for the knowledge acquired there."

"What have you learnt by this frightful dream," asked Tugendreich, with anxious curiosity.

"Nothing of that now, Fräulein," said the old man, gravely. "But tell me what has become of Herr Axel," he asked, looking cautiously around. "I saw him also in my dream, but not in the jacket of a dragoon."

"Ah!" said she, sobbing, "he has just gone. He could no longer delay, for a great battle is impending."

"Indeed it is, but be of good cheer, the bold Swede will survive it. You will yet--" here the magister broke off, vexed with himself, as though he had already said too much, and prepared for departure.

"But to-morrow, dear magister?" sighed she.

"The morrow has already become to-day," said Talander, in a comforting tone, "and your hostile constellation has lost its influence. Go boldly back to the castle with me. My awful vision has shown me many things, and you will find great changes. From poor Baron Grotta

you have nothing more to fear in this life. But come, that the daylight may not surprise us. My dream was a long one." He now led her out of the mill where the four attendants were in readiness. Under their escort they arrived in safety at the castle, at the gates of which, to their astonishment, they missed the sentinel of Tienfenbach's corps, and were surprised to see the baronial hall brightly lighted up.

"God be praised that you have come, you have been absent a long time," said her maid, who was waiting for her. "Two hours ago a hasty order arrived for the soldiers to start immediately, and the colonel will also depart at break of day. Your betrothal was to take place this very night, but as neither you nor the magister were to be found, the baron began to suspect and your father showed great displeasure. Suddenly some horsemen galloped into the courtyard. They were Saxons, and proved to be Colonel Von Starschedel and his son, the major, with six carbineers. Now the tables were turned. The baron had to congratulate himself that these gentlemen, respecting the right of hospitality, did not take him prisoner, for his men were gone and your father was too much afraid of these relations to say any more on the subject of your betrothal. Now they are all sitting together and hardly know what to say to each other. Only come and see. The handsome major has already asked for his lovely cousin twice." The Fräulein now went with a light heart into the hall, where she found them sitting at their wine, the colonel and the Saxons quickly rose on her entrance, and the major hastened towards her, not a little astonished to see that the cheerfulness that was formerly expressed in her countenance had fled, and that she endeavoured to avoid his embrace. But this did not deter him from offering his usual courtesies to his lovely cousin, whilst Colonel Starschedel, in a deep voice, told her attentive father of the perfect union between the elector and the king of Sweden, and the generous refusal of any security which the Saxons had offered.

The imperial colonel could no longer listen in quiet to their conversation. He rose and took his leave of the company with a few cold expressions of politeness. No one attempted to detain him, and

the last angry look with which he turned from the Fräulein fell upon Talander, who was just entering, and who gave a singular look of compassion at the departing colonel. He then posted himself behind the chair of the Fräulein, who felt uneasy at the attentions of her cousin, whom she nevertheless loved as a brother. With deep melancholy the seer's eyes rested now upon the venerable countenance of the colonel, and now upon the youthful manly figure of his son. At this moment there resounded in the court-yard the tramp of a horse, and the magister said: "There goes the imperial colonel. We shall never see him again, like many another who is in the prime of life."

"What are you thinking of?" asked the baron, suddenly interrupting him, as the expression of his old inmate's countenance told him that his words were prophetic. A general and mysterious awe seized the company, their conversation, which before had been so animated, stopped, and the chirping of a lark which hailed the morning dawn, gave them a welcome pretext for retiring, as the Saxons had to join the army of their elector on that day. The Carbineers were already mounted in the court-yard, the colonel took a parting cup with the baron, and the grief at parting inspired the major in the very doorway to try to extort from Tugendreich a confession of her inclination and a promise of her hand. But Talander stepped between them and said with paternal warning, "Young hero, you are riding forth towards on a great day. This is not an hour to form a worldly alliance. As a Christian you ought first to think of your end. You are perhaps nearer to it than you think. Is the Fräulein, if you fall, to weep as a widow for you? This would be mere selfishness and not love. Do not stretch out your hand so hastily after the myrtle crown; its green will turn to blood and silver; an angel will perhaps soon entwine from it a martyr's crown for you." Much struck, the major looked upon the seer, whose face beamed with a supernatural light, then offered him silently his hand, pressed a brotherly kiss on Tugendreich's forehead, and soon the old castle stood mourning in silence, all the guests having quitted it.

* * * * *

The baron sat silently and gloomily before the blazing fire, and Tugendreich was reading to him from Luther's Bible.

He had experienced much to depress his spirits. The neighbourhood was indeed now free from troops, but all his stores were either consumed by the war or destroyed, his tenants expected support from him, and in Madgeburg, where his capital was invested, he had lost fifty thousand thalers. Frightful reports were moreover circulated about a battle in which the Saxons had been defeated. In this state of anguish he had had recourse to the word of God, and his daughter was reading to him in a mild and harmonious voice this passage from Sirach:

"Who is ever daunted that abideth in the fear of God, or who that hath called him, is despised of him."

The old baron shaking his head looked up to heaven, and Tugendreich read on:

"For the Lord is gracious and merciful, forgiving sins and helping in the time of need."

"Indeed the Lord helpeth in trouble," cried Talander, who rushed into the room with youthful impetuosity, holding an open letter in his hand. "The Swedes and Saxons have fought with the formidable Tilly near Leipsic, and have defeated him, and the word of God is again free in our dear Saxony. Here is the confirmation of it which an old friend has sent me from Halle." He read with a joyful trembling voice, "On the 7th September anni currentis, there stood on the great plain of Leipsic more than 75,000 men opposed to each other as enemies, and it was to be looked upon as a happy omen, that shortly before the engagement a snow white dove perched upon a Saxon standard and afterward hovered over the whole line of battle of the protestants. At

noon the cannonading commenced, the Swedes attacked and were at first victorious, but now Tilly threw himself with all his forces upon the Saxons, drove them back, and directed the guns taken from them against the Swedes. Some Saxon regiments, however, held out bravely until the Swedes came to their assistance. Then old Tilly was compelled at length to retreat, and had nearly been struck dead in his flight with the butt end of a pistol by a captain of the Rhinegrave regiment. He arrived here in a sad plight, and upon the side of the imperial army 7600 have been left dead on the field of battle. The body of the allied army consisted in twenty-six pieces of artillery, one hundred colours and standards, and many articles of value. This glorious victory was followed by the capture of Leipsic, and was purchased dearly by both armies. On the side of the imperialists the Duke of Holstein died of his wounds as a prisoner, and there were killed besides the Generals Schönburg and Erwitte, the Colonels Plankhart and Baumgartner and Lieutenant Colonel Grotta."

The Baron Starschedel clasped his hands with a pious ejaculation, and Tugendreich honoured the memory of the fallen enemy and friend with a tear. "The Saxons," continued Talander, to read with great emotion, "lost General Bindhof, Colonel Löser and two Starschedels." "Merciful God, our cousins!" sobbed the Fräulein, and the old baron rose trembling from his chair, took a pen, beckoned to his daughter to follow him with the ink, and strode to the baronial hall, where he marked the appropriate crosses on the escutcheons of the beloved relatives in the pedigree, whilst some tears involuntarily rolled from his eyes to the ground. Tugendreich broke off some twigs from a laurel-tree standing near the window to adorn the pictures of the fallen heroes with deserved wreaths, and the magister, who had followed them with the letter in his hand, continued to read with mingled feelings of joy and sorrow, "Colonel Starschedel fell at the head of his carbineers while resisting an assault of Tilly. On this occasion the Saxon standard, on which the white dove had perched before the engagement, fell into the enemy's hands. To leave this symbol of victory in their hands appeared fatal to Major Starschedel, and a

young officer of an ancient family in the Swedish staff; they therefore took an oath to rescue it from the enemy's hands. Whilst the Saxon died the death of a hero, the Swede succeeded. The name of the latter was Count *Güldenlöwe*, and he was on the field of battle promoted by the king to the rank of colonel for his extraordinary bravery, and for having led the regiment of *Courville*, after its colonel was made prisoner, three times against the enemy; also receiving permission to add the above standard with the white dove to his coat of arms." "What was that?" cried the baron, running to the window to listen.

"That is military music, and if I am not mistaken Swedish," said *Talander*.

"The Swedes are entering the village," shouted the servants, and *Tugendreich* flew to the turret with a palpitating heart to view the passing heroes. The march came nearer and nearer, and behind the trumpeters of a regiment of dragoons rode its colonel, a young noble hero, in splendid armour, while his standard-bearer, whose uniform was adorned by the golden lion on blue ground, carried before him the rescued Saxon standard, which now received the laurel crown as it dropped down from *Tugendreich's* hands.

"That must be Colonel *Güldenlöwe*," cried *Talander*, who came panting behind the baron to the turret.

"Heavens! it is *Axel*," cried the *Fräulein*, as the colonel looked up, and she fell senseless into her tutor's arms. When she recovered she found herself in *Axel's* arms, and on looking up her eye met his penetrating glance.

"Well have you stood this trial, lovely girl," cried *Axel* in raptures. "I had vowed to wed only that girl who could love in me the man and not the count, whose love should be more powerful than any other consideration of her tender sex. You have stood your trial, and mine

now begins, to show through my life that I am worthy of such a heart."

The beautiful Fräulein sank blushing on her lover's breast. With tears of joy in his eyes the old baron embraced his faithful Talander, and the trumpeters below sounded a slow and solemn "Now God be praised."

C. A. F.

[1] Du in German would here imply more familiarity from a long acquaintance; Ihr would be more distant and cold.

[2] The name Tugendreich means "rich in virtue."

[3] From a long poem, printed at Leipzig in the seventeenth century, and called "The learned nobility." (Der gelehrte Adel.)

[4] Referring to General Tilly.