

rolling a small table on which was the *débris* of a *petit* champagne supper, from between them.

"Curious! a prerogative of your sex, fair madame, though any of your secrets would be *chic* enough to tempt a man to encroach," he answered gaily, drawing a chair near his own.

"Especially when 'tis of a woman who lives for him alone," and the handsome wealthy widow sank into the chair opposite him.

"Yes, for an hour, for a day, and 'tis pleasant so: you see I know you gay butterflys," he said, lazily placing a footstool under the pretty feet of his companion.

"Not so," she said slowly, and with a new tenderness in her tones. "Not so; but first I brought you here to tell you your friend Colonel Haughton made me an offer of marriage this morning. What say you; would you regret my fetters and wish me free? It shall be as you say."

Only that Mrs. Tompkins' attention was wholly given to her companion, she would have noticed the heavy curtains opposite her and separating her boudoir from a small morning-room pushed aside, and a pair of wrathful blazing eyes watching her every movement; had either been near enough, they would have heard a muttered oath at her last words.

"As I wish! 'tis well I am 'his friend, *chère* madame, for there are not many men would bid you to the altar with another, but I say take him, there is not a better fellow in the kingdom, and here is my benediction," and he laughingly lifted her hand to his lips.

"And is that all you care for me? Heavens! what different stuff we are made of, you can bid me to another, while I could *kill*. Nay, don't start. — Yes, could kill a woman you might love. And the speaker looked her words, while there was almost a sob in her voice as her bosom heaved convulsively.

"My dear Mrs. Tompkins, you honor me too much; believe me, 'tis but a passing fancy on your part."