

"Has Your Grace considered —"

"I have considered everything. You need not fear that I shall break faith with my people. In due time they shall shout themselves hoarse in the market-place, wishing me long life and happiness. I think I desire the one as little as I expect the other; but my people shall not be disappointed. They shall do their shouting."

"I had hoped to shout such wishes with them," said the Baron.

"I have no command to give you on that point," the Duchess answered.

Kevenfelt moved restlessly about the room for a moment. He was trying to find some argument which would appeal to her, and could find none.

"To which of the princes am I to convey congratulations?" he asked presently, and his endeavour to conceal his irritation was not altogether successful.

"To none of them at present," she answered. "To-morrow is only St. Winifried's Eve. I can still call to-morrow my own. It is a precious day to me, and except what business must be done, I will spend it alone. To-night I will give to my guests, but to-morrow shall be for myself. You will not grudge me this consolation."

"No, Your Grace, but I think your choice —"

"It shall be made known to you early on the morning of the feast day. I am a free woman until that day. You shall then go to the man I have chosen. Should he be inclined, at the last moment to withdraw from the honour of marrying the — the turbulent Duchess; well, there are other princes waiting in the palace, and no doubt one of them will accept the honour. You see,

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