

"Why not? If my little mother's lightest suggestions are laws with me, what are her invitations?"

For the first time he had addressed her by the affectionate term, and the sound was startling. The faintest flush spread over her cheek, admonishing him that the familiarity had not escaped attention. Greatly to his relief, she quietly passed the matter.

"You were at the *Pannychides*?" she asked.

"Yes, till daybreak."

"I thought so, and concluded you would be too weary to see us to-day. The Mystery is tedious."

"It might become so if too frequently celebrated. As it was, I shall not forget the hillside, and the multitude of frocked and cowled figures kneeling in the dim red light of the torches. The scene was awful."

"Did you see the Emperor?"

She put the question in a low tone.

"No," he returned. "His Majesty sent for our Hegumen to come to the Chapel. The good man took me with him, his book and torch bearer; but when we arrived, the Emperor had passed in and closed the door, and I could only imagine him on his knees alone in the room, except as the relics about him were company."

"How unspeakably dismal!" she said with a shudder, adding in sorrowful reflection, "I wish I could help him, for he is a prince with a tender conscience; but there is no way—at least Heaven does not permit me to see anything for him in my gift but prayer."

Sergius followed her sympathetically, and was surprised when she continued, the violet gray of her eyes changing into subtle fire. "A sky all cloud;