

tears, and, with a look of dignity and a voice that trembled, said—

“Banish me from your presence—send me forth to the world friendless and miserable as when I sought your protection—torture my spirit with cruel threats and reproaches—kill me, if you will, but do not, dear lady, force me to renounce my love. It were sacrilege to tear away the image that lives in my heart, and seek to place another in its shrine. Here, in thy palace, I met a youth—humble, homeless, friendless as myself. The bond of sympathy united us. He spoke kindly to ears that had long been accustomed to the words and tones of harshness—What wonder that in those ears his voice became a music sweeter than all other? What wonder that, when he breathed the accents of love, my soul responded in a kindred strain? What wonder that, when he asked my affection, it was given him freely and for ever? With such feelings, oh, Sovereign lady, can you ask me to wed your imperial brother? No; that union were misery to us both. What is marriage without affection but a bondage of the most sad and insupportable kind?—a state of servitude that trammels, not only the body but the mind, and destroys even the freedom of thought. You tell me of the wealth, the splendors, the honors I should enjoy; oh, these would but gild the galling chains, and render them heavier still. Think not, dear lady, I am insensible to your kindness, for while my heart continues to beat, it will cherish with fervent gratitude the memory of your favors; but the very evil that led me to supplicate your bounty will drive me again from your presence, an outcast alike from your home and heart.”

A flood of passionate tears prevented the utterance of Athenais, and she could say no more. Theodosius, who had been concealed in the apartment, during the interview between his sister and the maiden, drank in every word with eager ear and delighted soul. As soon as Athenais was silent, he emerged from his place of concealment and sprang to her feet! “Here let me kneel,” he said in impassioned tones, “here let me kneel and pour forth my gratitude and my love. Know, excellent Athenais, that thy angel-affection is given not to the humble tutor, but to Theodosius himself, and lofy as is his birth, exalted as is his station, he feels that he is scarce worthy of the treasure he has obtained. Forgive, dear maiden, the stratagem I used to gain thy heart, and believe me when I say, my future life shall be a study to deserve the precious boon.”

Pulcheria shared the happiness of her brother, and Athenais, bewildered, yet blest, was rapt in smiles and tears and wondering how her pleasure and surprize.

The nuptials were soon after celebrated with regal pomp, amid the joyous acclamations of the people; and thus the world beheld, what seemed more like a tale of fiction than reality, a humble maiden elevated by her virtues to lofty honors of the Imperial throne.

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