

beheld the carven capitals of the columns, tied together with festoonery of evergreens, and relieved by garlands of shining flowers, and above the musicians, under a canopy shading her from the meridian sun, the Princess Irenè herself. A bright carpet hanging down the wall enriched the position chosen by her, and in the pleasant shade, surrounded by young women, she sat with uncovered head and face, delighted with the music and the dancing—delighted that it was in her power to bring together so many souls to forget, though so briefly, the fretting of hard conditions daily harder growing. None knew better than she the rapidity of the national decadence.

It was not long until the young hostess noticed Sergius, taller of his high hat and long black gown; and careless as usual of the conventionalities, she arose, and beckoned to him with her fan; and the people, seeing whom she thus honored, opened right and left, and with good-will made way for him. Upon his coming her attendants drew aside—all but one, to whom for the moment he gave but a passing look.

The Princess received him seated. The youthful loveliness of her countenance seemed refined by the happiness she was deriving from the spectacle before her. He took the hand she extended him, kissed it respectfully, with only a glance at the simple but perfected Greek of her costume, and immediately the doubts, and fears, and questions, and lectures in outline he had brought with him from the city dropped out of mind. Suspicion could not look at her and live.

"Welcome, Sergius," she said, with dignity. "I was afraid you would not come to-day."