

"He demurred at first, till he began to realize that unless he acceded to the demands of the prince all his lands and what remained of his fortune would be taken from him. He remembered, too, that he was most deeply in debt to the young prince, who was notoriously fast and whose main pastime was found in wine and cards, to say nothing of pretty women.

"The Prince of Orno, while travelling near the Creighleigh estate had seen the Lady Jean, learned who she was, and being greatly taken with her fresh young beauty, decided that he would marry her. His hold on the Earl made him sure of his answer; that was why he demanded, instead of asked, for her hand.

"Thinking the matter over did the Earl no good. If he refused his daughter's hand, he would lose a great deal and possibly everything. If she became the wife of the prince, he, the Earl, would be settled and safe for life.

"The day that the prince had announced for his arrival at the castle, the Earl called his daughter to him. Her wonderful beauty and rare grace astonished him, and in her his dead wife lived over again. Remorse overtook him, but only for a brief period. He had told the prince he could come for his answer, and as that answer meant good for the remaining male member of the Creighleigh family, it must be in the affirmative.

"In a few words he told his daughter what was expected of her. Then he bade her retire to her chamber and adorn herself as became the affianced bride of a prince of the land, since the suitor for her hand would be at the castle that evening and require her answer.

"The terrified girl wept and implored her father not to make this terrible thing possible.

"'Father, you cannot mean it to be true,' she cried. 'I have never seen this prince to know him. I have never even been in the company of gentlemen, and for one to come and ask