

that what weak woman would be able to resist them?"

"Your highness must close your heart against the flattering speeches of this dangerous stranger," returned the Countess Aurora; "your father would never consent to your marrying a foreigner of inferior rank."

"Love in all ages has surmounted the petty prejudices of society, when its affections were placed on a worthy object," replied the noble maiden; "and may truly be said, to be no respecter of persons. My heart tells me that I shall be his, and I do not wish to be undeceived."

"But if the King of Sweden should offer?"

Eleonora started, and the colour mounted to her cheek.

"Aye, the King of Sweden—Countess, you have conjured up a mighty spirit, who could almost put to flight a whole legion of these little mischievous loves. But no, Aurora, my heart no longer trembles or beats quicker at the name of the chivalrous Gustavus—besides, *he* would never seek a bride in the house of Brandenburg?"

"I am not so sure of that," returned the fair Aurora, who already pictured to herself the pleasure and power of moving within the sphere of a royal court; "the young king is eager to enter upon a matrimonial engagement. He has been shown the portraits of the most beautiful princesses in Germany, it is not impossible that he may have taste enough to select you ~~for~~ his royal consort."

"Now, heaven forbid!" exclaimed the princess; "for I am fully determined to have my dear Count, or lead a life of celibacy."

"Your highness raves!—your portrait *has* been shown to the King of Sweden, and has met with his approbation. Oxenstiern, in a private letter to the Elector, said his royal master's choice wavered between the white rose of Brandenburg, and that phoenix of beauty, Sophia of Mecklenburg; but he thought his ultimate determination would rest with your highness. If so, it is presumed that Count Dahl will act as proxy for his sovereign."

"Aurora!" exclaimed the princess, rising hastily from her seat; "why was not this important communication conveyed to me before? But now, I am lost—irrevocably lost!"

"Dearest lady, recall your wandering heart—accept the diadem that a hero offers you, and bury your partiality to this gay young foreigner in oblivion. Besides," she continued, lowering her voice almost to a whisper; "how do you know that he loves you—that your feelings are reciprocal?"

"His eyes have told me so a thousand times!"

"Their language is deceitful—never rely on the affections of a man who dares not openly avow his love."

As the countess finished speaking, a soft strain of music rose in the breeze. The princess advanced

towards the open balcony, and instantly recognized the voice of her lover, who did not pour his impassioned lay merely to woo the cold ear of night.

Lady awake!—it is the hour,

Heed not the night, thy love is near;

Lady awake!—and leave thy bower,

Guarded by him—oh, nothing fear!

Come, while the moonbeam softly steals,

To gild with light yon steep crowned woods;

Come, while her lustre fair reveals,

The clearness of the glassy flood.

Oh, lady, haste! the evening closes,

Love is abroad and rides the gale;

While here, amid the dewy roses,

His sighs inspire thy lover's tale.

The princess turned to the countess, with a triumphant air, and was about to speak, when the tune was changed to a bolder strain, and, placing her finger on her ruby lip to enjoin silence, she stood with glistening eyes and palpitating heart, a delighted listener.

Wilt thou listen, lady gay,

To song of war or roundelay;

What may best thine ear approve,

Martial deeds, or tales of love,

Such as I can sing or tell,

In thy heart alone must dwell.

A warrior I, in tented field,

'Tis mine the heavy sword to wield;

Mingling in that desperate strife,

Where man contends with man for life,

Martial fame I woo'd and won,

Where noble deeds were dared and done!

Never till this moonlight hour,

Own'd I loves's bewitching power;

Or felt that woman's smile could give,

All that tempts the brave to live;

Vanquished by her pleading sigh,

The conqueror owns her victory!

By the silver queen of night,

By yon burning orbs of light,

By this solemn midnight hour,

By every sacred holy power,

By the cloudless heavens above,

By earth, and seas, I swear I love!

Eleonora stood motionless, with her jewelled arms folded across her breast, listening to every word of his spirited serenade. Then catching, as if by inspiration, the air of the ditty, she answered in a low sweet voice, that was often broken by violent agitation, but which fell like music from another sphere on the admiring ear of her royal lover—