

"The rude monster!" interrupted the lively girl. "I do not wish to see him; they say he is a hater of womankind."

"They wrong him then, Christina! He is in love——"

"Well! and his choice? Is she pretty?" again broke in the daughter.

"Pretty and teasing—like thyself."

"Like me?"

A meaning smile spread over the courtier's face, and the womanly instinct of Christina was at once aroused.

"I have never seen him," she said, after a moment's thought.

"But he has seen thee; and he says——"

"What does he say?" urged the maiden, as the baron paused in his speech.

"What matters it to thee what a monster—a hater of womankind—may say?" demanded he with assumed gravity.

"Ah! but then he is a king! What does he say—what *can* he say of me? My dear father, do tell me!"

But the minister was determined to keep silence, and was proof against all her little blandishments.

"By-the bye!" interposed he all at once, as if recollecting something he feared to forget, "let us turn to another subject—and a very serious one too. I will bring an officer to sup with me this evening—see that all be in order for his reception. Receive him courteously—receive him with deference—I have destined him for your husband."

"I will have none of him!" cried Christina, following her father, as he left the apartment; "if Adolphus be not my husband, no one else shall."

"Thanks, my sweet cousin!—a thousand thanks!" exclaimed Adolphus du Hesse, gliding from behind the long gold-fringed curtains, where he had been concealed for the last quarter of an hour. "How pleasant it is to play the spy, when we thus hear our cause sustained by the lips we love best, even should it be a cause as desperato as mine."

"Desperate!" repeated the maiden, who had regained all her vivacity. "The battle is half won. My father's anger is like a shower on the grass—a sunbeam suffices to evaporate it; dost thou not know him, Adolphus? Do not sigh thus, I beseech thee! cross not thine arms so! look not upwards with that solemn air! Away with gloomy looks and downcast brows! Thou would'st frighten poor Cupid away even from our wedding festival."

"Hope misleads thee, dear Christina! I know thy father better than thou dost thyself; Ah! my beloved!" pursued he, regarding her beauti-

ful and animated features with a melancholy smile; "canst thou have the courage to reject the splendid lot he will offer thee, in exchange for the ardent and devoted heart of thy penniless cousin?"

The beautiful eyes of Christina filled with tears as she met his gaze, but hers was not a nature to cherish long any sad idea, and she tried a little anger.

"You do not seem to think me destined to swell the list of faithful lovers, Mr. Adolphus! and that too in spite of the last proof of my affection, which you got by stealth like a spy as you are."

"Dry that tear, sweet cousin!" he replied; "I am no Stoic to bear unmoved its eloquence."

"Why wilt thou make me weep, then?" asked Christina, already in smiles. "Was it for the childish pleasure of drying my tears with thy lips? or wert thou really jealous of some imaginary rival—Count Erierson, perhaps, that antidote of every tender emotion?"

"I know thine aversion for Erierson, and have no fear of him; besides, he seems no richer than myself. But, Christina!——"

"What now, Adolphus? What new perplexity is this?"

"The baron brings with him this evening a new lover, and thy poor Adolphus—will he not be forgotten?"

"Thou would'st well deserve it, for even hinting at it. But thou art my—cousin, and I forgive once more thy jealous suspicions."

"Thou lovest me then in very truth, Christina?" said the young soldier, as he sealed his pardon in the manner usually adopted by lovers in such cases.

"Have I not told thee so an hundred times? Art thou not tired of the repetition?"

"No! no! thou canst not repeat it too often, my beloved!"

"We love one another, that is certain, Adolphus! And though my father will not now grant his consent to our union—what then? let us wait patiently for it."

"And should he never grant it?"

"Never! Dost thou fear it, cousin?"

"I fear it much, my Christina!"

"Well then, we must remain as we are. Happiness can never be insured by an act of disobedience."

"True, Christina!" replied young De Hesse, gazing on her with an abstracted air, in which might be traced some shade of reproach. "I find thee more prudent and philosophical than I had thought thee."

"I cannot break my father's heart," she answered.