

very beautiful; pale as death, and pitifully determined.

"Monseigneur, I must see the emperor."

"Madame, it is impossible."

"But my husband, the prince, is under arrest, yet he is innocent. His own lips cannot plead for him to the emperor. Mine must, and shall. Offer me a chair, monseigneur."

"Alas! madame, that there should be none in the corridor; it is, indeed, an oversight."

"Listen to me. All this day, from five in the morning until now, I have been striving to gain audience with the emperor. Once let me come face to face with him, and all his doubts of my husband's fealty will be removed. Will you not aid me to an audience with him? Oh, monseigneur, it is a heartbroken, despairing wife—an almost fainting and friendless woman—that appeals to you."

Talleyrand slowly took snuff, and regarded the lady with a look of suffering patience.

The beautiful eyes changed their tears for fire the beautiful arms fell heavily.

"Good, monseigneur, good! the victors in Berlin show how they treat their women! The politeness of France, then, is a fable! Even a prince has no courtesy for the wife of his equal in rank! Ah!" She reeled slightly, as if about to faint.

Talleyrand stepped from before the door, and supported her with his arm.

but to smile and beg the honor of madame's company.

They entered the emperor's cabinet together. The prince conducted the princess to a chair, as far from the document-strewn table as possible.

Then he seated himself as before, and asked madame's pardon that affairs of state—urgent affairs,—deprived him of the exquisite pleasure of madame's conversation. The princess remained silent. The only sound in the room was the scratching of the pen of Talleyrand. Through the windows came the muffled tread of sentries.

"You have a large number of documents before you on the table, monseigneur?"

"Yes, yes, a large number."

Monseigneur was, at the time, furtively covering one of them, and a letter, with his arm.

"When the emperor arrives, he will sign them, no doubt?"

"No doubt."

"Here?"

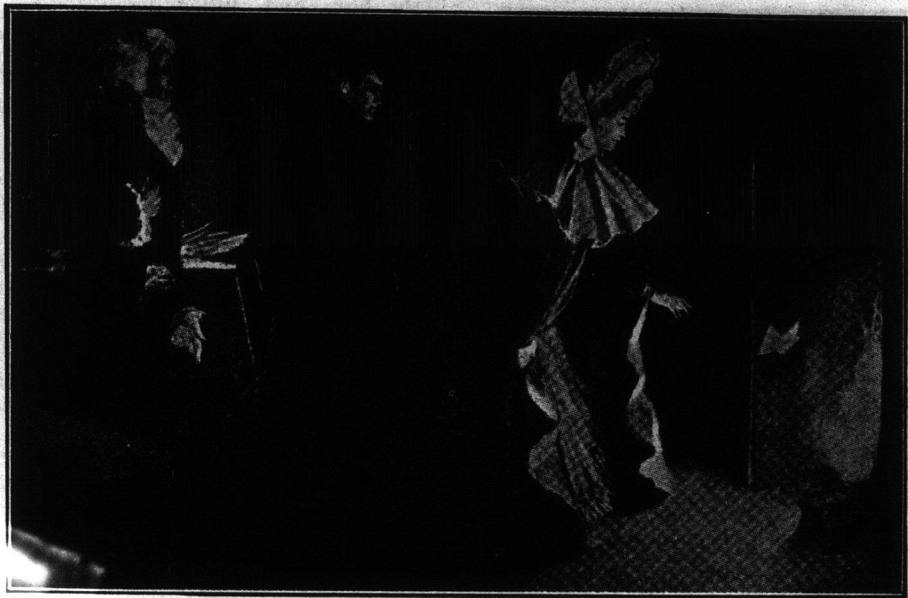
"No, no."

"To-night?"

"To-morrow."

"Oh, then, monseigneur, there is plenty of time. You can have little to do with those papers. I perceive they are already written. Will you not come and sit by me a little, and converse for a few moments before I go?"

Talleyrand turned in his chair, and regarded the princess. She leaned toward him and smiled. Really, she was a magnificent woman.



By Napoleon's order, the Princess of Hatzfeld destroyed the evidence of her husband's guilt.

Had he not done so, she would, apparently, have fallen.

"A chair," she murmured, "lead me to a chair."

"I will support madame to her carriage."

"No, no,—I faint,—lead me to a chair."

"Ah! to some distant room beyond the sentries; madame will be undisturbed in such a place. Yes; allow me to render my support thither."

"No; pardon; I am better."

"A rapid recovery! I offer my congratulations."

They stood and faced one another again.

"Monseigneur, I am a woman of determination."

The prince was sure madam was a model for women.

"Monseigneur, I have come to this place to see the emperor and to plead for my husband's life."

The prince expressed his admiration at so laudable an intention, and only regretted the utter impossibility of its fulfillment.

"It shall not be impossible!"

Monseigneur was too well bred to contradict madam. He bowed.

"I shall remain here until the emperor arrives."

The emperor would not pass down the corridor, nor enter that room. Madame would but waste time.

So much the better! Ah,—monseigneur had then no real excuse for keeping out madame! She would enter then into this room, where the emperor would not come, and rest awhile.

Monseigneur was annoyed. He, had been outwitted by a feminine diplomatist. There was nothing remaining

He hesitated.

"Come!"

"After all," he thought, "there is nothing left to do, and it may be best to humor her. Perhaps, if I promise something, I may the earlier get rid of her. Fortunately the emperor may not return for an hour yet."

"Will you not come?"

She spoke with a little offended pout, like a beauty not used to repeat an invitation. Talleyrand took up a certain letter from the table and locked it away in a certain box. Then he pushed his chair back, arose, and hobbled across the room and sat near her.

He regarded her keenly for some moments.

"You are a very beautiful and very remarkable woman."

"I seem to have little attraction for diplomats."

"On the contrary, madame, I am sure. At least, allow me to speak for one of them."

—and he bowed, and kissed her hand.

The princess smiled again; this time more bewitchingly than before.

"Prince de Talleyrand, you were once a student in the seminary of St. Sulpice."

"Yes, princess. As you know, it was while I was Bishop of Autun that Mirabeau first prophesied of my future career."

"His prophecy has been more than fulfilled. You have become the builder of an empire, the strength of a people, the right hand of Napoleon himself!"

"Hush, hush, madame. Let us be humble. Recollect that I was excommunicated by his holiness, Pius VI. What I have gained in temporal mat-

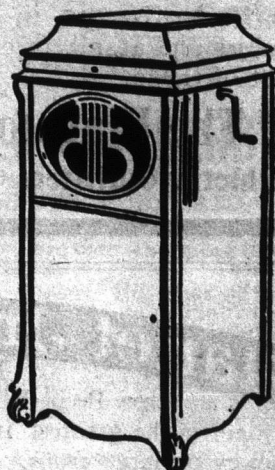
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