

"I care not, he cannot afford to offend me," thought Mrs Tompkins, and so only showing a velvet paw, making a step towards him, her rich crimson robes of velvet trailing after her, now offered her hand. "Here is my hand, George, bid me good-night, and like a good fellow go at once, and I forgive you."

"Dismiss Trevalyon first, I am an older friend than he," he answered sulkily.

"I shall not ; this is my boudoir, and, thank fate, I am my own mistress."

"Then, by the stars, I stir not one inch !"

Both reckless, both determined, how would it end ? and so Trevalyon thought, as he said, coolly :

"What is the use of acting like this, Delrose ? You certainly made your *entrée* later than I, if you are making a point of that ; but a soldier is usually more yielding to woman's wish."

"Not often, Trevalyon, when her wish is the will of a rival," he answered hotly.

"The fancy of a woman *à present*," thought Trevalyon. "But I must end this, for he won't. I am in no mood for trifling, I have again missed seeing Vaura. Mrs Tompkins is charming in a *tête-à-tête*, but with the *entrée* of a soldier on the war-path," and stepping towards his hostess he said gallantly : "So fair a foe, dear Mrs. Tompkins, surrounded by soldiers, is unfair ; I beat a retreat. May I carry a comforting message to the gentleman who called upon you this morning ?" and the blue mesmeric eyes rested on her face as he bent his handsome Saxon head for her reply.

Her dark eyes met his in a pleading way, but she read no weakness there, and thought as she gave him her hand :

"A man with an unsatisfied longing for another woman is difficult to subdue, but if George had not intruded himself, I should not have let him go till I had brought him to my feet, but I shall be revenged on him,