

"Oh, there's not much to tell. She was sent to France when quite a little girl, for her education—her mother's French, you know, and thinks all the rest of the world are barbarians. But now, I suppose she is finished, and will honor us with a visit. Listen, they're calling us below."

"Kathleen, Kathleen, Kathleen!" chorused half a dozen voices at once.

"Gypsy, Gypsy! where's Gypsy?" came again to our ears, after another pause.

"Come, Kath., let us go down," said I, passing my arm around her waist, as we ran down the oaken stairs.

"Fairer than ever, *ma belle cousine*," said the voice of Randal Percy, in a whisper to Kathleen, as we entered.

I looked up, expecting to see the scornful curl of her lip, with which she always received compliments, but it was gone now. A sudden flush crimsoned her oval cheek, and a softened expression filled the usually cold, black eyes, as she looked up into his handsome face with a smile. I had often wished Randal and Kathleen might love each other; but the *hauteur* with which she had always treated him, had hitherto made the wish seem vain.

"I like cousin Randal, don't you, Kath?" said I, abruptly.

"A little," she said, starting and coloring deeply.

"Come, Kathleen—come, you must be queen of our Christmas feast," said the gay voice of Mary Percy, as she came dancing toward us. "Here, Gypsy, we'll make you first maid of honor to her majesty; you're prime favorite already."

"Where's uncle Robert?" said I, without heeding her.

"Dear knows," said Mary, indifferently. "I heard a carriage coming a minute ago, and I suppose he went down to see who had arrived. I hope no more will come. Goodness knows there is a crowd of us here already!"

As Mary spoke the door was flung open, and Uncle Robert entered, with a young lady leaning on his arm. Even now—though many a weary year has passed since—I remember her perfectly. Her dress of pale-blue satin swept the carpet, and fell in graceful folds round her slender form. Her complexion was clear and colorless, her eyes deep and blue, shaded by long, silky lashes, while a shower of golden curls fell rippling over her white neck, like waves of light.