

fore—the familiar faces were all there, and yet many a change had taken place. It had transformed gay Mary Percy into a bride; pretty Etoile into the wife of a marquis; and I, myself, into a weary, sad girl. Randal Percy stood again beside me, paler and thinner than when I had seen him last, for he had been jilted by the fair Etoile. Kathleen was there, too; a superb woman, with the bewitching smile and languishing glance of a finished flirt, crowned with the wreath and carrying the wand of the Christmas Queen. Standing beside her, as her chosen consort, was Randal Percy.

The evening was drawing to a close, when Kathleen passed me and hurriedly whispered:

“If you wish to see a farce, Gypsy, steal into the parlor, hide yourself behind the curtains, and listen.”

Wondering what she could mean, I obeyed, and concealed myself behind the heavy curtains. Kathleen followed me and took a seat. Scarcely had she done so, when Randal Percy followed hastily, and took a seat by her side.

“Well, Mr. Percy,” said Kathleen, quietly. “you requested a private interview; may I know what you wish?”

“Dear Kathleen, do not speak so coldly; you surely know the reason,” he said, earnestly.

“I am sorry to be so dull of comprehension. I have not the remotest idea,” replied Kathleen.

“Then, dearest cousin, in three words I can tell you—*I love you, Kathleen!*”

“Do you, really? Almost as much, I suppose, as you loved Etoile, the other day. Eh, cousin Randal?”

“Kathleen, will you never cease to think of my folly? I never loved her; I only fancied so. I never loved but you, my peerless, my beautiful Kathleen!” he exclaimed, vehemently.

“A very pretty speech, sir. Did you talk to Etoile this way?” she said, quietly.

“Kathleen, you will drive me mad!” he exclaimed, passionately. “How shall I convince you that I love you only?”

“Most certainly, not by walking up and down before my window,” was the sarcastic reply. “Do you remember, you did before Etoile’s this very night, twelve months ago? How hot you must have been when you went there to cool yourself! Have you the rose Madame de Rochefort flung you that night?”