

another, I know not that, even with my philosophy, I could thus calmly urge you to fulfil your duty, at the expense of the cherished feelings of your heart. But—.”

At these words Josepha started with a sudden bound from her sister's arms, a burning blush mounted to her temples; and with a choked voice she uttered the word, “Forbear;” then burying her face in her hands, her whole frame shook with the violence of her emotion. The Princess sprang to her feet,—doubt and dismay filled her heart, and laying her trembling hand upon her sister's head, she softly asked, “Can this be so?”

For an instant Josepha made no reply; then by a powerful effort regaining composure, she turned towards Christina a face pale as her robe, and said in a low but firm voice,

“And if it be so, my sister, it matters not. Even were Ferdinand another's, the daughter of Marie Theresa must fulfil her destiny, and wed a royal wooer; yes, even though in the object of her love were united every virtue and every gift, save sovereignty. It is the cruel doom that appertains to our greatness, and no hope that it may be otherwise has ever found an entrance to my heart. Ah, my Christina, peasants envy us, but they dream not of the griefs that dwell with us, hidden as they are by the jewels that cover our aching hearts.”

“And can I not give you aid or comfort?” asked Christina with affectionate eagerness—“Withhold not your confidence from me; it is hard to suffer alone, and I well know what it is to endure, even for a brief space, the pangs of hopeless love—for when my father opposed my union with Prince Albert, the world held not a wretch so reckless, and miserable as myself.”

“Ah, but remember Christina,” murmured Josepha, “your love was placed upon an object whose rank cast no disgrace upon your choice—you had a spirit that I possess not, and our mother smiled upon the wishes of your heart. Speak no more of this, sweet sister, if I am dear to you—believe me I weep not for this—but I weep that I must quit my mother's arms, my sisters' caresses, my brother's love, and the scenes and haunts of my happy childhood; and—despise not my weakness—but I have a fearful presentiment that the fate of Joanna will be mine—and that ere long the same tomb will hold in its cold bosom the two betrothed brides of Ferdinand of Naples.”

“Yield not to such idle fears,” said the Princess, tenderly embracing her—“Whence can they spring? the flush of health is on this cheek, this bounding pulse beats high with life, and that radiant eye sparkles not with the artificial lustre of disease. Your nervous system is unstrung—the ceremonies of the day have been too much for you, and this night of weeping vigils has prostrated your little remaining strength. Dismiss these vague terrors, my sister,

and seek the repose of your couch. See, the yellow dawn is just tinging the sky, and you have not yet slept. Go, dream of your coming power, and rest assured the Queen of delicious Naples shall not have cause to complain, that the Princess of cold and rude Saxony absents herself from her court.”

A languid smile stole faintly over the beautiful features of Josepha, as if to repay Christina for her kind attempts at consolation, but as she strove to rise, her limbs faltered—the Princess perceived that she was fainting, and in alarm summoned her attendants. In a few minutes she recovered, was undressed and placed in bed, when she desired to be left alone, and Christina, affectionately kissing her, retired, to seek that repose from which she had been disturbed by the restless step of her unhappy sister, whose apartments adjoined her own.

On the succeeding day, Josepha pleaded indisposition as a wish for remaining in private; but when another and still another day passed on, and the same plea was urged, the Empress, convinced that the disease was that of the mind, insisted upon her reappearance in the courtly circle, as the only means of dispelling the gloom to which she was constantly yielding, in the retirement of her own apartments. She obeyed—but nothing won her from her sadness—no smile lighted up her lovely face—the hue of health and happiness faded from her cheek, the lightness of her step was gone, and the deep blue eye, which was wont to look joyously on all, now sadly sought the earth, veiled by the long dark fringes of its snowy lid. In vain her sisters strove to cheer and amuse her with plans of future pleasure, and pictures of gaiety and splendor, that were to make her court the most brilliant and attractive in Europe—or that her mother sought by alternate reasoning and persuasion, to reconcile her to her destiny. A settled gloom brooded incessantly over her, and she spent hour after hour alone in her oratory, or stole to some sequestered alcove of the palace gardens, to spend the time in solitary weeping. Sometimes she would take with her, her young sister Marie Antoinette, afterwards the beautiful and unfortunate Queen of France, and pour into her childish bosom the grief that was consuming her. The Empress was a fond and tender mother, and her heart bled to behold the unhappiness of her daughter, yet regarding her only as a wayward child, she looked forward with confident hope to the period when her present idle and unaccountable repugnance to an alliance with Ferdinand, would be dispelled by the active duties and pleasures of the high and brilliant station she was called to fill. Acting upon this conviction, she continued to treat the young Josepha with the most tender regard, and to notice as slightly as possible the dejection to which she was a prey.

At length, with a despairing heart, Josepha saw the day draw near on which she was to bid farewell to