

smily depart for Castle Bahreberg. Is that permissible?"

Cyprian's handsome face is the picture of the utmost embarrassment, but he quickly recovers himself and says laughingly: "To Bahreberg? Are they going to dream away a winter idyl, or is it business connected with an inheritance that makes their presence there necessary?"

"Inheritance? No author of 'Madam Potiphar' has presented himself yet, and—who knows! Perhaps at a certain time the will becomes invalid. I await a letter of explanation from Florence, for such a French leave is unpardonable."

Cyprian draws back as some others join the ladies. He stands aside and backs at the ice with his skates. His brow is clouded; no one has ever seen Valier so out of sorts as he is to-day.

The news that villa Ohly is suddenly deserted passes from mouth to mouth, and some one tells Cyril with much positiveness, that, by a clause of the will, the inheritance falls to Florence in case the author of 'Madame Potiphar' does not announce himself within a certain time.

He hears it with the utmost indifference. Just then his father comes up to him and whispers excitedly:

"Rafaela avoids me very ostentatiously; I implore you, my dear boy, arrange that she command me to skate with her. I must speak to her. I must, Cyril, do you hear?" and he glides noiselessly away.

It seems to the young tutor that his heart will cease beating. There is no doubt that his father wishes to bring the matter to a decision to-day. Cyril's heart cries out in pain and torment. His father. Why his own father, whom he cannot bitterly oppose? And yet in thought he does so; he feels that suddenly a gulf opens between them which all the reverence of his childhood, all his obedience, cannot bridge.

They are as unike as fire and water, yet their love has been mutually deep until to-day.

Princess Rafaela stands beside her brother and lays her hand on his arm to rest a moment. The duke glances tenderly at her rosy face, which has never seemed so fresh and lovely to him as to-day. And as he watches her more closely he sees what a happy change has taken place in her expression. The bold, childish obstinacy has disappeared, and in its place

has come a mild gentleness. She looks happy. Is it because she has won the love of her child?

That also; but there is something else in the radiance of her expression. Can that sweet, all-powerful love, which she denied a short time before, have come to her? The duke's eyes follow the captain's handsome figure anxiously as the latter skates rapidly and proudly past.

A feeling of uneasiness overcomes him. Count Cyprian is no suitable husband for Rafaela. Not because he was not born to the purple, but because he lacks all that could make a character such as his sister happy for long. Fortunately the princess has taken but little notice of him to-day, although this may be only a sweet shrieking from displaying to the public as yet, this, her heart's deepest emotion.

Rafaela's voice rouses him from his thoughts.

"Henry, I would like to ask you something."

He glances down at her in surprise.

"Well, man has leave to ask one question of fate," says he, jokingly.

The young princess glances at the opposite side of the park. There a broad canal connects the lake with the distant river.

"See how fascinating it seems over there in the snowy forest. I should so like to see from this noisy crowd and explore the canal. It looks so romantic, the ice is like glass, and they say more than three feet thick, so there could be no danger in such an extra turn. Henry, could I skate on the canal without making myself conspicuous?"

"Certainly, my darling. These are no hot springs, nor do robbers lurk in the wood. With a suitable escort the way is open to you. Whom did you think of summoning to your side?"

She gazed attentively at her skate.

"I thought of Count Lankwitz."

"Cyprian?" asked the duke, anxiously.

She shook her head violently.

"Oh, no. Cyril, as Henry's tutor, stands nearer to me."

The duke drew a deep breath.

"Very true. I tell you frankly that Count Cyril is probably the only one of our courtiers with whom you could absent yourself without exciting talk."

"Why?" said she, looking up suddenly.

"Because he is, thank Heaven, the exact

opposite of his father. The captain is a thorough gentleman, but there is a certain something about his nature and reputation which secretly makes him suited to act as chaperon to a lady. Cyril, on the other hand, will never compromise a lady. His reputation is faultless, his manner so strictly reliable that scandal would never venture to attack him. At his side you are safe. At his father's you are exposed to calumny."

Rafaela raised the roses on her muff to her lips. Her face was crimson.

"Oh, Henry," she cried, excitedly, "how fine it is when a man's reputation and honour are so unimpeachable. Why was not Cyril always my guardian spirit? So much, much trouble would have been spared me."

The duke himself summoned Count Cyril and communicated the princess's wish to him in a low tone.

Cyril bowed in evident surprise. His face wore a strange look of secret misery. Rafaela hastily whispered something to her lady-in-waiting, and the latter's cavalier, a command which did not seem to delight Miss Lola. It was so gay and amusing here. She only skated for the sake of the men. What did she care for the lonely, tiresome canal? With a pout she held out her hand to her escort and followed the princess.

Rafaela had turned to Cyril.

"Are you willing to inspect the park, count?" she asked, without looking at him.

"Your highness's wish is always a command to me," he replied hastily, and then his hands clasp hers. His face is very pale, the pressure of his fingers convulsive. He holds her close to his side, and they glide away as though in a dream. She has never been so near to him before. He feels how her cool little hands grow warm in his. A crack in the ice, a little unevenness, sends her slender figure even nearer to him. Is it the perfume of the roses that makes his head whirl?

"Why, why this torment? Why may he not clasp her once in his arms, although in a short time he must relinquish her to another? Why is the world so narrow and small? Why can he not rush on with her thus forever? His heart burns. All the torment of hopeless passion glows in his dark eyes.

There is a faint cry behind them. Both start and pause. Baroness Lola is on her

knees; her escort tries in alarm to raise her.

"For heaven's sake, dearest, have you hurt yourself? Cries the princess.

The court lady rises with many sighs of pain:

"Oh, my foot! Your highness, I fear I have injured it," says she.

"How unfortunate. And we are so far,

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