

**The Royal Marriage;
Or, Political Expediency
By
Letitia Elizabeth Landon
(L. E. L.)**

**First published in
The Keepsake, 1838
Compiled
by
Peter J. Bolton**

**All items in The Keepsake, 1838 were published
anonymously. However, Letitia Landon's authorship
is confirmed by a surviving manuscript.**

THE ROYAL MARRIAGE;

OR, POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY.

PART I.

“OH! mother, she looked so beautiful.”

“Yes, yes,” said the aged crone, letting the thread slip from her fingers, while the ear suddenly missed the monotonous sound of the spinning-wheel, that had been heard beneath the green oak since early morning. “Fine feathers make fine birds; what was she dressed in?”

“I do not know,” said the child, “I only looked at her face. I should be as happy as a queen if she would only let me wait upon her.”

“It would be a thousand pities not to make you happy,” exclaimed a singularly sweet voice; and, putting aside the rose bushes, whose wild leaves fell around her in a fragrant shower, a very lovely girl stepped before them.

“And, so it would make you as happy as a queen to wait upon me. Why, I shall be a queen myself; at least, all the fortune-tellers assert that such will be my fate. What do you say, good mother, will you let your little girl come with me?”

Mimi's face brightened with eagerness; she looked alternately at the brilliant stranger, and at her grandmother, the red round cheek growing redder every moment.

“I will take great care of her,” continued the youthful Princess, for such she was. “She shall be my little bower

maiden. I do not know why; but I have such a fancy for the little creature," passing her hand caressingly over the golden hair, that fell in natural curls down the sun-burnt neck.

"You do not know," said the old woman, "no, I dare say not; nor do you know why you take half a dozen other fancies; but you may have her if you like. I shall be glad to be rid of the charge. I am too old to work for any but myself now; and I suppose you will give me something for her services. I am aged and poor."

"Oh! yes," cried the Princess, hastily unfastening an embroidered purse that hung at her girdle; and, taking a few pieces of gold, gave them to the old woman, who received them without thanks; and, after holding them for a moment in the sunshine, deposited them in her huge pocket.

"Let the child speak for herself; Mimi, will you go with the Princess."

The only answer the child made was to put her hand into that of the lady, and to look smilingly in her face.

"Silence gives consent," said Sophie; for it was the Princess of Zell, the betrothed of the Elector of Hanover, who now stood before them. "She shall go with me then; and, as we stay here for three hours, I can have her prettily dressed before we set out;" and stooping down, she parted the bright hair on the forehead, and kissed the little maiden with delight, almost as childish as her own.

But Sophie was quite a girl, and the character of her beauty was that of girlhood. The cheek was blooming, and the mouth was rosy, and the clear blue eyes seemed as if they had never known a deeper shadow than that of their own soft and long eyelashes. It was a sweet and a happy face, and no wonder that little Mimi looked upon it with sudden love and confidence. Poor child, she had known cold, hunger, the hard word, and the angry blow—all life's small share of happi-

ness had been in her own heart—in the gladness which, even under the harshest circumstances, seems inseparable from childhood.

“And, so she will leave me—her mother left me before,” said the old woman, “and you, rich and insolent that you are, think that the child of my old age is to be taken from me for a few fair words, and a few pieces of gold. Little do you imagine how sad it will be to sit under this old tree alone; but it matters not, all are ungrateful alike. I do not know whether curses have power; I shall have plenty of time to make them during next winter’s desolate evenings.”

Sophie startled at the aged woman’s vehemence, and Mimi, trembling, clung to the folds of her robe. For an instant, the Princess hesitated, but the fear painted on the child’s face determined her.

“I meant no offence,” said she, in her own sweet voice, “I have been thoughtless in asking you to trust your child to a stranger; but I will be kind to her, very kind, and perhaps she may teach me how to aid yourself.”

The look, the manner, touched the old woman, and her harsh features relaxed into an expression of the deepest sadness. “It was I who was wrong,” exclaimed she, “I ought to thank God that the orphan has found a friend. Little enough have I to give her, but when I am gone she must starve. So take her, lady, and I can die by myself;” and the crone turned away, and began spinning. But the Princess saw there were large tears in the eyes too proud to shed them.

“Shall I leave her with you,” said Sophie.

“No;” returned the other, and the child from whose face the light had vanished suddenly almost hid herself in the Princess’ robe. “Do you not see that the creature clings to you, a stranger—you, who have youth, beauty, and gold, and the instinct of childhood teaches a selfish adherence to them.

Take her with you, she may get sweetmeats and fine clothes; from me she has little more than harsh words and blows." Again she turned towards her wheel, but the struggle was too much, and the poor old creature wept aloud.

Sophie knew nothing of human misery, but the kind heart was warm within her. She took Engelfried's hand, yet said nothing, for she was new to the task of consolation, but the evident kindness was enough.

"You do not know," said the old woman, mastering her emotion, as only the strong mind does master it, "life's worst misery, poverty. Life has many others, but none like that. Poverty cost my husband's life—my daughter's honour. Poverty has made that fair child a curse—not a blessing. I have sat up straining my old eyes long after hers have been closed, working; and God is my witness, that I grudged not my labor; yet when day came, I have grieved the child with what seemed causeless anger. I could not bear to see her untaught—almost unfeeling. Take her, lady, and God bless you both."

The Princess remained silent for a moment, with emotion, unknown before.

"Mimi," said she to the little creature, who stood with her large blue eyes, larger and bluer for their fixed gaze, "you must not leave your grandmother; she is old, and you must help her; but you shall both of you come to me. There was enough in my purse to keep you for a few days. Mimi, do you see the buds on this rose bush? watch them—for before they are blown, I will return and fetch you." Sophie kissed the child, took one of the roses, and was gone.

Every morning Mimi went down to the old rose tree; bud after bud expanded into crimson beauty; and the child was watching the last three that yet remained in their soft green cradles, when the branches were put aside, and the Princess stood before the breathless and delighted child. A closer observer

might have noted that a shadow had passed over the soft azure of those eyes, and the step, though as light, was less buoyant. A fortnight had been enough to cloud that fair and sunny face. The realities of life were there.

“My grandmother is ill in bed,” said the child.

“We will go and see her,” replied Sophie, who followed her little guide to a scene of whose misery she had no previous idea. There was but one room in the mud hovel, through whose crumbling walls and roof the rains had penetrated, and the sunbeams now entered with a fitful and unnatural light. A small heap of white embers smouldered on the hearth, but a ray of sunshine falling directly on it, had extinguished the fire, which had never been more than a few withered sticks. A wooden stool, an arm chair, but broken, and a three-legged table, were the only articles of furniture. Bed there was none; and the dying woman had no pillow but straw. Sophie started—so ghastly was the face which met her gaze.

“Mimi said you would come,” exclaimed a hollow voice, “I can now die in peace.”

The Electress, for she was now the wife of George of Hanover, knelt by the bedside. The floor was damp, and Mimi's little feet left their print upon the surface.

“The rich robe will be soiled,” muttered the old woman, “but it matters not. Lady, you are paler than when I last saw you. I know the look of trouble too well not to detect it at once. There is that on your brow which mocks at this world's state; but this is a weary life; cold, hunger, sickness of the body, sickness of the heart, infest it: and the poor is not the only house where affection never comes. I am dying, lady, and around the death-bed is the future. I see no happiness in those deep blue eyes—no rest in the varying colour of that soft cheek. But there is a God in heaven, lady—if there is the trial, there is also the reward—and in that faith I die. Mimi, my beloved,

would that I had never spoken harshly to you; but you were dearer than the life-blood, which would gladly have poured itself forth for your sake. Cling to the kind and lovely stranger with whom I leave you. Death has no truth, or she will need even your love."

The voice sank into an indistinct murmur—a gust of wind threw open the door of the hut—a stream of sunshine poured in upon the pale and set features—the Electress looked upon the face of the dead.

PART II.

"Sing me no more old songs to-night, Mimi; I am too sad already," said the Electress to a youthful singer, who, seated on a cushion at her feet, was singing an old German melody.

A few years had wrought a great change, both in Sophie and her companion. Mimi, the little orphan, had grown up into the beautiful maiden; but she was not gay, as her mistress had been at her age. Pensive, subdued, her soft voice was rarely heard, save in snatches of song, or when telling some old legend to the youthful prince, who, young as she was, had been placed in her especial care. But Mimi's life had not been one of those which lead to the outpourings of youthful gaiety. Her childhood had been what Charles Lamb calls "not brought up, but dragged up," the hungry, toilsome, and harsh childhood of the poor. The pet and plaything of the Princess she had next known luxury and splendour; but the luxury had its companion envy—and splendour cast the shadow jealousy. Mimi soon learned to think; for suffering is the parent of thought. Her love for her kind and gentle mistress was the passion of her existence; and love takes its deepest tones when connected with sorrow. She soon saw that her mistress was not happy, that the satin robe could not control a heart that

beat too wildly, nor the diamond coronet still the throbbing of the feverish temples, where the pulse was too quick and too keen.

Sophie was used to a more genial atmosphere than the court of Hanover. Her own princely home had been warmed by the most simple and true affection; and she had been her mother's darling. Suddenly she was transported into a cold and unkindly atmosphere, where life was a thing of forms and ceremonies, and thoughts and feelings were forbidden words—a royal victim, sacrificed to that state necessity, whose origin is in false pride and false prejudice, her hand was given, but the heart remained behind. Married to a man whom she could not love, she might have honored him; but that was equally out of the question. She might have forgiven his neglect and his inconstancy, for it is strange how much a woman who loves will endure; but then she must love. Now, her husband's neglect grew out of his utter incapability of appreciating her, and his inconstancy from all that was mean in his nature—he needed low amusement and coarse flattery.

I know nothing in royal history more pitiable than its marriages, or more miserable than the system of state expediency on which they are founded. It is one of those mistakes which human pride so often commits when left to its own devices. General good was never yet purchased by individual wrong; and the affection, which is the most exalted and hallowed feeling in our nature, is not to be sacrificed to political exigences with impunity.

Sophie was much altered, and yet lovelier than ever. She was now very pale, a sad soft paleness, fairer than the rose; and her large eyes were like the moonlight, melancholy and full of poetry and thought.

“Leave me, Mimi,” said the Electress.

The girl looked sorrowful, but obeyed. She was scarcely gone before her mistress half rose to call her back; she missed

the silent sympathy of her companion. But there is an indolence about any engrossing feeling, which makes even the slightest exertion irksome. Sophie sank back in the huge gothic chair, and again her thoughts summoned before her an image only too frequent and too dear. It was the face of the young and the brilliant Count Koningsmarke that rose before her, whose recent arrival in Hanover had turned the heads of half the court. But the instinct of love is subtle; the Princess knew that she was the object of the graceful and gifted stranger; a look—a brief and hurried word—these were all that had past, but she knew she was beloved. Count Koningsmarke had many faults, the faults of an indulged youth, and a dissipated manhood; but the deep and spiritual passion he now felt, for the first time, half redeemed the heart it occupied. He had that intellectual style of beauty whose carved features recalled those statues which are even now the type of the ideal and the divine; and, above all, he had that earnest manner and that passionate eloquence, which is most fascinating to a woman; it at once appeals to the imagination, and with her that is more than half love. It is impossible to say in what a passion, at once the most mastering and the most mysterious of our nature, has its origin. It springs into life on a look and a word. The heart may have remained untouched for years, it may have wondered at the weakness of others, for we cannot sympathise with what we do not comprehend; but not the less does the fated moment come at last. Then we believe in all we doubted before—then we yield to the sweet enchantment life never knows again. I firmly believe in love at first sight; not that the feeling is at once known and confessed, it is only “the coming event that casts its shadow before.” A new sensation has entered into existence, and, alas! for humanity—sweet, gentle as it seems—in all probability to produce a wretchedness before undreamed.

The last purple shadows of twilight died away, the lamplight grew distinct amid the surrounding gloom, yet Sophie never stirred from her seat. Her long fair hair, pressed back from her feverish temples, had gradually become loosened from its confinement, and had fallen around her. Her cheek was even paler; and the eyelashes were wet with tears, that rose from a wretchedness they could not relieve. Yet hers was a common subject of human thought—she was thinking how happy she might have been.

“Why was I born,” muttered she, “in a rank so surrounded by restraints? why am I a mere machine in the hands of others, who never ask whether there is a beating or a human heart within? Why are these feelings given me, if they are for ever to be repelled with a bitter sense of wrong? I feel, deeply feel, that there can be no happiness but in affection.”

The Electress was right; she was but one of the many victims sacrificed to that gilded misery—a state marriage: a remains of feudal barbarism. The crime and sorrow of such a marriage is even yet imperfectly understood; and yet what is a royal union but an outrage on all natural feeling? Two strangers meet, between whom there can be no sympathy; all the illusions, all the delicacy of sentiment, are put harshly aside; in all probability they do not even please each other externally; they have not a remembrance in common; and yet they are at once bound to each other by the most sacred vows. To what has this led, this forced and unnatural position? To the most disgraceful profligacy, and the most bitter unhappiness. Whether in the palace or the cottage, marriage, not to be intolerable must be one of affection, nothing can supply its place; and what can be said in defence of a system which coldly puts attachment aside, and where even mutual liking—love is a holier word—where even liking is a chance.

Sophie was essentially gentle and feminine in her nature,

she would have been happy under any circumstances, had she but been beloved. Care she would have soothed, sorrow she could have shared without a murmur, let her but have been loved in return. It is strange what a fanciful thing love without hope is, how it will create an unreal existence, only, alas! to return more bitterly to the actual. Sophie fancied a little lonely island far off in the southern seas, herself and one other its sole inhabitants. A slight noise aroused her from her reverie, she started, and saw Count Koningsmarke kneeling at her side. For a moment the intense happiness of his presence predominated, she left one hand in his, and covering her eyes with the other, wept passionately. Her dream seemed at once realised; she asked not how, she only felt that he was there, and that she was unutterably happy.

“Sophie! my beautiful, my beloved!” murmured the Count; but his voice broke the spell, she gasped as if to drink in its low peculiar music, but, sweet as it was, it roused her to a sense of their actual situation.

“Count Koningsmarke,” said she rising, but her lip trembled while she spoke, “you are a stranger in the palace, and may not be aware of its customs. I cannot permit your present intrusion. I command you to withdraw.”

His natural daring, heightened by a love that took its tone from his fierce and impetuous character, the Count still kept his kneeling attitude.

“Call in your guards,” said he, “my head is the forfeit of my presumption. I ask nothing but to look upon you, and life is a light price for that look. Let it be my last.”

The determined temper masters the more timid, and Sophie stood irresolute. Koningsmarke saw his advantage, he sprang from his knee, and approached.

“You tell me,” exclaimed he, “that I do not know the customs of your court; do you think I do not know the danger;—

one movement of your hand, one sound of your voice, and my death is certain. But what is the scaffold compared with the hourly torture of the closed heart and the silent lip? Lady, if I die for it, I will tell you I love you."

Pale, trembling, Sophie leant against the wall for support—"This is too cruel," said she faintly, "why run such a dreadful risk?"

"You care for my life, then?" cried he, again kneeling at her feet, "ah! I feel that it is precious—sweetest, dearest—the gold that gave me access will insure my retreat—only tell me that you do not hate me—that you will sometimes suffer me to look on a face dearer to me than heaven."

Sophie had but a woman's answer to give—tears, bitter tears.

"Do not weep," whispered he rising, and taking her hand, "I cannot feel sad while I see you. Oh! do you know what it is to be happy on a look?—Oh! look at me, dearest—let me hear one word—I care not what it is, if I do but hear your voice."

Sophie struggled with an emotion that would not be subdued; her heart beat till it choked her voice; her lips moved, but the sound was inaudible.

"How beautiful you are, but how pale—are you wretched too?" and he fixed his large dark and mournful eyes on hers. "I could talk to you of hours, long miserable hours, but I forget them now—shall I not often forget them? Tell me, loveliest, may I not sometimes return? Tell me the next time that I come you will expect me."

"No!" muttered the Electress, with a cold shudder.

"Do you fear?" exclaimed the Count, a slight curve on his scornful lip. "Will you not," added he in a more pleading tone, "hazard a little for my sake? Forgive me—but I love you so madly, that I even hope"—

“ Hope !” repeated she, with a strange and hollow accent, “ hope !”

“ Yes,” continued Koningsmarke, “ beloved by you, every thing seems possible.”

“ Every thing but guilt,” said the Electress, who seemed startled into composure by the sound of her own voice.

“ Guilt !” interrupted the Count, “ there is no guilt in the worship I pay to you, even as to my good angel. You will but pity me ; but look upon me with those sweet eyes, whose light makes me believe in heaven.”

“ Hush !” said the Princess, “ I have already listened too long. A wife and a mother, I have not a thought or a feeling at my own disposal ; I have not appointed my own lot, but I submit to the will of God. Sir, you must at once leave my presence.”

“ And will you sacrifice me,” exclaimed he passionately, “ to these phantoms of duty—cold—vain.”

“ My own heart,” replied she faintly, “ tells me that they are neither cold nor vain. Again I bid you leave me.”

“ I cannot. Think, Sophie—ah ! let me call you so, before you reject love so devoted—you will never be so adored again,” and he pressed the cold wan hand he still held to his heart.

The Electress stood for a few moments the very image of despair ; the damps rose upon her forehead, there was not a vestige of colour on lip or cheek, and the face looked yet more pale from the masses of golden hair that hung around it. A shudder of convulsive agony wrenched her slight frame ; but her resolution was taken.

“ Count Koningsmarke,” said she in low, hollow, but distinct tones, “ I will confess to you that I am more wretched than you can be ; but he who has heard so much from my lips, must hear no more. To-morrow will, I trust, see you on your way from Hanover.”

She had allowed her hand still to remain in his, she had led him to the door, which she opened herself. Surprised, subdued, the Count obeyed the impulse; but he paused on the threshold, when a slight noise caught his quick ear. He looked in its direction, and from one of the ballustrades of the winding gallery, saw a face looking down. It was but a glance, yet he recognised the coarse though fine features, and the black hair, of one of the Elector's favourites. At once he felt the prudence of retreat, and he obeyed the sign to depart, while Sophie leant, white as a corpse, and almost as inanimate, on the threshold.

"Farewell," murmured she, "farewell, Count Koningsmarke, for ever."

The words had only died on the pale lip which scarcely moved to utter them, when she saw the ground open beneath Koningsmarke's feet. A trap door, purposely left unfastened, had yielded to his weight; he disappeared, and the arches of the gothic gallery reverberated to one last and fearful cry of human agony. Sophie sprang forward—a natural impulse of horror induced her to start back from the dark abyss that yawned at her feet. Surely, far down in the darkness, she saw the glitter of jewels, and she heard one low groan—and then all was silent as the grave. She cast one desperate glance to heaven, and dashed herself forward, when her progress was arrested by a slight figure that threw itself between her and the brink of the chasm—Mimi had saved her mistress.

PART III.

Years, long dreary years, had past in the old castle, to which the jealousy of the Elector had consigned his consort. For years, the eyes of Sophie had never looked beyond the battlemented walls, and had dwelt only on the faces of her jailors.

She had had no communication from without ; and the lapse of time was only told by the change which her mirror marked. She had entered that prison young, very young—now her bright hair was thin, and grey mingled with the yet golden tresses. But this morning she was happy. She had risen with the sun—the lark she never heard now—to watch over the slumber of one who made her feel that earth had still one precious link—one for whose sake there was yet something to pray and to hope—a handsome youth of about fourteen was sleeping in the little room adjoining her own. It was her son, Prince George, who had escaped the night before from his attendants ; and at the risk of his life had swam the moat to see his ill-used, his beautiful mother.

“ How soundly he sleeps,” murmured she—“ it is a pity to wake him—and yet he can sleep any day—while his mother he may not see again.”

But she was spared the necessity of awakening him ; for, as if made conscious, by some sweet instinct, of her presence, the youth opened his eyes, and said—“ mother.” The sadness of a wasted life—the bitterness of a false accusation—the weariness of years of prison, were repaid by that moment’s happiness. Sophie could not satisfy herself with gazing on the bright and noble features of her son. She overwhelmed him with a thousand questions—she was eager to learn all his habits, pursuits, and pleasures, and yet she startled at the least sound—she feared that they were about to take him from her.

“ You eat no breakfast, mother,” exclaimed the Prince, pausing in the midst of the meal to which he was doing the full justice of a youthful appetite.

“ Not yet, George,” said she, “ this is Sunday, and since I have dwelt in this castle I never break my fast till after the service in the chapel.”

“ This is a dreary place,” rejoined the youth, looking round

on the damp walls, from which the decaying tapestry hung in tatters, "but they say I shall be king of England, and you shall have a beautiful palace then."

Sophie smiled, and kissed the forehead, whose golden curls were the colour of her own.

Time passed on, and yet no search was made for the young Prince, who accompanied his mother to the chapel. It was a gloomy ruin—the roof admitted the daylight in many places, and the arches were broken and defaced, while the tombs below yawned as if about to give up their dead. The young Prince shuddered as he knelt on the cold pavement where his mother had knelt for so many years. The service ended—the Electress approached the altar, and again kneeling, she took from the aged priest the sacred bread and wine, but ere she drank from the holy cup, she called upon the Saviour who had given it to his followers, to bear witness to her innocence. A ray of light from the roof fell around her while she spoke; her large blue eyes were raised to the heaven she invoked, and it flung around her pale and spiritual countenance a glory like that of an angel. At this moment, a sound of hurried footsteps disturbed the stillness of those old walls, and the chapel was filled with strangers.

"I knew that I should find him here," said a tall stately-looking man, the young Prince's governor. "I am sorry, madam," added he, "that this painful duty should devolve upon me, but his Serene Highness must not remain here."

"I did not hope that he might," replied Sophie, "it is happiness enough only to have seen him; something at my heart tells me we shall never meet again. George, my beloved child, farewell. Inform your father that to-day, for the first time, I prayed for him."

"Madam," exclaimed the Baron, "my mission is not one all of bitterness. With some concession, I am commissioned

to offer your husband's pardon, and even a hope that your return to the court will be permitted."

"Never;" answered the Electress, "I accept no pardon—I will make no concessions—I demand to have my innocence fully recognised—I return to that court its injured and acknowledged mistress, or I return no more."

The Baron withdrew in silence, and the young Prince clung to his mother's side. It was a bitter struggle—but she herself unclasped his arms.

"God bless you!" exclaimed she, and led him beyond the portal. Slowly he mounted his horse—heavily were the iron gates closed after him.

"Once more," said the Princess, "I am alone."

"Not alone, my beloved mistress," replied a female kneeling at her feet. "For years I have watched beside these gates, which to-day I have obtained permission to enter."

Scarcely, in the pale and time-worn woman, could even Sophie recognise the once girlish and lovely Mimi.

PART IV.

The last crimson lights of a summer sunset illumined the depths of that ancient and gloomy chamber; a golden haze seemed to float on the dusky air, and poured in through the open curtains of the green velvet bed. The embroidery had long since faded, and the black plumes that waved at each cornice, grew yet more hearse-like with every succeeding year. But now the rich hues and the soft rays gave a mocking cheerfulness to the bed of death—and yet not mocking—it was the type of that diviner light which cheered the last hour of the dying. Sophie's head was laid on that last pillow, whence it was never raised again.

When the Electress first rested on that pillow, her temples were feverish, and her heart beat even to pain; she slept only the restless sleep of exhaustion, and she waked in the midnight, the shriek on her lips, and the damp on her brow, one fearful sound for ever in her ears, and one fearful sight for ever before her eyes. Night after night had been conscious of her tears, and morning after morning had she loathed the sight of another day that brought the same monotony of sorrow. Anger, too, had hardened round her heart; undervalued and ill used, she grew embittered by injustice. Her son's visit was the first softening influence that had touched her for many years; but that thawed the well of affection, so long frozen within. She felt that she was beloved; and for the sake of that sweet child, she forgave the world and all its injuries. Mimi came, and brought with her all the genial feelings of youth—all its warm and kindly current of affection, old remembrances of nature, and its changeful loveliness; she brought the world of the past to the ill-fated prisoner. Think what it is to waste a whole life in captivity—to look on no faces but those of your guards—to be shut out from society—to know that you are forgotten, that the green grass and the crowded streets are alike forbidden things; to know that life goes on with its usual round of hopes, pleasures, and objects, in which you have no part; to feel that your faculties are stifling within you, that your mind, your heart, are dead before their time. This is the lot of a prisoner—this had the Princess of Zell endured for years—and this, too, had Mimi endured for her sake. But the devoted peasant knew not what endurance meant: that is not endurance which is undergone for one we love. Mimi's whole world was the gloomy chamber of her first, her dearest friend—she desired another only for her sake.

But the prison scene was closing; Sophie lay, supported by cushions, with life fast ebbing away; her hair was still long,

but of a darker colour, yet more conspicuous from its being blended with grey. She was thin even to emaciation, but the fine features retained traces of their former beauty, and the large blue eyes were soft as a dove's, and clear as those of a spirit. But the dying lady was restless and anxious, she looked faintly around for one who was not there. In consideration of the Princess' danger, Mimi had been allowed to leave the castle; she was the bearer of a letter from Sophie to her husband, who was now King of England. He had just arrived in his electoral dominions, and would have to pass near the castle.

At an inn where he was to change horses, Mimi awaited him. The purple shadows of twilight were on the sky when he arrived. You heard the galloping of the guards, the rolling of the carriage wheels, and, amid dust and shouts, the royal cavalcade stopped at the inn door. The monarch called for a light, which, for a gold piece, the daughter of the host allowed Mimi to bear. She gave the light, and gave also a letter. The pipe fell from the king's hand—he knew the writing.

“*Je me meurs,*” exclaimed he, sinking back in the carriage.

The confusion attendant upon his illness enabled Mimi to glide away unnoticed, but she saw that in the king's face there was death. The white moon, that had been pale in the sky as a crescent of snow, had cleared into light, when Mimi entered the chamber of her dying mistress. The warm crimson, and the golden haze of sunset, had faded into deep obscurity, scarcely broken by the far dim lamps that swung from the roof; but the face of the Princess was distinctly visible, for the moon shone directly upon it. Faintly she raised her head to welcome her faithful attendant, and her lips moved, but the words were lost in a faint rattling in the throat.

“I gave your letter to the King,” whispered Mimi.

Sophie sat erect on the bed, a wild and supernatural gleam

kindled her eyes with a fearful lustre—she raised her hand—so white, so spectral, that it scarcely cast a shadow in the moonlight.

“ I summon him before a higher tribunal than his own, to meet me.”

The effort was too much, and she sank on Mimi's shoulder; a spasm wrung her features, and they set in the marble calmness of a corpse.

The King, her husband, died at the same hour: and, within a week, Mimi was laid at the feet of her mistress.
