

"It does," I said, "exactly."

She flushed.

"And Carrots," I continued, "blushed furiously when she was angry. I certainly shall like you—if I may," I added humbly.

"What, like me by proxy, because of this Carrots—What did you say the name was?"

"Carrots."

"Carrots! My goodness! No, sir, I refuse to be Miss Carrots' proxy. Ah, there comes my aunt. What did you do to Kate Seymour? Desert her?"

"By George! I did forget her."

She laughed with infinite relish.

"And you have brought down on my head the family displeasure in consequence."

"It wasn't your fault."

"'Deed 'twas. I made eyes at you. You are a *parti*—a big one—and Kate had you a minute ago." She laughed again, wickedly.

For a long time after that night I was happy—at least, if there is such a thing as turbulent happiness. There is a certain happiness in being a slave sometimes. At least, one has the satisfaction of being near the Queen, and even her royal anger is to be preferred to cold indifference. So when I was not pleasing the Queen, I was angering her, so that she never got the chance to be indifferent to me. I wanted to call her "Carrots" for auld lang syne's sake, but she objected. I refused to call her "Miss Seymour," and so "The Queen" I titled her.

It took me only a few weeks to find out all about her. She made her home—"refuge," she called it—with the Seymours, but despite the fact that she had lived with them a number of years, she felt her dependence bitterly. It had all been different, she told me fiercely, when Mr. Seymour had been alive; but the rest of the family, who had always regarded her advent as an intrusion, disliked her, and after her uncle's death they had been careful to let her know in every way possible that her presence in their house was merely tolerated. All the independent and passionate soul of the Queen rose up in rebellion against this attitude, and she hated them with the same unreasoning fierceness that little

Carrots had hated her stepmother and Marie Grenier.

It was easy enough for me, an outsider, of course, to understand why the Seymour girls (there were five of them) did not like her. The Queen was supremely beautiful. Moreover, since her uncle's death, the Seymours had found themselves in somewhat straitened circumstances—straitened, that is, for a family which has never felt the necessity of curbing their wants and desires as far as money went. Old Seymour's affairs were found to be in a complicated condition after his death, and while still in independent circumstances, they were not in a flourishing financial condition.

A wise woman was Mrs. Seymour; one after my Aunt Beth's own heart. These two good ladies had put their heads together, and had conceived a scheme by which the family were to regain their fallen fortunes. The five beautiful girls were to marry five wealthy men. I was one of the elect—Kate's, I believe. But I had other plans.

While ostensibly (for the Queen's sake, though she did not know it) on the most cordial terms with Miss Kate Seymour and her family, all my daily pilgrimages to the Seymour house had but one end and purpose in view—to see the Queen. She must have known this, which may have accounted for her coming down from her stiff, stand off little perch and meeting me (accidentally, of course) always in the same place. Thus it was not always necessary to go to the Seymour house to see her.

Since the night of the dance, she had assumed a peculiar attitude to me, or, rather, attitudes, I should say, for she changed like April weather. Now she was haughty and remote and cold—this usually when I had been gallant and attentive (for her sake) to Miss Kate Seymour. At other times she was as confiding and sweet and jolly as a little girl I once knew years before in Canada. But whatever her mood, I was her abject devotee and slave.

In a few weeks' time, I had abjectly poured my soul at her feet, confessed all my real and imaginary sins, and told her my scarred and battered past. For my pains, the Queen rewarded me by intimating that I was a pre-