

The two subordinates turned to the lieutenant.

"Let us go and leave the saucy wench," said one.

The officer thought a moment. Then he spoke a few words in an undertone to his men, and without replying they mounted their horses and went galloping up the road. After they had passed from sight the young lieutenant turned again to the cottage. A pair of dark eyes were watching him through the curtains.

"Now will you open the door, Mistress Polly?" he asked.

The black eyes fairly snapped.

"Thou'rt wrong, sir. Hadst better guess again," said she.

"Nay; I have a better plan than that. Let us exchange names. Mine is Rudolf Clifford. Now what is yours?"

"I was minded not to tell thee. But since thou hast asked so prettily, I cannot refuse. Mine is Anne Clavier."

"Faith," quoth Rudolf, "you have a pretty name, indeed, and one that accords well with your face." And had not the curtains been drawn he would have seen a rosy blush rise to her cheeks at his words.

"Thou turnest pretty compliments, sir," said Anne. "I truth, thou shouldst have a reward for thy neat speech."

"Nay; not 'shouldst' but 'shalt,'" spoke the young lieutenant. "But my hunger increases. Will you not open the door, Mistress Anne?"

"Indeed," quoth she, "if thou are not enow a soldier to gain entrance thou shouldst not ask. Hast thou been used to have thy enemies surrender at thy command? If so, then here is one that will not."

"Are you, then, my enemy?" inquired Rudolf anxiously.

"Dost thou not serve the king?" she parried. "And is not the king my enemy?"

"Then," said he, "I shall be forced to storm your fortress and take you prisoner. But hold! Where are you? I dislike mightily to fight an unseen foe."

"Here." And as the window flew open Rudolf caught a glimpse of a fair face made prettier by a pink flush in either cheek, and black eyes which fairly danced with suppressed excitement.

"You are very kind, Mistress Anne, to show yourself, and, though it may seem ungallant to take advantage of your kindness, yet 'all's fair in love or war.' But to return your favor, I warn you that I shall come through the window."