

small boudoir within a dining room, where a table, ornamented with a gilded plateau and magnificent bouquets, was laid for twenty guests. In an adjoining drawing room several gentlemen and ladies were already assembled, who greeted its mistress in the gayest manner. One of these guests was the Comte de Saxe. When he saw Mina with Mademoiselle Gaultier he started back amazed, hesitated a moment, and then rushed after them into the boudoir.

Before any one else had time to speak, Mina cried out the instant she saw him, "Oh, M. de Saxe, save my mother,"

"Will you leave us a moment?" said the count to Mademoiselle Gaultier.

She turned round and saw that Antoine had made good his entrance, and was watching his young mistress like a faithful dog. "Very well," she said, and shut the door upon them.

"Now, my child," said the count, in German, "What is the matter? What of your mother?"

"She is in prison, and my father also," cried Mina, wringing her hands.

"In prison. Good God! Why? Where? For debt?"

"No," answered Mina, her cheeks as red as fire, and her lips quivering. "For stealing diamonds! They steal!"

"Diamonds!" said the count.

"Yes, diamonds mamma has had a long time, as long as I can remember. She sold them when papa was so ill, and she wanted money. They were round a picture of a gentleman in uniform, which she sometimes showed me when I was little. The men who took papa and mamma to prison found this picture, and said it was the proof they wanted."

"Ah! I think I understand," ejaculated the count. "Did your father know of this picture?"

"Yes; but he did not know till to-day, just before these men came, that mamma had sold the diamonds. He seemed sorry when she told him. Oh, M. de Saxe, you told mamma that if she ever wanted a devoted heart and a strong arm to defend her, she was to think of you. Will you help her now, and my father also?"

"I must go to the king; there is no other way. What prison is it?"

"The Conciergerie," said Antoine, stepping forward.

"Do you know at whose instance M. and Madame d'Auban have been arrested?"

"The huissiers said it was at the request of the Russian Ambassador."

"Confound him! Ah! I must begin by making sure of that point. Do you know to whom your mother sold the diamonds, Mde. Mina?"

"To a man named Wisbach, in the Rue de l'Ecu."

"I know him; a German jeweller."

"Will the king let them out of prison, M. de Saxe?"

"I hope so, my sweet child. I will do every thing I can to help you. In the mean time, in whose care do you remain?"

"His," said Mina, pointing to the old servant; "our dear, good Antoine. My father said I was to go to the Hotel d'Orgeville, and

say that through some mistake they had been arrested, but—"

"But you had much better not do so now, Mde. Mina. Go with this good man wherever you live. Where is it by the way?"

"30, Rue des Saints Peres."

"Well go there, and if any one calls, let him answer that your parents are out."

"And if Ontara comes?"

"Is that the Natches princes?"

"Yes; my adopted brother,"

"Would he be discreet?"

"An Indian would die rather than betray a secret."

"Well, then, you may see him, my little princess."

The count watched to see if that appellation made any impression on Mina; but seeing it did not, he went on—

"Now do not weep, do not be anxious, sweet Wilhelmina. The Comte de Saxe would sooner die than evil should befall your mother."

"Was she the little girl you loved so much?" Mina asked.

"She was," the count answered, with emotion; "and she is the mother of a not very little girl, whom I am beginning to love also very much."

"And I shall love you very dearly, if you get papa and mamma out of prison."

Meantime dinner was begun in the next room, and the noise of laughing and talking reached their ears. The Comte de Saxe opened the door and made his excuses to Mademoiselle Gaultier. He said that pressing business obliged him to forego her hospitality.

"I conclude," he added, "that you will have the kindness to send this young lady home?"

"I will see her home myself," answered Mademoiselle Gaultier, rising from the table.

"Good bye, M. de Saxe," she added, and her voice faltered again, as it had done in the carriage, and under her rouge her cheeks turned deadly pale.

"Come, my dear, eat something before you go," she said to Mina.

"I will drink some water, if you please."

Mademoiselle Gaultier poured out some for her, and a glass of wine for herself. Her hand trembled so much that she spilt it. She rose, sat down again, and said to her guests:

"I know you will excuse my treating you with so little ceremony. I must go, or I would not leave you."

Her eyes wandered round the table! she seemed to be looking at each of her friends in turn—one of them was stipulating that she should not be longer away than a quarter of an hour; another laughingly declaring they would make themselves very happy in her absence; others protesting against being deprived of her society even for five minutes. Once again she got up, took Mina by the hand, and went to the door. She stood there an instant, looking at the table she had left, at the pictures, at the furniture, with a dreamy expression. Her guests thought she was gone, and had begun again to talk and to laugh amongst themselves.

"Come," she said to Mina, who was struck by the strangeness of her manner. They went downstairs and got into the carriage, which had been all this time waiting at the door. The