

island bridge, or to get the boat, when a cry reached their ears—a low, feeble, and yet piercing cry.

“Did you hear?” they all exclaimed at the same time. The boy shuddered, and said it was one of the water spirits that had cried out. The Indian shaded her eyes with her hand, and with the long-sightedness common amongst her race, discerned a speck in the distance, which she declared was a boat.

“But it is a phantom boat!” she added. “There is no one in it, and it is coming towards us very slowly; but it advances, and against the stream.” Madame de Moldau turned pale. She was prone to believe in the marvellous, and easily credited stories of ghosts and apparitions. They all gazed curiously, and then anxiously, at the little boat as it approached.

“There is somebody in it, after all!” the Indian exclaimed.

“Of course there is,” said d’Auban, with a smile; but it is a child, I think; a small creature, quite alone.”

“It is Simonette,” cried the Indian.

“Good God! I believe it is.” There was an instant of breathless silence; the eyes of all were fixed on the little boat. It ceased to advance. The oars, which could now be seen, fell with a splash into the water, and the figure of the rower disappeared.

“She has fainted!” cried d’Auban, dreadfully agitated; thought upon thought, conjecture on conjecture, crossing his mind with lightning rapidity. He hastily assisted Madame de Moldau to dismount, made her sit down on a fallen tree, gave his horse to the boy, and then springing from one islet to another, and lastly swimming to the one against which the boat had drifted, he saw the lifeless form of the young girl lying at the bottom of it. There was not a shadow of color in her face; her hands were transparently thin, and sadly bruised within by the pressure of the oars; a dark rim under her eyes indicated starvation. If not dead, she was apparently dying. D’Auban’s chest heaved, and a mist rose before his eyes. It was dreadful thus to see the creature whom he had known from a child, so full of life and spirits, and to think of her dying without telling where she had been, what she had done, without hearing words of pardon, blessing, and peace. He raised her in his arms, chafed her hands, and tried to force

into her mouth some drops of brandy from his flask. After a while she languidly opened her eyes, and when she saw him, a faint smile for an instant lighted up her face. She pointed to her breast, but the gleam of consciousness soon passed away, and she fell back again in a swoon.

He hesitated a moment. Then quietly laying her down again, with her head supported by a plank, he seized the oars, and vigorously pulled towards the spot where Madame de Moldau and the servants were waiting. After a rapid consultation, it was determined that he should row her and the dying girl to the opposite shore, and then return to convey the horse across. The two servants in the meantime contrived to cross the islet bridge. When they met on the other side, the boy was sent to the village to fetch assistance, in order that Simonette might be conveyed to Therese’s hut, the nearest resting-place at hand, and to beg Father Maret to come to them as soon as possible. Madame de Moldau had thrown her cloak on some moss less saturated with wet than the long grass, and sitting down upon it, received in her arms the light form which d’Auban carefully lifted out of the boat. She pressed the wasted limbs against her bosom, striving thus to restore warmth to them. She breathed through the cold lips, whilst he chafed the icy feet. They scarcely spoke at all during these moments of anxious watching. Madame de Moldau’s tears fell on the poor girl’s brow and cheeks. He gazed upon her with the most mournful feelings. Their thoughts were doubtless the same. They wondered where she had been. They prayed she might not die before the priest came.

After swallowing some more brandy, which they had poured down her throat, she revived again a little. D’Auban forced into her mouth some crumbs from a piece of bread he had in his pocket, and in an authoritative manner bade her eat them. She opened her eyes, which looked unnaturally large, and obeyed. After two or three ineffectual attempts at speaking, she succeeded in saying, as she pointed again to her breast, “Here, here, in my dress.” To quiet her he nodded assent, and said he understood; upon which she closed her eyes again. He went on putting in her mouth a crumb of bread at a time.