

dren, even when they are imperial highnesses. He seemed a rosy little boy; with fair curling hair."

Madame de Moldau sank back in her chair, apparently exhausted with the attempt she had made at conversation. D'Auban proposed to conduct the visitors over the plantation. But she made an effort to sit up, and again addressed Count Levacheff.

"Was the Comtesse de Konigsmark at St. Petersburg?" she asked.

Before he had time to reply, M. Reinhart said in a half whisper, "Would not you like to obtain some information, madame, about a casket which was once in the countess' care?"

Madame de Moldau fainted away. Simonette received her into her arms, but there was no tenderness in the expression of her face as she bent over her drooping form! she looked on her colorless face with more scorn than pity. D'Auban felt angry and miserable. He led the strangers out of the house into the garden, and murmured something to the effect that Madame de Moldau was a great invalid.

"If you take my advice," said Reinhart, "you will have as little as possible to do with that lady. I feel certain now of what I suspected at New Orleans."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed d'Auban fiercely.

He would have willingly thrown into the river or trampled under foot the being who dared to speak of Madame de Moldau in that insulting manner; but, at the same time, a sickening doubt stole into his heart.

Reinhart was so struck with his agitation, that it suddenly occurred to him that discretion is the best part of valor. He had not the slightest wish to entangle himself in a quarrel with Madame de Moldau's friend, who might be, for aught he knew, a lover, or even an accomplice. He therefore said, with a forced smile, "The explanation is a very simple one: from what I have heard of this lady's beauty and charms, and what I have seen myself to-day, I should think there would be great danger of a man's losing his heart to her."

It was impossible not to accept this explanation, and equally so to believe in its veracity. The conversation dropped. Meanwhile Alexander Levacheff had dis-

appeared. As he was leaving the house, he turned back, as if by an irresistible impulse, and returned to the parlor. The door was open, the window also. Madame de Moldau's veil had fallen off her face. The light was shining on his pale, lovely features. Simonette hastened to the door, and closed it almost in his face. He stood in the hall apparently transfixed—motionless with astonishment. Then, sinking down on a bench, hid his face in his hands, and remained buried in thought. D'Auban, engrossed and agitated by Reinhart's remarks, had not at first noticed his absence. When he did so, and proposed to return for him, General Brockdorf objected that they had no time to spare; that Levacheff did not know a turnip from a potato, or a sugarcane from a coffee-plant, and would [be only too thankful to have been left behind.

When Madame de Moldau had recovered a little, she went upstairs to M. de Chambelle's room. Levacheff saw her go by, but she did not notice him. After she had passed, he pressed his hands on his eyes, like a man who tries to rouse himself from a dream.

She had seated herself by her father's bed and dismissed his attendant. He was asleep. His aged features looked thin and sharp, and his scanty grey hairs were matted with perspiration. She rested her head against the bed-post, and faintly ejaculated. "Faithful unto death! Faithful through a strange, long trial; and now at last going to leave me. Oh patient and devoted heart! am I indeed about to lose you? Ah! if you had not been lying here helpless and unconscious, I should not have seen those men! Why did I see them? It was rash—it was imprudent. I do not know how to take care of myself. It would have been better to have died. Oh no! God forgive me! what am I saying? I know—I know, my God, what mercies you had in store for me! You are good—goodness itself; but I am very weak." She heard voices in the garden, and went to close the window that the sick man might not be disturbed. It was d'Auban and his companions going away. Gradually the sound of footsteps receded. Simonette knocked at the door and gave her a slip of paper, on which some German words were written. White as a marble statue, trembling and irresolute,