

ing to the old man, who was gazing wistfully at me from his seat near the stove. 'Nobody cares for me in the wide world, but you two.'

"My darling princess," said the countess, "do you care to live?"

"I started up in wild affright, a dreadful idea had passed through my mind. I was perhaps a prisoner condemned to death. 'What have I done? Am I to die?' I cried, 'Is the Czar dead?'

"The tears fell fast from the countess's eyes. She shook her head: 'No, but he is far away, my princess, and the wretch who all but killed you, and believes that he did so, would not have suffered you to live if he had known that you had escaped from the effects of his ferocity. I had the absolute certainty of this. His measures were taken, and I saw but one way of saving you. We sent him word that you were dead, and spread abroad the news of your decease. A mock funeral took place, and the court followed to the grave what they supposed to be your mortal remains.'

"It is very dreadful," I said, shuddering.

"If it had not been for this stratagem your faithful servants could not have saved you. The Czarovitch has determined you shall die.'

"And he thinks that I am dead?" I asked, with a strange fluttering at my heart, such as I had never known before. 'But when he hears that I am alive! Ah, I am afraid! I am horribly afraid! Hide me from him. Save me from him.' I clung to the countess with a desperate terror.

"We have concealed you," she said, 'in this remote corner of the palace. M. de Sasse and two more of your attendants are alone in the secret.'

"I am still in the palace, then?"

"Yes; but as soon as you have recovered a little strength you must fly from this country. We have all incurred a terrific responsibility who have been concerned in this transaction, for we have deceived not only the Czarovitch, but the Czar himself. The court, the nation, your own family, all Europe, have put on mourning for you. The funeral service has been performed over a figure which represented you, sweet princess; the bells have tolled in every church of the empire for the flower of Brunswick's line, for the

murdered wife of the Czarovitch—for your supposed death is laid at his door.'

"I am dead then," I exclaimed, looking straight at the countess with such a wild expression that she seemed terrified. 'I am dead, then,' I repeated again, sitting bolt upright in my bed, and feeling as if I was the Ghost of my former self. 'Am I to remain always here?' I asked, glancing with a shudder at the dismantled walls and narrow windows.

"No," she softly answered. 'Like a bird let loose, like a prisoner set free, you will fly away and be at rest.' 'Yes, yes, I cried, laying my head on her shoulder. 'Rest—that is what I want.' And my tears flowed without restraint.

"Under a brighter sky," she continued, 'amidst fairer scenes, you will await the time when a change of circumstances may open the way for your return.'

"Cannot I go to Vienna, to my sister, or to my own native Wolfenbüttele?"

"I immediately saw in the countess's face how much this question distressed her. 'Princess,' she said, 'This is not possible. Not only the Czarovitch, but the Czar himself, believes you are no more. If you revealed your existence, you would expose to certain death those who, at the risk of their lives, saved yours. Besides, the Prince will never suffer you to live. His emissaries would compass your death wherever you went. I have evidence that you were taking poison in your food, and that it was only the antidotes I persuaded you to use which enabled you to struggle against its effects.'

"Then I have no hope left," I cried, 'no possible refuge. It would have been better to let me die. Would that my husband's hand had dealt a heavier blow, and that the grave had really closed upon me!'

"What! is there no charm in existence?" Madame de Königsmark exclaimed. 'Have you drained the cup of happiness during the twenty-three years you have lived? Cannot enjoyment be found in a life of retirement?'

"Drained the cup of happiness!" I bitterly cried. 'Why mock my despair? Have I known a single day of peace since I married the Czarovitch? Let me die of hunger, or call my husband's hirelings to despatch me at once, but do not drive me mad by talking to me of happiness.'

"I raved on for sometime in this state, half conscious, half delirious, I believe,