

tion. In your conduct there has been nothing but goodness and generosity. Would I could say the same of mine. My only excuse is that my destiny was so unexampled that I deemed myself bound by no ordinary rules. I fancied neither God nor man would call me to account for its driftless course. I should have let you know at once that there were reasons of every sort why we could never be anything more than friends to each other. In those days I never looked into my own heart, or into the future at all. Bewildered by the peculiarity of my fate, I felt as if every tie was broken, every link with the past at an end, save the only one which can never be dissolved—a mother's love for her child. I applied to myself the words of the Bible, 'Free amongst the dead;' for I had passed through the portals of the grave. It seemed to me as if I had survived my former self, and that ties and duties were buried in the grave on which my name is inscribed. I lived in a state which can hardly be conceived. It was like groping amongst shadows. Nothing seemed real in or around me. You raised me from that death-like despondency, that cold and silent despair. You made me understand that it was worth while to live and to struggle."

She paused as if to collect her thoughts, and then said with a melancholy smile:

"Then you know who I am?"

"Yes, Princess; and in that knowledge there is both sadness and joy."

"I ought to have told you long ago that I was married."

"Forgive me, Princess, for having dared—"

"I have nothing to forgive. On the contrary, my gratitude for what you have done for me is too deep, too vast, for words. I do not know how to express it. You showed me there could be happiness in the world, even for me. And then you taught me by your example, still more than by your words, that there is something better and higher than earthly happiness. You made me believe in the religion which bids me part from you, and which gives me the strength to do so."

"Thank God that we have met and not met in vain," d'Auban answered, with the deepest feeling. "Thank God for the sufferings of a separation more bitter than death, if we do but meet at last where the wicked cease from troubling—"

"Ay, and where the weary are at rest. But now, even now, I *am* at rest," she added with an expression of wonderful sweetness, "almost for the first time of my life; and though when I go from hence and leave you and Father Maret behind, I shall be the most lonely, perhaps, of all God's creatures, the most solitary being that ever wandered on the face of the earth seeking a spot wherein to hide and die, I feel happy—Can you understand this M d'Auban?"

"Yes; for it is the Christian's secret."

"But you have always had faith—you cannot perhaps conceive the feelings of those who once were blind and now see. You don't know what it is to have lived half a lifetime in darkness, and then to feel the glorious light breaking in upon your soul and flooding it with sunshine!"

D'Auban was too much moved to speak for a while, and then said, "Would it agitate or pain you, Princess, to relate to me the particulars of—"

"Of my extraordinary history—my unparalleled escape? No, I think I can go through it, and I should like to do so. I wish you to know all that has happened to me. It will be a comfort to us hereafter to have spoken quite openly to each other before we parted."

It was in the following words that Madame de Moldau told her story.

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MYDAME DE MOLDAU'S STORY.

"My childhood went by like a pleasant dream. The ducal palace in which I was born, with its gay parterres, its green bowers, and the undulating hills which surround it, often rises before me like a vision of fairy-land. My sister and myself were brought up like birds in a gilded cage, and with about as much knowledge of the external world as the doves we kept to play with or the gold-fish in our mimic lakes. Our governess was an elderly lady of rank, who had all the kindness, the placidity, and the romantic sentimentality of the Northern German character. We were, I suppose, sweet-tempered children, and scarcely a ripple marked the smooth surface of our even days. Nothing but gentleness was shown to us. Study was made interesting. We led a charmed existence, such as is depicted in fairy tales,