

are friends of De Harlay's. They would like very much to see his *folly*. Would you have any objection to my bringing them here?"

"Who and what are they?"

D'Auban mentioned their names, and added, "I have heard of the two first, but I know nothing of M. Reinhart."

"He was on board the boat which brought us up the river. I would rather not have seen him again. Have they told you any news?"

"Not much—nothing of importance; but everything about the Old World is more or less interesting here."

"Where do they come from?"

"From Paris, in the last instance."

Madame de Moldau bit her lip, and pressed her hand on her forehead. She stood the picture of irresolution.

"It is very provoking that M. de Chambelle should be ill," she said, "and too ill even to advise me."

The tone in which this was said would have pained d'Auban, if he had not at the same time observed that her eyes were filled with tears.

"There is really no necessity for your seeing these gentlemen," he gently said. "They need not come at all if it distresses you; or, if you like to stay up stairs, I could show them the hall and the verandah."

"Oh! of course I know I can do as I like."

This was said with a slight irritation of manner, which did not escape him. She seemed to have the greatest difficulty in making up her mind.

"You can bring them here," she said at last, but did not mention whether it was her intention to see them or not.

He supposed she meant to keep in her own apartment.

When he left the house she went up to her father's room. He was dozing, and talked in his sleep of missing volumes, and the binding of a book which had been sent by the king of Poland. She sighed deeply, gave some directions to his Indian nurse, and went to change her dress.

When she came down to the parlor she had put on a large lace veil, which nearly covered her face as well as her head. She called Simonette.

"Get the shawl," she said, "which we

used to hang against the window. My eyes are weak; I should like the room darkened."

This was done, and she sat down with her back to the light. Simonette was looking almost as nervous as her mistress. "Here are the gentlemen," she said, as the hall door opened.

D'Auban almost started with surprise at finding her in the parlor, and at the darkness of the room. He introduced the strangers.

She greeted them with her usual graceful dignity of manner, and then said in a low muffled voice which did not sound like her own: "I hope, gentlemen, you will excuse my receiving you in so dark a room. My health is not strong, and the light hurts my eyes."

D'Auban thought of the way he had seen her a few hours before playing with the children in the broad sunshine, and a chilling sensation crept to his heart.

General Brockdorf made some complimentary remarks on the beauty of St. Agathe, and mentioned his acquaintance with M. de Harlay.

Count Levacheff, who had also seen him in Paris, playfully described the Frenchman's ecstasy at finding himself again in the capital of the civilized world. "For my part," he added, "I find it very interesting to travel through a country so unlike what one has seen elsewhere. The grandeur of the scenery is sublime, and makes one forget the vulgar evils of insufficient provisions, tormenting insects, and rapacious boatmen. I suppose that the beauty of the country has lost its novelty, and perhaps its charm, for you, madame?"

"The views are beautiful and the climate also," Madame de Moldau answered, in the same unnatural voice. Turning to General Brockdorf, she said: "Is it for the sole pleasure of travelling that you visit this country?"

"Not altogether, madame. The Emperor of Russia has commissioned me to draw up a report of the natural features and peculiar productions of this newly-discovered continent. Every thing which tends to progress, to enlightenment, and to civilization attracts the attention of his imperial majesty."

"Is the Czar as active as ever," asked d'Auban, "in carrying out his vast designs?"