

approached, and he felt sure at that moment that they were the eyes of the royal maiden of seventeen years of age with whom he had danced one night in her father's palace. He sat down by her as usual, and they began talking of business; but he was, for the first time in his life, absent and inattentive to the subject before him. He was reverting to one of those trifling circumstances which remain impressed on a person's memory, and which just then came back into his mind. When the young princess was dancing with him she had mentioned that the lady opposite to them had undergone a painful operation to improve the beauty of her features. "I do not think it was worth while;" she said; and then, pointing to a mole on her own arm, had added—"I have been sometimes advised to have this mole burnt off, but I never would."

He remembered as well as possible where that mole was—a little higher than the wrist, between the hand and the elbow of the left arm. Could he but see the arm, which was resting near him on the table covered by a lace sleeve, all doubt would be at an end. He could not take his eyes off it, and watched her hand which was taking pencil notes of what he was saying. At that moment a small spider crept out of a bunch of flowers on the table, and then towards the sleeve so anxiously watched. D'Auban noticed its progress with the same anxiety with which Robert Bruce must have observed that of the insect whose perseverance decided his own. The creature passed from the lace edging to the white arm. Madame de Moldau gave a little scream and pulled up the sleeve. D'Auban removed the insect, and saw the mole in the very spot where he remembered it. He carried away the spider and laid it on the grass. His heart was beating like the pendulum of a clock; he did not understand a word she was saying. He could only look at her with speechless emotion.

"Sit down again, M. d'Auban," she said, "and explain to me where you want to build those huts."

He hesitated, made as if he was going to do as she desired, but, suddenly sinking down on one knee by her side, he took her hand and raised it with the deepest respect to his lips. She turned round, surprised at this action, and she saw that his eyes were full of tears.

"What has happened?—what is the matter?" she exclaimed.

"Nothing, Princess, only I know everything now. Forgive, forget the past, and allow me henceforward to be your servant."

"You! my servant! God forbid! But, good heavens! who has told you? M. d'Auban, I had promised never to reveal this secret."

"You have kept your promise, Princess; nothing but accidental circumstances have made it known to me. Do not look so scared. What have you to fear?"

"Oh! if you knew what a strange feeling it is to be known, to be addressed in that old way again. It agitates me, and yet—there is a sweetness in it. But how did you discover this incredible fact?"

"It is a long story, Princess. I saw you some years ago at Wolfenbittel; but it is only since yesterday that I have connected that recollection with the impression I have had all along that we were not meeting for the first time here."

"Have you indeed had that feeling M. d'Auban? So have I; but I thought it must be fancy. Did we meet in Russia?"

"No; I left St. Petersburg before your Imperial Highness arrived there. It was at the Palace of Wolfenbittel that I saw you, a few months before your marriage. I was there with General Lefort."

"Is it possible! I feel as if I was dreaming. Is it really I who am talking of my own self and of my former name, and as quietly as if it was a matter of course? But how extraordinary it is that you should have suddenly recollected where you had seen me! What led to it?"

"Simonette's suspicions about some jewels, and a picture in your possession."

"Oh yes. I believe the poor girl thinks I have stolen them. I perceived that some time ago. I have been very careless in leaving such things about. I do not see any way of explaining to her how I came by them; but as I am going soon, it does not signify so much."

"Do you still think you must go, Princess? Does not my knowledge of what you are alter our relative positions? If, imploring at your feet forgiveness for the past, I promise—"

"Oh, kindest and best of friends, believe me when I say, that it is the wedded wife, not the Imperial Highness who feels herself obliged to forego what has been a blessing, but what might become a tempta-