

thought she had left me in anger. Thank God, I did not resent it; but how little did I think.....Good heavens, if it was for him, Father; for his sake, she did this; what a wonderful instance of devoted disinterested affection! How mean, how selfish my own feelings seem to me, when I think of her. Even now I cannot help thinking of myself, of the change in my fate, what it might lead to, what it might involve.... There are so many obstacles besides the one now so suddenly, so terribly removed.... Poor girl, it would be sad if she had sacrificed herself in vain. My mind is so confused, I scarcely know what I think or say."

"And you should not try to think, or to resolve, whilst you are so much agitated. The Bible says, 'Do not make haste in time of clouds.'"

"But I do not feel as if I should ever be calm again, and I hate myself for thinking of anything to-day but the death of that poor prince—he hated me, but he was the father of my child. My child! my poor forsaken child. I should never have left him. I did not know what I was doing. O! reverend father, was it not unnatural, horrible, in a mother to leave her child!....."

"You were in a certain sense, compelled to do so, Princess. Your life was threatened, and it is very probable that by your flight you saved your husband from the commission of a crime."

"True; God bless you for those words—for reminding me of that." She was silent for a moment and then said, in an excited manner: "I cannot see or speak to M. d'Auban for some days. I must be alone. I want to see no one but you and Therese. I don't want to go back to St. Agathe just now."

"You would, I think, find it a comfort to remain here with Therese, and near the church. M. d'Auban intends, immediately after the funeral, to go and meet Simon, who must be by this time on his way back from the Arkansas. He wishes to tell him himself of his daughter's death."

"Simonette dead!" murmured Madame de Moldau; "dead! a creature so full of life and spirits—lying dead in that next hut! all over for her, save the great realities of another world. She ought not to have died in vain. How passionately she must have wished him to be happy! but perhaps I ought still to go."

"Princess, that is a question you cannot decide in a moment. Time and prayer must help you to it."

"And you, too, will help me?"

"Certainly, as far as I can. I will beg of our Lord to give you grace to resolve aright. I feel very much for you, my child." The words were said most kindly, and went to the poor lonely woman's heart, who, at this turning-point in her life, had not a friend or relative to take counsel with, and who dreaded perplexity beyond all other trials. There are natures to whom it is the only intolerable suffering; that have a strong passive power of endurance under inevitable evils, but to whom the responsibility of a decision is perfect anguish. In struggles between duty and inclination, between conscience and temptation, the lines are clearly defined and each successive effort is a pledge of victory. It is like scaling a steep ascent in the free air and broad sunshine. But where conflicting duties, as well as conflicting feelings, are in question, and the mind cannot resolve between them, the depressing effect on the mind is akin to that of walking in a thick fog at night amidst precipices. Under such circumstances, a child's impulse would be to sit down and cry. There was something childlike in Madame de Moldau's character, in spite of its latent energy. It did her good to be pitied. Father Maret's sympathy seemed to loosen the tight cord which bound her heart, and she sat down in Therese's little garden, and after a good fit of weeping, felt comforted and relieved.

Over and over again she read and mused over the details of the Czarovitch's death, which the French Gazette contained. A deep compassion filled her soul for the unhappy man who had been her husband. Womanlike, she resented his wrongs, and shed tears over his fate. Whilst reading the eloquent words with which the bishops of the Greek church had sought to obtain mercy from him at his father's hands, she felt it had been wrong to despise them as she had done in former days, and that the Christian faith, however obscured, and a Christian church, however fallen, can speak in nobler accents and find words of greater power than cold unbelief can ever utter. Her heart softened towards those Greek priests she had once hated; and she said, "God bless them for this thing which they have done."