

patient endurance for a few weeks of the horrors, as you termed them, of Simon's barge, and the hut where we were first sheltered under these sunny skies. You did not know that I had once almost starved in a cold northern palace, well-nigh perished from neglect.

"At a moment's notice, a summons would come to accompany the prince to meet his father at some distant part of the empire; five or six hundred leagues had to be traversed, day and night, with scarcely any interval of repose. He detested those forced marches, and used sometimes to feign illness in order to avoid them. When we joined the court I was secure for a while from ill-treatment, for the Czar was always kind, the Empress affectionate to me; but then I used to suffer in another way. You will understand it: something you said to me about the Czar makes me sure you will. Since my girlish days I had looked upon him with admiration—his prowess, his intellect, his energy, the immense works he had achieved, his gigantic creations, had stimulated all the enthusiasm of my nature. Perhaps my husband would not have hated me so bitterly if I had not exalted his father's name, his schemes, and his invocations with an enthusiasm, and in a way which was gall and wormwood to him. When I was suffering the deepest humiliations, when insulted and ill-used by the Czarovitch, I used to glory that I was the Czar's daughter—that my child would be his grandson. But shadows gradually darkened these visions. A cold chill was thrown over my youthful anticipations. This did not arise from the stories my husband and his friends related against the Emperor. I disbelieved them. The slaughter of thousands of men—the extermination of the Strelitz—I recked not of. The majesty of the crown had to be vindicated. The young Czar, in the hour of his might and of his triumph, bore the aspect of an avenging divinity in my blinded vision, and the glories of a nation rose out of the stern retributive justice of these acts.

"But when in his palace, for the first time, I saw him give way to passion, not as a sovereign, but as a savage (you used that word once; I fear it is the true one); when I saw him, with my own eyes, strike his courtiers; when with trembling horror I heard of his cutting off the head of a

criminal with his own hand, and another time of his administering the knout himself to a slave—then the veil fell from my eyes—then the dream was over. The disgusting buffooneries he delighted in were also a torment to me. The cynical derisive pantomimes enacted in his presence, in which even the sacred ceremony of marriage was profaned and ridiculed; the priesthood, degraded though it might have been turned into ridicule—it was all so revolting so debasing. No doubt he was great in what he conceived and in what he executed. No doubt he created an empire in a few years, and raised up cities and fleets even as other men put up a tent or launch a ship. But M. d'Auban, do you believe he has founded that empire on a lasting foundation—do you think that the examples he gave will bequeath to the principles of morality which are the strength of a people?"

"I place no reliance," answered d'Auban, "in reforms brought about by despotic power, or in a civilization that improves the intellect and softens the manners without amending the heart and converting the soul. Did you ever venture to express these ideas to the Czar?"

"Sometimes, in a general way, but you must remember, that whatever may have been right in my impressions at that time, was the result of conscientious instinct, not of any definite principles. I was afraid of showing him how much I disliked the bad taste of his favorite amusements. Once when the Czar had given way before me to a degrading transport of passion he said to me afterwards, 'Ah, it is easier to reform an empire than to reform oneself.' There was something grand in this acknowledgement from one with whom no one on earth would have dared to find fault."

"Amendment would have been grander. But the fact is, he had no wish to amend. He had no faith, no principles. Ambition was his ruling passion, and what in him looks like virtue is the far-sighted policy of a wise legislator. What unmitigated suffering the atmosphere of that court must have been to a nature like yours! The natural goodness of your heart, as well as your refined tastes, incessantly offended by the iniquities which compassed you about on every side, and at that time no firm footing on which to take your own stand in the midst of all that corruption."