

ing. Three, two, one, instead of one, two, three. I'll sit just here by the door, so that we can still talk if you wish. I look like a boiled lobster, I'm sure."

Princess Zairoff said nothing. But when the American had withdrawn, she threw herself down on a couch near the wall. By choosing it she was out of sight of anyone in the adjoining room, though able to converse if she wished.

That she did not wish was very evident. No sooner was she alone than an expression of intense anguish came over her face. Her hands locked themselves together, an agony far beyond the weakness of tears was in her beautiful eyes.

"I have lost him," she cried, in a stifled whisper. "Lost him for ever . . . and it was for this we were brought together . . . For this I was commanded to learn the secret of my failure. Yes, I, who thought myself so wise, have failed . . . Failed at the crucial test, because my passions governed me . . . because my heart was weak, for sake of love . . . Oh, my lost strength—my lost self-restraint . . . Must I again tread the weary road . . . and only overcome to fail again?"

She turned aside and hid her face in her hands, while all that dusky veil of rippling hair fell over her like a cloud.

"I am so human still," she moaned—"so human that, woman-like, I deceived myself, and dreamt of love perfected here, when I might have known . . . I might have known . . . But, oh, to lose him thus! To stand