

colonial surgeons. It seemed but too probable that he would not henceforth be equal to the labors and fatigue of a planter's existence; and the climate of Louisiana was daily reducing his strength and increasing his sufferings. She did not long hesitate, but with a cheerful smile proposed to him to sell the concessions, to part with St. Agathe! They had much increased in value during the last ten years, and their sale would realize a sum sufficient to insure them a small income. It was an effort and a sacrifice. St. Agathe was connected with the only happy period of her life. Her youth had revived in that beloved spot. There she had known the perfection of domestic happiness—there she had been blest as a wife and a mother, and almost worshipped by all about her. She had walked the earth with her head erect, her voice undisguised, and her heart at rest. No fears, no misgivings, had disturbed her sunny hours, or marred her nightly rest in its green shades and amidst its inhabitants. Since her arrival at New Orleans, sudden tremours had sometimes seized her at the sight of persons whose faces she fancied were familiar to her. Or, if a stranger's eyes followed her in the streets—and this often happened, for her beauty was more striking than it had been even in youth; her movements were so full of grace, and her figure so majestic that it was difficult for her to pass unnoticed—she hurried on with a beating heart, or hastily drew down her veil. Old heart-aches had returned—thoughts of the past were oftener in her mind. She heard the news of her sister's death in a casual manner, and could not tell even Mina of her grief. Her residence in the French town was a foretaste of what would be her lot if St. Agathe was sold. It was deliberately closing the gates of her earthly paradise; but then she knew that what had been for ten years a paradise could be no longer. Neither her husband nor herself could ever forget what they had gone through. There are associations which can never be cancelled. The people, the language, even the natural beauties of America, could not be to them what they once were. No; it was not a sacrifice she was making—on second thoughts she became conscious of this; but it was setting the seal to a doom which was already past recall.

The news from Europe was also preying more and more upon her mind. Two years had elapsed since notice of the Czar Peter's death had reached the colony; and now intelligence had just arrived of the Empress Catherine's decease. D'Auban had heard this one night at the governor's house, and had hastened home to tell his wife.

She anxiously asked, "And what of my son?"

"He has been proclaimed emperor, and Mentzchikoff has taken charge of his person and of the reins of government."

"Ah! I now understand why Catherine left him the crown, rather than to Anna Ivanovna. My poor child! in the hands of such men as Mentzchikoff and the Narishkins, what will become of him?"

"Was nothing more said?"

"No, that was all."

Madame d'Auban's lip quivered; and, gathering up her work, she hastened to a terrace which commanded a view of the sea—she felt

a wish to be alone, to commune with herself on the news she had just heard; even her husband's presence was irksome at that moment. The forsaken child was uppermost in her mind; the change in his fate brought before her all kinds of new thoughts. He was now an emperor, a czar, that young boy whose face she so longed to see. She fancied the shouts of the people when he was proclaimed—the cries of "Long live Peter the Second!" They seemed to ring in her ears as the waves broke gently on the shore; and then she wondered if he ever thought of his mother; if he ever noticed her picture; and whether that picture was hanging in the same place as it used to do, above the couch where she was sitting on the day when the baby of a year old had been brought to see her for the last time. Her name was on the frame, Charlotte of Brunswick Wolfenbuttel, born in 1666. Had they engraved on it the day of her death? "He sees my picture," she murmured; "and when he goes to church, he sees my tomb. Does he ever see me in his dreams? I have sometimes dreamt of him very distinctly, and have awoke just as he was going to speak to me. Oh, my boy emperor, my young czar, my crowned child, would not you, perhaps, give half your empire to have a mother, on whose bosom you might lay your fair young head, in whose arms you might find refuge from bad men and secret foes? And why should we not meet again? Why should there be an impassable gulf between us, now that the czar is dead and the empress also, and that my son, my own son, reigns in their stead?" As these thoughts passed through her mind, an ardent desire to return to Europe took possession of her; not that she formed any plan of regaining her position; not that she did not shudder at the thought of disclosing her existence, and at the dangers and misery to her husband and herself which such a step might involve in that old world, which, like M. de Talleyrand, thought mistakes worse than crimes, and *mesalliances* more degrading than sin. She would have died sooner than conceal her marriage; but secretly, perhaps, she might venture to approach her son. If the Countess de Konigsmark was still alive—it was two years now since she had heard from her—some communication might be made to the young emperor, which would re-establish her, not near his throne, indeed, but as a living mother in his heart.

She spoke to her husband of their vague thoughts and hopes, of the twofold reasons she now had to urge their return to France, and their decision was at last taken. D'Auban had doubted a long time; he had mistrusted his own intense longing to revisit his own country, and had felt afraid for his wife of a return to Europe; but an accidental circumstance which occurred at that time, but which he kept from her knowledge, hastened his acquiescence. He had never mentioned to her the orders which had been sent out from Europe, for the apprehension of persons suspected of the robbery of her own jewels. The reports which had been circulated regarding M. de Chambelle and herself had apparently died away since his death and her marriage, but he had never felt perfectly easy on the subject, and about this time he met