

"Well, be it so. In the land of the hereafter there will be no scorn, no unkindness. Oh for strength of limb, and skill, and courage! Now for the spirit of my childhood—the fearless spirit and the brave heart! God and my good angel befriend me! The travellers to Canada cannot be here before the end of next month. My father says so."

D'Auban passed a wretched night. He reproached himself bitterly for not having examined if it was indeed true that the French girl had overheard the Princess's story, and not taken measures to secure her secrecy. He felt his anger had made him imprudent. He resolved to see her the first thing in the morning. But when, as early as was possible, he went to St. Agathe, Simonette was not to be found. Madame de Moldau and the servants supposed she had gone to the village. He went there at once, but she had not been seen. He told Therese she had spoken wildly the night before of going away, and observed that she did not seem surprised at her disappearance. Father Maret, to whom he communicated all that had passed the day before between him and Madame de Moldau, and also during his brief interview with Simonette, expressed his fears that she had gone to New Orleans to denounce her mistress as the possessor of stolen jewels.

"She has often spoken to me of her scruples on that subject, and, not being able," he said, "to reveal to her the explanation of the mystery, she never seemed satisfied with my advice to let the matter rest. If, however, she did overhear the truth last night, it is scarcely credible that she can have carried out her intention. She may, however, have heard the Princess speak of her flight from Russia, and not the preceding facts—enough to confirm her suspicions, not enough to enlighten her. Would I had stopped and questioned her! The doubt is most harassing. But she cannot have started alone on a journey to New Orleans!"

"She is quite capable of doing so."

"Would it be of any use to try and overtake her?"

"If even we knew for sure which way she has gone, we have no clue as to the road she has taken, whether by the river or through the thickets. The wild attempt may be fatal to her."

"Full of risks, no doubt. But she is

used to these wild journeys. I would give a great deal she had not gone, for more reasons than one."

D'Auban's heart sank within him. Letters lately received from New Orleans mentioned that orders had been sent out by the French Government to make inquiries in the colony as to the sale of jewels supposed to belong to the Imperial family of Russia, and to arrest any persons supposed to be in possession of them. If suspicions previously existing were to be renewed by Simonette's depositions, the Princess might be placed in a most embarrassing position; it might lead to inextricable difficulties; and yet there was nothing to be done but wait—the greatest of trials under such circumstances. Father Maret hoped the travellers to Canada would soon arrive. D'Auban was compelled to wish for it also. In the mean time he tried to re-assure Madam de Moldau about Simonette's disappearance by stating she had hinted to him the day before that she had some such intention.

Though with little hope of success, he despatched men in various directions, and one in a boat for some miles down the river, to search for her. At nightfall they returned, without having discovered the least clue to the road she had taken. The next day an Indian said that a canoe, belonging to her father, which was moored a few days before in a creek some leagues below the village of St. Francis, had disappeared, which seem to confirm the supposition that she had gone to New Orleans. D'Auban suffered intensely, from a two-fold anxiety. He reproached himself for the harsh way in which he had spoken to Simonette, and sometimes a terrible fear shot across his mind. Was it possible that she had destroyed herself! He could not but call to mind the wildness of her look and manner. He knew how ungovernable were her feelings, and how she brooded on an unkind word from any one she loved. The blood ran coldly in his veins as he remembered in what imploring accents she had called on him to stop on the night he had left her in anger, and how she had said that the task she had to perform would require all her strength. Had she gone out into the dark night driven away by his unkindness, and rushed into eternity with a mortal sin on her soul—the child whom he had instructed and baptised, and who had loved him so much.