

shine. But as he drew near, and she still remained motionless and absorbed in contemplation, he felt that it was not the beauty of earth and sky that was filling her soul with ecstasy—not the brilliancy of the cloudless heavens which riveted her upward gaze. He guessed, and rightly guessed, that she had that day laid at the foot of the cross the burthen so long borne in silence; that the poisoned arrow had been drawn from her breast. He was deeply moved; for he loved the woman who midway in his life had come to sadden by her silent sorrow, and yet to cheer by her gentle companionship, the loneliness of his exile. He longed to hear her say that she was one with him in faith, that henceforward they would worship at the same altar, that one great barrier between them was for ever removed. He spoke to her in a loud voice; she turned around and held out her hand to him.

"Yes," she said, in answer to his question, "it is as you suppose. I am a Catholic."

For the first time since his mother had been laid in her quiet grave in the little churchyard of St. Anne, d'Auray, tears rose in his eyes.

"Blessed be this hour and this day," he murmured with uncontrollable emotion. "It has made us one in faith. May not our hearts and our lives be also for ever united! Madame de Moldau, will you be my wife?"

The moment he had uttered the words he would have wished to recall them; for she looked beyond measure grieved and distressed. It had been an irresistible impulse. He did not feel sure that she was not angry. There was such a burning blush on her cheek, and such a singular expression in her countenance; but the blush passed away, and a look of sweetness took the place of that strange expression.

"M. d'Auban," she said, earnestly and steadily, "it is better at once, this very day, under the shadow of the cross beneath which we stand, to tell you the truth."

"Oh, yes!" he exclaimed; the truth—the whole truth."

"The truth which what you said just now compels me to speak. For every possible reason we can never be more than friends; and if you would not drive me away from the home, where after much suffering I have found peace, and if you

would still help me to be good and happy, you will never allude to this subject again."

"Is this an irrevocable decision?"

"It is not a decision I have had to make; it is, I repeat it, a truth I am telling you."

"You are not free, then?"

"No, I am not free." She paused and hesitated a little. "If I was so there would still be reasons why I could not be your wife."

He remained silent. The disappointment was severe. She saw it was. Her voice trembled as she said:

"You have been all kindness to me, and the truest friend a woman ever had. I owe you more than I can ever repay. But do not ask me to explain; if you can, banish the wish to know more about me than that I was once miserable and am now contented—that I had neither faith nor hope when I came here, and that now, thanks to you, I have both."

"That is enough for me!" he eagerly cried—"quite, quite enough. I will seek to banish all other thoughts. The hope I had dared to indulge was not altogether a selfish one."

"I know it well. You wanted to help, to comfort me. Now your friend knows all." She said this, pointing to Father Maret's house. "He has given me the consolation, the advice I so much needed. He is teaching me where to find strength; he will direct my future course. But this I wish to say before I leave you to-day. Whether we are to continue to dwell in the same place, or should we part not to meet again, there is a thought that will never leave me as long as I live. I may forget many things—many there are I would fain forget but what you have done for me. . . ." She stopped, almost unable to speak for tears, and pointed to the part of the church where the altar stood, then almost immediately added, "I never can forget that you brought me *here*; that you brought me to *Him*!"

It was not all at once that d'Auban could collect his thoughts sufficiently to realize fully what had passed that day, and how different had been the result from what he had expected. The event he had so ardently desired had indeed come to pass, and ardent also was the gratitude he felt for this great blessing; but the earthly hopes connected with it had suddenly vanished. What he had felt to be the