

MADEMOISELLE ANGELIQUE.

AN ALMSHOUSE IDYL.

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A woman, bare-headed and with keen black eyes deep-sunken in her head, came up to him. She had a shawl around her shoulders. She spoke in a high, shrill voice to him, twitching at her shawl.

"You must excuse me. But I thought you would like to know that the political situation calls for me. They can't get along without me. It is my songs that can save the country. George Washington, the Father of the Country, loves my songs, and yet these stupid creatures laugh at them. Would you like to hear my campaign song?"

Poor Townley looked at her without answering. Did they have the insane in this place, too?" The woman seemed hurt that he took no interest in her, and shaking her head, as if to say, "He doesn't know my worth either," hurried off. He sat looking at the water and hearing his head throb till it seemed as if there was machinery within his skull that was working at random. The green banks of the opposite shore were blending in a strange way with the water, and people seemed to be walking in it and he was whirling along somewhere.

When he opened his eyes he saw several small beds in the room, covered with pale blue counterpanes, and the sun was coming in brightly at the window and falling on the wooden floor. He was in a bed himself near the window, and at a little table by his side, pouring something carefully into a tumbler, was—Mademoiselle Angelique!

She was quite preoccupied with what she was doing. When she had poured out the proper amount into the tumbler she added some water and a little sugar, stirred it up with a spoon, and set it on the table. Then she glanced around at Townley, and found a pair of blue eyes languidly fixed upon her.

She gave a start, but at once recovered herself.

"You must not talk or fret yourself, my friend. You have been ill, and are going to do nicely now. I am here to take care of you. Will you not take this medicine that the doctor left for you? and it will make you feel much better."

"Where am I!" said Townley, and his voice sounded so thin to him.

"There," said Mademoiselle Angelique, bringing him the tumbler with the medicine, "drink that and sleep a little, and then we will talk."

She raised his head from the pillow and held the glass to his lips. He slowly drank it, and thought the taste was not very nice. But how weak he felt, and so weary and light-headed.

"Now," said Mademoiselle Angelique, as she put the glass back upon the table, and coming to him again pressed her cool little hand for a moment on his forehead, "you will be nice and quiet, won't you? If you don't, then all the trouble of taking care of you will be made of no use. Go to sleep, will you?"

Townley nodded his head faintly. And she slipped away. He was too weak to do anything at trying to make out why she was here and where he was. So he turned over and was soon lost in slumber.

When he awoke again the sun was fainter in the room and the clouds were red and golden over behind the houses of the city. Mademoiselle Angelique was at his side. She was sewing at a blue-and-white-checked apron, and looked bright and contented. Perhaps the apron recalled to Townley where he was. He had seen them on some of the old women pottering about the place.

"Mademoiselle Angelique," he said in his faint voice.

"Well, Monsieur Townley?" she answered, letting her hands drop on her lap and looking at him with her good-natured, kindly eyes.

"Am I not in the Alms-house?"

"Yes, monsieur. We are in the Alms-house," she answered with a smile. "But we won't be here very long. We will get out when we get well. What are a few days here? Nothing."

"I may never get well," said Townley sadly. "How came you here?" he continued after a moment's pause.

"Ah! monsieur, my poor mother died a month after you left Paris. I could not endure living there after she had gone to heaven. So when I received an offer for America I was glad to come here. But it was a little lonely," she went on, still with her cheerful intonations. "I was at your Niblo Garden. And then I fell sick and could not dance. My money went in paying for the doctor and medicine, and so I had to ask them to send me here. I was neat and healthy, so they got me to look after the sick. And one day you were brought here a week ago, out of your mind. I was very glad to have the pleasure of waiting on you, monsieur, for I have not forgotten your kindness to me in Paris. But you must not talk much now. I am your nurse and you must mind me, or they will say I do not know how to care for the sick." She smiled so cheerfully, and with a playful, caressing air.

"Mademoiselle, I am a ruined man. I have lost all my money, and then I got hurt in an accident and had to come here," said Townley slowly and with a weary air. "It would be better if I were to die and end it all. But we cannot die when we want to."

"Oh monsieur! do not talk in that way. We will get strong. The Island is a fresh, pretty place, and the air is good. We will get strong and then leave here. Do not lose courage. You have made one more cheerful by being here, but we will get out soon. You must be very nice and take care of your poor health. All will go well now."

Mademoiselle nodded her head in the most hopeful, reassuring way, and began sewing again on her blue-checked apron. Townley felt a pang as he saw the cheeriness of her old self-sacrificing spirit.

After that they had many talks together. She would bring the papers and read them to Townley, and would talk to him in her brisk, cheery way. She was a great comfort to him.

"Mademoiselle," he said to her one day, "I was thinking to-day that I have only one friend in the world. Do you know who it is?"

"If monsieur has only one, then I surely know, because I know that I am and shall always be the sincere friend of monsieur."

"Yes. You are the one I meant. Why do you take such good care of me?"

"Because you are sick and must be looked after," said Mademoiselle Angelique simply. "I am only too glad to show any kindness to monsieur. Did you not help me in Paris?"

Townley found great support in his humble companion. There was something fine in his nature that roused him to a high pitch of regard for this young girl, who had been stricken harder than himself, he thought. She was in a strange land, and had always worked hard and faithfully and modestly. Then he was touched deeply by her sunny brightness. He was very weak and she was as unremitting and tender in her attention to him as if she had been his sister.

"Mademoiselle, if I get well and am able to go out from this wretched place, you must let me help you," he said to her.

"We will help each other when we get free. You must hurry and get better," she answered with a bright smile.

One morning she seated herself by his side and opened the daily paper to read to him. He could sit up now, but was still weak. She read the European news, and then the interesting portions of the rest of the paper. The scandal and the murders she omitted.

"They cannot do us any good," she said in regard to subjects of this kind. "I can pity poor girls on the stage if they go wrong. There is so much temptation. But these ladies who have homes and families and forsake their husbands and little children—pah! I have no excuse for them."

She ran her eye down the paper, making remarks as she was doing so. Finally she exclaimed: "Oh! if that good fortune could only have come to you, monsieur!" Then she read the following news-item from the paper:

"BUFFALO, May, 18—

"Mr. William P. Fowler, the well-known merchant of this city, died yesterday of rheumatism of the heart. The sad