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for Angelique, that these two could have frankly understood each other. Bigot, in his sudden admiration of the beauty of this girl, forgot that his object in coming to see her had really been to promote a marriage, in the interests of the Grand Company, between her and Le Gardeur. Her witcheries had been too potent for the man of pleasure. He was himself caught in the net he had spread for another. The adroit bird-catching of Angelique was too much for him in the beginning: Bigot's tact and consummate heartlessness with women, might be too much for her in the end. At the present moment he was fairly dazzled with her beauty, spirit, and seductiveness.

"I am a simple quail," thought he, "to be caught by her piping. Par Dieu! I am going to make a fool of myself if I do not take care! Such a woman as this I have not found between Paris and Naples. The man who gets her, and knows how to use her, might be Prime minister of France. And to fancy it—I came here to pick this sweet chestnut out of the fire for Le Gardeur de Repentigny! Francois Bigot! as a man of gallantry and fashion I am ashamed of you!"

These were his thoughts, but in words he replied, "The lady of Beaumanoir is not my wife, perhaps never will be." Angelique's eager question fell on very unproductive ground.

Angelique repeated the word superciliously. "Perhaps! Perhaps!" in the mouth of a woman is consent half won; in the mouth of a man I know it has a laxer meaning. Love has nothing to say to 'perhaps': it is will or shall, and takes no 'perhaps' though a thousand times repeated!

"And you intend to marry this treasure trove of the forest—perhaps?" continued Angelique, tapping the ground with a daintier foot than the Intendant had ever seen before.

"It depends on you, Mademoiselle des Meloises," said he. "Had you been my treasure-trove, there had been no 'perhaps' about it." Bigot spoke bluntly, and to Angelique it sounded like sincerity. Her dreams were accomplished. She trembled with the intensity of her gratification, and felt no repugnance at his familiar address.

The Intendant held out his hand as he uttered the dulcet flattery, and she placed her hand in his, but it was cold and passionless. Her heart did not send the blood leaping into her finger-ends as when they were held in the loving grasp of Le Gardeur.

"Angelique!" said he. It was the first time the Intendant had called her by her name. She started. It was the unlocking of his heart, she thought, and she looked at him with a smile which she had practised with infallible effect upon many a foolish admirer.

"Angelique, I have seen no woman like you, in New France or in Old; you are fit to adorn a court, and I predict you will—if—if—"

"If what, Chevalier?" Her eyes fairly blazed with vanity and pleasure. "Cannot one adorn Courts, at least French Courts, without it?"

"You can, if you choose to do so," replied he, looking at her admiringly; for her whole countenance flashed intense pleasure at his remark.

"If I choose to do so? I do choose to do so! But who is to show me the way to the Court, Chevalier? It is a long and weary distance from New France."

"I will show you the way, if you will permit me, Angelique: Versailles is the only fitting place for the display of beauty and spirit like yours."

Angelique thoroughly believed this, and for a few moments was dazzled and overpowered by the thought of the golden doors of her ambition opened by the hand of the Intendant. A train of images, full-winged and as gorgeous as birds of paradise, flashed across her vision. La Pompadour was getting old, men said, and the King was already casting his eyes round the circle of more youthful beauties in the Court for a successor. "And what woman in the

world," thought she, "could vie with Angelique des Meloises if she chose to enter the arena to supplant La Pompadour? Nay, more! If the prize of the King were her lot, she would outdo La Maintenon herself, and end by sitting on the throne."

Angelique was not, however, a milk-maid to say yes before she was asked. She knew her value, and had a natural distrust of the Intendant's gallant speeches. Moreover, the shadow of the lady of Beaumanoir would not wholly disappear. "Why do you say such flattering things to me, Chevalier?" asked she. "One takes them for earnest coming from the Royal Intendant. You should leave trifling to the idle young men of the city, who have no business to employ them but gallanting us young women."

"Trifling! By St. Jeanne de Choisy, I was never more in earnest, Mademoiselle!" exclaimed Bigot. "I offer you the entire devotion of my heart." St. Jeanne de Choisy was the sobriquet in the petis appartements for La Pompadour. Angelique knew it very well, although Bigot thought she did not.

"Fair words are like flowers, Chevalier," replied she, "sweet to smell and pretty to look at; but love feeds on ripe fruit. Will you prove your devotion to me if I put it to the test?"

"Most willingly, Angelique!" Bigot thought she contemplated some idle freak that might try his gallantry, perhaps his purse. But she was in earnest if he was not.

"I ask, then, the Chevalier Bigot that before he speaks to me again of love or devotion, he shall remove that lady, whoever she may be, from Beaumanoir!" Angelique sat erect, and looked at him with a long, fixed look, as she said this.

"Remove that lady from Beaumanoir!" exclaimed he in complete surprise; "surely that poor shadow does not prevent your accepting my devotion, Angelique?"

"Yes, but it does, Chevalier! I like bold men. Most women do, but I did not think that even the Intendant of New France was bold enough to make love to Angelique des Meloises while he kept a wife or mistress in stately seclusion at Beaumanoir!"

Bigot cursed the shrewdness and innate jealousy of the sex, which would not content itself with just so much of a man's favor as he chose to bestow, but must ever want to rule single and alone. "Every woman is a despot," thought he, "and has no mercy upon pretenders to her throne."

"That lady," replied he, "is neither wife nor mistress, Mademoiselle: she sought the shelter of my roof with a claim upon the hospitality of Beaumanoir."

"No doubt"—Angelique's nostril quivered with a fine disdain—"the hospitality of Beaumanoir is as broad and comprehensive as its master's admiration for our sex!" said she.

Bigot was not angry. He gave a loud laugh. "You women are merciless upon each other, Mademoiselle!"

"Men are more merciless to women when they bequile us with insincere professions," replied she, rising up in well affected indignation.

"Not so, Mademoiselle!" Bigot began to feel annoyed. "That lady is nothing to me," said he, without rising as she had done. He kept his seat.

"But she has been! you have loved her at some time or other! and she is now living on the scraps and leavings of former affection. I am never deceived, Chevalier!" continued she, glancing down at him, a wild light playing under her long eyelashes like the illumined under-edge of a thunder-cloud.

"But how in St. Picot's name did you arrive at all this knowledge, Mademoiselle?" Bicot began to see that there was nothing for it but to comply with every caprice of this incomprehensible girl if he would carry his point.

"Oh, nothing is easier than for a woman to divine the truth in such matters, Chevalier," said she. "It is the sixth sense given to our sex to

protect our weakness: no man can make love to two women but each of them knows instinctively to her finger-tips that he is doing it."

"Surely woman is a beautiful book written in golden letters, but in a tongue as hard to understand as hieroglyphics of Egypt." Bigot was quite puzzled how to proceed with this incomprehensible girl.

"Thanks for the comparison, Chevalier," replied she, with a laugh. "It would not do for men to scrutinize us too closely, yet one woman reads another easily as a horn-book of Troyes, which they say is so easy that children read it without learning."

To boldly set at defiance a man who had boasted a long career of success was the way to rouse his pride, and determine him to overcome her resistance. Angelique was not mistaken. Bigot saw her resolution, and, although it was with a mental reservation to deceive her, he promised to banish Caroline from his chateau.

"It was always my good fortune to be conquered in every passage of arms with your sex, Angelique," said he, at once radiant and submissive. "Sit down by me in token of amity."

She complied without hesitation, and sat down by him, gave him her hand again, and replied with an arch smile, while a thousand inimitable coquetties played about her eyes and lips, "You speak now like an amant magnifique, Chevalier!"

"Quelque fort qu'on s'en defende, il y faut un jour!"

"It is a bargain henceforth and forever, Angelique!" said he; "but I am a harder man than you imagine: I give nothing for nothing, and all for everything. Will you consent to aid me and the Grand Company in a matter of importance?"

"Will I not? What a question Chevalier! Most willingly I will aid you in anything proper for a lady to do!" added she, with a touch of irony.

"I wish you to do it, right or wrong, proper or improper, although there is no impropriety in it. Improper becomes proper if you do it, Mademoiselle!"

"Well, what is it, Chevalier,—this fearful test to prove my loyalty to the Grand Company, and which makes you such a matchless flatterer?"

"Just this, Angelique!" replied he. "You have much influence with Seigneur de Repentigny?"

Angelique colored up to the eyes. "With Le Gardeur! What of him? I can take no part against the Seigneur de Repentigny," said she hastily.

"Against him? For him! We fear much that he is about to fall into the hands of the Honnetes Gens: you can prevent it if you will, Angelique?"

"I have an honest regard for Seigneur de Repentigny!" said she, more in answer to her own feelings than to the Intendant's remark—her cheek flushed, her fingers twitched nervously at her fan, which she broke in her agitation and threw the pieces vehemently upon the ground. "I have done harm enough to Le Gardeur I fear," continued she. "I had better not interfere with him any more! Who knows what might result?" She looked up almost warningly at the Intendant.

"I am glad to find you so sincere a friend to Le Gardeur," remarked Bigot craftily. "You will be glad to learn that our intention is to elevate him to a high and lucrative office in the administration of the Company, unless the Honnetes Gens are before us in gaining full possession of him."

"They shall not be before us if I can prevent it, Chevalier," replied she, warmly. She was indeed grateful for the implied compliment to Le Gardeur. "No one will be better pleased at his good fortune than myself."

"I thought so. It was partly my business to tell you of our intentions towards Le Gardeur."

"Indeed!" replied she, in a tone of pique. "I flattered myself your visit was all on my account, Chevalier."

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