

"Partly as attendant, partly as companion."

"And is the lady a real one?"

"I have no doubt she is."

"And a person of good character? You see, Colonel, I am an old sinner myself, but I should not like my little girl to live with some of the ladies whom we know come out to the colony."

D'Auban felt he had no proof to give of Madame de Moldau's respectability beyond his own entire belief in it.

He answered in a somewhat sneering manner, "I will engage to say that, as far as morality goes, she is greatly superior to the persons your daughter associates with on board your boats."

"Ah! but there I watch over her."

Whatever d'Auban might think of the amount of Simon's parental vigilance, he felt that his own manner of speaking had been wrong.

"All I can tell you is," he said in a different tone, "that from what I have myself seen of Madame de Moldau, I am persuaded that she is a person of unexceptional character. Her father has more fortune than the generality of settlers, and has bought M. de Harlay's pavillon. I did not know them before they came here, but my impressions are so favorable that I do not hesitate to advise you to accept the offer I speak of, if Simonette herself is inclined to do so."

"Here comes the monkey," cried Simon, pointing to the thicket from whence his daughter was emerging. "May I speak to her first about it?" d'Auban asked.

"Certainly; only when you come to talk of wages you had better take me into council."

D'Auban went to meet the girl. In her half-French, half-Indian costume, with her black hair twisted in a picturesque manner round her head, and her eyes darting quick glances, more like those of a restless bird than of a woman, Simonette, as Maitre Simon's daughter had always been called, was rather pretty. There was life, animation, and a kind of brilliancy about her, though there was no real beauty in her features, and no repose in her countenance; she seemed always on the point of starting off, and had a way of looking out of the corner of her eye as if she caught at what was said to her rather than listened to it.

"How do you do, Simonette? It is a long time since I have seen you."

"Sir, I thought you had forgotten me."

"No, indeed, I have not; and the proof is in my coming here to-day to offer you a situation."

"Sir, I don't want a situation."

"Hear what it is, Simonette, before you decide. Madame de Moldau, the lady at St Agathe, would like to engage you as an attendant; but, in fact, what she really wants is a companion."

"Sir, she had better not take me."

"Why so, Simonette?"

"Because, sir, I should not suit her."

"But I think you would, Simonette, and I really wish you would think about it."

"Well, wait a moment, and I will." She darted off, and in a moment was out of sight.

Maitre Simon came up to d'Auban and asked what had become of her.

"She says she must take time to consider, and has rushed into the thickets."

"I always maintain she is more like a monkey than a woman," Simon exclaimed in a tone of vexation. "I daresay she is in the hollow of a tree or at the top of a branch. I wish she was married and off my hands. What wages would the lady give?"

"Well, forty francs a month, I suppose."

"Fifty would be more to the purpose. You see, sir, if it is not often that ladies are to be found in these parts, it is just as seldom that ladies' maids are to be met with."

"Well, I admit there is something in that. Let us then say fifty."

"Ah! I know you are a reasonable man, Colonel d'Auban. I wish the girl would come back."

In a few minutes she did return, holding a small ape in her arms, and playing a thousand tricks with it.

"Well, Simonette, your father is satisfied about the wages. It remains for you to say if you will accept the situation."

"No, sir, I will not," answered Simonette, looking hard into the monkey's face.

"But it is a very good offer," urged her father. "Fifty francs a month. What are you thinking of, child?"

"It would also be an act of charity towards the lady," d'Auban put in. "She is ill and sorrowful."

"And I am sure it would be a charity to ourselves," Simon said in a whining