

ture to Tilly with his sister, who had thus, apparently, more influence to take him away from the city than Angelique had to keep him there.

But her mind was especially worked upon almost to madness by the ardent professions of love, with the careful avoidance of any proposal of marriage, on the part of the Intendant. She had received his daily visits with a determination to please and fascinate him. She had dressed herself with elaborate care, and no woman in New France equalled Angelique in the perfection of her attire. She studied his tastes in her conversation and demeanor, which were free beyond even her wont, because she saw that a manner bold and unconstrained took best with him. Angelique's free style was the most perfect piece of acting in the world. She laughed loudly at his wit, and heard without blushes his double entendres and coarse jests, not less coarse because spoken in the polished dialect of Paris. She stood it all, but with no more result than is left by a brilliant display of fireworks after it is over. She could read in the eager looks and manner of the Intendant that she had fixed his admiration and stirred his passions, but she knew by a no less sure intuition that she had not, with all her blandishments, suggested to his mind one serious thought of marriage.

In vain she reverted to the subject of matrimony, in apparent jest but secret earnest. The Intendant, quick-witted as herself, would accept the challenge, talk with her and caracole on the topic which she had caparisoned so gaily for him, and, amid compliments and pleasantries, ride away from the point, she knew not whither! Then Angelique would be angry after his departure, and swear—she could swear shockingly for a lady when she was angry!—and vow she would marry Le Gardeur after all; but her pride was stung, not her love. No man had ever defeated her when she chose to subdue him, neither should this proud Intendant! So Angelique collected her scattered forces again, and laid closer siege to Bigot than ever.

The great ball at the Palais had been the object of absorbing interest to the fashionable society of the Capital for many weeks. It came on at last, turning the heads of half the city with its splendor.

Angelique shone the acknowledged queen of the Intendant's ball. Her natural grace and beauty, set off by the exquisite taste and richness of her attire, threw into eclipse the fairest of her rivals. If there was one present who, in admiration of her own charms, claimed for herself the first place, she freely conceded to Angelique the second. But Angelique feared no rival there. Her only fear was at Beaumanoir. She was profoundly conscious of her own superiority to all present, while she relished the envy and jealousy which it created. She cared but little what the women thought of her, and boldly challenging the homage of the men, obtained it as her rightful due.

Still, under the gay smiles and lively badinage which she showered on all around as she moved through the brilliant throng, Angelique felt a bitter spirit of discontent rankling in her bosom. She was angry, and she knew why, and still more angry because upon herself lay the blame! Not that she blamed herself for having rejected Le Gardeur—she had done that deliberately, and for a price; but the price was not yet paid, and she had, sometimes, qualms of doubt whether it would ever be paid!

She who had had her own way with all men, now encountered a man who spoke and looked like one who had had his own way with all women, and who meant to have his own way with her!

She gazed often upon the face of Bigot, and the more she looked, the more insupportable it appeared to her. She tried to sound the depths of his thoughts, but her inquiry was like the dropping of a stone into the bot-

tomless pit of that deep cavern of the dark and bloody ground talked of by adventurous voyageurs from the Far West.

That Bigot admired her beyond all other women at the ball, was visible enough from the marked attention which he lavished upon her, and the courtly flatteries that flowed like honey from his lips. She also read her pre-eminence in his favor from the jealous eyes of a host of rivals who watched her every movement. But Angelique felt that the admiration of the Intendant was not of that kind which had driven so many men mad for her sake. She knew Bigot would never go mad for her, much as he was fascinated! and why? why?

Angelique, while listening to his honeyed flatteries, as he led her gaily through the ballroom, asked herself again and again why did he carefully avoid the one topic that filled her thoughts, or spoke of it only in his mocking manner, which tortured her to madness with doubt and perplexity?

As she leaned on the arm of the courtly Intendant, laughing like one possessed with the very spirit of gaiety at his sallies and jests, her mind was torn with bitter comparisons as she remembered Le Gardeur, his handsome face and his transparent admiration, so full of love, and ready for any sacrifice for her sake—and she had cast it all away for this inscrutable voluptuary, a man who had no respect for women, but who admired her person, condescended to be pleased with it, and affected to be caught by the lures she held out for him, but which she felt would be of no more avail to hold him fast than the threads which a spider throws from bush to bush on a summer morn will hold fast a bird which flies athwart them!

The gayest of the gay to all outward appearance, Angelique missed sorely the presence of Le Gardeur, and she resented his absence from the ball as a slight and a wrong to her sovereignty, which never released a lover from his allegiance.

The fair demoiselles at the ball, less resolutely ambitious than Angelique, found, by degrees, in the devotion of other cavaliers, ample compensation for only so much of the Intendant's favor as he liberally bestowed on all the sex; but that did not content Angelique; she looked with sharpest eyes of inquisition upon the bright glances which now and then shot across the room where she sat by the side of Bigot, apparently steeped in happiness, but with a serpent biting at her heart, for she felt that Bigot was really unimpressible as a stone under her most subtle manipulation.

Her thoughts ran in a round of ceaseless repetition of the question: "Why can I not subdue Francois Bigot as I have subdued every other man who exposed his weak side to my power?" and Angelique pressed her foot hard upon the floor as the answer returned, ever the same: "The heart of the Intendant is away at Beaumanoir! That pale, pensive lady" (Angelique used a more coarse and emphatic word) "stands between him and me like a spectre as she is, and obstructs the path I have sacrificed so much to enter!"

"I cannot endure the heat of the ballroom, Bigot!" said Angelique: "I will dance no more to-night! I would rather sit and catch fireflies on the terrace than chase forever, without overtaking it, the bird that has escaped from my bosom!"

The Intendant, ever attentive to her wishes, offered his arm to lead her into the pleasured walks of the illuminated garden. Angelique rose, gathered up her rich train, and with an air of royal coquetry took his arm, and accompanied the Intendant on a promenade down the grand alley of roses.

"What favorite bird has escaped from your bosom, Angelique?" asked the Intendant, who had, however, a shrewd guess of the meaning of her metaphor.

"The pleasure I had in anticipation

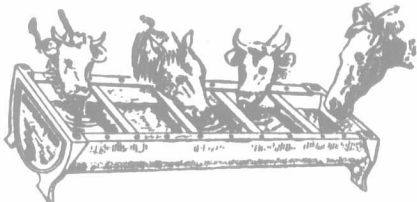
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