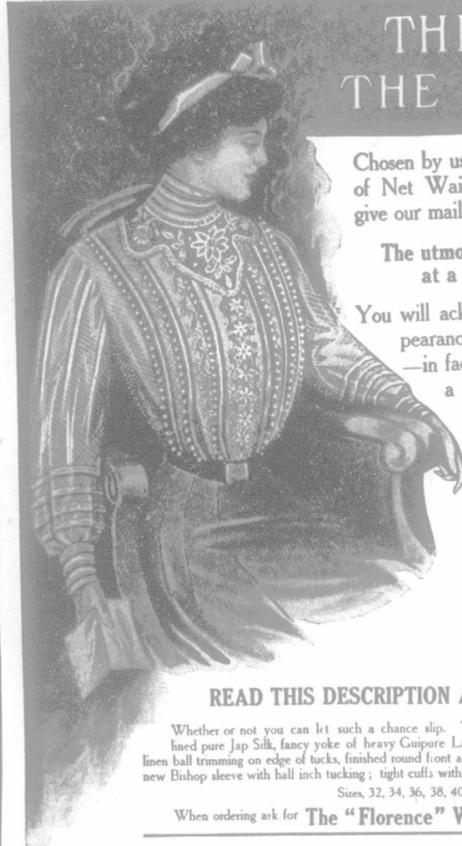


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by "St. Maur!" she shall pay for all this! I, who have caught women all my life, to be caught by one thus! she shall pay for it!"

"Well, make her pay for it by marrying her!" replied Cadet. "Par Dieu! I am mistaken if you have not got to marry her in the end! I would marry her myself, if you do not, only I should be afraid to sleep nights! I might be put under the floor before morning if she liked another man better!"

Cadet gave way to a feeling of hilarity at this idea, shaking his sides so long and heartily that Bigot caught the infection, and joined in with a burst of sardonic laughter.

Bigot's laughter was soon over. He sat down at the table again, and, being now calm, considered the whole matter over, point by point, with Cadet, who, though coarse and unprincipled, was a shrewd counsellor in difficulties.

It was determined between the two men that nothing whatever should be said of the assassination. Bigot should continue his gallantries to Angelique, and avoid all show of suspicion in that quarter. He should tell her of the disappearance of Caroline, who had gone away mysteriously as she came, but profess absolute ignorance as to her fate.

Angelique would be equally cautious in alluding to the murder; she would pretend to accept all his statements as absolute fact. Her tongue, if not her thoughts, would be sealed up in perpetual silence on that bloody topic. Bigot must feed her with hopes of marriage, and if necessary set a day for it, far enough off to cover all the time to be taken up in the search after Caroline.

"I will never marry her, Cadet!" exclaimed Bigot, "but will make her regret all her life she did not marry me!"

"Take care, Bigot! It is dangerous playing with fire. You don't half know Angelique."

"I mean she shall pull the chestnuts out of the fire for me with her pretty fingers, until she burns them," remarked Bigot, gruffly.

"I would not trust her too far! In all seriousness, you have but the choice of two things, Bigot: marry her or send her to the Convent."

"I would not do the one, and I could not do the other, Cadet," was Bigot's prompt reply to this suggestion.

"Tut! Mere Migeon de la Nativite

will respect your lettre de cachet, and provide a close, comfortable cell for this pretty penitent in the Ursulines," said Cadet.

"Not she! Mere Migeon gave me one of her parlor-lectures once, and I care not for another. Egad, Cadet! she made me the nearest of being ashamed of Francois Bigot of any one I ever listened to! Could you have seen her, with her veil thrown back, her pale face still paler with indignation, her black eyes looking still blacker beneath the white fillet upon her forehead, and then her tongue, Cadet! Well, I withdrew my proposal and felt myself rather cheapened in the presence of Mere Migeon."

"Ay, I hear she is a clipper when she gets a sinner by the hair! What was the proposal you made to her, Bigot?" asked Cadet, smiling as if he knew.

"Oh, it was not worth a livre to make such a row about! I only proposed to send a truant damsel to the Convent to repent of my faults, that was all! But I could never dispose of Angelique in that way," continued the Intendant, with a shrug.

"Egad! she will fool any man faster than he can make a fool of her! But I would try Mere Migeon, notwithstanding," replied Cadet. "She is the only one to break in this wild filly and nail her tongue fast to her prayers!"

"It is useless trying. They know Angelique too well. She would turn the Convent out of the windows in the time of a neuvaine. They are all really afraid of her," replied Bigot.

"Then you must marry her, or do worse, Bigot. I see nothing else for it," was Cadet's reply.

"Well, I will do worse, if worse can be; for marry her I will not!" said Bigot, stamping his foot upon the floor.

"It is understood, then, Bigot, not a word, a hint, a look is to be given to Angelique regarding your suspicions of her complicity in this murder?"

"Yes, it is understood. The secret is like the devil's tontine—he catches the last possessor of it."

"I expect to be the last, then, if I keep in your company, Bigot," remarked Cadet.

Cadet having settled this point to his mind, reclined back in his easy chair and smoked on in silence, while the Intendant kept walking the floor anxiously,

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