

THE MYSTERIOUS CRIME ON THE S.S. NEPTUNE

CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

The captain jumped at the idea, and was going down to carry it into effect when Ronald stopped him.

"I say," he asked eagerly; "who is that pretty girl with the dark hair?"

"Oh, that," said Templeton with a laugh, "is the object of your suspicions—Miss Cotoner."

Captain Templeton turned away, and Ronald discovered the young lady in question was the very one he had seen on the Barraca, and of whose face he had been dreaming ever since. She, guilty of a crime? The thought was madness; if anyone even hinted at such a thing he'd throw him over the side, and he no longer was astonished at the captain's indignation at his suggestion. The fact was, Master Ronald was in the first stage of that universal disease called love. He approached Mrs. Pellypop as she sat knitting industriously, and took a seat beside her; of course she commenced on the great subject of the day, and expressed her opinion that it was a "lascar."

"But what motive?" asked Ronald, absently; "couldn't be robbery—nothing was stolen."

"Then it must have been a steward," said Mrs. Pellypop, determinedly. "Mr. Ventin looked like a man with a temper, and very likely struck a steward, who retaliated by killing him,—oh, it's as clear as day to me."

"But where did he get his weapon?" asked Ronald.

"Stole it from the plate basket," said Mrs. Pellypop, whose idea of stilts was vague.

"It was not a table knife?" began Ronald, then broke off suddenly as he saw Miss Cotoner move away with a tall, slender, dark man. "I say, Mrs. Pellypop, who's that?"

"Whom?" asked Mrs. Pellypop, putting up her glasses. "Oh, the girl from Malta?"

"No, not Miss Cotoner, I know who she is; but the fellow?"

"Oh, her cousin, the Marchese Vassalla," answered Mrs. Pellypop; "not that I care much for foreign titles myself, but he looks a gentleman."

And, as a matter of fact, he was by no means ill-looking, but when Ronald saw him he instantly took a dislike to him. Why, he did not know, unless it was on the Dr. Fell principle; it might have been instinct, perhaps prejudice; but the fact remained nevertheless—he did like Matteo Vassalla. A handsome face certainly, with swarthy skin, brilliant, black eyes, and a coal black beard carefully trimmed. In his slender, sinewy figure there was something of the lithe grace of a panther; and what with the graceful movements of his hands, and the deferential manner with which he bent toward Miss Cotoner, he decidedly did not impress Monteith unfavorably.

But the lady—well, she has been described before, and as Ronald looked at her he only found new perfections. She had rather a sad expression on her face, and her head was a little bent down, but for the rest, she was as straight and graceful as Artemis. Ronald, who had stoutly resisted all the blandishments of the pretty girls on board, caught one glance of those brilliantly black eyes and surrendered at once. He also caught the glance of

another pair of eyes which did not regard him in such a friendly manner, and drew himself up haughtily as he left Mrs. Pellypop, and went down to the saloon.

"What the deuce did that foreign cad mean by staring at me like that," he muttered, quite forgetting that the cad in question had a title, and was of higher rank than himself; "I don't suppose he has anything to do with her; perhaps they are engaged—hang it, it's impossible, she'd never throw herself away on a thing like that. I'll ask old mother Pellypop to-morrow, she'll be sure to know all about her in that time."

Having thus in his own mind, satisfactorily settled the affair, Ronald went down to his cabin to dress for dinner.

Meanwhile Miss Cotoner and her cousin were having a few words on the subject of Mr. Monteith.

"What a handsome man," said Miss Cotoner, following the tall figure of the Australian with her eyes.

"Bah! a beef-eating Englishman," retorted Vassalla, with an angry light in his wicked black eyes, "he has no brain."

"You've to find that out yet," retorted the young lady, who seemed to take delight in tormenting her companion. "I think he's charming. I'm sure he looks it; I saw him yesterday on the Barraca."

"Remember you are engaged to me," replied the Marchese, angrily.

"By my parents, yes," she replied, coldly; "but not with my own consent."

"Consent, bah! let wiser heads guide yours, Carmela."

"Well, I certainly would not ask your head to take the position," replied Carmela, contemptuously. "Why do you annoy me like this; do you think I left my sister only to be worried by you? No, I don't think so. There is too much of the frying-pan into the fire theory is that for me."

"I will get your sister to take you back," he said vindictively.

"Oh, no you won't," she retorted, turning on him; "I'm of age—my own mistress, and I have elected to go and stop with my cousins in England. If I choose to marry an Englishman I certainly will, in spite of your threats; so good-bye Matteo, I'm going to dress for dinner," and she walked gracefully away, leaving the Marchese in a delightful temper.

"Bah!" he muttered angrily to himself; "she is only a woman; patience, my good Matteo, you shall win her yet, and then—" He closed his mouth with an angry snap that did not augur well for the happiness of Miss Cotoner's future life.

"What a flirt that girl is," thought Mrs. Pellypop, as she looked after the young lady; "I'm sure I don't know what the world is coming to; I never flirted," and to Mrs. Pellypop's credit, it must be said, she never had, but then, as Rochefoucauld remarks, some women are safe because nobody seeks after them.

When Ronald emerged from his cabin in evening dress he was caught at the foot of the stairs by Pat, who in company with a few convivial spirits, was having a sherry and bitters.

"Come and have something to drink after all your labors," he said in a

hospitable manner; "anything new about the affair?"

"No, I don't think so," replied Ronald sadly, "poor Ventin! To think he was so jolly last night and now dead."

"Do you think the person who killed him is on board?" asked Pat, confidentially.

"No, I don't," retorted Ronald, decisively; "I believe she's to be found at Malta, and I'll hunt her down and punish her somehow."

"Why?"

"Because I liked Ventin—he had a miserable life, and a miserable end, and a wicked woman like that wife of his is not fit to live."

"Stop a bit, old boy," observed Pat, coolly, "you haven't brought the crime home to her yet."

"But I will," reiterated Monteith, doggedly; "I'm sure it's she, and if it isn't I'll make it my business in life to find out who is the criminal."

"I say, Monteith," said Bentley, a vacuous-looking youth with no brains and lots of money, "Ventin's place was next to you at table—who are they going to put there?"

"I don't know and I don't care," growled Ronald, savagely turning away, cursing Mr. Bentley under his breath for his callous way of speaking.

"Seems out up," lisped Bentley, putting up his eyeglass, in nowise disturbed.

"Well, it's no joke having a fellow you like murdered," said Pat, finishing his sherry; "and Ventin, was a good sort, anyhow."

Then they all commenced talking again about the mystery till Pat grew weary of the discussion, and went on deck, where he found Ronald leaning over the side looking moodily at the water.

"Well, old chap," said Pat, slapping him on the shoulder, "don't take it so much to heart."

"It wasn't that," replied Monteith; "I was thinking how we could find out his real name."

"Why, wasn't it Ventin?"

"He said it wasn't."

"Search his baggage."

"That's been done, but without result—all his linen is marked L.V., all his letters directed to Lionel Ventin, in fact, it's the only name that can be found."

"Then it must be his real name," asserted Pat.

"Not necessarily; he told me he changed his name, so he evidently did it thoroughly."

"Any crest that might give a clue?"

"No, nothing."

"Oh! it seems a deuce of a muddle. Hullo, there's the dinner bell—come down, old boy, I'm starving."

They went below, and found nearly all the tables full. Pat went to his own table, and Ronald sat sadly down by the side of Ventin's empty chair. He was not there very long when he heard a rustle, and on turning round saw that Miss Cotoner was sitting beside him. Yes, sitting in the dead man's chair; so, with a sudden impulse, Ronald arose.

"I beg your pardon," he said, bowing; "but would you mind taking my chair instead of that one?"

"Why?" asked the young lady, coldly.

"Because—because," he stammered, confusedly, "it was Mr.—Mr. Ventin's gentleman who died."

"Oh!" she said and turned rather pale, "thank you," rising—"I will accept your offer," and she sat in Monteith's chair while he took poor Ventin's.

Of course this little incident was observed by all, and by none more so than Matteo Vassalla, who sat at a distant table and looked remarkably savage.

"Wait a little," he muttered; "when you are mine, I'll tame you."

Pat, indicating Ronald and Miss Cotoner to Kate Lester, hummed the first line of his favorite song, "I love a lubly gal, I do."

"What do you think?" he added. Miss Lester laughed and nodded. "I think the same as you," she answered.

CHAPTER V.

The inquest on the body of Lionel Ventin was resumed next day, but nothing new was discovered, and taking into consideration the strange story told by the deceased to Monteith the time of the committal of the crime, which, according to the Doctor's showing must have taken place when the ship was leaving Valetta, there appeared no doubt but that the murder had been committed before the steamer left Malta. As the deceased's real name was not Ventin, and all the evidence was purely circumstantial, the jury brought in a

verdict of "Wilful murder against a person unknown." The evidence was taken down so as to be handed to the authorities in Gibraltar, entries were made in the log-book about the affair, and poor Lionel's body was committed to the deep.

There is something inexpressibly sorrowful and solemn in a burial at sea. The body, wrapped in a sail, with iron shot at its feet, was placed on the lower deck near the open bulwarks, and was covered with the Union Jack. A number of the passengers were present, leaning from the upper deck but many of the ladies, among whom was Mrs. Pellypop, were reading the service for the dead to themselves in the saloon. The captain, surrounded by his officers, read the service over the deceased, and at a signal the body was pushed over the side, slipping from under the Union Jack, and fell with a dull splash into the sea. Then everyone dispersed, the engines, which had been slowed down during the burial, resumed their usual speed, and life on board went on as usual. There was a gloom, however, over all the ship, for it was not an ordinary death, and it was not until the "Neptune" reached Gibraltar, that the passengers began to recover their usual gaiety.

Meanwhile Ronald Monteith had become the slave of Carmela Cotoner, and, judging from her gracious manner towards him, she was in no wise displeased at having him at her feet. Ronald had hitherto laughed at the tender passion, but now he was being paid back for insulting the god of Love as he found out to his cost. He was always at Carmela's elbow,—carried her rugs and pillows about for her, danced with her, read poetry to her, and, in fact, was so constant in his attentions, that it was soon patent to the whole ship that Monteith was madly in love with the girl from Malta.

And, indeed, she was called nothing else. Mrs. Pellypop, not knowing her name at first, had given her that title, and everyone else followed suit. She was the belle of the ship, vice Kate Lester resigned, and was always followed by an adoring crowd of young men, of whom Ronald grew unspeakably jealous, and would get quite sulky if she smiled or spoke to anyone else. He carried this absurd behavior to such an extent that Pat Ryan took him to task one day for his sins.

To Be Continued.

DODGING DEATH

Some Strange Freaks of Rich Men to Escape the Reaper.

A man who, while poor, is not more afraid to die than most people, often develops a haunting terror of death after he has made a big fortune and spends an unhappy life and huge sums of money in trying to avoid the coming fate, frequently hurrying himself into a premature grave through sheer worry and fear. This passion has turned the brains of a good many wealthy people, and made monomaniacs of them. They resort to the most childish expedients to keep death from their doors.

You remember Kipling's character who had his chair slung on ropes from a beam that the world might spin under him, instead of carrying him along to grow older. There was an actual case very like this a few years ago, when John Islip, an Englishman, who made a huge fortune out of silver in Mexico, drove himself mad through worrying about his death.

After exhausting all the safeguards London could offer, he bought a small rocky island called Brychil, on the West Irish coast, taking with him one faithful servant. Here, in feverish haste he had four stone pillars raised, and a small

ONE-STORYED CABIN, with three rooms, rather like a house boat, slung on chairs from iron girders that crossed the pillars, and swung clear of the ground. Once inside this, he shut himself up, with some books and a pet jackdaw for company, and never left his living house until his death.

The attendant, who lived in a small house close by, used to row to the mainland—a mile and a half,—when the weather permitted, for provisions. The master spent his time reading and looking out over the Atlantic from the cabin windows. His brain had given way, of course, and he imagined his life stood still, while the earth revolved under him. He had no relatives to insist on his entering a private asylum, and he died three years later in the cabin, worried out of life by the fear of death. His hair was snow white, though he was only forty-three.

Another wealthy man, Jean Ingle-

sant, though he had made a fortune by shrewd speculation, also gave way to the dread of death. He conceived the idea that all movement and effort wasted the tissues of the body, and this notion sunk so deeply into his mind that he went to bed in a quiet country house, and hardly moved hand or foot for years, if he even stirred a finger he did it with dread, believing it used up his vitality and shortened his life by so much time. He spoke as little as possible, sometimes not opening his lips for days, and was fed by attendants with spoons. All his food consisted of "slops" to save him the fatal exertion of chewing, and his one amusement was being read to by the hour together, for he would not hold a book or turn the pages. Even the reading he did away with toward the close of his life, believing that listening shortened his existence.

ONE OF THE QUEEREST CASES was that of a Mrs. Holmes, a very wealthy widow, who had a terrible fear of germs and bacilli of all kinds. She had studied the subject deeply, and it affected her reason, to all appearance. The dread of death seized her, and she was convinced she would die by some wasting disease inspired by microbes. Knowing that cold is fatal to the average germ, she had two rooms adjoining each other, fitted as refrigerators, and kept constantly at a temperature of about 30 degrees, or just below freezing point. One would suppose this to be more trying than any quantity of microbes; but the owner was happy in her consciousness of freedom from germ diseases. Winter and summer the rooms were kept at the same point, and the adjoining rooms and hall were also kept cool that no current of warm air might bring bacilli in.

This lady lived clad in furs throughout the hottest days that blazed outside, and her attendants and servants were obliged to constantly disinfect themselves before entering her presence. They lived in a perpetual atmosphere of carbolic acid, and their mistress had to pay very high wages to induce any servants to stay with her.

Gloom and Despair

GIVE WAY TO VIGOR, HEALTH AND HAPPINESS.

An Attack of La Grippe Left the Sufferer Weak, Nervous, and Enfeebled—A Victim of Insomnia and Heart Trouble.

Naturally every sick person to whom help is promised, will ask, "has the remedy been successful? Whom has it helped?" We cannot better answer these questions than by publishing testimonials received from grateful people who are anxious that other sufferers may profit by their experience. One of these grateful ones is Mrs. Douglas Kilts, of Perry Station, Ont., Mrs. Kilts says: "Three years ago I had a very severe attack of la grippe, and the disease left me in an extremely worn out, nervous, and enfeebled condition. The nervousness was so severe as to have almost resulted in St. Vitus dance. Sleep forsook me. I had bad attacks of heart trouble, and the headaches I endured were something terrible. I had no appetite, and was literally fading away; I was not able to work about the house and was so weak that I could scarcely lift a cup of tea. I was treated by a good doctor, but with no benefit. Almost in despair, I resorted to patent medicines, and tried several, one after another, only to be disappointed by each. I lingered in this condition until the winter of 1899, when a friend prevailed upon me to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and I began taking them. From the first the pills helped me and I could feel my strength gradually returning. I continued the use of the pills according to directions until I had taken eight boxes when I was again enjoying perfect health. My strength had entirely returned, my appetite was splendid, the heart trouble and nervousness had ceased, while the blessing of sleep, once denied, had again returned. I had gained over thirty pounds in weight, and was able to do all my housework with ease. In fact I had received a new lease of life. I believe my cure is permanent, as more than a year has since passed and I feel so strong and well that I venture to say there is not a healthier woman in this section; indeed I am enjoying better health than I have for twenty years, and this has been brought about by the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. I feel that I cannot say enough in their praise for I believe they saved my life. My son has also received the greatest benefit from the use of these pills in a case of spring fever."

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And if they are diseased use the
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Third—"Are there deposits like brickdust in the urine after it has stood for twenty-four hours?"

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If you have kidney disease you can take Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills with perfect confidence that what has proved an absolute cure in so many thousands of cases will not fail you. So long as the cells of the kidneys are not completely wasted away, as in the last stages of Bright's Disease, Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills will give them new vigor and strength and absolutely cure kidney disease. One pill a dose, 25 cents a box, at all dealers, or EDMANSON, BATES & Co., Toronto, Ont.