

THE MYSTERIOUS CRIME ON THE S.S. NEPTUNE

"When did you see Vassalla again?"

"I went to my husband's cabin, and met Vassalla coming out. He tried to prevent me from going in, but I entered, and saw my husband dead, with Matteo's stiletto in his breast. Matteo implored me to be silent, and I obeyed. I went on shore at once, and wrote the letter you saw. I would have kept silent still, only I heard that he was going to marry my sister and determined to save her."

"You say Vassalla's stiletto was in poor Verschoyle's breast," said Foster, quietly, fixing his keen eyes on her face. "Will you kindly describe the weapon?"

"An ordinary stiletto," she replied, with a curiously carved ivory handle, representing the head of Bacchus surrounded with wreaths of grapes and vine-leaves."

"Yes, that is the description of the weapon," said Foster, "but how do you know it was Vassalla's?"

"Because my sister told me she had given it to him."

Ronald started, and would have spoken, as he remembered Carmela had said the same thing; but Foster stopped him.

"You say," observed the barrister, smoothly, "that Miss Cotoner gave your cousin the stiletto; may I ask when?"

"Oh, six or seven years ago."

"And it has been in Vassalla's possession ever since?"

"Yes," defiantly; "who else could have it?"

Foster made no answer; so Ronald took up the conversation.

"What motive had Vassalla for committing this crime?" he asked, in a puzzled tone; "he would not have nourished revenge all these years."

"Ah, you don't know a Maltese gentleman," said Mrs. Verschoyle; "he never forgets an insult. My husband insulted him seven years ago, and he swore he would kill him. It is like the Corsican vendetta with us."

"Are you prepared to make this statement in a court of law?" asked Foster, eyeing her keenly.

"Yes! I will swear to it on the cross."

"Vassalla will have to be arrested."

"Of course," she retorted, defiantly. "I want him to be arrested."

"For the murder of your husband at Valetta?"

"Yes!"

"Good! We will go up to London to-night, and take out a warrant."

"The sooner the better!" she said, vindictively.

"Will you let me offer you some refreshment?" said Ronald, as he arose to leave the room.

"Yes; send me a glass of brandy and soda," she replied. "I feel worn out."

Ronald bowed, and then went out with Foster to see after their things. They sent up the drink to Mrs. Verschoyle, and then Ronald wrote a letter to Carmela, telling her he was going up to London on business, but did not mention what Foster paid

the bill, got their dressing-bags, and in a few minutes they were on their way to the station.

While Foster was getting the tickets, Mrs. Verschoyle being on the platform, Ronald took the opportunity to ask his friend a question.

"Do you think her story is true?" he asked.

"If it isn't, Vassalla can easily clear himself," was the ambiguous reply.

CHAPTER XXV.

Meanwhile, Vassalla, quite unconscious of the storm that was about to break over his head, was enjoying himself in London, and had made arrangements to go to Marlow and see Carmela. He thought he had quite subdued Mrs. Verschoyle, and that every impediment to his marriage was removed. So he sat in his room at the Langham, smoking and moralizing complacently on the state of affairs.

"Fortune favors me," he said aloud, idly watching the blue wreaths of smoke curling round his head. "I have silenced that devilish Bianca, and won my beautiful Carmela—both at the same time. But, how wonderful it is that the death of Verschoyle should have been the means of winning me both a wife and a fortune! Now, when I am married I must be quiet. I will take my charming wife to Malta, and live on the estate. She does not care for me now; but she will grow fond—yes—she will grow fond."

And so he went on building castles in the air, and dreaming vain dreams, that were destined never to become true, for at that moment there came a knock at the door, which, if he had known its full purport, would have alarmed him as much as the knocking at the gate did Macbeth. But, as he did not know, he merely called out, "Come in," and went on smoking.

Enter a puzzled-looking waiter, showing in Mrs. Verschoyle, Ronald Monteith, Gerald Foster, and a stranger. Vassalla, turning his head saw them, and sprang to his feet in astonishment.

"What the devil—" he began, but Mrs. Verschoyle interrupted him.

"That is the Marchese Vassalla," she said, pointing to the dumbfounded Maltese gentleman; whereat the stranger advanced and produced a warrant.

"Matteo Vassalla, I arrest you in the Queen's name—"

"Arrest me!" interrupted the Marchese.

"For the murder of Leopold Verschoyle," finished the detective.

"Is this a joke?" asked Vassalla, angrily.

"You will not find it so," said Ronald.

"It is my duty to inform you," said the detective, stolidly, "that whatever you say will be used in evidence at your trial."

"Bah!" snarled Vassalla, with a gesture of contempt, turning his back on the officer of the law. "Who accuses me of this crime?"

"I do," said Mrs. Verschoyle stepping forward.

"You!" he cried out, recoiling; "you are mad to do such a thing."

"No, I am not mad," retorted Mrs. Verschoyle, "but I would have been if I had let you marry Carmela."

"Oh!" he said, viciously, looking at Ronald; "so this is a plot to rob me of my promised wife."

"She is not your promised wife," cried Ronald boldly; "she made the promise under compulsion—now she is free."

"To marry you," said Vassalla savagely.

"If she'll have me—yes," retorted Monteith.

The Marchese turned to Foster. "Mr.—whatever your name is," he said, "do you believe this charge?"

"Mrs. Verschoyle says you committed the murder," returned Foster.

"Mrs. Verschoyle," said Matteo, contemptuously, "is a madwoman."

"Am, I?" she returned, quietly; "you'll find there's some method in my madness."

"I can disprove the whole charge," said Vassalla, moving toward his writing table.

"Come, sir," said the detective, "we must be going."

"Going—with you?" retorted Vassalla, in an angry tone, "are you mad? I can disprove this charge," and he threw open the desk and took his portfolio from it.

"Try," said Mrs. Verschoyle, laconically.

Muttering a curse, the Marchese opened his portfolio, and ran through a number of letters. Suddenly he turned round with a ghastly face: "Where is the paper?" he asked.

"What paper?" said Mrs. Verschoyle calmly.

"What paper? Curse you!" he cried; "you know the paper I mean—the one written by your husband, whom you accuse me of killing."

"I know of no paper," she said, quietly, with a sneer; "this is a fabrication to delay justice."

"I tell you it's false," cried Vassalla, in despair, "I did not kill the man. I defy you to press this charge. When the time comes I can prove my innocence, and I decline to make any statement now."

"Prove your innocence," she said, sarcastically, "with the missing paper, I suppose?"

"Yes; and you know where it is," he said.

"Maltese dog," she shrieked, "you lie," and she would have sprung forward, but Ronald held her back.

"I have to thank you for this," said Vassalla to Ronald, as he put on his hat and coat, "but I do not forget, I will repay you; and as for you, jade that you are, I'll prove myself innocent and then punish you."

"Bah! I defy you," she said, contemptuously; "you'll never marry Carmela, but hang—hang, like the dog you are!"

"Confound it, Mrs. Verschoyle, leave the man alone," said Ronald, rather annoyed at the way she was behaving.

Vassalla walked to the door with the detective beside him, and faced round as he was going out.

"As sure as there's a God in heaven," he said, proudly, "I am innocent, and that woman only brings this accusation against me, to satisfy her absurd jealousy, I can prove my innocence, and she"—pointing to Mrs. Verschoyle—"holds the proof."

When the door closed, Foster turned to Mrs. Verschoyle.

"What does he mean?" asked the lawyer.

"I don't know," she said. "I possess no proof of his innocence, and I'm ready to go into the witness box and swear he killed my husband."

"He says he is not guilty," said Ronald.

"He'll say anything to save his neck, but he is guilty; I'll see him hanged, till he is dead."

There was something so repulsive in the vindictiveness of this woman, that both the young men were disgusted, and left the room, followed by Mrs. Verschoyle, who was laughing to herself in a satisfied manner.

"Why don't you thank me?" she said, savagely, to Ronald; "I have prevented Carmela from marrying another man, and secured your happiness."

"I don't care for happiness that is founded on the ruin of another man," said Monteith, coldly.

"Bah! you are a fool; he is guilty."

"That," said Foster quietly, "has yet to be proved."

She flashed a look of anger at him then went out of the hotel door and stepped into a hansom.

"I will see you to-morrow," she called out, "and then I can prove what I say is true."

The cab drove off leaving Foster

and Ronald looking at one another.

"What do you think?" asked the Australian.

"I don't know what to think," said Foster, "the Marchese says he is innocent."

"All men accused of a crime say that."

"Yes; but ifancy in this case it's true."

"Then, who killed Verschoyle?"

"I believe his wife did."

"What!"

"Yes, I think she's accusing Vassalla out of jealousy."

"But he did not accuse her of the crime."

"No," he certainly did not," said Foster, musingly. "It's a queer case. What was the paper he was talking about?"

"I don't know," said Ronald. "It is, as you say, a very queer case. I'm going down to Marlow to-morrow."

"What for?"

"I want to see Carmela, and tell her all about the affair."

"Yes, it will be best for you to do that," said Foster, "perhaps she may throw some light on the affair."

"I don't think so; we know everything she knows."

"I expect the real reason you want to go down is to tell her she is free?" said Foster, quizzically.

"She's not free yet," retorted Ronald.

"To all intents and purposes she is."

"I want to hear from her own lips that she considers herself free."

"But you don't think she'll marry Vassalla now—a man accused of murder?"

"I don't know," said Ronald, with a sigh, "women are such queer creatures. She may consider herself doubly bound, now he's down on his luck."

"I'll bet you she don't!"

"I'll bet you she does!"

"Very well," said Foster, philosophically, "the wager will be decided to-morrow night."

To Be Continued.

WORLD'S BREAD PRODUCERS.

Estimates of the Yield Officially Reported From Many Sources.

European reports show that the conditions of fall-sown wheat, spelt and rye in Germany, as officially reported by the German Statistical Office, is considerably above medium. The preliminary official estimate of French cereal crops for 1903 show the production of 43,612,498 bushels of barley and 252,877,918 of oats. The final estimate for the 1899 crops is for 45,306,122 bushels of barley and 270,436,558 of oats. Both grains were a little lighter in yield than in 1899, besides returning a smaller yield per acre in measured bushels.

Comparison of the wheat, maslin, rye, barley, and oats production in France for ten years shows that each of these crops is below the decennial average, as well as below the crop of 1899, though the deficit, as compared with the decennial average, is small in the case of the more important cereals.

The final general memorandum of cane crop for the season of 1899-1903 shows that in both Northern and Southern India the season began well for this crop, and the area planted was larger than in 1898, being approximately equal to the average. Failure of rain, however, later, seriously injured the crop. In the Punjab district at least one-third of the crop was lost, and the crop of the northwest provinces was estimated at only 62 per cent., but in Bengal and Madras Provinces from 83 to 87 per cent. of an average crop was realized.

The area under rice in the 1899-1900 season is estimated at approximately 52,000,000 acres, somewhat smaller than that in 1898, but more than the average. The yield was estimated at somewhat over 23,345,000 tons, being, like the area, smaller than that of last year. This reduction is in Madras and Bengal Provinces.

German government advices from Chili report that for the first six months of this year the weather has been favorable to the wheat newly sown for the crop of 1900-01, and that for the same period the Chilean exports of wheat were very small, due to the short crop of 1899-1900. The Roumanian government reports give 3,928,841 acres of wheat in 1900, with a production of 56,462,869 bushels.

AHEAD OF TIME.

Hostler—What was that man talking about?

Livery Proprietor—He said he merely came in to ask if we were going to have any automobile sleighs to hire out.

A Story From Life.

SHOWING HOW SUFFERING CAN BE OVERCOME.

A Mill Operator Who Suffered from Kidney Trouble Spent Many Dollars in Useless Experiments to Restore His Health—Dr. Williams' Pink Pills Acted Promptly and Effectively.

Good health is the chief requisite to happiness, low spirits, moroseness and irritability can in most cases be traced to ill health, and in not a few instances are direct symptoms of kidney trouble. These, added to the severe pains in the back which accompany the disease, make the life of the sufferer one of abject misery. One such sufferer was Mr. Darius Dean, of Jordan, Ont. Mr. Dean in an interview with a reporter recently gave his experience as follows:—"I am a saw and grist mill operator, and naturally a strong man; but the life of a miller is a hard one, with long hours of labor and frequent exposure. Some years ago as the result of this exposure I was afflicted with kidney trouble, and although I spent much money in various remedies I did not find a cure until I was persuaded to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. In the autumn of 1898, the trouble began to assume an aggravated form. I suffered from most severe pains in the back, and a feeling of drowsiness, and yet so severe was the pain that many a night I scarcely closed my eyes. My appetite was poor, I suffered from headaches, lost flesh, was miserably and wholly unfit for work. It was while in this condition that I was advised to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and procured three boxes. Before I had finished the third box I felt much better, and I then procured a half dozen boxes more. I used all these, but before they were all gone I felt that my health was fully restored. In the interval since then I have had just one slight return of the trouble, and Dr. Williams' Pink Pills soon drove this out, and my health since has been the very best. I have gained much in weight, eat and sleep well and consider myself as healthy a person as there is in the county; and the credit for this I feel is entirely due to Dr. Williams' Pink Pills."

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills increase the supply and the richness of the blood, and in this way cure physical and functional weaknesses. Most other medicines simply act upon the symptoms of the disease, hence when the medicine is discontinued the patient is soon as wretched as ever. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills go directly to the root of the trouble and cure to stay cured. Hence it is unwise to waste money in experiments with other medicines. These pills are sold by all dealers or will be sent post paid at 50 cents a box or six boxes for \$2.50 by addressing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

A SHORT CUT TO GLORY.

This amusing story from the chronicles of an English rural town illustrates the danger in kindling ambition in the rural breast.

An officer of a Yorkshire yeomanry regiment in an address to his troops made a stirring allusion to the medals worn by some army veterans in the ranks. One of the volunteers afterward went home in a very thoughtful frame of mind, and the next morning he came on parade with several medals on his breast. Said the officer:

"I didn't know you had been in the regulars."

"No, I ain't said the man."

"Well, how about the medals, my good fellow? They can't be yours."

"Can't they? The man promptly replied, Aye, but they be. My old cow won 'em all at Otley cattle show."

NO CHINESE OFFICERS.

The Chinese regiment of British infantry at Wei-Hai-Wei consists of nine companies, none of which are officered by Celestials. The Hongkong regiment, however, has native subadars and jemadars, the junior of the latter being young Muhammed Kasin Khan.

A REWARD OF MERIT.

I like to have my husband go hunting.

Does he hit anything?

I don't think so; but, as I never, ask any questions about the game he brings home, he always buys me a handsome present of some kind.

FOR SAFE-KEEPING.

Mr. Fijit—Say, that's the rottenest tobacco I ever smoked!

Mrs. Fijit—O George, you're smoking up my fancy silk! I put it in your tobacco jar for safe-keeping.

DR. CHASE PREVENTS CONSUMPTION

By Thoroughly Curing Coughs and Colds Before They Reach the Lungs—Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine Has an Enormous Sale.

There would be no use for sanitariums for consumptives if Dr. Chase's advice were more generally accepted. Not that Dr. Chase claimed to be able to cure consumption in its last stages, though his treatment is a great relief to the consumptive's cough, but what he did claim was that consumption can always be prevented by the timely use of his Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine. It is not a mere cough medicine, but a far-reaching and thorough cure for the most severe colds, bronchitis and asthma.

It is a pity that everybody on this great continent does not know of the surprising effectiveness of this great throat and lung treatment. The news is spreading fast, and Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine has by far the largest sale of any similar remedy. It should be in every home in the land for prompt use in case of croup, bronchitis, sudden colds or sore throat. It is truly wonderful in its healing effects on the raw and inflamed linings of the air passages. It aids expectoration, loosens the tight chest coughs and positively cures colds.

Mr. J. J. Dodds, of Pleasant avenue, Dear Park, Ont., writes:—"I have suf-

fered in my head and throat and all over my body since last summer from a very heavy cold, which I could not get rid of. I have tried several of what are considered good remedies, but none seemed to be of any avail. I began to think that my cold was developing into consumption, as very many have to my knowledge. I am thankful now to say that Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine has worked a complete cure, as I am now entirely free of the cold."

Mr. Wm. Davidson, St. Andrews, Que., states:—"Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine has cured me of bronchitis. I have, without success, tried many remedies for the past six years. Last winter when I had a severe attack and was unable to work I procured a bottle of Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine, and am happy to state that the third bottle made me a well man."

Insist on having Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine when you ask for it, and beware of druggists who offer mixtures of their own for the sake of a little more profit; 25 cents a bottle, all dealers, or Edmanson, Bates & Co., Toronto, by far the largest sale of any other