THE MYSTERIOUS CRIME ON THE S.S. NEPTUNE

CHAPTER XVIII.—Continued.

"So I have to pay the penalty of my sister's crime," said Carmela to herself, on reading this letter. "In order to save her, I have to sacrifice myself! Oh, it is cruel, cruel! and yet what can I do? If she is innocent, I am free to marry the man I love; but if she is guilty, God help me! I can do nothing but sacrifice myself to save her!"

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"Ronald Monteith to Carmela Cotoner.

"Is it true? I ask you, is it true, this rumor which I hear, that you are engaged to your cousin, Vassalla? Oh, Carmela, why have you trifled with me in this way? You must have seen how I loved you, how I worshipped the very ground you trod on; and now you coldly throw me on one side, and accept the hand of a man whom you do not and cannot care about. Think of how you are ruining two lives — yours and mine—before you take this fatal step; once done, it cannot be recalled. I await your answer, and hope you may be able to deny this cruel life. RONALD."

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"Poor Ronald," mused Carmela, "I am cruel, but only to be kind. He can never marry into a family like ours, and the greatest kindness I can do him is to refuse him. God knows, I love him well enough, but he could never trust me, once he knows the secret of Leopold Verschoyle's death, and that he does know it I am convinced. He may blame me now, but he will bless me in the future; so I had better write and tell him that it is true, though my heart may break while I pen the words."

. . . . . .

"Carmela Cotoner to Ronald Monteith.

"It is true! I am the fool of fortune, and this match is not of my own making. Forget that you have ever seen me, and your life's happiness will be the constant prayer of

"CARMELA."

"My life's happiness!" said Ronald, with a sob. "God! She breaks my heart, ruins my life, and talks about praying for my happiness—so like a woman!"

CHAPTER XIX.

Matteo Vassalla was in his sitting-room, walking to and fro with his hands in his pockets. The Maltese gentleman was very well satisfied with himself, as all his plans seemed likely to turn out as he wished. Carmela had promised to marry him, and, as she had plenty of money, this was very satisfactory to the impecunious nobleman. She did not love him, it was true; but then he agreed with Rochefoucauld, that it is best to begin marriage with a little aversion. And then he had the pleasure of taking the prize from under the very nose of his rival; the race had been a long one, and the prize had been awarded, not to the swiftest, but to the most diplomatic. Fate had played into Matteo's hands, and secure in the certainty of his good fortune, he strolled gaily up and down the room, humming to himself.

The only thing that troubled him was the coming interview with Mrs. Verschoyle, for he knew that lady loved him, and if she found out that Carmela was engaged to him, would do anything to stop the marriage. She would fling money, character, even life itself, to attain her ends, such was her passionate temper, and Vassalla knew she was a dangerous adversary. The only chance of getting the better of her was to keep cool, as she invariably lost her head, and gave her adversary time to espy the weak points in her armor, so the Marchese felt tolerably certain of winning the game; but still he had a bad quarter of an hour before him, and did not relish the prospect.

"Malediction on these women," he said, stopping in front of the mirror, and admiring himself; "why can't they accept the inevitable, and own themselves beaten? But no, this jade of a Bianca will fight to the last. I rather admire such tenacity of purpose myself, that is when I am not the opponent in the game."

He went to his travelling writing-desk, which was lying on a side table, and, having unlocked it, took out Carmela's last letter, which he read carefully, the result of his reading being anything but pleasant to him.

"Wants me to release her," he muttered, throwing down the letter and resuming his walk, "not I—give up the quarry after it has been run to earth? My dear Carmela, you must think me a fool; without your fortune you'd be a pretty prize, but with it, my faith, it's killing two birds with one stone—come in!" as a knock came to the door.

"Mrs. Verschoyle!" annnounced the waiter, showing in that lady, and closed the door after him, leaving the the two adversaries face to face with with the feeling of battle in the air.

Mrs. Verschoyle, as she called herself, though she had no claim to the name, being divorced, was very like Carmela, only, not quite so handsome, while her expression was rather repellent, and her lowering eyebrows and firmly closed mouth warned Matteo Vassalla that she had come with hostile intentions. Matteo was the fist to speak, and offered his visitor a a chair.

"You will be seated, my cousin?" he asked, politely,

"When I choose," she said, harshly.

Vassalla shrugged his shoulders and produced a silver cigarette case.

"As you please," he said, carelessly opening it; "you will smoke?"

"No!"

"Drink? — there is excellent wine here."

"No!—I tell you," she retorted viciously, "we can dispense with all these formalities, Marchese."

"Eh!" with a sudden lifting of the eyebrows, "why so precise, my cousin."

"Because you are a villain!" retorted Mrs. Verschoyle, bringing her fist down on the table.

"So!" said Matteo, with a laugh, "perhaps you will give me your reasons for calling me such a name?"

"The best of all possible reasons, you deserve it!"

"Indeed—the world is not of your opinion."

"Bah!—the world does not know you."

"Ah! so you are going to be Madame Asmodeus, and unroof my house for the benefit of my neighbors?" And Vassalla, having lighted a cigarette, sat down and prepared to listen. He had not long to wait, for Mrs. Verschoyle burst out into a perfect volley of imprecations in Italian, to which Vassalla listened very quietly.

"You're not improving," he said, coolly, when she stopped for want of breath; "but all this is talk. I want to know the reason of your visit."

Mrs. Verschoyle took off her gloves, sat down in a chair, and dragging it up to the table, placed her elbows theron, and began to talk rapidly.

"You Maltese dog!" she hissed between her teeth; "I know all—yes, all—did I not meet Signor Clement at the Strada Cristoforo, and did he not tell me that you were as the shadow of my sister Carmela, and that you wanted to become her husband? Speak, you traitor—is it not true?"

"Before I answer that question," said Vassalla, calmly, knocking the ash off his cigarette, "first tell me who is this Signor Clement, that knows so much of my affairs?"

"He came from England."

"When?"

"Shortly after your ship arrived in London."

"Did he stop at the Signora Briffa's?"

"Yes."

"And asked questions?"

"He asked me none, but, ah! with a gesture of impotent rage, "that Dexter, she gave him all the lies of me, I am certain."

"Exactly! and he told you that I was making love to Carmela, and advised you to come to England."

"How did you know?" asked Mrs. Verschoyle, looking at him with fiery eyes.

"Because I have my suspicions that this Clement is a spy."

"A spy—for what—on whom?"

"For murder—on you."

Mrs. Verschoyle grew deathly pale, she clenched her hands, and her two black eyes glared like burning coals at her cousin.

"Bah!" she said, at length, making a snatch at one of her gloves; "this is a child's story."

"No, upon my honor, it's not. I don't know for certain, but I could swear this man is a spy. Why should he go out to Valetta, lodge at the same house as you, and tell you this about me? Because he wanted you to come to England—because he is employed by an Australian devil called Monteith to hunt you down, and accuse you of the murder of your husband, Leopold Verschoyle."

Vassalla arose to his feet while speaking, and went over to the woman, who cowered in her chair like a savage beast, subdued for the moment by a master's eye.

"It's a lie—a lie!" she hissed, tearing her glove viciously; "who can prove I was on board?"

"Carmela."

"Carmela?" she bounded to her feet, her face working with fury. "she would not dare!"

"She has done so, and told Monteith."

"My God! my God!" cried Mrs. Verschoyle, stamping up and down the room; "oh, that my fingers were round her throat? She has taken my lovers from me, and now she'd take my life. Bah!" with a sudden change, "they can't prove anything. You can save me."

"Yes, but will I?"

Mrs. Verschoyle stole round the table, and laid her arm caressingly round his neck.

"Yes, you will, my Matteo. Think of the love I have for you. You will disappoint this bloodhound, when he thinks his game sure, and you will marry me. We will go back to our beautiful Malta, and there be happy."

This woman wooed with all the caressing fierceness of the South; her harsh voice sank to a liquid murmur, and her wonderful eyes lost their savage gleam, and became melting and tender.

"You will marry me," she whispered softly.

Vassalla sneered to himself, then rising suddenly, removed her arms from around his neck.

"Impossible," he said, coldly; "I am engaged to Carmela."

Mrs. Verschoyle sprang back, her eyes blazing with anger, and dashed the fragments of her glove in his face.

"Ingrate! Traitor! Scoundrel! You shall suffer for this."

"Not at your hands," with a soft laugh.

"Yes! at my hands. I have your letters, written when you truly loved me. When you said you would kill—"

"Silence, devil!" and Matteo, his face set and stern, caught her arm.

"I will not be silent!" screamed Mrs. Verschoyle, struggling to get free. "You shall not marry Carmela."

"I shall; it is the price of your safety."

"My safety?" and she suddenly grew calm.

"Yes, Carmela would have married the Australian. I hated him, and wanted her. He has been searching for the person who killed Leopold Verschoyle, and the evidence all points to you. He asked me if you were on board that night? I said 'No.' I showed your letter. He asked Carmela. She said 'Yes.'"

"The fool!"

"I made her write a letter denying it. She will keep silent for your sake. No one but I can prove it. I will keep silent on condition that I marry Carmela. She has accepted me, and you will not refuse your consent."

"I will."

"You will not."

"Dog, let me go!"

"Not till you consent."

"No!"

Vassalla released her, and went to the door of his room.

"I will be back in a few moments," he said, coldly. "If you consent, and promise not to trouble me, I will save you; if not, you must take the consequences," and he went into his bedroom, and shut the door.

Mrs. Verschoyle recovered herself by a strong effort, and going to the sideboard, poured out half a glass of brandy, which she drank off. This seemed to do her good, for she put her bonnet straight, smoothed her hair, and producing another pair of gloves from her pocket, put them on. Then she went round the room looking at things until she came to the table, whereon lay Vassalla's portfolio. She saw Carmela's letter, and first glancing toward the door to make sure she was safe, snatched it up, and devoured every word of it. Then throwing it down, she ransacked the portfolio with nimble fingers, evidently to see if there were more.

"It is here! it is here!" she muttered, glancing rapidly over the papers. "Ah!" and with a cry of delight she picked up a letter and slipped it into her pocket.

Just as she did this she heard Vassalla's foot, and knew he was returning. Pushing all the papers back, she ran noiselessly to the mirror, leaving the portfolio in the same disorder as she had found it, and was arranging her bonnet strings, when Vassalla, dressed to go out, entered the room, putting on his gloves.

"Your answer?" he said, sharply.

Mrs. Verschoyle turned to him with a smiling face.

"I am beaten. Yes."

He looked at her suspiciously.

"You mean it?"

"On condition that you stop the bloodhound."

"Agreed; and now let us go out."

"Where is Carmela?" she asked, as he held the door open.

"At Marlow, with Sir Mark Trevor. Do you want to see her?"

"No; that is, not at present," she answered, going down the stairs. "Where does the bloodhound live?"

"Why do you want to know?" he asked, sharply.

"You needn't tell me unless you like," said Mrs. Verschoyle, haughtily; "I only asked from idle curiosity."

"I believe he is stopping at the Tavistock Hotel, in Covent Garden."

"Oh!" carelessly, as they stepped out to the street, "this is my cab. Can I take you anywhere?"

"No, thank you," said Matteo, helping her in. "Good-by at present. I'll see you again soon."

"I hope so," replied Mrs. Verschoyle; and Matteo walked away as the cab drove off.

Mrs. Verschoyle lay back, and smiled.

"You think you have won," she murmured, glancing at the stolen letter; "but there are always two to a game, my dear Matteo! You forget that!"

CHAPTER XX.

Julian Roper, alias Signor Clement, had come to London in the same boat as Mrs. Verschoyle, and had made profitable use of his time by inflaming that lady's anger. On the morning after his arrival he went to Foster's chambers, in order to make his report, and there found his employer, Ronald Monteith, in anything but a joyful frame of mind. Poor Ronald was very much cast down by the news of Carmela's engagement to the Marchese, though Foster tried to console him to the best of his ability.

"She is acting under compulsion, my dear boy," said Gerald. "Vassalla has been telling her that Mrs. Verschoyle is the assassin of her husband, and has demanded her hand as the price of his silence."

"How does he know that Mrs. Verschoyle is guilty?" asked Ronald, fiercely. "We have proved nothing! She may be as innocent as you or I for all we know!"

"My dear lad," said Foster, shrugging his shoulders, "we can only go by circumstantial evidence in this case, and you must acknowledge things do look very black against Mrs. Verschoyle!"

"Oh, why did I ever start trying to find out the murderess of Leopold Verschoyle?" groaned Ronald, laying his head on the table.

"Rather, why did you fall in love with Carmela Cotoner?" said Foster, not unkindly.

"We'll talk no more of this," said Ronald, hastily rising to his feet, "till we see Roper, and hear what he has to say."

To be Continued.

The Home Treatment For Coughs and Colds.

Few indeed are the family circles from whence there has not been taken some member as the result of neglected coughs and colds. The prudent mother is constantly on guard lest her little ones fall prey to croup, bronchitis, or colds. She knows that if colds are promptly cured there is certain protection against consumption, pneumonia and other lung troubles.

Hosts of mothers have learned to trust implicitly to Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine to promptly loosen the tight chest coughs, to allay the inflammation, to clear the air passages and thoroughly cure the cold. Their confidence in this grand prescription of Dr. Chase has never been shaken, because it has never failed to prove beneficial. It is of such unusual merit as to have attained to by far the largest sale of any similar preparation.

A HACKING COUGH

Mr. W. A. Wylie, 57 Seaton Street, Toronto, states;—"My little grandchild had suffered with a nasty, hacking cough for about eight weeks when we procured a bottle of Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine. After the first dose she called it "honey" and was eager for medicine time to come around. I can simply state that part of one bottle cured her and she is now well and as bright as a cricket."

BRONCHITIS.

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."

Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine,

Mother's favorite remedy for Croup, Bronchitis, Asthma, Coughs and Colds, 25 cents a bottle; family size containing about three times as much, 60cts At all dealers, or Edmanson, Bates & Co., Toronto.

MALARIAL FEVER.

AFTER EFFECTS LEAVE THE VICTIM WEAK AND DEPRESSED.

Miss Emma Huskinson, a Captain in the Salvation Army, Tells How She Regained Health Through the Use of Dr Williams' Pink Pills.

From the Sun, Orangeville, Ont.

Among the oldest and most highly respected residents of Orangeville is Mrs. John Huskinson, whose daughter, Emma, has for a number of years been an acute sufferer from the after effects of malarial fever. A reporter of the Sun hearing of the wonderful effects which Dr. William's Pink Pills have had on Miss Huskinson, called at her home to enquire into the truth of the rumor. After stating the reason of his visit, he was kindly received by Mrs. Huskinson, who gave him the following facts of the cure: "Some years ago," said Mrs. Huskinson, "my daughter Emma, who is now captain of the Newmarket corps of the Salvation Army, was attacked by malarial fever. She was under a doctor's care for a long time and although she recovered sufficiently to go about, the after effects of the fever left her very weak and the doctor did not seem able to put any life into her. She had frequent headaches, was very pale, and the least exertion would greatly fatigue her. We thought a change might do her good and consequently she went on a visit to Toronto. While there she was advised to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills and at once purchased a supply. Before she had finished the second box she noted a marked change for the better; her appetite improved, her color returned, the feeling of exhaustion had disappeared, and by the time she had taken half a dozen boxes she was enjoying the best of health, and all her old-time vigor had returned. Although her work in the Salvation Army is hard and exposes her to all kinds of weather, she has since been able to do it without the least inconvenience.

"Some time after my daughter's cure I was myself completely run down, and to add to my trouble was seized with a severe attack of rheumatism. Remembering the benefit my daughter had received from Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, I decided to use them, and before I had taken half a dozen boxes I felt fully recovered and after effects of the fever let her very since. My advice to all ailing is to use Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People."

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills have restored more weak and ailing women and girls to robust health than any other medicine ever discovered, which in part accounts for their popularity throughout the world. These pills are sold by all dealers or may be had by mail at 50 cents a box, or six boxes for $$2.50, by addressing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

NO ROOM FOR EXTRAVAGANCE.

The pay of the Chinese soldier indicates that he must be an even more economical person than the New Zealand bushman, who was able to live on $22.50 a year, on which he kept a horse and entertained. The Chinese private at $12.00 per annum is extremely inexpensive compared with the Englishman at $385, the Russian at $240 and the Italian—the cheapest of European soldiers—at $205. On this three cents a day there is little fear of bursts of dissipation, though the cavalryman has an extra $2 per month for his horse, out of which he replaces the animal if it be killed.

ANNUAL PRODUCTION OF RUBBER.

It has been estimated that the approximate total production of rubber annually is 57,500 tons. Of this amount, 21,000 tons are taken by the United Kindgom; 21,000 by the United States and Canada; and 15,500 by the rest of Europe. The Amazon district produces 25,000 tons, and East and West Africa 24,000 tons; parts of South America other than the Amazon district, 3,500 tons.