

Toxin

By GUIDA.

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CHAPTER I.

"Oh! my necklace!" cried a fair woman as she leaned over the side of her gondola. A string of opals, linked and set in gold, had been loosened from her throat, and had slid down into the water of the canal, midway between the Lido and the city of Venice. But the gondola was moving swiftly under the impulsion of a rower far and aft, and though they stopped a few moments after at her cry, the spot where it had fallen was already passed and left behind. She was white with grief, and she had many jewels, but the opal necklace was an heirloom, and of fine and curious workmanship. The gondoliers did their best to find it, but in vain. They were in the deeper water of the canal, and with their oars struck and sounded the sandy bottom; but the lagoon, which has been the grave of so many, kept the drowned opals.

"Torcello was the mother of Venice; the daughter has slain her," replied an older man as he laid down his oars in the boat, and prepared to follow his companion. "His foot trod amongst the hemlock leaves and was entangled by them; he stooped, and his eyes, which were very keen, caught sight of the string of opals. 'A woman's necklace!' he said as he drew it from under the salt seaweed and the dewy dock leaves. It was discolored, and had sand and mud on it, and here little traces of its former beauty, but he recognized that it was a jewel of worth; he persevered, even dived to the bottom, where the stones were opals."

"What have you there?" asked the younger man from above on the bank. "The skull of an archduke!"

"The other threw the necklace upon the grass. 'You would have been a fitter finder of a woman's collar than I,' said the younger man, gravely, as he raised it and brushed off the sand. 'It has been so again. It is not really hurt, only a little faded and tarnished. 'Lord me, my dear place,' said the younger man. 'The plan was of strong maturing power. When it was hand-

ed to him he looked through it at some little distance on the back of the chair of the opal collar. 'Laramira, 1773,' he read aloud. 'Laramira is a Venetian name. 'There is a Ca' Laramira on the Grand Canal. It is next to the Laramira. You address its Moorish windows and worked sedulously from daylight to find it, sailors and fishermen and boatmen all joining in the search, in hope to merit the reward she promised. But no one of them succeeded. Their efforts were useless. The precious water would not yield up its prey. The opals were gone, like a shadow. In the hollow of an old oak pile the opals remained all winter long, lying like bird's eggs in a nest, whilst the restless waters washed and swirled above its sanctuary. The storm storm of the wood had kept its place for turtles, and many a covey had fled east if outward to the sea, to days when the white marbles of St. Mark's city had run red with blood. It had once been the base of a sea shrine, of a madonna of the waters to whom the boatmen passing had invoked the Stella Marina virgin so dear to fishermen and sailors. But the painted shrine had long disappeared, and only the old place of timber, down underneath the water,

"Why Will You Speak of Death?"

"I have lost my opals in the water," she cried to a friend who was one of the boatmen of the first boat.

"I am glad you have lost them," replied her friend. "They are pierres de malheur."

"Nonsense! They were beautiful, and they were Silvia Laramira's, poor Carlo's great-grandmother; they were one of her nuptial presents a hundred years ago. Her portrait hangs in the Belle-Arts. She was beautiful, and had a tragic fate. I must have the most dice and dredge till they are found. The water is so shallow. I cannot think how they have vanished so completely in such a moment of time."

"In the morning when it was known through Venice that the rich and generous Countess Laramira had lost her jewels, all the best divers hurried and worked sedulously from daylight to find it, sailors and fishermen and boatmen all joining in the search, in hope to merit the reward she promised. But no one of them succeeded. Their efforts were useless. The precious water would not yield up its prey. The opals were gone, like a shadow. In the hollow of an old oak pile the opals remained all winter long, lying like bird's eggs in a nest, whilst the restless waters washed and swirled above its sanctuary. The storm storm of the wood had kept its place for turtles, and many a covey had fled east if outward to the sea, to days when the white marbles of St. Mark's city had run red with blood. It had once been the base of a sea shrine, of a madonna of the waters to whom the boatmen passing had invoked the Stella Marina virgin so dear to fishermen and sailors. But the painted shrine had long disappeared, and only the old place of timber, down underneath the water,

"I've Lost My Opals in the Water."

rooted in the sand amongst the ribbon weed and mussel, had had power to resist the forces of the tide and tempest. All the winter long the old pile kept the opals safe and sound.

"But one day, when the peach and pear and plum trees had in turn burst into blossom on the Lido, and the flocks of gulls who had survived the stress of famine and cold had returned to their feeding places on the outer lagoons, a large iron ship coming from the Black Sea gave a rude shock in passing to the old oak pile, the top of it under the blow parted and fell asunder; the necklace was washed out of its hiding place, and carried in the heavy trough of the steamer's path, was floated ashore up the creeks into the long grasses and reeds beneath the Devil's bridge at Torcello. The yellow water lily was then flowering, and two little red warblers were nesting among the flags, as the opals were drifted up under some hemlock leaves and there rested.

"I think they are eggs, but they are all strong together," said the warbler to his mate.

"They look more like the spawn of a fish," said the little winged lady, with scorn.

A water rat came up and smelt at them, then went away disdainfully—they were not good to eat. For birds and beasts do not care for jewels; it is only humanity, which thinks itself superior to them, which sees any value in stones, and calls such toys precious.

"There is nowhere in the world any grass richer than that of Torcello, and forget-me-nots, honeysuckles, and wild roses grow down to the water's edge and around the hoary stones of the deserted lido.

"What a God-forgotten place!" said a young man as he sprang from a boat on to the bank by the bridge.

his dark, stary eyes, his laughing mouth, his tall figure, full of grace and strength like the form of the Greek Hermes in the Louvre.

Damer laid aside his papers with impatience. "And she has welcomed you, apparently? It is midnight and you look victorious."

Andria made a gesture of vexed protestation. "Pray do not suspect such things. I sent in my card and begged her majesty to say I had found her necklace. She sent word for me to go upstairs that she might thank me."

"Why did you thank me? She had a diadem. It was all solemn and correct. She was enchanted to find her necklace. It was an heirloom which Laramira gave her. He was killed in a duel, as I told you, two years ago. She is very beautiful and she is twenty years old, even less. I was very honest; I told her that an Englishman who was traveling with me had had the honor of finding the opals; and she wished to see you tomorrow. I promised to take you in prima segna; you surely ought to be grateful."

Damer shrugged his shoulders and looked regretfully at his papers and pencils. "Women only disturb one," he said, ungraciously.

Andria laughed. "It is that disturbance which perfumes our life and shakes the reas leaves over it. But I remember, to attract you a woman must be lying, dead or alive, on an operating table."

"Alive by operating," said Damer. "The dead are little use to us; their nervous system is still, like a stopped clock."

"A creature must suffer to interest you?"

"Certainly."

Andria shuddered slightly. "Why did you save me?"

Damer smiled. "My dear friend, it is my duty to save when I can. I should have preferred to let you alone and study your natural powers of resistance in conflict with the destruction which was menacing them. But I could not follow my preference. I was called in to assist your natural powers by affording them artificial resistance; and I was bound to do so."

Andria made a grimace which signified disappointment. "If my mother knew you looked at it in that way she would not adore you, my friend, as she does."

(To Be Continued.)

RAILROAD FIGURES.

Some Idea of the Magnitude of the Business of Transportation.

Statistics just published show that the mileage of the railways of the globe at the end of 1892 was 406,416, or one mile of railway for every 2,316 inhabitants.

The smallest railway mileage is possessed by Puerto Rico, which has only 11 miles; the largest by the United States, which, with 174,784 miles at the close of 1892, were far ahead of any other country. Next, but at a great interval, comes Germany, with 37,455 miles, followed by France, with 24,000 miles. The United Kingdom comes fourth, with 20,325 miles, and Russia fifth, with 19,656 miles. There are in Europe altogether 144,290 miles of railway; in North and South America, 218,210 miles; in Asia, only 2,252 miles, of which 17,788 miles are within India; in Australia, 12,685 miles; and in Africa, 7,212 miles. The islands of Malto, Jersey and Man have, between them, 68 miles. Persia has but 23, Hawaii 56 miles.

Belgium is far ahead of other countries with regard to the length of railway lines per 100 square miles of area, standing at 2.6 miles. The United Kingdom follows, with 1.67; then Holland, with 1.4; Germany, 1.32; Denmark, 1.1; France, 1.16; and Switzerland, with .84 miles per 100 square miles. The southern continent of Europe is not well provided with railways. Italy has the most, 7.7 miles per 100 square miles; and is followed by Austria, with 6.8 miles. Spain has only 2.4; European Turkey, 1.1; Russia, 1 mile. The 174,784 miles of railway of the United States makes for every 6 miles for every 100 square miles, and the 17,788 miles of British India 1.1 mile. The lowest figures in this respect are the 0.2 mile of South Australia, the Transvaal, Asia Minor, Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay and Venezuela. These countries are wide apart, but they resemble each other for want of railway enterprise.

The mileage of railways in Europe is 109,900 miles, and in the Railway News as follows: "West Australia comes first with 1113; Queensland next with 53.9 miles. Yet West Australia has only 609 miles of line, while British India with its 17,788 miles has only 1.1 mile of railway for every 10,000 inhabitants. As a contrast, British North America, with its 14,470 miles of railway, possesses 20.8 miles for every 10,000 population. The two countries worst off for railways are apparently Japan and the Dutch Indies; they have only 0.09 and 0.09 inhabitants being in either case only 0.1. This, of course, leaves out of the comparison China, which, with its vast territory and hundreds of millions of population, has only 121 miles of railway."

EQUAL TO THE EMERGENCY.

An Uncle Who Matched His Nephew's Efficiency with Interest.

A young Irishman in want of a five-pound note, wrote to his uncle as follows: "Dear Uncle: If you could see how I blush for shame while I am writing, you would pity me. Do you know why? Because I have to ask you for a few pounds, and do not know how to express myself. It is impossible for me to tell you. I prefer to die. I send you this by a messenger, who will wait for an answer. Believe me, my dearest uncle, your most obedient and affectionate nephew."

"I have received your letter, P. S. Overcome with shame for what I have written, I have been running after the messenger in order to take the letter from him, but I cannot catch him. Heaven grant that something may happen to stop him, or that my letter may get lost!" The uncle was naturally touched, but was equal to the emergency. He replied as follows: "My dear Jack: Console yourself, and blush no longer. Providence has heard your prayers. The messenger lost your letter. Your affectionate uncle."

A Vassar Valentine.

Vassar Maiden, dainty, classic, Poring o'er formation base, Tangent, essent and sine, Who shall be thy valentine, If you scorn not the tradition Of the good Saint Valentine, Chief of Cupid's postal line, Hear me once, ere Art and Science Harden thee 'gainst all compliance, Crushing out 'neath culture's sway All observance of the day. I will turn you from learning, Smile upon me, sighing, yearning, And I accept this halting rhyme— If I get it mailed.

What of the Future of English Politics?

Why Lord Rosebery's Resignation Would Probably Imply a Speedy Dissolution.

The appended letter to the editor from a valued Scrantonian, Mr. Thomas A. Aubrey, once resident in London will be read with particular interest, in view of the unstable condition of the cabinet ministry in England. The writer of it says: "Your comments on the English political situation in a recent issue contain a statement, which, as it stands, is liable to create a wrong impression as to a point of constitutional law in England, the restoration of which I refer to in the resignation of Lord Rosebery would necessitate a dissolution of parliament. This is erroneous, as far as relates to the law on the subject, inasmuch as parliament can only be dissolved by command of the sovereign, the death of the sovereign, or the expiration of the statutory limit regulating the duration of parliament; and the resignation of a premier, or even a whole cabinet, does not in itself or of necessity involve an appeal to the constituencies."

Cases in Point.

"During the reign of the present sovereign many cases might be cited where cabinets supported at the outset by a working majority in the representative house, but having in course of time been defeated on some more or less vital question, by the abstention, defection, or other action of their adherents, have resigned their seats of office, their places being taken by another cabinet, usually the outcome of a coalition between the secessionists, and what is known as the regular opposition. The most recent case of this kind on record is that of the fall of Gladstone's ministry in 1892.

"Coming into power on a gigantic wave of popularity in 1890, he formed what was then regarded as the most powerful English ministry of this century, but even his magnetic influence was powerless to hold together for any length of time the heterogeneous coalition cabinet known as the Liberal party, and with trouble in Ireland, Egypt, South Africa, in fact all over the world, disunion and then defection eventually accomplished the downfall of both cabinet and party. For six months the Conservatives, with Lord Salisbury at their head, assumed the reins, but like all other stop-gap governments, holding office without power, they were unable to initiate or carry through useful legislation, and soon tiring of their thankless task advised the crown to dissolve parliament. Thereupon followed the general election, the outcome of which was the introduction of Gladstone's first home rule bill.

History Repeats Itself.

"Now in some respects the position of the Liberal party today is parallel with the case of 1892, and in that fact lies the only justification for the statement that the resignation of Lord Rosebery would necessitate an early dissolution of parliament. The Liberal party has never since the last general election been chosen from the ranks of the Commons, and have his seat in the representative chamber. The Radical section, now too numerous to be entirely ignored, with reform of the house of lords at the head of their legislative programme, were therefore naturally inclined when Gladstone's retirement, Rosebery was jockeyed into the premier-

UDDER IS A GOOD WORD.

That Is the Conclusion of a Theatrical Advance Agent.

"I was standing on the platform of the station at Birmingham awaiting the arrival of the local train, when an old man approached. He wanted to buy a ticket, but he was unable to do so, as he had lost his ticket. He said to me, 'I have a sister living, and she has a theatrical company which will shortly be seen in Scranton, to a Tribune man yesterday.'

"What time does the train go to New Milford?" he asked. "Six o'clock," was my reply.

"Does the train stop there?" I don't know," said he, "you had better ask the ticket seller." He continued to ask questions until another venerable citizen relieved me from further trouble by calmly telling me the man "was dead" as an udder.

"I had in physical research learned, and have also heard that a certain species of venomous reptile known commonly as an udder is bereft of the sense of hearing, and intuition told me that he had reference to this grade of snake. I reminded him to repeat—he did so, and it was all over. In the meantime the old man began a conversation about bank failures in Birmingham. His subject was a man who had evidently had smallpox, for he not only showed the marks, but unlimited fatulence in the discussion.

PEOPLE WE KNOW.

(From Geneva, N. Y., Courier.)

It is a pleasure for us to present to our readers the recommendation of so estimable a citizen as Elias Dolson, of this place, knowing when he says that he was cured of rheumatism by the use of Dr. David Kennedy's Favorite Remedy. It is so true, as one of these blunders and said: "Mr. J. C., will you kindly go to your room and close the door and say 'inquiry' over and over till you are completely satisfied."

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ship, without their knowledge or consent, and for twelve months they have been in more or less open revolt. Home rule is still more or less to the fore, but so much time and energy having been wasted over that to no purpose, the party is now crying out for attention to other matters still nearer home; and such questions as Welsh disestablishment, English local government, parliamentary procedure, manhood suffrage and payment of members, to all of which the party as a whole is pledged, have each their separate faction clamoring for precedence, and agreed upon nothing except to disagree as to any method of procedure likely to result in concerted and united action.

"Lord Rosebery, therefore, presents the spectacle of a leader out of touch with his forces by reason of his connection with an unpopular and non-representative chamber, devoid of the confidence of a large section of his nominal followers, unable to control or combine the struggling factions among those who acknowledge his leadership, faltering and uncertain in his own expressed opinions with regard to a domestic policy and fully aware that his unfitness for the post, obtained by intrigue and retained against the wishes of many in the party, is hourly working the ruin of that party. Add to these things the fact that, except for Gladstone, who for the moment cannot be reckoned as a factor in English politics, there is no man in the Liberal party who under existing conditions would assume its leadership, and that the Conservative party do not hope to form a successful coalition with any other stray faction, and you have the reason why the resignation of Lord Rosebery now would necessitate an immediate dissolution.

What of the Result?

"What the result of the general election will be the most experienced political campaigners in either party will not venture to affirm, though at present it seems inevitable that falling the re-appearance of Gladstone in the fight, the Liberals will encounter certain defeat, by reason of their want of cohesion and for lack of generalship. Numbering many men of great gifts and attainments among its ranks, the Liberal party has yet no one who can arouse in its hosts the true militant spirit, or can display such personal enthusiasm and staying power as can W. E. Gladstone, even though nearing four score years and ten. For nearly twenty years, since Disraeli retired from the lower house, he has towered above all overshadowed his contemporaries, so that the oldest and best seem but as young, untired and inexperienced men, who now, in the hour of party need, are unable to command the confidence of their fellows by reason of their inactivity as compared with the great-ness of his leadership. In the history of the century has occupied the foreground in every political battle.

"It would be interesting to speculate further as to the immediate destiny of both great political parties and the men who must inevitably come to the front at the coming general election, but I have already overtaxed your patience and space."

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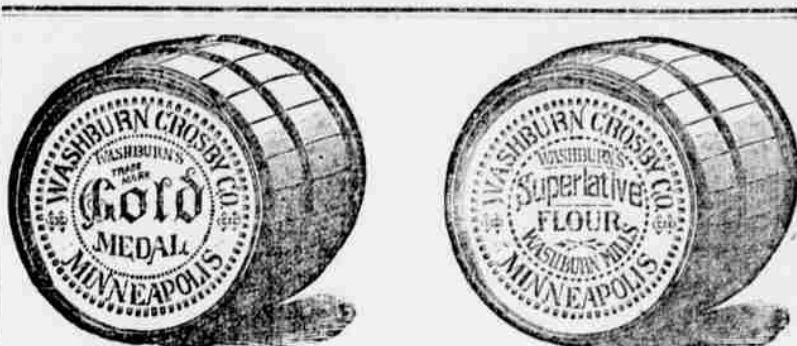
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