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The Cableman

AN EXCITING PRESENT-DAY ROMANCE

—BY—

WEATHERBY CHESNEY

Supplied Exclusively in Canada by The British & Colonial Press Service, Limited.

"The pine-grower's daughter!" exclaimed Scarborough. "The Caldeira de Morre is near the Casa Davis. She is not the sort of girl to make a mistake, but she may have been wrong. Are you sure it was your father she saw?"

"She met him on the road and spoke to him."

"Did she notice that anything was wrong? I mean, was there anything unusual in his manner? Did she see anyone following him? Or was there anyone with him?"

"He was alone, and Muriel says that he seemed to be in unusually good spirits. He told her that his enemy the gout had given him a holiday, and that he was taking advantage of it; and he asked her to bring Mr. Davis to the Chinelas to dinner to-day. She promised she would. Oh, Horace, I don't understand it! I left my father suffering agonies at the smallest movement, and a few hours afterwards he is walking along a high road three miles away, and saying that the gout has given him a holiday! It seems impossible! What pain he must have been in! And Muriel says he was cheerful! He was brave—I know he was brave—but this seems an impossibility. Can a man conquer a pain like that?"

"Yes," said Scarborough, "if some sharper emotion takes its place. Sudden or violent grief might do it—or terror."

Scarborough did not know how to answer her. There was, so far as he could see, only one explanation which was even plausible; and he shrank from suggesting it to Elsa yet. The doctor who was coming would no doubt be able to say whether or no the dead man had really suffered from an acute attack of gout yesterday. Scarborough resolved that he would try to see the doctor before Elsa did; and if the suspicion which was being driven in upon him now should be confirmed, he would keep the knowledge of the truth from Elsa as long as he could. If he father was what Phil Varney had said he was, she would know it soon enough. Meanwhile he would not destroy the faith which comforted her sorrow.

"What was the danger which your father feared?" he asked.

"He did not tell me."

"But you know it?"

"No. I want you to help me to find out what it was."

"Tell me how, and I will try."

Elsa hesitated, and then she said in a low tone:

"Phil Varney is your friend."

"You think it came from him?" cried Scarborough in a startled voice. "Do you understand what your suggestion implies?"

"Yes," said Elsa readily. "It connects him, perhaps, with my father's death. No, don't speak; let me explain what I mean. I think that my father had got together proofs which would clear his name, and that danger which threatened him was the loss of those proofs. Now who are the people in whose interest it would be that the proofs should be destroyed, if not those whose guilt would be made plain? The son of the man who ruined him might wish to get those proofs in his own hands. I think heaven that, though murder has been done, I believe that the documents which will vindicate my father's honor are still safe."

"And I," said Scarborough in great agitation, "thank heaven that I can account for every minute of my chum Phil Varney's time, from yesterday afternoon till an hour ago, when I came to see you."

"How can you do that?" she asked.

"Because he spent the time in my company. He came back with me from Ponta Delgada, dined with me, and slept at the Cable station, in the bedroom next to mine. I can account for him fortunately."

"I am glad," said Elsa, simply.

"I think you ought to be," he answered sternly. "The knowledge has saved you from hinting, to anybody but me, a horrible accusation against an innocent man."

"Oh, don't misunderstand me!" she broke out. "That's not why I'm glad. My poor father has been murdered. Do you think I am going to throw away a chance of finding his murderer because I may perhaps throw suspicion on an innocent man? I want to find the guilty. The innocent will be able to prove their innocence!"

"Your father found it hard to do so," Scarborough retorted, and almost before the words had left his lips, was ashamed of them.

Elsa drew herself up proudly.

"I have told you that the proofs still exist," she said. "The murderer did not destroy them." Then hurriedly, as though she had said more than she meant to say, she went on:

"I said that I was glad that you could prove Phil Varney to be innocent, and I am. But you misunderstand my reason."

"At any rate I credited you with one that was worthy," said Scarborough.

"And is a daughter's desire to avenge her father not worthy?" she asked hotly.

"I am glad to know that it was not Phil Varney, because now I need not waste time in following a false clue. There is another clue, which I mean to follow, and I mean to ask you to help me."

"I will help you," said Scarborough.

"Then," said Elsa quickly, "find out what the girl who calls herself Mona de la Mar was doing between yesterday afternoon and this morning. I told you I recognized another person besides Phil Varney. It was she. Her real name is—"

"Margaret Ryan," said Scarborough quickly. "Yes, I know."

"You know that, too!" said Elsa.

"What else do you know about her?" Scarborough got up and paced the road back and forth. Then he halted beside Elsa.

"I only know what Phil told me," he said. "But though for her sake I hope your suspicion wrongs her, I cannot say that I know it does. A carriage has just driven up to the Chinelas. Is it the doctor?"

"Yes," said Elsa. "Tell me what you know of Margaret Ryan."

"Not yet," said Scarborough firmly. "We don't know yet that murder has been done at all. We will go and hear what the doctor says."

And Elsa, after a brief hesitation, in which she seemed inclined to insist, gave away, and followed him to the house.

CHAPTER VII.

A Vow of Vengeance

The Portuguese doctor had said that he was not sure, but that so far as he was able to judge there had been no murder. He was inclined, indeed, with all necessary reservations in case the facts should afterwards prove to be otherwise, to think that the death, though lamentably sudden, was due to natural causes. A further examination would be necessary to decide the question. All that he could say, at present, was that there were no external marks of violence.

"But poison?" Elsa had suggested.

"The fumes from the Caldeira?"

The doctor shook his head.

"The fumes from the Caldeira de Morre are mainly carbon dioxide," he said. "Death was not due to them."

"How can you be sure of that?" Scarborough asked. "Carbon dioxide is a poison, is it not?"

"Certainly, Senhor, if it is breathed in excess for any length of time."

The dead body was found a few feet from the edge of the Caldeira."

"So I understand. But none the less, Senhor, I am confident that the fumes from the Caldeira de Morre were not the cause of death. Death from carbon dioxide is a form of suffocation. The appearance of the body negatives your theory."

"Can you explain to me how?"

"Certainly, Senhor. If the poor lady's father had been suffocated by the fumes from the Caldeira, his veins would be congested, the skin would be dark, and the lips would be almost purple. I observed, on the other hand, the exact opposite of all this. The lips were bloodless, the veins were flaccid, and the face was white. I am confident that, in this point at least, I shall prove to be right."

(To Be Continued.)

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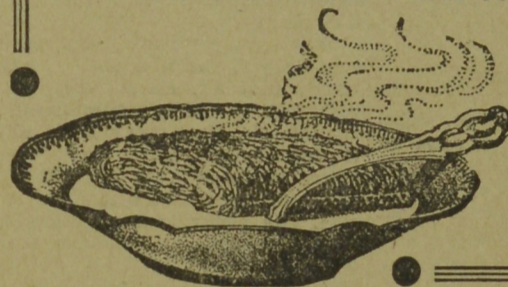
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