

murder them until she had acquired all their money.

Few of those whom the police say were poisoned by Mrs. Vermilya possessed much worldly wealth.

Mrs. Vermilya profited financially by the death of only three of her victims, so far as the police have been able to show.

Further, there is a great difference between a woman who fiendishly and redly murdered strong men with an axe, and a woman who murders men by slow poisoning with arsenic.

It is not by analogy with the Guinness case that the police will clear up the mystery of death that is holding Louise Vermilya in jail.

Again, Louise Vermilya's own letters to Thomas Bruington, the Peoria photographer, now in the hands of the police, are the best defense of the woman against the police theory.

These letters show time and again, the abnormal desire of Mrs. Vermilya to be with the dead, and in the places of death.

In them she talks blithely of "having a lot of business to do at the morgue," of spending "busy days at the cemetery," of visiting cemeteries.

But the letters show something else.

They breath forth a great love that the woman bore toward her dead husband, Charles Vermilya, and to the son, whom the police also say she murdered, Frank Brinkamp.

Over and over, there are refer-

ences to these two men in the letters, and each time note of tenderness and great love, is struck.

Take these excerpts:

"Tom, you ask about my late husband—He was the best man I ever knew. He was the kindest husband a woman could have . . .

"My boy came back to me, stricken with typhoid fever, and only to die. And there never was a more dutiful son. He was a source of happiness to me every minute God spared him to me.

"But my boy was taken—and I needed him so much."

The police say Mrs. Vermilya wrote these lines of the husband and son she had done to death by a hideous, slow and torturing method.

Do they read like it?

If Mrs. Vermilya is the monster the police say, would she write thus of her victims?

Would she, in that case, write of them at all?

All these things point to mania, granting that the police are correct in saying that Mrs. Vermilya slew nine persons.

And after all, the police have proved nothing except that there was poison in the body of Arthur Bissonette.

The strongest link in the case of the police against the woman is that last Saturday Mrs. Vermilya attempted to commit suicide by herself taking arsenic.

This is a damning thing, that Mrs. Vermilya will have much trouble explaining to a jury.

If she were innocent of all evil, she would not have taken poison.