

a few words with the witness in his own tongue?" he asked.

The Coroner hesitated. He saw that Forbes was ostentatiously making notes, and that Traherne was waiting for a move by Forbes. "I think the course you suggest would be reasonable," he said. "It would help Vuilmo to be more definite."

Waverton at once asked the Spaniard if the man who bought the poison spoke like an American possessing an ordinary command of the language, or was his diction as fluent and his pronunciation as good as his (Waverton's).

It was distinctly amusing to watch José Vuilmo's face when he heard the accents of his native tongue delivered with the accurate ease of one who spoke it without fault or effort. He gazed spellbound at Waverton, and then turned appealingly to the Coroner.

"See here a mistake the most unfortunate!" he cried. "This is not the gentleman who came to my establishment. This one is a veritable Argentinian; the other was altogether American. I see now that I was in error; but permit me to observe, Señor Judge, that I remarked on the habit of the scientific mind—"

He was stopped by the interpreter, who forthwith translated Waverton's question and the witness's answer.

WAVERTON resumed his seat again, and favored Steingall with a satisfied smile. At the same time he could not avoid Mrs. Delamar's glance, and he read therein a profound amazement which conveyed a warning that he had discomfited the druggist at the price of creating active distrust in a far more dangerous quarter. But he was evidently a man of singular strength of will; for he looked fully satisfied with his achievement, and the angry flush raised by the unexpected use of his name quickly gave way to a contented expression which, to Mrs. Delamar, was almost more bewildering than the ticklish turn taken by the evidence.

Prompted by Forbes, the prosecutor hammered in the druggist's disclaimer. "You believe now that the Claude G. Waverton present in court is not the Claude G. Waverton who bought the crystals of nicotine?" he asked.

"But no, Señor," was the answer, and Waverton's brow frowned again; because, perhaps, of the awkward manner in which the prosecutor had framed the question.

He took thought while the Coroner's pen scratched industriously, and broke in when the lawyer was about to proceed. "That is a somewhat unreasonable way to establish the fact aimed at. Why not ask the witness to state that, if I am Claude G. Waverton, the person who purchased the poison must have deceived him by using my name?"

"You may put that point when I have finished," said Forbes.

"But I protest now against the method you are adopting. There are not two Claude G. Wavertons."

The attorney deigned to appear interested. "We are not settling a matter of title to the Waverton property," he said. "The witness has stated that Claude G. Waverton came to his shop in Palm Beach, and you have got him to say that you are not the Claude G. Waverton in dispute. What more do you want?"

"I want you to remember that you are representing the State, and that you have no right to distort the evidence from the meaning honestly attached to it by Señor José Vuilmo."

"How dare you say that I am distorting evidence?"

"And how dare you hint that I am not Claude G. Waverton?"

"I did nothing of the sort."

"What, when you flippantly allude to 'settling a matter of title,' and that I am 'not the Claude G. Waverton in dispute'? Have a care, Sir!"

IF a mild-eyed sheep, tied to the slaughtering block, were suddenly to scarify his would-be slayer with stern threats and words of hot indignation, the worthy tradesman thus confounded could not have been more surprised than Forbes and the two detectives. The lawyer had certainly gone rather far in his disdain of one whom his legal mind now regarded as an impostor; but he no more expected this fiery denunciation than that the Coroner should hurl an inkpot at him.

Even Steingall was momentarily stupefied; but Clancy kept his head, and flashed a glance imploring caution, so Forbes temporized.

"I am not moved by fear of criticism," he said, addressing the Coroner, who, for his own reasons, let the two fight it out; "but I may as well explain that Mr. Waverton is working himself into a passion about nothing. I was seeking only to emphasize a point in his favor—"

"You must do it differently, then," interrupted Waverton, and his contemptuous tone brought a flush to the lawyer's forehead.

"Of course, I cannot be dictated to!" said Forbes hotly.

The Coroner raised his hand. "I see no objection to a subsidiary question, framed as Mr. Waverton suggests, being put to the witness," he said, and Clancy blessed the worthy man under his breath.

This was done, and the "breeze" died down. Traherne tried to fan it into activity again by inducing the druggist to reiterate that the buyer of the poison did closely resemble Claude G. Waverton, and that his (the witness's) altered belief arose largely from hearing Waverton speak Spanish so well. He wanted to know too why New York officials should appear in a New Jersey court, and threatened to have the proceedings quashed as irregular.

But neither Forbes nor Waverton paid heed to this hair splitting, and Traherne subsided. Forbes simply demanded that the address, "Asphodel House, Palm Beach," given by "the person who described himself as Claude G. Waverton" (whereat the bearer of the name

smiled grimly, feeling that he had worsted his opponent) should be noted, and José Vuilmo was permitted to retire.

Then another rustle of excitement ran through the court, because the Coroner raised his head, and, peering through benignant gold spectacles, called:

"Mrs. Josephine Kyrle!"

CHAPTER XIV. Mrs. Delamar's Ordeal

MRS. DELAMAR had dispensed with the veil she usually affected when in the neighborhood of Absecon or in any part of New Jersey where she might be known as Mrs. Kyrle. Though wearing black, she could hardly be said to be in mourning. The smart coat and skirt, an imported hat, a lace blouse, a pair of suede gloves, conveyed an artistic suggestion of widowhood without any loss of elegance or charm. She was really a strikingly handsome woman, and when she stood in the witness box against a somewhat harsh background of drab-painted wall she looked like a Morland portrait divested of its frame.

Even the Coroner was impressed, and his voice grew almost sympathetic when he explained that, as a supplement to her testimony given previously, the police wished enlightenment on other matters that had come to their knowledge.

She bowed silently. She had guessed already the nature of the ordeal she would be called on to endure, and she meant to go through with it as creditably as might be. It was useless to struggle, and a complete readiness to answer questions might soften the heart of that dour-faced descendant of some Scottish Covenanter who represented the District Attorney.

Forbes, observing the fiction of working through the local prosecutor, was already on his feet and glancing through some papers. Suddenly he raised his eyes and shot out his first question; though even he was elaborately polite, and his manner gave no hint of the coming storm.

"I have read through the testimony you gave at the opening of this inquiry," he said, "and I find you stated that you left Absecon for New York on the Tuesday of the week in which your husband died. Is that correct?"

"Yes, in a sense."

"May I take it that it is also incorrect, in a sense?"

"I left Absecon on that day; but did not travel direct to New York."

"Ah. Where did you sleep on the Tuesday night?"

"In the Board Walk Hotel, Atlantic City."

"You came to Atlantic City, took a room in the Board Walk Hotel, went out, returned late at night, and traveled to New York early next day,—is that an accurate summary of your movements?"

"Yes."

"Now, will you kindly tell the court why you acted

in this way, and what you did during a two hours' visit to Absecon, not to your own house, and during your later absence from the Atlantic City hotel?"

Forbes was an adroit lawyer, and the very form taken by his questions told the mystified Traherne that he wished to keep the witness clear of involuntary pitfalls. Lest she might be tempted to prevaricate, he revealed his hand clearly, and put forth a confident display of knowledge of her devious comings and goings on the day Kyrle was last seen alive, which was intended to warn her not to attempt to mislead the authorities. Traherne, who, of course, had received no definite instructions, realized that the District Attorney would not follow this line unless he was very sure of his ground, and was, moreover, only leading up to matters of much greater importance. He watched his client closely for any signal of distress, when he would intervene on one pretext or another, and at any rate gain time for her to collect her thoughts; but she was quite self possessed, though very pale, and did not take her eyes off the grim, sharp-faced, though smooth-spoken, lawyer who shared the secrets of the police.

CLANCY, alert as a jack rabbit, admitted to himself at this juncture that he was puzzled by Waverton's behavior. The latter was watching Mrs. Delamar with curious interest. He might have been a man who now saw her and heard her voice for the first time. His attitude was wholly detached and impersonal. Once his glance flitted to the rows of absorbed people in court, and he smiled. Clancy literally put his thought into words.

"You honest Atlantic City tradesmen," he was musing, "are giving your divided attention to a matter that you will never understand. There are issues in this case not to be decided by the combined wits of the Coroner and your good selves."

Clancy nodded his head in frank agreement, and Steingall whispered:

"What is it?"

"Nothing," said Clancy.

"Is that why you nodded?"

"Yes."

Steingall had something sarcastic to say; but forbore, for Mrs. Delamar was speaking.

"I remained in Absecon because I had to wait two hours for a boat or train to Atlantic City," she said. "My husband did not wish my presence at the Rosery; so I strolled to a farm where I was known. I bought some milk there. If necessary, I can give you the farmer's name."

"Not at all." Forbes conveyed that he would not dream of doubting her word in this matter.

Mrs. Delamar signified her appreciation of his courtesy by an expressive glance. Thus far, they resembled antagonists engaged in the punctilio of a duel; but steel was bound to grate on steel by and by.

"From Absecon," she said, "I went back to Atlantic City, and late at night returned again to Absecon, at my husband's wish, and received two packages from him. Altogether, I had a very wearying and apparently aimless day; but my husband was morose and eccentric, so I humored him. The packages were intended for the post, and, luckily, I remember the addresses. One was addressed to Professor Leon Anthony, M. A., Harvard University, and the other to a bank on Broadway, New York. Let me explain that my husband was a man of peculiar, almost fantastic, ideas, and he insisted on a sort of secrecy and want of purpose in my movements that day. We did not agree very well,—in fact, during recent years we have lived apart,—but he gave me to understand that he was going to Europe, as a member of an expedition to Morocco, and that his return was doubtful. He informed me that the packages contained a scientific diary and papers referring to his personal affairs, that he had described himself in his letters as already en route to the Cunard pier at New York, and that he wished to convey the impression that the Rosery had been practically closed since that morning. It was arranged between us, however, that he would really not go farther afield than Paris, until—until each of us had obtained freedom through the divorce court, and, as I was most anxious to have my marriage dissolved, I agreed to humor him with regard to the broken journeys of that day. Still, I could not help feeling a little



"I Must Introduce a Distressing Element," Said Forbes.