

panic, I raised my revolver, but before I could fire, the Count, with a sound of words which the tumid tongue would not utter, fell back. I could endure the terrible sight no longer, but rushed from the room, locking the door behind me. When I had roused the hotel people and the door was opened again, Count Furello lay still on the table—dead.

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So perished this villain by the horrible means he had prepared for me. When I think of that hideous death, the idea of my narrow escape sends a shiver through me. When we came to examine the lethal instrument which inflicted it, we found it to be a hollow stiletto with a collapsible handle, this forming a receptacle for the virulent poison with which it was charged. A slight prick, as it must have been in the case of poor Szalay, would be enough to cause death, and the venom acted so rapidly that a remedy was out of the question. A very pretty and effective implement of the great Chancellor's vaunted statecraft!

It appeared that the Count had taken a room on the same floor, whence it had been easy for him to slip into mine and await my return. But Von Lindheim's letter saved me.

There was, of course, an inquiry into the facts of that strange and appalling tragedy. Happily for me, all the circumstances confirmed my straightforward story, which was further corroborated by the dead man's antecedents. It appeared that before he quitted Italy several mysterious deaths of the same character as this one had occurred, with which he had seemed closely connected; but nothing beyond strong suspicion had been fastened upon him.

But at last the terribly appropriate retribution had overtaken him; and surely no man had ever greater cause than I to be thankful for the gift of a strong arm and an athletic frame.