

ALL FOR GOLD.

(Continued.) "I don't know, I did not look particularly, but I think it was English."

"Thank you, I'll go and ascertain," Balbi made his way to the post office. Yes, there was a letter within the glass frame addressed—

SIGNORE PIERO BALBI, Cuzco, Arequipa, Mollendo, Peru. The envelope was dirty, frayed and travel-stained and bore the postal stamps of the three towns named, together with note in pencil and ink made by numerous postmen stating their inability to deliver it on account of insufficiency of address.

Balbi applied for it, declaring that he had been recently travelling, and had had no fixed address for some time, but that in all probability it was intended for him. The postmaster raised numerous difficulties about handing it over and whose proof of his being the person whose name was inscribed upon it.

without a doubt formed a portion of this remainder. They have been examined by experts who are unanimous in their conviction that the various works of art are genuine. We would call particular attention to a circlet, or tiara, in gold, which in all probability formed the symbol of sovereignty of the reigning chief. The workmanship displayed in the delicate tracery is exquisite, and although the design is very unlike anything of modern times, the general effect is unique and striking. Art lovers would do well to take advantage of this opportunity of examining the goldsmith's work of a past age. The exhibition will only remain open a few days longer. It is a curious coincidence that this galaxy of art treasures should have come before the public just at the time when the attention of the mining world has been arrested by the flotation of 'The Queen of the Cordilleras,' the new Peruvian Copper Mine in which Mr. Giuseppe Guelfo is the moving spirit.

"There Gerald, what do you think of that?" said Dora Colvin, throwing down the paper from which she had been reading. "Have you time to spare this afternoon to take me to see them? We might call for Pauline, in case she would like to go too."

"By all means, though I doubt it. They would only be painful to her. You see poor Vipan's last trip was all through that country, and the little gold image he gave me the very last time I met him was something he had discovered in one of these places."

"Well, my good man, is it not for you after all?" asked the official. "You seem in doubt. Had you not better read it?" "Yes, yes!" and he glanced at the sheets. The first sentence, in rather ungrammatical Italian was significant.

"Nothing, my dear Balbi, nothing! A little stain, a little acid, some glass paper to take off sharp edges, a crack or two here and there with a heavy hammer and plenty of wormholes bored and there you are. The little Italian chuckled to himself. "I've got a fourteenth century one on order now. It's intended for the Earl of Marshfield," said Taft. "And he ordered it? Madonna mia!"

"Bless you, no! A firm at Wardour street ordered it. They'll send it among a lot of old lumber in a farmhouse near his seat, and will write him telling him of the discovery. He'll come and see it, and it's a hundred to one he buys it, especially as there's a little bit of a coat of arms with some of his quartering still to be seen."

"And if he doesn't buy it?" "Taft shrugged his shoulders. "Then the coat of arms must come off or be altered into somebody else's."

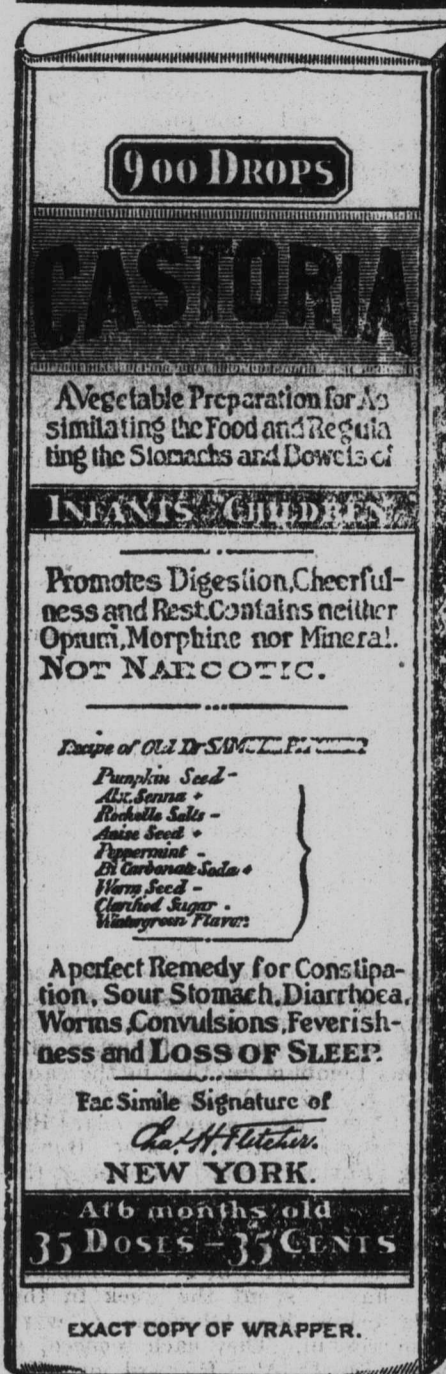
"Child's play. But out of one bit out of another, smoke, dirty varnish, a broken frame and frayed canvas. But they're not like furniture—more risky—and they're too common."

have them if they were given to me. They were offered me at one time. "Offered to you! How's that?" "Only I found that mine. At first I thought it was a good thing, but later on I learnt what it really was. It is almost worked out. A few months and there will be nothing more in it, and then—"

"Good name! Dio!" cried the little man, with a world of contempt in his voice. "She's a devil. You know not what I was talking about. I'll pay it. I'll pay it to the last atom. He's ruined thousands body and soul. But he has to reckon with the Piero Balbi now, though he knows it not at present. He shall, though, some day. I tell you, signor, that man shall go on his knees to me but I shall not spare him. I will crush him as I crush—Ah!—"

"What does he do?" "Works in metal."

"Does he design?" "Did he do that?" pointing to some pencil marks on the workwood of the bench.



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strong bond between us. But, before we talk of it, tell me something of your companionship with him of whom we have both been so cruelly robbed."

"Signoria, it is still hard for me to speak of him. He was more than a brother, the truest, firmest, most loyal friend a poor man ever had. He ventured his life for me, and Piero Balbi can never forget that. And though it is now impossible to show him gratitude in life, vengeance remains, and his humble friend will demand—aye, and exact—it to the last fraction. This is the chief reason for my visit to England."

"Yes, yes, I know it. But tell me something of your travels together. Anything, everything concerning him is of the greatest interest to me. And you were such close companions, you knew more of those last few months of his active life than anyone."

"Si, signoria. Indeed that is so. And for the next hour, that fair English girl and the rough, true-hearted, little Italian miner, seated side by side, conversed about the man who was so dear to both of them."

"And now, Mr. Balbi that you have been so good in answering all of my questions, it is not fair to trouble you further today. It is your turn now to question me, and be sure that I will try and give you any information in my power. First of all let me say that the second letter you enclosed to Mr. Vipan at the time this I took an early opportunity of visiting them again, and I am quite sure that this small space here, pointing it out, indicates the window on the stairs, close to the doors of his rooms, through which access was gained from the roof of an outbuilding, and the evidence at the inquest failed to prove whether that window was fastened on that night or no. Besides, if it had been, the catch was of so simple a description that anyone could have forced it with a pocket knife."

lowest morning, in a state of the greatest confusion. When they came into my possession, I went through them and endeavored to bring them to some state of order, and, while doing so, I can across this scrap of paper, handing Balbi an irregularly-torn piece of tinted yellow paper which appeared to have been ripped off the margin of some foreign looking paper, as it contained in one corner a few words in coarse print. "You will see," continued Pauline, "that a rough plan has been drawn on one side; this I have since ascertained represents the back of the premises in which Mr. Vipan had his chambers in Ducie Street. There is also what I think is a date upon it. It certainly does not appear to afford much information, yet crime has often been brought home on slighter evidence than this."

"The Italian turned the paper over, examining it with the greatest attention. "Again, signoria, you have made an interesting discovery. This scrap of paper, I am almost sure, was torn from the margin of a journal published daily in Mollendo. The few words of printing are part of an advertisement of a tobacconist who has a shop there. I remember the wording of it, though neither his name or address appear. Of the plan I can say nothing, as I have not seen the Signor Vipan's chambers."

"But I have, and when I discovered this I took an early opportunity of visiting them again, and I am quite sure that this small space here, pointing it out, indicates the window on the stairs, close to the doors of his rooms, through which access was gained from the roof of an outbuilding, and the evidence at the inquest failed to prove whether that window was fastened on that night or no. Besides, if it had been, the catch was of so simple a description that anyone could have forced it with a pocket knife."

"Just so, but this date, which appears to have been written at an earlier time, and with a pen and pencil, which, if my memory does not play me false, the date on which I wrote that letter to Signor Vipan. It seems to me that someone must have been closely following my doings in Peru and have gained a knowledge of my discovery. Then, having ascertained that I had written to the signor, followed, or even travelled by the same steamer as my letter, determined to gain possession of the information."

"But would this have been possible?" (To be continued.) "Aren't you drinking a little more than usual?" "Yes, my wife has a cold in the head and can't smell a thing."

CHAPTER XI. In Memory of Wallace Vipan.

The following morning Piero Balbi knocked at Lord Oxendale's door in Mount Street and inquired if the Signoria Spencer was within. On giving his name he was immediately shown up to Pauline's boudoir.

"The little man was strangely excited. For the first time in his life he was about to meet an English lady, and more than that, that lady to whom his dearest friend was betrothed, and the manner in which he had been at once admitted showed him that his coming was looked for, and that he was welcome. Small as this incident was, it went straight to his heart and intensified the feeling of attraction he already experienced towards the unknown lady."

"He had not waited more than a minute or two when the door opened and Pauline entered. The first sight of her sad and pathetic beauty completed her conquest over the Italian's heart. Mr. Balbi—Signor Balbi, I suppose I should say," she exclaimed with a sad smile, coming towards him with her hand extended in welcome. "I cannot tell you how glad I am to see you and make your acquaintance."

"The Signoria is very good," exclaimed the little man, seizing her hands. "Not at all. It is you who have conferred a great favour upon me and at the same time given me such a pleasant surprise. For it is I, since I received your letter saying that you were coming to England that I feared that some misfortune had overtaken you."



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