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painted white, that she had two masts and one funnel, and was about two hundred feet in length. The other, a coastguardsman, said that she was black and had two funnels and three masts. He put her length down at three hundred feet. Both, however, agreed that she had clipper bows and that she was never at anchor, but steamed slowly to and fro. One man was six miles to the north of her, and the other five miles to the south, so neither had any opportunity of giving a minute description.

The inquest on John Corodale, the third victim that Sir John Lowick's invention had claimed from the human race, was robbed of its chief interest by the fact that everyone was thinking of the stupendous tragedy that had followed so close upon Corodale's death, that Inspector Turnbull was dead, and that Ralph Lowick himself had disappeared. It was, however, conducted with the usual care exercised on such occasions, and though the evidence was only second-hand—being such evidence as Mr. Turnbull had communicated to his colleagues at Sinchester—a verdict of wilful murder was brought in against Ralph Lowick. The jury, however, added a rider to the effect that until all the facts of the case were known they were not prepared to say whether there were any extenuating circumstances or not. Certainly Corodale's statement that he had learned the secret from the lips of the murderer had not been confirmed.

The whole of England was in an uproar, and Corodale's death was hardly mentioned in the papers. The Government were reticent, and questions asked in Parliament met with the usual evasive replies.

"Everything possible is being done," said the Home Secretary, and his words were mentioned by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The latter, however, added a warning that it would be unwise and immoral to suspect any friendly nation of such a dastardly crime against humanity.

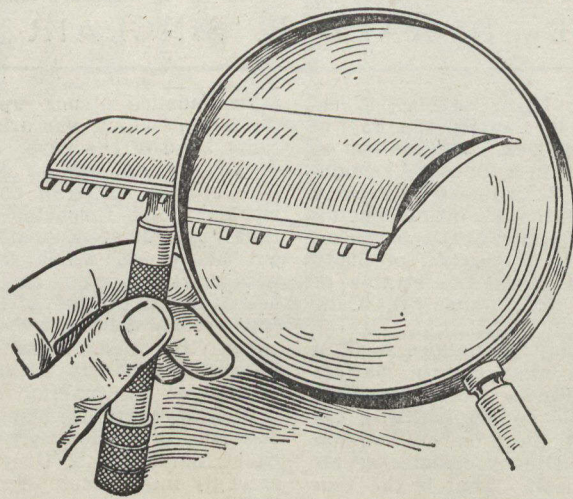
The general idea was that it was the work of a gang of desperadoes, who intended to obtain the valuable secret and sell it to the highest bidder. According to the newspapers, every foreign Government had promised their assistance in the work of running the ruffians to earth, and every day they provided some excitement for their readers in the shape of news of a mysterious vessel which was always seen, but always eluding pursuit—a vessel that could outdistance the fastest torpedo destroyer ever built. But nothing was found, and the nation screamed for vengeance in vain.

Amid all this turmoil there was one woman who spoke but little, and whose thoughts were centred more on the living than the dead. Joan Endermine was among the mourners who wept for those who had perished in the tragedy, but, unlike them, she could not stand by the grave of him she loved or give a last tribute of flowers to his memory.

She knew that Ralph Lowick would die, as surely as though he were in Sinchester Gaol awaiting execution. He could only buy his life at the cost of his honour, and he was not the man to do that. He would be killed, perhaps after months or even years of hideous torture. But he would never speak. And the secret would die with him. It would be used neither for the glory of England nor for the peace of the world.

CHAPTER XIV.

ONE summer evening, a month after the awful tragedy at Cransea Hall, Joan Endermine was walking with her father across the marshland which lay between Easternhoe and the sea. It was just such an evening as the one on which the great experiment had been made. The air was still, and the whole scene was bathed in the golden light of the setting sun. Her father had been talking fiercely of the impotence of the British Government, of what he would do if he were Prime Minister, or what he would say if he had a seat in Parliament. But as they neared Cransea Hall he had lapsed into silence, and



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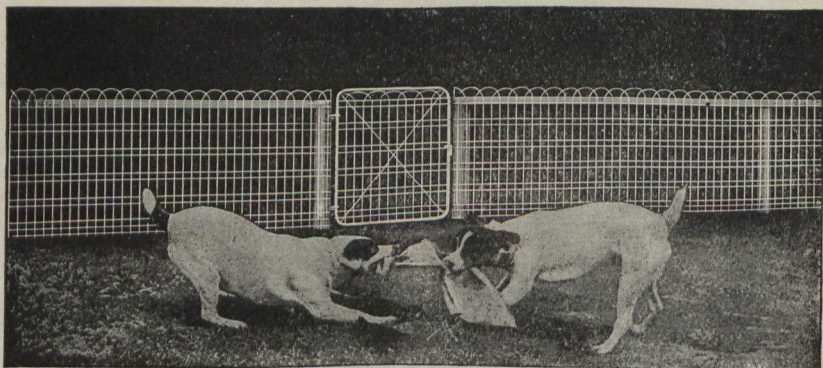
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