

A MODERN JUDAS.

OR, THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

CHAPTER XI—Continued.

'Oh! brain fever?'
'I'm afraid so!'
'In that case I can get nothing out of her,' said Fanks, coolly; 'it's a pity. By the way, do you know who I think knows a good deal about this case?'
'Monsieur Judas.'
'You'll make a good detective some day,' replied Fanks, approvingly. 'Yes; I mean Monsieur Judas. He's a crafty wretch, that same Frenchman, and knows a good deal.'
'About Melstane and Miss Marson?'
'Probably.'
'And Melstane's death?'
'Possibly.'
'You don't suspect him?' asked Roger, breathlessly.
'I don't suspect any one—at present, as I said before,' replied Fanks, with a sudden movement of irritation. 'Confound it, the more I go into this case the more mixed up it seems to get. It seems to me it all depends on those pills. The box went from Wosk's shop into the hands of Melstane, certainly—'
'Yes, and it went from Melstane's hands into those of Spolger,' said Axton, with sudden recollection.
'What do you mean?' asked Fanks, eagerly.
'Whereupon, Roger, in a terrible state of excitement, told his friend all about Melstane's interview with Spolger—of the pill-box left behind, and of the sending of it back to Melstane.
'And don't you see, Fanks,' cried Axton, in great excitement, 'Spolger is a bit of a chemist, so he could easily put in the two extra pills before he sent back the box. Melstane would never suspect, and so would come by his death. Oh, Spolger's the man who killed Melstane, I'm certain of it.'
'Wait a bit,' said Fanks, rapidly making a few notes in his pocket-book. 'When a crime is committed the first thing is to look for a motive. Now, what motive had Spolger for killing Melstane?'
'Motive!' repeated Roger, in amazement, 'the strongest of all motives. He was in love with Florry and wanted to marry her. She, however, was in love with Melstane, and while he lived Spolger had no chance. So of course he removed his rival by death. It's as clear as daylight.'
'Why 'of course'?' said the detective, putting his note-book in his pocket. 'Even love would hardly make a man like Spolger commit a crime.'
'He's a scoundrel.'
'Eh! but a nervous one.'
'He's fond of Florry.'
'And fond of his own skin.'
'I tell you I'm convinced he committed the crime.'
'Don't jump to conclusions.'
'I'm not jumping to conclusions,' retorted Axton, hotly. 'Look at the case, you blind bat. Spolger loves—adores Florry. He wants to marry her, but finds out she won't have him because she loves another man. Chance, by means of the forgotten pill box, throws in his way the means of injuring that other man. What is more natural? He takes advantage of the chance.'
'Injuring a man doesn't mean killing him.'
'Who said it did? Put it in this way. Spolger intended to merely injure him, but in making up the morphia pills he put in too much of the drug, and kills Melstane without intending to do so.'
'Theory! Pure theory!'
'Well, as far as I can see, the case is all pure theory at present.'
'By no means. We have ascertained the cause of death; the way in which the drug was taken; also a number of suspicious circumstances connected with Melstane's past life. That's not all theory.'
'I think the most suspicious theory connected with Melstane's past life is Monsieur Jules Guinaud, better known as Judas.'
'Because he has red hair and a crafty face,' said Fanks, coolly.
'No; because he loves Florry.'
'How do you know?'
'I think so.'
'Ah, that's theory,' replied Fanks, nodding his head; 'purely theoretical, if you like. Well, we must be off.'
'Where to?'
'To test your theory. I'm going to see Mr. Jackson Spolger.'
'He'll tell you nothing,' said Axton, putting on his coat.
'Perhaps not; but his face may. He's a nervous man. Japix told me that, so if he knows anything about this murder, he may betray himself unconsciously. Come along.'
So they went down into the sloppy street, and hired a cab, but just as they were going to step in, Fanks suddenly darted to the window of a brougham standing a short

distance away. It was a large brougham, and contained a large man, who put out his head when he saw Fanks, and roared out a welcome in a sententious voice:
'Hey, Monsieur Fouche!'
'Don't advertise me so publicly, Japix.'
'Pooh! no one here knows Fouche. They think he's a Chinese.'
'It's best to be on the safe side, anyhow.'
'Very well, Mr. Rixton.'
'That's better. I say, doctor, do you believe in patent medicines?'
'No,' roared Japix, indignantly, 'I don't.'
'But I've been advised to take Spolger's Soother.'
'Then don't take it. Who advised you?'
'A lady.'
'Humph! Only a woman would give such a silly advice. If you're ill, come to me like Spolger, and I'll cure you, but don't touch his medicine.'
'Is it dangerous?'
'Not very. The pills are only bread, gum, and morphia.'
'Morphia?'
'Yes; small quantity, of course. Not like that pill you gave me to analyze the other day. Good heavens!' exclaimed Japix, as a sudden idea struck him, 'what do you mean?'
'I'll tell you to-night.'
'When you come to dinner?'
'Yes; can I bring Axton with me?'
'By all means. Good-day!'
'Good-day!' replied Fanks, and darted back to his cab, where he found Roger awaiting him.
'Roger,' he said, when the vehicle started toward the Spolger residence, 'there may be something in that idea of yours after all.'
'I think so. But why do you say that?'
'Because I've just discovered that Spolger puts morphia in his pills.'

CHAPTER XII.

THE SPOOGER SOOTHER.

The residence of Mr. Spolger, situated about a mile beyond the town, was a large and particularly ugly building constructed on strictly hygienic principles. The inventor of the 'Soother' had lived in an ancient mansion, badly drained and badly ventilated, which had been erected many years before; but when his son entered in possession of his inheritance, he had pulled down the old house and built a barrack-like structure in which beauty gave way entirely to utility. Square, aggressively square, with walls of glaring white stone, it stood in the midst of a large piece of ground perfectly denuded of trees, as Mr. Spolger deemed trees damp and unhealthy, so the bare space was graveled and asphalted like a barrack-yard. Plenty of staring plate-glass windows admitted light into the interior, which was composed of lofty square rooms, lofty oblong corridors, all smoothly whitewashed.
The floors of polished wood, innocent of carpets, were dangerous to the unwary, and the furniture, all of solid oak, was made for strength rather than loveliness. There were few pictures on the walls, as Mr. Spolger thought that looking at works of art strained the optic nerve, and there were no draperies on the windows in case any disease might lurk in them. The bare inside looked out on to the bare barrack-ground, and the treeless barrack-ground looked into the glaring inside, so it was all very nice and healthy and abominably ugly.
In the midst of this fairy-like creation sat the proprietor thereof, by a hot-air stove, wrapped in a wollen dressing-gown, and engaged in measuring out his daily drops. A respectful man-servant, wrinkled like a snake, and black-clothed like a rook, stood beside Mr. Spolger with a small printed form of directions, which he was reading for his master's information, with regard to the effects of the drops. The servant, Gimp by name, was moist about the eyes, a fact which suggested drink, and he read the dull little pamphlet in a subdued whisper which was pleasant to the ears of the valetudinarian.
'The effects of these drops,' droned Gimp, with a weary sigh, for the pamphlet was by no means exciting, 'is to raise the spirits. Mrs. Mopps, of Whitechapel, who suffered from rheumatism, engendered by her daily occupation of charring, was advised to try them by an humble friend who had been cured by them of liver complaint. Mrs. Mopps did so, and took four drops daily in a wine-glass full of gin. She is now cured—'
'Ah!' said Spolger, with great satisfaction, 'she is now cured.'
'And doesn't suffer more than three days a week,' finished Gimp, in a depressed tone.
'Oh, she's not quite cured, then,' observed his master, regretfully; 'it must have been the gin. Gin is so very bad.'

'Very bad, sir,' replied Gimp, like a parrot.
'It makes the eyes moist.'
Mr. Gimp closed his own eyes tightly, aware that they betrayed him; but his master was too busy with his own ailments to trouble about the looks of any one else, and went on carefully with his measuring.
'Eight,' he said handing the bottle back to Gimp, 'I think that will do for a beginning. How many diseases does it cure, did you say?'
'Seven,' said Gimp, drearily; 'liver, rheumatism, headache, bed sores, nerves, consumption, and delirious trimmings.'
'Quite an all-round medicine. I've got a liver, and I often have a headache. I had rheumatism the winter before last; my nerves, of course, I always have. Bed sores? No, I've not had bed sores—yet.'
'Not been in bed long enough, sir, I think,' hinted Gimp, respectfully.
'No, quite right; but I may come to it. Consumption? Well, you know, Gimp, I'm not quite sure of my lungs. What's the last?'
'Delirious trimmings, sir.'
'I've not had that—I don't think I ever will have it; drink is death to me. I hope these drops will do me good. Give me the water, please. Ah, there, that's right. Now!'
He drank off the mixture slowly, with the air of a connoisseur, and gave the empty glass to the servant.
'Not much taste, Gimp. No; I've tasted nastier. Put the glass away, please. Have you heard how Miss Marson is to-day?'
'Just the same, sir. Delirious.'
'Ah! how terrible! I wonder if those drops would do her good?'
'I think not, sir,' said Gimp, drifting toward the door; 'it's 'er 'ead, ain't it, sir, not drink?'
'Yes, yes! You're quite right, Gimp. I must go over and see her again; and the day's so damp. Oh, dear, dear! Close the door, please, there's such a draught.'
Gimp did as he was told, and retreated noiselessly from the room, after which Mr. Spolger went over all his ailments in his own mind so make sure that he had forgotten none of them, examined his tongue in the mirror, felt his pulse carefully, and having thus ministered to his own selfishness, gave a thought to the lady he was engaged to.
'Poor Florry!' he moaned, thoughtfully, 'how she must have loved that man, and he wasn't healthy. I'm sure there was consumption in his family. I wonder if she loves me as much. Ah, that faint was such a shock to my nerves; so unexpected. I'd had pins and needles in the left leg. That is the first sign of paralysis. Oh, I do hope I'm not going to get paralysis.'
This idea so alarmed him that he arose hastily to see if his limbs would support him, and fell back in his chair with a subdued shriek as the shrill tones of an electric bell rang through the room.
'The front door bell,' he said, peevishly. 'Oh, my nerves! I must really have the sound softened. I wonder who wants to see me. I won't be seen. Who is it?'
This question was addressed to Mr. Gimp, who had entered the room in his usual stealthy manner, and now handed his master two cards.
'Mr. Roger Axton and Mr. Octavius Fanks,' read Spolger, slowly. 'I can't see them, Gimp, I really can't. The action of the drops demand perfect quiet.'
'The gentlemen have driv from town, sir.'
'Well, they must just drive back again,' said his master, crossly. 'My compliments, Gimp, and I'm too ill to see them.'
Gimp obediently retreated, but shortly afterward returned with a curt message.
'Mr. Axton sees he must see you, sir.'
'Oh, dear, dear!' moaned Spolger, irritably, 'those healthy people have no consideration for an invalid. Well if I must, Gimp, I must. But I see them under protest. Let them understand distinctly—under protest.'
Gimp once more disappeared, and on his reappearance ushered in Axton and Fanks, whom Mr. Spolger received with peevish politeness.
'I'm sorry I kept you waiting, gentlemen,' he said, waiving his hand, 'but my health, you know, I'm a mere wreck. I don't want to be jarred on. Pray be seated! Mr. Axton, you don't look well. Mr.—Mr.'
'Fanks,' said that gentleman, introducing himself, 'Octavius Fanks, detective.'
'Oh, indeed,' replied Spolger, starting, 'a detective, eh! I think I've seen your name in the papers lately.'
'Yes,' said Axton, bluntly, 'in connection with the Jarlchester affair.'
'Oh, indeed,' repeated their host once more; 'suicide, I believe, although Mr. Melstane did look consumptive. I incline to the latter. Now which idea do you favor, Mr. Fanks—suicide or consumption?'
'Neither! It was a case of murder.'
'Murder!'
Mr. Spolger jumped up in his chair as if he had been shot, and his face turned a chalky white.
'Pooh! pooh!' he said at length, with an

attempt at jocularity, 'absurd, monstrous! The jury said suicide.'
'I'm aware of that,' responded Fanks, coolly, 'but I don't agree with the jury. Sebastian Melstane was murdered.'
'By whom?'
'That's the mystery.'
Spolger said nothing, but wriggled uneasily in his chair under the somewhat embarrassing gaze of his visitors, and at length burst out into feeble protests against their candor.
'Why do you speak to me like this? I don't know anything about murders. They upset my nerves. I'm quite unstrung with all I've come through. What with Miss Marson's illness, and Melstane's death, and all kind of things, I'm quite uneasy in my mind.'
'What about?' asked Fanks, sharply.
'I've mentioned what about,' retorted Spolger, tartly. 'I wish you would go away.'
'So we will when you've answered our questions.'
'I won't answer any questions.'
'Oh, yes, you will. It will be wiser for you to do so.'
'I—don't understand,' stammered Spolger, feebly.
'Then I'll explain,' said Fanks, composedly. 'Melstane died from taking a morphia pill, which was placed in a box of tonic pills by some unknown person.'
'And what's that got to do with me?'
'Everything,' said Axton, suddenly speaking. 'Remember the story you told at Mr. Marson's the other day. You had the box of tonic pills in your possession for a time, and—'
'Oh,' interrupted Spolger, very indignantly. 'And I suppose you'll say that I put the morphia pill into the box in order to kill Melstane!'
'That's the idea,' said Fanks, coolly. 'A very ridiculous one.'
'I don't see it. You did not like Melstane, because he was loved by Miss Marson. You use morphia for your 'Soother,' so what was to prevent your acting as you suggest?'
'Don't—don't!' cried Spolger, putting out his shaking hands with a sudden movement of terror. 'You'll argue the rope round my neck before I can defend myself. I did not like Melstane, certainly, but I had not the slightest idea of killing him. I'll swear it.'
Fanks suddenly arose to his feet, and walked across the room to a shelf whereon was displayed a number of drugs in glass bottles. The invalid had risen to his feet, and was looking steadily at him, while Axton, similarly fascinated by Fank's actions, leaned forward to see what he was doing.
The detective's hand hovered lightly over the array of bottles, then suddenly swooped down with the swiftness of a hawk upon one which he bore to the table. It was a large glass bottle half filled with a white powder, and labeled 'Morphia.'
'There!' he said, as he placed it before Spolger, triumphantly.
'I know that bottle. But what has that to do with this murder?'
'Melstane died from morphia.'
'It's no good going over the old ground,' said Spolger, with a scowl. 'I can easily prove my innocence. Please touch that bell, Mr. Axton.'
Roger did so, whereupon a shrill sound rang through the house, and Mr. Spolger dropped back into his chair with an expression of acute suffering on his face. Then Gimp made his appearance with such marvelous rapidity that it was quite plain that he must have been listening outside the door, but he walked into the room with the utmost composure, and waited to be addressed.
'Gimp,' said his master, sharply, 'do you remember the day Mr. Melstane called?'
'I do, sir.'
'Do you remember what took place?'
'Certainly, sir.'
'Then tell these gentlemen all about it.'
Gimp at once addressed himself to Fanks, who stood by the table with one hand on the jar of morphia and the other in his pocket, looking at the servant to see if he was speaking the truth.
'Mr. Melstane called, sir,' said the respectable Gimp, deliberately, 'a few weeks ago to see my master. He saw him, and I believe, sir, they had words.'
Spolger nodded his head to affirm that such was the case.
'I was called in, sir, to show Mr. Melstane out. I did so, and he swore awful.'
'And after you showed Mr. Melstane out?'
'I came back, sir, to this room, and found my master much agitated—nerves, I think, sir.'
'Yes; a bad attack.'
'My master pointed to a pill-box on the floor, and told me to run after Mr. Melstane with it. I did so, but could not see him, so I took the pill-box down to Mr. Melstane's lodgings that evening.'
'The pill-box was in your possession the whole time?'
'Yes, sir! It was wrapped in white paper,

and sealed with red wax, sir. I didn't know it was a pill-box till master told me.'
'And I knew it was, because Melstane held it out to me and asked me if I made pills like that,' said Spolger, savagely.
'Well, Mr. Axton, I hope you are satisfied.'
'Perfectly,' said Fanks, with great politeness; 'but please tell me, when did you use this morphia last?'
'Not for months,' replied Spolger; 'the pills are made at the factory, and I never trouble about them. I don't know if you've noticed it, sir, in your desire to make out a case against me, but that bottle is tied with a string across the stopper and sealed.'
'Ah! that's the very thing I'm coming to. The seal is broken.'
'Impossible!' cried Spolger, coming to the table to examine the bottle; 'I haven't used it for a long time, and sealed it when I last used it! Gimp, how is this?'
'I'm surd I don't know, sir; the bottle ain't been touched to my knowledge.'
'Does any one else come into this room?'
'None of the servants,' said Spolger, after a pause; 'Gimp looks after everything here.'
'Oh! what about your visitors?'
'Well, now and then I see some one here—just like yourselves.'
'There was a faint hesitation in his tone, which Fanks was quick to detect, and which prompted his next question:
'Has Mr. Marson been in here?'
'Often.'
'And Miss Varlins?'
'Oh, yes! both the ladies have been here; but they would not touch any of my drugs. The know how particular I am.'
Fanks said nothing, but remained for a time in meditative silence, which Spolger broke by asking him if he would take some refreshment.
'No, thank you,' he replied, quickly. 'I'm much obliged to you, sir, for your courtesy. Are you ready, Roger?'
'Oh, yes, I'm coming,' said Axton, rising to his feet. 'Have you heard how Miss Marson is to-day, Spolger?'
'Just the same, I believe.'
Poor girl!
Yes, it's dreadful! responded Spolger, with a groan; of course the marriage will have to be put off. I'm not sorry, because I'm so upset. Fancy being taken for a murderer!
Oh! not as bad as that, said Fanks, good-naturedly; I only thought you might throw some light on the mysterious affair.
Well, I can't, said Spolger, curtly.
No; I see that. Good-day, sir.
Good-day, replied their host, with a bow. I hope you'll be successful in your search for the real criminal.
Fanks made no reply, as he had his own idea regarding Mr. Spolger's good wishes, but departed, followed by Axton; the last thing they heard being the voice of the invalid complaining about the door being left open.
When they were seated in their cab and once more on their way to Ironfields, Fanks broke the silence first.
Roger, it was a mare's nest after all.
Yes; he knows nothing.
I'm not so sure about that.
Do you mean to say he is concealing something?
I don't know what to say, said Fanks, testily, but I think some one else is concealing something.
Whom do you mean?
You'll be angry if I tell you.
No, I won't. Who is it?
Judith Varlins!
EXTRACTS FROM A DETECTIVE'S NOTE-BOOK.
.... It is as I thought.... The packet was delivered to Judas.... We (Roger and myself) met Miss Varlins by chance and had a very strange interview with her.... She did not want me to look at the letters.... I got my own way at last, when the packet was delivered by Judas.... She looked at the letters, and I saw an expression of relief on her face....
.... Query. Could she have written to Jarlchester to Melstane?... Were there any letters there likely to implicate her in the crime?....
.... If so, those letters, I think, have been stolen, and by Judas.... However, I can't tell for certain.... I looked over those letters and found nothing.... Strange! Query. What does Miss Varlins mean by this strange conduct?....
.... Roger told me a queer story about Spolger concerning the pill-box.... We went up to see Spolger, but the whole affair turned out to be a mare's nest.... All my suspicions now point to Judith Varlins....
.... Spolger and Axton have both proved their innocence of the crime.
.... Query. What about Miss Varlins?
(To be Continued.)

The French delegates on Tuesday in the International Labor Congress at Brussels fervently supported the resolution to pledge workmen of all countries not to support candidates for office unless they were prepared to advocate legislation demanded by workmen.