

"Looks bad for Vassalla," said Ronald.

"Not a bit!" retorted the stout-hearted Winks, "the stiletto evidence will get him off; but Mrs. Verschoyle evidently intended he should swing, and has perhaps destroyed the paper."

He went off, so Ronald invited Foster to dine with him at the "Tavistock," an invitation which that gentleman accepted. All the newsboys along the Strand were calling out sensational sentences about the case, and Ronald bought some papers to read. When they entered the hotel the clerk handed Ronald a letter that had been waiting for him all day. It was addressed in a woman's handwriting, and Monteith opened it carelessly, but on glancing at the contents he gave a shout which startled Foster.

"What's the matter, old chap?"

"The missing paper!" gasped Ronald, holding it out; and so it was. Foster took it and read it.

"My dear Monteith—I'm sick of life, and as I've no one to consult about staying in it, I'm going into the next world, straight off. Lionel Ventin."

"This puts Vassalla's innocence beyond all doubt," said Foster, "but the signature will have to be proved—can you do it?"

"No," replied Monteith; "but there's Mrs. Taunton."

"Yes!—we'll have to see her," said the barrister, putting the letter in his pocket; "but how the deuce did it come to you?"

"I don't know," said Ronald blankly, "unless she never intended Vassalla should suffer, but sent me this to-day and the case would have been squashed to-morrow. I believe she was mad."

Foster thought so also, especially when they went back to the hotel and found how the letter had been posted. Mrs. Verschoyle had placed it in an envelope and directed it to Ronald, but, evidently changing her mind, went out leaving it on the table. A waiter coming in had seen it, so posted it at once thinking it was an oversight on Mrs. Verschoyle's part.

There was no difficulty in proving the document to be authentic, as Mrs. Taunton affirmed at once that both the writing and the signature were in her brother's handwriting, and supported her assertion by producing