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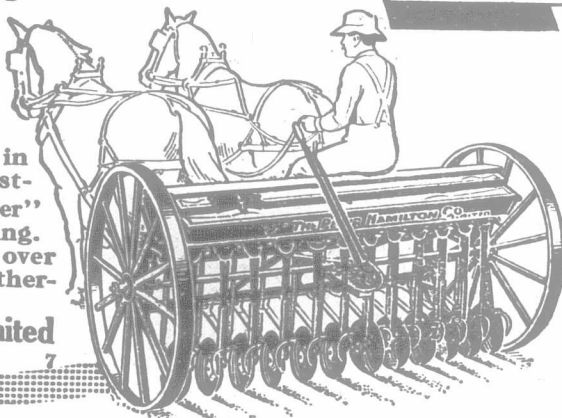
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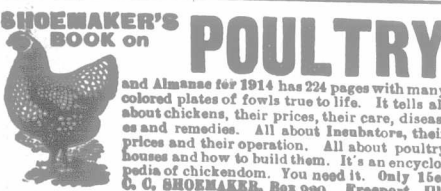
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reposing safely in some secure inner pocket.

The other solution was equally probable. The purchase of the face-powder might have been quite innocent and bona fide. The man below might know nothing whatever about the snuff-box, and Seltz might even now be on his way to Brussels to dispose of it in accordance with his original intentions.

If so, however, why had he informed M. Perrier that he had changed his mind and would not take the vacation he had requested? Was this merely a blind to avert suspicion in case the unexpected murder of the man Noel resulted in inquiries being made of M. Perrier?

Of course, when Seltz had spoken of his intention to go to Brussels no thought of murder was in his mind. He had no vital object in hiding his movements, for he had no reason to suppose that suspicion could possibly be attracted to him.

After the sending of the note to him by Noel he must have realized the danger of his position and told M. Perrier that his plans had changed, while in reality fully intending to carry them out as he had originally intended.

There was, of course, a possible third solution, namely, that Seltz had nothing to do with the murder at all, and was merely an innocent barber, quite unaware of all the mystery that was being woven about himself and his movements.

In that event, as Duvall realized with the deepest chagrin, he would be obliged to return to London and begin his investigations all over again. There could be but one starting point—the murder of the valet.

Yet his painstaking examination of the scene of the murder had shown an utter absence of any clues. Even the weapon which had caused the valet's death was his own property; the finger-print on the seal which closed his lips was made with his own forefinger.

And here the detective began to feel a deep sense of doubt as to the accuracy of his conclusions regarding Seltz's guilt. Would a man of his type have taken the trouble to place the gruesome seal upon the dead man's lips? This seemed, on second thought, the act of a hardened and unfeeling criminal—a man to whom murder was a scientific accomplishment, not a hasty and hideous crime.

Was Seltz such a man?

There was no answer to this question; the fleeting glimpses which Duvall had secured of his face through the barber-shop window had told him little or nothing of the man's character.

One fact, however, presently forced itself upon the detective's mind. If Seltz had left the shop for Brussels that night, according to his original intention, he must be somewhere on the boat. No night route from London to Belgium existed except that by way of Harwich.

He blamed himself that, in his eagerness to discover the stranger with the satchel, he had not thought to look for Seltz.

Upon the conclusion of his deliberations Duvall crossed over to the other side of the boat where he had left Dufrenne. The little old Frenchman stood gazing down at the sea, his face blue with cold and filled with a look of bitter disappointment. He did not glance up as Duvall joined him.

"Come, M. Dufrenne," the detective said kindly, "let us go below."

The old man accompanied him without a word. As they reached the companionway, however, he spoke.

"We must return to London at once," he said. "This same boat will take us back to Harwich."

"Yes," Duvall agreed, "unless we discover that Seltz is aboard."

"Seltz?" The Frenchman looked up, puzzled, yet with an expression of renewed hope in his eyes.

"Yes. We have apparently followed the wrong man. In that case, why not search for the right one? If Seltz is on board we will follow him to Brussels. If not, we will return to London. We can make sure when the passengers are discharged at Antwerp."

Dufrenne nodded eagerly. "It may indeed be possible," he remarked as they entered the saloon.

Most of the passengers were on deck when the steamer reached her wharf at Antwerp, but, in spite of a careful search, Duvall was unable to locate Seltz among them. He stood by the