

which she was afterwards the principal figure. She had always struck him as being a quiet and respectable girl. When asked why she had received her notice of dismissal Victor answered that it was because his friend, Mr Henderson, had suddenly made up his mind to travel.

"I understand you to say suddenly," said the superintendent in charge of the case. "Why was it Mr Henderson suddenly made up his mind to go abroad?"

"I do not know that this question is at all relevant to the case," said Victor, appealing to the coroner. "It was purely a private matter on Mr Henderson's part."

"But anything that bears on the question at issue can scarcely be irrelevant," said the coroner. "I think it would be better if you would answer the question."

Fensden paused for a moment while the court waited in suspense.

"I repeat my question," said the superintendent. "Why did the deceased so suddenly lose her employment?"

Once more Victor hesitated. Godfrey looked at him in surprise. Why did he not go on?

"We decided to travel on account of a conversation Mr Henderson and I had concerning the girl."

"What was that conversation?" inquired the coroner.

Once more Fensden seemed to hesitate.

"Did the conversation refer to the deceased?"

"It did."

"I gather from your reluctance to answer that you were afraid Mr Henderson might become attached to her, so you used your friendly influence in order to hurry him away as quickly as possible? Am I right in so supposing?"

Another pause, during which Victor's face was seen to express great emotion.

"That was so."

"You are sure that Mr Henderson was attached to the deceased?"

"I am sure of it."

"Did you know that Mr Henderson was aware of the deceased's return to Naples?"

"I was aware that he was in correspondence with her," said Victor, "but he said nothing to me of his intention to visit her in Naples."

"Had you known this would you have endeavoured to dissuade him from such a course?"

"I do not know what I should have done, but I should think it very probable that I should have endeavoured to prevent their meeting."

"When did you become aware of the deceased's return to England?"

"When Mr Henderson informed me of it on my arrival at his house at Detwiche Hall."

"You were naturally very much surprised to hear that he had met her, I suppose?"

"Very much," Victor replied.

"Did you say anything to him upon the subject?"

"I warned him against the folly of being drawn into another entanglement with her, particularly when he was to be married in ten days' time."

"You say another entanglement with her? Are we, therefore, to understand that there had been an entanglement before?"

Again Victor paused before he replied.

"I withdraw the word 'another,'" he said, hurriedly. "I did not mean it in that sense. I merely suggested to Mr Henderson that his fiancée might not care to know that he had been seen driving through the seats of London after midnight with an Italian girl who had once been his model."

"Good heavens!" said Godfrey to himself. "And this is the man I have trusted and who has called himself my friend for so many years!"

At this point the coroner, addressing the jury, stated his intention of adjourning the inquiry until the following Wednesday morning at eleven o'clock. He had excellent reasons for keeping it open until then, he said, and these reasons he had communicated to the foreman of the jury, who was completely satisfied. The court thereupon adjourned and Godfrey presently found himself in the street, with Mr Codely on one side and Sir Vivian Devereux on the other. Victor Fensden was waiting for them on the pavement, and as soon as they emerged he approached them with a face that still bore the traces of violent emotion.

"Godfrey," he began in a faltering

voice, "after what they dragged out of me I scarcely know what to say to you."

"In any case, I beg that you will not say it," said Godfrey, coldly. "You have said quite enough already." Then, turning to the others, he continued: "Come, gentlemen, let us find a cab. I suppose we had better go back to your office, Mr. Codely?"

"I think it would be better," said that gentleman. "I must have a talk with you upon this matter."

Then, entering a cab, they entered it, leaving Fensden on the pavement looking after them. Codely's face was still very pale. It was impossible for him to be blind to the fact that his kindness to Teresa had been the means of bringing down grave suspicion upon himself. Yet, even with that knowledge before him, he knew that he would not, or could not, have acted otherwise than he had done.

When they reached the lawyer's private office, the door was shut and they sat down to business.

"Well, Mr. Henderson," said Mr. Codely, "what is your opinion now?"

"I think that the public mind is already jumping to the conclusion that I am responsible for the murder," Godfrey answered, without fear or hesitation.

"I am very much afraid that you must accustom yourself to look upon it in that light," the other replied. "The man Fensden's evidence given in such a manner as he gave it, was unnecessarily damaging."

"He is a black-hearted scoundrel!" said the old baronet, wrathfully. "I told you yesterday, Godfrey, that I didn't trust him, and that I felt sure he bore you some ill-will. And yet, do you know, Mr. Codely," he added, turning to the lawyer, "Mr. Henderson has done everything for that man. He has practically kept him for years past, he took him on a tour round Europe only a few months ago, and this is the result. It makes one sick with humanity."

"When you have seen as much of humanity as I have, you will not be surprised at anything," said the lawyer. "The greater the obligation in many cases, the deeper the ingratitude. We are wandering from the point, however. Now I am going to be plain-spoken. Tell me, M. Henderson, did you ever, under any sort of circumstances, make love, or suggest love, to the woman who is now deceased?"

"Never," said Godfrey, firmly. "The man who declares that I did, lies."

"Very probably, but that won't prevent his saying it. When you left her in Burford-street, did you meet anyone near the house?"

"Not a soul. The street, so far as I could see, was empty."

"I think you said this morning, that the night porter let you in at your hotel? Did you make any remark to him respecting the time?"

"Yes, I said to him when he had opened the door, 'I'm afraid I'm rather late; then, looking at my watch, I added, 'Why, it's half-past twelve!'"

"If he's blessed with a good memory, he will recollect that," said Codely. Then with his usual abruptness, he continued, "Which way did you walk from Burford-street?"

"Through the Tottenham Court-road, along Oxford-street, and down Bond-street."

"A man shall walk it quickly to-morrow morning in order to see how long it will take. If only that night porter has a good memory, and can be relied upon, this should prove an important point."

"But, surely, my good sir," put in Sir Vivian, "you do not for a moment suppose that Mr. Henderson will be accused of having killed this woman?"

"I should not be at all surprised," said the lawyer, quietly. "Let us regard the facts of the case. Some months back, Mr Henderson employed this girl as his model, and retained her services when he really had no need for them. He was on such familiar terms with her that his friend felt compelled to remonstrate with him. As a result they left England hurriedly, the girl following them to Naples. No, no, Mr Henderson, I beg that you will be silent. Remember, I am telling the story as I should tell it if I were against you instead of for you. As I have said, the girl left for Naples, and I insinuate that she followed you. It can be proved that she corresponded with you, and that you sent your friend on his way, to travel alone; always bearing in mind that he was the man who had persuaded you to give the girl up. You, in the

meantime, returned to Naples, in order to visit her again. You may dispute the motive, but you cannot deny that you took her out to dinner, and to a theatre afterwards."

"But her mother was with her," said Godfrey, hurriedly, his face flushing angrily at the imputation put upon his action by the other.

"That point is immaterial," the lawyer replied, calmly. "It is sufficient for the purposes of the prosecution that you met her there. Then you proceeded to England, and, after a little while in the country, became engaged to the daughter of Sir Vivian, now present. The Italian girl had also come to England. Why? To be with you, of course. You, however, see nothing of her. Therefore, she is unhappy. Why? Because you are about to be married."

"But that is only supposition," said Godfrey. "As a matter of fact, she herself was already married."

"To whom? Why not to yourself?" "Good Heavens, man," said Godfrey, starting from his seat, "you don't surely mean to say that you believe I had married her?"

"I believe nothing," he replied, still with the same coolness. "But you will find that the counsel for the prosecution will consider it more than likely. Let me continue my story. I was saying that she was unhappy because you were about to be married. It is only natural. Then you came up to town, visited the theatre, and afterwards, quite by chance, met her in the Strand, at midnight. At midnight, and by chance, mark that! Does that meeting look like an accidental one? Could you convince a jury that it was? I doubt it. However, let us proceed. The girl is in trouble, and you take her home in a hansom. The policeman and the cabman will certainly identify you, and, for the reason that you say the street was empty when you bade her good-bye, no one will be able to swear that you did not go into the house with her. Now, Mr Henderson, I ask you to look these facts in the face, and tell me, as a thinking man, whether you consider the public is to be blamed if it regards you with suspicion?"

"As you put it, no," said Godfrey. "But it can surely be proved that I had nothing whatsoever to do with it, beyond what I have said."

"Exactly; and that is what we have got to do. But I don't mind telling you candidly, that I fancy we shall have our work cut out to do it. You see, we have to remember that, beyond our own evidence, there is absolutely nothing for us to argue upon. The two strongest points in your favour are the facts that you were at Detwiche when the box containing the dead woman's hands was sent off at Euston, and that there would not be sufficient time between the moment when the policeman saw you in Burford-street and the time when you arrived at your hotel, for you to have committed the crime. What we have to do is to find the person who despatched the box from London, and to

make sure of the hall porter. In the meantime, go back to Detwiche, and be sure that you don't stir from home until you hear from me."

"One more question, Mr Codely. I should like you, before you go any further, to tell me honestly whether in your own heart you believe me to be innocent or guilty?"

"I believe you to be innocent," said the lawyer; "and you may be sure I shall try to prove it."

(To be continued.)

CHRISTMAS
"Graphic" Story Competition

PRIZES 1901

First Prize	£5 0 0
Second Prize	£3 0 0
Third Prize	£2 0 0
Fourth Prize	£1 0 0

The Stories MUST NOT be less than 400 or more than 500 words in length, and free from anything unsuitable for all classes of readers. It will be seen by Rule 5 that the broadest scope is allowed. So that the scope of the story is laid in New Zealand, the choice of subjects is unlimited.

NOTICE TO AUTHORS.

1. A Motto instead of the writer's name must be written under the title of the story. The author's real name must be enclosed in a separate envelope addressed to the Editor, and ALL SUCH ENVELOPES MUST HAVE THE MOTTO AND WORDS "STORY COMPETITION" ON THE TOP LEFT CORNER. This envelope must not be placed in the MS. packet, but MUST BE POSTED SEPARATELY. It must also contain a declaration that the work is original and entirely the sender's own.

2. Every MS. must be prepaid, and if left open at both ends will be carried at book rates. It must be addressed "Editor NEW ZEALAND GRAPHIC, Shortland-st., AND OUTSIDE THE WRAPPER, ABOVE THE ADDRESS, MUST BE CLEARLY INSCRIBED THE MOTTO MENTIONED IN RULE 1.

3. Any competitor who may desire to have his MS. returned in the event of it not being successful must clearly state his wish in a note attached to the above declaration, and must also enclose stamps for return postage. When such a desire is not expressed the MS. will become the property of the GRAPHIC.

4. All Contributions must reach the Office before May 15th, 1901.


5. Choice of subjects rests with the writer, BUT THE SCENE MUST BE LAID IN NEW ZEALAND AND BE OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO NEW ZEALANDERS. It may deal with any subject, natural, supernatural, love, heroism, adventure, life on the gumfields, gold mines, or country, search for treasure, fighting, or peace; in fact, anything bright and interesting, and free from anything unsuitable for family reading.


6. Write clearly, on one side of the paper only.

7. Writers who fail to comply with the above simple rules and conditions will be rigorously disqualified.

A STOREKEEPER

AND





DR. JOHN HAMILTON, STOREKEEPER,
Dunedin and South St., Ballarat.
writes—

"I am pleased to add my testimony to the good qualities of your excellent **VI-COCOA**. It is one of the best stimulants and a most refreshing drink when one is tired. I am always recommending it to my customers, and shall always drink it myself."

DAINTY SAMPLE FREE.
Write at once (a post card will do), but mention this paper.

DR. TIBBLES' VI-COCOA Ltd., 269 George St., Sydney.