

WEIRD MYSTERY

Tracing a Dark Crime.

BY ALEXANDER ROBINSON, M. D.

CHAPTER VIII.

Leonore was in the library. She stood before the window looking upon the dreary day. It had commenced to rain, and the water from the trees in the garden made a dismal picture, in keeping with the affliction that had visited her house.

"I entered she turned quickly, and seemed somewhat relieved when she saw it was myself. 'Doctor, are those people gone?' she asked. 'Yes, Miss Leonore. That was the verdict of the jury—a very necessary decision in cases of this kind. I know. What was the verdict, doctor?' 'She was wonderfully calm and self-possessed. I could not but notice this. They decided that Dr. Seabury came to his death by poison, administered with his own hand.' 'Watching her face closely I could not but see that she experienced any emotion. Her features were calm as the summer sea.'

"When can I look upon my poor old friend?" "Her words relieved me from a duty I did not like. 'Now if you desire. Are you capable of standing the shock?' 'Do not fear for me; I am stronger than you imagine. Will you go up with me, doctor?' 'I have a little writing to do connected with the case. So with your permission I will remain here until you come down.' So saying, I seated myself at a desk and began to examine the phial I had taken from the dead man's hand, at the same time drawing writing paper to me. This phial was an odd little thing, made of crystal, to all appearances. It had been buried in the tombs of the pyramids for thousands of years, and no doubt might have aroused a fever of interest in the breast of a man like Doctor Schlemm.

Leonore had left the room. I realized what a shrewd trick this was on the part of the old detective, and disbelieving as the idea was to me, I could not forget that his aims were justice itself. The innocent would never suffer at the hands of Abner Ketcham, and if guilty it was only the right thing that they should be brought to the bar. I commenced my writing. Some time passed by. So nervous had I become that it was with difficulty that I kept at my work. At last I heard the rustle of skirts on the stairs. When Leonore entered the library I was folding up what I had written, around the ancient phial. I looked up into her face. Unless my eyes deceived me there were traces of tears there. There rushed upon me a mad desire to console her—to pour out burning words of regret at her lonely situation, and to offer my services in any manner acceptable; but wisely I restrained myself. She was yet under the ban of suspicion. Much as I believed firmly in her innocence, it had not yet been clearly proven, and there were some things that needed the closest investigation. I now desired to see Mr. Ketcham. To do so, I must go up-stairs again. In looking around for my hat, I found that it had left it in the chamber above, and leaving Leonore, I ascended. I found Mr. Ketcham standing thoughtfully by the window. He turned as I entered the room, and although I looked eagerly in his face, I was baffled. 'Close the door and sit down, Doctor.' His words, innocent in themselves, sent a chill through my heart. They meant that he had discovered something worth while repeating to me. Being deeply interested in the case, I could not do otherwise than listen eagerly. 'When Leonore entered the room, she stood right there for a minute with her hands clasped, her eyes glued upon the bed and that motionless figure. 'Then she seemed to break the spell that bound her, and gliding forward fell on her knees beside the dead. 'Doctor, I have in my time looked upon some strange sights, but never one quite equal to that, where a girl we believe guilty of murder bends over the form of her aged victim, and fondles his hand. I could not restrain a cry. 'She is innocent, sir. A guilty soul would turn from such a sight in terror. Why the dead must even arise to condemn her dead she dare do that.' 'Listen! I calmed myself under his magnetic eye, and waited to hear more. The quiet assurance of his manner gave me warning that in some way Leonore had not improved her case by the visit she had made to the death bed. 'She remained there, apparently convulsed with grief, and yet uttering no sound. 'Then I saw her raise her head and clasp her hands convulsively, while she bowed down upon the body. 'Words fell from her lips. They reached my ears, and were treasured every one as having a decided bearing on the case. 'This was exactly what she said, breathing the words in apparent deep emotion: 'My poor, murdered guard, to think that it has come at last, that which you have feared so long. Heaven forbid you be for the cause of it all. 'Then she gave way to a fit of sobbing. This lasted but a short time,

however, and Leonore became herself again. 'She bent over and kissed the cold lips of the dead, then left the room. I could sit still no longer. 'Do you mean to say, sir, the girl who could be guilty of such a base crime would act in that manner?' 'Wait! I neither condemn nor acquit until the returns are all in. I simply say that, according to the evidence, it looks black for Leonore. 'Remember, Doctor, the peculiar circumstances under which the girl committed the crime, if she did do it. 'They would account for the words she spoke, and allow of her actions. She seemed to know that in a time of mental irresponsibility she had committed this awful deed, and bewailed the fact. At least, that was the construction I put upon the words she uttered.' I was silent. Although he had not broken down the barriers of my conviction, still his argument was unanswerable. Before my mind was arrayed the evidence against the girl. In one way it was overwhelming. I put it down under different heads, so that it could be regulated. First, the photograph on the back of which the old doctor had written 'Leonore—the cause of my sleepless nights and watchful days.' It would indicate, as Mr. Ketcham said, that there was something wrong with the girl's mind, and that her loving guardian was constantly expecting a periodical outbreak, during which she seemed to seek his life. His assertion to the detective relative to an enemy who had followed him from India might be only a blind to hide the truth, as he was apt to be sensitive upon this point. I dismissed this from my mind, and proceeded to the next point. Second, the discovery of the lock of black hair in the hand of the dead, undoubtedly torn from the head of the assassin, and that, a woman. It matched Leonore's hair exactly, and although in itself this fact was a simple thing, taken in the light of corroborative evidence it would amount to a good deal, since she had been in his room that night. Third, the footprints in the dust of the old store-room. We had fitted Leonore's small slipper to some of them, and found that they tallied exactly. Fourth, the discovery of the Malay creese in her room. It was ostensibly a paper cutter, but was just the weapon to be caught up and be put to deadly use by a person whose mind was unbalanced, and who in the delirium of sudden insanity was bent upon taking human life. Fifth, Leonore's own words and actions, as witnessed and heard by the old detective, were strongly savored with the view of the case as he put it. She seemed to avow that she was the cause of the Doctor's death, and bewail the cruel fate that made it so. Of course a different construction might be put upon her words under new light, but just then they seemed to imply the worst. When all these facts were arranged in a line before me, they presented a terrible indictment against Leonore. No wonder I was silent. There were a few things on the other side, but as yet they were overshadowed by the colossal proportions of the opposite evidence. I was ready to work hard in order to prove her innocence, but for the life of me just then I did not know how to begin. While my mind had been dwelling upon these things, Mr. Ketcham was regarding me with interest. I could detect a faint smile lurking in the corners of his mouth, as though he could guess what was passing in my mind. Then for the first time I noticed he held a paper in his hand. The thought flashed upon my mind that he had found something in the ebony desk bearing upon the case. Perhaps it was more evidence tending to fasten the coils around Leonore. As he held the paper out I mechanically took it from his hand. It seemed to be a letter. There was no date on it, and yet something about the paper told that it was several years old. I saw it was addressed to the old Doctor, and seemed to be from some friend out in Singapore. Most of it was mere gossip about the old friends of Dr. Seabury in India. Then came a paragraph that riveted my attention. 'And Leonore—I hesitate to approach that subject, knowing how it concerns your days and nights—how is she? Has anything occurred yet? I hope not, in any of her name, and that that terrible scourge may never visit again my old friend Seabury.' That was all on that subject. 'Stek at heart, I handed the paper back to the detective. 'Well, Doctor?' 'I am afraid all roads lead to Rome, sir.' 'Then you admit that at least I have good reasons for my suspicions?' 'Alas! it is too true.' 'Doctor, you take it too much to heart. Remember that, even if guilty, the girl cannot be punished. She was insane at the time.' 'What you say does not take away the sting, sir?' 'See here, Doctor, am I to depend upon you any further in this case?' I turned upon him indignantly. 'No, sir; not so long as it comes to hunting down a poor girl. That is business with you, but none of mine.' 'Then you wash your hands of it?' 'Not at all. While you are seeking to tighten the coils around Leonore, Mr. Ketcham, I shall be using my utmost endeavors to prove her innocence. We shall see who will win the game.' His face brightened. 'Give me your hand, Doctor. I honor you for the stand you have taken. If ever that poor girl needed a friend it is now. Strange though it may seem, I sincerely hope you will succeed, but at the same time I say frankly I fear the worst.' 'Then you say she is innocent?' 'I have never been drawn before. I left Mr. Ketcham seated in a rocker, his eyes glued upon the photograph on the ceiling, while I went out to start upon my hopeless task.

CHAPTER IX. I THROUGHLY considered by the condition of affairs, I was not prepared to throw up the case. Mr. Ketcham had not proved his theory. One false move would knock the bottom out of it, and this was what I intended to find if such a thing were possible. I was arrayed against the keenest man in the detective line in New York. My only hope lay in the fact that his heart was not in his work, while I could go to mine with the greatest of zeal, having before my eyes the vision of a woman's appealing face, as Leonore's appeared to me when she declared that if ever she had need of friends it was now. Yes; I would be her friend, poor girl! What was the danger she seemed to dread? Was it discovery? I shut my eyes to the terrible array of evidence against her, as set forth in the arraignment of Abner Ketcham, and turned my attention toward the other side. Certain things haunted me. If the party who had climbed that trellis of vines on the night of the murder could be found I believed I could learn something that would be of value. I purposed, devoting my first energies toward finding that person. Of whom could I get particulars concerning the dead man? A name I had seen upon a visitor's card, coupled with the words 'your old friend,' decided me to visit the Sturtevant House with the intention of visiting him. There was a strong possibility that he might no longer be there. I consulted the register. 'Major Beebe, late of her Majesty's Royal Highlanders, Bombay.' That was the important entry I found in the register, written in a great sprawling hand. 'Is Major Beebe still here?' I asked the gentleman at the desk. The clerk smiled, and replied to my question with a nod toward a rather pompous, red-faced gentleman, who was twirling his blonde side-whiskers near by. This gentleman having surveyed me as I approached, assumed a stolid, freezing air that told me, without further investigation, that he had had some bitter experiences with New York confidence men. 'Major Beebe, I believe.' 'The same, sir. What can I do for you?' 'I wish to talk a little with you, Major, on a subject of interest. Will you be so kind as to sit with me over yonder?' He kept up his freezing manner, but accompanied me to the chairs. 'Now, sir, state your business,' and he glanced at me through his spy glass, as though he would annihilate me. Not one whit troubled by his fierce aspect, I proceeded in my own way. 'I understand, Major, that you were a friend of the late Dr. Seabury.' He almost jumped from his chair. 'What the deuce do you mean, sir, giving me such a shock? I am a friend of Dr. Seabury, if that is what you mean,' he replied, with some asperity. 'When did you see him last?' 'Twenty-four hours ago.' 'He was well then?' 'Unusually so. We took dinner in company in this house. By jove, young sir, am I to understand anything has happened to him?' 'Dr. Seabury is dead!' He seemed stunned for a minute. 'This is terrible. When did he die?' 'About two o'clock this morning.' 'It must have been very sudden.' 'Terribly so.' 'Of what did he die?' 'The coroner's jury has agreed that he came to his death by his own hand.' 'Suicide?' 'Yes.' 'The poor fellow must have lost his mind. He was the last one in the world to do such a thing.' 'That may be so, Major. I am a doctor who was called to his bedside in the hope of doing something; but the poison was deadly and there was no hope. I wish to ask you what you know of the Doctor.' 'We have been friends for, let me see, possibly a dozen years.' 'Was there any mystery connected with his past life?' 'I have heard such hinted, but could not say positively.' 'Do you know his ward?' 'Leonore? Yes, I have met her. She is a charming girl.' 'I thanked him mentally for that. 'What is her last name, Major?' 'Seabury, of course.' 'Then she was an adopted child?' 'I always understood she was the child of his cousin, by the same name.' 'Did you know her mother or father?' 'I did not.' 'Do you know anything about her?' 'Nothing, except that, while Seabury loved her fondly, I have seen him look over his shoulder at mention of the name Leonore, as though some sudden fear had come upon him.' 'My heart went down to zero. One more question. 'Major, if I affirmed it as a fact would you believe it, that Leonore has been subject to occasional spells of insanity, during which, like most mad persons, she sought to injure the one she loved the best, and that it was this which haunted Dr. Seabury day and night?' 'I would believe it possible,' he replied, in the calmest of tones. 'I had no more to say in this regard. 'Major, if you go to the house to see the body of your old friend, please do not say a word of having met me, or what I have talked about.' 'I promise you, Doctor.' Shaking hands with the soldier, I left the hotel. My first attempt, instead of bringing a gleam of light, had added to the darkness.

If this kept on, I would soon be compelled to grope my way. All my energies were now to be devoted to finding the party who had climbed the vines on that night. I had but one clew to his identity. A portion of his forefinger was missing. Where should I look for him? The tool he had dropped seemed to indicate that he was a burglar, and could be found in dens frequented by such. Being possessed of an adventurous turn, I had seen much of the great city. Still, I would have hesitated about engaging in any such undertaking, had the cause been an ordinary one. All that influenced me was my determination to leave no stone unturned in the endeavor to save Leonore from the storm-clouds gathering around her. A feverish desire to do something was upon me. Obeying my first impulse, I sought again the strange house of Dr. Seabury. Standing beside the wall at the point where the party had climbed the wall in leaving the grounds, I looked about me. Possibly there was some clew here which had escaped my first hasty search. I examined the ground. People had passed to and fro, and all traces of the footprints left by the man tracked had long since disappeared. Here and there a little knot of women were to be seen talking together in low tones, and casting mysterious glances at the old house seen over the wall and among the trees. Already news of the suicide had gone abroad. A policeman stood at the gate. Another walked the grounds, already nearly dry from the warm sun. As I clambered over the wall he came toward me, motioning angrily with his club, but I paid no attention to him. When he came up I had merely to mention that I was working with Mr. Ketcham on this case, and he instantly collapsed. He had great respect for that name. I found that the rain of the early morning had almost washed out the footprints left by the man. It was not to examine these I had come back. Was there nothing else? Again I climbed up as the man had done, through the brambles that had grown in the breach of the half fallen wall. One of the obtrusive twigs caught in my pocket, and actually dislodged my handkerchief. I bent down to pick it up. Ah! there was one of my letters also that had been deftly snatched out of a pocket by this self-same inquisitive bramble bush. The deuce! I started as if shot, for, as I picked the envelope up, it felt cold and damp. It had come from my pocket, but had lain there through the rain. Quick as thought, I turned it over to look upon the address. This was what what greeted my eyes: 'THEODORE PARKER, 'New York City.'

severe start. I thought of a picture I had seen in Dr. Seabury's chamber, turned faces to the wall in dark corners. True, it had been the head of a young girl, bright and keen, but it had possessed the same peculiarity of yellow hair spoken of by the night patrol. Instantly there flashed across my mind the conviction that I might discover some connection between the would-be burglar and possible murderer and the original of the picture that was turned to the wall. More plainly, then, a new vista seemed opening before me. I was delighted with my success thus far, and would not feel ashamed to meet Mr. Ketcham when I went to report my progress in the game. Perhaps the man could establish one more link in the chain for me. 'Tell me, my friend, have you ever been close enough to see this man's hands?' 'Oh, yes, sir.' 'Was there anything peculiar about them?' 'Well, no, sir, except I noticed one of his fingers was gone.' 'Indeed! From which hand?' 'He reflected a moment. 'The left, sir.' 'You are sure of that?' 'I can swear to it. I remember he was leaning against the wall one night when we passed him, and his left hand was up against the stones. The light from a street lamp showed us his hand plain as day, and—B-H, he's my pard, you know, he spoke of it afterward.' I had no more to say. The case was assuming such proportions that I really wished for the assistance of Mr. Ketcham, but the time had not yet arrived for me to seek him. I would try and find a clew to the whereabouts of Theodore Parker. Perhaps the letter I had found would aid me. [TO BE CONTINUED.]

NAPOLÉON AND JOSEPHINE.

A New Private Life Which Defends the Act of Separation.

A great deal of sentiment has been wasted over Josephine and her divorce, but the author of a new private life of Bonaparte by Simeon and translated from the French by Arthur Levy shows that Napoleon was fully justified, apart from reasons of state, in taking the steps of separation. At the time of his marriage and for a long time afterward he worshiped her, but she was always cold and indifferent, seldom writing to him during his absence, continually and secretly contracting debts for jewelry and dress, and finally compromising her reputation by her relations with an officer, Hippolyte Charles, who had been expelled from the army of Italy by the Emperor. This scandal occurred while Napoleon was in Egypt, and was kept from him as long as possible. He was at last told of it by Junot, and determined on an immediate divorce. On his return he was met by Josephine with such a show of humiliation and sorrow and with so many vows of future devotion that he forgave her and continued to live with her, although his love for her was dead. Later a genuine affection seems to have grown up between them, so that at last, when the divorce was decided upon it was a matter of pain to both. Napoleon never, even after his marriage with Marie Louise, lost interest in Josephine. The second marriage was even more unhappy than the first. Marie Louise was a weak creature, with no principle, and when the Emperor was banished to Elba, she took up with a lover with whom she had long had relations. Both wives, whom he had striven by every means in his power to make happy, deceived him, with this difference; while Josephine was unfaithful to him from the start, Marie Louise only deceived him after several years of marriage. In each of these unions he tried to found an exemplary and peaceful home governed by the simplest habits. Neither the splendor of his career nor the pride of State had any influence upon his character as husband and father. Several chapters are devoted to the relation of what Napoleon did for his officers and relatives, and the ingratitude shown by them in return. We are inclined to think that Mr. Levy does not sufficiently regard both sides of the question. As a general thing when Napoleon bestowed a favor upon anyone of his relatives it was saddled with conditions which were often difficult and irritating; and, besides, any recipient of his favors was never allowed to forget the obligation. **She Proved Her Love.** Don Massimo, Duke of Antikoll, whose engagement to Princess Eugenie Bonaparte was recently announced, some years ago fell in love with a beautiful Roman girl of humble birth, but, in spite of their mutual supplications, her parents refused in the most emphatic manner to give their consent to the union. After a great deal of persuasion, however, the girl appeared to waive her objections to a secret marriage. The day of the ceremony came at last, and it was while they were standing together and taking their vows, that the Roman maiden suddenly threw herself into her lover's arms and sobbed out: 'You shall see now how great is the love I bear you. I will not consent to this marriage. The world says that I want your title and your money. I don't, but I could never make you happy, and in spite of the Duke's urgent, heartbroken entreaties, she obstinately refused to go through the remainder of the ceremony.'

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