

# A WEIRD MYSTERY

## Tracing a Dark Crime.

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### CHAPTER XVI.

If any of my more fashionable acquaintances had met me at this hour, they would have given me wide room. My appearance was not prepossessing. In fact, to tell the honest truth, I had succeeded in giving my face a rather villainous look that would be a passport in my favor considering the locality where I expected to carry on my operations. My gait, too, was slouchy. It was my desire to appear as much as possible like a man whose greatest fear would be to meet the police in daylight. Thus disguised I felt that I could depend upon my natural talents for getting me through any scrape. It was not long before I was in the neighborhood of the place to which I had been directed by the detective. My idea was to find Colonel Cain and keep a watch on him, trusting to chance to throw myself in his way. The den I entered was known to the police, but those who frequented it were evidently not wanted as yet, for few calls were made here by the blue coats. Now and then a detective prowled about in disguise, looking for his man, but, on the whole, it was a quiet resort. I soon discovered that my man was in the place. The photograph gave him away. He seemed to keep apart from the rest, and several times I saw him examining something he had written upon a small piece of paper. I made up my mind that this was the plan of a house he intended to enter. It was after midnight when he left the place, but in the meantime I had seen the paper slip from his pocket and fall upon the floor under his chair. Watching my opportunity I had picked it up, photographed it on my mind, and then dropped it again, so that when he came to look for it he found it. I had found, just as might have been expected, the diagram of the ground floor of a house on Madison avenue, with his method of procedure marked. When he went out I knew that he intended to burglarize that house. Here was a chance to make his acquaintance, and at the same time gain his good-will. A bold move and the game was mine. Did I have the grit to try it? Subsequent events would prove that I did not lack the necessary nerve. I followed him out, but it was not my intention to pursue, but to get ahead. This I managed to accomplish, and arrived at the house on Madison avenue long before he came upon the spot. A feeling of repulsion passed over me at the part I was about to play. For a physician in good standing to be caught or shot in the act of burglarizing a private residence would ruin me. I relied on two things, and the thought of Leonore carried me through. Should anything happen, Mr. Ketcham would see that I did not come out with discredit. Then again, I took it for granted that so surew a man as this burglar would not fix his eye upon a house that was well protected as a base of operations. These things quickly decided me. I remembered what his plan had been in the matter of gaining an entrance. So I made my way over fences to the rear of the house I had marked as the one he intended working. It was a new experience to me, this climbing about among back yards in the solemn hours of night, running the risk of a shot from some person who might happen to be on the watch. My nerves were pretty well strung by the time I landed in the yard for which I had all along been aiming. Here I made as rigid an examination as the time and circumstances would permit, and was pleased to find that it all compared favorably with the little plan the cracksmen had possessed. There could be no doubt that I was in the right place. Over in one quarter I saw the door leading to the kitchen. This was in the shape of a storm-door. According to Colonel Cain's idea, this door should be readily opened—it had been fixed for or by him. I tried it. Sure enough, there was no resistance as I turned the knob. Before me was like darkness—the interior of the room. What lay there I could not guess, but the venturesome burglar takes many risks, and as for a good cause I was now working in that role, I must do likewise. So I stepped within and closed the door. Crouching my way step by step across the room I finally came to the stove. Behind this I crouched, revolver in hand, and awaited results. I was silent as death in the house, and I soon came to the conclusion that the family must be away, and that the burglar had known this fact. My game was to hoodwink him, and I did not intend aiding in sacking the house either. If my plans carried out, the owners of the house ought to feel obliged to me for sending a burglar away who would have wasted the premises. Under such peculiar circumstances the minutes seemed terribly long to me, and I was really relieved to hear a sound at the door. My man had come. I prepared to receive him in the manner I had planned. When the door opened I heard rather than saw a man enter. Almost on the point of rising, I suddenly became frozen with astonishment. Another man had glided in through the open door.

I felt a chill run over me. A dark lantern was cautiously opened for a moment and I was almost petrified to see the blue uniforms of police officers. Were they after me? I confess I began to wish myself well out of the scrape. Mr. Ketcham might be able to clear me, it was true, but the thought of being caught in the kitchen of a private residence was anything but pleasant to my mind. The three policemen closed the door after them, and I could hear them talking. "He must be here soon," said one. "Yes, if the man didn't lie. We'll nab him in the act," remarked a second. "He's a slippery customer, and we ain't a-going to get him without trouble. Mind, boys, he's to be carried to the station if he refuses to be led." "Where shall we hide?" "The dining-room, Curry said. That's where he aims for. You see, the family forgot to send some of their plate to the bank when they sailed in such a hurry, and this fellow approached Curry with a proposition to tie up and make away with it, and they could divvy afterward." "Curry was playing him, eh?" "Well, I don't know. It's my opinion the man meant to go in with him, but when he got thinking it over, he got scared, and peached." "We oughtn't to wait here, boys." "Right, sergeant. Let's get in hiding." They moved toward the door leading to the regular kitchen, passing so close to me that I could have put out my hand and touched them. It may be set down for certain that I held my breath as they passed by. When they were gone, I realized what a close shave I had had. All became quiet again. The house was like a tomb. Once or twice I heard a venturesome rat gnawing under the floor, and the sound seemed doubly loud. What kept the burglar? Had he been on the ground in time to see the three policemen enter? If so, then my little game was knocked off on the head. I began to grow impatient. Something must happen soon, or I would leave the premises, unable to hold out. Ah! had my ears deceived me, or was that some one at the door? I listened intently, filled with the hope that the cries was at hand. Yes, there was no mistake this time. The sound was repeated. It was exactly what I had heard when the three police officers were about entering. I only hoped that when the scene occurred he would not give the alarm. Such a piece of business would bring the three officers swooping down upon us, and we would, in all probability, find ourselves scooped in. The door opened again. A man glided into the room. I could hear him breathing hard, and feeling assured that it was my burglar I prepared to spring upon him the smartest trap he had ever touched. I moved out from behind the stove and crouched there as if I had just come through the door leading into the house. My appearance was intended to represent a man who had been baked in some nefarious design, and now found himself caged. To render this stage effect, I called up every atom of my powers, but I had confidence, and that would go a great ways. I was none to soon. The burglar was getting his lantern into shape, and all at once this light fell upon me. I instantly covered Colonel Cain, at the same time saying in a low, tense whisper: "Not a word on your life, man. I swear I will not be caught alive. A cry, and you are a dead man!" The bait took. My words astonished the burglar more than did my presence, for while he had on the second jumped to the conclusion that I was a detective lying in wait for a worthy about his build and make up, he realized at once that I believed him to be the same. My threatening attitude kept him quiet, at the same time he was busy examining me with his keen eyes. I spoke again: "You can't hold me—there ain't no man on earth can run me. I'm going to get out of here if I have to walk over you." "Hold up, pard; there's a mistake here." "I know it; that's why I'm backing out like a crab. There's some fellers in here I ain't longing to meet; oh, no!" "I tell you we're both here on the same business—to crack this crib." "Do you mean that?" "I swear it. Come, what's the use of leaving? We can clean it out and divvy." "Well, you see, there's some fellows in yonder I don't care to meet." "In this house?" "Yes; three of them." "You are mistaken. Curry said there wasn't a soul here." "Curry! That's the name they used as they came in. They said he had made a deal with them." "A deal! Jerusalem! Who are they?" "Bluecoats." "Police, and in this house?" "They're in hiding in the dining-room now, waiting for some one. I thought it was me, but now I see it's you they want." "Impossible!" "Is it, though? Just step through that door yonder, and see how quick they gobble you up." "This beats the deuce! Curry betray me! I'll pay him up for this." "Do what you please. As for me, I'm going to get out of this place in a deuced hurry. Make way there." "Not so fast, my friend. If this be true, you have done me a service I shall try hard to repay." "I want no reward. If you doubt my word we can easily prove it. Go out with me and see for yourself." He had no inclination to remain, and together we left the outer kitchen in which our whispered conversation had taken place. By my direction he climbed up to the window of the dining-room, and both watched and listened until some of the

impatient men within, changing their positions, betrayed their presence to Cain. When he joined me again he wrung my hand savagely. "My dear fellow, I am under heavy obligations to you—Command me." I felt some satisfaction in my work. Here the burglar had fallen into my snare. The game had opened brilliantly—how would it end? I was ready for further work. CHAPTER XVII. As I walked away with this man of dark methods I felt that the part which I dreaded most had been carried through in a very satisfactory manner. Fortune had smiled upon me. I had high hopes of attaining my object, whether this would prove satisfactory to me or otherwise. We walked away like old friends. The Colonel felt himself under great obligations to me. That suited my ideas exactly, as I had some use to make of this feeling on his part. We walked along until he finally turned and asked if I had objection to accompanying him to a retreat of his which he only used when he desired the utmost secrecy. Of course I was dreadfully tickled to hear him speak thus, but it was not according to my plan that he should learn my willingness. I agreed to go with him, however. We were not in the fashionable quarter of the city at this time. Squalor surrounded us, and vice stalked rampant through the narrow streets we now traversed. At this hour of the night it would be as much as a respectable man's life was worth to walk these dirty streets where the toughest of New York's citizens were congregated. Colonel Cain evidently had a hiding place somewhere in this locality, to which he retired perhaps to ponder over his plans and perfect them in solitude. To this den he was now taking the man who had just saved him from falling into the hands of the police, in order to get better acquainted. I had no suspicion of foul play. The manner in which I had made this man's acquaintance was against such a thing as arousing suspicion in his mind with regard to me, and I believed things were just what they appeared to be on the surface. "Here we are." He had stopped in front of a building that seemed hidden down with years—indeed, it was but a question of months when it must be condemned by the city authorities and torn down. Through sheer custom the man, before he entered here, turned and looked up and down the dingy, ill-smelling street. This I marked as the habitual caution of the old thief. Used to being hunted like a beast of prey, he never knew a minute's peace, and yet the excitement of such a life had its fascination for his dwarfed and distorted mind. I held my breath as we entered the hallway of this tenement. It was indeed a noisome place, and I could not but believe the building had as tenants a number of Chinese. Mott street was near at hand. He ascended ever so many flights of narrow stairs, until I groaned over the work and the difficulty of groping one's way through inky darkness. All that saved me from speedy disaster was the fact that with one hand I had seized hold of the Colonel's coat. At last, when we could go no further, my guide condescended to halt. We were on the top floor of the tenement, with the roof almost within reach of an outstretched hand. This I saw after a jingling of keys had told me that my companion was opening a door of which he possessed the open sesame, and then a match starting into life was applied to a candle. The room into which he led me was a dingy-looking place. From the walls the plaster had fallen until half of the naked laths were grinning at one as if in derision. As for the low ceiling, it was never guilty of being plastered, but showed forth in all the hideous colors of age. In the middle was a trap or scuttle, secured on the inside. This could readily be reached by means of a box that stood directly beneath it. I saw at a glance that it was meant to be the burglar's means of escape from the rear should his castle be assaulted in front. When I had looked around for a chair, I found a relic near me, upon which I rested my weary frame with not a little suspicion regarding its integrity. Meanwhile Colonel Cain, the cracksmen, had closed and barred the door against all possible intrusion. This done, he seated himself upon the box and breathed fast. Those narrow and steep stairs were certainly enough to lay one out, and my knees felt as though they would never come into shape again. I could not remember a worse climb in my calendar, unless it was at the Bunker Hill monument. We were on deck now, and the time had about come for diplomacy. All that I had ever read or heard about men of this dark profession must stand me in good stead now, for I had a part to play that every man could not carry out. I had determined to make out to be a rather new hand at the business, and one who, although not up to all the tricks of the trade, was willing to learn. In this role, any lack of the requisites with which you are true burglar is supposed to be supplied would be forgiven. Having taken his seat on the box, the burglar hit his pipe, and then, folding his hands around his knees, proceeded to look me over. "Who might you be, comrade, not meaning to be rude?" he finally said. "Seeing that you are the host, it is but fair that you should introduce yourself first." "By Jove! your's right, now. What a giddy old I am to forget. I'm known as Colonel Cain, and over the water they do say I'm the boom'erest trump that ever lived." "That's most you, Colonel. Joslyn's my name. I'm Joslyn's home." "We speak the same language."

CHAPTER XVIII. I was to meet you, Joslyn." "And I'm proud to take you by the honest hand, Colonel. Such a meeting is likely to fall to a man once in a lifetime, and I feel as though fate had more to do with it than my know." "Perhaps it was intended that we work together from this on." "I'd hardly venture to suggest such a thing, Colonel. You're a veteran, while I am but a greenhorn in the business." "Tell me, Joslyn, how you happened to be in that house, and knew of the three officers lying in wait?" "I gave him the story almost straight, telling how I had entered the house believing it to be empty, and heard the officers coming and hidden, listening to their short conversation before they secreted themselves. Then I went on to tell how I had managed to back out as far as the kitchen, when the door opened and another police officer appeared, flashing his bull's-eye upon me." "This was too much for me, and I had made up my mind to cut through at any cost when, upon a little investigation, the last comer had proved to be a comrade instead of a deadly foe." "My story was so frank and my manner so engaging that he could not help believing all I said." "In return, he told me what I already knew with regard to his arrangements with the man left in charge of the Madison avenue palace, and who had betrayed him." "I was looking around me all the time in an interested way. Not that there was much to see, but I was determined that nothing should escape my observation that might serve as a clew in the case I was engaged on." "Was this the man who had entered the house of Dr. Scabury by means of the pantry window?" "Looking at him, I tried to imagine what cause he could have for the bitter hatred against the old Doctor." "He was swarthy enough to have been under an Indian sun, and his hair was black as the strand found in the dead man's clasp, but not so long by half." "I had some hopes. It was plain to me that Mr. Ketcham believed the man who had entered that house intent on burglary could tell something of the crime, but, on my part, I hoped he would prove the author of it himself." "I had built up a new theory. The man from India was pursuing him on account of some private wrong, and he it was who had been it at the death." "Colonel Cain was my man." "He had all the appearance of a muscular fellow, and might have been a match for a stronger man than the old Doctor." "Strange, though, that either Leonore or Theodore would not know of him, for the former must have some connection with the case, else why those words on the photograph?" "Was this sable-haired Colonel Cain her father? It might be possible, since she was only a ward of the Doctor's." "This thought brought new trouble. I looked my man over again, and was ready to say there seemed no actual flaw in the chain as yet." "Blindly I shut my eyes to the main facts, and would only see what was pleasing." "This was human nature. We very often do this same thing in ordinary life. Meanwhile, the burglar was making himself at home. From a hole in the wall, which served him as a closet, he took a bottle and a couple of glasses. "You must excuse the lack of style, my friend. It is hardly possible to live in the hunted manner I do and keep up with the reigning fashions. Like all others, I hope some day to make a fine haul, and retire on an independent fortune." "Let us hope that the day of our retiring is not far distant," I said, and he of course misinterpreted me. "We drank to the retirement. I am a very moderate drinker, and I said so to my new friend. I had been exceedingly careful to let him take the first sip to prove that the liquor was not drugged, for I was on the lookout that such a game should not be played on me." "As I raised my tumbler to sip the contents again, I received an electric shock. It was as though my system had suddenly come in contact with the positive and negative poles of a battery." "At the same time a great feeling of satisfaction came over me. I realized that a step forward had been taken in proving the innocence of Leonore." "Upon the wall hung a knife. It was of peculiar mold, and I recognized the fatal Malay creese!" "This signified a great deal! When my eyes had fallen upon this blade, hope was revived in my soul to an astonishing degree." "It was singular how much the creese seemed to have to do with the case, and we had simply to follow the clues put forth by the one who perpetrated the crime in order to reach the end." "Of course I was too wise to betray myself, and after making sure that my eyes had not deceived me, I kept my attention away from the blade as much as possible." "After a time, however, in getting up to stretch my limbs, my hand happened to touch it." "Hallo! what's this, anyhow?" I asked, with seeming curiosity. "A knife," he replied, and I saw some sign of uneasiness in his manner. "Well, that's the queerest knife I ever set eyes on. What do you call it, Colonel?" "It was examining it as I spoke. The blade was far from bright, dingy-looking spots that might come from rust or dried blood marred its surface." "It was quite a contrast to the fine creese used as a paper cutter by Leonore, and yet both were built on the same pattern." "It is called a creese. They are used by the thugs out in India." "I hope you are not a thug," I laughed. "Nonsense. I picked the blade up from beside the body of a friend who fell to the hands of those cursed fen-

aces. Yet, that creese has seen terrible work." "An unnatural glow came over his face at the words, and I could see, without appearing to notice, that he had shut his teeth hard while he spoke." "I did not ask for particulars." "They were already before my mind better than he could give them." "Replacing the creese on the wall, I resumed our conversation at the point where I had broken it off." "There was one thing I was very anxious to do now. This was to search the room." "If the Colonel would only leave me alone there for a time I believed I would be able to tell positively whether he was the man we wanted or not." "Fortune favored me." "He was a heavy drinker, and could stand more liquor than most men I knew." "The black bottle was now empty, and by the way in which he took it up several times and looked into it I knew he had not had enough yet." "So I finally threw a half-dollar on the table with a jingle." "Colonel, isn't there some place near by where you can get that replenished? I'll stand treat, and by the time you get back I'll have finished what is in my glass and be ready for more." "Yes, I know of a den near at hand. I'll take me five or ten minutes to get back. Amuse yourself as best you can, comrade." "Setting the black bottle, he was gone. I heard him descending the stairs, and when he had reached the second flight below I concluded it was time for me to begin my operations." [SO BE CONTINUED.] DEATH AFTER ALL NOT SO GRIM. The Final Hour Usually Brings Neither Fear nor Pain. Familiarity with death is apt to alter one's earlier conceptions of it. Two ideas are very generally accepted, which experience shows to be false. One is that the dying is usually fear death; and the other, that the act of dying is accompanied by pain. It is well known to all physicians that when death is near its terrors do not seem to be felt by the patient. Unless the imagination is stimulated by the frightful portrayal of the "pangs of death," or of the sufferings which some believe the soul must endure after dissolution, it is rare, indeed, that the last days or hours of life are passed in dread. Oliver Wendell Holmes has recorded his protest against the custom of "telling a person who does not actually seem to know that he cannot recover. As that loving observer of mankind asserts, "no must everyone who knows whereof he speaks assert that people almost always come to understand that recovery is impossible; it is rarely useful to tell anyone that this is the case. When nature gives the warning death appears to be as little feared as sleep. Most sick persons are very tired; sleep—long, quiet sleep—is what they want. I have seen many people die. I have never seen one who seemed to fear death except when it was, or seemed to be rather far away. Even those who are constantly haunted while strong and well with a dread of the end of life forget their fears when that end is at hand." "As for the act of dying—the final passage from life to death—it is absolutely without evidence that the oft-repeated assertions of its painfulness are made. Most people are unconscious for some hours before they die; and in the rare cases where consciousness is retained until a few minutes before the end the last sensation must be of perfect calm and rest. It is worse than cruel to add to the natural dread of death which oppresses the majority of us while in good health the dread of dying.—Dr. J. W. Roosevelt, in Scribner. THE CARO ANTS WITH TARANTULAS. The British steamship Kennet arrived at Philadelphia two days ago with the crew in a state of panic caused by the unwelcome companionship of great numbers of tarantulas and scorpions. These venomous insects had been brought on board with a cargo of logwood which was shipped at Port de Paix, an settlement in Hayti. From the time the ship cleared from the harbor the officers and men were continually coming on these pests in different parts of the ship, which had overrun. They were killed wherever found, but the supply seemed inexhaustible. Tarantulas chased across the tables when the crew were at meals, and scorpions scurried from hiding places in the bunk. In the after-cabin the insects were so thick that the officers were driven on deck to get a catnap of sleep. The scorpions and tarantulas were re-enforced as the voyage proceeded by other vermin equally repulsive in appearance. If not so dangerous, only a naturalist could have given names to them. All the way across the voyage was one long nightmare. As the cargo was being also argued it was found to be actually alive with both the scorpions and tarantulas. The old sailors on board the Kennet say they will never ship in logwood laden vessel again, and remain now only in the fear that destruction would cause a forfeiture of their wages.—New York Evening Post. THE LORD KNOWS. Some years ago in a Maine town a revival had been conducted jointly by two churches. When the meetings were concluded one dominie put forth his best work and succeeded in getting nearly all the converts into his fold. The next Sunday the other parson felt that this circumstances needed a word of explanation, so, looking down at the handful of converts in his congregation, he said: "Brethren, it doesn't make any odds who strings the fish—the Lord knows who caught 'em." THE PERUVIANS ARE SAID TO HAVE SACKED THE OBSERVATORY ERECTED BY HARVARD COLLEGE ON MOUNT AREQUIPA. Why not send the Harvard football team down there and wipe Peru on the map.

