

Tracing a Dark Crime

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CHAPTER XVIII (Continued)

Chuckling over the success of my little ruse I began to look around for some evidence that the man had been in the Seabury house on that terrible night. At first my search was without avail. I looked in every crack and cranny I could find, but success did not greet my efforts. If he had brought anything with him the man seemed to have been careful enough to have securely hidden it.

Still I did not despair. It was not my nature to give up easily. The more difficulties that arose, the more determined I appeared. My search was continued with ever increasing vigor. Half of the ten minutes had already elapsed, and I could expect to hear the footfalls of the Colonel on the dark and narrow stairs at any time. While I searched I kept my ears open for such sounds.

At last I believed I was rewarded. In a dark hole, where it had evidently been thrown contemptuously as of little value because it was alone, I found a silver spoon. Upon the end was engraved a name. I read it with such satisfaction as the hunter can feel when his game is sighted along the gun barrel, or perhaps the angler when a violent tug announces that his line has been taken by the wary bass.

A little diplomacy now and the game was surely mine. The name was "Seabury." The spoon had come from the house where the murder had been committed. Mr. Ketcham had been right in reading the dwelling of Colonel Cain upon the pantry window.

He had been there. This man knew more concerning the mysterious murder than perhaps any living soul. If he had not committed the crime himself, then he could tell who did. I felt a savage delight in the thought that I now held a key to unlock the mystery. Mr. Ketcham might yet be forced to learn the truth from me. My hopes beat high. I threw the lone spoon back whence it had come.

Why had he taken that one article, only to cast it contemptuously aside when he reached his den? Ah! the rendering of this answer would lift the veil from the whole. I meant to solve it very soon. I must confess that the appearance of this spoon on the scene of action gave my theory a hard blow.

If I was to look upon the man as the Nemesis, following his intended victim from crime to crime with but one object in view—the death of old Doctor Seabury, what in the wide world could he mean by carrying off this solitary spoon? Was it his nature asserting itself? He was a burglar by profession, and on finding a spoon lying in his way as he made his retreat from the house, he could not resist the temptation to pick it up. The act was done mechanically, and when on reaching home he found it in his pocket, with the hated name of Seabury engraved upon the end, he cast it from him in the loftiest of scorn.

CHAPTER XIX

I kept cool. There was no use getting excited, for I was not in danger, though the burglar seemed to have received a shock of some kind. To use a popular expression that exactly covers the case; "it was none of my funeral."

No sooner had the panting burglar locked the door than he raised the bottle to his lips and took a good drink, probably with the intention of calming his nerves. "Joslyn, we're cornered!" were the first words he gave utterance to. "What do you mean?"

"I mean the police are sharp after us." "Come, come! what have we done that they should copper us?" I said, more to draw him out than anything else. His face danced with a strange light; it shone from his dark eyes like electricity, and I realized that when worked up this man must be a bad customer to tackle. "I reckon it's me they're after; but as you are in my company they'll run up in at the same time. It's the same old story of dog Tray again."

"But, see here, Colonel, I didn't know you were wanted for anything." He didn't take the hint, but smiled grimly. "You see I am, Joslyn. I had got the liquor, and was on the way back, when I saw a bluecoat hiding behind a pile of boxes that stood on the curb. 'Hallo!' said I to myself, 'I'll watch you, my fine fellow, and see what is up.' So I did; and it took me just about one minute to learn that he was watching the upper story of this old house."

"That meant me, I knew it just as well as I did the a, b, c of my profession. What was I to do? I could easily have slipped away, and they be none the wiser. 'But I remembered that you were up here, and you were my friend. I've done some tough things in my day, but I never yet went back on a friend. 'So, at the risk of my neck, I have come back here to get you out.' I silently took his hand. My mind was dwelling upon his words. At the risk of his neck. What could that mean but murder? The expression had done more to revive a feeling of hope in my breast than anything that had yet occurred.

"We must get out of this Joslyn. The officers will be up here soon, for they must have seen me enter, and believe their bird is safely caged." "Then we must get out, Colonel." "Words of wisdom, my friend, and the sooner we put them into execution the better for us." "How shall we levant?" He looked upward. I, too, turned my eyes toward the scuttle, with the ready box beneath it. "That's our lay, Joslyn."

I had determined to accompany the other, believing that my time was approaching for the truth to be made known. The chase might be a hot one; but if I intended to carry out my plans I could only look for a revelation from Colonel Cain; so I must not lose track of him. I had an idea that whatever the police really wanted him for his guilty conscience made him believe it was for the murder of old Dr. Seabury. "Is there nothing here you mean to take with you in your flight?" I asked. He quickly cast his eyes around. Then, springing forward, he snatched the old creese from its position on the wall. "That may prove a trusty weapon. Anyhow they won't lay hold of it as evidence against me," he muttered almost savagely. Better and better. I came near chuckling, and rubbed my hands together in silent glee.

CHAPTER XX

By degrees the man was giving himself away, and, at this rate, I would soon be in possession of the whole truth. Having secured the knife he now sprang upon the box and unfastened the scuttle. When this was pushed back an opening was revealed plenty large enough for a man to pass through. I could see the stars beyond. Colonel Cain did not hesitate an instant, but, seizing hold of the edges, with a muscular effort he drew himself half way through.

It was now an easy task to finish, and presently he was looking down upon me from the roof. "Come on, Joslyn," he hoarsely whispered. I did not need any urging, for my sharp ears had caught the sound of heavy steps upon the stairway, as of men groping their way upward. There could be little doubt but that they were the hounds of the police force closing in upon the jackal of a cracksmen whom they had succeeded in covering.

As these sounds were on the first flight of steps, I realized that the officers had stolen a march upon us, and came near reaching the door in time to cut off our escape. I was no mean hand at this sort of work, and managed to climb through the hole in the roof with as much agility as the burglar had shown. "They're coming," I said, quickly. "Yes, I hear them, the hounds. Come, we'll baffle them yet." He was terribly excited, although I could not see his face in the darkness to watch its fluctuations. "What did this signify? Was there the dark frame of the gibbet looming up on his mental horizon?"

The scuttle having been closed, we began to make our way across the roof. This was my first experience in such peculiar work. If the reader has never clambered over the roofs of a block of city houses, now up and now down, he can have no appreciation of the situation. It is additionally enhanced when there is a hot pursuit made. The same feeling came over me that I had experienced when I discovered the three officers entering the house on Madison avenue where I was concealed. A

rebel against being pursued like a criminal—just when I realized that I had taken this route voluntarily upon me I felt that there was no use complaining. Of course the Colonel led. He knew the way, and that in itself was sufficient to make him a guide. We left the roof of the tenement in a rather singular method. Reaching the edge at its lowest corner the burglar turned to me. "Don't be afraid to go down after me. There's a flat roof below," he whispered. I saw him pass over the gutter and then he vanished from my sight. A second or two later there came a dead fall below.

"Come on, Joslyn." Voices sounded back of me. The policeman was at the scuttle, having readily guessed our method of escape from the room of the old tenement. I did not hesitate, knowing the chances I was taking both ways, but proceeded to follow the example cast by my quondam friend. Throwing myself flat, I grasped the edge of the gutter firmly with both hands, and then allowed my body to fall over. Thus I found myself hanging in utter darkness from the gutter of a house that was fully five stories in height.

Faith, however, is a wonderful thing. I knew Colonel Cain had gone down in this way, and that I could do the same. Just as I was about to let go any way, I felt a pair of hands touch my body. "Drop—it's only a couple of feet, Joslyn." I did so. Knowing the depth I did not receive as much of a shock as might have been the case had I been in utter ignorance as to whether I should fall one foot or twenty. I found that we were upon another roof, but somewhat nearer the ground. The cracksmen led me along this. It was of tin, and rattled somewhat under our feet, at which he muttered a curse. "Hang the luck! That racket gives us away," he said, crossly. We could hear the police hastening toward the point where we had left the higher roof, and had no doubt but they had heard our movements.

CHAPTER XXI

By this time, however, we had managed to gain the end of the second roof. What was next on the programme I could not even guess; but must await the turn of events now so rapidly occurring. Watching my companion, I saw him swing off upon what seemed to be a board. I got down on my knees the better to examine it, and I found that my suspicions were quite true. A board it undoubtedly was, of sound strength, and just wide enough to allow a man of steady nerve to walk upon it. Where did it lead? A large building was before us, looming up like a castle. I knew it was a tenement of some sort, and the plank seemed to extend from the gutter of our roof to a porch of some kind in the rear of the other tenement. Ah! I had it. This porch was made of iron, and was really a portion of a modern fire escape.

Looking up, I could just distinguish another like it, outlined against the sky. Of course there were more below. It could not be the idea of Colonel Cain to remain upon the roofs longer than he could help. The ground was his only hope of escape. I could now see exactly how he hoped to make this anchorage. Upon this plank then depended our hope of escape. Had it been missing we should be captured beyond a doubt. The reader can imagine that I had no slight task before me. A slip on my part would send me down to death.

To a man of ordinary nerve it would not have been much of a job to have crossed over in the daytime. Two short steps would have accomplished it. In the night time, however, the plank was all but invisible. I dared not put my foot down without first feeling that it was in the center of the plank. Shutting my teeth, hard, I made the forward movement. There was a period of suspense that appeared longer to me than it really must have been. Then my outstretched hands came in contact with an iron railing. Eagerly I clutched it, and a feeling of relief went through my frame as I realized that I was safe.

The Colonel was there and helped me to clamber over the railing. Then as he bent down I did likewise. I found that he had the plank securely wedged between two scrolls in the iron-work of the porch, so there could not have been much chance of its working loose while one was crossing. He was desperately engaged now in working this end of the plank loose. I saw the idea at once. It would cut off immediate pursuit by isolating the fire escape from the adjoining roof. By our united efforts we managed to get the plank free from its fastenings. "Down with it, Joslyn."

The officers were investigating the descent from the upper to the lower roof. I could see a dark lantern in use. If they should turn it upon us they might discover something to their advantage. We released our hold on the plank. It went surging downward at once, but being heavy, fell like a rock, so that no sound was made until it reached the bottom, when there came a sudden crash, and all was still again. One of the officers was now hanging over the gutter above, and the man with the lantern dared not turn it away, as the light was needed right there. This assisted us. We had no sooner allowed the plank to drop than the Colonel's arm was placed on my shoulder, and he drew me back.

"Here's the way down, comrades. We haven't a second to lose. They'll open fire on us if they throw the light this way." There was a small opening at the other end of the iron porch. Below this depended an iron ladder, which in turn reached down to the next landing. In this way the descent could be made to the bottom. These fire escapes are daily growing more common in certain portions of the great city. Their utility is unquestioned, if they can be only kept clear, but the inmates of tenements

seem to look upon the porches as depositories of trash and sleeping places during the hot nights of summer. The way we went through that opening was a caution. No danger now of the ladder giving way. On the porch below we landed in the midst of a family enjoying a sound sleep upon their open couch. Our advent among them was the cause of much consternation. But one idea prevailed, and this was that the house must be on fire, and the people above were taking advantage of them. So they followed us as well as possible, but in the jam the opening was filled, and there they stuck, screaming and cursing at a rate to awaken the dead. I have often looked back with considerable amusement to that scene, but just then I had no time to enjoy it. Of course the attention of the officers would be directed toward this point now, and we could hardly hope to escape discovery, unless we were exceeding spry about getting down. Other difficulties met us. More people were upon the fire escape, and we had to push through of over them. "Fire! fire!" rang out on the night air. A bedlam ensued, the like of which I have never seen my fortune to hear since. Men swore in seven languages, while women and children ran the scale backward and forward with their shrill cries. One would have thought a menagerie had broken loose in the neighborhood. In the midst of this racket we hung from the lower porch and dropped, reaching the ground in safety.

CHAPTER XXII

Then my companion led the way to an arched passage, opening the door as we went with what seemed magic slight-of-hand. From this we emerged and found ourselves walking hastily down the street. Colonel Cain had eluded his trackers to fall a victim to one more keen. There has always been a love of adventure in my system. Many a time during the past year I have, cropped out, but never until this night could I say that I had been fully satisfied. I was ready to cry out enough, for the present at least. This night would stand out as a most singular event in the ordinary life of a city physician.

It was easy for me to see that my companion was exceedingly well pleased with his escape. As my hand touched his arm I could feel that he was trembling with excitement, although while the impending peril lasted he had been practically cool. There had of late come up some very important reason when he feared to fall into the hands of the police. I remembered that the old detective, Mr. Ketcham, had said there was no special cause for this man's arrest just now. Yet the officers seemed going to very great trouble in order to effect his capture.

One thing alone made me believe it could hardly be for the murder of Dr. Seabury he was wanted. It was believed by the public that the worthy physician had committed suicide. Few people knew that a crime had occurred. Then how could these ordinary police officers be in full chase after the supposed murderer when the facts of the case did not even admit of Mr. Ketcham's believing this man to be the guilty party? It was incredible. I could not unite such antagonistic facts, and yet sullenly held on to the case, not being willing to acknowledge myself beaten. Where were we going now? That was a matter which concerned my companion more than myself. He was walking along with his head bowed down, as though in deep thought, and yet when he turned to look around him every little while, I could see his eyes were still shining with the phosphorescent gleam that had made me compare them with the orbs of a wild beast hunted in the forest.

As I waited for him to speak, it was a long time ere the silence was broken, but at last he turned to me. "Joslyn, we have stood by each other nobly, so far, and I'll be hanged if I haven't taken a decided liking to you, but I reckon the time has come for us to part." "Why so, Colonel?" I asked, throwing a pained vein into my voice. "I would not ask you to follow where I am about to go, and yet it seems to be my only chance now of eluding these hounds until the breeze blows over and I can skip from the city." "Have I refused to go with you?" "No, no; you have stuck to me with a warmth that commands my highest admiration, Joslyn." "I did not seem gratified. I see now how it is, Colonel. You have become tired of my company. Well, I can't blame you. Let us part here." "No, no, my friend, you misunderstand me. Short as has been our acquaintance I have become very much attached to you, more so than I ever remember of being with any man."

I could not help being mollified at this confession. "Then why do you wish to part?" "Simply because I do not desire to drag you with me to an uncongenial place, when you have no reason to desire to remain hidden." "You don't want to be too sure about that. But how do you know I won't follow you? Try and see. If I can't stand it I'll back out, that's all. Besides, if you're going into retirement for a time you'll want to open some communication with the outer world. I can be your means of hearing what is going on." He hesitated no longer. "Joslyn, have it your own way. I am content, if you are. Come with me, and perhaps some day, should you be harassed for a secret hiding place, you may be glad that you went to seek shelter among the dead."

His words did not encourage me, though I at once accompanied him. Among the dead! What new adventures was now to befall me? All manner of grisly phantoms, waving their skeletons arms in warning, seemed to rise up and bid me keep off; but I had made up my mind, and it must be something more terrible than imagination that could keep me back now.

My curiosity would soon be satisfied, if any ruse. I hoped that were quite respectable in their appearance. I had the streets. We had halted before what seemed to be an old iron door, set in a high wall. The sight of both made me think of a prison yard, and yet this was not such. After his usual careful search of the street, the cracksmen took a key from his pocket, and inserted it in the lock. Some muscular exertion was necessary to turn it, but I could hear the tongue slide back with a ponderous sound. Then the iron door was loose, and could be pushed open with slight exertion. Beckoning me to follow him, my companion entered. As near as I could make out we were in a covered way, possibly a drive of some sort, which extended along in the same direction as the wall. When we reached the end, looking up I could see the blue sky. The waving arms of great weeping willows stood between and swept up and down as though in mockery. As I lowered my eyes I could not help but start, for in the darkness I seemed to be surrounded by a ghostly company. Scores of white objects lay around, their exact dimensions and outline being somewhat hidden by the gloom that lay like a pall over all. I knew they were tombstones. A cemetery in the heart of the city. This then was where the hunted burglar meant to hide until the storm had subsided and it was safe for him to appear once more. I could not but admire his shrewdness in selecting such a place, where no one would ever look for him. As a secret den its equal could hardly be found in all the great city. He walked in and out among the tombs of by-gone worthies and seemed to know just where he was heading, for he made no mistakes. Thus he ushered me down the steps and into a deserted sepulcher. The place was gloomy and had a rather unpleasant odor, but I was not thinking of this. I watched the Colonel close the door in silence, and then he struck a match, lighting a candle. With curiosity I looked around the place which I believed would see the end of my trail, so far as the burglar was concerned. [TO BE CONTINUED.]

BOOTS HAVE HAD THEIR DAY.

Trade Affected by the Increased Wear of Shoes by Americans. The diminished use of boots is a matter of concern to the manufacturers of them and to the producers of heavy leather and heavy calf skins, says the Shoe and Leather Reporter. Twenty years ago the calf boot industry was a leading one in New England. Whole towns were studded with factories which produced calf boots exclusively. For a decade the sale has been gradually falling off, and to-day it is of hardly any importance. A few manufacturers of shoes include boots as a specialty, but the demand is too light to amount to much. When calf boots were more in vogue manufacturers consulted the partialities of the cowboys, to whom price was a secondary consideration. The legs were frequently corded with silk stitching. The star and crescent and other fanciful ornamentations were inlaid on the legs of the boots; there were high heels and the boots were striking specimens of mechanical art. The soles were inlaid with copper, zinc, and brass nails. The cowboys no longer pay \$15 or \$20 for a pair of boots. But they were not the only wearers of calf boots. They were extensively worn. Many men prefer them to-day, though the number is growing less. The old-fashioned stoga boots were formerly sold in large quantities; they are wellnigh obsolete. There followed a demand for a lighter and more stylish article. A kip boot of lighter texture was produced, about equal in appearance to the best calf boot, but this, too, has fallen somewhat into disuse, and the sales this season are scarcely over one-half the usual amount. Where there were twenty factories producing boots exclusively there is now not one. Even the farmers are using heavy shoes instead of boots, and if it becomes a necessity to wear long-legged boots they buy rubbers. Twenty years ago the entire product of Salem and Peabody was heavy boots and brogan leather. To-day there are less than half a dozen tanneries making it. Brogans and plowshoes are indispensable in many sections of country, but there are comparatively few exclusive manufacturers of these now. The Creedmoor, Dom Pedro, English ties and Creole congress are supplanting them. The decline in the consumption of calf boots affects the tanners of calf skins. It is a question what is to be done with heavy skins. The tanners must necessarily buy more or less of them. They cannot select light and medium weights exclusively, and if they take them they feel no certainty of being able to dispose of them in the finished state. There is, nevertheless, a use in this world for whatever is good for anything, and there will be some way of disposing of heavy calf skins, though for the moment it appears difficult to point out the direction into which

We find happiness while we are pursuing it, and lose it after we reach it.