



The Mystery OF Carney-Croft

By
JOSEPH BROWN COOKE

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CHAPTER I.—Continued.

"That's more'n I know," said the man, turning and looking me squarely in the face, "but they said they seen two ghosts, one fur the old man, an' one fur the boy, aout under the trees in front of the house right where ole Carney fell off his hoss! Every one of 'em seen the same thing, an' when nine men agrees to a dot on a thing o' this kind it's pretty hard, even fur a church member, not to believe it."

"They'll all tell ye the same story. The boy was a-swayin' back an' forth, jest as he did after the hoss kicked him, an' the ole man kind o' hoverin' an' bendin' over him like he was in the saddle a-cussin' him again. The figgers was perfectly plain, all in white, but them that stayed to look long enough said ye could see the trunks o' the trees an' other things right through 'em, too."

"I suppose they all came back to Hoskins' after seeing this wonderful sight," I remarked.

"You bet they did, an' they come a-runnin', too," said the man. "I never seen a scarier lot o' men in my life."

"Made pretty good business for Hoskins that night, eh?" I ventured.

"Wal, I guess it did!" he rejoined, with a grin. "An' it'll keep right on makin' good business fur him, too! Them fellers won't git over talkin' o' that fur a month o' Sundays!"

"How did they get home that night?" I continued persuasively.

His grin broadened as he chuckled. "Them as couldn't walk had to ride home in this 'ere rig. Haow I ever viled so many in is more'n I kin tell!" and he laughed immoderately at the thought.

"So when business is good with Hoskins it's likely to be good with you, too, eh?" I went on.

"Most generally," he replied. "Most generally; 'less Hoskins gits all their money 'fore they're ready fur me an' their credit ain't no good."

"And when the men aren't working at Carney's they spend a good deal of time at Hoskins', don't they?" I asked.

"Yes, an' a good deal o' money, too," he rejoined. "Ole Carney allus paid 'em well; nobody can't deny that."

"So it's a good thing for Hoskins and a good thing for you, to get them away from the place every little while," I suggested warily.

"I s'pose it is, an' I s'pose we can't neither of us help it if they want to leave," he returned sullenly and with sudden suspicion as he pulled his horse up sharply at the station platform.

My train arrived in a few moments, and as I was about to step aboard I drew the fellow toward me and said to him in a low tone, that others might not hear:

"The men were quite right about the ghosts. I saw them myself, from my window, perfectly distinctly and exactly as you have described them."

The car was already moving and I hung up on the step and left him standing bewildered.

CHAPTER II.

Two Letters.

My Dear Mr. Ware:
My apologies for not replying to your letter of nearly two weeks ago are weakened by the fact that I am now writing to you in great distress.

My brother will be here day after tomorrow, and it has just occurred to me that I have made a most dreadful blunder and I need your advice more than ever before.

You know, I asked Miss Weston, my old school friend, to come here and stay with me for a time at least, and she did so, understanding, as I have since learned, that Jack was away and not to return.

She is here now and seems to me to be quite ill again, but the embarrassing part of it is that she and Jack was once great sweethearts, and his going away to Honolulu was really due to some disagreement that they had nearly three years ago. I never knew just what the trouble was. As Annie was my dearest friend in school and afterwards, too, I quite overlooked the whole matter in my anxiety to have someone with me when I was so awfully alone. You remember, I merely telegraphed her to come, and she did not even know of father's death and supposed, of course, that Jack was away.

Now she is coming so soon that I don't know what to do. It is a frightfully embarrassing position to be placed in, especially as there was so much mystery over their separation.

You see, under the circumstances, I cannot possibly adopt your suggestion to close the house and come to town for the present, and, anyway, I feel that I ought to stay here till Jack comes to keep an eye on father's things.

Miss Weston is, I am sure, quite too ill to be moved, and with Mrs. Remsen, our old housekeeper, I feel perfectly safe. Please write me at once and advise me in my present predicament.

Very truly yours,
FLORENCE CARNEY.

P. S. There is a rumor that Carney-Croft is haunted, and some of the village people even go so far as to say that you saw a ghost when you were here. Have you heard anything of this sort? It is ridiculous, of course, but it makes me nervous.

My Dear Miss Carney:
Your letter of yesterday is at hand. I would not worry, if I were you, about your brother and Miss Weston. It was probably some childish affair that they have both forgotten by this time.

I am sorry to hear that Miss Weston is ill again, for it must add to your cares materially, but as you have told me that all your house servants are reliable and trustworthy I suppose you are managing fairly well.

I expect your brother in town to-day or to-morrow and he will probably stay here over night and go on to Carney-Croft the

next day. Either he or I will telegraph you as soon as he arrives.
I thought you know about the ghosts or I should have written you before. There were two large pieces of mosquito netting in my room which were apparently intended for covering portraits. I threw them over a chair-back near the window and they blew out during the night and caught in the branches of the trees in front of the house. I knew that some of the men from the village had seen them and taken them for ghosts, but as I myself saw your butler pulling them down early the next morning I supposed the whole story had been explained to the satisfaction of everybody.
Very sincerely yours,
FREDERICK WARE.

CHAPTER III.

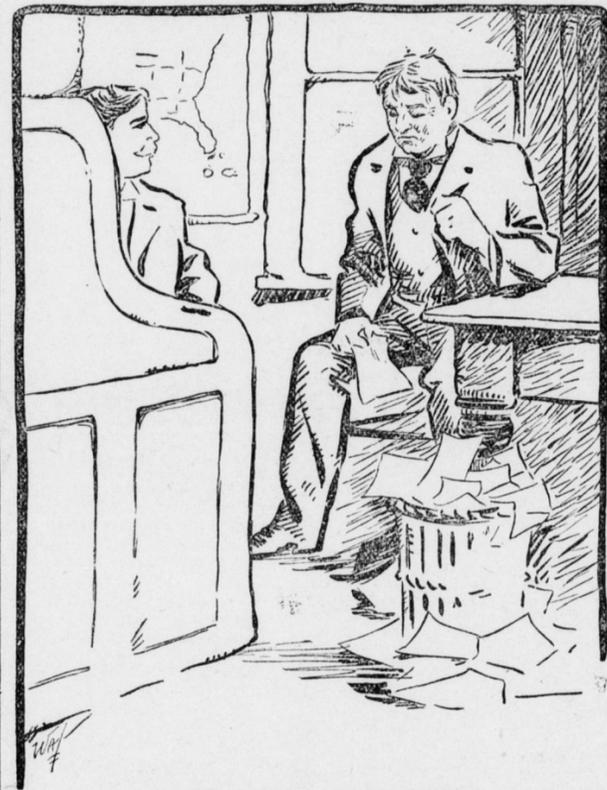
John Carney.

As Mr. Carney was ushered into my private office I rose to greet him, and stepped from behind my desk with outstretched hand; but as he raised his face to mine I drew back in amazement and disgust and motioned him to a chair with scant ceremony.

"Drunk! the beast!" I muttered to myself, as he shambled drowsily to the seat I had indicated and dropped into it with a thickly uttered "Thank you."

He seemed to fall asleep for a moment, and I eyed him steadily for some time before I could bring myself to speak. And so the handsome, straightforward, manly fellow of three years ago had sunk to this! A sodden, degraded wretch, unfit to associate with pigs in a sty, and yet the heir to a vast estate and the sole legitimate protector of the sweet-faced orphan at Carney-Croft who awaited his coming with the impatience born of love and hope and confiding trust! God help the poor girl now, and God help the accursed wretch that sat opposite me!

His heavy breathing wheezing in and out of his throat; his listless, stupid face, flushed and mottled from the effects of his excesses; his body, dripping with perspiration which stood out in beads on his forehead and glistened on his hand as it lay in the sunlight; and his drooping, blood-shot



"I Am Going to Carney-Croft To-Night."

eyes, now half closed and again wandering aimlessly about the room; all combined to make a disgusting picture. It was with the utmost difficulty that I could restrain my feelings sufficiently to address him with ordinary civility. Finally, my judgment prevailed over my indignation, and I remembered that I was the legal adviser, only, of the house of Carney, and not in any way concerned with the moral conduct of his head.

"You had a comfortable journey, I hope," I remarked icily.
"As comfortable as such a journey can be," he wheezed, turning his bleary eyes toward me as he spoke. "The conditions which made my homecoming necessary did not make my trip enjoyable, and I traveled with the greatest possible haste, as there are certain matters that I want you to arrange for me at once."

He spoke his words with a force and precision unusual in a man in his condition, but he was evidently controlling himself to the utmost degree and, as he talked, his face flushed in great blotches, his blood-shot eyes seemed almost bursting from his head, and the perspiration oozed from his body and trickled in little streams down his cheeks and neck.

"Do you wish to hear any of the details of your father's death?" I asked in a most matter of fact tone.

"No, thank you," he said, with some effort. "I found a long letter from Florence at my hotel this morning and she has told me everything. I wish merely to arrange some money affairs with you and make my will, and I wish to do so at once."

"How much money do you need for the present?" I asked, sarcastically.

"How much money do I need?" he repeated, in a bewildered tone. "Why, I don't need any. I have all the ready cash that I want. I only want to arrange for the future, you know."

"Very glad to hear it," I observed dryly. "Now, as to your will. Do you think, Mr. Carney, that your state of mind to-day is such that you are quite ready to make a will? Would it not be better for you to wait a day or so until—until you have had an op-

portunity to rest from your journey and your—ahem—your health has improved somewhat?"

I regretted my words on the instant. In spite of the man's condition, they seemed to have cut him to the quick. An expression of anguish, pitiful to see, passed over his face and his whole body trembled. After a moment he said slowly with the same wonderful self-control:

"My health, as you choose to call it, Mr. Ware, will not improve to any appreciable degree, and my mind is, at this moment, as clear as it will ever be. I wish you to draw up a will leaving everything I possess to my sister, Florence Carney, and I wish, also, to give you power of attorney so that from this time on, you can conduct the estate in my stead and supply her with such funds as she may need. I do not expect to spend much time at Carney-Croft and I want these matters attended to now, before I go there at all."

His ideas were so thoroughly in accord with his duty to his sister that I was now anxious to carry them out at once as he requested, lest another opportunity might never occur. It took but a short time to arrange the details of the will, and then it and the power of attorney were signed by him in a trembling hand and witnessed by members of my office staff.

When these formalities were over and we were alone again, Mr. Carney said abruptly:

"I am going to Carney-Croft to-night and have wired Florence to have a carriage for me at the midnight train and not to sit up. I don't expect to stay there long, and I should think it would be better to close the place and have her take a house here in town where she would be more comfortable."

"I made the same suggestion myself," I replied, "but she wrote that she felt perfectly safe at home, and

she wanted to remain until you came to take charge of things. As you have turned all such responsibility over to me, as your attorney, there is but one thing now to prevent her leaving."

"What else can there be?" he muttered thickly.

I watched him closely as I answered. "Do you not know that her friend, Miss Weston, is with her?"

"What! Annie Weston there!" he exclaimed. "Is she well?"

"No," I replied, studying him. "She is not at all well. In fact, she is too ill to be moved, and that is why Miss Carney cannot close the house at present."

"I never dreamed that Annie Weston would be in my house," he whispered, as if to himself. "Poor girl! Poor girl!"

"When Miss Carney asked her to come, Miss Weston did not know that you were to return, and even now she has not been told that you are on your way home," I continued. "Your sister was quite upset over the fact that, in asking Miss Weston to visit her when she was in such need of a companion she entirely forgot the disagreement between you a few years ago."

"Disagreement!" he almost shouted, pulling himself up in his chair. "Why, what on earth are you talking about, man? We had no disagreement, I tell you! Nothing of the sort. I suppose Florence told you that, but she knew nothing about it at all. I went away because Annie thought I ought to; but she was mistaken, poor girl! If I had stayed at home I shouldn't be in this condition now, but she thought it was for the best. Poor little woman, she tried so hard to do the best thing for me and—look at me now! Look at me, Ware! But she must not be disturbed under any circumstances. You say she does not know I am coming home. She must not be allowed to know it. As I told you, I shall not stay there long, and there is no need of her knowing that I am in the house. I shall not see her, Ware," he almost sobbed. "I'm not fit to see her! I'm not fit to see her, man!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

NEVER SO GREAT.

NEW RECORD MADE IN THE NUMBER OF STEEL RAIL BREAKAGES.

NEW YORK STATE RAILROAD COMMISSION CALLS ATTENTION TO IT IN BULLETIN.

Albany, N. Y. — Broken rails removed from the tracks of the railroads of this state during the three months of January, February and March just past were manifoldly more than in the corresponding three months of either past two years, according to a bulletin issued last night by the state railroad commission. The board "has just completed," says this bulletin, "an investigation of breakage of rails in the tracks of the principal steam railroad companies of the state."

"The unusual number reported during the past winter," the bulletin says, "caused the investigation at this time. The board has found that during the three months ending March 31, 1907, there was a total of 3,014 breakages on the principal steam lines of the state; during the corresponding three months of 1906 there was a total of 826, and during the corresponding three months of 1905 there was a total of 1,331."

One of the commission's tables analyzes the totals as to weight of the rails, and appears to show that while the breakage in 1905 and 1906 was chiefly in the 80-pound rails, the largest number in the quarter just past was in the 100-pound rails, of which 1,295 were removed—495 from the Lake Shore main line, and from the New York Central eastern main line 475; Mohawk division 217 and western main line 107.

The other table analyzes the figures as to date when the removed rails were rolled, and apparently showing heaviest breakage totals in rails rolled since 1899 and especially in those rolled in 1904, 1905 and 1906.

UNIQUE FEATURE.

Is Presented in the Massey Murder Trial—Son of Murdered Man Attends Court as an Expert in Criminology.

New York. — The bullet that killed Gustav Simon, the shirt waist manufacturer who was shot to death in his factory in Broadway last November, was on Thursday exhibited in the court where Mrs. Anisia De Massey is on trial, charged with having taken his life. While the deadly missile was passed from hand to hand by the jurymen she sat chatting with her counsel and from time to time making notes in a memorandum book.

Among the spectators in court were two sons of the murdered man. One of them, Dr. Carleton Simon, an expert in criminology, is making a study of the defendant.

Mrs. Anna Polanza, who had worked with the defendant in Simon's factory, said that when Simon, after he was shot, was being removed from his office to the elevator she heard a policeman, pointing to Mrs. De Massey, ask if that was the woman that fired the shots. "Yes," said Simon, "this is the woman. Madame De Massey shot me."

On motion of counsel for the defense and with the consent of the prosecution the statement of the witness that she heard Simon declare the shots were fired by the defendant was stricken from the record. From another witness, Elizabeth Hale, who was employed by Simon as a designer, however, the prosecution got about the same testimony.

THE STROUP-ROSS TRAGEDY.

The Murdered Man Expected Trouble at His Wedding—A Statement from His Fiancee.

Oil City, Pa.—The body of Miss Belle Stroup and that of Thaddeus E. Ross, her former sweetheart, whom she shot before committing suicide Wednesday, eight hours before the time fixed for Ross' marriage to another woman, were viewed by a coroner's jury Thursday, after which they were removed from the undertaking rooms.

Miss Sampson said yesterday: "I did not know Miss Stroup. I was aware Mr. Ross kept company with her before he commenced calling on me four years ago, but I was under the impression he had stopped and never dreamed of his corresponding with her. Had Miss Stroup come to me Wednesday when she arrived in Oil City or at any time after she first learned of our proposed marriage and told her story, I should never have permitted the marriage ceremony to have been performed. If Thad had promised to marry this girl, she should have been his wife."

Although living with his parents, Ross had a furnished room in a business block in the heart of the city where he sometimes slept and entertained guests. That he apprehended trouble at his wedding is shown by a request made of the Sampson family that there should be plenty of light in front of the house, in order that he might see the guests as they entered the front door. Ross was warned by friends that he should be careful.

Largest Herd of Bison Is Sold.
Denver, Col.—A message was received here Thursday that the Pablo herd of buffalo on the Flathead reservation, Montana, has been sold to the Canadian government. There are between 400 and 500 buffaloes in the herd, which is the largest in the world. The price is said to be \$150,000.

\$400,000 Fire Loss.
Minneapolis, Minn.—Fire totally destroyed the Wisconsin Central freight depot in this city Thursday, resulting a loss of \$400,000.

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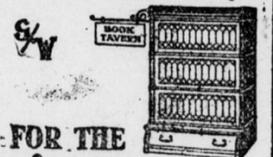
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