



The Mystery of Carney-Croft

By JOSEPH BROWN COOKE

(Copyright, 1907, by Story-Press Corporation.) CHAPTER XXIV.—Continued.

I puzzled long and deeply over these words, for they brought a new and hitherto unsuspected person into the case. Whom did the widow mean by "she?" It could not have been Miss Weston, who was too ill to leave her bed, and, after considerable thought, I was forced to believe, as the only possible explanation, that the pronoun referred to one of the servants in the house. This, to my mind, added materially to the gravity of the affair, for if unknown members of the domestic staff were concerned in the matter there was no telling how far the conspiracy might reach nor to what purpose it was carried on.

I had become so accustomed to mysterious happenings of this sort, and my head was so filled with visions of Miss Carney, and with the words I was now determined to say to her, that no impression could have been made on my mind by anything short of a most startling phenomenon.

As I have said, the message was evidently intended for Jenks and was from the widow, who, it seemed equally clear, either was or had been in the subterranean passage holding converse with its loathsome inhabitants.

From my window I could see that there were no lights in her cottage, and I was on the point of venturing forth again and, from a safe distance, watching the pit until she emerged and started for home, when a realization of my physical exhaustion took hold of me and I adopted the wiser plan of remaining in my room.

The night was far from restful, and at the first glimpse of daylight I dressed and returned to the manhole. There was a light fall of snow on the ground and I was not surprised to see that someone had climbed out of the shaft and gone across the lawn toward the Bruce house, but the lid of the manhole was securely fastened down as before.

In my efforts to raise it, or at least to assure myself that it was locked, I found, at the sides, two openings in the grating larger than the others and, slipping my revolver easily back and forth through one of these, I was no longer at a loss to understand how it had appeared so mysteriously the night before.

It was quite evident that it had been passed up through the opening and turned until it lay flat on the grating, the person below doubtless mistaking me for Jenks and misconstruing my efforts to raise the lid into a signal from the stage driver that he had arrived and was awaiting orders. That I did not understand this simple maneuver from the first and appreciate the situation at a glance was because of my highly excited nervous state and my subsequent encounter with Jenks himself.

On my return to the house I found the following telegram which had just arrived:

"Wire received. Will not await letter. Sure to arrive on time.

"CARNEY." This message was dated New York and, apparently, had been transmitted thence from the cable over the local wire to Carney-Croft. It must have been in response to my dispatch of the previous day and served to set my mind at rest as to the whereabouts and purposes of John Carney, which had been troubling me in an indefinite way for some time past.

The only thing now left for me to do seemed to be to remain virtually passive until he arrived, keeping a sharp watch on things, but taking no positive steps in his absence, unless unforeseen circumstances arose to call for immediate action. My chief desire was to see Miss Carney and make clear to her my feelings, but this seemed to be out of the question, as she remained constantly with Miss Weston and no longer came to any meals or showed herself about the house.

The country was fast taking on the mantle of white under which it was to sleep for so many long weeks, and it was with a comfortable shiver that I entered the library, just before luncheon, and strode up to the fire to warm my hands and toast my shins and back successively.

I found Miss Weston's physician similarly engaged and asked him solicitously concerning his patient.

His face clouded and I even thought I saw a tear in the corner of his eye, for, like all doctors with the right kind of stuff in them, familiarity with human suffering had only warmed his heart and softened his nature.

"I had hoped," he continued, "that young Carney's return would have a good effect on her, but when we told her of the message that came this morning she only drew the sheets over her face and broke down completely. There is something more to this, Mr. Ware, than the mere absence of her sweetheart, but what it is I cannot even imagine."

"Then you know nothing of the mystery of Carney-Croft?" I asked cautiously, closing the door and speaking in a low tone.

"The mystery of Carney-Croft!" he exclaimed in bewildered surprise and then his face relaxed and he smiled pleasantly as he said: "Oh! you mean the ghost stories that were told about here after Mr. Carney died?"

"Well," I returned, "ghosts or something of the sort were really seen about the place, were they not?"

His smile broadened as he replied: "Oh, yes, some of the boys did rig themselves up in sheets and play spook for a time, until I took a hand in it myself and drove them out. I was going to send you word about it, but I found it was only a lot of boyish pranks, and that they hadn't done any harm beyond getting into the old tunnel by the river, and, of course, that didn't amount to anything."

"The old tunnel!" I exclaimed in well-feigned surprise. "Is there a tunnel by the river?"

"You never heard of it, of course," he went on, "and I fancy nearly everyone has forgotten it by this time. When Mr. Carney began to build here he located his house some 200 yards farther down the hill toward the water. He had a plan of running a little tunnel from the cellar to the river so that ashes and other refuse from the house could be taken out that way and not clutter up the lawns or be seen from the windows."

"Just as this work was partially completed the old dam, some two miles up the stream, was demolished and a new one built about a mile below. This raised the water level until the far end of his tunnel was completely submerged and so he gave up the scheme entirely and began a new cellar quite a distance back from the first. The partly finished tunnel and the excavation for the original cellar were covered over and had practically been forgotten by everybody except the boys, who used to dive down and swim into the hole in the summer."

"Then, as I say, they got the idea of playing ghost and would run down the hill in the moonlight with nothing on but a sheet or a piece of old fish net

"Keep away from that hole and do nothing till you get my letter. Your life may depend on it. Wire if you wish me to come."

The messenger was waiting and, with no thought of the letter to which he referred, but only to hasten the time when some one would be with me to whom I could talk, I replied with the single word, "Come."

CHAPTER XXV. A Drive in the Storm.

A moment later the doctor returned hurriedly to the library for his medicine case and said:

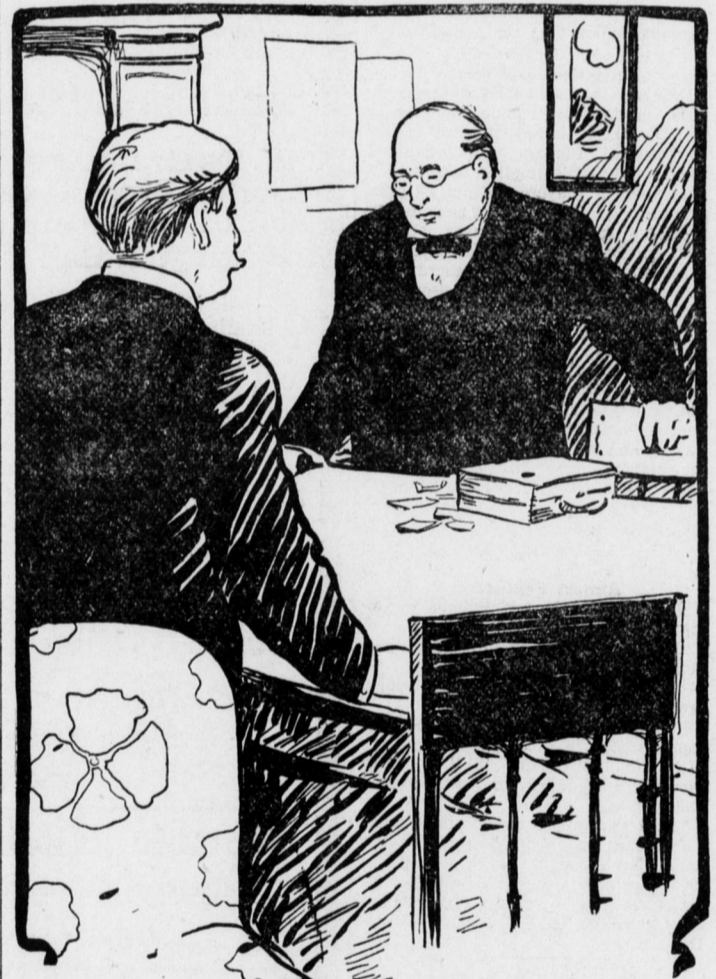
"I wish we could get consultation here in the country," he continued, measuring out some powders with a critical air and depositing them on bits of paper which he had cut for the purpose. "Most of the deaths in this part of the world are from accident or old age, and a man with a large city practice and extensive hospital experience might possibly suggest some means of prolonging her life for a time. We cannot hope to save her, but I wish we could keep her till Carney comes."

"I have telegraphed my friend MacArdel to come and help me solve the mystery of the place," I ventured cautiously, not wishing to hurt his professional pride. "You know he was with me here last summer and we had a number of very peculiar experiences then, so he knows a good deal about it already, and I thought we could work together to advantage. Perhaps he could be of service to you at the same time."

"The very man!" exclaimed the doctor. "I know him well by reputation. When will he arrive?"

"If my wire is delivered promptly he can get here on the midnight train," I replied. "I know he will start at once, for I sent for him at his own suggestion, in response to a letter from me telling him of the tunnel affair, and I think he has some very definite theories on the subject."

"Just the thing!" cried the doctor, picking up the powders and hurrying toward the door. "Let me know the minute he sets foot in the house. I shall be here all night."



"We Cannot Hope to Save Her."

which waved out far out behind them. When they got to the edge of the bank they would emit some sort of a ghostly yell and dive down out of sight. Finally, when all the young girls in the neighborhood began to get hysterics, I discovered what was going on and put a stop to it by giving two or three of the ringleaders a sound thrashing and installing a family of beavers in the tunnel who vigorously attacked all future intruders."

The doctor laughed heartily as he finished his little tale and concluded by saying: "There have been occasional rumors of ghost since then, I know, but I fancy that is the biggest mystery Carney-Croft ever had."

"Doctor," I returned seriously, "there is a far greater mystery than that going on here this very minute. That tunnel is again occupied, by whom I do not know, but the man or men who are down there are in league with that Bruce woman who lives in the new cottage, and with Jenks, the stage driver. Moreover, these people are connected in some inexplicable way with Miss Weston, and the Bruce woman, who seems to be the head and front of the whole thing, has written letters to Miss Weston, and even to me, most of which contain vague references to Miss Carney and threats that—"

"The Bruce woman written to you?" exclaimed the doctor. "Why, my dear sir, it is impossible! I have known the woman for a dozen years and she cannot read a word or write a letter!"

At that moment he was summoned hurriedly to Miss Weston's room and I was handed a telegram from MacArdel which read:

As he left the room I strove to collect my scattered thoughts and determine the present aspect of the situation. If the widow could not write, who, in heaven's name, did send the notes? It did not appear probable that the doctor was wrong in what he had said, and, moreover, the statement served to explain the merriment of Jenks when I had accused her directly of being the author of the letters.

Still, she had assumed all responsibility for them, which was tantamount to writing them as far as their practical features were concerned, and I finally decided that if they were not her own work they must have been written at her dictation, which really amounted to the same thing.

I spent the afternoon in the library, hoping that I might see Miss Carney and at least offer her my sympathy in her present trouble, even if I said no more at this time, but she did not come down stairs during the entire day, and at dinner she sent me word by Mrs. Randolph that Dr. MacArdel would be very welcome, not only because I had asked him to come, but for himself as well, and in the hope that he might be of benefit to Miss Weston. The storm had increased steadily all day but, in spite of its fury and the drifts that were piling up and blocking the roads at every point, I announced my determination to go with the sleigh to meet MacArdel.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Splendid Prospect.

"Do you see any great future for Panama?" "Certainly. Look at the great excursion resort it has already become."—Washington Star.

FULLY UP WITH THE TIMES.

Oklahoma City Surprised Narrow-Minded New Yorker.

Oklahoma amazes an easterner. The wide, asphalted streets, the plate glass fronts of department stores, the clean sidewalks, the well-dressed, unhurried shoppers, the finish, the metropolitan air you find in Oklahoma City, for example, seem marvelous to find in a territory only 17 years old. But do not say so.

A New Yorker who went there on business complained that fate was thrusting him into a wilderness, and his Oklahoma associates could not reassure him. But coming down to breakfast the first morning, at his hotel in Oklahoma City, he stared around in wonder as he entered the dining-room.

"This," he exclaimed, "this is Oklahoma! Why, do you know?" confidentially, "I even found a porcelain bathtub in my room."

"Well," said an Oklahoman, drily, "don't you have those in New York?"

BABY TORTURED BY ITCHING.

Rash Covered Face and Feet—Would Cry Until Tired Out—Speedy Cure by Cuticura.

"My baby was about nine months old when she had rash on her face and feet. Her feet seemed to irritate her most, especially nights. They would cause her to be broken in her rest, and sometimes she would cry until she was tired out. I had heard of so many cures by the Cuticura Remedies that I thought I would give them a trial. The improvement was noticeable in a few hours, and before I had used one box of the Cuticura Ointment her feet were well and have never troubled her since. I also used it to remove what is known as 'cradle cap' from her head, and it worked like a charm, as it cleansed and healed the scalp at the same time. Mrs. Hattie Currier, Thomaston, Me., June 9, 1906."

The Manchester canal was built at a cost of \$75,000,000 to reduce freight rates for a distance of 35 miles, and, while it did not prove a good interest bearing investment on such a large expenditure, its indirect and more permanent benefits are said to have warranted it.

Germany has 3,000 miles of canal, carefully maintained, besides 7,000 miles of other waterway. France, with an area less than we would consider a large state, has 3,000 miles of canal; and in the northern part, where the canals are most numerous, the railways are more prosperous. England, Germany, France, Holland and Belgium are all contemplating further extension and improvement of their canal systems.—Century Magazine.

Late Already.

Five minutes after the tardy gong had struck, the principal of the school was walking through the lower hall when he saw a pudgy little fellow scampering toward the first grade room as fast as his fat legs could carry him. "See here, young man, I want to talk to you," called the principal to the late comer. "I haven't got time to talk to you; I'm late already," replied the breathless beginner as the door of his classroom closed.—The Circle.

Punishment by Inches.

A Bergen (Genesee county) justice of the peace has adopted an original scheme for the dispensation of justice. Henry Meyer, 27 years old and seven feet two inches tall, was a prisoner in his court for stealing four bags of oats. He was sentenced to 90 days in jail, one day for each inch of stature and one for each bag.—Nunda (N. Y.) News.

Yes, Yes.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Tartleigh, "when you die you expect to meet all your husbands?" "You are very rude," retorted Mrs. Muchwedde. "When I die I expect to go to heaven."—Young's Magazine.

WHAT'S THE USE?

To Pour in Coffee When It Acts as a Vicious Enemy.

Fasters have gone without food for many days at a time but no one can go without sleep. "For a long time I have not been sleeping well, often lying awake for two or three hours during the night but now I sleep sound every night and wake up refreshed and vigorous," says a Calif. woman.

"Do you know why? It's because I used to drink coffee but I finally cut it out and began using Postum. Twice since then I have drunk coffee and both times I passed a sleepless night, and so I am doubly convinced coffee caused the trouble and Postum removed it."

"My brother was in the habit of drinking coffee three times a day. He was troubled with sour stomach and I would often notice him getting soda from the can to relieve the distress in his stomach; lately hardly a day passed without a dose of soda for relief."

"Finally he tried a cup of Postum and liked it so well he gave up coffee and since then he has been drinking Postum in its place and says he has not once been troubled with sour stomach."

Even after this lady's experience with coffee her brother did not suspect for a time that coffee was causing his sour stomach, but easily proved it.

Coffee is not suspected in thousands of cases just like this but it's easily proved. A ten day's trial works wonders. "There's a Reason."

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He Was Not to Blame.
Little Bartholomew's mother overheard him swearing like a mule driver, says the Cleveland Leader. He displayed a fluency that overwhelmed her. She took him to task, explaining the wickedness of profanity as well as its vulgarity. She asked him where he had learned all those dreadful words. Bartholomew announced that Cavert, one of his playmates, had taught him. Cavert's mother was straightway informed and Cavert was brought to book. He vigorously denied having instructed Bartholomew, and neither threats nor tears could make his confess. At last he burst out: "I didn't tell Bartholomew any cuss words. Why should I know how to cuss any better than he does? Hasn't his father got an automobile, too?"

Not His Element.
"And if I give you money," said the philanthropist, "will you promise to go and take a bath?"
Redface Leary drew himself up to his full height.
"A bath? And is it a mermaid you take me for?" he cried bitterly.

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