

The Snake Scotched AND Justice Done.

CHAPTER XXXII.

(Continued.)
At the moment Talbot and Gibbon were struggling on the wall of the viaduct. Mr. Selby entered the hotel and asked for Miss Gresham and Mr. Sainsbury.

They saw by his face, which was an eloquent one, excepting when he was in court or wished to conceal his thoughts, that he had something of importance to communicate to them; and Veronica entered the sitting-room in a state of suppressed excitement not unminged with a vague fear and dread.

"What is it, Mr. Selby?" she asked, apprehensively. "I see that something has happened. Why did you call my cousin, Mr. Talbot Denby, as witness?" she added, with a woman's quickness.

"Because I wanted him—forgive me, Miss Veronica—it was wonderful how soon all her friends got to calling her by her Christian name; they excused themselves by saying that it was so beautiful; they really meant that the owner was so lovable—but I wanted him in many senses of the word. I am going to ask you to be brave, and I know I shan't ask in vain, for you have been—well, simply heroic during this hard time. But prepare yourself for a shock. Miss Veronica, I think indeed I am nearly sure, that I have found the murderer."

Veronica sank into a chair, and Mr. Sainsbury and Burchett, who had entered the room, exclaimed.

Mr. Selby nodded.
"Yes; in my opinion the man who killed James Oatway was—Miss Veronica, I have warned you; you will be calm? Is—his voice dropped—'Mr. Talbot Denby!'"

Notwithstanding the warning, Veronica started, and a cry of horror and incredulity escaped her.

"Talbot!" she said. "Oh, no, no! It is impossible!"
"Nothing is so possible as the unexpected. That is a truism which is brought home to us lawyers every day in the week. Listen. My suspicions were first roused by the fact that Mr. Denby had been out in the woods that night, and that he had—denied it."

"He wanted to avoid being mixed up with the case," murmured Veronica. "Besides, what motive could Talbot have in—killing the man?"

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Mr. Selby drew Grey aside.
"Wire to Scotland Yard and tell them to keep an eye on Mr. Talbot Denby," he said.
Grey started.

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connection was there between them?"
"The first question I can't answer definitely, though I can give a tolerable guess; the other I can. Look at this." He took a silver match-box from his pocket. "If you remember, this was found on the body. At the time no one thought anything about it. It is true that it has the Denby crest; but the man might have picked it up or stolen it."

"Yes, yes!" she assented, eagerly.
"Oh, yes!"

"Yes; but, on the other hand, it may have been given him by Mr. Talbot Denby. Anyway, Grosier, to whom I showed it just now, says that he noticed it in Oatway's hand the day of the murder, and that he had not seen it in his possession before then; and he could not have failed to observe it if Oatway had possessed it, used it. Now there is the connection between the two. It is a small, almost invisible link, but it is a link, and I think I can construct the rest of the drama from it."

"How?" asked Mr. Sainsbury.
"By Mr. Denby's aid," replied Mr. Selby. "I am going to ask him a few questions. There are several ways of asking questions, but I know of one—it is common property to us lawyers—by which the interrogated is led on to answer more than he is asked. For instance, I shall ask Mr. Talbot if he minds my smoking, and shall borrow a match. He will not have one or he will bring out a brand-new match-box. I shall admire it, remark on its newness, and he will volunteer the statement that he bought it to replace an old one which he lost—he will say how long ago. Then—he shrugged his shoulders—'well, I shall forget that chain, Miss Veronica. I am going to the court to see Mr. Talbot. You will say nothing to Mr. Ralph—beg pardon!—Lord Denby!'"

He had himself driven to Lynne Court and enquired for Mr. Denby.
"Mr. Denby went by the four-thirty. He was called to town on important business, sir," said the butler.

"Bad news?" asked Mr. Selby.
"What a beautiful place you have here! Great responsibility for you! I hope it wasn't bad news?"
The butler shook his head.

"I'm afraid that there—there was something wrong, sir," he said, gravely. "I heard his lordship the earl and Mr. Denby talking, you might say quarrelling, in the library."

Mr. Selby drove back to Halsery and got hold of Mr. Grey, and they went to the station. The sleepy-headed porter said that, yes, Mr. Gibbon and Mr. Denby—he put Gibbon first—had driven up to the station and that they'd gone by the four-thirty. He hadn't seen them get into the train, but Mr. Gibbon had taken the tickets, and of course they wouldn't have taken the tickets.

They hadn't wanted to go.
Mr. Selby drew Grey aside.

"Wire to Scotland Yard and tell them to keep an eye on Mr. Talbot Denby," he said.
Grey started.

"Surely you don't suspect—" he exclaimed; but at last Mr. Selby got the wire sent off.

Then he went back to Halsery, and shutting himself up in his room went over the case point for point. Presently there came a knock at the door, and thinking it was the servant come to tell him that dinner was ready, he called out:

"Don't want any dinner. Go away!"
But the door opened and Grey came in. He was pale and excited and so breathless that he could scarcely speak.

"There's—there's been an accident!" he stammered.

Mr. Selby frowned impatiently. What were accidents to him, engrossed in the case?

"All right. Send for the doctor—what do you bother me for? Any answer from Scotland Yard yet?"

Grey shook his head desperately.
"No need to wait for that, Mr. Selby. The accident's happened to Mr. Talbot Denby!"

Mr. Selby sprang to his feet all-alert and interested.

"Mr. Denby?"
"Yes; his man, his valet, Gibbon, was lying beside him. In fact, they were lying gripping each other as if—as if they'd been struggling or caught at one another as they fell."

Mr. Selby was reaching for his hat.
"Where are they?" he asked.

"At Lynne Court," replied Grey.
"The boy was frightened—as well he might be!—and ran home screaming. He met some men, and recognising Mr. Talbot Denby, they carried both to Lynne Court."

"Get a fly!" said Mr. Selby.
"I've got one already."

"Are they dead?" asked Mr. Selby, as the fly started.

Grey shook his head.
"I can't say—I didn't stop to enquire, but came to you at once."

"Quite right! Hi! stop!"
They were opposite the Roebuck.

He ran in and found Veronica. She had heard the news and was pale and oppressed by the tragedy.

"You will come with me?" he said.
"The earl will want you."

For answer she went upstairs and returned to him in a few minutes with her hat and jacket on.

Little was said during the drive. They found the Court in a state of excitement, servants standing in groups in the hall, the butler moving about as if he were unconscious of his actions.

"The earl!" were Veronica's first words.

"In his room, miss. Oh, Miss Veronica, I'm so glad you've come!—it's—'it's an awful thing."

Veronica went straight to the earl's room. He was sitting in his chair, his face white and drawn, his hands shaking.

"Veronica!" escaped his lips, with evident thankfulness and gratitude at her presence. "I—I am glad you have come!"

She knelt beside him and took his hands in hers.

"Tell me, dear," she murmured, "is—is he badly injured?"

He looked at her strangely, as if with a grim satisfaction.

"Talbot, you mean? He is dead," he said, solemnly. "He was dead when they found him. His man Gibbon is alive—as yet. He lies in the adjoining room. Doctor Campbell is there."

"Talbot dead?" she said. It was hard to believe.

He inclined his head.
"Yes."

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"How—how did it happen?" she asked, in a whisper.

He shook his head.
"I cannot tell you. I do not know. I only know how they found them. They must have fallen from the viaduct, but how, I cannot say."

"Mr. Selby is here," she whispered.

"Would—would you like to see him?"
As the earl made a gesture of indifference, Mr. Selby knocked at the door and entered.

"Forgive me, my lord," he said, "but I must ask you to come with me. You are a magistrate, and are needed. I have sent a carriage for Lord Sainsbury, another magistrate—"

The earl, by Veronica, rose, and followed Mr. Selby. They passed the room in which Talbot's shattered body lay and entered the dressing-room, to which Gibbon had been carried.

(To be continued.)

Too Late.

Two of the more impressive sights of a railroad grading camp are the marvellous alacrity of the men in responding to the call for dinner and their unparalleled quickness in wrapping themselves around their grub. During construction of a new branch line in Saskatchewan an old farmer furnished one of the grading camps with vegetables. He often arrived at the camp at meal time and was always greatly impressed with the voracity of the men. The work was hard and when the call for dinner was given every man made a rush for the table and the food disappeared in quick time. One day, a workman on his way to the table tripped on the root of a tree and fell. He lay all sprawled out, making no attempt to rise. The farmer in great concern rushed to him. "Are you hurt, are you hurt?" he asked anxiously. "No," answered the man. "Well, why don't you get up and go to your dinner?" "No use," returned the other sadly. "It's too late now."

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