

## A Traceless Poison

(Original)  
Having been summoned as an expert in chemistry in the Nolan case, I concluded my testimony with the remark: "A person desiring to kill another would be more likely to use a poison that would leave no trace," whereupon the prosecuting attorney asked me if there was such a poison. I having replied that there was, he asked me to name it. The judge forbade me to do so. The prosecutor insisted, but the judge was insistent. He would not permit me to name publicly a poison that would leave no trace.

Immediately after my testimony was published I was deluged with letters inquiring the name of the poison that left no trace. Most of them doubtless came from idle curiosity, but I was astonished at the number of those which showed plainly, from the pains the writers took to conceal their identity, that they were written for an evil purpose.

One day I received a call from a woman who asked for the secret. She said she had made a bet with her brother, who was a scientist, of \$1,000 that there was such a poison, and she desired to prove it to him by trying it on a dog. If I would give her the name of the poison and she won she would give me half the amount.

I questioned her, then, going into another room, returned with a tiny pill, which I gave her, saying that if it killed the dog and left no trace she might refer her brother to me for evidence that she had won the bet. When she left I sent a housemaid to follow her, who brought me her address. Sending for a detective, I directed him to establish some sort of a watch on the house where she lived, to shadow her when she went out and report to me any case of illness that might occur to any one with whom she might be connected.

In a few days my man reported that the lady's husband had died suddenly. It had been given out that he had suffered an apoplectic stroke and had not lived an hour after.

I was thunderstruck. I alone knew the nature of the pill I had given the woman, and of course she would keep the secret. Nevertheless I was very much troubled at the result. I directed the detective to keep her under strict surveillance. Later he reported to me that she had visited the office of a life insurance company. Upon inquiry he had learned that her husband had been insured for \$50,000. I hurried to the insurance office, called on the president and advised him before paying the claim to make sure that there was no trickery connected with it. But I would answer no questions.

The next I heard of the case was that upon examination of the body—exhumed for the purpose—it was discovered that it was the remains of the brother of the man insured. The insured himself had disappeared. Payment was refused, and the woman was arrested on a charge of fraud, to which was added a charge of murder.

The body of the deceased was given over to physicians with a view to discovering if the man had died a natural death. One reported apoplexy as the cause, another heart trouble and another kidney disease. Three different experts reported three different poisons found in the body. There was opium, arsenic and one other, the name of which I have forgotten. I was summoned as a witness for the prosecution and produced a sensation by refusing to testify on the ground of self incrimination.

Afterward I consented to give my evidence. I informed the court of the woman's visit to me, of her request for a poison that would leave no trace and the use she proposed to make of it. Then I told them that I had given her the pill. At this point a technical objection was interposed by the defendant's counsel, and the judge sustained him. I was forbidden to tell what was in the pill, the reason being that it had not been proved that the pill had been used. This left me in a very unfortunate position.

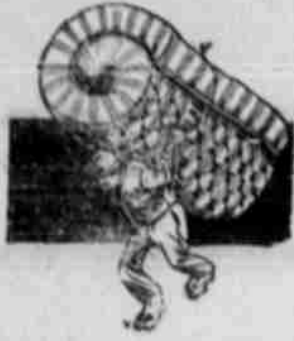
After a long trial the woman was acquitted of the charge of murder, and the charge of fraud was never pressed. The prosecution had failed to prove she knew that the man who was buried was her husband's brother or that she had poisoned him. Her counsel contrived to throw all the blame on her husband, who had disappeared.

After her acquittal the woman came to see me. She was curious to know if I had been deceived by her story about the bet and if I had really given her a traceless pill. Before replying I asked her to explain the case to me, and, after a solemn promise on my part to keep her secret, she did so.

Her husband's life was largely insured, and since they were an ill-mated couple she resolved to poison him. Just as she was about to give him the pill I had furnished her her husband's brother came to the house for a visit. His health had been broken down by excesses, especially drugs that he had taken in large quantities. While at their house he suddenly died, probably of heart failure. The woman proposed to her husband that he disappear and his brother, who resembled him closely, be buried in his stead. This was done.

I told her she would find an explanation of my part in the matter in the paper the next morning. My explanation recited my experiences as to a traceless poison and my desire to make a test case. The whole filled two columns, at the end of which I gave the contents of the pill I had given the woman.

It was made of bread.  
HAROLD OTIS.



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53 acres one mile from Independence; all cultivated and fenced; no improvements. The place will be sold for.....\$3000

600 acres four miles from Dallas; 50 acres in cultivation; quarter mile from rail road; enough axle-handle grab oak to pay for the place; six-room house; ideal dairy and goat ranch. Per acre.....\$20.00

28 acres adjoining city limits of Independence; all in cultivation, one-third acre in strawberries and other fruits on place; two-story house, five rooms below; dug well with abundance of water; large barn and chicken house; woven wire around place, also cross fences. 3000, including household furniture and farm implements. A bargain.

192 acres one mile from Independence; fenced with woven wire and well improved; cross fences of woven wire. This is a real farm. All in cultivation except 15 acres in timber and pasture; large 8-room house; barn 40x50; other outbuildings, such as machine-sheds, chicken houses, etc.; living water on place and good dug well. Per acre \$100.

215 acres, two miles from Independence is another of the good farms near Independence; level, but with 17 feet drainage in half mile; 200 acres in cultivation, rest in good oak timber; new barn 40x56; chicken houses and other buildings; a young orchard of 115 trees just coming into bearing, also old orchard; has good well, windmill and tower, with water piped to house; good fences and cross fences, cow barn 40x44, granary, etc. Can be bought for \$60.00 an acre.

102 acres, seven miles south of Independence, one mile from two school houses; 45 acres in cultivation; young orchard of 100 trees, eight years old; 25 acres of oak and fir timber on place; living water runs through corner of place; 7-room cottage built last year, good barn 50x34; place fenced with woven wire; telephone goes with place; after October 1st will have to buy crop that is seeded to get possession. Price for this place, \$3300.

22 acres, two and one-half miles from Independence; rolling, good land; 14 acres in cultivation; house has three rooms below, upper rooms not finished; barn 20x30; good well with plenty of water; fenced with barbed wire and woven wire; good spring on place. Place cost \$50 in grub and stumps. Can be bought for \$1200.

33 1-3 acres, one and one-half miles from Independence, bottom land; has hop yard of 10 acres on it; best quality onion land; 30 acres in cultivation; all fenced; old buildings. A good buy. Place can be bought for \$4000.

53 acres, one and one-half miles from Albany, in highest state of cultivation; 27 acres in Baldwin and Johnathan apples; young orchard in all kinds of fruit and two acres in berries; orchard is in first-class shape; Baldwins had seven boxes apples to tree this season; six acres in clover pasture; barn 40x45; dwelling is 8-room house; good well with water in house; three crops would pay for place. Situated on slope Place can be bought for \$2000 and balance on long time at six per cent. Price \$3000.

8 lots, beautifully situated in Independence. All or part of them will be sold cheap.

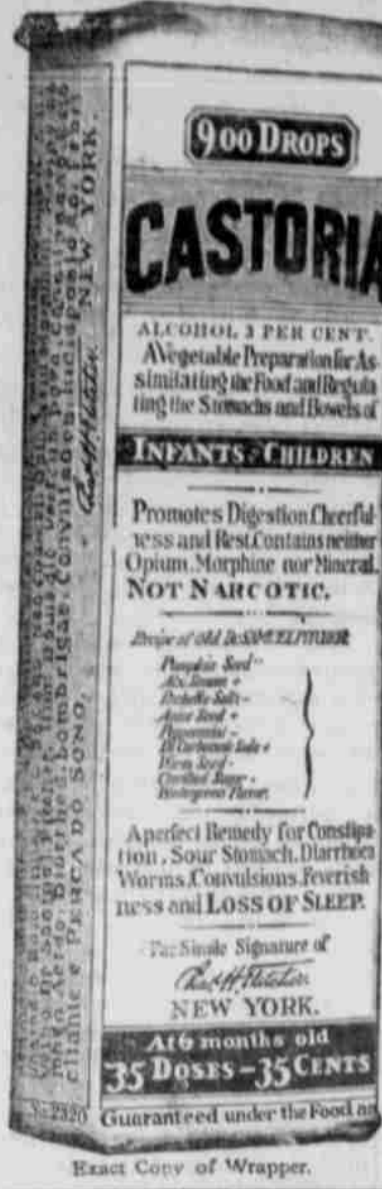
9-room house and three lots in Independence; large septic tank; hot and cold water and bath; electric lights and telephone; barn, fruit and berries; range and linoleum will go with place, \$2200.

Good 7-room house and 8 lots; barn, chicken house and wood house, fruit trees, strawberries and small fruits. In Independence. \$850.

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7-room house, with closets and two lots, in Damon & Haley's addition to Monmouth. Outside city limits. Best well water in Monmouth; chicken house, wood house, fruit trees; house is old but is very comfortable. \$400.

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