

Outrageous Fortune

by Patricia Wentworth

SYNOPSIS: The first step toward proving that her cousin Jim Randall is not the same as the one who stole the money is to trace down the money's whereabouts. She starts to London to do it, pondering meanwhile the fact that she is sure she did not do it, and that she is sure she did not do it, and that she is sure she did not do it.

Chapter 26
FINGERPRINT BOOK

CAROLINE had the sensation of having made a horrible error. That she should have followed her old nurse's sister was a piece of the most devastating bad luck. Perhaps she didn't know her—

Mrs. Rodgers nodded again.

"I knew you at once, miss, though I could see as you didn't know me. You haven't changed a mite since Harry 'ud bring you in for a cup of tea and some of my mint honey. I've put on a bit since those days, so I made sure you didn't know me."

"Mrs. Rodgers—"

"I'm a-going to tell you what Mrs. Henry told me, and I'm not a-going to ask you why you want to know, because maybe I know already and maybe I don't—and anyway least said, soonest mended."

"Yes!" said Caroline in a whisper.

"What I said in the train is neither here nor there. There isn't a servant up at the Hall as don't know there was a tray and glasses in the study the night Mr. Van Berg was shot, and the housemaid see with her own eyes how the police took the fingerprints— a clapper-tongued woman if there ever was one—so there ain't no secrets there. No—it was the butler told Mrs. Henry what I'm a-telling you."

"What did she tell you?"

"When they had finished taking the fingerprints and all the rest of it, the inspector he sees all the servants separate, and then he has the butler back he says,

"I understand, he says, 'as Mr. Van Berg kep' a book with all his friends' fingerprints in it,' he says. 'That's right,' says Jackson—that's the butler's name. 'Well, says the inspector, 'I want to see that book.'"

"And Jackson, he says, 'It's always a-laying on Mr. Van Berg's table, and whenever he has a visitor he gets him to make his mark and sign his name.' And the inspector laughs and says, 'Very handy for us, Mr. Jackson.'"

Caroline's eyes widened.

"And then it wasn't so handy after all," said Mrs. Rodgers—for lo and behold the book wasn't nowhere to be seen."

The blood came back into Caroline's cheeks with a rush.

"And where was it?" she demanded.

"Pushed right down behind all the books at the back of the bookshelf. They went on looking till they'd found it. And then what do you think?"

"I don't know," said Caroline, trembling.

Mrs. Rodgers looked at her with a kind of awful pity.

"There was a page torn out," she said.

Perhaps it was, because she had been awake all night, perhaps it was because she had had a dreadful picture in her own mind of a finger-print with Jim's name signed underneath it, but at these words, she faintly.

SHE was really only unconscious for about a minute, but it was long enough for Mrs. Rodgers to have laid her down flat. She had got a new cabbage-leaf out of the basket and was fanning her with it.

Caroline opened her eyes wide. She got up on her elbow, and remembered why she had fainted—she had been so horribly afraid that Mrs. Rodgers was going to say that the police had found Jim's fingerprints. A page had been torn out. Was it that page? Who had torn it out?

Mrs. Rodgers was kneeling on the grass. She sat back on her heels, fanning herself now instead of Caroline.

"Who tore out the page?" said Caroline. She didn't feel as if she could wait a single moment before she asked that question.

"Who do you suppose?" said Mrs. Rodgers.

"I don't know."

"Who would tear it out, if it wasn't the one who shot Mr. Van Berg? It

stands to reason he wouldn't go away and leave his fingerprints there all ready for the police, and his name signed to them— would he?"

Caroline bit her lip. There was something wrong about the way Mrs. Rodgers was arguing, but she couldn't quite get hold of it—only there was something wrong. She thought of Jim, and she said with a rush,

"Oh, he wouldn't! A friend wouldn't!"

Mrs. Rodgers shook her head. "Nobody can't say that. Folks gets quarrelling, and you can't say what'll happen. But Mrs. Henry, she says, and she holds to it very strong, 'What 'ud be the good of his tearing the fingerprints out of the book and leaving the glass 'ud drunk out of fairly plastered with 'em? It wouldn't 'ave took 'im 'art a minute to 'ave wiped them off,' she says—and there's something in that."

She got up and dusted her knees with the cabbage-leaf. "I can't sit on my 'eels like I could when I was a gel. Two hundred pound's 300 pounds, and I shouldn't wonder if it wasn't more by now." She sat down on the stile again.

A little color came back into Caroline's cheeks. That was it—that was what she had been trying to get hold of. If it had been Jim who had torn the page out of the book, then why hadn't he wiped his glass? Everyone knows about fingerprints nowadays. He hadn't wiped his glass because he hadn't anything to hide. He hadn't shot Elmer Van Berg.

She knelt by Mrs. Rodgers and laid a hand on her knee.

"In the train you said—"

Mrs. Rodgers looked grim. "And I'd better have held my tongue. No need to tell me that."

"Oh, I didn't mean that—I didn't truly. Oh, dear Mrs. Rodgers—I didn't mean anything like that."

Mrs. Rodgers relaxed a little.

"In for a penny, in for a pound. What did I say?"

"Something about Mrs. Van Berg's maid."

"A French 'ussy!" said Mrs. Rodgers. "And if Mrs. Van Berg 'ad 'art of the things that 'ussy's been 'int'ing—Not that it's only foreigners that's given to it, for that there Miss Bussell that's housekeeper at the Hall she's the worse of the two, and the dear knows how Mrs. Henry's stood it, for I wouldn't."

Caroline patted Mrs. Rodgers' knee.

"What did the maid say?"

"Miss Louise, they call her. Well, she don't say nothing. That's just her aggravatingness—she'll 'int and 'int until you're sick, sore and sorry, and then she'll slip out of the whole thing and pretend she never said nothing."

"What does she hint?"

Mrs. Rodgers gave a kind of snort. "Int! She's as good as said it wasn't no secret to her what name was tore out, and then went back on it."

"How could she know what name had been torn out?"

"There isn't much goes on in the house as she don't know—picking, and prying, and 'inting! 'Orrid, I call it! Letting on she knows things about Mrs. Van Berg too!"

"What sort of things?"

"She's a wicked 'ussy," said Mrs. Rodgers, "and I wouldn't repeat what she says, if it weren't for a warning. You might know someone as wanted warning, or you mightn't. If you don't, there's no harm done. Now, my dear—whether the police have got wind of it or not, I can't say, but what that 'ussy keeps 'inting is just that, that her mistress, Mrs. Van Berg, knows a sight more than she lets on."

"A gentleman quarrels with another gentleman about a lady and shoots him—what a good idea to hide the emeralds and say a thief has done it!" she says. And when Mrs. Henry and me presses her, she says she is talking about a story she has been reading in a magazine—and how I kep' my hands off her, I don't know and I can't say."

Caroline got up a little uncertainly. She held to the cross-bar of the stile and leaned against it. She wanted to get away from Mrs. Rodgers before she said anything more.

Jim wasn't in love with Gusie Van Berg—it couldn't be true that he was, or that he had quarrelled with Elmer Van Berg and shot him, and hidden away the emeralds to make it look like a burglary.

She said, "There'll be another train—I must catch it."

Mrs. Rodgers got up too.

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ed a \$14,705.40 claim against Baker county in a decision rendered here today by Circuit Judge Wilson. The city sued the county for \$26,102.23 which it claimed was due outroad taxes the county collected but did not turn over to the city under statutory provisions requiring counties making special road levies to turn back 50 per cent of the amount collected to incorporated municipalities.

The case was assigned to Judge Wilson from Baker county and was argued on written briefs.

The taxes in question were for the years 1928 to 1930.

Judge Wilson held the county was not liable for the years 1928, 1929 or 1930 because no separate law had been made during those years, but that it was liable for the other years.

BAKER AWARDED ROAD TAX MONEY

THE DALLES, Ore., Oct. 21.—(AP)—The city of Baker was today awarded a \$14,705.40 claim against Baker county in a decision rendered here today by Circuit Judge Wilson.

BLUEBLOOD STOCK CURRIED FOR SHOW

PORTLAND, Oct. 20.—(AP)—Horses of matchless beauty, blunt, powerful bulls, and the aristocracy of sheep, swine, fowls and pets were gathered under the vast roof of the Pacific International Livestock exposition building here today, groomed for the formal opening of the annual show tomorrow.

THE FAMILY ALBUM—HOT WATER

By C. M. PAYNE

GLUYAS WILLIAMS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

'SMATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Mail Pilot Optimism!

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



THE NEBBS—Surprise

By SOL HESS



BOUND TO WIN—Blimpson Delivers

By EDWIN ALGER



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



WE'RE CARRYING OUR END!

WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT THE PERFECT GUM



BALEM, Oct. 20.—(AP)—The World War veterans state aid commission today announced sale of \$500,000 bonds to Stone, Webster and Blodgett, Inc., of Chicago, to assist in retirement of \$550,000 outstanding bonds due November 1.

FAKENHAM, NORFOLK, Eng., Oct. 21.—(AP)—A young bull, frightened by the traffic, today rushed into a small ship where Queen Mary was inspecting goods.

There's No Guesswork in Tribune A. B. C. Circulation