

MURDER AT MOCKING HOUSE

BY WALTER C. BROWN

It was a Herculean task that a policeman and a man who resembles the contractor and political boss Pierre Dufresne have been shot in the breakfast room of Dufresne's house in Medford. The man who shot Dufresne is there. Harper returns to the house and finds the headquarters of a man who, he asks for "Sheriff" the reporter.

CHAPTER 13

ENTER MRS. DUFRESNE
"Doyle left, Sergeant," Clymer answered.
"Did he do any telephoning?"
"No, sir. We heard your orders about that."
Harper nodded. He supposed that the reporter had become anxious and nervous about his "scoop," and had gone out to try to find another telephone. As he turned to his work, there came the sound of hurried steps entering the hall, doors slammed, and a woman's voice cried out, hysterically, "Pierre! Pierre!" she wailed, "where is he? Oh, where is he?"

The detective understood in a flash why Doyle had left the house. Laboring under the delusion that Dufresne had been killed, the reporter had taken it upon himself to carry the news to the man's wife.
He nearly collided with the on-rushing figure. She was wrapped in a fur coat and out of its huge collar her lovely head rose, hatless, and with snowflakes glistening and melting on her soft hair her eyes were wide with terror and despair, the beautiful mouth twisted pitifully.

Blocking the doorway, he laid his hand on her arm.
"Steady, Mrs. Dufresne," he said, trying to lead her back into the hall. "There has been a terrible mistake. Your husband is safe and sound. The man who was killed here is a stranger. He wore a disguise that made him look like Mr. Dufresne. Do you understand me?"
"Yes, yes," she breathed, "there has been a mistake. Pierre is safe. But let me see—let me see!"
"Are you sure you want to look into that room, Mrs. Dufresne?"
"I must see," she declared, in a low voice. "I must see for myself!"
Harper moved aside from the door. Mrs. Dufresne stepped into the room. "Oh!" she gasped when she saw the weird tableau of death.

"I'll show you how it is," Harper said. The detective stripped away his beard and moustache.
When Mrs. Dufresne saw the natural features of the man, she made strange, wordless sounds. Without warning, her knees buckled. Without reaching forth vaguely to support herself, she collapsed. As she fell, her face struck the sharp corner of the center table, opening a long rash across her cheek.
Harper leaped to her side with a cry of dismay as he saw the blood pouring from the wound. Calling for Dr. Miller, he gathered the unconscious figure into his arms and strode from that ill-fated room.
Dr. Miller gave a little grunt as he straightened up beside the bed where Mrs. Dufresne lay stretched out.

"How is she, Doc?" Harper inquired, anxiously.
"Well, I've stopped most of the bleeding, but these old hands of mine are too clumsy to attend to that cut properly."
"Will it leave a scar?"
"That's what we must avoid. Some of these new dyes do wonderful work along that line. It'd be best to have one in, think."
"We'd better get hold of her own doctor first and let him handle this. I hate to think of her being scarred or disfigured."

DR. MILLER bent down and asked his question. He scribbled the doctor's name and initials on his prescription pad and banded the lead to the detective. "Get his phone number and tell him to come as soon as possible. The sooner, the better."
When Harper left Mrs. Dufresne's room to go downstairs again, he found Howard Doyle waiting at the foot of the stairs. "How is she, Sergeant?" he inquired at once, visibly perturbed.
Harper replied angrily. "If Mrs. Dufresne's face is marred for life you ought to pick out a high bridge and throw yourself over."
"Why didn't you say something, then, before you left? This is Dufresne's house and the dead man certainly looked like Dufresne. You held us all back, locked the door, and went away without saying anything."
Harper's face flamed with anger. "Listen to this, Doyle. I warned you not to release the story until I gave the word. Hold on, now—I've no time to argue. I'll talk to you later."
The detective looked up Dr. C.

Ulrich's telephone number and called it. Harper explained the situation briefly and described the nature of the wound. If the doctor had any curiosity about the cause of the wound he gave no sign of it. He promised to be over in less than half an hour.

With that detail out of the way, Sergeant Harper turned his attention to the major matter in hand. He called together Officer Clymer, Detective Lafferty, and the two plainclothesmen from Headquarters. "So far we have found no clue to the identity of the man who has been killed here," he began.
"For some unknown reason he chose to impersonate the master of this house. If this same man wrote the threatening letter and shot at Mr. Dufresne, the chances are that we are dealing with a lunatic. There will be traces and I want you to look for them. We haven't found this man's hat and overcoat, for instance. Look for signs of forcible entry, too, but don't go outside. I want the snow left undisturbed."
The men scattered to their tasks. Harper and Carlin were alone with the dead man, and the investigation into their strange death was on in earnest.

"Well, Professor: It's time we got down to brass tacks. What do the stars in their course tell you about this?" While he asked this question, Harper was carefully looking over the man in the armchair.
The ballistics expert smiled at the pleasant, "Dr. Miller has emptied the pockets," he explained. "Over there you can see all that was found." On a corner of the buffet was a folded, unused man's handkerchief of good quality. On it was seventy-nine cents in change.

"What has taken place here, Sergeant, is plainly written." He pointed to the body in the armchair. "That man is seated there. He has been drinking. He is smoking a cigarette. The policeman enters. Two guns are lifted simultaneously and fired. Both men are dead—they have killed each other. That is the story. The reason why all this happened? That is your job, Sergeant, and you are welcome to it!"
Harper nodded. "The reconstruction of the scene is quite obvious. But suppose, Carlin, I told you that I don't believe everything I hear—and not always what I see?"

"Ah, then, that makes a difference. We can talk more about this simple story." Carlin's flair for the dramatic was being "fed" by the detective with admirable results. "There are certain parts of this story I find hard to swallow. The most excellent marksmanship displayed, for instance—it is almost too perfect."
"One shot—right through the brain. It is true that the man in the chair needs two shots—but one goes straight to the heart, the other not two inches away. A man does not fire after he has been shot through the brain, nor after a bullet has gone through his heart."
"Yet each man died where he was found," Harper mused. "There are the stains on the rug to prove it."
"Consider this," Carlin went on excitedly, now at full tilt with his subject, "consider the absolute nonchalance of these men. This one did not rise from his chair, an instinctive movement where danger threatens. He did not even drop his cigarette. It burned on and on between his fingers until it was consumed, searing the flesh."
He screwed a jeweler's glass into his eye and examined a misshapen bullet under direct light. "This is a .38 caliber, and I have no doubt that the rifling will prove it to have issued from Officer Hamilton's gun. And when the other two bullets are probed out I have no doubt they will prove to have come from this other gun."

"Both deaths were instantaneous, yet we cannot readily admit so incredible a thing as an absolutely simultaneous exchange of shots, for the man in the chair here fired twice."
"But what disturbs me most is this," he went on, pointing to the circular bullet mark in the stranger's forehead. "The bullet went in through the left frontal, passed completely through the skull and made its exit wound in the base of the brain. If we did not have the bullet, and you asked me what had caused that wound, I would answer without a moment's hesitation—a .45 steeljacket. But it seems that I would be wrong, for there is that mark on the wainscoting where our .38 bullet lodged itself."
"I have a strange reluctance to asserting that these men killed each other in the manner indicated, yet there are the facts staring us in the face."

Tomorrow, Dr. Ulrich antagonizes Sergeant Harper.

WRITERS' LEAGUE ENJOYS MEETING WITH MRS. HINES

(By Maude Pool.)

Members of the local branch of the League of Western Writers held a meeting of exceptional interest at the Hotel Holland Saturday afternoon, when Mrs. Agnes E. Hines of Forest Grove, Oregon executive of the National league, met with the writers.

Mrs. Hines, who organized the Medford branch a year ago, spoke of her plan to establish a literary agency in Portland, which would be of particular interest to local writers, who have difficulty in choosing the right market for their material. Bringing a message of encouragement to her listeners, she pointed out to the numerous phases of endeavor open to league members which not only would establish a firmer foundation for the league as a whole, but which could bring valuable publicity to southern Oregon. She urged a representation from Medford at the writers' convention in Portland in August.

Mrs. Hines recently has organized branches of the Writers' League at McMinnville, Tillamook, Washington county, and Roseburg, with representative members both at Eugene and Corvallis. She is a tireless worker in the journalistic field as well as in the production of her educational films in which she has captured the highlights of Oregon history and scenery. Something of her constant search for the unusual was revealed in her comments on Oregon's first rosbush, one of which she located by coincidence while at Roseburg and filmed for a colored slide in her work. While motoring she dashed off a bit of verse on the beauty of the rose.

TRUCK OWNERS' CHIEF OPENS QUARTERS HERE

(By Maude Pool.)

Q. C. Thompson, vice president of the Association of Commercial Truck Owners, arrived in Medford recently to establish headquarters at 107 East Main street.

The southern Oregon territory including Eugene and Bend will be under the supervision of Mr. Thompson who was formerly associated with the A. C. T. O. offices in Portland.

Members were given a key word as the subject for a poem or story to be read at the next meeting in June. A special business meeting will be called in the meantime.

THE WORLD AT ITS WORST

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



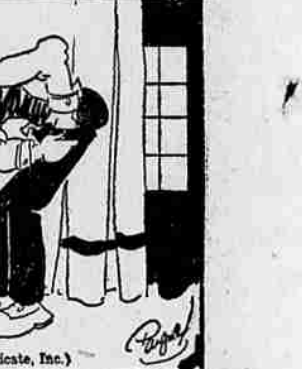
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GIVE IT A WHIRL



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S'MATTER POP—



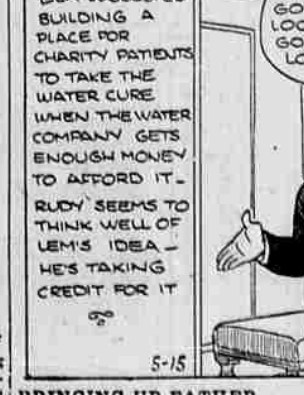
TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Mystery Grows!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—"All Ashore"



THE NEBBS--The Heart Of Gold



BRINGING UP FATHER



REV. D. J. FERGUSON MAIN SPEAKER FOR JUBILEE OPENING

Uncrowned Queens of Oregon, paying special tribute to pioneer womanhood and the important part it played in the history of the state. He has been preparing a serial which will be of direct and touching interest to all Oregonians, particularly those who have followed the history of the Beaver state.
Rev. Ferguson has lectured in every state in the union, and in numerous cities of the British Isles.
He has been prominent in the state since 1924. In 1931 he was moderator of the Portland presbytery and has also been commissioner to the general assembly in Pittsburgh and to the world conference on stewardship in Edinburgh, Scotland.
Special church observances will be held in all southern Oregon and state churches Sunday morning on topics of union motherhood. At 2:30 Sunday afternoon, Secretary of Agriculture Wallace will speak at the fairgrounds, making Medford his first stop on his first visit to the Pacific coast.

REV. D. J. FERGUSON MAIN SPEAKER FOR JUBILEE OPENING

A statewide and nationally known speaker, Rev. David J. Ferguson, pastor of the First Presbyterian church of Astoria, will deliver the main address at the union church services scheduled for Sunday, June 3, at the Jackson county fairgrounds, opening Oregon's Diamond Jubilee celebration, June 3 to 9, observing Oregon's 75th anniversary of statehood.
The topic of Rev. Ferguson's address has been announced as "The

By C. M. Payne

By Hal Forrest

By Edwin Alger

By Sol Hess

By George McManus