

# MURDER AT MOCKING HOUSE

BY WALTER C. BROWN

**SYNOPSIS:** Although a policeman and a stranger apparently have shot each other in the home of Pierre Dufresne, Sergeant Harper is not convinced. Mrs. Dufresne comes in and sees the bodies. She faints and insures her face. Dr. Ulrich, apparently anxious to see her from being questioned, demands absolute quiet for Harper and the police sergeant discuss the case.

## Chapter 14 "HAND OF GOD"

"ON THE surface it's as clear as a pane of glass, but I have a feeling there's a nigger somewhere in the woodpile," Harper went on. "What induced Hamill to walk in here and deliberately shoot down a man seated at a table, smoking a cigarette? Why should the man shoot a policeman? Why was that man masquerading as Dufresne, the owner of the house? Look here."

Harper lifted the man's left hand. The first and second fingers had been seared by the burned out cigarette. "This fellow recently wore a ring—very recently. There's the mark around his third finger. If you will look closely at the knuckle joint you will see where it was forced off. But where is the ring?"

"There was no watch, no wallet, no papers, no cards, nothing that you would expect to find in a man's pockets, except a handkerchief and some loose change. When he broke into this house he completely discarded his identity."

"Look at these. There are no occupational calluses or stains. These are not hands used to manual labor, nor are they quite the hands of a gentleman of leisure." He turned them over. "Look at the fingernails. Cut blunt. Clean, but not cared for otherwise."

Harper snapped wide the nose-glasses and let them drop on their cord. "These glasses are not his, either. Look at the red marks indented on the sides of his nose, made by the pinners. He certainly was not accustomed to them."

"Formal clothes, but his shoes, while of good quality, have been soled. We haven't even found his hat and coat. Oh, there are a lot of questions here that need answering."

Dr. Miller shook his head. "I've told you all I can and I doubt that the autopsy will add much to that knowledge."

The front door opened and there was an influx of the belated party from the Austerlitz. Harper dropped the telephone and went forward to greet them.

Evidently Markison had put into practice Harper's orders to use heroic methods to get Dufresne back on his feet. He was bundled to the stairs against the cold and storm, and, still a little unsteady on his feet, leaned on a supporting arm held out by the lean and glum-looking Andrews. Markison and the second detective were just behind them and a moment later an alert, handsome young fellow in a chauffeur's uniform entered briskly. This was Joseph Donaghy, Mr. Dufresne's chauffeur.

AT THE same moment Dr. Ulrich appeared on the stairs, rolling down his shirt sleeves and fastening the cuff links as he descended. "Hello, Pierre," he exclaimed cordially, advancing to shake hands.

"Why, Doctor, what on earth are you doing here?" Dufresne asked, extremely puzzled.

Dr. Ulrich shot a questioning glance at the detective, but before he could answer Harper cut in. "There has been a very regrettable accident, Mr. Dufresne. When we first discovered the bodies, one of the reporters assumed from the disguise the man was wearing that it was you and told Mrs. Dufresne. Of course she came over immediately. She fainted, and in falling struck her face against the edge of the table."

"My wife—here?" Dufresne positively stammered. He looked around at the circle of faces as if he could not digest the meaning of the words Harper had just uttered. His eyes fastened on Dr. Ulrich's. "By Jove—scarred—for life—" he mumbled.

Dr. Ulrich took him by the arm. "Pull yourself together, Pierre," he commanded. "There's at least an even chance that it will heal without a scar."

"C'est la main du Seigneur!" Dufresne stumbled forward and sank down on the lounge.

"What did you say?" Harper asked.

Dufresne looked up. "Pardon me, I am upset. Where is she now? I must see, at once!"

"Certainly, certainly, Pierre," Dr. Ulrich said soothingly, "but a little later, if you please. You will only be in the way if you go now."

In a few minutes Pierre Dufresne stood up, with a great change in his bearing. His face had become hard and expressionless, his carriage more erect, his step firmer. "I want some hot coffee. Tell Mrs. Whitmore."

"Mrs. Whitmore?" Harper repeated blankly. The name was strange to him.

"Haven't you seen Mrs. Whitmore? She hasn't appeared, with all this commotion in here?" Seeing Harper's blank look, he went on to explain. "Mrs. Whitmore is my housekeeper. She and her husband have been living in the apartment over the garage while the decorators were working in the house. Andrews, get her on the house phone and tell her to come over."

"Yes, and call up Aline and Richard, Mr. and Mrs. Croydren," he explained to the detective. "Mrs. Croydren is my wife's sister. Their house is on the next street. You can see a corner of it from our back windows."

Andrews went to rouse the sleeping Whitmores. There was a special telephone connection between the rear of the house and the rooms over the garage.

"Is it necessary to have all these men running through the house?" Dufresne questioned testily. "This place seems to be swarming with police. Who are all these men and what the devil are they doing here?"

"There are certain regulations and formalities to be complied with in a case of this sort," Harper explained. "These men are doing routine work. As soon as it is completed, they'll clear out."

THEY went into the breakfast room and Harper closed the door. Although Harper was watching closely, he could detect no spark of emotion on Dufresne's face as he stood inside the door and surveyed the murder scene. With the two faces there before him, Harper saw that there was indeed a startling resemblance, more than enough to confuse the casual eye.

"That's the way we found them. The electric lights were not on. Now, Mr. Dufresne, does that suggest anything to you?"

Dufresne shook his head. "I am completely mystified, Harper. I can not tell you why any man should try to murder me nor why he should disguise himself in that fashion, break in here, and then shoot a policeman. I can't even understand why the policeman entered the house. I assume that this is the man who has been threatening me."

"It seems likely. While we have not yet established any definite connection, the circumstances of the events from this afternoon on can hardly be laid to absolute coincidence."

Harper removed the false moustache, the glasses, the eye-glasses. At once the resemblance to Dufresne was dissipated. This man was at least ten years younger. The lines of his face exhibited strength, persistence, and determination. Doggedness was in the line of his jaw. Not at all the lineaments of an imbecile, nor those of a homicidal maniac.

"I never saw this man before in my life," Dufresne declared, emphatically.

"Are you quite sure of that, Mr. Dufresne? Remember, he had probably been following you about for some time. Think well."

"I am positive. I have a good memory for faces—an excellent memory. I do not know this man. I have never seen him before."

"Would you have any objections to my bringing in the others and asking them the same question?"

"Not at all, Harper. I believe that would be the best procedure."

Sergeant Harper called in Dr. Miller and the two ambulance men. "We'll be all through in a few minutes," he said. "Then you can strip this body and take it away. In the meantime, you may remove Hamill."

There was now more confusion than ever. Mr. and Mrs. Whitmore had arrived and were listening, wide-eyed and almost incredulous to the low-voiced explanations of Andrews.

The man had come up from Headquarters with the missing gray and white dusting powders for the insulator, and Harper set the fingerprint man to work on the decanters and glass and the two guns.

The trained nurse Dr. Ulrich had summoned arrived in a taxicab and was whisked upstairs by the doctor before the detective had a chance to see her face.

But for all the activity, the house remained what it had seemed when Harper first arrived—a house filled with the grisly feel of death.

# GAME COMMISSION ROLPH TO CLOSE NAMES LOCKWOOD POLITICAL CAREER TO CROCKATT'S JOB

ROSEBURG, Ore., May 17.—(AP)—Appointment of Charles A. Lockwood of Roseburg as field representative for the Oregon state game commission, filling the vacancy created by the resignation of Ernest L. Crockatt, was announced here this morning by Frank W. Wire, state game supervisor.

Mr. Lockwood, who served last year as warden at Diamond Lake, was for several years president of the Oregon Sportsmen's association, and prior to his work with the state organization headed the Douglas County Sportsmen's association.

He is to be immediately assigned to the task of allocations from the state game bird hatching, Mr. Wire reports.

Mr. Lockwood was recently appointed to return to Diamond Lake as warden for the coming season, a position which is now to be filled by Cliff Parrott, prominent Roseburg sportsman, the game supervisor reports.

Mr. Parrott was instructed this morning to proceed immediately to Diamond Lake to prepare for the opening of the fishing season there May 27.

Florida claims top range among the states in the varieties of honey produced.

Massage of the surface of the body dilates the capillaries or blood vessels.

# ROLPH TO CLOSE POLITICAL CAREER

SAN FRANCISCO, May 17.—(AP)—"Sunny Jim" Rolph, California's famous governor who was even better known as the mayor of San Francisco, drew the curtain of his own accord today on a long and colorful career in public affairs.

When the hood is heated it has a tendency to become more acid.



YEH-YOUD THINK HE WAS RUNNIN' ON STANDARD GASOLINE WITH TETRAETHYL UNSURPASSED

# THE FAMILY STARTER



By GLUYAS WILLIAMS (Copyright, 1934, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

# S'MATTER POP—



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# TAILSPIN TOMMY—Marjorie!



1875

# By Hal Forrest



By Edwin Alger

# BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Briar's Aboard!



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# THE NEBBS—Poor Lemmy



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# By George McManus

# IRREGULARITIES IN EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTS SEEN

SALEM, May 17.—(AP)—Numerous irregularities in the accounting system of the state board of higher education, pointed out in comments of the annual audit released by the state department today, were caused by "lack of definitely delegated authority and responsibility" within the institutions.

The secretary of state's auditing staff has been working on the audit of the five higher institutions of learning for several months. The audit specifically commented upon accounts receivable which were many months delinquent, and stated "collection at this time is very improbable." It specified a contract with Sam Brown for the digging of a well on his place near Gervais by the state college for which the contract of \$3977 entered into December 30, 1929, has not been paid by Brown. The accounts receivable totaled \$10,451.95, which were not entered into the records of the central accounting office.

George Baystovitch played center for Montana State University in every football game for the past two seasons.

Field tests have shown wheat land increases in fertility if sown to Koresan lespedeza between crops.