Murder at MOCKING HOUSE

BY WALTER C. BROWN

SYNOPSIS.—Recently two men, one a policeman and one a stranger, have killed each other in the breakfast room of Pierre Dufresne's house. But Sergeant Harper does not believe it, and now he has evidence to back his "hunch." The bullet mark in the wainscoting, supposedly made by the policeman's gun, does not fit the bullet itself.

Chapter 22

MORE EVIDENCE

HARPER'S eyes took in the display of "exhibits" set out on the buffet. They stopped at the liquor glass from which the dead man had drunk, his fingerprints boldly revealed by the spray of fine powder.

He crossed the room to a beautiful antique corner cupboard and opened the glass door. There they were, the matching glasses of the one the dead man had used.

Using his handkerchief as a shield, he picked them out, one by one, and held them against the light. The first four were clean and clear. The fifth brought an exclamation of triumph to his lips. It was not stained or smeared, for the sides were crystal clear, with not a trace of fingerprint, but one drop of water rolled about on the bottom. That glass had been used, dried, and replaced—but it had been used.

He dropped his handkerchief over the small glass as he heard a sound

One drop rolled about on the bottom.

in the hall. It was Lafferty, bearing in his arms a bundle of clothing, topped by a felt hat. "Here they are, Steve," he cried eagerly, "every last piece—hanging up in Dufresne's wardrobe closet as neat and orderly as you please. Andrews spotted them right away."

"And I'll bet there's not a single thing in any of the pockets," Harper prophesied.

The detective had guessed correctly. Every pocket was turned out and found to be quite empty. The inner hatband bore no initials and the maker's gilt-stamped seal had been worn away until it was undecipherable.

The examination of the clothing further revealed that the labels had been ripped out, as several broken threads mutely testified. Harper, however, did find a marking around the false buttonhole on the left coat lapel which indicated that a fraternal pin or other emblem had been worn there for some time.

The detective whisked away the handkerchief concealing the liquor glass. "I've got my nose down to the right trail at last, Jack. Listen to this—our mysterious visitor was not killed by Hamill. He died by the hand of some person unknown to us. The bullet that killed him lodged in that wall, and stuck there!

"THE blunt-nosed bullet from Hamill's gun that was found on the floor simply could not have made that scar in the wood. The real murderer removed the original bullet and substituted one from Hamill's gun. Hamill was killed by the bullets from the gun found in the dead man's hand, there's no denying, but that gun was then held by other fingers."

"Then there was a meeting here between our dead man and another person," Lafferty exclaimed. "He was killed as he sat there at the table. Then Hamill somehow butted into the picture and there was nothing for the murderer to do but add another killing to protect himself from arrest."

"Exactly. And the two dead men facing each other probably suggested the idea. It would be quite easy to wipe the guns clean, press the two victims' hands around the stocks and leave them that way. After that I think our dead man's pockets were rifled, identifying marks torn from his real clothes and a ring forced from his finger, probably a signet ring. No doubt the murderer took them away with him and by this time they've been put beyond our reach forever."

"But what has this glass to do with it?" Lafferty asked.

"That is our second clue and the first definite proof that another person was present last night. The dead man had been drinking. I reasoned that if he had had a visitor there would have been two glasses in service.

"What would the murderer have done with his glass afterward—why, clean it and put it back in its place. And that's just what was done, only the glass was dried hastily and enough water was left to form a drop in the bottom. There it is still. It is the only evidence of use—but enough."

"THEN the next question is—where is the real bullet?"

Lafferty looked at the cold and untidy hearth. "Were those ashes sifted thoroughly?"

"Yes. No foreign substances were found there nor in the ash-pit at the bottom of that chute," he said, pointing to the iron plate set in the tiling of the hearth floor.

"A steel-jacket wouldn't melt under the heat of a log fire, would it?"

"No, but say, I think you've hit on something there. I believe the killer tried to melt it down that way. Look at those brass tongs. The ends are smoky and scorched but there was not a fingerprint on the handle. Wiped clean, no doubt."

"What about the bullet from Hamill's gun? Where was that fired, and how? It has the proper shape for having passed through a human body and hit a wall at diminished speed. Only one of Hamill's bullets was used."

Harper pounded on the table. "You've got it, Jack. It was necessary to reproduce, at least roughly, the resistance of flesh and bone. Where did Carlin go to fire his test bullets from these guns? To the cellar—and that's where the killer would do it, too. Come on, let's search down there!"

Leaving Officer O'Connell to keep an eye on the crime room and its exhibits, they made their way to the cellar. They turned on all the lights and looked around.

"What did Carlin use for his tests?" Harper asked.

"He filled up a basket with rags and waste and fired into that. We must look for something that would retard a bullet but not offer too much resistance."

They wandered about, augmenting the electric lights with the beam of their flashlight, but the unusual neatness and open order of the cemented cellar held out little promise of success.

Mrs. Whitmore's efficient rule did not tolerate the hoarding of odds and ends of worn-out articles often accumulated in such places.

Harper found his way into a boarded-off section that had once served as the coal-bin, before the advent of the oil heater, but now held only a few empty boxes and a collection of paint cans on a shelf. And there, thrust away in the darkest corner, picked out by his flashlight, he found it.

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Monday, a mysterious stranger spies on the detectives.

Zane Grey Coming To Umpqua Camp

ROSEBURG, May 28.—Zane Grey, author and sportsman, is to arrive in Roseburg about June 10, according to word received here, and will spend another summer on the North Umpqua river. He has camped at Steamboat ranger station for the past three summer seasons, and announces that he plans to select a site upon which to erect a summer home.

SONS ALUMNI PLANS ANNUAL LUNCHEON ON DAY OF GRADUATION

ASHLAND, May 28.—(Spl.)—Alumni of the Southern Oregon Normal will greet the graduates of 1934 at the eighth annual alumni luncheon immediately following the commencement exercises on June 6. Education Day of the Oregon Diamond Jubilee celebration. The luncheon will be served at 12:30 p. m., at the Lithia Springs hotel.

Officers of the alumni association are Verne Spears, Chiloquin, president; Mrs. William Norton, Klamath Falls, vice-president; Cuma Lancaster, Coos county, second vice-president, and Mrs. Grace Reid, Medford, secretary-treasurer.

One of the largest gatherings of alumni from both the old Normal and the new should be in Ashland for this affair since it occurs on Education Day of the jubilee celebration.

Reservations are now being sent, registrar and executive secretary of the Southern Oregon State Normal school.

ROLPH WEAKER SAYS PHYSICIAN

SAN FRANCISCO, May 28.—(AP)—Governor James Rolph, Jr., of California, under the constant care of nurses at a Santa Clara county ranch, was reported "somewhat weaker" by his personal physician, Dr. Harold E. Fraser, here today.

Dr. Fraser, who examined the governor yesterday, said: "His increasing weakness is just evident in his general tone, his increasing need for rest in bed." The physician asserted that only the governor's "tremendous vitality is holding him up."

Though only the nurses are in regular attendance at the ranch, it was pointed out that several physicians are available on emergency call at a nearby sanatorium.

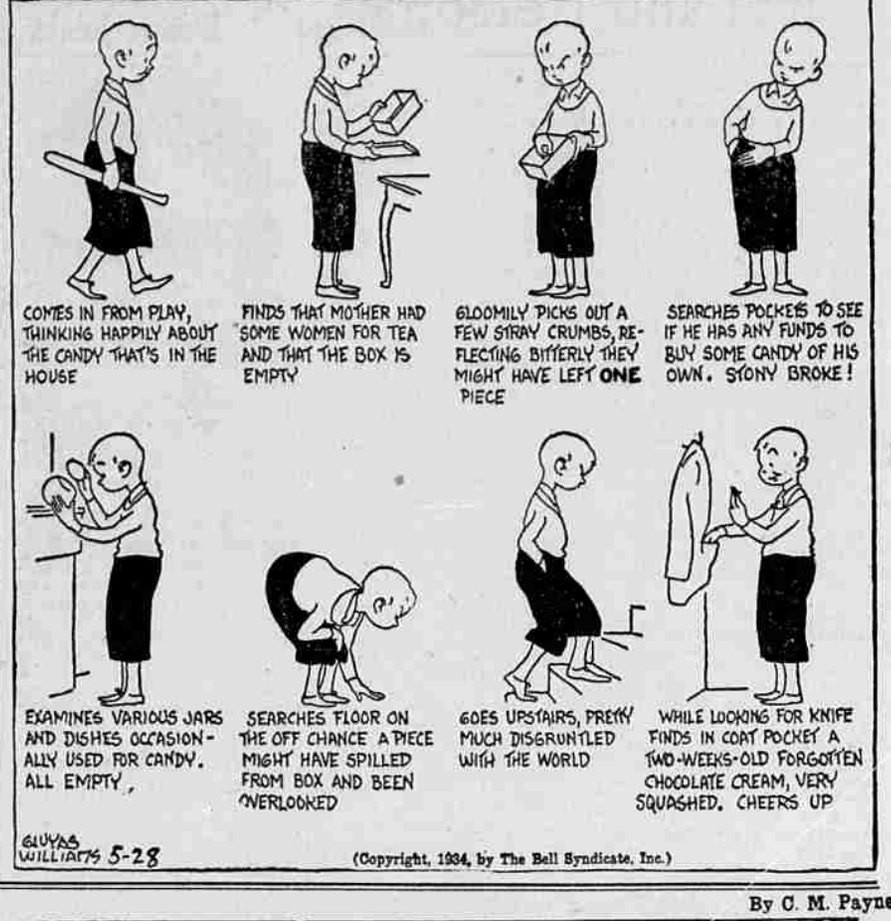
State highway patrol officers are on guard at the ranch retreat and only persons fully authorized to make visits are permitted near the house. The governor's wife and son, James Rolph, 3rd, visit him daily.

Relief Post Declined

PORTLAND, Ore., May 2?—(AP)—Estes Snedecor, Portland attorney and member of the state house of representatives, today notified Governor Julius L. Meier he could not spare the time to serve on the state relief committee.

Palace Beauty Shop will be closed Thursday and Friday for redecorating.

CANDY HUNGRY By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



'S MATTER POP— By C. M. Payne

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Nothing To Do But Wait For The Crash! By Hal Forrest

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Some Supposin's By Edwin Alger

THE NEBBS—Emma Gruntly By Sol Hess

BRINGING UP FATHER By George McManus