

Murder at MOCKING HOUSE

BY WALTER C. BROWN

SYNOPSIS: There are many tangled threads about the bungling murder of a policeman and a stranger in Pierre Dufresne's house. One of them, the disappearance of a mysterious 15 calibre revolver, seems to lead to Dufresne himself. Sergeant Harper is the more suspicious because Dufresne is too cautious to stop the investigation and get the police out of his house. Dufresne has called in Harper's superior officers.

Chapter 26
PEACEMAKERS

"SERGEANT," the Director began in his booming voice, "Mr. Dufresne has asked me to see what can be done to expedite this inquiry. Of course," he continues quickly, "it has never been my policy to interfere arbitrarily with any man in my Department, as you know, Harper, but Mr. Dufresne is an old friend of mine and I want to be as accommodating as I can, especially in view of Mrs. Dufresne's mishap."

"I think it would be inadvisable to move from the scene of the crime under present conditions," Harper replied, quietly but firmly.

"But why, in Heaven's name?" cried Dufresne. "Am not I the one most concerned? There will be no more threatening letters, no more shots from hiding. I don't care who he was or what he was. It is enough to know that he will not trouble us again. He was undoubtedly a homicidal maniac."

"What makes you think so?" Harper challenged.

Dufresne stared in surprise. "What else can we think? You have every characteristic of a violent homicidal maniac."

"Apparently, yes, and of the most virulent type," agreed Harper. "But you forget that the man who was killed last night was the same one who wrote the threatening letters and shot at you yesterday."

Dufresne broke in excitedly. "Sergeant, you are deliberately manufacturing difficulties. To call such a train of events a coincidence is to stretch a remote possibility until it snorts its own thinness." He snorted his scorn of such an idea.

Captain Macklin had been taking in this verbal tilt intently. From the first he had sensed some underlying current of hostility between Dufresne and the detective. He injected himself smoothly into the conversation. "Harper, have you any direct evidence that this man was not the one who wrote the crank letters?"

"Captain Macklin, I would prefer to make my report privately."

"Come, now, Sergeant," Connors boomed, "there's no need to take that line. There seems to be a little friction between you and Mr. Dufresne. We don't want anything like that."

"Gentlemen," said Dufresne with great dignity, "my wife needs peace and quiet after the shock she had last night. She is the innocent victim of bungling methods—"

"Mr. Dufresne," Harper snapped, his temper rising, "you will please remember that I had nothing to do with Mrs. Dufresne's mishap."

"I am not blaming you, Harper. There was nothing personal in my complaint, but the fact still remains—"

"Let's not get side-tracked," Macklin resumed, "is there any such evidence, Harper?"

"Of course there isn't," Dufresne interrupted again. "What happened in this room last night is plain to be seen. There is no need to twist it into still more fantastic shapes nor in trying to rationalize a madman's actions."

DIRECTOR CONNORS waved his big, blunt cigar in the air. "Yes, Harper, if you've got anything substantial to build on, let's hear about it."

Harper drew himself up stiffly. "Very well, Director. I have been reluctant to part with this information for fear it would hamper my further work in this case. Maniac or not," he answered impressively, "this man was murdered, not by Officer Hamill, but by a third person who was here in this room! This same unknown person also killed Hamill! The scene was fixed, the evidence tampered with so that it would look as if the two men had killed each other. At first this was only a theory, a suspicion of mine, but now I positively know it to be a fact."

"You have the proof?" Captain Macklin asked with restrained tenacity.

For reply the detective briefly recounted the doubts he and Carlin had shared concerning the wound in the murdered man's head and how it had led to the recovery of the original .45 bullet and the roll of carpet with the telltale bullet hole.

Harper had been keeping a wary eye on Dufresne during his recital,

but the latter appeared as nonplussed as the others.

"This is utter nonsense," he cried. "It cannot be. The bullet that killed this man came from the policeman's gun. It was found right here in the room."

The detective held up the steel-jacket. "Why was this bullet hidden away so carefully?" He stood the roll of carpet by the table. "Why does this carpet have a bullet hole through it? We tested our theory of concealed murder by hunting for concealed evidence—and we found it. And we're going to find more of it!"

"But these are not proofs," Dufresne continued. "A stray bullet, a hole in some old carpet."

"There are traces. The substitution of bullets is one. It is true there are no fingerprints but this criminal was too astute for that. No doubt he wore gloves. The murderer sat in this room with his victim. They even drank together and perhaps it was at that moment the killer chose to fire. After the murder the extra glass was washed, dried, and put back in the cabinet. But we have found the glass, with traces of its recent use still in the bottom."

"The murderer's first thought was to melt down the bullet by holding it in the flames of the log fire with these tongs. A systematic effort was made to hide the victim's identity—a ring was forced from his finger, an emblem from his coat lapel, whatever papers, keys or other articles he had were rifled from his pockets. Even the labels were ripped from his own clothes. None of these things has come to light in the house—we assume that the murderer carried them away."

"That is all guess-work, Harper," Dufresne retorted. "If there was a third person, as you insist, how did he escape from this house after the crime? I'll admit fingerprints can be wiped away but you can't wipe away tracks in the snow."

"I can't answer that question, yet," the detective replied. "I don't know how it was done, but I know that it happened. We've had men murdered in locked and sealed rooms and the solution turned out to be quite simple. If the murderer planned a way to escape without leaving tracks in the snow I'll find how it was done before I'm through!"

Harper looked directly at his commanding officers. "I have other evidence that cannot be divulged in this house without seriously injuring our chances of success."

Dufresne sneered openly. "It's fortunate I was under your own police guard last night, Harper, or you would crown this brilliant fantasy of yours by accusing me of being the master mind behind this affair."

Harper's face reddened at the insulting tone which barbed these words. He stepped forward so that he stood face to face with Dufresne. "Those two men were murdered," he repeated, "and I am sure that at least one person in this house could identify the man who masqueraded in your likeness. I'll go even further. I believe that you, Mr. Dufresne, are helping to shield that person from us and that is a dangerous game to play."

The master of the house threw back his head and laughed tauntingly. "Now I know you're crazy!"

"Mr. Dufresne," Harper purred, "a little while ago you told me that you had only one gun in your possession—an automatic."

"Perhaps you'd be interested to know that you own another weapon, a revolver of large caliber. This was usually kept in the upper right-hand drawer of the highboy in your dressing-room. Early this morning that revolver was still in its place. It has since disappeared. Can you tell us anything about that?"

Dufresne looked at him out of a face suddenly sobered. "I own no such revolver," he stated firmly.

"Your butler, Andrews, says that you do."

"Ring for him. We'll soon get to the bottom of that," Dufresne replied, sharply.

They waited in an uneasy silence until the butler made his appearance. Andrews stood looking from one to another inquiringly under his tufted white eyebrows.

"Andrews, what in the devil have you been saying to the police? Go on, Harper, you started this."

Harper faced the old man. "A little while ago you told me that Mr. Dufresne kept a revolver in a drawer of the highboy in his room. Mr. Dufresne denies that."

Andrews lifted his head. "I never saw such a revolver," was his calm statement.

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Tomorrow, Sergeant Harper details Dufresne.

ROUND EUROPE PLANE FLIGHT LURES PILOTS

1934 Contest Sponsored by Aero Club of Poland, Will Have Entries From Many Nations Start August 29

WARSAW (UP)—The biggest European sport flying contest, the "Round Europe" flight for 1934, will be organized by the "Aero Club of the Polish Republic," to which the winner of the last race in 1932, Franciszek Zwirko, belonged. Zwirko was killed a short time later.

The first "Round Europe" flight actually was started and organized in 1929 by the "Aero Club of France." Participation for 1934 is assured by Poland, Germany, France, Italy and Czechoslovakia. But the failure of Britain to file notification has caused great disappointment.

The Route
The flying route covers 9,400 kilometers, as follows: Warsaw-Koenigsberg - Berlin - Cologne - Brussels - Paris - Bordeaux - Pau - Madrid-Seville - Casablanca - Meknes-Sidi Bel Abbas - Algiers - Biskra - Tunis-Fermeo - Naples - Rome - Rimini-Zadar - Vienna - Brunn - Prague-Katowitz - Lvov - Vilna - Warsaw.

This route is 3,000 kilometers farther than that of 1932. The distance must be completed between Sept. 8

and Sept. 15, that is over 1,100 kilometers per day. With the inclusion of the African laps, for the first time the flight crosses the frontiers of Europe.

Starting Time
The flight starts officially on Aug. 29 with the technical examinations, which last until Sept. 7. This hard trial includes: minimum speed, start and landing within the shortest stretch, examination of gasoline consumption, and dismantling and re-assembly of airplanes.

After the "Round Europe" flight, on Sept. 15, a speed test, always awaited with great curiosity. Beside the cup for the winner are

money prizes: for first place 100,000 French francs; for second 40,000; for third, 20,000; the fourth, 10,000, and 15 prizes of 6,000 francs each.

Roy Connaster, second baseman for the University of Alabama, made only two errors in 68 chances and batted .415 in the first 12 games this season.

Sandy Garrison Cassanova, Los Angeles boxer, is now in Mexico where he has launched his career as a matador with success.

Washington State college scheduled a dual track meet with the University of Oregon this year for the first time since 1928.



DIFFICULT DECISIONS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



S'MATTER POP



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Who Shot Bruce Wilkins?



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Bunnies!



THE NEBBS—Think That One Over



BRINGING UP FATHER



WRIGLEY'S GUM
WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT GUM
THE PERFECT GUM
SWEETENS THE BREATH
The Standard of Quality