

MURDER AT MOCKING HOUSE

BY WALTER C. BROWN

SYNOPSIS: Sergeant Harper has proved to his own satisfaction that the policeman and the stranger found dead in Pierre Dufrene's house were murdered, and did not kill each other. He believes one of the guns used in the house, but when he fails to find it, Dufrene ridicules him. Now he and Detective Lafferty are searching the room in which the Dufrene household was locked up while the remainder of the big house was searched.

Chapter 23
WET STRING

"NO LUCK, Steve," Lafferty reported, finished with his part of the search.

"What've you got there?"

"Just a length of twine," Lafferty answered, "I picked it off the door, near the window-seat."

"The window-seat? That's where Dufrene and Macklin were sitting. Let's have a look at it."

Lafferty handed it over, with a chuckle. "Big clue!" he chaffed.

But Harper was paying little attention to his assistant's joking. He roughly estimated the length of the twine at about twelve feet. "Dufrene has been wearing that lousy robe all morning," he mused. "It could have fallen from his pocket."

He ran the tough cord through his fingers. "It feels wet here in the center, Jack."

ing up and down, head bent, eyes on the floor, hands thrust deep into his pockets.

Harper moved on quietly, smiling to himself as he unlocked the door to the breakfast-room. He had no doubt but that the master of the house had missed the piece of twine and was searching for it.

It was getting on toward noon and Harper shut the door of the breakfast-room behind him and sat down at his work-table to re-arrange his plans in accordance with the vital changes the last few hours had made in the case.

The case had now been in Harper's hands for something like fourteen hours and he had no need to apologize for the progress made.

There was not the slightest doubt in his mind that some one still present in this house had planned and executed this whole scheme. The difficulty would arise in linking one of them to the facts so long as the identity of the masquerader remained unrevealed. It was impossible to assign a motive out of their slender knowledge.

At least four of the eight persons in the Dufrene household were under direct suspicion in Harper's mind. He was mulling over these various personalities, as they had revealed themselves to his observation under different phases, when



Harper glanced into the drawing room.

Lafferty was still smiling. "You don't even know that any one dropped it. It might have been there before we came to this room at all."

"Then it would have been noticed and picked up before this," Harper argued. "Look at it this way. Assume that Dufrene took the gun and hid it. We know it's still in the house, for no one has gone out even as far as the garage. Whoever took it had to plant it, and quickly, in a place where it would be hidden not only from us, but from every one else in the house."

"Where could it be hidden so quickly and so safely? There was no time to prepare a special place nor to go out and bury it in the grounds."

"Well, one could open a window and heave it out as far as possible. Or, there may be a little sliding panel somewhere in good old melodrama style."

HARPER nodded. "Laugh if you will but there's always the possibility of a secret cupboard somewhere. Four yards of twine—how was it used?"

"Well, I've heard of things being hung behind shutters and outside window sills and inside chimneys, but in that case we wouldn't have the string."

"Yes, and it's set in the middle. That suggests contact with water—or snow!"

"We've looked around outside and we've been up in the little cupola. There's not a single mark in the snow on the roof."

Harper was deep in thought. "I'm sure the gun is hidden, not just thrown away to get rid of it. Suppose you call at the neighboring houses and find out if anything unusual was heard or seen last night. In the meantime I'll try to squeeze a little information from the servants."

The detective folded the piece of twine and put it away in his vest pocket. Lafferty set out on his quest, Harper going as far as the front door with him. Then, as he returned along the hall, he glanced into the drawing-room in passing and was surprised to see Dufrene, still wearing his lounging robe, pac-

he was interrupted by a sharp knock on the door.

A BRISK young man wearing a gray overcoat and hat entered, and, behind him, a short, dark-skinned man bundled up in a heavy fur coat. "I'm Harris, of the Central Bureau," said the young man, smiling.

Detective Lafferty sent me out to trace that disguise. This is Mr. Pagliotti, who has a theatrical supply house on Twelfth Street. He can identify the beard and the man who bought it."

Harris handed over a tissue-wrapped package, inside of which were the beard and goatee as well as Jackson's photographs of the dead man.

Harper turned to the plump Italian. "Can you identify these as having come from your stock?"

"Yes, sir. We make everything in our own workrooms and I'd know our goods anywhere. The finest workmanship, sir," Pagliotti spoke with very little accent, his bearing confident, his black eyes gleam with intelligent curiosity.

Harper held up one of the pictures. "Is this the man who made the purchase?"

"Yes, sir. I remember him distinctly."

"When was the purchase made?"

"Your man asked me that. I replied, early in October."

"October?" exclaimed Harper, half rising in his chair.

"October," Pagliotti repeated. "I recalled that it had been some time before our Halloween rush. We keep a record of all cash sales, as this one was, so I looked up the original slip. Here it is."

The Italian proudly produced a cash sales voucher. The date was October tenth, just three months to the day before the masquerader met his death while wearing this purchase. Here was a vital fact that was at variance with all other known features of the case.

"Are you quite sure about all this?"

"I am positive," replied Pagliotti, promptly. "There is more to be told, an incident that fixed itself in my memory."

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Mr. Pagliotti gives Harper more important information, Monday.

4-DAY ROUNDUP AT FAIRGROUND OPEN WEDNESDAY

Second only to the well-known Pendleton Roundup and rivaling that, Norman Cowan's famous roundup is ready for its five performances at the county fairgrounds Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday afternoons, with a special showing Saturday night. Over 125 cowboys from all parts of the west have agreed to enter. They have been arriving for the past several days and will be officially entered today and tomorrow.

Over 50 head of bucking horses, 20 head of Brahma steers, 25 head of Mexican steers and 40 cows and calves arrived in Medford by train today and were immediately placed in corrals at the roundup grounds. The Mexican steers are making their first United States appearance in Medford, having been purchased less than a month ago in Nogales. These steers represent some of the wildest animals ever seen in an American rodeo and test the mettle of cowboys in bulldogging contests.

The bucking horses include several which have never been ridden, including Jack Dempsey, I Thought So and Billy the Kid, names all well known to horse bustlers, but these horses refuse to be "busted." The same string of horses were used in the Pendleton roundup last year and will be used there again this fall, marking Pendleton's silver rodeo anniversary.

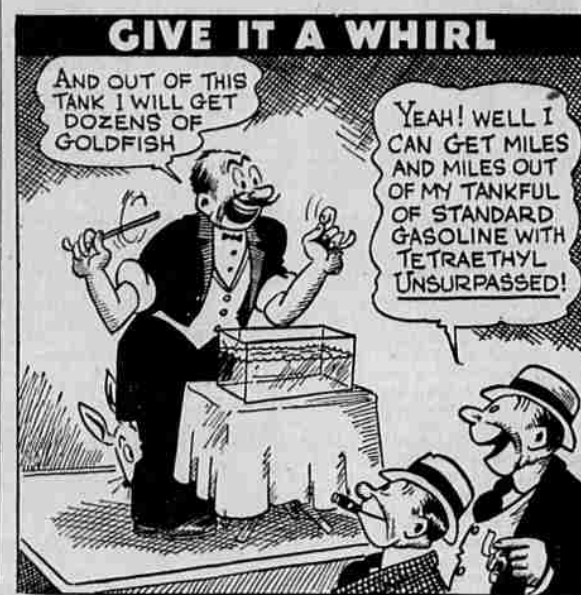
Some of the best cow ponies in the west are being brought to Medford. They will strut their stuff in the bulldogging and roping contests. The

ponies have almost human intellect when it comes to handling themselves when roping or bulldogging is to be done.

Clay Carr, world's champion cowboy, a title which is recognized by the Rodeo Association of America, arrived here this forenoon, confident he will make enough points to aid him in retaining the title another year. Other cowboys are not so sure Carr will be successful and are ready to show him a few new tricks. "Chuck" Wilson, Canadian champion bulldogger, arrived yesterday and is looking forward to tussling with the Mexican steers. "They don't come too big or wild for me," he boasts.

"Bobby," whose picture has appeared in more newspapers and magazines than any other steer living or dead, has been in Medford for the past week with his owner, Monte Reger of Buffalo, Okla. "Bobby" is the world's champion high jumping steer and will perform daily during the roundup.

A complete program of Wednesday's roundup events will be announced tomorrow. Popular admission prices will prevail for all performances. Additional seating arrangements have been made to assure seats for all visitors.

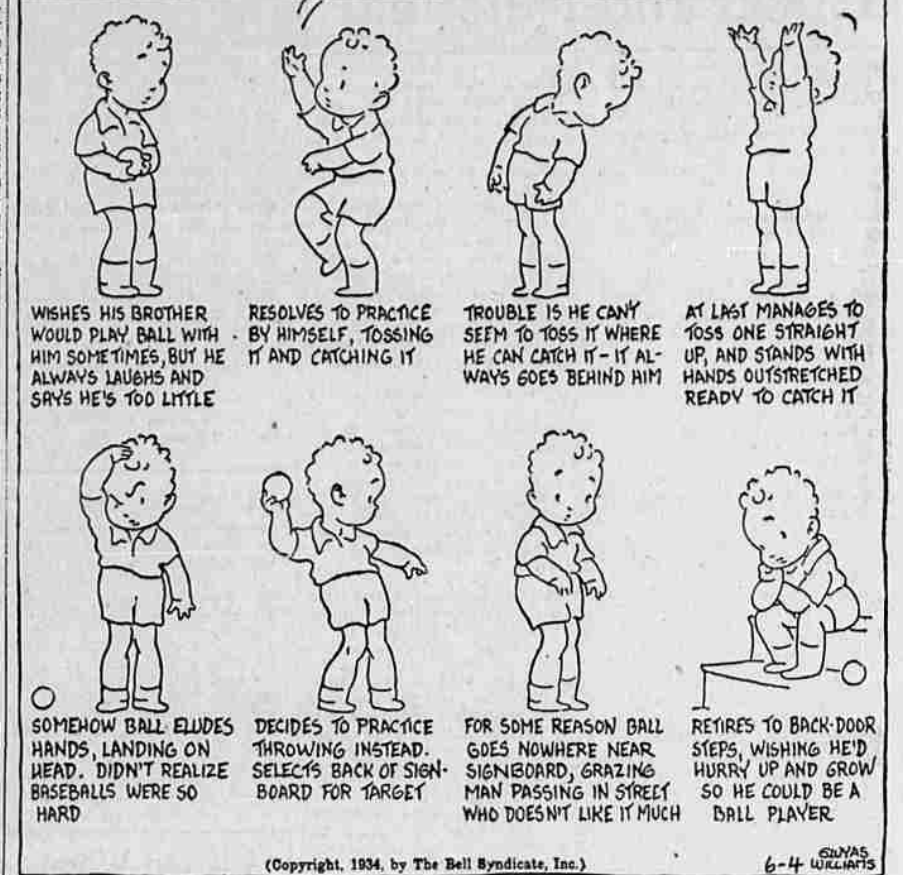


AND OUT OF THIS TANK I WILL GET DOZENS OF GOLDFISH

YEAH! WELL I CAN GET MILES AND MILES OUT OF MY TANKFUL OF STANDARD GASOLINE WITH TETRAETHYL UNSURPASSED!

TOO LITTLE

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



WISHES HIS BROTHER WOULD PLAY BALL WITH HIM SOMETIMES, BUT HE ALWAYS LAUGHS AND SAYS HE'S TOO LITTLE

RESOLVES TO PRACTICE BY HIMSELF, TOSSEING IT AND CATCHING IT

TROUBLE IS HE CAN'T SEEM TO TOSS IT WHERE HE CAN CATCH IT - IT ALWAYS GOES BEHIND HIM

AT LAST MANAGES TO Toss ONE STRAIGHT UP, AND STANDS WITH HANDS OUTSTRETCHED READY TO CATCH IT

SOMEHOW BALL ELUDES HANDS, LANDING ON HEAD. DIDN'T REALIZE BASEBALLS WERE SO HARD

DECIDES TO PRACTICE THROWING INSTEAD. SELECTS BACK OF SIGN-BOARD FOR TARGET

FOR SOME REASON BALL GOES NOWHERE NEAR SIGN-BOARD, GRAZING MAN PASSING IN STREET WHO DOESN'T LIKE IT MUCH

RETIRES TO BACK-DOOR STEPS, WISHING HE'D HURRY UP AND GROW SO HE COULD BE A BALL PLAYER

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6-4 GUYAS WILLIAMS

S'MATTER POP—



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Tommy Seems To Have A Clue!



By Hal Forrest

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The Warning



By Edwin Alger

THE NEBBS—Who's Sorry Now?



By Sol Hess

BRINGING UP FATHER



By George McManus

WRIGLEY'S GUM

WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT

THE PERFECT GUM

SWEETENS THE BREATH

The Standard of Quality

Black-tailed jack-rabbits are abundant through all of eastern Colorado.

The Colorado grizzly bear, once a numerous species, is rapidly dying out, one report putting its present numbers as low as a dozen or two.

A house of worship built by the Russian colony in 1912 still stands in fairly good repair near Fort Ross, Calif.