

MURDER AT MOCKING HOUSE

BY WALTER C. BROWN

...is: Sergeant Harper is a piece of alpha and the... of a manufacturer of... to go on as close to the... death of two men in... Dufresne's house. The string... explains what became of one of the... death guns, but the information... about the details only complicates... matters. It is in questioning the... housekeeper, who has told him that... a maid recently left the Dufresne's... employ.

PUZZLED HOUSEKEEPER

"HOW long have you been living over the garage?" Harper asked.

"Since about the middle of December."

"When did the decorators finish?"

"About two weeks ago."

"Why didn't you move back to the house?"

"Mr. Dufresne thought it just as well to leave things as they were until the house was opened again. There was to be a big party then, I believe."

"Then, since the middle of December there has been no one staying in this house at night?"

"No. After the workmen left each day Mr. Holliday locked up and brought me the keys. Every morning he came for them, so the men could get in and work."

"Were you here in the house at all yesterday?"

"Yes, in the afternoon. I was in every room of the house."

"What then?"

"I locked up and went back."

"Was it anything then?"

"Just beginning."

"Your husband was there all the time? In the evening?"

"Yes."

"During the evening, did you at any time look out of the window, over toward the house?"

"Not that I recall. We want to bed early. The next thing we knew the phone was ringing and Andrews was telling me that some one had been killed in the breakfast room and to hurry over. So we got up and dressed."

"Mrs. Whitmore, what would you say if I told you that this house has been frequently occupied at night during the last few weeks?"

"The housekeeper stared at him without the slightest change in her grim expression."

"Am I to imply from your silence that you don't believe me?"

"I don't believe it," she snapped. "It's impossible. I would have known."

"Well, it happened. Probably it was the man who was killed last night. In fact, it's possible these nocturnal visits began as far back as last October, while you were still living here in the house."

"That's absurd," Mrs. Whitmore declared.

"Perhaps I can prove it to you. When this place was closed for the summer the ash-pits for the fireplaces were cleaned out?"

"Certainly."

"Well, if you will look into the pit from this room you will find quite an accumulation of ashes there—wood ashes. That means those ashes have accumulated since last summer. In other words, some one has been using that fireplace."

For the first time Mrs. Whitmore looked startled. "But the hearth was always clean and ready," she muttered. "I would have seen had it been used. I've been through this room a dozen times."

not burn down to its socket in four or five hours. But we have the solution to that question. We found a box of candles in the drawer of the buffet. This box originally held a dozen, which are now only short stumps, more evidence of prior meetings in this house. The four candles you put in the holders, Mrs. Whitmore, are lying there in the buffet, untouched."

Mrs. Whitmore shook her head. "This is all news to me."

"Another thing—last night the electric current was switched off at the fuse-box. Is that the way you left it each night?"

"Why, no. The only times we cut off the current was when repairs were being made to the wiring of the fixtures. The lights were all right when I left yesterday."

Harper paused again and there was more curiosity than animosity now in her locked glances. "Tell me," he began again, "did Mr. Dufresne ever come up here in the evenings? Any time since he took up his quarters at the Austerlitz?"

"No, he did not."

"Did Mrs. Dufresne ever come up here at night—alone?"

The housekeeper's eyes took on a venomous glitter. "I see what you're driving at," she snapped, "and you ought to be ashamed to ask the question."

The detective smiled exasperatingly in the face of her fury. "Aren't you a little quick on the trigger, Mrs. Whitmore? I haven't made any accusations. I merely asked if Mrs. Dufresne had ever come up here at night?"

"Mrs. Whitmore sprang up. 'She did not. See if you can twist that around. The ideal! If that's what's bursting in your head you'd better open the windows and let some clean air in!'"

The incensed woman stalked toward the door, leaving behind her a Sergeant of Detectives who seemed no whit abashed nor embarrassed by her vehemence. Indeed, his face assumed the pleasant expression of a man who has suddenly collared an elusive idea.

Her angry suggestion about opening a window, by some hidden process of mind, had linked itself with a piece of twine tucked away in his pocket. In a flash he grasped the significance of that clue and the force of this intuition carried certitude with it.

Mrs. Whitmore, throwing open the door for her wrathful exit, hit the lanky Lafferty, who had that instant put his hand on the knob to enter the room.

Lafferty hunched his shoulders and raised his arm in front of his face in mock defense. "What did you do to the old crow?" he inquired. "Her feathers are all ruffled and, unless my ears deceive me, she was cussing as she left."

Harper had unrolled his piece of twine and was fingering it thoughtfully.

"Charming woman, Mrs. Whitmore," he exclaimed. "She thought she was giving me a piece of her mind, but she just told me where that missing gun was hidden."

"That's as clear as mud. Where do you think the gun is hidden?"

"Come on," Harper invited. "I can show you quicker than I can explain it. I know I'm right—it must be there. I ought to have figured it out even without finding the string."

They made their way to the top floor, without meeting any one en route, and mounted the cramped and sharply-turning shaft of steps that led to the square, glass-enclosed cupola or tower that crowned the house.

The detective raised one of the windows, after a stubborn resistance, and slipped out over the eill. Lafferty followed. "What now?" he queried, turning up his coat collar.

Harper stood looking around. From this elevation the surrounding world appeared like a soft white wilderness, stretched away to infinity.

But the detective had only a moment's thought for this. His feet left clear tracks in the pristine whiteness as he went carefully toward the edge of the roof.

"Watch out, you don't start slipping down that slope," Lafferty warned, "or you'll end up with a broken neck."

They walked gingerly along the danger line, careful to avoid any sudden slip. Harper with his eye cast on the short, steep slope to his left. Suddenly, he stepped ahead and pointed down to a dark blotch in the snowdrifted spot that edged the roof.

"There it is! There's the gun!"

Tomorrow, a revolver tells Harper things he wants to know.

BANDIT RELEASES YOUTH UNHARMED AFTER KIDNAPING

BEDFORD, Ind., June 5.—(AP)—Ralph Shields, 16, who was kidnaped by a gunman at his home this morning, was released near here later and given possession of his automobile. He was unharmed.

One of three youthful gunmen who terrorized southern Indiana last night kidnaped Shields and forced the lad to drive him away.

The bandit, sought by 200 deputies and citizens for the slaying of a deputy sheriff and the wounding of a policeman, slugged Gilbert Shields, uncle of Ralph, when the elder man tried to interfere. Bloodhounds and possemen combed the Knobby Hill country west of here in search of the other two bandits, believed to be the ones who fled last night after wounding John Pfaffenberger, 35, a Seymour policeman, and killing Harold Amick, 33, a Scott county deputy sheriff.

TOLEDO STRIKE HAS PEACEFUL ENDING

TOLEDO, O., June 5.—(AP)—Toledo's automotive strike, which brought on rioting, the killing of two men and heavy property damage, had a peaceful end today.

The plants of the Electric Auto-Lite Co., the Bingham Stamping & Tool Co., and the Logan Gear Co. reopened under agreements approved by union workers and company officers.

IDAHO WHEAT HIT BY ROOT DISEASE

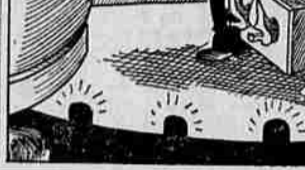
LEWISTON, Idaho, June 5.—(AP)—Columbia basin root rot is laying low thousands of acres of wheat is believed to be the most sudden and widespread disaster to grain farmers in the central Idaho region in recent years, growers said yesterday.

So serious has become the situation in fields that 10 days ago were considered bumper crops that the University of Idaho has asked that federal agricultural experts be sent here to study the disease and a condition which threatens land in Mex. Perre, Lewis and Idaho counties.

Field expeditions into numerous areas today confirmed previous reports.

The disease, resembling dry rot, followed in the wake of unusually favorable growing conditions and a mild winter.

Cheese manufactured in Mississippi plants last year totaled about 6,500,000 pounds.



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PIANO PRACTICE

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

SHE'S DOWN AT PIANO FOR HALF HOUR'S PRACTICE. STARES AT PIANO BLOOMILY

EVENTUALLY GETS HIS MUSIC OUT FROM PILE, SPILLING REST ON FLOOR. TAKES HIS TIME PICKING IT UP

PRACTICES FOR A MINUTE OR TWO AND GETS UP TO CALL TO EDDIE SELZER THAT HE'LL BE OUT IN A LITTLE WHILE

PRACTICES FOR A FEW MOMENTS AND SHOUTS TO MOTHER IS TIME UP YET?

IS TOLD SHE'LL CALL HIM WHEN IT'S TIME, AND GETS TO WORK

MIND BEGINS TO WANDER FROM PIANO TO PROSPECTS OF THE BASEBALL TEAM

MOTHER CALLS WHY ISN'T HE PRACTICING? GETS VERY BUSY IN FEAR THE HALF HOUR MIGHT BE EXTENDED FOR TIME OUT

BEGINS TO GET UNEASY. CALLS IS SHE WATCHING THE TIME AND IS SHE SURE THE CLOCK HASN'T STOPPED

FINISHES PRACTICING SOFTLY WITH ONE EAR COCKED SO HE'LL HEAR AS SOON AS SHE CALLS

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SMATTER POP—



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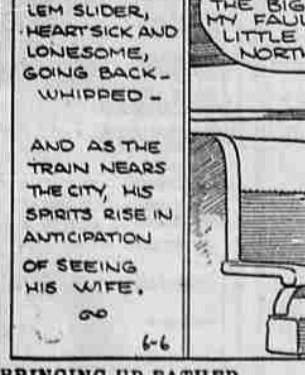
TAILSPIN TOMMY—Skeeter Puts Two and Two Together!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Anchor Island!



THE NEBBS—Gone!



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BRINGING UP FATHER



ST. JOHNS, Newfoundland, June 6.

(AP)—A forest fire today swept through the coastal village of Keels, destroying 25 dwellings, a church and a village school. Many citizens placed their belongings in boats and shoved off into Bonavista bay.

OREGON CITY, June 5.—(AP)—

James Anderson, 12 of Bolton, drowned in the Willamette river here yesterday when he fell from a log into six feet of water. The body was recovered about 20 minutes later by his brother, William.



By C. M. Payne



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By Edwin Alger



By Sol Hess



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By George McManus

