Murder at MOCKING HOUSE

BY WALTER C. BROWN

SINOPSIS.—... still unable to identify stranger who, with a policeman, was killed in Pierre Dufresne's house, he at least has some "leads." One is that at the time Ellen Becker, a servant, left the Dufresnes' employ Mr. and Mrs. Dufresne had a quarrel. Another is that there was something strange about Ellen's leaving, and a third is that Donaghy, the chauffeur, has recently been seen with a large amount of money in his pocket.

Chapter 41

PUZZLING AMBUSH

DONAGHY suddenly recaptured his jaunty manner. "Certainly I've got a big roll of bills, a regular man's size stake.

"What of it? There wasn't any money missing, was there? I didn't win it on the horses. That's just a yarn I pitched to nosey John, to makes his eyes pop. This is money I've saved up from my wages and I'm not trusting it to any bank. Now, if you want to count it, or write down the numbers, or look for fingerprints on it, it's all right with me."

Harper waved aside the mockingly offered wallet. "So you carry your hard-earned savings around with you, yet you borrow small sums of money from your fellow servants to tide you over to the next payday? I must say I like the horse story better, Donaghy!"

This time the chauffeur's temper blew up. "I don't give a damn what you like or don't like," he sputtered. "It's my business. If you think you've got anything on me, go ahead and make the pinch. You can't bluff me and you're not going to hang anything on me, either, by hanging around the kitchen and wheedling gossip out of the help.

"Put the screws to the servants, make 'em jump through hoops when you crack the whip. Ask anything, we've got to answer. But I haven't heard you making any noises like that upstairs. Try badgering them and see what you get!"

Donaghy went on, unheeding, "There are lots of things you don't know about, Mr. Sergeant of Detectives, for all your snooping. I'll give you a couple of hot tips and dare you to do something about it.

"You can't question Mrs. Dufresne because her face is all wrapped up in bandages. Question her, hell, you can't even get into the room. Well, she can talk, because I heard her talking to the doctor, and talking plenty.

"Here's another! Mr. Dufresne hasn't been near her since she came back to this house last night. Is he staying out, or is he being kept out? If you can spare a little time from the butler, the chauffeur, and the cook you might look into a few things like that, going on right under your nose."

Harper got down from the table. "Donaghy, I'm running this case in my own way. Right now we're discussing your part and I'm going to tell you what I think, in plain words. It's for your own good.

"I am convinced you hold the key evidence in this case, because you know who that dead man was and why he came here. If you have accepted a bribe for your silence, or levied blackmail on the strength of that knowledge, I warn you that you're playing with dynamite.

"Both those murders were treacherous, cold-blooded affairs. There may have been a strong reason behind the first killing but Officer Hamill was murdered for one reason, and only one—he knew the killer's identity. Any one who will kill, and kill again to cover the first crime, can keep right on killing so long as there is danger of discovery."

THE dark blue limousine with the blue and gold seal of the city blazoned on the door slipped swiftly past the snow banks that lined the country road.

Harper and Lafferty had gone over the scene of Dufresne's ambush of the day before with extreme care and with the help of Officer Watson, to whom Dufresne had first reported the affair. And they had found exactly nothing whatever.

No cars had been seen, no trains had passed that could have served the hidden gunman, and all traces of his hiding place had been hidden, if they existed at all, by the snow.

"It looks as if we're up against an invisible man," Lafferty remarked.

"Make it plural," returned Harper with a sharp look. "The sniper vanishes in a few minutes in the midst of a bare, flat country. But he must have been back in the city almost as soon as Dufresne, who drove like mad.

"And then a still smarter man murdered the sniper, and escaped from Dufresne's house without leaving a track in the snow. Either it's magic, or someone's been dragging red herrings across the snow."

"You mean some of our clues have been planted?"

"Exactly. By the way, you haven't told me how you made out at Mrs. Morlock's."

"Well, Mrs. Dufresne's alibi is just as strong as her unsupported word. Here is the situation, Steve. Dufresne called up his wife about 4:30 and told her about the ambush. He said he was safe, was staying in the Austerlitz for the night, and that there was a police guard.

"She seemed greatly upset by the news, complained of a nervous headache, begged off attendance at Mrs. Morlock's dinner party and immediately retired to her room.

"About five o'clock the maid left a tray outside her door. When she passed a little later it had been taken in. The point is that no one actually saw Mrs. Dufresne from five o'clock until the maid went up to announce that Doyle was asking to see her.

"Dinner was served at seven and while they were dining one of the chauffeurs gave the alarm about the fire in the garage. The telephone wires were strung at the back of the garage and the 'phones went dead right after they'd called the Fire Department. Naturally, the whole house was in an uproar, but what Mrs. Dufresne did no one in the house seems to know."

"THAT wouldn't take any prize as an alibi, would it?" Harper asked quietly. "I always thought that when a murder was planned the murderer usually turned up armed with the best alibi—not the worst. It's almost a law of criminal nature. Now who, would you say, had the very best alibi in this case?"

Lafferty groaned. "Sherlock Holmes is in again."

Harper continued with a sly smile, as though he had been answered, "You're quite right, Steve. Dufresne and Andrews. And what portions of our evidence have been most troublesome to place?"

"Personally," Lafferty said, "I could get along better if I knew nothing of the case that dated prior to sundown yesterday. That fellow buying the disguise months ago, the crank letters, the ambush, those damned things make everything dizzier."

"Right again, Jack. And why? Because those three events should be links in a sequence, the logical outcome of which would have been Dufresne's death! That's why I've felt so uneasy about the letters—something tells me they were not written by our dead man."

Lafferty nodded. "I see. The letters furnished Dufresne with his alibi. If the letters are 'phoney,' then the alibi—I get your drift. Where's our next stop, the Austerlitz?"

"Not yet. First we have to pay a little social call on the mysterious housemaid, Ellen Becker." Harper took a slip of paper from his vest pocket. "Ellen lives at 1221 West Magnolia Street. I don't think we're expected and I doubt if we'll be welcome.

"Harris found her in a little over an hour," he told Lafferty. "That youngster will make his mark. He's got a nose for the scent as sharp as a beagle's."

"Do you expect her to cut and run?"

"If she knows something, that's very likely. I'll be interested to see her reaction when she finds out who we are."

The police car threaded its way through the city lanes until the driver pulled up at the opening of a narrow street. "Here you are, Sergeant," he announced. The detectives got out and Harris emerged at once from a tobacco shop on the corner and joined them.

"Any sign of activity?" Harper asked.

"I think so," Harris reported. "Miss Becker has been called to the 'phone in that store twice. There's a booth, so I couldn't hear what she said, but she looked excited."

"Good enough. Wait here for us," Harper directed, and he and Lafferty turned into the narrow street, solidly lined with neat, but small, two-story houses. They mounted the low steps at 1221 and pulled the old-fashioned bell.

They had a wait before the door opened about a foot and a middle-aged woman with iron-gray hair looked out at them suspiciously.

Harper greeted her politely. "We would like to see Miss Ellen Becker."

"She's not at home," the woman answered brusquely.

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The mysterious Ellen Becker is put on the "spot," tomorrow.

FIRST COVER SPRAY FOR SECOND BROOD OF MOTHS ADVISED

The first cover spray for control of second brood codling moth worms should be completed on all varieties of pears and apples by June 27, according to the advice of L. G. Gentner, entomologist of the Southern Oregon experiment station, and L. P. Wilcox, county agent.

Use powdered arsenate of lead, three pounds to one hundred gallons of water. If spider mite injured leaves are noticed prior to the application of this spray, a combination summer oil emulsion arsenate of lead solution may be used, this controlling the mite infestation as well as codling moth worms.

The combination spray would be as follows: One and one-quarter gallons medium summer oil emulsion, plus two pounds of powdered arsenate of lead, plus on-half pound spreader to the one hundred gallons of water.

To date apples and pears generally throughout the county are comparatively clean of worm injury. This, however, should not be grounds for growers to relent on their spray program from now on. The battle is only one-half won with the heaviest fighting yet to be done. Apply the sprays as called for, with as much thoroughness as has been exhibited so far this season, and at harvest time a worm-free crop will be your reward.

Phone 542. We'll haul away your refuse. City Sanitary Service.

Florence Graves, accredited Piano Teacher. Studio, 220 No. Oakdale.

NATURALISTS TO CONDUCT JAUNTS IN CRATER PARK

CRATER LAKE NATIONAL PARK, Ore.—(Special.)—Naturalist services will be underway at Crater Lake July 1, offering numerous guided nature trips, caravans, lectures and community house programs, Acting Park Naturalist Warren G. Moody, announced this week.

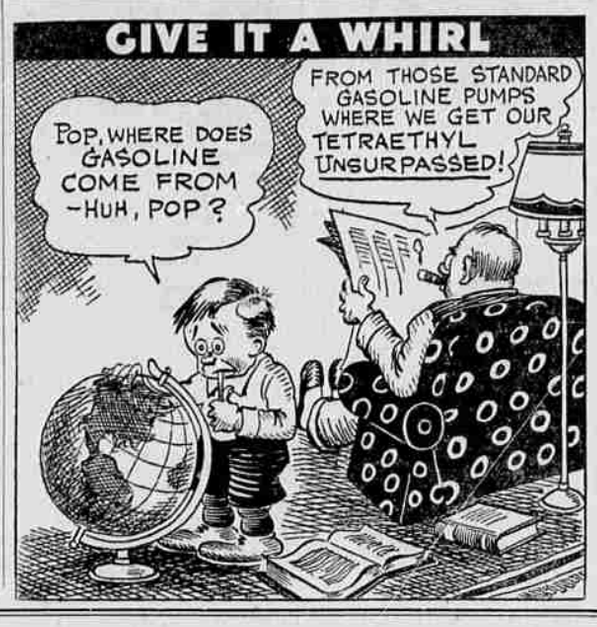
A highly trained staff of naturalists will contribute to this important feautre for park visitors who fully understand and appreciate the scenes of rare beauty found in the park. These men were carefully selected on the basis of specialized training and a number of them are members of college faculties, thus providing the public with the highest type personnel possible.

Called back to national park services in Washington, D. C., last year, the position so efficiently held the past three years by Park Naturalist D. S. Libby, is being filled this season by Warren G. Moody of Fresno, Calif., a veteran of numerous seasons with the national park service. The latter is a graduate of Stanford University and is an instructor of science with the Fresno high school faculty.

Remaining members of the staff are: Dr. Carl Swartzlow, Columbia, Mo., instructor of geology in the University of Missouri; Prof. Warren D. Smith, head of the department of geology, University of Oregon, and author of many geologic treatises; Russell Andrews, Klamath Falls, Stanford University graduate, member of Klamath high school faculty, administrative assistant to the acting park naturalist. Craig Thomas, Fresno, Calif., zoologist and musician; Dr. Elmer I. Applegate, curator, Dudly Herbarium, Stanford University, botanist; Stanley Brode, member of Pendleton high school faculty, biologist; Prof. Ernest G. Moll, Eugene, Ore., member of University of Oregon faculty, botanist and ornothologist; Prof. Hugh Waesche, member of Virginia Polytechnic school faculty, geologist; Berry Campbell, John Hopkins University, zoologist specializing in mammals.

THE DALLES, Ore., June 19.—(AP)—Helen Conley, 18, a graduate of the Tygh Valley high school near here this spring, was instantly killed early Sunday when a car in which she was riding with three youths from The Dalles overturned on a highway curve while the party was returning from a dance at Tygh valley. Carl Spaulding, musician, was driving.

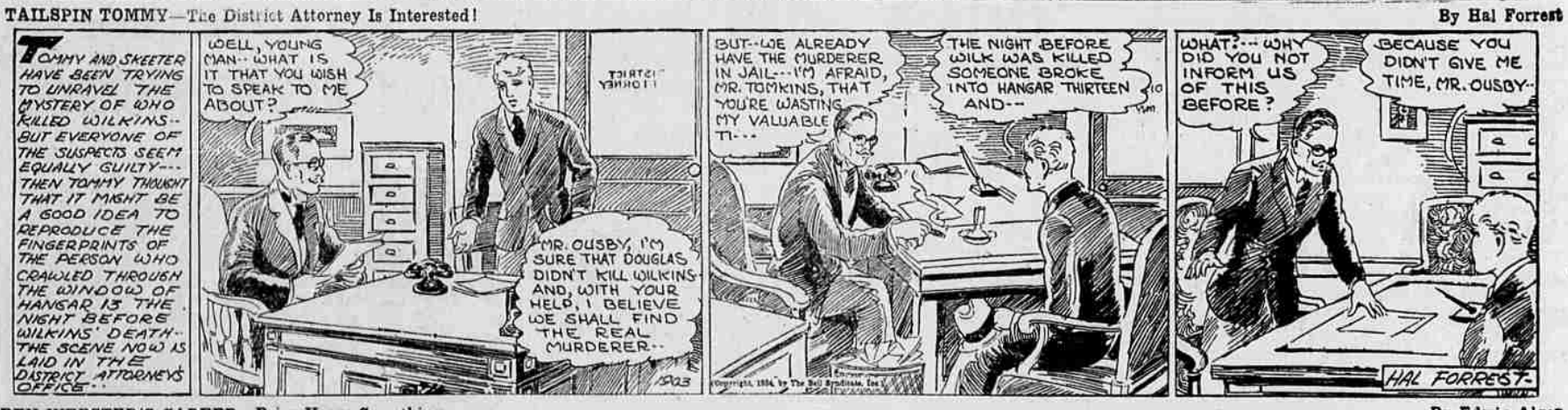
All kinds of legal blanks for sale for rent, no hunting, no trespassing and other cards for sale at Commercial Printing Dept. of Mail Tribune.



DIFFICULT DECISIONS — By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

S'MATTER POP— By C. M. Payne

TAILSPIN TOMMY—The District Attorney Is Interested! By Hal Forrest



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Briar Hears Something By Edwin Alger

THE NEBBS—It's All Over Now By Sol Hess

BRINGING UP FATHER By George McManus