

MURDER AT MOCKING HOUSE

BY WALTER C. BROWN

SYNOPSIS: When a mermaid in the house of Mrs. Dufresne has taken refuge from both Mr. and Mrs. Dufresne to maintain silence about some suspicious notes demanding rendezvous which she has found. But Sergeant Harper, investigating the double murder in the Dufresne house, has forced Dufresne to talk. Now he has left orders that Mrs. Dufresne must not leave her room, and has gone to the library to confront the master of the house.

Chapter 46

JOLTING DUFRESNE

"THE bloodhound of the law," Dufresne declaimed, "come to read the handwriting on the wall. Mene, mene, tekel, upharasin. Good old Harper, come to Alexander's Feast. No, no Alexander's—Belshazzar's. Read me the writing on the wall, Harper!"

The detective did not answer this fanciful jesting. Dufresne grew restive under the growing weight of Harper's silence. "Well, what did you come up for?" he asked, testily. "I want to have a serious talk with you, Mr. Dufresne. We're nearing the end of the chase now and it has narrowed itself down to two persons. The question is, which one to arrest and charge with the murders?"

Dufresne drained his remaining liquor and put the glass down heavily. "Why come to me? I don't want

to testify that both were made by the same hand. You planned to kill that man and built up false clues to conceal the real motive.

"Today I went over the scene of your alleged ambush. You got out there and fired at your own car. You see how your story falls to pieces? If there was no crank letter writer on your trail, then there was no ambush, and without the ambush there would have been no turnout of police guards to establish your alibi.

"Your purpose was to get out of the Austerlitz, unseen and unnoticed, but you didn't dare incriminate yourself by asking any of your friends to perjure themselves by giving you a false clearance. So you thought out a way to do it. You faked the attack on your car, locked yourself in your bedroom with the avowed intention of drinking yourself into a state of coma and left the police on guard between your door and the elevator.

"It was all very ingenious, Mr. Dufresne, but this afternoon I reproduced your feat under similar conditions.

DUFRESNE leaned back comfortably and crossed one leg over the other. "It sounds very clever. Since it interests you, suppose you explain how it was done."

"I'll explain," answered Harper, with sarcasm. "There are two suites



"Read me the writing on the wall, Harper!"

to hear about it. You're wasting your time."

"Nevertheless, I'm going to tell you what I have found out. May I borrow your key-ring for a moment? That will illustrate what I mean."

Dufresne handed over a flat leather case. Inside were five or six keys on separate catches. Harper spread them out fan-wise. "The clues are like these keys," he explained. "Only one will open the truth about this case, but the eye alone cannot tell which one of these keys will fit the lock. The trick is to find the one that fits."

Pierre Dufresne was watching this demonstration with bored gravity when the detective put his hand over the keys and asked, suddenly, "Mr. Dufresne, why did you kill that man?"

The expected reaction did not come. Dufresne's head tilted up sharply and his manner tensed, but his gaze was level and without a trace of fright. "You'd better explain, Harper. Your mental processes are too intricate for me."

Harper brought a notched key from his vest pocket and laid it down beside its counterpart on Dufresne's ring. "These are both master-keys to the service-rooms of the Austerlitz," he said. "Does that explain?"

THE dark eyes narrowed. "I can't say that it does. In fact, I don't remember that particular key at all. Probably I found it somewhere and slipped it on my ring."

"It means the breakdown of your very clever alibi for last night, Mr. Dufresne. In the best-laid plans there's always some little thing that slips by unnoticed and in this case it's the possession of this key."

"Is that so?" Dufresne re-filled his glass with steady hand. "Is this the appropriate point for me to break down and confess all?" he drawled.

"Your whole story is a fake," Harper answered. "You wrote those threatening letters and sent them to yourself. We have specimens of your hand-lettering and experts are ready

on that floor, separated by a corridor. There is a bend in this corridor, but since it ends at a window twenty-eight stories above the street, no attention was paid to it. But next to that window is a service-room and in that service-room is a large dumb-waiter used to send laundry hampers and such things up and down to the various floors.

"I went out the rear door of your suite, crossed the hall, got in the dumb-waiter, pressed the button, and rode down to the basement. I came out into a sort of store-room, waited on the employees' entrance, re-entered the building by the front door, and rode up again in the elevator. The men on watch had seen nothing, because they could not see around that bend in the hall. That is how you got out last night, Mr. Dufresne."

"Pardon me, Harper. You have explained quite ingeniously how it was possible to get out, but that doesn't prove that I took advantage of it. There's a considerable legal distinction there, don't you think?"

"There is one person who knows you were out of the suite last night," "I think that will be even harder to prove."

"Perhaps, if you will summon Andrews, I will ask him why he was so startled when I came back to the Austerlitz—why he tried to stop me from entering your bedroom—why he looked so flabbergasted when he saw you really there, lying on the bed. Faithful old Andrews! He didn't know what it was all about, but he did his best to protect your plans. It was well conceived and well executed, but here and there your hand was a little heavy. That smell of brandy in the bedroom was entirely too strong. You spilled it around to drive home the idea that you were dead drunk. That heavy smell and the peculiar expression on Andrews' face when he saw you there gave me the first twinge of suspicion about your alibi."

(Copyright, 1934, by Walter C. Brown)

Monday, another tragedy intrudes itself into the tangle.

former supreme court justice, John L. Rand, present chief justice, included King as an attorney, citizen and justice. The service was held under the auspices of the Jefferson club of Salem in the Unitarian church.

Oregon Weather.

Partly cloudy tonight and Tuesday, with local showers in the mountains; little change in temperature; moderate changeable winds offshore.

Pendleton Brewery Fire

PENDLETON, Ore., June 23.—(AP)—A fire started by an overheated motor in the Roesch brewery here this morning caused between \$4,000 and \$5,000 damage to the ice plant and stock.

Tribute Paid

SALEM, June 23.—(AP)—Acting as chief speaker at the memorial services held here last night for Will R. King.

TRIXIE FRIGANZA TIRES OF WAITING IN FILM CAPITAL

NEW YORK, June 25.—(AP)—

Trixie Friganza said today if Hollywood thought she intended to "rock out" her time waiting around movie lots doing nothing, "they were crazy as a fried egg."

"I got dog-bited tired of twiddling my thumbs out there," said the good humored, white-haired actress who for 45 years has starred on the American stage.

"So I packed up my hot water bottle and came back to Broadway—where they are doing things."

And this morning, Chamberlain Brown, the theatrical agent, telephoned to ask the 63-year-old actress how she would like to appear in an Atlantic City stock company playing "Grandma" in "No More Ladies."

Use Mail Tribune want ads.

TIN CAN MAIL BOX IS USED IN SOUTH SEAS

ROSEBURG, Ore.—(UP)—Robert Warren, patient at the U. S. Veterans Hospital here, received a letter from his son, R. S. Warren, mailed originally in a tin can thrown into the South Seas.

R. S. Warren is an electrician aboard the U. S. S. Mariposa. He threw the message overboard, as is the custom with large passing ships, near the island of Niu Fouu. The can was picked up by natives and the mail relayed to smaller boats calling at the port.

Truck Regulation

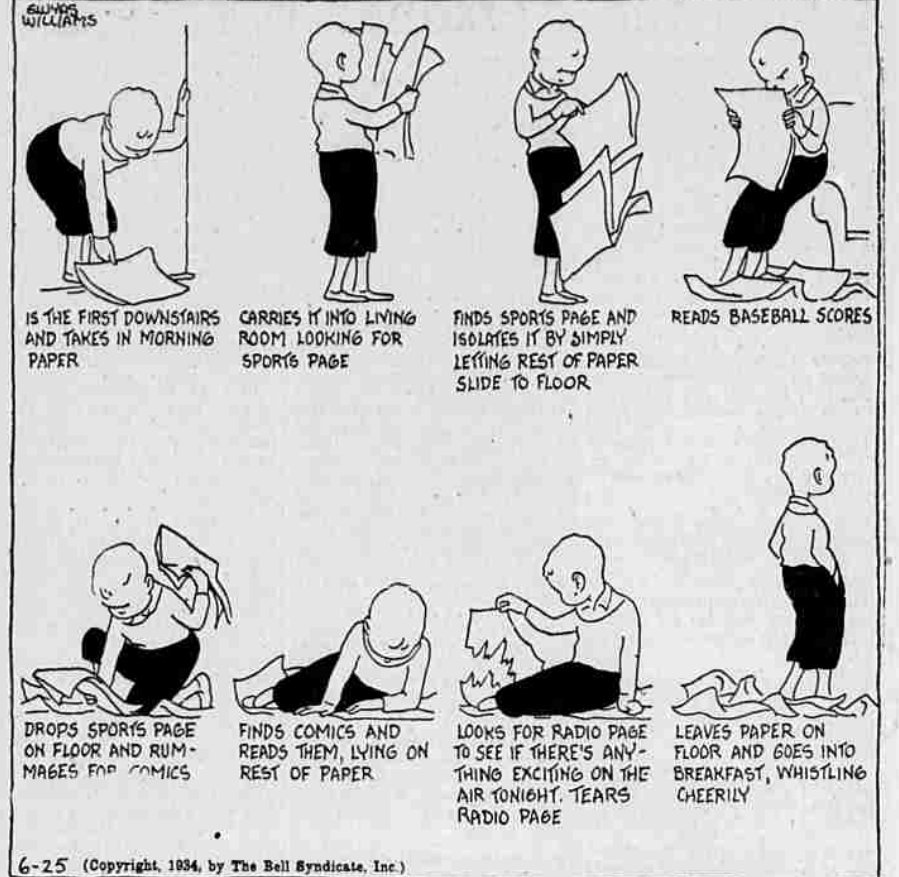
SALEM, June 23.—(AP)—Herbert Hauser, state supervisor of transportation under the public utilities commission, will leave here tonight for Salt Lake City to join representatives of the state department, highway department and the legislative interim committee to attend the western conference on bus and truck legislation.



Use Mail Tribune want ads.

A BOY AND THE MORNING PAPER

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



6-25 (Copyright, 1934, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

S'MATTER POP—



TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Grand Finale—But Is It for Yvonne?



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Dead Dog Reef



THE NEBBS—Two Sides to a Question



BRINGING UP FATHER



Advertisement for Wrigley's Spearmint Gum, featuring the text 'QUALITY GUM', 'WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT GUM', 'THE PERFECT GUM', '5¢', and 'AND WORTH IT!'.