

I did not kill Osborne

By VICTOR BRIDGES

SYNOPSIS: Nicholas Trench is acquitted of the murder of John Osborne when he learns that Osborne had stolen a valuable formula for a new metal, and that a good many people believe Nicholas has the formula. Two Russians almost murder him; he is saved by the rightful owner of the formula, Molly O'Brien, and now Molly has joined forces with him to try to find the valuable paper. They are about to have breakfast in Trench's apartment.

Chapter 14 BREAKFAST TOGETHER

"BOB's fetching the breakfast," I announced. "So if you'll take about ten minutes, so I expect he'll take about ten minutes, so if you would like what we call a wash and brush up now's your chance. That's the bath-room, next door."

"How about you?" she asked. "Wouldn't you rather shave first?"

I shook my head. "I'll wait and let him in. It would be better for him not to see you. The lower orders are very easily shocked, and, besides, he might talk about it at the pub."

"May I borrow a towel?" she inquired.

"By all means," I replied. "There ought to be one in the bottom drawer unless the police have pinched it."

She smiled indulgently. "I'll find it," she said.

Left to my own devices, I set about the job of straightening up. I wheeled the sofa back to its former position, redistributed the cushions, and since it was not likely to be required in the immediate future, disinfected my highly effective booby trap.

This done, I proceeded to lay the table. The kitchen, which was a very small one, opened out of the studio, and from the miniature dresser, where my charlady had last tidied them away, I disinterred such necessary objects as knives, forks, cups, plates, and a moderately clean cloth.

I had about finished my task when the slam of the outside gate announced the fact that Bob had returned from his shopping excursion. The next moment there was another rap at the knocker, and on my opening the door I found him standing there loaded up like Father Christmas.

"Got the 'ole blinkin' lot for yer," he said triumphantly. "Seventeen pence it come to, so there's one and a penny change."

"You can keep that and buy some breakfast with it," I replied. "After all this exercise you'll be quite hungry by the time they open."

I found him of his burdens, and carrying them gingerly into the studio, followed my yellow conspirator in the act of descending the stairs. Fresh, smiling, and with her copper-colored hair now under control, she looked more beautiful than ever.

"Here's our breakfast," I said. "You'll find the tea and sugar in the kitchen."

She peered inside the bag of eggs. "I'll make you an omelet if you'll trust me. I'm supposed to be rather good at them."

"Go ahead," I returned. "And if Jerry should show up in the meantime, just let him in and introduce yourself."

A quarter of an hour later, washed, shaved and arrayed in a clean shirt and collar, I was seated on the opposite side of the table watching my guest approvingly while she poured out the tea.

"Do you like milk and sugar, Mr. Trench?" she inquired.

"Both," I informed her; "and don't you think now that we're partners we might as well begin calling each other by our Christian names? It's frightfully exhausting to say Miss O'Brien every time I speak to you."

SHE laughed. "But it won't help me much. You see Nicholas is almost as long as Mr. Trench."

"Oh, it wasn't hard, tried," I interposed. "I'd got bargained to that long before the end. What upset me was a little conversation I had with my cousin Seymour. I don't know whether you've ever heard of him? He's got some minor job in the Government—quite an important person—in his own right way."

She nodded. "I've seen his name mentioned in the papers. Tell me about it."

Between mouthfuls of omelet I proceeded to do so. I gave her what I think was quite a fair and impartial version, for by this time any lingering traces of resentment that I had cherished against my distinguished relative had given place to a kind of half amused indifference.

"I was an ass to lose my temper with him," I finished, "but I suppose when one's just escaped the gallows one's nerves are apt to be a bit sensitive. It was his own silly fault—sending for me in such a hurry."

"He must be a selfish pig!" she exclaimed indignantly. "If I ever meet him I shall tell him so to his face."

"He won't believe you," I replied. "He's frightfully skeptical about that sort of thing. Unless a miracle happens he'll go down to his grave thinking that he's behaved with extraordinary generosity."

She pushed back her plate, and leaned forward across the table. "A miracle will happen," she said. "I'm absolutely sure of it. We're not only going to get back the formula, but we're going to find out who killed Osborne as well. Then all these people like your cousin, and Lord Redland, will have to admit how stupid and wrong they've been."

"It's a good program," I agreed; "the only trouble is that it may be a little difficult to carry out."

I PRODUCED my pipe and began to fill it. "Things are a bit clearer now we've got your end of the story as well as mine," I went on, "but even so we don't seem to have made the least progress towards spotting the actual murderer. It couldn't have been either Stellman or Dimitri. They must have believed that I was the man they wanted, or they'd never have run the risk of coming here and giving themselves away."

She frowned thoughtfully. "He wasn't a fool—Osborne. He wouldn't have told anybody—unless it was someone he was trying to sell it to."

"Exactly! And for all we know he may have been negotiating with two or three different people," I got up and going over to my desk came back with Sir William Avon's letter. "What do you make of this?" I asked. "I found it there when I came in last night."

She read it through quickly, and then with an excited light in her blue eyes glanced up into my face.

"But I've heard of Avon and Sons," she exclaimed. "My father has mentioned their names several times. They are one of the best known firms in the world."

"Oh, yes," I remarked. "They're the big noise all right so far as British engineering goes, and if Sir William takes his trouble to write a letter like that he must have some very particular reason for wanting to see me."

"I don't think..."

"I don't think he'd commit murder and burgle a safe," I interrupted, "but I do believe he was on the track of this invention—and that," I added, as the door in the outer fence banged again, "sounds to me uncommonly like Jerry."

Jerry it was sure enough. I could hear his familiar whistle while I hurried across the hall, and when I flung open the door and his cheery grin and six foot two of bone and muscle confronted me on the threshold, I felt so relieved I could almost have embraced him.

"Hello, Nick," he began with a characteristic chuckle; "how are you, old lad, and what's all this ridiculous nonsense about?"

"Come in, Jerry," I said, "come inside and try to restrain your exuberance. I've got a young lady having breakfast with me, and she's not used to enthusiastic baronets."

"A young lady! What, at this time in the morning?" He deposited his hat on the table. "Where has she come from?" he demanded.

"From New Orleans," I replied, "and her name is Molly O'Brien. I've told her all about you, so you needn't be nervous." I pushed him into the studio. "Molly," I said, "this is Jerry Mordant."

ROTARIANS HEAR PEACE ADVOCATE AT NOON MEETING

An interesting talk by J. J. Handsaker, associate secretary of the National Council for Prevention of War, was a feature of Tuesday's luncheon meeting of the Medford Rotary club at the Hotel Medford.

In his brief discussion of war prevention, the speaker forcefully brought home to the Rotarians the stake the large and small business man has in the prevention of war and the retention of valuable foreign as well as home markets.

"War must be 'out' if we expect any measure of prosperity," Mr. Handsaker said after citing, as an example, the present state of Germany, once a large and valuable market for products of the northwest. Economic depression following the world war was pointed out as a forceful proof that war does not pay.

The speaker briefly reviewed his visit to Europe and spoke of the steadily growing unpopularity of the United States, due to the raising of tariff barriers. Resulting boycotts of American-made goods have caused great hardship for American industries, Handsaker said. The activities of munitions makers, during and since the world war, were also briefly reviewed.

The Rotarians were invited by Mrs. Root, who attended Tuesday's meeting to enjoy the gathering at the Hotel Medford last evening, when Mr. Handsaker spoke in behalf of

the aims and activities of his organization, the National Council for the Prevention of War.

Preceding the main address, Lee Bishop gave a very interesting talk on St. Nicholas. At the next meeting of the Medford Rotary club, Bishop will discuss the legends and myths that have given birth to annual Christmas observance in this and other countries of the world. Dave Canfield, new superintendent of Crater Lake National park and member of the Rotary club, was introduced at the meeting.

CALIFORNIA TO BACK PORTLAND EXPOSITION

PORTLAND, Ore., Dec. 12. — (AP) — Word that the congressional delegation of California and the large cities there will support any plans Portland makes for an exposition to celebrate the completion of the Bonneville dam in 1937 or 1938, was received here Monday. The California delegation will co-operate with Oregon in seeking federal funds for a series of coast exhibitions. It was announced.

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FARMER CENSUS PLANS DRAFTED

Initial steps for the taking of the agricultural census of Jackson county, as required by national law, have been taken by the county agent and county clerk. Notices advising farmers are due this week, and will be posted soon thereafter in rural areas.

No word as to appointment of census-takers has been received by County Agent Robert G. Fowler. Press dispatches recently stated that applications for appointment as census enumerators should be filed in Washington, D. C. The last farm census was taken in 1925.

A sample copy of the four-page questionnaire to be answered by agriculturists has been posted on the courthouse bulletin board. The questions cover all phases of agriculture, including value of land, length of tenure on farm, acreage, number of livestock, and last year's crops.

NEW METHODS

S'MATTER POP-

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Betty "Steps on the Gun"!

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The Story of Willie

THE NEBBS—Enter the Heits

BRINGING UP FATHER

SEAL SALE ENDS DECEMBER 22ND

Under the auspices of the Jackson county Health association, sale of anti-tuberculosis Christmas seals is well under way throughout the county in a campaign carried on by an efficient corps of workers supervised by Miss Helen Bullis.

HAUPTMANN UP FOR ARGUMENTS

FLEMINGTON, N. J., Dec. 12.—(AP) Bruno Richard Hauptmann, the stolid Bronx carpenter, stood handcuffed in Hunterdon county court yesterday for 18 minutes as he listened to preliminary arguments in his attorney's demand on the state for a bill of particulars on the indictment that he murdered Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr.

The argument was short lived, for Supreme Court Justice Thomas W. Trechard, who presided, postponed hearing in the matter until Thursday when the defense requested that he fix a date when Edward Betty, chief defense counsel, could be present.