

# I did not kill Osborne

By VICTOR BRIDGES

**SYNOPSIS:**—Such is the story of that chemist's dealings with John Osborne, the man Nicholas just has been acquitted of having murdered. Osborne had stolen the formula of a new metal from Mally O'Brien after her father, who invented it, died. Osborne agreed to sell the formula to Sir William, but with the thief's death the paper disappeared. Nicholas, Mally and Jerry Mordant are trying to find it.

## Chapter 21 NEW PLANS

"WELL?" I inquired when the door closed, "and how did it turn out?"

"Exactly as Osborne had stated," Sir William answered. "I needed better you with a lot of technical details, but both as far as lightness and strength were concerned it was incomparably superior to any other metal in existence. Applied to the manufacture of airplanes, for instance, it would increase their efficiency by at least twenty-five per cent."

"The possibilities it opened up were obviously so enormous that no question as to whether Osborne was the actual inventor or not could be permitted to stand in the way. I gave him a check for two thousand pounds on account and agreed that he should have the rest as soon as I had examined the formula."

"The arrangement was that he was to bring it to my office at ten o'clock on the morning of August the fourth. As you have reason to know, the appointment was never kept. At that hour he was lying dead in his study with the safe open and his papers missing."

The slow deliberate voice ceased speaking and for a moment or two I sat silent.

"I am much obliged to you for telling me all this," I said, "but I should have been still more grateful if you had come forward a little earlier. It might have saved me a good deal of discomfort."

Sir William nodded composedly. "That was an omission for which I must ask your forgiveness. I considered the matter very carefully and I decided that it would be wiser to wait until I had heard the case against you. With such important interests at stake I was anxious to avoid any unnecessary publicity."

"But supposing they had found me guilty?" I persisted. "Were you going to stand quietly by and see me hanged?"

He shook his head. "In that case I should have felt it my duty to place the facts before your solicitors. With the new evidence that I was in a position to supply they would have had no difficulty in securing a fresh trial."

There was a cool frankness about Sir William's admission that in spite of my resentment made me more disposed to trust him. After all, he had told me the truth, and if he were prepared to be honest on a point like this the odds were that I could rely on the rest of his story.

He was obviously a man who did not allow any delicate scruples to interfere with the course of business, but on the other hand, he appeared to have treated Osborne with strict fairness, and I saw no reason for doubting that he would be equally straightforward with us.

I hesitated for an instant; then I decided to take the plunge.

"WELL, you've carried out your side of the bargain," I observed, "and now I propose to do the same. Before I begin there's just one point I'd like to be clear about. I assume from what you've said that you're not anxious to take an unfair advantage of anyone. If Osborne did steal the formula, and if the rightful owner of it happened to turn up..."

"I should be delighted to meet him," he interrupted. "If such a person exists, and he is prepared to do business, I can assure you that he will get better terms from me than from any other firm in the world."

I pushed aside my plate. "Then listen!" I said.

It was a longish task I had in front of me, and I made no effort to hurry over it. Once I started to tell my story I felt that half-measures would be worse than useless. If I were going to trust my companion the job would have to be done thoroughly, so without attempting to keep anything back, I settled down to let him have the facts.

It must have taken the best part of half an hour before I reached the end, and all the time I was talking Sir William maintained an unbroken silence. He sat there, solid

and massive, like an expressionless stone Buddha, his keen eyes alone betraying the intense interest with which he was following my narrative.

At the conclusion he very deliberately lighted a cigar.

"Thank you, Mr. Trench," he said, pushing across the box. "I am glad you've had the good sense to take me into your confidence. It's an extraordinary affair and I congratulate you on the admirable way in which you have kept your head."

"What do you make of it all?" I inquired. "Do you suppose those chaps Steilman and Dimitri followed Miss O'Brien from New Orleans?"

"The latter undoubtedly did. From your description I should think that the other was probably a German—some well known international crook whom Dimitri may have picked up over here. He would need help in a business like this; it's not the type of job that an American gunman could handle by himself."

"But even then we are not much further on," I observed. "No matter who they are they certainly didn't kill Osborne. Somebody knocked him on the head, however, and somebody opened the safe and went off with the papers."

"That seems to be the logical conclusion," he puffed meditatively at his cigar. "How do you propose to act in the matter?" he inquired suddenly. "If you are afraid of these people, there's nothing to prevent you from going round to Scotland Yard and telling them your story."

I shook my head. "I've had quite enough of Scotland Yard," I said. "You can do as you please, but as far as Jerry and I are concerned, we've made up our minds to tackle the thing ourselves."

"You have?" He nodded slowly. "A very sensible decision! The less the police are brought into this better for all of us. Whatever else they might do, they would certainly destroy any chance we have of recovering the formula."

"You think there is a chance then?"

"It's not impossible. It depends to a certain extent upon whether the man who stole it is aware of its value. He may have been an ordinary thief who was interrupted just as he had opened the safe. In that case his first instinct would probably be to grab what he could and bolt from the house."

"Sounds a bit thin to me," I objected. "Burglars don't usually risk their necks unless they know that there's something worth taking."

"I agree with you. It's considerably more probable that whoever broke into the place came to steal the formula. After all we have no proof that Dimitri was the only person in the secret. Osborne may have had a second confederate whom he let down as well."

"There's another idea that struck me," I remarked. "If this invention is as important as you say, there must be several big firms here and in America who..." I hesitated—"well, who wouldn't be too squeamish about how they got hold of it."

He shrugged his shoulders. "We have some fairly unscrupulous competitors, but I doubt whether any of them would go as far as murder. I am more inclined to regard it as a private enterprise, and for that very reason I take a less hopeless view of the situation than I otherwise should."

"Sooner or later, provided nothing happens to alarm him, our unknown friend will attempt to dispose of his plunder."

"He may have done so already."

"I think not. The metal market is a sensitive concern, and I make it my business to keep closely in touch with all its principal centres. I am convinced that up to now nothing has happened. If there are developments elsewhere we are almost certain to hear of them, but my own belief is that the first approach, when they are made, will probably be in our direction. I should not be surprised if something of the kind were to occur at any moment."

"And supposing it does?" I said bluntly. "Are you prepared to do business with a murderer?"

"Quite," was the prompt answer. "As I told you before, I regard the acquisition of this process as a national duty. If it is offered to me I shall not hesitate to buy it, but you may rest assured that Miss O'Brien's claims will receive the fullest and fairest consideration."

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Nick plots a dangerous journey, Monday.

## EDUCATION ADVISERS APPOINTED FOR CCC CAMPS OF DISTRICT

Announcement of the appointment of new educational advisers for CCC camps in the Medford district was made today by D. E. Wiedman, educational co-ordinator, who stated that with the exception of camps Humbug Mountain and Cape Sebastian, one adviser has been stationed at each camp in the district. Hereafter seven advisers were assigned to two camps each.

Camps Humbug Mountain and Cape Sebastian were previously assigned to H. M. Stiles, who has been transferred to Vancouver district, and are now under Educational Adviser Donald Maco. Company 611 is stationed at Camp Humbug Mountain, and Company 1652 at Camp Cape Sebastian. Celiaan Uford, formerly educational adviser at Camps Evans Creek and Elk Creek, has been transferred to Port Arthur, Calif.

The new appointments, which are expected to be completed soon with the assignment of men to Camps Humbug Mountain and Cape Sebastian, were announced as follows: Linden McCullough to Company 926, Camp Applegate; Floyd O. Burnett to company 1944, Camp Gasquet; Harris C. Rude to Company 1534, Yreka; John Blanchard to Company 1555, Camp Evans Creek; Penton Muldrow to Company 1629, Camp Wolf Creek, which formerly had no educational adviser; George Brinlow to Company 1641, Camp Clear Creek; Stanley Richmond to Company 759, Camp Sitkum; Leonard A. Moore to Company 1747, Camp Elk Creek.

## MELON AND TOMATO GROWERS WILL GET STAMP TAX REFUND

Approximately \$5,000 in refund checks are being mailed out by the Oregon-Washington Melon and Tomato Marketing Agreement to 1,000 growers of those commodities in the two states.

This amount is 10 per cent of the money collected from a stamp tax on each crate of melons and tomatoes sold in Oregon and Washington during the growing season, after paying all expenses of enforcing the pact and providing for a sinking fund to start operations for 1935. Only those growers who bought \$10 or more in stamps are receiving refunds, due to the excessive cost of mailing checks for less than one dollar, according to officials of the marketing agreement.

Meetings between growers and the joint control committee are being held throughout Oregon and Washington, reporting on the operations this year and planning better enforcement for 1935. Producer groups so far contacted are well satisfied with the agreement as it now operates, but wish stricter enforcement among the growers, according to Harry Hawkins of Yakima, Wash., and Morton Tompkins of Dayton, Ore., who are conducting the meetings.

**Use of Butter Increased**  
OLYMPIA, Wash. (UP)—Use of butter has jumped 5,000,000 pounds a year since Washington levied a 15-cent tax on butter substitutes, according to Dr. Robert E. Prior, state dairy supervisor.

## STEINER INTERPRETS TOKYO NAVAL ACTION AS DANGERING PEACE

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20. (AP)—While considering Japan's projected denunciation of the naval treaty "extremely unfortunate," Senator Borah expressed the view today that "we ought not make the mistake of interpreting the act as indicating a warlike attitude toward the United States."

"It is rather an expression of Japanese oriental policy," added the former foreign relations committee chairman to newsmen.

Senator Steiner (R., Ore.) had this to say: "The Japanese attitude endangers the peace of the entire world. There will be no security on the Pacific until all of the interested powers can find it possible to be bound by the limitation of treaties to which they subscribe."

Asked about American plans for fleet construction in view of the coming Japanese denunciation of the London naval treaty, Secretary Swanson, at a press conference, said: "We will do what is necessary for proper defense of America and her commerce and her industries."

25 Religious Faiths at College  
COLUMBIA, Mo. (UP)—A recent church survey showed 25 religious faiths represented at the University of Missouri. Included were: Mohammedan, Yoga, Quaker, Ethical Society, Greek Orthodox, and Moravian.

## CHRISTMAS WEEK NEWS

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SETTLES DOWN WITH PAPER TO CATCH UP WITH THE NEWS

WILFRED BECKONS HIM TO COME INTO THE DINING ROOM, HE WANTS TO SHOW HIM WHAT HE GOT FOR MOTHER.

RETURNS PRESENTLY TO PAPER

A MOMENT LATER WIFE ASKS HIM TO STOP READING A SECOND, SHE WANTS TO GO OVER THIS LIST WITH HIM TO SEE IF SHE'S FORGOTTEN ANYBODY

CHECKS LIST AND IS CALLED INTO HALL WHERE MILDRED WANTS TO KNOW IF HE HAS ANY IDEAS ON A PRESENT FOR WILFRED

THINKS HE'LL BE QUIETER IN THE STUDY, BUT IS ROUTED OUT BECAUSE WIFE WANTS TO SHOW CHILDREN HER PRESENT FOR HIM, WHICH IS HIDDEN IN THERE

SETTLES DOWN IN LIVING ROOM FOR A BRIEF MINUTE

IS CALLED UPSAURS TO HELP DECIDE WHICH SCARF TO SEND TO AUNT SUE AND WHICH TO AUNT EYMA. DECIDES IT'S NO USE TRYING TO KEEP UP WITH THE NEWS

## S'MATTER POP—

THERE IS A MAN IN THE MOON UNCLE CY SAYS SO

AW, DON'T LETTUM TELL YA THAT!

WHERE WOULD HE BE WHEN THERE AINT ANY MOON?

HE'D FALL DOWN AN' GET KILT, WOULDNT HE?

I'M VERY BRIGHT. I FIGGER OUT THINGS

OH-H!

## THE NEBBS—Enter the Heits

CAPTAIN ORTEGA, INTELLENCE CHIEFER OF THE NAZIAN ARMY, HAS DISCOVERED A PLOT TO START A REVOLUTION. UNCLE NAT HAS UNDEIGNED A STUPENDOUS OIL FIEAD AT EL LORAND. BETTY IS PACKING HER THINGS TO MAKE THE TRIP TO THE CAPITAL CITY, WITH HER UNCLE, WHO PLANS TO ACQUIRE THE PETROL CONCESSION FROM THE PRESIDENT. MEANWHILE... CAPTAIN SARCIA SEIZES UPON THIS MOMENT TO...

I HAVE WAITED LONG, MY DARLING INEZ. TO SEE YOU ALONE—WE MUST AGREE ON THE DATE OF OUR MARRIAGE.

BUT—I—I— I CANNOT AGREE— I DO NOT LOVE YOU.

NO—NO—

AH, YES—AND YOU WILL MARRY ME—NO WOMAN OF NAZIL CAN RESIST ME— NEITHER CAN YOU.

CAPTAIN, I BELIEVE THAT YOUR ATTENTIONS TO THE SENORITA ARE... UNWELCOME...

IS THAT SO!!

ARCHIE, THINGS AT THE OLD CIRCUS ARE IN A TURMOIL—THE LEADING ARTISTS, PERFORMERS LIKE MYSELF AND WILLIE, TOO, ARE LEAVING AS FAST AS THEY CAN.

NOW'S YOUR TIME TO REGAIN CONTROL, ARCHIE—WE KNOW CHEETS SWINDLED YOU OUT OF IT—COME! ASSERT YOURSELF! ASSERT YOUR RIGHTS!

I PLEDGE YOU EVERY OUNCE OF ENERGY STORED WITHIN THIS TOWERING TORSO!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT SAMSON'S SAYIN', BUT I SURE WOULD LIKE TO HELP.

NOBLY SAID MY LAD! AT THE FIT AND PROPER TIME, YOU CAN WAHOOD OUR CHANT OF VICTORY!

I WON'T MAKE A SINGLE MOVE EXCEPT ON THE SAYSO OF BEN WEBSTER—HE'S OUR BOSS!

## BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Samson's Tidings

I'VE GOT A GREAT IDEA FOR OUR PARTY TOMORROW NIGHT— YOU CALL UP YOUR PAL FLINT AND TELL HIM WE WANT THE MOVIE GANG OVER.

I WANT TO SHOW THIS BIG SOCIETY WOMAN THAT THINGS CAN HAPPEN IN THIS VILLAGE— SHE THINKS A CRICKET'S CHIRP IS GRAND OPERA TO US— I JUST WANT TO DISILLUSION HER— SHE CAME DOWN HERE FOR A REST AND I WANT TO GIVE IT TO HER.

I'LL DO THAT LITTLE THING— I'LL SEE ROCKNEY AND TELL HIM HE'S GOT TO DRAG ALL THE BIG ONES DOWN INCLUDING PRINCE MUCHINOFF WHO'S MAKING A PICTURE THERE NOW.

GEE, THAT'S GREAT— BUT DO IT— I'M ALWAYS A BIT SHY OF YOUR ENTHUSIASM IT USUALLY FADES WITH THE SOUND OF YOUR VOICE.

WELL, WITH MAGGIE'S BROTHER IN JAIL, MANY MILES AWAY FROM HERE, I FEEL GREAT.

THANK GOODNESS! IT'S A RELIEF TO KNOW I AINT GONNA LOOK AT HIM FER SOME TIME TO COME.

E-E-E-K!

WHO PUT THAT PHOTOGRAPH OF MAGGIE'S BROTHER ON MY DESK?

YOUR WIFE PUT IT THERE, SIR!

## THE NEBBS—Coming Events

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## BRINGING UP FATHER

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## PORTLAND TALKS PUNCHBOARD TAX

PORTLAND, Dec. 20.—(AP)—The city council soon will consider a proposal to license and tax punchboards. Commissioner Riley said today license fees would be based on the value of the boards and the number of punches on each. There are so many of them in the city that control by arrests is practically impossible, it was explained.

One cigar salesman suggested that a tax of not more than \$1 a board would bring \$20,000 a month to the city treasury.

Money paid for Christmas Seals helps spread the knowledge that saves lives.

Every tuberculous Christmas Seal sale is a recovery campaign.

## RAY NAMED HEAD INSURANCE MEN

The regular meeting of the Rogus Underwriters' Association was held at the Jackson hotel at noon Wednesday with nearly all the life underwriters of Medford and Ashland present.

A general discussion showed the importance of every member belonging to the National Board of Life Underwriters. Every member signed a pledge for membership and loyalty in attendance.

Election of officers was held and the following elected: Charles Ray, president; Geo. Henselman, vice-president; H. C. High, secretary; and F. B. Sweeney, treasurer.

They will serve until July 1, 1935.

Christmas stands for peace and happiness. The tuberculous Christmas Seal brings both. Buy now!